

**Philosophy and Critical Thinking**  
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**Week-02**  
**Lecture 07: Socrates**

Welcome in lecture 7. Today, we are going to talk about Socrates, one of the very important thinkers from the Western world. Today, we are also going to understand Socrates, his idea, and most importantly, his method. And the Socrates method is very famous, for example in teaching, in discussion and so on. So let's start about the Socrates. As we know that we have about the Socrates, he was from Athens because we have been like discussing this Greek philosophy and he was a very great Athenian figure who completely gave himself to philosophical enquiry. However, we do not have a direct knowledge about the Socrates. Direct knowledge means there is no work available of Socrates. Socrates never published any book or written any book. We also have no idea much about the Socrates. So, our knowledge is limited to the secondary resources from his disciple Plato which we also will be discussing in the next session or many other thinker or historian like that. Socrates was from very poor family. His father was a sculptor, mother was midwife. Midwife means who helps others to living baby. Socrates and about his education, how he got education or he had a formal education. So, there is an argument that he was not formally educated. But Socrates was aware of his philosophy was moving around and the philosophy of other philosophers who was before the Socrates. Socrates was a religious man and he believed in immortality of the soul. Soul, the immortality of soul means that this life is not the first and then last life. So, there is a life after this life. Now this belief also played a very important role in Socrates life. There was an argument that the Socrates was a best example of a person who is with self-control and he was the happiest of men. There is a very interesting about Socrates is he is to hear a divine voice. Now, this divine voice is said that he is always used to guide Socrates in the sense that always used to ask him what sort of action should not perform. So, there is a saying, an argument that this divine voice never asked Socrates that what set of action is to perform. So, the divine voice always is guiding Socrates that what sort of action you are not supposed to do. Now one thing is a very important point here would like to mention that Socrates had a strong religious persuasion that he was acting under a mission from the god. Now, the mission was the search for knowledge. Socrates always claimed that I know that I know nothing. Now what does it mean is I know that I know nothing. It only means that the knowledge about your ignorance. Socrates used to say that I am aware of my ignorance and this is how he used to ask other fellow citizens about the knowledge, about the concept which he has and which they have. However, this divine mission to search up for knowledge by questioning wise men got him into trouble and he was condemned to death on three counts. For denying the nation's god, second for setting up of new gods and third

for corrupting the youths. Now as I said that he used to hear the divine voice, he believed that, that voice is his god's voice and he believed that that is only one god or there is only one god and he always used to indulge in the discussion with other fellow citizens about the knowledge and he also used to encourage others to ask a question yourself, skillful questioning is a very important part which we will be discussing how Socrates did. However, because of these charges he got on capital punishment. Even his trial was very interesting. If you read his trial, story of his trial, you will find it is very interesting and interesting the sense that Socrates never tried to protect himself. After this judgment, there was a chance of possibility or let us say the argument that their disciple came with the escape plan but Socrates never followed that. Socrates believed that first as I said first his belief in immortality of the soul that this is not first in the last life and he also believed that we should follow the law and he believed that this law which punished him many times he was under this law as he benefited him. So therefore, now he cannot just go away, run away from this place, and finally, in May 399 BC, he was offered hemlock poison, and then he died. Now let us understand about Socrates and their time. As we have been discussing the many philosophers, it is quite evident that all the philosophers they are developing their idea based on their other philosophers. So, there is one philosophy, there an argument, the claim and based on that claim the next philosopher is giving a different set of argument. So right from an Anaximander, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, whatever we have discussed in the last week, you will find the same all of them had doing has developing their argument based on the established or based on the popular philosophy at that time. So, it also it is very important to know that time of Socrates, what kind of philosophy was popular and why Socrates argued against that argument philosophy. So, the time of Socrates, the sophists were famous, and they have a different set of philosophy. They believe that knowledge is perception. So, whatever we are getting through this knowledge through perception that is real, that is true. Again, the perception gives only relative knowledge of things. It only means that the knowledge is completely relative. So knowledge cannot be one. So, for example, like I am perceiving X or there is another person called Y and he perceiving the same object differently or he has a different way to perceive in the world. Their argument is therefore, there is a different kind of knowledge or is knowledge completely relative. The second one and very important point is morality is based on feelings and desires. So again, this morality is not one. So, if you ask about their philosophy, they will believe that moral laws are not one. The third one, the laws of the state are made in the interest of ruling party and underlying principle of which is might is right. However, against this philosophy, what Socrates did that, Socrates argued against this sophist philosophy and he accepted the distinction between reason and perception. Whatever we are perceiving, we also can apply a reason to that. Socrates was a person who always used to believe that skillful question is very important and can play a very important role in the thought. Now he used to claim that virtue is knowledge of good through concepts and concepts are formed by reason and

reason is one and the same for all. So, if you want to virtue or you only seek virtue, then we should only seek virtue and for that it is very important to inquire the concept. We are using many different kinds of concept without examining those concepts through reason. Socrates used to say that we have to think, we have to give a reason, we have to think of the reason and then accept the concept. I will let you know in the next slide what Socrates did that. Again, if virtue is knowledge through concept which are given by reason, then there will be a universal knowledge and moral and political laws. So, he argued against the sophist idea and said argued that if you are going to follow this and if you are following this, there should be a universal knowledge and moral and political laws. Now, how Socrates used to do that, I mean his method was very important path. So, he was always using a dialectical method. By process of dialectical inquiry, the investigation is led to a newer hypothesis with fewer and fewer contradictions. So for example, there is one concept. So, if you are skeptic about this concept and you are asking these questions, then there is obviously there are no contradictions. After this investigation, you will come to a new hypothesis with very few contradictions. So, Socrates is basically always looking for new information or looking to inquiry for new definitions. He argued that absolute knowledge lies in constant search and not in reaching and grasping it. It only means that even you are inquiring on a concept, after this investigation, investigation with the reason, it should not be like concluding something but you are again constantly trying to understand and more. I will give an example. It is a very important part of the Socrates method. So, suppose you have a concept, let me clarify what does it mean when I am saying the concept or not. See there are a lot of things in our mind. We have established in our mind which is not examined. For example, justice. We are using this word, what is just, this is just, this is not just and so on. Many times, you are using this word good, this action is good for me, this action is not good for me and so on. The idea is, do you know what good means? We are using this word, courage. The idea is, do you know what courage means? How are you going to define the courage? If I am going to use the word good in my day-to-day life, do I know what good means and in what sense I am using the word good? So even I am trying to understand this concept but again after the investigation, trying to understand the concept means that using the reason, asking question and when I am asking question, getting the information coming to a conclusion where with the few contradictions or let's say that pure understanding, Socrates will ask you to continue this journey. I will give you an example, more or less, it may not be a perfect example but nowadays in Indian system it is an Indian family, sometime you may get this kind of joke. For example, I used to do this kind of joke, sometime. Suppose there is a two-year-old kid and if you touch his ear and nose and act like you are going to eat his nose or ear and they say, I am going to finish your nose. He will start crying. What the person is, the kid is, the moment he hears that you are going to eat his ear and nose, he will start crying. Maybe after some time, one year, and two years, it is the same joke. Now the kid what he is doing, he is touching his eyes, nose and ear or maybe smiling. So, after some more year, the same

thing, the kid will not even touch his nose and will not check his nose and ear and say, I know this joke. The philosophy is always gone for the second stage. You are doubting things. So, you have the one concept and then you have doubt, you are thinking of that concept and you are trying to understand more. Socrates is going one more step ahead, and don't stop that. In this example, kid after touching his nose, he realized that I have nose. So even this person is saying that he has finished my nose, but I have realized that I have nose. So, he is stopping his inquiry there. But Socrates is asking in terms of the concept that you have a knowledge. So, after this investigation, you got some knowledge, some concept, which is with a few contradictions, but still do not stop that. Always constant search to and not coming to any final conclusion. He is to argue that the real knowledge of justice, virtue, internal ideas are already present in man, because as I said, he believed in the immortality of the soul. So soul is like in many lives, there is a circle of birth and rebirth. So, the soul has gone through many lives, maybe in this world, in other world and so on. So, all the knowledge is there where in the soul. If you just ask a skillful question, this way we can recollect things. So, Socrates believed that you know things, we know things. What is important thing is just we have to ask the question. Asking question is also very important part in the Socrates method. So that is why he used the word skillful question. So skillful questioning is very important. So if you are doing that, you will get the real knowledge. He argued that the soul is immortal and has been born many times and, has seen all things both here and in the other world, has learned everything that is. So, we need not to be surprised if it can recall the knowledge of virtue or anything else, which as we see it once possessed.

Now let us again understand the Socratic method. First is, skeptical in the sense that you have an idea, a concept and then you are not confirmed, not sure about that. You know things but you are still thinking any different way to understand or many are doubting this idea of that concept. And then the conversation, conversation means that you have to go for the dialogues, the question and answer. So it is asking question and then there is a reply, then question and so on. Third one is all about the concept. So, this question, the series of question which we are going to ask, this is a moving around, this is a concept. And finally, deductive, you deduct what it is. I will give you an example. What happened in time of Socrates, one person expressed his desire to be a politician or a statement. Now at that time they used to like discuss on a street and then Socrates asked him about, okay fine, you are going to be a politician or a statement. He also asked that, okay it means that you need something, some kind of quality. One of the qualities is to judge what is at least just and what is unjust. Let us say what is justice and what is unjust. So, let's draw a line in the sense that like for example there is in a column, so this side there is an adjust, let's say this is an unjust. Now what kind of action we can put in just category and what kind of action we can put in unjust category. For example, stealing, right. Is it just or unjust? So, he said no, no, n you cannot keep in just, so let us put it in unjust. For example, falsehood. We'll say okay this is again unjust and so on. So, he gave another example. For example, you are

performing this action which is called stealing to benefit others, right. Or for example you did something, you stole something, you are stealing something to support your own family. Or look for example there is another example is in a falsehood which you have put in the unjust category. There is a father and his son is not well. He does not want to take medicine. So, what father did that, father said that this medicine is in a wonderful in taste and so on. He is basically telling a lie. Now because of his father's argument, the kids what he did, he took this medicine. Now, will you put this action in unjust then say no, this will go in just category. Now take an example of stealing. Suppose there is a person with the societal tendency, right. He's always arguing like that or maybe he is in that his thoughts is coming in my mind, right. And he also has a sword. What you did to save him, you stole his sword. So, is this action is unjust? He said again this is an unjust. No, it's a just. So, the idea is and then again, the Socrates when he asked about a few more questions then, this person was confused how to answer, right. So, the basic mind is and to tell you all this thing is that the Socrates was more interested in the defining a concept, right. If you are using, we have established many concepts in our mind without examining, right. Socrates used to say that first is knowledge is virtue. So, we should always go for knowledge. Knowledge means that always you inquire about the knowledge, about the concept which you have. He also argued that unexamined life is not worth living. Now unexamined life only means that we have in our mind we have so much concept we have learned from our family, we have got from society, our friends and so on. We are using this concept in day-to-day life without aware of the meaning. So, we should what we need this urgent work is to examine all the concept which we have we established in our mind. Without examining this concept what we are doing we are building our intellectual palace on those unexamined concept which is the basis going to be a very big. So, the urgent work is you examine all the concept which you have established in your mind without examine. And that is what he used to say this is a very urgent work to all of us do that. So first he said that unexamined life is not worth living, right. So, you have to examine all the concept. So we are using day to day life many many concept as I said. So, whenever you are using you plus you use you understand that what kind of or in what sense you are using that word. For example word good. So I am saying that okay this set of action performing in classroom is not good. So, when I am using this word good in this sentence in what sense I am using word good and what does it mean and good means. The Socrates used to give importance to this concept. So, you should examine all the concepts which you have in your mind, right. Likewise, we have many concepts we have examined. Again, that is a very important claim by Socrates that it is better to be human beings dissatisfied than a pig satisfied. Better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a full satisfied. It is satisfaction does not mean that about the career, about the money. Satisfaction is always used for the knowledge. As I said that he always used to claim that I know nothing. Now knowing nothing means that you have concept and you are still doubting that okay I have idea but still you are looking for a new knowledge about this concept. Even you bring this idea in Indian system. Indian system

we will be discussing that some philosopher has argued the same way that they have a different way to argue. They said that knowledge of any object is not possible, right. So, we are like claiming that I know this is X that is Y and so on. But claiming that there is Indian philosopher arguing that basically that your knowledge is just one aspect of reality. That is not complete and full aspect or complete knowledge of that object. So, whenever he was saying I know X this is just a partial, just one way to see the same one reality, right. So, this Indian philosopher arguing that you should not be like always claiming that I know this is what it is. Socrates has a similar view. Socrates also argued that you should not be like satisfied with the knowledge. So, when you have something, some concept in your mind you have investigated through the reason. Again, you are looking for a new definition of that. You are asking that okay fine I know what it is putting again a different situation okay if I am putting this situation where are these differences going to survive in this situation or going to change that is what is called the contradiction. This is Socrates who was even encouraging others to do that. All the youth used to ask the question and then say look, okay, do you know about this idea and if there is a concept, then he used to ask against the concept, right. Now I hope it is clear.

Now, there is a statement it is by Socrates during the trial. This is the last statement I mean to say this is a statement during the trial. I believe this is very important. This is from a book of Frank Thilly. He said, "Still, I have a favor to ask them, my condemners and accusers. When my sons are grown up, I would ask you, oh my friend, to punish them; and I would have you trouble them as I have troubled you if they seem to care about riches, or about anything more than about virtue." Here, you will find that again, Socrates is arguing that you have to give importance to only virtue. Virtue is a very important, very significant life. "If they pretend to be something when they are really nothing" it means that they have no idea about themselves, right. So, I am claiming that I know many things but in reality, I know nothing. And this is what, Socrates' idea of like ignorance. "Then reprove them as I have reproved you for not caring about that for which they ought to care and thinking that they are something when they are really nothing. And if you do this both I and my sons will have received justice at your hands." So basically, he is arguing that it is very important to know about your own knowledge. And that is what as I said that he is to claim that I am the person who knows nothing. So, when he is saying I know nothing it is not about any specialized knowledge, it is only about any concept. And that is why Socrates was very famous even at that time, even today in the Western world, are very important figure. And his method, the dialectical method is famous in the sense that even after the Socrates his student Plato used the same method. And we will be discussing the Plato in next class. But the Socrates was his argument and his idea of the knowledge was proven in that time.

Yeah. So thank you. And this lecture was based on these books, The critical history of Western philosophy and history of philosophy. Thank you so much for your kind attention. Thank you.