In the earlier section, it is maintained, that Ethics could be treated as a theory of virtues, making the concept of 'virtue' central to Ethics. In order to justify this proposition, it is necessary to understand, at the outset, some fundamental problems about the nature of virtue itself, and many other questions such as: the meaning of virtue, virtue and its expression, distinction between 'Virtue' and virtues, determinants of a virtuous person, worth of virtues, origin of virtues, and the definition of 'virtue'. These cardinal problems of the concept of 'virtue' have been discussed in this chapter.

(i) Meaning of 'Virtue'

The word 'virtue' is so commonly used in ordinary language that its meaning is rarely doubted. We often speak of a virtuous man or an action as contrasted with a wicked man or an evil action. Hence, 'virtue' appears to refer to righteousness or goodness of man or rightness of an action; and 'vice' refers to the badness or unrighteousness of man or to wrongness of an action. In Ethics, too, we find 'virtue' used in two senses:

(a) Virtue as quality of character;
(b) Virtue as habit of action corresponding to the quality of character, e.g. we may refer to the 'honesty' of a man as his virtue, or to the honesty of his dealings equally as 'virtue'.

Besides these, the word 'virtue' can be used in many senses, out of which we are concerned only with its ethical usage, e.g.

(1) 'Virtue' as General Moral Excellence: - Virtue as a general moral excellence refers to goodness or righteousness, an abstract quality of a person.

(2) Virtue as particular Excellences: - Ethics is primarily concerned with particular excellences which make a good character. Virtues in this sense, are the good traits of character, and 'vices' bad traits of character. The excellences which constitute a good character may be moral, intellectual, natural, theological, spiritual and so on. The first is a 'general' usage, while second is a 'particular' usage, and that is how the distinction between 'virtue' and 'virtues' is worth considering.

(3) Thirdly, 'virtue' can be used to indicate good or admirable quality of a person or some aspect of his personality, e.g., we often say that 'Socrates had the virtue of knowing his weakness'.

(4) Fourthly, 'virtue' can be used as a worthwhile attribute or property as of a thing or of a substance; e.g.
we sometimes say 'this finish has the virtue of durability as well as beauty'.

(5) Fifthly, 'virtue' may be used for inherent power to produce effects; e.g., 'the medicine has lost its virtue' meaning thereby that the medicine has lost its capacity to cure a patient, i.e. it is no more useful.

(6) Sixthly, 'virtue' may be used in the sense of by or in virtue of, meaning thereby 'by reason of', 'because of' etc., e.g., 'one should act by virtue of one's legitimate authority'.

(7) Lastly, 'virtue' may mean to do the best use of, to avail oneself of, as when we make a virtue of necessity; i.e. to do what one is compelled to do without complaint e.g., 'We made a virtue of necessity and worked indoors until the rain stopped'.

Etymologically, virtue derives from the Latin Virtus which means power. Applied to many things, virtue is the natural power or function of a thing. On the contrary, vice is a flaw, a lack of due function.

But 'virtue' may be more than function or power to work, because it is the power to work well. "Every virtue both brings into the good condition the thing of which it is the excellence and makes the work of that thing to be well done e.g., the excellence of the eye makes both the eye and its work well. ... Therefore, the virtue of man
will be a state of character which makes a man good and makes him do his work well."

Secondly, if one thinks of 'virtue' as merely a function of man in much the same way as cutting well is the function of a knife, one cannot account for praise and blame in moral discourse. We do not blame the knife for being a bad knife, but we do blame a person for being a bad person. "Therefore, human virtue is a habit of perfecting man as man and inclining him to do well the proper qualities of man."

In all the above cases, the term virtue is used in different senses but mainly under two heads - moral and non-moral. Like 'ought', 'duty'; 'good', or 'wrong', 'virtue' can be used in contexts which have nothing to do with morality. The fourth case reveals the moral use of 'virtue'. The first and the second reveal the general and the particular use respectively i.e. the use of 'virtue' in abstract and concrete respectively. All other uses reveal the non-moral use of 'virtue' in ordinary language.

Ethics deals with 'virtue' in its moral aspect. If we take a survey of moral philosophy, we cannot fail to note that 'virtue' was always used in its moral signification. The other usages are not denied, simply they are less significant from the point of view of Ethics. The various virtues of man's life were described as designation for all commendable qualities of moral character; and vices, its opposites, were used to express all condemnable qualities
of an immortal character. The various virtues are the features that make up good character. In Hume, we find the most explicit assertion of the view that "it is character that we approve when we approve morally"; again, "Actions are by their very nature temporary and perishing, and where they proceed not from some cause in the characters, they infix not themselves upon him, and can neither redound to his honour, if good, nor infamy, if evil."³

The Greeks used 'virtue' to mean excellence, and 'virtues' (in the plural) to mean the various particular excellences of character. The non-moral usage is essentially pragmatic and having an extrinsic value, while the moral use is primarily intrinsic. Both these usages are valuable. The only difference is that the moral sense seems to have more or less intrinsic value compared to physical objects having a mere instrumental value. Virtues are self-evident, and hence the truth in the proverb 'Virtue for virtue's sake'.

Therefore, 'virtue' is to be studied in its moral aspect, and 'vice' in its immoral aspect. Virtues and vices both refer to man's qualities in terms of good or bad. Ask a layman what he means by 'vices', and he will probably mention sexual promiscuity, gambling, inebriation and practices supposed to be associated with these. A few will think to include business dishonesty, irascibility or sloth, for example, within the scope of word's meaning.
'Virtue' in its popular and ethical sense connotes abstinence from acts labelled as 'vices'. More the person abstains from vices, the more the chances of his development of a good character. In supporting virtues as moral excellences, F. J. Hall and F. H. Hallock say, "Virtues are regulative principles of habits of conduct which when fully observed produce perfect righteousness of life and character." Gilson also supports the above view and maintains that ethically virtues are those excellences of man's character which are praiseworthy and meritorious and hence worthy for moral cultivation, and the cultivation of such a virtuous life involves an unfailing practice of the various virtues on every single occasion so that in due course it becomes one's habit.

This idea about virtues as good excellences of character, and vices, their opposite, has found a parallelism in the history of Hindu ethical-religious thought. According to Hindu Ethics, virtues are to be acquired through a constant practice. The traditional virtues of a devout Hindu are brought together in the Bhagavadgītā in terms of 'Godly' state of life. The Āsuras are clever and energetic but suffer from exaggerated egoism and hence have no moral or spiritual aims. "The demoniacs do not know the way of action or the way of renunciation. Neither purity, nor good conduct nor truth is found in them." Men, with demoniac nature regard the world without a moral basis, and
regard sexual passion as the sole cause of all living creatures. These are the bad men of society who have a feeble understanding, who perform cruel deeds, who are the enemies of the world, full of hypocrisy, having excessive pride, obsessed with innumerable cares, looking upon the gratification of desires as their highest aim, bound by hundreds of ties of desire, given over to lust and anger, hoarding wealth by unjust means for self-satisfaction, self-conceited, obstinate, filled with the pride and arrogance of wealth. These are the 'vices' of a demoniac person, and the man who is released from these does what is good spontaneously and reaches the state of ethical perfection. Like the demoniac qualities, Bhagavadgītā also analyses, in detail, those qualities which are the component factors of a perfectly virtuous character, e.g., fearlessness, purity of mind, steadfastness, charity, self-control, self-sacrifice, study of the scriptures, austerity, uprightness, non-violence, truth, freedom from anger, renunciation, tranquillity, aversion to fault-finding, compassion to living beings, modesty, absence of fickleness, vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, freedom from malice and excessive pride, are the characteristics of a 'Godly' man.

The author of the Bhagavadgītā recognizes the virtues and the vices of man's character, and has set forth the distinctive qualities of those who are seeking for divine
perfection. The distinction between the virtuous and the vicious is neither exclusive. It is quite possible that some men may partake of the nature of the both. Nothing is wholly bad or wholly good. The Devas and the Asuras are both born of Prajāpati.6

(ii) 'Virtue' and 'Virtues' Distinguished

Ethics, as a science, is more concerned with 'Virtues', in the plural. Hence, the second use of 'virtue', as particular moral excellence, is of utmost importance in the science of Ethics. Again, we have said that virtue and vice are both terms of moral appraisal, praiseworthy and blameworthy, commendatory and condemnatory respectively.

But the question is: if Ethics is the theory of virtues, what are those virtues which determine man's character? Sometimes 'virtue' is defined by some in terms of 'virtues' in the plural, they perhaps overlook the distinction between 'virtue' and 'virtues'. 'Virtue', in the abstract, may be one, but this requires expression in conduct, in terms of various virtues. Truthfulness, kindness, courage, temperance, charity and so on are the various forms of the basic virtue of 'Goodness'. Socrates too appears to have admitted the plurality of virtues but having an essential unity. 'Virtue is one' and 'virtue is teachable' are the two corollaries of his basic ethical maxim "Virtue is knowledge".

Hence, 'Virtue' is a valuable quality of man's
character, and to some extent of any living thing so far as it can resemble human beings in this respect. It is not of course any valuable aspect of individual personality, not, for example, his beauty, or intelligence or speed of running. Similarly, when we ascribe to a person, in writing, a favourable testimonial about him, we do find that most of the good qualities we mention are not qualities we class as 'virtues'.

Hence, virtues may be regarded as praiseworthy habits of choice. Man as he lives acquires habits of exercising his various powers of choice in particular ways, and if we praise such a habit we call it a virtue. These views are held by Aristotle in his Nicomachean Ethics.

But the use of the 'virtue' is still narrower than this. It may be that even all praiseworthy habits of choice are not called 'virtues'. For example, the habit of choosing happiness seems praiseworthy, and the habit of choosing unhappiness seems blameable; yet we do not call them a virtue and a vice respectively. If so, we must ask what marks off those praiseworthy habits of choice that we do call virtues from those that we do not. G. E. Moore appears to have suggested that "Virtues are distinguished from other useful dispositions ... by the fact that they are dispositions which it is particularly useful to praise and sanction, because there are strong and common temptations to neglect the actions to which they lead." But it
appears that "Virtues are good by definition. Merely calling anything a virtue is an implication that it is good. There is no proper place for an argument that virtue is good, except just this argument that virtue is good by the meaning of the word 'virtue'." The place for an argument and exhortation of virtue is elsewhere; namely, where the questions arise, which habits of choice should be praised as virtues and which should not. To this problem, Plato in his 'Republic' purported a list of four cardinal virtues: wisdom, temperance, courage and justice. Aristotle in his Nicomachean Ethics added about eight more. Aquinas produced another list of virtues combining Plato's four with his own such as 'faith, hope and love' celebrated by St. Paul.

Again, is it possible to give a complete list of human virtues? None of the above thinkers supposed himself to be giving a complete list of human virtues. They knew well enough that there is no definite end to the excellences we may want men to have or praise them for having. They were merely setting up what they thought the most important virtues, those most often to be striven for and most worth remembering in a slogan, or those most in need of recommendation at the moment.

Throughout the history of Ethics, cultivation of 'traits of character' was regarded as the highest ethical ideal. These traits or excellences are honesty, kindness,
consciousness, etc. It may be possible that these traits are innate or they may all be acquired by teaching and practice. Various approaches with regard to the nature of human being are possible. In fact, it has been suggested that Ethics is or should be conceived as primarily concerned with the cultivation of the important excellences of character. Plato and Aristotle seem to have conceived Ethics in this way, for they talk mainly in terms of Virtues and Virtuous, rather than in terms of what is right or obligatory. David Hume uses similar terms, although he mixes in some non-moral traits like cheerfulness and wit along with moral ones like benevolence and justice. More recently, Leslie Stephen stated his view in these words:

"... Ethics is internal. The moral law ... has to be expressed in the form 'be this', not in the form 'do this' ... the true moral law says 'hate not' instead of 'kill not'. ... the only mode of stating the moral law must be as a rule of character."^9

This view has a certain truth. However, whether the view is true or not, we may still ask what moral traits are to be cultivated. In a way, the answer is easy; with only a little thought, most of us could make up a long list which would include the traits mentioned before and many more. But we cannot be satisfied with a list of virtues in answer to our question, any more than Socrates
was when he asked Meno: "What is virtue?" We want to know the standard by which we are to determine what qualities we are to cultivate in ourselves. In Stephen's terms, what rules of character are we to follow, what are we to be?

With regard to the cultivation of the qualities of character, there are various moral theories. Hence, it seems clear, at once, that there may be many answers to this question. According to trait-egoism, we should cultivate the qualities or traits which are conducive to our own welfare. In this, we include all the 'self-regarding' traits of character. Trait-utilitarianism will insist that we should cultivate a trait if and only if its expression in our action is at least conductive to the greatest general good as that of any alternative trait. In this, therefore, we include all the other-regarding traits of character. These theories will be trait-teleological since they propose that a trait be developed if and only if its development makes for the greatest balance of good over evil for self, society or universe. But, of course, there will also be trait-deontologism, according to which certain traits are morally good and are simply to be cultivated as such, not because of any non-moral value they may have or promote. This is the principle contained in "virtue for virtue's sake".

These theories may be combined in various ways. Proponents of different kinds of theories may agree about
the list of traits to be cultivated, but they may differ regarding the grounds on which they advocate cultivation of traits. Thus, a trait-egoist and a trait-utilitarian might agree that courage, honesty, kindness, consciousness, and so on, should be fostered. However, their arguments would be different. On the other hand, proponents of the same kind of theory may differ in their lists of morally desirable traits. One trait-utilitarian might include humility in his list, and another might not. Although both would argue on the grounds of general utility, they would reach different conclusions because they disagreed about whether humility was, in fact, useful.*

All the above theories unanimously agree that virtuous life is morally good and is something to be acquired. Virtues are to be deliberately cultivated. Real moral life is a life of constant vigilance. One has to make ceaseless efforts and constant struggle against the lower passions. Virtuous life is a creative life and needs much of chiselling, moulding, pruning and weeding. The difference in the natural and moral life is that between a river and a canal, between a forest and a garden, between the rock and the statue, or between a lump of gold and an ornament. Virtuous life is a cultivated life. It is

* I have separately discussed these various theories about criteria for determining the traits of character which are morally good.
something achieved by the individual under the guidance of moral consciousness. When acquired as a habit of will, it becomes like all habits, as if a second nature of man. The traits of character automatically become permanent feature of one's personality. But the question is how to cultivate traits of character. One of the ways, I think, is imitation of saints and heroes. When we say that Ethics is concerned with 'what I ought to be' we readily perhaps say 'I ought to be virtuous'. But how? It is not enough to say 'Be this' and 'Be that', but also 'Be like so and so' - where 'so and so' is an ideal type of character or an actual person taken as representative of the ideal, an exemplar. Examples of the first are Plato's 'just man' in the 'Republic', Aristotle's man of 'practical wisdom' in the 'Nicomachean Ethics', Augustine's citizen of the city of God and so on. Examples of the second kind are Socrates, Christ, Buddha, Mahātmā Gāndhi and so on. Heroes and saints are not merely people who did things. They are people whom we are expected, and expect ourselves to imitate. Of course, imitation means not merely doing what great seers did, it means being like them. Constant struggle and discipline are so often necessary for the cultivation of the virtues. We have a 'fight with ourselves', till the virtuous will is triumphant. The heroes and the saints do not merely give us a list of traits, they give us examples to follow. Of course, it is not possible for an ordinary
man to achieve the same good qualities as saints and in
the same degree because each individual is unique in his
own way. In spite of this, it appears that it is enough
and at least desirable if we try to be a little like them.

(iii) Definition of 'Virtue'

The question regarding the definition of 'virtue'
has puzzled many ethical thinkers in the history of Ethics.
Virtue has been defined variously by various thinkers. The
more significant questions regarding the definition of
virtue are: What is precisely connoted by 'virtue'? What
does it really affirm? Let us discuss some definitions.

(1) Virtue as a kind of disposition: Virtue is sometimes
defined as a kind of disposition to do good action.
Virtuous activities are dispositional activities. But this
explanation of 'virtue' in terms of a 'disposition' is
vague in the sense that it is incomplete. The term 'dispo­
sition' is a complex term which can be used in matters
relating to health; e.g., 'a man can have a disposition
to catch cold', or he may have hereditary disposition for
headaches. Some allergic diseases are typically disposi­
tional. Again, the word disposition is also used in
connection with the so-called states of temper. If a man
easily gets angry, we speak of him as having a certain
disposition. Hence, virtue as a kind of 'disposition'
does not bring out the ethical significance of 'virtue'.
(2) Virtue as passion: This is another definition of 'virtue'. Passion is sometimes made the genus of virtue. But this too is an unsatisfactory explanation. If passion is the genus of virtue, can we say that virtue is a kind of passion? What kind of passion is it? Passionlessness is also a virtue. We cannot say that the person who is highly emotional or passionate is a virtuous person. Virtues, on the contrary, direct passions. Man becomes virtuous if he can regulate his emotions and passions in a certain way. Aristotle's 'golden mean' is a virtue because it avoids both the extreme passions of excess and defect. Passions to do a thing in excess or in defect are vices rather than virtues. Hence, virtue is not passion, on the contrary, it lies in between two extreme passions. Again, if passion is the genus of virtue, animals would have virtues in the same sense men have, since animals too have passions.

(3) Virtue as habit: Unsatisfied with the first two views of virtue, some regard virtue as habitual disposition as the essence of virtue. A man is not called virtuous or vicious on the basis of his performance of a single good act or a single bad act. A habit of performing good action should be developed. But 'virtue' as habitual disposition can also be regarded as inadequate because there might be an action which cannot be performed often. 'X' can be a virtue even if it occurs only once. Virtue
may require a habitual disposition, but all habitual dispositions are not, therefore, virtues as such, because there are actions which cannot be performed habitually to attain the status of virtue. Is not martyrdom a virtue? But can it be habitually performed? No, and yet it is an important virtue.

(4) Virtue as excellence of character: Out of all the views so far held, virtue as the excellence of character appears to be ethically acceptable. Virtue corresponds with the Greek 'arete', the characteristic properties of the good character.

Connected with this view is the idea of virtue as 'norm' of character. But, when virtues are defined as norms of character, the problem is about the nature of such norms. What kind of norms are they? Can these norms be treated as the norms for doing or the norms for being? Are the norms positive or negative, subjective or objective, relative or absolute? A host of problems crops up with the idea of virtues as the norms of character.

Hence, out of these four views regarding the definition of virtue, it appears that the traits referring to the excellence of character are the virtues, the bad traits of character the vices. Virtues are the excellent qualities of man's good character, and vices are the evil qualities of man's bad character. The Greeks sought excellence of character as an ideal of human life. Self-control, courage,
wisdom, justice, brotherly love and other human virtues are permanent and valuable as ever. Hence, "the good traits of character are called the virtues; the bad traits are called the vices". Virtues are those excellences of character which men admire and value. They make for the survival and the welfare of the group and are therefore often deliberately cultivated.

(iv) Worth of Virtues

It has been said so far that the concept of 'virtue' can play a dominant role in the development of a good character. Virtues are therefore to be treated as character-values. But what can be the value or worth of these character-values? Various moral philosophers have raised such questions as: What is the value of virtues? Are virtues means to an end or are ends in themselves? Why should I be virtuous?

The pragmatic and the utilitarian theories in Ethics regard the value of virtues as instrumental in character, while the deontological theory in Ethics supports intrinsic value of virtues as such. The common point of view from which the good and bad qualities of men should be studied is the pragmatic and utilitarian. Gratitude has been defined as the lively expectation of favours to come. We might consider those qualities admirable or virtuous from which we expect to follow certain types of desirable behaviour.
This instrumental character of virtues is brought out in the study of evolution of morality and moral sentiments. Virtues are those actions favourable to the survival and welfare of the tribe.

But this approach cannot be justified in the later stages of the development of morality. It appears that desirable qualities are often admired and valued without any clear sense of their relation to character and deliberate will. It is good that at least in the later stages of moral development this relation to character is realized and the qualities become valued for their own sake as part of the nature of good life itself.

Instrumentalism gives rise to a relativistic theory of Ethics, according to which virtues are relative and conditional in character. Virtues are relative rather than absolute. This relativity of virtues takes two forms: (1) to the stages of development or states of society; and (2) to social function.

Nevertheless, few moralists have been content with this kind of relativism. Underneath or through the changing conceptions of virtue and of character, they have rightly felt that there are certain more or less constant human qualities that are not only admired everywhere at all times and by all men, but which remain in their essence constant, despite their change in form. There are so to speak certain
absolute character values that are permanent and intrinsic. And this notion of a permanent ideal of character and intrinsic value of virtues was expressed by Plato in his conception of the cardinal virtues.

It may hardly be doubted that in the primitive form the value of virtues is largely instrumental. But herein it would be a mistake to think of them as even wholly instrumental. The moral sense of the primitive people seems to indicate that they also have an immediate and unaffected joy in character for its own sake. Pride, valor, loyalty, even sincerity and truthfulness, they seem to value for their own sake. But how did this come about?

The attempt is often made to explain how this came about psychologically. Just as we admire the skill of an artist for its own sake, similarly we come to admire manly courage or self-sacrifice quite apart from the considerations of its effects. But this explanation does not go to the root of the matter. The reason that we value virtues for their own sake is that they are forms of self-realization, and self-realization is not only the intrinsic good, but the highest good. They are not merely means to living well, but part of the actual content of the good life, or rather aspects of the nature of the very goodness of that life.

Urban in his 'Fundamentals of Ethics' says that such intrinsic evaluation of excellence of human character is
esthetic and not ethical. This is justifiable on the ground that all value is ultimately esthetic. But I think that the name matters little. The important thing is the recognition of the justification of the intrinsic value of virtues as such, as part of the very goodness of life. According to intrinsicalism, the view of instrumentalism makes a devaluation of the concept of 'virtue'. It destroys its real ethical worth. It makes Ethics merely pragmatic. As a matter of fact, virtue shines by its own light and does not require any external determinants or measures to measure its worth. Hence truth in the proverb "virtue for virtue's sake".

(v) Virtue and Its Expression

So far it is maintained that Ethics as the science of virtues sets itself to explore man's inner personality. It appears that man's virtues ought to be the outward expressions of man's inner character, and throughout the thesis this view has been maintained. Virtues are the moral qualities, traits or excellences of good character; by vices, we mean all immoral qualities, traits or bad qualities of character.

There are numerous rules, written or unwritten, which govern and regulate human conduct—social, economic, political, and religious. But these are the external forms which regulate human behaviour. They externally determine human conduct. And the conduct based on these external regulations
is good but not necessarily virtuous. This is also the view of J. Krishnamurti, who believes that 'virtue' is the source of man's character. It has an inner spring, and that is how it could be distinguished from 'duty' wherein the spring of action is from without. 'Virtue' surpasses the concept of 'duty'.

But these inward springs of action need not and may not remain inward. They are, in the normal case, the springs of action; and action in the relevant sense, is public, not private. The virtues may be expressed in action, and when we think of them we think of them in their natural expression. To examine the expressions separately, as is the habit of many moralists, is really undesirable. Hence the aretaics are firm in maintaining that virtue could not be the spirit of the moral life if it were not expressed in overt actions. It is the nature of a friend to show himself friendly. Without the inner friendly spirit, if it exists, indeed, it would be meaningless; but if the friendly spirit is also a disposition towards friendly deeds, it expresses itself in these deeds. 'A friend in need is a friend indeed' so the proverb goes. Friendly deeds, therefore, in the normal case, belong to the virtue. An intelligent man evinces his intelligence in his actions.

*I have explained this point in detail while comparing 'virtue' with 'duty' in the fifth chapter.
A reflective man thinks before he aims, and aims before he shoots. All the Hindi saints, and particularly Carandās, describe the valuelessness of virtue without action. What is wanted, says Carandās, is that a good man should act as he speaks. According to Rāmdās and Tukārām, it is much better not to talk, than to talk and not to do. It was for this reason that 'mauna' was regarded as the highest virtue by ancient seers. Words without action are like the night without the Moon, like a brave man who has no spirit of adventure in him. Apart from such similes used by Carandās, what is needed in social life is that our actions should follow our words.

Hence, the question in Ethics is: Is Ethics concerned with 'rightness' of an action or the 'goodness' of man's character? It appears that the question 'what I ought to be' should be treated to be ethically more important than the question 'what I ought to do' or 'what I ought to have'. The former is known as Agent-Ethics and the latter as Act-Ethics (i.e. Ethics of conduct). But we have already seen that the term 'virtue' may refer either to character or conduct and therefore is equally important in Agent-Ethics and Act-Ethics. From the point of view of actions, all virtuous actions are nothing but right actions, from the point of view of inner quality, it reveals man's character. And it is true, that character cannot be observed unless it is expressed in action or conduct. Hence, virtue is not
merely what a man possesses, it may be what he does actually. Hence, it appears that the distinction between Agent-Ethics and Act-Ethics should not be stretched beyond a moderate extension. It is not a genuine distinction. We call honesty a virtue because it is a good quality of man's character; and to the honesty of his dealings equally as a virtue. And what is true about 'honesty' is true about all the virtues. Honesty, thus, becomes the self-regarding and other-regarding virtue as well.

In brief, virtues may be expressed in overt actions, but ultimately a moral judgement is passed on the character of the person and not on the actions of the person. Actions themselves are only temporary and perishing, hence a final judgement is passed on the 'character' and not on the 'conduct' of the person.

(vi) Are Men Essentially Virtuous or Vicious?

This is a question with regard to the acquisition of virtues. Are men virtuous by nature or do they become virtuous? If human nature is essentially bad and if it is true that we cannot change human nature, then it is largely futile for a bad man to spend his time for the cultivation of good traits of character and the whole science of Ethics would be meaningless. But the various moral institutions such as family, state, religion and even education can play a great part in grinding man's nature from bad to good.
There are various approaches to human nature in terms of virtue and vice, e.g.,

(1) All men are essentially virtuous,
(2) All men are essentially vicious,
(3) Man is neither virtuous nor vicious,
(4) Some men are virtuous and some men are vicious,
(5) Man is partly virtuous and partly vicious.

The first approach is an anti-thesis of the second, and the third is again the anti-thesis of the first and the second approaches taken together.

(1) According to the first approach, all men are essentially virtuous. This is the religious theory of moral optimism. The hidden virtues are to be brought out by means of education, persuasion, appeal, and Sanskāras. This may require a good deal of effort and time, yet it is meaningful and significant.

(2) The second view maintains that all men are essentially vicious. This is the psychological theory of moral pessimism. Historically, this view was purported from at least three sources.

(a) Christian theology: Augustine (354-430), in his view of sin, says that a sinful man is unable to do any good through his own efforts. Adam's sin and fall has so corrupted human nature that every individual is born in a state of sin and is essentially evil. Man is born with
evil qualities which make it impossible for man to be virtuous. Hobbes describes human nature as essentially selfish, brutal, full of passion, and instincts. Man's nature is corrupt and evil, since it is tainted at the source. Luther and Calvin reaffirmed Augustine's views in their doctrine of total human depravity.

(b) Again, the classical economists have popularized the idea that under economic incentives, man acts only in accordance with his individual interests. The economic man is essentially selfish. For a time, economics was called 'dismal science' responsible for many human woes.

(c) Nineteenth century biological scientists treat human nature as essentially selfish emphasizing the significance of man's biological heritage; and like other animals he inherits a great array of fixed instincts acquired in the struggle for existence which result in selfishness, prejudice, jealousy, crime, war, poverty, and so on. Civilization is largely a veneer covering a bestial nature.

All these views have also got support from Freudian school of Psychology. According to this analytical study of human nature, human beings are governed by their instincts (self-preservation, possession and sex).

Thus the two views mentioned above take the opposite views. The first insists that man is born virtuous, but
only artificially turns out to be vicious. The second view maintains that man is essentially vicious, and artificially becomes virtuous. In both, contextual relativism plays a great part.

(3) The third approach, which is an anti-thesis of the first two approaches, maintains the view that man is neither virtuous nor vicious. This is the view of moral neutralism which believes in the materialistic theory of neutralism and circumstantial determination. According to John Locke, originally man is like a blank tablet, ready for inscription. According to social environment, man turns out to be either virtuous or vicious. Man is not only known, but also becomes, according to the company he keeps. Hence, it becomes necessary to see that the child is brought-up in the right circumstances so that it may acquire more and more virtues and less and less vices as far as possible.

(4) Besides these three views, there is another approach which maintains the view that some men are virtuous and some are vicious. This is the dualistic view which believes in the two-fold creation of human beings in this world. The sixteenth chapter of the Bhagavadgītā beautifully brings out a detailed and a clear-cut division of men into divine (Daivī) and satānic (Āsuri). The Divine qualities represent virtuous aspect of human nature, and satānic qualities represent vicious aspect of human
nature. Those who possess the earlier qualities reach the peak of moral perfection, and the vicious go down the path of utter moral destruction.

(5) The last possible approach is the view according to which man is partly virtuous and partly vicious. This is the realistic theory which rejects the two exclusive groups of men, namely the fourth view. Men cannot be so disjunctively divided into two camps—virtuous and vicious. Human nature is complex and hence involves admixture of good and bad traits, though we may find the proportion of these traits diversely distributed in various individuals according to their prakrti. It is not the case that some men are absolutely virtuous or vicious. The difference is only of degree and not of kind. The Jekyll and the Hyde are not just two opposed and different persons, but these stand for two opposite tendencies found in human beings. Man is both spirit and flesh, reason and passion, good and evil, Eros and Thanatos, virtuous and vicious. Vedāntic view makes a synthesis of the three theories which we have mentioned earlier. The theory of prakrti well explains the innateness of virtue and vice. Man's prakrti is made of three gunas—sattva, rajas and tamas. 'Rajas' and 'tamas' are responsible for the passions which give rise to vices of human life. When 'sattva' predominates, vices are overcome, and when sins are overcome, man becomes Brahman.
Brahman, and transcends all qualities (Gunatita). If this is so, then what is the value of virtues in Brahmanic life?

But it should be noted that the way to the Beyond is easier to be found through the good than through the bad; for even the customary and conventional good represents certain essential and permanent features of the highest good. To take only one example, there may be risk in speaking the truth and a gain in telling a lie. But in the former case man is at peace with himself and possesses courage, fearlessness, joy and a sense of internal freedom. These are obviously the characteristics of Brahman represented in human life, though in a fragmentary manner. So we can say in general that even though Brahmanic life goes beyond morality, the reflection of the over-good can be found better in the ethical good than in anything else.

There is some element of truth in every theory having a different point of view. However, out of all these approaches, the third view appears to be tenable. It is psychologically true that much of the individual's development—physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual—is determined by environmental conditions, and hence it becomes rather the duty of the family or social institutions such as school, state, religious institutions to provide sufficient conditions conducive to the moral
perfection of men. To become virtuous is a long, constant, and continuous process; it is an art, which is perhaps the most important and difficult though not impossible, of attainment.

(vii) The Main Characteristics of a Virtuous Man

We are now in a position to state adequately the nature of virtue and the main characteristics of a virtuous man. Virtue means the excellence of inner character which may be expressed in outward conduct. We have already said that we speak of 'virtuous character' as well as 'virtuous activity', goodness and rightness respectively, and these two are inseparable.

It is clear that virtues may be expressed in the activities. What, then, are the main characteristics of a virtuous man?

It may be said that one who is truly virtuous is a conscientious man of action. He not only is good, but does good. This consideration will materially help us in understanding the exact significance of the ethical maxim 'there are no holidays for virtue'. This statement means that there are no days of rest from virtuous activity. A truly virtuous man never retires from the life of virtuous activity. His life is a continuous, unbroken series of virtuous acts. It is a life of ceaseless virtuous activity. It is, in fact, a life dedicated wholly and completely to
the cause of morality. Virtue is not like a dress to be put on or put off at one's own sweet will. It is not anything to be whimsically dispensed with. It is not anything to be practised on special occasions or on prescribed holidays. One cannot be an opportunist, violating the laws of morality, whenever one thinks it convenient or prudent to do so. Undivided, unflinching, continuous loyalty to morality characterizes a really virtuous man.

Some persons labour under the misapprehension that oldage is the proper time for virtuous acts. Youth is the time for the enjoyment of worldly pleasures, as the capacities of enjoyment are fully developed. Young people should not be troubled with questions of morality, religion, virtue, value, and so on, but should be allowed to enjoy pleasures freely.

But the above view appears to be defective and hence should not be subscribed. The evils of intemperance are well known. In youth, the appetites and passions become very strong, and if young men and women are permitted to follow their appetites and passions, desires and inclinations without restraints—if they do not develop the habit of self-control, they will ruin themselves and degrade the societies to which they belong. In fact, one can hardly be expected to be virtuous in old age, unless one begins to practise virtues very early in one's life. Persons
passing their youth merrily in sensuality cannot generally turn virtuous all of a sudden.

This does not mean that a virtuous man has to renounce society. He enjoys, with legitimate bounds, those pleasures that are approved of by conscience. He shuns all sorts of excess. He accepts moderation as the guiding principle of his life.

(viii) 'Virtue' and Education

We have stated and examined some significant theories of human virtues and vices. Proper education could play a great part in turning men from evil towards good. Education may create a moral atmosphere in the life of an individual. Moral instruction could also be imparted to men. 'Virtue is teachable' is the view of Socrates.

Ancient Greece and India agree in holding that it is the aim of education to guide us to apprehend and appreciate the supreme virtues of human life. We must be educated not for cruelty and power but for love and kindness, the simple but the most valuable decencies of life. Even from the nurseries, we must train human beings by unconscious influence and conscious effort to love truth, goodness and beauty. To create and maintain the moral atmosphere alone can be the aim of any educational institution. Plato had a clear vision of this goal and method of education. There are no mechanical cures for psychological maladies. If
the world is suffering from the deterioration of virtuous character, we have to cure it only through right education. India has her proud heritage and we have been taught the transience of mere material wealth and the transcendental importance of the spirit in man. The essential aim of education has been the recognition of human worth and dignity. Hence, the development of good character should be the end of imparting knowledge. Education, without the aim of character-values, is no education at all. The purpose of education is development of character, which includes physical, intellectual, social and spiritual enrichment.

Education and character-building are intimately connected. Moral bankruptcy is due to lack of right education. Good 'character' is a collection of virtues. It is to be manifested in actions. How a man walks, how he talks, how far he becomes one with the life of the society—these are the things which may determine the character of man.

There are various ways of developing character. Children might be told the ideal stories of great men, sages and saints, scientists, men of literature, or autobiographies of great men. This may develop at least a desire in the minds of children to be good, and hence children develop a pro-attitude towards truthfulness, honesty, sportsmanship, modesty, kindness, respect for women, etc. 'Prayer' in the academic institution also can play an important part in guiding the lives of individuals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Aristotle. <em>Nicomachean Ethics</em>, II, 6, 1106 a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Bhagavadgītā, 16/7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Chāndogya Upaniṣad, I, 2, I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Bhagavadgītā, Chap. XVI, 6.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>