CHAPTER IV

RUSSELL'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY

MAN AND MORALITY
CHAPTER IV

RUSSELL'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY : MAN AND MORALITY

In the previous chapter it has been pointed out that Russell's contemporary human society was not so sound and stable as to be encouraging and conducive enough to the peaceful and rational living of men. It was even not so much enlightened, though one could easily notice the surging trend of scientific and technological progress leading to enormous materialistic prosperity, as might be expected to guide mankind as a whole through the path of moral progress concerning the socio-political and economic aspects of global human society. Evils of different types like religious dogmas, superstitions, greed for political power, economic exploitation and inequalities, educational system incompatible with the need of time, tendency for nuclear armament and war-mongering, indifference to women, repression of the poor, racial rifts, religious conflicts and intolerances, sexual crimes, social injustice and many others that might degrade men to the level of animality came to the notice of Lord Russell quite vividly and spontaneously. The social and moral codes that were prevalent during that period also appeared to be too weak to resist the trends of such evils as were found to be harmful to the general social-atmosphere on the whole. Russell wants to say that the inherent drawbacks in the socio-political morality of that period were at the very root of all kinds of evils and abuses that turned the world into an unhappy place for human dwelling. He was greatly shocked and appalled having witnessed the harrowing war-fever among the western nations during the early part of the twentieth century which he contemplated to be extremely awful for the existence of mankind in a civilized form irrespective of creeds and communities. To speak the truth, chilling depression
enshrouded him as he came to know the inhuman and anti-human behaviours of a large section of people, though men like to call themselves superior beings created by God. So, his philosophy of life turned out to be much obligatory as to how mankind may be saved from the pitfalls of religious persecution, political aggression, economic injustices, cruelties of atomic wars and many other hostile forces that are assumed to be sharply detrimental to the moral and rational growth of the human race all over the world.

In his famous essay *Ideas That Have Harmed Mankind*, he has mentioned that the world stands in need of sound political organizations for the elimination of wars and benevolent economic organizations to generate sane internationalism. Besides all these, it also needs certain moral qualities of which the chiefly important are charity and tolerance. Russell is never in favour of any kind of fanatical faith as is offered to us by various rampant 'isms.' For him both the organizational and the ethical aims are closely interwoven; given either, the other is sure to follow. For the right direction of the world, both the aims must move simultaneously. Without the gradual lessening of the evil passions which are the natural aftermath of war no mutual help among people is possible. Russell stresses:

"There will have to be a realization at once intellectual and moral that we are all one family, and that the happiness of no one branch of this family can be built securely upon the ruin of another. At the present time moral defects stands in the way of clear thinking, and muddled thinking encourages moral defects. Perhaps, though I scarcely dare to hope it, the hydrogen bomb will terrify mankind into sanity and tolerance. If this should happen we shall have reason to bless its inventors."¹

On such grounds, Lord Russell, throughout his life has called upon the people of the world to be guided by rational judgement and conscience, not by false beliefs and mere animal urges of impulse. He was much hopeful that men

will definitely be guided by rationality and intelligence to live in a good and ideal human society. That is why he started searching out the moral evils that were running rampant in the entire human society of his time. So, Russell's moral philosophy may be recognized to have founded on what is known as rational outlook tinged with humanitarian feelings, not on traditional superstitions and religious dogmas. Apart from this, he has also tried to analysis scientifically the different perspectives of human life in relation to society. Thus, Russell's moral philosophy is concerned not only with the behaviours and actions of individual life but also with the roles played by politics, economics, education and science in human society. In this chapter, we seek to make an attempt to throw light on such views of Russell as may enable us to have the true nature of his moral Philosophy in relation to man and society as well. We are also inclined to identify the relevant moral principles advocated by Russell which, according to him, were expected to shower peace on international human relations. In a word, what Russell thinks in the moral line is the reflection of his sharp reaction to ethical problems of his contemporary world. Anyway, this chapter may be deemed to be the embodiment of a mild and committed attempt at discussing the need of morality in man's actions and behaviours. It is to be noted here that Russell would not have turned out to be a moral thinker had he really found all the people of the world equally enriched in moral qualities. Russell was morally obliged to warn the world of the impending danger of universal death that might be caused by moral degradation. Robert E. Egner comments in his work Bertrand Russell's Best as follows:

"It is a tribute to Lord Russell that he organized the first protest to help prevent the dread peril. Lord Russell like Einstein gave his last moment of reflection to the ethical questions raised by the march of scientific power."  

2. Bertrand Russell's Best, op.cit., p. 128.
The kind of morality that Lord Russell wanted to advocate is one wherein the slightest trace of superstitions and organized false beliefs is never allowed to work. The roles of fear and hatred are also banished from the domain of such morality. It is one where human beings are expected to cherish mutual love and respect sincerely and benevolently. Russell is, thus, a great thinker of the twentieth century, and his moral thinking has offered him a higher position in the human history. But, unless and until one clearly understands Russell's views on the moral concepts like 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong', 'sin' and 'sanctity' and so forth, one cannot make a proper estimate of his moral philosophy.

Russell and the Concepts of **Good** and **Bad**:

As our concern is moral philosophy, we must take the concepts 'good' and 'bad' into account in relation to human conduct and behaviours; otherwise the whole process will be confounded. Again, Russell is also a social philosopher; his concepts of 'good' and 'bad' need to be studied in relation to his notion of social progress to the effect of peace and happiness in human life. It is a common fact that almost every body of a society possesses the idea of 'good' and 'bad' in their own notion. But it is to be noted that what is goodness cannot be perceived by the sense as redness can be. Moreover, people's views may vary from person to person as to the idea of goodness while they are ready to agree as to the idea of redness. The notion of 'good', therefore, needs to be analysed into some other notions, such as 'pleasure' or 'object of desire'. Russell is also of the view that anything that gives pleasure or is desired may not be good in real sense of the term. He also points out the bad desires or the beastly desires which can never be accepted as a part of ethics though these desires may render certain amount of pleasure to some one under certain circumstances. For example, when one man desires another man's pain, it is obvious that what, here, is desired is not good, but bad. Thus, Russell in his famous essay **The Elements of Ethics** has mentioned:

"When a thing is good, it ought to exist on its own account, not on account of its consequences, nor yet of who is going to enjoy it. We
cannot maintain that for me a thing ought to exist on its own account, while for you it ought not; that would merely mean that one of us is mistaken, since in fact everything either ought to exist or ought not. Thus, that one man's desire may be another man's aversion proves that good, in sense relevant to ethics, does not mean the same as desired, since everything is in itself either good or not good, and cannot be at once good for me and bad for you. This could only mean that its effects on me were good, and on you bad; but here good and bad are again impersonal" 3

Russell is, thus, going to stress the point that the notions of good and bad which form the very edifice of ethics should not be personal; it ought to be impersonal for all people.

It is also to be noted that 'Ethics' must have a postulate, which cannot be disputed. 'Good' is the postulate in ethics and it should not have different implications at different times. The 'good' which is the object of primary desires must acquire some permanence amid the changing secondary desires. Lord Russell, in his essay Are All Desires Equally Moral has stated: "If ethics is to be a definite body of knowledge, the Good must be a fixed standard, by which we are to test the moral worth of acts." 4

Lord Russell is a social philosopher; and his sense of morality must be studied in the sense of social good which implies the good of mankind as a whole. Again morality is exhibited only in an action, and action springs from desire. The aim of moral judgement is to discriminate the good desires from the evil ones. Russell's moral philosophy is based on the humanitarian zeal for the good of mankind as a whole. So, whatever action is done by man must result in the good both for himself

3 Bertrand Russell, Philosophical Essays. George Allen and Unwin Ltd
and for the human race if that action is to be recognized as morally good. As man cannot live bereft of desires, his action must help the mankind so far as ethical view is concerned. Here lies the significance of 'good' as the postulate of Ethics Russell is, therefore, of the view that what is good is always desired, but what is desired may not, all the time, be good for all. Unless and until 'good' acquires the quality of universal acceptability-- the term 'good' becomes very narrow to stand as an ethical postulate. He also stresses that 'good' as the satisfaction of desire of one must not harm the other. This satisfaction must also satisfy the other people provided all are inclined to the general 'good' of mankind. In his essay Good and Bad which is a very significant chapter of the book Human Society in Ethics and Politics. Russell asserts: "Against our definition of 'good' as 'satisfaction of desire' an objection might be raised on the ground that some desires are evil and their satisfaction is a further evil. The most obvious example is cruelty' 5. He, thus, goes to imply that good is something which arouses desires in human mind to do some action which is bound to be universally acceptable. Otherwise, the term 'good' will always remain partial and controversial.

So far as 'bad' is concerned, we may say that what is not good is bad, that is, evil. Those human actions which are found not to contribute to the growth of rational judgement, and pose hindrance on the path of true human relation which is expected to be based on enlightenment and conscience may, without any iota of doubt, be called evil actions that give rise to what is known as immorality. Evils actions always harm the interest of the human race, and stand contrary to the general good of the community. To speak precisely, good and evil, in reality, cannot be thought in isolation.

In a society, people are found to behave in innumerable ways; they also do innumerable deeds. Although some behaviours appear to be unavoidable, one should not think that, according to Russell, these behaviours are completely free

5. Human Society in Ethics and Politics, op.cit, p. 58.
even from the least trace of evil. Similarly, there are some human actions in society
which do not have the slightest sense of the 'good', yet they are being accepted by
the members of the society as if they were quite inevitable. In this regard Lord
Russell says: "It is doubtless foolish, in practice, to fret over the inevitable; but it
is false, in theory, to let the actual world dictate our standard of good and evil" 6
Russell does not accept the view that unavoidable means 'not evil'. Similarly, what
is impossible may also be good. It may be concluded that 'good' may not be
inevitable; but good behaviour inevitably results in good. Russell stresses the points
that it is only through rational attitude that the good and the evil can properly be
discriminated.

To sum up his views on 'good' and 'bad', we may say that man alone and not
any authority over him determines the criterion of 'good' and 'bad'. For Russell,
'good' is what promotes the creative urges in man and 'bad' what thwarts them, the
sole criterion of ethical value being man's happiness. So, in order to know what is
'good' for a man, it is parallely necessary to know his nature, needs and aspirations.
As man is a social being, no proper study of his nature, his needs and his aspirations
is possible "if the individual human being is treated as an abstraction" 7 Unless the
relation between man and society is taken into consideration, moral philosophy
bears no meaning at all. That is why Russell's conception of 'good' and 'bad' cannot
be thought apart from the basic relation of man with the society that he lives in.

**Russell and the Concepts of 'Right' and 'Wrong'.**

In moral philosophy 'right' and 'wrong' are generally used to determine the
nature of voluntary and habitual actions. When an act is performed according to
some moral code or law of conduct, it is said to be right. On the other hand, a
wrong action implies a travesty of rule of conduct, i.e. it violates the law of conduct.
J.S. Mackenzie defines a right action as one that tends to bring about what is

---

7. Anirudha Jha, *Social Philosophy of Bertrand Russell*
   Ajanta Publication, Delhi, 1978. p. 44.
good. 8 Again J. N. Sinha states: "An action is right if it tends to bring about what is good, an action is wrong if it tends to bring about what is evil."9 From the above definitions it is clear that only the right action can promote the general good of mankind. There is, of course, a very wide divergence among different communities as to what they consider right or wrong. It is particularly, in the case of taboo morality, this divergence is traceable to a difference in beliefs as to the effects of actions, Russell says: "If mankind were agreed as to what is right, we could take right as the fundamental concept in Ethics and define the good as what is achieved by right conduct"10 Here the problem is that different communities cherish different views as to what they consider right or wrong.

In General view, the ideas of 'right' and 'wrong' are judged by the ideas of good. According to Russell 'good' implies the conduct which is right and also sort of things having their intrinsic values. So far as 'right' and 'wrong' are concerned, Russell dispels the 'good' which is a bit confusing in meaning. On the other hand he admits that the word 'right' is also ambiguous having different meanings for different people on different occasions. The utilitarians judge the rightness of an action in relation to the goodness and badness of its consequences. The intuitionalists judge it by the approval or disapproval of the moral sense or conscience. Lord Russell wants to combine both the theories to get a complete account of right or wrong.

"There is", he thinks, "one sense in which a man does right when he does what will probably have the best consequences, and another in which he does right when he follows the dictates of his conscience, whatever the probable consequences may be"11

---


Russell also views that 'right' may be divided into two, one is objectively right and the other is subjectively right. Objectively right is in some way dependent on consequences. An objectively right act is one which produces the greatest excess of good over ill, or the least excess of evil over good. It is also called the most fortunate act or the wisest act. A subjectively right action is one which is judged by the agent to be objectively right. Similarly, a subjectively wrong action is one when it is judged to be objectively wrong. Now, a subjectively right action is a moral action, and a subjectively wrong action is an immoral action. So Russell decides:

"In judging what actions are right, we need to know what results are good. When a man is mistaken as to what is objectively right, he may nevertheless act in a way which is subjectively right; thus we need a new pair of notions, which are called moral and immoral, a moral act is virtuous and deserves praise; an immoral act is sinful and deserves blame." 12

This is how Russell wants to establish his own views on what is right and what is wrong in connection with human conduct and behaviour. Such Russell's views on 'good' and 'bad' and 'right' and 'wrong' are to be taken into account while throwing light on his moral philosophy in relation to individual and as society as well.

**Russell on Morality and Religion:**

Any attempt to deal with Russell's moral philosophy inevitably leads to the analytical discussion of his own views on the different aspects of religion. Lord Russell, during his long life-span, happened to witness different religions flourishing in different parts of the world. It is a general belief that religion teaches man to be moral and honest in their behaviour and action. Religious teachings, as common people suppose, are meant for refraining men from doing any kind of evil and urging them to follow a path that may lead to the shelter of the Supreme Power. In fact, human virtues like honesty, compassion, love, mercy, reverence,

12. Ibid., p. 59.
sympathy, tolerance, self-control and others are the very important features of the moral life of man which are supposed to be enriched by religious teachings. The more deep-rooted these qualities are in human mind, the more immune the world to the contamination of what is known as evil desires. Religion is also supposed to condemn vice, cruelty, crimes of different types, injustice, persecution, sin and many other evils and abuses that degrade the dignity of human life. But Russell was not happy at the role of the extant religions either in extolling the virtues or in condemning the vices. He could learn it from the role of Christianity in the main as he was born and brought up in this faith. So, his views on the role of religion in moral life are derived from the role that Christianity was playing in society during his own life. Russell, in his essay "The Essence and Effect of Religion" has stated that

"religions are beliefs with many dogmas which direct human behaviour and are neither based on - nor contradict - real evidence; and that the method employed by religions to direct people's mind are based on sentiment or power rather than reason" 13

If these characteristics of religion are true, we cannot expect that religion always increases human happiness which is the motto behind morality. No one can deny the fact that religion has contributed a lot to human history and is also expected that it will continue to do the same. He supports organized religion to the extent that it "helps maintain social order, enabling people to enjoy a happier world." 14 In such cases, religions are important and useful. But, for Russell, the price of its usefulness is too high. He again maintains that religious conservatism is incompatible with progress in thought as because under the strict and conservative religious system individual development is stifled. Therefore, Russell thinks, "the civilization of a nation will definitely regress under the oppression of religions,


Some notions may appear strong due to their religion but they are not able to progress."  

Here in this study, we want to refrain from making any deliberate discussion on certain points related to religion such as Existence of God, Spiritual Power, After-life and so forth so much so that these concepts are not yet proved on the evidences that men can intellectually search out. Our main concern here is how Russell reacts to the role of religion in guiding the society to make proper uses of the human virtues like honesty, truthfulness, compassion, love, benevolence and so forth which the men of religions very frequently speak of. Though he supports the religious virtues, he cherishes the view that no one can achieve the true welfare of mankind unless he has adequate knowledge of evolution, eternal laws of nature and the basic necessaries to satisfy the different human needs for a smooth living. He is very much confirmed that neither religious dogmas and faiths nor the mere ethical theories can bestow lasting welfare on human beings. In this regard he says:

"When I speak of knowledge as an ingredient of the good life, I am not thinking of ethical knowledge, but of scientific knowledge of particular facts. I do not think there is, strictly speaking, such a thing as ethical knowledge. If we desire to achieve some end, knowledge may show us the means, and this knowledge may loosely pass as ethical."  

It is now quite evident from his various writings on the subject of religion that Russell was totally opposed to the dogmas and false beliefs which were fostered by the extant organized religions of his time. On the contrary, he highly ranked these values which are really conducive to honest and virtuous living. Edgar Sheffield Brightman, in his essay 'Russell's Philosophy of Religion' writes:

"He is undoubtedly hostile to traditional and institutional Christianity. Is he equally hostile to the essence of religions? It is possible to argue...

15. Ibid, p. 72.

forever about the essence of religion, and come to no conclusion; but all will agree that religion is a concern about values, their dignity and their destiny. Inquiry about Russell’s religion is inquiry into his attitude towards values” 17.

Here, it may be commented that if the need of religion is necessarily felt for the moral and material progress of mankind, then it will be a religion which differs in several ways from the old ones. In his essay 'What We Can Do' he writes:

"The world has need of a philosophy, or a religion which will promote life. But in order to promote life it is necessary to value something other than mere life. Life devoted only to life is animal, without any real human value, incapable of preserving men permanently from weariness and the feeling that all is vanity. If life is to be fully human it must serve end which seems, in some sense, outside human life, some end which is impersonal and above mankind, such as God or truth or beauty" 18

Lord Russell stresses the point that religion will be fully useful and effective for men if it can impart men true lessons on humanitarianism and universal brotherhood. But Russell doubts whether all the organized religions based on dogmas and false beliefs have been successful in this line. Nevertheless, he, by doing away with the dogmatic views, supports these important principles of religions which he consider worth preserving for enriching the moral sense of men and these are "Worship, Acquiescence and Love" 19. Here worship, for Russell, does not mean worship to God; rather it means worshipping to the 'Ideal Good' which is expected by all. He also calls it selective worship which is given to whatever exists to bring in good to life. Russell describes it as a kind of mental state which is always inclined to whatever is known as good for mankind.

17. Philosophy of Bertrand Russell. op.cit., p. 550.
As regards 'Acquiescence' Russell is of the view that one should acquiesce to that evils which can never be removed by human power and intelligences. These evils are either our private sorrows or any fundamental evils of the world. He admits that Acquiescence in private grief is an essential element in the growth of universal love and the impartial will. Again acquiescence in fundamental evils may increase moral discipline and arouse in man a sense of harmony with the universe. Thus, acquiescence removes the sense of worries from the mind and restores peace.

With respect to 'Love' Russell cherishes the view that men should have a sense of heavenly love instead of the earthly one. Christianity enjoins both love of God and love of men as the two great commandments. Russell did not believe in God, but he believed in the fact that men can go ahead through their mutual love. Love of man must have some ideal good; this ideal of good leads men through a moral path. He also appears to be sure that without a universal sense of love among people of the world, human society cannot last any further. Thus, these outstanding elements of religion did really influence Russell throughout his life, and these elements activated him to offer logical arguments in support of the moral growth of humanity. From the above evidences we may be confirmed of the fact that Russell always favoured the humanitarian and enlightening elements of religions, but not the dogmatic views that are, in no way, considered to be conducive to the moral and rational growth of men.

Russell did not believe in God, nor did he maintain the view that religion which is based on the belief that God is the Creator of the universe and also at the root of all human behaviours can really guide men as to how they should lead a moral life. He has offered many arguments in support of his view that God does not exist of which the first-cause argument is very significant. In the essay Why I am not a Christian, he comments: "What really moves people to believe in God is not any intellectual argument at all. Most people believe in God because they have been taught from early infancy to do it, and that is the main reason."20

20. Why I am not a Christian, op.cit., p.20
That is why Russell wants to say that people accept religion only on an emotional ground.

Lord Russell has also very aptly criticized the nature of Christ as "historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all." 21 What he has known about Christ is only through the Gospels without any historical evidence. What role the Churches as the centre of Christian religion play to morally guide mankind is not acceptable to him either. As for example, he never supports that an inexperienced girl should continue to live with a syphilitic husband who was unknowingly married to him though the church is ready to stress that marriage is indissoluble sacrament and the girl is religiously bound to live with him for life. Russell looks down upon such attitude to be a fiendish cruelty, and anybody who is free from such religious dogmas will definitely condemn such relation. So he says that "there is a great many ways in which at the present moment the Church, by its insistence upon what it chooses to call morality, inflicts upon all sorts of people undeserved and unnecessary suffering." 22 Taking such cruelsome rituals into account Russell says that Churches have chosen "to label as morality a certain narrow set of rules of conduct which have nothing to do with human happiness." 23 On the contrary, the Churches are ready to say that morality has nothing to do with human happiness, and it is very much shocking to Russell.

So far as the basis of religious dogmas is concerned, Russell says that it is 'Fear' that affects human life to a greater extent. "Fear is the basis of the whole thing--fear of the mysterious, fear of defeat, fear of death. Fear is the parent of cruelty, and therefore it is no wonder if cruelty and religion have gone hand-in-hand." 24 Russell says that if men is to master some forces of nature for the good of mankind with the help of scientific knowledge and if such an attempt goes against the traditional view of Christian religion, against Churches, this attempt

22. Ibid p.25
23. Ibid p.25
should never be treated as immoral and anti-religious. Because "a good world needs knowledge, kindliness and courage; it does not need a regretful hankering after the past, or a fettering of the free intelligence by the words uttered long ago by ignorant men."  

It is better on our part to keep in mind that whatever comment was passed on religion by Russell is basically concerned with Christianity as he could get himself acquainted with all the ins and outs of this faith. He made a very shocking declaration to attack Christian religiosity by saying that "the Christian religion, as organized in its Churches has been and still is the principal enemy of the moral progress in the world". We do not want to pass any comment on such a view of Russell regarding Christianity. But it is noteworthy that no fundamentalist boldly came forward to challenge Russell on this braving comment. In contrary to that, the same Russell also admires the noble virtues of religion for the good of mankind. He is amazed at the views of saints and mystics who combined the belief in certain dogmas and a certain way of feeling about the purpose of human life. He says:

"The man who feels deeply the problems of human destiny, the desire to diminish the sufferings of mankind, and the hope that the future will realize the best possibilities of our species, is now-a-days often said to have a religious outlook, however little he may accept of traditional Christianity. In so far as religion consists in a way of feeling, rather than in a set of beliefs, science cannot touch it."  

Commenting on the negative role of religions in society Russell says that what is true of Christianity is also equally true of Buddhism. He came to know that the Buddhist priesthood--as it exists even today, for example in Tibet, has been obscurantist, tyrannous and cruel in the highest degree though the Buddha

25. Ibid p.26
26. Ibid p.25
himself propagated the lessons of amiability and enlightenment. He, thus, wants to emphasize the point that there is vast gap between what a religion should be according to its propounder and what it is actually doing for the 'good' of universal human beings. If religion is to help mankind for its moral and intellectual growth, he does not find any reason why the Church, in the past, opposed Galileo and Darwin and during his own days Freud. This led Russell to think that there is wide disagreement between Christianity and the Church. In the essay *Has Religion Made Useful Contributions to Civilisation*, he mentions that Christ teaches about the donation to the poor, abstinence from fight, needless to go to Church, mercy to the sinners and so forth which are the nice instances of moral behaviours. Russell is doubtful as to whether the Churches are imparting such lessons to the best of their effect. So, he comes to the conclusion that this type of religion, not only intellectually but also morally, is pernicious to mankind.

There are some people in society who do not believe in any organized religion, yet remain away from any kind of immoral behaviour and action. It is evidently true that the terms 'religion' and 'morality' are not dependent upon each other. The sense of any moral virtue cannot brand a person as a member of any definite religion. To substantiate this his view what he writes in the essay 'The Essence and Effect of Religion' is as follows:

"I do not think that religion is beneficial to morality, first, because belief in religion is not completely based on fact, and is, hence erroneous. Second, those who take a religious attitude either refuse to hold any belief other than those of their religion, or else they acquire the bad habits of insincerity and inconsistency by holding beliefs which they know to be false." 29

Lord Russell observes that the demerits of religions are rooted in its conservative opposition to the scientifically and rationally new ideas. The orthodox men of religions always want people to adhere to the old customs, old views and dogmatic beliefs without raising any question about them. As a result, progress in ideas and institutions gets hindered pathetically. Again religious belief in God causes people to think that they are being guided and controlled by the wills of God. It is also believed that God loves and helps so long as people do not irritate Him; otherwise He may bring about disasters for them as the consequences of their wrong doings. Russell thinks that these orthodox and traditional views cannot bring in any good to mankind. As opposed to such views, Russell lays stress on the point that men should study nature to acquire some teachings that are very much beneficial to human beings. He states:

"I cannot claim that the universe is harmful to Man; nor can I say that the universe loves Man since I do not have evidence either way. I think that Nature is neutral to human beings and what it is better to believe that it may, to a certain degree, be controlled. We should study Nature rather than assume without evidence that the world is created by God. By doing so, our minds will become calm, and at last we will be able to perform our proper duty to Mankind." 30

Russell's views as to how human problems related to said life can be solved are different from those of the religious advocates. He says that people cannot fully depend upon the religious hints at the solution of the social problems. If the social dealings are not based on mutual faithfulness and intellectual integrity, among the members of the society, no religious teaching can bring solution to such problems. Here, he stresses the virtue of truthfulness and intellectual integrity for solution of the vexed questions of society. This type of virtue alone can benefit the world than Christianity or any other system of organized beliefs.

30. Ibid p. 76.
A.J. Ayer in his book 'Russell' has passed a comment that Russell's concern for human welfare was strengthened by the belief that if people cannot be made happy in this earthly life, there is no opportunity for them to be happy in any other. This suggests that Russell has no belief in After-life which is very emphatically professed in religion. Russell's points is that if people cling to the notion of After-life, there is the best possibility that people may neglect their present life and, instead, may aspire for 'the good' only in the after-life. Thus the concept of after-life may make people quite negligent towards their duties for the human race, and thus they may be morally degraded.

From the above discussion, it is clear that Russell's moral philosophy was neither influenced nor affected by the dogmatic and superstitious views of any religion. The commonplace concept of God's omnipotence could not even thwart him in the way of his beliefs. Russell appears to be profoundly confirmed that religion will not be beneficial to the society unless and until it teaches the lessons of practical morality by virtue of which universal happiness may be achieved. On the contrary, he is much pained to learn that religion prevents our children from having a rational education; religion prevents us from removing the fundamental causes of war; religion prevents us from teaching the ethic of scientific co-operation in place of the old fierce doctrines of sin and punishment. In order to make the world free from the influences of such suppressing motive of religion, Russell in his essay "Has Religion Contributed to Civilization", has made the following suggestion:

"It is possible that mankind is on the threshold of a golden age, but if so, it will be necessary first to slay the dragon that guards the door, and this dragon is religion." 31

These are, no doubt, Russell's extreme views on religion that he has dealt with in different essays, and which he deems to be detrimental to the moral

progress of man. Here, it is to be noted that Russell seems to pay less attention to the positive aspects of religion which are also to be enumerated impartially. One cannot deny some of the fundamental moral teachings as taught by religion such as abstinence from the act of stealing, telling a lie, envying others, looking lustfully at woman, deceiving others, murdering, torturing and many of the sort deserve to be judged as much constructive of human character. These fundamental moral lessons are usually learnt at the initial stage of life through religious influences. Russell himself was deeply influenced by the positive aspect of religion to shape his own morality under the impact of the protestant teaching "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil". 32 Edgar Sheffield Brighton has also praised (Essay. Russell's Philosophy of Religion) in high terms Russell's free acceptance of Christian doctrine of humanity, love for one's neighbour and the right of the meek. He also comments that inquiring about Russell's religion is enquiry about his attitude towards values. For Russell, human behaviours, to be essentially moral, must have certain values which are also the concerns of religions. If the traditional values prove to be of no use for the present world, they should not be pursued dogmatically. Russell, as we have seen, does not oppose the sense of value that religion may arouse in the minds of people, but, at the same time, he denounces the attitude to cling to the traditional values that are no longer effective for the general good of mankind. Why morality needs the proper knowledge of the practical world, not the dogmas and superstitions, is very beautifully reflected in the following words:

"The life of Man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, towards a goal that few can hope to reach, and where none may tarry long. One by one, as they march, our comrades vanish from our sight, seized by the silent orders of omnipotent Death. Very brief is the time in which we can help them,

in which their happiness or misery is decided. Be it ours to shed sunshine on their path, to lighten their sorrows by the balm of sympathy, to give them the pure joy of a never-tiring affection to strengthen failing courage, to instil faith in hours of despair. Let us not weigh in grudging scales their merits and demerits, but let us think only of their need-- of the sorrows, the difficulties, perhaps the blindness, that make the misery of their lives; let us remember that they are fellow-sufferers in the same darkness, actors in the same tragedy with ourselves."  

Russell's love for mankind becomes very clear from the above passage which he writes in the essay: *A Free Man's Worship*. He feels deeply that only the humanitarian zeal can do something good for human beings, not the mere teachings of the organized religions. So he thinks that the so-called organized religions cannot give the proper shape of that morality which he desires for the universal peace and progress of men. According to him the true essence of morality is "to create hope in the minds of people for a better living."  

Russell wants to call himself an agnostic as he thinks that it is impossible to know the truth about the existence of God and After-life, which are the basic concerns of Christianity, and also of other religions as well excepting Buddhism. Nevertheless he is ready to be called a Christian if the term 'Christian' means "a man who loves his neighbour, who has wide sympathy with suffering and who already desires a world freed from the cruelties and abominations which at present disfigure it."  

---

33. *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*, p. 72.
35. *Russell on Religion*, op.cit., p.44.
better. A.C. Grayling aptly observes:

"But although Russell was hostile to religion, he was nevertheless a religious man. This is only a seeming paradox. It is possible to have a religious attitude to life without belief in supernatural beings and occurrences. Such an attitude is one in which appreciation of art, love and knowledge brings nourishment to the human spirit, and carries with it a sense of awe before the world and those one loves, and a concomitant sense of the immensity of which one is part." 36

Morality and Sin:

In the day-to-day affairs of human life, the term 'sin' is very widely used to imply the motives behind certain acts which are harmful to the general good and also contrary to the religious codes. As man is a rational animal, he has got the power of judging what is good or bad, what is right or wrong according to his power of conscience. It is natural that man commits error, and that error is judged by conscience. Without the sense of morality, conscience is barren. That is why it is said, sin is an act which does not conform to any moral code based on religion. Thus, 'sin is a wrong overt action, it is an evil deed, a wilful violation or neglect of moral duties. It is either commission of wrong action or omission of right actions." 37 Without the sense of morality, the sense of sin becomes insignificant. Russell refers to the views of Dr Tennant on sin which are elaborated in his work "The Concept of Sin." According to Dr Tennant, "sin consists in acts of will that are in conscious opposition to a known moral law, the moral law being known by Revelation as God's will." 38 It follows that a man destitute of religion cannot sin.

38. Human Society in Ethics and Politics. op.cit., p. 94.
Russell believes that the Christian ethics is not wholly based on scientific truth, it is rather based on dogmas and superstitions. From this point of view Russell says that conception of sin in the light of Christian ethics may harm the human race to a greater extend. In such cases any good deed which does not conform to false beliefs of Christianity may be termed as sin. According to Russell sin is such an act which is really harmful to the progress of mankind, and which is also independent of any kind of false faith. It is, of course, true that the sense of sin plays a very important part "in religion, more specially the Christian religion".

One important point that Russell wants to point out is that sin has been a dominant psychological factor, in the past and still at present, of great emphasis in the mental world of a large proportion of men. At the time of making such observation, he is also well conscious of the fact that the concept of sin is not as transparent as water. People of different faiths accept it in their respective views. He says, "although the sense of sin is easy to recognize and define, the concept of sin is obscure, especially if we attempt to interpret it in a non-theological term".

The psycho-analysts, however, trace the origin of men's sense of sin such as the seven deadly sins (pride, envy, anger, sloth, covetousness, gluttony and lust), in men's pursuit of religious faith which they learn in the very early years of childhood. Though, in later life, many of them forget the parental disapproval related to the sense of sin, a feeling of something painful associated with certain categories of acts that are ultimately deemed to be harmful both to themselves and to other members of the society debar them from doing such acts with the conviction that these are sinful. Those who believe that sin consists in disobedience to God the Father, of course, always wants to be guided by the religious morals taking them for universally acceptable. The sense of sin, thus, is caused by the fear of being damned by God for violation in general sense.

39. Why I am not a Christian, op.cit., p. 29
40. Human Society in Ethics and Politics, op.cit., p. 91.
Lord Russell humbly admits that his concept of sin is not very distinct and stubborn unlike the Christian concepts. He, in a very straightforward way, states "Nor am I sure whether in my own view, there is a valid concept deserving to be called Sin" 41 He is, of course, an ardent supporter that the shameful, cruel and treacherous acts are to be avoided by every rational being. His concern is that man must be debarred from doing any evil act not as disobedience to God but as 'disobedience to the Conscience'. So, sin suggests, according to Russell, to be avoided not only in the eyes of religion but also in Conscience. He also views that the conception of sin is closely connected with belief in free will. If any action is determined by causes over which men have no control, retributive punishment, in such a case, bears no justification.

It is worth mentioning that the modern psychologists are not very much willing to accept the traditional concept of sin based on puritanic view of life as nourished by the so-called theological organizations and beliefs. It is conscience that reveals whether the act done is sinful or not. Even those people who are at present greatly liberal in case of religious faiths still continue to accept the orthodox view of sin to some extent. Many of the criminals tend to forget their crimes when there is little chance of detection, but when they are going to be searched out then only they come to realize that they had done some amount of sin for which they are thus being chased. Moreover, the fear of being outcast from the community may also graven the sense of sin when one goes to act against anything that the community morally approves. But Russell wants to assert that sin is "something which has its roots in the unconscious, and does not appear in consciousness as fear of other people's disapproval." 42 When someone knows in his consciousness that something is sinful for no reason visible to introspection, he feels uncomfortable by doing such acts. It so happens when the man attaches much importance to the sense of morality based on theological beliefs.

41 Human Society in Ethics and Politics, op.cit., p. 94
Reprinted in 1999.
The sense of sin, according to Russell, is instilled in the mind of a child by the teaching of religious morality imparted by the mother or the nurse. The child is taught that the breach of moral code is Sin which deserves damnation. But such teaching of sin is shorn of rational foundation. Particularly in the realm of sex, this type of teaching is found to be more active and influencing. Whatever may be the sense of sin, Russell states that, as a matter of fact, the sense of sin cannot make a man good, rather it makes him feel inferior and unhappy. Feeling inferior, he may have a grudge against those who claim to be superior. In such cases, envy occurs in place of admiration. Thus, the sense of sin may isolate the sinners from the main stream and cause severe mental depressions that are likely to suppress all other qualities he possesses. Unless he can rationally judge what he has committed in the name of sin, no punishment, no retributive measure can purify his heart.

Russell wants to say: "A man should make up his mind with emphasis as to what he rationally believes, should never allow contrary irrational beliefs to pass unchallenged or obtain a hold over him, however brief".  He further maintains that traditional morality fostered by the so-called religions must be viewed rationally while considering the true essence of the concept of 'Sin'. To him, without a rationalistic approach to the nature of the wrong doing of the sinner, he cannot be made realize what harm he has done to his self as well as to his society in which he lives. Russell is quite sceptic about the traditional moral teaching on sin, purity, sanctity, damnation etc. given to the children by their elders. In contrary to that, he is enthusiastic enough to sort out the really harmful sins committed by many respectable persons of the society though they are not facing any retributive measures. Such his protests may be audible in his following words:

"Ask yourself rationally whether the world is the better for the moral teaching traditionally given to the young. Consider how much of unadulterated superstition goes into the make-up of conventionally virtuous man, and reflect that, while all kinds of imaginary moral dangers

43. Ibid, p. 83.
were guarded against by incredibly foolish prohibitions, the real moral dangers to which an adult is exposed were practically unmentioned, what are the really harmful acts to which the average man is tempted? Sharp practice in business of the sort not punished by law, harshness towards employees, cruelty towards wife and children, mad violence towards competitors, ferocity in political conflicts—these are the really harmful sins that are common among respectable and respected citizens. By means of these sins a man spends misery in his immediate circle and does his bit towards destroying civilization. 44.

It is universally accepted that all the members of a society should follow a better way of life, better in the sense that this type of life should be useful to the true good of the society where evil does not play any pernicious role. Russell likes to say that the sense of sin cannot be the best method to adopt a better way of living, because if something abject, something lacking in self-respect always dominates the life. Even a rational man cannot help the society when he is to act undesirably under certain circumstances. Here the sense of sin cannot keep a person away from doing any evil deed if the man does not have sense of self respect. So, it is Russell's emphasis that a wrong doer is to be made realize what harmful acts he has done and thereby brought away from any harmful act in subsequent days instead of condemning him to be a damned sinner as per the intensity of wrong doing. Russell is vehemently opposed to the prevalent Christian views that the sinners should be punished to purify them. He condemns such views in his essay Has Religion Made Useful Contributions to Civilization in the following words:

"They hold this so good that they are even willing that punishment should extend to the wives and children of sinners. There are in the world at the present moment many thousand of children suffering from

44. Ibid. p.80.
congenital syphilis who would never have been born, but for the desire of Christians to see sinners punished. I cannot understand how doctrines leading to this fiendish cruelty can be considered to have any good effect upon morals." 45.

By rationalising the sense of sin Russell is not going to suggest that there is no difference between 'right' and 'wrong' actions. In society, right actions are 'always needed, while wrong actions are useful to blame. Generally a wrong action is condemned as sinful and deserves punishment. But Russell prefers "the deterrent or the reformatory effect" 46 instead of punishment. In the essay Ideas That Have Harmed Mankind Lord Russell has categorically stated that conception of sin and vindictive punishment seems to be at the root of vigorous attitude towards organized religions and politics. He does not believe that the feeling of sin is innate; it is the product of early infancy when it is taught. The attitude to punish the sinners has increased the enormity of cruelty in the world.

Referring to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity which are more or less ethically perverted, Russell states that God, who is good and omnipotent, foresaw all the pain and misery that the world would contain at the time when He created it. Therefore, God Himself is responsible for all sins and sufferings. It is useless to argue that the pain in the world is due to sin; similarly it is not sin that causes rivers to overflow their banks or volcanoes to erupt. If the omniscient God knew in advance the sins of which man would be guilty, He was clearly responsible for all the consequences of those sins when He decided to create man. "The usual Christian argument is that the suffering in the world is a purification for sin, and is therefore a good thing. This argument is, of course, only a rationalisation of sadism; but in any case it is a very poor argument." 47

45. Why I am not a Christian, op.cit., p. 29.
46. Human Society in Ethics and Politics, p. 98.
47. Why I am not a Christian, op.cit., p. 31
Lord Russell, thus, stresses the point that what is morally harmful to the

general good of mankind should necessarily be condemned and deterred so that
repetition of the same harmful act does not occur. Therefore, sin is to be rationally
judged, not dogmatically and emotionally. Moral evils are definitely there in human
society; but these moral evils must be eradicated from the minds of men through
the teaching of rationality and enlightenment. A soul, purified and enlightened,
may prove to be of great benefit to men like the soul of Valmiki in Indian epic
Such are the views of Russell on sin and moral evils of any kind.

Marriage and Sexual Ethics:

The Commonplace view of marriage is that it is a social institution through
which the conjugal relation of a man and a woman attains the moral and legal
recognition of the society for living together with the sole purpose of creating a
new generation for the continuity of mankind. Every society has its own marriage
codes, and a family in that society is expected to sincerely follow such codes to
gain social status and supports. Though the institution of marriage grants the
husband and the wife permission to lead a life of uninterrupted conjugal relation,
there are many instances of man-woman relations outside marriage to gratify the
biological urge which is not anti-natural. Different societies treat such relation
differently in the light of their respective sexual codes. But, in many cases, such
extramarital relations are being condemned as sinful acts as they are supposed to
violate the moral codes of the society in relation to sex. In order to prevent
men and women from indulging in such immoral relation, the concerning
societies have imposed certain restriction on such unrecognized sexual
relations which are still found in force all most in all countries. Russell in his
work Marriage and Morals has made an elaborate and rationalistic analysis of
the grounds on which such restrictions have been imposed by the people of different
creeds and communities in their respective societies. Here, in this part of the chapter,
our humble intention is to throw light on what Russell says about the Sexual
ethics as upheld by the societies in the light of tradition.
Russell cherishes the view that law, public opinion and the moral judgement of the community are closely associated with the sexual morality of the concerning group. Any form of violating such moral codes may lead to public criticism and also punishment as resolved by the community. But Russell expresses certain amount of doubt as to the justification of such punishments. He says:

"There is no country in the world and there has been no age in the world's history where sexual ethics and sexual institutions have been determined by rational conditions, with the exception of Soviet Russia. I do not mean to imply that the institutions of Soviet Russia are in this respect perfect; I mean only that they are not the outcome of superstition and tradition, as are, at least in part, the institutions of all other countries in all ages. The problem of determining what sexual morality would be best from the point of view of general happiness and well-being is an extremely complicated one, and the answer will vary according to a number of circumstances. 48

Russell is almost true in his observation that determining sexual ethics is a difficult task in so far as the general happiness and well-being as may be expected from such relation is concerned. Different communities will offer different opinions in this regard, according to socio-economic set-up of the communities. It is evident that sex-relation between man and woman bears more significance than any other relation between these two biologically opposite groups as it gives rise to family. As regards family, Russell maintains that the primary motive of sexual ethics in a patriarchal society of western civilization is to secure the degree of female virtue without which the patriarchal family becomes impossible since paternity is uncertain. In recent times, the move for emancipation of woman has dealt a severe blow to the age-old sexual ethics of the patriarchal society. Russell

is also apprehensive of the fact that the role of father is increasingly taken over by the State with the growth of modern civilization; and there is reason to think that a father may before long cease to be very important, at any rate, in the wage-earning class. If this occurs, a complete break-down of traditional morality will come to being, and the mother will also attach less importance to the notion of paternity.

There is no denying the fact that every community has its own law as to how it can enforce the sexual ethics and to protect the ordinary rights of individual in the sphere of sex. Sex ethics is also related to the question of population of a community. All these factors are to be counted while an attempt is made at throwing light on the sexual ethics as conceived by Russell. He says that no sexual ethics can be either justified or condemned on solid grounds until it is examined from all the points of views related to advanced medicine, hygiene and education that have much role in bringing about certain changes in sexual ethics these days. Russell, therefore, suggests two-fold task in criticizing the current ethics:

"On the one hand we have to eliminate the elements of superstition which are often subconscious; on the other hand we have to take account of those entirely new factors which make the wisdom of past ages a folly instead of the wisdom of the present." 49

Any attempt to deal with Russell's views on the sexual morality essentially needs a clear idea about Russell's views on marriage as a social institution. It is, of course, in most communities a religious institutions, but the legal aspect is basically counted. So far as sex is concerned, it is supposed that a male, once married, ceases to be attracted to any other female and the female once married ceases to be attracted to any other male in a traditional concept of marriage. Russell raises the question about the gain or loss from such traditional concept of marriage. In such a wedlock, he observes, the life of the married woman in peasantry

49. Marriage and Morals, op.cit., p.16.
is a very hard one as, in most cases, the woman is treated as a domestic animal. The life of a married woman in such social set-up is nothing but toil and hardship. In Christianity, Russell wants to say: "a married woman had not, of course, the right to leave the husband for another man, but she could leave him for a life of religion." 50 Such was the religious binding on the life of the married woman in spite of her incompatibility with her husband caused by different reasonable factors. Russell prefers a change in the custom of conjugal life if no commonly recognized standard of decent behaviour is found in the family to restore and secure true domestic peace. Otherwise, life turns miserable in such bondage. He also feels that the polygamous attitude both of the man and the woman which causes unhappiness in the conjugal life may be kept under suppression but cannot be prevented from existing. He does not favour woman's emancipation to be infidel towards her husband. It is also true that some husbands are there who are infidel to their wives. He stresses the point that the game of infidelity must be banished from the conjugal life if true happiness of family life is heartily desired. Love cannot be gained either from the husband or from the wife compulsorily, it must be gained through mutual fidelity, and then only a truly emotional and cordial relation between the husband and the wife may be possible.

There is no doubt that a difficult and unhappy conjugal life fails utterly to do anything constructive for the family itself. In such cases Russell suggests that civilized men and women, for the healthy family atmosphere, should try to fulfil certain conditions such as "there must be a feeling of complete equality on both sides, there must be no interference with mutual freedom; there must be the most complete physical and mental infancy; and there must be a certain similarity in regard to standards of values". 51 He also suggests that husband and wife should not regard themselves as each other's policeman. With such mutual understanding, marriage may turn out to be a happy relation, not by husband's domination over and infidelity to his wife, nor by wife's traditional submission to her husband.

50. Ibid p. 108.

51. Ibid, p. 115.
in the name of marriage morality, nor by challenging behaviour for becoming equally free to be infidel to the husband.

Let us now proceed to Russell's views on prostitution in relation to sexual ethics. Prostitution is, today, a world wide institution in the face of the rapid growth of the outward human civilization. To what purpose prostitution exists in society is not our main concern here, though of course, one thing is very clear that a prostitute who is universally despised is thought to be an outcast and not allowed to mix up with the common people except in business. This exposes the hollowness and nakedness of the so-called moralistic profession which was originally set up as a part of Christian Churches and the temple cult of ancient Hinduism as well. It is, at present, not wholly possible to abolish such sex-tradition on many socio-economic grounds. Russell, in this regard, comments that, if possible, these types of institutions are to be reduced to a minimum on three grave objections such as "first, the danger to the health of the community; second, the psychological damage to women; and third, the psychological damage to men."\(^{52}\) Moreover, it is inevitable that venereal diseases spread from one person to another through such institution. Traditional morality, of course, believes that venereal disease is a kind of punishment to the sinners; Russell does not believe it to be so. He thinks: "Prostitution, so long it exists will afford a means of spreading disease more dangerous than any other"\(^{53}\) On the other hand, Russell has deep sympathy for the poor and condemned life of a prostitute which is a demoralizing one. Even the clients of a prostitute do not want to rank her with a good woman. If prostitution cannot be abolished, society must show due honour to the prostitutes because, in the words of Russell, "the more strict the standard of morality in any country, the more degradation will attach to the life of a prostitute."\(^{54}\) He also points out that sexual relation with a prostitute is not a true relation, but a temporary

\(^{52}\) Ibid. p. 119.

\(^{53}\) Ibid, p. 123.

\(^{54}\) Ibid. p.120.
relief from the sexual urge. Unless it becomes a relation of mutual delight and spontaneous impulse from both the parties, what is valuable in sex relation is never found. In such relation only the animal part of life dominates, not the human part.

Another important point that Russell wants to refer to is that the intrusion of the economic motive into sex is always in a greater or lesser degree disastrous. If marriage is supposed to be an easy mode of livelihood for women and nothing else, then the cordial and true emotional relation cannot be expected to persist there. Both the man and the woman in a happy conjugal relation are expected to show mutual love, respect and cordiality in almost the same amount for each other. In prostitution, this is not realized, and it is not possible to exist there. That is why, Russell says, this institution should not be much encouraged though in certain cases it is felt necessary. In support of such view he says:

"Morality in sexual relation, when it is free from superstition, consists essentially of respect for the other person, and unwillingness to use that person solely as a means of personal gratification without regard to his or her desires. It is because, prostitution sins against this principle that it would remain undesirable even if prostitutes were respected and the risk of venereal disease were eliminated." 55

So far as women's liberation from the traditional morality in relation to sex is concerned, Russell says that men will be able to find satisfaction for the impulses in such liberty without haunting the brothel houses when motive is purely pecuniary. Russell argues that 'this may be considered to be an advantageous position of sexual liberation of women with respect to the efforts to be made for minimising the growth of prostitution. If such an atmosphere prevails men and women may enter upon sexual relation with their respective counterparts of their own status, taste and class where a considerable degree of passionate love on both sides may be possible. The moralist, of course, will regret it, not because it will be

55. Ibid, p. 122
sinful or vile, but because nothing will remain to conceal in sexual matters. It is left to the people both religious and non-religious how they accept Russell's views on new freedom in sexual matters as stated below:

"The new freedom between young people is, to my mind, wholly a matter for rejoicing, and is producing a generation of men without brutality and women without finicky fastidiousness. Those who oppose the new freedom should face frankly the fact that they are in effect advocating the continuance of prostitution as the sole safety-valve against the pressure of an impossibly rigid code."  

Traditional morality emphasizes that both the husband and the wife should remain faithful to each other till their death, and thus they can attain the sanctity of married life. Here Russell argues that monogamy, in the purely true sense of the term, is seen in a narrow region where the inhabitant hardly ever has occasion to leave home and seldom sees any woman except his wife. In such situation the chances of becoming unfaithful to one's husband or wife is almost nil. But in a society where one is to travel without one's wife or husband or live in a crowded urban community the chances of becoming unfaithful to the respective counterpart, not in all cases, of course, are of high degree. Second, the concept of sin that may result from violating sex morality helps monogamy to a great extent. The third support of it is the public criticism that they may face for any act of infidelity.

But the world situation has undergone a tremendous change in relation to social intercourse of people which has caused easy mixing of man and woman in their day-to-day affairs: For such a situation any workable sexual ethics is very difficult to formulate. Moreover, impulse to jealousy and the impulse to polygamy make a workable sexual ethic difficult to exist. Jealousy is the result of supposed unfaithfulness between husband and wife, and it is in no way good for society. Russell stresses that if sexual freedom harms the general interest of the society

56. Ibid. p. 124.
towards 'good', it should never be encouraged. As regards the woman he states:

"If women are to have sexual freedom, father must fade out, and wife must no longer expect to be supported by their husbands. This may come about in time, but it will be a profound social change, and its effects, for good or ill, are incalculable." 57

In the case of extra-marital relation, Russell's comment is quite rationalistic, not emotional at all. He argues that economic causes may compel men, as a rule, to postpone marriage, but this does not mean that men and women should remain chaste in the traditional sense for whole life. A temporary relation between the boys and the girls, not with the professionals, but with the counterparts of their own class may be allowed on the grounds that they must not want to have children in such extra-marital relation.

Another important aspect of sexual ethics as viewed by Russell is that everything possible should be done to free sexual relation from the economic taint. The case is different in prostitution. But in family life, if a wife wants to secure her economic position by the power of her physical and sexual charms, not by hearty love and affectionate devotion, the relation between the husband and the wife is very much liable to break down as the aforesaid charms start withering away. His voice of protest against the mercenary attitude in sex relation well sounds in his following words:

"Sex, even when blessed by the church ought not to be a profession. It is right that a woman should be paid for house-keeping or cooking or the care of children, but not merely for having sexual relations with a man. Nor should a woman who has once loved and been loved by a man be able to live ever after on alimony when his love and hers have ceased. A woman like a men should work for her living, and an idle wife is no more intrinsically worthy of respect than a gigolo." 58


58. Ibid pp. 117-118.
Only the mutual love may keep the relation between husband and wife invulnerable. One should remember that love does not grow and flourish "while it is hedged about with taboos and superstitious terrors, with words of reprobation and silences of horror". So, sexual ethics, according to Russell, must aim at creating such a congenial atmosphere of pure love that may stir the spirit of men and women in doing something good both in the family and in the society as well.

Russell agrees with the Church in thinking that it is a kind of evil if someone always gets obsessed by sexual thoughts. Nor does he suggest that one should remain ascetic in the matter of sex. It should be regarded by the moralists as food is regarded by a hermit. It is a natural human need like food and drink. Yet "men can survive without it whereas they cannot survive without food and drink". A comprehensive sexual ethic cannot regard sex merely as a natural hunger and a possible source of danger. Russell estimates that sex, besides being a natural hunger, is also closely connected with the greatest goods in human life like those of lyric love, happiness in marriage, and art. So, according to him sex relation should be carried on with some noble purposes, not for satisfaction of mere biological desire. It requires courtship, true love and companionship. Without these, physical hunger may be appeased for the moment; but the mental hunger remains unsatisfied. Mental satisfaction plays a very important role in sexual ethics inside wedlock.

In connection with family life, parents should maintain a sound sexual relation so that they may take adequate care of their children both physical and psychological. If the children are not given a true shape of mind and physique, parents cannot be happy at all in their life. Thus, sex ethics is also deeply concerned with the sound relation of the parents and their role in bringing up the children, and ultimately in their contributions to the society as good human beings.

60. Ibid p. 227.
Rational education in matters of sex is largely advocated by Russell to be very important in guiding children's minds in the line of acquiring refined knowledge about sexual matters, whether it is marital or extra-marital relation. Russell's view is that it would be well if men and women could remember "in sexual relation, in marriage and in divorce to practise the ordinary virtues of tolerance, kindness, truthfulness and justice. Those who, by conventional standards, are sexually virtuous, too often consider themselves thereby absolved from behaving like decent human beings. Most moralists have been so obsessed by sex that they have laid much too little emphasis on other more socially useful kinds of ethically commendable conduct" 

Russell also deals with the position of women in a patriarchal society in connection with his reflections on sexual ethics. It is universally admitted that the role of a woman in other than being the sexual partner of the husband is undeniably very indispensable in maintaining the family and bringing up the children. The very frequently sounded term "Liberation of Women" suggests that women have not been given the proper honour and place they deserve both in family and in society. So, Russell rightly observes that in Christian Ethics more emphasis was laid only upon sexual virtue of women. This obviously implies that women, in Christianity, were not given equal position with men. He says:

"since the moralists were men, woman appeared as the temptress; if they 'had been women, man would have had this role. Since woman was the temptress, it was desirable to curtail her opportunities for leading men into temptation; consequently respectable women were more hedged about with restrictions, while the women who were not respectable, being regarded as sinful, were treated with the utmost contumely." 

But the relation has changed now. Before the rise of Christianity, Russell states, even in patriarchal society men were not very orthodox to enslave women. The main motive behind the effort to curtail woman's freedom was a means of keeping them away from sin that might arise from any extra marital sexual relation. But that notion of sin is no longer much in use, and as a result, women today are enjoying much freedom in their thinking and behaving.

The conventional moralists also seem, to think that sexual virtue is more essential in a woman than in a man. Though it is to be equally sought in man also, the moralists know that the men may easily sin secretly in spite of the imposition of any restrictions on them. Russell's view regarding this point is somewhat different. So long as men find timely marriage difficult for economic reasons, a large number of women are consequently to remain unmarried for the prime period of their lives. As the unmarried men have scopes for pre-nuptial sexual experience, there should be some relaxation in the traditional standard of feminine virtue. It is an injustice to women who are to remain unmarried for life without having sexual experience if they do not get any chance of being married as caused by the probable outnumbering of men by women. Russell is, of course, not in full support of liberation of women in sexual matters; he rather professes a kind of discipline to be observed both by men and women. He does not want the world be defiled by the sexual abuses. He only offers his argument that if men are allowed to have pre-nuptial sexual experience, it is a heinous injustice if women are wanted to die without such experience under the pressure of the lopsided sexual ethics. For the forward movement of the world, Russell needs a genuinely new morality by which he means that the obligations and duties for the present world must differ from those of the past if justice in sexual morality for men and women is rationally sought. He does not think that the new system should involve unbridled yielding to impulse, but he thinks that there must be some logical restraint on human passions. As we have seen, Russell has said nothing concrete in relation to the liberation of women in sexual matters, but has made some suggestions that both the man and the woman should be very conscientious in indulging in any kind of emotional outburst. He also hopes that man and woman should perform their basic duties to the family and the society as well without creating any scandalous
atmosphere that may appear to be harmful to their children and also to the other members of the society in which they live.

Russell has also passed his comment on divorce which is not to be considered baseless under certain circumstances. Russell supports divorce if the life of one partner becomes incompatible with that of the other. There may be a number of grounds of divorce, but Russell is of the view that "mutual consent should be the most usual ground." 63

Russell further emphasises the point that men and women should try to know and realize the effects of the scientific outlook in weakening the taboo that prevails on sexual morality. People are also expected to distinguish the evils that may arise from any kind of undesired and unprotected sexual acts. He cites the example of venereal disease that result from such indiscriminate relation with suffering man or woman. A man with scientific outlook should come forward to prevent any sexual matters that are supposed to cause injury to the sound relation of men and women that live peacefully in society.

It is to be remembered by all that sex is an natural urge primarily for procreation, not for lusty pleasure though a sense of biological satisfaction is always there. Wherever children are concerned, no parents, as Russell thinks, should behave in this line irrationally in order that the children may remain unaffected by any kind of psychological sabotage. Russell's views on sexual morality may be understood clearly from his own words that are given below:

"In seeking a new ethic of sexual behaviour, therefore, we must not ourselves be dominated by the ancient irrational passions which gave rise to the old ethic, though we should recognise that they may, by accident, have led to some sound maxims, and that since they still exist, though perhaps in a weakened form, they are still among the data of our problem. What we have to do positively is to ask ourselves what moral rules are most likely to promote human happiness, remembering always that, whatever the rules may be, they are not likely to be universally observed. That is to say, we have to consider the effect which the rules in fact have, not that which they would have if they were completely effective." 64

63. Why I am not a Christian, op.cit., p.117.
64. Ibid, p. 120.