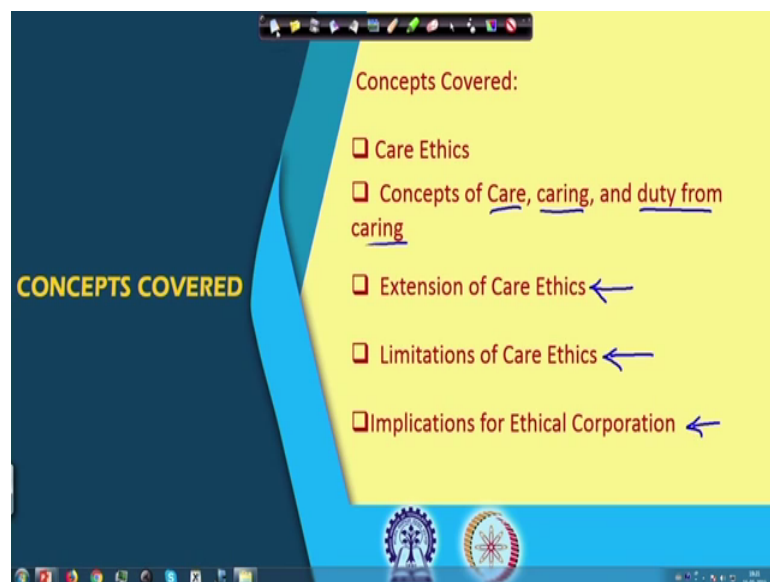


The Ethical Corporation
Prof. Chhanda Chakraborti
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur

Lecture - 10
Normative Ethical Theories: Care Ethics

Welcome to this lecture10 on our second week. And we are still trying to complete the ethical theories that we are learning. Today we will talk about care ethics which is going to be quite different from all the theories that you have heard from me so far.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:46)



So, our plan is as usual we are first going to cover the technical concepts here. For example, in this theory we are going to talk about what does care mean and what caring would imply, and then where is ethics in all this caring and whether care ethics can be extended to business situations or corporate situations. As always we will talk about what could be some of the shortcomings in this theory, and then finally, what are the implications for Ethical Corporation.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:25)

Care Ethics

- This group of normative ethics theories provide a stark contrast to Utilitarianism, Deontology, Justice theory, Virtue ethics.
- Care ethics: Main proponents Carol Gilligan (psychologist), and many other thinkers, Nel Noddings (Philosopher), Virginia Held (Feminist Philosopher), etc..
- It is an ethics that is **not** supposed to be universal, rational, abstract, impartial, and rule-bound.

So, first of all what is this theory that we are looking at, its name suggests that it is all about care. And you are right if you think that that is an odd name for an ethics theory, but so far we have heard the names of utilitarianism, deontology, justice, virtue ethics and so on. And it is true that this theory provides a very sharp contrast to all that learning that you have learned so far from these theories in what way, I will try to explain as we go along.

But one of the very first point that I need to mention here is that care ethics has a very distinct presence of feminist thinkers, amidst its proponents. It was started by Carol Gilligan, who was a psychologist and she actually contested a very well known model of moral development by Larry Kohlberg, her mentor was Larry Kohlberg and she was a student, but she found out the flaws in that skill, the we must have may have heard about Kohlberg's, stages of moral development and she was the one to find the holes in that model and through that she is started talking about this alternative way of looking at ethics and from that this whole care ethics theory sort of sprung.

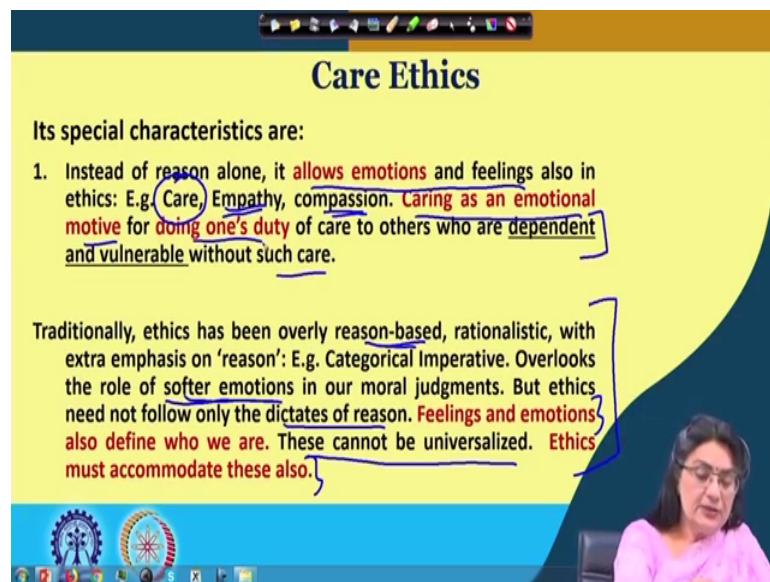
And then afterwards many other thinkers have played very important roles for example, Nel Noddings, Virginia Held, there are many voices here, but surprisingly number good number of those thinkers are women that is not what I am trying to tell, here I am just to say that you know this is going to be a very different kind of a thinking, so let us take a look.

First of all, the first point that I would like to make is that whatever saying is that ethics can be also not universal meaning, if you from the earlier theories you may have heard this underlying and claim that if there is an ethical role, it should apply to everybody alike and they are saying that perhaps that is not the way to look at it.

Here is also another major departure that ethics does not have to be reason-based you know, it does not have to be rational. And it does not have to be abstract, rather it should be about particular situations. So, there are many departures that you are going to see from the earlier theories, it also says that it does not need to be impartial.

Now, this should this should cause some stir on your part, because you always think that being ethical means that being fair means being completely impartial not biased, but you will find that this theory is going to say that there are situations, where we cannot treat everybody alike; there are some who are more intimate to us and out of that also, you can speak about ethical duties. So, this is the theory is going to provide us many occasions to be surprised, let us go for it.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:48)



Care Ethics

Its special characteristics are:

1. Instead of reason alone, it **allows emotions** and feelings also in ethics: E.g. **Care, Empathy, compassion. Caring as an emotional motive for doing one's duty** of care to others who are **dependent and vulnerable** without such care.

Traditionally, ethics has been overly reason-based, rationalistic, with extra emphasis on 'reason': E.g. Categorical Imperative. Overlooks the role of **softer emotions** in our moral judgments. But ethics need not follow only the **dictates of reason. Feelings and emotions also define who we are. These cannot be universalized. Ethics must accommodate these also.**

Let us talk about the specific characteristics that we need to particularly pay attention to one that note that typically in western ethics. Theories have been normative theories have been reason-based, there is an over emphasis on reasoning and what it can do to keep us on the track of ethics.

For example, in the previous lecture you may have heard, Aristotle saying that we need to keep the emotions and desires under the control of reason. So, reason is that driver, who keeps all these emotions in check under leash. So, there is this and then you have heard Kant in deontology is speaking about, how the categorical imperative for the moral rule must be finally, rational, it has to be a rational rule.

So, the In fact there was a clear message that you know the there is practically no place for softer emotions in ethics, Kant specifically did not like to include emotions and feelings in the moral motives and in moral judgments. So, we are only to supposed to follow the dictates of reason.

On the other hand this theory is going to say that we are not just rational beings, because in us there is an emotional side also and feelings and emotions make us who we are, we are stirred by situations, we feel swayed by situations and that is the truth about us, but unfortunately these emotions and feelings cannot be universalized always; you cannot, you cannot feel the same kind of feeling for everybody. You know, there is a special relationships and special feelings for certain people and ethics needs to accommodate those also. I will give you examples what they have in mind, but think about the intimate relationships that you may have for example, with your mother.

Do you feel the same way about everybody else, are you supposed too and that is what they are asking me that there are situations where you have to give, sort of a special weight age for the special relationships in our life, so that is the first point that first of all that it, allows emotions and feelings also in ethics. Particularly they are going to talk about this emotional response called care, but they do bring in empathy, compassion, kindness, all those noble emotions and they say we ethics needs to accommodate them.

Specifically, when we are going to talk about relationships where somebody is dependent on us for care, somebody who would whose existence would be vulnerable or who would be in terrible trouble if we do not care. So, in such cases caring becomes an emotional motive for doing ones duty, you will get to hear all about that. So, this is first that reason is not the only thing, but we need to make room for emotions and feelings also.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:18)

Care Ethics

2. Instead of abstract and universal approach, it allows context-bound approach in ethics: Situated judgements.
Virginia Held: Contextual, lived, actual experience of embodied humans rather than hypothetical moral agents. Moral judgments about particular situations.

3. Primacy of inter-personal relations in ethics over the isolated 'Self': Responsibility and duty rising from those relationships

Nel Noddings: Relationships are ontologically basic. The moral agent is not an isolated being. A society is a web of relationships. Our identity is defined by our relationships to the others.

Second they will say that you know instead of a universal approach or a context-free abstract approach, as you may have seen say in Kant's deontology in the various formulations of categorical imperative at the situations do not play a role. Here in care ethics on the other hand, they say that there has to be a context-bound approaches specificity of the context has to be taken into account.

You heard the same thing in Aristotle's virtue ethics also, but here there is a difference; what they are talking about is that moral judgments are necessarily situated. So, they you from the particularities, we have to take the judgment, there was no general rule here and what kind of experiences these are the situational experiences, held has said it like this that you know these are the actual experiences.

Where we say lived, we mean experiences actually happening in the right context of whom of ordinary human beings, who have a body and these are not you know rational agents in the abstraction, but these are actual people who live their lives in certain contexts in that there are this moral judgments happening.

So, second point that I have made here is that there is a all moral judgments must be rooted in the experience of the particular situation and there has to be a direct connection between that situation and the judgment that you are making on it.

Third point that they will say that you know if other theories have spoken about the moral agent as an isolated individual, they are completely wrong. You know you have heard the moral agent in deontology as being just and isolated self. It is you who is trying to see whether the rule is universalizable, it is you who is trying to figure out whether the rule is reversible, whether you are exploiting somebody whether you are using somebody as a means or not that is you. And you are not answerable to anybody else even the duty is self imposed.

So, you are in a cocoon of being alone and that is the moral self. I have heard other also even in justice theory even in utilitarianism, there is a talk about the moral agent. This theory says, but that is just a myth because the reality is that we are related, there was no unrelated self where everybody is withstand in relationships. In fact, Nel Noddings put the point like this that you know the society is actually an web of relationships. If you are familiar with the neural network for example, then we can take that analogy that we are like the nodes in a great network. What is the network made of and they will say they are made of social relationships.

You cannot suddenly take somebody out of the relationship and try to identify. Even to identify you in that network we have to give the reference to the nodes nearby you. So, similarly our identity in the society is defined by what kind of relationship we have with the others ok. If you want to take examples, then the identity is created by you know who whose children we are, whose siblings we are, where do we work or which country do we live in and so on.

These are all some sort of what acknowledgement of relationships that create our this identity. So, third point was that there was no isolated moral agent. In fact, what is primary, what is ontologically more important or basic is the interpersonal relationships. Therefore, relationships are going to define us what kind of actions we should be doing.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:54)

What is Care?

- Tronto (1994): A practice, a relationship. Four sub-elements:
 - 1) Attentiveness, to become aware of a need in the other

Each 'caring' relation includes at least two people: Care-giver — care-receiver. May be reciprocal; may be not. But, the distinctive characteristic is that care-giver responds to a perceived need for care in the other. The care-giver realizes a need through empathy.

- 2) Willingness to respond and take care of need: Commits to provide care to improve the cared-for's situation.
- 3) Competence: The skill of providing good and successful care. **Competent care**
- 4) Responsiveness, consideration of the position of others, and recognition of the potential for abuse in care .

Let us talk about care. Now, this term has been really I mean has been discussed a lot in care ethics, because various thinkers have tried to define it in their own way. I am not going to go over all those debates and the disputes over the term, but let me just say this that you know Tronto has given us something to hold onto by saying that this care is actually first of all a practice and it is a relationship. We just talked about relationships. So, care is some sort of a relationship. Relationship of what kind, I am going to explain, but first Tronto identified four sub elements in it

First element is attentiveness. Attentiveness means you be you pay attention, you suddenly become aware about a need in the other, a relationship means there are at least two people involved right. So, at least two people involved in this relationship. And if since we are using the term care, so one person is the care giver, the other one is let us call it care receiver. So, it is like a dyad two people together that is the unit.

Now, suddenly what attentiveness means that the care giver is becoming aware about the need in the care receiver, there is a need first of all. Now, this relationship between these two may be reciprocal for example, friends caring for each other. You know sometimes I care for the friend, sometimes the friend cares for me, but sometimes it may not be there. For example, think about the mother caring for the newborn, the newborn baby cannot do the same for the mother.

So, there is, but it is still a relationship of caring. But whichever way you take it they will say the distinctive characteristic here is that the caregiver knows that there is a need, this need is does it really exist in the caregiver or not is not so important, but that the caregiver perceives it and that is the starting point. What helps to realize that this emotion called empathy. You know if you empathically understand that there is a need in the other then the second element is after knowing there is a need, the willingness to respond and to take care of the need.

So, you commit yourself to provide care to improve the care receivers situation that is the whole idea, and then there has to be competence meaning the caregiver has to have certain skill of providing good and successful care you know it is not just a impulsive emotion only, but there is a also knowledge that you are able to relieve the other person from their trouble or from their condition, improve their condition and so on. So, what we are talking about is competent care not just any kind of a care, but competent care.

And then there is the fourth element is responsiveness you know considering the other persons position and also understanding that there is potential for abuse in care. You know if I do not, then what happens to the person; if I overdo it, then what happens to the person and so on. So, all of this Tronto said is what care is about. So, first of all that it is a complex relationship, it is a relationship. It involves at least two people minimum two people, sometimes it may be reciprocal sometimes may it may not be, this is what we understood.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:10)

Caring and Duty from Caring

- Caring: The act of being troubled by another's trouble, and the corresponding obligation, commitment. It is a relationship that is ethically fundamental. The response is not rational in nature.
- Examples: Caring for elderly, newborn babies, sick babies, sick patients, friends in trouble, friends, family.
- Held: Caring need not be always maternal in character. Also in hospital, in case of extended family, towards domestic workers, between teachers and students.
- Ethical duty particularly when other's well-being depends significantly on the decision of the one who cares. Asymmetrical dependence, vulnerability.
- Ethics of care: We have a DUTY to take special care towards those with whom we have such special relationships
- Ethical, because steady, value-based commitment.

Let us try to understand what caring is. If care is that so caring is again a relationship. So, from care you are trying to do something. It is a relationship, but note that there is also response based on that relationship. Response which is not exactly rational in nature, it is more emotional in character rather than rational, it is there is not much calculation involved here.

For example, when the friends care for each other unless you are a very, very, I do not know extremely shrewd person. We do not really usually think that whether you know the I mean in 25 years I am going to come back for the return for the for the good deeds that I am doing to the friend, it is not like that. You are stirred by the condition of your friend and you would like to help. So, because you care that is all.

And examples we can give many I have given you already friends, I have already also said you know mother and newborn babies. But held has said that caring all does not need to have always a reference to the maternal side of us, it can be also a relationship were responsible relationship.

For example, when you are caring for the elderly you know somebody for example, your grandfather or does not have to be even a related person, suppose it is a nurse who is working in a unit that is for the sick newborn babies. So, there you need to really care for those infants, or you are taking care of the sick patients, for example, family.

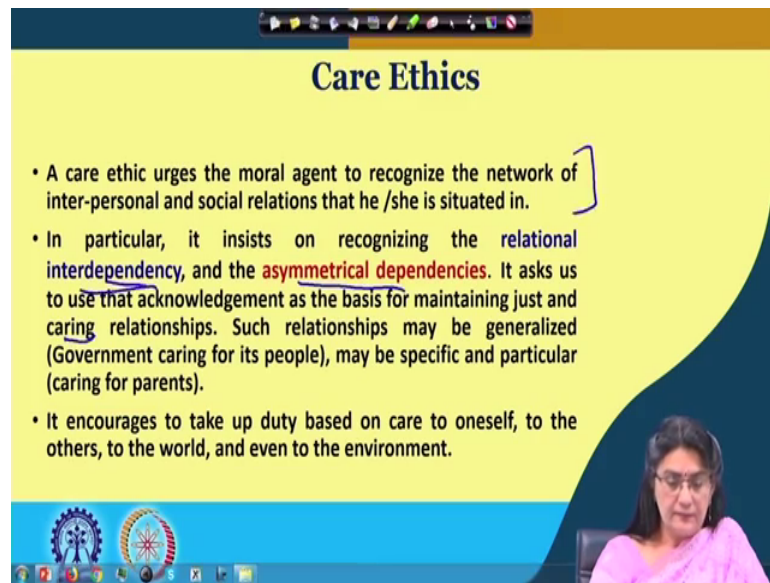
A held has said that why just limited to those a kind of examples, it can be also where you care about the domestic workers in your household, or the relationship that may exist between teachers and their students, you know there is a care. So, relationships where you are taking some responsibility, you it is it is an obligation that is generated from that relationship and there is a commitment also.

Now, where does the ethical dimension lie in this relationship, now care ethics will say that it particularly is visible the ethical side of this kind of a caring is particularly visible when the others well being depends in a in an asymmetrical way on you. So, that you know the decision to care, the one who is trying to provide the care the decision of the caregiver becomes significant for the care receiver for the well-being.

So, there is an asymmetrical dependency though the other side is not in a position to return the favour to you. And it is so dependent on you for the care that it becomes a duty on the part of the caregiver to continue this relationship. So, for example, if you have very if you have a family member who cannot move by himself or herself, if you if you are taking care of a person who cannot feed for example, himself or herself or who cannot walk without the support for example, and so on, and cannot really go out in the in the city to take care of the usual business, and dependent very dependent on you.

And there if you see if you are stirred by the need to do something about it, and there has to be a commitment to remain engaged with this person so that so that the person's well-being is not hampered, now that is a sense of duty. Its motive is not universal ability. And please notice because we have talked about the asymmetry here. So, it cannot be reversed either, but you still feel that there is a duty here, which is born out of this relationships. Why are we calling it ethical because there are values ingrained in it. There is commitment, but the commitment is based on certain kind of values.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:56)



Care Ethics

- A care ethic urges the moral agent to recognize the network of inter-personal and social relations that he /she is situated in.
- In particular, it insists on recognizing the relational interdependency, and the asymmetrical dependencies. It asks us to use that acknowledgement as the basis for maintaining just and caring relationships. Such relationships may be generalized (Government caring for its people), may be specific and particular (caring for parents).
- It encourages to take up duty based on care to oneself, to the others, to the world, and even to the environment.

So, overall then what we have just learned is that you know care ethics first of all asks us to recognize that we are living in a world where we where we are not alone, and that our existence is actually through this kind of inter-personal relationships. That there are interdependences you know we depend on each other and they depend on us, but there are also sometimes asymmetrical dependences and we need to acknowledge these relationships and the obligations that come out of this. We have to care we have to show care, but in a fair sort of way.

These relationships can be generalized. For example, if you have government caring for this for example, for its people, we have the caring government relationship. If you are caring only for your parents and can be caring as very specified one also, but overall it says that there can be duty based on care towards oneself or to the others to the world or even to the environment.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:15)

Extension of Care Ethics

- Originally care ethics was conceived as most appropriate for personal and intimate relations.
- Now, it is expanded to public and social sphere: To political theory (The Government,, the people), to civil society (among the people of the same society).
- Also applied to business: Care as a goal, motive, skill, emotion, practice, orientation, or a combination of these in the organization.
- Interdependency, cooperative relationships to address the contemporary business challenges, even sustainability issues: Consumer care, Employee care
- One may also find asymmetrical dependency in these relationships: The manufacturer will inevitably know more about the product than the consumer: Informational asymmetry. For workplace safety and health, employees will be inevitably dependent on the employer.

Care ethics as I have just described originally it was meant to be only for personal and intimate relations. So, that in a in a intimate relationships or in the private sphere of the person, this relationships held and you care for them, and you do things according to the level of intimacy and the commitment, but since then care ethics has grown into a discourse in itself.

And it has been expanded to various other fields. For example, in the public and social sphere, we find that people have tried, scholars have tried to apply it to political theory and speak about how a government and people, people means the society under that government are related, what should be the relationship.

So, if you want to see the responsibilities on both sides you can start to speak in the language of care ethics. Similarly, it has been applied to civil society. So, a same society where we all live, but we are very different in our orientations in our needs, in our in our ethnicity and so on, how does this relationships work are there certain ethical obligations to what do we owe to each other morally and so on.

This extension is also possible in terms of applying it to the corporate sphere or to businesses, where care becomes you know a goal in itself and organizational goal; it can become a skill or a practice or even an orientation. Later we are going to talk about the caring organization which is an organization structure, so it is possible right now we will say to extend care ethics into understanding corporations also. So, in this kind of a

situation what the relationships are going to be defined by their inter dependency right and by the cooperation, instead of steep competition and cooperation and so on.

And we get to see the usage of these words also from time to time for example, employee care or customer care you know. So, the relationship is between in customer care between customers and the company. So, what kind of obligations you have what do you need to show that you care for the customers and so on? This you can see that there can be reciprocity in these relationships, but there can be also asymmetrical dependency at times in here, for example, if you think about the employee and the company, then employees are for certain things they are dependent completely on the company.

For example, workplace safety you know in the workplace environment the kind of conditions that you work in out and the safety in there you are dependent on the corporation itself. So, we can apply many of these precepts of this theory in the corporate sphere also.

(Refer Slide Time: 26:53)

Limitations of Care Ethics

1. In the name of special obligations in special relationships, Care ethics may allow favoritism, cronyism, and parochialism by giving primacy to the near and dear ones, e.g. in a Corporation. [To avoid such arbitrary favoritism, Noddings suggests inclusion of justice within care.]
2. Care is a liability for any business person, because it seems to encourage passivity and weakness. E.g Caring for an employee suffering from personal issues. But, unthinking promotion of caring practices is not economically feasible, and may work against some of the main goals of business: Profitability, efficiency, tough competition with the competitors.
3. Care ethics offers ambiguous advice to business: If a Corporation has to show care, who should they care for? Should a Corporation care just as much for its competitors as it should for its own consumers and employees? In case there is a conflict to care between the customer and the employee, who should the Corporation first care about? [Care ethicists argue that this only shows that there is space for flexible, nuanced, and case-based reasoning].

Limitations: let us talk about that. In the name of you know because it is so very different from the other theories. So, there have been a lot of sharp criticism aimed at this theory. And one of them is that you know because it allows so much special relationships it talks about not being impartial. So, people critics have said that there are chances that the care ethics may be degraded into some sort of biased and favouritism, cronyism some sort and

maybe even parochialism. By because you are you are trying to give primacy to the ones who are near and dear to you and that is not a very good thing to happen in an ethics.

The care ethics have tried to counter that by saying that it is very much possible to integrate the concepts of fairness and justice we did not care. You know there for example, think about parental care. Now, that the parental care to a child does not mean that you give in to every single demand or the whim of the child that is not care that is irresponsible parenting.

So, where exactly parental care comes in, it comes with that with the further thought about what would be good for the child, you know where went to say no and when to say yes is part of the parental care and that is about being just being fair with regard to the situation.

The other criticism has been that has been proposed here is that you know caring because it involves emotional response and it sort of taking a softer attitude towards the care receiver. So, sometimes it may seem to encourage a passivity and weakness you do not do much.

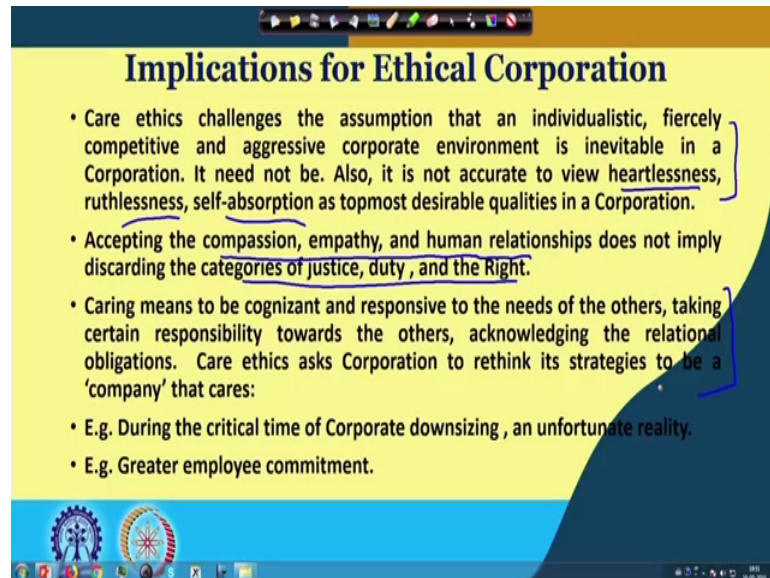
You, you, you find an employee is not doing the job properly and you look the other way because you know that the employee is suffering from some personal issues, but that is not really economically a wise proposition because it is going to go against the ultimate business goals. For example, if you have to make, make it meet a deadline and you are trying to care for this employee things are not going to happen. So, how do you resolve such situations does care ethics take understand the business demands.

And then here also that critics have said that care ethics offers ambiguous advice to business. For example, it does not make it clear who should we care for. And if there are many contending parties who should we care for first. For example, should we care just as much for our competitors as we should for our own consumers and employees, or if there is a conflict of you know caring for your consumer and your employee who should you backup first.

So, and care ethics have tried to counter that by saying that you know it just means that you are not doing a case based reasoning because this kind of these are kind of situation

based. So, you cannot give a general advice here, you need to look into the situation properly. But these are some of the well-known criticisms of the theory.

(Refer Slide Time: 30:30)



Implications for Ethical Corporation

- Care ethics challenges the assumption that an individualistic, fiercely competitive and aggressive corporate environment is inevitable in a Corporation. It need not be. Also, it is not accurate to view heartlessness, ruthlessness, self-absorption as topmost desirable qualities in a Corporation.
- Accepting the compassion, empathy, and human relationships does not imply discarding the categories of justice, duty, and the Right.
- Caring means to be cognizant and responsive to the needs of the others, taking certain responsibility towards the others, acknowledging the relational obligations. Care ethics asks Corporation to rethink its strategies to be a 'company' that cares:
- E.g. During the critical time of Corporate downsizing, an unfortunate reality.
- E.g. Greater employee commitment.

Now, what does it imply for the ethical corporation, first of all that note that it challenges the idea that the every corporation has to be this fierce, money greedy monster? You know it actually speaks about that there can be other models available. It is not really accurate to see all corporations are being heartless or ruthless or totally self-absorbed you know fiendish kind of creatures, and these are not very desirable qualities.

On the other hand that they are a you know what they encourage is that this kind of emotions and human relationships should be given some value here, but that does not mean that just because you are valuing compassion and human relationships that you have to give away the other categories completely for example, justice duty and right. And they are also encouraging that you take responsibility.

Caring means taking responsibility particularly in hard times. For example, when there was a downsizing happening or for example when you want to show greater employee commitment, so there are lessons to learn here also for the corporate sector.

(Refer Slide Time: 31:48)

References:

- Noddings, Nel. *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. Berkeley: University of CA Press, 1982.
- Tronto, Joan. *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1994.
- Held, Virginia. *The Ethics of Care*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Hamington, M, and M Sander-Staudt (eds.). 2011. *Applying Care Ethics to Business*. Springer

The slide features a dark blue background on the left with the word 'References' in a yellow, cursive font. The right side has a yellow background with the text. At the bottom right, there is a small video inset of a woman with glasses wearing a pink sari. At the bottom center, there are two circular logos: one of a tree and one of a gear.

So, here then is what I have put in a nutshell. I have given further references for you to look into for this theory is quite different.

(Refer Slide Time: 31:58)

Conclusion:

Module 10 discusses Care Ethics as a normative ethics, which provides a sharp contrast to the normative ethics theories introduced previously. Extension of Care Ethics from the personal sphere to the public and social sphere is explained to make the case for applying it in business environment also. Limitations of this ethics are discussed, along with the implications of this ethics for Ethical Corporation.

The slide features a dark blue background on the left with the word 'Conclusion' in a yellow, cursive font. The right side has a yellow background with the text. At the bottom right, there is a small video inset of a woman with glasses wearing a pink sari. At the bottom center, there are two circular logos: one of a tree and one of a gear.

And in conclusion we can say that you have this is this sort of ends our discussion on the normative theories. We as usual we have given you some choices. And from next week onwards, we will talk about functional areas, but we will try to see where do this normative theories fit in.

So, thank you very much, this would end our session today.