

SOPHIA One-Sheet

The Nature of Good and Daily Life

Humans have an infamous tendency to split things into polarities—black and white, good and bad, gain and loss, success and failure. We are also adamant on assigning value to everything around us. In this quest of evaluation, we end up using words such as, ‘good’ or ‘bad’ so loosely and frequently that we hardly ever remember what they actually mean.

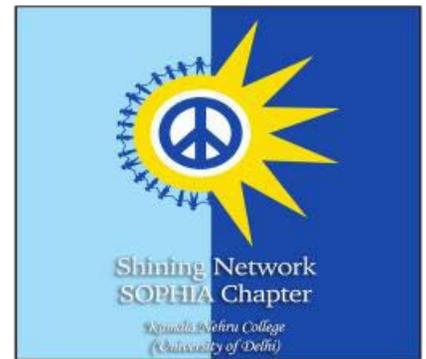
A very loaded word—‘good’, is actually an abstract term, with no definite attributes. Everybody has different opinions about what they think is ‘good’. But when asked to define ‘good’, they turn into characters from Plato’s Republic—perplexed individuals with approximate and hazy concepts.

Sentiments are hurt and personal beliefs offended when people with different notions on the matter, sit down to have a talk. Debates and discussions on, what is a ‘good’ life, who is a ‘good’ person, what is a ‘good’ government, what is a ‘good’ religion can be held for hours without reaching a conclusion that fully accommodates everyone’s idea of good.

Taking cultural differences into consideration, we must be open to others’ ideas of the good. No matter how moral or efficient our own values and methods appear to be, we must accept individual opinions of the others which may vary greatly from our own. With an entire study in Philosophy dedicated to determining what is ‘good’ or ‘bad’, something we can all surely agree on is that ‘good’ is the correct thing or the right way to be. But then, what does the ‘right way’ mean?

Possible questions for conversation:

- (1) What is ‘good’ according to you?
- (2) In this era of consumerism, a ‘good’ product is one that performs its function efficiently. Can the same be applied to humans? Does a dutiful employee who is efficient in his/her profession qualify as a ‘good’ human being?
- (3) Is ‘evil’ a necessity, does it become a part of the idea of a ‘larger good’?
- (4) In spite of the relativity that exists between cultures and societies, some practices such as murder or theft are considered as being inherently bad. However, there are some conditional exceptions that may justify such behaviour. Keeping in mind these contextual pardons, should acts or practices be classified as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ at all?
- (5) Quoting Plato, and further continuing the age-old dialogue, what is a good life?
- (6) Is ‘*dharma*’ in the Indian cultural/philosophical context equivalent to ‘good’ or does it stand as a means to attain ‘good’?



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This one-sheet was created by the Shining Network SOPHIA Chapter, Kamala Nehru College, University of Delhi, & was first used on August 9th, 2018, facilitated by Prof. Balaganapathi Devarakonda, Head, Dept of Philosophy, University of Delhi, coordinated by Dr. Geetesh Nirban, Faculty Convener, Shining Network