Ethics, morality and spirituality

Dr. Sr. Ann Mary
Associate Professor
HOD of History, Tourism & Heritage Club
Teresian College
Mysore 570011

Today man has entered a new era of history characterized by rapid changes. The time of a monolithic civilization is outdated. The age old enclaves of cult will never again appear on the face of the earth. Theghettoes have broken open and we are exposed to varied views and forms of life which is rather fascinating where ethics, morality and spirituality are ignored factor. Faced as we are by a bewildering number of options, it seems rather difficult to relate to our inner life in direction to our Divine who resides in the inner most shrine of our soul. Hence the topic ethics, morality and spirituality is a reminder that God Supreme will become vibrant in a soul and the world when we give due importance for ethics, morality and spirituality.

Morality and ethics appears as a studied behavior comprising combinations of more or less stable habits, the effect either of a training undergone or of a practice that the subject has imposed upon oneself. It is at the service of these habits and training that asceticism comes in. It makes as it were the negative side of the directing or canalizing of the persons energies. Given the limited assets of energy at a human beings disposal, every choice of his/her, whether as a passing action or as a fixed habit, exacts some renunciation even if it is only in the form of putting limits to pleasure and satisfaction, a form in which man has always found suffering lurking at the very heart of pleasure. Morality and Ethics naturally will lead to Spirituality for God can reside only in a pure, holy and spotless surface. In a human life that is normal and therefore free from any pathological searching for suffering or self denial, asceticism will step in quite reasonably as the negative side of the positive measuring out and limiting of one’s energies in some directions so as to have the full use of one’s strength in the area of activity that the individual has chosen or which has been forced upon by society. Morality or moral life is only distinguished from a life of following out one’s own inclinations in the way that wild vegetation differ from cultivated land. To speak in the language of psychological
treatises on the one hand, we have instinctive tendencies, on the other higher tendencies, the same as the former, but rose to a personal and social level.

The important element surely is to find out for what purpose the subject is cultivating and organizing his energy. It all amounts to a question of dynamism, to a problem of equilibrium and the using of psychic energies in which asceticism plays the part of the machinery that blocks and bridles, to which we have recourse in order to master and regulate the discharge of the well spring of energy. The handling of such a machinery can be a delicate task and may give rise to blunders at the expense of the subjects equilibrium.

In a world of increasing choices, we find ourselves often confused about how to grow to our graced destiny in God. The secular world is dynamic, fascinating, and seductive. Beguiled as we sometimes are by its grandiose projects, we begin to grow according to its arbitrary enthusiasms rather than growing as self directed human beings in accordance with divine inspiration. We become so adept at reacting, we forget how to respond out of an inner, at oneness with the Lord and His word. We try to adopt new life styles, to be in with what is current. We define ourselves mainly on the basis of our occupations and hobbies or on how our neighbors value us. We become our secular roles to gain the approval of the world and betray the Divine in us who has to penetrate and transfigure these roles. We take on new patterns of living, yet we do not try to harmonize them with our spiritual values. We slide along thoughtlessly, bewitched by the media, beguiled by the sophistication of our secular peers.

Propelled by our need for self emergence, in accordance with the times, we forge ahead often in directions that have no real meaning for us because they are at odds with our inner direction. We lose our concrete sense of self and the more lost we become, the more desperately we search for substitutes and end up in immorality. In our desire to emerge and become what we are called to be, we may rush after every fad that offers a quick solution to the spiritual quest. The need for morality, ethics and spirituality therefore, is of absolute need of the hour. As all these three elements are interconnected and intertwined, for spirituality cannot take place unless there is morality and ethics in one’s life.

While present day secular society is a confusion of paradigms and life styles, it offers at the same time an astonishing variety of possibilities. It enables spirituality to reveal
itself in a richness of forms undreamt of before. Because of this pluralism of life styles; more types of people can live out their unique destiny. They can even find their peculiar niche in the father’s house where those many rooms promised by Jesus are now becoming manifest. We might have lost security and simplicity but have gained creativity and pluriformity. The uniform culture, moral values and the ethics of the past may be dead, but the crown of creation, namely the human mankind itself seems more alive than ever.

Today the world at large is sustained invisibly by universal ethics and moral values, and the spirituality which is sacred and unique. It is revamping like a leaven spreading itself through the dough of a redeemed humanity, transfiguring countless cultural styles and forms with the words and wisdom of the Saints inspired from above, incarnating itself in myriad ways in this world. Creative self unfolding by the Divine has become a much more personal endeavor. The secular society offers no guidelines for authentic inner growth to practice moral values and to follow the ethics. It is only Christ and the Masters of the spiritual life, who lived in His light, tell us what is involved in spiritual emergence in dialogue with the ever changing word where he calls us to be his’’ little flock’’.

It is rather absolute necessary that each of us ask ourselves constantly the following basic questions to enthuse ourselves to be rooted in ethics, moral values and spirituality, which will enable us to be spiritual, sacred and Holy, rather than worldly, immoral and secular. How can I find my way as creative person in the new, wide open situation of a Diaspora creation? How can I live the essential message of the faith in my own style now that there is no longer a uniform cultural code to test me in detail, how to incarnate the Divine in my life and my world and to give up my immoral life?

Spirituality, ethics and morality are intertwined. Each of these elements can be seen as a discipline that guides all too spiritual identity. The words of Holy Scriptures, the teaching of the Church and spiritual masters, illumine in this pursuit. They in their own ways, inspire our attitudes enabling us to be more open to the call of our true self in the Divine. Spirituality explores these attitudes; it examines how we prepare ourselves with moral values and how it transforms our daily life. When Ethics and morality are approached and practiced
enthusiastically in one’s life is called formative spirituality which brings in fruits which will last
forever. The focus of the formative spirituality, ethics and morality are on the conditions,
structures and dynamics of unfolding in our daily life. It wants to facilitate the graced discovery
and unfolding of our destiny in the Divine. It tries to establish the necessary and sufficient
conditions for our personal-spiritual formation. The end result of all these is to provide
humankind with a lasting foundation for graced living with the Divine, it helps us to find our
own practical and particular solutions to the life questions, will have to face without betraying
the fundamental conditions of our spiritual life, ethics and morality. Morality, ethics and
spirituality takes us to handle psychological, social and physiological obstacles that may interfere
with the discovery of our true self or life direction with the Divine. It enables us to permeate our
whole life and personality by the grace from Above.

The human sciences of today contain findings and insights regarding obstacles
and suggest effective ways of coping with them. But morality, ethics and spirituality integrates
and it transforms into a self consistent approach to the personal, spiritual formation of all.
Therefore ethics, morality and spirituality are profoundly practical, for it refers to what effects it
brings in the inner life which is invisible sacred and noteworthy. Spiritual maturity affects
mainly the emotional, psychological or external surface of professional life and profound change
effects a lasting inner conversion which leads to perfect happiness and peace. All these three
elements namely ethics, morality and spirituality in successive stages of life deepens the life with
graces and the results will be most gratifying and lasting.

In conclusion I can say that, the ultimate purpose of man and creation is God’s
 glory. It is to this end that they have been made. Yet in the present world of natural science
and technology, Ethics, Morality and Spirituality are often dismissed as unscientific and
unproductive. God is regarded as a personification of human wishes and religion as euphoric
opium for man’s distress. Over and against such figures of fantasy and illusion, we should devote
ourselves in active assistance to our fellowmen and solve the problems by the creation of better
world and society were Ethics, Morality and Spirituality reigns. In this secular interpretation of
life, often covered by secularization, the emphasis is not on morality, ethics or spirituality but on
science, reason and society and better life here on earth. But Ethics, Morality and Spirituality
will alone be successful in bridging the rift that is prevalent today, namely rape, murder, robbery and all that is immoral that is taking place today.