CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Ethics has a long history starting from primitive age to modern era. Ethical beliefs and feelings exist even in the most primitive human society. Our primitive ancestors depended upon each other for the desire of a quiet life. They felt it that without mutual co-operation and understanding smooth livelihood would not be possible. This rudimentary form of ethical outlook has been developed gradually in form of group morality indicating the particular rules and regulations of a group. In due course of human civilization man began to realize that morality is not a law imposed by his group or priests. It is not only necessary for leading a convenient life. It is something which needs one's own inner conscience to determine what is right, what is wrong or what our duty is. As civilization marched ahead, human desire got priority to study the answers of these questions in a systematic way. Generally ethics has been defined as the normative science of conduct of human beings. In modern ethics a quest has been made to find out the more basic ethical questions like, how one should live. How can one be happy? What is good? Etc. Traditional ethics was busy in finding out the answers of these questions and also in setting norms or standard of our conduct. We may consider their ethical thinking as normative ethics. Normative ethics is one of the branches of ethics. In 20th century moral thinkers tried to explain the meaning of ethical terms and judgments. Meta ethics constitutes one of the branches of ethics and it deals with the
questions about the nature of ethical theories and judgments. Besides normative ethics and meta ethics, there is another branch of ethics known as applied ethics. Applied ethics is the application of ethical theories to solve our practical problems. It tries to apply normative principle to our moral problems. The application of normative ethical theories into practical problems is not completely a new idea in the field of ethics. Ethical ideas were not some abstract ideas. Slavery, racism, inequality were some of the important problems which attracted moral thinkers to solve these problems through ethical outlook. Problems of bioethics deserved special importance in ancient times also. But still, during first six decades of 20th century moral philosophers kept themselves aloof from practical ethics. However, Philosophers like C.E.M. Joad, Bertrand Russell and few others were exceptions in this regard. Some significant events like US civil right movements, the Vietnam War and the rise of student’s activism which brought changes in human thinking raised the possibility of application of ethical theories. Moral thinkers began to realize that the skills they acquired studying ethics were highly relevant to those issues. Later on, applied ethics has been found in a new form during 1960. The importance of studying applied ethics grew more while modern people confronted different problems.

Our civilization is a gradual development from Stone Age to modern scientific and technological age. Science and technology have tremendous role in satisfying human desire. Today, with scientific and technological
advancement life expectancy of human is greatly improved. People have started to live an easy and comfortable life. The technological advancement, especially in the field of life science has opened up a new vista. The emergence of new biotechnology has greatly helped to fulfill human aspiration. For instance, development of invitro fertilization and artificial insemination make it possible to bring new hope to infertile couples. Again the progress of industrial technology has helped human being to meet different demands of growing population. Though rapid strides of scientific and technological developments have brought revolutionary changes, now it is felt that technology has been developed without careful consideration of its negative impacts.

The adverse effect of technological development on nature is quite apparent today. The ecological degradation and disequilibrium introduce with their prospect of irreparable damage to nature as a whole. Industrial and technological revolution present humanity a lots of problems like air, water and land pollution, deforestation, depletion of ozone layer and many others. We are all well known about the unforgotten happenings like Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Bhopal gas tragedy or Chernobyl leakage of atomic radiation. As in our earth each and every system has its own place and value, destruction or degeneration of any system starts a chain reaction to cause disruption in our ecosystem as a whole. Present environmental crisis claims serious concern and understanding of moral reasoning. Johnson points out, "Environmental degradation is a time bomb, which can explode any time if
the present suicidal attitude of human beings continues unabated". At present animal kingdom is also at stake like human being. We are in a dilemma of present technological power and its detrimental effects. This dilemma needs a careful study embracing its all aspects. It needs an ethical outlook and a practical approach. Our present study constitutes a careful ethical study on this practical problem. The ethical crisis which arises today in this field is a matter of grave concern. In view of this, notable thinkers have come forward to solve this problem with different ethical views. In the field of environmental ethics two significant theories are widely discussed. These are human oriented or anthropocentric and nature oriented or ecocentric theories. Human oriented ethics holds that we should place certain constraints on our treatment of natural environment to promote the well being of humans. The inherent tendency of this view is that we should protect our natural environment as it fulfils our needs. It has an instrumental value. Against such type of attitude, ecoethics stands its position ascribing an intrinsic value in natural objects. Nature is valuable by itself. Aldo Leopold\textsuperscript{2}, Arne Naess\textsuperscript{3}, George Session\textsuperscript{4} are most prominent moral thinkers on this line.

Besides, environmental crisis, modern people have confronted with some other genuine and new problems. These sensation creating bioethical problems of modern times deserve special mention. Bioethics is the systematic study of human conduct in the area of the life sciences and health care. Ethical duty in the field of health care is not completely new one.
The famous Hippocratic oath in Greece around the fourth century B.C., Caraka and Susruta the notable Ayurvedic texts of ancient India, perhaps reflect the best examples of ethical attitude in health care. But at present modern people have to face some new ethical dilemmas in the field of health care and biotechnology. In fact, with great progress in treating and preventing diseases biotechnology also has created some unsolvable ethical dilemmas. Today physicians and scientists have to face a complex situation relating patients' life and death issue. For example, in 1975 a twenty one year old woman Karen Ann Quinlan lay in a New Jersy hospital, as she had for months in coma. Doctor agreed that her brain was irreversibly damaged and that she would never recover. Her parents after anguished consultation asked the doctors and hospital authority to disconnect the artificial respirator from their daughter. When the doctors and hospital authority refused their request, they petitioned to court to recognize them as her legal guardian so that they could authorize the withdrawal of treatment. The court supported the parents and the respirator was removed. But Ann Quinlan did not die and began to breathe on her own. She was living in comatose in a fetal position in a New Jersy nursing home up to 1985 Karen Quinlan finally died on June 11, 1985, ten years after she lapsed into coma. The problem like Karen Quinlan raises the problem of euthanasia, the most debated issue of present time. Actively helping a patient to achieve death often referred as euthanasia. Though many countries have legalized euthanasia, ethical controversy remains unabated till this time. The question of euthanasia has
been raised in such circumstances like when one is in an irreversible coma and there is no prospect of recovering any higher brain function. Secondly, the question of euthanasia arises in a case of a chronically ill patient who is suffering from a severe disease and expresses his own wish to die. Thirdly, the most difficult and controversial question arises in case of a new born infants with severe incurable and uncorrectable genetic defects. The issue of euthanasia has confronted us with lots of ethical questions. Should we respect one's autonomy by allowing him to die? We are in a dilemma of beneficence and nonmalificence in case of patient like Karen Quinlan, a patient in coma. Serious moral conflict arises when we confront with the problem of new born infant with severe and uncorrectable birth defect. All these controversial questions lead us to study the issue of euthanasia. In our present study, a discussion has been made on the problem of euthanasia.

Like euthanasia, abortion is another divisive issue in the field of bioethics. Abortion simply means destruction of life after conception and before birth. Abortion was legalized in later part of the 20th century in most of the countries all over the world. But still the moral question of rightness and wrongness regarding abortion issue is not over. Abortion is a debated issue as it gives rise lots of controversial questions. It is related to the autonomy and rights of the pregnant woman. A woman may want to abort her fetus under different circumstances. Should we respect her autonomy and rights in all circumstances? Is her autonomy and rights related to the rights of a human fetus? Is the fetus a human being from its conception? Is the fetus a
potential person? While answering these questions a good number of moral thinkers come forward to share in this debated issue. John T. Noonan⁵, John Finnis⁶, state their conservative views in this respect. Opposing conservative's view, there are other group of moral thinkers including feminist Philosopher like Judith Jarvis Thomson⁷ and person centric Philosophers like Peter Singer⁸, M. Tooley⁹, M.A. Warren¹⁰, and H.T. Engelhardt¹¹ offer their liberal views. We have presented this issue in chapter-V of our study considering its different aspects. Three other important bioethical issues like surrogate mother, cloning and physician patient relationship have been incorporated with this chapter.

Invitro fertilization and artificial insemination are two successful procedures of modern reproductive technology which make it possible for a couple to conceive a child, who is otherwise unable to conceive in the usual way. This great contribution to humanity, still been confronted with some controversial moral and legal issues. Among many others, surrogate mother is one of the most debated and sensational issues. Surrogate mothers, in the more usual sense are women who agree to become pregnant by means of artificial insemination or through in vitro fertilization. This issue has been confronted by serious moral questions. The most objectionable question that rises against surrogate mother is that it uses a child as an object, or a product, as the surrogate mother carries the baby to term against a good payment. Modern people are in a dilemma whether they agree with
surrogate mothering to give a gift to the infertile couple or prevent it due to its adverse impact.

In the sphere of biotechnological development, another most sensation creating issue is cloning. Cloning generally means the identical copy or replica of an object. It is a sexual form of reproduction as the clone is a copy of its parent (Single) organism. It has been thought that cloning will include a better understanding of genetic deficiencies. Again it will overcome male and female infertility because in case of cloning, copy of the single parent may be obtained employing body cells. But cloning controversy remains unabated due to its possible negative impact. Though human cloning is not yet allowed, ethical thinking and attitude are necessary in this respect. Should we allow human cloning using as a means to our end? We are confronted with this controversy whether we save humanity from commercialization of human embryo or present scientific achievement in progress of treating severe diseases. Can we allow human cloning neglecting its all adverse impacts like single parenthood? A discussion has been made about cloning controversy in chapter-V of this study.

Lastly, we have discussed the problem of paternalism including truth telling and confidentiality in physician patient relationship. A physician has faced with a disputed situation when he is compelled to come apart from paternalistic attitude. The problem of truth telling cannot be solved from classical point of view. For example when a physician has to confront with a cancer patient truth telling may cause a serious harm to the patient. We have
dealt with the problem of truth telling and confidentiality in the last part of the chapter V.

Above mentioned environmental and bioethical problems require our great concern as these are not some abstract but practical problems. Moral thinkers, social philosophers, scientists, intellectual class and religious society have come forward to solve these problems with their own opinion and comments. But, still we are inclined to raise some general questions regarding rules, standards or principles that we can use as our guide to get ourselves relieved out from these moral dilemmas. Moral difficulties connected with environmental crisis and biomedicines are so complex and so important that they require our special attention. Environmental and medical ethics give them this attention, but it remains a part of the discipline of ethics. As these problems to a great extent are the gifts of modern age, traditional ethical theories are not sufficient to solve all these. For example, traditional ethics believes it that we have duties to rational beings or persons. Though ordinarily, we have little difficulty with this commitment to person, but there are circumstances, particularly in the medical context, in which serious problems arise. Can we consider a fetus developing in its mother womb as a person? The way this question is answered makes all the difference in deciding about the rightness or wrongness of abortion. So making moral decisions in such a controversial question is always a difficult and stressful task. In this respect modern moral philosopher's views about human centric attitude and ecocentric attitude towards environmental context are helpful to
arrive at a suitable conclusion. In present biomedical context, contribution of four moral principles is worth mentioning. These principles are the principles of nonmaleficence, beneficence, autonomy and justice. Though these principles themselves come into conflict in a special situation, we may try to come out from such conflict applying our basic ethical ideas.

The present study is an endeavor to present an elaborate discussion of these problems and to find out a suitable solution.

**Notes and References**


