Moral Philosophy : Western

SEMESTER I
(AS PER CBCS AND NEP 2020)

PHILOSOPHY/SOCIOLOGY

SURYA KUMAR BHUYAN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

The fourth course of First Semester of M A in Philosophy of KKHSOU is "Moral Philosophy: Western". It is designed to help the learners to have a deep understanding of the theoretical knowledge of western moral philosophy. As a learner of Master Degree in Philosophy one must have proper and thorough understanding about different moral theories. Moral philosophy deals with the science with science of customs or habits of men. It is also called the science of rightness and wrongness, because human will is expressed in right or wrong conduct. Rightness or wrongness refers to the highest ideal of human life. Hence, ethics is the science of the highest Good of man that includes Truth, Good and Beauty.

This course consists of fifteen units in total.
First unit of this course is 'Introduction to ethics'. After going through this unit one will be able to have proper understanding of the different types of ethical thinking. Ethics is an important branch of philosophy which mainly studies about value or morality. Ethics is not a science like psychology, which is concerned with the origin and growth of conduct. Ethics is something, which is concerned with the evaluation of conduct with reference to an ideal. So far as ethics is concerned, it can also be regarded to be a science as it aims at systematic explanation of rightness and wrongness or our voluntary actions in the light of the Highest Good of man. This unit will also focus on different ethical philosophies like absolutist ethics, moral absolutism, ethical relativism, existential ethics, situational ethics, evolutionary ethics, descriptive ethics, applied ethics, bio-ethics, environmental ethics, and business ethics.

Second unit of this course is 'The Nature of Moral Judgement'. This course particularly deals with moral judgment, which is the main cognitive factor of moral consciousness. Moral consciousness is the consciousness of right and wrong. It is the consciousness of moral distinctions. Actually, it is the awareness of moral worth of acts and agents. This unit further deals with the issues like the concept of morality and its different senses of use- descriptive and normative, the concept of morality and its' nature as a social institution of life etc.

'Aristotelian Ethics of Eudaimonia' is the third unit of this course. This unit introduces to you the concept of eudaimonia as laid down in Aristotle's philosophy. Eudaimonia is one of the central concepts in Aristotle's philosophy. Aristotle was a rare ingenious. Metaphysics, logic, ethics and politics, natural philosophy, philosophy of mind, rhetoric-every branch of philosophy was handled by Aristotle with his extra-ordinarily minute intelligence. In fact, Aristotle was the first western thinker to divide philosophy into the said branches. Aristotle's writings that have come down to us are academic treatises. The treatises are cast in a questioning, argumentative and non-dogmatic style.

The fourth unit of course four is After going through this unit, one will able to know what Aristotle's Concept of Happiness is, what is the highest end of life and the differences between voluntary and non-voluntary action and will also Know the relationship between happiness and the freedom of will. Again one will further know that happiness is the concept, which can be regarded to be the concerned of all ethics. Almost all the ancient thinkers or ethicists tried to claim that the ideals they portrayed the ingredients of a happy life.

The fifth unit of this course is 'Virtues of Aristotelian Ethics'. This unit introduces to you about the concept of virtues in Aristotelian ethics. This topic has a significant place in his ethics. A question of high importance in any investigation of ethics is how we can teach people to be good. In this regard Aristotle clearly stated that he does not think virtue can be thought in a classroom or by means of argument. Then his ethics is not designated to make people good, but rather to explain what is good, why it is good and how we might set about building societies and institutions might introduce this goodness.

The sixth unit of this course is 'Phronesis of Aristotle'. This Unit introduces to you the concept of phronesis as expounded by Aristotle in Book VI of Nicomachean Ethics. Virtue comes about by choosing a mean between vicious extremes according to the right principle. This unit also consists of theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom, kinds of Intellectual virtue, three kinds of knowledge, Meaning of Phronesis in Aristotle's Ethics, Practical Wisdom involves four chief factors, Practical Wisdom is a virtue, and not art.

The seventh unit is 'The Theories of Moral Standard: Hedonism' This unit will make you know that ethical theory which propounds that we always desire pleasure. Pleasure is the only object of desire, good or bad. You should remember that in Moral Philosophy or in Ethics actions are judged as good or bad by reference to the supreme end of life. Do you know how actions are judged as good or bad? Any action which is conducive to consistent with the supreme end of life is judged as good. Again, any action which is not conducive to or inconsistent with the supreme end of life is judged as bad. There are many ethical thinkers like Bentham. Mill etc., who have propounded that 'Pleasure is the supreme end of life or Summum Bonum of man'

'Utilitarianism and its Kinds' is the eighth unit of course four. This unit introduces to you Utilitarianism as a moral standard. The trend of modern ethics is generally altruistic or universalistic. In recent times none maintains the egoistic system as sufficient theory of morality and also feels unhappy about the deontological theories. Therefore, the natural alternative is the teleological theory called utilitarianism. It is the theory which holds that the sole ultimate standard of right, wrong and obligation is the principle of utility.

The ninth unit is 'Utilitarianism: Bentham and Mill'. This unit introduces to you Bentham's theory of morality. Ethics is primarily concerned with moral judgements. But it is evident that moral judgement presupposes a standard or norm or ideal with reference to which an action is judged to be right or wrong. The actions which are conductive to proposed moral ideal are good or right, and those that do not conform to the moral ideal are wrong or bad. This unit will deal with utilitarianism and explain Jeremy Bentham's idea of Utilitarianism and will explain Mill's idea of Utilitarianism and will describe the basic points of Mill's moral philosophy.

The tenth unit of the course four is, 'The Ethical Theory of Kant'. This unit introduces to you Kant's Ethical Theory. Kantian Ethical Theory refers to a deontological ethical theory ascribed to the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. According to Kant, actions become good or bad by rule following, not by virtue of their consequences. Kant advocates that reason alone can judge all our actions as right or wrong. His moral theory called "Rationalism" which gives all importance to reason.

The eleventh unit is, 'Kant and Autonomy of The Will'. This unit introduces to you Kant's autonomy of the will in his moral theory. All men have a direct and distinct consciousness of freedom. They feel that they are able to choose between alternative forces of actions. Man has autonomy to choose what is right and wrong. After an act they also feel that they could have chosen otherwise. This is a fact of experience and so must be recognized.

The twelfth unit of this course is 'Liberalism and Its Principles'. After reading this unit one will be able to know that Liberalism is a worldview related to political philosophy consists of the ideas of liberty and equality. It advocates a wide array of views depending on their understanding of these principles, but generally they support ideas such as freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, free markets, civil rights, democratic societies, secular governments, gender equality etc. It is the culmination of developments in western society that produced a sense of the importance of human individuality

The thirteenth unit of the course four is, 'Individualism'. This unit will let you know that Individualism is the moral stance, political philosophy, ideology, or social outlook that emphasizes the moral worth of the individual. Individualists promote the exercise of one's goals and desires and so value independence and self-reliance and advocate that interests of the individual should achieve precedence over the state or a social group, while opposing external interference upon one's own interests by society or institutions such as the government. Individualism is often defined in contrast to totalitarianism, collectivism and more corporate social forms.

The fourteenth unit is 'Liberalism vs. Communitarianism'. This unit will take you to the liberal-communitarian debate, which took its present form, can be traced back to the beginning of the modern age, when

liberalism emerged as a political and philosophical movement. John Locke in 17th-century England and Immanuel Kant in 18th-century Prussia developed theoretical views of society and human nature that stressed equality, personal autonomy, individual rights, and universalizable moral principles.

The fifteenth unit of this course is 'Liberal Justice and Justice as Desert'. After going through this unit, one will be able to know that nothing other than justice finds its relevance in human life in a greater way. Justice reflects the moral status of the society, community and state. Everybody is pleading for justice. What then is justice? Justice means what is just in the real sense of the term. The term justice may be evaluated from various perspectives. People are talking of social justice, economic justice, political justice, moral justice, liberal justice. The relevance of justice was prevailing from the antiquity. The Greek philosophers were vocal about the concept of justice.

While going through this course you will come across some boxes which are put on the left side or right side of the text. These boxes will give us the meanings of some words and concepts within the text. Apart from this, there will be some broad and short questions included under Activity and Check Your Progress in every unit. Activities will increase our thinking capacity because questions put in Activity are not directly derived from the text. But answers to the short questions are put in the section Answers to Check Your Progress. Besides, there are some text-related questions which are put in Model Questions. These questions will help you in selecting and mastering probable topics for the examination so that you can prepare for the examination with confidence.