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## UNIT 5 MORAL RELATIVISM\*

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- 5.1 Introduction
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- 5.3 Different types of Moral relativism
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### 5.0 OBJECTIVES

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There is no single method to understand the concept of morality. Moreover, many a times there are varied confusions regarding morality because many philosophers consider morality to be illusion. There are many moral positions out of which moral relativism is one of the most popular one. It provides that we be bound at least by practices and codes of our culture, preferences, age group, and so forth. This unit presents,

- the philosophical meaning of the doctrine of moral relativism,
- views of various kind of moral relativism

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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Philosophers have divided ethical theories into three general subject areas-Normative ethics, Meta ethics, and applied ethics. Normative ethics is also called prescriptive ethics as it studies the moral problems and seeks to discover how one ought to act. It does not investigate the facts of one's actions. More specifically, this discipline is concerned with judgments in setting up norms for when an act is right or wrong. It takes on a more practical task, which is to arrive at moral standards that regulate right and wrong conduct. This might involve articulating the good habits that we should acquire, the duties that we should follow. For example, honesty should be inculcated and dishonesty be discouraged. Applied ethics involves examining specific controversial issues such as abortion, infanticide, animal rights etc. Metaethics is also called analytical ethics. This discipline is concerned with elucidating the meaning of ethical terms. It asks 'what is' e.g. goodness, excellence, right, amoral and so on. It investigates where our ethical principles come from and what they mean. Are they human constructions or do they involve human emotions?

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Two questions that are prominent in Meta-ethics are- (1) Whether morality exists independent of humans or it depends on humans, and (2) What is the underlying mental basis of our moral judgments and conduct. Meta ethics is the most abstract area of moral philosophy as it does not ask what acts, or what kind of acts are good or bad, right or wrong; rather it asks about the nature of goodness and badness, what it is to be morally right or wrong. Meta-ethical positions may be divided according to how they respond to such questions. The biggest controversy in meta-ethics is the division between moral realists and moral anti-realists. Moral realists hold that moral facts are objective facts that are out there in the world independent of any human attitudes. Things are good or bad independent of us, and we come along and discover morality. Proponents of moral realism are called as realists or objectivists. Moral realism believes that objective values or moral facts are parts or the fabric of the universe. Moral anti-realists hold that moral facts are not out there in the world until we put them there, that the facts about morality are determined by us. In this view, morality is not something that we discover but something that we invent. For anti-realists, there is no moral truth when it comes to moral judgments and that anything goes when it comes to morality. Moral anti-realism can involve either a denial that moral properties exist at all or the acceptance that they do exist but that their existence is mind dependent. There are several different forms depending on whether ethical statements are believed to be subjective claims (Ethical subjectivism), not genuine claims at all (non-cognitivism) or mistaken objective claims (moral nihilism). Ethical subjectivism should not be confused with moral relativism. Ethical relativism is broader than ethical subjectivism. Ethical subjectivism holds that moral statements are made true or false by the attitudes or conventions of the observers or that any ethical sentence implies an attitude held by someone. Ethical relativism is the view that for a thing to be morally right is to be approved by the society, leading to the conclusion that different things are right for people in different societies and periods in history.

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## 5.2 DEFINITION

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Ethical relativism or Moral relativism is more easily understood in comparison to moral absolutism or moral objectivism. Absolutism claims that morality relies on universal principles (natural law, conscience). Moral absolutism is the ethical belief that there are absolute standards against which moral questions can be judged, and that certain actions are right or wrong, regardless of the context of the act. Thus, actions are inherently moral or immoral, regardless of the beliefs and goals of the individual, society, or culture that engages in the actions. For example- Christian absolutists believe that God is the ultimate source of our common morality, and that it is therefore as unchanging as He is. 'Honesty is the best policy' is true or correct independent of any human's acceptance or rejection. Moral relativism asserts that morality is not based on any absolute standard. Rather ethical truths depend on variables such as situation, culture, one's feelings, etc. That is, whether an action is right or wrong depends on the moral norms of the society in which it is practiced. The same action may be morally right in one society but be morally wrong in another. For example, an extra marital affair is condemnable to some societies while it is acceptable to others. For the ethical relativists, there are no universal moral standards- standards that can be universally applied to all people at all times. The only moral standards against which a society's practices can be judged are its own. There is no common framework in order to

resolve moral disputes or for reaching agreement on ethical matters among members of different societies. For moral relativists there is no one right answer to any ethical question. Moral relativism is a view that rejects the notion that there is one, universally valid morality, which can be discovered by valid moral reasoning.

Moral relativists endorse that-(1) Moral judgment is true or false and actions are right or wrong only relative to some particular standpoint. (2) No standpoint can be proved objectively superior to other. All attempts to define morality in terms of some common claim fails, for they all rest on premises that belong to the standpoint being defended and need not be accepted by people who do not share that point of view. One moral outlook cannot be conclusively proved superior to another does not mean however that it cannot be judged superior. Moral relativism rejects that moral values are naturalistic or non-naturalistic- are real or objective in the sense of being independent from human belief or culture. Such a position instead insists on the fundamentally anthropocentric nature of morality. According to this view, moral values are not out there in the world at all but are created by human perspectives and needs. These needs and perspectives can vary from person to person or from culture to culture. It is difficult to imagine human beings without the practice of evaluation and moral appraisal. What exactly does a moral relativist claim? For illustration let us consider an example. Runa opens a letter addressed to her teenage daughter Udeshta, written by Udeshta's American boyfriend Smith. Runa thinks she has a right to know about her daughter's love life, while Smith thinks this violates Udeshta's privacy. Runa's view is supported by her culture and values, while Smith's view is supported by his own culture and values. A moral relativist might say that the judgment that Runa ought not open the letter is correct relative to Smith's system of values, and that at the same time, the same judgment is not correct relative to Runa's system of values. We always assess an action or human behavior as right or wrong.

Yet, in spite of seeming significance, there are some people who are skeptical about morality- about whether such a thinking as a truly universal moral system and whether moral claims are true or just a matter of opinions. Some argue that what is morally good is a matter of taste or a matter of convention. This view can be traced back to historian Herodotus who noted that there is an enormous cultural diversity on moral issues- in some countries cannibalism is permissible and in others, it is immoral. Similarly, eating beef is acceptable to some while for others it is immoral. Moral relativists do not deny that moral claims are true or false- only that truth-value is relative. Relativism maintains that there are no universal moral truths at all, where universalism is understood as true or false across all cultures. The moral relativist claims not only that the correctness of moral judgments can in this way depend on a thinker, or on the value system relevant to the thinker, but also there is no privileged correct value system. Thus a relativist's core claims are (1) moral judgements are relative, (2) There is no unique authority by which the correctness of all moral judgments must be assessed. The fact on which the correctness of moral judgments is claimed to depend may vary. Some types of relativists may claim that it depends on certain psychological characteristics of the judge. Others claim that it depends on sociological facts about the judge.

Many ethicists reject the theory of ethical relativism. Some claim that while moral practices of societies may differ, but the fundamental moral principles underlying these practices do not. For example, in some societies, killing one's parents after they reached a certain age was common practice, stemming from the belief that

people were better off in the afterlife if they entered it while still physically active and vigorous. While such a practice would be condemned in our society, we would agree with these societies on the underlying moral principle- the duty to care for parents. Societies, then, may differ in their application of fundamental moral principles but agree on principles. Also, it is argued that some moral beliefs are culturally relative whereas others are not. Certain practices, such as customs regarding dress and decency, may depend on local custom whereas other practices, such as slavery, torture, or political repression is governed by universal moral standards and is judged wrong despite many other differences.

For Relativists, the truth of the moral claim depends completely on the beliefs that are common to the culture in which the judgment is made. Readers might confuse moral relativism with moral subjectivism. There lies a thin difference between both these terms. Ethical subjectivism is not ethical relativism because ethical subjectivism believes that individuals create their own morality i.e. existence of morality can be dictated by individual experiences as there can be no objective truth. People’s beliefs about actions being right or wrong, good or bad, depend on how people feel about actions rather than on reason or system ethical analysis. The truth and falsity of moral utterances depends on the attitudes of people. A moral subjectivist would argue that the statement “Rohit was evil” expresses a strong dislike for the sorts of things Rohit did, but it does not follow that it is true or false that Rohit was in fact evil. Both the terms are compatible in the sense that truth of moral claims is relative to the attitudes of individuals.

**Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is moral relativism?

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2. How is moral relativism different from moral absolutism?

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3. Is moral relativism same as moral subjectivism?

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### 5.3 DIFFERENT TYPES OF MORAL RELATIVISM

The denial of universalism is a popular view because of the fact that some think that in order to be tolerant of others, we need to reject universalism with respect to truth in morality and instead ascribe to relativism. Different people arrive at different understandings and there are no basic moral demands that apply to everyone. When one explores the history of humankind, one cannot but be struck by a profound lack of consensus on many questions. Different societies and cultures and different people within the same society or culture appear to have dramatically different moral beliefs and practices. For instance, the moralities of some societies pronounce that abortion is unacceptable. The moral codes of other societies permit abortion. In light of such deep differences in moral beliefs and practices it is obvious to many that there are no universal, generally applicable moral principles, rules, and values, valid for all places and issues. Morality has no objective, rational basis, that there are no objective moral truths upon which all reasonable people could be expected to agree were they fully aware of all the relevant facts and information. When it comes to morality many say that “everything is relative.”

Moral relativism can be understood in several ways-

- (1) **Descriptive Relativism-** Descriptive relativism is also known as cultural relativism. It states that beliefs or standards about moral issues are relative to different individuals and different societies i.e. different individuals and different societies accept different moral beliefs and thus disagree about the answers to moral questions. For example, some societies condemn abortion; others accept it. In some cultures, women are not allowed to enter the kitchen in her menstruating days.

Descriptive relativism denies that there are any moral universal claims that every human culture endorses. Richard Brandt has used the term descriptive relativism to refer to the view that there are fundamental disagreements about the moral beliefs or moral standards of different individuals or different societies. It is simply a claim about how things are, it is not a normative or evaluative judgment of any sort; the act of polygamy is morally permissible in one culture and forbidden in another.

- (2) **Moral requirement relativism or normative relativism-** This states that different basic moral requirements apply to different moral agents, or groups of agents owing to different intentions, desires or beliefs among such agents or groups. Normative relativism states that moral requirements binding on a person depend on or are relative to her intentions, desires, or beliefs. Normative moral relativism is the idea that all societies should accept each other’s differing moral values, given that there are no universal moral principles. For example, just because bribery is accepted in some cultures does not mean that other cultures cannot rightfully condemn it. Since nobody is right or wrong, we ought to tolerate the behavior of others. Normative relativism is the view that it is wrong to judge or interfere with the moral beliefs and practices of cultures that operate with a different moral framework to one’s own so that what goes on in a society can only be judged by the norms of that society. Two common forms are-

- (a) **Individual moral requirement relativism** states that an action is morally

obligatory for a person if and only if that action is prescribed as part of the basic moral principles accepted by an individual.

- (b) **Social moral requirement relativism** states that an action is morally obligatory for a person if and only if that action is prescribed as part of the basic moral principles accepted by that person's society. This is the most popular form of moral relativism.
- (3) **Metaethical relativism-** It states that moral judgments are not objectively true or false and thus that different individuals or societies can hold conflicting moral judgments. Nevertheless, there is a tendency to think and act as though our own moral views or those of our society or culture are obviously correct. It holds that moral judgments are not true or false in any absolute sense but only relative to particular standpoints. Saying that the truth of moral claims is relative to some standpoint should not be confused with the idea that it is relative to the situation in which it is made. It states that there are no moral objective grounds for preferring the moral values of one culture to another. Societies make their moral choices based on the unique beliefs, customs, and practices. Moreover, people tend to believe that 'right' moral values are values that exist in their own culture. They do not only believe that people disagree about moral issues but that the terms such as good, bad, right and wrong do not stand subject to universal truth conditions at all. Rather they are relative to traditions, practices of individuals or of groups. Most forms of meta-ethical relativism envision moral values as constructed for different, and sometimes-incommensurable human purposes such as social coordination and so forth. This view is called Moral constructivism and is explicitly endorsed by Gilbert Harman. Another view of moral relativism states that moral values are constructed by divine commands- idealized by human rationality or social contract between competing interests. This is called Divine-command Theory.

**Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What are the different types of moral relativism?

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2. What is the nature of meta-ethical relativism?

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## 5.4 PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS

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In philosophical discussions, the term 'moral relativism' is primarily used to denote the meta ethical thesis that the correctness of moral judgments is relative to some factor, i.e. relative to an individual's or group's moral norms. Strictly speaking, there is more than one way of understanding this doctrine. It encompasses views and arguments that people in various cultures have held over several years ago. The ancient Jaina Philosophy gives the theory of *Anekantavada*. According to this theory means that reality is not absolute in nature and there are many sides to it. There is no single point of view, which portrays the complete truth or reality. The same principle was articulated by the Greek sophist Protagoras (c 481-420 B.C). This principle enjoyed a revival following the anthropological discoveries of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Protagoras asserted famously that *Man is the measure of all things*. It arose from the observation that other societies survived perfectly well, in spite of having different moral codes from those the observers were brought up in. The Greek historian Herodotus (c 484-420 B.C) observed that each society regards its own belief system and way of doing things better than all others do. Various philosophers questioned the idea of an objective standard of morality. This in turn led to doubt that there was only one correct set of values. Its guiding thought is that *there is more than just one true morality*. There is no one system of morality- say Christian or Islamic- which is binding at all times in all places. Different cultures, at different times and places, have different ways of life and moral practices. It is possible that all such practices are correct. A moral system is not true absolutely, but true for a particular culture, or a particular individual. Is moral relativism true? To answer this question, we had better be clear what sorts of truths are meant to be relative and what sorts are not. For many people inclined towards moral relativism end up saying that all truth is relative-not just moral truth. According to them, there is no such thing as a detached, objective perspective on truth: all judgment is made from within a particular standpoint. It is inevitable that this growing uncertainty led to increased tolerance and acceptance of other ways of life. The truth of relativism entails that we should not morally judge others. The idea was that moral beliefs and practices are bound up with customs and conventions, and these vary greatly between societies. Even though moral relativism made its first appearance in ancient times, it hardly flourished. Many scholars see its reappearance in the writings of Montaigne. In the centuries following, further trends in modern philosophy helped prepare the way for moral relativism. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Hobbes argued for a social contract view of morality that sees moral rules like laws, as something humans agree upon in order to make social living possible. According to Hobbes moral tenets are not right or wrong according to whether they correspond to some transcendent ideas, rather they should be appraised pragmatically according to how well they serve their purpose. In the early modern era, Baruch Spinoza (1632-1673) notably held that nothing is inherently good or bad. For he sees that the attribution of qualities like goodness or perfection are errors that are based upon the false belief that nature is designed by God with humanity in mind. This family of concepts, which includes moral and aesthetic concepts along with concepts of sensible qualities, holds to be produced by the imagination rather than reason. David Hume (1711-1776) in several important respects serves as the father of emotivism and moral relativism. He argues that prescriptions saying how we should act cannot be

logically derived from factual claims about the way beings are. He raised doubts about the possibility of proving the correctness of any particular moral point of view. For him, morality is based ultimately on feelings rather than on reason. However, he does not espouse relativism but distinguishes between matters of fact and matters of value. He suggested that moral judgments consist of matters of value for they do not deal with verifiable facts obtained from the world; but only with our sentiments and passions. He famously claimed that morality has objective standards and suggested that the universe remains indifferent to preferences and our troubles. Nietzsche (1844-1900) emphasized the need to analyze our moral values and how much impact they may have on us. The problem, Nietzsche found, in conventional morality is, that it does not give scope to our self-creating capacity. Nietzsche called it “will to power”. Therefore, conventional morality becomes a threat to human freedom or human potentiality to create something. His famous pronouncement that “God is dead” implies that the idea of transcendent or objective justification for moral claims is no longer credible. According to Nietzsche, one remains strange to oneself while one is following the imposed rules and regulation. These imposing rules and regulations were done earlier by religions in the name of a supernatural being (God). Instead of using our reason, we go with religion by faith. Religion hides our real identity by imposing rules and regulation and making us follow it. Here we simply accept and follow what we are told to be “good,” and “bad.” Here our life lacks the self-reflective and self-creating capacity. According to Nietzsche, “we are not ‘knower’ when it comes to ourselves.” He believed that morality should be constructed actively, making them relative to who we are and what as an individual we think about good and bad action, instead of reacting to moral laws made by a certain group of individuals in power. Edward Westermarck (1862-1939), an anthropologist ranks as one of the first to formulate a detailed theory of moral relativism. He portrayed all moral ideas as subjective judgments that reflect one’s upbringing.

**Check Your Progress III**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What are the arguments given by Nietzsche on moral relativism?

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Moral relativism has become an increasingly popular view because of the following reasons-

- (1) **The downfall stage of religion-** Religion seems to offer the possibility that morality was independent of us. With a turning away from religion there seems to have come a certain amount of doubt about the possibility of objective morality. We have, the moral relativist says, no better place to look than to the individual or his society.



- (2) **The observing of cultural diversity-** Most of us are aware that the world contains many different cultures and that some of those cultures engage in practices very different from our own. Given all these, there can be no single objective morality because morality varies with cultures. This is the most commonly cited reason given in favor of ethical relativism and is the undeniable fact of widespread difference of opinion on important moral questions. Some societies have considered slavery to be within the natural order of things while others have condemned it as a moral abomination. Many individual sees abortion as nothing short of murder, while others condemn attempts to prevent abortion as unacceptable violations of a woman's right to control her own reproductive processes. In light of such vast differences of opinions it is not reasonable to believe in an objective moral truth. If such objective standards would not exist, there would be a good deal of agreement on moral matters than one actually discovers.

The theory of ethical relativism has some serious disadvantages and we can point out some arguments against moral relativism. One of the most powerful arguments is regarding the existence of some objective moral truths. Another flaw is that given the extent of disagreement about moral issues, it follows that there are no objective moral truths. Relativism tells us little or nothing about how actually people should behave. For much the same reason, the position of the moral reformer or critic is commonly thought to be incoherent if ethical relativism is true. Suppose the cultures whose moral practices Rina wishes to criticize are not someone else's but her own. Suppose that Rina is the one who lives in a society whose conventional moral practices clearly incorporate the institution of slavery and that Rina rejects this terrible view completely. She sincerely believes slavery to be morally wrong. In fact, she believes it to be an abomination, which must be eradicated from all civilized societies. Suppose now that Rina makes the following claim to anyone who will listen: "Slavery is morally wrong." If moral relativism is true, then, *prima facie* her claim is necessarily incorrect or false, as anyone who cared to do so could easily demonstrate. Since slavery is, as a matter of fact, morally sanctioned by the conventional standards of her society, it appears to follow from moral relativism that Rina's critical claim cannot be right. At best she can be interpreted as saying — on some ground other than morality — that slavery should not be moral. Perhaps she could argue, on purely prudential grounds, that our collective self-interest suggests that we should ban slavery because it eventually leads to serious social instability. Or perhaps she could argue, on strictly economic grounds, that slavery is an inefficient system of production better replaced by a fully open, free-market system in which former slaves are economically motivated to contribute productively to the economy. All of these are possible reasons for criticizing the practice of slavery as it is found within Rina's society. But none serves as a moral reason. If moral relativism is true, it would seem that Rina cannot intelligently deny that slavery is, as a matter of fact, a morally justified practice. Rina seems to be left with no intelligible space in which to criticize her culture's practices on moral grounds. Failure to provide intelligible space for the moral reformer is a serious shortcoming of any theory of morality.

Moreover, relativism is logically incoherent. Consider the statement: all truth is relative. If this statement is objectively true, then relativism is false because there is at least one objective truth- namely, the truth that truth is relative. But if the statement is only subjectively true, then as we have already seen, this just means

that you believe in relativism. Thus, by claiming that truth is relative you either contradict yourself or make a trivial claim with nothing to recommend your belief.

**Check Your Progress IV**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What are the two reasons that have popularized the concept of moral relativism?

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**5.5 LET US SUM UP**

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Moral relativism means that a belief, idea, proposition, claim, etc. is never true or false, good or bad, right or wrong, absolutely. According to the moral relativist, there exist conflicting claims that are both true. In short, ethical relativism denies that there is any objective truth about right and wrong. Ethical judgments are not true or false because there is no objective moral truth- x is right –for a moral judgment to correspond with. In brief, morality is relative, subjective, and non-universally binding and disagreements about ethics are like disagreements about which flavor of toffee is best. And what specifically might morality be relative to? Usually morality is thought to be relative to a group’s or individual’s beliefs, emotions, opinions, wants, desires, interests, preferences, feelings etc. There are three ways of understanding moral relativism- cultural moral relativism, normative moral relativism, and meta-ethical moral relativism. The theory of moral relativism has its roots in ancient Greek Philosopher Protagoras and flourished through modern times from Hobbes, Spinoza, Hume, and Nietzsche. Moreover, relativism is neither supported by our inability to know what’s true, nor by the fervency of our belief in relativism. It is a claim that all things are relative that are incoherent or illogical.

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**5.6 KEY WORDS**

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**Subjectivism:** Subjectivism is the philosophical tenet that our mental activity is the only unquestionable fact. The truth and falsity of moral utterances are dependent on the attitudes of people.

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**5.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES**

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## 5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Answers to check your progress I

1. Moral relativism asserts that morality is not based on any absolute standard. Rather ethical truths depend on variables such as situation, culture, one's feelings, etc. That is, whether an action is right or wrong depends on the moral norms of the society in which it is practiced. The same action may be morally right in one society but be morally wrong in another. For example, an extra marital affair is condemnable to some societies while it is acceptable to others. Moral relativists endorse that-(1) Moral judgment is true or false and actions are right or wrong only relative to some particular standpoint. (2) No standpoint can be proved objectively superior to others. All attempts to define morality in terms of some common claim fails, for they all rest on premises that belong to the standpoint being defended and need not be accepted by people who do not share that point of view.
2. Ethical relativism or Moral relativism is more easily understood in comparison to moral absolutism or moral objectivism. Absolutism claims that morality relies on universal principles inherent in the natural law, conscience or some other fundamental source. For example- Christian absolutists believe that God is the ultimate source of our common morality, and that it is therefore as unchanging as He is. 'Honesty is the best policy' is true or correct independent of any human's acceptance or rejection. Moral absolutism is the ethical belief that there are absolute standards against which moral questions can be judged, and that certain actions are right or wrong, regardless of the context of the act. Thus, actions are inherently moral or immoral, regardless of the beliefs and goals of the individual, society, or culture that engages in the actions.
3. There is a thin difference between moral or ethical relativism and moral or ethical subjectivism Ethical relativism is broader than ethical subjectivism. Ethical subjectivism holds that moral statements are made true or false by the attitudes or conventions of the observers or that any ethical sentence implies an attitude held by someone. Ethical relativism is the view that for a thing to be morally right it must be approved by the society, leading to the conclusion that different things are right for people in different societies and periods in history. For the relativists, the concern is not about whether moral judgments exist or not but whether they are true or false relatively i.e.

depending either on the moral framework of the individual or groups. Ethical subjectivism believes that individuals create their own morality i.e. existence of morality can be dictated by individual experiences as there can be no objective truth. People's beliefs about actions being right or wrong, good or bad, depend on how people feel about actions rather than on reason or system ethical analysis. The truth and falsity of moral utterances depend on the attitudes of people. An ethical subjectivist would argue that the statement "Rohit was evil" expresses a strong dislike for the sorts of things Rohit did, but it does not follow that it is true or false that Rohit was in fact evil. Both the terms are compatible in the sense that truth of moral claims is relative to the attitudes of individuals.

### Answers to check your progress II

1. There are three types of moral relativism- (1) Descriptive relativism or cultural relativism, (2) Normative relativism or moral requirement relativism and (3) Meta ethical relativism.
2. Meta ethical relativism- It states that moral judgments are not objectively true or false and thus that different individuals or societies can hold conflicting moral judgments. Nevertheless, there is a tendency to think and act as though our own moral views or those of our society or culture are obviously correct. It holds that moral judgments are not true or false in any absolute sense but only relative to particular standpoints. It states that there are no moral objective grounds for preferring the moral values of one culture to another. Societies make their moral choices based on their unique beliefs, customs, and practices. Moreover, people tend to believe that 'right' moral values are values that exist in their own culture. They do not only believe that people disagree about moral issues but that the terms such as good, bad, right and wrong do not stand subject to universal truth conditions at all rather are relative to traditions, practices of individuals or of groups.

### Answers to check your progress III

1. Nietzsche's argument of morality sets a firm base for the theory of moral relativism. For him, what is right or good depends on those who are in power. He does not believe in an objective or universal morality, which he termed as conventional morality. His famous pronouncement that "God is dead" implies that the idea of transcendent or objective justification for moral claims is no longer credible. According to Nietzsche, one remains strange to oneself while one is following the imposed rules and regulation. This imposing of rules and regulations were done earlier by religions in the name of a supernatural being (God). Instead of using our reason, we go with religion by faith. Religion hides our real identity by imposing rules and regulation and making us follow it. Here we simply accept and follow what we are told to be "good," and "bad." Here our life lacks the self-reflective and self-creating capacity. According to Nietzsche, "we are not 'knower' when it comes to ourselves." He believed that morality should be constructed actively, making them relative to who we are and what we as individuals good and bad etc.

### Answers to check your progress IV

1. Moral relativism has become an increasingly popular view because of the following two reasons-
  - (1) The downfall stage of religion- Religion seems to offer the possibility

that morality was independent of us. With a turning away from religion there seems to have come a certain amount of doubt about the possibility of objective morality. We have, the moral relativist says, no better place to look than to the individual or his society.

2. Observing the cultural diversity- Most of us are aware that the world contains many different cultures and that some of those cultures engage in practices very different from our own. Given all these, diversity there can be no single objective morality because morality varies with cultures. This is the most commonly cited reason given in favor of Moral Relativism is the undeniable fact of widespread difference of opinion on important moral questions. Some societies have considered slavery to be within the natural order of things while others have condemned it as moral abominations. Many individual views abortion as nothing short of murder, while others condemn attempts to prevent abortion as unacceptable violations of a woman's right to control her own reproductive processes. In light of such vast differences of opinions it is not reasonable to believe in an objective moral truth. If such objective standards would not exist, there would be a good deal of agreement on moral matters than one actually discovers.



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