

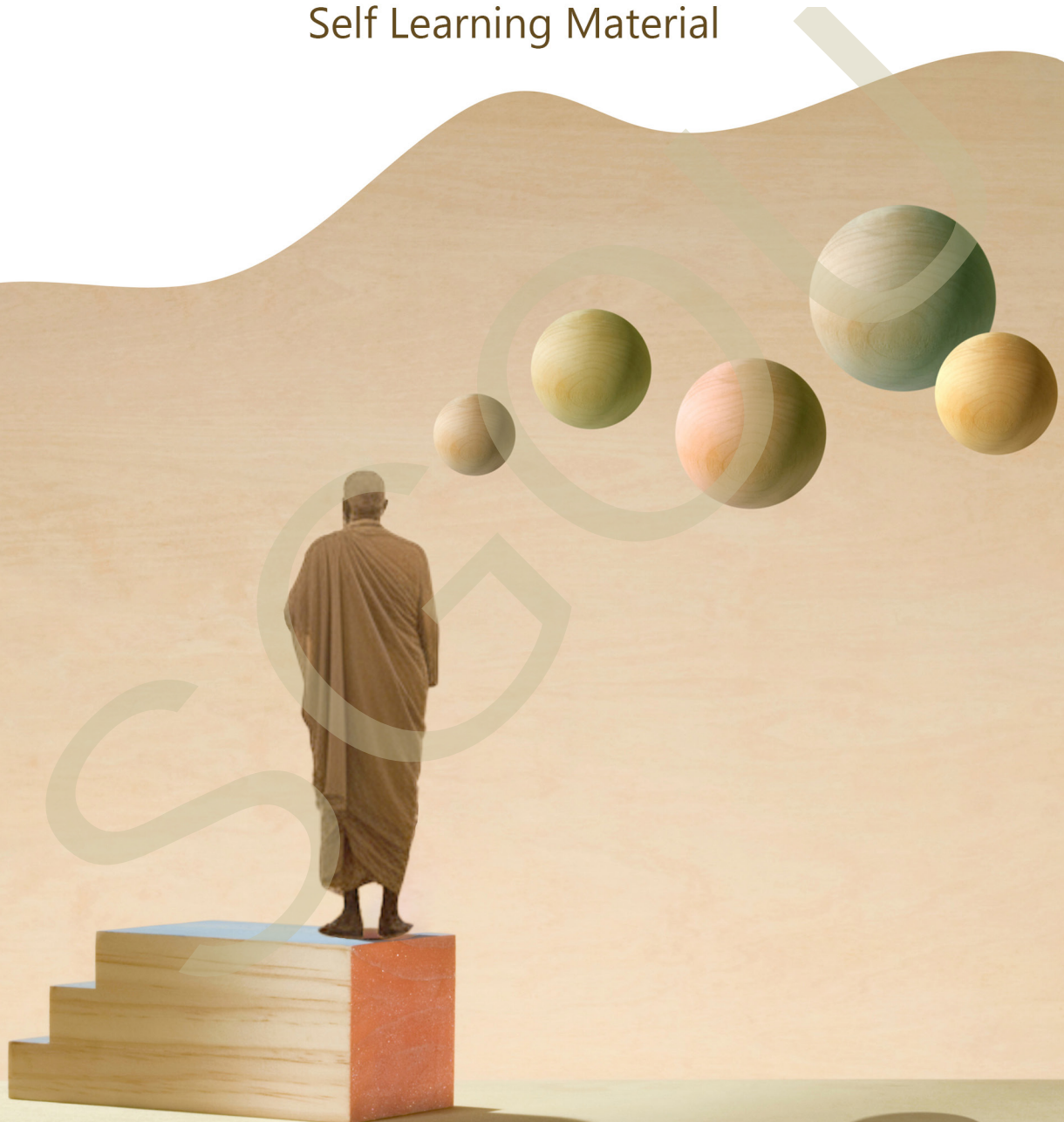
PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELLING TOOLS IN GURU'S PHILOSOPHY

COURSE CODE: B21PH02SE

Skill Enhancement Course

Undergraduate Programme in Philosophy

Self Learning Material



SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

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**Psychology and Counselling Tools
in Guru's Philosophy**
Course Code: B21PH02SE
Semester - V

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(Model Question Paper Sets)**



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Course Code: B21PH02SE
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Undergraduate Programme in Philosophy

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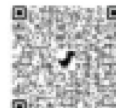
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MESSAGE FROM VICE CHANCELLOR

Dear learner,

I extend my heartfelt greetings and profound enthusiasm as I warmly welcome you to Sreenarayanaguru Open University. Established in September 2020 as a state-led endeavour to promote higher education through open and distance learning modes, our institution was shaped by the guiding principle that access and quality are the cornerstones of equity. We have firmly resolved to uphold the highest standards of education, setting the benchmark and charting the course.

The programmes offered by the Sreenarayanaguru Open University aim to strike a quality balance, ensuring students are equipped for both personal growth and professional excellence. The University embraces the widely acclaimed “blended format,” a practical framework that harmoniously integrates Self-Learning Materials, Classroom Counseling, and Virtual modes, fostering a dynamic and enriching experience for both learners and instructors.

The University aims to offer you an engaging and thought-provoking educational journey. The undergraduate programme in Philosophy has structured its curriculum based on modern teaching approaches. The course integrates current debates into the chronological development of philosophical ideas and methods. The programme has carefully maintained ongoing discussions about the Guru’s teachings within the fundamental framework of philosophy as an academic field. The Self-Learning Material has been meticulously crafted, incorporating relevant examples to facilitate better comprehension.

Rest assured, the university’s student support services will be at your disposal throughout your academic journey, readily available to address any concerns or grievances you may encounter. We encourage you to reach out to us freely regarding any matter about your academic programme. It is our sincere wish that you achieve the utmost success.



Warm regards.
Dr. Jagathy Raj V.P.

01-08-2025

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BLOCK

Introduction to Psychology



UNIT

Meaning and Definitions of Psychology

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ define psychology and recall the historical shifts in its definition
- ♦ explain key concepts in Indian psychology, including the relationship between mind, self (Atman), and consciousness
- ♦ illustrate how Sree Narayana Guru's teachings can be used to promote mental purity and self-reliance
- ♦ compare Western and Indian perspectives on the nature and function of the mind

Prerequisites

Mental health plays an important role in human life. When the mind loses its normal balance, a person may experience disturbances in thinking, feeling, or behaviour. In the modern world, complex problems such as jealousy, hatred, deceit, rivalry, and greed often create mental strain. This can lead to various forms of mental illness. Treatment is necessary to restore such individuals to a healthy state of mind. However, while people are generally willing to seek help for physical illness, many hesitate to seek treatment for mental illness. One reason for this is that society often finds it difficult to fully accept those who have recovered from mental health problems. Such attitudes arise mainly from a lack of understanding about the mind and its functions. Psychology is the branch of knowledge that studies the mind and behaviour, and it plays an important role in helping people regain normal life after mental difficulties.

Keywords

Psyche, Logos, Behaviour, Consciousness, Mind (Manas), Self (Atman), Brahman, Advaita Vedānta, Maya, Arivu

Discussion

From time immemorial, people have tried to understand what the mind is and whether the soul exists. Philosophers have explored these questions in detail. Psychology, however, is a distinct branch that was developed to study them scientifically. The word psychology is derived from the two Greek words 'psyche' and 'logos.' The word psyche means soul or mind and logos means study. So literally the word psychology means "the study of soul" or science of soul. Psychology, as a subject, has gone through several changes in its definition over time.

In the beginning, psychology was defined as the study of the soul, based on its Greek roots. Later, this definition was replaced by the idea that psychology is the study of the mind, focusing on thoughts and mental processes. However, this too was found to be insufficient, as the mind cannot be directly observed. Then, psychology was defined as the study of consciousness, which includes awareness and experiences. This definition was also considered limited because consciousness is only a part of human experience. Today, the widely accepted definition is that psychology is the study of behaviour, including both human and animal behaviour. According to William McDougall, "Psychology is a science which aims to give us better understanding and control of the behaviour of the organism as a whole." Psychologists use scientific methods such as standardised tests to study behaviour. These tests help measure abilities, interests, and personality traits. Some tests, like projective tests, are used to explore a

person's inner thoughts and feelings, which may not be directly expressed.

Nowadays, psychologist's knowledge is applied in various fields to improve lives. This includes clinical psychology to address mental health issues, educational psychology to enhance learning, and social psychology to understand group dynamics.

As we begin to explore nature of mind or soul, several important questions arise: What exactly is the mind? Is it only the result of brain activity, or does it exist as something different from the physical body? Is it possible that we have a non-physical soul? These are some of the questions that arise when we begin to think about human nature and experience. We may also ask what makes a behaviour normal or abnormal, what kind of behaviour we should follow, and how we can control our thoughts and actions in a better way. What exactly is the mind? These are some of the basic questions discussed in the field of psychology. These questions are also analysed in philosophy, as a sub section. It is generally said that psychology is a science and the well skilled psychologist is a Scientist.

Science is a systematic study of some particular field of knowledge by making of hypothesis, observation, verification, falsification, experiment and measuring events. Scientists aim at building general principles and theories to explain and judge things as correctly as possible. Psychology imbibes all these characteristics and thus



psychology comes under the area of science. By using scientific methods psychologists are able to give answers to questions pertinent to human behaviour. Psychologists study every aspect of human thought and behaviour.

Although psychology is now a well-established scientific field, it has a relatively short formal history. It originated from philosophy, which is often called the mother of all sciences. However, the interest in understanding human nature has a long history. From the very beginning, human beings have tried to understand themselves. Greek thinkers like Plato and Aristotle expressed their curiosity about the mind, its activities, and human behaviour. Aristotle is sometimes called the father of psychology. But a clear systemic study on psychology developed in the last part of the 19th century. Wilhelm Maximilian Wundt is commonly considered the father of experimental psychology; he established the first laboratory for psychological research at the University of Leipzig in Germany in 1879. Some of the subfields of psychology are physiological psychology, developmental psychology, personality psychology, health psychology, clinical psychology, counselling psychology, educational psychology etc. some of the important procedures that are used in psychology are introspection, observation, experimental, case study, questionnaire, interview, survey etc.

1.1.1 Indian Psychology

Ancient Indian philosophy gives primary importance to metaphysics. At the same time, it also explores the mind, experience, and their limits, and offers methods to control mental activities. The Vedic seers were mainly interested in understanding consciousness. They explained that the body, the five sense organs, and the mind are closely connected to consciousness. They also taught that the purity of the mind, body, and sense organs is

necessary for the realisation of consciousness.

We gain this insight from the Upanishad that states the mind as the subtle matter. The objective of the Upanishads is to reveal the self. Atman or self is responsible for the activities of manas. The mind (manas), while important, plays only a secondary role in the acquisition of knowledge. It is also viewed as that which binds the self to the external world and thus becomes an obstacle to liberation when not properly understood or controlled. Building on these early ideas, most Indian philosophical traditions adopted a psychological approach to guide people toward ethical living and to help them overcome sorrow and suffering. For example, the Buddha used a powerful psychological method when a grieving woman came to him after losing her son. He asked her to bring a handful of mustard seeds from a house where no death had occurred. When she failed to find such a house, she gradually came to realise the truth that death is inevitable if one is born.

Indian psychology focuses on the inner state of man and the overall well-being of his life. In Indian psychology one can see questions about mind, self and consciousness and a detailed answer to this question are given by the Indian saints and seers. Most of the great gurus and philosophers of India have at their core thinking a psychology, fortified by their insights. Sree Narayana Guru was one among those philosophers and the vision of Guru had widely influenced the Kerala culture. One is in awe of the mighty foresights and understanding of the Guru who found various methods to communicate such a deep knowledge and wisdom to common man for eg: vision of oneness or all-inclusiveness, nondualism etc.

The concept of psychology in India is derived from the Indian traditional ideas and thoughts, knowing the soul is paramount

but Indian thinkers emphasise the need to control the mind. The Bhagavad Gita describes the need for the human mind to always maintain a balanced state. Unable to control his mind, Arjuna one among the Pancha Pandavas saw his relatives on the battle field and tried to withdraw from the battle. Through his teaching Krishna was able to revive Arjuna and bring him back to the battlefield. One can see this as an example of counselling. Human beings' five sense organs must function under the control of mind. Bhagavad Gita explains that only a stable minded person 'sthitapranja' can attain liberation. Yoga teaches people about mental and physical health.

If we search for the roots of Indian psychology, we will reach the Vedic period. But it was not until the twentieth century that Indian psychology developed into a special discipline. Indian psychology deals with all aspects of human behaviour-cognition, affection, conation etc. The word Indian psychology was first used by Sri Aurobindo. But the first book on Indian Psychology, was published by Jadunath Sinha in 1933 'Indian psychology Vol. 1: cognition.

In Indian psychology, personality is understood at three progressive levels: the animal, the human, and the divine. These levels are not separate types of beings but represent stages in the evolution of human consciousness. The animal level refers to basic instincts and physical needs. The human level includes rational thinking, emotions, and moral awareness. The divine level, which is the highest, stands for pure consciousness. This divine consciousness is not just one aspect of life but is considered the only true and lasting reality. Many people wrongly believe that consciousness is limited to the brain or mind. In the Brhadāranyaka Upanishad, manas or mind is treated as a sense organ that is an instrument of knowledge with a physical basis. Actually, mind is only an

expression of consciousness. Indian thinkers like Sree Narayana Guru also challenges the limited view of consciousness. which transcends. Instead he speaks about of Arivu, or infinite consciousness, both physical and mental boundaries. According to him, the realisation of this infinite consciousness is the true goal of life.

1.1.2 Concept of Mind: Indian Perspective

Although philosophy and psychology have long discussed and studied the mind and sought to clarify what it is, the human mind remains an enigma to this day. From the very beginning, the nature of the mind and its elements have fascinated human beings. Various explanations have been proposed, but none has fully resolved the mystery. The function of the mind is common to all human beings across different regions of the world, yet interpretations of its functions vary among people. Philosophers from both the East and the West have offered different explanations regarding the nature and function of the mind. Indian philosophers, in particular, have inclined toward the concept of the Self or Brahman as the fundamental principle behind all existence, and the mind is not excluded from this view.

Building upon this perspective, Indian philosophers from the very beginning emphasised that the mind, or manas, is something apparent and distinct from the self or Atman. They recognised that manas is merely an instrument through which the self gains knowledge. In human life, manas functions as a means to measure feelings, desires, and experiences. According to Indian thought, the mind is composed of subtle matter and therefore shares the characteristics of matter, such as origin and dissolution. Matter is not confined to gross or solid forms; it is dynamic and can exist as energy. Since energy is also a form of matter, it follows



that the mind, as subtle matter, need not be viewed as separate. Both mind and matter are mere appearances of Absolute Reality, and not ultimate realities.

Mind plays a central role in human life by giving it continuity and meaning. It is the mind that connects past experiences, present events, and future plans, allowing us to learn, remember, imagine, and make choices. However, a major question raised by many thinkers is whether the mind has an independent existence apart from its functions. Most of what we call the mind is known to us through its activities, such as thinking, feeling, remembering, and imagining. These functions can often be explained in psychological terms. Yet, some philosophical traditions, especially in the East, make a distinction between consciousness and matter. In this view, both the body and the mind are seen as forms of matter, while consciousness is something beyond both. However, they also suggest that matter itself is not completely separate from consciousness. Rather, it is a kind of appearance or expression of consciousness. This view helps to understand mind as both active and dependent on the ultimate reality.

1.1.3 Sree Narayana Guru's Perspectives on Mind

Sree Narayana Guru in *Asatya Darśanam* of *Darśanamālā* explained the nature of mind. This universe is the vision of the mind but the mind that is behind that vision is nowhere to be seen. When the mind exists, there is knowledge of this universe. When the mind disappears, the experience of this universe also disappears. In deep sleep, we do not even know the existence of our body. Mind is not merely a stimulus reply instrument because there are essentials of mind which guide the stimulation of the senses and also there are states which continue even after the reply is

made. An uninterrupted stream of memories is always passing through a man's cognizance. Psychologists pointed out that memories are residing in the unconscious realm. But how can we accept this unconscious. Indian philosophers rejected the distinction between the conscious and unconscious and said that mind is an internal organ and it is the instrument of the self. According to Sree Narayana Guru, consciousness and the self are not two different entities but one and the same. Experiences such as pain and pleasure arise within the field of consciousness. The mind is understood as a modification of consciousness. Guru explains that both mind and body belong to the realm of matter. The mind is subtle in form, while the body is gross.

The mind is also a creation of maya. Maya is the power that creates false appearances and misleads us into believing them to be real. Sree Narayana Guru has said that the mind is not different from maya. The mind is a continuous flow of names and forms. What we call the mind is the changing appearance of ideas. We do not know where these ideas come from or where they go. We also do not understand why they arise or continue to exist. The mind is a subtle form of life and is considered indescribable. Everything we see around us is like a wave rising from the sea. A seeker of truth should not be carried away by the manas and its attributes. The mind binds the self to the world. The purpose of Sree Narayana Guru was to help one realise the self or consciousness. For this, he recommended *Atma Vidya*, the knowledge of the self. The mind causes attachment in life because ignorance exists within it. The same mind, when freed from ignorance, can lead us to wisdom. The mind is nothing but a flow of thoughts. It gives rise to various emotions and qualities such as love, kindness, compassion, friendliness, gentleness, concentration, courage, calmness, envy, jealousy, and hatred.

1.1.4 Understating Self and Self-actualisation

Whether the self exists or not, whether it is immortal or mortal, and what happens to it after death are questions that have puzzled humankind since ancient times. Indian philosophical systems generally hold that the self exists and is eternal. After death, the subtle body, which is a mixer of ahankara, manas, chitta, budhi and prana transmigrates into a new life or attains liberation (moksha) from the cycle of birth and death. The Atman, or self, is the basis of all activities of an individual. The Atman presents in us is eternal, all-knowing, and all-powerful. Generally, everyone believes that the Atman is subject to birth and death. But actually, the Atman is neither born or nor dead. It is the astral body or Sukshma Sarira that is subject to birth and death. Indian thinkers identify the Atman with Brahman, the ultimate reality. The Advaita Vedānta system particularly emphasises the non-difference between Brahman and Atman.

A person in the existential state is conditioned by ignorance, which clouds the Atman. Because of this, people are unable to know the truth that the Atman that is present in them are the ultimate reality itself. The goal of life according to Indian thinkers is to understand the presence of ignorance and to explore the way to clear the clouds of ignorance and enable the individual to attain bliss or supreme happiness. Three ways of achieving the bliss are prescribed: they are Karma Marga or the way of action, Bhakthi Marga or the way of worship and Jnana Marga or the way of wisdom. These three ways point to the three basic aspects of mind; volition, emotion and cognition.

When a person realises the non-difference between Atman and Brahman (Advaita), the sense of selfish separation dissolves, giving rise to altruism, compassion, and

harmony. This inner transformation naturally extends to society, fostering peace, unity, and freedom from discrimination. Sree Narayana Guru's life mission was to create such a society rooted in equality and spiritual wisdom. As an Advaitin, Guru emphasised the realisation of the truth 'Aham Brahmasmi' 'I am Brahman,' affirming the oneness of all beings and the ultimate unity of existence. For Guru, the removal of ignorance was not only an individual spiritual pursuit but also the foundation for social reform and universal brotherhood. He considers everything, including, the physical, mental, internal, external, subjective, objective aspects as the different self-expression of one eternal consciousness or cit. In Malayalam he called it as arivu. Like Advaita philosophy, Guru also believes that in essence there is no difference between Brahman and Atman.

The known this is no other,

It, when closely examined, also

Reveals itself to be consciousness in essence.

Thus, the consciousness substance in both these

(The knower and the known)

Being one alone,

Nothing other than the one consciousness

Ever has real existence anywhere.
(Arivu_1)

Guru pointed out that the soul is self-lighted. It is independent and luminous. Soul is not darkness. People are aware of the presence of the self in themselves. From this, one will get the proof that the self exist. The individuals think, 'this is mine,' 'this is my body' etc, about the various parts of their body. Individuals think as if they were not the



body but something else residing in the body - a hidden self-inside the body. According to Guru, consciousness is not limited to the physical organs; it is something higher. Since everyone is conscious of this higher reality, which is the self, Guru believes that each person experiences this higher self or the witness self. In this sense, every individual can observe their own self. Even a person who is not fully aware of their essential truth still has at least a general awareness of their innermost self. The self is beyond sense experience and inference, because inferential knowledge requires direct prior experience.

According to the Guru, one should realise that what appears as the soul, along with the body, birth, death, and so on, are all appearances within consciousness, which is the Real Self. The Brahman or Atman is the source of vital energy. Everything from vital energy to the body and sense organs is only an

appearance in the Atman. The Atman existed before these things came into existence. The vital energy, the body, and the five sense organs exist only within the soul or Atman. The Atman survives even after the destruction of the vital energy, body, and sense organs. We can understand this by comparing it to an actor who pretends to be someone else. Similarly, the eternal Atman superimposes subtle and gross elements upon itself and experiences them. The actor who plays a character does not become that character but rather experiences it as someone else. Likewise, the soul is temporarily connected to scenes that do not truly exist. The soul or consciousness alone continues to exist even when everything else perishes. Therefore, there is no need to worry about what happens to the self after death or what it means to be a released soul. A self-actualized person is one who truly lives because they find meaning and purpose in life.

Recap

- ◆ The term *psychology* comes from the Greek words *psyche* (soul/mind) and *logos* (study).
- ◆ Psychology is defined as the study of the mind.
- ◆ Today, psychology is defined as the study of behaviour.
- ◆ William McDougall said psychology aims to understand and control behaviour.
- ◆ Psychology originated from philosophy, its “mother science.”
- ◆ Wilhelm Wundt is known as the father of experimental psychology.
- ◆ Wundt founded the first psychology lab in 1879 at Leipzig, Germany.
- ◆ Subfields of psychology include clinical, counselling, educational, developmental, and health psychology.
- ◆ Common methods in psychology include observation, experiments, case studies, and surveys.
- ◆ Indian philosophy focuses mainly on metaphysics but also studies the mind and consciousness.
- ◆ Upanishads describe the mind (manas) as subtle matter.

- ◆ Mind, body, and sense organs must be pure to realise consciousness.
- ◆ Indian psychology focuses on mental control and well-being.
- ◆ The Bhagavad Gita teaches mental balance through the example of Arjuna and Krishna.
- ◆ Yoga promotes both physical and mental health.
- ◆ Indian psychology recognises three levels of personality: animal, human, and divine.
- ◆ The divine level is pure consciousness.
- ◆ Mind is an instrument of the self, not the self itself.
- ◆ Sree Narayana Guru described the mind as a creation of maya.
- ◆ Mind is a flow of names and forms, arising and disappearing like waves in the sea.
- ◆ Purity of mind comes from qualities like love, kindness, and non-violence.
- ◆ Ignorance causes attachment and suffering; removing ignorance leads to wisdom.
- ◆ Atman (self) is eternal, all-knowing, and identical to Brahman (ultimate reality).
- ◆ Self-realisation removes selfishness and promotes compassion, unity, and social equality.

Objective Questions

1. What is the literal meaning of the word “psychology” based on its Greek roots?
2. Who is considered the father of experimental psychology?
3. Name two Greek thinkers who discussed the mind and human behaviour.
4. According to William McDougall, what is the aim of psychology?
5. From which period can the roots of Indian psychology be traced?
6. According to Indian psychology, what are the three progressive levels of personality?
7. What is the highest level of personality in Indian psychology?
8. Who wrote *Indian Psychology Vol. 1: Cognition* in 1933?
9. According to Guru, what is the relationship between Brahman and Atman?



10. In Guru's view, what is the only eternal reality?
11. What causes attachment in life according to Sree Narayana Guru?
12. What is the mind described as in relation to maya?

Answers

1. The study of the soul or science of the soul
2. Wilhelm Maximilian Wundt
3. Plato and Aristotle
4. To give a better understanding and control of the behaviour of the organism as a whole
5. The Vedic period
6. Animal level, human level, and divine level
7. Divine level (pure consciousness)
8. Jadunath Sinha
9. Identical
10. The Atman or consciousness
11. Ignorance
12. A continuous flow of names and forms; not different from maya.

Assignments

1. Define fieldwork and explain its significance in understanding social realities.
2. Compare and contrast anthropological fieldwork (e.g., Malinowski's approach) with quantitative field studies (e.g., census surveys).
3. Discuss M.N. Srinivas's contribution to Indian sociology through his fieldwork in Rampura village.
4. What are the essential qualities of a good fieldworker?
5. Critically analyse the ethical challenges faced during fieldwork.

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Suggested Reading

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SGOU



UNIT

Psychological insights in Sree Narayana Guru's teachings

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand Sree Narayana Guru's view that consciousness is the unchanging reality behind all changing objects
- ◆ explain the relationship between spiritual well-being and material well-being in Guru's philosophy
- ◆ relate Guru's emphasis on vocational education to present-day solutions for unemployment
- ◆ distinguish between temporary material pleasures and lasting spiritual happiness as explained by Guru.
- ◆ assess the role of education in removing superstition and promoting social equality, based on Guru's teachings

Prerequisites

Narayana Guru once heard a woman crying loudly during a morning walk. Guru approached her and inquired about the matter. She said her brother, who had a job abroad, had died and that she could not bear the grief and cried loudly. You must have seen situations like this many times, how you handled that situation. In any case we can understand what the guru spoke to the women at that time.

“Swami asked: Do the dead come back?

Woman: No

Swami: Won't we all die one day?



Woman: We will

Swami: then, why do you cry?

Women: I will not cry

Swami: do you have children?

Woman: yes

Swami: look after the children well. Educate them. There is no use of crying over everything. Keep your faith in God and worship Him regularly” (The Biography of Sree Narayana Guru, Murkkoth Kumaran). The Guru was able to pacify the lady in a very natural way, like an experienced psychologist. In this context, as said earlier we will remember that in the past, the Buddha also asked a woman, who had come to ask for the life of her dead child to bring mustard seed from a house where no one died.

Those who study the life of Sree Narayana Guru will see that he understood the mental, social, and spiritual problems of the people and suggested ways to overcome them. Although he did not study psychology as a subject, many of his ideas align with modern psychological thought. His understanding grew from life experiences, interactions with people from different walks of life, spiritual awareness, careful observation, a sense of humour, and the ability to respond quickly to situations. Through his actions, teachings, and guidance especially towards socially disadvantaged groups he offered insights into human behaviour, relationships, and mental well-being.

Keywords

Consciousness, Kevala, Chinmayi, Subjective, Spiritual, Eternal, Equality, Self-realisation, Non-violence

Discussion

1.2.1 Consciousness: The Only Reality

‘You cannot step into the same river twice’. These are the words of the famous Greek thinker Heraclitus. Every object we see in this world is subject to change and they are not eternal. But the Narayana Guru explains that behind these variable objects there is something that remains unchanged and that is

consciousness or Arivu. All worldly objects are different manifestations of wisdom. Like the waves of the sea, these worldly objects originate from consciousness and return to it. Guru explained that consciousness is in the makeup of all the objects of our perception and conception internal as well as external. Everything that we may see is this consciousness. The main objective of the Guru’s philosophy is to wipe out duality

which is the cause of conflict, intolerance and all kinds of evils. Of course, variety gives beauty to our life, one must accept variety in custom, race, caste, language, skin colour etc. but one should remember that these varieties are superficial factors and in essence there is no variety.

That on which the manifestation

Of consciousness depends

Is of four kinds

Gross, Subtle, Causal, Turiya (the fourth)-ie.the Pure Consciousness.

The very same division is applicable

To the manifestation of consciousness

(Bhanadarsanam verse 2 Darsananamala,

Trans. Muni Narayana Prasad)

Consciousness has two main phases. One refers to the world of actualities, where there is action and reaction. Darkness, nescience, ignorance, and necessity are the main characteristics of this phase. The other phase, which is the counterpart of this dark side, is beyond all practical considerations. It is the noumenon, which Guru described as Kevala (pure) and Chinmayi (made entirely of mind-stuff). According to Guru, these two levels the spiritual and the physical are not separate. Understanding this truth helps a person accept both the good and the bad experiences of life and act in a balanced manner.

Psychologically pain and pleasure are subjective states. Normally our tendency is to connect them with what appears as concrete facts that belonging to an external, physical world. It is just our imagination that pain and happiness, all came from other things or from others. All the objects in the world are just different expressions of the

same consciousness. Muni Narayana Prasad, writes “The ineffable is the one unconditioned reality, which always assumes innumerable apparent forms or conditioned aspects; Gold for example, is the substance by which numerous apparent ornaments take shape.”

Those who seek happiness in the objects around them do not realise the reality or consciousness. They are living in the fragrance of momentary pleasures but consciousness or bliss is the only reality that will exist always.

1.2.2 Spiritual Well-being and Material Well-being

The goal of human life is to attain peace, happiness, and joy. Questions often arise, such as what gives us comfort and happiness, how it can be achieved, and whether economic growth alone can make us truly happy. Many thinkers have emphasised the need for spiritual well-being, leading to further questions about how it can be achieved and whether seeking spiritual happiness means giving up material comfort. Sree Narayana Guru's thoughts and actions provide a clear answer: true happiness includes both spiritual and material well-being, though there is a difference between the two. Material pleasures are temporary, while spiritual happiness is eternal. Spiritual well-being is essential, yet without a reasonable level of material progress, overall development is not possible. Guru explained this balance between material and spiritual life in various ways, and his views on the purpose of the Sivagiri Pilgrimage clearly show his understanding of the relationship between material progress and spiritual growth. He identified specific areas for development: education, hygiene, worship of God, organisation, agriculture, trade, craft, and training in technology. According to him, those who return after the pilgrimage and are already employed should have improved their skills.



Those who are unemployed should have learned a trade or skill that can help them earn a living. In this way, the pilgrimage was meant not only as a spiritual journey but also as a practical path to self-reliance and sustainable living.

Guru showed us that material progress is required along with spiritual well-being. Material well-being is necessary for psychological well-being and psychological well-being is necessary for spiritual well-being. Sree Narayana Guru's spiritualism inheres a deep concern for the poor lower caste people of Kerala, in his teachings and writings, he emphasised the need of the material development of the poor one can see in his teachings a synthesis of spirituality and materialism Guru realised the fact that human beings are not just physical and material beings that exist to satisfy their senses but spiritual beings as well. In the spiritual level there is only unity or oneness of existence. But mere spirituality is not enough, therefore he points to the need for material development also. He was well aware about the condition of lower caste people, suffering from poverty. He was of the opinion that to solve this problem we need to give importance to material development. That is why Guru puts emphasis on vocational education, craft, trade etc. Whereas some thinkers consider spirituality and materialism as opposing realms Guru from his dialectical method perceives them as complementary and mutually beneficial. This kind of approach of Guru is the need of the hour for an overall development of human society.

1.2.3 Education for the Upliftment of Individual and Society

Guru recognised that the first step towards progress was to educate the lower castes, who at that time were trapped in ignorance.

Therefore, he placed great importance on education. However, he stressed that education was necessary not only for the lower castes but for all sections of society. This leads to an important question: What is the purpose of education? Some may say it is mainly for getting a job, but the Guru believed this is not the only goal. He taught that education should lead to overall growth, both spiritual and material. The society he envisioned through this idea of education was one based on mutual respect and equality. For Narayana Guru, education was a means to self-realisation or awareness of one's true nature. He emphasised the importance of purity in thought, speech, and action, and aimed to create a balance between the spiritual, individual, and social purposes of education.

Guru believed that education helps in building better societies, developing virtues, and giving people a sense of freedom. He recognised that education promotes empowerment and supports development. Guru used education as a means to uplift society because it could improve the social and economic conditions of marginalised groups. He also saw education as a way to make people responsible citizens by teaching them to live with discipline, follow rules, and act with conscience. At the time of the Guru, blind faith and superstitions were common in Kerala, and people misled by such beliefs often caused harm to themselves, their families, and society. Education gave people, especially those from the lower castes, the confidence to step out, achieve their goals, and improve their lives. It encouraged them to question, think analytically, and reject superstition. An educated person considers the logic behind actions and stands for what is right. Education also promotes healthier living and supports overall social progress. For Guru, education was the most powerful tool for the complete development of the lower castes.

Guru emphasised the need for education for all, including women. He took initiatives to establish schools and organised night schools for elderly learners. Recognising the link between education and access to knowledge, he encouraged the establishment of libraries in many places. Guru also understood the importance of English education for society and advised people to become proficient in it. He stressed that those who have the means should help others who wish to learn but lack opportunities. For Guru, education was not only for acquiring skills but also for purifying the mind and realising the all-inclusive reality, or *Arivu* (consciousness).

Everything in the world deserves respect because all things are manifestations of consciousness and are connected to us. Therefore, it is the duty of human beings to care for both the community and the natural environment in which they live. A divine law works behind all creation, which is why nature functions in harmony. Human beings too must lead a morally upright life to build a harmonious community on earth, and in Guru's opinion education is essential to achieve this.

Narayana Guru gave great importance to vocational training and work experience. He believed that work experience encourages individuals to think creatively and helps students value the dignity of labour at all stages

of their growth. Students should treat manual and intellectual work as equally important. This was a key aspect of the Guru's idea of education and remains relevant to the social and economic conditions of Kerala and India. He stressed that students should be equipped to earn a living after completing their studies. His aim was to make education need-based so that the problem of unemployment could be removed. Along with vocational training, the Guru also recognised the importance of book learning. He emphasised that systematic knowledge and skill can be acquired only through reading and study. For this reason, he promoted the building of libraries and established many himself, often in connection with temples.

For Sree Narayana Guru, freedom or liberation was the ultimate goal of education. His concept of freedom included economic, social, cultural, political, religious, and, ultimately, spiritual freedom. He viewed education as a means to bring about social change and was an advocate of work-oriented education suited to the needs of society, guiding progress towards spirituality and humanity through non-violent means. Guru's idea of education was highly relevant in his time and remains important in today's world of science and technology. Through education, he sought to build a society based on truth, non-violence, justice, and equality.

Recap

- ◆ Heraclitus said all things change.
- ◆ Guru taught consciousness is unchanging.
- ◆ Worldly objects are forms of knowledge.
- ◆ Duality causes conflict and evil.
- ◆ Consciousness has four forms.
- ◆ Pain and pleasure are subjective.
- ◆ Objects are expressions of consciousness.



- ◆ Real happiness is in consciousness.
- ◆ Life's goal is peace and happiness.
- ◆ Guru combined material and spiritual well-being.
- ◆ Material pleasures are temporary.
- ◆ Spiritual joy is lasting.
- ◆ Sivagiri Pilgrimage had practical aims.
- ◆ Material progress aids spiritual growth.
- ◆ Guru stressed vocational education.
- ◆ Guru saw spirituality and materialism as complementary.
- ◆ Education is for all.
- ◆ Education builds equality and freedom.
- ◆ Education removes superstition.
- ◆ Guru promoted women's education.
- ◆ Libraries were encouraged.
- ◆ Education teaches moral living.
- ◆ Vocational training is important.
- ◆ Manual and intellectual work are equal.
- ◆ Education must be need-based.
- ◆ Liberation is education's ultimate aim.
- ◆ Guru wanted a just, non-violent society.

Objective Questions

1. Who said, "You cannot step into the same river twice"?
2. According to Sree Narayana Guru, what is the unchanging reality behind all changing objects?
3. What does Guru identify as the cause of conflict and intolerance?
4. What example does Muni Narayana Prasad give to explain unconditioned reality?
5. What is the only reality that will exist always?
6. What are the two components of true happiness according to Guru?
7. Which is temporary - material pleasure or spiritual joy?
8. What was the dual purpose of the Sivagiri Pilgrimage?

9. Which type of education did Guru emphasise to solve unemployment?
10. How did Guru view spirituality and materialism?
11. What was the ultimate goal of education for Guru?
12. Name one superstition Guru wanted to eradicate through education.
13. Why does everything in the world deserve respect according to Guru?
14. Why should education be need-based?
15. What does vocational training help students to value?
16. What kind of society did Guru aim to build through education?

Answers

1. Heraclitus
2. Consciousness (Arivu)
3. Duality
4. Gold and ornaments
5. Consciousness
6. Spiritual well-being and material well-being
7. Material pleasure
8. Spiritual journey and practical path to self-reliance
9. Vocational education
10. Complementary and mutually beneficial
11. Liberation or freedom
12. Blind faith and superstition
13. All things are manifestations of consciousness
14. To remove unemployment
15. Dignity of labour
16. A society based on truth, non-violence, justice, and equality



Assignments

1. Write an essay on spiritual and material well-being.
2. Education for the upliftment of lower castes. Explain Guru's views.
3. Write on Sreenarayana Guru's views on liberation.

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UNIT

Sree Narayana Guru's Non-Controversial Way of Life: an Example for Others

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ explain how Sree Narayana Guru challenged caste discrimination through his actions
- ◆ describe the social and psychological impact of the Guru's temple reforms
- ◆ interpret the key philosophical messages in *Daivadaśakam*, *Darśanamālā*, and *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*
- ◆ analyse the Guru's Advaita philosophy in relation to unity and equality

Prerequisites

Everyone wishes to present themselves in a way that creates a good impression on others. Dressing modestly and behaving calmly not only helps others form a positive view of us but also gives us confidence and positive energy. Living in a community also requires good interaction with others and the absence of an inferiority complex. Psychologists note that modest dress and dignified behaviour can increase a person's self-confidence. The personality of Sree Narayana Guru, marked by simplicity in life and depth in thought, attracted many people, especially those from the lower castes of his time. His goal was to uplift these communities and guide them towards spiritual growth. While he did not directly confront the rigid customs of the upper castes in the context of that period, he opposed the oppressive practices of the aristocracy through his way of life. In this sense, he can rightly be regarded as both a philosopher and a thinker with deep psychological insight.



Keywords

Caste equality, Idol installation, Self-confidence, Sattva guna, Temple reform, Non-dualism, Consciousness (Arivu), Maya, Bhakti, Moksha, Religious harmony

Discussion

1.3.1 Living the Message of Equality

Narayana Guru set an example by doing for himself what the upper castes had denied to the lower castes. He showed that whatever the upper castes could do, the lower castes were also capable of doing. One of his methods was to imitate the actions of the upper castes to prove equality. Guru courageously performed many acts that, at the time, were considered the privilege of the upper castes. His education, including his knowledge of Sanskrit and worship practices, helped him in this effort. During his time, the installation of idols in temples was carried out only by Brahmins. However, the Guru himself installed idols in temples across Kerala, thereby ending the Brahmin monopoly. This naturally led to strong opposition. It is well known that when Guru installed an idol of Lord Shiva, there was significant resistance from the higher castes. At that time, he calmly replied that he had installed an 'our own Shiva.' This intelligent response helped avoid a major conflict and showed his skill in handling opposition with psychological insight.

By engaging in various activities of the upper castes, Guru demonstrated that the caste system has no real basis among human beings. No one is born superior or inferior by birth; it is through one's actions that such differences are created. At a time when the upper castes were seen as the leaders of society, Guru, who was born into a lower caste, undertook activities that were then

considered the exclusive domain of the upper castes. Such actions required great self-confidence. The lower castes of that period were not even allowed to dress like the upper castes. The Guru pointed out that all human beings are born equal, and the differences among them arise from factors such as lack of education, variations in dress, and uncleanness. To make this clear, he imitated the practices of the upper castes. His actions helped remove the sense of inferiority among the lower castes and build self-confidence in them.

The change in Kerala society through the peaceful work of Guru was immense. Keralites are moving forward with an emphasis on education and we are able to achieve complete literacy. Sree Narayana Guru has a great place among the early gurus who took the helm of all this.

Through his life, the Guru showed that everyone can control the mind and body and thereby attain spiritual growth. He proved by his own example that a person from a lower caste could rise to spiritual heights by breaking the restrictions imposed on them. He guided others and helped them reach his level. Gandhiji once said, 'My life is my message.' In a similar way, Sree Narayana Guru presented his life as an example, showing that if ignorance is removed, nothing is impossible for human beings. Psychologists note that people, especially children, learn more effectively when lessons are demonstrated in action rather than explained only in words. This

is because seeing and experiencing an idea makes it easier to understand and remember. Guru understood this principle well. Instead of merely talking about equality, he demonstrated it through his own actions, making his life itself a powerful lesson that influenced the minds of people more deeply than words alone could.

1.3.2 Reformation through Temples and Worship

It may be difficult to imagine today that, in the past, members of the so-called upper castes would order lower caste people to move out of their way when they approached. During the time of Guru, the aristocracy or upper castes worshipped deities such as Shiva, Ganesha, and Subramanya, while the lower castes were denied permission to worship these gods. Instead, they were allowed to worship only certain deities such as Chathan and Yakshi. There was a clear difference between the worship practices of the upper castes and the lower castes. The upper castes offered flowers, fruits, and vegetarian food to their deities in a manner that reflected sattva guna, whereas the lower castes often offered animal meat and alcoholic drinks, reflecting tamo guna. This practice influenced their mental state and way of life. Alcohol consumption became not only part of worship but also a cause of self-enslavement, leading to moral decline. Sree Narayana Guru worked to change these practices among the lower castes of Kerala, bringing about a transformation that lasted for generations.

When dealing with such serious issues very lightly, one can see in guru a psychological and philosophical approach. For this purpose, the Lord Shiva, the god of higher caste people was consecrated to the Avarnas. When Siva is worshipped the ritual, themselves change. By changing the demonic things and doing the rituals based

on sattva Guna, Guru was able to raise the mental level of the lower caste and change their living conditions. Avarnas who worship in temples with savarna deities will have their own self-esteem and had a feel that their standard is also high. Through this Guru was able to create a new awakening in the people, who were for a long time considered as inferior in the society. Guru put forward the great principle that by setting up temples like this, everyone has the right to worship and that all can enjoy equally many things which the Savarna considered only theirs. Through this the Guru proclaimed the great principle that mankind belongs to the same clan beyond caste and religion.

Guru pointed out that a library and a garden should be built in connection with temples so that those who came for worship would also have facilities for study and a peaceful atmosphere. He advised that there was no need to spend large amounts of money on constructing big, old-fashioned temples or on festivals and fireworks (Biography of Sree Narayana Guru, Murkkoth Kumaran). For him, temples should inspire the need for study along with religious worship. The temples he built had different kinds of installations such as a lamp in one and a mirror in another to convey that God can be seen in any object in the world, which he may have believed would help people develop tolerance. Guru aimed to make people think for themselves and lead their lives towards goodness, influencing them through thoughtful actions. He understood that people who came to temples would naturally pay attention to cleanliness, and he used this to teach the importance of living a clean life. He believed that the purity of the body extends to the mind, and that this sense of purity can be strengthened through worship in temples. In all these ways, Guru saw temples as places that could guide people towards spiritual learning.



1.3.3 Psychological insights in Sree Narayana Guru's works with special reference to Daivadaśakam, Darśanamālā and Ātmopadeśa Śatakam

When we begin to study the works of Sree Narayana Guru, it feels like standing before a vast ocean, rich with valuable ideas that can bring joy and meaning to our lives. His writings offer solutions to many problems, whether practical or spiritual, and reveal both a thoughtful philosopher and an insightful observer of the human mind. Guru did not separate different aspects of life into fixed compartments; in his works, there is no division between personal, social, spiritual, mental, or physical life, as he viewed life as a whole.

Poetry was one of the ways in which Sree Narayana Guru expressed his ideas, and the rhythm and beauty of his verses naturally touched the human mind. In each poem, his messages, especially his philosophical thoughts, were arranged closely and meaningfully, like pearls in a necklace, giving his works a unique and lasting value. Most of his writings were poems in Sanskrit, Malayalam, and Tamil, many with five, seven, or ten stanzas that could be performed musically. These works were designed to capture attention and bring positive change to the human mind. Guru sought to establish the truth that all human beings and all things in the world are different expressions of the same reality and therefore equal. According to Muni Narayana Prasad, Sree Narayana Guru's works can be grouped into five categories: hymns, philosophical works, moral writings, translations, and prose.

Guru has given 33 works in the form of

poems. This includes the universal prayer Daivadaśakam. This is one among Guru's philosophical works. The other important philosophical works are Ātmopadesasatakam, Darśanamālā, Brahmavidyapanchakam, Advaita Dipika and Arivu. Guru's aim was to cultivate the sweetness of true devotion in the human mind while also elevating the mind to the truth of non-dualism.

1.3.3.1 Daivadaśakam

The Daivadaśakam was written by Guru for children to recite as a daily prayer. It was composed in a way that helps children develop both self-confidence and spirituality. Although it was intended for children, anyone regardless of caste or religion, can recite this hymn. The work reinforces the idea that everything is one and the same. In this poem, Guru addresses God as the ocean of mercy and bliss. A person who repeats this short hymn comes to feel that there is no real difference between people or between themselves and the world around them.

You are the creation the creator too,

As also the myriad of created things,

You, again, O God, are the substance

Of which all creation in modes.

Guru wished for everyone to attain eternal glory. This poem inspires people to remove selfishness from their minds and work for the good of all. One can see the Guru's psychological approach in this hymn, as he recognised that devotion can awaken emotions such as compassion and empathy, and elevate human beings to a spiritual level. Daivadaśakam contains ten verses praising God, and it is important to note that people of any religion can pray to the God they believe in through this work. Guru used this hymn to show that all beings and things are

different aspects of the same ultimate truth, and that the differences we see around us are only temporary. In ten short verses, the truth of Advaita is expressed, leading the devotee towards the ultimate reality. His aim was to guide everyone to pure truth, regardless of caste, creed, time, or environment. When people sing this hymn rhythmically together, they can experience pure bhakti (devotion), and through that devotion, they may be lifted to the spiritual realm.

In this poem Guru also explains the way to reach the ultimate reality. Once we have considered everything in the world that can be touched and experienced, it becomes clear that there is an eternal witness behind all these worldly objects. Inanimate objects cannot recognise their own essence. When we lose consciousness, our body is no different from an object. When the body is gone, consciousness still exists, experiencing itself. In essence, consciousness is bliss, but our worldly experiences often hide this bliss from us. The Guru uses the example of an actor who wears costumes and acts as a character. The actor never truly becomes the character; he only creates the appearance for others. He remains himself both during and after the performance. In the same way, if we set aside the layers of body and identity that are attached to our consciousness, what remains is the eternal truth pure consciousness.

Again, Guru says,

“In the deep ocean of your glory

Let us all become immersed there to dwell,
dwell forever in felicity Supreme.”

1.3.3.2 Darśanamālā

In Narayana Guru’s works, there are elements of both Śruti and Smṛti. Among the Smṛti works, Darśanamālā is one of the most important. In this book, the Guru presented Advaita philosophy in a way

that could be easily understood by all. It originated as an oral discourse to his disciple Swami Vidyananda, on the need for a work focused solely on Vedanta philosophy. The disciple assured the Guru that he would listen carefully to the verses as they were chanted once and would not ask for any repetition. Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati, writing about this incident, commented, “Even the production of this timeless masterpiece was used as a tool to further the training of a disciple.” Written in Sanskrit, Darśanamālā consists of ten sections, each containing ten verses. Through this work, Guru presented the Advaita doctrine of non-dualism and further strengthened it by bringing together different streams of thought. He explains that the world was created through maya, or the creative power. Before its origin, the world existed in a latent form within the ultimate reality. Then, like a sprout emerging from a seed, it came into being by that power itself (Psychology of Darśanamālā by Nitya Chaitanya Yati). Even a person without formal education can understand the process of a seed germinating and growing into a large tree. Guru used this simple example to explain the creation of the universe in a way that everyone can understand.

Brahman is the basis of everything, and everything we see is a manifestation of the same reality. Therefore, it is our duty to give equal respect to all living beings. Through Darśanamālā, Guru asserts the principle of the oneness of existence. Those who see the things of this world as separate and different from one another fail to understand the real truth, and such people remain trapped in the cycle of birth and death. The sections Adhyāropadarsana and Apavādadarsana explain clearly what is real and what is false. Adhyāropadarsana shows that the universe is not ultimately real but only an appearance, shaped by one’s mental construction of it. Guru repeats this idea throughout the verses. If an object is known in one form and that



form does not change, it is true; if the form changes, it is untrue.

Mayādarśana explains the concept of maya, the force that creates, sustains, and hides the true nature of things by presenting false appearances. Bhānadarśana describes the reflective nature of the universe, showing that the world appears in consciousness like a reflection in a mirror and has no separate reality from it. Karmadarśana explains the concept of karma, describing movement as the essence of karma. Wherever there is movement whether within or outside there is karma. The universe is formed through karma, and all movements occur against the background of a motionless base. Brahman is the foundation of all universal action or movement. The svarūpa (true nature) of jnana is explained in Jnanadarśana, which discusses the nature and qualities of knowledge. Knowledge is one, nameless, and formless. Consciousness is the ultimate reality, and when it takes on name and form, it becomes the universe. This is the secret of wisdom that Guru sought to reveal through Jnanadarśana.

In the Bhaktidarśana of the Darśanamālā, Guru explains the nature of devotion in a clear and practical way. He teaches that the ultimate truth must first be discovered within oneself and that devotion should not depend on or be attached to any material object in the world. True devotion should continue without interruption, unaffected by external changes. Guru describes bhakti as meditation on Brahman and as the constant effort to know the self, or atman. In Advaita philosophy, Brahman and Atman are one and the same; realising this unity is the highest form of devotion. The Bhaktidarśana also points out that devotion should lead to inner purity, self-discipline, and compassion for all beings. Such devotion does not merely seek personal comfort but aims at liberation, where the devotee sees no difference between

the worshipper, the act of worship, and the one being worshipped. In this way, Guru connects devotion directly to the realisation of non-dual truth.

In Yogadarśana, it is explained that this world, which appears with names and forms, is in reality Brahman itself. When one realises this, the mind becomes absorbed in Brahman. The mind can be controlled through yoga, which is the restraint of mental modifications (chitta vritti nirodha), and can be turned towards one's own Self. When this is done, the impressions of 'I' and 'you' disappear, and the person realises that there is nothing other than Brahman. The last section, Nirvanadarśana, describes moksha or liberation. Here, Brahman is shown as the only reality without a second, and one who realises this truth goes beyond all distinctions.

Through this work, Guru clearly explains, step by step, how to control the mind and attain liberation. By studying the ten darśanas in Darśanamālā, one can discover the secret of the universe. The work is written in such a way that a person seeking the truth gradually develops the ability to understand the higher reality, or consciousness, through their own effort. Knowing reality requires self-effort, just as psychologists guide people towards a balanced state of mind. In a similar way, Guru shows how human beings can realise the ultimate reality through their own actions. He explains that everything we see around us is an expression of Arivu (Brahman or consciousness), and understanding this helps one overcome selfish feelings of 'mine' and 'thine', leading to shared bliss.

1.3.3.3 Atmopadesha Śatakam

Atmopadesha Śatakam is a work of one hundred verses. Guru used simple language in this text to make its ideas accessible. In this work, he discusses the power of knowledge, the influence of religious experience, the value of morality, the meaning of love and

sympathy, and the significance of concepts such as yoga, maya, and karma. The work is in the form of self-instruction. Human beings are gifted with intellect, and this gift should be properly used and nurtured. Reading Atmopadesha Śatakam, a work that has stood the test of time, stimulates the mind. The philosophical reflections in it awaken and strengthen the intellectual self.

Narayana Guru writes:

“What are known as ‘this man’ or ‘that man,’

Contemplatively visualised.

Are in essence all one primordial Atma assuming various forms.

Whatever one does for one’s own happiness.

Should be conducive to the happiness of others as well.”

Realisation of the atman is the ultimate goal of human life. A person who has realised the atman makes no distinction between one person and another and reaches a state where only bliss (ānanda) exists. One who attains this stage can face the challenges of life with equanimity. Through this work, the Guru clearly states that Advaita consciousness is the ultimate truth of the universe.

In Atmopadesha Śatakam, verses 44 to 49 present Guru’s distinctive ideas on religion. While Guru respected sincere religious minds, he could not agree with religious dogmas. For him, religion was a means to know reality, though not the only means to realise God. Verse 44 begins with Guru’s famous saying: “All religions are in essence the same.” He points out that ignorant people, without understanding the essence of religion, engage in endless arguments.

“Not seeing that the various religious in the world

Are essentially the same, advancing various arguments

Like the blind man and elephant roam not like fools,

But stop wandering, and calmly, settle down.”

(Trans, Natarajaguru, Life and Teaching of Sree Narayana Guru)

Since all religions teach essentially the same truth, those who try to prove the superiority of one religion over another are misguided. Guru compares them to blind men who have only partial knowledge of an elephant. In his view, those who fight in the name of religion are like these blind men. He urged people not to be influenced by communal riots or religious violence. According to Guru, there is no religion that directs its followers away from the development and well-being of all. However, religion holds no authority over a person who has realised the ultimate reality or consciousness; instead, such a person becomes a guiding force for religion itself. Guru cited Buddha and Jesus Christ as examples of those who became such guiding forces.

One religion may appear defective when viewed from the perspective of a follower of another religion. Unless a person realises the highest truth, which is consciousness, they will remain deceived by ignorance. Guru therefore advised people not to argue for the sake of argument, but instead to try to understand the other person’s point of view. “To know and to make known, not to argue and to vanquish” was the motto of the Religious Parliament held by Guru at Alwaye Advaita Ashram in 1924. It was the first conference of religions held in India. People from different parts of the



country, representing various faiths such as Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism, gave speeches on topics related to religion. Guru, however, clarified that anyone may argue for the purpose of clearing doubts and explaining principles. This shows that he believed religious experience cannot be conveyed by mere public demonstration, as it is a matter of personal faith. It is clear that Guru is of opinion that arguments should be based on rationally valid standpoints. But in the religion, faith being the cardinal virtue it is meaningless to argue or to fight.

It is impossible for one religion to fight and defeat another, and no religion can be abolished in this way. Therefore, the Guru said, “Be wise enough to see that the fanatic, without knowing this, fights in vain and gets ruined.” This is the meaning of verse 46. According to Guru, people should have the

freedom to follow whatever religion they choose, and he stated, “Whatever be one’s religion, it is enough if the man becomes good.” He believed that religious teachers should use discriminative power to reform religion, rejecting anything that hinders human progress. Guru viewed religion as all-comprehensive and held that disputes arise from the pride and ego of followers. He also emphasised that all names and forms in the universe are merely phenomena that arise from and dissolve into the primordial consciousness. Just as a garland lying in the distance does not change simply because it is mistaken for a snake, Guru teaches that all we see are different expressions of the same consciousness. From this understanding, one realises that “my will is the will of another and another’s will is my own will,” and any action done for one’s own good should also bring good to others.

Recap

- ◆ Guru worked to bridge caste divisions.
- ◆ Installed idols for breaking tradition.
- ◆ Asserted caste differences are social constructs.
- ◆ Stressed superiority comes from actions, not birth.
- ◆ Built confidence in lower castes.
- ◆ Life served as a living message.
- ◆ Actions spoke louder than words.
- ◆ Reformed lower-caste worship customs.
- ◆ Promoted sattva-based rituals.
- ◆ Equal worship increased dignity.
- ◆ Temples became symbols of unity.
- ◆ Added libraries and gardens to temples.
- ◆ Discouraged lavish temple spending.
- ◆ Used symbolic installations like mirrors and lamps.

- ◆ Promoted cleanliness for purity of mind.
- ◆ Saw life as integrated, not divided.
- ◆ Spread devotion and non-dualism in verses.
- ◆ *Daivadaśakam* teaches unity and selflessness.
- ◆ Consciousness is bliss beyond identity.
- ◆ Maya conceals true reality.
- ◆ Yoga controls mind towards liberation.
- ◆ *Atmopadeśa Śatakam* urges self-realisation.
- ◆ All religions share the same essence.
- ◆ Religious fights stem from ignorance.
- ◆ Religion must promote human welfare.
- ◆ All forms are expressions of one consciousness.

Objective Questions

1. What was the Guru's reply when questioned about his installation of Lord Shiva?
2. What mental quality did the Guru's actions aim to build among the lower castes?
3. What did the Guru identify as factors that created visible differences among people?
4. Which famous leader's quote, "My life is my message," is compared to the Guru's example?
5. What type of offerings reflected sattva guna in upper caste worship?
6. What offerings in lower caste worship reflected tamo guna?
7. What social evil did the Guru associate with alcohol consumption?
8. What principle did the Guru proclaim by setting up temples for all?
9. What facilities did the Guru suggest should be connected to temples?
10. According to the Guru, what effect does body purity have on the mind?
11. Which universal prayer was written by the Guru for children?
12. How many verses are in the *Daivadaśakam*?
13. What ultimate truth is expressed in *Daivadaśakam*?

14. What is the central teaching of Darśanamālā?
15. How many sections are in Darśanamālā?
16. What is the goal described in Nirvanadarśana?
17. How many verses are in Atmopadesha Śatakam?
18. What is the ultimate goal of human life according to Atmopadesha Śatakam?
19. Which famous motto was associated with the All Religions Conference of 1924?

Answers

1. He said he had installed an “our own Shiva.”
2. Self-confidence.
3. Lack of education, variations in dress, and uncleanliness.
4. Mahatma Gandhi.
5. Flowers, fruits, and vegetarian food.
6. Animal meat and alcoholic drinks.
7. Self-enslavement and moral decline.
8. That mankind belongs to the same clan beyond caste and religion.
9. A library and a garden.
10. Purity of the body extends to the mind.
11. Daivadaśakam.
12. Ten.
13. Advaita or non-dual truth.
14. The oneness of existence.
15. Ten sections.
16. Liberation or moksha.
17. One hundred.
18. Realisation of the atman.
19. “To know and to make known, not to argue and to vanquish.”

Assignments

1. Write an essay on Guru's reformation through temples and worship.
2. Poetry is one of the ways in which Guru expressed his ideas and ideals. Illustrate with examples from Daivadasakam and Atmopadesa Satakam.
3. Write verses from Atmopadesa Satakam about Guru's concepts of compassion and mercy towards all things on the earth.

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Suggested Reading

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UNIT

Absolute Approaches of Sree Narayana Guru

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ explain Sree Narayana Guru's strategies for individual enhancement, including personal hygiene, vocational training, and education
- ◆ understand Guru's teachings on overcoming fear, dualism, and individual slavery through self-awareness and non-dualism
- ◆ describe the role of vocational education in eradicating poverty and fostering dignity of labour
- ◆ analyse Guru's approach to promoting self-reliance among socially and economically disadvantaged groups
- ◆ evaluate Guru's methods for removing superstitious beliefs and promoting rational thinking

Prerequisites

How would you react if someone slandered you? Would you fear humiliation or try to take revenge? Have you ever thought about the best way to respond in such situations? Sree Narayana Guru clearly explained how to react in such cases. He firmly said that people with patience and compassion should not be afraid of anything. Once, Shivalinga Sivani, a disciple of Guru, was humiliated by a man of high caste. Guru advised the disciple to face the matter calmly. Guru said, "It is ignorance that makes them accuse and harass others. We should forget their offence and forgive them. Let us not hate them; let us treat them with compassion. If we do our duties conscientiously, we need to fear nothing" (The Biography of Sree Narayana Guru, Murkkoth Kumaran). Through such conversations, Guru

emphasised the need for individual development. His words and actions inspired those around him.

As a practical Vedantin of India, Sree Narayana Guru sought to apply the principle of non-duality in daily life. He taught the importance of education, compassion, and peaceful coexistence, which are all essential for personality development. Individual enhancement refers to the motivation to improve oneself and maintain self-esteem. It involves positive thinking and constructive action, which are necessary for self-improvement and self-improvement, in turn, is necessary for the improvement of society.

Keywords

Self-Reliance, Personal Hygiene, Vocational Education, Dignity of Labour, Non-Dualism (Advaita), Self-Realisation, Equality, Religious Tolerance, Unity of Humanity

Discussion

1.4.1 Sree Narayana Guru's Interventions on Individual Enhancements

Individual enhancement is possible only by controlling the mind and our actions. Realising this, Sree Narayana Guru, the great apostle of non-dualism, sought to show people the means to control and direct their actions, helping them feel good about themselves and maintain self-esteem. His aim was the complete spiritual growth of each individual, and he worked tirelessly toward that goal. He believed that only a person who lives a life of peace and contentment can rise to the spiritual level; otherwise, it is meaningless to speak of Vedanta to someone who is hungry or living in slavery. Sree Narayana Guru prescribed various strategies for enhancing personal worth, including personal hygiene, vocational training, education, and the removal of superstitious beliefs. His life mission was the upliftment of the weaker sections of Kerala society and humanity as a whole. At the time of the Guru, the lower-caste

people were often unaware of their own potential. He taught them the importance of self-realisation - knowing themselves - and the non-dualism of Advaita, which is essential for realising the oneness of humanity and the brotherhood of all.

Guru revolutionised the outlook of people on life. The materialisation of his motivational teachings was felt and reflected during his lifetime and is still present in Kerala society even in today's world of science and technology. The effect of Guru's self-enhancement strategies is seen in the tendency of people belonging to weaker sections to view themselves as having positive qualities and a more positive outlook on the future than they had before. Guru may have realised that poor hygiene can be a sign of self-denial or emotional irregularities such as depression and other mental disorders. Therefore, he placed great importance on cleanliness.

This was evident when Guru once visited his ashram in a small village. What he saw

there made him annoyed. The inhabitants of the monastery lived in very unhygienic conditions. Seeing the need for change, he spoke with the ashram residents and stressed the importance of taking a bath every day and maintaining cleanliness before starting work. “Physical hygiene is very important. If that is achieved, cleanliness of food and home follows. If man can achieve total hygiene, he can achieve anything. Then nobody will dare to ask him “who are you?” All those who take bath belong to one caste (mockingly) Let us treat all others as untouchables.” (The Biography of See Nara ya na Guru, Murkkoth Kumaran)

1.4.2 Personal Hygiene

Sree Narayana Guru, while persuading people to lead a pure life and maintain cleanliness, advised the poor and backward classes of Kerala to keep their houses and surroundings clean. He emphasised the importance of keeping both the mind and body pure. During his stay at Aruvippuram, Guru noticed that many lower-caste people did not bathe, wore unwashed clothes, and lived in unhygienic surroundings. Directly telling them to bathe and stay clean could have hurt their pride or caused resentment. Understanding this, Guru created a situation in which certain activities could only be performed in a clean state. He took a stone from the river, regarded it as Īśvara, and lit a lamp in front of it. Drawn by the Guru’s words and personality, people came to pray with him. Guru observed that, in order to participate in the prayer, they would cleanse themselves willingly, thereby realising the importance of personal purity.

It is clear that Guru dedicated various temples to the people not only for worship but also to promote cleanliness. Although there were many temples at that time, the lower classes had no access to them. In such actions, one can see the work of an

expert psychologist, as Guru guided ordinary people to understand themselves and improve without hurting their feelings. He believed that everyone should recognise their own abilities and work towards self-elevation. The motivation given by Sree Narayana Guru to the people of Kerala will never be forgotten. His aim was to make the poor aware of personal hygiene while preserving their dignity. For Guru, the ultimate goal was to elevate all human beings to a spiritual level and lead them to eternal bliss, with both external and internal cleanliness serving as important stepping stone.

Poor hygiene can be a sign of self-denial, and Guru often emphasised the importance of maintaining cleanliness. He pointed out that unhygienic conditions were one of the causes of untouchability and taught that if cleanliness was strictly observed, untouchability would naturally disappear. No one would tell a clean person to stay away, and such a person would not remain excluded even if told to do so. Cleanliness should not be practised only to show others; it must be genuine. Guru emphasised that cleanliness should begin at home, especially in the kitchen, and extend to the surroundings. He insisted that cleanliness should be maintained at all times and in all places. Living a clean life keeps both body and mind healthy. Healthy eating was also a key part of his advice. He encouraged people to avoid stale or spoiled food and to follow a fresh and nutritious diet.

Guru stressed the importance of living a pure life, giving equal emphasis to both internal and external purification. Disciplining the mind is essential, and all unhealthy actions such as killing, stealing, and adultery must be avoided. Purity of mind holds the highest importance and can be achieved by cultivating qualities like love, kindness, and non-violence. Practising concentration also helps in gaining control over the mind. When an individual removes unhealthy thoughts



and tendencies, they can attain peace of mind and happiness, which in turn makes them polite and gentle in behaviour. Thus, the purification of the mind is necessary not only for personal well-being but also for the good of all.

To gain peace, one must first be aware of oneself and of what is happening around, with honesty. With such awareness, unhealthy actions can be replaced by healthy actions like kindness, compassion, and sympathy. Guru preached certain principles, which were both social and ethical, to be followed in groups to avoid internal conflicts. These included controlling the mind, purifying the inner self by removing unwholesome tendencies, cultivating non-violence and compassion, and living together peacefully and harmoniously with mutual respect and understanding. Guru also emphasised the need to change negative thoughts in the mind and purify it. He taught that external cleansing leads to internal cleansing. Through these teachings, Guru aimed to lead the people around him to both worldly and inner bliss. In this approach, one can see in Guru the qualities of both a good psychiatrist and a great philosopher.

1.4.3 Vocationalisation

Sree Narayana Guru's aim was to make the people of his time self-reliant and help them regain their lost self-respect. For this, he recommended vocational education. He believed it was important to make youngsters interested in vocational training and to prepare them through practical work experience. Guru not only preached these ideas but also put them into practice. In 1924, he started a model school at Sivagiri, which offered vocational education along with English and other languages. Students were trained in agriculture and mechanics. Guru believed in the dignity of labour, considering all work honourable. His system of vocational training allowed students to

earn while studying, shaping them into self-reliant individuals. After vocational training, students could find employment and lead a decent life. The Guru's idea of vocational education remains relevant for all times, as he encouraged young people to work hard and become self-sufficient. He was of the opinion that those who waste time without working, or live off the labour of others, commit a crime against society.

Guru's concept of vocational training aimed to make students strong, healthy, and active, both physically and mentally. It led young people towards self-sufficiency and taught them that all kinds of work are honourable. A student pursuing vocational education works towards their dream job, gaining mental peace and satisfaction. In such individuals, the light of knowledge will shine, and there will be no sense of division between 'mine' and 'thine.' They will realise that the only thing that exists at all times is consciousness.

1.4.4 Removal of Superstitious Beliefs

Superstition is a belief or practice that usually arises from ignorance, blind faith in fate or black magic, misunderstanding of events, or fear of the unknown. Psychologists have studied how superstitions affect human life. In their view, superstitions often develop from the assumption that there is a connection between unrelated events that occur together. In India, and particularly in Kerala, superstitions have had a negative impact on society. Even today, it is uncertain whether we have been able to fully overcome them. Superstitions can mislead people, cause cruel acts of violence, and sometimes create divisions between individuals. They can generate fear, insecurity, sleeplessness, and suspicion towards others. Even in daily life, superstitions can create unnecessary problems. For this reason, many great

personalities, including Sree Narayana Guru, stressed the need to eradicate them.

Guru's attitude towards superstition can be understood from an incident at Sivagiri. Two people once came to seek his help, believing that Sree Narayana Guru had supernatural powers to drive away demons. At that time, many in Kerala believed in a spirit called Kutti Chathan, thought to trouble people by pretending to be a child ghost. One man told the Guru that Kutti Chathan was stoning his house every day and requested a solution. He believed that Kutti Chathan would obey the Guru's words. Without hurting their beliefs, Guru wrote a letter addressed to Kutti Chathan, asking it to stop troubling the family. It is said that the stoning stopped after this (Narayana Guru, Ed. Balakrishnan, p. 154).

From the above incident, it is clear that Sree Narayana Guru understood that Kutti Chathan was actually a human being. If someone had directly told the people who believed in Kutti Chathan that it was not real, they would not have accepted it. They came to Guru expecting help, and if he had refused, they would have felt disappointed and hopeless. Realising this, Guru did not directly challenge their belief but conveyed the necessary message to the person behind the so-called ghost. His ability to make quick psychological decisions in solving difficult problems is notable. In any case, Guru never encouraged superstition, because he understood that it hinders the social and spiritual growth of human beings.

It can be rightly said that Sree Narayana Guru was a strong critic of superstition. He recognised that such beliefs degrade human dignity. During his time, Kerala society was deeply influenced by religious superstitions and social evils. Religious practices were often mixed with superstitious rituals, idolatry, polytheism, and witchcraft.

Sree Narayana Guru desired that Kerala be free from superstitions. He observed that superstitions were a major cause of the degradation of the lower-caste people. A pure mind, he taught, is essential for both spiritual and material development. Mystery and superstition are signs of weakness, as a superstitious person does not try to understand what is happening around them and often holds unrealistic ideas about the world. Guru emphasised the importance of education, realising that it could free the lower castes from the grip of superstition. He taught that a pure mind can be attained only when one is liberated from superstitions. Those who hold on to such beliefs cannot realise the real truth. Therefore, superstition must be eradicated if we are to understand that everything is an expression of consciousness.

1.4.5 Fear - A Natural Emotion

Sree Narayana Guru explained in detail how fear arises and how it can be eradicated. He understood that the realisation of non-dualism is possible only when fear is removed from the human mind. According to him, what frightens us is always the idea of "others" or "other" objects; we are never afraid of ourselves. If we have nothing to fear from ourselves, then fear must come from something believed to be separate from the self. But is there really anything that exists apart from our soul? Each of us is like a wave in the sea of consciousness, and there is no real difference between the sea and the waves. If everything is a manifestation of the same reality, there is no reason to be afraid. This is what guru reminds us:

When self-knowledge shines,
then ignorance is fearful; Substantiation
by name and form
in the most terrible fashion,



looms here, ghost like.

At the time of Guru, the lower classes feared the upper classes. Guru also realised that this fear would make the life of the lower classes more miserable. Therefore, he has realised that fear needs to be removed from the mind in order to raise their standards. Even today, fear can have a debilitating effect on a person's mental development.

When knowledge develops, one eventually realises the state in which nothing exists but pure knowledge. In that state, the sense of 'I' and 'you' disappears, and fear along with other emotions becomes irrelevant. When we say, 'I like this' or 'I do not like this,' we assume that the 'I' is separate from the countless things in this world. This misconception can be removed through meditation. Sometimes, even ordinary people experience bliss when they feel united with what they see. For example, a person who loves nature may forget themselves when they reach a place of great beauty. In such moments, thoughts of time and space disappear. When we identify ourselves in this way, we realise the truth of non-dualism that we are not two and fear and other emotions lose their hold. Quoting the Taittirīya Upaniṣad, Nitya Chaitanya Yati writes: "Thus the highest form of happiness is not any kind of excitement, as in the case of pleasure, but total fearlessness. Man is not afraid in the state of deep sleep, because at that time there is no ego and no ideation giving rise to names and forms which may be experienced as threatening entities by him."

In the opinion of Narayana Guru, fear will naturally go away from us when we understand the real truth. Each person must try to distance himself from his fear. Guru says like a counselling expert that, one should remove the feeling of 'mine' and 'thine' then naturally the fear will be removed because the main cause of our fear is belief in dualism.

What is the reason for fear?

Devotee: I don't know.

Swami: Don't know? Think of it and then you will understand. It is because of dualism.

Devotee: I don't understand what you say.

Swami: See, fear is created from the thought of a thing that is different from 'One'. That thing is called the 'second.' So, the existence of the 'second' thing creates fear. If we are the only 'ones' we don't feel afraid, I hope you have understood what I said.

Devotee: We should consider everything as 'one' and that 'Oneness' gives us satisfaction in life.

1.4.6 Self-Reliance

A self-reliant person thinks freely and lives accordingly. Such a person recognises their own abilities and chooses ways to find happiness and satisfaction without blindly following the path of others. Self-reliance is important for all societies. A self-reliant person will never become a slave to others, can solve problems independently, and can make decisions on their own. They show self-acceptance, gain self-knowledge, and, as psychologists point out, benefit from the great power of self-acceptance. With courage, they strive to reach their goals. Imagine a society filled with such self-sufficient individuals; it would achieve remarkable growth. Perhaps it was because he understood this psychology that Sree Narayana Guru sought to instil confidence in the lower classes and guide them to a higher level of life. In his various teachings, he clearly explained the need for every human being to recognise their own worth. He stated that "equality on the actual as well as the theoretical level is the birthright of every human being." Self-reliance is necessary

for achieving equality, and a lack of self-sufficiency leads to slavery.

In a society of self-reliant individuals, inequality has no place. According to Sree Narayana Guru, self-reliance is a means by which socially backward people can rise. Self-respect is essential for social upliftment, and self-reliance gives individuals the power, energy, and determination to free themselves from any kind of dependence and to attain freedom. Guru taught the people of his time many practical ways to become self-sufficient.

Self-reliance was Sree Narayana Guru's goal when he started vocational schools. In these schools, children learned the skills needed to gain employment, earn a living, and thus eradicate poverty. Such training helped to build confidence and self-reliance among the youth. He also suggested that agriculture should be given proper importance in vocational education. As mentioned earlier, Sree Narayana Guru opposed the caste system. He urged people to eradicate superstitions and animal sacrifices that were common in society at that time. He also encouraged the removal of harmful practices such as child marriage (*Taliketttu*). The Guru recommended a simple form of marriage ceremony that was inexpensive and involved affordable rituals so that even poor families could follow it. However, he strongly emphasised that education was the most effective way to eliminate such practices from society.

Guru tried to instil confidence and self-reliance among the weaker sections of Kerala society by promoting the values of spiritual freedom and social equality. Born into a lower caste, he performed many activities traditionally reserved for the higher castes to demonstrate that every human being should engage in work according to their ability. Guru emphasised the need for women to be as

self-reliant as men, placing equal importance on their education. A self-reliant mother becomes a role model for her children.

Dowry-related deaths and harassment are less common in societies where women and men are equally self-reliant. In this context, Guru recognised that self-reliance is essential for all. A self-reliant person is aware of their abilities, chooses work accordingly, and lives a contented life. Such a person will also strive to know the ultimate truth and realise that only consciousness truly exists.

1.4.7 Freedom from Individual Slavery

There was a time when slavery existed and was accepted as something natural. It was a period when one group of human beings worked like beasts for the benefit of others. Is slavery completely gone today? No, poor people are still enslaved by the rich and the elite in society. How can this be eradicated? According to Sree Narayana Guru, every person must be freed from slavery, and he provided ways to achieve this freedom. Education is one of the most effective means to do so. The Guru repeatedly urged the people of Kerala to enlighten themselves through education and served as a role model in this regard. He also emphasised that human beings learn from what they see around them and from their own work experiences. However, for this learning to be meaningful, people must have an inner awareness of who they are. While this recognition can sometimes be found even among the uneducated, education helps most people to develop a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world.

This inner awareness and education together form the foundation of self-reliance. An independent person is aware of all their possibilities, knows how to develop them, and understands how to use them effectively.



A person in a state of slavery, however, may not be aware of the freedom they deserve and therefore will not recognise their own potential. From an early age, parents may have high expectations for their children, often wanting them to obtain higher or professional education, secure a well-paying job, and achieve social recognition. When children hear this repeatedly, they may become conditioned to follow these expectations, losing their own will and becoming dependent on such external goals. In many cases, society does not allow young people to pursue education or employment according to their own interests. This is partly due to a lack of dignity of labour. Even today, in our society, wage earners are often regarded as having lower status than professionals, which leads many young people to aspire only to white-collar jobs. When a person moves away from their true interests and engages in work that does not align with their abilities or passion, it can result in a lack of sincerity, dissatisfaction, and even depression. Recognising this, Sree Narayana Guru emphasised the importance of vocational education as a means to help individuals develop skills suited to their interests and become self-reliant.

Guru believed in the dignity of labour and taught that every job has value. This is why

he insisted that skills such as agriculture, mechanics, and other practical trades should be taught in schools. When individuals are free to choose work according to their abilities and interests, they are freed from the bondage of dependence on white-collar jobs. True liberation begins when slavery is removed from the mind, allowing the light of knowledge to spread. Only when these light spreads can we realise that we are all different expressions of the same ultimate consciousness.

Another factor that undermined the freedom of the people of Kerala was religion, especially when it was bound by prejudice and superstition. Guru taught that the inner or spiritual essence of every religion is the same - ātmasukham, or spiritual happiness - and therefore no religion is superior to another. He opposed the superstitious practices associated with religions and promoted religious tolerance and mutual respect. According to him, this can be achieved by truly understanding others. In his concept of the “other” (aparan), Guru explained that there is no real difference between one individual and another. Understanding this truth, he believed, would help free people from all forms of slavery, both external and internal.

Recap

- ◆ Peace and contentment enable spiritual progress.
- ◆ Self-realisation fosters oneness and brotherhood.
- ◆ Guru transformed people’s outlook on life.
- ◆ Cleanliness reflects dignity and self-respect.
- ◆ Temples encouraged both worship and cleanliness.

- ◆ Hygiene combats untouchability and social exclusion.
- ◆ Purity includes both body and mind.
- ◆ Purity of mind requires moral discipline.
- ◆ Love and non-violence purify the mind.
- ◆ Awareness replaces unhealthy actions with kindness.
- ◆ Social harmony needs inner and outer purity.
- ◆ Guru promoted self-reliance through vocational training.
- ◆ Agriculture and mechanics were part of curriculum.
- ◆ Superstitions arise from ignorance and fear.
- ◆ Education is key to removing superstitions.
- ◆ Pure mind is free from superstition.
- ◆ Non-dualism removes fear and duality.
- ◆ Fearlessness brings highest form of happiness.
- ◆ Dualism creates separation and insecurity.
- ◆ Self-reliant people think and act independently.
- ◆ Self-reliance fosters equality and dignity.
- ◆ Vocational education supports self-sufficiency.
- ◆ Women's self-reliance strengthens family and society.
- ◆ Education frees people from mental slavery.
- ◆ Society undervalues manual labour.
- ◆ Vocational training aligns work with ability.
- ◆ Religious tolerance removes internal and external slavery.

Objective Questions

1. Name two strategies prescribed by Guru for enhancing personal worth.
2. What philosophical concept did Guru teach to realise the oneness of humanity?
3. What did Guru identify as a possible sign of self-denial?
4. For what purpose did Guru dedicate various temples to the people?
5. What did Guru say should begin at home, especially in the kitchen?
6. What was Guru's aim in promoting vocational education?
7. In which year did Guru start a model school at Sivagiri?
8. Name two subjects or skills taught in the Sivagiri model school.
9. According to Guru, living without working is a crime against whom?
10. What metaphor did the Guru use to explain non-dualism and the absence of fear?
11. What is the main cause of fear, according to Guru?
12. What feeling should be removed to naturally eliminate fear?
13. Why did Guru recommend vocational education for children?
14. According to Guru, self-reliance is essential for achieving what?
15. What is one of the most effective means to eradicate slavery, according to Guru?
16. What is the spiritual essence of every religion, according to Guru?

Answers

1. Personal hygiene and vocational training.
2. Advaita (non-dualism).
3. Poor hygiene.
4. To promote worship as well as cleanliness.
5. Cleanliness.
6. To make people self-reliant.
7. 1924
8. Agriculture and mechanics.
9. Society.
10. Waves and the sea.
11. Belief in dualism.
12. The feeling of 'mine' and 'thine'.
13. To help them gain employment and eradicate poverty.
14. Equality.
15. Education.
16. Ātmasukham (spiritual happiness).

Assignments

1. Write an essay on Sreenarayana Guru's interventions on individual enhancements.
2. Guru believed that both education and wealth are necessary for leading a dignified life. Write on Guru's efforts in establishing schools and vocational training centres.
3. Write an essay on Guru's efforts in abolishing individual slavery and giving liberation for the lower castes.



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Suggested Reading

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BLOCK

Counselling Tools in Sreenarayanaguru's Philosophy



UNIT

Title: Counselling – Meaning and Definition, Types

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ◆ counselling from both psychological and philosophical perspectives.
- ◆ know the nature, purpose, and process of counselling.
- ◆ identify the integration of Guru's teachings as a tool for psychological growth and counselling.

Prerequisites

Counselling is a compassionate and intentional process that helps individuals navigate emotional, psychological, and personal challenges. It thrives on empathy, trust, and effective communication between the counsellor and the one seeking help. Before diving into the different types, goals, and methods of counselling, it is vital to understand its core essence - offering guidance that empowers individuals to find clarity, peace, and purpose in their lives.

Keywords

Counselling, Directive Counselling, Non-directive Counselling, Eclectic Approach, Contextual Application, Traditional Indian Approaches, Indigenous Models

Discussion

In today's fast-moving and competitive world, people often face emotional, social, and spiritual challenges that impact their overall well-being. Increasing stress, anxiety, broken relationships, addictions, identity struggles, academic pressure, and job burnout have made mental health a major concern for people of all ages.

2.1.1 Concept and Need for Counselling in Modern Society

Counselling plays an essential role in addressing today's personal and emotional struggles. It is a professional process that helps individuals gain self-awareness, heal emotionally, make wise decisions, and grow personally. Unlike casual advice, counselling is based on empathy, active listening, and psychological understanding. It enables people to explore their thoughts and feelings, work through inner conflicts, and make better life choices.

Today, more people are recognizing the value of emotional intelligence, self-care, and mental health. Counselling offers a safe, private, and non-judgmental space for individuals to express themselves, question their beliefs, and discover healthier ways of living.

As society changes - with the decline of joint families, rising migration, constant digital exposure, and unclear values - many feel lonely and uncertain. In this disconnected world, counselling provides support, clarity, and healing.

2.1.1.1 Emergence of Counselling as a Discipline

Though helping others has deep roots in human history, counselling as a formal and scientific discipline took shape in the 20th century, mainly in Western countries. It developed through contributions from psychology, education, and social work.

The growth of counselling has been marked by several key milestones.

One of the earliest was the Guidance Movement of the early 1900s, which primarily aimed to assist individuals with educational and career decisions. A significant advancement came with Carl Rogers' Humanistic Approach, emphasizing client-centered care, empathy, and unconditional positive regard, which fundamentally reshaped therapeutic relationships. The development of various schools of psychotherapy - including behavioral, cognitive, and integrative approaches - further enriched counselling techniques and broadened its applicability. Another major step in the professionalization of counselling was the establishment of organizations such as the American Counseling Association (ACA), which played a crucial role in formulating ethical guidelines and setting standards for professional training and practice.

Today, counselling includes a wide range of fields - such as school and career counselling, family and marriage therapy, trauma support, and more. It brings together scientific knowledge, communication skills, and increasingly, holistic and spiritual approaches.



2.1.1.2 Counselling in Indian Philosophical Traditions

While modern counselling developed as a structured profession in the West, India has a rich and ancient tradition of psychological and spiritual guidance rooted in its philosophical wisdom.

Sacred texts like the *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad Gita*, and *Yoga Sutras* offer deep insights into human suffering, self-awareness, and mental peace. The *Guru-shishya* tradition (teacher-disciple relationship) was a personalized form of counselling, where the guru guided the disciple not only in knowledge but also in emotional and spiritual growth.

Examples include:

1. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna counsels Arjuna in his moment of confusion and despair - not by giving direct instructions, but by helping him awaken his inner strength and clarity.
2. Systems like Ayurveda and Yoga promote mental health through harmony of body, mind, and spirit.
3. Ancient practices like Atma Vidya (self-knowledge) and Dhyana (meditation) were powerful tools for self-discovery and emotional balance.

Thus, in Indian tradition, counselling was not merely advice-giving - it was a path toward self-transformation, awakening, and freedom from ignorance (*avidya*).

2.1.2 Counselling through the Lens of Guru's Teachings – The Inner Transformation

Sree Narayana Guru, a great spiritual leader and social reformer, emphasized the unity of humanity, inner purity, and self-realization. His teachings offer a profound foundation for counselling as a path of inner transformation, beyond mere problem-solving. In the context of modern psychology, the Jungian concepts of the collective conscious, collective subconscious and collective unconscious were systematically and integrally applied by Sreenarayana Guru, both at the level of the individual and at the level of the collective.

2.1.2.1 Key Principles from Guru's Teachings Applied to Counselling:

Sree Narayana Guru's teachings emphasize compassion, equality, and self-awareness, offering deep insight into human nature. These principles can greatly enrich counselling by guiding clients toward inner transformation and holistic well-being.

1. Oneness of All Beings

"One caste, one religion, one God for all humanity." Counselling inspired by this vision fosters equality, dignity, and non-discrimination, creating a safe space for all individuals regardless of background.

2. Self-Knowledge as Liberation

Guru taught that true freedom comes from within. Counselling through this lens helps clients look inward, reflect on their thoughts and emotions, and discover their deeper self.

3. Ahimsa (Non-violence) and Compassion

Guru upheld kindness and non-violence in thought, word, and action. A counsellor guided by this value offers a gentle, empathetic presence that supports healing.

4. Detachment and Inner Peace

Guru encouraged detachment from ego and material attachments to attain peace. In counselling, this translates to helping individuals move beyond superficial struggles and connect with lasting inner calm.

5. Meditation and Silence

Silence was a core practice in Guru's life. Counselling influenced by this includes mindfulness, reflection, and the healing power of stillness.

For Sree Narayana Guru, transformation begins within. Counselling rooted in his teachings goes beyond techniques to become a spiritual journey - awakening the seeker to truth, love, and unity. It's not just about solving problems, but guiding individuals toward a higher awareness and peaceful living.

The central teaching of Sreenarayana Guru is the recognition of truth. To attain this, one must eliminate ignorance, and such elimination is possible only through knowledge. True knowledge consists in realizing one's own essential nature. Upon such realization, it becomes evident that the same Self pervades all beings. It is on the basis of this profound insight that all of Guru's teachings were formulated.

gain mental clarity, overcome emotional difficulties, and achieve personal growth. It is rooted in ethical practice, psychological understanding, and a deep respect for the individual's potential. Over the years, various psychologists and scholars have defined counselling in ways that reflect their theoretical perspectives and values.

Carl Rogers (1951), known as the father of person-centered therapy, described counselling as:

"A series of direct contacts with the individual which aims to offer him assistance in changing his attitudes and behaviour." Rogers emphasized the importance of empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard in the counselling relationship. He believed these core conditions create a safe space that fosters real change and self-discovery. Cormier and Hackney (2005) defined counselling as: *"A professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals."* This definition reflects the broad scope of counselling and its focus on empowering individuals in multiple areas of life. Patterson (1985) offered another perspective, stating: "Counselling is an accepting, trusting, and safe relationship in which clients learn to discuss freely what upsets them, to define their goals, acquire the essential social skills, and develop the courage and self-confidence to implement desired new behaviour." Patterson highlights the relational and developmental nature of counselling, focusing on client growth through trust, expression, and action.

Taken together, these definitions present counselling as a structured and purposeful process. It is more than giving advice - it is a meaningful engagement aimed at helping individuals reflect, grow, and make informed, life-enhancing decisions.

2.1.3 Definitions of Counselling

Counselling is a professional, supportive relationship designed to help individuals



2.1.3.1 Key Elements of Counselling

While definitions of counselling may vary, several core elements remain consistent across all approaches. These elements form the foundation of effective and ethical counselling practice:

1. Therapeutic Relationship

A strong, trusting bond between the counsellor and client is central to the counselling process. It is not merely about giving advice but creating a collaborative, respectful partnership where healing and growth can take place.

2. Growth and Empowerment

Counselling goes beyond solving immediate problems. It aims to empower individuals to discover their inner strengths, grow personally, and develop the confidence to face life's challenges.

3. Self-Awareness

A key goal of counselling is to help individuals become more aware of their thoughts, emotions, values, and behavioural patterns. This awareness leads to deeper understanding, better decision-making, and improved coping skills.

4. Confidentiality and Safety

Counselling provides a safe, private, and ethical space where individuals can speak freely. Confidentiality is essential for building trust and ensuring psychological safety.

5. Non-Judgmental Attitude

The counsellor accepts the client unconditionally, without criticism or bias. This open and accepting attitude allows clients to explore their experiences honestly and without fear of rejection.

These elements together make counselling a powerful and transformative process that respects individual dignity and fosters meaningful change.

2.1.4 Sree Narayana Guru's Perspective: Counselling as Inner Awakening and Life Transformation

Sree Narayana Guru, a revered spiritual leader and social reformer, viewed personal transformation as the key to social change. His teachings offer a unique and holistic perspective on counselling - not as a technique, but as a path to inner awakening and self-realization.

At the heart of Guru's philosophy is the belief that true change begins within. His approach to guidance was rooted in compassion, wisdom, and a deep respect for the divine potential in every human being. Counselling, in this light, becomes a sacred journey from ignorance (*avidya*) to knowledge (*vidya*), from confusion to clarity, and from suffering to inner peace.

2.1.4.1 Key Aspects of Counselling in Sree Narayana Guru's Vision:

1. Inner Awakening Over Problem Solving

Guru emphasized 'knowing the Self' as the solution to human suffering. Counselling inspired by his vision aims not just to address external issues but to awaken the individual to their inner strength and truth.

2. Equality and Human Dignity

His message of "*One caste, one religion, one God for all*" reflects a non-discriminatory approach. Counselling in this spirit respects every individual equally, promoting dignity and acceptance.

3. Compassionate Presence

Like the Guru-disciple tradition, Guru's way of guiding involved silent support, loving presence, and gentle wisdom - qualities essential for a healing counselling relationship.

4. Self-Enquiry and Reflection

Guru encouraged looking inward to know the self. Counselling, therefore, involves helping individuals reflect deeply, question limiting beliefs, and find meaning and purpose.

5. Spiritual Practice as Healing

Practices such as meditation, silence, detachment, and service (*seva*) were part of Guru's path to transformation. These can be integrated into counselling as tools for lasting inner change.

Sree Narayana Guru's teachings expand the meaning of counselling from a psychological intervention to a transformative journey. It is a process of awakening the inner light, fostering self-realization, and living with truth, love, and harmony. In his view, true healing is not just about solving problems - it is about becoming free, whole, and deeply aware.

2.1.5 Modern vs Guru's Philosophy of Counselling

Modern counselling and Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy of counselling differ significantly in their foundations, yet both aim at human well-being. Modern counselling is grounded in scientific, psychological, and therapeutic principles, focusing on problem-solving, emotional healing, and personal growth. It employs methods such as talk therapy, cognitive-behavioral techniques, and integrative approaches, with a professional

and empathetic client-counsellor relationship at its core. The individual is seen as someone facing challenges who, with proper support and tools - like active listening, goal-setting, and behavioral strategies - can achieve better emotional regulation, coping skills, and social adjustment. Ethical standards are guided by professional codes set by organizations like the APA (American Psychological Association) and ACA (American Counseling Association), with core values of empathy, confidentiality, and respect.

In contrast, Sree Narayana Guru's understanding of personal growth embodies a deeply spiritual and transformative outlook, drawing strength from Vedantic wisdom and a holistic philosophy of life. It seeks not just resolution of external issues but inner awakening and liberation from ignorance (*avidya*). The focus is on self-knowledge, detachment, and harmony through silence, reflection, meditation, and self-enquiry. The relationship is not merely professional but a sacred Guru-disciple bond enriched by compassion and wisdom. The individual is regarded as a divine being with innate potential and unity with all existence. Tools such as Dhyana (meditation), Atma Vidya (self-realization), and Sadhana (spiritual discipline) are central, with ethical principles grounded in Dharma, Ahimsa, and universal love. Ultimately, this approach aims for spiritual liberation, inner transformation, and peaceful coexistence.

Modern counselling emphasizes structured psychological help, while Sree Narayana Guru's approach sees counselling as a sacred journey toward truth and unity. Both aim for healing and growth, but the paths differ - one being secular and scientific, the other spiritual and holistic. Together, they offer complementary insights into human well-being.



2.1.6 Characteristics and Goals of Counselling

Counselling is a professional and supportive process that helps people understand themselves, solve problems, make decisions, and grow personally. Unlike casual advice, counselling is purposeful, structured, and guided by clear goals. It is built on respect, compassion, and a non-judgmental attitude.

The counselling process includes:

1. Counselling involves creating a safe and trusting environment where individuals can openly express their thoughts and emotions.
2. It provides emotional support to clients during periods of stress, confusion, or emotional turmoil.
3. Counsellors help individuals gain insight into their thoughts, feelings, and behavioral patterns.
4. The process encourages the development of coping skills and resilience to face life's challenges.
5. Counselling empowers individuals to make informed and independent decisions in their lives.

In counselling, clients are not seen as weak or broken, but as capable individuals with the potential to heal and grow.

2.1.6.1 Core Characteristics of Counselling

1. Voluntary Participation

Counselling works best when the client chooses to take part willingly. True change

happens when a person is ready and open to it.

2. Confidentiality

Privacy is a key part of counselling. Clients need to feel that what they share will remain confidential. This builds trust and allows for honest conversations.

3. Empathy and Unconditional Acceptance

Counsellors try to understand how the client feels, without judging. They listen with care and offer acceptance, making the client feel safe and valued.

4. Client-Centered and Focused on Growth

The counselling process centers on the client's needs and goals. It encourages personal development, emotional strength, and greater independence.

5. Professionalism and Ethics

Counselling is carried out by trained professionals who follow ethical guidelines. They respect diversity, maintain healthy boundaries, and uphold integrity in their work.

Overall, counselling is a respectful and supportive journey that helps individuals discover clarity, strength, and new possibilities for their lives.

2.1.7 Sree Narayana Guru's Approach to Counselling

Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy offers a profound and holistic approach to counselling, rooted in love, unity, and self-realization. His method was not clinical but deeply compassionate and spiritual—touching the heart, guiding the mind, and awakening the soul.

1. Empathy

Guru's life was a living expression of empathy. He saw all beings as equal and divine, understanding their pain without judgment. His compassionate approach aligns with the core counselling value of truly listening and feeling with the other

2. Service (Seva)

Guru believed that serving others selflessly was a way to heal both the giver and the receiver. In his approach, counselling becomes an act of sacred service - uplifting others with humility and care.

3. Silence

For Guru, silence was not emptiness but presence. His silent gaze or calm presence often brought deep transformation. In counselling, this highlights the power of quiet reflection, non-verbal connection, and creating a peaceful space for healing.

4. Presence

The Guru's presence was healing in itself. His simplicity, stillness, and awareness created an environment where people felt safe, seen, and accepted. This mirrors the therapeutic presence a counsellor offers - grounded, attentive, and nurturing.

5. Spiritual Awakening

Guru guided people toward inner awakening through self-knowledge (*Atma Vidya*), meditation (*Dhyana*), and detachment from ego. His counselling was not just about solving problems, but about helping individuals discover their true nature and live in harmony with truth.

Sree Narayana Guru's approach to counselling is a sacred blend of empathy,

service, silence, healing presence, and spiritual insight. It moves beyond the surface to touch the core of human suffering, offering not just solutions - but transformation, peace, and awakening.

2.1.7.1 Counselling as Sadhana in the Philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru

In the vision of Sree Narayana Guru, counselling is not just a technique or profession - it is a *sadhana*, a disciplined spiritual path guided by compassion, inner wisdom, and self-purification. Just as a spiritual aspirant engages in *sadhana* to attain clarity and liberation, a counsellor in Guru's path serves others as a means of personal transformation and deeper self-awareness.

2.1.7.2 Key Dimensions of Counselling as Sadhana

Counselling as *Sadhana* views the helping process as a sacred practice that fosters inner growth, self-awareness, and spiritual transformation for both the counsellor and the client. Important dimensions are;

1. Self-Purification and Humility

The counsellor begins by working on themselves - letting go of ego, pride, and judgment. True support comes not from superiority, but from inner humility and balance.

2. Loving and Selfless Service (Seva)

Counselling, in Guru's path, is seen as a sacred act of service. It is not done for personal gain or recognition, but as a heartfelt offering to promote the well-being of others.

3. Silence and Deep Presence

For Sree Narayana Guru, silence held



great power. A counsellor practicing sadhana learns to listen not just with ears, but with full presence. Often, healing takes place through stillness and silent understanding, more than through words.

4. Daily Inner Practice

Just like a spiritual seeker maintains regular reflection and meditation, a counsellor too is encouraged to practice mindfulness and stay rooted in higher values. This strengthens clarity, insight, and emotional stability.

5. Seeing the Divine in Everyone

Guru's teaching of universal oneness invites the counsellor to view every client as a reflection of the divine. This awareness eliminates bias and fosters deep respect and unconditional acceptance.

6. Leading Others to Self-Knowledge

The goal of counselling in this tradition is not just to solve external issues, but to guide individuals toward self-understanding, freedom from illusion, and a life rooted in truth, peace, and inner harmony.

In Sree Narayana Guru's path, counselling is more than a helping profession - it is a spiritual journey that transforms both the counsellor and the client. It is a sacred discipline marked by self-growth, service, and shared awakening, leading toward greater compassion, truth, and liberation.

2.1.8 Types of Counselling – A Simple Overview

Counselling is a flexible and diverse field that supports individuals through various life challenges. It can be classified based on its purpose, setting, and approach, helping tailor the method to suit each person's unique needs. Understanding these types ensures more effective and meaningful support,

whether it's academic, emotional, vocational, or spiritual.

Based on purpose, counselling can take several forms. Educational counselling helps students manage academic stress, improve study habits, overcome exam fear, and make informed career choices. Vocational counselling supports individuals in exploring career options, making job-related decisions, and planning future goals. Personal-social counselling addresses emotional struggles, relationship issues, identity crises, and overall mental health and well-being.

Based on setting, counselling is provided in various environments depending on the needs of the client. School counselling focuses on helping students cope with academic, social, or emotional problems. Workplace counselling addresses job-related stress, career planning, and employee well-being. Clinical or mental health counselling is designed for individuals experiencing mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, or trauma. Pastoral or spiritual counselling is offered in religious or spiritual contexts, guiding individuals toward inner healing, meaning, and life purpose.

Counselling approaches differ in how active or passive the counsellor is in the process. In directive counselling, the counsellor plays a leading role, offering advice and helping clients make decisions often useful in structured situations like career guidance. In non-directive counselling, rooted in Carl Rogers' humanistic tradition, the client leads the conversation, and the counsellor provides a supportive, empathetic presence, helping the individual gain insight and self-awareness. Eclectic counselling blends both methods, allowing the counsellor to adapt based on the client's personality, needs, and goals. This flexibility makes it one of the most practical and responsive counselling styles.

Counselling can also be delivered in individual or group settings. Individual counselling offers one-on-one support, which is more private and personalized, making it ideal for dealing with grief, trauma, or deep-seated personal issues. Group counselling, on the other hand, involves several people facing similar challenges. It promotes shared experiences, empathy, and peer support commonly seen in addiction recovery programs, youth groups, and mental health support circles.

Directive and non-directive counselling represent two ends of a spectrum concerning the level of control the counsellor holds. Each has its strengths. Directive counselling provides quick structure and solutions, while non-directive counselling nurtures long-term growth and self-discovery. When integrated wisely, they form a balanced, holistic approach to healing and transformation.

Eclectic counselling brings together the best of various approaches: cognitive, behavioral, psychodynamic, humanistic, and spiritual, tailored to the individual. This integrative method allows for greater flexibility, relevance, and effectiveness in addressing the complexity of human issues.

Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy beautifully reflects this eclectic spirit. He did not limit himself to a fixed method or school of thought. Instead, his counselling was guided by the unique needs of each seeker. Sometimes he used direct advice, at other times silence, reflection, or spiritual insight. His intuitive and compassionate approach aimed not just at solving external problems, but at awakening the individual to inner peace, truth, and transformation. His teachings continue to inspire a deeply human and spiritually enriching model of counselling.

2.1.9 Spiritual Flexibility in Counselling

In spiritual counselling, flexibility is essential. The counsellor may shift between listening and instructing, stillness and action, or gentle support and firm guidance. This allows space for personal insight, grace, and healing beyond structured techniques.

Eclectic counselling, inspired by Guru's philosophy, is not just a mix of methods but a sensitive and responsive way of helping. It values intuition, client needs, and holistic growth, making it a powerful tool for both psychological and spiritual development.

2.1.9.1 Counselling in Different Contexts

Counselling is a versatile process that adapts to various life settings and human needs. While the core principles - such as empathy, confidentiality, and client-centeredness - remain the same, the context in which counselling is offered greatly influences its goals and methods.

In educational settings, counselling supports students with academic stress, career decisions, exam anxiety, and learning difficulties. School and college counsellors help learners build confidence, develop study habits, and set goals for the future.

In the workplace, counselling focuses on employee well-being, stress management, conflict resolution, and career development. It helps individuals maintain mental health while balancing job responsibilities and personal life.

Clinical or mental health counselling deals with emotional and psychological issues such as anxiety, depression, trauma, or behavioural challenges. It involves therapeutic techniques to restore mental balance and improve coping skills.



Family and relationship counselling addresses issues between couples, parents and children, or extended family members. It promotes communication, emotional healing, and mutual understanding.

Spiritual or pastoral counselling occurs in religious or faith-based environments. It guides individuals through existential questions, moral dilemmas, grief, or personal transformation using spiritual principles and practices.

Each context brings unique challenges and opportunities. Effective counselling recognizes these differences and tailors its approach to support individuals meaningfully within their specific life situations.

2.1.10 Traditional Indian and Indigenous Approaches to Counselling: In the Light of Sree Narayana Guru's Life and Teachings

Traditional Indian counselling is deeply rooted in spiritual wisdom, self-inquiry, and the harmony of body, mind, and soul. Unlike modern therapeutic models, it emphasizes inner awakening over symptom relief, with the goal of restoring balance and self-realization. This holistic vision is beautifully reflected in the life and teachings of Sree Narayana Guru, a saint, philosopher, and reformer who counselled not through theory, but through presence, compassion, and truth.

Guru's counselling was woven into daily life through silent listening, insightful speech, and humble service. He offered no fixed technique, yet his impact was transformative. His philosophy "*One caste, one religion, one God for all humanity*" carried not only a social message but also a therapeutic one: the affirmation of each individual's dignity and divinity. This created a safe, sacred space for healing.

Traditional Indian approaches, like Guru-shishya parampara, Bhagavad Gita's dialogue, Yoga, and Ayurveda, emphasized self-knowledge (Atma Vidya), detachment (Vairagya), ethical living (Dharma), and meditative stillness (Dhyana). Sree Narayana Guru embodied all these. His silence often spoke louder than words, and his compassionate gaze gave courage to the broken. He saw suffering not as a flaw to fix, but as a veil over truth to be lifted.

Counselling, in this indigenous tradition, is not a profession - it is a sadhana, a sacred path of service and inner purification. Guru's life shows that true counselling begins with love, deepens through wisdom, and culminates in liberation - not only of the seeker, but also of the one who guides.

2.1.11 Integrating Sree Narayana Guru's Philosophy in Modern Counselling

Modern counselling, while grounded in psychology and scientific methods, is increasingly open to holistic and culturally rooted perspectives. Integrating the philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru into contemporary counselling enriches the practice by offering a deeper, values-based approach to human well-being. His teachings emphasize self-knowledge (Atma Vidya), compassion, equality, and spiritual awakening all of which align with the broader goals of mental health and personal transformation.

Guru's philosophy views the human being not merely as a psychological entity, but as a spiritual self-capable of inner growth and harmony. His approach was non-judgmental, inclusive, and rooted in the oneness of all beings, as expressed in his famous dictum: "*One caste, one religion, one God for all.*" This perspective encourages counsellors to view clients with unconditional respect

and to acknowledge their inherent dignity and potential, regardless of background or beliefs.

Central to Guru's life was the use of silence, presence, and reflection as healing tools offering insights beyond verbal intervention. These elements can inform modern practices such as mindfulness-based therapy, spiritual counselling, and trauma-informed care, where the focus is on presence, listening, and inner stillness.

Furthermore, Guru's model of counselling as service (seva) and self-discipline (sadhana) invites counsellors to see their role not only as professionals but as compassionate

guides committed to their own growth. His emphasis on self-inquiry, ethical living, and spiritual detachment provides valuable principles for maintaining integrity, empathy, and balance in practice.

By integrating Sree Narayana Guru's vision, modern counselling can evolve beyond technique into a transformative process that nurtures mental health, inner peace, ethical living, and spiritual well-being. His philosophy enriches counselling with compassion, presence, and sacred purpose, blending ancient wisdom with modern methods. This integration allows counselling to become a holistic path toward healing, self-awareness, and wholeness.

Recap

- ◆ Counselling helps people understand themselves and solve their problems.
- ◆ It is a way to give support, care, and guidance to someone in need.
- ◆ Good counselling is private, respectful, and full of understanding.
- ◆ The main aim is to help people grow, feel better, and make good choices.
- ◆ There are many kinds of counselling – for students, families, careers, and more.
- ◆ Directive counselling means the counsellor gives advice and tells what to do.
- ◆ Non-directive counselling lets the person talk freely and find their own answers.
- ◆ Eclectic counselling mixes different methods to suit the person's needs.
- ◆ Counselling can happen in schools, hospitals, offices, or even online.
- ◆ Indian traditions like yoga and meditation also help with healing and peace.
- ◆ Our old ways, like stories, songs, and rituals, are also helpful in counselling.
- ◆ Great teachers like Sree Narayana Guru taught love, equality, and truth, which are useful in modern counselling too.



Objective Questions

1. What is the main goal of counselling?
2. Which of the following is a key feature of counselling?
3. Who is the founder of non-directive counselling?
4. In directive counselling, the counsellor mainly:
5. Which type of counselling combines different approaches?
6. Counselling is mainly helpful for:
7. Which is not a characteristic of good counselling?
8. Which Indian tradition supports inner peace and healing in counselling?
9. Which statement is true about non-directive counselling?
10. Sree Narayana Guru's teachings focus on:
11. Which is a traditional Indian healing approach?
12. Eclectic counselling is useful because it

Answers

1. To help people
2. Confidentiality
3. Carl Rogers
4. Gives suggestions
5. Eclectic
6. Anyone in need
7. Forcefulness
8. Yoga
9. The client explores their own thoughts
10. Equality, peace, and compassion
11. Ayurveda
12. Adapts the client's situation

Assignments

1. Explain the meaning, purpose, and basic principles of counselling. Discuss how counselling differs from advice-giving, teaching, and psychotherapy, using practical examples.
2. Compare directive, non-directive, and eclectic approaches to counselling. Discuss their advantages and limitations. Which approach do you think is most useful for school settings, and why?
3. Describe the traditional Indian and indigenous approaches to healing and counselling. How can practices like yoga, Ayurveda, and the guru-shishya tradition be used in modern counselling?
4. Discuss the role and importance of counselling in at least three different contexts (e.g., educational, medical, workplace, family). How should counselling be adapted for each setting?
5. Explain how the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru such as unity, compassion, and equality can be integrated into modern counselling practices. Reflect on their relevance in promoting mental and social well-being today.

Suggested Reading

1. Corey, G. (2017). *Theory and practice of counseling and Psychotherapy* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.
2. Nelson-Jones, R. (2014). *Practical counselling and helping skills: Text and activities for the lifeskills counselling model* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
3. Rao, N. S. (2013). *Counselling and guidance* (2nd ed.). Tata McGraw-Hill Education.
4. Gibson, R. L., & Mitchell, M. H. (2016). *Introduction to counseling and guidance* (7th ed.). Pearson Education.
5. **Film** “Yugapurushan” (2010) Malayalam , Directed by: R. Sukumaran





UNIT

Characteristics of a Counsellor, Sreenarayanaguru: An Effective Counsellor

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ define the key characteristics of a counsellor.
- ♦ discuss the personal and professional qualities required in counselling.
- ♦ explore how Sree Narayana Guru's writings may reflect certain qualities associated with a counsellor.

Prerequisites

Have you ever shared a **problem** with someone who made you feel truly heard - someone who **listened** without judging and gently guided you toward understanding yourself better? Such moments capture the essence of what makes a counsellor effective. Before we move on to discuss the key characteristics of a counsellor, let us take a closer look at how these qualities shape meaningful interactions and why they are essential to the counselling process.

To better appreciate the qualities of a true counsellor, it is worthwhile to examine historical figures who may have embodied such ideals in their life and work. Sree Narayana Guru, revered as a spiritual reformer, philosopher, and social guide, stands as one such figure. His life and teachings reveal elements that resonate with the values upheld in this profession - empathy, commitment to equality, clarity of thought, and emotional wisdom. Through his writings and actions, these qualities can be observed, and this unit delves into these aspects in detail as we proceed further.

Keywords

Empathy, Active Listening, Unconditional Positive Regard, Self-awareness, Cultural Sensitivity, Non-judgmental Attitude, Sree Narayana Guru

Discussion

2.2.1 Characteristics of a Counsellor

2.2.1.1 Introduction to Counselling Psychology

Counselling psychology is a specialized branch within the broader discipline of Psychology that focuses on facilitating personal and interpersonal functioning across the lifespan. It integrates theoretical frameworks and practical approaches to help individuals cope with emotional, social, vocational, educational, and developmental challenges. Counselling psychology is grounded in humanistic values, emphasizing the growth and well-being of individuals. This field is distinct in its commitment to helping people achieve a sense of meaning and purpose in life while overcoming psychological distress. The core aim of counselling psychology is to empower individuals to make informed decisions, resolve difficulties, and enhance their overall quality of life.

This field is rooted in the belief that all individuals possess the potential for self-understanding and change, provided they are given the right support and environment. Counselling psychologists work in diverse settings including schools, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, private clinics, and community organizations. They support individuals by facilitating personal insight, emotional adjustment, and behavioural change through structured and reflective

therapeutic methods. Their interventions are guided by empathy, ethical responsibility, and cultural sensitivity, ensuring that the counselling process respects the uniqueness of each individual's life experiences. In doing so, the counsellor plays a vital role in helping individuals manage difficulties, make meaningful choices, and enhance their psychological well-being.

2.2.1.2 Understanding Counselling: Definition and Core Concepts

Counselling can be defined as a professional, collaborative process that enables individuals to explore concerns, clarify issues, and develop coping strategies in a safe and confidential environment. It is not merely a set of techniques but a meaningful relationship between two people - the counsellor and the counsellee - characterized by empathy, respect, and mutual trust.

Within the counselling process, two key roles are central to its effectiveness: the counsellor and the counsellee. The *counsellor* is a professionally trained individual who facilitates the counselling process by creating a supportive and ethical environment in which personal exploration, emotional expression, and problem-solving can take place. The counsellor uses specialized skills such as active listening, empathy, and reflective questioning to guide the conversation in a purposeful manner. On the other hand,



the *counselee* refers to the individual seeking help to address personal, emotional, psychological, or situational difficulties. The counselee actively engages in the process by sharing experiences, expressing concerns, and working collaboratively with the counsellor to achieve insight and positive change. The quality of the interaction between these two roles forms the foundation of effective counselling, where mutual trust, respect, and commitment are essential for meaningful progress.

2.2.1.3 Importance of Counsellor in the Counselling Process

The quality of the counselling relationship is widely recognized as a key determinant of successful therapeutic outcomes. Research consistently highlights that the counsellor's personal attributes and the strength of the therapeutic alliance play a critical role in client progress. Lambert and Barley (2002) affirm that empirical research “strongly and consistently supports the centrality of the therapeutic relationship as a primary factor contributing to psychotherapy outcome.” Similarly, Norcross (2002a) emphasizes that an effective psychotherapist is one who not only applies appropriate methods but also offers strong relational presence and tailors their approach to the unique needs of each individual.

In this context, we shall now explore the key characteristics of a counsellor. These qualities are essential in creating a conducive environment for personal exploration, change, and healing.

2.2.1.4 Characteristics of a Counsellor

Carl Rogers (1957, 1959), the pioneer of person-centered counselling, clearly stated that the essential conditions for

therapeutic change are embedded within the therapeutic relationship itself. He identified six conditions that must be present for constructive personality change to occur, and emphasized that these, taken together, are both necessary and sufficient for effective therapy - regardless of the type of client, therapeutic approach, or context. According to Rogers, no other factors beyond these six are required to bring about meaningful psychological transformation. Among these, he highlighted three central characteristics that the counsellor must embody: empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence. These core conditions form the foundation of an effective counselling relationship.

Additional insights into the counsellor's role have been offered by scholars such as Foster (1996) and Guy (1987), who delineate specific personal attributes that make individuals particularly well-suited to function effectively as counsellors. Although their lists are not exhaustive, they highlight how aspects of one's personal qualities - such as emotional maturity, self-awareness, and interpersonal sensitivity - can significantly influence the success of the counselling process. In addition to these scholarly contributions, Gerald Corey, a well-known figure in the field of counselling, offers valuable perspectives on the personal characteristics of effective counsellors, grounded in both his professional experience and empirical research (Norcross, 2002a, 2002b; Skovholt & Jennings, 2004). These insights collectively deepen our understanding of what makes a counsellor truly effective.

In the sections that follow, we will examine these three essential qualities proposed by Rogers, along with other important personal and professional characteristics that define an effective counsellor as outlined by Foster, Guy and Gerald Corey.

1. Genuineness

Genuineness and congruence are the foundational qualities proposed by Carl Rogers for an effective counsellor. It refers to the therapist's ability to be open, honest, and authentic within the therapeutic relationship. A genuine counsellor does not present a false front or mask; rather, they bring their true self into the therapeutic encounter. This authenticity ensures that their inner experiences are consistent with their outward expressions.

According to Rogers (1957, 1959), genuineness means that the therapist is deeply in touch with their own thoughts and feelings and that this internal awareness is accurately reflected in how they relate to the client. While it is not required for the counsellor to disclose personal experiences to the client, it is essential that they do not deceive either the client or themselves.

Rogers expanded his understanding of genuineness to include appropriate self-expression. He came to view selective and thoughtful self-disclosure as a means of strengthening the therapeutic relationship, provided it serves the client's process and is done responsibly.

Thus, genuineness in counselling is not about constant self-revelation, but about being emotionally honest, present, and real in the counselling setting. This quality enhances the client's trust and encourages a more open and authentic interaction, laying the groundwork for meaningful psychological growth.

2. Unconditional Positive Regard

Unconditional Positive Regard is a central concept in Carl Rogers' client-centred therapy, referring to the therapist's deep and unwavering acceptance of the client,

regardless of the client's thoughts, emotions, or behaviours. This quality implies that the counsellor values and respects the client as a person, without imposing any conditions for that acceptance.

Within the therapeutic setting, when the counsellor provides unconditional positive regard, it creates a safe and accepting environment. This environment allows the client to explore and acknowledge thoughts or feelings they may have previously denied or distorted due to fear of judgment or rejection. Gradually, the client begins to develop unconditional self-regard—the ability to accept themselves wholly and without judgment.

This quality requires the therapist to genuinely care for the client, not just tolerate them. It involves consistently valuing the client's presence and emotional world, irrespective of what the client expresses. When clients sense this consistent and sincere acceptance, they feel safe enough to confront all aspects of themselves, fostering personal growth and emotional healing.

3. Empathy

Empathy is a crucial quality in person-centered counselling, involving the therapist's capacity to deeply understand and communicate the client's inner experiences. Carl Rogers emphasized that empathy is more than simply listening - it is the ability to enter the client's world and perceive it "as if" it were one's own, while maintaining the emotional boundaries necessary to avoid becoming entangled in the client's feelings.

This kind of empathy allows the therapist to grasp the subtle meanings, emotions, and conflicts embedded in the client's experiences - sometimes even those the client is only vaguely aware of. By reflecting this understanding back to the client, the therapist



helps the client become more conscious of these internal processes, thereby facilitating clarity, insight, and emotional healing.

Accurate empathy also plays a vital role in reinforcing the therapist's unconditional positive regard. Without empathy, clients may fear that once they are truly known, they will no longer be accepted. It is only when the client feels deeply understood without being judged that they begin to trust the therapeutic relationship. This trust is essential for the client to open up and engage in meaningful self-exploration.

According to Rogers (1959), empathy helps bridge the emotional distance between the therapist and the client. It creates a relationship in which the client feels fully seen, fully heard, and fully accepted - even in their most vulnerable or painful states. This deep emotional connection is what ultimately enables therapeutic change.

Apart from the foundational perspectives offered by Carl Rogers, later researchers have also identified a range of personal and professional qualities essential for effective counselling. Scholars such as Gerald Corey, Foster (1996), Guy (1987), and Linda Seligman, through their contributions to counselling literature, have emphasised that the role of a counsellor extends beyond the application of theoretical knowledge and techniques. It involves emotional maturity, interpersonal competence, cultural sensitivity, and a sustained commitment to personal and professional growth. The following section presents a consolidated synthesis of these perspectives, outlining the qualities that underpin successful counselling practice.

1. A Clear Personal Identity

A clear personal identity is a foundational characteristic of an effective counsellor. It refers to a well-developed sense of self, encompassing awareness of one's own values,

beliefs, life goals, and the principles that define a fulfilling existence. Counsellors who possess this clarity understand who they are, what they stand for, and what they aspire to become. This self-awareness enables them to remain grounded, authentic, and consistent in their professional role, even when guiding clients through periods of uncertainty, conflict, or change. Such stability fosters trust, as clients perceive the counsellor as a secure and dependable presence in the therapeutic relationship. Ultimately, clarity of personal identity strengthens the counsellor's capacity to offer genuine, value-driven guidance and to model integrity and self-understanding for those they serve.

2. Self-Respect and Emotional Stability

Self-respect and emotional stability are essential qualities that enable counsellors to maintain professional effectiveness and personal well-being in their practice. A healthy sense of self-worth allows counsellors to offer genuine care and support without seeking validation or approval from clients. This self-respect is rooted not in feelings of superiority, but in a stable inner strength that fosters mutual respect and empowers others. Emotionally stable counsellors demonstrate maturity and responsibility in managing their own feelings and reactions, ensuring that their personal emotions do not interfere with the therapeutic process. By providing a calm, composed, and supportive environment, they create a safe space in which clients feel understood and valued. This combination of inner confidence and emotional balance not only enhances the counsellor's professional presence but also models self-acceptance and resilience for clients.

3. Patience

Patience is a core quality that enables counsellors to support clients at their own

pace without rushing the therapeutic process. Many clients may need time to process their thoughts, articulate emotions, or build trust before meaningful change can occur. A patient counsellor accepts this natural progression, avoiding unnecessary pressure and allowing space for reflection, self-discovery, and gradual growth.

This quality also helps counsellors remain calm and composed when facing repeated concerns, resistance, or slow progress. By maintaining a steady and non-judgmental presence, they reassure clients that their journey is respected and valued. Patience fosters a supportive environment where clients feel free to explore their challenges openly, increasing the likelihood of lasting positive outcomes.

4. Self-Awareness and Management of Countertransference

Self-awareness and the capacity to manage countertransference are critical to maintaining professional integrity and effectiveness in counselling. Counsellors with high self-awareness are attuned to their own emotions, biases, and personal histories, enabling them to recognize how these factors may influence their perceptions and interactions with clients. They maintain clear professional boundaries, ensuring that personal reactions do not interfere with the client's therapeutic process. When appropriate and therapeutically beneficial, counsellors may draw upon their own experiences or insights; however, such self-disclosure is always intentional, measured, and directed toward the client's growth and well-being. By skilfully managing countertransference, counsellors protect the objectivity of the therapeutic relationship and create a safe, client-centred environment that fosters trust and progress.

5. Openness to Growth and Change

Openness to growth and change reflects a counsellor's commitment to ongoing personal and professional development. Such counsellors actively engage in self-reflection, examining their thoughts, behaviours, and attitudes with honesty and humility. They demonstrate flexibility in adapting to new situations, embrace unfamiliar experiences, and are willing to take reasonable risks that foster learning and improvement. Rather than remaining confined to familiar patterns, they show the courage to question themselves and make necessary adjustments in the interest of becoming more effective and authentic in their role. This growth-oriented mindset not only enhances their own competence and resilience but also models adaptability and self-improvement for clients, reinforcing the belief that change is both possible and worthwhile.

6. Commitment to Ongoing Professional Development and Lifelong Learning

A strong commitment to ongoing professional development and lifelong learning is a defining hallmark of an effective counsellor. Such professionals recognize that personal and professional growth is a continuous journey rather than a fixed achievement. They actively engage in reflective practice, examining past decisions, beliefs, and self-perceptions, and are willing to revise them when they no longer serve their well-being or professional effectiveness. Guided by a growth-oriented and purposeful mindset, they avoid stagnation and instead make life-enhancing choices that align with their values and goals.

Professionally, they seek to refine their skills and expand their therapeutic repertoire through regular training, supervision, consultation, and continuing education.



They remain open to emerging research, evolving therapeutic approaches, and new perspectives that can enrich their practice. This dual commitment - to personal meaning-making and to professional excellence - not only sustains their own effectiveness but also ensures that clients benefit from up-to-date, informed, and ethically sound counselling.

7. Cultural Sensitivity and Respect for Diversity

Cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity are essential qualities that enable counsellors to work effectively with clients from varied backgrounds. Culturally sensitive counsellors possess an awareness of how their own upbringing, cultural heritage, and life experiences shape their worldview and influence their professional interactions. They recognize that cultural factors significantly shape clients' perspectives, values, and behaviours, and they approach these differences with openness, humility, and respect.

Such counsellors actively honor and validate the diversity of human experience, including variations in culture, race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. They integrate this cultural awareness into their ethical decision-making and therapeutic practice, ensuring that interventions are respectful, relevant, and inclusive. By fostering an environment of acceptance and understanding, they create a safe space in which clients feel valued for their unique identities and empowered to engage fully in the counselling process.

8. Strong Interpersonal Skills

Strong interpersonal skills are central to building effective and meaningful therapeutic relationships. Counsellors with these abilities demonstrate active listening, patience, warmth, and clarity in communication,

fostering an atmosphere in which clients feel genuinely heard, respected, and valued. They engage in collaborative problem-solving, working alongside clients to identify goals and develop strategies that support positive change.

Such counsellors are able to connect with others empathetically while maintaining their own sense of self, ensuring that emotional involvement does not compromise professional boundaries. They show respect for differing viewpoints, acknowledge clients' experiences, and work toward shared therapeutic objectives in a cooperative manner. By combining empathy, communication, and collaboration, counsellors with strong interpersonal skills create a foundation of trust and mutual respect that enhances the overall effectiveness of the counselling process.

9. Presence in the Here and Now

Presence in the here and now is the counsellor's ability to be fully engaged and attentive in the present moment, both with clients and within themselves. Counsellors who embody this quality are not distracted by past regrets or preoccupied with future uncertainties; instead, they remain grounded, focused, and emotionally available during the counselling process. This mindful presence fosters deeper connection, allowing clients to feel genuinely seen, heard, and valued in each interaction.

By living in the present, counsellors enhance their capacity to respond authentically and sensitively to clients' needs as they emerge, creating an environment of trust and immediacy. Such presence not only strengthens the therapeutic alliance but also models for clients the value of mindful engagement and acceptance of the current moment.

10. Sense of Humor and Balanced Perspective

A sense of humor and a balanced perspective are valuable characteristics that enrich the counselling relationship. Counsellors who possess these qualities can see the lighter side of life and are able to laugh - particularly at themselves - without diminishing the seriousness of the client's concerns. This ability to maintain perspective enables them to navigate challenges with composure and emotional resilience, preventing undue stress from overshadowing their professional effectiveness.

Humor, when used appropriately, helps to humanize the counselling process, ease tension, and foster a warm, approachable atmosphere. It can strengthen rapport, promote openness, and support clients in viewing their own situations with greater flexibility and hope. By integrating humor with empathy and sensitivity, counsellors create a balanced, supportive environment that encourages both emotional healing and personal growth.

11. Meaningful Engagement in Work

Meaningful engagement in work reflects a counsellor's deep personal investment in their professional role. Effective counsellors view their work not merely as an occupation, but as a vocation that aligns with their values, passions, and sense of purpose. They derive genuine fulfillment from the process of helping others, finding personal significance in the growth and change they facilitate in clients' lives.

While they appreciate the external rewards and recognition their work may bring, their motivation is primarily internal, grounded in a commitment to service and the belief in the transformative potential of counselling. This intrinsic motivation sustains their dedication,

resilience, and enthusiasm, even in the face of challenges, and ensures that their professional identity remains a source of satisfaction and meaning throughout their career.

12. Ethical Responsibility and Fairness

Ethical responsibility and fairness are fundamental principles that guide a counsellor's professional conduct. Counsellors who embody these qualities operate within established ethical frameworks, ensuring that their decisions and actions are grounded in integrity, transparency, and respect for clients' rights and dignity. They approach their work with objectivity, avoiding personal biases that could compromise the fairness of their interventions.

Such counsellors consistently prioritize the well-being of those they serve, making thoughtful, informed decisions that uphold professional standards and foster trust in the therapeutic relationship. By maintaining high ethical standards and practicing fairness, they create a safe and equitable environment in which clients can engage openly and confidently in the counselling process.

13. Ability to Set Healthy Boundaries

The ability to set healthy boundaries is a crucial characteristic that safeguards the well-being of both counsellors and clients. Effective counsellors understand the importance of maintaining professional and emotional limits that prevent over-involvement or emotional exhaustion. They are able to say no when necessary, manage the risk of emotional spillover from clients' concerns, and preserve a clear separation between their professional and personal lives.

By upholding these boundaries, counsellors ensure that they remain present, supportive, and effective during sessions while also prioritizing their own self-care and work-life balance. This balance not only



protects their mental and emotional health but also models for clients the importance of respecting personal limits as a vital component of healthy relationships.

14. Willingness to Acknowledge Mistakes

A willingness to acknowledge mistakes reflects a counsellor's humility, integrity, and commitment to continuous improvement. Effective counsellors are not afraid to admit when they are wrong, recognizing that denial or avoidance of errors can undermine trust and hinder professional growth. Instead, they take responsibility for their actions, openly address mistakes, and view these moments as valuable opportunities for learning.

By modelling accountability and transparency, counsellors strengthen the therapeutic relationship, demonstrating to clients that imperfection is a natural part of the human experience and that growth often emerges from honest self-reflection and corrective action. This openness fosters mutual respect and reinforces an environment of authenticity and trust.

15. Reflective Thinking and Conceptual Skills

Reflective thinking and strong conceptual skills enable counsellors to analyse complex emotional, behavioural, and interpersonal issues with depth and clarity. These abilities involve critical thinking, abstract reasoning, and the capacity to integrate diverse information into coherent understandings of clients' experiences. By reflecting on both the content and process of counselling, they can identify patterns, underlying causes, and potential interventions with precision.

Such skills allow counsellors to formulate effective, evidence-based treatment strategies while remaining flexible and adaptable to the unique needs of each client. This combination

of analytical insight and reflective practice enhances their capacity to provide nuanced, client-centred care and to respond effectively to evolving challenges within the therapeutic process.

16. Curiosity, Inquisitiveness, and Passion

Curiosity and inquisitiveness are vital qualities that inspire counsellors to explore and understand the complexities of human thought, emotion, and behaviour. A genuine interest in people and their inner worlds fuels their engagement in the counselling process, deepens empathy, and promotes openness to new perspectives and learning. This natural curiosity helps them ask insightful questions, listen with intention, and uncover the underlying dynamics that shape clients' experiences.

Complementing this is a sense of passion and vitality, which infuses their work with energy, enthusiasm, and authenticity. Counsellors who embrace their passions with courage bring a purposeful and life-affirming presence to their professional role. This combination of inquisitiveness and passion not only enhances their effectiveness but also inspires clients to engage more fully in their own journeys of growth and self-discovery.

17. Capacity to Build a Strong Working Alliance

The capacity to build a strong working alliance is a defining feature of effective counselling practice. Beyond establishing rapport, skilled counsellors work collaboratively with clients to develop a clear, shared understanding of the goals of counselling and the methods to achieve them. This process involves mutual agreement, transparency, and an ongoing commitment to collaboration, ensuring that the client remains actively engaged in their own growth.

Such alliances are particularly crucial when working with youth and families, where differing perspectives and needs must be integrated into a cohesive therapeutic plan. By fostering trust, open communication, and joint responsibility, counsellors create a partnership that empowers clients, strengthens commitment to the process, and significantly enhances the likelihood of achieving meaningful and lasting outcomes.

18. Flexibility and Adaptability

Flexibility and adaptability enable counsellors to respond effectively to the evolving needs of their clients. Rather than rigidly adhering to a single method or theoretical orientation, effective counsellors are willing to adjust their approach when progress is limited or when a client's circumstances change. This may involve modifying therapeutic techniques, incorporating adjunctive services such as psychiatric support or family therapy, or making a referral to another professional when it is in the client's best interest.

By remaining open to change and responsive to feedback, counsellors demonstrate a client-centred mindset that prioritizes outcomes over personal preference. This adaptability not only enhances the effectiveness of counselling but also models resilience and problem-solving, reinforcing the principle that flexibility is a strength in both therapy and life.

19. Application of Evidence-Based Practices

The application of evidence-based practices ensures that counselling interventions are grounded in sound research and proven effectiveness. Effective counsellors select strategies and techniques that have empirical support for addressing the client's specific presenting issues, thereby increasing the

likelihood of positive outcomes. They remain informed about current scientific findings, advances in therapeutic methods, and best-practice guidelines within the field.

While guided by research, they also adapt these interventions in a flexible, client-centred manner, tailoring their application to each individual's needs, cultural context, and personal goals. This integration of scientific evidence with clinical expertise and client preferences reflects both professional responsibility and a commitment to providing the highest quality of care.

2.2.2 Sree Narayana Guru as an Effective Counsellor

Having examined in detail the theoretical characteristics of an effective counsellor - such as empathy, unconditional positive regard, genuineness, congruence, and cultural sensitivity - it is pertinent to consider how these attributes may be identified in historical and cultural contexts. Sree Narayana Guru, a renowned spiritual leader and social reformer, may be regarded as embodying several of these characteristics through his philosophical writings, ethical teachings, and reformist actions. His life and work provide a culturally grounded framework for understanding counselling qualities beyond formal therapeutic practice. The subsequent section will undertake an analytical exploration of Guru's contributions, illustrating how his principles and conduct align with the essential attributes of an effective counsellor.

Born in 1855 in Chempazhanthu, near Thiruvananthapuram, Sree Narayana Guru was deeply sensitive to the sufferings caused by caste discrimination, ignorance, and social injustice. From a young age, he showed a contemplative nature and an earnest pursuit of knowledge and spirituality. As he matured, Guru became a philosopher rooted in Advaita Vedanta, but one who simplified its essence



to promote compassion and equality. His vision of “One Caste, One Religion, One God for Mankind” was more than a slogan - it was a psychological intervention that restored the dignity of the oppressed and helped them find inner strength. His emphasis on universal brotherhood, self-purification, and the unity of all beings mirrors the core values of humanistic counselling.

Guru was also a social reformer who worked systematically to heal the societal wounds inflicted by caste-based exclusion. He consecrated temples accessible to all, founded schools and community organizations, and encouraged self-reliance and rational thinking. His approach was non-violent, reflective, and rooted in compassion - again resonating with the qualities of an effective counsellor who seeks not to impose, but to guide. As a writer, his works conveyed deep psychological insight. In texts like *Atmopadesa Satakam* (One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction), Guru used poetic language to teach introspection, mindfulness, self-awareness, and ethical living - all of which are cornerstones of personal development and inner healing.

Guru’s approach to helping people was grounded in empathetic listening, reflective silence, non-directive guidance, and the creation of an atmosphere of trust—tools that modern counsellors use in therapeutic settings. He often offered counsel to those suffering due to spiritual confusion, social humiliation, and emotional turmoil, not by prescribing solutions but by helping them discover answers within themselves. This method aligns closely with client-centred counselling, where the counsellor facilitates the individual’s journey toward clarity and autonomy.

Moreover, his egalitarian vision, emphasis on education and self-improvement, and

ability to inspire hope and purpose among the oppressed make him a model figure who intuitively practiced the principles of effective counselling. His teachings did not merely address social change but triggered personal transformation, thereby nurturing both collective empowerment and individual well-being.

Therefore, beyond his widely acknowledged contributions as a reformer and spiritual guide, it is essential to recognize Sree Narayana Guru as an effective counsellor. His life and work reflect not only an ethical vision but also a psychological framework of healing, growth, and liberation. In the following section, we shall examine in detail the counselling dimensions of his interactions, philosophies, and methods of guiding individuals through suffering toward self-awareness and resilience.

2.2.2.1 Empathy and Compassion

Empathy and compassion are twin pillars of an effective counsellor’s character - one enabling deep understanding of another’s inner world, the other motivating concrete action to alleviate suffering. Sree Narayana Guru’s life and writings reveal these qualities as central to his philosophy and practice. His poetic work *Anukamba Dāsakam* (“Ten Verses on Empathy”) captures his vision of a world governed by kindness and mutual care.

Verse 1

ഒരുപീഡയെറുമ്പിനുവരു-
ത്തരുതെന്നുള്ളനുകമ്പയുംസദാ
കരുണാകര!നൽകുകുള്ളിൽനിൻ-
തിരുമെയ്വിട്ടകലാതെ ചിത്തയും.

“O Lord, the ocean of compassion ! Bless me with such kindness that I may never

cause pain even to a tiny ant. Grant me also the grace to keep Your divine form always alive in my heart, never forgetting it at any moment.”

In this opening verse, Guru affirms the interconnectedness of all living beings and advocates for the non-harming of any creature, a principle that reflects the counsellor’s ethical duty to respect and safeguard the dignity of every individual.

This prayer, while traditionally spiritual, can be interpreted through a humanistic lens by focusing on the aspiration for ethical living and profound empathy. The plea for ‘compassion so that I do not hurt even an ant’ highlights humanism’s emphasis on universal empathy and the extension of ethical consideration to all sentient beings, however small. While referring to a ‘divine form,’ a humanistic reading could interpret ‘thoughts that never stray from your divine form’ as a commitment to consistently uphold the highest ethical ideals and virtues in one’s life. This aspiration reflects a humanistic desire for inner moral consistency and the constant cultivation of a compassionate mindset that guides all actions and thoughts. Ultimately, the prayer, when viewed humanistically, becomes a profound request for the personal strength and continuous self-development needed to embody deep kindness and ethical awareness in everyday existence.

The poem’s choice of the ant, one of nature’s smallest and seemingly most insignificant creatures, serves as a powerful rhetorical device, profoundly expanding the scope of mercy and compassion. This isn’t merely about extending kindness to our equals or those who can reciprocate; rather, it underscores a deeper, more radical ethical stance.

By specifically mentioning the ant, the Guru emphasizes that true compassion must

reach the downtrodden, the helpless, and even the seemingly negligible elements of nature. This deliberate focus reveals that the measure of human wisdom and ethical development isn’t just in how we treat the powerful, but in our approach to the most vulnerable. Such an all-encompassing compassionate outlook elevates the value and wisdom of human life, demonstrating a profound understanding of interconnectedness and universal well-being. It suggests that our capacity for empathy is truly tested and enriched when extended without expectation, even to those who appear to have no claim on our consideration. This expansive view of compassion ultimately enriches the human experience, reflecting a highly evolved moral consciousness.

When he speaks of a mind that “never strays from your Divine Form,” he’s helping us connect with our own inner reservoir of goodness and virtue. He is saying, “Let’s create a mental space where your most compassionate self is always at the forefront.” He’s acting as a supportive therapist, helping us build the mental fortitude to consistently choose kindness, empathy, and ethical awareness in every thought and action. The Guru understands that this is a continuous process of self-development and he’s there, guiding us every step of the way, with endless compassion.

Verse 3:

അരുളൻപനുകമ്പ മൂന്നിനും
പൊരുളൊന്നാണിതു ജീവതാരകം
“അരുളുള്ളവാനാണു ജീവി” യെ-
ന്നുരുവിട്ടിടുകയീ നവാക്ഷരി.

“Truth is one, and it is grounded in knowledge, love, and compassion. This truth enables human life to cross over the sufferings of worldly existence. Only the one who possesses true knowledge can be said to be truly alive. Like a sacred mantra made up of nine syllables, this insight is to be remembered and repeated constantly.”



In verse 3, he proclaims, “*knowledge, love, compassion are life’s guiding stars*”, presenting these virtues not as optional ideals but as essential guides for all human interaction.

‘The essence in ‘Arul’, ‘Anpu’, and ‘Anukampa’ (Grace, Love, and Compassion) is one and the same. That essence is the Polaris (Dhruva Nakshatra), the guiding star capable of helping the vehicle of life cross the ocean of sorrow and reach the other shore. Always chant the new Navakshari mantra (nine-letter mantra): ‘Arulavanān Jīvi’ (He in whom ‘Arul’, knowledge or love is naturally present, he truly lives).’

This passage beautifully synthesizes the concepts of grace, love, and compassion, elevating them to the guiding principles of a meaningful life, a perspective deeply aligned with humanistic values.

By stating that ‘Arul’, ‘Anpu’, and ‘Anukampa’ share a single essence, the text highlights humanism’s pursuit of universal ethical principles that unify various expressions of human goodness, focusing on shared core values. The metaphor of this essence as a ‘Polaris’ guiding the ‘vehicle of life across the ocean of sorrow’ powerfully illustrates humanism’s belief in human agency and resilience, suggesting that these intrinsic qualities are our most reliable guides through life’s challenges. The emphasis on constantly chanting “Arulavanān Jīvi” (He in whom ‘Arul’ or love is naturally present, he truly lives) underscores humanism’s focus on lived ethics and the embodiment of virtues, suggesting that true existence is defined by compassionate action. Ultimately, this passage serves as a humanistic call to cultivate and prioritize compassion, love, and grace as the foundational elements for a purposeful, meaningful, and effectively guided life, fostering individual well-being and collective flourishing

Verse 4:

അരുളില്ലയതെങ്കിലസ്ഥി തോൽ
സിര നാനുനൊരുടമ്പുതാനവൻ;
മരുവിൽ പ്രവഹിക്കുമംബുവ-
പ്പുരുഷൻ നിഷ്ഫലഗന്ധപുഷ്പമം.

Devoid of kindliness, he is just a foul body of bones, skin, veins, and fruitless like the water flowing in the desert (mirage) and a flower without fragrance

Verse 4 warns, “*Devoid of kindliness, he is just a foul body of bones*”, underscoring that without compassion, human life loses its moral worth. Guru’s empathy was not confined to thought or feeling; it found expression in his compassionate actions - working to abolish caste-based discrimination, promoting education among the marginalised, and mediating social conflicts with fairness and understanding. In counselling terms, he modelled a helping relationship that balances emotional attunement with constructive action, showing that true guidance involves both heartfelt understanding and active commitment to another’s well-being.

2.2.2.2 Unconditional Positive Regard as Reflected in the Writings of Sree Narayana Guru

One of the essential qualities of an effective counsellor, identified by Carl Rogers (1957) and other humanistic theorists, is unconditional positive regard - the ability to accept and value individuals without judgment, irrespective of their background, beliefs, or actions. It involves recognising the inherent worth of every person, creating a therapeutic atmosphere of respect and acceptance. This quality finds a striking parallel in the life and teachings of Sree Narayana Guru, whose philosophy transcended the divisions of caste, creed, and religion.

In *Jāti Nirṇayam*, Guru affirms the unity of humankind and rejects all forms of social discrimination. He writes:

"ഒരു ജാതി ഒരു മതം
ഒരു ദൈവം മനുഷ്യൻ
ഒരു യോനിയൊരാകാരം
ഒരു ഭേദവുമില്ലതിൽ."

(One caste, one religion, one God for humanity; one womb, one form, without any differences.)

This verse encapsulates Guru's vision of equality - valuing every human being as part of the same universal family. Such a perspective directly mirrors the counsellor's attitude of unconditional acceptance, where the individual is not reduced to labels or categories, but respected as a whole person.

Guru further emphasises this in the continuation of *Jāti Nirṇayam*:

"ഒരു ജാതിയിൽ നിന്നല്ലോ
പിറന്നിടുന്നു സന്തതി
നരജാതിയിതോർക്കുമ്പോൾ
ഒരു ജാതിയിലുള്ളതാം."

(Is it not from one humanity that all progeny is born? Realising this, one must see all as belonging to a single caste.)

This appeal to recognise the shared origin and essence of humanity reflects the same stance a counsellor adopts, valuing the client not for their social identity but for their intrinsic human dignity. It is an affirmation that beneath external differences lies a common human experience.

Guru's work *Jāti Lakṣaṇam* also reinforces this inclusive outlook. In its opening verse, he observes:

"പുണർന്നു പെരുമെല്ലാമൊ-
രിനമാം പുണരാത്തത്
ഇനമല്ലിനമാമിങ്ങൊ-
രിണയാർന്നൊത്തു കാണമതും."

"All beings that reproduce through mutual union belong to the same category. Those that reproduce without such union do not belong to the human species. In this world, those that come together in pairs for reproduction may be regarded as a distinct species."

Here, Guru dismantles the notion of caste as a divisive structure and instead redefines it as a bond of unity. In counselling terms, this resonates with accepting the client's reality without prejudice, and recognising the common threads that connect human experiences.

Guru's assertion that "all beings that reproduce through mutual union belong to the same category", can be interpreted as a powerful counseling tool for individual healing. He is reminding us of our fundamental shared humanity. When a person feels isolated, alienated, or devalued due to their caste, background, or any perceived difference, a counselor can use these words to re-establish a sense of belonging and connectedness. Guru's message provides a framework for self-acceptance, encouraging individuals to see beyond superficial labels and recognize their intrinsic worth as part of the greater human family. This perspective helps in healing the psychological wounds of discrimination, fostering a healthy sense of identity and self-esteem.

Healing Societal Divides

Guru's observation that "those that come together in pairs for reproduction may be regarded as a distinct species" offers a blueprint for societal harmony. He points out that natural association, living and moving



together, is a hallmark of a single species. As a social counselor, he is advocating for the dismantling of artificial barriers that separate people. He is essentially saying, “If you see people living, working, and interacting together, it is a clear sign that they belong to the same human species.”

This perspective is crucial for mending a fractured society. Guru’s words challenge the very basis of caste-based discrimination and segregation. He urges us to look at the natural evidence of our interconnectedness - our shared lives, our collective struggles, and our communal bonds. By emphasizing this, he encourages us to build societies based on cooperation and unity, rather than on the divisive and harmful constructs of caste. His counsel is a call to action: to recognize our shared humanity and work toward a world where every person is seen not through the lens of a label, but as a valued member of the single human family.

Guru’s insight becomes sharper in the following verses from *Jāti Lakṣaṇam*:

“പേരു തൊഴിലി മൂന്നും
പോരുമായതു കേൾക്കുക!
ആരു നീയെന്നു കേൾക്കേണ്ട
നേരു മെയ്തനെ ചൊല്കയാൽ.”

Listen! Name, place, and occupation – these three are sufficient (for identification). One need not ask, “Who are you?” as the truth is revealed by the body itself.

Guru’s message can be interpreted as a guide for building therapeutic rapport and fostering genuine human connection. When a person comes for counseling, they often carry the weight of societal labels - be it their caste, religion, or social status. Guru’s advice to focus on “name, place, and occupation” is a gentle reminder to a counselor to see the person, not the label.

- ◆ Name: A name is a personal identifier, unique to the individual. Focusing on their name respects their individuality and personal history, creating a safe and trusting environment.
- ◆ Place: This refers to their origin, their roots, and the context of their life. Understanding where a person comes from helps a counselor grasp their environment and the influences that have shaped them, providing a richer, more empathetic understanding.
- ◆ Occupation: A person’s work reveals their contribution to society, their skills, and their daily routine. It helps a counselor appreciate their role and responsibilities, offering a practical lens into their life.

By highlighting these three aspects, Guru’s counsel steers us away from superficial or prejudicial inquiries. He is teaching us to bypass the loaded question of “Who are you?” (which often seeks to place people into a pre-defined social hierarchy) and to instead focus on the tangible, human elements of their existence. This approach is fundamental to creating a therapeutic relationship built on respect, empathy, and genuine curiosity. It helps a person feel seen and valued for who they are, rather than for the social groups they belong to. He is saying, in effect, that the truth of a person is “revealed by the body itself” - their actions, their presence, and their life story - not by an abstract or divisive concept of identity.

‘ഇനമാർന്നുടൽ താൻ തന്റെ-
യിനമേതെന്നു ചൊൽകയാൽ
ഇനമേതെന്നു കേൾക്കില്ല
നിനവും കണ്ണുമുള്ളവർ.’ (5)

As the body, belonging to a species, itself proclaims the species, those with discernment and sight will not ask, “Which species?”

Sree Narayana Guru's words advocate for transcending caste by focusing on a shared humanity and rejecting superficial divisions. A person's physical form is a natural expression of their species, which is human, and that this is all that should matter. The phrase "Let the body itself take its natural form to its species" suggests that the physical body, regardless of its features, is inherently human.

The passage is a critique of the caste system and its irrationality.

◆ **Rejection of Caste-based Identity:**

The first part of the quote, "Let the body itself take its natural form to its species and show what species it belongs to," is a direct challenge to the notion that physical appearance or lineage can determine caste. Guru's counseling would focus on helping individuals shed the psychological baggage and social labels associated with their caste. Instead of viewing themselves through a lens of inherited social status, they would be encouraged to embrace their identity as a human being.

◆ **Emphasis on Rationality and Critical Thinking:**

The second part of the quote - "no one with the power of thinking and the power of observation will ask anyone, what caste do you belong to?" - highlights the irrationality of the caste system. Guru believed that true wisdom and rational thought would lead people to see past such arbitrary divisions. A counseling approach based on this would involve encouraging self-reflection and critical inquiry. It would help individuals question the foundations of their beliefs about caste, leading them to

understand that it is a man-made construct with no basis in reality.

- ◆ **Building a Unified, Human-Centered Identity:** Ultimately, the counseling aspect of this teaching is about fostering a sense of a shared human identity. By encouraging people to see themselves and others as part of the same species, Guru's philosophy seeks to break down social barriers and promote unity. This approach can help individuals overcome feelings of inferiority or superiority and develop empathy and respect for all people, irrespective of their background.

The 47th verses of Athmopadesa Satakam concludes that there is only one religion and oneness of society is the important theme.

ഒരു മതമാകുവതിനു രൂപതെല്ലാ-
വരുമിതു വാദികളാരുമോർക്കുവീല;
പരമതവാദമൊഴിഞ്ഞ പണ്ഡിതന്മാ-
രരിയുമിതിന്റെ രഹസ്യമിങ്ങശേഷം.

"All plead but one religion to prevail
Which the disputants fail to remember
withal;
Those wise ones freed from dis adoption
of another's faith
Can know here wholly the secret of all
this".

Another compelling example of his unconditional acceptance is found in one of the most profound verses inscribed on the walls of Shiva temple erected by the Guru.

“ജാതിഭേദം മതഭേദം
ഏതുമില്ലാതെ സർവ്വരും
സോദരത്വേന വാഴുന്ന
മാതൃകാസ്ഥാനമാണിത് ”
Without any discrimination of castes
Nor enmities of creed
Here it is, the model land
Where all live like brothers at heart



Rather than dividing people into binaries of right and wrong, he cultivated a worldview where every individual - regardless of caste, religion, or background - deserved love, respect, and the opportunity to grow. He extended this inclusive acceptance to entire communities, creating a healing social environment.

In counselling, such unconditional regard is a transformative force. It empowers individuals to confront their vulnerabilities without shame. Guru's example mirrors this core counselling value - his life and teachings offered emotional sanctuary, where human beings felt seen, respected, and uplifted, just as they are.

2.2.2.3 Empowerment through Education

One of the defining roles of an effective counsellor is to empower individuals so that they are capable of addressing their own problems and improving the quality of their lives. Empowerment, in this sense, goes beyond offering immediate solutions - it involves enabling people to develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence necessary for self-reliance and personal growth. Sree Narayana Guru embodied this quality through his deep conviction that education is the primary means of liberation, both at the individual and societal levels.

Guru believed that many of the difficulties people face in life stem from a lack of proper education, which in turn perpetuates social evils, ignorance, and injustice. He saw that the social anarchy and religious oppression prevalent during his time were sustained largely because education was not accessible to all. For him, the remedy was clear - knowledge must be universal, transcending barriers of caste, creed, and social status. He encouraged the establishment of schools in place of mere centres of ritual, promoting the

idea that temples should become “temples of learning.” This vision was symbolically expressed through his unique temple installations - placing a mirror instead of an idol, lighting lamps, or inscribing simple yet profound words such as “*Truth*” and “*Kindness*” in the sanctum. These actions reflected his intent to shift the focus from empty ritualism to self-reflection, moral values, and enlightenment through learning. When questioned about these unconventional practices, Guru clarified that the temples of the future must serve as schools - centres for intellectual and moral development.

Guru's initiatives were not limited to symbolic acts. He personally took steps to make education a reality for the common people. He established schools in the premises of the Aluva Advaita Āśrama and initiated the founding of an English school at Sivagiri. Furthermore, he actively encouraged others to establish educational institutions, seeing them as instruments for social reform and the eradication of caste-based discrimination. His writings echo this emphasis. In *Ārivu* (“Knowledge”),

അറിയും മുമ്പേതെന്നാ -
ലറിവില്ലതൊന്നുമിങ്ങിരിപ്പില
അറിവറ്റതിനേതതിരു -
ണ്ടറിവെന്നാലൊന്നുമിങ്ങു കാണമില.
Prior to knowledge “What?” if we should ask,
Other than knowledge nothing here is found;
The unknowing, what limitation could it have?
And as for knowledge, there is nothing here to see.

Guru is pointing out that before knowledge arises, if one were to ask “What truly exists?”, the answer would be - nothing apart from knowledge itself. Ignorance (*avidya*) is not an independent entity with its own form or limit; it exists only as the absence of knowing. Just as darkness has no substance

apart from the absence of light, ignorance is not something you can “find” or measure on its own. When true knowledge dawns, there is nothing else left to perceive apart from that knowledge - it alone is the reality.

He upholds knowledge as the guiding light for life’s journey, while in *Advaita Dīpikā* (“Lamp of Non-duality”), he asserts that the realisation of truth is inseparable from the cultivation of wisdom. These works underline his conviction that education is not merely an academic pursuit but a path to personal transformation and social harmony.

From the perspective of counselling, Guru’s approach aligns with the characteristic of fostering empowerment - helping people to become capable of finding solutions to their own challenges. By promoting education as the foundation for both individual resilience and collective progress, Guru demonstrated that a counsellor’s role is not confined to addressing immediate crises, but extends to building long-term capacities for self-sufficiency and critical thinking. His life’s work stands as a testament to the belief that education is the most powerful tool for transformation, enabling people to overcome limitations, challenge injustice, and contribute meaningfully to society. In this way, Guru exemplified the counsellor’s mission of empowering others through the gift of knowledge.

From *Advaita Dīpikā* (Lamp of Non-duality) - Verse 4

വൃത്തിസ്ഥമാമറിവിൽ വിശ്വവുമില്ലിതിന്റെ
വിത്താമവിദ്യയതുമില്ല വിളക്കു വന്നാൽ
അദ്ദിക്കിലെങ്ങുമിരുളില്ലാടനങ്ങു വർത്തി-
വിട്ടാൽ വിളക്കു പൊലിയുന്നിരുളും
വരുന്നൂ.

“When steady knowledge is established,
the entire universe as a separate reality ceases

to exist. The root cause of illusion, ignorance, also disappears. Just as, when a lamp is lit, darkness vanishes instantly in every corner, and when the flame is removed, darkness spreads once again.”

He once said:

“Progress through education, strength through organization.”

This embodies the counsellor’s role in facilitating long-term growth, not dependency. He emphasized empowerment over charity, self-direction over advice, and reflection over dogma - which aligns with the highest ideals in professional counselling. Sree Narayana Guru helped individuals and communities recognize their strengths in the face of systemic discrimination. He did not portray oppressed groups as victims; instead, he motivated them to rise through education, unity, and moral courage. His teachings helped people shift from a deficit mindset to an empowered identity, which is a foundational principle in counselling psychology - to enhance self-efficacy and resilience.

2.2.2.4 Counselling through Self-Instruction

Sree Narayana Guru’s *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* (“One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction”) exemplifies the counsellor’s essential role - not as an external adviser, but as a guide who cultivates inner awareness and self-guided insight. In these verses, Guru addresses the seeker’s inner conflict with clarity, compassion, and a profound understanding of transformation from within.

Consider verse 1:

അറിവിലുമേറിയറിഞ്ഞീടുന്നവൻ ത-
ന്നുരുവിലുമൊത്തു
പുറത്തുമുജ്ജ്വലിക്കും
കരുവിനു കണ്ണുകളഞ്ചുമുള്ളടക്കി



തെരുതെരേ
വീണുവണങ്ങിയോതിടേണം.

“One who has deeply perceived knowledge shines within and also outside; the seed must open its eyes - unfolding even as it falls to embrace the ground.”

This vivid imagery captures the counsellor’s task: helping individuals awaken to the light of their own insight (*the seed opening its eyes*), enabling their inner awareness to shine outward and shape their engagement with reality. The manifestation of wisdom is neither forced nor imposed, but emerges organically as the seeker is gently guided. On verse 18;

അഹമിരുളല്ലിരുളാകിലന്ധരായ് നാ-
മഹമഹമെന്നറിയാതിരുന്നിടേണം;
അറിവതിനാലഹമന്ധകാരമല്ല-
നറിവതിനിങ്ങനെയാർക്കുമോതിടേണം.

The Self is not darkness.

If it were darkness, we would not have known and identified ourselves as ‘I’, ‘I’.

As we do know, we should let everyone realize that the Self can be known.

This verse affirms that the Self is not darkness or ignorance, because if it were, we could never recognise ourselves as “I.” Our very ability to be self-aware proves that the Self is illumination by nature - it is the light that makes all knowing possible. Darkness cannot reveal itself, but light can; likewise, the Self reveals both the world and our own existence. Since we already experience this awareness in the form of our identity and consciousness, it follows that the Self is knowable. Therefore, we should guide and inspire others to realise this truth - that the Self, far from being an abstract mystery, can indeed be directly experienced through inner awareness.

പ്രിയമപരന്റെയതെൻപ്രിയം; സ്വകീയ-
പ്രിയമപരപ്രിയമിപ്രകാരമാകും
നയമതിനാലെ നരന്നു നന്മ നൽകും
ക്രിയയപരപ്രിയഹേതുവായ് വരേണം.

This verse highlights the principle of empathy and universal goodwill. It teaches that what is valued and cherished by another person should also be respected and valued by us. Such an attitude builds mutual understanding, trust, and harmony. Acting in this way reflects the “correct policy” for living - one that moves beyond selfishness and considers the happiness and well-being of others. Therefore, any action we take should be guided by the intention to bring benefit not just to ourselves, but also to others. This mindset fosters compassion, cooperation, and moral responsibility, making our conduct both ethically sound and socially enriching.

From verse 24 to 27, guru says that when we look deeply, the “this person” or “that person” we perceive are not truly separate beings, but expressions of the one, undivided primeval Self. True unity means that our pursuit of happiness must also encompass the happiness of others—anything that benefits oneself while harming another violates this oneness. Hurting others invites suffering upon oneself, much like a natural law of consequence. The Self, which animates the body and holds it together, is mistakenly identified with the physical form, leading to the illusion of separateness. Yet, the Self is pure knowledge, illuminating our very existence even in darkness. Like a magician’s art, this same knowledge manifests in diverse names, forms, and actions through the mind and senses, while remaining one in essence. Recognizing this underlying unity and the Self’s unchanging nature is a profound step toward self-realization, where one sees beyond the illusion of individuality to the truth of oneness.

In verse 58, Guru says

നവനവമിന്നലെയിന്നുനാളെമറ്റേ-
ദ്രിഘസമിതിങ്ങനെചിന്തചെയ്തിടാതെ
അവിരതമെണ്ണിയളന്നിടുന്നതെല്ലാം
ഭ്രമമൊരുഭേദവുമില്ലറിഞ്ഞിടേണം.

This teaching urges the abandonment of time-bound attachments - regret over the past, anxious expectations in the present, and imaginative projections into the future - as they obscure true awareness. Engaging in endless comparisons and calculations only fuels mental restlessness. Instead, one should focus on realizing the eternal, undivided reality - the One - which exists beyond temporal divisions and remains ever-present, unchanging, and free from all forms of differentiation. This realization is a key step toward self-realization and inner peace.

Verse 63

അറിവിലിരുന്നപരത്വമാർന്നിടാതീ
യറിവിനെയിങ്ങറിയുന്നതെന്നിയേതാൻ
പരവശനായറിവിലപണ്ഡിതൻതാൻ-
പരമരഹസ്യമിതാരു പാർത്തിടുന്നു!

This verse highlights the profound perspective of the wise, who recognize that ultimate reality is nothing but pure Knowledge itself. They remain anchored in it, free from the restless pursuit of something external or distant. For them, truth is not a far-off goal but a present, living reality to be directly experienced in the “here and now.” In contrast, the ignorant perceive truth as something hidden or remote, leading them into unnecessary struggle and inner turmoil. Only a rare few break through this illusion and grasp the secret of the wise - that realization lies in being, not in seeking.

The closing verses of Atmopadhesha Shadhakam, verse 98, 99 and 100 emphasizes that our limited understanding of ultimate

reality stems from ignorance, which makes us mistake fleeting pleasures for true happiness. The Self is not a product of cause and effect, nor is it dependent on the workings of the intellect or senses; even if these faculties cease, the Self remains as pure, unchanging knowledge. For one who has removed the veil of ignorance, the ‘I’ and Knowledge are seen as identical, but for those still veiled, doubt persists. The text asserts that if the ‘I’ were separate from Knowledge, there would be no one to know at all. The true Self is beyond all labels - neither “this” nor “that” - and is pure existence, infinite consciousness, and immortal bliss. With such clarity, one is urged to courageously abandon attachment to both existence and non-existence, and to gently merge with the all-pervading Truth that brings enlightenment and serene joy. This vision reflects the essence of self-realization, where identity dissolves into the universal reality.

Through such verses, Guru models self-reflective counselling - encouraging seekers to access their innate clarity and allowing transformation to unfold from within, rather than being projected externally. His tone is compassionate, empowering, and profoundly respectful of each individual’s capacity for insight. As a counsellor, Guru thus embodies the role not of a speaker of truths, but of a nurturer of realization, guiding others to discover their own luminous understanding.

2.2.2.5 Facilitator of Self-Awareness and Cognitive Clarity

Darsanamala (“A Garland of Visions”) stands as a profound philosophical framework in which Sree Narayana Guru assumes the role of a counsellor, gently guiding the seeker toward self-awareness and cognitive clarity. Comprising ten chapters of ten verses each, the work traces the entire arc of consciousness



- from its origin and outward projection to its return and dissolution in the Absolute - mirroring the stages of a client's journey in counselling. Each "vision" is a self-contained insight, yet all are strung together like flowers on a golden thread, symbolizing the continuous process of self-discovery.

The first *darsana*, *Adhyaropa*, presents the creation and essential structure of consciousness, viewing perception as a projection or superimposition on the ground of being. It identifies how incomplete notions and entrenched prejudices distort understanding. The second, *Apavada Darsana*, seeks to correct such distortions by refuting false assumptions, examining dualities like cause and effect, unity and multiplicity, and self and other, while explaining how true knowledge is attained. *Asatya Darsana* builds on this by showing that recognising falsehood is the most effective way to eliminate it, urging active cognitive correction. These initial sections parallel aspects of modern psychotherapy in their emphasis on correcting errors in perception and thought. The subsequent *Maya Darsana* offers a corrected vision of the empirical world and exposes factors that conceal truth, while *Bhava Darsana* provides a normative understanding of awareness, including the fourfold model of consciousness. This progression reaches its central keynote in the dictum *tat eva sat* ("That alone is"), described by Yati as the "precious pendant and secret key" of the work.

The second half of *Darsanamala* begins with *Karma Darsana*, which challenges the assumption of personal authorship of action and explains how attachment to action binds one to cycles of cause and effect. It prescribes detachment through recognition of the unmoved Self as the true source. In *Jnana Darsana*, Guru distinguishes between

conditioned and unconditioned knowledge, granting knowledge its absolute place in existence and completing the normalized vision of reality. *Bhakti Darsana* explores the science of values, defining devotion as continuous contemplation of the Self, which unifies the psyche and dissolves disturbances caused by identification with the non-Self. This is followed by *Yoga Darsana*, which promotes uprooting mental tendencies and compulsions, aiming for the cessation of fluctuating consciousness that generates duality. Finally, *Nirvana Darsana* presents the various grades of absorption into total consciousness, culminating in the extinction of limited awareness in the bliss of the Absolute. While this "extinction" serves to complete the philosophical sequence, Guru's highest ideal - retaining Self-realization while engaging in the world's welfare - is expressed earlier, in the fifth verse of *Nirvana Darsana*.

Viewed through a counselling lens, *Darsanamala* reflects many qualities of an effective counsellor: diagnosing and correcting cognitive distortions, guiding individuals toward self-awareness, offering a normative vision of reality, cultivating value orientation, and fostering integration of inner realization with outward action. Conceived through years of deep contemplation, the text serves not only as a spiritual treatise but also as a guide for psychological transformation, embodying Guru's ability to counsel individuals toward clarity, balance, and liberation.

2.2.2.6 Non-directive Guidance and Respect for Autonomy

A vital quality of an effective counsellor is the ability to offer non-directive guidance while respecting the client's autonomy. In modern counselling, especially within humanistic and client-centred approaches, the counsellor does not impose decisions,

solutions, or judgments. Instead, they provide a reflective space that empowers the counsellee to arrive at their own understanding and decisions. The counsellor walks alongside, offering support - but never control.

Sree Narayana Guru profoundly embodied this principle. He did not prescribe rigid rules or demand blind obedience from his followers. Instead, he consistently encouraged individual reflection, self-inquiry, and personal responsibility in the pursuit of truth. Guru believed that truth is not something handed over by another but discovered within oneself. His guidance was never authoritarian - it was gentle, suggestive, and liberating, always allowing people the freedom to explore and evolve at their own pace.

Guru encouraged people to look within themselves, for truth and enlightenment, rather than relying solely on external sources or rituals, which reflect this deeply non-directive spirit. Guru recognized that true transformation cannot be forced from the outside; it must emerge from within the individual, through insight, reflection, and self-realization. He trusted the inner potential of every person and provided an atmosphere in which that potential could unfold naturally.

Such an approach is closely aligned with Carl Rogers' person-centred therapy, where the counsellor creates a non-judgmental, accepting space and allows the client to take ownership of their growth. In this framework, the counsellor's role is to facilitate - not direct - the process of self-discovery. Similarly, Guru offered guidance without imposing solutions. He respected each individual's inner wisdom and emphasized self-exploration over external conformity.

Thus, Sree Narayana Guru's non-directive, autonomy-respecting approach to guidance

mirrors one of the most essential qualities of a counsellor. He did not force change upon people; he helped them to awaken change from within. By encouraging people to "find your own path" and "seek truth within," Guru practiced a timeless, deeply respectful form of counselling - one that empowers rather than directs, supports rather than controls.

2.2.2.7 Empowerment and Transformational Leadership

An essential quality of an effective counsellor is the ability to empower the counsellee - to help them realize their inner strengths, overcome feelings of helplessness, and build confidence in their ability to face life's challenges. This empowering role is not just about offering support but also about inspiring self-growth, independence, and transformation. In this way, the counsellor often becomes a transformational leader - someone who leads by example and uplifts others not by control, but through inspiration and belief in their potential.

Sree Narayana Guru fully embodied the role of an empowering guide and transformational leader. He deeply understood the oppressive effects of caste discrimination, ignorance, and social exclusion on people's minds. Instead of merely comforting the oppressed, he awakened their inner dignity, restructured their worldview, and motivated them to take charge of their own progress. Guru saw education as the most powerful tool for this transformation. He firmly believed that true empowerment begins when a person gains knowledge, awareness, and confidence to rise above imposed limitations.

Education, for Guru, was the key to self-respect, self-reliance, and self-realization. He established schools and educational centres through the SNDP Yogam, thus institutionalizing empowerment. This action-oriented leadership style created a ripple



effect, helping individuals, especially from marginalized communities, to believe in their own potential and transform their lives.

This form of transformational leadership, rooted in empathy, vision, and belief in human potential, aligns strongly with the counselling goal of helping individuals achieve autonomy, resilience, and growth.

2.2.2.8 Holistic View of Well-being

A truly effective counsellor sees the individual as a whole being, addressing not just the emotional concerns but also their social, physical, spiritual, and ethical dimensions. This holistic approach ensures that well-being is not treated as the absence of illness, but as a state of harmony in all aspects of life.

Sree Narayana Guru deeply understood the interconnected nature of human well-being. His philosophy did not isolate spirituality from social justice or ethics from daily life. Instead, he taught that inner purification (Atma shuddhi), ethical living (Satya jeevanam), social equality, and community service were all essential for true well-being. In his writings, especially in *Atmopadesa Śatakam*, he consistently urged individuals to cleanse the mind, live truthfully, and seek unity with all beings.

Guru's establishment of temples, schools, and community spaces was part of this holistic vision. He worked toward spiritual awakening, social reform, intellectual growth, and moral strength, seeing all of them as necessary for healing and upliftment. This mirrors the counsellor's role in addressing multiple dimensions of a person's life - not only mental health but also relational, cultural, and existential concerns.

2.2.2.9 Wisdom and Insight

A counsellor's wisdom lies in their ability to see beneath surface problems and guide clients toward deeper understanding and insight. Insight does not mean giving ready-made solutions but helping individuals make sense of their internal conflicts and life choices in meaningful ways.

Sree Narayana Guru's wisdom was both philosophical and deeply human. He could grasp the root of human suffering - not merely in outer conditions but in ignorance, attachment, ego, and inner impurity. His verses in *Atmopadesa Śatakam* consistently urge individuals to look inward, recognize their own nature, and cultivate self-awareness. For instance, when he writes about purifying the mind, or detaching from fleeting desires, he offers not just spiritual advice but psychological insight into how to overcome internal turmoil.

This capacity to awaken awareness, guide without controlling, and provide clarity through simple yet profound reflection is very much in line with the insight-oriented methods in counselling, such as existential or cognitive therapy. Guru's life was a continuous demonstration of this wise, intuitive guidance.

Sree Narayana Guru's life and teachings reveal a profound alignment with the essential qualities of an effective counsellor. His compassionate presence, non-directive guidance, clarity of thought, and unwavering belief in human potential enabled him to support individuals and communities in their journey toward healing and empowerment. Through his empathetic words, reflective silence, inclusive philosophy, and transformational leadership, Guru created a psychological and spiritual space where people could reclaim their self-worth, reflect deeply, and rise above suffering. His emphasis on self-purification, education, and inner truth

mirrors the core values of modern counselling - autonomy, insight, unconditional positive regard, and holistic well-being. Though not trained in contemporary therapeutic models, Sree Narayana Guru functioned as a natural counsellor - one who healed not only through words, but through presence, action, and

wisdom. Recognizing him as an effective counsellor allows us to appreciate the timeless relevance of his approach and its deep resonance with the goals of psychological support and human development.

Recap

- ◆ Counselling psychology supports emotional, social, and personal well-being across life stages.
- ◆ A trusting, respectful relationship between counsellor and counsellee is essential for progress.
- ◆ Carl Rogers highlighted genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and empathy as core counselling qualities.
- ◆ Self-awareness, emotional stability, and a clear sense of personal identity strengthen a counsellor's effectiveness.
- ◆ Cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity build inclusivity in the counselling process.
- ◆ Ethical responsibility, fairness, and healthy boundaries protect the client–counsellor relationship.
- ◆ Flexibility in approach allows counsellors to meet changing client needs.
- ◆ Evidence-based practices guide interventions while respecting each client's unique context.
- ◆ Strong interpersonal skills and reflective thinking enhance the counselling experience.
- ◆ Effective counselling blends personal qualities with professional skills and behaviours for meaningful outcomes.
- ◆ Sree Narayana Guru's writings and actions reflected deep empathy and compassion, treating kindness as an essential value for all human interactions.
- ◆ He combined emotional understanding with active efforts to uplift the oppressed, showing that true guidance involves both care and constructive action.



- ◆ In Anukamba Dāsakam, Guru shows that everyone should be accepted and valued without judgment.
- ◆ Through his writings and actions, Sree Narayana Guru emphasised that true empowerment comes from education, which enables self-reliance and personal growth.
- ◆ Through Ātmopadeśa Śatakam, Sree Narayana Guru guides individuals to self-awareness, showing that true counselling fosters inner insight and personal understanding.

Objective Questions

1. Which branch of psychology focuses on personal and interpersonal functioning?
2. What is the core quality identified by Carl Rogers along with genuineness and unconditional positive regard?
3. What quality helps a counsellor remain stable and composed in their work?
4. Which term describes awareness and management of one's own reactions?
5. What type of sensitivity is essential for respecting diversity?
6. What should counsellors maintain to ensure professional relationships remain healthy?
7. What quality enables counsellors to adapt their methods to client needs?
8. What kind of practices are supported by scientific research?
9. What skill refers to being fully engaged in the present moment?
10. Which value ensures fairness and moral conduct in counselling?
11. In which poetic work does Sree Narayana Guru highlight the importance of empathy?
12. According to Guru, what happens to a person who is devoid of kindness?
13. Which of Sree Narayana Guru's works emphasizes acceptance and valuing of all individuals without judgment?

14. Which quality of an effective counsellor is reflected in Sree Narayana Guru's emphasis on education?
15. Which counselling approach is reflected in Sree Narayana Guru's Ātmopadeśa Śatakam?
16. Which text by Sree Narayana Guru guides seekers toward self-awareness and cognitive clarity?
17. Which counselling quality involves respecting the client's ability to make their own decisions?
18. What method did Sree Narayana Guru use to empower individuals, especially from marginalised communities?
19. What approach addresses multiple aspects of an individual's life, including spiritual, ethical, social, and emotional dimensions?
20. Which quality allows a counsellor to help clients understand the root of their inner conflicts and gain self-awareness?

Answers

1. Counselling
2. Empathy
3. Emotional stability
4. Self-awareness
5. Cultural
6. Boundaries
7. Flexibility
8. Evidence-based
9. Presence
10. Ethics



11. Anukamba Dāsakam
12. They lose their moral worth
13. Anukamba Dāsakam
14. Empowerment
15. Self-instruction
16. Darsanamala
17. Autonomy
18. Education
19. Holistic
20. Insight

Assignments

1. Define counselling and explain the importance of the counsellor–counsee relationship in the counselling process.
2. Discuss the key characteristics of an effective counsellor with suitable examples. Why are these qualities essential for successful counselling?
3. Describe how Sree Narayana Guru, embodied the qualities of an effective counsellor. Support your answer with examples from his life and teachings.
4. Critically analyse the relevance of Sree Narayana Guru’s philosophies and actions in today’s counselling context. How can his approach guide modern-day mental health professionals?

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UNIT

Tools and Techniques in Counselling

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ◆ familiarise the meaning and purpose of counselling tools.
- ◆ identify and describe the major tools and techniques employed in counselling.
- ◆ reflect on the deeper spiritual tools used in Guru's approach to healing and transformation.
- ◆ learn how to integrate traditional tools with modern counselling techniques for holistic care.

Prerequisites

One evening, a young woman walked into a counsellor's room carrying a heavy bag. She sat down and placed it on the floor with a sigh. "This," she said softly, "is everything I've been carrying my fears, my anger, my disappointments, my confusion." The counsellor didn't rush to open the bag, but simply sat with her, offering presence and warmth until she felt safe enough to share its contents.

As they gently unpacked the "bag" together, the counsellor used different tools listening without judgment, asking thoughtful questions, guiding her through breathing exercises, and helping her reframe her thoughts. Sometimes they painted, sometimes they wrote, sometimes they simply sat in silence. Each tool was like a key, unlocking another part of her heart and mind.

Over time, the bag grew lighter. The woman realized she could carry it differently or leave some things behind altogether. She left the counselling room not just with solutions, but with a deeper understanding of herself and a renewed sense of hope. This is the essence of counselling tools: helping a person find the strength, clarity, and peace they already hold within.



Keywords

Therapeutic relationship, Rapport building, Empathy, Active listening, Unconditional positive regard, Communication, Assessment, CBT, Projective techniques, Strengths-based assessment, Group counselling

Discussion

Counsellors can work more efficiently with clients when they have access to counselling resources. In the counseling process, they facilitate evaluation, dialogue, and recovery. These instruments may be psychological, nonverbal, or verbal. The quality and results of counselling are enhanced when the appropriate instruments are used.

2.3.1 Definition and Significance of Counselling Tools

Counselling tools are organized materials, techniques, or equipment that help counsellors and therapists comprehend, evaluate, and deal with people who are seeking psychological assistance. These tools are deliberately chosen to support various stages and objectives of the counseling process and might be verbal or nonverbal, creative or cognitive, standardized or adaptable. They consist of genograms, storytelling cards, visual aids, workbooks, psychological tests, and scripts for guided visualization, among other things.

The value of counselling tools is found in their ability to improve therapeutic results, increase self-awareness, and enable communication. Tools provide clients with various ways to express and gain understanding if they have trouble articulating their feelings or past experiences.

Safety, customization, and engagement are made possible by the deployment of suitable

technologies, particularly in culturally diverse or trauma-sensitive settings. These resources are fundamental supports that enable the counseling process to become organized, perceptive, and growth-oriented; they are not merely add-ons to treatment. When used skillfully and sensitively, they can help inspire transformative insight, clarify values, challenge distortions, expose patterns, and boost emotional resilience.

2.3.1.1 Difference between Counselling Tools and Techniques

The terms tools and techniques are often used interchangeably in everyday conversation. However, in professional counselling, they represent distinct yet complementary aspects of practice. Understanding the difference between the two is important for effective and purposeful counselling.

Counselling tools refer to the tangible or structured mediums used during sessions. These are physical resources, structured formats, or digital aids that support the counselling process. Examples of counselling tools include personality inventories such as the MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator-It is one of the most widely used personality inventories, based on Carl Jung's theory of psychological types) or Big Five, drawing and art materials, role-play scripts, sand trays and figurines, mindfulness apps or audio



files, journaling prompts, and Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) worksheets. These tools provide structure, encourage self-expression, and guide the client's exploration.

Counselling techniques, on the other hand, refer to the specific methods or strategies a therapist uses to facilitate insight, change, or healing. They are the practical approaches that counsellors apply during interaction with clients, often in combination with tools. Examples of counselling techniques include active listening, reflection of feelings, Socratic questioning, guided imagery, scaling questions as used in Solution-Focused Therapy, and the empty chair dialogue used in Gestalt Therapy. Techniques focus on how the counsellor engages with the client to bring about understanding and growth.

By combining appropriate tools with effective techniques, counsellors can create a structured yet flexible therapeutic process that meets the unique needs of each client.

2.3.1.2 Role of Tools in Assessment, Relationship-Building, Intervention, and Healing

Counselling tools serve multifaceted purposes and are employed at various stages of the therapeutic journey. They are:

1. **Assessment:** Tools help counsellors gain a clearer understanding of the client's psychological functioning, personality traits, cognitive patterns, and emotional states. For instance, standardized scales like the Beck Depression Inventory or non-standardized tools like emotion thermometers or feeling wheels can help measure distress levels and set therapeutic goals.

2. Relationship-Building:

Tools like narrative prompts, genograms, photo cards, or lifeline drawings can foster connection and safety. In early sessions, using creative or visual tools helps clients lower their defenses and engage more openly, especially when trust is still being built.

3. Intervention:

Many therapeutic tools are directly designed to alter dysfunctional thoughts, behaviors, or emotions. CBT tools such as thought-challenging templates, behavioral activation charts, or exposure hierarchies are structured interventions to bring about change. Art-based tools allow access to the unconscious, helping clients explore emotions that are difficult to verbalize.

4. Healing and Empowerment:

Some tools, especially those rooted in expressive arts, spirituality, or mindfulness, focus on nurturing inner strength and self-compassion. Guided meditation scripts, forgiveness letters, visual metaphors, and mandala drawings can be powerful in the journey of emotional healing, forgiveness, and transformation.

In sum, tools are not limited to information gathering; they are participatory, co-creative instruments that can open new pathways for insight and inner change.

Counselling tools, whether clinical or spiritual, standardized or creative, serve to amplify the healing process. They provide structured ways to understand the self, build trust, facilitate change, and support growth. By recognizing the difference between tools

and techniques, and by embracing a deeper understanding of their use, therapists can work with greater clarity and impact.

2.3.2 The Therapeutic Relationship as a Primary Tool

In the field of counselling and psychotherapy, there exists a growing awareness that beyond all structured methods, diagnostic tools, and theoretical frameworks, the therapeutic relationship itself is the most vital tool for healing and transformation. The quality of the connection between the counsellor and the client often determines the depth of insight, safety, and growth that can occur within the therapeutic space.

2.3.2.1 Building Rapport and Trust

Rapport is the foundation of all effective counselling. It refers to the sense of connection, mutual respect, and understanding that allows a client to feel seen, heard, and accepted. Trust cannot be demanded; it must be earned through consistency, respect, confidentiality, and genuine concern for the client's well-being.

Building rapport means creating a safe and non-judgmental space where clients feel comfortable to share. It involves maintaining respectful and consistent communication, honouring the client's pace, and using language and tone that suit their culture and personality. The counsellor needs to be genuine, open, and non-defensive, showing respect for the client's unique way of seeing the world. When trust develops, even clients who are initially guarded begin to share their true thoughts and feelings, allowing deeper and more meaningful counselling work to happen.

2.3.2.2 Empathy, Active Listening, and Unconditional Positive Regard

Empathy is the ability to understand another person's experience from within their frame of reference. It means entering into their emotional landscape without becoming overwhelmed or disconnected. Empathy helps the client feel deeply understood, which itself can be profoundly healing. These core elements articulated powerfully by Carl Rogers are not just ethical ideals but practical tools that shape the emotional environment of counselling.

Active Listening involves giving full attention to the client's verbal and non-verbal messages. It includes:

- a. Reflecting feelings
- b. Clarifying thoughts
- c. Summarizing content
- d. Asking thoughtful, open-ended questions
- e. Maintaining appropriate eye contact and body posture

Through active listening, counsellors demonstrate their attunement to the client, which encourages further self-disclosure and exploration.

Unconditional Positive Regard is the attitude of complete acceptance toward the client without judgment, blame, or conditions. It is not about agreeing with every action but recognizing the inherent dignity and worth of every person. This attitude allows the client to let down their defenses, confront painful truths, and move toward self-acceptance.

These relational qualities are more than warm attitudes and they serve as active ingredients in the therapeutic process,



facilitating insight, reorganization of self-concept, and emotional healing.

2.3.2.3 Presence as a Spiritual and Psychological Tool

Presence is the counsellor's ability to be fully in the moment with the client undistracted, grounded, and emotionally attuned. It is both psychological and spiritual in nature. When a counsellor is present, they hold a calm, attentive, and non-anxious space that allows the client's inner world to unfold with safety.

Presence means being fully attentive and engaged with the client in the moment. It involves being comfortable with silence, staying steady even when the client is in distress, and offering a sense of calm rather than rushing to provide solutions. It also includes tuning into the client's energy, emotions, and body language with compassionate awareness, creating a safe and supportive atmosphere for healing.

In a world filled with noise, judgment, and performance, a moment of authentic presence can itself become a healing experience. It affirms the client's existence and provides a sacred space for transformation to emerge not through doing, but through being.

In counselling, the relationship itself is the most enduring and powerful tool. While assessments and interventions have their place, it is the quality of connection marked by empathy, trust, and presence that often catalyzes the deepest healing. From both psychological and spiritual lenses, the relationship between counsellor and client is sacred.

2.3.3 Communication Tools in Counselling

Communication tools in counselling are strategies that help the counsellor and client

share thoughts, feelings, and information effectively. They include both verbal methods, such as asking open-ended questions, making reflections, and summarizing, and non-verbal methods, such as body language, facial expressions, gestures, posture, and eye contact. Effective communication builds trust, encourages openness, and helps the counsellor understand both spoken and unspoken messages, creating a safe space for meaningful and productive counselling sessions.

2.3.3.1 Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

Communication in counselling occurs on two levels: verbal and non-verbal. While words convey information, non-verbal cues often reveal the emotional truth beneath those words.

Verbal communication in counselling involves careful attention to the choice of words, the tone, rhythm, and pace of speech, and the use of metaphors, stories, or analogies to aid understanding. It also includes expressing empathy and support through language, helping clients feel valued, understood, and encouraged during the counselling process. Skilled counsellors choose their words intentionally. They avoid jargon, use gentle and affirming language, and frame questions in a way that encourages exploration rather than defensiveness.

Non-verbal communication in counselling includes facial expressions, eye contact, body posture and orientation, gestures and movement, physical proximity and touch (where culturally appropriate), and the use of silence and pauses. These cues often reveal emotions and thoughts that the client may not yet be able to put into words. For example, averted eyes, a clenched fist, or a collapsed posture can indicate discomfort, fear, or emotional pain.

The counsellor's own non-verbal presence - calm, grounded, and open - can act as a stabilizing force that reassures the client and encourages openness. By being attentive to both verbal and non-verbal language, the counsellor can respond with greater empathy and accuracy, strengthening trust and deepening the therapeutic relationship.

2.3.3.2 Use of Open-Ended Questions, Reflections, and Summarizing

Counsellors use communication tools such as open-ended questions, reflections, and summarizing to facilitate meaningful dialogue and understanding.

Open-ended questions invite elaboration and exploration, allowing clients to lead the conversation and reflect on their experiences.

Reflections involve restating or paraphrasing the client's words, especially their emotional content, to show active listening and help clients gain clarity about their own feelings.

Summarizing brings together the key themes, ideas, or emotions expressed during a session, providing clarity and focus, and reinforcing the client's experience.

Deep listening is at the heart of meaningful therapeutic communication. It is more than hearing words it is receiving the whole person, with their emotions, silences, contradictions, and unspoken needs. This practice involves inner stillness, where the counsellor quiets their own mental chatter; non-judgmental awareness, allowing the client to be fully themselves; and attunement, listening for the emotions beneath the narrative. It also honours silence, giving space for reflection, and echoes the client's inner meaning by reflecting the deeper emotions or truths behind their words.

Deep listening builds trust and safety, communicating, *"You matter. I am here."* In such a presence, even the most guarded parts of a client can begin to surface and heal. Communication tools whether open-ended questions, empathic listening, or compassionate silence become more than techniques; they become channels of connection and transformation. Grounded in the wisdom of the Guru, this form of communication turns into a sacred offering, where words and silences alike nurture healing.

2.3.4 Psychological Assessment Tools in Counselling

Psychological assessment tools are structured methods to gather reliable information about a client's mental, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural functioning. They help identify strengths, challenges, and underlying issues, providing a sound basis for diagnosis and intervention. Common tools include intelligence tests, personality inventories, aptitude tests, emotional assessments, and projective techniques.

Used ethically and alongside observation and interviews, these tools go beyond diagnosis they promote self-awareness and guide effective intervention. In holistic counselling, they aim to empower rather than label, offering insights that foster healing, growth, and transformation.

2.3.4.1 Interview, Observation, and Self-Report Inventories

Counsellors use a variety of methods to gather information about a client. These include:

Interviews are one of the most fundamental tools in counselling, allowing the counsellor to gather in depth personal information



through direct conversation. They may be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured, depending on the purpose and flexibility needed. Interviews provide valuable insight into a client's history, concerns, and emotional state while building rapport and trust. The counsellor's listening skills, empathy, and sensitivity play a key role in making interviews effective.

Observation involves carefully noting a client's behaviours, expressions, body language, and interactions in different settings. It can be direct occurring during counselling sessions or indirect, such as feedback from teachers, family members, or colleagues. Observation helps the counsellor detect patterns that clients may not be consciously aware of, such as avoidance behaviours, anxiety cues, or strengths in social interaction. It complements verbal data by adding a behavioural dimension to the assessment.

Self-report inventories are standardized questionnaires in which clients rate their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Examples include personality tests, depression scales, or stress inventories. These tools offer a structured way for clients to share their inner experiences and can reveal patterns not easily captured through observation or interviews alone. When combined with other assessment methods, self-reports enhance accuracy, encourage self-reflection, and actively involve the client in the counselling process.

2.3.4.2 Role of Tools like Mental Status Examination (MSE) and Projective Techniques

The Mental Status Examination (MSE) is a structured tool used to assess a client's current psychological functioning across areas such as appearance, behaviour, mood,

thought processes, perception, cognition, and insight. It provides a snapshot of the client's mental state at a given point in time, helping counsellors identify possible mental health concerns, track changes over time, and guide diagnosis and treatment planning. Conducted through observation and targeted questioning, the MSE is especially useful in clinical and psychiatric settings.

Projective techniques, such as the Rorschach Inkblot Test or Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), explore the client's unconscious thoughts, feelings, and conflicts by encouraging open-ended responses to ambiguous stimuli. These tools can reveal underlying emotional patterns, defence mechanisms, and aspects of personality that clients may find difficult to express directly. In counselling, projective methods are often used alongside other assessments to gain deeper, more nuanced insights into a client's inner world, facilitating more effective therapeutic interventions.

2.3.5 Behavioural and Cognitive Tools

Behavioural tools in counselling focus on observing, measuring, and modifying specific behaviours. Techniques such as behaviour charts, activity scheduling, and reinforcement plans help clients understand patterns in their actions and make positive changes. These tools are especially effective in addressing issues like anxiety, phobias, or habit formation.

Cognitive tools aim to identify and challenge unhelpful thought patterns that influence emotions and behaviours. Methods like thought records, cognitive restructuring, and guided discovery help clients recognise distorted thinking and replace it with balanced, realistic perspectives. This approach is central to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

When used together, behavioural and cognitive tools create a comprehensive approach to change. Clients learn not only to adjust their actions but also to transform the thinking patterns that drive those actions, leading to lasting emotional and behavioural well-being.

2.3.5.1 CBT Tools: Thought Records and Cognitive Restructuring

Thought records are structured worksheets used in CBT to help clients identify and examine their automatic thoughts. When a distressing event occurs, the client writes down the situation, the emotions they felt, and the thoughts that came to mind. They then evaluate the evidence for and against these thoughts, and consider more balanced alternatives. This process builds awareness of thinking patterns and reduces the impact of negative, unhelpful thoughts.

Cognitive restructuring is a technique that goes a step further by actively challenging and reframing distorted thoughts. Once the client has identified a recurring unhelpful belief such as “I always fail” or “Nobody cares about me” the counsellor guides them to question its accuracy, explore alternative perspectives, and replace it with healthier, more realistic beliefs.

Together, thought records and cognitive restructuring help break the cycle of negative thinking. Clients learn to pause before reacting emotionally, assess the validity of their thoughts, and consciously choose more constructive responses. Over time, this strengthens their emotional resilience and problem solving skills.

These CBT tools are practical, easy to use, and empowering for clients. By turning vague feelings into clear, examinable thoughts,

they give clients a sense of control over their mental and emotional state turning therapy into a process of self-discovery and lasting change.

2.3.6 Emotional and Expressive Tools

Emotions are the gateways to human experience. They give color to our inner world, drive our behavior, and reflect our needs, wounds, and desires. In counselling, helping individuals feel, express, and regulate their emotions is central to the healing process. Emotional and expressive tools support clients not only in processing unresolved pain but also in discovering their voice, creativity, and deeper sense of self.

2.3.6.1 Techniques for Emotional Release and Self-Expression in Counselling

Catharsis is the process of releasing intense emotional energy that has been suppressed or unexpressed. It can occur through talking, crying, screaming, writing, or physical movement. In a therapeutic context, catharsis is not merely about “letting it out” it is a conscious, supported, and meaningful release that brings clarity, relief, and integration.

Emotional ventilation allows clients to express overwhelming feelings such as grief, anger, fear, or shame in a safe and accepting environment. Often, long-held emotions especially those unacknowledged in childhood or traumatic contexts can block energy, distort thinking, and lead to psychosomatic distress.

The role of the counsellor during catharsis is to create a safe and trusting space where the client feels emotionally secure. This involves validating the client’s emotional experience, containing its intensity, and



ensuring they remain grounded to prevent traumatization.

When guided with skill and sensitivity, catharsis can become a profound and transformative moment. It allows the client to release suppressed emotions, gain insight, and reclaim parts of themselves that were previously hidden or wounded.

Expressive therapies such as art, music, and play provide powerful alternatives for emotional expression when words are insufficient. Art therapy uses creative processes like drawing, painting, or sculpting to access the unconscious, enabling emotional release, self-discovery, and the integration of difficult experiences. Music therapy engages rhythm and melody to evoke and process emotions directly, while play therapy especially effective with children offers symbolic ways to act out fears, desires, and conflicts.

Alongside expression, emotional regulation tools help clients manage and respond to intense feelings. Techniques such as breathing exercises, mindfulness body scans, grounding practices, cognitive reframing, and affect labelling foster resilience and self-awareness. These skills allow clients to stay centered during distress, viewing emotions as important messengers rather than threats.

When effectively combined, emotional and expressive tools guide clients from fragmentation toward wholeness. They transform pain into acceptance, foster a sense of inner balance, and support lasting emotional well-being.

2.3.7 Spiritual and Meditative Tools

Spiritual and meditative tools in counselling help clients connect with a deeper

sense of meaning, purpose, and inner peace. Practices such as mindfulness meditation, breath awareness, guided imagery, prayer, and contemplation encourage stillness, self-reflection, and a compassionate awareness of thoughts and feelings. These tools can reduce stress, promote emotional balance, and cultivate resilience by helping clients observe their inner experiences without judgment.

For many individuals, spirituality whether rooted in personal beliefs, religious traditions, or a sense of connection to something greater serves as a source of comfort and guidance during challenging times. Integrating spiritual and meditative practices into counselling can deepen self-understanding, enhance coping, and foster hope. By creating space for both silence and insight, these tools nurture the mind-body-spirit connection, supporting holistic healing and personal growth.

2.3.8 Group and Community-Based Tools in Counselling and Healing

Healing is not only an individual journey it is also a communal process. In many traditions, psychological wounds are seen as relational in nature, and thus, relational healing becomes essential. Group and community-based tools provide powerful contexts where individuals experience validation, belonging, support, and transformation in the presence of others.

2.3.8.1 Group Counselling Basics: Sharing Circles and Peer Counselling

Group counselling brings together individuals with shared challenges, guided by a trained facilitator. Within this space, participants engage in sharing circles, where each person speaks from their experience while others listen without judgment. This

structure builds trust, empathy, and safety.

Peer counselling where individuals support one another through active listening and reflection encourages empowerment and reduces the isolation that often accompanies psychological distress. In such settings, the healing comes not only from the counsellor, but from the group itself.

Group counselling offers a powerful sense of connection, helping participants realize *“I am not alone”* in their struggles. By hearing others’ stories, they gain fresh perspectives and shared wisdom while developing social and emotional skills such as empathy, communication, and active listening. Witnessing the courage and growth of fellow members inspires hope, motivates change, and reinforces the belief in one’s own potential for healing.

2.3.9 Integrative and Eclectic Use of Tools

Counselling is most effective when it honors the whole person mind, body, emotion, and spirit. No single tool or method fits every client or every moment. An integrative and eclectic approach allows the counsellor to draw from multiple traditions and techniques, weaving them into a dynamic, responsive, and client-centered healing process. This approach reflects the wisdom of the Guru, who teaches that true transformation arises when the right insight is offered at the right time, with love and discernment.

2.3.9.1 Combining Tools for Holistic Counselling

Holistic counselling combines psychological approaches like CBT, narrative therapy, and behavior modification with

expressive, emotional, and spiritual methods such as art, mindfulness, breathwork, prayer, and silence. This integration fosters cognitive clarity, emotional healing, creative expression, behavioral change, spiritual grounding, and a sense of meaning. Instead of rigidly following one model, the integrative counsellor draws ethically and intuitively from a diverse toolbox, tailoring techniques to the client’s readiness, cultural background, and deeper inner needs.

2.3.9.2 Inner Transformation as the Goal

Inner transformation, in both psychology and spirituality, is about more than changing behaviors or emotions it is a shift in how one perceives oneself and life. Integrative counselling understands that thought change must be paired with an open heart, emotional release must lead to deeper insight, and spiritual awareness must be anchored in daily living. In this view, tools are not the final goal, but pathways to greater awareness, wholeness, and love. The counsellor becomes not just a skilled practitioner, but a compassionate witness, companion, and mirror, helping the client journey toward authentic transformation.

This unit highlights the wide range of counselling tools psychological, behavioral, cognitive, emotional, expressive, and spiritual that can support a client’s growth and healing. When used skillfully, these tools help build trust, foster self-awareness, promote emotional balance, and encourage positive change. Ultimately, effective counselling lies not in the tools alone, but in the counsellor’s ability to apply them ethically, empathetically, and in alignment with each client’s unique needs.



Recap

- ◆ Counselling tools help the counsellor work effectively with clients.
- ◆ They are used in assessment, relationship-building, intervention, and healing.
- ◆ Tools are different from techniques in counselling.
- ◆ A tool is a resource or instrument used in the process.
- ◆ A technique is the method of applying a tool.
- ◆ Tools make the counselling process more structured and effective.
- ◆ The therapeutic relationship is the most important counselling tool.
- ◆ Building rapport is the first step in forming a good relationship.
- ◆ Trust between counsellor and client is essential.
- ◆ Empathy helps the counsellor understand the client's feelings.
- ◆ Active listening shows that the counsellor values the client's words.
- ◆ Unconditional positive regard means accepting the client without judgment.
- ◆ Presence means being fully focused on the client.
- ◆ Communication tools can be verbal or non-verbal.
- ◆ Open-ended questions help clients express more freely.
- ◆ Reflections show that the counsellor has understood the client's message.
- ◆ Summarizing helps in reviewing and clarifying what was discussed.
- ◆ Psychological tools include interviews, observations, and self-reports.
- ◆ Mental Status Examination and projective techniques are used for deeper assessment.
- ◆ Strengths-based assessment focuses on client abilities and resources.
- ◆ Behavioural and cognitive tools help clients change unhelpful thoughts.
- ◆ Group and community tools encourage shared healing and inner transformation.

Objective Questions

1. What do counselling tools help in?
2. What are tools different from?
3. What is a tool?
4. What is a technique?
5. What do tools make the counselling process?
6. What is the most important counselling tool?
7. What is the first step in forming a good relationship?
8. What is essential between counsellor and client?
9. What helps the counsellor understand the client's feelings?
10. What shows the counsellor values the client's words?
11. What means accepting the client without judgment?
12. What means being fully focused on the client?
13. What types can communication tools be?
14. What helps clients express more freely?
15. What shows that the counsellor has understood the client's message?
16. What helps in reviewing and clarifying discussions?
17. Name one psychological assessment method.
18. What examination assesses mental condition?
19. Name one projective technique.
20. What does strengths-based assessment focus on?
21. Name one behavioural tool.
22. Name one cognitive tool.
23. Name one group counselling method.
24. What do group and community tools encourage?

Answers

1. Counselling process
2. Techniques
3. Resource



4. Method
5. Effective
6. Therapeutic relationship
7. Rapport building
8. Trust
9. Empathy
10. Active listening
11. Unconditional positive regard
12. Presence
13. Verbal, Non-verbal
14. Open-ended questions
15. Reflections
16. Summarizing
17. Interview
18. MSE
19. TAT
20. Abilities
21. Behaviour rehearsal
22. Cognitive restructuring
23. Sharing circles
24. Shared healing

Assignments

1. Define counselling tools and explain their significance in the counselling process.
2. Differentiate between counselling tools and counselling techniques with suitable examples.
3. Discuss the role of the therapeutic relationship as a primary tool in counselling.
4. Explain the use of communication tools in counselling, highlighting verbal and non-verbal methods.
5. Describe any three psychological assessment tools used in counselling and their applications.
6. Evaluate the importance of integrative and eclectic use of tools in achieving holistic counselling and inner transformation.

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UNIT

Life Skills and Sree Narayana Guru

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ explain self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, and problem solving as essential life skills to be enhanced
- ◆ apply the wisdom of Sree Narayana Guru's life and philosophy in enhancing these life skills
- ◆ evaluate their own level of self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, and problem solving through activities based on Sree Narayana Guru's life and philosophy

Prerequisites

Let us begin *in* Sree Narayana Guru. Think about him. Does he occur to you as someone who would dictate life, or hand you a mirror, not to answer you, but to deepen your questions?

Pause for a moment, and as learners of philosophy look into him again, not as a figure set apart by time, but as a quiet presence seated on the rocks of *Maruthwamala*, and ask yourself: *what is it to live?* As you reflect, do you find it transpires into another question that lingers on the premises of a 'life well lived': *how to live?* What do you think transpires between *what is it to live* and *how to live*? Is there a point at which living becomes something we must account for? Can living be *sterile*?

To live, rather than *just* exist, has supposedly been the essence of life. We, as humans, in particular, capture our existence as lives bound by meaning. We often seek meaning, not for the sake of understanding the meaning of our existence, but to be constrained by it. Thus, for us to live, we must define it and thereby have a sense of owning it. And, life skills, as modes of being in the world, dictate the terms

towards defining life.

Now, pause again to ask whether *to live* lies in what we do, or in how we are. Is it about having the right job, making the right choices, or staying calm under pressure? Or is there something more, something that cannot be measured but must be felt, like dignity, compassion, courage, or clarity? We often speak of life skills as if they are items on a checklist, such as communication skills, decision-making skills, or emotional intelligence. But perhaps, before we learn these skills, we must ask: *what does it truly mean to live a life?*

Let the unit not only dictate how to develop life skills, but compel you to take cues from Guru. When he said വിദ്യ കൊണ്ട് സ്വതന്ത്രരാകുക (be enlightened through education), was he merely advocating for literacy, or a formal degree? Or was he compelling us to use knowledge as a tool for deeper self-enquiry, to see ourselves, others, and the world with an unclouded mind? When he said ജാതി ചോദിക്കരുത് പറയരുത് ചിന്തിക്കരുത് (ask not, say not, think not of caste), was it only about breaking social hierarchy? Or, was it about learning to live without limiting the mind by ego, fear, and judgement?

We begin here, with questions. Not to chase answers, but to let the questions chase us a little, disturb us a little, towards further enquiry.

Keywords

Ability, WHO, Self-awareness, Personal Growth, Self, I, Other, Empathy, Compassion, Love, Critical Thinking, Problem Solving

Discussion

If life, as Sree Narayana Guru saw it, was not something to be imposed but to be realised, then perhaps life skills are not merely things to be learned, but truths to be lived. But, how?

Let us try to understand it through an activity. Think of a moment when you had to make a difficult decision, or a time when you felt overwhelmed and had to find a way to calm yourself, or perhaps, when a friend was in distress and you were unsure of how to help, yet you chose to simply listen. What guided you in such situations? Were you consciously following any set of

instructions or recalling any formal lessons to navigate these situations? Probably not. You were thinking, feeling, choosing, and responding, guided by your awareness, values, and instincts. In simple terms, this is how life skills operate, not as abstract concepts, but in the everyday acts of being human with awareness.

The World Health Organisation defines life skills as: *the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.*



The 10 Core Life Skills (As identified by WHO)

The World Health Organisation identifies ten core life skills that are widely seen as essential for holistic human development:

i.	Self-awareness
ii.	Empathy
iii.	Critical thinking
iv.	Creative thinking
v.	Decision-making
vi.	Problem-solving
vii.	Effective communication
viii.	Interpersonal relationships
ix.	Coping with stress
x.	Coping with emotions

This unit, however, focuses on only four life skills,

- Self-Awareness
- Empathy
- Critical Thinking
- Problem Solving

The following sections discuss each in detail.

2.4.1 Self-Awareness

Self-awareness can be generally understood as the ability to recognise and understand your own thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. It is considered the first step towards personal growth, and includes being able to,

- ♦ notice what you feel, and why you feel that way
- ♦ understand how your actions affect others
- ♦ recognise your strengths and limitations

- ♦ reflect on your values, beliefs, and motivations.

But what does it truly mean to be aware of yourself? Take a moment to ask yourself, what is my level of self-awareness? Is it enough to say, "I know myself?" or is there more to it? Why might this awareness matter at all?

As these questions challenge our thinking, let us turn to Sree Narayana Guru for direction. These verses from ആത്മാപദേശശതകം invite us to engage with a fundamental question central to self-awareness, the question of who we *truly* are.

‘ഇരുളിലിരുപ്പവനാര്? ചൊൽക നീ’ യെന്നൊരുവനുരപ്പതു കേട്ടു താനുമേവം അറിവതിനായവനോടു ‘നീയുമാരെ’-
നരുളുമിതിൻ പ്രതിവാക്യമേകമാകും

(10, ആത്മാപദേശശതകം)

"Tell me who are you sitting in darkness?" one asks.

On, hearing this, the other, In order to know, asks in return, "Who are you?"

The answer to both these questions is the same.

(10, Aatmopadeshashatakam)

The verse presents a dialogue where one person asks another, “Who are you, sitting in the dark?” and the reply is simply the same question turned back, “And who are you?” The verse reflects Guru’s non-dualistic philosophy, implying that the self of the person asking the question and that of the person being asked are not different. Thus, self-awareness in Guru is not about identifying with one’s individual ego, personality, or social roles, but about recognising this deeper, shared reality, that the act of understanding *who I am* eventually leads to the realisation that it is fundamentally not different from *who you are*.

‘അഹമഹ’മെന്നരുളുന്നതൊക്കെയൊരാ-
യുകിലകമേ പലതല്ലതേകമാകും;
അകലുമഹന്തയനേകമാകയാലീ
തുകയിലഹം പൊരുളും തുടർന്നിടുന്നു’
(11, ആത്മോപദേശശതകം)

What is spoken of as ‘I’, ‘I’ by each
When well-pondered upon,
Is found to be not many but just one in true
essence.
The I-senses divergingly, of course, are
many,
And, therefore, in and through the sum
total
Of the many assuredly endures
The one essential content of ‘I’.
(11, Aatmopadeshashatakam)

If I deeply turn inward and seek the truth, I will realize that the experience which appears in me, in you, and in everyone is not different, but the same one consciousness. With the realization of truth, the sense of being a separate individual (the “soul” feeling) disappears. However, because of differences in conditions and circumstances, this one consciousness seems to appear as many separate beings. That is why the ultimate truth, which actually shines as one, appears as though it is divided into many.

The verse highlights a key distinction between two different meanings of ‘I’. It

states that the ‘I’ that keeps speaking within us is, upon deep enquiry, not many, but one. It is egoism (*ahanta*) that makes this ‘I’ appear to be many, causing distance and separation.

The above two verses present to us the idea of an ‘I’ which is different from the fragmented and isolated identity which we usually claim as our own, but a continuous and undivided essence. How might we begin to make sense of or awaken this deeper awareness within ourselves?

Guru says,

ഭക്തിരാത്മാനുസന്ധാനം
ആത്മാനന്ദഘനോ യതഃ
ആത്മാനമനുസന്ധത്തേ
സദൈവാത്മവിദാത്മനാ.

(1, ഭക്തിദർശനം)

Bhakti is constant meditative
Search into oneself/atman.
For the reason that oneself/ātman
Is ānanda in essential content,
An ātman-knower always
Meditatively searches into oneself
With oneself as means.

(1, Bhakti Darsanam)

This, along with the two verses above, prompts a process of self-enquiry. We are encouraged to question the nature of the persistent voice within that says ‘I.’ This internal voice often represents our ego, which is but the collection of our individual thoughts, beliefs, memories, and personal stories. Meditating on this voice reveals it as a constant narrative, whose source is the absolute Self. These verses thus urge us to look beyond the superficial layers of our personality to realise this deeper, non-dual Self.

The enquiry into the Self, however, shall not be taken to be a distant abstraction, but a living experience, one that begins when we turn our attention inward. Imagine yourself



standing in front of a mirror, this time not to adjust your appearance, but to *see* yourself. Behold, and look into you. What do you see? Let the following echo Guru's profound wisdom in the stillness within you, as you behold yourself now.

തനുവിലമർന്ന ശരീരി, തന്റെ സത്താ-
തനുവിലത്തെന്തിതെന്തിതെന്തു സർവ്വം
തനുതയൊഴിഞ്ഞു ധരിച്ചിടുന്നു; സാക്ഷാ-
ലനുഭവശാലികളാമിതോർക്കിലാറും.

(48, ആത്മോപദേശശതകം)

The Reality endowed with a body,
In its status of being the essential existence,
Becomes completely oblivious of bodily
existence,
And conceives identities such as
“This (ideal) is mine”, or “That (ideal) is
mine”.
The secret of this identity, if called to
mind,
May make anyone a direct experiencer
of enlightenment.

(48, Aatmopadeshashatakam)

ഒന്നൊന്നായെണ്ണിയെണ്ണിത്തൊ-
ട്ടെണ്ണം പൊരുളൊടുങ്ങിയാൽ
നിനീടും ദൂക്കുപോലുള്ളും
നിനിലസ്വന്മാകണം

(2, ദൈവദശകം)

Counting all the countables
One after another, when
Everything is reckoned and finished with,
They disappear and continue
To exist in the seeing mind.
In like manner, let this mind
Attain rest pulsationless in you

(2, Daivadasakam)

The verse prompts that, like the eye that goes still upon taking in all things seeable, may the inside become stilled and settle in the ultimate reality. It is not about analysing or identifying with our thoughts, but transcending them entirely; that the core of our being is, but the silent, unmoving awareness that observes it all.

Now, look *into* you again. What do you *see* now? Is then the state of self-awareness, one of profound peace and unity, achieved by letting go of the fragmented and returning to that still point within?

Hold the moment, and break away to write down (in any form) *what is it to be you?*

Return to Guru, and read him again, or at least the following. Does it reverberate?

പുലനറ്റുപ്പൊരികളുറ്റു പരിപൂരണ-
പോതം പുകന്റെ പുത്തേ-
ളുലകറ്റുടലോടുയിരുള്ളമടക്കു
മിടക്കൊടും പൊഴിത
നിലെ പെറ്റു നിരഞ്ചനമാകി
നിരുപാതികൈ-
നിത്തരൈക്കടലേ
അലൈ പൊക്കിയടക്കി മടക്കിയല-
ക്കോലമാക്കാതരുൾ പുരിവായ്

(2 (5), തേവാരപതികങ്കൾ)

Grant me the state,
That is no object of knowledge,
And not perceptible to senses,
That is plenitude of pure Consciousness,
Beyond even the world of gods,
And within the being of which
Become extinct both body and life.
O the unconditioned, blemishless,
Waveless ocean of stillness,
Bless me with the favour
Of not being caught in
The snare of the uprising
And downfalling waves!

(2 (5), Thevarappatikangal)

2.4.2 Empathy

If self-awareness is seeing yourself *as truly you*, empathy is seeing another *as truly as they are*, not as an object or as *other*, but as being the subject of their experience. By transcending the boundary between self and other, it fuses their experiential world with one's own, enabling a direct participation in the reality of the other while retaining

awareness of one's own being. Thus, empathy is the capacity to *feel with* another, to sense what someone else is going through, not by imagining from the outside, but by entering, however briefly, into their experience. As it is generally understood, it involves,

- ◆ listening deeply without judgement
- ◆ recognising and responding to others' emotions
- ◆ understanding the perspectives different from one's own
- ◆ acknowledging another's emotional experience as authentic and valid.

But why should we be empathetic? Why not stay insulated in our own experiences? And, by refusing to enter another's reality, what aspect of being human do we deny? Could it be that *to be is to be as the other of the other*?

Now, how has Guru explained empathy? As a self-proclaimed *Advaitin*, Guru asserted the indivisibility of the self and the other, and empathy would then be acting on that realisation. To put it in his words,

അവനിവന്നെനരിയുന്നതൊക്കെയോർത്താ-
ലവനിയിലാദിമമായൊരാത്മരൂപം
അവനവനാത്മസുഖത്തിനാചരിക്കു-
ന്നവയപരനു സുഖത്തിനായ് വരേണം.

(24, ആത്മോപദേശശതകം)

Contemplatively visualized,
Are in essence all one primordial ātmā
assuming various forms.
Whatever one does for one's own
happiness,
Should be conducive to the happiness
of others as well.

(24, Aatmopadeshashatakam)

This was preceded by another that sublimates the act of being empathetic.

പ്രിയമപരന്റെയതെൻപ്രിയം; സ്വകീയ-
പ്രിയമപരപ്രിയമിപ്രകാരമാകും
നയ, മതിനാലെ നരന്നു നന്മ നൽകും
ക്രിയയപരപ്രിയഹേതുവായ് വരേണം.

(22, ആത്മോപദേശശതകം)

The happiness of another is the happiness
of mine,
And my happiness is the happiness of
others too—
With this guiding principle,
Actions performed to ensure happiness of
oneself
Should secure the happiness of others
as well.

(22, Aatmopadeshashatakam)

Thus, empathy, for Guru, was a consequence of knowing. Seeing no separation between one and the other, one cannot but care. Compassion becomes the expression of empathy, and love its enduring presence.

അരുളൻപനുകമ്പ മുന്നിനും
പൊരുളൊന്നാണിതു ജീവതാരകം
'അരുളുള്ളവനാണു ജീവി' യെ
നുരുവിട്ടീടുകയീ നവാക്ഷരി

(3, അനുകമ്പാദശകം)

Grace, Love, Compassion—
All these three
Have one reality alone
For their meaning content,
The star that is life's saviour.
"He who loves is
Who really lives—"
Do repeat this sacred
Nine-syllabled charm.

(3, Anukambadasakam)

The verse presents empathy not as an emotion, but the very essence of life itself, for *he alone lives who loves*. And, what is love? അരുളൻപനുകമ്പ മുന്നും! That grace, love, and empathy are the same!

ഒരു പീഡയെറുവിനും വരു-
ത്തരുതെന്നുള്ളനുകമ്പയും സദാ
കരുണാകര! നൽകുകുള്ളിൽ നിൻ-



തിരുമെയ് വിട്ടകലാതെ ചിത്തയും.

(1, അനുകമ്പാദശകം)

Such compassion that
Even to an ant
Would brook to befall
Not the least of harms,
Confer on me;
O Mercy-maker,
Along with the thought
That from your sacred presence
Never to go astray.

(1, Anukambadasakam)

The prayer, “May I cause no harm at all, even to an ant,” demonstrates a universal and radical form of empathy that extends to the smallest of creatures, making the concept of empathy tangible and actionable.

കൊല്ലായ്കിലവൻ ഗുണമുള്ള പൂമാ-
നല്ലായ്കിൽ മൃഗത്തൊടു തുല്യനവൻ,
കൊല്ലുന്നവനില്ല ശരണ്യത മ-
റ്റൊല്ലാവക നന്മയുമാർന്നിടിലും

(5, ജീവകാരുണ്യ പഞ്ചകം)

Not-killing makes
A human virtuous.
Otherwise equal to beasts
He does become.
No refuge there is
For the one who kills,
Even if all other virtues
Accrue on him.

(5, Jeeva Karunya Panchakam)

This verse, by providing a stark and uncompromising ethical framework for empathy, elevates it from being just a desirable trait to a non-negotiable prerequisite for being human.

And, if this is what Guru insists on, what would it be, to be empathetic when your survival itself is bound to the destruction of another life? How would you understand and live this teaching when life meets life, and both seek to endure?

Think of a situation. You are walking through a narrow path with tall grasses, and you spot a cobra lying across your path, its hood raised. The only way forward is past the snake. How will you meet this dreadful situation? Gather your response(s).

Now, those who are ready to strike in defence of your life, pause! Feel the hands of Guru on your shoulders, gently reminding you, the snake guards its life as dearly as you guard yours. This land is its home, as it is ours. Guru picked up a small stick and gently tapped the ground. The cobra, lowered its hood, and slithered away.

You are alone again, the path still before you. Can you hear the soft murmur - *when life meets life, what endures?* Empathy is not being sentimental, but how life fills itself in one, and flows to another.

2.4.3 Critical Thinking

If thinking is putting together the pieces of a puzzle to see the picture, critical thinking is turning the puzzle over to ask, is this the right picture at all? Or, if thinking is reading a book to understand it, critical thinking is asking, who is telling this story, and what might be left unsaid? You may read each page carefully, follow the events, and remember the details. But suppose you pause to wonder, why did the author choose these characters and not others? Whose voice is missing? What assumptions does the story ask me to accept without proof? That questioning of the frame itself is critical thinking.

Thus, critical thinking is the ability to actively and objectively analyse, evaluate, and interpret information, ideas, or situations, to reach reasoned and well-justified conclusions. It involves recognising assumptions, testing their validity, examining evidence, and considering alternative viewpoints before

deciding what to believe or do. In this sense, it is not merely about finding faults, but about seeking clarity, coherence, and truth.

But why would this be an essential life skill? Imagine a child born into a caste deemed ‘untouchable’, forbidden to draw water from the well, shunned away from public places, or a mother watching her son sold as a slave, separated from family and his homeland, forced into a life of cruelty and silence. Think of a young girl denied education because she is considered destined for the home, while her brothers roam the world, or the worker trapped in harsh conditions, with no voice or rights, expected only to comply. These are not distant tales or forgotten history, but lived realities, real stories from places and times still remembered. What if no one had ever asked, “why must this be”? What if no one had dared to question? The privileges we hold as humans, the dignity we claim, are because someone, perhaps a Narayana Guru, dared to think beyond the given.

Beyond being the mystic that he was, Guru was relentless in challenging the absurdities of living. He did not keep himself secluded from the mundane realities of life, and did not take inherited customs, beliefs, or social arrangements without question. Instead, he examined them against the principles of reason, justice, and human dignity. Where he found them wanting, he was unafraid to question, to reinterpret, and to reform. In this way, Guru’s life and work stand as a testament to the power of critical thinking, not as an abstract exercise, but as a force that transforms society.

Even as a child, this clarity of thought and concern for others guided him. Once, walking past a *Pulaya* (a community marginalised by the hierarchical caste system) settlement near his home, he saw a rice pot boiling over on an untended stove. Without hesitation,

he stepped inside and took the pot off the fire. When scolded for entering a space he was told to keep away from, his reply was simple: “If I had not done that, the family would have had nothing to eat tonight.” In that response lay something more than compassion or care, but a reasoned refusal of the practice of untouchability that cannot withstand reason.

However, he was not confrontational, nor forceful, nor driven by loud defiance. His way was gentle, inviting change without hurting. His life and works are full of such wit, plain and simple, but profound in impact.

The widely known consecration of a Siva idol at *Aruvippuram* offers an example. Setting aside the restriction that only Brahmins could perform such rites, the act and the declaration, “*This is an Ezhava Siva,*” radically unsettled an idea that had long been.

Even a train journey became a setting where his incisive thought came through. A *raja* (local ruler) was a co-traveller in the train. Eager to place Guru in the social hierarchy, the *raja* asked Guru his caste. Guru turned the question back with a quiet wit, “Can’t you tell by looking?” *Raja* admitted he could not, Guru asked, “If you cannot know it by the looks, how could you possibly know it by hearing?”, revealing the futility of judging others by inherited labels as caste, and questioning assumptions and exposing the limits of conventional knowledge.

He even dared to unsettle deeply held sentimental beliefs with simple, but striking words. When asked whether burial or cremation was the right way to dispose of a corpse, Guru replied, “Crush them in an oil press; they will make good manure.” The questioner flinched, surprised by the bluntness. Guru smiled gently and asked, “Why? Will it hurt?”



A Conversation Beneath the Mango Tree

This incident took place during one of the most remarkable encounters in modern Indian spiritual and social history was the meeting between Sree Narayana Guru and Mahatma Gandhi during the latter's visit to Kerala in 1925, when he visited Guru at *Sivagiri Ashramam*.

During the visit, an insightful conversation took place. As they sat together, Gandhi pointed to a mango tree in front of them in the *ashramam*, and observed that just as the branches and leaves are different from each other in the same tree, so are people different from one another. Guru replied that, the juice will taste the same, implying that despite the differences among religions, they share a core that unites humanity.

Critical thinking finds clear expression in one of Guru's core teachings: *To believe is not enough. One must see. To follow is not enough. One must discern.* He boldly challenged the caste system, refusing to accept its divisions and insisting on the fundamental equality and dignity of every human being, thus urging us to think beyond the given.

പുണർന്നു പെറുമെല്ലാമൊ-
രിനമാം പുണരാത്തത്
ഇനമല്ലിനമായിങ്ങൊ-
രിണയാർന്നൊത്തു കാണമതും

(1, ജാതി ലക്ഷണം)

All that mate together
And beget offspring
Belong to one species;
Those that do not mate
Together are not so.
Those of the same species
Are often seen in pairs as well.

(1, Jati lakshanam)

The verse by asserting that "all that produces offspring by mating is of one kind", directly challenges the idea of separate human castes. By proposing a simple and verifiable logic that any species capable of interbreeding and producing fertile offspring is fundamentally one kind, he moved the debate from the religious or historical dogma to a verifiable reality.

ഇനമാർന്നുടൻ താൻ തന്റെ-
യിനമേതെന്നു ചൊൽകയാൽ
ഇനമേതെന്നു കേൾക്കില്ല
നിനവും കണ്ണുമുള്ളവർ

(5, ജാതി ലക്ഷണം)

The body that pertains
To the species tells you,
Of what species you are.
Those who think, and
Those who have eyes,
Therefore, will not ask,
"Of what kind (jāti) you are?"

(5, Jati lakshanam)

By stating that the body "itself declares its kind", the verse specifies that the truth of our shared humanity is self-evident. We do not need prescriptions to tell us what a human being is; our bodies already provide the evidence.

ഇല്ല ജാതിയിലൊന്നുണ്ടോ
വല്ലതും ഭേദമോർക്കുകിൽ
ചൊല്ലേറും വൃക്തിഭാഗത്തി-
ലല്ലോ ഭേദമിരുന്നിടു.

(10, ജാതി നിർണ്ണയം)

Species-wise, does one find,
When considered,
Any difference between man and man? Is
it not that Difference exists apparently
Only individual-wise?

(10, Jati Nirnayam).

The verse suggests that, upon reflection, it can be discerned that caste itself holds no real difference, only the individual aspects vary.

Now, imagine holding a mirror yet again. This time not to look into you, but to question *whatever* that is you. Think of your name, but what makes it yours? You are either male or female, but why must it be so? You belong to a land, but how is it yours? You think something is true, but how do you know? Does it begin to dawn that what you took for certain may only be borrowed, and what you thought was fixed may only be assumed? Think more, until you see the questions behind your answers, and the truths that begin where certainty fades.

2.4.4 Problem Solving

If critical thinking is about questioning the frame, problem solving is about working within or beyond that frame to act. You may identify what is wrong, but problem solving asks, *what now?* It is the ability to face a difficulty, break it down, explore options, and choose a path that moves you towards a solution, even if the path has never been walked before.

Imagine a leaking roof during heavy rain. You may know precisely why the roof leaks and even which tile is broken, but that alone will not keep you dry. Problem solving involves finding a solution to stop the leak, whether that means fixing the tile, covering it for the night, or even moving everything to a dry corner until help arrives.

It is not limited to emergencies. It happens when two neighbours, each with different needs, work out how to use the same small plot of land without conflict, or when friends, lost in an unfamiliar city, figure out how to find their way with no map and no phone signal. It also happens when a class must divide a single set of materials so everyone can complete their work. Thus, problem solving is about seeing not just the obstacle, but the possibilities beyond it.

But, how is this an essential life skill? Because life is seldom without obstructions. Some challenges may be small, such as cooking a meal when one ingredient is missing or finding a way to repair a chair with only the tools you have at home. Others are much larger, like ending a custom that has treated some people as less than others for centuries, or changing an unfair system

Activity

Choose a belief you have inherited - about gender, caste, religion, or success.

Ask:

- * Who told me this?
- * What evidence supports or challenges it?
- * If Guru were to sit beside me now, what questions would he ask?

Write a short journal entry starting with:

"I used to think..., but now I begin to ..."

As you write, think about moments when you have accepted ideas simply because that is how it is? What might change if you began to ask more and assume less?



that many believe cannot be changed. In both cases, knowing what is wrong is only the beginning. Unless someone takes action, the leak will continue to drip, the door will remain shut, and the injustice will persist. Problem solving is what turns understanding into change.

Guru understood this clearly. He not only pointed out what was unjust; he also worked to change it. When education was denied to some communities, he started schools open to all. In his ashram, he introduced vocational skills training so that people could earn a living with dignity. When entry to temples was restricted by birth, he built temples that welcomed everyone. When costly rituals burdened the poor, he suggested simpler and meaningful forms of worship. His solutions were simple, but they met the need and improved lives.

An incident at the Thalassery Jagannatha Temple reflects Guru's tactful approach at problem-solving. The temple, consecrated by Guru, initially allowed lower caste communities to worship though only from a distance. Over time, even this limited access was prohibited. Upon learning this, Guru reached the temple to address the issue. He convened a meeting and emphasized the futility and meaninglessness of caste divisions, urging that all castes be allowed to enter and worship freely.

One attendee, a staunch caste fanatic, responded that a decision would be taken only after one year (*varsham* in Malayalam). Guru quietly nodded in agreement. Before the meeting ended, the sky suddenly clouded over, and it began to rain (*varsham* also means rain in Malayalam). When the rain stopped Guru asked, what do you say now that one *varsham* has passed? Shall we allow them to enter the temple now? And, thus ending the impasse.

Sree Narayana Guru approached problems not with judgment or fear, but with insight. His responses often dissolved tension because they were not just clever, but compassionate. One such instance is when he wrote a letter to the *Chathan* (ചാത്തൻ, spirit or malevolent force). A man once came to Guru in distress. He claimed that his house was being attacked by *Chathan*. Given the prevailing beliefs and traditions of that period, others around him believed this too, and fear gripped the gathering. Guru did not mock him, nor did he dismiss the experience. Instead, he sat down and wrote a letter to *Chathan*, asking him to stop troubling the man and to behave well. And, the man was instructed to keep the letter in his home. Miraculously, the attacks stopped. What was the miracle? It was not magic or Guru's superordinate powers, but merely the understanding of human nature. The Guru's act,

- ◆ acknowledged the man's suffering rather than dismissing it
- ◆ transformed fear into faith through a symbolic gesture
- ◆ solved the problem by calming the mind, not by attacking the unknown.

His teachings show that problem solving is not just strategy, but discernment guided by compassion, courage shaped by ethics, and clarity sustained by detachment. Guru reminds us that *it is not that anything is unknown*. When we truly understand, fear dissolves. And often, the solution lies not in controlling the outer world, but in clarifying the inner one.

Sree Narayana Guru's approach shows that solving problems requires:

- ◆ understanding the nature of the problem, not just its appearance
- ◆ responding with clarity and calm, not panic or prejudice

- ◆ transforming situations through insight, not just through control.

Now, let us turn back to ourselves.

Recall the biggest problem/s

- you face in person
- you think humanity faces

Now,

- What makes it a problem?
- Have you understood its cause, or only its effects?
- Who or what is most affected by it?

- What options exist to address it? Which of these have you never considered before?
- How might your solution change if you aimed not only to fix the issue but to make the situation better for everyone involved?
- How would you respond differently now, inspired by Guru?

Now, as learners of philosophy, think of the problems defining our age. How would you attempt it? Why do you think philosophising matters?

- ◆ All verses included in this unit are taken from *Sreenarayanaguru Krithikal Sampooranam*, published by DC Books, with commentary by Muni Narayana Prasad.
- ◆ Translations are taken from *A Cry in the Wilderness: The Works of Narayana Guru*, translated and edited by Vinaya Chaitanya, published by HarperCollins.

Recap

- ◆ Understanding life skills
- ◆ WHO definition of life skills
- ◆ Self-awareness is the ability to recognise and understand your own thoughts, emotions, and behaviours.
- ◆ Self-awareness is the first step towards personal growth.
- ◆ Reflecting on self-awareness as a life skill: questioning what it truly means to know yourself and why deeper awareness matters
- ◆ Reflecting on your level of self-awareness through introspection
- ◆ Empathy as seeing and feeling another's experience authentically.
- ◆ Empathy involves deep listening, understanding, and responding without judgement.



- ◆ Guru's teaching: Empathy arises as a consequence of knowing the unity of self and other
- ◆ Compassion and love as expressions of empathy
- ◆ Reflecting on what is it to be empathetic
- ◆ Critical thinking is the ability to actively and objectively analyse, evaluate, and interpret information, ideas, or situations, to reach reasoned and well-justified conclusions.
- ◆ Critical thinking involves recognising assumptions, testing their validity, examining evidence, and considering alternative viewpoints before deciding what to believe or do.
- ◆ Critical thinking helps challenge unjust social norms and hidden biases.
- ◆ Instances from Guru's life and works as providing examples of critical thinking.
- ◆ Reflecting on critical thinking as a life skill
- ◆ Problem solving as the ability to face a difficulty, break it down, explore options, and choose a path that moves you towards a solution.
- ◆ Instances from Guru's life as providing examples of problem solving skill.
- ◆ Reflecting on problem solving as a life skill.

Objective Questions

1. What does WHO define as the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour?
2. Which life skill discussed in the unit can be considered as the first step towards personal growth?
3. In which work does Guru discuss the equality of castes and dismiss caste distinctions?
4. Guru's teaching that "He alone lives who loves" comes from which work?
5. What skill involves recognising your own emotions?
6. What term describes understanding another person's feelings?

7. Which philosophical concept connects the self and others as one?
8. What is the ability to critically analyse and evaluate the given called?
9. Who challenged caste divisions using reason and justice?
10. Which work contains the verse about grace, love, and empathy?
11. What skill involves finding solutions to difficulties?
12. Which organisation provides a formal definition of life skills?
13. What does self-awareness require recognising besides thoughts?
14. In which poem does Guru express gratitude from the perspective of an embryo?
15. Empathy requires listening without what?
16. Critical thinking questions the validity of what?
17. Which skill involves breaking down obstacles to find solutions?
18. In which work does Guru describe the Self as a mass of joy?
19. Which work is referenced in relation to compassion and not harming even an ant?
20. The work 'ജീവകാരുണ്യ പഞ്ചകം' (Jeeva Karunya Panchakam) focuses on what ethical principle?

Answers

1. Life skills
2. Self-awareness
3. ജാതി ലക്ഷണം (*Jati Lakshanam*)
4. അനുകമ്പാദശകം (*Anukambadasakam*)
5. Self-awareness
6. Empathy



7. Advaita (or Non-duality)
8. Critical thinking
9. Sree Narayana Guru
10. അനുകമ്പാദശകം (*Anukambadasakam*)
11. Problem solving
12. WHO
13. Emotions
14. പിണ്ഡനന്ദി (*Pindanandi*)
15. Judgment
16. Assumptions
17. Problem solving
18. ഭക്തിദർശനം (*Bhakti Darsanam*)
19. അനുകമ്പാദശകം (*Anukambadasakam*)
20. Non-killing

Assignments

1. The title ‘ആത്മോപദേശശതകം’ (*Aatmopadeshashatakam*) can be translated as ‘One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction.’ Based on this, what do you think self-instruction implies here? How might it guide someone on the path of self-awareness?
2. As learners of philosophy, reflect on how Sree Narayana Guru’s approach to self-awareness and empathy challenges common assumptions about the ‘self’ and ‘other.’ How can this philosophical insight deepen your understanding and practice of life skills?
3. In his work അനുകമ്പാദശകം (*Anukambadasakam*), Guru links empathy, grace, and love. How do you think these qualities manifest in real-life situations? Can you find examples where empathy leads to transformative social change?
4. Guru’s use of paradoxes and wit, such as the letter to *Chathan* or the ‘oil press’ comment on corpses, invites us to think differently. Choose one such example from his life or works and discuss how humour or paradox can be a powerful tool in addressing problems.

5. How has this unit shaped your understanding of life skills as lived truths rather than merely learned abilities? Illustrate your response with examples from your own experience.
6. ജാതി ലക്ഷണം (*Jati Lakshanam*) dismisses caste distinctions as unreal. Considering this, discuss how Guru's teachings continue to inspire contemporary efforts to combat social divisions. Provide examples.
7. How does discussing life skills from a philosophical perspective add depth to their practical application?

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Suggested Reading

1. Muni Narayana Prasad. (2003). *The Philosophy of Narayana Guru*. D K Printworld.
2. Nataraja Guru. (1952). *The Word of the Guru: An Outline of the Life and Teachings of the Guru Narayana*. Paico Publishing House.
3. Nitya Chaitanya Yati. (2002) *That Alone, the Core of Wisdom: A Commentary on Atmopadesa Satakam, the One Hundred Verses of Self-instruction of Narayana Guru*. D.K. Printworld.
4. Nitya Chaitanya Yati. (1987). *The Psychology of Darsana Mala*. Gurukula Publishing House.



MODEL QUESTION PAPER SETS



SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE:

Reg. No :

Name :

Model Question Paper- set-I

Fifth Semester – UG Degree Examination
SKILL ENHANCEMENT COURSE – B21PH02SE

**PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELLING TOOLS IN
SREENARAYANAGURU'S PHILOSOPHY**

(CBCS - UG)

2022 -23 Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

Section A (Objective Type Questions)

I Answer any 10 questions. Each question carries 1 mark (10×1 = 10 marks)

1. Who is considered the father of experimental psychology?
2. Name two Greek thinkers who discussed the mind and human behaviour.
3. What is the literal meaning of psychology based on Greek?
4. What are the three progressive levels of personality in Indian psychology?
5. According to Sree Narayana Guru, what is the relationship between Brahman and Atman?
6. What is the significance of Aruvipuram in Guru's life?
7. Who wrote "Indian Psychology Vol. 1 Cognition" in 1933?
8. What does Advaita teach about the self and the universe?
9. According to Guru, what causes attachment in life?
10. What tool is commonly used in counselling to understand a client's mental state?
11. Define vocational education as per Guru's teachings.
12. Who established the first psychology laboratory?

13. What is 'Arivu' as mentioned in Guru's philosophy?
14. Who introduced the first laboratory method for psychological study?
15. What is the meaning of 'Atman' in Indian philosophy?

Section B (Very Short Questions)

II Answer any 10 questions. Each question carries 2 marks. (10×2=20 Marks)

16. Outline the major features of Indian psychology.
17. Discuss Sree Narayana Guru's views on consciousness.
18. How does the Bhagavad Gita illustrate the need for mental balance?
19. Explain self-reliance according to Guru.
20. What is the purpose of projective psychological tests?
21. How did Guru address the issue of untouchability?
22. What qualities are essential for a good counsellor?
23. Briefly state the role of education in removing superstition.
24. What is non-directive counselling?
25. Mention any two qualities that help purify the mind, according to Guru.
26. What is meant by self-actualization?
27. State the difference between behaviour and consciousness.
28. Briefly define the concept of 'self-realisation' in Indian tradition.
29. State the role of compassion in the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru.
30. What are the functions of the mind according to Indian psychology?

Section C (Short Questions)

III Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 4 marks (5×4 = 20 marks)

31. Compare Western and Indian perspectives on the nature of mind.
32. Short note on Sree Narayana Guru's approach to reforming religious practices.
33. Explain the different counselling tools mentioned in the course.

34. Discuss the role of vocational education in social upliftment.
35. Highlight Guru's contributions to rational thinking and eradication of superstition.
36. Write a note on the importance of empathy in counselling.
37. Describe the connection between psychological well-being and spiritual well-being.
38. Discuss how Indian and Western thinkers differ on the source of human suffering.
39. Explain the three Gunas in Indian psychology and their relevance to behaviour.
40. Write a short note on Maya as a psychological and philosophical concept.

Section D (Essay Questions)

IV Answer any 2 questions. Each question carries 10 marks (2×10 = 20 marks)

41. Explain the significance of Advaita philosophy in Sree Narayana Guru's teachings, with special reference to self and consciousness.
42. Discuss the integration of traditional Indian approaches and modern counselling, using Guru's life and teachings as context.
43. Analyse the concept of mind from both Indian philosophical and psychological viewpoints.
44. Evaluate the significance of individual enhancement strategies proposed by Sree Narayana Guru for present-day society.



SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE:

Reg. No :

Name :

Model Question Paper- set-II

Fifth Semester – UG Degree Examination
SKILL ENHANCEMENT COURSE – B21PH02SE

PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELLING TOOLS IN
SREENARAYANAGURU'S PHILOSOPHY

(CBCS - UG)

2022 -23 Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

Section A (Objective Type Questions)

I Answer any 10 questions. Each question carries 1 mark (10×1 = 10 marks)

1. What is the aim of psychology according to William McDougall?
2. Who gave the slogan, "One caste, one religion, one God for all"?
3. Name two subfields of psychology.
4. What is the Atman?
5. Give any one feature of conscious experience.
6. What is the non-dualistic approach called in Sanskrit?
7. Who installed the first model school for vocational education in Kerala?
8. Which poetic work of Guru advocates compassion for all beings?
9. What is meant by the "study of behaviour"?
10. Name one Indian practice that aids in healing and counselling.
11. Define maya according to Guru.
12. What type of questions are used in interviews during counselling?

13. Name any two ancient Indian texts focused on philosophy or mind.
14. Who coined the term 'Indian psychology'?
15. What does 'Maya' denote in Advaita philosophy?

Section B (Very Short Questions)

II Answer any 10 questions. Each question carries 2 marks(10×2 = 20 Marks)

16. List the key learning outcomes from Block 1 of the syllabus.
17. Define mental purity.
18. How does Guru view material pleasures versus spiritual happiness?
19. What is meant by self-report inventories?
20. Outline steps to maintain external and internal cleanliness.
21. How can education eradicate social evils?
22. Describe the importance of empathy in counselling.
23. Mention the characteristics of non-directive counselling.
24. Briefly describe Advaita as explained by Guru.
25. What are behaviour charts?
26. Name any traditional Indian method mentioned for self-improvement.
27. List two qualities of an effective group counsellor.
28. Explain the key aspects of Sree Narayana Guru's vision of social equality.
29. Briefly describe the concept of 'Brahman' in Indian philosophy.
30. What are the differences between empirical and transcendental self?

Section C (Short Questions)

III Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 4 marks (5×4 = 20 marks)

31. Explain how vocationalisation promoted dignity of labour in Guru's teachings.
32. Contrast directive and non-directive approaches in counselling.
33. Discuss the psychological significance of Guru's temple reforms.

34. Summarize the impact of superstitious beliefs in Kerala society and Guru's method of eradication.
35. Write a note on the holistic perspective in modern counselling.
36. Describe the role of group counselling in traditional Indian practices.
37. What are the main conclusions about the mind drawn by Indian philosophers?
38. Examine the concept of 'liberation' or 'moksha' in the context of psychology and philosophy.
39. Analyse the use of stories or parables in Guru's psychological teachings.
40. Short note on methods of psychological self-assessment discussed in the course.

Section D (Essay Questions)

IV Answer any 2 questions. Each question carries 10 marks (2×10 = 20 marks)

41. Describe the journey of psychology from ancient philosophy to modern science, referring to concepts in both Indian and Western traditions.
42. Assess how Sree Narayana Guru's approach to self-reliance and education can guide social transformation.
43. Evaluate the role and effectiveness of different psychological and counselling tools presented in the course.
44. Discuss the theme of unity in Sree Narayana Guru's thought, focusing on philosophical and practical aspects.

സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യായാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

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സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം
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**DON'T LET IT
BE TOO LATE**

**SAY
NO
TO
DRUGS**

**LOVE YOURSELF
AND ALWAYS BE
HEALTHY**



SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELLING TOOLS IN GURU'S PHILOSOPHY

COURSE CODE: B21PH02SE



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