

b) What do you mean by virtue ethics? Is a good character sufficient condition for moral actions?

Approach: Introduce by defining what virtue ethics is and elaborate by giving an example. In the main body first show the significance of good character for moral actions and then present counter arguments explaining that good character is not a sufficient condition for moral action. Also discuss some other consideration that determine the morality of an action. Conclude by expressing your opinion on the determinants of morality of an action.

Virtue ethics is a **normative ethical theory** that emphasizes that **virtues**, or **moral character determine the ethicality** of an action. Virtue ethics is **person based** rather than action based. **For example:** A virtue ethicist would argue that **helping others** is ethical because it would be **charitable** or **benevolent** (not because of end result (**consequentialism**) or duty to help others (**deontology**)). **Socrates, Plato and Aristotle** supported virtue ethics, although their **conception of virtues and wisdom differed** from each other.

Virtue ethics **focuses on developing good character traits** in a person. Good character is important for moral actions because:

1. A person with good character **automatically displays values** that a person needs to live well, for example, **prudence, justice, courage, temperance, fairness** etc. Good character **nudges a person to take moral action** based on such values.
2. Good character focuses on **what it means to be a good human** not only in a particular situation but **for the whole of a person's life**. It cultivates **internal goodness** in a person and this goodness leads to ethical decisions.
3. A person with good character is **compassionate, caring, benevolent and merciful**. Such persons always **choose interest of other over their narrow self-centered interests**. **For example:** Mahatma Gandhi

However, **good character alone is not sufficient condition** for moral actions because:

1. There is **no universally acceptable set of virtues** that makes a character good. Character traits which are seen as good, **varies from culture to culture**.
2. In case of **virtue conflict**, **character may not be able to resolve** this conflict. **For example:** **justice and mercy** both are desirable character traits, in case of conflict between them, a person having both these qualities may not be able to make decisions.
3. People do **not always act as per their own character**. Internal and external pressure can prevent him from making ethical decisions. **For Example:** peer pressure and drinking.
4. Everyone has **different character, shaped by different factors** like family, religion, school etc. This means, there can be no universal norms of action if