

Moral Dilemmas and Ethical Decision Making

COURSE CODE: B21PH01SE

Undergraduate Programme in Philosophy

Skill Enhancement Course

SELF LEARNING MATERIAL



SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.

Moral Dilemmas and Ethical Decision Making

Course Code: B21PH01SE
Semester - III

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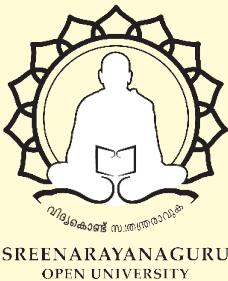


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MESSAGE FROM VICE CHANCELLOR

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 courses 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 skill enhancement course “Moral Dilemmas and Ethical Decision Making” for BA Philosophy learners has been carefully designed to bridge theoretical knowledge with practical application. We have ensured that the course material encourages critical thinking and fosters the development of analytical skills essential for navigating complex moral landscapes. The Self-Learning Material has been meticulously crafted, incorporating relevant examples to facilitate better comprehension.

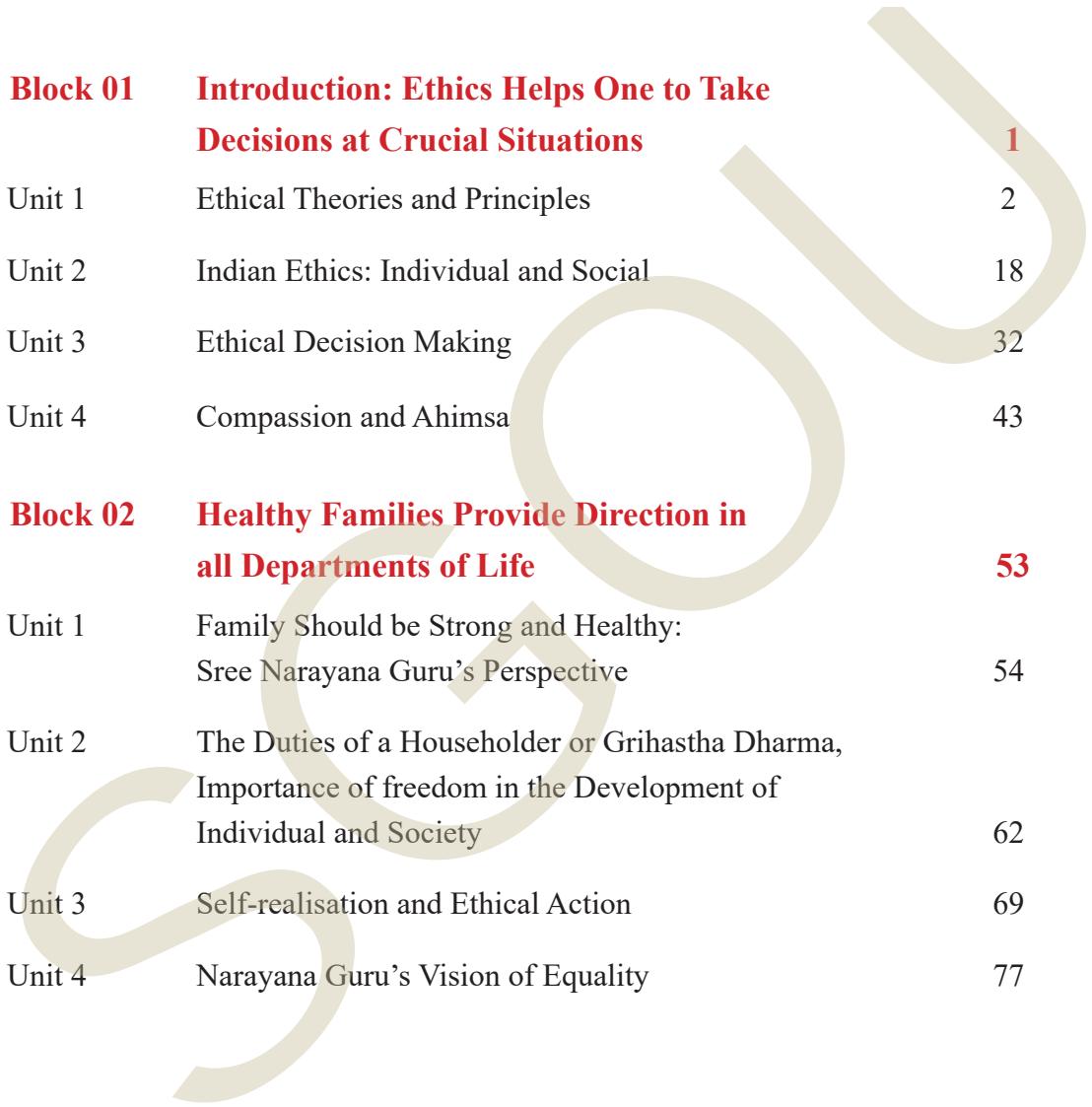
Rest assured, the university’s student support services will be at your disposal throughout your academic journey, readily available to address any concerns or grievances you may encounter. We encourage you to reach out to us freely regarding any matter about your academic programme. It is our sincere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



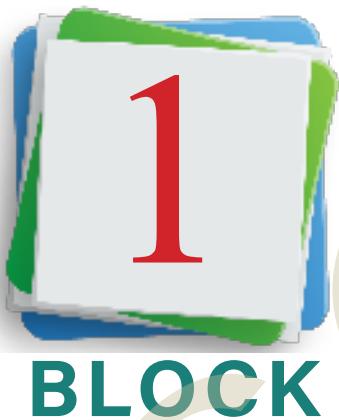
Warm regards.
Dr. Jagathy Raj V. P.

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CONTENTS



Block 01	Introduction: Ethics Helps One to Take Decisions at Crucial Situations	1
Unit 1	Ethical Theories and Principles	2
Unit 2	Indian Ethics: Individual and Social	18
Unit 3	Ethical Decision Making	32
Unit 4	Compassion and Ahimsa	43
Block 02	Healthy Families Provide Direction in all Departments of Life	53
Unit 1	Family Should be Strong and Healthy: Sree Narayana Guru's Perspective	54
Unit 2	The Duties of a Householder or Grihastha Dharma, Importance of freedom in the Development of Individual and Society	62
Unit 3	Self-realisation and Ethical Action	69
Unit 4	Narayana Guru's Vision of Equality	77



Introduction: Ethics Helps One to Take Decisions at Crucial Situations



Ethical Theories and Principles

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

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

- ◆ familiarise themselves with the fundamental concepts and principles of consequentialism, deontological theory, and virtue ethics
- ◆ have a general awareness of ethical issues and a commitment to ethical actions
- ◆ get familiarised with the foundational ethical principles
- ◆ get exposed to professional ethics and their application in various fields
- ◆ get a general awareness of ethical dilemmas in personal and professional contexts

Prerequisites

Are pesticides safe for humans? Do vineyards need pesticides? Grapevine farmers say that they need pesticides and fungicides to protect vineyards. Customers say that they need pesticide-free grapes in order to protect their health. Environmentalists express the view that pesticides ruin the ecosystem. It is a problematic situation to offer a customer a worse product for one's own profit. In the above-mentioned example, choosing one moral will result in violating another, or doing one thing could bring positive results but is morally wrong. There are so many similar problems in human society. Another common example is 'stealing from the rich to feed the poor.' Who will deal with such problems? Whose field is this?

Here comes the importance of ethical theories and principles. Ethical theories and principles give one strength to face such problems and help one to understand the distinction between what is considered right or wrong in a particular situation.

A person with a compassionate mind cannot enjoy a banquet by ignoring a person who has been injured in a road accident. According to Sreenarayananaguru, a kind person is one who does good to others in any situation. Guru says:

“A compassionate person performs actions day and night
For the good of others who essentially are not ‘others’
With no selfish motive. The mean, on the other hand,
Performs unsuccessful deeds.
With no vision of higher values,
For one’s benefit alone.”

Keywords

Consequentialism, Deontology, Ethical egoism, Utilitarianism, Virtue theory, Dilemma, Casuistry

Discussion

1.1.1 General Introduction to Ethics

Human beings' ethical behaviour has been noticed from the beginning of human society, and anthropologists have recorded that all primitive tribes have definite rules of practice. Ethics is essentially a natural phenomenon that developed to restrict individual selfishness and nurture human co-existence. The known history of Western Ethics begins with ancient Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and Greece was the birthplace of Western Ethics. It was sophists who studied the human conduct for the first time. Socrates said that 'virtue is knowledge' and it may be taught and learned. Plato prescribes four cardinal virtues- wisdom, courage, temperance and justice. Aristotle believes that social good is above individual good.

What type of human behaviour is immoral? How should one behave in life? What are the peculiarities of a person with good character? These are some of the fundamental questions of ethics.

In Indian philosophy, ethics is a means of attaining self-realisation or liberation. Narayana Guru, who acknowledged the fact that the goal of all is a happy life, taught us the need to put values into practice in order to achieve this goal. Let us see what is said by Sree Narayana Guru in his famous poem, Atmopadesasatakam

“The happiness of another is the happiness of mine,

And my happiness of another 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.” (Verse 22)

The Guru conveys a great message that in a world where people think only of themselves, jealousy, hatred and violence will come along. According to Sree Narayana Guru, everything people see in this world is various expressions of the same ultimate consciousness. Those who understand these teachings of the Guru, and live by this message of the oneness of existence, will give up selfishness and live for the happiness of all. The Guru says,

“അവനിവന്നനിയുന്നതൊക്കെയോർത്താ-
ലവനിയിലാദിമമായൊരാത്മരൂപം
അവനവനാത്മസുവത്തിനാചതിക്കു-
നവയപരന്നു സുവത്തിനായ് വരേണും”.

- (Atmopadesasatakam 24)

Ethics teaches such great messages. When we treat others with love and compassion, it means we treat ourselves well. We need to remember another great principle of the Guru; in his opinion, if we think authentically, there is no difference between universal and particular. We know the relationship between the sea and the waves. Similarly, all objects in this world are just different waves of the ocean of consciousness. The Guru says

“നടിയിട്ടുമാദിമസത്തയുള്ളതെതല്ലോ;
ജയമിതു സർവ്വമനിത്യമാം; ജലത്തിന്-
വടിവിനെ വിട്ടു തരംഞ്ഞഗമന്യമാമോ?”

- (Atmopadesasatakam 19)

Ethics prescribes a set of rules, theories and principles that contribute to leading a good, happy and successful life. There is a need to fix certain norms to make judgements on various acts of man living in society. ‘Norms’ may be defined as standardised ways of conduct and behaviour in a society, e.g., not hurting others. Ethics deals with such norms in

detail as a branch of philosophy. The ethical values present in one’s mind work as a guide. This guide helps one to choose the right action in the right place, at the right time, and in the right way.

Sree Narayana Guru was the owner of such a big heart. It was common to steal jackfruit from the premises of a temple consecrated by the Guru. Guru reacted when the priest, understanding who the thief was, told the Guru about it. Upon hearing about the theft, the Guru said, “Why didn’t you tell him that if he came in the night his feet might get thorn pricks or bitten by snakes. You should have asked him to come during day time and take the fruits. You have no compassion in you. At least now, you should start to love him and warn him of the danger in his actions”. The Guru here is not encouraging theft but points out that there is an element of good in everyone, and it is the duty of a philanthropist to make an effort to bring it out. Actually, the person stole jackfruits out of poverty. The circumstances of a person must also be taken into account before sentencing. Only the owner with a big heart, who gives importance to values, should respond in this way. In the modern period only, a few people share this perspective.

Values are unarticulated beliefs that form the foundation for ethical behaviour. If ethical values are not practised in a society, then there will be a total imbalance eventually leading to its destruction. People living in a society have a greater responsibility to lead a life according to the ethical codes that are fixed and practised in that society. People have to regulate their conduct to suit the social contexts. Ethics is important in a society because it grants the members some expectation of consistency and predictability in behaviour or action.

Ethics is not a remote subject but is part

and parcel of everyday life. It belongs to one of the branches of philosophy namely axiology. Axiology deals with the concept of ethics and aesthetics. The name ethics is derived from the Greek word ‘ethos’, which means ‘character or custom’ or ‘habit’. Ethics is related to moral issues. It treats moral questions such as what is the right thing and wrong thing to do. A society needs moral conduct because it can provide a framework for a happy and good life for its members.

Ethics may be defined as the normative science of conduct of human beings living in societies. It deals with the standards or rules or, norms or criteria by which one judges human actions. Normative science is dealing with ‘what ought to be’ rather than what is. ‘Ethics as a normative science is concerned with what ought to be done’. Ethics seeks to set norms or standards for conduct. Norm dictates what we ought or ought not to do. The word norm comes from the Latin ‘norma’, which means rule or pattern. Ethical code is an essential part of human societies. Its prime function is to control the behaviour of an individual, a group or a society.

One can say that ethics is a system of principles that help people to distinguish right from wrong and good from bad. Ethics can give real and practical guidance to our lives. Ethical values like honesty, truthfulness, trustworthiness, and responsibility help and guide people along a pathway to deal more effectively with ethical problems by removing those behaviours that do not conform to their sense of right and wrong. Ethics is what guides people to tell the truth, treat others with kindness, keep promises or help others in need. In order to make better judgments on the acts of people in a society, one should know the norms and principles of ethics. Those principles include character and conduct, right and

wrong, good and bad, duties, etc.

Character is the settled inner disposition of an individual. It is the permanent bent of mind created by a settled habit of action. On the other hand, conduct is the willed action or voluntary action one carries out with a choice. An action is right when it is in agreement with the existing rules of a society. The term ‘right’ originated from the Latin word ‘rectus’, which means straight or according to rule. Right and wrong are relative terms. Right action in a society may be wrong in another society.

Ethics as a general category can be divided into non-normative ethics and normative ethics.

Non-normative ethics: It is not based on norms or standards. Non-normative ethics aims to establish the factual or conceptual nature of an event, rather than prescribing what ethically ought to be the event.

Descriptive ethics: The aim of descriptive ethics is to acquire empirical knowledge about morality. Those who study moral behaviour, like anthropologists, sociologists and historians, use this method to analyse the moral attitudes, codes and beliefs that differ from person to person and from place to place.

Metaethics: Metaethics analyses the meaning of the principal terms in ethics, such as ‘right’, ‘responsibility,’ ‘good,’ etc. Examining the term morality and separating between moral and non-moral are the typical Meta-ethical problems. Metaethics is concerned with the nature of moral statements.

Normative ethics: Always looks towards standards of right or good action. It explains how one ought to act.

General normative ethics: The



Non-normative approaches	Normative approaches
Descriptive ethics	General normative ethics
Meta ethics	Applied ethics

purpose of general normative ethics is to form an ethical theory so that one can get answers to questions like what is right and what is wrong. It is concerned with how people should behave to be right or wrong.

Applied ethics: It uses tools like the principles and theories of general normative ethics to legitimize the positions on certain moral problems. It deals with ethical issues arising in the actual life situation of different professions, the cyber world, the environment, etc. Applied ethics emerged in the 1960s and is today regarded as the most relevant branch of ethics. Enormous developments in the field of science and technology bring certain ethical issues. These issues demand serious attention because many of them challenge the very existence of life on earth, e.g., environmental problems. At this juncture, the application of ethics gains much signification, e.g. the ethical issues behind abortion, euthanasia, etc.

Ethics is also known as moral philosophy. The term ‘moral’ is derived from ‘mores’, which means custom. Commonly, the terms ethics and morality are used in a similar way, but a few ethicists make a distinction. Morality can be assumed as an individual person’s appeal to questions of what is right or wrong or good and bad, often on a personal level. On the other hand, ethics is the standards of right and wrong prescribed by a certain community or social setting. So, one can rightly say that morals are personal values, whereas ethics guide values within professions and groups.

As we are living in a society, all our actions, in one way or another, affect the other members. So, understanding what is right and wrong is necessary, and ethics gives one knowledge about right and wrong or good and bad. It helps one to make decisions in crucial situations. So, ethics becomes inevitable in human life. An understanding of ethical norms or standards deepens one’s reflection on the basic questions of life.

Sree Narayana Guru has made it very clear what every person’s worldly life should be like. Guru taught us that happiness is found only in kindness and that lack of love is the cause of all sorrows. Ignorance leads to a lack of love and is the root cause of all sorrows.

“By kindness comes joy.

To a heart devoid of love comes all sorrows

Darkness (of heart) expels love and is the core of sorrow and seed to everything (all sufferings)”. (Anukampa Dashakam 2)

1.1.2 Ethical Theories

Ethical theories represent the viewpoints from which individuals seek guidance as they make decisions. Ethical theories are formal statements about what we ought to do when faced with an ethical problem. The study of ethical theories gives a logical structure for knowing the ethical depth of human conduct and helps one to point out ethical problems and support tools for their solution. Different

ethical theories emphasise different decision-making patterns.

Ethical theories come under general normative ethics. There are generally three major ethical theories- consequentialism, deontological theory and virtue theory. These theories serve as the cornerstone of discussions in normative ethics.

1.1.2.1 Consequentialism

All of you will agree that lying is wrong. However, if telling a lie would help to save a person's life, Consequentialism says that it is the right thing to do. Consequentialism is a normative ethical theory that says that something is good or bad depending on its outcomes or consequences. From the point of view of a consequentialist, an ethically right action will produce a good result. For example, a consequentialist justifies killing a human bomb because it is better to kill one person than to cause death of many people. The sub-types of Consequentialism are ethical egoism, ethical altruism and utilitarianism.

◆ **Ethical Egoism:** In a densely populated area, there is a cashew factory emitting smoke, which leads to air pollution and respiratory illnesses among the local residents. Concerned about their health, the community urges the factory owner to shut down the factory. However, the factory owner refuses to do so because closing the factory would result in financial loss for them. This scenario illustrates ethical egoism, a theory asserting that an action is morally right if its consequences benefit the individual performing the action. In this case, the factory owner's refusal to close the factory despite its harmful

effects on the community aligns with ethical egoism, as he/she prioritises his/her own financial interests over the well-being of others. According to ethical egoism, individuals should exclusively act in their own self-interest, and in this instance, the factory owner's decision reflects this principle, disregarding the negative consequences imposed on the community.

- ◆ **Ethical altruism:** Imagine witnessing a scenario where a man risks his own life to save another person who is drowning. Despite the danger involved, the individual jumps into the water and successfully rescues the drowning person. This exemplifies the concept of ethical altruism, which asserts that an action is morally right if its consequences benefit others, even if it comes at a cost or risk to oneself. In this case, the individual's act of risking his/her own life to save another demonstrates a commitment to prioritising the well-being of others over personal interests. Ethical altruists are motivated by compassion and a sense of duty to help others, even if it means sacrificing their own safety or well-being. Unlike ethical egoists, who prioritise their own interests, ethical altruists emphasise the importance of promoting the welfare of others and living for the sake of others.
- ◆ **Utilitarianism:** The most prominent Consequentialist theory is utilitarianism. This theory says that moral decisions should be made on the basis of their consequences. It is mainly



based on the ‘the greatest happiness for greatest number’ principle. It was the 19th-century philosophers Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill who clearly described this theory. If somebody asks a utilitarian what a person should do, answer is that a person ought to act so as to maximize happiness and minimize unhappiness. Here, one is reaching a conclusion based on what will benefit the majority.

There are two versions of utilitarianism: Act utilitarianism and Rule utilitarianism. According to Act utilitarians, whenever we do something, we should perform the action that will create the greatest net utility. That means the principle of utility - do whatever will produce the best overall results - should be applied on a case-by-case basis. And, the right action in a situation is the one that yields more utility to the more number. According to rule utilitarians, our specific action is morally justified or morally right if it conforms to a justified moral rule. That is, we should judge the morality of individual actions by reference to general moral rules, and we should judge particular moral rules by checking if their acceptance into our moral code would produce more well-being than other possible rules.

In Act utilitarianism, a person has to act in such a way as to produce the greatest quantity of good over evil, for example, one could produce happiness in the world by doing physical labour like farming, cleaning, etc. On the other hand, Rule utilitarianism takes into account the rule and is concerned with fairness. People try to live by the rules prescribed by society. For example, keeping a promise is looked upon as a good rule in society.

1.1.2.2 Deontological theory

Deontology analyses the way that things are done rather than concentrating on consequences. It gives preference to respect for fundamental rights such as the right to truth, fulfilment of promises, etc. Deontology focuses on responsibility, intention and duty. Kant, who supported this theory of ethics, believes in ‘duty for duty’s sake’. Deontology regards duty as the basis of morality. Deontologists believe that some actions are morally mandatory regardless of their outcome. Defending one’s duty is what is considered ethically correct. For example, a deontologist will always keep his promises to other people and will follow the law.

After studying all the above theories, let us also listen to the opinion of the Sree Narayana Guru. According to Guru, the non-dual path is the only rescue when conflicting interests develop in a given situation due to one-sided action. When the dualistic mental outlook has once been wiped out and kindness expanses evenly like moonlight without distinction on all people, even on the common people and the trouble makers, that kind of kindness belongs to the framework of the Absolutist way of life and is the one that in the framework of self-realisation, is very important to keep in life. Guru stresses the criterion of one’s of happiness thus:

“അവനവനാത്മസുവത്തിനാചരിക്കു-
നവയപരമു സുവത്തിനായ് വരേണോ.”

1.1.2.3 Virtue theory

The virtue ethical theory judges a person by character rather than by an action. It is from the Greek tradition of Plato and Aristotle that virtue ethics originates. Virtuous character is cultured and makes a part of the individual, just like a tradition

or language. Virtue ethics require the head of an organisation to understand what virtues are good for public relations, and then decisions are made in the light of those particular virtues. For example, if the virtue of courage is of the utmost importance to a good soldier, then all decisions should be made ethically to ensure courage is preserved. Virtue ethics gives primary importance to individual character and well-being. This theory expresses that a virtuous person makes good choices. Virtuous persons are able to look at an action from other persons perspectives.

Nitya Chaithanya Yati says, ‘when compassion dawns in the firmament of our life as our guiding star we become easily acceptable to others and we also detect in everyone something good to love and accept. The world will always find a good friend in a kindly person who is not daunted by reproaches and reprovals. Such a pleasant person brings out his or her goodness spontaneously. The sun shines and does not radiate darkness because it is its nature to shine, so only good comes to the world from the compassionate sage as he engages in action without feeling that he is doing anything.’

One can conclude that different ethical theories emphasise different points—different decision-making styles; some people concentrate on predicting the outcome, and others focus on one’s duties in order to reach what the individual considers an ethically correct decision. Regardless of the approach, people employ various theories and principles to make decisions.

1.1.3 Ethical principles

Have you ever acted only for the happiness you get despite knowing that others will be harmed? Knowingly often,

when we do something that we should not do, the body becomes tired, and the mind becomes restless. This happens when you realise or feel that you are acting contrary to the moral principles that you have already learned. Most people are aware of the moral principles. But it is doubtful whether they are bringing this into the world of actions. Moral principles play a vital role in shaping the course of our lives. There is no one who does not want others to treat us well. But we often forget that others want the same thing. There is no one who does not like shadow, but very few can be a shadow and role model for others. Narayana Guru was a person who was able to be a shadow to others and lead them to progress.

Knowledge of ethical principles will often cast a shadow over us and help us to solve our troublesome problems. Before understanding how important ethical principles are in human life, let us recall Guru’s comment on ethics. According to him, ethics is not to be understood as relying upon the conduct of a good man taken by himself; it is to be understood as consisting of two parts. It is not a one-sided affair but a practice in which the bestower and recipient belong to a unitive and universal situation.

“ഒരുവനു നല്ലതുമന്യൂനല്ലും ചേർ-
പ്പാരു തൊഴിലാത്മവിരോധി, യോർത്തിക്കേ
ണം.
പരമു പരം പരിതാപമേകിട്ടുന്നോ-
രെതിനരകാണ്ണിയിൽ വീണെരിഞ്ഞിട്ടുന്നു.”

- (AtmopadesaSatakam verse 25)

Ethical principles provide decision-making guidance as individuals strive to make ethically correct conclusions. Ethical issues are present in almost every field of work and daily life. Ethical principles enable people to identify major ethical issues and help them to resolve



them. Or one can say that the ethical principle represents the viewpoints from which individuals seek guidance as they make decisions. In fact, people do not make decisions in the same way, using the same information and employing the same rules. Ethical principles can help people to carry out a more successful and happy life in both personal and professional realms.

Ethical principles such as autonomy, beneficence, maleficence, and justice work as pointers to making ethical decisions. These ethical principles are not dependent on one's personal point of view; they serve as a justification for the evaluation of human actions.

◆ **Autonomy:** It refers to every individual's right to independence and freedom to make their own choices. A person who accepts this principle should give respect to an autonomous person's opinions and try to refrain from obstructing his actions unless they are deadly harmful to others. In the context of the medical profession, the concept of autonomy is most concerned with the ethical obligation of the doctor to protect his/her patient's right to make decisions about latter's health. Autonomy must be respected even if the doctor does not agree with the client's decision.

There are conditions in which autonomy may be restricted because of the concern for the well-being of the community. For example, if a communicable disease such as corona is diagnosed, the patient can be required to take the recommended medication and may have to be isolated to prevent the spread of the infection to others.

◆ **Beneficence:** Beneficence in ethics refers to the obligation to act for the benefit and well-being of others. In the field of medicine, it asks medical professionals to do good to the patients. It means refraining from harm and providing positive assistance, for example, like providing immunization for children. Beneficence also includes acts of kindness and charity aimed at improving the lives of others. The following questions provide an analysis or evaluation of the principle of beneficence in a given context.

- ◆ Who benefits?
- ◆ Who are the decision makers
- ◆ Who is affected?
- ◆ What are the risks?

◆ **Non-maleficence:** It is an ethical principle that emphasises the obligation to avoid causing harm or inflicting injury to others. This principle guides individuals, particularly healthcare professionals, in their actions and decision-making processes to ensure that they do not harm patients or other individuals under the care. Non-maleficence recognises the inherent vulnerability of individuals in need of care and underscores the importance of minimizing risks and preventing harm to the greatest extent possible like not abandoning a heart patient who is in need of services.

However, there are circumstances in which it is impossible to do well and

avoid doing harm all at the same time. At that time, one should look towards doing well to the greatest number. Again, a doctor cannot always avoid doing harm to a patient. For instance, in times when a communicable disease arises in a particular area of the town, doctors may have to suggest isolating individuals with the infection against their will to contain the spread of the disease and for the good of the majority. In a case where a patient donates his organ in order to save the life of their child or even a stranger, it is stated that non-maleficence is not violated.

◆ **Justice:** What does Justice mean? Justice is a composite principle, and it gives rise to fairness, equality and impartiality. Justice is classified into two: distributive justice and social justice. Distributive justice is the responsibility to be impartial to all people regardless of their individual differences, such as colour, gender, age, religion, social status, etc. Social justice will be expressed when all individuals and members of a society are treated in exactly the same way by the authorities, and everyone should have access to the same things that might improve their lives.

The above-mentioned ethical principles help one to decide what is right or wrong for society as well as for each individual.

1.1.4 Professional Ethics, Ethical Dilemma, Ethical Decision Making and Casuistry

Have you ever witnessed unethical behaviour among professionals? Some-

times, you may have met with a doctor who demanded special fees to perform surgery in a government hospital. Did you speak up or wonder whether it was truly unethical? How do people decide what to do in such cases? You may have witnessed some form of such ethical misconduct among various professionals. The misuse of government office time is very common unethical behaviour among some professionals. Some government professionals conduct personal business during office time. A person who wholeheartedly believes in ethics will not tolerate such behaviour.

Ethics is one of the most important characteristics that applies to any profession. What exactly is a profession? It typically refers to a specialised occupation or vocation that requires specific education, training, expertise, and ethical standards. Professions connect with jobs that have a group identity such as teachers, engineers, doctors, businessmen, etc. Each profession will attach certain values to maintain its morale. A professional is a person who is committed to a particular occupation. Professionals focus on public safety and emphasise that one should only attempt to perform what one is capable of practising ethics is the basic necessity of any profession. In the known history of ethics, Thomas Percival (1740 to 1804) published a code of medical ethics for physicians and also created the first code of ethics for professional ethics.

To lead a morally perfect life, a jnanin like Sree Narayana Guru needs no support of ethical codes; it materialises with him as a natural sequence. But a professional, on the other hand, notices himself unable to do so. So, the best he can do is to follow the instructions given by the professional authorities.

1.1.4.1 What is Professional Ethics?

Professional ethics are principles that govern the conduct of a person or group in different professions. They are integral to the success of each profession. Professional ethics provide a set of rules which a particular group of people practice in their professions. These are consistent within particular groups such as teachers, lawyers, etc. When a professional behaves or desires to behave in a way that is against professional ethics, the authorities will have clear guidelines on what disciplinary actions to take.

Ethical principles may vary from profession to profession. For example, professional ethics related to teaching professionals differs from that of related to soldiers or doctors. However, there are some universal ethical principles that apply to all professions. These include honesty, loyalty, trustworthiness, respect for others, tolerance, doing good, and avoiding harm to others. These principles underscore the fundamental similarity in human desires and ambitions. As Nataraja Guru suggested, one should be guided by what would be conducive to the happiness of humanity in general. Regardless of our professional roles, prioritising universal ethical principles that are common to all profession contributes to the collective well-being of humanity.

1.1.4.2 Ethical Dilemma

Do you remember a time when you had to make a choice in life, and each option was equally unpleasant or equally important? It is commonly accepted that killing a human being is morally wrong. But, what are we supposed to do when a person, who is your close friend, request you to put an end to the suffering that he is

going through due to some fatal disease? If you are not ready to kill your friend (of course, killing is morally and ethically wrong), then you may be forced to see his suffering, and also, your friend may think that you are not his well-wisher. But if you kill him, then you are doing a morally and legally wrong action. This confusion is called a dilemma. Such situations arise all too frequently in everyday life and in personal, social, and professional situations.

Ethical dilemmas are situations in which there is difficulty in choosing between equivalent alternatives. An ethical dilemma is a complex situation where ethical principles or values are in conflict. To whom do you have a duty, to your father, mother, wife, husband, friends, your job, and so on? How will you answer? Ethical dilemmas are intensely complicated situations that cannot be easily dealt with. In such cases, people have to depend on their morals and values and should consider the possible outcomes or consequences of handling the situation. In order to solve an ethical dilemma, one must follow the following steps:

- ◆ **Refute the dilemma** – After carefully analysing the dilemmatic situations, sometimes it may be possible to refute the existence of the dilemma.
- ◆ **Value Approach** – It is a means of arriving at a conclusion-select the alternative that presents the greatest good or lesser evil.
- ◆ **Spot out alternative solutions** – The problem can be reconsidered, and one can reach new alternative solutions.

Ethical dilemmas are particularly important in professional life. In order to

solve ethical dilemmas, each profession should develop ethical standards for its professionals. Professionals commit themselves to supporting and working in accordance with ethical guidelines.

1.1.4.3 Ethical Decision Making

“Do any of your life decisions conflict with your dreams? If so, will you be able to sleep peacefully? No, you can’t.”

Decision-making involves selecting the most suitable way to solve or handle a specific problem or solution after considering the different alternatives. The best alternative must be selected; in other words, ethical decision-making involves judging and selecting alternatives that align with ethical principles. People reject unethical alternatives and maintain a clear distinction between right and wrong in ethical decision-making. A person chooses an alternative that agrees with ethical principles or may select the best ethical alternatives. Various ethical frameworks such as consequentialism, deontology, and virtue theory guide individuals in making ethical decisions. When it comes to the matter of an ethical dilemma, there are two or more agreeable but opposing choices, but in ethical decision-making, there is not much confusion between right and wrong. When confronted with a difficult ethical dilemma, people need the capacity to make an ethical decision to solve it. Education and work experience also play an important role in ethical decision-making.

There are different steps to the decision-making process. Some of them are pinpointing the ethical problem, picking out the potential issues involved, studying relevant ethical guidelines, considering possible and probable courses of action, obtaining consultation, applying ethical principles, fixing upon what appears to be the best course of action, acting and reflecting on the outcome. Thinkers prescribe five steps primarily for solving ethical problems and making decisions such as defining the problem, identifying the affected parties, exploring optional solutions, evaluating solutions and selecting and justifying solutions.

1.1.4.4 Casuistry

Casuistry is another theory that centres on decision-making using cases whereby people depend on judgments reached in previous cases. It is a process of reasoning that looks to solve moral problems by pointing to theoretical rules from a particular case and applying those rules to recent instances. It is a case-based method of reasoning which is mainly used in business ethics and bioethics. Some objections to casuistry have been presented:

- ◆ Casuistry needs a uniformity of views rarely present in the postmodern world.
- ◆ It cannot bring agreement on controversial issues.
- ◆ It produces different conclusions.

Recap

- ◆ Ethical behaviour evolves from basic rules to complex theories in human societies
- ◆ Greek philosophers laid the foundation for Western Ethics, emphasising virtues
- ◆ Key ethical questions revolve around morality, conduct, and character traits
- ◆ Indian Philosophy sees ethics as a path to self-realisation
- ◆ Ethics provide guidance for a fulfilling life, rooted in societal norms and values
- ◆ Normative ethics includes descriptive, meta, general normative, and applied approaches
- ◆ Understanding ethics promotes kindness, love, and happiness
- ◆ Ethical theories guide decisions by offering frameworks for moral dilemmas.
- ◆ Consequentialism judges actions based on their outcomes
- ◆ Ethical egoism prioritises self-benefit
- ◆ Ethical altruism prioritises others' well-being
- ◆ Utilitarianism seeks to maximise happiness for the greatest number
- ◆ Deontological theory stresses duty and intention over consequences
- ◆ Kantian ethics uphold moral obligations as inherently valuable
- ◆ Virtue theory evaluates individuals based on character traits, not specific actions
- ◆ Virtuous people make decisions aligned with virtuous principles
- ◆ Ethical principles guide actions toward benefitting others, shaping our lives
- ◆ Narayana Guru exemplified ethical leadership, being a guiding light for progress
- ◆ Ethical decision-making involves considering principles like autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice
- ◆ Autonomy entails respecting individuals' right to make their own choices

- ◆ Beneficence prompts professionals to do good and assist others positively
- ◆ Justice encompasses fairness, equality, and impartiality, promoting social welfare
- ◆ Ethical principles offer a framework for evaluating actions and resolving ethical dilemmas
- ◆ Understanding ethical principles aids in making morally sound judgments
- ◆ Professional ethics govern conduct across fields, ensuring moral standards
- ◆ Universal principles like honesty and respect apply to all professions
- ◆ Ethical dilemmas, conflicting values, occur in personal and professional life
- ◆ Ethical decision-making involves selecting the most moral action
- ◆ Steps include defining problems, exploring solutions, and reflecting on outcomes.
- ◆ Casuistry uses past cases to address moral issues
- ◆ Casuistry relies on applying previous judgments to current dilemmas
- ◆ Ethical dilemmas require balancing conflicting values and considering consequences.
- ◆ Professionals must adhere to established ethical standards.
- ◆ Training and experience are crucial for ethical decision-making.

Objective Questions

1. Who laid the foundation for Western Ethics, emphasising virtues?
2. What are the main areas from which the key ethical questions revolve?
3. How does major schools of Indian Philosophy view ethics?
4. What are the types of normative ethics?
5. What is the basis for judging actions in consequentialism?
6. What does ethical egoism prioritise?

7. What does ethical altruism prioritise?
8. What is the objective of utilitarianism?
9. What does deontological theory emphasise?
10. How are individuals evaluated in virtue theory?
11. What guides the decisions of virtuous people?
12. How is Narayana Guru described in terms of ethical leadership?
13. What does autonomy entail?
14. What does beneficence prompt professionals to do?
15. What does justice encompass?
16. What purpose do ethical principles serve?

Answers

1. Greek philosophers
2. Morality, conduct, character traits
3. Path to self-realisation
4. Descriptive, meta, general normative, applied approaches
5. Outcomes
6. Self-benefit
7. Others' well-being
8. Maximise happiness for the greatest number
9. Duty, intention over consequences
10. Character traits.
11. Virtuous principles.
12. Guiding light for progress.

13. Respecting individuals' choices.
14. Doing good, assisting positively.
15. Fairness, equality, impartiality.
16. Evaluating actions, resolving dilemmas.

Assignments

1. Ethics as a general category can be divided into normative ethics and non- normative ethics. Explain
2. Describe ethical theories; Consequentialism, Deontological theory, Virtue theory.
3. What all are the basic ethical principles? Explain.
4. Elaborate professional ethics and ethical dilemma.

Suggested Readings

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2. Mackenzie, J, S (1901) *Manual of Ethics*, New York: Hinds Hayden & Eldredge Inc.
3. Sinha J, A (2014) *A Manual of Ethics*, London: New Central Book Agency.
4. Thilly, F. (1982) *A History of Philosophy*, Allahabad: Central Book Depot.
5. Singer, P. (1985), Ethics, in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Chicago.



Indian Ethics: Individual and Social

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand Indian ethics from individual and social perspective
- ◆ get an overview of Buddhist and Jaina ethics
- ◆ recognise the moral values upheld by Buddhism and Jainism
- ◆ appreciate the plurality upheld by Indian society

Prerequisites

We shake hands or hold our hands folded as a warm gesture of respect to others while we meet them. We uphold certain values specifically truth, love, compassion, ahimsa or non-violence, renunciation or tyaga, liberal giving or Dana, forbearance, acceptance and tolerance, respect for elders and others, welfare of mankind and all living beings. These values in general and some of them specifically such as compassion, ahimsa, tyaga and acceptance for pluralism are known as Indian values. A cordial and gentle relationship between humans and nature is also very important in Indian spiritual and intellectual traditions. The following unit will talk about the Indian ethics, its origination, its relation to certain religions and its importance to attain liberation

Key Themes

Social Ethics, Indian Ethics, Jainism, Buddhism, Values, Dharma

Discussion

Ethics plays an important role in Indian tradition, philosophy and religions originated in Indian soil. One can rightly say that Indian ethics is an indispensable part of Hindu religion and other religions of Indian origin. Indian thinkers believe that ethics is a way of life to realize the ultimate reality. For example, in Gandhian philosophy, ethics is the means to attain Truth or Reality.

Indian ethics plays an important part in the growth of Indian culture. Indian culture is a combination of various cultures that co-exist together as a single community. Ethics is the binding force behind all variety. Ethical principles and codes prescribed by the ancient scholars of India imparted to the concept 'strength of unity in diversity'. Indian tradition in general believes that religion becomes empty without ethics and philosophy, and that, without proper religious guidance ethics and philosophy lose their meaning. Most of the Indian philosophical systems give importance to ethics. Indian systems in general consider *moksha* as the ultimate aim in human life and without following ethical principles or moral codes. It affirms, no one can attain *moksha* or liberation.

However, it is also true that most sections of Indian society still practice caste system, untouchability, dowry system, and are living in poverty without proper education. This reality continues even after independence. The Kerala society has been able to eliminate many of these things and to live a better life, with the social reformists like SreeNarayana Guru and others. SreeNarayanaGuru the poet, philosopher the social reformer upheld and propagated certain values

which helped man to be a good citizen. He upheld that people of a society should be pure and that purity is the essential nature of our self. According to Guru, human beings should practice love and compassion to all, because we all are one in the supreme spirit or consciousness, which he called in Malayalam as *Karu*. According to Guru, everything we see here is just a manifestation of the ultimate consciousness in abstract and concrete forms.

The Indian term for ethics is dharma. The word "dharma" originates from the root 'dhr' which means "to hold together". The objectives of dharma are to hold the human society together for its development. Dharma in the Vedas refers to the highest truth and power. Dharma is understood in the Vedas as duty par-excellence. It can be referred to as the duties of individuals according to one's station in life and the practice of moral virtues and norms. Indian tradition expressed that even Gods are believed to incarnate to restore righteousness and peace in society.

The early origins of Indian Ethics can be traced back to the Vedas especially Rig Veda. The Rig Veda says "Those who adopt good moral conduct in place of wicked conduct, achieve excellent life and longevity." The Vedic seers advised people to lead a peaceful unified life. The Vedas teach people how to perform one's duties at various stages of life and they give primary importance to truth. Truth alone triumphs- 'Sathyameva Jayate' (Mundaka Upanishad) is the principal slogan of Indian culture.

Therefore, a large section of Indian society considers the Vedic authority as the



main source of morality. The authority of smritis followed the Vedas. It is believed that the Vedas and smritis together are the foundations of Indian morality. Indian Smriti scriptures describe in great detail how a person should behave in his or her personal life and what kinds of behaviour and practices should be avoided. Mahabharata emphasizes the importance of performing one's duties or dharma. The importance of ethics and ethical values are described in the significant scriptures of Indian tradition such as Ramayana, Mahabharata, Dharma Sastra etc and the universal moral problems faced by humans in daily life have been specifically pictured in Mahabharata and Ramayana.

Indian Philosophy presents the moral values and duties of a human being which were considered as necessary to lead a perfect and happy life. Every individual needs to lead a moral life not out of compulsion, but due to the fact that only if one is moral, he/she can do good for his/her own self and society and also can free himself/herself from all grief and pain.

Simple living and high thinking are the heart of Indian ethics. One can see that all great personalities of India have led such a life. The life of Sri Ramakrishna, Sree Narayana Guru, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and others are some of the examples of in the recent history of India. They dedicated their lives for the good of others. According to Sree Narayana Guru, the discovery of the full value of one's life is cultivated by identifying with ultimate reality. In such a state one learns to acknowledge that his/her happiness is implicit in the happiness of all and the happiness of others are as much of one's responsibility as his/her own happiness.

Ethical values play a very important role both for an individual and society

as it brings about personal and cultural code of conduct and portrays social values. One absorbs moral values from family, religion, society and through education. Through these moral values a person learns to function in society. Though humanity has attained enormous development in the field of science and technology, unfortunately in today's world there has been a downward tendency in character and ethical values. Money making and materialistic profits have been given great importance. It has become the need of the hour to impart ethical values and explain how to implement values in various departments of human life. Ethical principles prescribed by Indian tradition can help in a great way to accomplish this task. Indian tradition directs people to discharge their duties according to the moral codes of ethics. People can live amidst worldly joy and peace only if they practice and imbibe some moral values.

1.2.1 Individual and social Ethics: A General Introduction

Indian philosophy gives importance to both individual ethics and social ethics. Individual ethics refers to the good qualities that are important for the individual well-being and happiness. Individual ethics refers to ethical values, principles and theories that an individual uses while making decisions and behaving in daily life or it refers to a person's belief about what is right and wrong. In contrast to amorality, individual ethics can be defined as a person's dedication to living a moral life. Despite disagreements, there are streams in Indian systems which regard the ultimate status of the Self that self-awareness was the primary good that leads to moral life. When certain action is deemed to be immoral then the personal

worth of that individual is lowered and when the action is good the individual worth of that person is raised.

Individual Ethics is the code of conduct that govern an individual's whole life or it refers to an individual's beliefs and values in any area of life. That ethics is learned in childhood, influenced by family, religion, friends and one's own surroundings. Individual code of ethics varies but many people share some common ethical values. The most common individual ethics put forward by Indian tradition as well as other major traditions are honesty, loyalty, integrity, respect, selflessness, charity, hospitality, self-restraint, simple living, etc. Sree Narayana Guru taught us that the more one becomes conscious of one's place and value in the world, the more one finds how unimportant and fading one's personal existence is. This knowledge makes the person feel the need of having a humble and simple life.

1.2.1.1 Social Ethics

The values necessary for societal peace and order are the focus of social ethics. The individual being a part and parcel of society, the Karma of an individual reflects in the society. Each individual makes the foundation of social morality. Social ethics is a blend of differing aspects of how societies are structured and controlled by their people. Social morality keeps a society in balance. Each person living in society cannot act as the person pleases. Indian tradition prescribes rules, laws and societal norms to make boundaries and this allows the communities to grow. *Dharma Sastras* give primary importance to social ethics. Social ethics dictates what we accept and what we do not accept, from the people within society. Some of the examples of Indian social ethics are love, compassion, charity, non-stealing,

friendliness, etc. The well-known dictum of social ethics is "do unto others as you would have them do unto you". Ethics is important in a society because it grants the members some expectations of stability and harmony in behavior and action. When loving one's neighbor as oneself, the human being evades the duality between egoistic interest by scratching out dialectical correlate.

In Atmopadesa Satakam Guru writes,

പ്രിയമാരും ജാതിയിതെൻ പ്രിയം, താദീയ-
പ്രിയമപരപ്രിയമനനേകമായി
പ്രിയവിഷയം പ്രതി വനിട്ടും ഭേദം; തൻ
പ്രിയമപരപ്രിയമനനിശ്ചിഭേണം

-(verse 21)

This verse outlines the foundation for all ethics of right or good conduct. The object of happiness is the object of our love. Then every one's favorite thing is one - the object that gives happiness. Narayana Guru believed that it is only by illusion that one feels the object one likes in many ways, such as my affinity, your affinity, other's affinity of another, etc. The Guru pointed out that it is essential to understand that one's own affinity is the affinity of another.

1.2.2 Rta, Dharma, Karma and Nishkamakarma

The Rig Veda prescribes the idea of an all-pervading cosmic order and that is known as rta. One of the principal ethical concepts of the Rig Veda is rta. It means law, order and truth. It is translated as Universal law or cosmic order or simply as truth. In the Rig Veda the term rta appears as many as 390 times and has been marked as the one concept which spread through the whole of Rig Vedic thought. Rta stands



for harmony and balance in nature and in human society. Rta is the basic truth or system of the universe which no one can break. It is the eternal cosmic and moral order or it is the ultimate foundation of everything. According to Vedic religion rta regulates and co-ordinates the operation of the universe and everything within it. The Vedas explained that rta is ultimately responsible for the proper functioning of the natural and moral order.

One can rightly say that rta is a force or power which is controlling the forces of nature and of moral values in human community. It keeps everything in balance. It is described that when this harmony and balance are disturbed there arises disorder and suffering.

From the concept of rta originates two other important concepts - the concept of Dharma and the concept of Karma. Although there are many distinct and varied interpretations of the concept of Dharma, it is commonly understood to entail obligation. The idea of Karma denotes the existence of a universal moral code that governs human behavior and determines both rewards and penalties that are acceptable for that behavior.

Dharma stands for duty, obligation and righteousness. It is a way of life in which a person leads a life by following ethical values and one is expected to carry out one's duty according to one's own social position and station in life. The term Dharma has multiple meanings. Etymologically, it means to hold, to support, to uphold, and the word is derived from Sanskrit. It can also mean correct, proper, customary or traditional. The *dharmasastras* prescribes the guidelines and rules regarding what are considered as appropriate behavior for human being living in a society.

Dharma is originated out of goodness

and truth. By dharma, Sree Narayana Guru means the adherence of each person's individual duties. There are many duties such as pitrudharma-duty of father, matrudharma-duty of mother, putradharma-duty of son and bharyadharma-duty of wife. Each person has to wholeheartedly observe his or her duty. Acting with prudence of what is right and what is wrong comes under dharma. The Guru spoke and worked against the practice of caste system as it was an adharma or immoral system. In his work *sadacharam*, Guru asks people not to forget the good acts of a person; and also says that it is noble to forget those that are not good. Dharma and truth shall always prevail in this world.

Forgetting something good done by someone else is no good at all. It is good to forget instantly what is not at all good. *Dharma* becomes victorious, truth too is likewise; always it is so. *Adharma* as well as untruth does not become victorious at any time. (*Sadacaram*: verse 1&2)

Guru emphasizes more on the moral dimension of dharma than on its essential supreme philosophy as the common people could only gain fame and love (sreyassu and preyassu) through sadachara. Guru's dharma points at the self-realization of all the acquiescent. Guru advises people to realize the reality through good deeds and observance of truth. This is also relevant to the society as only in a reputable society can a reputable person grow.

According to the concept of karma, there is a uniform moral law directing the actions of man. One gets rewards or punishment in accordance with one's actions. If good deeds are performed one can reap happiness and if evil deeds are performed, he/she will get back evil results. "One reaps as one sows". Good and bad actions decide the future life of

an individual. The Vedas speak about four main karmas.

1. Sanschita karma or accumulated past actions.
2. Prarabda karma or matured karma, when a person does some actions, it is taken note of by the universe.
3. Varthamana karma or the present willful action
4. Agami karma or forth coming karma.

According to karma, the outcomes or consequences of our deeds are not something distinct from the deed itself; rather, they are an integral part of it and cannot be divorced from it.

Bhagavad Gita prescribes karma yoga as one among the ways to attain realization of reality or to attain liberation from the cycle of birth and death one should do ones actions without looking for any selfish advantage. This is described as the method of nishkama karma or the method of disinterested action. According to this, actions should be done with the attitude of non- attachment to their fruits.

Indian thinkers believe that for the smooth function of a society there should be an ordered arrangement of functions and duties. According to Indian tradition, each individual has to grow to his best according to his own dharma or *svadharma*. Each individual is expected to perform one's duty in accordance with one's vocation and inner disposition. It is made in terms of three gunas - the sattva (purity), rajas (virility) and tamas (darkness). These three qualities are present in each individual in diverse proportions and this diverse proportion of qualities is considered as the basis of various types of action and inner

disposition.

There are four ashrams and four purusharthas. The ashramas and dharmas are presented in such a way that they support fulfillment to the person in his individual, social, moral and spiritual realms and in essence leads to peace and harmony in society. The four ashramas are; Brahmacharya- stage of studentship, Garhasthya- stage of household, Vanaprasta- life in the forest and Sanyasa- renunciation.

In addition to four ashrams, Indian tradition also explained the four ends of life - the purusharthas. They are Dharma (righteousness), Artha (worldly gain), Karma (fulfillment of desire) and Moksha (liberation). In this classification Dharma comes first and the other three must be based on dharma. For example, acquiring wealth is necessary for a family but a man should acquire it only through good means.

The major objective of Indian ethics is the well-being of humanity. In that sense, one can say that Indian ethics is humanistic. For example in the works and teachings of Sree Narayana Guru, there is an emphasis on the concept of humanism. In the light of the humanism in Guru, it can be said that he was an advocate of non-religious humanist ideas as he expressed that 'we are not the part of any caste or religion. I have not yet established any form of religion'.

Guru says:

“ജാതിവേദം മതവേദം ഏതുമില്ലാതെ
സർവരൂപം
സോദരത്വം വാഴുന്ന മാതൃകാസ്ഥാന
മാണിത്”

(Devoid of dividing walls of caste or race or hatred of rival faith, We all live here in brotherhood; such, know this place to



be! this model foundation!). These verses include ideas of humanism, the ideas of impartiality, freedom and brotherhood which are the quintessence of humanistic way. All human beings are equal and that will result in freedom.

Indian tradition preaches love, non-violence and compassion for all living beings. It is not limited to human beings, it includes every living being such as plants, birds, animals, etc. Indian religions also point out that good moral conduct is necessary for leading a happy and successful life. Study of Indian ethics helps a person to look at his own life critically and evaluate his actions. It assists people in knowing what is best for them and what they ought to do in order to attain it. Ethical principles prescribed by our ancient saints and seers give right direction and purpose to human life. Indian ethics prescribes that good moral conduct is necessary for leading a happy, successful life.

1.2.3 Jainism and Buddhism: An Overview

Jainism and Buddhism are two religions of Indian origin. The common denominator that applies to both religion is the fact that both are philosophical systems as well. Jainism and Buddhism originated from the Hindu religion but both developed a different belief system and rejected some of the crucial Hindu beliefs and practices. They share many similarities in their beliefs and practices. They teach us that the way to liberation or bliss is possible only if one leads a life of harmlessness and renunciation. Both believe in life after death and in karma theory and uphold that a person can attain liberation during this life itself (jivan mukti). For attaining this, people have to control their desires. None of these religions says that God created the world.

While keeping the similarities, Buddhism and Jainism also have significant differences. Buddhism is a religion founded by the Buddha while there is no such founder for Jainism. Jainism believes in soul but Buddhism does not believe in a permanent soul. Jainism puts forward extreme ahimsa while Buddhism presents liberal feelings and practical behavior. Jainism is mainly confined to India but Buddhism is considered as a world religion and has spread to other lands. Jainism presents strict methods of attaining liberation while Buddhism prescribes a middle path, a moderate method for attaining Nirvana or liberation.

Jainism was originated in the region called Magadha. The Jaina and the Buddha are supposed to have been contemporaries. Jainism was established by Mahavira (599-527 BC) in about 500BC. Rishabhadeva is considered as the first Tirthankara among the 24 Tirthankaras. Mahavira is the 24th and the last Tirthankara. Tirthankara means one who helps human beings to cross the ocean of samsara. Mahavira is regarded as the man who gave Jainism its present-day form. The word Jainism is derived from the word 'Jina' which means conqueror, that is, the one who has conquered passions and desires and karma and obtained emancipation. Jainism is divided into two sects called shvetambara or white-clad and digambara or sky clad and both follow the teachings of the jina. The Digambaras are more rigorous and puritanic while the Svetambara are more accommodating.

Jainism possesses a vast literature and the canonical works of Jainism are called Agamas. The canonical or authoritative works accepted by all sects are said to contain the teachings of the last Tirthankara, Mahavira. The language in which the canonical works are written is

ardhamagadi, a prakrit language. Mainly there are forty-five Jaina agamas.

Buddhism evolved as an ethical religion not only in India but in most countries where it has been accepted. Buddhism being a religion of compassion and love stands against the Vedas that proclaim animal sacrifice to please the Gods. Buddhism campaigned against *himsa*. There can be found some glaring similarities between Hinduism and Buddhism, since both these religions believe in liberation and also in the doctrines of Karma and rebirth. However, Buddhism differs from Hinduism in that it is against Hindu practices of animal sacrifice, caste system and other unnecessary rituals.

Buddhism was founded in north eastern India by prince Siddhartha in the 6th century BCE. Buddha is one who has attained wisdom (*Bodha*), an ideal state of intellectual perfection, which can be achieved by all who seek for it. The term Buddha literally means enlightened one, a knower. It is assumed that the Buddha's birth was on 563 BCE, his enlightenment on 528 BCE and his *mahaparinirvanam*(death) on 483 BCE. The Buddha was born in a place called Lumbini. It was through the discovery of an Asoka pillar at Rummimdei the birth place of the Buddha was recognized. In the Buddhist scriptures, it is strange that no mention of the life of the Buddha is given. It is generally accepted that the Buddha was a shakyan, son of Suddhodana, the king of Kapilavasthu. When the Buddha passed away, his followers organized a religious movement. This was the foundation for Buddhism. In the 3rd century the King Asoka made Buddhism the state religion of India. The Buddhist teaches purification in order to attain liberation or Nirvana and also explains how to attain compassion, tolerance, acceptance, friendliness and

care of all living beings.

The Buddha did not write any book since his teachings were only oral and one gets information about his philosophy from the works that were compiled by his followers long after his death. These compiled works help to serve as the basis of one's knowledge of Buddhism. The works were written in pali language, in the form of dialogue with thoughts presented in metaphors and allegory. The teachings and principles of the Buddha are clearly explained in the canons known as Tripitaka or three baskets.

The three baskets are:

- ◆ Vinaya pitaka- the basket of discipline, it consists of rules of discipline to be followed by the Buddhist.
- ◆ Suttapitaka- the basket of discourses. It is the sayings of the Buddha.
- ◆ Abhidhamma pitaka- the basket of higher expositions. The main teachings and principles of the Buddha are clearly explained in the Abhidhamma pitaka.

Buddhism is broadly divided into two groups Theravada or the teaching of the Elders and Mahayana or the great vehicle. Let us also remember the four noble truths prescribed by Buddha; dukkha, dukkhakarana, dukkhanirodha and dukkhanirodhamarga.

1.2.3.1 Jaina ethics

Jainism gives great importance to three important things in life known as the three gems or Triratna: Right Vision (Samyak Dristi), Right Knowledge (Samyak Jnana) and Right Conduct (Samyak Charita). By following these three, it is believed that one can attain moksha or liberation.



Besides these, the jaina scholars put great stress on reverence (sraddha). Various other moral principles are followed by the Jains, the most important being punya (merit) and papa (demerit). One attains punya when one does good deeds and papa when one does evil deeds. In order to attain spiritual growth or perfection one must follow a virtuous life. Without purity, one cannot attain perfection. In the end one transcends both virtue and vice. The triratnas and the pancha Mahavrtas design the ethics of Jaina tradition. The pancha mahavrtas are the following:

- ◆ Ahimsa means abstinence from hurting life through thought, word, and deed.

Among the panchamahavrtas, the Jains had given ahimsa a prominent place. For the Jains, ahimsa is not a negative virtue of abstention from violence but it is a positive virtue of all-embracing love. The life and teachings of jaina monks are strictly based on nonviolence. A follower of this religion has to practice absolute nonviolence. They insist us to have love and fellow feelings towards all living things in this world. The jains believe that everything in this universe has soul. Therefore, we have to love all living things. One should practice the principle of ahimsa even towards small insects even though it is difficult for an ordinary man to practice perfect ahimsa in the same manner as the jaina religion demands.

- ◆ Satya - complete abstinence from falsehood. By this virtue, jains do not merely mean telling the truth. Rather, one must always be careful to speak only what is good and pleasant.
- ◆ Asteyam - Non-stealing or not taking anything which is not given.

◆ Brahmacharyam-Abstinence from sensual and other pleasures. It means for abstention from passions one must practice this principle in thought, word and deed.

◆ Aparigraha or non- possession. It is renunciation of all worldly desires.

These vows are observed by householders partially and are termed as anuvrtas (small vows). The saints or Ascetics observe these five vows more strictly and therefore observe complete abstinence.

1.2.3.2 Buddhist ethics

The aim of the Buddha was to motivate people to live based on righteousness and justice and thereby to prepare them to attain *nirvana*. The word *nir* means 'no' and *vana* means 'craving' meaning 'no more craving, attachment or selfishness.' It means extinguishing the forces of passion.

Morality is the foundation of Buddhist ethics. Buddhist ethics can be attained with the Dhamma or the doctrine of ideals and principles and vinaya, the doctrine of rules and circumstances. One must live in agreement with Dharma or Dhamma to attain a moral life. The word dharma can hardly be translated aptly to any other language. It indicates ethics, virtues, justice, values, duty, etc. And, Dharma is to be preserved among individuals. In other words, it is the awareness that all humans are one. All the thinkers who insisted to reject the hypercritical attitude and to see the oneness in human being have used the dharma for the wellbeing of the humanity. The Buddha and Sree Narayana Guru are embodiments of dharma. According to Sree Narayana Guru, dharma is the path which leads people to the reality. He says;

ଯଦମ୍ ଏବା ପରା ରେବାମ୍
ଯଦମ୍ ଏବା ମାର୍ଦାଯାମ୍
ଯଦମ୍ମାର୍ଦ୍ଦ୍ୟତ ବିଜତୀ
ବେତ୍ତ ଫ୍ରେଯାମ୍ ନ୍ୟାମ୍

According to the Guru, Dharma is the supreme God and the greatest wealth. It wins over everything. Guru was of the opinion that dharma helps one to attain prosperity and progress.

Dhamma or Dharma is a universal law which controls both the physical and moral order of the universe and is not under the control of God. In Buddhism, the term Dharma is used to denote both the natural order and the entire corpus of Buddhist ethico- religious teachings. Buddhism being an ethical religion puts great emphasis on good conduct, love, compassion and instinctive insight and propagates a life of compassion and non-violence.

Five Precepts or Panchasillas, according to Buddhism, are the five principles which enable us to live a life of peace and happiness. These five precepts of ethical code are basic procedures in Buddhism. It helps in good behavior, mental training and removes bad thoughts, words, deeds, non-violence and peace in order to live in harmony with each other. They are the following:

- ◆ Do not kill-Abstention from destroying living creatures. It is non-violence.
- ◆ Do not steal-Abstention from taking that which is not given. It is prevention of trickery and economic exploitation.
- ◆ Do not misuse sex- Abstention from sexual misconduct. Monks and nuns should practice complete celibacy and the common people should stay away from adultery.
- ◆ Do not lie-Abstention from incorrect speech.
- ◆ Do not consume alcohol or other drugs- Abstention from intoxicating drinks and drugs.

One among the steps of the eight-fold path is Sila or morality, which helps in the growth of intellectual discipline or *pranja*. Buddhism upholds that only a person with the right character can know the real truth. Good character can be attained by following three parts of the eight-fold path; right speech, right action and right livelihood.

- ◆ Right speech - it is a necessary part of the path. Right speech means one must avoid telling lies, harsh words and arrogant speech. 'Bad words blaming others, arrogant words humiliating others. From these behaviours come hatred and resentment. Hence conflict arises, rendering in people malicious thoughts' (Dhammapada 8). Right speech is hostility towards wrong speech. People who are not afraid of lying would throw away their virtue. If one acts in one way and speaks in another way, this will ultimately lead one to harmful actions. Right speech, however, expects one to keep away from telling the truth, if it has detrimental effects.
- ◆ Right action- it is to refrain from any form of *himsa* and theft. Right action must show respect for existence, possessions and personal friendship.
- ◆ Right livelihood- it means the right way to earn one's livelihood and acquire wealth, in accordance with the law

and without making trouble. The Buddhists prohibit five kinds of livelihood – buying and selling cattle for slaughter, slaves, arms and ammunition , poisonous substances, intoxicants like drugs and alcohol. The Buddhists forbid them because they do not contribute to the welfare of mankind and go against the values of life. All occupations that have unhealthy effects on society are looked upon as morally disreputable even though they give profit.

The Buddha also taught some other virtuous deeds for his disciples to perform in order to lead a peaceful life in society. They are Dana or Charity, inner purity, control of anger, reverence or respect, sharing merits with others, rejoicing in the merits of others and teaching dhamma, listening to dhamma, straightening one's views. There are some wrong actions from which the Buddhists are advised to keep away. Some of them are- killing of living beings, stealing, lying, harsh speech, covetousness, ill-will, wrong views, etc.

The Buddha was compassionate towa-

rds all living beings. The empathy and sympathy are cultivated, when compassion for other living being is suffused in the mind. Sree Narayana Guru admires the importance of compassion, adores the strength of compassionate people and highlights the need of being kind towards the other living beings. A compassionate person will be hesitant to kill any living beings. Guru explains that all beings are the greatest manifestations of the supreme consciousness. In *Anukampadasakam* (Ten verses on Compassion), Sree Narayana Guru portrays the Buddha as the ocean of forgiveness and kind heartedness. Compassion is the source of happiness, that one, who is bereft of it, acquires unhappiness. He shares the same place with the Buddha when he elucidates the elevated love and humanity.

As Buddhism is particular about the moral value of an action, its motive and intention are judged based on the honest and dishonest means accepted for carrying out an action. Buddhism emphasises the need to observe ethical principles in order to free from all the tragedies of life and to attain nirvana.

Recap

- ◆ Ethical principles of Buddhism and Jainism are helpful because they explain how to control mind and body.
- ◆ Buddhism and Jainism present values of life which are of great help to human society.
- ◆ Both these systems promote human's simple living
- ◆ Jaina scholars believe that in order to attain spiritual growth one must follow a virtuous life.
- ◆ Jainism presents pancha- mahavratas for saints and anuvratas for common people.
- ◆ Buddhism prescribes panchasilas.
- ◆ Buddhism gives great importance to good conduct, love, compassion, charity, inner purity, control of anger, friendliness.
- ◆ Triratnas and the pancha Mahavratas design the ethics of Jaina tradition.

Objective Questions

1. What is the Indian term for ethics?
2. What is the literal meaning of dharma?
3. What are the five precepts?
4. What is the objective of dharma?
5. What are the four ends of life - the purusharthas?
6. What are four main karmas?
7. What is the focus of social ethics?
8. What is at the heart of Indian ethics?

Answers

1. The Indian term for ethics is dharma.
2. The word “dharma” originates from the root ‘dhr’ which means “to hold together”.
3. Do not kill-Abstention from destroying living creatures. It is omission of violence; Do not steal-Abstention from taking that which is not given. It is prevention of trickery and economic exploitation; Do not misuse sex-Abstention from sexual misconduct. Monks and nuns should practice complete celibacy and the common people should stay away from adultery; Do not lie-Abstention from incorrect speech; Do not consume alcohol or other drugs- Abstention from intoxicating drinks and drugs.
4. The objectives of dharma are to hold the human society together for its development.
5. Dharma (righteousness), Artha (worldly gain), Kama (fulfillment of desire) and Moksha (liberation).
6. 1. Sanschita karma or accumulated past actions; 2. Prarabdha karma or matured karma, when a person does some actions, it is taken note of by the universe; 3. Varthamana karma or the present willful action; 4. Agami karma or forth coming karma.
7. Values necessary for societal peace and order are the focus of social ethics.
8. Simple living and thinking high are the heart of Indian ethics.

Assignments

1. Good character can be attained by following three parts of the eight-fold path; right speech, right action and right livelihood. Elucidate
2. Elaborate Five Precepts or Panchasilas.
3. Do you agree with a complete non-violence in Jainism or Buddhism?

Suggested Readings

1. Bilimoria, P, Joseph P. (2017). *Indian Ethics: Classical Traditions and Contemporary Challenges*. Routledge
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5. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/jaina-philosophy/>
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7. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-indian-buddhism/#BasTeaBudEth>



Ethical Decision Making

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ get familiar with ethical principles and theories in ethical decision-making.
- ◆ know how Sree Narayana Guru formed ethical codes based on needs and preferences.
- ◆ recognise the significance of purity in human life in achieving peace and spiritual well-being.
- ◆ bring into practice the five common ethical codes prescribed by Guru: non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, refutation of adultery, and abstinence from liquor.
- ◆ realise the five purities emphasised by Guru: cleanliness of the body, purity of words, purity of mind, purity of sense organs, and purity of home and surroundings.

Prerequisites

The revered figure in Indian philosophy and social reform, Sree Narayana Guru, emphasised the importance of ethical living for personal and societal well-being. His teachings on non-violence, truthfulness, and purity offer valuable insights into moral conduct and ethical decision-making. Therefore, a basic knowledge of Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy and its significance in Indian culture sets the stage for a deeper exploration of moral codes and ethical practices. Understanding the concept of Pancha Suddhi, or the Five Purities, is essential for comprehending Sree Narayana Guru's emphasis on purity of mind, body, and surroundings. These purities, which include cleanliness of the body, purity of words, purity of mind, purity of sense organs, and purity of home and surroundings, form the foundation

for spiritual and moral growth, according to the teaching of Sree Narayana Guru. Recognising the importance of observing these purities in daily life prepares one to engage with ethical principles and practices.

Keywords

Moral code, Ethical Decision-making, Ahimsa, Satya, Aestheya, Avyabhichaaram, Madyanishedam, Dehashuddhi, Vaak Shuddhi, Manahshuddhi, Indriya Shuddhi, Grahashudhi.

Discussion

1.3.1 Introduction

There are a few ethical principles and theories prescribed by philosophers and ethicists that can guide ethical decision-making. The ethical theories such as the utilitarian approach, consequentialist approach, etc., help you reach ethical decisions. You should also consider that not everyone will necessarily agree on what is good and what is evil, and people may not agree on what a common good means. Considering these drawbacks, people may combine several ethical approaches- utilitarianism, virtue ethics, etc., when making ethical decisions. If people examine all means and ways to make ethical decisions, they are believed to make better ethical decisions.

Sree Narayana Guru is one of the greatest philosophers and social reformers of modern India. He awakened the Kerala people from an inactive life to an active life of truthfulness, honesty and unity. He was a perennial source of spiritual, moral and social motivation for the people of Kerala. He implemented his non-dualistic conception of reality for the welfare and liberation of humanity. The Absolute,

which he called Arivu, knowledge, Karu, etc., is the cornerstone of his whole teachings. Everything in this universe is the manifestation of the one and the same Arivu. The common ethical codes prescribed by Sree Narayana Guru are relevant to all sections of society because they prescribe the rules of behaviour for all. He framed ethical codes based on interests, needs and preferences. Sree Narayana Guru's teachings help people make decisions and create good behaviour.

Purity is an important aspect of human life for attaining peace, happiness and spiritual practices. Impurities have a negative impact on the human mind and body, and their purification is necessary. Indian thinkers generally believe that only those who have pure minds and bodies can attain self-realisation or bliss. Therefore, Indian thinkers emphasise the importance of cleanliness and purity of human beings' physical, mental and spiritual well-being and prescribe self-purification for salvation. Sree Narayana Guru aimed to purify human beings, their family and their environment so that they could lead a life free from suffering and bondage.



1.3.2 Ethical Decision Making

Have you ever had the opportunity to worry about not being able to make the right decision? Many times in life, there are those who make the wrong decision and later regret it. If the decision is not made in time, it is no use to worry later.

Ethical decision-making speaks to the process of judging and selecting between alternatives in agreement with ethical principles. A person who is making ethical decisions should perceive and eliminate unethical alternatives and make a selection of the best ethical alternative. Every tradition may have ethical guidelines that help a person handle ethical decision-making. When someone is faced with a problem, the person should consider the possible and probable solutions for solving the problem. One should take into account the consequences of the probable courses of action and then decide on what appears to be the best course of action. The best course of action is the one that seems to develop the least harm. Most societies provide such a framework for decision-making.

People have different moral codes and that sometimes it may be difficult to distinguish right from wrong. Then, a question naturally arises: Who has the correct moral code? Moral codes guide the process of decision-making and behaviour. A person in a high position of power should make decisions guided by a defined code of ethics or conduct, especially if their decisions are questionable. The moral codes of a society are in agreement with the laws and order.

A code of ethics prescribes the basic rules for decision-making for people who belong to a society or group. It aims to

guide members of a society or community to avoid situations where those in positions of power can mistreat others and to help individuals make good ethical decisions. Ethical codes of conduct unite people by setting guidelines to protect people and promote the integrity of society. Ethical codes define the boundaries between what is considered right and wrong.

1.3.3 Sree Narayana Guru's Common Ethical Codes

Let us try to understand how the code of ethics of the Guru can be useful for our lives. We know that the ultimate goal of the Guru is to elevate us to the spiritual level. He points out that our lives and what we see are only shadows of the real truth. We need to realise the distinction between the shadow and reality and try to recognise the light. It needs a calm mind and thereby a peaceful life.

The code of ethics prescribed by Sree Narayana Guru is important because it clearly lays out the rules of behaviour and provides the groundwork for leading a happy and peaceful life. His code of ethics guides people's daily lives and helps them judge whether their behaviour can be justified. Guru's ethical codes are essential for positive human behaviour and action. They are formed based on interests, choices, desires, and preferences.

According to Sree Narayana Guru, Dharma is considered the basis of life in this world. Dharma indicates the spiritual and ethical attitude of human beings. According to Indian tradition, dharma is the moral law governing individual conduct. A person dedicated to Dharma is a popular person who is eligible to live in this society. According to him, those interested in doing good to others should

practice virtues or dharmas. Dharma is something that needs to be developed and practised. There is no end for the virtue. This world has originated from Dharma, and it will end in Dharma. And this world is identified with Dharma. The Guru was of the opinion that the conduct taken up for one's self-happiness must certainly guide another's happiness. The idea of humanity as an end is really noteworthy, and we should never consider another a mere means. The idea of the categorical imperative, put forward by the well-known Western philosopher Immanuel Kant, agrees with the same moral or ethical principle naturally present in man.

The five common ethical codes or *Panchadharmas* advised by Sree Narayana Guru are: - Non-violence, truthfulness, absence of covetousness, refutation of adultery and abstinence from liquor. The Guru says:

Ahimsa- Satyam- asteyasthadhaiva-avyavhicharithaa

Madyasya varjanam chaivam pancha- dharma- ssamaasathah (Sree Narayana smrithi 8)

◆ **Ahimsa or Nonviolence** – Is perfect non-violence possible in this world? Of course not, because our very living involves some form of himsa. Perfect ahimsa is not of this world. But non-violence is one of the virtues that we should practice in life. Even though perfect ahimsa is not of this world, perfectibility can be attained. Most of the spiritual leaders emphasise the need to practice non-violence. The Mahavira, the Buddha, Sree Narayana Guru, Swami Vivekananda, and Gandhiji were men who stood for non-

violence. Narayananagaru says, "Non-violence is the noblest among all other virtues". Can you agree with these words of Sree Narayana Guru?

Among the five codes, ahimsa is regarded as the greatest dharma; all other dharmas exist in ahimsa. From himsa originates adharma. According to Sree Narayana Guru, true non-violence means not causing any harm to any living being, either physically or mentally, or not putting its life in danger through our thoughts, words, or actions. (A detailed account of Guru's conception of ahimsa is given in Unit-4, dealing with compassion and ahimsa.)

◆ **Satyam or Truthfulness** – Sree Narayana Guru gave primary importance to truth or satya. He told his disciples that 'of all that is good and venerable, truthfulness happens to be the best'. Guru firmly believes that the source of this universe is eternal truth, or truth is the foundation of this world. He advised his disciples to always tell the truth and never tell a lie or untruth. Guru says:

Sathi sadhu bhaveth- sathyam sathyam- brahma- sanaathanam

Sathyethishtathi- lokoyam- vadeth- sathyam na cha anurutham (Sree Narayana smrithi -verse 72)

(Of all that has existence, truth is the best. And Brahman is the one eternal Truth. This world exists in that Truth. Therefore, always tell the truth; never tell lies)

The source of this universe is eternal truth. This world itself is based on that truth. Therefore,



always tell the truth, and never lie or tell untruth.

- ◆ A person who wholeheartedly and strictly follows truth throughout his life becomes equal to a yogi. Yogi is a person who has control over his passions and emotions and does positive things in life.

Gandhiji also emphasised truth in his teachings. He identified God with truth and was ready to sacrifice anything and everything for the sake of truth.

- ◆ **Astheya or Non-stealing—** Too often, people feel lust for the possession of others and sometimes take the wrong path to possess it. This often leads to big problems in the lives of many and turns them away from their true goal, which is the realization of reality.

No one has the right to take away the property of anyone else who does not even think about it unless it is given by the latter. Narayana Guru pointed out that the quality of non-covetousness is as precious and praised as a diamond-studded throne. Guru pointed out that theft is the cause of all dangers and misfortunes, including dishonour. Being honest and truthful helps a person to attain prosperity. So, to lead a happy life, one should practice honesty and truthfulness. Great people follow the idea of non-stealing in thought, word and deed. Sree Buddha told his disciples to avoid all sorts of theft. One who is overwhelmed and corrupted with the venom of theft is labelled as the most harmful and greedy person. Honest people naturally keep away from him. Nobody would respect a thief. Thus Astheya is a dharma

which is to be clearly practised. The Guru says:

Churaa- visha- samaakraanthi - maleemasa naraadhamam-

Nir- bharthsy- noonam asyanthi doelarkam- iva- anaghaah. (Sree Narayana smrithi -77)

(Sinless ones always censure a heinous and impure man who is poisoned by the habit of stealing, and they keep themselves far away from him)

- ◆ **Avyabhichaaram (Not committing adultery)-** In modern society, refraining from adultery is of vital importance. Going against this rule of behaviour creates many problems for the individual, both physically and mentally, breaking up families and violating duties to both spouse and children. Sree Narayana Guru advised his people not to indulge in adultery. Guru expressed that looking at women other than one's wife with lust and conversing with them with hidden desire are condemned as adultery. Adultery leads one to dishonour, loss of wealth and wisdom, damage to one's family prestige and traditions, and untimely loss of life. For a person who commits adultery, even daylight appears pitch dark. The person cannot enjoy the genuine pleasures of conjugal life, which is a gift of nature.

Divaapyandham- thamah pumso vyabhicharam- upeyushah

Thasmaanniyathi- dattham yath sukham thaccha- vinashyathi (Sree Narayana smrithi -80)

(Even daytime appears full of darkness to the man who resorts to unchaste life. Nature-given happiness also perishes in his case)

Sree Narayana Guru says whoever desires happiness and prosperity in this life and the next should certainly not indulge in adultery.

♦ **Madyanishedam or Denial of liquor-** One who follows this rule will abstain from any form of distilled and fermented intoxicating drinks. By drinking, one is brought to the level of a beast. If one becomes addicted to alcohol, one loses control of both body and mind and creates problems for oneself and society at large. This worldwide problem has no distinction of age, sex, race or religion. Homes are greatly affected by these habits and emerge with family problems like broken homes, abused children, or loss of wealth and property. It can even cause social crimes like murders, rape, abuse, robbery etc. Guru was of the opinion that liquor is like a poison, and advised his followers not to consume it. According to Sree Narayana Guru, liquor generates deadly sins. So wise men never buy it for themselves, sell it, give it to others or store it with any of these intentions. One's own parents, siblings, wife, children and even God are angry and irritated with an alcoholic. Hence, no one should consume liquor.

One who takes liquor digs his own grave. The Guru says:

*Budheer- vaikalya- janakam
madyam- ithy- uchyathe budhaihi*

*Madhyasevaam na kurveetha
madyam vishasamam viduhu (Sree
Narayana smrithi -82)*

[That which causes disability to intelligence is understood by the knowledgeable as *madya* (Liquor). Do not consume liquor. Liquor is thought of as poison-like]

Liquor damages the liver badly. Its use negatively affects the user, the community and future generations. Guru says, "Liquor is poison. Do not make it, take it or give it." (Moorkoth Kumaran 170) Guru opposed toddy tapping. One of Guru's devotees said they go for toddy-tapping because they don't have other means of living. To him, Guru says, "Let them make four knives out of the one used for tapping; each knife can be used for shaving. They can take up the barber's profession, which will also be more fetching. Toddy tapping is a social evil. They can go for coconut harvesting. They need not climb so high also, but the problem is that they may climb higher and higher by force of habit. We must be very careful with these people".

These five common ethical codes help people lead a civilised life with peace and dignity. These five simple codes can apply to all human beings; if they follow them, they can lead a good life. The five common rules of behaviour help to establish a firm foundation for development and culture, personal morality, social harmony, and better living.

1.3.4 The five purities

Many great men have said that only those who are pure in mind and body can have intellectual clarity. If a mirror is dirty, we cannot see our face well. Man needs to understand that he is ultimately one with himself and with those around him. To know this truth for ourselves, we have

to observe certain precepts. Guru realised that the most important of these are human intellect and body purity, and he has told us what to do for it.

Today, we are battling against thousands of viruses. The five purities that Guru told us about are very important these days.

Sree Narayana Guru pointed out that there are five purities to be observed. They are:

- ◆ *Dehasuddhi* or cleanliness of the body.
- ◆ *Vaakshuddhi* or purity of the word.
- ◆ *Manahshuddhi* or purity of mind.
- ◆ *Indriyashuddhi* or purity of sense organs.
- ◆ *Grahashuddhi* or purity of home and surroundings.

Guru expressed that cleanliness of the body and home, purity of mind, and the word and sense organs are considered essential for human beings. This is given in verse 90 of *Sree Narayana Dharmam*.

1.3.4.1 Deha Shuddhi or Cleanliness of the Body

Purity is a physical, moral, or ritual state of freedom from pollutants. To maintain body purity, Guru recommends the following: bathing daily using clean water; cleaning the eyes, ears, teeth, and nails; wearing clean clothes; breathing fresh air; eating good food; drinking fresh and clean water; and keeping the feet and hands always clean.

1.3.4.2 Vak Shuddhi or Purity of the Word

Human beings often underestimate the power of words and, as a result, are not able to control their faculty of speech. This results in words being used which actually hurt others or words that humiliate certain others. Public speeches have influenced others greatly, either for better or for worse. It is said that a harsh word can wound someone more than a weapon. On the other hand, a kind word can even change the mind of a hardened criminal. One can create a society where the goals can be achieved through communication and harmony, with the control of one's speech. That is why Sree Narayana Guru gives importance to the purity of words. He was of the opinion that one has to use words with clear, specific meanings that are appropriate to the situation. A sweet voice, distinct pronunciation and pleasant manner will add attraction to the spoken words. Words that do not irritate or excite others and pleasantly express truth and equanimity, with beauty and nobility, will always be enjoyed by others. According to Guru, such words are holy, like a hymn, learnt by oneself.

1.3.4.3 Mana Shuddhi or Purity of Mind

Only a pure mind can know the reality or truth. Thus, purity of mind is necessary for knowledge. Narayana Guru says, "The factors that contribute to the purity of mind are sincerity, kindness, love, gentleness, courage, modesty, concentration, and absence of anger." Straightforwardness and meditation are also helpful for attaining Mana Shuddhi.

1.3.4.4 Indriya Shuddhi or Purity of Sense Organs

The purity of sense organs can be maintained by staying away from undesired interference, not harming or pampering one's sense organs, and not praising anything that is not praiseworthy.

1.3.4.5 Gruha Shuddhi or Purity of Home and Surroundings

The importance of purity of home and surroundings cannot be overlooked by any society. Every faith and civilisation stresses the importance of purity of home and surroundings. The purity of home and surroundings has been considered an important factor in judging the development of a civilisation or a society. Sree Narayana Guru said that houses must be well-ventilated so that sunlight and fresh air will reach the interior. Anything

that is rotten and spoilt must be thrown away. The house must be swept and dusted clean every day. Do not excrete in the areas immediately surrounding the house. Make it a daily practice to fumigate (sanitise) the interior with fragrant smoke in the morning and evening. These measures guarantee the purity of the home and surroundings.

Persons who pay attention to *Pancha Suddhis* will get good health and eternal bliss. They will gain strength in the body and clarity in their wisdom. They will be able to live long and happy, just like the youth, until the end. The purity prescribed by Narayana Guru is relevant at all times.

The five ethical codes and five purities can play a very important role in the physical and spiritual well-being of individuals. They can go a great distance in developing a sense of brotherhood and promoting a feeling of unity among people of different religions.

Recap

- ◆ Sree Narayanan Guru, the great apostle of ahimsa.
- ◆ Ethical decision-making uses principles and theories.
- ◆ Ethical decision-making involves choosing between alternatives based on ethical principles.
- ◆ Guru's concept of Arivu underpins his ethical teachings.
- ◆ Ethical codes: non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, no adultery, no liquor.
- ◆ Non-violence is the highest virtue; all other virtues exist within it.
- ◆ Truthfulness is the foundation of the universe.
- ◆ Non-stealing is crucial for honesty and prosperity; theft leads to dishonour.

- ◆ Refraining from adultery preserves family integrity and personal dignity.
- ◆ Abstaining from liquor prevents physical and social harm.
- ◆ Purity is essential for peace and spiritual growth.
- ◆ Five purities include cleanliness of body, words, mind, senses, and home.
- ◆ Purity of the body involves daily bathing, clean clothes, and good hygiene.
- ◆ Purity of words: speak kindly, truthfully, and appropriately.
- ◆ Purity of mind: maintain sincerity, kindness, love, and concentration.
- ◆ Purity of sense organs: avoid harmful stimuli and maintain self-control.
- ◆ Purity of home: clean, ventilated, and free from pollutants.
- ◆ Purity leads to health and clarity.
- ◆ Ethical codes guide behaviour.
- ◆ Ethical codes foster brotherhood and unity among diverse communities.
- ◆ Five ethical codes and five purities enhance physical and spiritual well-being.
- ◆ Ethical living for a dignified life.

Objective Questions

1. According to the ethical codes of Sree Narayana Guru, what is the highest virtue?
2. How many common ethical codes did Sree Narayana Guru prescribe?
3. What does 'Astheya' mean in Sree Narayana Guru's ethical codes?
4. According to Sree Narayana Guru, what is the primary purpose of observing the five purities?
5. What is the meaning of 'Vaakshuddhi' in the context of Pancha Suddhi?
6. Which ethical code emphasises not consuming alcohol in Sree Narayana Guru's teachings?

7. What does 'Avyabhichaaram' mean in Sree Narayana Guru's ethical teachings?
8. According to Sree Narayana Guru, what should a person avoid to maintain purity of mind?
9. Sree Narayana Guru's teaching of 'Grahashuddhi' refers to the purity of what?
10. Which ethical code suggests avoiding the desire to possess other's belongings?
11. What practice is recommended for maintaining 'Indriyashuddhi' or purity of sense organs?
12. Sree Narayana Guru's teachings on 'Manahshuddhi' emphasise the importance of what?

Answers

1. Non-violence
2. Five
3. Non-stealing
4. Attaining peace and spiritual well-being
5. Purity of words
6. Madyanishedam
7. Disapproval of adultery
8. Anger and jealousy
9. Home and surroundings
10. Astheya
11. Avoiding undesirable interference
12. Mental purity



Assignments

1. Discuss the significance of Sree Narayana Guru's five common ethical codes in contemporary society. How can these ethical codes contribute to personal and social well-being?
2. Analyse the role of purity (Pancha Suddhi) in achieving peace and spiritual well-being according to Sree Narayana Guru's teachings. How can the practice of the five purities (Dehashuddhi, Vaakshuddhi, Manahshuddhi, Indriyashuddhi, and Grahashuddhi) impact an individual's life?
3. Evaluate the statement: 'Non-violence is the noblest among all other virtues', as taught by Sree Narayana Guru. Why is non-violence considered the highest virtue, and how does it encompass other virtues?

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Compassion and Ahimsa

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ◆ Define and explain the concepts of compassion (*Anukampa*) and non-violence (*Ahimsa*) as articulated by Sreenarayana Guru.
- ◆ Critically analyse the poems “*Anukampa Dasakam*” and “*Jivakarunya Panchakam*”.
- ◆ Apply the principles of compassion and non-violence from Guru’s teachings to contemporary ethical issues.
- ◆ Reflect on their own practices of hygiene and sanitation, inspired by anecdotes from Sreenarayana Guru’s life.

Prerequisites

Do we treat living beings around us with compassion and love? The truth is that some people engage in cruel acts. There is a well-known story about Siddhartha. Siddhartha and his cousin Devadatta went for a walk and Devadatta shot an arrow at a flying swan. Siddhartha could not agree with this evil action of his cousin. Siddhartha refused to part with the bird. He nursed the wound of the bird and saved it. This story is an example of the values of compassion and ahimsa that Siddhartha displayed. As mentioned earlier, Indian tradition directs people to discharge their duties according to moral codes. People can live amidst worldly joy and peace only if they practice and imbibe some moral values. Indian religions put stress on moral values or ethical values. Indian Philosophical systems also give importance to ethics. Ethics is a means to attain reality. Most of the Indian systems consider moksha or liberation as the ultimate aim of human life and without following ethical principles or codes no one can attain moksha. Generally Indian religious

and philosophical thinkers ask their followers to perform good actions and to refrain from wrong action. The principles of compassion and ahimsa are central to most of the world religions. Indian religions such as Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism consider these two as key precepts in their ethical codes. Perhaps one of the reasons why the afore mentioned religions, which originated in ancient times, still relevant today is that they give great importance for nonviolence, compassion and brotherhood. Compassion is caring for others even when they may not care for you. Compassion helps to disperse misunderstanding, doubt, intolerance, hatred, etc. It is the quality or state of being kind, treating others with kindness and respect. For example, leaving aside how one feels about the effectiveness of wearing a mask during the corona virus pandemic, one must do it wherever necessary if it removes another person's fears or keeps the virus from spreading. Such a gesture shows compassion. Although it is mandatory to wear mask during the pandemic time, many people try to avoid it, but those who have compassion and caring towards others should always be careful to wear a mask whenever there is a possibility of the spread of virus. One can rightly say that compassion is the ability to know what is the right thing to do and having the courage to do it. It is the most important means to spread love among humanity or it is seeing the good in everyone. Compassion is a virtue that is present in everyone but unfortunately sometimes it gets forgotten. It is present in us and can be enhanced or it is something that one can develop with practice. It is a value in a person to empathize, to help and to give respect to others without any selfish motive. Human beings live in a society and depend on it for their survival. So, for one's own happiness and happiness of others one should practice compassion. Without compassion, humanity cannot survive. The word non-violence is familiar to us. But many do not know the broader meaning of this term. Ahimsa is a Sanskrit term meaning non-violence or non-injury. In Indian philosophy the term ahimsa is used in a wider sense. It means not only not killing but also not causing physical or emotional pain to any living being through thought, word and deed. Positively it means all-embracing love. Ahimsa is one of the principal virtues of Jainism and Buddhism. Most of the Vedic scholars pointed out that all living beings have the spark of the same divine spiritual energy, therefore to do violence against another being is to do violence to oneself. Nonviolence is one of Yoga's foundational ethical principles. Mahatma Gandhi was the most well-known advocate of ahimsa in modern times. Gandhi said that nonviolence like charity must begin at home. When people implement ahimsa in action it holds them in positive connection with themselves and the world.

This unit introduces the ideas of compassion and ahimsa which are the best of ideals that humanity has to offer to humans as well as to other creatures. *Anukampa Dasakam* and *Jivakarunya Panchakam* are the names of two poems written by Sreenarayana Guru, which expresses his ideas on compassion and non-violence. It also discusses anecdotes from Guru's life and his views on hygiene and sanitation.

Keywords

Compassion, Non-violence, Jivan Mukta, Atman, Brahman, *Aparan*, Non- dualism

Discussion

1.4.1 Compassion and Ahimsa

The social condition of Kerala at the time of Sree Narayana Guru was characterized by the division of society into different castes and communities. The social system existed at that time was hierarchical and thoroughly unjust. The lower castes were denied access to public places, public roads and educational institutions. In such a society there was no place for compassion and Ahimsa.

Sree Narayana Guru throughout his life and teachings showed us the importance of compassion and ahimsa for the progress of human society. It is out of great compassion that guru, the *jivan mukta* (liberated person while alive) came down from the mountain caves and lived among his fellow beings with an aim to uplift all human beings. Guru's own words offer justification for such an inference. It is the second half of verse twelve of *Subrahmanya Kirtanam* that contains such an autobiographical tone:

Evidently the moonlight has vanished and the sun has risen,

Making the moon disappear.

Let us wait to guide me goadingly to the transcendent Brilliance.

Alas! Are they sleeping drunk? O, wake up, wake up at once!

It is time now to have a deep bath in

the river! (Translation by Muni Narayana Prasad)

Guru preached people around him the importance of practicing higher values of life. Guru was an embodiment of compassion and ahimsa by praying that he might live without harming even an ant. Through the non-violent actions, Guru succeeded in his attempt to make radical changes in the way of life of the people around him, in all aspects of life, both in their social as well as personal life.

Ahimsa means not only non-violence but performing no harm to anyone mentally and physically. Sree Narayana Guru realized the truth that one's own happiness should result in the happiness of others. According to Guru, non-violence is the supreme dharma and if it is deteriorated life will fall apart. Compassion itself is a sort of non- violence which restricts the thought of causing any kind of anxiety to the living beings and show love and compassion to others. Compassion, together with non-violence, is the completion of love and forgiveness. When love based on non-violence becomes unconditional, there would be no room left for *himsa* or violence.

Anukampa Dasakam and *Jiva Karunya Panchakam* are two poems by Sree Narayana Guru written in Malayalam language. The eminence of compassion and ahimsa are glorified and recommended beautifully in these two works.



1.4.2 *Anukampa Dasakam*

Anukampa Dasakam - means ten verses on compassion - is a short poem by Sree Narayana Guru. This poem mainly projects the importance of compassion, kindness, ahimsa, grace etc. The compassionate person is greater than the receiver of the compassion. In *Anukampa Dasakam*, Guru expressed the idea that one who will know and promote that truth in one's life will be able to overcome the critical situations, sorrows and toils of this world. The first verse in *Anukampa Dasakam* is a prayer to the almighty to bless human beings with compassion towards all living beings and also a mind which ever meditates on him. The next four verses describe the dignity of compassion and the last five verses are a tribute to the embodiments of this compassion. Sree Krishna, the Buddha, Sree Sankara, Rama, Jesus Christ, Prophet Mohammad and some Saivite Saints are cited in those verses.

Love and compassion for other living beings is the foundation of a peaceful and happy life. Through the poem *Anukampa Dasakam* Sree Narayana Guru points out that compassion variously understood as 'grace' or love is the key principle underlying all the religions and cultures of the world. He portrayed the founders of the different religion and cultural leaders as examples of compassion. All religions and different cultures of the world wholeheartedly agree in this higher value. Guru believed that even a small ant had a place under the umbrella of mercy.

ଓରୁ ପୀଯାତେଗୁମିଳୁଙ୍ଗୁ ରତ୍ନ-
ତତତୁତେତୁନ୍ତୁତୁକମ୍ପଯୁଙ୍ଗୁ ସବୁ
କରୁଣାକର! ନଳ୍କୁକୁତୁତ୍ତିର ନିର୍ମାନ
ତିରୁମେତ୍ୟ ବିଟକଲାତେ ପିତିଯୁଙ୍ଗୁ

(*Anukampa Dasakam* verse 1)

To love a friend is innate and natural but to love a creature like the ant need open-mindedness, an attitude of one who believes in unity of all. Compassion as the principal value in human life works as a unifying principle. Guru called God as *Karunakara* meaning mercy maker.

Narayana Guru explains that a heart empty of love is the source of all sorrow. Guru was of the opinion that kindness, love and compassion in essence are one and the same. The verse three of *Anukampa Dasakam* says "he who loves is he who really lives". In verse four Guru expressed that the ruthless people are just a foul-smelling body with just bones, skin and nerves, like a flower without fragrance. In the fifth verse Guru said that mercy exists even after death. From all this it is clear that in Guru's thoughts compassion and consciousness or reality are one and the same.

Those who are merciful to others are like the cow (*Kamadhenu*) which fulfills the wishes of Visvamitra Maharshi. The merciful are like *devataru* or *kalpavrksa* which gives everything to those who are in need. According to Guru, compassion, will take any ordinary person to the heights s/he cannot even dream of. It is love upon which the continued existence of the world stands. When Guru expressed that everything in the world should be loved, he must have said it out of his awareness of this philosophy of ethics. Guru not only preached compassion and love but also applied those values in practical life. He asked people to practice compassion towards all fellow beings including non-humans. Once on seeing a mango tree bending down with fruit, Guru said 'what a kindness!'. Human life would be successful only at such ability to appreciate values present in all living beings. Compassion is the simple act of

kindness and the acknowledgement of all lives as important as our own.

Guru makes it clear what the Vedas and the other Gurus prescribed is the same. The essence of all religions is love and unity. Guru points to the fact that the essence of everything is love. The philosophy of Guru is having two components, his theoretical suppositions and his conception of reality. His core philosophy constitutes one side of the division and his conception of morality, compassion, non-violence, etc comprise the other side. One can rightly say that they are the dialectical correlatives of the non-dualistic point of view of the Guru. What causes intolerance and anarchy in human society is the misconception that others are different from oneself and the treatment of them without mercy or compassion. To get rid of this, Guru demanded that we should understand the truth that we are all different expressions of the same reality.

1.4.3 *Jivakarunya Panchakam*

Jivakarunya means kindness to living beings and *Panchakam*- is a short poem of five verses. This short poem of five verses demonstrates that ethics emerged directly out of the contemplative way of life. The first verse of the *Jivakarunya Panchakam* disclose the famous teaching of Advaita that is non- dual reality of the self. There is no difference between individual self (atman) and ultimate reality (brahman). In essence the self that is present in all living beings is one and the same and it points to the unity of all life. So, is it not right to say that all living beings are brothers in universal kinship? Then how could we 'kill living beings and mercilessly eat them'? Guru wanted to express the fact that all life forms are manifestations of the same universal reality. So, killing or *himsa* could not be justified. Guru also states that

regardless of all good qualities, the person who kills will never find a place to hide anywhere. This opinion of Guru is given as the concluding verse of this work:

കൊല്ലായ്ക്കയിലിവൻ ഗുണമുള്ള പുമാ -
നല്ലായ്ക്കിൽ മുഗത്തോടു തുല്യനവൻ
കൊല്ലുനവനില്ല ശരണ്യത മ -
റേല്ലാവക നമയുമാർന്നിടില്ലോ.

- (verse 5)

According to Guru, goodness exists in the thought on how to get away from killing other living beings. The intelligent people are those who understand dharma and adharma and regard those people who slaughter animals as *adhamas*.

Ahimsa is one of the greatest virtues in dharma. Killing a living being is *himsa* and through *himsa* one projects the mental attitude that "you and I are different and that you can be killed for my food". Sree Narayana Guru tried to teach through this poem the golden rule that "treat other people with the concern and kindness you would like them to show towards you."

Guru said that there is a common belief among people that someone else has done the killing of animals and therefore one can eat without the uneasiness of one's own conscience. Guru rejected this and said that if there is no one to eat the killed, then there will eventually be no killer too. According to Guru, it is the eater that creates the killer.

കൊല്ലുനവനില്ല ഭൂജിപ്പതിനാ -
ഇല്ലെങ്കിലശിക്കുകതനെ ദൃശ്യം
കൊല്ലിക്കുകകൊണ്ടു ഭൂജിക്കുകയാം
കൊല്ലുനതിൽനിന്നുമുരത്താരാലാം.

- (*Jivakarunya Panchakam* verse 4)

Almost all religions of the world in one way or other emphasize universal brotherhood and uphold kindness to all living things. Buddhism in principle is based on ahimsa and Jainism presents the



extreme form of this principle. The kindness explained in the poem *Jivakarunya Panchakam*, points to universal love, which is founded on a wide and rational outlook. Reason is connected to a humanitarian outlook. This outlook is the essence of all religions. Guru expressed that

கொலூவுவதமுதமமாமதிலு
தினாவுவதமெடுயுமுதமமா
ஏலூமத்துவாவுமோல்கிலித
நலை பருயேங்கத் யாற்மிகர!

-(Jivakarunya Panchakam verse 2)

Through *Jivakarunya Panchakam* Guru advised people not to harm and to honour the relationship human beings have with this world, with each other and with themselves. Man becomes the equal of an animal by killing an animal for pleasing one's palate or for the pleasure of hunting. In the concluding verse quoted above, Guru is placing all other virtues inferior to non-hurting. The following is the English translation of the verse:

கொலூய்க்கயிலிவங் ரூளமுதை புமா
நலூய்க்கிழ முருதேநாடு தூலுநவங்
கொலூநவங்கில் ஶரஸ்யத ம -
ரெலூவக நமதுமாற்கிலிலு.

-(Jivakarunya Panchakam verse 5)

In principle, when one kills another creature, one kills oneself, because ultimately the essence that is present in you and other living beings is consciousness or knowledge. As this is the truth how it is possible to kill other creatures and eat their flesh without guilty feeling.

Perfect ahimsa is not possible in this world. But one can't feed and raise a goat and kill it just like one snatch a vegetable from one's vegetable garden. But of course, one is free to decide according to one's conscience whether or not to kill creatures for just for the sake of taste.

We need to have a measure of how much we can hurt other living beings for our food. The poem points to the importance of showing kindness towards all living beings on this earth.

It is said that Sree Narayana Guru used to wander about freely in wild forests where cruel animals like leopards and tigers live. They not at all hurt him. Guru pointed out that animals would harm others only if there was ill-will in men's hearts. This clearly shows his firm faith in non-violence, which was inherent in him and which he preached and wholeheartedly practiced. On an occasion in Coimbatore, Guru was having an interval in a garden and on the sight of toiling bulls in the garden, Guru asked his followers to make an appeal to the authorities to take action to ease the labour of the poor bulls and to supply sufficient number of cattle for dividing the labour so that the over effort that was put on the poor animals could be simplified. Sree Narayana Guru advocated vegetarianism. So, one of his devotees raised a doubt.

“Swami, when we drink the milk of the goats and cows, what is wrong in eating their meat?

Swami: Well, do you have a mother?

Devotee: No, Swami she died recently.

Swami: Died? What did you do with the dead body? Buried or ate it?”

Compassion and ahimsa are our inner strength and character. Compassion for self and others determine our ability to be a person of peace at home and in the society. How one treats oneself will influence one's treatment of others. If there is to be peace in the world there must be peace in one's heart. Sree Narayana Guru through his life and teachings showed us that compassion and ahimsa are the best of what humanity

has to offer to human beings and other living beings on this earth.

Often people focus on their own wellbeing. They are ready to destroy nature and other living things for their own pleasure. Isn't this the cruelty we do to ourselves? Guru indicates that human beings are responsible for the protection of nature and other living beings. When we exploit the nature and do cruelty to other living beings, we should remember that ultimately we are all one and thus we are doing cruelty to ourselves, we are exploiting ourselves. Deep ecology is a very popular environmental theory. It says that everything has its own value, so we have to protect them. Deep Ecology along with its spiritual view calls for a new outlook on values that come from an acknowledgement of the oneness of all life. Deep ecology is in agreement, with Guru's teachings and practices. Contemporary world is witnessing different forms of violence and in such a world, Sree Narayana Guru's principles of compassion, ahimsa, etc. is very relevant. The values expressed by Guru can guide our planet towards a better future.

1.4.4 Anecdotes from Guru's Life: Hygiene and Sanitation

During the life period of Sree Narayana Guru, community cremation grounds were unknown to the people of Kerala. They never consider it as necessary requirement, because most people lived in

big compounds with enough space around the house. Usually, dead bodies were cremated in their own property. Likewise at that time people were not so bothered about sanitation. They were ignorant about the need of clean toilets. At that time defecating in open places was not a shameful action. Due to these types of unhealthy behaviour, there was spread of many diseases. Seeing all these Narayana Guru tried his best to educate people the importance of the disposal of dead bodies and cleanliness. He spoke thus about funeral rites. The burial ground should be like a garden. It should not be scary and dirty. When you bury a dead body, plant a tree in the spot. Neem trees are better in this regard. Southerners can have 'Punna' (a type of tree). Neem and Punna are good. The burial ground should be like a garden, where people can come and breathe fresh air. There should be a platform in the middle of the ground on which people can come and speak on 'renunciation'. It is better to plant a tree at the cremation spot.

Sree Narayana Guru's insights are very deeper since it touches up on the philosophical heights while touching the mundane reality. His Advaitic-vision covers a lot of ground. Standing on the ideals of compassion and ahimsa, Guru talks about the problem of hygiene in personal and social life. He explains how the concern of the *Apara*, or the other is really a concern of oneself. So, there is no distinction between the self and the other according to Guru.

Recap

- ◆ During Sree Narayana Guru's time, Kerala was deeply divided by caste and community, with lower castes denied basic rights and access to public places and education
- ◆ Sree Narayana Guru emphasized the importance of compassion and Ahimsa for societal progress.
- ◆ Guru's teachings on compassion and Ahimsa are encapsulated in his poems *Anukampa Dasakam* and *Jivakarunya Panchakam*
- ◆ Ahimsa extends beyond non-violence to include not causing harm mentally.
- ◆ Guru's verses in *Anukampa Dasakam* stress that a heart devoid of love leads to sorrow.
- ◆ *Jivakarunya Panchakam* criticizes the act of killing for food.
- ◆ Guru taught that kindness should extend to all living beings, even the smallest creatures.
- ◆ Guru says that intolerance stems from seeing others as different from oneself.
- ◆ Guru's teachings align with deep ecology, which values all life forms and promotes environmental stewardship.
- ◆ Guru advocated for better hygiene and sanitation practices in Kerala.

Objective Questions

1. What was the key characteristic of the social condition in Kerala during the time of Sree Narayana Guru?
2. What is the alternate term for liberated person while living?
3. What according to Guru is the supreme dharma?
4. Which virtue, together with non-violence, is the completion of love and forgiveness?
5. In which poem Guru expressed the idea that one who will know and promote that truth in one's life will be able to overcome the critical

situations?

6. As per Guru's philosophy, what is the essence of everything?
7. Which poem discloses the famous Advaita teaching of non-dualism?
8. Which environmental theory claims that everything has its own value?
9. By which name the people who slaughter animals are called as?
10. Which site should be like a garden according to Guru?

Answers

1. Hierarchical and unjust social system
2. *Jivan Mukta*
3. Non-violence
4. Compassion
5. *Anukampa Dasakam*
6. Love
7. *Jivakarunya Panchakam*
8. Deep Ecology
9. *Adhamas*
10. The burial ground

Assignments

1. Elaborate any three verses from Anukampa Dashakam?
2. What is the first verse in Anukampa Dashakam about? Explain.
3. What is the meaning of Jivakarunya Panchakam? Elucidate two verses from the same.

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**Healthy Families
Provide Direction in all
Departments of Life**



Family Should be Strong and Healthy: Sree Narayana Guru's Perspective

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

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

- ◆ understand Sree Narayana Guru's views on Family
- ◆ grasp Guru's use of his philosophical framework to understand family
- ◆ be familiar with Guru's instructions on leading a successful married life
- ◆ recognise the teachings of Guru regarding the place of women in society
- ◆ apply the ideas of Guru to address the practical concerns and social upliftment

Prerequisites

Where do we get peace, security and acceptance? Most of us will say that we get peace and security from our own family. There are people who happen to live in less peaceful families. In any case, the institution called family is of great importance in Indian society. Families are the heart of human society. The development of a society mainly depends on family and it is one of the oldest and the basic institutions around the world.

In this unit we are focussing on Sree Narayana Guru's views on family. Guru has written extensively on this topic. He threw light into different aspects of family life. Some of the important topics which concerned Guru are 1) the importance of family in relation to society at large, 2) the significance of individual freedom 3) a prescription on marital procedure. Through his writings, Guru introduces key philosophical notions regarding family such as *Garhasthya Dharmam, Self-realization through ethical action*.

Keywords

Dowry System, Garhasthya Dharma, Know Thyself, Freedom, Equality

Discussion

2.1.1 The Origin of Family

Historically people grouped together into families for security. A family is an accepted social group that is typically formed by marriage, birth or adoption. Families create emotional bonds and function as the fundamental unit of society. Families exist in a variety of forms depending on the manner in which the members join them. For example, a family in which a person is born is referred to as their family of orientation. A family created by marriage is referred to as a procreation family. These differences have cultural relevance in relation to the question of ancestry. Families are social groups whose members behave as close relatives. Families are social organizations where members join together to create a solid fundamental bond and sustain long-term emotional connections with each other.

Family units are not immune to historical shifts in the power dynamics in society and in the economic system. The nuclear family of the present times is very different from the traditional, huge and expanded agrarian family of ancient society. Whether it is extended family or nuclear family, the family continues to be a strong foundation of society even today. The family influences society from within and without. The family members get emotional, physical, economic, and community support. Family set up and its

pattern may vary from place to place and time to time but still the value of family withstands. Family is important because the growth, wellbeing and stability of a society depend on family and its members. Although family is a subjective matter, it is a fairly objective fact that family is incredibly important for people regardless of how they define it.

2.1.2 Health and Family

Healthy individuals (both mentally and physically) in a healthy family (morally worthy) are the backbone of a well-developed society. That is why Sree Narayana Guru said that it is in everyone's best interest to help to create a conducive environment for all families. Homes are places where parents begin the vital process of socializing their children and teach them how to behave with others in the community. Children learn from their family how to survive and live in cooperation with others.

Marriage plays an important role in the survival of a family. Whenever the institution of marriage faces challenges, the messages of Guru regarding the marital adjustments and family adjustments remain timeless and relevant. Ethical codes prescribed by Sree Narayana Guru give people a framework of life. This framework can function as a foundation for a happy peaceful life. Narayana Guru believes that freedom is a basic instinct of human beings and it is essential for their overall development.



2.1.3 Marriage as a Social Institution

“The common opinion of people is to live in peace and tranquillity”. These are the words Of the Narayana Guru. Peace and security are essential elements for success in life. There are many ways to attain this. Many religions lead their followers to this goal in different ways. Sree Narayana Guru also advises us on how-to live-in peace and happiness and recognises that education is necessary for social development. He expressed that family applies strong influence in the personality development of the individuals and through that the development of society. So, the family should be strong and healthy in all respects. The Guru gives much value to family life. It should be a bondage of heavenly bliss. He had a very sophisticated view of family life. Many years ago, Narayana guru had the foresight and gave many valuable points for today’s generation which is thinking about family or aspiring to. Marriage is the starting point of family life. Guru was of the opinion that marriage is not merely a personal matter; it is a social institution.

2.1.4 The Path to Marriage and Family Life

According to the Guru a person should get married with the blessings and permission of their teachers and parents after learning the teachings about family life, dharma and world knowledge. If everyone lives one’s life with the knowledge of one’s dharma, life will be successful. Everyone has their own dharma. Guru believed that one could know one’s dharma through the Smritis as well as through the lessons from the teachers.

Narayana Guru asserts that a person

must have knowledge about the essential nature of family life before getting married. Many psychologists today express the view that prior to leading a family, one must have an understanding of what family is and how it is to be carried forward. Nowadays Premarital counselling is very common. Marriage brings forth a new set of responsibilities and formal obligations that project the underlying structures of society. The relationship of husband and wife is unique. Therefore, gaining a comprehensive understanding of marital and family dynamics is important for a successful and fulfilling marriage.

Individuals in the family should not live only for themselves. Do not live just to eat and earn money to help one’s family only. A house holder should never live only for his family, he has to treat others with love and compassion just like his own family members. A house holder should keep away partiality in his approach. He owes his duty to all living beings in the universe. He should treat all with respect and love and must have utmost compassion for living beings. One should always have a sense of equality that sees everything as part of the one divine truth and lead a virtuous life.

Children’s curiosity about spiritual enlightenment arises from a peaceful home atmosphere and from their parents. Negativity occurs in children with parents who lack emotional bonding and who give less importance to education. Poverty can be another problem. Children who come from such backgrounds are less likely to understand the real Truth.

2.1.5 Guru’s Reformative views on Dowry System

The family and marriage systems were functioning in an improper way during the time of Guru. Dowry system

was an unhealthy practice that existed in connection with marriage at that time in India and Kerala. So, Narayana Guru realised that a reformation in the marriage system was necessary. Giving and receiving dowry for marriage is not meant for the respectable in the society. A good-hearted person can never take or give dowry because this giving and receiving is like buying and selling one's own daughter or son. It is equivalent to buying and selling pets. If this advice of the Guru is followed by everyone, especially the parents as well as the youth, many social tragedies can be avoided. The Guru firmly believes that the bride and groom who have been found by their parents and who have to live together in the future should be given the opportunity to talk freely with each other before marriage and make decisions. Guru has said that parents should accept their decision realistically.

Guru was of the opinion that the marriage can be arranged in the temple or in one's house or even in educational institutions. Back in time when Narayana Guru gave this advice there was no practice of marriage in the temple. Narayana Guru started it at the Sivagiri Sarada Math. As a result, marriages became common in the temples which still continues in the Kerala society. The Guru expressed the view that maximum ten people are required for a marriage. The parents of the bride and groom, each of their friends, each of their close relatives, teachers and priest. Instructions pertaining to the number of people to be present in a wedding function are given in verses 179 and 180 of 'Sree Narayana Dharma/Narayana Smrti.' The meaning of these verses is as follows: The two parents of the bridegroom, the two parents of the bride, two classmates, two close relatives of the bride and groom, the guru and the priest-these ten should be present at the marriage ceremony.

The number of participants should never be less. Swami Muni Narayana Prasad argues that it is in view of the well-being of human society that such a system was introduced.

2.1.6 The Notion of Garhastyam

According to Guru the first step in establishing a bond of marriage is to find out whether one partner is fit for the other physically as well as mentally. This aspect was usually ignored. People gave more emphasis on economic and social status in fixing up marriages. Sometimes families' breakup due to health problems. So, a complete checkup of both the bride and bridegroom should be carried out by a doctor before the marriage. Guru was of the opinion that those afflicted with deadly diseases like leprosy, tuberculosis, heart disease or even poverty should not marry. As successful family life depends not only on the selection of the life partner, it is a matter of adjustment of two different individuals coming from two different situations.

Guru cautioned not to think that marriage is only for entertainment and to experience marital pleasure. He also stated that *garhastyam* is the best of three ashramas of life. It is significant that he said this even though he was a monk himself. One can understand that the Guru believed that whether one should become a monk or a house holder in life is based on the personal interest of each individual.

2.1.7 Guru's views on Women within Family

Narayana Guru believes that women can hold an influential position among the family members. The success of the family depends on the female members of any

house, especially the wife. The essential qualities of a housewife are innocence, flawlessness and capacity of adjusting expenditure of family according to income. In earlier times women in Kerala were considered completely inferior to the males, having no important position in the family.

Guru believed that women should be given equal status as men. To make her life successful, society must create a social environment in which she will be able to enjoy freedom and equality of opportunity. Guru believes that mutual understanding and cooperation are very necessary for a happy married life. He says equal sharing of happiness and sorrows, mutual cooperation in all activities, living in splendid love and clearing the errors of both sides with a happy mind are the duties of couples. According to Narayana Guru, 'families in which there is unbroken mutual love between husband and wife will achieve divine purity and prosperity in all respects.

Polygamy and polyandry were very common in medieval Kerala. This led to several problems in economical as well as social domains. The practices of polygamy and polyandry were byproducts of the joint family system. Guru realised that society could not make development if social evils like polygamy and polyandry exist. So, he stood for the abolition of these practices. The progress of the downtrodden people of Kerala, was hindered by these or similar customs and practices to a great extent. So, he advised them to make periodical reforms. The teachings of Narayana Guru regarding the marital adjustments and family adjustments are significant across

time.

2.1.8 Marriage and Freedom

Guru was adamant that achieving freedom is the prerequisite for all human development. Man must be free to think and talk, yet he must also be free to be in a marriage and not hurt other people. Freedom does not imply that there are no barriers to misappropriate money and other resources. It represents people's inherent right to utilise their own body, wealth and other resources as they see fit without causing harm to others. The difficulty for a house holder is to strike a delicate equilibrium between following societal conventions and scriptural commands and allowing some degree of creative freedom.

There is a famous saying 'food is the God before the hungry'. The hungry do not have to try to know the real truth. Realising this Guru himself emphasised the socio-economic upliftment of those around him. Guru called for growing in knowledge and becoming socially enlightened. Through that one can achieve spiritual progress. The goal of Guru was to lead people to the realisation that everything is a different manifestation of the same reality. He aimed to promote equality in all aspects of life. To achieve this, social upliftment is necessary and it can only take place through a good home environment. According to Sree Narayana Guru each and every member of a family and society are one and the same because all are part and parcel of only one reality or Consciousness or *Arivu*.

Recap

- ◆ Family is the basic unit of society and families exist in a variety of forms
- ◆ Health involves both mental and physical health and family plays an important role in maintaining it
- ◆ It is important to have Individual freedom within the family
- ◆ Family is a social institution formed out of marriage
- ◆ Children's curiosity for spiritual enlightenment should start from family
- ◆ Dowry system is a social evil and it should be abolished
- ◆ *Garhastyam* is the best of three ashramas of life
- ◆ Guru believed that women should be given equal status as men
- ◆ Mutual understanding and cooperation are very necessary for a happy married life
- ◆ Guru called for growing in knowledge and becoming socially enlightened.
- ◆ Society and family are part and parcel of only one reality or Consciousness or Arivu.

Objective Questions

1. A family in which a person is born is referred to as?
2. A family created by marriage is termed as?
3. Which is the place where parents begin the vital process of socializing their children and teach them how to behave with others in the community?
4. According to Guru, what is the starting point of family life?
5. When will life be successful according to Sree Narayana Guru?
6. What is the best of three ashramas of life as per Guru's advice?
7. Which are the byproducts of the joint family system?

8. Name the synonym for consciousness which Guru used?
9. What qualities does Narayana Guru consider essential for successful housewife?
10. According to Guru, what is a prerequisite for all human development?

Answers

1. Family of Orientation
2. Procreation Family
3. Home
4. Marriage
5. When one lives life with the knowledge of one's *dharma*
6. *Garhastyam*
7. Polygamy and Polyandry
8. *Arivu*
9. Innocence, flawlessness, and managing family expenses.
10. Freedom

Assignments

1. What is the role of the family in providing security and emotional bonds?
2. How does Sree Narayana Guru view the connection between freedom and human development?
3. What reforms did Narayana Guru suggest regarding the dowry system and marriage practices?

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UNIT

The Duties of a Householder or Grihastha Dharma, Importance of freedom in the Development of Individual and Society

Learning Outcomes

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

- ◆ gain knowledge about the Panchasudhi and Panchadarmas
- ◆ understand the Guru's perspective on life
- ◆ learn about the Guru's concept of religion and God

Prerequisites

From birth to death, every human being has to perform one's own duties. Old age homes come into existence when the son or daughter does not perform his/her duties. Perhaps in today's busy life, many people do not have the situation or time to carry out their duties. But a person who lives for the happiness of all will try to carry out his duties, no matter how busy he is. Actually, a moral code is inevitable for the prosperity of daily life. If all the members of a family are virtuous, then the needs of those family members will be met, and they will be able to lead a happy life. In any case, a family member is responsible for fulfilling one's responsibilities to their parents, life partner, and children. All human beings want to live freely and fearlessly. Those who have achieved mental freedom will have a unique identity in life and will have no fear. These people have a balanced mind. Such people will set aside their lives for the betterment of others. Sree Narayana Guru and the Buddha were examples of this. Do you agree with what is mentioned here?

Keywords

Dharma, Compassion, Freedom, Panchadharma, Panchasudhi, Panchamahayajna

Discussion

Have you ever noticed that there are certain duties that a householder has to perform? Narayana Guru has advised through the 'Sree Narayana Dharma' / 'Narayana Smrithi' about the dharma to be followed from one's birth till one's death. Dharma itself is what must be known to those who desire success in life. A family person should do any work based on dharma. Because it is dharma that is the basis of this world. A householder should consider helping others as his main dharma in life. It is possible to eliminate the sins done knowingly or unknowingly and increase the virtues by doing the dharma. Dharma itself is the base of all prosperity. One should not do anything that causes the degradation of dharma, as it is certain that the happiness resides in one's own actions. Narayana Guru gives his followers a detailed description of the duties to be performed by a householder so that the home will be a place of happiness and prosperity. *Panchadharma* (Five Righteousness), *Pancha Sudhi* (Fivefold Purities) and *Panchamahayajnas* (Five Great Sacrifices) are mandatory for a householder and the fulfillment of life is achieved through these.

Ahimsa or nonviolence, Satya or Truth, Aestheya or non-stealing, Brahmacharya or celibacy and abstinence from alcohol are accepted as *Panchadharmas*. Purity of body or *sarirashudhi*, Purity of speech or *vacsudhi*, Purity of mind or *manasudhi*, Purity of senses or *indriyasudhi* and purity of house or *grihasudhi* are known as *Panchasudhis*.

Brahmayajna, Pitr-yajna, Daivayajna, Bhutayajna, and Manushyayajna are the five great yajnas, or panchamahayajna. Panchamayajna are one of the important

dharma for a householder. Brahmajna means to read, learn, and spread the holy scriptures related to God. The intention of Pitr-yajna is to take care of the parents. According to Daivayajna, people should perform temple visits, start meetings with good people, and lead a spiritual life. Bhutayajna is meant to serve animals, birds, plants, and trees are given protection from small insects. Manushyayajna is meant to entertain guests, help the poor, honour monks, adopt poor students and educate them. Those who observe the Suddhi panchaka will live a vigorous, long-lived, and healthy life in this world.

The Guru explains in detail how a family man should live. After attaining knowledge as taught by the teachers, one should get the consent of one's parents and teachers and can enter into the life of a good householder.

- ◆ The proposed householder must marry a good-natured and cheerful girl from a good family. The parents of the bride and groom, one classmate of each, the teacher and the priest, these ten people must be present at the marriage ceremony. Giving and taking of dowry is disapproved by noble people. It is like selling and buying one's own children.
- ◆ If a bride is promised to be given in marriage to a particular person, she should not be offered to another person.
- ◆ People who are suffering from diseases should never get married. After marriage if any one of the couples contacts any incurable diseases, they should

not produce a progeny with congenial defects.

- ◆ The objectives of a householder's life are to maintain dharma and to beget children. He should perform all the necessary functions in the company of his wife.
- ◆ During the life of a householder earning and amassing wealth is necessary but it also has to be used for charitable purposes. A household must offer food to guests and poor people.
- ◆ The ideal and good qualities in a householder are, kindness and compassion for all living beings, and equanimity and stable mindedness in all situations.
- ◆ The householder should practice the five cardinal virtues.

A person who is practicing the above-mentioned duties can lead a happy life. Guru's code of ethics is a guide and reference to support common people in day-to-day decision-making, empowering them to handle ethical dilemmas they encounter in their lives in accordance with the laws of nature. Guru's ethical codes encourage ethical conduct, honesty, integrity, and best practices. The Guru expressed that a householder who does his duties with precision and intelligence is nobler than all monks (Sreenarayana Dharma; verse 194). Further, Guru adds that "a householder who lives in this world without transgressing his own duties (svadharma) is equal to the king of gods. He is lovingly praised by all beings." (Sreenarayana Dharma Verse, 197). The above-mentioned duties of a householder are proposed by the Guru for the benefit of all. These are so simple and

easy that anyone can practice without extra strain. Those who follow these sincerely will enjoy happiness in this world, and it will also be an incentive to attain external bliss.

Narayana Guru, in his work Advaita Jeevitham (Unitive Life), says that the worldly and the spiritual are not two but, in fact, both serve the same purpose. The body feels good as a joint action of all parts of the body; similarly, the attainment of happiness, the ultimate goal of human society, requires the coordinated action of both spiritual and worldly aspects. We all know that the purusharthas dharma, artha, kama, and moksha are part of Indian culture. The most important of these is moksha itself; moksha means liberation from bondage. Few Indian thinkers pointed out that salvation is something experienced while alive here, not something to be achieved after death. Narayana Guru also believes in jivanmukthi, which is liberation while living. He did not teach beliefs like heaven and hell after death. The goal of any human being should be to attain moksha, and the householder should attain artha and kama (wealth and desire) and lead one's life firmly rooted in dharma. Then that life becomes the cause of attaining moksha.

Every person should adopt his own ideal or duty and work towards realising it. Every person in every family and culture differs in thought, ability, or strength to accomplish things; therefore, they must hold distinct ideals or duties. No one has the right to mock ideals and duties of others. Allow each person to fulfil his or her personal dream by doing the best they can. It is inappropriate to evaluate someone based on the standards of another. For instance, it is incorrect to evaluate an elephant using the same criteria used for a sheep. Each should be

assessed according to their own unique attributes and standards.

It is impossible for ordinary people living ordinary lives to know the ultimate reality, which is beyond forms or names, through Jnanamarga. Narayana Guru believes that such people could attain salvation with the help of a guru, and it was his firm belief that the blessings of a guru would certainly lead a common man to salvation. Family members who perform their duties properly are likely to attain moksha. It was expressed that the life of a householder would be successful or meaningful if he accepted a guru, surrendered his life to him, who is equal to God, and was blessed by rendering service to the guru. A good guru can guide a common man to God, or he can help the person understand the real truth. Belief in God helps a man concentrate on his work and do it well. A person who wholeheartedly concentrates his attention on God, for sometimes every day can bring such concentration to other things, like doing his duty as well.

Narayana Guru believes that the worship of God would be good for a common man leading a family life. That is why he has advised that the worship of God should reach all the houses and hearts. He has written a poem for the people to pray to the god every day and named it as Daivadasakam. Daivadasakam begins by saying 'God protect us' and it ends with phrases 'vazhanam, vazhanam sukham' praying to God to bless us to lead a good and happy life. That is, the Guru makes it clear that God's help is needed for a householder to complete one's duties or responsibilities and live happily in society. But one thing should be noted here that Narayana Guru in essence believes that God is nameless, formless, omnipresent and all powerful. However, he also

expressed that this is not possible to be worshipped and sheltered by common people. Therefore, Guru suggested that god can have a name and form for the purpose of worship. The sages of the upanishad have also emphasized the same. The Guru called upon the common people to shed caste and untouchability and build a social family life based on spirituality. By doing so, the common man can pass this worldly life without much suffering.

2.2.1 Importance of freedom in the development of individual and society

Sree Narayana Guru placed utmost importance in freedom and intelligence in the development of the individual as well as development of the society. Physical and mental freedom are necessary for people to better themselves. Freedom from ignorance is essential for diversity and it is the key to a successful life. Education is necessary for attaining this. A man who had attained spiritual freedom will realise that everything they see around them is a manifestation of one and the same Arivu. Such a man will do his duties whole heartedly and will work for the good of others.

The establishment of temples was a plan formulated by the Guru to elevate the down-trodden who were overlooked in society and were slaves to the upper class. Through this, the Guru tried to purify the society from the cruel, worthless superstitions and evil customs. He also aimed at both internal and external purities. The Guru prescribed to the people the power of organising and about attaining social justice and equality. SNDP Yogam was the organization that Guru established with this objective in



mind. Guru explained the need to redeem people from inequalities and the slavery of dependency and to lead them to economic development through the establishment of educational institutions and vocational training centers. He urged people to gain strength through organisation and liberation through education. This was the deliberation behind the establishment of the organisation known as the Yogam. Guru's purpose was to prepare the society as a whole, especially the down-trodden in the society to live freely and to enable them to understand the meaning of life.

Narayana Guru believes that a true religion should include members from all corners of life. Religion should allow

freedom of belief. The primary duty of a religion is to lead individuals towards the freedom of the soul. As a man who had attained freedom, Sree Narayan Guru resisted Brahmanical prejudice and established deities himself, despite being considered as avarna. He preached the synthesis of divinity and humanity and installed a mirror, the last idol he idolized. Some thinkers were of the opinion that through this the Guru asked people to look at the mirror and see oneself. We can also interpret this as a great principle that any object can be imagined as God. 'Know thyself' was the remarkable message. Knowing oneself is necessary for getting freedom.

Recap

- ◆ Dharma means duty.
- ◆ Pancha Dharma prescribes how one should act.
- ◆ Pancha Sudhi means purity of the mind and body.
- ◆ Yamas are the important dharmas.
- ◆ How to be a good householder.
- ◆ The Guru's ethics were honesty, integrity, and best practices.
- ◆ Narayana Guru's precepts of life.
- ◆ Every human being has their own duty based on their culture.
- ◆ Worshiping God ensures the well-being of the common family.
- ◆ Freedom and intelligence will develop society.

Objective Questions

1. Name the Panchadharmas.
2. Name the Panchasudhi.
3. How does the Guru's code of ethics guide common people?
4. What is the primary duty of religion?

Answers

1. Ahimsa (nonviolence), Satya (truth), Aestheya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (celibacy).
2. Sarira Shuddhi, Vak Shuddhi, Mana Shuddhi, Indriya Suddhi, Gruha shuddhi
3. It supports decision-making.
4. Freedom of the soul.

Assignments

1. How does Sree Narayana Guru emphasise the importance of freedom and intelligence in the development of individuals and society?
2. Discuss Panchadharma according to Narayana Guru and how do these principles contribute to a householder's life?
3. How does Sree Narayana Guru conceive the life of a family man?



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Self-realisation and Ethical Action

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will:

- ◆ get exposed to the combination of ethics and spirituality in Sree Narayana Guru's teachings for self-realisation
- ◆ get familiarised with Guru's writings to understand the ethics in human life
- ◆ acquaint with the non-dualistic unity of Atman and Brahman, transcending the spiritual-human dichotomy
- ◆ get familiarised with self-realisation, liberation, and ethical living's significance in Guru's teachings

Prerequisites

The journey of self-realisation is a fundamental aspect of human existence, guiding individuals towards a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world. By cultivating self-awareness and introspection, individuals empower themselves to make conscious choices that align with their true essence, contributing to their fulfillment and the well-being of society as a whole. In the initial stages of life, parents and teachers help their children in this matter as this kind of choice is impossible in childhood. However, teenagers need to choose the path that is most suitable for them. What is essential for a person to choose for themselves in this way is that they must understand themselves. A person who is aware of their own abilities will think independently and make decisions. Such a person will think deeper and try to understand what their essence is. After thinking deeply, they finally find the answer to the question of 'who am I?' We can call such people self-realised. Those who identify themselves in this way are a gift to any society because such people are living for the upliftment of

others. The Buddha was such a soul. Sree Narayana Guru, Swami Vivekananda, Chattambiswami, and others are self-realised people who follow contemporary Indian philosophy.

Keywords

Meditative, Cosmic yolk, Arivu, Bliss, Adharma, Moksha, Nishkama karma

Discussion

Sree Narayana Guru, through his teachings, explains that ethical actions are closely connected with a meditative way of life. Though he was a spiritual thinker, he reacted to ethical issues in society because he realised the fact that a good moral life is necessary for self-realisation. Guru's works like *Jati-Mimamsa*, *Anukampa Dashakam* and *Jiva-karunya Panchakam* mainly describe the importance of ethics in human life. In *Jiva-Karunya Panchakam* Guru points out how contemplation and ethical values can join together under one general principle of wisdom. Guru Nityachaitanya Yati describes Sree Narayana Guru as following a line of contemplative reasoning that is full of true humanity and dignity.

“Grace yields blessedness;
a heart love-empty
Disaster spells of every kind.
Darkness as love’s effacer
and as suffering’s care.
Is seed to everything.
Grace, love, mercy- all the three
Stand for one same reality- life’s star”
(Anukamba Dasakam, verse 2)

In the first verse of the *Atmopadesasatakam*, Guru explained that the one cosmic yolk is transforming into everything. Reality is the one knowledge (Arivu) behind all knowledge, which unifies the knower, the known and knowledge within itself. A person with a unitive understanding can see the sameness outside and inside. It is that sameness that the Guru stresses again and again.

In ‘Sree Narayana Dharma’, it is described that dharma is a thing of happiness. From birth to liberation, what gives ultimate external bliss is the dharma. The cause of unhappiness is adharma. Those who want to attain liberation or self-realisation and happiness must depend on dharma by rejecting adharma. Sree Narayana Guru stressed that the goal of a human being is to serve humanity. Guru’s aim was to use dharma for the advancement of the society. It may be on the basis of this that his disciples attached the word dharma in Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam and Sri Narayana Dharma Sangham Trust.

In Narayana Guru’s works, *Atmopadesasatakam*, *Brahmavidya Panchakam* and *Darsanamala*, the emphasis is placed on Atman rather than Brahman, which is contrary to many traditional scriptures. Guru was of the opinion that knowledge

of the Atman as the cause and foundation of all other knowledge is essential for understanding the interconnectedness of existence and for achieving spiritual enlightenment. He made an effort to eliminate needless deceit between reality or God and people. In his view, egoism has a harmful ramification on man's search for self-realisation or *Atma sakshatkara*.

Narayana Guru's teachings on non-dualism extend beyond metaphysical concepts to include practical implications for ethical and moral living. It suggests that spiritual realisation should not be divorced from everyday life or ethical conduct but rather integrated into all aspects of human existence. According to the Guru, the empirical self is a body with the senses, the mind, the intellect, etc, as its parts. Each of these organs is a non-self that is affixed to the self. The avayavi (owner of the limb), therefore, experiences nescience (Atmopadesasatakam 26). Here the term 'avayavi' refers to the individual who identifies with various aspects of the self, including the body, senses, mind, and intellect. Nescience, in this context, denotes a state of ignorance or lack of awareness regarding the true nature of the self. This ignorance arises from the attachment to the non-self elements, which obscures the realisation of one's essential nature. Within this framework of human consciousness, Narayana Guru acknowledges three fundamental states: awake, dreaming, and deep sleep. These states are important aspects of our everyday experiences that bring a sense of multiformity. In the waking state, individuals engage with the external world, experiencing sensory perceptions and conscious awareness. The dreaming state involves a realm of imaginative and subconscious activity, generating a variety of dream experiences. Deep sleep represents a phase of rest for the mind,

characterised by the absence of conscious experiences. Together, these states offer a diverse spectrum of human consciousness, shaping our understanding of reality and self-awareness.

Apart from these three, following the Upanishadic teachings, Guru also identifies a fourth state of non-dual bliss known as the Turiya state. It is the only one where non-dualism is realised as actual. The turiya-consciousness is illuminable and without origination. It cannot be known by the senses, mind, or intellect because it is perfect and certain in itself. Guru, in verse thirty of the Atmopadesasatakam, explained that instead of being avasthatrayas (the three states of wakeful, dream and deep sleep), it is transcendental consciousness. The self in its purest form is this pure awareness, which is neither a subject nor an object but rather a non-dual experience.

Self-knowledge is incompatible with any factual cognition. Factual experience, nevertheless, might indicate the eternal witness. For example, the sense organs, the mind, the intellect, etc, are not working during profound sleep. Nevertheless, after a sound sleep, the individual awakes and says, 'I had a good sleep'. Due to the past tense of the verb in the proposition, the agent of experience is recalling the joy he felt while he slept. Waking and sleeping stages do not exist together. Anyway, the self is the basic concept in all three phases. It knows everything on its own. It is the ever-present, everlasting witness, consciousness, that is incorporated in all mental processes as the knower, knowledge and known. The Guru explains that since sleeping and waking states that are exclusive, the *avayavi* (limb owner) cannot be the reason for this experience. Atman is the only one who is observant of all three states. In itself, the Atman is



knowledge or wisdom. It is ecstasy on its own.

The worldly objects human beings experience with their senses and minds impart in them the idea that their own being is unique from everything else they perceive. Each sense organ has a special purpose in understanding the outside world. The mind, for example, demonstrates something people perceive; the intellect raises up some concepts on the basis of that, the memory records it, and the ego evaluates it as harmful or useful. They develop the idea that 'I' is an assembly of these sensitive processes. With this awareness, they start recognising their body, sense organs, mind and so forth. People have a disposition to think things like 'this is my body', 'this is my ideas', 'I am beautiful' and so on. But still, unknowingly, they are confirming that they are something other than mind.

The Gurus of Vedantic tradition consider negation to be the sole effective method for approaching the unfathomable. This strategy starts with a rationale of what the self is not (neti neti). Narayana Guru stresses that the body and the sense organs are not similar. Identifying the non-self with the self is a misinterpretation.

There is nothing to be acknowledged in this world, as one considers the Atman. It is self-luminous or consciousness. Sree Narayana Guru validated the views of Advaita, stating that Atman is a non-dual reality and that the duality is really Maya or an illusion. The Guru accepted Brahman as Atman, although the Atman is luminescent and freely does action, taking various forms through Maya. It is self alone exist before an action is taken and nothing else is recognised. So, the actions are executed by the self with its own Maya. The Guru emphasises that all that seems is only a superimposition,

and as a result, 'I' ego is superimposed in the same way as in the shell silver. There is just one Atman that endures eternally and transcends all things. That which has no origination is the self, and the self is Brahman, the Supreme reality.

The correlation between I and consciousness is not present in Guru's philosophy. The problem actually arose due to the Maya veil, which exists as a barrier to knowing the non-dual consciousness. When that barrier is removed, I and consciousness become obvious and translucent. If consciousness and I were really different from each other, then consciousness would not be known. The Guru expressed in the Atmopadesasatakam:

The repeated I, I contemplated from within

Is not many but remains One; divergent egoity

Being multiple, with the totality of such

The self-substance too continuity assumes (Atmopadesasatakam 11.)

The unity and infinite nature of Atman are described by the Guru in this verse, revealing that before one gain knowledge of the Atman, one is under the control of darkness, but once one senses its existence, one is able to get out of the control of the darkness and perceive light. That which is practically known as the individual soul is actually the transcendental consciousness. There are multiple jivas or empirical selves, but there is only one Supreme consciousness. The truly existing nature of the jiva is the one ultimate consciousness. The jiva's inventiveness, finitude, boldness and agency are essentially accidental traits that do not have a permanent character.

The Guru in the philosophical poem

Arivu, despite not being against the diversity of the cosmos of existence, said there is only one reality. The sun shines in the sky as one, but when its figure is mirrored in a calm lake, nevertheless large, only small reflections can be seen. However, if waves form and produce foam with plenty of bubbles, then each bubble will project a different reflection of the sun. This is a transient phenomenon, but it is a magnificent instant to clearly explain that one can see as many without making any modifications to the original. Like the sunlight reflects on several lakes, the ultimate reality activates all individuated selves.

Nescience or *avidya* superimposes the body and mind to Atman. Guru points out that Atman is consistently at liberty, but because of Maya or ignorance, one acts as if one is affixed. The main purpose of the Guru was to change the mistaken idea that Atman is limited and specific and to unveil the truth of the non-dual consciousness. Narayana Guru was a strict adherent of non-dualism; all differences between Atman and Brahman or between object and subject are the ambiguous creation of Maya. Man is made up of both body and soul, but the body is only a hallucinatory representation. When one realises this fact, the soul does not go away which is nothing but pure consciousness.

The Maya principle projects dead appearances, and nothing is away from the magic of Maya. The real truth is realised only when Maya is removed through knowledge, and it is possible to get rid of Maya only if one keeps moral principles in one's life here in this world of existence.

Guru said that persons who desire moksha should practice nishkama karma, which is selfless service. Control of sense organs is a prerequisite for such an attitude in life. Meditation in the right way will help one to control the sense organs. As said earlier, according to Narayana Guru, the self is eternal, and it is the ultimate consciousness, so the life of man does not end in this world of existence. By leading a noble, ethical life, one can free oneself from the sufferings of this world of existence and can attain peace and happiness, for this, one should lead a life of non-attachment. The ethical codes and moral principles presented by Sree Narayana Guru are bound to be an unfailing source of inspiration and guidance to all. Ethics, metaphysics, human life, this world and all its objects, everything is consciousness or knowledge, just like the waves of the sea. The Guru was trying to make us understand this great truth. In the opening verse of Guru's philosophical work *Arivu*, this truth is presented as:

“The known ‘this’ is no other:

It, when closely examined, also

Reveals itself to be consciousness in essence” (Arivu-Verse 1)

Narayana Guru's emphasis on ethical living, selfless service, and meditation as paths to liberation underscores his holistic approach to spirituality. Ultimately, his teachings offer a timeless source of inspiration and guidance, emphasising the interconnectedness of ethics, metaphysics, and human existence within the realm of consciousness.

Recap

- ◆ Sree Narayana Guru links ethical actions with a meditative lifestyle for self-realisation
- ◆ Guru Nityachaitanya Yati highlights Guru's reasoning, rooted in humanity and dignity
- ◆ 'Grace, love, mercy' symbolise life's essence in Anukampa Dasakam
- ◆ Atmopadesasatakam's first verse emphasises cosmic unity
- ◆ Dharma brings bliss, adharma causes unhappiness
- ◆ Narayana Guru prioritises Atman over Brahman for enlightenment
- ◆ Non-dualism extends to practical ethics in Narayana Guru's teachings.
- ◆ The Turiya state transcends empirical self-experience
- ◆ Self-knowledge is distinct from factual cognition
- ◆ Sense organs reinforce the ego's identification with the body.
- ◆ Negation helps approach the unfathomable reality of Atman
- ◆ Atman acts through Maya, transcending worldly appearances
- ◆ Removing Maya reveals unity between the soul and consciousness
- ◆ Narayana Guru stresses selfless service and sense control for liberation
- ◆ Meditation aids in controlling senses and realising the eternal self.
- ◆ Ethics offer guidance for peace and happiness
- ◆ Guru teaches that everything is consciousness
- ◆ Truth is revealed through knowledge and ethical living

Objective Questions

1. Whose reasoning highlights Sree Narayana Guru's teachings as rooted in humanity and dignity?

2. What do ‘grace, love, mercy’ symbolise in the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru?
3. What does the first verse of Atmopadesa Satakam emphasise?
4. According to Sree Narayana Dharma, what leads to ultimate external bliss?
5. What does Narayana Guru prioritise over Brahman for understanding existence and enlightenment?
6. What aspect of Narayana Guru’s teachings extends to practical ethics and moral living?
7. What does the Turiya state signify in Narayana Guru’s teachings?
8. What is essential for understanding the eternal witness in Narayana Guru’s teachings?
9. What does the removal of Maya reveal, according to Narayana Guru?
10. What practice does Narayana Guru stress for liberation?

Answers

1. Guru Nityachaitanya Yati
2. Life’s essence
3. The cosmic unity transforming into everything
4. Dharma
5. Atman
6. Non-dualism
7. The realisation of non-duality, transcending empirical self-experience
8. Self-knowledge, distinct from factual cognition
9. The unity between the individual soul and supreme consciousness
10. Selfless service and sense control

Assignments

1. How does Sree Narayana Guru connect ethical actions with a meditative lifestyle for achieving self-realisation?
2. Discuss the significance of dharma in Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy, emphasising its role in attaining ultimate bliss and liberation.
3. Analyse Narayana Guru's teachings on non-dualism and its practical implications for ethical living. How does he integrate spiritual realisation into everyday actions?
4. Explore the concept of Maya in Narayana Guru's philosophy and its role in obscuring the truth of non-dual consciousness.

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Narayana Guru's Vision of Equality

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand Guru's concept of self, other and oneness
- ◆ recognise Guru's vision of equality and humanity especially in Atmopadesa Satakam
- ◆ appreciate Guru's orientation of Advaitic philosophy into social equality

Prerequisites

All of us must be remembering the colors and pattern of our school uniforms. At that time, we might have desired to go to school in other color dresses at least occasionally. At that time, we may not have known enough about why the teachers insisted us to wear uniforms. The teachers were trying to bring the idea of equality to our mind. All of us are same. They were indicating to the greatness that we are all one, beyond the difference we see around us.

All of us are afraid of 'other'. Why do we fear 'other' people? 'Other' places? 'Other' countries? 'Other' states? 'Other' communities and cultures? 'Other' religions, beliefs and practices? The fear comes from the thought that there is something 'other' to myself – something different from me – which may bring difficulties or harms to me. We are afraid because we are so rooted in the idea that we are 'different' from others. However, we are not different. All of us have been given birth in the same process and way. All of us are same and our caste is humanity. If we think that everything in this universe including us, are mere different manifestations of the same ultimate consciousness, then that fear of 'other' will leave us. Sree Narayana Guru was a self-realised philosopher who tried to teach us this truth.

Key Themes

Self, Other, Equality, Non-duality, Humanity.

Discussion

Social equality is a social situation where everyone in the society is regarded equally as in the case of equal opportunity for all for education, jobs, etc. Sree Narayana Guru taught that equality is extremely important for social growth. He rejected casteism and promoted new values of social equality and spiritual freedom. It is easy to preach that all should be treated as equals, but the peculiarity of Sree Narayana Guru was that he followed genuinely this principle in practical life.

There is a spark of truth present in all human beings that is the real self, which is described in many ways by Sree Narayana Guru. He described it as one cosmic yolk which is transforming into everything, the karu- the primeval cause. Karu is the substances that develops into all forms. The real self is compared to a sun of pure awareness. Again, it is compared to an oceanic treasury. It is the one knowledge behind the all knowledge, which unifies the knower, the known and the knowledge within itself. True self is again compared to a light which has never been lit and which will never be extinguished. It is the one changeless truth behind all changes. This kind of thinking naturally leads to equality because the true light present in all of us are one and the same. This is the essence of the first four verses of Guru's philosophical work, *Atmopadesasatakam* (One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction)

According to Narayana Guru, there is no difference between soul and soul, soul and God and therefore human and human.

Men are equal in all aspects. He advocated a new social setup where there is unity in diversity. He preached the principle of equality at a point in time when Kerala people were divided on the basis of caste. In Kerala, like in many other parts of the country, a segment of the populace was oppressed and misused by a society which engaged in conflict amongst people based on caste and religion. In actuality, the lower socio-economic groups were refused even the status of being human. Guru could not tolerate this kind of prejudice since, as was previously mentioned, he saw that all people were unique expressions of the same reality. Guru's purpose was to impart to the people the knowledge of happiness or the truth. His goal was to encourage advancement in all facets of human life.

Guru made an effort to alter society, the economy, religion, ethics and personal spheres, and he was successful in doing so. He is called a humanitarian, social reformer who could not stand injustice, inequality, the suffering of oppressed people, and thus he worked to free humanity. The fundamental aim of Guru's philosophy is to do away with dualism, which causes conflict in all spheres of human endeavor .

Although our ethnic origin, social class, spoken language, and heritage give the humans an appearance of variety and difference, according to Guru, they are merely external characteristics which should not be taken seriously by the people.

Guru gave education a lot of weight because he thought it was essential to bring the lower caste people out of ignorance, inequality and into the level of literacy of light. Narayana Guru stated that three things are necessary for prosperity in this world; education, wealth, and organisation. He believed that one can only reach the spiritual level through worldly advancement.

Guru's ethical teachings helped in promoting an idea of the social equality which in essence leads to unity and happiness in society. People generally believe that they belong to distinct castes. This belief is not true. Guru affirmed that for human beings there is only one caste. All humanity comes under one caste, all are brothers and sisters and thus all should exist with all affluence.

In order to equip individuals for the path of liberation, the self-realised Guru placed a strong emphasis on societal concerns including organising, building temples and educating. Guru recognised the importance of moral values in evolution of a society. And, the moral precepts that he recommended for the people are noteworthy.

2.4.1 Otherness

Sree Narayana Guru tried to clear out the indubitable moral principles which are inherent in the way of thinking of common man, regardless of class, caste or creed, in day-to-day life. Guru was of the opinion that the moral law is universal and mandatory. It must bring into play not only to all human beings but also to all living beings. What is right or wrong for each person is really so for all rational beings in all situations, Guru affirmed.

For leading a happy life in a society, some form of unified consciousness

and collectively agreeable principles are necessary. This fact has naturally nurtured the query of 'I' and the other. What ought to be one's connection with the other is an important question in every community and society. Sree Narayana Guru was aware of the fact that man as rational being always seeks for pleasure. In *Atmopadesasatakam* Guru says that everyone strives to actualize self-contentment or happiness in all possible ways. But no one can lead a good, happy life without considering the other.

How to treat the other is basically an ethical problem. It is an ethical problem since it mainly connects with the attitude of one's responsibility to the other in personal as well as social life. Humans become social only by facing the others in all different forms of communication. In such situations Guru asserts that one should not be an object of another man's desire and that conflict between people originates only with regard to objects dear to each.

Sree Narayana Guru brings forth the notion of 'aparan' to clarify one's ethical relation to another human being. The term 'aparan' hints to the one who is not parted from the self. It cancels the otherness of the other. Narayana Guru said that whatever one does for one's own happiness should bring forth another's happiness at once. Any action that guarantees one's happiness and causes another's suffering goes against the principle of the oneness of the self.

Regardless of whether it is one's own self or the self of another, Guru advised people to view humanity as an end in itself and never as a means to an aim. This is fundamentally a modern idea. The idea that humanity is a goal in itself is incredibly creative. It asks us not to use some one else as a means to an end. The categorical imperative of Kant describes

the same moral principle that is intrinsic in human being. Kant says, “Act so as to use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always as an end, never as merely a means.” People are goals in and of themselves, and they cannot be used only as tools to achieve an objective.

The verses 21 to 25 of Atmopadesa Satakam encompass unambiguous elucidation of the essence of Guru’s ethical position. The moral precept that says one should do unto others as one should do unto oneself is borrowed from the same dialectically supreme ethics that Guru follows as examined in these verses. When one loves one’s neighbor as oneself, one holds off the duality between egoistic attractions by cancelling the dialectical opposite.

பியமொரு ஜாதியிதென் பியல், தாவீய-
பியமபரபியமென்னேக்மாயி
பியவிஷயங் ப்ரதி வனிடுவ மே; தன்
பியமபரபியமென்றின்னே.

-(verse_21)

Following is the translation by Muni Narayana Prasad.

(The sense of dearness felt by all is basically one in kind.

Conflict-causing confusions such as,

“This is what is dear to me”

“This is what is dear to you”

“The other is what is dear to him.”

Arise only with regard to objects dear to each.

What is basically dear to oneself,

Thus is what is dear to another also.

This has to be understood well.)

This verse speaks clearly the basis for ethics of correct conduct. All actions point

at each person’s self-happiness and should turn at once as the happiness of the others. This clearly explains the whole foundation of the ethics on which Guru’s conception of human relations is based. “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” (AtmopadesaSatakam,verse-22).

We need to let go of the idea that ‘this man’ or ‘that man’ and make sure that what we do to make ourselves happy will also give happiness to others. Guru pointed out the need to always act with compassion. A person who acts with compassion will give up his own selfish interest and act in a way that is good for others.

Guru expressed that appreciation of something other than oneself produces fear. Man is afraid of another person or object which is distinct from him. One who accepts that there is no second object that exists, that everything is one (everything is the manifestation of the same arivu), that the other is not distinct from oneself, will have no thought of fear. Only a person who overcomes fear can always hold on to moral principles in life. Guru led a life based on this conviction.

2.4.2 Non-duality as Basis of Ethics

As an Advaitic, Sree Narayana Guru believed in non-dualism which means that there is ‘no two’ or that there is ‘only one undivided without a second’. What is thought of as the ‘other’ now turns out to be a non-other, which in essence, represents the principle of non-duality. Guru explains that one who loves his own religion, caste, family, country etc. should accept that others also uphold the same

view. He emphasises that the basic cause which produce strife among people stems from sheer ignorance of the essential unity of all or non-duality of substance or arivu.

Consciousness exists and *Jada* or body is a shadow. The shadow casts from the object and it does not exist apart from the object. You and I are all shadows of consciousness in the world. In other words, the connection between these worldly objects and consciousness is as inseparable as the sea and the waves.

Narayana Guru firmly expressed that humanity is one and indivisible in kind. He realised that if people realise the importance of the principle of non-duality, equality could be developed which is necessary for the peaceful living of mankind. A person who realises the fact that there is no difference between Atman and Brahman (individual self and eternal reality) and implements this great truth in day today life will have only compassion and ahimsa towards all and such a person will stand for equality. There are Indian thinkers who believe that to know the non-dual reality, spiritual discipline such as, yoga philosophy (yama and niyama), is necessary which consists in the observance

of compassion, non-violence, etc. It is true that Guru's ethical ideas originated from his metaphysical ideas or is the result of his realisation of non dualism. But he presents an all-inclusive philosophy and thus he can accept the viewpoints of those who believe that ethics is the way to attain the knowledge of non-dualism. This is the reason why he whole heartedly accepted Sahodaran Ayyapan. Guru was able to accept even an atheist because he believes in the unity of all. Guru's ultimate metaphysical position joints hands with his ethics. The metaphysical truth cannot be isolated from moral truth, rather, two are organically related to each other.

It comes naturally to a man of sound knowledge to live a morally acceptable life; he does not need the assistance of ethical norms. On the other side, someone without information finds himself/herself powerless to take action. Therefore, the wisest course of action is to heed the enlightened person. The understanding that there is only one Atman or self, who appears as every being, including human being, gives human existence a new set of behavioral guidelines: whatever makes one happy, should also make others happy.



Recap

- ◆ Concept of aparan clarifies one's ethical relation to another human being.
- ◆ Aparan hints to the one who is not parted from the self and it cancels the otherness of the other.
- ◆ One should do unto others as one should do unto oneself
- ◆ Non-duality as the basis of Guru's ethics
- ◆ Real self is compared to a sun of pure awareness.
- ◆ Real self is the one knowledge behind all knowledge, which unifies the knower, the known and the knowledge within itself.
- ◆ True self is compared to a light which has never been lit and which will never be extinguished
- ◆ For a happy life, a unified consciousness and collectively agreeable principles are necessary

Objective Questions

1. What is the unified consciousness in Guru's philosophy?
2. What is the relation of the self and other in Guru's philosophy?
3. What is the basis of ethics of Guru's philosophy?
4. What is the pure awareness?
5. What was Guru's concept about worldly advancement and spirituality?

Answers

1. Consciousness that Atman (individual self) and Brahman (universal self) are one.

2. Relation of oneness
3. Non-duality
4. The awareness that one and the other are same
5. Guru believed that one can attain spiritual level through worldly advancement.

Assignments

1. Explain Narayana Guru's vision of equality
2. Elucidate the concept of 'aparan' in Guru's philosophy
3. How non-duality and equality are connected? Elucidate
4. Guru was an Advaitic and he promoted Advaitic philosophy for social reformation and justice. Elaborate

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സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

விழுயாத் ஸுத்திராக்ளம்
விஶுப்புரையி மார்ளம்
ஸுப்பிரஸாம்மாத் விழுண்ளம்
குதுப்பகாஶமே நயிக்கலே

കുറിരുടിൽ നിന്നു തേങ്ങളെ
സുരൂവാമിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം
ന്നനേഹാപ്പതിയാൽ വിളങ്ങണം
നീതിവെജയയ്ക്കി പാറണം

ശാസ്ത്രവ്യാപ്തിയെന്നുമെക്കണം
ജാതിഭേദമാകെ മാറണം
ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ
ജത്തോനകേ/രമേ ജാലിക്കരേ

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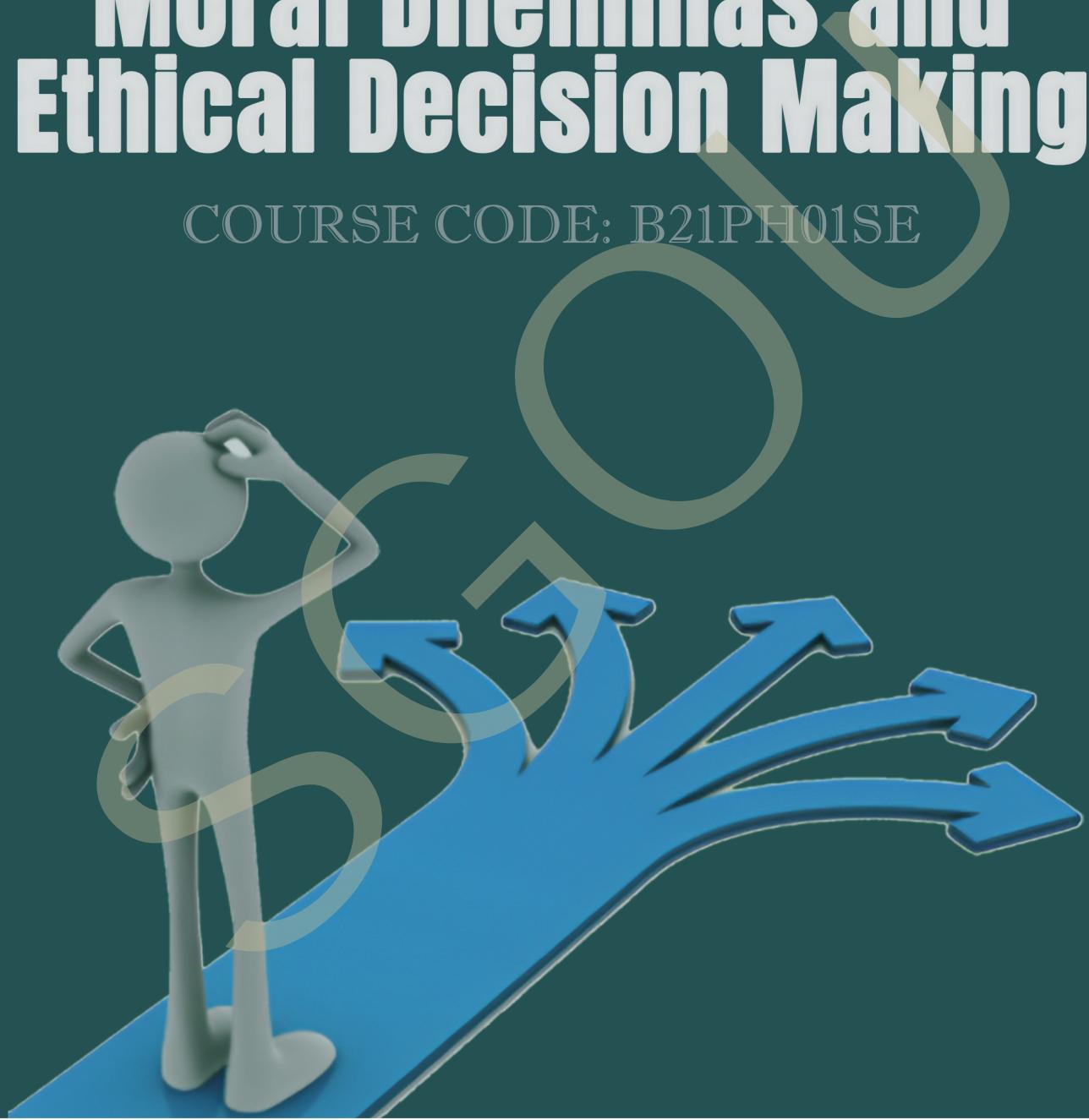
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Moral Dilemmas and Ethical Decision Making

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