

**Ethics**  
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**Module No. #01**  
**Lecture No. #26**  
**Gandhian Ethics Part-1**

Today, we are going to talk about, one of the most celebrated figures in recent Indian history, is even from the point of moral philosophy, it is Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, more popularly known as Mahatma Gandhi. Now, many of us have, a preliminary idea about Gandhian Ethics. And of course, in this course, we will just touch upon Gandhian Ethics, as a part of the tradition of Indian Ethics, which is again up, as a part of the broader outline of the syllabus of Ethics.

Now, there are many things, in Gandhi has been considered as a Moral Stalwart. He is being referred as a Politician among Saints, and as a Saint among Politicians. Gandhi's Civil Disobedience Movement, and phenomenal role in the Independence of India, cannot be overstated. And, the importance of Ethics in Gandhi's ways, are perhaps one of the most prevalent examples of Moral Theoretician getting into practice.

So, apart from being an Idealist, Gandhi also put his theory, his beliefs into test, into the real world. So, before we talk about Gandhian Ethics, let us just briefly put out this, understand, what was the relationship, or what was Religion and Ethics for Gandhi.

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III (d) GANDHIAN ETHICS

- Religion & Ethics - Gandhian perspective

From the philosophical point of view

- Religion & Ethics are conceptually distinct although a coexistence is possible.

For GANDHI — This is not a true description of reality

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Religion & Morality inseparable.

Morality as crucial to religion.

True religion & true morality are inseparable.

The first thing, that we are now going to talk about is, Religion and Ethics - Gandhian perspective. Now, philosophically, Religion and Morality, are two different things. Religion is very frequently defined as a set of beliefs about, the Metaphysical pre-suppositions of human existence. And, Ethics or Morality is about, how people behave with each other. Now, let us look at this fundamental issue that, Religion is dealing with our Metaphysical beliefs or claims.

And, Morality is perhaps dealing with, how people deal with each other. Is there a relation?

Philosophically, of course, they are two different entities. But in fact, the Philosophers would accept that, they can co-exist, but they need not be connected. So, from the philosophical point of view, Religion and Ethics are conceptually distinct, although a co-existence is possible. Now, for Gandhi, this is not a true description of reality.

Let us say, philosophically, we can understand that well, Religions deals with a different domain of human existence, and Morality or Ethics deals with a different domain. Now, why does Gandhi confuse the two. Before that, let us reflect on, what our own views are. Here, we see a religious person, for example. Imagine any religious person, that you have seen. Now, if we imagine, this religious person, speaking or misrepresenting facts, or cheating, or committing cruelty.

Do we not find something amiss, with this religious person, that we imagine, a cleric, or a pundit, or a religious practitioner? That, if we do not find ordinary day Morality reflected, in the lives of supposedly religious people, we find something missing. All the religious books, prescribes, a moral code of conduct. It is not that the case, that Religion is silent about, moral code of conduct. In fact, all Religions propose a moral code of conduct.

They do not philosophise. Or perhaps, most of them do not philosophise on, how the moral code of conduct is arrived. In fact, many of them take the God's word, as sanction for a code of conduct. But, all of them, do talk about Morality. All of them, do talk about Ethics, about how people ought to deal with each other. Whereas, you see that, Religion does talk about, our mode of interacting with each other, which concerns the value domain or morality.

So, we do find it unusual that, if we find a religious person, and who is not moral, it seems to be a sort of contradiction. That well, if somebody is a religious person, but does not display ordinary day moral values, well, there is something amiss over here. In fact, it is a prevalent strain amongst, youngsters and young people today, to describe themselves as, spiritual but not religious, as moral but not religious. So, what are these examples about.

These examples, are a reaction from, what Religion has become. Religion has become a set of

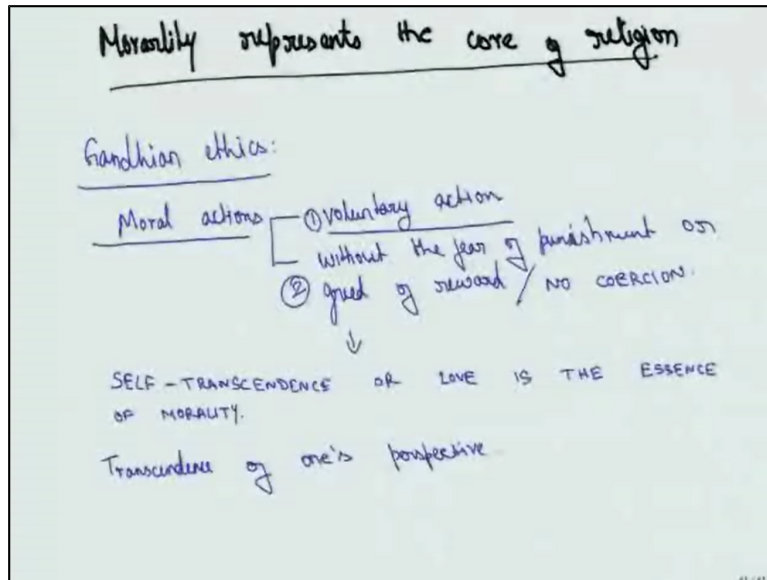
rituals, devoid of any connect, or any commitment to morality. Observing a set of rituals, makes one, a religious person. But, if observing a Religion does not bring about, what one would regard as ordinary moral day behaviour, then we find the kind of difficulty. In fact, we tend to throw out the baby with the bath water. We tend to throw out Religion, because we find religious people, not being moral.

Perhaps, what Gandhi verbalise, is an intuitive human urge, to find religious people as moral, to find Religion as a carrier of Morality. And, Morality is not necessarily to be carried by Religion. But, Morality is an essential accompaniment of Religion. In fact, there have been Atheist, there have been people, who are irreligious, but yet, they commit themselves to the moral domain. Bertrand Russell, was such an example.

That, where the moral domain exists, and is to be followed, irrespective of Religions. What we serve intuitively, first, that we want to find religious people as moral. We also want to have space open, that well, there are moral people, who may or may not be religious. Now, what is it for Gandhi. Now, for Mahatma Gandhi, Religion and Morality is inseparable. So, Gandhi's claim is that well, we find Religion. Gandhi would say that well, a religious person has to be a moral person, and not the other way round. That, a moral person has to be a religious person, but Religion as the basis of Morality.

That, a religious person has to be moral. And, if there is a conflict, between a Moral Diktat and Religious Diktat, well, it is the Moral Diktat, that has to remains supreme. So, Religion is to be judged, from the point of view of Morality. That, if a religious person is acting in an apparently Immoral way, then well, that person is not religious enough. So, Morality as the judge of Religion, or Morality as crucial to Religion. He goes on to say, that well, True Religion and True Morality are inseparable.

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And, that Morality represents, the core of Religion. So, what is Gandhi's point of view. Gandhi's point of view comes out to be, that well, Morality is the core of Religion. That, we do have to take Morality into account, while understanding Religion. And, Religion ought to bring about Morality. And, if it fails to do so, well, then there is something wrong with the Religion, or its interpretation. So, Religion ought to bring about Morality.

And, if it fails to do so, then the Religion ought to be discarded, or that particular kind of Religion ought to be reinterpreted, or discarded, and not Morality. The moral sense is fundamental, and that should be preserved. Now, having said that, about the relationship between Religion and Ethics, let us come about, that well, what is Gandhi's Notion of Morality, or Gandhian Ethics. Now well, to begin with, Moral Actions. What are Moral Actions. Or, what are Morally Judgeable Actions.

Moral Actions are actions, which are voluntary actions, and without the fear of punishment, or greed of reward. So, these are Moral Actions. That, actions that take place voluntarily, and that without the fear of punishment, or greed of reward. That is, no coercion. So, Gandhi begins by claiming, that well, what kind of actions are to be judged as Moral Actions. Now, actions which originate, from our freedom of choice, from our ability to choose, are actions, that can be judged as Moral Actions.

Whereas, actions which are done out of instinct, or done out of reflex reaction, can no more be judged as moral reaction. Now, this is a fairly simple analysis of action. And, when I find, that well, if we are talking about our moral judgeability of actions, we do mean actions, which have the freedom of choice. Now, the second point, seems to be more important, and has something more to offer.

That well, actions, which take place without coercion. So, without the fear of punishment, and without the greed of reward, in such a case, can actions be Moral Actions. What would Gandhi say. Gandhi would say, that well, if somebody is acting in a way, which is motivated by a fear, or fear of punishment, or the desire for a reward, well, it is no more in the domain of Moral Action. So, in this strain, we find a very Non-Consequentialist undercurrent, in Gandhian Ethics.

That well, if we are working for consequence, or our actions are motivated by certain goals, then that cannot be classified as a Moral Action, or that cannot be classified as a morally appreciable action. Let us take for an example. Going by, our earlier discussion about the Theory of Karma, we said that well, one has to accumulate moral dessert. So, accumulating moral dessert, for any betterment in this life, or after life, or later, and that being the primary motivation for good action, it seems to be for Gandhi, not an example of a Moral Action at all.

So, when something good is being done, to avoid punishment, or to get something for oneself in the future, it can no more be called as Moral Actions. So, well, when one is doing good turns to attract, to get future benefits, then one is not doing a moral act. So therefore, Moral Actions have to be actions out of, emerging out of free choice, uninfluenced by any consequences, that they bring about, which affect the action.

So, having any goal, of a good life, or of later rewards, or fear of latter punishments, is not really Moral Actions. So, look at this, a very interesting example. In that case, the schoolboys discipline, which is enforced by the fear of the schoolmaster, is not a discipline, that Gandhi would say, is a moral act at all. Because, this takes place, in the fear of punishment. When, that same schoolboys, is out of the school campus, and freed from the fear of punishment.

If that schoolboy continues, to choose to be disciplined, that comes out to be an example of a Moral Action. Whereas, if that schoolboy comes out, and chooses to be indisciplined, well, then that is, that action can be judged morally. Not the action, that takes place, under the fear of governance. Now, look at it, this way. This is a deontological, and a very huge jump, in expectations from human behaviour. So, in human societies, we have this entire notion of punishments and rewards.

And, punishments in particular, are framed to discourage behaviour, that is not right, or that is deemed Immoral by the society. So, the fear of punishment, keeps us of Immoral Actions. Now, that for Gandhi is actually, no moral credit of ours. So, if I am not stealing, or not doing anything wrong, for the fear of being caught, then I am not to be given any credit for my acts, for not doing anything wicked.

Now, so just imagine. Imagine it. I leave it to you, as a thought experiment. That, if you pull out law enforcement for a day, from the streets, what would be fine people doing. Now, this would give you an, the Gandhian test for Morality is, when this enforcement, or this fear of punishment, or the greed of reward is pulled out. In case of Morality, is mostly in terms of constraints. It is mostly, in terms of the fear of punishment. That, if we do this, we are punished, therefore we do not do this.

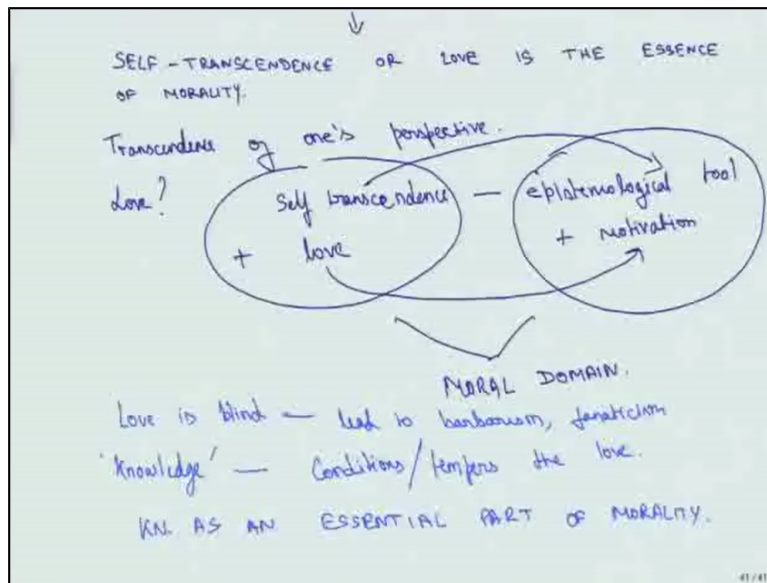
But, whether would a person steal, if he had an opportunity to steal, without the fear of being caught. That, according to Gandhi, is a true test of Morality. So, this is an example of a high Gandhian ideal, which is according to Gandhi, a true test of Morality, rather than a confirmation to the expectations, of the reward punishment scheme, of the society. Now, coming back to the slide. When we talk about Moral Actions, and the classifications of Moral Actions. Well. So, we talked about voluntary actions.

That, Moral Actions are only actions, which are voluntarily done. That is, they have a freedom of choice. And, number one, was this. And, number two was, when it is without the fear of punishment, or the greed of reward. So, there is no coercion. Now, what does this lead to. Well. Okay. Now, Gandhi's crucial claim is that, self-transcendence, or Love constitutes, is the essence

of Morality. So, it is when, one is able to transcend oneself, that one comes to function out of Love, and that is the essence of Morality.

So, when one transcendence one's selfish desires, transcendence of one's perspective. So, very often, we have run across this, as a conclusion of many moral theories, that when, the ability to transcend one's perspective, makes one's acts as moral. Because then, well, it is not done for one's own purpose, but well, when it is seen that from a trans-perspectival decision. So, Gandhi is also sticking to the same kind of classification, calling self-transcendence and Love, is the essence of Morality.

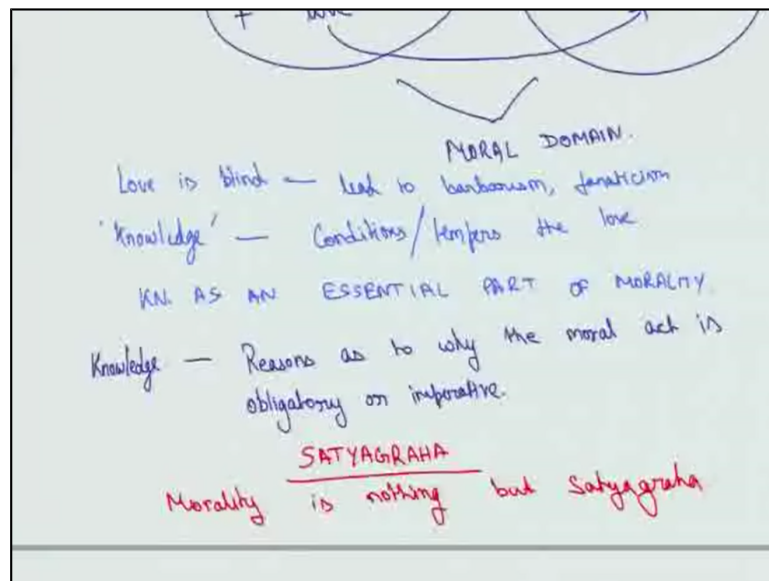
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Now, why is Love, as the source of Morality. Well. When one transcends, one's perspective, one would perhaps have access to others perspectives. So, unless there is a Love for the other, why would one want to benefit, because from doing an action, which is morally right, and which perhaps, disadvantages the self, and gives an advantage to the other. Now, look at this interesting notion.

That, transcending perspectives, gives us the Epistemological tool, to know the other. But, Love gives us the motivation, to do the right act. So, let me put it down. That, Self-Transcendence is the Epistemological tool + Love. And, in this case, analogically, Epistemological tool + Motivation. The Love acts as the Motivation. And, Self-Transcendences is the Epistemological tool. So, this gives rise to the moral act, or the moral domain.



Now, Gandhi introduces another perspective, into this association of concepts, is that well, he accepts that well, we do find that well, Love is blind, and it might lead to actions, which are blinded. So here, he introduces the Notion of Knowledge. Love is blind. And, this blindness can lead to, Barbarism, or Fanaticism, or a lot of things like this. Now, by introducing the third term, knowledge, is that which conditions or tempers the Love, so that, it is an informed choice for acting upon.

Now, when Gandhi says that, Morality does not consist in loving blindly, it is loving with the full

consciousness and knowledge of Love. Now, knowledge as an essential part of Morality. Let me make this clear, that what has knowledge got to do. Well. Self-Transcendence gives the Epistemological perspective, or Epistemological tool, to transcend one's perspective to know, to perceive from, or to comprehend what is it, from other perspectives are trans-perspectival.

Now, Love gives the motivation, for converting it into action. But, this Love cannot be unbound. It is bounded by knowledge. And, what is this knowledge. This knowledge is about the reasons, why the moral act is obligatory. Knowledge is about reasons, as to why, the moral act is obligatory. So, what is the point. The point is that, Morality is obeying the voice of the conscience, with the full knowledge of the conditions, that make this call imperative or obligatory.

So, that means, that well, where does knowledge enters the equation, is that well, when we are listening to the voice of conscience, and we also understand, why we are listening to the call of conscience. So, knowledge is also a factor in the, moral act being performed. So, one is not just having trans-perspectival knowledge, but one is able to transcend one's perspective, one loves the other, or the entities concerned to motivate for an action.

And also, one is in knowledge of the reasons, why this apparently selfless action is obligatory. That, what is the reason for this, to take place. Now, this according to Gandhi is, what he has termed as the knowledge of Satyagraha. Or, that is particularly, how Satyagraha takes place. So, Morality is nothing but, Satyagraha. Because, this is what, are the points that, Gandhi talks about Satyagraha too. Will now talk about, the various virtues, that Gandhi talks about, which are taken from tradition.

And, Gandhi adds it to those. He talks about, virtues like, non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, non-acceptance, and chastity. So, these are known in Sanskrit as, Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Aparigraha, and Bramhacharya. So, these are some of the virtues, core virtues, cardinal virtues, for a Satyagraha too. And, in this understanding, for the moral person, to act upon. Gandhi expands on this, and adds some more virtues to this, which we will be talking about, next.