Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur

National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL)

Course Title
Cognition, Transformation & Lives

Lecture –19
Transformation and Ethics

by
Dr. Alok Bajpai
Psychiatrist, IIT Kanpur

So welcome to this last one hour of this course on cognition, emotion and transformation. And I hope that some of you would have found it of use to your lives and some of you still be wondering about this is all about, but do not worry just keep it in your mind and keep thinking, because there will be a point of time when you will have to really mull over all these things.

Because as we have talked about, so till now what we have talked about is the blocks which make human life and mind cognition, emotion, action how the neuroscience and how the brain has evolved from between the unconscious and conscious, and how it creates meaning and how people decide, what are the cognitive frameworks, we have been able to get an overview of all this and obviously the details you can always go back and read and ask me or my TA.

We have also looked at how the society influences or thought process and how people need to confirm or rebel, but at the end of the day the need for change is always there, the mind has to keep exploring new things, gain new experiences, create new memories within which it places the new information which is pouring in every second of life, to basically make you to survive one, to fulfill the need, the basic needs of survival and then as you move on till the peak like self actualization.

And the basic need of harmony, I mean it is the contradictory pressures, we also looked at what how change can be affected by external situations and the need for survival, but transformation which is a longer change, a deeper change and its ongoing process sort of irreversible is different

from change. So the need for change and need for transformation keeps varying, but there are moments in life and people transform.

We all have experienced moments of change, whether we have been able to transform is the question which each one of us can answer for one self. We also in the last lectures we talked about, gave Mahatma Gandhi as a model who consciously transformed himself. We talked about Gandhi in the context of empathy. So all transformations are not necessarily social, all transformations are not necessarily personal, not necessarily good, not necessarily bad.

It all depends on what is the context, where we took it as an example of positive transformations, we have also mentioned in passing about the positive psychology which after long periods of psycho analysis, of behaviorism, of man being total reflection of society or society being a reflection of man. Positive psychology has started looking at the strength of the human being. Although it is nothing new, because if you go back to mythology and religion especially in the eastern thought they have always believed into this strength and goodness of man.

That was the model we took, we did not talk about the bad transformations. And in this process we landed about a point of thinking that what are the pushes, what are the points where which push people for changing and transforming. And the big question which came, I keep saying big question to this question, because that is still really a big one. Whether the whole unconscious determines what make conscious things, or whether I have a will to choose how we are going to do it.

Because when you say that strength of human beings and exhorting people to do what is correct given in the context there is no universal correct embaring a few truths. So we trans posted this information which Mahatma Gandhi's life and I told you how he consciously there were points in his life in childhood, in young age and later on which were like nodes in which Gandhi kept transforming himself all that he did was conscious.

And it is pity clear thing people it is like an objective truth which is on our phase because Gandhi's choice of symbols of Charkar of the way he dressed the way he talked the vernacular

languages which he used all those things where not unconscious he knew the impact of it but because it was a very benevolent intention at that he wanted to unite the country so he took symbols from within.

It was not a top down leadership like which we see we see lot of leaders who are we will go to the poor sort and eat food or go and mix people change into the dress of that local area and they would come back into the helicopters and fly away Gandhi was not like this he was totally bottom down leader, bottom up leadership rather and as he went in people saw the geniuses of and the honesty of his living that is how people are identified with him so those basic structure of brain which help us identify with other which create empathy we talked about empathy in the sense that it is not a very solo act of just feeling what you are feeling.

Putting myself it is a slightly more complicated which balances cognation and emotion, that you identify with the persons emotions suspend your own emotions for some time and then you separate yourself cognitively to create a solution so empathy is present but to monitor empathy and develop it is an art an and training so all transformations required training, now let us proceed and let me sum up in next 30, 40 minutes, you may ask me what is the need but all of us need change if you feel that okay when my is life is fine and maybe I do not need a change wonderful.

But so you do not have really pay attention to all this but if you feel that there is a need for change and there is a need for change I will discuss that but let me give another example they were other people also who transformed Martin Luther king they and how do and how does this go how do transformations happen there was this black lady who was travelling in a bus and the conductor asked her to get up and leave it because it was not allowed for blacks and that day one day she said no.

She had been travelling on that road may be getting humiliated insulted everyday one day she said no that was the movement of transformation that let to the black revolution which martin Luther king even today's revolution also use the so those movement of transformations can be in individual in families in we looked into many examples, so I will just try to highlight this process

and give you one more example. Especially suppose we talk about students in school and in college let us look at this word called ethics.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:37)
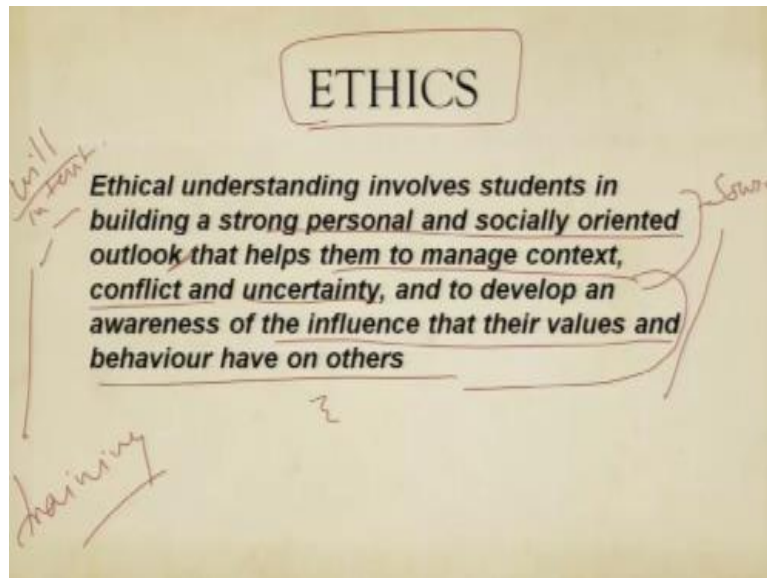
Ethics ethical understanding involves students I am just focusing on that situation in whether ethics is important for students or is it just important for those who rule, those who are into power and business we talk lot about because ethics is posted against corruption ethical people are not corrupt ethical people do the right thing so whether the students and kids also should do right things ethical understanding involves students in building a strong personal.

And socially oriented outlook again it is stepping out of self caring for the other which is the natural tendency we talked about altruism and sacrifices and how the brain really creates the need and how in a feedback loop you receive what you give what you give you will receive that helps them to manage context and nobody would deny that you need all these things conflict and uncertainty mind does want uncertainty mind needs to get a solution out of conflict and to develop an awareness of the influence that their values and behavior have on others.

So ethics is a step ahead of empathy if empathy has in the base line emotional template and in-between it has emotion and cognition both working ethic is absolutely at a level of cognitive functioning ethical understanding involves students so look at this, building a strong personal and socially oriented you are expected to build to have a intent or a will to build by training.

A socially oriented outlook that means you have step out off the self whatever you want to do should be beneficial to other that helps them to manage context wherever whatever you are doing ethics the content of ethics may vary but what is ethical is still ethical conflict when you come into conflicts with right and wrong which are obviously determine by the society rule uncertainty and to develop an awareness of the influence that they values and behavior have on us.

So on two levels one you have a inner source to do this at the same time you should be aware of what your value system is affecting and how it is affecting others.

(Refer Slide Time: 11:35)
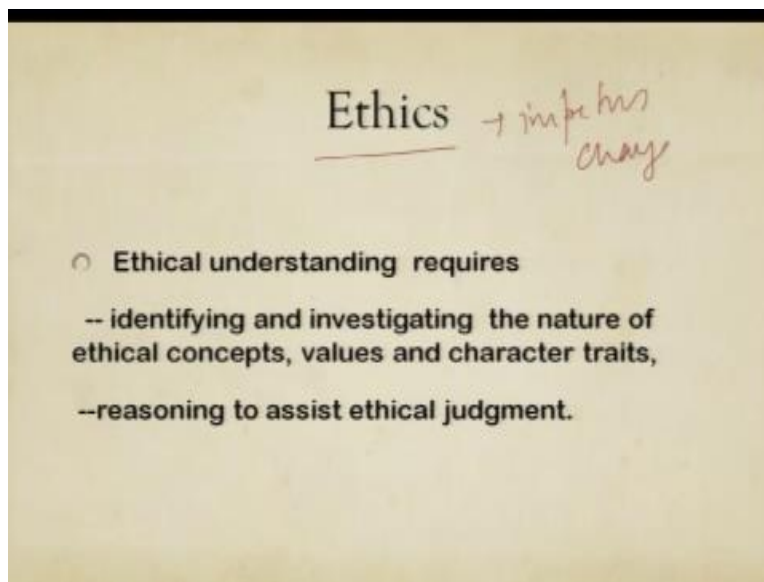
So ethical understanding requires it can be a great impetus for changes and because it requires ethics require training so ethical training should start from schools because from the schools they can really take it up because as you remember the first cognitive networks hierarchical forming

layer after layer of knowledge and all so if the knowledge of ethic is thought from a schools and that is what people are gearing up there are institutes which have been set up by Dalai lama there have been Ramakrishna mission has a whole value based education.

All this are coming into curriculum suddenly the shift is to after almost 20, 30 years of teaching children to be successful and go getters and become ambitious and become gain this and gain that has appears to be creating more misery actually the depression is increasing the psychiatric illness are increasing people are still that material rush has not made them happy. And I am not talking in sense of this spiritual gurus and moral teacher practically you look at it there is whole push for life the phase the fast phase is not giving such people are turning back.

To looking at the value system and what they found is that it is a ethical framework which has got disrupted over last 20, 30 years which is causing all this so again the so what is it, may be schools will get teaching but college students and engineering colleges and degree colleges do not have such training.

And honestly if you ask me I am whether your colleges engineering students do study some humanities subjects and that is one reason there was a major shift to engineering medicine, commerce and management in the last 30 years and now there is a switch back to liberal arts and humanities because people all over the world have realize that it is a humanities the introduction to humanities which actually make humans.

Rest all is technical knowledge which can be pumped into develop more technology or whatever you talk about so that also is important for creating a good life but that is not all that is not just something which so AC makes you comfortable but if you cannot survive without AC that is a problem so that is a mental stuff, so medical colleges for that matter I know I do not think any medical college in India at least.

Teachers even for one or two hours I specific class on ethics or how you deal with the patient all the teaching goes on with the bed side but there is no communication skill or anything taught

having this is surprising because doctors deal with patients the whole day, not doing that creates a conflict later on so ethical understanding actually requires.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:09)
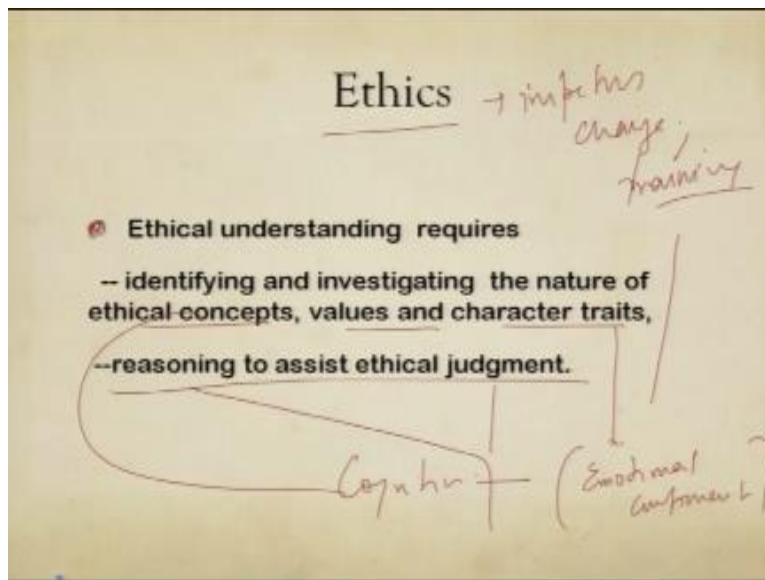
If you look at this identifying an investigating the nature of concepts values and character the reasoning to assist ethical judgment this is all cognitive creates, so you learn to realize what are ethical concept compare where various whether truth is good, whether honesty is good, whether speaking a lies good, whether hiding things is good, whether cheating is good, whether corruption is good taking everything has to be brought in compare it with character trades which may still have some amount of emotional component. So again cognition the first part comes in play and the reasoning to judge.
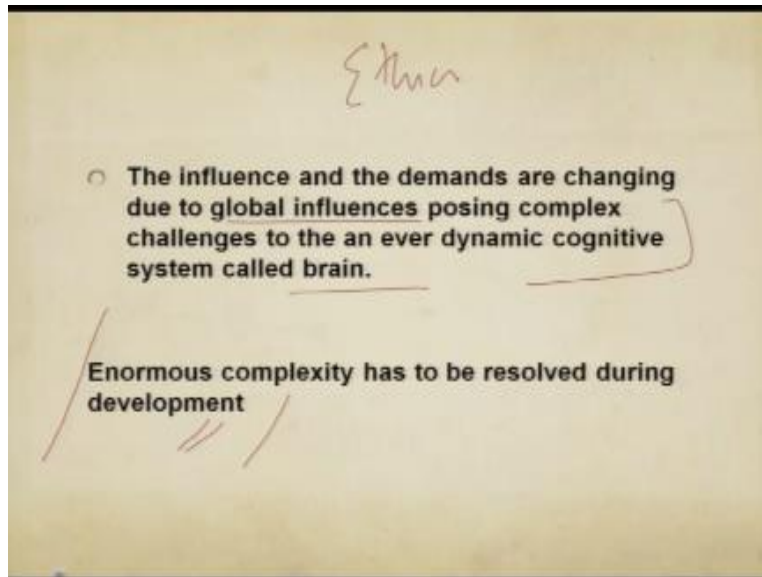
This is a big point where people realizing can transform, so even a correct person has a chance which is said that the greater the devil, the greater potential he has to become a saint or in other words every saint has a past. But what is important, you go on to blame the past or you look at the transformative scales of that person, it is also important in today's world because even the ethics is changing it is a global influence which work on, it is a globalization that demands are changing posing complex challenges to an ever dynamic cognitive system call brain, life a slow people where doing certain jobs.

The father left at a certain pace the child picked up from the village, cities evolved different type of jobs emerged, people from small cities go on leave their homes very early to go on to complete their graduation or their post grade or engineering, then they shift bigger cities which are becoming ever crowded and when they go to this companies all of you are engineers and who work for software IT and you know that marketing the amount of target they have to achieve, the amount of pressure they have to live in that is we got lot of money for that.

So all this conflicts are coming out of a global market, so people may have a will to live a life but the pressures in the flow of life is not allowing them. So as you grow even children have

pressures to perform to write, to get report card to choose the subject even they are thinking brain develops in 19, 20 there are certain what do you want to become common question, you may want to become a musician but your middle class father will not allow you, they will say no, it is not secure.

So you said no, no once you become and settle down you have a proper career where you can earn money then you want to go and do music by that time the music is out of your head, it is changing some parents are thinking on this line that okay fine let the kid allow, let us allow the kid to explore live the way they want and actually do what they want, so there is a enormous complexity which has to be resolved during development.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:38)
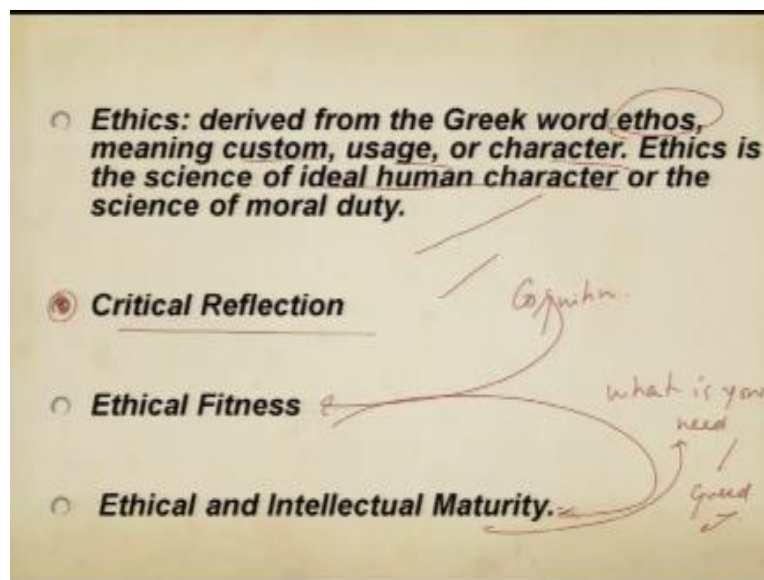
So the change you cannot avoid, so ethics is derived from a Greek word called ethos meaning custom, usage or character is a science of an ideal human character. So society has its ethics in the form of religion, in the form of social transaction, in the sense of social and moral duties you are going train from your childhood to develop a capacity of critical reflection. Unless you do this which is an act of cognition you cannot achieve ethical fitness. Once you do not have this you cannot do have an intellectual maturity.

And unless you have a intellectual maturity how can you decide what is your need and what is your greed, greed can always create problem initially dopamine may push you to get more and more is like human beings are some of this species who do lot of hoarding and that hoarding never is complete you are always want to keep getting more and more and more even for information brain also wants more I showed you in the slide ,but brain wants to get the information of the survival but the rest of the trash does not get out it gets over loaded and ,so what is the basis of it.

(Refer Slide Time: 20:22)
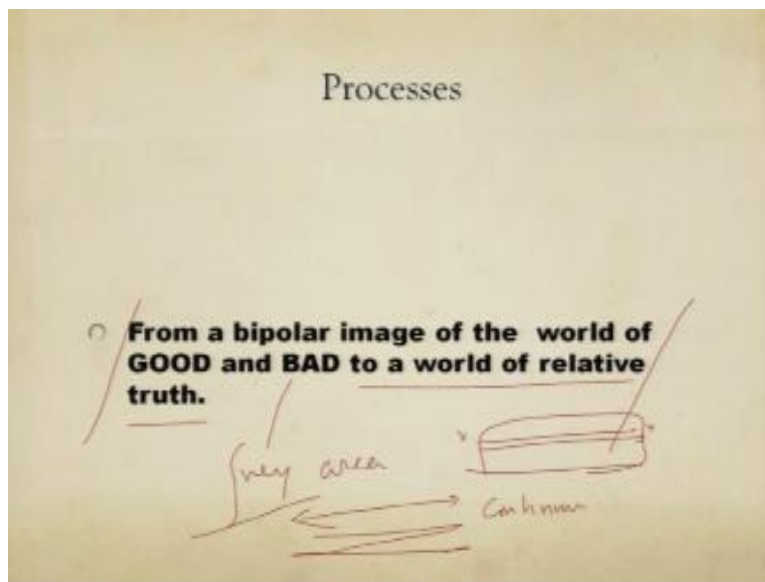
The basis of the whole process is from the bipolar image of the word and good and the bad to the world of the relative truth. so you are talking about the grey areas there are no extremes there is a whole shade a continuum is learning and within the contradictory things the mind keeps oscillating between this and this good or bad so, lots of people as they grow they actually choose their ends .
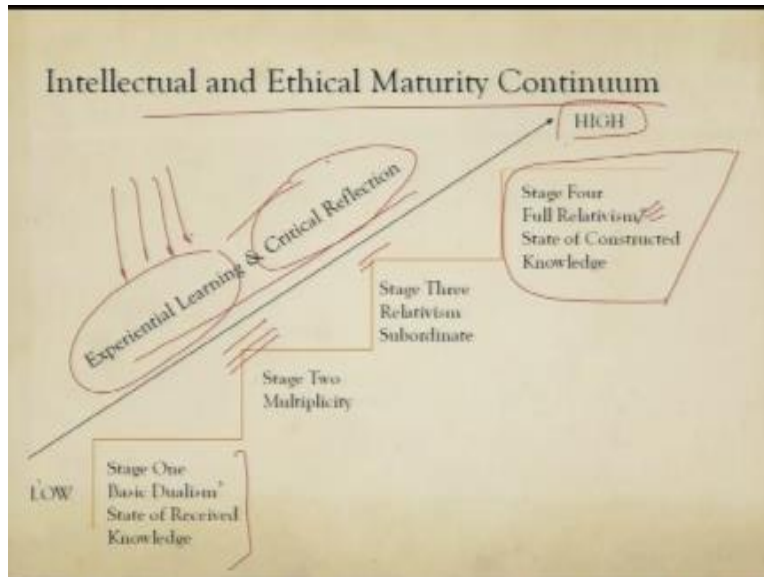
This the continuum I was talking about low basic the world self mind body and the received knowledge then as you move on you realize there are multiple layers to existence, so here you actually construct your knowledge by the time you reach here as the experiential learning and the critical define keep experiences environment and the senses everything keeps pumping this you reflect on this and then you reach a high level of an ethical maturity where you can place whatever objects people think phenomena in to the full relative mode is the state of the constructed knowledge you don't have this knowledge when you have born you keep receiving it you realize that they are beyond me that they are in the people .

And the other people are more people, and there are more people the more phenomena you realize the hierarchy here that not everything is equal and then you move on to the full construction and that is a cognitive exercise.

you can give an impetus to change. so these are the factors impacting we look at it the society value media keeps telling you economy keeps telling you so this is the data economy information society right here the media facts value school family friends and the religion institutions principals laws rules sports and this is the life and then you have to take a moral ethical action these are the theories you have others and the self you have reflection again you reflect and take a moral ethical action and once you do that in a feedback loop from the society you get a rewarded or punishment or not necessarily physical or law the inner punishment of we are talking about the guilt and the shame the feedback goes here again here to and then you keep the doing the action .So the whatever the weight emerges for you .
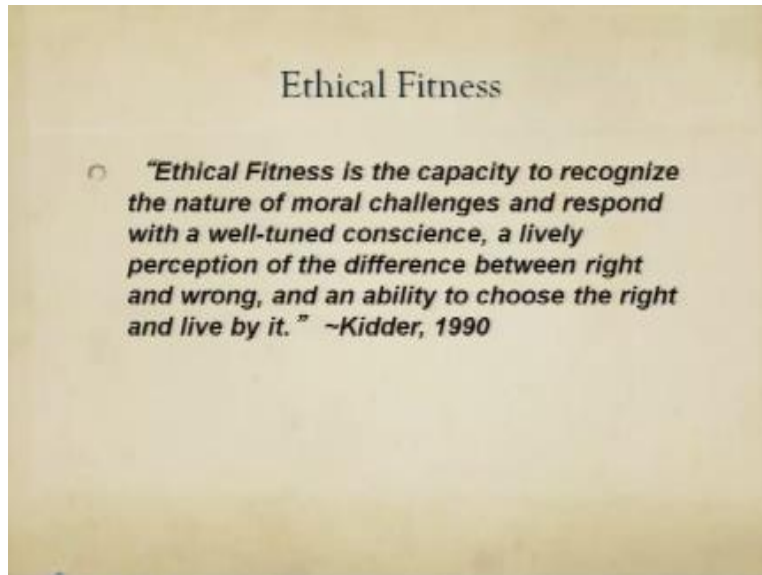
So the Ethical fitness is the capacity to recognize the nature of moral challenge and when I am saying the morality and I am not talking again I am reminding you again and again please do not constructive us in the sense of the right wrong and what I mean by moral is your brain should have the capacity to think of the what is right or good are bad for you so some people may reject in the conscience but we talked of a small in inner voice which Gandhi used to say even if you leave all this theoretical abstract concept.

Even as I am talking look at the biology the heart problem what we called I am says is that the subjectivity of an experience the soft problem are the experiential things and we can tell about the color and that is the soft problem what is me in me and even while I am talking there is something which is watching what I am talking you just require some training and some amount awareness to really look at this phenomena even if you remember what we talked about the visual and the auditory sketch pad while I am the speaking.

There is the whole auditory component is a visual thing which is the happening but still there is something in the self which binds but the performance of this self is again washed by so you can

take it in whatever sense you believe but there is some truth to it we may have been able to really break this riddle of consciousness of still now because possibly because we are maybe we are not asking the right question. It is why your generation to and for us also to find out the right definition. Maybe we are just looking at the physiological definitions which have to come to us from hundred years and we are trying to address the question from a different angle.

(Refer Slide Time: 25:34)
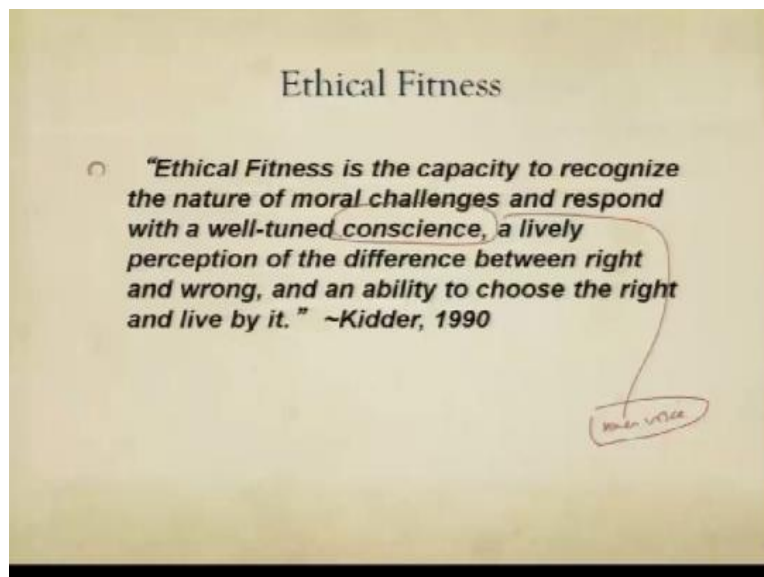
So is the capacity to recognize the nature of moral challenges and respond with a well tuned conscious, a lively perception of the difference between right and wrong and ability to choose the right and wrong. When I say right and wrong I am not saying the whatever your scriptures have told you whatever your gurus have told you, they may be right because everybody tells by experience but even if you reject all that.

Even if you rebel still even after rebelling you have to choose some right and wrong for yourself. One cannot probably escape this right and wrong this is also one of the basic cognitive layers. Which is deeply associated with emotions of guilt and shame? People can have not have guilt for society. But they may have personal guilts. They may have guilts in the relationships, may be a

father who is earning a lot of money for kids and giving them all best education with lot of fathers tend to do.

May feel guilty at the end when kids have gone out he said these I could have earned less shown them less rich world and I could have spent more time with them. May be that would have, so this types of things cause dilemma.

(Refer Slide Time: 27:03)
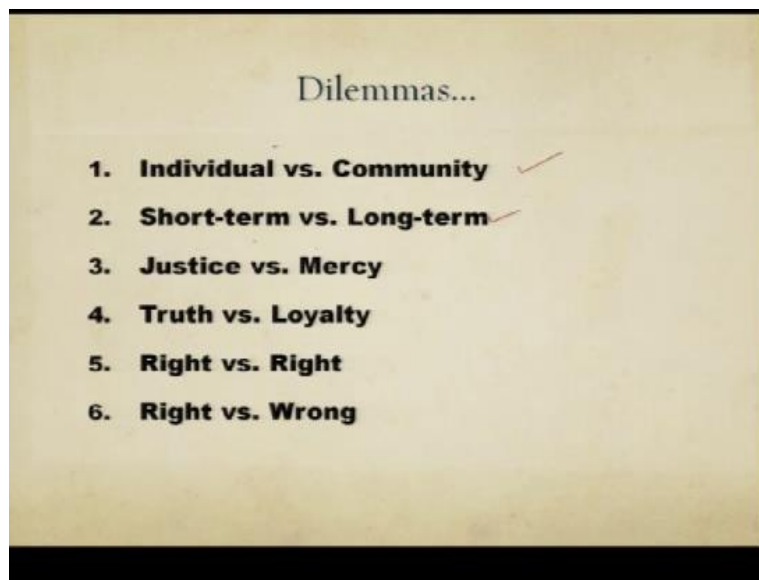
Individual versus community, care for oneself for short term versus long term. Short term gives good gratifications sacrifices gives probably long term thing, justice versus mercy truth versus loyalty, right versus right, there can be multiple rights, like the examples which has given earning money for a good education of kid is right. And father sacrifices a lot of mother scarifies a lot. But spending time with kid this also right so how do you choose, how do you choose between the right versus wrong.
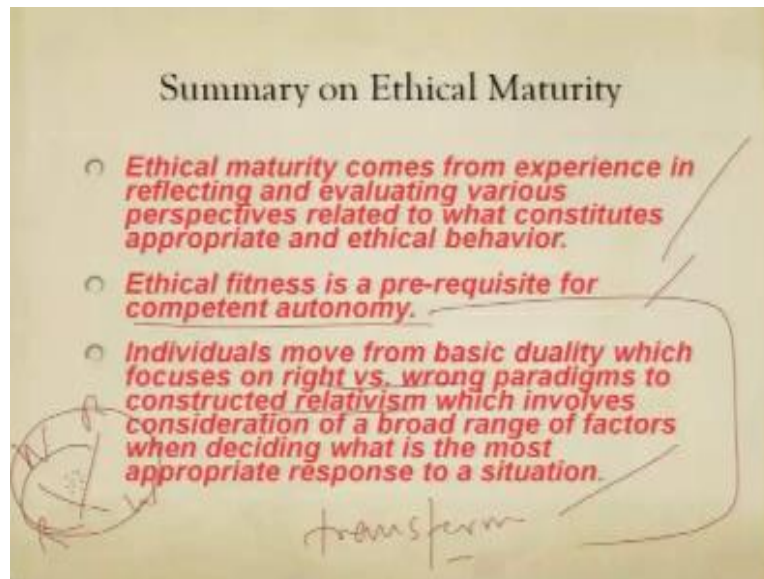
So to sum up ethical maturity comes from experiencing in reflecting and evaluating various perspectives related to what constitutes appropriate and ethical behavior. It is a prey requisite for competent autonomy and this autonomy is related to what you have to transform yourself to exercise this, they move from basic duality which focuses on right versus wrong to constructed relativism which involves consideration of a broad range of a factors when deciding what is the most appropriate response. So we cannot live in an absolute right and wrong and all that there is a right there is a wrong and it is grid wrong right we do not know what combination, so one has to really develop this critical reflection.

And that is the biggest transformation and thinking with people should attempt once they have reached a point where they can think. So there are ways there are hope there is people teach yoga mindfulness and the people do meditation people do lot of spiritual practices lot of but even when people do it people have to answer for themselves whether it has helps them transformed, probably it does not help them transform because they are just adjuvant and adjuncts to give you relief for sometime give you relief from conflicts. But unless you really change the basic

cognitive frame work of thinking and balance your emotions against it is not successful, so I will ended this and continue to would this in the last lecture thank you.

Lalty Dutta

Ajay Kanaujia

Shivendra Kumar Tiwari

an IIT Kanpur Production