Chapter: iii

INTUITIONISM AND MORAL PRESCRIPTION

In moral philosophy the criterion of intuition has been held to provide the truth of moral activity. It is said that people in day to day life come to know about the rightness or wrongness of action by their inward intuition. There are two types of intuitionism. I) Dogmatic, II) Philosophical intuitionism.

DOGMATIC INTUITIONISM

According to dogmatic intuitionism, the rightness and wrongness of action depends upon dogmatic and common sense intuition. It is called dogmatic because it does not refer itself to higher faculty of reasoning. Since ancient times, dogmatic intuitionism has helped propagation of beliefs that form an integral part of religions and their practices. For instance, cruelty to animals was attempted to be justified on religious grounds. That is why it is subject to criticism because in dogmatic intuitionism there is unanimity regarding the knowledge of rightness. It may be remarked that intuitive knowledge may just be a feeling of sensuous mind that may fluctuate. Therefore, in order to arrive at legitimate standard of moral judgement, intellect and reason ought to be developed by an individual mind.

PHILOSOPHICAL INTUITIONISM

The source and root of conscience is believed to be intuition or sense experience or vital sensibility. It is natural that goodness is known immediately by the individual, however the mode of cognition by which goodness is known is either sense experience or reason. In sense experience the source are several and therefore it is confusing whereas in reason and
reflection the so-called voice of conscience is analyzed and thus the arguments are examined properly.

In this regard Aristotle propounded the Dianoetic theory according to which moral principles are common, universal, immutable and self evident. To know such principles, human individual requires the help of intelligence. There is a contribution of inference in moral judgement. Although dianoetic theory holds that the moral judgement can be known by intuition, it can however be justified by intellectual reasons and objective cognitive grounds.

It is the function of moral philosophy to find out moral ideal implicit in moral intuitions. The function of intuitionism is to explain the background why certain behaviour is immediate and natural. Secondly, intuitionism should explain why moral intuition pervades through out the group and the race. In case of Hindu, Christian and Buddhist ethics, certain intuitive principles such as benevolence, compassion, love and charity are common. It is the function of moral philosophy to explain how virtue flourishes in the whole social group and race. Thirdly, certain moral principles admit certain exceptions. According to circumstances, moral principles are modified and they are adjusted to certain situation. It should explain as to how such intuitive principles are admitting certain variations.

"By 'intuitionism' we shall mean the theory that, although ethical generalizations are not true by definition, some of them which are true can be seen to be true by any person with the necessary insight. According to this view, a person who can grasp the truth of true ethical generalizations does not accept them as the result of a process of ratiocination; he just sees without argument that they are and must be true, and true of all possible worlds." 1
Intuitionism necessarily leads to the study of relation between ethics and psychology. Though ethics deals with purposive behaviour in the matter of reflection, insight and intuition are necessarily connected with psychology. In the history of psychology at one stage, ethics was regarded as a branch of psychology as both the disciplines were concerned with activity and behaviour. In fact, our conducts have their roots somewhere in instincts like aggression, fear and rest. Moreover, likes and dislikes, pleasure and pain, desire and will; the main aspects of mental life have a great impact on our moral activity. Thus, ethics and psychology are closely connected.

“To intuit something is to apprehend it directly, without recourse to realizing process such as deduction or induction. Intuitionism in ethics purposes that we have a capacity for intuition and that some of the facts or properties that we intuit are irreducibly ethical. Traditionally intuitionism also advances the important thesis that beliefs arising from intuition have direct justification and therefore, do not need to be justified by appeal to other beliefs or facts.”

“Varieties of intuitionism differ over what is intuited for instance, rightness or goodness, whether what is intuited is general and abstract or concrete and particular; the degree of justification offered by intuition; and the nature of the intuitive capacity.”

The distinction between the right and the good, Ross thinks that, ‘Morality is the expression of moral consciousness. A Criterion of moral behaviour is given us by our inner moral agent. Just as there is a soul as the governor of body and life, similarly, there is a moral agent within us which prescribes what is positive and what is negative in our behaviour. Although, the knowledge of good is inward, its expression depends upon our situation in family, society and the status of our working. Good is the ultimate goal of our activity and realization yet the instrument and the means by which we
realize is called the right.’ Ross gives an example of a patient who is suffering from a disease and doctor is trying to make him healthy. How to make him healthy is a question for the doctor. Now here, the treatment, the drug, the medicine is the right for the patient. If the patient follows the prescription of the doctor properly and sincerely then the patient is cured. So the end is called good but the means is called the right. Good is that which is realized.

This is how a moral prescription works in individual and social life. According to Ross, there are many types of duties which are known by intuition. They are called prima facie duty. Duties like duty to parents, society, institution, work, state, international duties and so on, come under the title of right. They are to be performed according to prescription.

As distinguished from metaphysics, the problems with which moral philosophy is particularly related are activity and conduct. The question ‘Why should I do or what I ought to do?’ is the fundamental question regarding the issue of moral obligation. Moral philosophy is supposed to provide reason for specific obligation. As cognitive understanding about the moral problem is not enough to expound the scope of moral philosophy, one should take into account, the necessary equipment of the moral agent to perform moral obligation. Consequently, some moral philosophers like Prichard, Moritz Shlick propound intuitionism as the backing element of moral obligation.

PRIMA-FACIE DUTY

According to Prichard, the mistake of moral philosophy is that it tries to get the answer of its question outside its scope. Actually, it should attempt to get its answer regarding the standard of morality in its own action. This is the import of intuitionism. W. D. Ross is the main proponent of intuitionism,
finds the source of moral obligation in observing 'Prima Facie Duty'. In his book 'The Foundations of Ethics', Ross mentions that it is the moral consciousness which inspires the moral activity which is his distinct approach regarding the moral problems. According to Ross the primary and fundamental duties comprise in fulfilling the present and immediate task. Suppose one is going to attend the wedding ceremony, he comes across a child weeping for being parted from his mother. In this circumstance, to get it to its mother becomes prima facie duty of the individual. Ross thinks that the moral agent is in search of prompt judgement about day-to-day problems and issue of practical significance. This is why it begins with prima facie duty. In this regard, Ross would call it the 'Right'. Whereas, Moore insists upon 'ought'.

Thus, Ross differs from Moore, as Ross holds that it is the 'Right' that is unique and indefinable. For Moore, to think about the aim of life is more important than to approach moral obligation. On the contrary, according to Ross moral consciousness is the source and inspiration of moral activity. In this context, he propounds the doctrine of prima facie duty which consists of several duties:

1. Fidelity to promises (telling the truth, paying debts)
2. Reparation for injuries (compensating for a harm one has done)
3. Gratitude (repaying a kindness)
4. Justice (distributing goods rightly)
5. Beneficence (improving the conditions of others)
6. Self improvement (improving our own condition in respect of virtue or intelligence)
7. Duties of non-malificance (Non injury to other persons)

In Śīkṣāpatri the doctrine of Prima-facie duties is justified multidimensionally for a perfect guideline to the mankind in the present context
and for the time to come, *Lord Swaminarayan* has encompassed practically all the dimensions of the doctrine that propounds morality.

**Fidelity to promises:**

“*My disciples shall pay wages either in money or grain regularly to the labourers hired by them and at the rates agreed with them.*” ⁴

“*Do not commit a breach of trust.*” ⁵

**Gratitude:**

“A preceptor, a king, an elder, a renunciate, a learned one and an ascetic should be duly honoured by polite words on their arrival and by rising up to them.” ⁶

**Justice:**

“One who has engaged servant should take proper care in respect of their food and clothing according to your means of subsistence.” ⁷

“A man must be thoughtfully assigned a work for which he is best fitted otherwise.” ⁸

**Beneficence:**

“All *My disciples should be charitable and merciful to poor according to their means*.⁹

“My disciples of means shall celebrate the religious festivals in temple with great pomp and enthusiasm and shall give alms to the deserving Brāhmins.” ¹⁰

**Non-violence:**

“None of my followers shall ever kill any creature whatsoever; nor shall they intentionally kill even small insects such as lice, bugs, etc.” ¹¹
"None shall kill animal such as goats, etc., even for the purpose of performing sacrifices or for propitiating a deity; for non-violence in itself is avowedly highest dharma." 12

"None shall ever commit homicide for any object, be it for woman, wealth or even a kingdom." 13

"None shall mutilate with a weapon or the like any part of his body or that of others as punishment for misdeeds committed either by oneself or by others in a state of excitement." 14

Here, the question arises as 'how does a moral action becomes duty?'

In reply, Ross thinks that 'it should be made evident to one's moral sense and individual should certify to himself regarding the decorum of such action'. Ross not only gives the list of prima facie duty that is what he calls 'right' but also throws light on the problem how to know and recognize the nature of 'right'.

The term 'right' as generally used in ethics, is derived from the Latin 'rectus', means straight or according to rule. When we say this conduct is right, we mean primarily that it is according to rule. But what Ross understands by the term 'right' is different. He relates it with moral obligation i.e. duty.

ROSS AND MOORE

Through the doctrine of prima facie duty, Ross tries to bring egoism and altruism together. In this regard, there is a similarity between Ross and Moore. Moore deals with the principle of collective goodness. The doctrine of prima facie duty fosters humanistic spirit by cultivating attitude of non-violence towards other persons. True morality flourishes by the observance of prima facie duty, as the observance of prima facie duty diminishes egoistic impulses and enhances altruistic emotions. Where there is
awareness of betterment of fellowman and social organization, there lies the true morality which only can bring radial change in the fabric of society.

As far as altruism is concerned moral philosophers differ in their approach. Some of them believe that it is the empathy and sympathy laying on the mind of individual indicating altruistic tendency for good of other persons. Later on moral philosophers have found the justification of altruistic spirit within individual morality. According to G. E. Moore, answer to the question of utility in the society lies in the dynamic nature of goodness which could engender benevolence in society whereas, Ross finds the solution in the cultivation of inward intuitive power to perceive the ‘rightness’ of the action. He thought that within individual mind there is an underlying capacity to recognize the propriety of action Thus, Ross’ theory of intuitionism advocates that morality is an expression of moral consciousness which is developed within the inward cultivation to know and perceive rightness of action.

MEANS AND ENDS

The reason why Ross thinks that it is the inward intuition which gives the direction to the individual to find out the proper solution is that there are intermediate stages which lead to the final achievement of goodness. The relation between right and good resembles the relationship between means and ends. Good is that which can be called the end of activity whereas the right or intermediate goods or good may be called the end by the help of which the ultimate good can be realized. For instance, it is impossible to get good flowers from a poisonous tree. Likewise, it is impossible to get good end by bad means. Your means should be benevolent.

The Chinese philosopher Lao Tse advocates the similar approach. He says, “To the good, I would be good, to the evil I would also be good in
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order to make them good. With the faithful I would keep faith, with the unfaithful, I would also keep faith so that they may become faithful.” Lord Swaminarayan advises His saints to live the egoless life and show love and compassion towards all; noble as well as wicked. Lord Swaminarayan advises,

“My saints and Brahmačāris should always tolerate the abuses, beating of wicked but in return never abuse and beat them instead always wish for their betterment. But never ever think ill of them.”

Thus, in its highest interpretation means themselves become the ends, the right becomes the good. Only good means can realize good ends. This indicates the doctrine of purity of means.

“For him, means were as important as the end. The nature of the means used for the attachment of the end shall determine the nature and character of the end and application of immoral and impure means may distort the end in view. The end, however noble, may get trained and perverted if the means used for its attainment are morally indefensible.”

Gāndhijī emphasized the purity of means in every walks of life. During India’s struggle for freedom he had once remarked, “I am prepared to sacrifice everything for the liberation of my country, but not truth and non-violence.”

Unless means are not fair, one cannot achieve the destined end. One who earns money by foul means, never becomes happy in real sense. Thus, every stage of life is to be properly looked after and proper means are required to be selected for attaining intended ends.

It is in this context that Ross makes distinction between prima facie duty and real duties. As moral life and moral consciousness admit certain complications, moral agent is suppose to work both at the level of primary
duty as well as that of ultimate realization. Ross thinks that there is certain stations called duty laying at specific stage of moral life. The question of real duty is required to be considered in connection with present duty which is immediate however, the term 'real' as got two meanings. One is total duty that includes later good also whereas another meaning consists of the present duty that requires urgent attention of the moral agent. Moore as well as Rashdall believes in total goodness. However, good and right are distinct in view of what is immediately upright and moral and requires to be done by the individual. On the other hand, moral action cannot be separated from its total purview of ‘performance of duty’ by the moral agent.

Good according to Ross is that which is superior to right and ultimate in the ideal sense. Although Ross believes that inward intuition is the instrument of moral recognition. He also thinks that there is an element of joy and delight in the knowledge of goodness. Alike Moore, Ross thinks that by the practice of goodness harmony can be established in the society and world at large. In this ways Ross considers that the character of goodness is dependent more on collective social life rather than lonely individual. Ross appreciates Kant’s emphasis on universality of moral action. Morality demands the involvement of universal will in moral action.

Although nature of goodness is known by its totality, it is dependent upon what is recognized as right in initiate circumstances. According to Ross the real problem is the recognition of what is right in day to day behaviour as well as in relationship with other persons. As goodness is an ideal which stands at distance from the right the relationship between right and the good is more determinative rather than natural. It is like the mean that determines the end. So without performing what is right it would not be possible to realize goodness. Here, Ross shows the continuity between the right and the good. In this context the problem of duty is really the problem
of finding out what is right. The function of the moral agent is to find out what is urgently required in moral behaviour and what is demanded as a target and goal of activity. As it is said earlier, it is the moral consciousness that is determining moral behaviour. The right and the good are both parts of such moral consciousness.

Thus, Ross successfully analyzes the concept of right. He says that right is simple an unanalysable, it is concrete in its perception of moral situation. In this way the nature of rightness is absolute whereas that of goodness is relative. Utilitarianism which points out the merit of consequences does not evaluate the standard of intuition adequately. When Ross points out that real problem is moral pursuit is that of recognizing what is right in moral activity and not that of goodness.

According to Ross, observance of prima facie duties is more important, means right is more important than good. Goodness can either works as an end or as means. In so far as it works as an end it is required to be determined by means or other intermediary activities. On the other hand when goodness works as means, it works as self-evident rightful acts. In this way, the end itself becomes a means to a higher end, which is supposed to be self-evident. Thus, the notion of self-evidence and duty as self-righteous are the key notions of Ross. The ethics of Ross ends into intuitive realization of moral duty and obligation. It is the moral perception of the agent that justifies the duty and obligation as the right and the good in their intimate relationship.

The codes of Śikṣāpatrī express the real essence of morality therefore, have a power to transform the social system from its degenerated state to an ideal state. It maintains human dignity, fulfils the needs of fellow human being and teaches how to respect others. It also teaches that one should live
and shape his behaviour in such a way that he never inflicts any harm to others directly or indirectly.

*Lord Swaminarayan* directed to form a good society and spread benevolence everywhere. By keeping this aim in view, He encouraged non-violence in thought, speech and action through *Śikṣāpatrī*. By accusing others, by stealing somebody’s property, by killing someone, one can never practice the true morality.

**ŚIKṢĀPATRĪ AND INTUITIONISM**

As far as intuitionism and *Śikṣāpatrī* are concerned, *Śikṣāpatrī* on one hand advises not to follow the mind and to put check on its wantonness and on the other hand it also advises to follow moral sense within. It means one has to look inward and to develop the power of insight for the accurate and genuine moral judgement. No doubt, in some cases, decisions taken may be wrong. There are all possibilities of being misguided.

Intuitionism of *Śikṣāpatrī* is not independent of *dharma*. According to *Śikṣāpatrī* a person whose moral sense is backed by religious strength rarely fails to discriminate between worthy and worthless, good and evil, right and wrong. As it is mentioned earlier that morality without religion is tree without root. So also, either ethics of *Śikṣāpatrī* never deviate from the religious aspect. As religion, in its essence, means relying upon the God or Supreme truth for the better life and perfection. A person who is thoroughly religious, rarely fails in taking moral judgement. Ultimately, God is the one, who guides his moral activity through His conscience.

Intuitionism does not necessarily deny, that desirable consequences follow from right actions and that evil consequences follow from wrong actions. Nor does it necessarily denying that there is any connection between virtue and happiness. It emphatically denies that the consequences constitute
rightness or wrongness and that happiness constitutes virtue. Happiness is again related with one's mind.

Rightness and wrongness are inherent qualities of actions. It is the moral faculty which immediately apprehends rightness or wrongness of particular actions irrespective of any ends and their consequences. The moral quality is unique, original, underived and apprehended intuitively by conscience. So it is obvious that one's moral faculty is directly related with one's conscience.

Intuitionism regards moral qualities as objective characters of external actions which are in the world. It does not regard rightness or wrongness as person subjective or mental reactions. Even if some moral judgements are found to be common to all, the moral rules which they enjoin are found to be incapable of exact definition because nearly all moral rules have some exceptions. For instance, "Thou shall not kill" except in self-defense, lawful war and likewise.

The moral faculty is not in the nature of an internal sense but it is rational in nature. Moral judgement consists in the application of the moral principles to particular actions. Thus, it is not intuitive but inferential in nature. Right pre-supposes correct moral judgements. And this requires adequate knowledge or moral principles. Cultivation of intelligence, therefore, is an essential factor in our moral life.

Adequate moral principle cannot be acquired accidentally. One has to approach appropriate scriptures or a person of profound wisdom. Śikṣāpatrī is one such scripture gifted to the mankind by Lord Swaminarayan. Moral principles are effectively explained in it. If one takes refuge in Śikṣāpatrī, he could easily acquire the conceptual proficiency in understanding the moral and ethical principles.
Morality depends upon the fitness or unfitness of the relations in which we stand to each other and the rest of the universe. Thus, it is primarily related with one’s inner self. If a person’s body, mind and soul are perfectly synchronized there would be no turmoil within himself. He would be in a position to take perfect moral judgements. Such an internal harmony can only be achieved if one understands and tries to live the principles of pure spirituality. Śikṣāpatrī is a scripture which at every step of life from every angle teaches nothing but spirituality.

“Identifying oneself with Brahma, distinct from the three bodies, one should always offer devotion to the Lord.”

Certain forms are necessarily right or wrong in themselves. Even divine will cannot convert right into wrong and wrong into right. To be virtuous one should have an insight into a true relation of persons. Hence, the cultivation of true knowledge is of great importance in moral life. True knowledge implies the knowledge of divinity. Such knowledge can only be acquired from the scriptures derived directly from the divine. The mankind is, therefore, fortunate enough because Śikṣāpatrī is gifted by Lord Swaminarayan, a divinity incarnated in a human form.

“Non-attachment to all objects of the sense except to the Lord is Vairāgya. Comprehensive knowledge of Jīva, Māyā and Īśwara is jñān.”

“Jīva which is very subtle resides in the heart, it is ātman and by virtue of its sentiency or sense of feeling it pervades the entire body. It is unpierceable, indivisible and eternal.”

In persons of healthy moral nature, the purity of moral sentiments are preserved which is commonly known as “voice of conscience”. It cheers us when we follow the path of duty and tortures us when we go astray. So we should cultivate healthy moral sentiments and enlighten them by rational
reflection because erroneous moral judgements make moral sentiments misleading.

Moral sentiments influence moral judgement. Moral sentiments are changed by habit. Thus, immoral actions blunt the moral sentiments and stifle the voice of conscience. So it becomes absolutely necessary for a person to follow the path of moral conduct. To follow the path of moral conduct, one has to practice it as a part of his daily routine. This very principle is advocated in \textit{Śikṣāpatrī}.

"One should constantly keep the company of a true saint."\textsuperscript{21}

History of mankind has witnessed ups and downs, the moment of triumph and defeat, war and peace, morality and immorality and likewise. It is rightly said that history is written on pages but created in human mind. That means the decisions taken at the demanding moments and the power of decision lies absolutely on one's ability to discriminate right from wrong, good from bad.

Thus, it can be concluded that the destiny of mankind depends on the rightness or wrongness of human judgement. Human judgement in turn largely depends on one's thinking pattern. If it is positive, society is uplifted and if it is negative, nations are destroyed. Shikshapatri invariably tunes one's thinking towards positivity and spirituality.

Hence, we can conclude that \textit{Śikṣāpatrī} though miniscule in size has the potential to positively maneuver the mankind to the sublime height of bliss, joy and happiness forever through correct moral judgement and highly developed conscience.
Notes & References:

4. Śīksāpatrī, 152
5. Śīksāpatrī, 37
6. Śīksāpatrī, 69
7. Śīksāpatrī, 67
8. Śīksāpatrī, 66
9. Śīksāpatrī, 83
10. Śīksāpatrī, 156
11. Śīksāpatrī, 11
12. Śīksāpatrī, 12
13. Śīksāpatrī, 13
14. Śīksāpatrī, 16
15. Śīksāpatrī, 201
18. Śīksāpatrī, 116
19. Śīksāpatrī, 104
20. Śīksāpatrī, 105
21. Śīksāpatrī, 36