Chapter-1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to introduce the issues of morality in general and that of the Oromo of Ethiopia in particular. To that effect, it is divided into three major sections. The first section is concerned with account of the general concepts and issues pertaining to moral values. It is further divided into subsections. The first subsection attempts to bring to light the problems that morality addresses and the second one venture to single out the problems that morality itself is facing. The second major section is all about the organizational structure (chapter scheme) of the thesis. The third major section is concerned with the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of the thesis. This section is again divided into two core sub-sections- conceptual and theoretical frameworks. In the conceptual framework key moral issues are raised and discussed. In the theoretical framework major ethical theories are introduced, and the theory that fits to the subject of the research is earmarked.

1.1. Background

This PhD research sets out from practical observations. While the action that people perform and the behavior they exhibit are greatly influenced by their moral values, the latter have not earned as much attention as they should deserve. This is what the Ethiopian societies share in common with all other human communities in the world. The problems that this generates, however, are more complex and formidable to the Ethiopians than they are to some other communities of the world. We are convinced that the key to all the challenges that unceasingly haunt Ethiopia and its people lie primarily in the moral values of its people. Unfortunately, the indigenous moral values of the Ethiopian societies have not been profoundly studied. In the attempt to identify the main causes of the interwoven problems currently facing the country, researchers devoted much of their efforts to the economic, political, cultural and social activities of people, while paying no attention of significant degree to their moral life and values. However, it is strongly argued here that whether the actions that people perform are productive or unproductive, solution offering or trouble causing is tremendously influenced by their moral values.
The reality of human life is not only made up of facts but also full of values. Grappling with the problems of development and the issue of raising the living condition of people does not seem to be feasible unless the moral values [that play important role in commanding the daily activities of people and thereby influencing the far-reaching development of the country], of the concerned societies are genuinely addressed. In addition to its indigenous values nations such as Ethiopia may today face exotic values received through the intermingling of culture and the trans-nationality of science and technology. Overshadowed by the exotic ones the indigenous values are unnoticed, forgotten or neglected although they still have tremendous roles in influencing the life and development of the local people. We, therefore, need to look into our indigenous moral values.

As it is to all other people, morality is one of the most important aspects of their life to the Ethiopians too. Daily they make the use of it. They act and behave according to their moral norms. They evaluate their own actions as well as the actions performed by others in the light of these norms. Deep down in their life, the norms have played a significant role in making them what and who they were in the past, and what or who they are at the present. Yet most people do not seem to have sound perception of the moral values that largely make their identity and life possible. They do not seem to have acquired the knowledge of moral values as much as they have done the knowledge of facts.

Mostly people consider morality more as a matter of religious concern than as an issue of earthly reality, because “religions are also moral guidelines by which to live.” (Grice, 1989: 11) And more often it is the religious people and institutions that very often teach and preach about morality. The fact being this, there is a strong tendency to leave all issues of morality to religious institutions and their practitioners, when it should have been the concern of all rational and responsible bodies. Although it pervades both the religious and non-religious life of man, the narrow and shallow belief that morality was the subject of the religious realm alone, has so far been rolling down from the preceding to the succeeding generations. Most people, therefore, think that morality does not have a meaningful role to play either in enhancing or in hampering
development. It is viewed as if it is more important and meaningful for heavenly life than it is for the secular world.

The point to be addressed is: would it be appropriate to continue with this kind of old age belief of morality? Should we remain ignorant to all what is there in our value systems and goes either for or against our good purpose? If there is a genuine interest to solve the practical challenges that people face and sincere need to know how strong or weak we are in solving our problems, our moral values should be investigated in the light of moral philosophy [ethics]. Whether they might have been the host for a number of evils or not should critically be reflected upon. Keeping oneself ignorant to this essential part of life is not only losing a vital sight to the reality of humanity but also undermining one’s own identity.

The present study is designed to explore not the moral values of the whole Ethiopian nation but that of the Oromo people of Ethiopia as it is embedded in their Gada system. Deductively the moral predicament that is true of the country as a whole may also be true of its components. “Among the many peoples living within the borders of present-day Ethiopia the Oromo constitute easily the most numerous.” (Bartels, 1983:13) They are known not only for being the largest constituent in the country, but also for being the possessors of a comprehensive socio-political system called Gada. According to Bartels, Oromo have a famous, complicated and ancient social organization known as Gada system, in which the responsibility for the people’s well-being was handed over from one group of people to other every eight years. (Bartels, 1983: 15)

The life and activities of the Oromo people are largely dictated by the rules and ethos of their Gada system, at the basis of which there is moral value. Whether this moral value helps people to move forward or holds them back is the subject of study. Although the existence of moral value cannot be denied, it seems that no clear and valid knowledge of this value has so far been gained. The extent to which these values serve either good or evil purpose has not been clearly examined. With ignorance and negligence to one’s own (indigenous) moral value, it is unlikely to get on the right track leading to better life. Thus, it is imperative that we explore the moral value of the Oromo Gada system in order to find a key to their conception of a better life and development.
Many reasons can be singled out for choosing the Oromo indigenous moral value. In addition to the already mentioned one, there are three more reasons worth noting. One, the researchers are more familiar with the ethos of the Oromo people of Ethiopia than that of the non-Oromo groups in the country. Two, demographically, the Oromo of Ethiopia constitute the majority of the ethnic groups in the country, and geographically they inhabit across the vast area of the territory. These demographic and geographic features make Oromo a sound representative sample to consider the space and role of morality in the life and development of Ethiopia. Third, a sense of wonder about the value system embodying the Oromo Gada system stimulated the necessity of its exploration.

1.2. Statement of the problem

It is not a choice, but a must that humans seek solutions to unsolved problems and look for answers to unanswered questions. They move forward only when they are able to answer questions and solve problems. The master key in the issue of development and life is a person— a person who is enlightened with the knowledge of facts and values. What value and place do people give to morality, and what human problems does morality solve? Human beings are the subjects and objects of morality. As subjects, they make it and as object they are made by it. Their internal and external worlds are reconciled or antagonized, harmoniously integrated or disharmoniously separated through their moral life. These intricate problems have a great impact in making life better or worse. In view of this, some of the exact problems that pertain to the morality of the Ethiopian people in general and to that of Oromo in particular are briefly stated below.

1.2.1. National Problems

What provoked the undertaking of this research in this subject is decisively the challenge of the nation. Ethiopia is the land of diversity both in the natural and human world. It is rich not only in diversity but also endowed with the auspicious social and natural environments. But despite its rich diversity and favorable ecological and social environments, unfortunately it is one of the least developed nations of the world. What is the cause(s) of this stagnation? All people in the country want to live the best possible life, and have been striving towards this end. Then what is the mysterious force that is responsible for their drawbacks? What or who was making them what they did not like and choose to be? How certain and deep these people know themselves? Do they think
that there are mysterious or external forces responsible for all what, who and where they are now?

Many things have been written and said about the external phenomena that could affect their life and development. But not much has been written and said about what these people have had so far from inside. Human personality is made not only by what is outside him/her but decisively by what is inside him/her. The internal life of a person is mirrored largely in the person’s actions and behaviours that could be morally judged. Then can we see any problem in the moral life of the Ethiopians that is responsible for the depression of the country? At this stage, we are far away from answering this question either affirmatively or negatively. It is raised only to imply that this is the core point that triggered this research.

As far as the observation of the researchers goes, people in the country had been and still are being haunted by poverty, famine, instability, insecurity, lack of social peace and tranquility and stagnant mode of life. Ethnic consciousness has become stronger than national sentiment. The climate of hostility is being felt more than a friendly environment. Isolated and fragmented activities of individuals are more rampant than the rational and purposefully organized cooperation and team work. Level of rational consciousness is below desirable standard. Significant consensus about common concerns cannot easily be reached at, among the concerned parties or bodies of the country. Tolerance does not prevail as much it is required. Minor problems often cost much sacrifice. In the attempt of settling problems much preferred is violence or force to peaceful means. It is not moral and democratic consciousness and value that is being largely used as a guiding principle but feudal sentiment. Rigidity is very strong and lack of creativity is rampant.

Compounded with the already existing age-old challenges such as poverty, ignorance, illiteracy and lack of health facilities the fast growing evils such as corruption, nepotism, dishonesty, indolence, greed and lust, inefficiency and insensitiveness suck the cream of people’s resources; enervate the energy and strength of national aspirations. The prevalence of all of these undesirable vices in the life and reality of the Ethiopian people suggest that there is deep moral impairment in their life. With all these unaddressed vices it is impossible to think of sound development and the flourishing of human life.
Ethiopia is a multi-cultural nation. It is composed of about eighty different ethnic groups. As Levine puts, it is the museum of peoples. (1974: 20) Each has its moral value. But it seems that the values of none of these were well studied and known. Two problems are contained in this. One, how close these values to, or how different they are from one another has not been figured out. The failure to know well the values of each other is one serious predicament. Second, each may consider its own as superior and that of others as inferior, when in fact the reality is different from this. This has been the source of disharmony, which is one major area of our life where evils harbor and breed. For people to live well and have fulfilled life, the evil tendencies harbored in their value considerations should be exposed and dispelled. This study attempts to pinpoint these issues that can be considered at different levels.

1.2.2. Ethnic-Based Problem

As mentioned earlier, “The Oromo is the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia and one of the largest in Africa.” (Legesse, 2000: Preface) It is not only their demographic feature that attracts intellectual inquiry, but also their value system. They are the possessors of indigenous democratic system called Gada. Gada for them is a comprehensive value system of which moral value is the core component. “Search for values is an essential cultural quest of the humankind. — Civilizations advance and flourish when they are active in this search, otherwise they decline.” (Tripathi, 2003: v) As they have tremendous power to affect the life and development of mankind either positively or negatively, values, in particular moral values must critically be studied.

But in Ethiopia, there was no sound academic venture that has ever been made to bring the moral values of the Oromo Gada system [and that of the other ethnic group of the country for that matter] to light. Being a core component of various human values, moral value is one of the decisive factors that constitute the identity of people. According to Tripathi (2003: 178) human values are the whole range of values that make human life meaningful, fulfilling and valuable. Upon analysis, these values are classified into material, societal, psychological, aesthetic, moral, ethical and spiritual ones. All of these, if managed properly, contribute “to the realization of goodness, as in the good person, good life and good society.” (Tripathi, 2003: 178)

Moral value is the highest and core value with reference to which other values are directed, explained and evaluated. In other words, it plays a decisive role in the making of
the identity of people. One may not distinctively identify who the Oromo as Oromo were in the past, who they are at the present and who they could be in the future unless he/she knows at least some of the moral qualities of these people. Hence, an inquiry into the moral value of these people is imperative to genuinely understand their identity.

Oromo is not only demographically the largest but also geographically occupies the vast and resourceful area of the country. This very fact itself has a serious moral relevance. Whether these people treat others (non-Oromo) or others (non-Oromo) treat them (Oromo) morally right or wrong is greatly influenced by their geographical location and by the resources over which they claim the power to utilize. The question of morality ultimately rests on the issue of how people share what. Have the Oromo been moral or immoral in sharing resources with others? How have others (non-Oromo) treated the Oromo for the latter being the owners of the vast and rich area of land? Indeed, there have been treatments. What have been the ultimate outcomes of these treatments for the nation in general, and to the Oromo people in particular?

Self-examination depicts the better picture of one’s reality because it helps to know whether there are more virtues than evils or conversely more evils than virtues in one’s life and relations. Many Oromo may think that the sources of all sorts of evils are external to them while plenty of them could deeply be rooted in their own value system. This is how and where false consciousness and image of oneself could be generated. Out of this disparity between what these people really are and what or who they ideally want to be emerges. The first is their reality and the second is their ideal. The ideal of individuals or society is always superior to their reality. The project of life is always to go from the reality to the ideal. This succeeds only if their present reality is well understood. With morality left out, the acquisition of sound knowledge of the self is impossible.

1.2.3. Intellectual and Cultural Problem

In the present world a trend that denies the importance of the indigenous moral values in favor of the values of the western has developed. Some of the Oromo and non-Oromo intellectuals of the country do not seem to have good knowledge of the indigenous values. Owing to their academic background and intellectual exposure they appreciate the value of the western world while paying either little or no attention to that of their own.
We do not deny the importance of appreciating and using the desirable moral value and principle of any human community. What we presumably assert, however, is the badness of blinding oneself to that of one’s own. In fact, the rational elements of the civilized world’s moral value could and should be used as a searchlight to find one’s own values. It is imperative to use our knowledge of the moral values of the developed world as a means to find, reflect upon and cultivate the desirable aspects of the indigenous value system of one’s own.

The fact that the indigenous moral values have not yet captured the attention of the academia shows that most professions are alien to these values and the values themselves are strange to these professions. Moral values without critical and rational input are perhaps too weak to guide human actions, and qualified knowledge is fragile without an agent’s internal commitment for ethical principle. When they are not based on firm foundation, knowledge, profession, power, responsibility, services and interests are susceptible to different forms of abuse. Thus intellectual inquiry for the exploration of moral values and commitment of ethical principles is imperative.

Although this truth, in the present day world, is getting more and more recognition than it had been in the past, in Ethiopia it is still a chronic problem to be sincerely addressed. Those who are engaged in science and technology have almost nothing to say about morality and ethics, and those who are preoccupied with the issues of the latter also do not seem to have something to say about the achievements or problems of the former. This alienation weakens both, and hence its cumulative effect is a challenge to the well-being of humanity. An intellectual life and activity entrapped in such estrangement cannot adequately serve the purpose that it is needed for.

1.2.4. Lack of Dynamism

Moral values of societies are either conservative or dynamic. The Oromo is predominantly a traditional society. People, who are strongly dictated by traditional values, do not question the rational justification that underlies any moral act and judgment. They rather accept their authority passively. Approving moral acts and judgments without knowing what good or evil qualities they entail, or what strong or weak sides they have, is tantamount to blinding oneself to one’s own reality.
Moreover, a prolonged traditional morality of a society cannot cope up with the need and performance of modernity. The process taking place in the material, social and mental life, however, demands a transition from the “unreflective to reflective morality.” (Sinha, 1994:55) The reflection “should not be to foster, inculcate or to propagate any predetermined set or system of values” (Ibid) but to identify the merit and demerit of this value so as to understand whether it makes a positive contribution to the course of development or not. It is hoped that this study attempts to respond to this need too.

1.2.5. Political Problem

Currently our political discourses are very much loaded with terminologies of democracy. Democracy is a system that is presumed to correct all the misgivings and evils of the undemocratic systems and values. As such it is that which the modern world cherishes most. Deeply rooted in and based on peoples’ moral values and aspirations, democracy is relatively a better system of rule. Basically genuine democratic systems are close to moral ideals, whereas the undemocratic ones are immoral. Democratic values are either based on or derived from moral values, whereas the undemocratic ones are the perverted form of these values.

The core principle of both moral and democratic values is respect for the life, dignity, interest and freedom of others as well as of oneself. Ethiopia is, currently claiming to have embarked on the road to democratic system. Whether this road really takes us to the genuine or sham democracy will to some extent depends on how this country treats the values of its citizens [individually and collectively]. To avoid the reversal of this frail democratic course of development and to put an end to undemocratic practices that obstruct the exercises of rights, the recognition and cultivation of indigenous values is an indispensable move.

To mobilize people in the direction of development, officials of governmental and non-governmental organizations must have commendable knowledge of the values of the people they are to serve. But so far this does not seem to be the case since they pay no reasonable attention to it. Not only that they are leading and serving people without adequate attention to value considerations, but also have been imposing values that are irrelevant and alien to the soil and culture of these people. One of the major handicaps why very often people fail to solve their own problems seems to lie in this fact. An
official without good knowledge of the moral value of her/his people could either be undemocratic or unenlightened to the cause of her/his people. Therefore, the critical investigation of the moral value of these people is very important even for those who have the power to rule and mobilize them.

1.2.6. World-wide Problem

The Oromo moral value is a part and parcel of the value system of humankind in general and that of Ethiopian people in particular. It may have something to contribute to the well being of humanity and the development of the country, or aspects that are harmful to both. Whether it does something good or bad to the country or to the world at large should be the concern of humanity.

The common elements that it shares with others and the unique features that it entails for itself are also another area of interest to know. From this perspective the Oromo moral value is one that the world wants to know and evaluate; it is that which it should appreciate or blame either partially or wholly. For it to be known, understood and evaluated it must get a presentable form. This issue to a certain degree could be addressed by providing it a systematically organized presentable form.

1. 3. Hypotheses of the Study

Ethiopia, which claims a recorded history of over 3000 years, is still being haunted by the specter of poverty, hunger, ignorance and many other formidable problems. Human problems, just like any other natural and societal phenomena, are effects that presuppose causes. Development that drives away poverty is the result of the active work of humans; and poverty, by contrast, is largely the outcome of the passivity and ignorance of these humans. One hypothesis for the cause of these problems is that there is moral impairment in the life of these people. This can be proved by examining, from moral and ethical viewpoint, the way the Ethiopian people treated one another in their interaction. Fair treatment develops people, whereas unfair treatment impedes their progress.

The modern world does not give as much attention to the knowledge of moral values as it does to the knowledge of facts. The role of morality is ignored and that of science and technology is exalted, except in religious life and institutions. In the attempt to find a solution to whatever problems people encounter, a call is always made upon science and technology alone. Ethiopia shares the predicament of ignoring morality in common
with the whole world. This might have contributed to its failure. One can prove this by
examining the place and the role that moral rule and ethical principles have in the
economic, political, cultural and societal activities of its people, of which one is the
Oromo.

There are heated discussions about the importance of indigenous moral values to
the development and well being of the indigenous people. Strong tendency has developed
to appreciate the exotic values and belittle or abandon the indigenous one. Most of the
educated people of the country seem to have adopted the western value concepts taken up
through education of various forms. Many of the ruling elites of the country also attempt
to use the exotic values, which they consider as the values of the modernized or civilized
world to mobilize and rule the native people. In a situation where and when either no or
little attention is given to the indigenous moral values both by intellectuals and ruling
elites while the majority of people are still bound by these values, [without certainly
knowing what good or bad they contain], there occurs deep value crisis. It is a crisis in
which both the indigenous and exotic moral values are too weak to shape, reshape and
sharpen the views and activities of the indigenous people. Axiologically our people are in
a state of confusion. This can easily be checked by the degree of the prevalence of the
traditional moral value against the exotic one.

The reality of a person is composed of the internal and external aspects. Moral
value in a given society is primarily considered with the internal life of every person in the
society. Today people do not exert efforts to know the rationality and essence of values
that are engraved in their life, as much as they do to understand the truth and falsity of
facts. They explain their own reality mostly in terms of all that are external to themselves.
The perception that we have for the moral value of the Oromo Gada system can be viewed
from this perspective. Consequently we do not clearly and neatly know who the Oromo
really are. This is the other hypothesis that this study ventures to address.

Negligence and insensitiveness towards the moral values of the indigenous society
have prevented people from understanding their own identity. Without the sound
knowledge of their own values it impossible for people, to genuinely know who, what,
where and why they were in the past, what or who they are now. False knowledge of their
reality makes people to live very far away from the kind of life they want to have and live.
Because of the perpetually persisted ignorance of their moral value people develop
misconceptions, bias, prejudices, irrational and superstitious beliefs about one another. With these evils within and amongst them, the creation of harmonious, peaceful and tolerant society is questionable. Although the Oromo claim that they have been in reality peace-loving, generous, friendly and humane, some portrayed them as violent, warriors, barbarians and unfriendly. These assertions together with other undesirable acts and behaviours experienced in the course of history have created the unhealthy environment amongst the different ethnic groups of the country. Whether these assertions are founded or unfounded must be checked.

The Oromo Gada system which is formed on the basis of their moral value has already been characterized as democratic. Democracy is a value system that expresses the legitimate mechanism of seizing, maintaining and using power. It is the antidote of the undemocratic values, since it entails “The sense of fair play, concern for the common good, check and balances to ensure accountability.” (Tripathi, 2003: 7) At the root of any genuine democratic life there is a firm moral foundation. Oromo as people of democratic temper respect the right, dignity, interest and freedom of others. They are also believed to be non-violent and tolerant. Whether this is true or not must be explored. More importantly how strong and rational is the Oromo moral value to support and promote democratic values should be checked. To get rid of all undemocratic values that have been for long with and in them, people need not only a democratic state, but also and more importantly a democratic society. The need to build such a society makes the study of the indigenous moral value imperative. From this perspective, there is a curiosity to check whether there is any grain of democratic value in the Oromo moral system or to know how close to or different from democratic style of life this system is.

1.4. Parameters and Key Questions of the study

Posing key questions is essential for taking the study to its intended goal. Questions of such purpose are double aged. On one side they are the ones that the study seeks to address, and on the other they are those that can be used as searchlights for the investigation. Because of this, questions are one of the major components of this research. Some of the major inquisitive questions, with the help of which the data of this research were collected are stated below.
1. Who are the Oromo of Ethiopia? How are they defined? What constitutes their identity? What is the literal and metaphoric meaning of the word “Oromo”? They are also known by a derogatory term “Galla” What does this term connote?

2. What is the Oromo Gada system? When and how did it originate? Who was the founder of it? What is the philosophy that underlies this system? What did necessitate it? In other words, what purpose does it serve - or what questions does it answer, and what problems does it solve?

3. Why Gada system is believed to be a democratic? What are the specific features that make it democratic? As democratic system what does it share with, and how does it differ from the western form of liberal democracy?

4. How does the Gada harmonize politics and morality? What is politics for man and what is man to politics in Gada system? Who should rule whom? What sort of politics is morally justifiable? From where should power is derived, and whom should it primarily serve? What means must be used to come to power and use it over the subjects and how should one leave public office?

5. What are the moral values that the Oromo Gada system is based on? Or what is morality for the Oromo people? Where did this morality come from? What is “safuu” in the moral life of Oromo? Are moral values based on the will of a superhuman being? Or are they the results of the human genius? What actions and behaviours are believed to be morally right or wrong, good or bad? What kind of things, relations, actions and conducts deserve moral concerns or “safuu”? What are the reasons for evaluating some of the human actions, relations, etc. as morally right and good and some others as morally wrong and evil? Is morality a matter of choice or necessity? Do the Oromo have moral concern for things other than humans? To what degree do the Oromo commit themselves to their own moral principles?

6. How profound and rational are the moral values of the Oromo Gada system? Are they relevant to the daily actions and behaviors of these people? What is the place of love, friendship, humanity, kindness, compassion, tolerance, peace, fairness, keeping promise, telling truth, respect, honesty, etc. in contrast to hatred, enmity, unkindness, cruelty, war, nepotism, corruption, violence, dishonesty, etc.? Why the Gada believes some of these attitudes, behaviours or values as good and others as bad? What is the
highest good in terms of which human actions are evaluated as right or wrong, good or bad?

7. How would the Oromo like to treat others? How would they like to be treated [for themselves] by others? What are the practical evidences that demonstrate the moral quality of how they treated others and how they were treated by others? How these treatments were experienced in the historical, linguistic, sociological, political and economic life and activities? What moral rights do they grant to people of different ages, sex and social groups? What is the moral response of an Oromo towards a person in sickness, misery or trouble?

8. How does an Oromo husband treat his wife? And how does an Oromo wife treat her husband? How do parents take care of their children? How do the Oromo sons and daughters behave towards their aged parents? What is the place of neighborhood, friendship and peace in the Oromo moral value?

9. What moral concern do the Oromo have for work? How laziness and carelessness are considered? What are the social pathologies that deserve the attention of the Oromo safuu? How rampant is the tendency of committing immoral acts and exhibiting unethical behaviours among the Oromo people? How one would rate the tendency of Oromo civil servants in abusing their power and profession? What are the weaknesses of the Oromo morality?

1.5. Significance of the study

Truth is always the pursuit of mankind. As rational beings humans raise questions and attempt to answer them reasonably. As Pojman puts, there is no question more important than the question, “How should we live our lives?”(2005: xi) It has been and still is the endeavor of mankind to know what the value of life is, and what system to pursue to secure and promote this life. Knowledge enables man to live a meaningful and fulfilled life as individuals and … live together in prosperous and flourishing community. (Pojman, 2005: xi) As they pursue knowledge of facts people earnestly need to gain the knowledge of moral values too. Conducting research is one major means of acquiring authentic knowledge of human reality. “Research aims at discovering the truth” (Ghosh, 2000: 185); the truth that has not been known, or that has been less or wrongly known.
Being motivated by curiosity and necessity “Human minds always want to know the unknown, and explore the unexplored areas. (Gosh, 2000: 189)

Social research can equip one with detailed and sufficient knowledge about the working and organizations of a society and institutions.”(Gosh, 2000: 191) It is by knowing the hitherto unknown, and by exploring the unexplored that mankind empowers itself in order to make the survival and flourishing of life possible. Research is undertaken, therefore, to discover answers to questions by applying scientific method. (Ibid: 185) The present study of the traditional moral value of the Oromo Gada system is probably the first of its kind in this form. It is a venture to the unknown, less or incorrectly known aspect of these people. Its goal is thus to make the unknown known, the less known more known, to correct the incorrectly perceived ones, and to coherently, consistently and critically organize the hitherto unorganized and unsubstantiated ideas of the subject. In this sense, this study has made an attempt to bring about advancement in the organization and systematization of Oromo indigenous moral values.

Oromo so far have been transmitting the knowledge and experiences of their values through oral literature. Should they keep on doing the same forever? For their moral value to be well known, understood and appraised; and furthermore, to be taught, learnt and transmitted; it has to be framed and organized in a written and theoretical form. It is believed that this study does not only serve the purpose of bringing the moral value of these people to light, but also to provide it with a systematically organized presentable form. When considered from this angle, the output of this research could make a theoretical contribution to further knowledge and research in this particular area.

Under the shadow of modernization, most of the educated people of the country have been taken away from their indigenous value, and have been placed somewhere beyond their own domain. In other words, they are in a grave value crisis, which has “many interrelated dimensions and interleaved layers.” (Tripathi, 2003: 2) In the spirit of this study, this alienation must no more be allowed to happen to the young generation that belongs to the future. As they constitute the major component of their identity and integrity, the school children of these people must be given the opportunity of learning the merits and demerits of the indigenous values of their own community. They need to begin their school life with what is their own. They must be given the opportunity of opening their eyes to their own reality. This research report may serve as a rudimentary material to
teach and study the content and the goal, the importance and deficiency of the indigenous moral values of Oromo.

Moral value is that in terms of which other values are understood and explained. This study of the Oromo traditional moral value thus provides a clue to the values that embody the material, societal, spiritual, political, aesthetic and environmental life of these people. The discussions and narratives made, the findings arrived at and the conclusion drawn altogether could provoke further studies, and provide information to any concerned body. People make morality, and they themselves, to some extent, are made by it. Human actions and conducts are not only dictated by external factors, but also motivated by moral principles that govern their internal life. Social phenomena such as power, profession, responsibility, service, interest, aspirations and the like, are very much susceptible to different kinds of abuse unless they are based on firm moral and ethical principles. Viewed from this perspective, the result of this research could be of a paramount importance to policy makers, leaders, politicians, donors, researchers, and social workers in their effort to build the capacity of people for development and betterment.

Although Ethiopia is proud of itself for being a country with immense and rich diversity unfortunately this richness in diversity has not so far contributed as much as it could, for making it a great nation. Paradoxically, it is now one of the poorest and the least developed nations of the world. Diversity was not only well handled rather considered as a curse – because of arrogance and ignorance. This had been a denial to the pride of the nation. This research may come up with one of the very reasons why this nation has been so far strangled in the web of humiliating history.

Besides the common values they share, each ethnic group in the country has values of its own. To understand the common and unique values, the interdependence and independence of its peoples the knowledge of value is very important. This provides a necessary ground for creating mutual understanding and promoting good will and tolerance among them. In other words, a well-established knowledge of the indigenous moral values of social groups “brings out the unity among diversities and helps to strengthen social cohesion.” (Ghosh, 2000: 192) In this light the study is, therefore, up to the interest of the Oromo and Ethiopian people in particular, and also to those of who relentlessly work for the good of mankind in general.
1. 6. Methodology

This study attempts to philosophically investigate the traditional moral values of the Ethiopian Oromo as expounded by Gada system. The type of data required for the research determines the kind of method to be employed. Owing to the nature of the study qualitative method is the only means that is employed for data collection. The qualitative data of the research are mainly obtained from primary and secondary sources. Consequently the sources of the data are of two kinds – documentary [literature] and field works. The first provides the secondary data the second gives the primary data. The data gathered are organized and reported, and finally analyzed philosophically.

1. 6. 1. Archival and Documentary Sources

In an attempt to lay a preliminary ground for the research we explored archives and libraries as indirect and secondary sources. We read the available books published on the subject relevant to the study. We attempted to explore libraries at both Addis Ababa University (Ethiopia) and Panjab University (India), and also tried to read some relevant published and unpublished written materials available in the cultural centers [or offices] in Ethiopia. Scholars, researchers and writers of different academic backgrounds and disciplines have produced quite good number of materials about the Oromo geography, history, culture, language, religion, proverbs, folklore, folktale, etc. Our exposure to this scholarly works rendered us a general orientation, helped us in deepening our understanding and in directing me to the right course.

We have not confined ourselves to the reviewing of only the published materials. We have also explored the relevant unpublished documents such as survey studying, reports, letters, minutes, narrations, resolution and articles. In the process of reviewing these published and unpublished materials, and gathering data from these sources, we have learnt that either little or no literary works have been done on Oromo’s moral value. But luckily quite good number of works has been produced on the Oromo Gada system, which is the integral system of various values. We, therefore, used the Oromo Gada system as a fundamental source from where the Oromo moral value could be extracted. Not only the written ones but also the recorded oral materials such as blessings, prayers, ceremonial and ritual speeches are reviewed.
1. 6. 2. Methods of Fieldworks

The sites that we selected for the fieldwork are Borana, Guji, West Shawaa, Jimma, West Hararghe and East Wallagaa Administrative Zones and Addis Ababa (otherwise Finfinne), all of which are located in the Oromia regional state. Originally all the administrative zones of the region were selected as study sites. But due to the financial shortage and time constraints only the above sites were finally selected. Indeed these selected sites are considered to be the representative samples of all the parts of the regional state.

Borana and Guji zones, which are within the radius of 650 to 770 km from the capital, i.e., Addis Ababa, are situated in the south-eastern and southern part of Oromia, and of Ethiopia respectively. These two zones are selected for the study, because they are believed to be where the Gada System, to some extent, has still an authority to regulate or guide the life and activities of people as a living institution. “Borana alone still retain … the ancient Gada socio-political system;” (Sahlu, 2002: 3) Adding to these Legesse comments, the “Ethiopian Borana is where the institution has survived and continued to thrive.” (2000: 81) As they have preserved their Gada system more than any other zones of Oromia it is believed that they could provide at least some of the classical elements of Oromo moral value. The majority of people in both zones are Waageeffatatota, believers of Waaga, God.

We have never been to Borana and Guji zones for long time before. Although we are fluent in Afaan Oromo, it was not easy for us to get with the dialect of the Borana and Guji at least for the first couple of days. Both the Borana and Guji speak Afaan Oromo. We also speak the same language. But as witnessed by Sahlu, “The distinct dialect with its elaborate vocabulary of Borana is difficult to be understood by the central and western Oromo, to whom the same words often represent different meanings.” (2002: 5) Having been born and brought up in the central Oromia it was not easy for us to communicate with the Borana and Guji elders. Since we did not have time to stay more and get accustomed to it, we had to hire a native speaker in order to make the process of data gathering smoother. But for the second time we did it on our own. With the exception of Borana and Guji, the cultural traits of the other sites are mixed with that of non-Oromo communities.
West Shawaa and East Wallagaa are located within the radius of 400 km away to the west of the capital. The majority of Oromo people in both zones are Christians - Orthodox, Catholic or Protestants, the first being the largest. Jimma which is to the south of the capital city is about 330 km away, and West Hararghe is found to the east from the capital. It is also about 350-400 km far away from the centre. The Oromo of Jimma and West Hararghe are predominantly Muslims. Although all the sites were visited the major part of study is conducted in Borana, Guji and West Shawaa zones. We had only twenty days to stay in both Borana and Guji zones. But because of two reasons we visited West Shawaa several times. One, than all the other zones in the regional state we know better the moral value of the Oromo of this zone. Second, it is located in the hinterland of the country and within the radius of 300 km away from the capital. Owing to its proximate location it was repeatedly visited for data gathering.

West Shawaa is one of the Oromia zones where there are a lot of intermingling, assimilation or inter-ethnic culture exchanges. The Oromo of this zone have received some of the values of non-Oromo settlers and have given some of their own to the latter. Despite the intermingling or assimilation of cultures Oromo still retained some of the basic structures and features of the Gada system, particularly its ritual feature. The zone is particularly selected for comparative purpose. How much of the Oromo’s moral value is affected by the intermingling or assimilation of different cultures? Is the effect of this intermingling constructive or detrimental to the value of the local Oromo?

Addis Ababa is selected as seventh site of the study. With a population of about 3,000,000 it is the capital of Ethiopia and at the same time that of the Regional State of Oromia. Most of the literary works done on Oromo are available in the Oromia regional offices, Universities, Colleges, and cultural institutions found in the capital. In view of the nature of the subject of the study we employed only two methods of data gathering. These are in depth-interview and observation.

### 1.6.2.1. In-depth Interview

We designed a detailed key in-depth interview. Three reasons forced us to adopt this as the major method of the research. One, the extensive body of the Oromo moral value does not exist in written form, and hence it has to be extracted from the practical life, experience, norms (ethos), behaviours, etc. perceptible and explainable in oral form.
Two, some of the key informants we were able to contact could not adequately read and write. Third, the data of the research are purely of qualitative nature that requires analytic and detailed approach. For these three reasons, we took for granted that the only feasible method is in-depth interview.

The core issues that the study should address are listed in the format of the interview. Basically the interview is set in a structured format. But we have not confined ourselves only to this format since there could be information that would not be captured by this alone. Put it differently, we also used unstructured interview patterns in order to capture the information that would come up in the process of undertaking the structured interview. The structured interview was employed to make the study objective, consistent, coherent and well developed. As such, it corrects the subjective nature and unsatisfactory data provided by the unstructured interview. The employment of the unstructured interview with the informants, officials and any layman also helped us, to some extent, to catch those information originally missed out by the structured interview and to avoid the limitations imposed by it.

We conducted interview with informants within a period from July 12, 2007 to June 2008. The key informants with whom the interviews were held are believed to be men of great insight, rich experience, commendable memory and knowledge of traditional values and life. In terms of academic background some were illiterate, and others were literate from high school graduates up to Master’s Degree. Some of the responses of the informants were rational, and relevant to the subject, whereas that of some others were not. It is on the basis of these that the attempt to single out the strong and weak sides, merits and demerits of the Oromo moral value was made.

Conducting research, as mentioned elsewhere, on values is a daunting task to administer. Particularly the research on moral value that pervades all human actions and behaviours is the most difficult one. The data of such research cannot be quantified or measured, because of its qualitative nature. The fact that it is about traditional moral values, which is largely based on oral narratives, makes it even more daunting. No other option is adequate than extracting data from the oral narratives of informants, the actions and behaviours of people and written documents. In this sense, the data are basically facts of legend, sociological, anthropological, linguistic, geographical, economic and political nature. It covers such a vast terrain.
The research is the combination of many different areas. We can categorize them in two – non-philosophical disciplines (sociology, anthropology, linguistic, history, geography, politics and economics) on one hand and philosophy on the other. We are aware that as students of philosophy, we certainly lack sound knowledge of other disciplines. But we are convinced to indulge into it because of two main reasons. One, we persuaded ourselves that philosophy must be used for understanding, explaining and transforming the reality of mankind. Two, we developed a strong belief that philosophical reflection on the Oromo traditional moral value should begin from somewhere regardless of whatever the quality and dimension of the research might be. Sociological, anthropological, historical, etc. approach is used for the collection of data, and philosophy is used to critically assess the validity of the Oromo traditional moral value on the basis of the collected data. Viewed from this angle the research is interdisciplinary.

1.6.2.2. Observation

Observation is the other important source of data for the study at hand. It provides the first hand knowledge of the object to be studied, which in this case is the traditional moral value of the Oromo society. Our observational experience is not confined only to the period of the study. It also includes the earlier personal experience that we gathered since childhood. To begin with preliminary information was gathered from observation of empirical facts, events taking place in the daily life, activities and interactions of people. Our observation of the behaviors that the Oromo people exhibit in their interactions, their ceremonial and ritual practices helped us to at least roughly understand how the Oromo act and behave either individually or collectively towards others, and whether others do the same towards them. In other words, from observation we gained some knowledge of how the Oromo do treat human groups such as children, young and old, persons of opposite sex and strangers, and how would they permit others to treat themselves.

The main purpose of this study is not simply to report the traditional moral value of the Oromo society as a fact, but to critically evaluate whether it is rationally founded, relevant and valid. This dimension makes the study generally philosophical, and particularly ethical. In addition to the last chapter that is entirely the critical analysis of the study, critical assessments are given either in the context; or at the end of a topic or a chapter as per the necessities and in the last chapter of the study.
1.8. Chapter Scheme of the Study

This study is organized into six chapters. The first chapter is titled “Introduction”. It consists of topics, sections and sub-sections. The major topics of the chapter are background, statement of the problem, hypotheses of the study, parameters and key questions of the study, significance of the study, methodology and review of literature. Chapter two is generally concerned with the introduction of the Oromo of Ethiopia. It attempts to pinpoint the specific features that constitute the identity of this ethnic group. To that effect some of their historical, geographical, demographic, linguistic and ethnographic features are considered to answer the leading questions set for the chapter. Chapter three is concerned with the exploration of the Gada System of the Oromo society. The Oromo of Ethiopia have a comprehensive political, social, moral and religious system known as Gada. Showing how this system incorporates social, economic, political, religious and moral values is the purpose of this chapter. The qualitative data collected from both primary and secondary sources are used to answer the key questions that are employed as searchlights for the critical investigation of the system.

The title of Chapter four is the “Moral Values of Oromo”. It looks into the traditional moral values of the Oromo society on which their Gada System is based. The Oromo people ascribe values to things, actions, relations, conducts, systems, etc. They do these in terms of the desirable or undesirable quality they entail. But not all are moral values, because the question of rightness or wrongness, goodness or badness is not the concern of all. The Oromo word “safuu” designates the morality of the Oromo society. The chapter tries to show what the word “safuu” refers to, where it is derived from, what actions deserve moral judgment, what moral rights are granted and what duties are imposed. Or it explores what actions and behaviours are morally desirable or undesirable. The data on the basis of which this chapter is organized are obtained from the primary and secondary sources. Chapter five is concerned with the practical application of the traditional moral values of the Oromo society. It is titled “Moral Concerns for Others and Oneself”. The treatment of others and oneself is the core point of morality. In precise words, the respect that the moral agent has for the life, dignity, right, interest, freedom and development of the others as well as oneself is its central concern. In the intent of practically examining the Oromo traditional moral value, the chapter explores what human characters the Oromo praise or blame, how they as an individual or a group treats others;
what moral rights they grant to people of different ages, sex, professions, social groups, etc.; how they respond to the ill treatment they face; and what the depth of their moral concern for values such as justice, peace, friendship, work, etc. is. The data that go into the organization of this chapter are again from the primary and secondary sources.

Chapter six which is titled, “Critical Assessment and Concluding Remarks” attempts to critically evaluate the reports of the second, third, fourth and fifth chapters. The chapter is primarily concerned with the examination of the strength and weakness of the Oromo moral values. Recommendations are given on the basis of the identified strength and discovered weakness. The important actions, reactions and interactions; ideas, behaviours and interpretations are figured out for the purpose of identifying the strong and weak sides. The data analyzed and synthesized in this chapter are largely drawn from the preceding chapters, although primary and secondary data are also included.

1.9. Review of Literature

This section tries to explain some key concepts pertaining to the subject of this research; and to lay a theoretical background of the subject in terms of which the thesis is framed. The section is divided into two major sub-sections- conceptual framework and theoretical framework. In the first concepts such as moral values, morality, moral agent and responsibility, moral character, the historical development of moral life are discussed. In the second the major competitive theories of ethics are reviewed among which virtue ethics is selected for reviewing the Oromo moral value.

1.9.1. Conceptual Framework

1.9.1.1. The Concept of Moral Value

Many people may know the word moral value, but not all of them understand what the word exactly means. It is, therefore, necessary to at least crudely explain the meaning of this key concept. For men, whatever makes the development of their life possible is desirable, and hence good; and that which does not is not. Anything that is friendly to this life is taken care of. The concept and problem of value is derived from such concerns that humanity had for life. As Barry puts, “History reveals that no society has ever been without some value system, and every individual has some code of value.” (1983: 93) In other words, value is an inalienable quality of humanity.
Just as facts do, values affect human life and progress. The overall quality of life is very much influenced by values embodying the different parts constituting this life. We act and behave according to our value system or orientation. We evaluate actions and behaviours with reference to certain value standard. The quality of being or having worth is not naturally given to action or a thing. It is rather borne out of the need of making human life good. Thus “Man is the creator of all values.” (Tripathi, 2003: 179) Any action or behavior that satisfies their biological, material, social, political, psychological, intellectual, religious, aesthetical and moral desires has value, and hence is believed to be good. But what do we exactly mean by the word value?

It is difficult to come up with the neat definition of it. However, it must at least be defined roughly. “Values are emotionally charged beliefs about what is desirable, or offensive, right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate.” (Howard, 1992: 470) “What we call value is that which we desire or are interested in. (Patrick, 2004: 433) The social, emotional and rational beingness of mankind necessitates values, without which the survival and flourishing of humanity is just precarious. People want desirable things to happen, and undesirable ones not to happen. The former are beneficial whereas the latter are harmful. Therefore, we cannot conceive of human life without value that decisively constitutes the personality and the relations of human individuals.

The crucial issue, however, is not whether there are values in human life, rather to understand whether “they will advance or retard life, whether they will be consistent or not.”(Barry, 1983: 93) There are “material values, societal values, psychological values, aesthetic values, ethical values, and spiritual values.”(Tripathi, 2003: vii) All these go to the making of human life and personality. “A good life is looked upon as a harmonious realization of all these values.”(Ibid) We cannot really act or behave without some kind of value orientation. In connection to this Barry states, “Much of how we see ourselves is determined by what we value, for our values shape our thoughts, feelings, actions, and perceptions.” (1983: 90) The way we value what we value, why we value and how we interpret it, explain and understand this value may create harmony or engender disharmony. The causes of peaceful and harmonious togetherness or conflicts, wars, violence and disagreements are deeply rooted in values.

Values are of two kinds- intrinsic and extrinsic (instrumental). A thing has intrinsic value when it is pursued for its own sake. “Intrinsic values are good not because we desire
them; rather we desire them because they are good- they are absolutely necessary for human flourishing.” (Pojman, 2005: 71) An extrinsic value is, however, one that is not pursued for its own sake, rather for the sake of something else. In fact intrinsic and extrinsic values are not always exclusive. What is valued by one person, group of persons or community for its own sake may be pursued by others as means for the sake of something else. There are still values that are commonly understood as either intrinsic or extrinsic. Both intrinsic and extrinsic values could be either productive or counterproductive. “We should prefer values that are productive and lasting to ones that are not.” (Barry, 1983: 94)

This study is concerned with moral value, which is a set of “rules that are necessary for human survival and flourishing” (Pojman, 2005: 78) It is the value of human conduct or act, or the value with reference to which human actions and behaviours are evaluated as right or wrong, good or bad. Moral value is intrinsic for it is pursued not as a means but as an end. The intrinsic nature of moral value emanates from the intrinsic life of mankind. Invariably all moral values involve a decision or choice about what one ought to do or to be in a specific situation. If what ought to be done is done, then a morally right or good action is performed. This is an action that is performed in the best interest of the individual or the society. But if what ought not to be done is done then the action of the moral agent is judged as morally wrong or evil, because it is against the best interest of either the individual or group life.

Development flourishes when moral values are actively working in the human’s daily life and experience. But when values are suppressed or neglected human life and development falls into a state of stagnation. When such historical juncture is encountered people seek a new moral value that helps them move forward. The search for good society and a good life are perennial quests in the advancement of human civilization. (Tripathi, 2003: 68)

In contrast to the self centered immoral life, devoid of sense of duties and responsibilities towards others, a good life for all can be assured on the basis of virtues, ethical sensitivities and moral conduct of individuals. (Tripathi, 2003: 32) A good society is not what is given, but what is to be made. It is human creation. The commitment of people, either individually or collectively to productive moral rules is the crucial key for the attainment of good life. “A good person must be a moral person. His personal conduct
and social interrelationships must be based on ethical principles. In fact ethical and moral values occupy the centre-stage in good life. (Tripathi, 2003: 32) There is causal relationship between the moral values of the society that provide guiding principles to the moral agent and the act or behavior of the agent. When persons either personally or collectively act in the spirit of how much good they can do to and share with others instead of how much they can grab or hoard from others, then they are guided by ethics of duty and responsibility. Thus without the commitments of individuals or group of individuals to ethical and moral standards, the prevalence of good society is unthinkable.

Moral values change with the change of human conditions and ever growing knowledge. An act or behavior that was believed to be immoral some times in the past might be considered moral; and that which was pursued as moral earlier might be blamed as immoral today. Whatever is believed to be right and good at the present-day may be evaluated to be wrong or evil in the future to come. The act and practice that was not viewed from moral perspective sometimes in the past might have become an object of morality at the present. But the intrinsic nature of human value and the issue of right and wrong, good and bad remains the same. The point, however, is the failure of humanity to rationally and consistently notice this change. When people fail to perceive the elements of change taking place in values it is the knowledge of the past that may become dominant in guiding the present. At this juncture, contradiction emergens between the forces of development and the power of the old age moral belief. In this case moral value may become an obstructing factor instead of being a change agent. It is well observed by Tripathi (2003: 117) as, “In the changed circumstances many of the older customs become more of bondage, a burden, rather than a source of inspiration and upliftment.” When people fail to critically examine and reexamine them certainly these values become forces of destruction. Values that were originally called forth, to basically ward off human burdens should not become burdens on humans.

1.9.1.2. The Historical Development of Moral Life

People, no doubt, are social beings. “Humans are social beings and our actions often affect those around us and even the general quality of life in our society.”(Michael, 1991: 2) The social and rational beingness of humanity entails its moral beingness. Put differently, “Morality is a social activity… If you were the only person in the world there
would not be any morality.” (Pojman, 2005: 7) Individuals cannot acquire human features without a social environment that humanizes them, and human society cannot exist without the aggregate existence of humanized individuals. One always makes the other. The important issue however is not that human individual live together and form society, but how they manage to live together. In the study of moral philosophy thinkers are concerned more generally with questions about how one ought to live, what could count as good reasons for acting in one way rather than another, and what constitutes a good life for human beings (Norman, 1985: 1)

Individuals enter into and live in social life with conflicting interests. Interests in one form or another bind people together. It is that which either harmonizes or antagonizes their relations. Wherever there is scarcity, “human society will never escape the problem of equitable distribution of the physical and cultural goods, which provide for the preservation and fulfillment of human life.” (Niebuhr, 1960: 1) Humans are in constant conflict as long as the treasures, which nature and society provide are not enough to satisfy at least their reasonable wants. Yet as rational beings people are not carried away by conflicts to a common ruin. The first demand of human life is survival, and the next one is to live a quality life. This necessitated morality to arbitrate the conflict between the selfish interest of oneself and the selfish interests of others. Thus persons as human and rational beings are also moral beings, since they create and live in their moral world.

Grasping and judging which action is morally right or wrong, desirable or undesirable is in the nature of humans.” Only man is a moral being, consciously reflecting upon right and wrong behavior, approving or disapproving, voluntarily choosing, and suffering regret for wrong doing.” (Patrick, 2004: 425) Humankind lives in the world where it makes not only decisions but also where right or wrong ways of doing things is established as a norm. To make the survival and flourishing of life possible people must give up some of their egoistic interests. As pointed out by Patrick, “When men live in communities many egoistic impulses have to be suppressed for the sake of the common good.” (2004: 425) It is morality that makes one consider the interest of others by suppressing one’s own. Indeed this constitutes the essence of morality.

Neither individuals nor society can exist without moral and ethical life. Every human being is, to some extent, free to choose between the right and wrong course of actions. But it must be noted that, “while it is likely plausible to consider that what makes
morality necessary is conflict” (Singer, 1991: 11), it is not enough to say that it exists only because of conflict. For the flourishing of morality there “must also be willingness and capacity to look for shared solutions to conflicts.”(Ibid) People give up some of their personal interests for the sake of the common cause. They voluntarily submit their individual will to the general will. Those who have internalized such values act and behave responsibly even in a situation where there is no one to observe them. In principle, people obey moral rules not because it is a means for some other end, but because it is an end in itself; and hence obeyed by the free choice of the agent.

Different disciplines are directed towards solving problems and answering questions of human life. Natural and social sciences of different fields have offered considerable number of solutions and answered a lot of questions. Ethics also has been attempting to develop the moral life of humanity in order to settle problems and answer questions that have ever been faced and raised about the right or wrong, good or bad actions of humans. The achievements scored in the ethical life of mankind, however, are not as remarkable and immense as the ones gained in the fields of other sciences. Being hampered by different factors the moral life of the present day man is too much impaired to address the evils of this world.

1.9.1.3. Challenges of Moral Value

Human life is an integral system, both individually and collectively. Material, societal, aesthetic, ethical, religious etc. values constitute the integral system of this life. “It would be most wonderful if every individual could realize all the values in his or her personal life.”(Tripathi, 2003: 34) Unfortunately, however, people do not give significant attention to values. Particularly moral values are not given due consideration especially in the modern world. “Some people think that morality is out of date. They regard it as a system of nasty puritanical prohibitions, mainly designed to stop people having fun.”(Singer, 1991: 1) The importance of the knowledge of values is largely viewed as insignificant as compared to that of a fact. Paradoxically, we live a life that exists in, with and on value system. Yet we do not compel ourselves to genuinely know these values. The consequence of this is value crisis, the major cause of which is traced to a narrow perception of good life attainable in terms of only material values. (Tripathi, 2003: vii)
The larger part of the world is being dominated by the western scientific and materialistic view of life and value that “places its faith in the certitude of scientific knowledge alone.” (Tripathi, 2003: 31) Of course, no doubt that there are studies of values in the west - but not as values rather as facts. Said in other words, the studies of value undertaken in the west are more of value-free endeavors. They “are more of empirical than conceptual in nature. Their aim is to present an objective and scientific picture of values, as they exist in the individual and in the society.”(Tripathi, 2003: 30) The current world as a whole is largely concerned with the teaching and studying of science and technology. No reasonable number of scholars is engaged in the research of moral values as much as they are in that of science and technology. The major focus of the day is to produce “only careerists and job seekers, and not change agents for social and human progress.”(Tripathi, 2003: vi)

But studying value as pure empirical fact and not as value in its own right as such does not provide genuine knowledge of human reality. It is not only facts that explains and influences human survival and flourishing but also values. Some of the outstanding questions of humans [such as for example, how to secure and lead a good life, how to be a good person and create a good society] cannot be answered by the scientific knowledge of facts alone. Knowledge of human facts alone is a partial view of human reality. With partial and inadequate knowledge of human reality the creation of good life and good society is inconceivable. The knowledge of a fact does not necessarily help people to choose morally right course of action and to pursue a good goal of life. Without moral rules and ethical values, the “education imparted to students does not refine their social, moral and human sensitiveness, nor does it inculcate in them a sense of responsibility to work for the common good and to serve the society through their knowledge and skills.”(Tripathi, 2003: vi)

Humanity seeks to create and live good life while underestimating moral value that is imperative for the possibility of this good life. This is the paradox of man. People today think that good life is attainable only by improving the social, economic and political conditions of society. This is highly praised particularly in the western tradition. No doubt that the improvements of these different aspects of human society are good. But without moral and ethical goodness that guides and enlightens them, no good can withstand the
challenges that threaten it. A good life and good society with no moral goodness at the centre of its value system is contingent and vulnerable.

Today it seems that what people lack is not the material resource, knowledge and skill; but moral and ethical commitment. Our contemporary world is more resourceful and powerful today than it had ever been in the past. Achievements of science and technology have given humanity a tremendous power to solve the complex problems it faces. Yet the current world is full of complex and complicated evils more today than it had ever been before. Billions suffer from poverty in this world of plenty. The history of human society witnesses that men in principle prefer love to hate, peace to war, togetherness to isolation, life to death, good to evil, etc. The best minds of humankind have ever been trying to find out ways of dispelling all forms of evils and promoting good.

But none of these wishes and efforts was able to rescue mankind from the stiff burdens of countless evils. For most of the evils humanity is the major cause. This is because not “much thought was given to the development of good human persons, persons with integrity, commitment and values who will run the modern social system and its different institutions.” (Tripathi, 2003: v) In other words, humankind has not yet learnt how to make the world a best place to live in, although it has ever been dreaming for it. When moral and ethical principles are neglected humanity does not only miss good qualities of life but also be forced to have and suffer from bad ones. The discouragement of moral values is at the same time the encouragement of “disvalues like greed, violence, and competitive fierceness.” (Tripathi, 2003: 69) That means the present day man suffers from the poverty of good will, not from the poverty of material wealth and knowledge as such.

While the current world is severely aching from various moral pains that should be urgently addressed, humanity still pours down all the resources and energies of this world to the development of science and technology alone. Indeed this is good, but not the only good. Many good things can be abused if they are not based on and supported by some other ultimate good, i.e., moral good. The achievements of science and technology could serve good as well as bad ends. Whenever they are used with good will they serve the good cause of humans, whereas when they are wield by those who have evil intention they are doomed to serve evil purposes. More over science and technology have no power to address all questions and problems of human society. Put differently, not only that
science and technology cannot answer all human questions, but also they themselves may lead humanity to a tragic end if they are not enlightened and guided by moral rules. Imagine, for example, how much resources of the present day world goes to the production of war armaments, the ultimate end of which is nothing but evils that devour human life while millions are dying of starvation. It means, for it is left behind the curtain morality is not able to respond, to many of the human challenges that are decisively of moral nature.

Of course moral values are still there deep and functional in the life experience and activities of people. They have contributed a lot to make the survival, development and togetherness of people possible. Still they keep on doing the same. What is being strongly argued here, however, is that they are not developed to the extent of considerably preventing humans from doing evils against their fellow human beings and the world, and from abusing all good achievements available at their disposal. They are not obeyed as much as they should be obeyed. Humans should obey moral laws not as a means for some other end, but as Kant observed as an end in itself. According to Kant’s account, without authentic moral commitments and respects at their basis, all good things such as material resources, knowledge, Power, honor, skill, beauty, etc. can easily be abused or turned into means and sources of various evils.

All the atrocities and inhuman acts that people of this contemporary world inflict upon one another certainly suggest that the question how we should live together has not been well addressed. Surely there is failure to control selfish impulses. On top of that there is immense ignorance and arrogance that make people to commit evils. Consequently, the world still needs morality and even more urgently today than it had ever been in the gone days. Undoubtedly, ethical awareness and acts are the necessary conditions for human survival and flourishing. “If we have to endure as a free, civilized people we must take ethics more seriously than we have before.”(Pojman, 2005: xvi) As Titus (1954: 4) argued we want life not death, happiness not pain, and to live full and abundant lives and not the miserable ones; and morality is the attempt to discover and to live the good life.

One thing is certain. People still have moral rules or principles, as stated earlier. But these rules or principles alone are not able to guarantee moral behaviours unless these people commit themselves to these principles. No effort of significant magnitude is being exerted to make people cultivate their internal conscience as much as they do their
external features. Moral values [in the form of rules] govern the internal character and the external action of human persons. People cannot commit themselves unless they internalize the moral principles. Today, this is one serious problem in the moral life of human society.

The other problem is related to the rigidity of some moral principles and values. Customs and moral laws must constantly be refined. (Patrick, 2004: 427) Laws could be responsive only if they are dynamic. People should not blindly follow or obey rules. They must critically examine their rational basis, in order to know whether they contain flaws or free of them. Definitely moral rules are the bodies of rights and duties, responsibilities and obligations that require decisions and choices for the actions and behaviours expected of people. Right decisions and correct choices could be made only if the moral agents critically reflect on and evaluate the principle guiding their course of action. It is only then that one can know what she/he ought to do or to be. Moral philosophy or ethics has developed in response to this necessity.

1.9.1.4. Morality

The term morality which is derived from the word “moral” denotes a principle, a belief, or a norm of distinguishing right from wrong, good from bad action or conduct. Gyeke defines it as “a set of social rules and norms intended to guide the conduct of people in a society. The rules and norms emerge from… and anchored in people’s beliefs about right and wrong conduct, and good and bad character.” (1998:55) In this sense, morality is a form of social consciousness that expresses the human action or behavior that is either desirable or undesirable in relation to the life, interest, right, dignity and freedom of oneself or others.

Why do humans need morality; do they have problems that cannot be tackled by and through other efforts and mechanisms than it? As discussed earlier human beings value their life intrinsically- the life that is pursued as an end, not as a means. Its survival and flourishing is always the top and urgent issue of humans. Morality is concerned with the actions and behaviors that make the survival and flourishing of this life possible. These are desirable and hence praiseworthy. Any action or behavior of man that is against the good purpose of life is morally undesirable, and hence blameworthy. Humankind needs morality because it has challenges that no other discipline or institution can address.
Challenges arise from the issues of togetherness, relationships, professions, business, work conditions, development, economic and political spaces, social positions and roles, autonomies and restrictions, etc. In all these people treat one another according to the values ascribed to and the attitudes formed towards one another. Morality is engrossed with this treatment, whether it is fair or not is the heart of its objective. Grayling (2005: 18) holds that morality “fundamentally concerns how we treat each other, its starting point is: good manners.”

In morality the focus is human beings and their actions; and hence the latter are both the subject and the object of the former. As subjects they make it, and as objects they are/can be/ made by it. Human beings are actors, doers or moral agents, whose actions or behaviours are evaluated as right or wrong, good or bad. “Those whose actions, character and motives can be morally evaluated are called moral agents.” (Whitebeck, 1998: 14) The actions they perform and the behaviours they exhibit, may affect either positively or negatively the well-being of oneself or others. That is why they are liable to moral judgment. As objects of morality human beings are those upon whom the actions or behaviours of the moral agents are imposed. This shows that as social beings humans act, react and interact in their interrelations. Morality seeks that the action that the moral agents perform or the behaviours they exhibit should promote life. In other words, the ultimate aim of morality is to make the world a safe place for humans to live in and flourish.

Morality is by nature social. We cannot think of its possible existence outside social framework. What gave rise to it is largely the conflict of interest that embedded social life. As Gyeke (1998: 55) puts it, “... if there is no such a thing as human society there would be no such a thing as morality.” But the mere fact that man is a social being alone cannot make him a moral being. It is impossible to think of morality without the capacity of making discriminatory judgment between what is right and wrong, good and bad. Viewed as such reason is a necessary condition although not a sufficient one for the emergence and development of moral life.

Let us put this question to our selves. Would it be a necessity for humanity to have morality if all human beings do right and good things, or if they avoid committing evils? Gricic contends that we would not need morality if “human beings were fully altruistic, unselfishly concerned for the welfare of others.(1989: 2) Although humans are basically
social, deep down in their material and mental life they have a tendency of not granting to others as much as they do to themselves. This makes conflict of interest and value inevitable. In their social interactions people individually or collectively act either in the best interest of themselves (which may be pursued against that of others) or in the best interest of others. The basic mission of morality is to resolve this conflict. It attempts to settle it in the best interest of humanity or society. Having concern for the interest of others and making people develop a sense of duty and responsibility for their well-being is its central objective.

When morality advocates the best interest of humanity or society it appears as if it is against that of the individual moral agents. In actual fact what morality is against is not the self-interest of individuals but the self interest that is harmful to the interest of others. The interest of one should not be denied for the sake of that of the other. There has to be a balanced attitude for both the self-interest of the moral agent, and the interests of the recipients. Having a concerned attitude for others without denying the required weight for oneself, and taking care of oneself without denying the others is the golden mean, in Aristotelian term. That is why Grayling (2005: 30) again says, “… really thoughtful self-interest would give high priority to concern for others; for selfishness is self-defeating.”

Without self-interest it is impossible to think of other-interest, and without other-interest it is impossible for self-interest to exist. In their interests human beings are tied together. As I have interest, for example, in others; others also have interest in me. That means I ought to keep my interest not only for my own sake but also for the sake of others. Therefore, “The process of living gives rise in men, to the need of determining what is right and wrong and of establishing ideas with which they can praise or blame others and even themselves.”(Katen, 1973: 225)

The other important feature of morality is the freedom of choice. It is impossible to conceive of morality without freedom. The moral agent is free to choose between two courses of action. He/she is free to choose either the course of action that promotes his/her best interest at the expense of others; or the course of action that advances the best interest of the society. In other words he/she is not conditioned by external factor for pursuing this or that course of action. It is not because he/she anticipates a reward or punishment from somewhere that the moral agent chooses to do this or that but because of his/her moral commitment.
The motive to do morally right or wrong arises from within the moral agent. This is where the essence of morality lies. What a matter most is not only that one does what is morally right, but whether she/he does it out of her/his free will. Human act or behavior is moral not only because the moral agent acts or behaves in accordance with the norms of the society, but also because she/he voluntarily chooses to act rightly regardless of any benefit or fear. Morality is, therefore, decisively concerned with the voluntary judgment of the moral agent, which is internal. Morality is necessitated because, as Grcic says, persons are morally limited and often ignore the welfare of others. (1989: 2) The issue of morality comes into view when a moral agent crosses the boundary of his/her self-interest and causes harm to that of others. Motivated by temptation or ambition the moral agent exaggerates his/her self-interest and underestimates that of the others, and acts accordingly. In this situation the moral agent extracts benefit by inflicting harm on others.

Morality has set of rules, formally un-proclaimed, unwritten or un-instituted rules. A rule basically restricts freedom. It permits the moral agent to act or behave in a morally desirable way; and it does not allow him/her to act or behave in a morally undesirable manner. Although a person is free to choose between the morally desirable and undesirable courses of action, he/she could be blamed if he/she chooses the morally undesirable one. Moral rules, therefore, impose restriction on the action or behavior of a moral agent. But it must be noted that the restriction is not to downgrade but rather to upgrade the humanity of humans. It restricts the freedom of people only “to promote greater freedom and well-being.” (Pojman, 2005: 7)

Moral rules define what the moral agents in general ought to do and ought not to do; and how they ought to behave and ought not to behave in a particular situation. That is to say, moral rules have the authority to guide or control the action or behavior of the moral agent. In connection to this Pojman (2005: 9) writes.

We need moral rules to guide our actions in ways that light up our paths and prevent and reduce suffering, enhance human well-being [and animal well-being, too, for that matter], resolve our conflicts of interests according to recognizably fair rules, and assign responsibility for actions so that we can praise, reward and punish people according to how these actions reflect moral principles.
1.9.1.5. Distinctiveness of Morality

There are other forms of social consciousness that are very close to and sometimes overlap with morality. Very often these kinds of social consciousnesses are confused with morality. Religion and legal laws, for example, could be mistaken for morality because of their similarity to it in many ways.

1.9.1.5.1. Morality and Religion

Both are similar in many ways. They even overlap in some areas of life. Both primarily seek that people should do right or good. To that end they teach and preach that people should be kind, honest, tolerant, compassionate, and caring to and sharing with one another. But although they are similar in some ways they also differ in many other ways. Their core point of differences lies in their aims and methods. “Religion relies on revelation whereas morality relies more on reason, on rational reflection.” (Pojman, 2005: 13) The goal of religion is primarily salvation, for which acting and behaving according to the scriptures, worshiping and praying to God, Allah or whatever supernatural power believed in, is the means. For morality the ultimate aim is the attainment of individual or societal good, for which only the right way of thinking and doing is the means. It is possible for ethics to critically examine the moral quality of religions although they sometimes appear to have unquestionable power over human affairs.

1.9.1.5.2. Morality and Law

Both morality and social and political laws impose certain restriction on the actions and behaviours of people. They define what ought to be (must be) done and what ought not to (must not) be done. But despite their similarity morality is not law, and law is not morality. A law is either written or unwritten, and enforceable by different legal and social institutions. It is legislated, proclaimed or instituted by the body that assumes power. Morality, however, is basically unwritten, unlegislated or un-proclaimed social consciousness that unfolds through the norms of the society, and gets refinement through the works of sages, philosophers; religious, ethical and moral thinkers.

Indeed human life and welfare are looked after by the laws and rules of different political and non-political institutions and agencies. Yet there are parts of life that are still liable to harm and abuse for they are beyond the eyes of law and rules. In the presence of
persons one may do good thing because of fear of law, or disapproval of a society. In a situation when and where no one observes, or when and where the existing laws or rules are inapplicable the moral agent may act in the best interest of himself/herself, instead of acting in that of the society. This is the core concern of morality. It attempts to make the moral agent do the opposite - it seeks that everyone acts and behaves in accordance with the general need of humanity without being conditioned by the presence or absence of any external body. We think this is the best offer of morality to humanity.

Although law is believed to maintain the peace and order of a given society, it may protect predominantly the best interest of the ruling class as opposed to that of the ruled. In contrast, morality is universal since it attempts to protect the life, interest, right, dignity and freedom of all humans regardless of any particularity. It has strong power (authority) in helping people to interact with one another at all possible levels. In this sense, morality is not only different from law, but also the critic of law. Laws come in conflict with morality when they violate the right, honor, interest and freedom of people for all of which morality seeks unconditional respect. Particularly ethics criticizes or blames repressive laws, and even demands their banishment. Obeying laws is one of the moral or ethical duties of people. This is justifiable as long as the law serves the good purpose of the society. When it fails to do this it may not be the moral duty of people to obey it. Indeed,

There is a general moral law to obey the law, since the law serves an overall moral purpose and this may give us moral reasons to obey laws that may not be moral or ideal. But there may come a time when the injustice of a bad law is intolerable and hence calls for illegal but moral defiance. (Pojman, 2005: 11)

Although obeying laws is morally desirable it becomes the moral duty of people to fight against them when they turn against the good purpose of morality, or when they become immoral. “When the law becomes egregiously immoral,” writes Pojman (2005: 11) “it may be my moral duty to exercise evil disobedience.”

There is one more point of difference. Law is concerned mainly with the consequence of an action that is externally vivid, whereas morality is concerned not only with the consequence but also with the intent of the moral agent which is internal. In law one is proved to be either guilty or innocent. Even the criminal, immoral or unethical person could be proved innocent if evidence is not established against him. But in morality
one cannot escape the judgment of his/her own conscience. That is why Pojman (2005: 13) says, “The law is shallower than morality and has a harder time judging motives and intentions. You can be morally evil, intending to do evil things, but as long as you do not do them, you are legally innocent.”

1.9.1.6. Relevance of Morality to the Contemporary World and Its Status

Is morality in progress or in state of stagnation? To what extent does it guide and govern the acts and conducts of the present man? Does it have the power of solving the problems of life that it was necessitated for? It is worthwhile to discuss this, because we can know whether human character has developed in relation to creating or solving problems. This brief review attempts to address these issues. Our experience of the current world does not witness moral progress. The qualitative and quantitative of service it offers to the material and human life of the present society is by far less than what it could have done. If it is not in progress, then it is in a state of stagnation or degeneration.

If there has been moral progress in the moral life of the present-day man, then the world would have not seen such bloody and brutal acts as terrorism, sexual and racial discrimination, tragic human rights violation, ethnic cleansing, exploitation, poverty, illiteracy, hunger and lack of shelter, being committed by humans against fellow humans – with the magnitude they are all being experienced today. The question whether or not morality is in progress could also be deemed in comparison with the economic, scientific and technological advancement of the contemporary world. Many argue if there were progress in morality, the remarkable achievement gained in economy, science and technology would be enough to put an end, or at least reduce many of the present problems that are wrecking our world. At least these achievements would have not been by being used for immoral acts and ends.

But why is a failure instead of a progress? Human life flourishes when moral values are actively working in its daily activities and experience. When outmoded moral values are retained and values that are demanded by time are suppressed, or when these values are left uncultivated human life and development fall into state of stagnation. The sheer fact that morality is the pursuit of human concern alone does not make it solve the moral problems of humanity. Indeed it was originally called forth for good purpose. But in course of time, it may turn against this purpose. Although it claims that striving for good
life is its prime objective, the way good life itself is interpreted and understood and what means is used to attain this good life, is a problematic. Thus morality solves problems and answers questions of moral life only if it is relevant, consistent, responsible, responsive and comprehensive.

The vivid evidence for the status of the morality of the current world is, as mentioned earlier, the existence and occurrence of different kinds of wars, violence, terror and crimes that devour the lives of millions in different parts of the world. No deep analysis is required to understand that this is the reality. Basically morality is the “pursuit of truth and understanding about how we ought to live together in a complex world.” (Pojman, Ibid: xvi) The point to be looked into, however, is whether humans have sufficiently learned how they ought to live together. All the atrocities and inhuman acts that men of this contemporary world inflict upon one another certainly suggest that the questions how we should live together have not been well addressed. This was observed nearly five decades ago by Niebuhr (1960: 1) who wrote, “For all the centuries of experience, men have not yet learned how to live together without compounding their vices and covering each other ‘with mud and with blood.’”

Undoubtedly morality is the most important subject of humankind. Pojman (Ibid: 9) is absolutely right when he says, “The goal of morality is to create happy and virtuous people, the kind that creates flourishing communities. That is why it is the most important subject on earth.” But humankind does not seem to have recognized its ‘most importance’ as much as it is required. If humanity has developed its moral knowledge and quality as much as it has advanced science and technology, most of the atrocities and violence of the current world would have been less than what they are now. Moral thinkers, religious personalities, philosophers and good-wishers have said many good things for humans to secure a flourishing life. Put in slightly different way, the best minds of humankind have ever been trying to find out ways and means to dispel all forms of evils so as to promote a more satisfying life. Unceasingly almost the entire humankind has been aspiring and striving to eliminate evils and promote good. And also “There are means and resources available by which we may build a more satisfying life and better world.” (Titus, 1954: 1) Then what or who is responsible for the evils to get such a power of resistance against all these good efforts of humans?
Humanity has failed to adequately solve moral problems, because of its ignorance, arrogance, selfishness and negligence. Those noble words and lofty reasons of the thoughtful sons and daughters of humanity have been given deaf ears. They are not heard as much as they are voiced. Today people are concerned more about the advancement of science and technology, and their achievements and material development. Indeed this has its own merit. But it alone cannot offer solutions to the complex problems of our world. People have failed to discharge the responsibility of cultivating morality and ethics as much as they do science and technology. Certainly no advancement of science and technology can substitute morality and ethics. Without morality and ethics, what means do we have to correct even if the achievements of science and technology are abused?

What is more relevant than ethics and morality to the world in which humanity suffers from unethical behaviours and acts? It is man who has been and is still fighting for the best, humane and safe world to live in; and it is again man who has and still is scuffling against this moral ideal. This is the paradox of humanity. Evil gets dominant positions when good or noble ideas fail to win the heart and mind of people. Not all people take the blame for the failure, it rather goes to those who have the power to move and mobilize the rest by and large. Morality makes people to act or behave not the way they are pleased but the way they ought to do and be. But we are still in a condition where and when the few who hold the top rung in the ladder act and behave as they are pleased.

The attitude and power of those who were/are at the top suffocated and continues to suffocate the development of morality and ethics. As morality and ethics are the antidotes of their selfish interests they do not let them flourish. There have ever been battles between ethics and un-ethics, morality and immorality. The majority of the world’s people, in principle, have been fighting for the flourishing of morality and ethics, yet it has not won the battle. How the few who have been battling in favour of immorality, were able to withstand the power of the majority? It is the power of the few that overpowers the morality of majority. This shows that the power of morality is still too frail to get mastery over immorality. Unless due attention is given to the development of morality and ethics the moral quality of humanity unceasingly continues to crumble, eventually leading it to a tragic end.

There is one important observation to be pointed out here. One may wonder why evil remains strong in the world that has been craving for good. Almost all human beings
yearn for a well lived life; and hence approve morality. Almost all human beings do not
want a bad lived life, and hence disapprove immorality. Morality that has been applauded
throughout human history has not blossomed and immorality that has been condemned all
along human existence has not withered away. This suggests that there is deep rooted
hypocrisy and pretension in the life, systems and relations of humanity. This is the
mystery of human morality. Not all who approve morality in idea support it in practice.
This is the chronic impediment to the moral life of man. It acquires the power of solving
moral problems only if each and everyone internalizes and realizes its rule and commits to
its application. Only then morality becomes “exactly that set of rules that are most likely
to help nearly all of us if nearly all of us follow them nearly all of the time.” (Pojman,
Ibid: 12)

Being hampered by different factors the moral system and life of the present-day
man is too much impaired to address the evils of this world. It is by far behind
accomplishing its mission – the mission of making people learn the best way of living
together. The grave obstacle comes from the failure to control selfish impulses.
Empowered and veiled by the scores of science and technology selfishness is growing
more and more. All the antidotes of good life are harbored in selfishness. As far back as
1954 Titus argued that we (humans) want life not death, happiness not pain, to live full
and abundant life. (Ibid: 4) Nearly six decades have elapsed since this was stated. But the
statement is as young as it was then, because the world still needs morality – probably
more urgently today that it had ever before.

When considered in the light of development attained in other areas, the immoral
exercise of this world seems to be more brutal, ugly and deeper than that of the past. When
bare selfishness becomes stronger than altruism, immorality gets preponderance over
morality. In other words, immorality gains the opportunity of entrenching itself when
morality fails to develop. Perhaps it is the cessation of humanization that is making the
current humanity to lose morality to immorality. That is to say, today man is in the time
when he should stretch himself as much as possible to rejuvenate or revitalize and
creatively develop his moral system in order to make it relevant and responsive to life
challenges. Because of the unprecedented technological advancement the lack of morality
and ethics causes more damage to the world today than it had ever done before. Thus

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humanity is now in the world that necessarily appeals to the power and wisdom of morality and ethics for most of its challenges.

1.9.1.7. Moral agent and Responsibility

Morality is inconceivable without someone who is morally responsible for performing certain acts, the consequence of which is often either to benefit or harm oneself or others. Viewed from this angle there are two inseparable entities in morality – the moral agent and the responsibility of this moral agent. The moral agent, as mentioned elsewhere, is one who has a moral responsibility in choosing the course of actions, giving judgments, performing acts or showing behaviours in the intention of achieving or maintaining a desirable objective. From positive perspective this is the responsibility of the moral agent. He or she also has the responsibility of restraining himself/herself from giving, performing and showing injurious judgments, acts and behaviours respectively. This is the negative responsibility.

Moral responsibility is quite different from other forms of responsibilities. It is the responsibility of judging, acting or behaving in accordance with the morally desirable rules of society or humanity. Its essential feature lies in the fact that it is discharged out of the free choice of the moral agent, when other responsibilities are imposed on agents by external bodies or institutions. In other words, moral responsibility is associated with the free will of the moral agent – the will to do right, or the will not to do wrong. It is the conscious choice of the moral agent that determines the course of action to be pursued. Without being conditioned by an external body, the moral agent says “This is my obligation to do, or not to do.” In short, moral responsibility is the responsibility that the moral agent freely (voluntarily) discharges.

Not all persons who are morally responsible. Passing a moral judgment needs a reasoning capacity that discriminates between right and wrong, good and bad. A person is morally responsible only if he/she is mentally capable for making judgments. Children, insane and mentally impaired persons cannot be morally held responsible for their actions or behaviours. Moral responsibility must not also be confused with causal events. There are natural events such as earthquake, hurricanes, landslides, etc. that could be said responsible for “unbearable damages to the life and property of people. These natural events are causally responsible, but not claimed to be morally responsible. They are causal
agents not moral agents.” (Whitebeck, 1998: 37-38) If a man inflicts harm on a person she/he is held responsible for the act and hence is liable to a blame or punishment. But this cannot be said of natural events. Flooding, for example, causes enormous damage to life and resources of people. Since it is devoid of the capacity of making judgment and evaluating the consequences of its action it is not morally responsible.

There is also a possibility of confusing moral responsibility with legal or official responsibility. The two are different although they sometimes overlap. Official responsibility is “a responsibility that someone is charged to carry out as part of one’s assigned duties.” (Whitebeck, 1998: 40) This is a duty mainly imposed from outside. A failure to perform this duty is liable to warning, fine or punishment. But moral responsibility is motivated from within the moral agent, and enforced by him/her voluntarily. “Moral responsibility, unlike official responsibility cannot be simply transferred to someone else. This feature of moral responsibility is expressed by saying that it is not alienable.” (Whitebeck, 1998: 42) Further more official responsibility is largely conditioned by institutional rules and regulations that are looked after by external authorities, whereas moral responsibility is motivated by the internal commitment of the moral agent. There are even situations in which the two kinds of responsibilities immerse the moral agent into a dilemma. For the sake of clarification, let us take the following example.

A boss has ordered one of the workers to dump a toxic substance down the river. But the worker clearly knows that this is potentially injurious to human health. Should he do it or refrain from doing it? This puts him in a dilemma. It is his official responsibility to do as he is ordered; and it is also his moral duty not to do whatever is harmful to others. If he does as he is ordered by his boss, then he is ignoring his moral responsibility and hence he inflicts harm to others. If he obeys his moral responsibility then this act would mean refusal to the official duty entrusted to him for which he/she is legally accountable. In this sense, official and moral responsibilities sometimes enter into conflict. This means, particular situation a morally enlightened agent prefers to discharge his moral responsibility and gives a justification for ignoring his official responsibility.
1.9.1.8. Moral Right and Duty

Very often people use phrases such as “moral right” and “moral duty”. But these phrases are used vaguely. Not many people are with clear and neat perception of their meanings and interrelationships. Confusions may also arise between legal and moral rights and duties. This topic is concerned with the unraveling or minimizing of these confusions.

Moral value is nothing but the expression of human value. In the practical life of human individuals this value is understood and applied in two forms- in the form of right and in the form of duty. We talk of moral values as long as there are moral rights and duties, and we talk of moral rights and duties in so far as there is moral value. The moral rights and duties of humans are derived from the interest of these humans. It is in the best interest of every one that his/her interest is recognized and protected. “All persons are created equal, for all are endowed with certain ‘inalienable rights’. (Whitebeck, 1998: 21)

For Whitebeck (Ibid) ‘inalienable rights’ are the right that “cannot be taken away by others, traded away by the person, or forfeited as a result of the person’s action.”

Inalienable and absolute rights are very often confused. “An absolute right is the right whose claim can never be outweighed by other moral considerations. The right not to be tortured is widely regarded as an example of an absolute right.” (Whitebeck, 1998: 24)

In contrast, there are moral rights that, on consideration, can override other moral rights. For example if a certain moral agent encounters the claim of two conflicting moral rights, he/she must give precedence to the right that has more weight over the other right. Analogous to W. D. Ross’s concepts of actual and prima facie duties, some scholars claim that there are actual and prima facie rights. The “… rights whose claims may be outweighed by moral considerations are called prima facie rights.” (Whitebeck, 1998: 24)

These are all the rights “that can be justly overridden under certain circumstances.” (Ibid) Although in inalienable rights one right can outweigh the other right because of certain circumstances, there is no right that takes precedence over absolute right. That is to say, “Only absolute rights take precedence over other moral considerations” (Ibid).

The decisive interest that humans strive for is securing a well-lived life. Such life flourishes only if rights are granted to individuals or groups in relation to duties that are imposed for the respect and protection of these rights. Rights are granted in recognition of the justified claim that person can have. And duties are imposed in recognition that these
rights should be respected. The moral standing of human action or behavior can be judged only by fulfilling moral duties in relation to the moral rights that the society grants.

Right and duty are correlative to each other. Rights are generally justified claims. (Singer, 1990: 346) In an attempt to explain this, Whitebeck (1998: 23) asserts that whenever “there is moral justification for some claims then that person has a moral right.” Being a human being alone is enough for securing this right. All humans have interests, and hence all need rights for the protection and advancement of their individual interests and common good. In response to this necessity, society concedes to its members certain moral rights for the common good (Sinha, 1994: 38). A person who has moral right is entitled for making a claim. We have a right to demand something if the absence of this thing impoverishes us and if its presence will enrich us, provided it is within the reach and means of society to supply this thing (Titus, 1954: 228).

“To be a person the most elementary of moral categories is to claim respects for one’s rights, as one respects the right of others.” (Knowles, 2004: 13-14) This implies moral duty. If one has a right then she/he must have also a duty to respect the right of others. Any person who has moral right also has a corresponding moral duty. Justified claims can be materialized if rights are not only recognized but also exercised and secured. Rights have territories beyond which they cannot be extended. They presuppose the imposition of a sanction or restriction on the other. Moral restriction or obligation is a moral duty. Whitebeck (1998: 23) asserts that moral duty or obligation is a moral requirement to follow a certain course of action, or to refrain from doing certain things. Right gives a justifiable free-access to something of an interest, and duty is supposed to avoid any interference from others to this access. Thus moral right and moral duty are the two sides of the same thing, i.e. morality. The moral quality of human action or behavior is evaluated in terms of the moral right granted and the moral duty imposed. An action is believed to be morally right or good when it is performed with the view of respecting the recognized moral right; or with the clear intention to discharge one’s moral duty.

The recognition of a value implies an obligation to seek it. --- if we have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, then we have the corresponding duty to respect the lives of others, to refrain from restricting their liberty, and to desist from placing obstacles in the way of their attainment of happiness (Titus, Ibid: 236).
But moral rights were, are and can be violated. That is why evils are being experienced. The problem is some of those who have rights do not perform the corresponding moral duty entrusted to them. Titus (1954: 236) again states that if “I have a right, then I also have the duty to respect the claim to that right on the part of others.” The question is how many of the people all over the world obey this moral principle. Almost all seek that their rights get recognized and respected, but not all who respect the claim that others make to that right. This is the core problem of morality.

Humans have both legal and moral rights. There is close relation and crisscrossing between them. But we need to distinguish between the two categories of rights. Singer contends, “Legal rights are the products of laws, which can vary from society to society. Moral rights on the other hand, are said to belong to all subjects-of-a-life regardless of their color, nationality, sex, etc.” (Ibid) The decisive distinction is that moral right is more fundamental than legal right.

1.9.1.9. Morality and Ethics

People sometimes mistake ethics for morality, and morality for ethics. This confusion arises firstly from the failure to clearly know the distinctive features that make morality different from ethics and the latter from the former. Secondly, it arises from the lack of understanding as to how one is related to the other. In this section a brief attempt is made to unravel the confusions and misunderstandings by showing what one is in the light of the other. Ethics is the philosophy of morality. It is also called moral philosophy. People use ethics and moral philosophy interchangeably. In the words of Frankena (1995: 4), “Ethics is a branch of philosophy; it is moral philosophy, or philosophical thinking about morality, moral problems and moral judgments.” It is one of the oldest and the most interesting branches of philosophy. Being a branch of philosophy it is a rational and critical discipline about the most important questions of moral life and action. Put shortly, it is the critical study of moral values.

As a rational and critical enterprise ethics is the criticism of customary moral beliefs, institutions and style of life. Liberating people from blind customs, and directing their activity and life on the basis of conscious and reasoned moral orientation is its chief mission. This is possible not simply by discarding the whole existing values, but by evaluating and sifting the good from the bad. That means moral philosophy defines
morality and determines the meaning and rational justification of the right way to live, the correct values to pursue and the appropriate way to treat others. (Gricic, 1989: 3-4) Moral philosophy [ethics] is a normative enterprise rather than a descriptive one. Mainly it is not concerned with how people actually act, rather how they ought to act or behave. Although it needs a realistic view of human nature and human motivation, “… its aim is not to describe people’s actual behavior and goals …” rather “to develop a principled account of how we ought to act, what values we ought to accept, and what kind of goals are worth having.” (Johnson, 2007: 1-2) This makes moral philosophy different from other disciplines that are also concerned with values. In an attempt to further explain this Johnson writes,

Many areas of the humanities and social sciences are concerned with human conduct and values. … Social sciences such as psychology, sociology and anthropology are concerned (among others things) with describing actual human behavior and explaining why human beings act as the way that they do in the circumstances studied. (Johnson, 2007: 1)

These disciplines study values as facts that can be described, and hence evaluate them in terms of truth and falsity. But ethics is an evaluative or normative discipline, because it attempts to critically investigate the rightness or wrongness, goodness or badness, and the rationale of human actions. Its objective is to make people rationally and critically know about the moral world they live in and their own place in this world.

A moral philosopher transcends the common sense perception of moral life. He/she questions and reflects on the existing moral concepts. People from all walks of life use moral values in their everyday reality. Thus the subject of moral philosophy is not as such strange to any lay man. But not all who use morality know what moral value is and is not. Even most of those who discern what is moral from what is immoral do not question why they ought to obey moral rules. Ethics makes difference to this attitude. “Almost all of us have, without questioning, accepted the moral percents and practices that we were taught while growing up. However, there comes a time when we begin to look critically at the moral precepts and values that one has always accepted.” (Johnson, 2007: 5) When one begins critically questioning the moral principles and precepts that he has already accepted, then he is engaged in doing moral philosophy. “A rational being accepts our fallibility, to have open mind, to listen to new ideas and evidence, and to be willing to give
up false beliefs and to accept new and more rational beliefs.” (Grcic, 1989: 2) According to Frankena (1995: 4) “Moral philosophy arises when, like Socrates, we pass beyond the stage in which these rules are internalized.”

1.9.2. Theoretical Framework

For a research a theoretical background with reference to which the data gathered are analyzed and evaluated is necessary. This section is devoted to providing a theoretical context in the light of which this research is undertaken. From the documentary and field research made we have learned that the Oromo Gada is an integral system consisting of philosophy of reality, [i.e., Metaphysics]; of Waaqa [God] [i.e., Theology]; of society, politics and values, [i.e., Moral, Political and Social philosophy]. To set a framework in terms of which we can understand, critically evaluate and appreciate the moral values of the Oromo Gada system it is imperative to shortly consider the different major competitive theories of ethics.

In an attempt to substantiate and provide rational justification to moral values many thinkers theorized morality in various ways. Ethics has unfolded as a result of this effort. The history of ethics as a discipline dates back to the time of Socrates, who is believed to be historically the first thinker in bringing the issue of morality to critical scrutiny. Although credits are also owed to the Sophists for critically questioning the rationale of the moral concepts of the day, it was the challenging questions and discussions of Socrates that have laid a firm foundation for the study of morality as a subject. Starting from then onwards moral thinkers have developed various theories and schools of moral philosophy.

Accordingly ethics is divided into two major fields_ Normative and Non-normative ethics. Normative ethics involves an attempt to determine what moral standards to follow so that our actions may be morally right or wrong, and non- normative ethics consists of either a factual investigation of moral behavior or an analysis of the meaning of terms used in moral discourse… (Barry, 1983: 97-98) A focus is made on the normative ethics since it goes with the purpose of this research. There are three major and competing normative traditions in the moral philosophy of the western world. These are virtue-ethics, teleological (action- based) ethics and deontological (duty- based) ethics. Each of these traditions houses different theories and ramifications that can be considered below in brief.
Teleological Ethics: This theory of ethics maintains that the basic criterion of what is morally right or wrong is the non-moral value of the consequence of an action. It starts not with moral rules but with goals. (Singer, 1994: 3) If the consequence of an action is good then the action is said to be morally right, whereas if the consequence of an action is bad then the action is believed to be morally wrong. It is, therefore, known also as Consequentialist ethics for it considers the consequence of an action as a standard of morality. Teleological ethics compares the balance between the good and the evil produced by the action of the moral agent. If the good produced is greater than the evil occurred the action is morally right, if it is the otherwise definitely it is wrong. In this tradition, it is not the means but the end that counts; or the end justifies the means (Pojman, 2005: 112) For instance, telling a lie is not morally right or wrong, good or bad in its own right. It is the consequence of the action that makes it good or bad, right or wrong. In other words, lying is morally right if the consequence is good and truth is wrong if the consequence of the action is bad.

For teleological ethics the consequence of an action is said to be good if it is pleasure giving and bad if it is pain inflicting. Pleasure is the highest good and pain is the highest evil for the theory. The consideration of pleasure as the sole good and pain as evil, (Pojman, 2005: 12) makes teleological ethics hedonistic. Hedonism is the ethical view that pleasure is the highest good and pain is the highest evil. The motivation of doing what is morally right or wrong is triggered by the desire for pleasure and aversion to pain. The question whose pleasure is to be primarily pursued divides hedonism into egoistic and social hedonism [utilitarianism].

Deontological Ethics: In contrast to teleological ethics deontological system considers that certain features in the act have intrinsic value. According to Pojman, for the deontological ethicists the locus of value is in the act or in the kind of act (2005: 110), not with its consequence. While there is no intrinsic worth in the act for the consequential ethics, deontologists consider that the moral value of the act is in the act itself. For example, lying to the deontologists is intrinsically bad even when it may produce good consequence, whereas truth is intrinsically good even if it causes pain or harm.

Virtue- ethics: Although these different ethical traditions and theories could provide theoretical and conceptual framework for this research it is the nature of the data and

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information that determines the kind of theory that is more relevant and applicable to the context of the Oromo traditional moral values. Character or trait of a person occupies the central place in the traditional moral value of the Oromo society. Accordingly on the basis of the nature of the data collected for this research it is appropriate to evaluate the Oromo traditional moral value in the light of virtue-ethics. In this sense, a brief account of virtue-ethics is important in order to set a theoretical ground for the subject of this research.

Virtue – ethics has a long history. It is the first moral theory ever formulated in the context of Western philosophy. The key moral concept, in virtue – ethics, is virtue, which means excellence of character. What matters most is not doing this or that but “being a certain type of person who will no doubt manifest his or her being in actions or non actions.”(Pojman, 2005: 166) The basic question of virtue- ethics is, what sort of person should I be, or what kind of person would I be if I act or behave this or that way? Rather than seeing the heart of ethics in actions or duties (as other theories), virtue- ethics centers it in the heart of the agent- in his or her character. (Pojman, 2005: 166) The internal character of the moral agent is decisively emphasized.

The moral thinkers of the ancient Greece, particularly Socrates, Plato and Aristotle focused on virtue as a topic of ethics. Virtue, for them, was a good character trait, or excellence of character. As Pojman puts, “‘Virtue is a good character trait, typically involving disposition to feel, think and act in certain morally good ways.”(2005: 219) In short virtue- ethics aims at nurturing humanity with virtue. In precise words, it aims not at doing or acting this or that way but at producing excellent persons who could act or behave out of goodness. In an attempt to explain what kind of persons virtue –ethics aims to produce Pojman again writes:

It seeks to create people like Moses, Confucius, Socrates, Jesus, Buddha, St. Francis, Abraham Lincoln, Father Damien (the priest who worked among the lepers), John Stuart Mill, Albert Schweitzer, Mohandas Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Mother Teresa__ people who light up our moral landscape as jewels who shine in their own light.”(2005: 166)

Although many of the ancient Greeks contributed to the development of virtue-ethics, the works of the three remain unsurpassed. Socrates was the original thinker, who has laid a solid foundation of moral philosophy, on the basis of which all the subsequent
moral thinkers did their contributions. He had a wonderful love affair with truth, justice and virtue. While his predecessors were preoccupied with the issue of the cosmos Socrates developed strong interest in the mind and life of man. This took him out to philosophical inquiry. The underlying cause of the various evils, Socrates believed, was ignorance. It was the ignorance of justice, for example, that caused unjust acts. While men basically seek to live good life it was the ignorance of their true good that could be the source of all their wrong doing. (Sidgwick, 1993: 24) If ignorance was found to be the cause of evils then the remedy, according to Socrates, was knowledge. If a person fully understands the nature of the good, he could not fail to pursue it. Socrates had strong conviction that men should not accept ideas as they were handed down to them; rather they had to know the validity of these ideas. He insisted that it is vitally important to define ethical concepts. For this purpose he held conversation with everyone on important moral issues. His intent was not to dismiss (as sophists did) but rather to show the possibility of ethical knowledge and to make the attendants know how deep their ignorance was. Thus it could be said that Socrates was the one who opened human eyes to the world of moral studies.

Plato is one of the best known and most widely studied of all ancient Greek thinkers. As he was one of the prominent pupils of Socrates he continued the search for a rational morality. His moral philosophy must be treated as the “continual movement from the position of Socrates towards the more complete and articulate system of Aristotle” (Sidgwick, 1993: 36). The leading moral concept in the ethics of Plato is justice, which could be understood in relation to injustice. Injustice, in his day, would be expressed when at least one of the following was committed - sacrilege or theft, betraying ones friend or country, breaking promise, bigotry, adultery, negligence of one’s duties to parents and gods. He knew that injustice was exercised by corrupt rulers, government officials, individuals and group of individuals against individuals or group of individuals. As they were for Socrates for Plato too social evils and ills were caused by ignorance, and hence they could be cured by education.

Good life, according to Plato, must be harmonious (Frankena, 1995: 92) He believes that the soul of man, in its good and normal condition must be ordered and harmonized under the government of reason. (Sidgwick. Ibid: 41) In the soul of every person, Plato believes, there are three parts - reason, appetite and spirit. It is only the harmony of these parts that dispels evils and brings about justice to individuals. Any organ
in the body is in its proper order and right place if it fulfills its function, and attains its end. The special end of each and every part can really be good in so far as it serves the ultimate end or good of the whole. Similarly in a well-ordered society the essence of every man consisted in doing what he or she is naturally good for. Just as an eye that does not attain its end by seeing is without the essence of an eye, a person who does not do what he/she is naturally talented for does not have the essence of humanity.

A wise soul, according to Plato’s account, will necessarily be one in which all elements operate in harmonious activity. (Sidgwick, Ibid: 45) A person, in whom these parts are harmoniously related according to their proper role, is virtuous. Society is too composed of parts [individuals, group of individuals] that are categorized according to their special talents into classes - the guardians (rulers), the auxiliaries (soldiers) and artisans (workers). The role of each class corresponds to the three parts of the soul of an individual. If each and every class does what it is naturally best fitted for and remains in the social position that nature provides it with, then justice reigns.

The intellectual contribution of Aristotle to the development of moral philosophy is more immense and articulate than that of his predecessors. He has the credit of writing historically the first comprehensive theory of morality. Gricic writes that Aristotle’s ethics has been one of the most influential theories ever presented.”(Ibid: 56). Aristotle begins his moral study with the examination of the facts of human experience. He argues that men apparently sought many things. Some of these were not ends but means for some other ends, and others were ends in themselves. The final thing, at which the whole activities of men aim, according to Aristotle, is Eudaemonia. Eudaemonia is translated as happiness by some, and as well-being by others. As it suits to the purpose of the research we choose the first translation. Eudaemonia in Aristotle’s perception includes the complete development of the functions which make man a human being and a member of a society (Titus, 1954: 186) He believes that all persons live and act in order to meet their needs and so as to achieve happiness; everything that men do and seek is because they want to be happy (Gricic, Ibid: 56) The uniqueness of human being, for Aristotle, lies in its reasoning capacity. Thus a good person is a rational person whose life is structured and guided by reason. (Ibid)

As pointed out by Pojman, for Aristotle humanity has an essence or function. Just as the function of a knife is to cut well, so it is the function of humans to use reason in
pursuit of good life (Ibid: 172) For Aristotle, Titus observes “Man is essentially and primarily a rational being.” (1954: 187) This is what makes man not only different from other animals but also to experience a different kind of life. Good life, for him, is not a passive state rather an active exercise of human function; and happiness is the natural outcome of this function.

Aristotle puts a clear demarcation between pleasure and happiness. Pleasure is the experience of the lower impulse that man shares in common with other animals, whereas happiness is the rational experience of man that he shares with no other species. In other words, the good of man depends on the exercise and development of his rational nature (Titus, Ibid: 187) It is by and through reason that the habit of right thinking, right willing and right acting is internalized in the life of man. Aristotle calls this habit virtue. In Aristotle’s view one could be said to have acquired the habit of right thinking, willing and acting if and only if he is able to avoid extremes. Avoiding extremes means adopting golden mean. “The doctrine of golden mean or moderation is central in the ethics of Aristotle. Reason seeks the balanced course between too much and too little,” (Titus, Ibid: 188) which is, according to Aristotle, the golden mean. Golden Mean is virtue.

The conduct of a person is virtuous if it avoids the two extremes – i.e. excess on one hand and deficiency on the other. Both excess (too much) and deficiencies (too little) are vices for they are dictated by emotion, and not guided by reason. For example courage is a middle course between rashness (which is excessive indulgence or baldness) and cowardice (which is a state of being in excessive fear), and hence it is virtue. A life, in Aristotle’s view, lived in accordance with virtue is a happy life. Happiness is pursued as an end, but it is not the only thing which is an end in itself (Norman, Ibid: 41) Aristotle contends that while there are things such as honor, pleasure, intelligence, virtues that are aimed at as ends in themselves, they are also aimed at as means for the sake of happiness. But happiness is never pursued for the sake of anything else. While other things are both means and ends happiness is never a means to anything else. Therefore, for Aristotle, it is the supreme good.

1.10. The Appropriateness of Philosophy

Is the traditional moral value of societies the appropriate subject for philosophy to reflect upon? “Philosophy is a practice of giving reason in support of one’s beliefs and actions. Its ultimate goal is to arrive at a rationally justified position on one’s beliefs about
the important issues of life, including what is the best way to live one’s life and organize society.” (Pojman, 2000: 9) Human’s daily acts and behaviours are influenced more by moral values than they are by legality and science in particular societies and situations. There is nothing more important issues of life than correctly providing reason that supports such traditional moral values. Reason develops these values and unreason blocks them. This is what necessitates philosophical reflection.

Each and every individual man is a complex being. Human society is even more complex. Multitudes of physical and mental phenomena constitute the identity of each human individual and society. As complex entities, both are analyzable into parts, and be studied separately. The task of studying the different parts of the whole entity is taken care of by various natural and social sciences. But two major problems remain unaddressed. One, there are features of humanity as individual or group, that natural and social sciences cannot profoundly explore because of the nature, scope of their area of concern and methodology. Second, there is a problem of synthesizing or generalizing the knowledge acquired from each discipline. No disciplines or intellectual enquiry takes care of these problems other than philosophy.

Particularly what other areas of enquiry could address the issues of indigenous moral values of societies if not philosophy? This is a life-situation where many challenges are critically unexplored. The predominance of undefined and unrefined concepts, unexamined and unfounded traditions is rampant. The societies may know the problems they daily face as effects, but not the causes of these effects. In some cases they do not even feel the presence of grave problem that threatens their life as a problem. They may experience value-crisis without knowing what it is. In general without critical mind it is impossible to sift the truth from falsehood, the good from bad, and the appearance from essence. But philosophy itself is facing a challenge. We put aside the external challenges and consider one challenge arising from itself.

One serious challenge to the development and application of philosophy is the distinction that people put between the general and particular subjects. Some people are of the opinion that since particular issues of the world the domain specific sciences philosophy has nothing to do these particulars. The idea is to fix philosophy to general problems that sciences cannot reach just as sciences are confined to the specific issues of the world. The crux of the contention is that the general and particular are entirely
different. We think that this misleading. In reality the general and particular are given together. They are the two sides of the same reality. What is the general that stands in isolation from the particular? What is particular in the absence of general? Things have both general and particular features at the same time. A person is an individual as long as he has specific features that no one shares with him. The same person has general features that he shares in common with others humans. It is to the one and the same person that both the particular and general features are attributed. Some of the general problems that sciences cannot address themselves are in the particulars. From this we can draw a conclusion that particular issues are also the domain of philosophical enquiry provided that the former is inaccessible to scientific investigation and needs generalization. Therefore, we believe that there is no other appropriate discipline for studying indigenous moral values of societies than philosophy.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter we reviewed the problems that triggered the undertaking of research on the traditional moral values of the Oromo of Ethiopia. The moral problems of national and ethnic, intellectual and international nature were earmarked in connection to the research. Overburdened by these crisscrossing and complementary moral challenges it is hard to look for a better future for the people in the region. This makes the necessity of the research unquestionable. An attempt is also made to figure out the key moral concepts as conceptual background of the research. The purpose of the research undertaken on the traditional moral value could easily be understood when the key concepts and terminologies are first made clear. In view of this, concepts such as values, moral values, morality; the historical development, the challenges and the current status of morality were analyzed. Without certain theoretical framework a research remains unenlightened. In an attempt to address this we made an exploration of theories to fix one in the light of which the research could be undertaken. Among the different competing theories of ethics virtue-ethics is selected as a theoretical reference of the research.

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**Notes**

1. The term is used in various ways. It is used to mean code of conduct and mode of life in certain professions and religions respectively. It also means a discipline of inquiry.

2. Sophists are group of teachers in ancient Greece, who were mainly engaged in rhetoric. They had strong interest in practical success rather than in the search of truth.

3. Different authors spelt this word term in different ways. Some spell it just as given here in the text. There are others who spell it as ‘eudaimonia’. In both cases the
word means different things for different thinkers. Some considered it as meaning wellbeing and others underlined that it means happiness.

4. This does not mean that they are mutually exclusive. A happy person is one who at the same time experiences pleasure. Although happiness cannot be reduced to pleasure, it should be noted that pleasure is experienced in happiness.