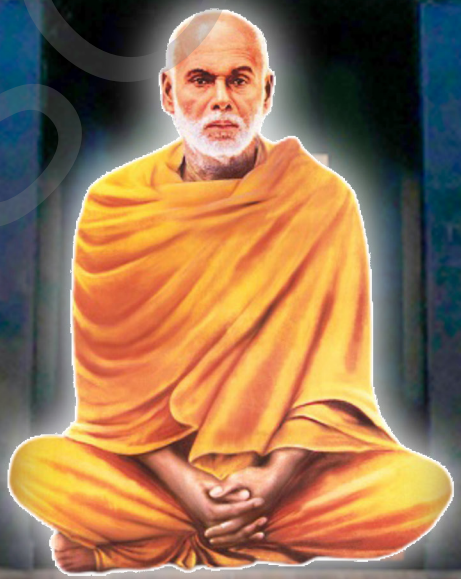
Sreenarayanaguru Darsana Simplified for Youth

COURSE CODE: B21PH05DE

Undergraduate Programme in Philosophy

Discipline Specific Elective Course

Self Learning Material



SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

Vision

To increase access of potential learners of all categories to higher education, research and training, and ensure equity through delivery of high quality processes and outcomes fostering inclusive educational empowerment for social advancement.

Mission

To be benchmarked as a model for conservation and dissemination of knowledge and skill on blended and virtual mode in education, training and research for normal, continuing, and adult learners.

Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.

Sreenarayanaguru Darsana Simplified for Youth

Course Code: B21PH05DE

Semester - V

Discipline Specific Elective Course
Undergraduate Programme in Philosophy
Self Learning Material
(Model Question Paper Sets)

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MESSAGE FROM VICE CHANCELLOR

Dear learner,

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

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

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

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

Warm regards.
Dr. Jagathy Raj V.P.

01-10-2025

Contents

BLOCK

Introduction

UNIT

What is Philosophy

Learning Outcomes

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

- explain the meaning and origin of the word Philosophy
- state the main branches of Philosophy
- describe the purpose and method of philosophy as a rational and reflective inquiry
- familiarise the role of concept creation in philosophy, as explained by Deleuze and Guattari
- recognise how philosophy contributes to personal growth and helps build a thoughtful and inclusive society

Prerequisites

Have you ever gazed at the stars and wondered, why are we here? Have you questioned what truly makes something right or wrong, or how we can know anything for certain in a world of endless perspectives? These are not mere abstract thoughts; rather, philosophical questions that have shaped history, ignited revolutions, and driven humanity's greatest thinkers to seek truth. Philosophy is not about memorising answers but about daring to think deeply, challenge assumptions, and see the world with fresh eyes. It invites you to wrestle with timeless ideas like justice, existence, knowledge and explore unknown territories of thought. Like an intellectual adventure, philosophy pushes us to ask better questions, refine our reasoning, and discover new ways of understanding ourselves and the universe.

Keywords

Wisdom, Critical Thinking, Questioning, Self-Reflection, Concepts, Meaning of Life, Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ontology, Logic, Ethics

Discussion

The word 'philosophy' comes from two ancient Greek words: philo, which means 'love,' and sophia, which means 'wisdom.' So, philosophy means 'love of wisdom.' According to the Random House Dictionary, philosophy is defined as "the rational investigation of the truths and first principles of living, knowledge, and conduct." This means that philosophy uses reasoning and clear thinking to explore the most basic ideas that guide our lives. It is not about memorising facts, but about asking meaningful questions and looking for thoughtful answers. One important part of philosophy is the idea of wisdom. Wisdom, according to the same dictionary, means "knowledge of what is true or right, combined with good judgment." It is not just about knowing information, but about understanding how to use that knowledge wisely in real-life situations. In ancient Greece, the word sophia had a wider meaning than our word 'wisdom' today. It included not only deep thinking but also practical skills and cleverness in solving problems. A wise person could be someone skilled in arts, business, or everyday tasks. So, in philosophy, wisdom is not only about thinking deeply but also about acting wisely and using the mind well in all areas of life.

According to Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy, "Philosophy is the study of the most general and abstract features of the world and categories with which we thing: mind, matter, reason, proof, truth etc."

1.1.1 Understanding Philosophy and Its Main Branches

Philosophy is the study of basic questions about life, knowledge, right and wrong, and the nature of reality. It is a way of trying to understand the world and our place in it by using careful thinking, asking questions, and reflecting deeply. Unlike science, which studies facts through experiments, or history, which looks at past events, philosophy deals with ideas that influence how we think and live. Philosophy helps us think about important questions such as: What is real? What is good? How can we know anything for sure? How should we behave? These questions may not have clear answers, but they guide us to think carefully about our beliefs and choices. Through philosophy, we learn to listen to different opinions, examine reasons behind ideas, and develop our own understanding. It is both a method of thinking and a way to approach life.

Philosophy covers many areas, including metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, logic and aesthetics. Metaphysics investigates the fundamental nature of reality by asking, 'What is real?' It explores questions about existence, such as: What is the universe truly composed of? Do objects exist independently, or only because we perceive them? Are human beings purely physical bodies, or do we possess an immaterial soul or consciousness? Metaphysics also examines abstract concepts like time, space, causality, and even the existence of a higher power or ultimate reality. By questioning assumptions

about reality, metaphysics helps us reflect on whether the world is merely what we see and measure, or if there are hidden layers of meaning and existence. It challenges us to ponder our place in the cosmos and the very fabric of what we call 'real.'

Epistemology examines the nature, sources, and limits of knowledge. It investigates fundamental questions such as: What does it mean to truly know something? Can we trust our senses and reasoning? How can we distinguish between justified knowledge and mere belief? For example, while you might believe it will rain based on dark clouds, epistemology asks whether this belief qualifies as genuine knowledge or just a probable guess. This field explores various ways we acquire knowledge through direct observation, logical reasoning, personal experience, or testimony from others and questions whether absolute certainty is ever possible. In today's digital age, where information and misinformation abound, epistemological skills become particularly vital. They help us evaluate the reliability of sources, recognise biases, and demand evidence before accepting claims as true.

Ethics studies moral principles and seeks to answer the fundamental question: 'What is the right thing to do?' It helps us distinguish between good and bad actions, fair and unfair decisions, by analysing core values like honesty, justice, and compassion. Everyday situations such as deciding whether to lie to spare someone's feelings or choosing to share limited resources become opportunities to apply ethical reasoning. Beyond personal dilemmas, ethics guides larger societal questions. It evaluates how governments should treat citizens, whether businesses should prioritise profits over people, and what responsibilities we share toward each other and the environment.

Logic investigates the principles of correct reasoning and effective argumentation. It provides systematic tools to analyse arguments, focusing on their structure, clarity, and consistency to determine whether conclusions truly follow from their premises. Logic helps us distinguish between valid reasoning (where the conclusion necessarily follows from the premises) and fallacies (errors in reasoning that may appear convincing but are actually flawed). Studying logic helps to develop critical thinking skills to construct coherent arguments, identify hidden assumptions, and spot misleading claims essential for academic success, informed decision-making, and navigating an information-rich world. Aesthetics examines beauty, art, and our experience of them. It explores fundamental questions about why we find certain things beautiful or moving: What makes a sunset breathtaking or a melody touching? Is beauty purely subjective or are there universal standards of what is beautiful? Aesthetics investigates how we perceive and evaluate everything from paintings and poetry to films and natural landscapes. Beyond defining beauty, this field questions the very purpose of art: Does it aim to evoke emotions, provoke thought, mirror society, or express truths beyond words?

Apart from the major branches, philosophy also focuses on some important areas that explore specific fields of human thought and life. These include Philosophy of Religion, which studies questions about God, faith, and the meaning of religious beliefs; Philosophy of Science, which examines how scientific knowledge is formed and what makes science different from other ways of knowing; Philosophy of Language, which looks at how language works and how it relates to thought and reality; and Philosophy of Mind, which explores the nature of the mind, consciousness, and how the mind relates to the body. Philosophy also deals with Social Philosophy, which studies social institutions, justice, and human rights. These areas help us understand different aspects of our world

and how we experience it, using reason, critical thinking, and reflection.

We can see that the most philosophical question tend to fall into one of the following four areas.

1. Questions related to being or existence. Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy thast is concerned with these questions. Two basic questions of metaphysics are: what is being? And what are the fundamental features and properties?

2. Questions related to knowledge. Epistemology, the theory of knowledge, is the branch of philosophy concerned with these questions- What is the nature of the knowledge and what are its criteria, sources and limits? These are basic questions of epistemology, and thus it includes such questions: what is truth? And is it possible to know anything with absolute certainty?

3. Questions related to values.

a. Moral philosophy (ethics), the philosophical study of moral judgements.

b. Social philosophy, the philosophical study of society and its institutions.

c. Political philosophy, which focuses on the state and seeks to determine its justification and ethically proper organisation.

d. Aesthetics, the philosophical study of art and value judgements about art.

Questions of logic, the theory of correct reason, seeks to investigate and establish the criteria of valid inference and demonstration.

Moreover, to understand to philosophy in the right sense, we have to know the right meanings of the terms epistemology, ontology, metaphysics and axiology.

Epistemology means theory of Knowledge.

Ontology means theory of Being.

Metaphysics is theory of Reality.

Axiology is theory of Values.

1.1.2 The Act of Philosophising

Philosophy is not just a subject that we study it is a way of thinking and questioning the world around us. As the philosopher Immanuel Kant once said, we cannot simply learn philosophy as we might learn facts or formulas. Instead, we learn to philosophise to engage in a process of asking deep, meaningful questions about life and universe, knowledge, and existence. Philosophising is the active process of thinking deeply and critically about fundamental questions. It is like being a detective of ideas, asking questions. Unlike other subjects that might focus on memorising facts, philosophising is about exploring ideas, challenging assumptions, and seeking understanding. For instance, you are debating with your friends about whether it is okay to lie to protect someone's feelings. Philosophising would involve not just stating your opinion but digging deeper; why do we value honesty? What makes an action morally right or wrong? This process does not always lead to a single correct answer but encourages you to think carefully and consider different perspectives.

According to Deleuze (French philosopher) and Guattari (French psychoanalyst and political activist), philosophy is not just about thinking rather about creating concepts. A concept is an idea that helps us understand something more clearly. For example, the

concept of 'freedom' helps us think about personal choice, while the concept of 'justice' helps us talk about fairness. Philosophers create new concepts when they try to answer difficult questions. Just like artists create paintings and scientists create theories, philosophers create concepts to express new ways of seeing the world. These concepts are not given to us; rather, must be invented, shaped, and explained. Philosophy, then, is a creative subject. It gives birth to new ideas that can change how we live and think.

In the modern world, philosophy has many challenges. Deleuze and Guattari warn us that sometimes ideas like 'creativity' and 'concept' are used in business and advertising in ways that have little to do with real thinking. For example, companies talk about 'concept design' or 'creative marketing' to sell products. But in philosophy, concepts are not made for sale; rather, they are made to help us understand truth, experience, and meaning. Philosophy should not become a product or a trend. Its job is to think beyond fashion and business. True philosophical thinking is honest, patient, and sometimes uncomfortable. It does not follow popular opinion; instead, it asks us to go deeper. The following are the key features of philosophising,

Questioning Everything : Philosophising begins with curiosity. Like Socrates, an ancient Greek philosopher, you ask questions to uncover what lies beneath everyday beliefs. For example, Socrates might ask, 'What is justice?' and keep probing until the answers reveal deeper truths or contradictions.

Critical Thinking : It involves examining ideas logically, looking for evidence, and spotting flaws in arguments. If someone says, 'Everyone should follow the rules,' a philosopher might ask, 'Why? Are all rules fair? Who decides?'

Self-Reflection : Philosophising often turns the lens on ourselves. It asks us to examine our own beliefs and values. For instance, why do you believe what you do about success or happiness? Are those beliefs truly yours, or did you adopt them from others?

Openness to Dialogue : Philosophising thrives on discussion. It is not about winning an argument but about exploring ideas together, listening to others, and refining your thoughts.

Many philosophical questions concern norms. Normative questions ask about the value of something. The sciences are interested in finding out how things are, but they cannot tell us how things ought to be. When we decide that something is good or bad, right ro wrong, beautiful or ugly, we are applying norms or standards.

1.1.3 Philosophy: Its Purpose and Benefits

What is the use of philosophy? Some people say philosophy has no real use, because it does not produce anything we can touch or sell. But the real value of philosophy is in its ability to help us think in new ways. It challenges old habits and makes us question what we usually take for granted. A good example is the French philosopher, Michel Foucault. He studied how knowledge, power, and rules shape the way we think and live. For example, Foucault looked at schools, prisons, and hospitals not just as buildings, but as places where people are controlled and shaped by society. He asked, why do we think certain behaviours are "normal" and others are "wrong"? Who decides what is true or false? How do systems like education or medicine control people without them even realising it? These were questions that most people never thought to ask, but Foucault made them important. He helped people see that many things we believe are 'natural' are actually made by society. For example, Foucault showed that

the idea of 'madness' changed over time. In some periods, people with mental illness were treated as if they were dangerous. In others, they were cared for. This shows that what we call 'truth' can change, depending on who has the power to define it. Foucault's philosophy helped people understand that the world is not always the way it seems. He encouraged us to question what is 'normal,' who decides the rules, and how power works in everyday life.

Another example of this is René Descartes, a French philosopher from the 17th century. He wanted to find out what he could really know for sure. He began to doubt everything he had learned even his senses, because sometimes they can be wrong. For example, a stick in water looks bent, even though it is straight. This made him ask the question 'how do I know anything is real?' Through this deep questioning, Descartes came to a famous conclusion: "I think, therefore I am." This meant that even if he doubted everything else, the very fact that he was thinking proved that he existed. He used doubt, not to destroy knowledge, but to build a stronger foundation for it. This is an example of how philosophy helps us look at things from new angles and not just accept ideas because others do.

Philosophy also helps us face difficult questions that science and technology cannot answer. For example, science can explain how we grow old, but it cannot tell us the meaning of life. Technology can connect us through phones and the internet, but it cannot decide what is right or wrong to say. These are questions of value, meaning, and ethics questions that philosophy helps us explore with careful thinking and reflection. Because of this, philosophy becomes not just a subject to study, but a lifelong habit of thinking. Even though it may seem difficult at times, philosophy is more important than ever in today's world. In an age of fast information and constant communication, philosophy encourages us to slow down. It teaches us to think before we speak, to question before we believe, and to reflect before we act. It also helps us deal with uncertainty, change, and difference. Rather than avoiding disagreement, philosophy shows us that it can be a starting point for learning. It invites us to explore different ways of thinking and to respect others who hold different views. In this way, philosophy helps us grow as individuals and contributes to building a more thoughtful and understanding society. As Deleuze and Guattari say, philosophy is the ongoing effort to create meaning in a changing world.

We can conclude this topic with a few remarks on the benefits of studying philosophy.

The importance of some philosophical questions – is there a God who is attentive, caring and responsive to us? And Is abortion morally wrong? – is obvious and great. A justification would have to be given for not contemplating them. But some philosophical questions are more or less obscure, and seemingly only academic or theoretical, consequence. Not everything, philosophers consider, is dynamite. The questions posed earlier about whether computers might be able to think someday would be perceived by many as pretty academic and theoretical.

But then, every field has its theoretical and non-practical question. Why do astronomers wonder about the distance and recessional velocity of quasars? Why are paleontologists interested in 135- million – year – old mammalian fossil remains in northern Malawi? The answer is that some questions are inherently interesting to the people who pose them. An astronomer wonders about a quasar just because it is there. And some philosophical questions are like that too: the philosopher wants to know the answer simply to know the answer.

There are also side benefits in seeking

answers to philosophical questions, even those that are difficult, abstruse, or seemingly remote from practical concerns. Seeing philosophical answers usually essential making careful distinctions in thought, words, and argument, and recognizing subtle distinctions among things and among facts. Philosophical solutions require logic and critical thinking skills, discussion and exposition.

Recap

- Philosophy means 'love of wisdom' and uses reason to explore life's basic questions.
- It is about thinking deeply, not memorising facts.
- Philosophy seeks wisdom; practical and thoughtful use of knowledge.
- It helps us ask: What is real? What is good? How should we live?
- Metaphysics asks what is real and explores existence.
- Epistemology studies knowledge and how we know things.
- Ethics deals with right and wrong in personal and social life.
- Logic teaches clear, correct reasoning.
- Aesthetics explores beauty, art, and their meaning.
- Philosophising is about questioning, thinking deeply, and seeking meaning.
- Kant said we must learn to philosophise, not just learn philosophy.
- It means exploring ideas and not just stating opinions.
- Deleuze and Guattari say philosophy creates concepts to understand the world.
- True philosophical thinking is not for profit, but for truth and understanding.
- Key features include: asking questions, thinking critically, self-reflection, and open dialogue.
- Philosophy helps us think in new ways and question what seems normal.
- Foucault showed how power shapes truth and society.
- Descartes used doubt to find certainty and concluded, "I think, therefore I am."

- Philosophy tackles questions science and technology cannot answer.
- It teaches us to slow down, reflect, and respect other viewpoints.
- Philosophy is a lifelong habit that builds better individuals and society.

Objective Questions

1. What is the meaning of the word "philosophy" based on its Greek roots?
2. What is the main question explored in metaphysics?
3. State importance branches of philosophy?
4. Which branch of philosophy examines the nature and limits of knowledge?
5. What does epistemology ask about our beliefs?
6. What branch of philosophy studies moral principles and human conduct?
7. What does logic help us identify in arguments?
8. What does aesthetics explore?
9. Which branch of philosophy studies the concept of beauty and artistic experience?
10. What does philosophy of religion focus on?
11. What does the philosophy of language study?
12. What is studied in the philosophy of mind?
13. What do Deleuze and Guattari say philosophy creates?
14. What is the aim of philosophical concepts according to Deleuze and Guattari?
15. How did Foucault redefine ideas like madness and normality?

16. What kind of questions does science fail to answer that philosophy can explore?

17. Write the meanings of the terms epistemology, ontology, metaphysics and axiology.

Answers

1. Philosophy means 'love of wisdom' (from *philo* = love, *sophia* = wisdom).
2. Metaphysics asks, 'What is real?'
3. Ethics, logic, epistemology and metaphysics
4. Epistemology.
5. Whether a belief qualifies as knowledge or is just a guess.
6. Ethics.
7. Valid reasoning and fallacies.
8. Beauty, art, and our experience of them.
9. Aesthetics.
10. Questions about God, faith, and the meaning of religious beliefs.
11. How language works and how it relates to thought and reality.
12. The nature of the mind, consciousness, and its relation to the body.
13. Concepts.
14. To help us understand truth, experience, and meaning.
15. By showing that such ideas change over time and are shaped by society.
16. Questions of value, meaning, and ethics.
17. Theory of knowledge, theory of being, theory of reality and theory of values.

Assignments

1. Explain the meaning of philosophy as 'the love of wisdom.' How is this idea reflected in the ancient and modern understanding of the term? Illustrate your answer with examples.

2. Discuss the major branches of philosophy metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, logic, and aesthetics. Choose any two and explain how they help us to understand different aspects of human life.

3. What does it mean to 'philosophise'? Examine the role of questioning, critical thinking, and dialogue in the act of philosophising. How does this differ from studying philosophy as a subject?

4. Why is it important to study philosophical questions that may seem theoretical or abstract? Discuss with examples how philosophy contributes to logical reasoning, critical thinking, and social understanding.

Suggested Reading

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UNIT 2

Philosophy in the East

Learning Outcomes

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

- identify the regions and cultural roots of major Eastern philosophical traditions
- understand that Eastern Philosophy is not one single system, but is made up of many different traditions with unique ideas, practices, and beliefs
- recognise a close connection between philosophy and religion in Eastern tradition
- understand that many Eastern philosophies aim not just at knowledge but also at personal growth, reducing suffering, and living a good life

Prerequisites

Have you ever wondered how people in different parts of the world have tried to understand life, the world, and our place in it? Just like Western philosophy, the Eastern world too has a long and rich tradition of deep thinking. From the banks of the rivers in India to the mountains of China, from the deserts of Arabia to the islands of Japan, great thinkers have asked timeless questions: What is a good life? How should we live with others? What is the nature of reality? In this unit, we will get introduced to the major philosophical traditions of the East such as Indian, Chinese, Islamic, Tibetan, Japanese, and Korean. These traditions may be different in language and style, but they all share a deep concern for human life, ethics, harmony, and wisdom.

Keywords

Darśana, Āstika, Nāstika, Confucianism, Taoism (Daoism), Kyoto School, Self-cultivation, Mahāyāna Buddhism, Harmony

Discussion

1.2.1 The Idea and Scope of Eastern Philosophy

The term 'Eastern Philosophy' is often used to describe the philosophical traditions that developed in regions such as India, China, Japan, Korea, Tibetan and Arab world. Many of these ideas are very old, some going back more than 2,000 years. However, the practice of grouping them under one name like 'Eastern Philosophy' is actually a recent development. This way of classifying ideas mainly began in the 19th century, when Western scholars tried to understand and organise knowledge from Asia. Before this, people living in Asian countries did not use terms like 'Eastern,' 'Asian,' or 'Oriental' philosophy to describe their own traditions. These categories were not recognised or used by the thinkers in India, China, or other parts of Asia. Today, the term 'Eastern Philosophy' is commonly used, especially in contrast to 'Western Philosophy,' which refers to philosophical traditions that developed in Europe and later spread to places like North America and Australia. However, this comparison can be misleading. It creates the impression that Eastern Philosophy is one single, unified tradition, when in fact it is made up of many different schools of thought. Each of these developed in specific historical, cultural, and religious settings. Grouping them all together under one label often hides their differences and prevents us from fully understanding the unique ideas found in each tradition.

When we study philosophy in Asia, we often come across ideas that may feel unfamiliar or different from the way many people in non-Asian parts of the world usually think. However, one important thing to remember is that the basic questions that philosophers ask are very similar everywhere. Questions like 'What is real?', 'What is the best way to live?', and 'How do we Know?', have always been part of human thinking, no matter where people live or which culture they belong to. These are questions that arise naturally when people reflect on life. They are not specific to one region or religion; rather, they belong to the human condition itself. Understanding that people across different cultures ask the same deep questions helps us see how connected we all are. It breaks down the idea that the world is divided into two separate ways of thinking like East and West, or 'us' and 'them'. The questions that matter in life are shared by all, even if the answers given by different traditions may vary. This view encourages us to explore Asian philosophies not as something distant or foreign, but as part of the wider human search for truth and meaning.

1.2.2 Major Philosophical Traditions in the East

Western philosophy has remained more or less true to etymological meaning of 'Philosophy' in being an intellectual quest for truth. Eastern philosophy has been, however, intensively spiritual and has always emphasized the need of practical realization of truth. Especially, Indian Philosophy comprises the philosophical speculations of all Indian thinkers, whether ancient

or modern, theists or atheists. In fact, the rootcapregion of Indian Philosophy is the vedas. But Indian philosophy develops not only through the 'Upanishads' or 'Vedanta', but also through the Buddhism, the Jainism and the Supreme Advaita.

Eastern philosophy includes many different systems of thought that developed in various parts of Asia, especially in India, China, and nearby regions. These philosophies are deeply rooted in ancient religious and cultural traditions and mainly focus on how to live a good and meaningful life. Unlike Western philosophy, which often separates philosophy and religion, Eastern philosophy treats them as closely connected. For instance, Indian philosophy, a major part of Eastern philosophy, is not one single tradition or belief system but is made up of many different schools of thought. Each school is called a *darśana*, which means 'a way of seeing' or 'a viewpoint,' and each offers a particular way of thinking about life, reality, and the self. Some of these schools accepts authority of the Veda, while others are not. However, they are all grouped under the term 'Indian philosophy' because they developed within the cultural and historical setting of ancient India.

The history of Indian philosophy covers a period over 30 centuries. The earliest literature that is available is the vedas, the beginning of which is taken to be somewhere near 2500BC. During this period Indian philosophy developed practically unaffected by external influence. And several systems of philosophy emerge in India, criticizing each other. Though remarkably great in achievement, Indian philosophy presents some difficulty to the historians. Very little is known about the lives and characters of those thinkers who have contributed to the philosophy of India. There is almost a total lack of chronological details.

The roots of Indian philosophy can be traced back to the Indus Valley Civilisation (around 2500–1800 BCE), though exact dates are uncertain due to gaps in historical records. Early Indian philosophical ideas are more clearly linked to the Vedas, a collection of sacred texts considered to contain eternal knowledge. These texts are called *śruti*, meaning 'what was heard,' and are believed to be timeless truths received by ancient sages, not created by any human or divine author. As Indian thought developed, deeper questions about life and existence appeared in the *Upaniṣads*, which form the later part of the Vedas. The *Upaniṣads* shifted focus from external rituals to inner understanding, exploring the nature of the self and ultimate reality. As time passed, some thinkers rejected the authority of the Vedas and developed alternative systems of thought, called *nāstika darśanas*, which include Buddhism, Jainism, and Cārvāka. Others accepted the authority of the Vedas and built schools of philosophy known as *āstika darśanas*, which include Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṁsā, and Vedānta. The terms *āstika* and *nāstika* refer to their attitude toward the Vedas and not to belief in God. Each of these schools presents its own views on reality, knowledge, and the path to liberation.

Indian Philosophy can be classified into two: The Orthodox and Heterodox.

The six systems or Shad darsanas constitute the Orthodox Philosophy which accept the authority of vedas. They are grouped into three.

1. Nyaya - Vaiśesika
2. Samkhya-Yoga
3. Purva Mimamsa- and Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta.

On the other hand, the heterodox system did not accept the authority of Vedas. They are

1. Jainism
2. Buddism
3. Charvaka, the Indian materialism.

Philosophy in India does not arise out of wonder or curiosity as it seems to have done in the west. It originated under the pressure of the practical need arising from the presence of moral, physical and intellectual evil. It is the problem of how to remove these evils that troubled the ancient Indian most. Moksha or liberation is the liberation from evil. It is the philosophical culmination of every school except Charvaka. The conception Moksha varies from system to system. But in all the theories it represents a state in which evil is completely overcome.

Just as Indian philosophy evolved through reflections on sacred texts and debates over the authority of the Vedas, Chinese philosophy developed in response to historical and cultural conditions in ancient China. Chinese philosophy began during the Spring and Autumn period (8th to 5th century BCE), a time of political stability and cultural growth in ancient China. Early Chinese writings show that people were interested in the connection between human life and spiritual forces. Kings and wise people were believed to have the ability to guide both human affairs and spiritual matters using practices like divination and astrology. As China faced social and political problems, people started asking important questions about life, society, and good governance. This led to a period of active thinking and discussion known as the 'Hundred Schools of Thought,' during which many philosophical traditions developed.

Chinese philosophy focuses on how to live a good life, how to build a just and orderly society, and how to maintain harmony between people and nature. It covers a wide range of topics such as ethics, politics, cosmology, and human nature. A key belief shared by many Chinese philosophers is that human beings are naturally good and capable of improvement. They believed that with proper learning, self-discipline, and moral effort, individuals could cultivate virtue and contribute to the well-being of society. This view reflects a generally optimistic outlook on human nature, in contrast to some Western philosophies which emphasise human weaknesses and the need for control. Several important schools of thought shaped Chinese philosophy. These include Confucianism, which focuses on social order and moral values; Mohism, which promotes universal love and practical ethics; Legalism, which stresses strict laws and state power; the School of Names, concerned with logic and language; the Yin-Yang school, which explores natural balance; and Taoism, which encourages harmony with the natural flow of the universe. While their teachings differ, all these schools aim to guide individuals and societies toward personal growth, peace, and balance. Along with these native traditions, Buddhism arrived in China through the Silk Road and gradually became part of the Chinese philosophical landscape. It blended with Daoist and Confucian ideas, adapting Indian teachings to Chinese ways of thinking. During the Tang Dynasty, Buddhism flourished and influenced not only philosophy but also art, education, and governance.

Just as Chinese philosophy developed through native traditions and later integrated Indian Buddhist ideas, Tibetan philosophy also built upon Indian Mahāyāna teachings while shaping its own distinctive system that blends reasoning, meditation, and ethical living. Tibetan philosophy developed in the Himalayan region and is closely connected with Tibetan Buddhism. While it is deeply influenced by Indian Mahāyāna

Buddhism, it has its own unique way of thinking about life, the mind, and the world. Tibetan thinkers combine logical argument, meditation, and ethical practice to explore important questions about truth, the self, and reality. Philosophy in Tibet is not just theory; it is also practical. Its purpose is to help people reduce suffering and live a better life. Tibetan traditions value debate and reasoning but always connect them to daily life and spiritual goals. They believe that wrong understanding leads to suffering, and through study and reflection, one can gain wisdom and peace. Tibetan Buddhism is known as 'Vajrayana'. Milarepa is one of the greatest saints in Vajrayana.

Tibetan Buddhism has four major schools: Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu, and Gelug. These schools differ mainly in the teachers they follow, the practices they use, and the texts they study. The Gelug school, followed by the Dalai Lamas, later became the most politically powerful. Tibetan texts are collected in two large groups: Kangyur (the words of the Buddha) and Tengyur (commentaries by Indian and Tibetan scholars). In Tibetan thought, the goal is not just to understand reality, but to use that understanding to become a better person and help others. This practical approach gives Tibetan philosophy a special place in the broader tradition of Eastern philosophy.

As Buddhism spread across Asia, it also made a lasting impact on Japan, where it became an important part of the country's philosophical tradition. Japanese philosophy is a rich and diverse tradition that has developed over many centuries, drawing from both native beliefs and foreign influences. At its core, Japanese philosophy explores how to live in harmony with nature, society, and the self. It focuses on values such as simplicity, respect, loyalty, and inner calm. The earliest form of Japanese thought can be found in Shinto, the native religion of Japan, which teaches respect for nature and the worship of kami (spirits). Shinto does not have a formal system of philosophy, but it shaped the Japanese view of life as something sacred, natural, and interconnected. From the 6th century CE, Buddhism entered Japan from China and Korea. Buddhist schools like Zen, Pure Land, and Nichiren Buddhism developed in Japan, each offering different paths to spiritual enlightenment. Zen Buddhism, in particular, became highly influential in Japanese art, poetry, and even martial arts, emphasising meditation, self-discipline, and living in the present moment. The term 'Zen' is derived from the Chinese word 'Chan', which is derived from the Sanskrit 'Dhyan'.

Together with Buddhism, Confucianism also entered Japan and influenced the way people thought about society, education, and moral behaviour. During the Tokugawa period, Neo-Confucianism became the basis of education and governance, encouraging obedience, loyalty, and social harmony. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, during the Meiji Restoration, Japanese thinkers began to engage with Western philosophy, science, and politics. This led to a period of modernisation where traditional ideas were re-examined in light of new challenges. Philosophers like Nishida Kitarō, the founder of the Kyoto School, combined Western philosophy especially German idealism with Eastern traditions like Zen. The Kyoto School explored ideas about self, nothingness, and world order, trying to build a bridge between East and West.

In a similar way, Korean philosophy developed through the blending of native beliefs, Buddhism, and Confucian thought, forming a distinct tradition with its own focus and methods. It developed over the last two thousand years and focuses on the deep relationship between human beings, their communities, and the nature of reality. Unlike many Western traditions that separate theory from practice, Korean philosophy gives equal importance to both. For Korean

thinkers, the true value of philosophy lies not just in thinking about life but in living it. Philosophical ideas are closely tied to ethical action, self-cultivation, and leadership for the common good. Traditions such as Korean Buddhism, Confucianism, and Tonghak (Eastern Learning) all promote personal discipline, moral development, and social harmony. These traditions often work hand-in-hand with religion to help people overcome their suffering and improve themselves and society. In this way, Korean philosophy blends thinking and action, and it treats self-improvement as one of its main goals. Another key feature of Korean philosophy is its focus on relationships rather than individual things. It teaches that relations are more basic and real than separate objects. This means that everything exists through its connection with others. Korean philosophy tends to be monistic, but not in a way that denies differences. Instead, it sees all things as parts of one living system, where everything is connected and flows from deeper relationships.

Like other major Eastern traditions, Islamic philosophy also developed by combining religious faith with philosophical reasoning. It drew from different cultural influences to explore questions about life, knowledge, and human purpose. It blends faith and reason, meaning that it tries to understand religious truths using logical thinking. It was influenced by Greek, Persian, and Indian ideas, especially during the Abbasid period, when many Greek texts were translated into Arabic. This helped Muslim scholars to combine the teachings of Plato and Aristotle with Islamic beliefs. Important thinkers like Al-Farabi, Avicenna (Ibn Sina), Al-Ghazali, and Mulla Sadra explored deep questions in areas such as metaphysics, ethics, and politics. In modern times, thinkers like Iqbal and Seyyed Hossein Nasr have continued this tradition by addressing new challenges such as science, democracy, and the environment.

Recap

- The term 'Eastern Philosophy' is modern and was introduced by Western scholars.
- Earlier, Asian thinkers did not use terms like 'Eastern' or 'Oriental' for their traditions.
- Eastern and Western philosophies ask similar basic questions.
- These questions include: What is real? How should we live? How do we know things?
- Eastern philosophy has many schools with different views.
- Indian philosophy has both religious and non-religious schools.
- It is divided into āstika (accepts the Vedas) and nāstika (does not).

- The roots of Indian philosophy go back to the Indus Valley Civilisation and the Vedas.
- Upaniṣads focus on the self and inner truth.
- Nāstika schools include Buddhism, Jainism, and Cārvāka.
- Āstika schools include Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Mimāṁsā, and Vedānta.
- Main Chinese schools include Confucianism, Taoism, Mohism, Legalism, and others.
- Chinese thought values self-improvement, ethics, and social order.
- Buddhism entered China and mixed with native ideas during the Tang Dynasty.
- Japanese philosophy is influenced by Shinto, Zen Buddhism, and Confucianism.
- Japanese thinkers also engaged with Western philosophy during the Meiji period.
- Korean philosophy combines thought and action.
- Islamic philosophy blends faith and reason, influenced by Greek and Indian ideas.
- Tibetan philosophy combines logic, meditation, and ethics to reduce suffering and gain wisdom.

Objective Questions

1. What does the term *darśana* mean in Indian philosophy?
2. Which ancient texts are considered the basis of early Indian philosophical ideas?
3. What is the difference between āstika and nāstika schools in Indian philosophy?

4. Which philosophical schools are classified as nāstika in Indian philosophy?
5. Name the six āstika darśanas in Indian philosophy.
6. During which historical period did Chinese philosophy begin?
7. What was the period of active philosophical discussion in China called?
8. Which school of Chinese philosophy promotes universal love and practical ethics?
9. Which Chinese philosophical school stresses strict laws and state power?
10. What is the native religion of Japan that shaped early Japanese philosophy?
11. Which form of Buddhism is known for its influence on Japanese art and meditation?
12. Who was the founder of the Kyoto School in Japanese philosophy?
13. Name two important thinkers from the Islamic philosophical tradition.
14. What are the two main collections of Tibetan Buddhist texts called?
15. What is the purpose of philosophy in Tibetan tradition?

Answers

1. Way of seeing
2. Vedas
3. Vedic authority
4. Buddhism, Jainism, Cārvāka
5. Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Mimāṁsā, Vedānta
6. Spring and Autumn
7. Hundred Schools

8. Mohism
9. Legalism
10. Shinto
11. Zen Buddhism
12. Nishida Kitarō
13. Al-Farabi, Avicenna
14. Kangyur, Tengyur
15. Spiritual development

Assignments

1. Why is the term 'Eastern Philosophy' considering a recent and general classification? Discuss how this label may both help and hinder our understanding of diverse Asian philosophical traditions.
2. Compare the goals and approaches of Western and Eastern philosophies with reference to their emphasis on truth, spirituality, and practical living.
3. Explain the difference between āstika and nāstika schools in Indian philosophy. How does this classification reflect their attitude toward the authority of the Vedas rather than belief in God?
4. Discuss how Chinese philosophy developed during the 'Hundred Schools of Thought' period. Highlight the central concerns of at least two Chinese philosophical schools and their vision of human nature and society.
5. Examine the role of religion in shaping the development of Japanese, Korean, or Tibetan philosophy.

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UNIT

Wisdom

Learning Outcomes

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

- understand the difference between knowledge and wisdom
- identify the role of wisdom in solving real-life problems
- explain how Indian philosophy links wisdom with liberation and ethical living
- describe how Western philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle viewed wisdom
- explore the importance of reason, reflection, and values in wise decision-making

Prerequisites

Across different cultures and times, people have wondered what it means to live well, make thoughtful decisions, and understand life beyond surface appearances. Some have turned to philosophy, not just to ask abstract questions, but to explore how thinking can shape the way we live and act. In everyday life, individuals often face choices, uncertainties, and challenges that do not have simple or ready-made answers. At such times, a kind of thinking is needed that moves beyond facts and information; something that can guide judgment, bring clarity, and help one reflect deeply. Various traditions, both ancient and modern, have explored this form of thinking through the idea of wisdom. In some traditions, wisdom is linked with self-awareness or inner balance; in others, it is closely tied to ethical living, devotion, or freedom from suffering. One may encounter reflections on how wisdom relates to calm decision-making, responsible action, or understanding what truly matters. This unit invites learners to explore these diverse ideas, not through fixed definitions, but through examples drawn from philosophical thought.

Keywords

Knowledge, Self-realisation, Liberation (Mokṣa), Reason, Practical Wisdom, Justice

Discussion

1.3.1 Introduction

Wisdom is not just about collecting facts or gaining knowledge. It is about using our thinking to solve real problems and to live in a way that brings value to our lives and to others. The philosophy of wisdom gives more importance to life's challenges than to knowledge alone. It teaches us to ask the right questions and think clearly. This means it helps us make better choices and take control of our lives. Wisdom helps us act freely and responsibly, with awareness of what is right and what brings value to life. It does not remove our freedom but improves it by helping us make decisions that lead to good outcomes. The more wisely we think and act, the more we are able to live the kind of life we truly want. Wisdom also helps us discover and achieve what is of value like love, peace, health, justice, and happiness. It includes knowledge, but it goes beyond it by also including care, creativity, and action. Wisdom is about knowing what really matters in life and doing something about it. It helps individuals and societies grow by encouraging better relationships, fairer institutions, and shared responsibility.

1.3.2 Difference between Knowledge and Wisdom

Knowledge means knowing something. The means of acquiring knowledge can be sense organs or reason. But wisdom is practical knowledge. For example, knowing that eating good food improves health is knowledge. But actually, eating good food and thereby improving health is wisdom.

The wisdom in philosophy challenges the limited way in which knowledge is often used. When knowledge is used narrowly, it tends to focus only on collecting facts or information, without paying attention to real-life situations or human experiences. This creates a gap between learning and living. In contrast, the philosophical approach to wisdom connects knowledge with life. It suggests that all forms of inquiry whether in science, the humanities, or society should begin by asking what truly matters in life and how we can achieve it. This approach is guided by basic and necessary principles. These principles help us understand what is truly valuable, such as happiness, justice, or peace, and encourage actions that aim to realise these values in everyday life. This philosophical approach also questions the common belief that we should first gain knowledge and only later apply it to solve problems. It sees that method as incomplete or even irrational. Instead, wisdom begins by carefully examining real-life challenges and asking what is truly valuable in a given situation. The goal is not just to increase knowledge, but to improve the way we live. This means clearly identifying the problems we face, thinking about different ways to solve them, and making choices that lead to meaningful and responsible living.

The philosophical approach to wisdom also gives importance to personal reflection. While academic study is useful, wisdom grows through our own thinking about life. Every person reflects on questions like what is good, what is worth doing, and how to deal with difficulties. This kind of personal

reflection is central to the idea of wisdom. Wisdom involves not only knowing what is valuable but also experiencing it and working to make it real in the world. Wisdom is both personal and social. It helps us form better relationships, create fair institutions, and improve our communities. Its goal is to help people live with dignity, fairness, and a sense of purpose.

Reason also plays an important role in the philosophy of wisdom. Reason here means using careful and logical thinking to understand problems and find better ways to act. It does not mean forcing one right answer on everyone. Rather, it encourages people to explore various possible answers and make informed, thoughtful choices. This process is guided by two basic steps: first, clearly state the problem; second, explore different solutions and evaluate them. These steps can help us deal with both personal and social problems. Real-life issues are often complex, so we may need to break them down into smaller parts or learn from how others have solved similar problems. Since people may see problems differently, reason helps us discuss our differences and find common ground. In this way, wisdom helps us think better and live better, both as individuals and as members of a community.

1.3.3 Indian philosophical approach to the concept of wisdom

In Indian philosophy, the idea of wisdom has been central from the earliest times. Unlike approaches that focus mainly on intellectual knowledge, Indian thought connects wisdom with self-realisation, inner peace, ethical living, and liberation from suffering. Wisdom is often described as *jñāna* (knowledge), *viveka* (discrimination), and *bodha* (awakening), and is closely tied to liberation (*mokṣa*). The earliest expressions of Indian wisdom are found in the Vedas, especially in the later portions known as the Upaniṣads. In these texts, wisdom is not seen as information or reasoning alone, but as insight into the nature of the self (*ātman*) and its unity with the ultimate reality (*Brahman*). The sages of the Upaniṣads asked deep questions such as: 'Who am I?' 'What is the nature of the universe?' and 'What is the ultimate purpose of life?' Their answers were not simply philosophical theories but were rooted in spiritual experience. According to the Upaniṣadic tradition, true wisdom arises when one realises that the self is not limited to the body or mind, but is identical with Brahman, the infinite and eternal reality. This realisation is not only a matter of knowledge but leads to liberation from ignorance and suffering.

Classical schools of Indian philosophy offered different perspectives on wisdom, though most agreed that it leads to liberation (*mokṣa*). In the Sāṅkhya system, wisdom means discriminating between *Puruṣa* (pure consciousness) and *Prakṛti* (material nature). According to Sāṅkhya, suffering arises when we mistake the body, mind, and ego for the true self. Wisdom consists in realising that the self (*Puruṣa*) is different from the ever-changing elements of nature. When this discrimination (*viveka-jñāna*) becomes firm, one becomes free from bondage. Yoga philosophy, which is closely linked to Sāṅkhya, defines wisdom as the result of a disciplined practice aimed at calming the mind and perceiving the true self. Patanjali's Yoga Sūtras speak of eight limbs (*aṣṭāṅga yoga*), and through ethical conduct, concentration, and meditation, the practitioner gains insight and detachment. The wisdom that comes through yoga is not theoretical, but transformative; it changes one's way of being and leads to peace and freedom.

Both Buddhism and Jainism, though different in their teachings, give great importance to wisdom as a central part of the path to liberation. In Buddhism, wisdom

(*prajñā*) is one of the three essential aspects of the path, along with ethical conduct (*śīla*) and mental discipline (*samādhi*). It involves a deep understanding of impermanence (*anitya*), suffering (*duḥkha*), and non-self (*anātman*), gained through meditation and reflection. This kind of wisdom is not just about knowing concepts but directly experiencing truth, leading to the removal of craving and ignorance, and ultimately to freedom from suffering. Wisdom in Buddhism also leads to compassion, as seeing the interconnectedness of life naturally gives rise to care and kindness. In a similar way, Jainism views wisdom as a combination of right knowledge (*samyag-jñāna*), right faith (*samyag-darśana*), and right conduct (*samyag-cāritra*), which together guide one towards liberation. Jain thinkers stress the principle of *anekāntavāda*, the many-sided nature of truth, which teaches that no single viewpoint can fully capture reality. A wise person is one who understands multiple perspectives and avoids rigid thinking, showing humility, tolerance, and open-mindedness as signs of true wisdom.

In Vedānta, especially in Advaita Vedānta as taught by Śaṅkara, wisdom is understood as the direct realization of non-duality (advaita). This non-duality refers to the essential oneness of the individual self (ātman) and the ultimate reality (Brahman). In this context, wisdom is not merely intellectual knowledge but an inner awareness or direct experience of the self as pure consciousness. The Atreya Upaniṣad expresses this idea through the mahāvākya "Prajñānam Brahma," which means "Consciousness is Brahman." Here, consciousness is identified with Brahman, the Absolute, which is unchanging, infinite, and the foundation of all existence. According to Śaṅkara, ignorance (*avidyā*) causes us to identify with the body and mind, creating the illusion of separation between the self and Brahman. True wisdom (*jñāna*) is the realisation that one's self is not different from the absolute reality. This is not intellectual knowledge but an inner awakening that dissolves all illusion. The wise person sees unity in all diversity and lives in the world without being affected by it. In later periods, Indian philosophers such as Rāmānuja, Madhva, and Vallabha reinterpreted the idea of wisdom through the lens of devotion (*bhakti*), showing a shift from purely intellectual understanding to a more personal and emotional engagement with the divine. For them, wisdom was not limited to knowing the nature of reality but also involved cultivating a deep and loving relationship with God. In this view, true wisdom lies in surrendering the ego and living with constant awareness of the divine presence, making wisdom a lived and heartfelt experience.

In contemporary Indian philosophy, the idea of wisdom has expanded further to include concerns such as pluralism, human values, and global ethics. Modern thinkers emphasise that wisdom is not only about knowledge but also about self-awareness, emotional balance, ethical responsibility, and the ability to live peacefully with others. It is understood as the capacity to apply knowledge wisely in real-life situations, make fair decisions, and act in ways that promote the well-being of all. Thus, from devotional surrender to ethical action, the concept of wisdom in Indian philosophy continues to evolve as a rich and holistic ideal.

1.3.4 Western philosophical approach to the concept of wisdom

In Western philosophy, the idea of wisdom has always held a central place. From ancient Greece to modern times, philosophers have explored what it means to be wise, how wisdom differs from knowledge, and why wisdom is important for individuals and society. The concept of wisdom has evolved through various philosophical traditions, but it has consistently been linked to questions

about truth, morality, and the good life. This long-standing interest in wisdom can be clearly seen in the early Greek tradition, where thinkers were not only concerned with natural phenomena or logical arguments, but also with living wisely and understanding the deeper principles that govern life. Among these thinkers, Socrates stands out as a major figure who redefined wisdom. Socrates claimed that he was wise only because he knew that he did not know everything. This idea challenged the popular belief that wisdom meant possessing a large amount of information. Instead, for Socrates, wisdom involved being aware of one's ignorance, being open to questioning, and being committed to the search for truth through dialogue. His method of asking questions, now known as the Socratic method, was designed to uncover hidden assumptions and lead people to greater self-understanding.

Plato, the student of Socrates, took the idea of wisdom further. He believed that true wisdom involved the knowledge of eternal and unchanging truths, which he called Forms. According to Plato, the visible world is only a shadow of a higher reality, and the wise person is one who strives to understand this higher realm. In his famous work 'The Republic,' Plato described the philosopher as someone who turns away from the illusions of the world to seek the truth through reason and contemplation. He also connected wisdom to the idea of justice, suggesting that a wise ruler would govern not for personal gain, but for the good of the whole society, guided by knowledge of what is truly good and just.

Aristotle, who studied under Plato, offered a more practical understanding of wisdom. He made a distinction between two types of wisdom: theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom. Theoretical wisdom, according to Aristotle, involves understanding universal truths and the principles that explain the world. Practical wisdom, on the other hand, is about making good decisions in everyday life. It requires not only knowledge but also experience, good judgment, and moral character. Aristotle believed that practical wisdom was essential for living a virtuous life, because it helps individuals choose the right actions in complex situations. For him, a wise person knows not only what is good in general, but also what is good in a particular context. Wisdom, therefore, is not limited to abstract thought but is deeply connected to ethical living.

During the medieval period, Western philosophy was strongly influenced by religious thought, especially Christianity. Philosophers such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas integrated Greek philosophy with Christian teachings. For them, wisdom was not only a human achievement but also a divine gift. Augustine believed that wisdom involves the love of God and the search for eternal truth. He saw it as something that leads the soul toward a higher spiritual reality. Aquinas, building on the work of Aristotle, defined wisdom as the highest intellectual virtue, one that enables the human mind to understand things in relation to God. He argued that faith and reason work together to help us gain wisdom. In this way, wisdom was seen as both an intellectual and moral quality an understanding that leads to right action and spiritual growth.

In the modern period, the focus of philosophy shifted from metaphysical and religious questions to human reason, science, and individual experience. Immanuel Kant, a major philosopher of the modern era, brought ethics back into the discussion of wisdom. For Kant, wisdom involves the use of reason to act morally. He believed that a wise person is one who follows moral laws out of a sense of duty, not because of personal desires or external pressures. In this view, wisdom is not only about thinking clearly but also about being committed to doing what is right. It includes both knowledge of moral

principles and the strength of will to act according to those principles.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, philosophers have continued to explore the meaning and value of wisdom. Nicholas Maxwell, has criticised modern philosophy and science for focusing too much on knowledge and not enough on wisdom. He proposes a shift from what he calls 'knowledge-inquiry' to 'wisdom-inquiry.' According to Maxwell, the main aim of intellectual activity should not be just to acquire knowledge, but to use that knowledge wisely for the betterment of humanity. For him, wisdom means the capacity to realise what is of value in life, both for oneself and for others, and to act accordingly. He argues that wise thinking should guide public policy, education, and science, so that human problems such as poverty, violence, and environmental destruction can be addressed more effectively.

Recap

- Wisdom is more than collecting facts; it helps solve real-life problems.
- The philosophy of wisdom connects learning with living.
- Wisdom helps us make thoughtful and responsible choices.
- A wise person acts freely with awareness of what is valuable.
- Wisdom helps individuals and societies grow together.
- Knowledge focuses on facts; wisdom focuses on life's deeper meaning.
- Personal reflection is central to gaining wisdom.
- Wisdom helps us build fair institutions and better relationships.
- Reason is used in wisdom to think clearly and make good decisions.
- Wisdom allows people to explore different answers, not just one.
- In Indian philosophy, wisdom is linked to self-realisation and liberation.
- The Upaniṣads describe wisdom as insight into the self and Brahman.
- Sāṅkhya defines wisdom as knowing the difference between self and nature.
- Yoga sees wisdom as a result of calming the mind through practice.

- Jainism teaches that wisdom comes from knowing truth from many angles.
- Vedānta links wisdom with knowing the unity of self and Brahman.

Objective Questions

1. What does the philosophy of wisdom focus on instead of just collecting information?
2. What role does reason play in the philosophy of wisdom?
3. What does the principle of anekāntavāda in Jainism suggest about truth?
4. What are the three essential elements of the Buddhist path that include wisdom?
5. According to Vedānta, what causes the illusion of separation between self and Brahman?
6. Who believed that true wisdom begins with the awareness of one's ignorance?
7. What is the goal of wisdom in the Upaniṣadic tradition?
8. Who proposed the shift from 'knowledge-inquiry' to 'wisdom-inquiry'?

Answers

1. Life problems
2. Problem-solving
3. Many-sidedness

4. Prajñā, sīla, samādhi,
5. Maya
6. Socrates
7. Mokṣa
8. Nicholas Maxwell

Assignments

1. Differentiate between knowledge and wisdom using examples. How does philosophical wisdom help to bridge the gap between learning and real-life living?
2. Explain how the Indian philosophical traditions such as Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Buddhism, and Advaita Vedānta understand and define wisdom. How is wisdom connected with liberation in these systems?
3. Discuss the role of reason and personal reflection in the philosophy of wisdom. How can wisdom help individuals and societies make responsible and meaningful decisions?
4. Compare and contrast the views of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle on wisdom. How does each philosopher relate wisdom to the good life and ethical living?
5. What is Nicholas Maxwell's concept of 'wisdom-inquiry'? How does it respond to the limitations of knowledge-focused thinking in addressing modern human problems?

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UNIT 4

Philosophy in the West

Learning Outcomes

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

- understand how Western philosophy began in ancient Greece
- get to know how philosophy is different from myth or religion
- identify how faith and reason worked together in medieval thought
- explore modern views on knowledge, science, and self

Prerequisites

Imagine a world where every question leads to another, where doubt becomes a doorway to understanding, and where thinking itself becomes an adventure. Philosophy invites us into this world not with promises of fixed answers, but with the challenge of exploring ideas that shape how we live, act, and see ourselves. It is like walking into a vast landscape with many paths: some well-trodden, others less explored. You may find yourself asking what is real, what is right, what is true, or even who you are. These are not just questions for scholars or experts; rather, they are questions that touch every life, every day. When you begin to reflect on such questions, you enter into a conversation that has stretched across centuries and cultures.

Keywords

Pre-Socratics, Rational inquiry, Critical thinking, Faith, Reason, Rationalism, Empiricism, Utilitarianism, Existentialism, Phenomenology, Postmodernism

Discussion

1.4.1 Introduction

Western philosophy refers to the tradition of thinking that began in ancient Greece and developed over centuries across Europe and the Western world. It is a discipline that asks deep and fundamental questions about life, knowledge, values, reality, and the human condition. Unlike religion or myth, which often rely on faith, authority, or storytelling, philosophy uses reason and careful thinking to explore the nature of things. Philosophers do not accept ideas blindly; instead, they question, analyse, and argue to find clear and logical understanding. The beginnings of Western philosophy can be traced to ancient Greece, where thinkers started asking about the origin of the universe in rational terms. This marked a turning point from explaining the world through myths to using reason and observation. Western philosophy developed through several major periods. The ancient period focused on nature, ethics, and knowledge. The medieval period explored the relationship between reason and religious belief. The modern period shifted attention to human experience, science, and political thought. In the contemporary period, philosophy addresses social, political, ethical, and global issues.

1.4.2 Ancient Greek Philosophy: The Birth of Western Thought

As stated above the roots of Western philosophy can be traced back to ancient Greece, where thinkers began to explain the world not through myths but through reasoned arguments and observation. This shift marked the beginning of a new way of thinking, one that relied on human reason to understand nature, life, and society. The earliest of these thinkers are known as the Pre-Socratic philosophers. They were mainly concerned with the origin and nature of the universe. Thales, for instance, believed that water was the basic substance of all things. Anaximander proposed a more abstract principle called the 'apeiron,' or the boundless. Heraclitus argued that change is the fundamental nature of reality, famously saying that one cannot step into the same river twice. In contrast, Parmenides claimed that change is an illusion and that true reality is unchanging and eternal. These early thinkers laid the foundation for future philosophical inquiry by moving away from mythological explanations and towards rational investigation.

Following the Pre-Socratics, the Sophists emerged as teachers. They travelled from city to city, teaching people how to speak effectively and win arguments. The Sophists held a relativistic view of truth, suggesting that what is true depends on the perspective of the speaker or the situation. In reaction to this, Socrates took a different approach. He focused on ethical questions and the search for moral truth. Rather than teaching fixed answers, Socrates asked questions to help people examine their own beliefs. This method, now known as the Socratic method, involved dialogue and critical self-reflection. Socrates is known for the statement 'Know thyself,' and he believed that understanding oneself was the path to wisdom. Plato expanded on the ideas of Socrates and developed one of the most influential systems of philosophy in the Western tradition. He introduced the Theory of Forms, which proposed that the world we see around us is not the real world but a shadow of a higher, unchanging reality. According to Plato, the Forms are perfect and eternal, and everything in the physical

world is an imperfect copy of these Forms. In his work *The Republic*, Plato described an ideal society governed by philosopher-kings, individuals who possess true wisdom and justice. He believed that only those who understand the Forms could lead society in a fair and just manner.

Aristotle, a student of Plato, took a more practical and observational approach. He believed that knowledge begins with sensory experience and that we learn through observation and reasoning. Aristotle made significant contributions to many fields, including logic, ethics, politics, and metaphysics. He developed a system of classification for knowledge and laid the groundwork for scientific thinking. In ethics, Aristotle introduced the concept of virtue and the 'golden mean' the idea that moral virtue lies between extremes. Aristotle believed that the goal of human life is to achieve eudaimonia, often translated as flourishing or well-being, through a life of rational activity and virtuous living. After the death of Aristotle, new philosophical schools emerged during the Hellenistic period. These schools continued the tradition of philosophy but focused more on how to live a good and peaceful life. The Stoics taught that one should live in harmony with nature and accept what cannot be changed. They believed that self-control and inner strength lead to true happiness. Epicureans, on the other hand, held that pleasure as the highest good. However, they also taught moderation and the value of friendship. These schools turned philosophy into a way of life, offering guidance for personal conduct and emotional well-being in an uncertain world.

Important Ancient Greek Philosophers

1. Pre-Socretic Era Thales (640-546 BC) Father of Western Philosophy
2. Anaximander (610-547 BC)- a pupil of Thales.
3. Anaxemenes (588-524 BC) wrote ionic dialect prose.
4. Xenophanes (560-478 BC) Founder of Eleatic school.
5. Parmenides (515-450 BC)
6. Zeno (489-430BC)
7. Pythagoras(580-500BC) Famous for his number theory.
8. Heraclitus (535-475 BC)
9. Empedocles (490-430 BC)
10. Anaxagoras (500-425 BC)
11. Greek Atomists'- Leucippus (Mid 5th century BC), Democritus (460-370 BC)

Socratic Era

- Socrates (470-399 BC)
- Plato (428-423 BC)
- Aristotle (384-322 BC)

1.4.3 Medieval Philosophy: Faith and Reason

During the medieval period, Western philosophy was deeply influenced by the rise of Christianity. As the dominant cultural and religious force in Europe, the Christian worldview shaped much of the philosophical discussion of the time. Thinkers began to explore how faith and reason could be brought together. Philosophy was no longer followed only for its own sake but was closely connected to theology, the study of God and religious truth. Philosophers asked questions not only about the nature of the world and human beings, but also about divine

reality, the soul, salvation, and the meaning of existence from a religious perspective. Rather than replacing philosophy, Christian belief challenged thinkers to use reason to understand and explain faith more clearly.

One of the earliest and most influential figures of this period was Augustine of Hippo. He combined the teachings of Christianity with the philosophical ideas of Plato. For Augustine, true knowledge was not only about the external world but also about the inner experience of the soul. He believed that divine truth was revealed through introspection and the illumination of the mind by God. Another most significant figures in medieval philosophy were Thomas Aquinas. He is best known for his effort to bring together the teachings of Aristotle with Christian doctrine. Aquinas believed that reason and faith were not opposed but worked together to lead people to truth. He used careful reasoning to explore the existence and nature of God. In his famous work *Summa Theologica*, he presented five logical arguments, known as the 'five ways,' to prove the existence of God. In the later medieval period, philosophers such as Duns Scotus and William of Ockham continued to explore complex questions about knowledge and language. These thinkers helped to open up new ways of thinking that eventually led to the rise of critical philosophy in the modern period.

1.4.4 Modern Philosophy: Reason, Knowledge, and the Self

Modern philosophy marks a shift in focus from the authority of religion and tradition to the authority of human reason. It began in the 17th century and continued through the 18th century, during a time of major scientific discoveries, political change, and growing interest in individual freedom. Philosophers began to ask how do we know what we know? Can we trust our senses? What is the role of reason in human life? This period is marked by two major approaches rationalism and empiricism which offered different answers to these questions. Rationalist philosophers believed that reason, rather than experience, is the primary source of knowledge. René Descartes is known as the father of modern philosophy because he questioned everything that could be doubted and tried to find one thing that was certain. He concluded, 'Cogito, ergo sum' ('I think, therefore I am') as the one undeniable truth. Descartes argued that the thinking self must exist because even in doubting, there is thinking. From this starting point, he tried to build a system of knowledge based on reason alone. He also introduced the idea of mind-body dualism, claiming that the mind and the body are two separate substances. According to Descartes, the mind is non-physical and capable of thinking, while the body is physical and extended in space. This idea raised important questions about how the mind and body interact, and about the nature of consciousness.

In contrast, empiricist philosophers argued that all knowledge comes from sensory experience. John Locke rejected the idea of inborn ideas and said that the human mind at birth is a 'blank slate' or *tabula rasa*. According to Locke, people learn through experience, and knowledge is built from the information gathered through the senses. George Berkeley took empiricism in a different direction with his theory of idealism. He claimed that physical objects do not exist independently of our perception. For Berkeley, 'to be is to be perceived,' meaning that objects exist only as they are experienced in the mind. He believed that God maintains the continuity of perception, making the world stable and orderly. David Hume brought empiricism to its limits by questioning the very foundation of human understanding. Hume concluded that much of what we believe is based on habit and

expectation, not certainty. He was also sceptical about the idea of the self, suggesting that it is not a fixed substance but a bundle of changing perceptions.

Immanuel Kant tried to resolve the conflict between rationalism and empiricism by proposing a new way of thinking. He agreed with the empiricists that knowledge begins with experience, but he also believed that the mind plays an active role in shaping that experience. According to Kant, we do not simply receive information from the world; our mind organises and structures it using built-in categories. These categories make experience possible. In this way, Kant combined elements of both rationalism and empiricism. He said that we can never know things as they are in themselves (the noumenon), but only as they appear to us (the phenomenon). This balanced approach became a turning point in modern philosophy and influenced many later developments. Building on Kant's contributions, the modern period of philosophy laid the groundwork for new ideas in science, politics, and ethics. By focusing on the powers and limits of reason, the nature of the self, and the foundations of knowledge, modern thinkers changed how people think about truth, freedom, and human responsibility.

1.4.5 Nineteenth-Century Philosophy: History, Society, and Individuality

Nineteenth-century philosophy introduced new ways of thinking about history, society, and the individual. One of the most influential movements during this time was German Idealism, which focused on the idea that reality is shaped by the mind and that history follows a meaningful process. G.W.F. Hegel, one of the key figures in this movement, developed a method called the dialectic, which explained how ideas and history develop through a pattern of conflict and resolution. According to Hegel, history unfolds as a process through which the 'Absolute Spirit' or ultimate reality becomes fully aware of itself. He believed that reason and freedom are gradually realised through human progress, and that all events in history contribute to this larger spiritual development. For Hegel, individuals and societies are part of this ongoing journey toward truth and self-realisation.

Not all philosophers of the nineteenth century accepted the optimistic and systematic vision of German Idealism. Some reacted against it by focusing more on human suffering, emotion, and individual experience. Arthur Schopenhauer, for example, argued that the driving force of life is not reason or spirit, but an irrational force he called the 'will.' He believed that life is filled with suffering because desire never ends, and that wisdom lies in recognising this and learning to overcome the will through compassion and art. Søren Kierkegaard, often considered the father of existentialism, focused on individual faith and personal choice. He believed that truth is not just a matter of reason but must be lived and experienced. Kierkegaard emphasised the importance of taking personal responsibility, even in the face of doubt and despair. Friedrich Nietzsche offered another critical response to traditional morality and religion. He challenged the idea of fixed moral values and introduced the concept of the 'will to power,' suggesting that human beings should create their own values and live with strength, courage, and creativity.

While German and existentialist thinkers explored deep questions of spirit and individuality, British philosophers were more focused on practical ethics. Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill developed the theory of utilitarianism, which argued that the best actions are those that bring the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people. Bentham introduced the idea of measuring pleasure and pain to guide moral choices, while Mill expanded this

by stressing the importance of quality in pleasures, not just quantity. Utilitarianism became an influential ethical theory in both politics and law, aiming to improve society through reasoned action and concern for human well-being.

1.4.6 Twentieth-Century Philosophy: Language, Existence, and Social Critique

Twentieth-century philosophy saw major developments in how thinkers approached knowledge, language, human existence, and society. In the English-speaking world, a movement known as analytic philosophy became dominant. Philosophers like Bertrand Russell and G.E. Moore focused on the use of logic and careful analysis to understand philosophical problems. They believed that many traditional philosophical puzzles could be solved or at least clarified by examining how language is used. Russell worked on the foundations of mathematics and developed a theory of definite descriptions to better understand how we talk about the world. Moore, on the other hand, emphasised common sense and clear thinking, arguing that philosophers should not stray too far from everyday experience. One of the most influential figures in this tradition was Ludwig Wittgenstein, who in his early work believed that language mirrors reality, and that philosophy should aim to describe this structure. Later in life, he changed his view and introduced the idea of 'language games,' arguing that meaning is based on the way words are used in specific contexts.

At the same time, a different path was being followed on the European continent through movements such as phenomenology and existentialism. Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, argued that philosophy should return 'to the things themselves,' meaning that we should study how things appear to us in conscious experience. He tried to set aside all assumptions and look directly at how objects are given in awareness. Martin Heidegger, a student of Husserl, took this further by exploring the meaning of 'being.' He believed that human beings are defined by their relationship to time and death, and that we often live inauthentically by avoiding the truth of our existence. For Heidegger, genuine thinking involves confronting the mystery of being and living with awareness of our limited time. Jean-Paul Sartre, influenced by both phenomenology and existentialism, emphasised human freedom, choice, and responsibility. He argued that existence comes before essence; we are not born with a fixed nature but must create ourselves through our actions. Sartre believed that freedom is a burden as well as a gift, since we are always responsible for what we choose to become.

Another major trend in twentieth-century philosophy was critical theory and postmodern thought, which challenged dominant ideas about knowledge, power, and progress. The Frankfurt School, with thinkers like Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, criticised modern society for becoming overly focused on technology, efficiency, and control. They argued that reason itself had become a tool of domination, and that genuine freedom requires critical reflection on culture and society. Later, Michel Foucault explored how knowledge and power are closely linked. He showed how institutions like schools, hospitals, and prisons use knowledge to shape and control people. Foucault believed that truth is not simply discovered, but constructed through social practices and discourse. These thinkers questioned traditional ideas of truth, objectivity, and identity, and opened new ways of thinking about society and the individual.

Recap

- Western philosophy began in ancient Greece.
- It seeks truth through reason, not myth or faith.
- Pre-Socratics asked about the universe's origin.
- Thales said water is the basic substance.
- Heraclitus believed in constant change.
- Parmenides said change is an illusion.
- Socrates taught by asking questions.
- His method is called the Socratic method.
- He believed in self-knowledge and virtue.
- Plato spoke of eternal Forms beyond this world.
- Aristotle focused on observation and reason.
- He introduced the golden mean in ethics.
- Stoics taught self-control and peace.
- Epicureans valued pleasure with moderation.
- Medieval philosophy united faith and reason.
- Augustine combined Christian faith with Plato's ideas.
- Aquinas used Aristotle's logic to explain God.
- He wrote the famous *Summa Theologica*.
- Locke called the mind a blank slate.
- Descartes said, 'I think, therefore I am.'
- Berkeley believed objects exist only if perceived.
- Hume questioned cause and the self.
- Kant said our mind shapes experience.

- Hegel explained history using dialectic.
- Schopenhauer saw life as driven by will.
- Kierkegaard stressed personal faith.
- Nietzsche urged creation of personal values.
- Mill and Bentham promoted happiness in ethics.
- Modern thinkers explore language, power, and freedom.

Objective Questions

1. Where did Western philosophy begin?
2. Who said ‘Know thyself’?
3. Which philosopher developed the Theory of Forms?
4. What substance did Thales identify as the origin of all things?
5. Who believed that change is constant in the universe?
6. Which philosopher believed change is an illusion?
7. What is Plato’s famous political work?
8. Which philosopher defined the mind as a blank slate?
9. Who said ‘Cogito, ergo sum’?
10. Which philosopher developed the dialectic process?
11. What idea did Schopenhauer emphasise?
12. Who is considered the father of existentialism?
13. Who introduced utilitarianism based on happiness?
14. What book did Aquinas write?

Answers

1. Ancient Greece
2. Socrates
3. Plato
4. Water
5. Heraclitus
6. Parmenides
7. The Republic
8. John Locke
9. René Descartes
10. G.W.F. Hegel
11. Will
12. Søren Kierkegaard
13. Jeremy Bentham
14. Summa Theologica

Assignments

1. Trace the evolution of Western philosophy from the Pre-Socratic period to the Hellenistic schools. How did the philosophical focus shift from cosmology to ethics and personal conduct?

2. Compare the approaches of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle to philosophy. How did each of them contribute uniquely to the development of Western philosophical thought?

3. Explain the key differences between rationalism and empiricism in modern philosophy, referring to the views of Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. How did Immanuel Kant attempt to reconcile these two traditions?

4. Discuss the impact of nineteenth-century philosophers such as Hegel, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche on the concepts of individuality, history, and morality.

Suggested Reading

1. Russell, Bertrand. (2004), *History of Western Philosophy*, London: Routledge.

2. Kenny, Anthony. (2006), *An Illustrated Brief History of Western Philosophy,* Malden: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

3. Weber, Alfred. (1897) *History of Philosophy,* trans. Frank Thilly, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

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BLOCK

Who Am I? Whence is This World?

How and Why does the World Emerge?

Learning Outcomes

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

- recall the key philosophical concepts such as Consciousness, prakṛti, and mâyâ as explained in Indian philosophy
- explain how the philosophical view of creation as a continuous process differs from the idea of a one-time historical event
- differentiate between the revealing and concealing aspects of manifestation (*māyā*) and analyse how this dual function shapes human perception of Reality
- assess the implications of recognising that personal actions are expressions of the universal process

Prerequisite

Human beings have always wondered about the origin and meaning of the world. From the earliest times, people have looked at the sky, the earth, the rivers, and the mountains, and asked where all this comes from and why it exists. These questions have been asked in different places, cultures, and periods of history. Some sought answers in the stories passed down by elders. Others turned to careful observation of nature. Still others explored these questions through deep thinking and meditation.

The human mind does not rest content with merely living in the world; it also seeks to understand the hidden patterns and connections that lie behind everyday experience. This search has shaped many of the beliefs, practices, and ways of life we see in different societies. It has also led to the development of philosophy, which asks questions about reality, knowledge, and the self. Philosophy approaches these questions not only to satisfy curiosity, but also to guide life with a clearer

understanding of where we stand in the larger order of things. When we reflect on the nature of existence, we begin to see that our own lives are part of something much greater. This awareness can change the way we look at ourselves, others, and the world around us. By engaging with such questions, we are continuing a tradition of inquiry that has been alive for thousands of years. It is a journey that does not always give final answers, but invites us to think more deeply about what is real and meaningful.

Keywords

Consciousness, Reality, Prakṛti, Māyā, Creation, Manifestation, Ignorance, Revelation, Concealment

Discussion

2.1.1 Introduction

Philosophers and religious thinkers have long debated the origin of the world. Many religions describe creation as a historical event that took place at a specific moment in time, often narrated as an act of God in the distant past. However, in philosophical discussions, creation is not always seen as a one-time event. Rather, it is understood as a continuous, beginningless process. In the Indian philosophical tradition, reality in its essential nature is consciousness. This one underlying Consciousness cannot exist without appearing as the world, and the world cannot appear without Reality existing. As Muni Narayanaprasad writes, "Reality cannot exist without appearing as the world, and the world cannot appear without Reality existing." This means that the emergence of the world is an ongoing process, inseparable from the existence of Reality itself. Therefore, instead of asking "How was the world created?" which implies a past event; it is more accurate to ask, "How does the world emerge from one Consciousness?" This shift in questioning allows us to consider creation not as a past occurrence, but as something that is happening right now. Even if we cannot provide a final and complete answer, we can explore ideas that help us understand the process.

Moreover, in verse 94 of Ātmopadeśa Śatakam, Sree Narayana Guru says: "The universe, which appears and disappears (the illusory world), and Brahman, which neither arises nor fades (the Absolute Reality), coexist. This state of conjunction is an inexpressible paradox. It is beyond the grasp of logic. In this Supreme Reality, which lies beyond the reach of speech and mind, how can any theory of knowledge operate?"

2.1.2 Consciousness as Active Reality

In examining how the world emerges from Consciousness, one must accept that the process contains an element of mystery. This mystery is recognised not only in religious traditions but also among philosophers, and to some extent, even scientists. Some orthodox scientists, however, reject the idea of mystery, arguing that every phenomenon must be fully explainable in measurable

and observable terms. Yet, common sense tells us that certain processes such as how non-material energy manifests as tangible matter remain beyond complete human understanding. The change from something intangible to something physical is not an ordinary transformation; it challenges the limits of reasoning. The same is true when we consider how the unchanging Reality of Consciousness manifests as the changing, diverse world. This is not a simple mechanical conversion but a transformation that cannot be fully grasped through ordinary logic alone. According to Muni Narayanaprasad, "This transmutation of the changeless into the changing is an inscrutable wonder" and must be approached with an open recognition of its depth. Philosophers acknowledge that while complete proof may be impossible, a coherent and consistent explanation can still be developed. This explanation must consider Consciousness not as a passive background, but as an active, creative principle. Just as we experience our own individual consciousness as constantly functioning whether in waking, dreaming, or even in deep sleep so too must the universal Consciousness have an inherent activity. This activity, when expressed, gives rise to various forms, which together constitute what we call the world.

Our own experience provides a key to understanding the creative process of Reality. The Consciousness we experience in ourselves never remains inactive. Even in deep sleep, when we are not aware of the external world, consciousness continues to function, allowing us to later recall that we enjoyed rest. Something that functions on its own has within it an inborn tendency to create or manifest. This inherent tendency is called the creative urge. In universal Consciousness, this urge is never at rest. It constantly brings about transformations within itself, resulting in the assumption of various forms. These forms are not external to Consciousness; they are self-assumed appearances. The range of these appearances extends from the most subtle the mind and thought to the most gross physical matter. The process can be described in terms of two levels of manifestation: the subtle mental appearance, which is the actualisation of subtle imagination (sūkṣma-saṅkalpanā), and the gross material appearance, which is the actualisation of gross imagination (sthūla-saṅkalpanā). Both emerge from the same Consciousness-Reality. This means the entire world, from thought to physical object, is a form of Consciousness's own creative activity.

In Advaita Dīpikā (verse-3), Sree Narayana Guru states: "The cause of cloth is thread; the cause of thread is cotton. This cotton, again, is formed from the five great elements (pañca bhūtas), which are regarded as the primordial cause of the entire universe. These five elements appear as shining within Consciousness itself. How do they appear within Consciousness? Just as water appears in a mirage in the desert, so too do these elements manifest within Consciousness. Hence, in the ultimate analysis, Consciousness alone is the true cause of the universe."

2.1.3 The Veiling Effect of Appearance

Indian philosophers often compare the mysterious emergence of the world from Consciousness to the art of magic. A magician, through deliberate imagination and skill, can make us see appearances that are not actually there, or transform one appearance into another. In the same way, Consciousness manifests forms through its own will, making the appearances seem independent and real. However, these appearances are inseparable from the Consciousness that produces them. According to Muni Narayanaprasad, "Māyā is not an external force imposed on Consciousness, but the very creative power of Consciousness to appear as the manifold world while remaining itself unchanged." The Sanskrit term for this phenomenon is

māyā, often translated as "illusion" or "that which has no independent being." This does not mean the world is absolutely non-existent, but that it does not exist apart from Consciousness. Just as the water remains the reality behind the wave, Consciousness remains the reality behind all appearances. When we see a wave, our attention is often on the shape and movement rather than on the water itself. Similarly, when we perceive the world, our attention is on forms and names, not on the Consciousness that underlies them. In Muni Narayanaprasad's view, this focuses on appearances functions like a veil, hiding the true Reality from our awareness. In this sense, māyā is not separate from Consciousness but is the mode by which Consciousness appears as the world while concealing its own true nature.

One of the key aspects of this process is that the very appearance of the world functions as a veil over Reality. The act of knowing, which arises in Consciousness, turns our attention outward toward objects. In doing so, it prevents us from recognising the Consciousness that makes knowing possible. This is similar to how the wave distracts us from noticing the water. The activity of knowing is itself a function of Consciousness, but it also becomes the reason why Consciousness remains hidden. As Muni Narayanaprasad points out, manifestation is a double act "it reveals Reality in forms, yet those very forms conceal it." The moment Consciousness manifests as a world of objects; the forms of those objects capture our attention and conceal their source. In philosophical terms, the manifestation is both the revelation and the concealment of Reality. This is not a fault in creation but an inherent part of the creative process. Without this veiling, there would be no separate experience of the world. With the veiling, the world becomes a field of experience where individual beings can interact, learn, and act, while the underlying Consciousness continues to sustain all appearances. This dual role manifesting and concealing is, as Muni Narayanaprasad affirms, central to understanding why Reality appears as the world.

Sree Narayana Guru says in Advaita Deepika (Verse 6): "Life, in reality, is the totality of opposing experiences that alternate as 'is' and 'is not'. The experience of 'is' reveals Sat (Being), while the experience of 'is not' reveals Asat (Non-being). These two experiences, being relative, are the effects of the beginningless Māyā. Upon deeper inquiry, one realises that these relative notions of Sat and Asat themselves are unreal (illusory). Just as the serpent seen in a rope does not truly exist - for the rope alone exists - so too, what truly exists is only the Absolute, non-dual Reality (Advaya Satya), which transcends all relativity."

2.1.3 The Concept of Prakṛti

In Indian philosophy (especially in Samkhya theory), the activity of Consciousness in producing the world is expressed through the concept of prakṛti. The term comes from the root *kṛti*, meaning "action," with the prefix *pra*, meaning "proper" or "complete." Thus, prakṛti means "that which is properly engaged in activity." When Reality unfolds itself into apparent forms, some action takes place within it, and this action constitutes prakṛti. According to Muni Narayanaprasad, "prakṛti is not something other than Consciousness, but Consciousness itself in action." The totality of nature, including all physical, mental, and subtle phenomena, is prakṛti. Every element of nature is in constant motion or transformation, and therefore, activity is its essential characteristic. In Muni Narayanaprasad's view, this activity should not be seen as a separate force but as the self-expression of Consciousness. The natural world we experience such as plants, animals, human actions, planetary movements all belong to

prakṛti. Even our own actions are part of this larger functioning of nature. This means that the actions we consider personal are, in fact, expressions of the universal process of prakṛti, or in Narayanaprasad's words, "the play of Consciousness as the world."

2.1.4 Human Action and Free Will

From the perspective of individual experience, we feel that we have the free will to act or not act. We decide to speak, to move, to think, and to refrain from certain actions. This sense of freedom is real at the level of individual experience, but it is still part of the functioning of prakṛti. As Muni Narayanaprasad points out, "The body, senses, mind, and intellect, which are considered as belonging to oneself, are but the instruments through which nature functions." Our abilities to think, speak, and move are not self-created; they arise from the same universal activity that governs all of nature. Therefore, the voluntary actions we perform are inseparable from the overall activity of prakṛti.

When we believe that our abilities and actions are entirely our own, we fall into a form of ignorance. Recognising that our capacities are part of the functioning of nature helps us understand the unity of all action. It also shifts our sense of ownership over deeds, reducing ego-driven attitudes and promoting harmony with the larger process of life. As Narayanaprasad observes, this insight replaces the illusion of "I act" with the understanding that "nature acts through me."

The tendency to view actions as our own personal achievements is rooted in ignorance. This ignorance is not simply a lack of information; it is a deep-seated misunderstanding of the relationship between the individual and the universal. When we forget that our abilities and opportunities are part of the larger functioning of prakṛti, we create a false separation between ourselves and the world. This false separation strengthens the ego, leading us to believe that we are independent agents who control reality. In truth, our actions, like the movement of waves in the ocean, are inseparable from the larger movement of Consciousness through prakṛti. The wave cannot claim independence from the water, and likewise, we cannot claim independence from the universal activity. As many Indian philosophical traditions affirm, and as Narayanaprasad's reflections echo, knowledge of this unity between Consciousness and nature is the key to overcoming ignorance.

2.1.5 The Purpose of the World's Emergence

Given this understanding, the question "Why does the world emerge?" can be approached from the perspective of the nature of Consciousness itself. Consciousness, by its inherent nature, is active and creative. The emergence of the world is not an event imposed from outside; it is the natural expression of Consciousness's own potential. As Muni Narayanaprasad observes, "Just as heat is the nature of fire, activity is the nature of Consciousness, and this activity is called prakṛti." In this view, just as a seed naturally grows into a plant, Consciousness naturally manifests as the world. The forms, beings, and events we experience are expressions of this inner potential. While the process contains mystery, its basic direction is consistent: Reality manifests as the world to express its inherent creativity.

In Muni Narayanaprasad's explanation, the emergence of the world from Consciousness is a continuous, beginningless process, not confined to a past act of creation. It involves the inherent creative urge of Consciousness, expressed through prakṛti, which manifests in both subtle and gross forms. This manifestation functions like magic or māyā, appearing

to be independent while remaining inseparable from its source. The very appearance of the world both reveals and conceals the Reality behind it. As Muni Narayanaprasad points out, misunderstanding this leads to ignorance, while recognising that we are expressions of the same Consciousness that appears as the universe can transform our understanding of life.

In Verse 81, Ātmopadeśa Śatakam, Sree Narayana Guru says: "Nature (Prakṛti), which is the power (Śakti) of the Absolute (Brahman), becomes divided into two aspects. One aspect manifest as the enjoyer (bhoktṛ), the individual soul (jīva), appearing in the world as all living beings. The other aspect evolves by generating the experience of "this" and "that" (objectivity and differentiation). Through this process of evolution, it becomes the external world - both of this life and the next - serving as the field of experience for the enjoyer, the jīva. In this verse, Sree Narayana Guru presents a non-dualistic cosmology where both subject (the experiencer, jīva) and object (the experienced world, Loka) emerge from the same primal power (Brahma-śakti). The apparent duality of self and world is thus a manifestation within the unity of Brahman. The "this-this" (idu, idu) denotes the arising of object-consciousness, the basis for phenomenal diversity.

Recap

- Many religions present creation as a historical, one-time event.
- Creation as a continuous and beginningless process.
- Reality, in essence, is Consciousness.
- Consciousness and the world are mutually dependent in existence.
- Muni Narayanaprasad states that Reality cannot exist without appearing as the world, and vice versa.
- The proper question is how the world emerges from Consciousness, not when it was created.
- This emergence is an ongoing process happening now.
- The shift from intangible to tangible challenges human reasoning.
- The manifestation of the changing from the changeless is described as an "inscrutable wonder."
- Consciousness is considered an active, creative principle.
- Individual consciousness is always active, even in deep sleep.
- Universal Consciousness has an inborn creative urge.

- Forms in the world are self-assumed appearances of Consciousness.
- Manifestation occurs at subtle (mental) and gross (material) levels.
- Mâyâ is the creative power of Consciousness to appear as the world while remaining unchanged.
- The world does not exist independently of Consciousness.
- Mâyâ functions like a veil, hiding Reality.
- Prakṛti means "that which is properly engaged in activity."
- Prakṛti is Consciousness in action, not separate from it.
- All physical, mental, and subtle phenomena are part of prakṛti.
- Our actions are expressions of prakṛti, not purely personal achievements.
- The sense of "I act" is rooted in ignorance.
- Ignorance creates a false separation between the individual and the universal.
- Knowledge of the unity between Consciousness and nature removes ignorance.
- Activity is the nature of Consciousness, just as heat is the nature of fire.
- Consciousness manifests as the world naturally, like a seed grows into a plant.
- The emergence of the world is continuous and beginningless.
- Mâyâ makes the world appear independent while being inseparable from Consciousness.
- Understanding our unity with Consciousness transforms our view of life.

Objective Questions

1. According to many religions, creation is often described as an act of whom?
2. In the Indian philosophical tradition, what is the essential nature of reality?

3. Who said, "Reality cannot exist without appearing as the world, and the world cannot appear without Reality existing"?
4. Which Sanskrit term describes the creative power of Consciousness to appear as the manifold world?
5. What does the term mâyâ literally mean in relation to existence?
6. In the wave-water analogy, what does the water represent?
7. What does the Sanskrit term *prakṛti* mean?
8. What natural quality of fire is compared to the nature of Consciousness?
9. How does the text describe the emergence of the world from Consciousness as a past event or as an ongoing process?
10. What two functions does the manifestation of the world perform in relation to Reality?

Answers

1. God.
2. Consciousness.
3. Muni Narayanaprasad.
4. Mâyâ.
5. "That which has no independent being."
6. Consciousness.
7. "That which is properly engaged in activity."
8. Heat.
9. As an ongoing process.
10. It reveals Reality and conceals Reality.

Assignments

1. Discuss the philosophical difference between viewing creation as a historical event and understanding it as a continuous, beginningless process. How does this shift in perspective influence our understanding

of Reality and Consciousness?

2. Explain the idea that "Reality cannot exist without appearing as the world, and the world cannot appear without Reality existing." How does this statement redefine the traditional notion of creation?

3. Describe how Consciousness functions as an active, creative Reality. In what way does the idea of the "creative urge" help explain the manifestation of the world?

4. Analyse the concept of *māyā* in relation to the emergence of the world. How does the world both reveal and conceal Reality, and what philosophical significance does this dual function hold?

5. Examine the role of *prakṛti* in the emergence of the world from Consciousness. How is *prakṛti* understood as "Consciousness in action" rather than as a separate material principle?

6. Interpret Verse 81 of *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* in the light of the non-dual view of creation. How does this verse express the unity of subject and object within the oneness of Brahman?

Suggested Reading

1. Prasad, S. M. (2011). *Pure Philosophy Simplified for Youth.* New Delhi: DK Print World Pvt Ltd.

2. Yati, G. N. (1998). *Neither This Nor That but AUM.* New Delhi: DK Print World Pvt Ltd.

3. Yati, N. C. (2004). *In the Stream of Consciousness.* Kerala: Narayana Gurukula.

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UNIT 2

Birth and Death

Learning Outcomes

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

- explain the philosophical understanding of birth as both a beginning and a continuing opportunity for mindful and meaningful living
- analyse philosophical perspectives on death as an integral part of life
- analyse the concept of pure Consciousness as eternal, unchanging, and the true essence of the individual beyond the body and mind.
- recognise the idea of liberation as freedom from the cycle of birth and death through realisation of one's true nature

Prerequisite

From the moment we are born, life presents us with a series of changes. We grow from infancy to adulthood, learning, experiencing, and adapting to new situations. We meet people, form relationships, and witness the passing of others. Alongside these personal experiences, we also observe cycles in nature. The seasons change, plants grow and wither, and animals are born and eventually die. These patterns seem so familiar that we often accept them without much thought. Yet, if we pause to reflect, questions begin to arise: Is there a deeper meaning behind these changes? Are birth and death final events, or are they part of something ongoing? Such questions have been asked by human beings for centuries, across different cultures and traditions. They have inspired stories, rituals, and philosophical reflections that attempt to understand life's flow and our place within it. Understanding different perspectives on life and death can shape the way we live, make choices, and relate to the world around us. By exploring these ideas, we can develop a clearer sense of what it means to exist and how to face the changes that come with life's journey.

Keywords

Birth, Death, Consciousness, Reality, Karma, Ātman, Saṃsāra

Discussion

Human life is marked by two certain events birth and death. Every living being appears in the world at a certain moment and disappears after a span of time. This sequence is so common that it seems natural and unquestionable. Yet, for centuries, philosophers and spiritual thinkers have asked deeper questions: What is truly happening when a being is born? What is it that dies? And is there something that remains beyond these events? According to Muni Narayanaprasad, birth and death are not absolute beginnings or endings but changes in appearance within a deeper, unchanging reality. He compares this process to the waves of an ocean. A wave seems to rise, move, and disappear, but the ocean itself remains the same before, during, and after the wave's existence. In the same way, individuals emerge from the one Reality, exist for a while, and then merge back into it. The Reality, which is Consciousness itself, does not begin or end. This view invites us to look at life not merely as a physical event between birth and death, but as a continuous expression of something eternal. By understanding this, one may begin to see life and death in a new way not as final events, but as phases in the ongoing activity of the underlying Reality.

From a Western philosophical perspective, reflections on birth and death have developed in different yet interconnected ways, exploring their meaning, purpose, and relation to human existence. In Plato's dialogues, death is viewed not as a destruction but as a transition for the immortal soul, a separation of the soul from the body that allows it to attain true knowledge. Martin Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, understood human existence as "Being-in-the-world," where death is the ultimate possibility that each person must face. For Heidegger, awareness of death gives life its urgency and authenticity, compelling individuals to live meaningfully in the present. Arthur Schopenhauer offered a metaphysical interpretation rooted in his concept of the "will," the fundamental reality behind all appearances. He regarded both birth and death as manifestations of this will; events within the endless cycle of striving and renewal, rather than absolute beginnings or endings.

2.2.1 Concept of Birth

Philosophically, birth is more than a biological event; it marks the beginning of a journey. It can be seen as the start of a role in a "cosmic script". Birth connects us to an unbroken chain of human history, where each person's arrival is made possible by countless ancestors who overcame challenges such as wars, famine, and hardship. In this way, birth is not just an individual occurrence but the continuation of a shared human story. This understanding carries both responsibility and opportunity; the responsibility to live with meaning and the opportunity to experience the richness of existence. Birth calls for gratitude towards life and towards those who made our existence possible. From this perspective, it is both a gift and an invitation to align our actions with the deeper patterns of the cosmos, remembering that our time here is temporary and valuable. It asks us to live in a way that honours this unique beginning and respects the interconnectedness of all life.

The value of birth is realised in the way we choose to live after it. Caring for the body and mind allows us to live in harmony with what the text calls the "cosmic beat." Wisdom, in this view, is not just knowledge but the ability to organise life in a way that supports health, joy, and balance. In this sense, birth is not only a beginning but also a foundation for mindful living. Each day becomes an extension of that first moment of arrival, where living well means making choices that preserve vitality and strengthen our connection to the deeper order of existence. To honour birth is to respect life itself, and this involves living in ways that reflect care, gratitude, and awareness.

The philosophical understanding of birth extends beyond the moment of physical arrival into the world. It also includes the idea of renewal that each day offers a new opportunity to begin again. By treating every day as a "miraculous birth-day," life is transformed into a series of fresh starts. This approach enables us to reconnect with our original cosmic purpose and live with joy, gratitude, and authenticity. When we live in this way, we not only strengthen our own sense of purpose but also inspire and uplift others. The energy present at birth can be renewed throughout life, helping us adapt to change and sustain hope. Such a perspective allows us to face the eventual return to "infinity" after death with peace and fulfilment, knowing that our life was lived in harmony with its true meaning.

2.2.2 Philosophical Perspectives on Death and Its Relation to Life

In many philosophical traditions, death has been understood as the separation of the soul from the body or the ending of physical life. In the Western tradition, Socrates described philosophy as "practising dying," meaning the task of preparing for death by detaching from the body and worldly concerns. This idea is also found in some Asian traditions where practitioners aim to detach from bodily desires and identify with a higher, unchanging reality. The purpose of this detachment is to face death without fear, seeing it as a transition to another state of existence. While these traditions seek to overcome the fear of death, they sometimes encourage a withdrawal from life's everyday experiences. This tension has led other philosophers to search for an understanding of death that does not require withdrawing from life. They argue that instead of treating death as a separate, distant event, it can be recognised as something already present within life itself. This view shifts the focus from escaping death to understanding its relationship with life in a more integrated way.

Some philosophical approaches treat life and death as inseparable. In Daoist thought, for example, life and death are compared to yin and yang; opposite forces that depend on each other. The Japanese Zen master Dōgen taught that birth and death happen in every moment, not only at the start and end of life. This means that life is a continuous process of arising and passing away. In the same way, in Western thought, Montaigne believed that death is not separate from us but part of who we are. Nietzsche also challenged the idea that death is the opposite of life. He saw our return to the inanimate elements of the universe as a natural and even joyful event. Heidegger as stated above explained death as an ever-present possibility that shapes our existence now. For these thinkers, understanding death is not about waiting for it to arrive, but about realising that it is already part of the life we are living. This perspective encourages living more consciously, since awareness of death can deepen our sense of the present moment.

A key idea found in both Eastern and Western philosophy is that life exists only in the present moment. Each moment arises and passes away, and trying to hold on to

it creates frustration. This momentary view of life changes how we understand death. Death is not simply a final event in the future but a process happening in every moment as experiences end and new ones begin. Accepting this helps us let go of unnecessary attachments and live more openly. When life and death are seen as parts of one continuous process, the fear of death can lessen. Philosophers across cultures agree that the best way to face death is also the best way to live: to recognise the fleeting nature of existence, let go of rigid attachments, and live each moment with awareness and care. In this way, death becomes not just an end, but an ever-present teacher about how to live meaningfully.

2.2.3 Birth and Death: Transformations in the Flow of Consciousness

"മരണവുമില്ല പുറപ്പുമില്ല വാഴ് വും
നരസുരരാദിയുമില്ല നാമരൂപം
മരുവിലമർന്ന മരീചിനീരുപോൽ നി-
ല്പൊരുപൊരുളാം പൊരുളല്ലിതോർത്തിടേ
ണം.

ജനിസമയം സ്ഥിതിയില്ല ജന്മിയന്യ -
ക്ഷണമതിലില്ലിതിരിപ്പതെപ്രകാരം
ഹനനവുമിങ്ങനെതന്നെയാകയാലേ
ജനനവുമില്ലിതു ചിത്പ്രഭാവമെല്ലാം".
(ആത്മോപദേശ ശതകം -78 & 79)

In the Ātmopadeśa Śatakam, in verses 78 and 79, Sree Narayana Guru expresses his philosophy regarding birth and death as follows: "There is no death, no birth, and no life. All these are mere appearances, like a mirage seen in the desert - they seem to exist but do not, in reality. None of these are true; this should be understood through deep reflection. When an object or a living being is said to be born, it does not truly exist in a permanent sense. The very moment it comes into being, it begins to undergo transformation; therefore, it cannot be said to continue to exist even in the next moment. How then can it be called a real entity? What appears as constant existence is only an illusion within consciousness. Everything is but a manifestation of consciousness."

According to Muni Narayanaprasad, what we call birth is the manifestation of an individual identity in space and time. The underlying Consciousness takes on a particular form, name, and personality, which then participates in the world. In Indian tradition, this is often seen as the result of karma; the effects of past actions that shape present circumstances. Just as a seed contains the pattern for a tree, the individual is born with tendencies and potentials shaped by earlier causes. Birth, therefore, is not an absolute start but the continuation of an ongoing process. The form is new, but the Consciousness is timeless. This way of seeing birth reduces the mystery and fear around the event. It also helps one understand that life is part of a much wider flow, where forms come and go but the essence remains.

Death is often seen as the opposite of birth; the end of life. For many, it is a moment of loss and separation. But according to Muni Narayanaprasad, death does not mean the destruction of the real self. The body, which is made of matter, stops functioning, but the Consciousness that was expressed through it continues to exist. In the Indian philosophical tradition, this is similar to changing clothes; the body is given up, but the Consciousness moves on. Muni Narayanaprasad adhere this view and state that death is only a transition, not a final end. When a lamp is extinguished, the flame is gone from view, but the source of fire remains. In the same way, death is a shift from visible existence to an unseen continuity. This understanding can change one's attitude toward death, making it less of a cause for fear and more of a natural phase in the cycle of existence.

If birth and death are not absolute, what continues beyond them? According to Muni

Narayanaprasad, what continues is the pure Consciousness that is our real nature. This Consciousness is not limited by the body or mind. Just as electricity can light different bulbs without itself changing, Consciousness can express itself through different bodies across time. Indian philosophy uses the term Ātman to describe this inner reality. It is unborn and undying, eternal and unchanging. Western thinkers like Spinoza also spoke of a single, infinite substance in which all individual forms exist. In both views, the individual is not separate from the whole but is a temporary expression of it. Understanding this continuity can give life a sense of meaning. It places human existence in a larger, ongoing reality where beginnings and endings are only apparent changes, not final truths.

A useful way to understand birth and death is to see them as transformations rather than as absolute events. Just as waves rise and fall on the surface of the sea, bodies appear and disappear in the ocean of Consciousness. The wave seems to have a starting point when it rises and an ending point when it merges back into the sea, but in reality, it is always water. Likewise, our physical form appears to be born and later dies, but our true nature is always Consciousness. It is universal, continuous, and unaffected by changes in form. This teaching helps to reduce fear of death, which often comes from thinking of ourselves only as physical beings. By understanding that we are the eternal Self, we can live without the anxiety of losing our existence. Clinging to the body as our real identity is a form of ignorance. Such ignorance hides the truth of our eternal nature and makes us experience unnecessary sorrow. According to Muni Narayanaprasad, the essence of the individual (Consciousness) undergoes changes in form, not in its true nature. This is similar to water taking the shape of different vessels while remaining water. A child grows into an adult, and the body changes continuously, yet we say it is the same person. Death is simply a more visible change in form, and birth is the beginning of a new form.

Indian philosophies like Buddhism also see life as a series of constant changes, where nothing remains exactly the same from moment to moment. Western philosophers, such as Alfred North Whitehead, have also emphasized that reality is a process of becoming rather than a set of fixed things. This way of seeing life helps remove the sharp divide between birth and death and places them within the ongoing movement of reality.

Recap

- Human life has birth and death.
- Every being appears and disappears in time.
- Birth and death are changes in appearance.
- Reality is like an ocean; beings are waves.
- Consciousness does not begin or end.
- Life is a continuous expression of the eternal.
- Plato saw death as a soul's transition.

- Heidegger linked death to authentic living.
- Schopenhauer saw birth and death as will's manifestations.
- Birth offers responsibility and opportunity.
- Its value depends on how we live.
- Each day can be a renewal.
- Death is seen as soul-body separation in some traditions.
- Some view life and death as inseparable.
- Death shapes how we live now.
- Life exists only in the present moment.
- Accepting death reduces fear and deepens awareness.
- Consciousness is timeless and unchanging.
- Death is not the end of the self.
- Consciousness continues beyond death.
- Death is like changing clothes.
- Âtman is unborn and undying.
- True nature remains unaffected by form changes.
- Clinging to the body causes ignorance.
- Consciousness changes form but not essence.
- Buddhism sees life as constant change.
- Karma governs birth, death, and rebirth.
- Liberation is freedom from the birth-death cycle.

Objective Questions

1. What are the two certain events that mark human life?
2. In which work did Martin Heidegger discuss death as the ultimate possibility?
3. Whose philosophy is rooted in the concept of the "will" as the fundamental reality?

4. What does birth signify from the philosophical perspective?
5. In Indian philosophy, what is often seen as the cause of birth into a particular situation?
6. Which Indian term is used to describe the inner reality that is eternal and unchanging?
7. Which Indian philosophy views life as a series of constant changes?
8. What term is used in Indian philosophy for the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth?
9. What is mokṣa?
10. How does understanding the law of karma encourage ethical living?
11. What was Dôgen's teaching about birth and death?
12. In Western philosophy, how did Socrates describe the purpose of philosophy in relation to death?

Answers

1. Birth and death
2. Being and Time
3. Arthur Schopenhauer
4. The manifestation of an individual identity in space and time
5. Karma
6. Âtman
7. Buddhism
8. Saṃsâra
9. Realisation of one's true nature as pure Consciousness, beyond forms and changes
10. By showing that every action contributes to future conditions
11. Birth and death occur in every moment
12. The art of preparing for death through detachment

Assignments

1. Explain the meaning of the ocean-wave analogy in relation to birth, death, and Reality.
2. Describe how the verses 78 and 79 of Âtmopadeúa Úatakam explain the illusory nature of birth and death.
3. Illustrate how the understanding of life as a continuous process can influence one's daily conduct and relationship with others.
4. Show, with suitable examples, how the idea of "each day as a new birth" can shape a meaningful approach to life.
5. Compare and contrast the views of Indian philosophy and Western thinkers such as Plato, Heidegger, and Schopenhauer on the nature of death.
6. Evaluate the claim that birth and death are mere transformations, not beginnings or endings.
7. Assess how awareness of death can contribute to living an authentic and purposeful life.

Suggested Reading

1. Prasad, S. M. (2011). *Pure Philosophy Simplified for Youth.* New Delhi: DK Print World Pvt Ltd.
2. Oscar Cullman, "Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead," in Krister Stendahl, ed; *Immortality and Resurrection,* (New York: Macmillan 1965). 29-30.
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UNIT

Why the world?

Learning Outcomes

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

- explain the philosophical question "Why the world?" and its significance in exploring the nature of existence
- describe the concept of Consciousness as the foundational reality in Indian philosophical traditions.
- analyse the idea of creation as the self-expression of Consciousness, using relevant analogies.
- interpret the concept of *līlā* (divine play) in relation to the creation, maintenance, and transformation of the world.

Prerequisite

From the earliest days of human thought, people have looked at the world around them and wondered about its existence. We see the sky stretching above, the earth beneath our feet, the endless changes in nature, and the lives of countless beings coming and going. These sights and experiences often lead to questions that go beyond everyday concerns. How did everything begin? What is the source of all that exists? Is the world here for a reason, or is it simply the way things are? Such questions are not limited to scholars or philosophers; they occur to people in moments of quiet reflection, when watching a sunrise, hearing a piece of music, or witnessing the birth of a child. The curiosity to understand the origin and purpose of the world is part of what makes us human. Civilisations across time have tried to answer these questions through stories, rituals, art, and reasoning. Some turned to myths and legends, others to religion and philosophy, and still others to science and observation. Each approach has sought to uncover what lies behind the world we see and experience every day.

Our own personal experiences often mirror this search for meaning. At some point, we all pause to ask not just "How does the world work?" but "Why is there a world at all?" This is not a question with a simple answer, because it invites us to think about the deepest layers of reality. It challenges us to look beyond immediate needs or daily routines and to explore the possibility that there is something more fundamental shaping everything we know. This kind of inquiry is not only about gathering facts; it is about understanding our place in the bigger picture. By reflecting on such questions, we enter a tradition of thought that connects us to thinkers, seekers, and visionaries from many cultures and times. It is a journey that may not give us final answers, but it opens a way to see life and the world with greater depth and awareness.

Keywords

Consciousness, Self-expression, Ānanda, Līlā, Unity, Cycles of creation

Discussion

2.3.1 The Nature of Consciousness and Creation

One of the oldest questions in philosophy is why the world exists at all. This question has been approached from religious, metaphysical, and scientific viewpoints. Philosophy seeks to go beyond surface explanations and explore the ultimate cause and purpose of existence. In Indian philosophical traditions, the nature of ultimate reality, often described as pure Consciousness. According to this view, Consciousness is not just an attribute of living beings but the foundational reality from which everything arises. One key feature of Consciousness is its tendency to actualise happiness. In human life, this is observed in the way individuals seek satisfaction in various activities. The same principle is extended to the universal scale. Just as human beings engage in self-expression for fulfilment, Consciousness too expresses itself in the form of the world. The world is thus not seen as created for a practical function alone but as the manifestation of the inherent nature of Consciousness to express and enjoy itself.

One of Consciousness' essential features is the self-expression, much like an artist who feels compelled to paint or a writer to write. The highest form of happiness is said to be the joy of expressing one's own nature. Human creativity reflects this truth on a smaller scale. Writers, artists, and thinkers often report that their deepest fulfilment comes from giving form to their inner vision. In the same way, the ultimate Consciousness expresses its inner content through the creation of the world. This act is not forced or driven by necessity but flows naturally from its nature. The world, with all its complexity and change, can thus be understood as a creative expression of the infinite possibilities contained within Consciousness. A simple analogy to understand this is the behaviour of a child at play. A child uses whatever is available toys, objects, even imaginary scenarios to create worlds of its own. The play involves

making and unmaking without concern for permanence. The joy is in the act itself, not in the result. There is no attachment to the creations or anxiety over their destruction. Likewise, Consciousness expresses itself freely in the form of the world, creating, sustaining, and transforming without attachment. This process is continuous and spontaneous. It suggests that the existence of the world is not due to an external purpose but is the natural outcome of Consciousness delighting in its own creative energy.

The principle of creative self-expression is not confined to the universal level; it operates in individual lives as well. People engage in activities not only to meet needs but also to express their abilities and inner nature. A person may paint, solve problems, teach, or build not solely for reward but for the satisfaction of the activity itself. This reflects the same pattern observed in Consciousness at the universal level. Our urge to create, to explore, and to communicate mirrors the larger process by which Reality expresses itself as the world. This correspondence between the individual and the universal offers a philosophical insight: the structure of human experience reflects the nature of ultimate reality. In Indian religious philosophy, this creative activity of Consciousness is often described as *līlā*, meaning divine play. In this view, the universe is not produced out of necessity or compulsion but arises as an expression of joy. God, or the Supreme Consciousness, engages in creation, maintenance, and transformation of the world as part of a spontaneous, playful act. This does not reduce the world to something trivial; rather, it emphasises that creation is a free expression of infinite potential, unbound by need. The concept of *līlā* also helps to explain the variety, change, and cycles present in the world. The world is dynamic because it is the manifestation of a living, creative principle.

Sree Narayana Guru presented a unique vision of consciousness and creation that integrates philosophy, spirituality, and humanism. His philosophy is rooted in Advaita Vedanta, yet it transcends conventional metaphysical boundaries through a pragmatic and inclusive understanding of existence. According to Guru, consciousness (Chaitanya) is the ultimate reality - the fundamental essence that pervades the universe. He saw all phenomena as expressions of a single, undivided consciousness, manifesting in multiple forms and names. In his work Atmopadesha Śatakam, Guru emphasises the idea that the self and the universe are not separate entities; both are manifestations of the same absolute truth. This non-dualistic outlook dissolves distinctions between God, nature, and individual beings, promoting the realization of unity in diversity.

Creation, in Guru's view, is not an external act performed by a creator but a spontaneous expression of the universal consciousness itself. The multiplicity of forms arises from the same source, just as waves arise from the ocean without altering its essence. Thus, creation is understood as a process of self-expression rather than production. This perspective aligns with his ethical message: if all beings are manifestations of the same consciousness, then social divisions based on caste, religion, or race are meaningless.

Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy integrates metaphysics with moral and social ideals. His teaching, "One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man," reflects his deep insight into the unity of existence. He emphasised that realisation of the self is inseparable from love, compassion, and equality among human beings. Consciousness, for him, was not merely an abstract idea but a living reality that calls for harmony in thought and action.

2.3.2 Happiness, Realisation, and the Meaning of the World

From a more abstract philosophical perspective, the ultimate Reality or Consciousness is not only awareness but also happiness (*ānanda*). This happiness is not dependent on external conditions but is part of the very nature of Reality. The world, as an expression of Consciousness, is therefore also an expression of happiness. This does not mean that every individual event in the world appears pleasant to human perception, but that the essence of existence itself is rooted in bliss. Philosophers argue that to truly understand the meaning of life, one must realise the ānanda state that underlies all appearances. Human experience provides a way to understand this claim. People often seek lasting fulfilment, but most forms of happiness from material achievements or possessions fade over time. A different kind of contentment arises when a person realises their essential nature as part of a greater Reality. This realisation often brings a deep peace that is not disturbed by changing circumstances. Such moments point towards the idea that our true nature is identical with the Consciousness that is both the source and substance of the world. This insight supports the philosophical claim that the world's existence is an expression of Consciousness enjoying and knowing itself.

Understanding that all things, including ourselves, are expressions of the same Reality changes how we live. We begin to see our actions, relationships, and experiences as part of a unified process rather than as isolated events. This awareness brings meaning to life, as it connects the personal with the universal. Contentment grows from accepting life as it is, recognising it as part of the creative self-expression of Consciousness. Instead of resisting change or clinging to fixed outcomes, we learn to participate in the ongoing flow of creation with awareness and acceptance. The self-expression of Consciousness that gives rise to the world is not a one-time event but an endless process. Creation, transformation, and dissolution occur in cycles, much like the rhythms of nature. This ongoing activity reflects the inexhaustible potential of Reality. Just as an artist continues to produce new works throughout life, Consciousness continues to generate new forms and experiences without reaching a final conclusion. The world, therefore, is always changing yet always grounded in the same unchanging Reality. This understanding removes the need to look for an ultimate end point to creation; the process itself is the fulfilment.

The question "Why the world?" can thus be answered, from this philosophical viewpoint, by recognising that the world is the spontaneous and natural self-expression of Consciousness. It exists because Consciousness, by its very nature, expresses its infinite potential in the form of creation. This expression is both the purpose and the meaning of the world. Just as human beings create to express themselves and find joy, Consciousness does so on a universal scale. The world is not separate from Consciousness but is one with it, a continuous unfolding of its nature. Recognising this not only provides an answer to a philosophical question but also gives our own existence a place within the larger creative process of Reality.

Recap

- Philosophy asks why the world exists.
- Consciousness as ultimate reality.
- Consciousness tends to actualise happiness.
- Self-expression as core nature.
- Human creativity mirrors Consciousness.
- Creation flows naturally, not forced.
- Child's play as analogy.
- Creation without attachment.
- Self-expression occurs universally and individually.
- Lîlâ means divine play.
- Creation as joy, not compulsion.
- Reality also equals happiness.
- Happiness is part of true nature.
- Material joy fades with time.
- Realisation brings lasting peace.
- Seeing unity in all existence.
- Accepting life as creative flow.
- Creation is an endless process.
- World as unfolding of Consciousness.

Objective Questions

1. In Indian philosophy, what is described as the ultimate reality?
2. What is the term in Indian religious philosophy for the divine play of creation?

3. How is the concept of *līlā* explained in relation to the universe?
4. What does the concept of *līlā* suggest about the variety and change in the world?
5. What is meant by *ānanda* in the context of ultimate reality?
6. Is the happiness of ultimate reality dependent on external conditions?
7. How does the text differentiate between temporary material happiness and lasting peace?
8. How is the world described in relation to Consciousness - separate or one with it?
9. What does recognising the unity of the world and Consciousness give to our existence?

Answers

1. Pure Consciousness.
2. *Lîlâ*.
3. The universe arises as a spontaneous, joyful act of creation.
4. The world is dynamic and constantly changing.
5. Ultimate Happiness or bliss.
6. No, it is part of the very nature of reality.
7. Material happiness fades; realisation brings lasting peace.
8. It is one with Consciousness.
9. A place within the larger creative process of reality.

Assignments

1. How can the idea that the world is the self-expression of Consciousness change the way we understand our own existence?
2. If creation is a form of *līlā* or divine play, how can this idea help us face change and uncertainty in life?
3. How does Sree Narayana Guru's vision of Consciousness as the ultimate

reality inspire a sense of unity among all living beings?

4. How can the understanding of happiness (*ānanda*) as the nature of Consciousness influence how we live each day?
5. Describe how seeing creation as a spontaneous act rather than a planned event changes your view of life and purpose.
6. Write a short essay on the idea: "To live is to participate in the self-expression of Consciousness."

Suggested Reading

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Dharma and Karma

Learning Outcomes

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

- explain the meaning and nature of dharma and its role in guiding human conduct
- describe the principle of karma and how actions generate consequences
- compare the different interpretations of karma in Mimâṁsâ, Vedânta, Buddhism, and Jainism
- analyse the relationship btween dharma and karma in shaping ethical living and spiritual growth
- evaluate how the unity of dharma and karma forms a path to mokṣa

Prerequisite

Human life is always marked by questions about what is right and wrong, what should be done, and why actions matter. From early times, people have sought to understand the principles that give meaning to conduct and shape the course of life. These questions are not only about rules or customs but about the deeper order that connects human beings with society and with the world. Every culture has tried to answer these concerns in its own way. In Indian thought, philosophy has never been seen only as abstract reasoning but as a guide for living. It seeks to explain how life can be understood and how it can be directed toward harmony and freedom. By reflecting on these ideas, one finds that philosophy becomes more than a subject of study. It becomes a practical path that shows how daily choices, even small ones, are part of a larger order that gives life meaning and direction. Another way to approach these questions is to consider the role of responsibility. Every individual, in some way, is faced with duties towards family, community, or even toward oneself. At

the same time, each person observes that actions have effects, sometimes immediate and sometimes long-lasting. A kind word may bring peace, while a careless act may cause harm that cannot easily be undone. Why do actions produce particular results? Can a person, through wise choices, shape a better future? These questions are not only philosophical but deeply practical, because they touch the concerns of everyday living. They encourage us to think about the connection between conduct and outcome, between what ought to be done and what naturally follows from it.

Keywords

Mokṣa, Āśrama, Ṛta, Svadharma, Niṣkāma Karma, Apūrva, Saṁsāra

Discussion

2.4.1 Introduction

Indian philosophy pays great attention to the principles that guide human life and action. Among these, two of the most important concepts are *dharma* and *karma*. They are central to almost all schools of Indian thought, both orthodox and heterodox, and they shape the understanding of duty, morality, responsibility, and the results of human actions. Dharma refers broadly to the right way of living, duties, and obligations, while karma refers to the law of action and its consequences. Together, they provide a framework to understand how human beings should act and why their actions matter. As Hiriyanna explains, Indian philosophy always considered philosophy not just as speculation but as "a way of life, not merely a way of thought". Dharma gives the guidelines for how to live rightly, while karma ensures that actions bear consequences, linking conduct with results across this life and future lives.

2.4.2 The Meaning and Nature of Dharma

The word *dharma* comes from the Sanskrit root *dhṛ*, meaning "to hold" or "to support." This root meaning already suggests the function of dharma in human life and society. It is that principle which holds together, which sustains, and which provides the foundation for order and stability. In other words, Dharma may be seen as what upholds and sustains society, morality, and the individual's life. It is not merely an abstract principle, but something that actively operates in daily life, giving direction to conduct and maintaining balance both in the social and the cosmic order. In the Vedic period, dharma was most closely associated with ritual duties, sacrifices, and the organisation of social life. The performance of sacrifices, for example, was not just an individual matter but was believed to contribute to the maintenance of cosmic harmony. The careful following of ritual duties was therefore regarded as essential to preserving the balance of the world. As Indian thought developed, the meaning of dharma widened beyond ritual to include ethical and spiritual duties as well. It came to signify the moral law that governs right conduct, truthfulness, non-violence, compassion, and self-control. Dharma was not regarded as a single, fixed law that applied in exactly the same manner to all people at all times. Rather, it was understood as something that varies according to the situation and the person. A person's stage of

life whether as a student, a householder, a hermit, or a renunciate determines what specific duties he or she must follow. In the same way, a person's social role whether as a teacher, a ruler, or a worker also defines the particular duties expected of them.

The idea of dharma is also connected with the maintenance of cosmic order (*ṛta*). In the early Vedic vision, the universe was sustained by a principle of order, and human beings were expected to act in accordance with it. Later texts described dharma as including duties like truthfulness, non-violence, self-control, and compassion. Dharma thus became both a moral law and a spiritual path. As Hiriyanna notes, "Philosophy in India never stopped short at the discovery of truth, but strove to realise it in experience". Dharma ensures that realisation is grounded in action, guiding people to live harmoniously in society and in line with the ultimate truth.

An important aspect of dharma is that it emphasises duty over rights. In Indian thought, the primary focus is not placed on claiming or demanding privileges but on sincerely fulfilling one's role and responsibility in life. The framework of dharma requires that every individual recognize their particular position in society and in the broader order of existence, and then act in accordance with the responsibilities attached to that position. Rights may be implied as a natural outcome when everyone performs their duties, but they are not made the central concern.

The Bhagavad Gītā gives strong emphasis to this perspective, presenting it not only as a philosophical teaching but also as a practical guide to action. The well-known dialogue between Arjuna and Krishna provides a striking example of this approach. Arjuna, standing on the battlefield, is deeply troubled and conflicted about engaging in war against his own relatives and teachers. He questions the very value of fighting and wishes to withdraw from his responsibilities. At this critical moment, Krishna reminds him of his *svadharma*, or own duty, Krishna clearly instructs Arjuna that "better is one's own duty, though imperfectly performed, than the duty of another well performed". The teaching conveys the idea that it is more valuable to remain true to one's specific responsibility, even if carried out with limitations, than to abandon it and attempt to perform the duty of another, no matter how perfectly. This verse highlights the centrality of dharma as the foundation of ethical life and shows that true righteousness may sometimes demand sacrifice, discipline, and even hardship, yet it remains the guiding principle of moral action.

Sree Narayana Guru redefined the concept of Dharma in a way that combined spirituality, morality, and social responsibility. For Guru, Dharma was not merely a set of religious rituals or external duties, but a universal principle that upholds truth, righteousness, and harmony in individual and collective life. In traditional Indian thought, Dharma refers to the moral and cosmic order that sustains life and the universe. Sree Narayana Guru interpreted this concept in the light of human values and reason. He emphasised that true Dharma is rooted in love, justice, and self-knowledge. In his view, Dharma must promote the well-being of all beings, transcending barriers of caste, creed, and religion. Therefore, the highest Dharma is the realisation of oneness - the understanding that all human beings are manifestations of the same divine consciousness.

Guru taught that moral conduct and self-realisation are inseparable. A person who understands the divine nature within themselves naturally acts with compassion and righteousness toward others. Dharma, therefore, becomes a path of self-purification and social harmony. In his ethical teachings, Guru repeatedly stressed the importance of

humility, truthfulness, and non-violence as essential aspects of righteous living. Unlike ritualistic religion, Guru's Dharma is based on universal ethics and rational understanding. He rejected dogmatic practices and emphasized that true religion lies in good conduct and service to humanity. His famous dictum, "One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man," reflects this moral and spiritual ideal - it is a call to live according to the Dharma of unity and equality.

2.4.3 The Law of Karma

Karma literally means "action," but in Indian philosophy it is not confined to physical deeds alone. It is a broader principle that also includes words and even thoughts, since every form of expression, whether outward or inward, is regarded as an act with significance. The law of karma states that every action necessarily produces consequences, and these consequences fall upon the doer, either in the present life or in future lives. No deed is ever without result, and nothing done is ever lost. Good actions, which are motivated by truth, compassion, or selflessness, bring beneficial results that uplift the individual, while harmful actions, driven by selfishness, anger, or cruelty, bring suffering and bind the individual more tightly to the cycle of rebirth. This principle makes life itself a moral order rather than a mere chain of accidents, for it ensures that every person is responsible for their own destiny and cannot escape the fruits of their choices. Karma, therefore, provides a rational explanation for both the diversity of human experiences and the possibility of moral progress through deliberate and conscious effort.

Karma is also closely tied to the idea of saṁsāra. Since not all actions bear fruit in a single lifetime, the consequences of deeds may appear gradually, sometimes in a later stage of life or even in future births. This understanding implies that the present life of a person is not accidental but is shaped and conditioned by actions performed in the past, while at the same time the actions performed now will in turn shape the conditions of future lives. The law of karma thus extends beyond the limits of a single existence and links different stages of life together in a continuous moral order. It does not mean that human beings are helplessly bound by their past deeds without any possibility of change. Instead, the principle of karma emphasises moral responsibility, choice, and free will. Every individual has the capacity to act rightly in the present moment and thereby influence what lies ahead.

In Indian philosophy, different schools explained karma in their own ways, though they agreed on the basic idea that actions bring results. The Mimāṁsā school gave importance to ritual actions prescribed in the Vedas. It taught that the performance of rituals produces results that are not immediately visible. These unseen results were called apūrva. For example, when a person performs a sacrifice correctly, the ritual action generates an unseen force that later brings about the promised outcome, such as prosperity or attainment of heaven. Here, the emphasis is on the correct performance of duty, especially religious rituals, rather than on intention or inner attitude. On the other hand, the Vedānta schools shifted the focus from external ritual to the inner state of the individual. They argued that intention and knowledge determine the value of action. In this view, an action done without desire for personal gain, and with right knowledge of the Self, leads to liberation. Thus, while Mimāṁsā stressed outward performance of ritual duties, Vedānta highlighted inward awareness and detachment as the key factors in deciding the moral and spiritual worth of an action.

Buddhism and Jainism, though heterodox traditions, also gave important interpretations of karma. Buddhism taught that karma is based on volition or will. What matters is not

the mere physical act but the mental intention behind it. Volitional acts leave impressions or tendencies in the mind, shaping future experiences. These mental formations explain why individuals differ in their conditions and why suffering continues. Jainism developed a more elaborate doctrine by describing karma as a kind of subtle material substance that attaches itself to the soul whenever a person acts, speaks, or even thinks. This karmic matter binds the soul to the cycle of birth and death. Liberation, according to Jainism, comes only when all karmic matter is completely removed through strict discipline and ascetic practices. Despite these differences, the common principle running through all schools is that karma links actions with consequences. It makes life a moral and spiritual order where individuals are responsible for shaping their destiny through what they choose to do, think, and intend.

Sree Narayana Guru reinterpreted the ancient Indian concept of Karma in a highly rational and ethical manner. In his philosophy, the Law of Karma is not merely a doctrine of fate or destiny, but a principle that emphasises moral responsibility, self-awareness, and the power of human action. Guru viewed Karma as the law of cause and effect that operates not only in the material world but also in the moral and spiritual realms of life. According to traditional Indian thought, every action - physical, verbal, or mental - produces corresponding results that shape an individual's present and future. Sree Narayana Guru accepted this principle but gave it a deeper ethical and social meaning. For him, Karma is not a punishment or reward administered by an external deity, but a natural outcome of one's actions arising from the universal order. Good actions lead to inner peace and harmony, while selfish or harmful deeds create bondage and suffering.

Guru emphasised that human beings have the freedom and responsibility to shape their destiny through right action and self-knowledge. He taught that ignorance (Avidya) is the root cause of wrong actions, which keep the mind bound to the cycle of sorrow and rebirth. Liberation (Moksha) is attained when a person realizes their true nature as pure consciousness and acts in accordance with truth, love, and justice. Thus, right understanding transforms Karma into a means of spiritual evolution. In his ethical and social teachings, Sree Narayana Guru extended the Law of Karma to the collective level as well. He believed that the moral progress of society depends on the righteous actions of its members. Service to humanity, compassion, and equality were, for him, the highest forms of Karma. His famous message, "One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man," reflects his belief that good actions inspired by unity and love can transform the world.

2.4.4 Dharma and Karma as the Path to Liberation

The relationship between dharma and karma is central to Indian philosophy because it explains how ethical conduct and spiritual growth are connected. Dharma refers to the right way of living, the duties and responsibilities that uphold moral and social order. Karma refers to the law of action and its results. When these two are considered together, they form a system where human conduct is directly linked to its outcomes, not only in the present life but also in future lives. Acting according to dharma ensures that karma produces beneficial results. For example, if a person acts truthfully, helps others, and performs their responsibilities with sincerity, the law of karma ensures that these actions bear good consequences, either immediately or at a later time. On the other hand, when a person acts against dharma by being dishonest, selfish, or harmful, such actions create negative karma, which results in suffering and continued bondage to the cycle of birth and death. In this way, dharma provides the guidelines for what ought to

be done, while karma guarantees that every action has an outcome. They are therefore not separate principles but interdependent. Together, they provide both the rule and the consequence, guiding individuals toward liberation.

The relationship between dharma and karma is important for understanding the path of liberation, or mokṣa. Together, they form a framework where ethical living and spiritual growth are closely connected. The Bhagavad Gītā gives a clear teaching on this relationship through the concept of karma-yoga, which means the discipline of selfless action. In the Gītā, Krishna instructs Arjuna to carry out his duty as a warrior without attachment to the results of his actions. Arjuna is told not to withdraw from his responsibilities but to perform them in a spirit of dedication to the divine. This transforms karma from being a cause of bondage into a means of liberation. Krishna's teaching is summarised in the famous verse: "To action alone you have the right, not to its fruits." This verse shifts attention from the desire for reward to the importance of performing duty for its own sake. In this teaching, dharma gives direction to action by defining what one's role and responsibility are, while karma ensures that every action has inevitable consequences. Thus, the unity of dharma and karma, when practiced through selfless action, becomes a path leading directly to freedom from the cycle of birth and death.

Recap

- Dharma means right living and duty.
- Together, they explain why actions matter.
- Philosophy is seen as a way of life.
- Dharma comes from Sanskrit root *dhṛ*.
- Dharma sustains society and individual life.
- In the Vedic period, dharma meant rituals.
- Dharma later included moral and spiritual duties.
- Duties vary by stage of life.
- Duties also differ by social role.
- Dharma connects with the cosmic order (*ṛta*).
- It includes truth, non-violence, and compassion.
- The Gîtâ highlights the value of duty.
- Karma means action, including thought and word.

- Every action produces consequences.
- Good actions bring good results.
- Bad actions bring suffering and bondage.
- Karma explains diversity of human experience.
- Mimâṁsâ stressed ritual action
- Vedânta stressed knowledge and intention.
- Buddhism linked karma with volition.
- Jainism taught karma as binding matter.

Objective Questions

1. What does dharma broadly refer to?
2. From which Sanskrit root is the word dharma derived?
3. What does the root *dhṛ* mean?
4. How was dharma understood during the Vedic period?
5. How did the meaning of dharma expand in later periods?
6. How does dharma vary for different people?
7. What is emphasised in dharma - duty or rights?
8. Who reminds Arjuna of his duty in the Bhagavad Gîtâ?
9. What is *svadharma*?
10. What does the law of karma state?
11. What kind of actions bring suffering according to karma?
12. How does Jainism describe karma?

Answers

1. The right way of living, duties, and obligations.
2. From the Sanskrit root *dhṛ*.

3. "To hold" or "to support."
4. It was associated with ritual duties, sacrifices, and social order.
5. It came to include ethical and spiritual duties.
6. It varies according to stage of life and social role.
7. Duty.
8. Krishna.
9. One's own duty.
10. Every action produces consequences that affect the doer.
11. Actions driven by selfishness, anger, or cruelty.
12. As a kind of subtle material substance binding to the soul.

Assignments

1. Reflect on how the concepts of *dharma* and *karma* together create a meaningful structure for human life. How can these ideas guide ethical decision-making in today's world?
2. How does the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gītā* illustrate the tension between personal emotion and moral duty? Can you relate this to any real-life situation?
3. Discuss how Sree Narayana Guru's reinterpretation of *dharma* transforms it from a religious duty into a universal ethical principle. How can this idea be applied in building social harmony today?
4. The law of *karma* teaches that every action has consequences. How does this principle encourage moral accountability and personal growth?
5. Compare the traditional ritualistic understanding of *karma* in Mīmāṃsā with the ethical interpretation given by Vedānta and Sree Narayana Guru. How does intention change the moral value of an act?
6. Explore how the teachings of *dharma* and *karma* can be used to solve modern ethical problems such as inequality, environmental destruction, or social conflict.
7. How does Sree Narayana Guru's idea that "good actions inspired by unity and love can transform the world" deepen the meaning of *karma* beyond personal salvation?

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BLOCK

Some Guidelines Towards a Virtuous life

UNIT 1

Lives of Great Men as Guidelines for Virtuous life

Learning Outcomes

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

- explain how the lives of reformers shape human history and provide lessons for virtuous living.
- describe the contributions of Sree Narayana Guru to social equality, education, and spiritual wisdom.
- analyse the role of Savitribai Phule in promoting women's education and social dignity.
- discuss Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's struggle against untouchability and his contributions to justice and human rights.
- evaluate Mahatma Gandhi's principles of truth, non-violence, simplicity, and their role in social transformation.
- assess Periyar's advocacy of rationalism, self-respect, and social justice in challenging caste and gender inequality.

Prerequisite

Every society is shaped by the way its people live, think, and act. Human life is not lived in isolation; it is deeply connected with the community and the world around us. From early times, people have asked questions about how life should be lived, what is right and wrong, and what makes life meaningful. These questions are not limited to philosophers or saints alone. Every individual, in one way or another, tries to find answers through personal choices and social actions. History shows us that while political events and economic changes leave their mark, the lives of individuals who devoted themselves to the welfare of others often have a deeper and lasting influence. Their journeys remind us that life is not only about personal success but also about contributing to the well-being of others. When we look at how

such individuals lived, we can see that values like truth, equality, compassion, and justice are not abstract ideas but guiding principles for daily life. These values help people to respond to challenges, overcome difficulties, and work for a better society.

Across different cultures and times, men and women have stood against injustice, worked for education, fought for dignity, and practiced self-discipline to shape a society based on fairness and respect. They came from different backgrounds and faced different struggles, but their lives carry a common message: virtue is not limited to personal purity but is also about responsibility toward others. This is why studying the lives of such individuals is important. These stories are not just about the past; they continue to speak to present and future generations. They show that ordinary human beings, with determination and moral strength, can bring extraordinary change. In this sense, exploring their journeys is not only about understanding history but also about preparing ourselves to live with clarity, courage, and responsibility.

Keywords

Social responsibility, Equality, Education, Women's dignity, Justice, Human rights, Truth (Satya), Non-violence (Ahimsa), Self-respect Movement

Discussion

3.1.1 Introduction

Human history is shaped not only by events but also by the lives of individuals who dedicated themselves to the welfare of society. The life stories of reformers, saints, and leaders provide important lessons for living a virtuous life. Their experiences, struggles, and insights serve as guiding lights for later generations. Virtue is not simply about moral conduct in private life; it is also about social responsibility, justice, and compassion toward others. The lives of great men and women help us to see how ethical principles can be applied in difficult situations. By studying their lives, we can understand how virtues such as truth, courage, equality, compassion, and self-discipline are lived out in practice. The following discussion focuses on the contributions of five remarkable figures: Sree Narayana Guru, Savitribai Phule, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, M. K. Gandhi, and Periyar. Each of them addressed the social evils of their time and worked for the upliftment of humanity. Their lives show us that personal virtue is deeply connected with social reform and that individual integrity can become the foundation for collective transformation.

3.1.2 Sree Narayana Guru: The Path of Equality and Wisdom

Sree Narayana Guru (1855–1928) was one of the most influential social reformers and spiritual leaders in modern Kerala. He championed the ideals of equality, education, and moral upliftment at a time when society was deeply divided by caste and discrimination. Born into the Ezhava community, Guru rose above social barriers through his wisdom and compassion, promoting a philosophy based on universal

brotherhood and human dignity. Guru's famous message, "One Caste, One Religion, One God for Humanity," became a beacon of social harmony. He emphasised that true spirituality lies in righteous living and mutual respect, not in rituals or caste distinctions. By consecrating temples open to all castes and advocating for education as a means of liberation, he initiated a silent revolution that reshaped Kerala's social landscape.

His establishment of schools, temples, and the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam provided platforms for marginalised communities to assert their rights and dignity. Through his teachings, Guru inspired generations to think beyond narrow identities and work toward a just and enlightened society. His vision of equality and wisdom continues to inspire modern India. He remains a guiding light for those striving for social justice, moral integrity, and human unity in a rapidly changing world. To understand the depth of Guru's reformist vision, it is important to see the historical and social conditions in which he lived and worked.

Sree Narayana Guru lived at a time when caste discrimination was deeply rooted in society. People belonging to lower castes were denied entry into temples, access to education, and basic human dignity. Guru challenged this system not through violence but through peaceful reform and constructive work. He consecrated temples that were open to all, regardless of caste, thus breaking the monopoly of upper castes in religious life. One of his famous messages was, "One caste, one religion, one God for humanity." This was not meant to erase diversity but to emphasise the equal worth of all human beings. By teaching self-respect, brotherhood, and education, Guru showed that spiritual wisdom must lead to social equality. His life demonstrates that true virtue is not only about personal purity but also about ensuring justice and dignity for others. Another important lesson from Sree Narayana Guru's life is his emphasis on education as a tool for liberation. He encouraged communities that were denied learning opportunities to establish schools and spread literacy. Guru himself founded schools and libraries and urged people to use knowledge as a means of empowerment. He believed that without education, neither personal growth nor social change could be achieved. His teachings combine ethical conduct, spiritual awareness, and practical reforms. His life provides an example of how virtues such as humility, compassion, and courage can create lasting social transformation. In this way, Guru's life becomes a guideline for anyone who seeks to live meaningfully in harmony with others.

3.1.3 Savitribai Phule: Education and the Dignity of Women

Savitribai Phule was one of the first female teachers in India and a pioneer in women's education. She lived in a period when girls were not allowed to study, and social customs confined women to domestic spaces. With the support of her husband Jyotirao Phule, she started schools for girls and women belonging to marginalised communities. Her work challenged the deeply ingrained prejudices of society, and she faced harassment and humiliation for teaching girls. Yet, she continued her mission with determination. For her, education was not merely about literacy but about awakening self-confidence, self-respect, and independence in women. By breaking social barriers, she showed that the path to virtue includes fighting against injustice and creating opportunities for others. Savitribai Phule's life also highlights the importance of compassion and service. During the plague epidemic in Pune, she worked tirelessly to care for the sick and destitute, often risking her own health. She passed away while serving plague victims, showing that her commitment to humanity

was stronger than her fear of death. Her writings, including poems, encouraged women to resist oppression and claim their rightful place in society. Her life teaches that virtue is not limited to personal morality but also involves collective responsibility and courage to defy unjust traditions.

3.1.4 Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: Justice and Human Rights

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was a jurist, social reformer, and the chief architect of the Indian Constitution. Born into a Dalit family, he experienced untouchability and social discrimination from childhood. Instead of being crushed by these challenges, he used education as his weapon. He pursued higher studies in India and abroad, becoming one of the most educated leaders of his time. Ambedkar's life teaches us that perseverance, hard work, and self-discipline are essential virtues for overcoming obstacles. He believed that liberty, equality, and fraternity are the foundations of a just society. Through his leadership, he worked to abolish untouchability and secure equal rights for all citizens. Ambedkar's role in drafting the Constitution of India is one of his greatest contributions. He ensured that the principles of democracy, social justice, and human rights were enshrined in the nation's legal framework. For him, virtue was not an abstract idea but a practical commitment to fairness and equality. He emphasised that true morality means respecting the dignity of every individual. His call to "educate, agitate, and organise" remains relevant even today, reminding us that knowledge and unity are the paths to liberation.

3.1.5 M. K. Gandhi: Truth and Non-violence as Life Principles

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, known as Mahatma Gandhi, led India's struggle for independence through the principles of truth (*satya*) and non-violence (*ahimsa*). Unlike many leaders who relied on weapons and war, Gandhi showed that political and social change could be achieved through peaceful means. His experiments with truth in personal life and his campaigns against colonial rule became a new model of resistance. For Gandhi, virtue was inseparable from truthfulness in thought, speech, and action. He believed that only by living truthfully could one serve humanity. His philosophy of non-violence teaches us that real strength lies in self-control and compassion rather than in aggression. Gandhi also emphasised simplicity and self-restraint as virtues necessary for a meaningful life. He wore simple clothes, lived frugally, and practiced restraint in food and habits. This was not mere personal discipline but a statement against exploitation and inequality. His campaigns for the upliftment of villages, the removal of untouchability, and the promotion of communal harmony show that virtue extends beyond individual conduct to social responsibility. Gandhi's life reminds us that moral values must be lived consistently in daily choices, and that small acts of truth and kindness can have great social impact.

3.1.6 Periyar: Rationalism and Social Justice

E. V. Ramasamy, popularly known as Periyar was a social reformer from Tamil Nadu. He strongly opposed caste discrimination, superstition, and gender inequality. Periyar believed that rational thinking was essential for a just society. He encouraged people to question blind traditions and superstitions that caused inequality. His life shows that virtue includes the courage to question and the responsibility to reform. By organising the Self-Respect Movement, he inspired marginalised communities to claim dignity and equality. For Periyar, self-respect was a virtue that every human being deserved, and he worked tirelessly to build a society free from oppression. Another important aspect of

Periyar's life was his advocacy for women's rights and education. He argued that society could not progress unless women were treated as equals. His campaigns for widow remarriage, property rights for women, and equal opportunities challenged patriarchal norms. Periyar teaches us that a virtuous life is not only about personal piety but also about building an equal and rational society

Recap

- History is shaped by the lives of reformers.
- Virtue includes social responsibility, justice, and compassion.
- Great leaders show how ethical principles are lived in practice.
- Sree Narayana Guru worked against caste discrimination.
- He opened temples for all and taught equality.
- He promoted education as a tool for liberation.
- Savitribai Phule pioneered women's education.
- She fought prejudice and encouraged self-respect in women.
- She served society with compassion during the plague.
- Dr. B. R. Ambedkar overcame untouchability through education.
- He stood for liberty, equality, and fraternity.
- He framed the Indian Constitution for justice and human rights.
- M. K. Gandhi led India with truth and non-violence.
- He practiced simplicity and self-restraint.
- He worked for social harmony.
- Periyar opposed caste, superstition, and gender inequality.
- He led the Self-Respect Movement for dignity.
- He promoted rationalism and women's rights

Objective Questions

1. What was deeply rooted in society during Sree Narayana Guru's time?
2. How did Guru challenge caste discrimination?
3. What was Guru's famous message about humanity?
4. What did Guru promote as a tool for liberation?
5. Who was one of the first female teachers in India?
6. Who supported Savitribai Phule in her work?
7. During which epidemic did Savitribai Phule serve the sick?
8. Who was the chief architect of the Indian Constitution?
9. What social problem did Ambedkar experience from childhood?
10. What was Ambedkar's weapon against discrimination?
11. Which three principles did Ambedkar consider the foundation of a just society?
12. Which principles guided Gandhi in the freedom struggle?
13. What did Gandhi believe was inseparable from virtue?
14. What was the name of the movement organised by Periyar?

Answers

1. Caste discrimination.
2. By peaceful reform and constructive work.
3. "One caste, one religion, one God for humanity."
4. Education.
5. Savitribai Phule.
6. Jyotirao Phule.
7. The plague epidemic in Pune.
8. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.
9. Untouchability and social discrimination.

10. Education.
11. Liberty, equality, and fraternity.
12. Truth (satya) and non-violence (ahimsa).
13. Truthfulness in thought, speech, and action.
14. The Self-Respect Movement.

Assignments

1. Reflect on how Sree Narayana Guru's idea of "One Caste, One Religion, One God for Humanity" can guide the building of a more inclusive and equal society in today's world.
2. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar viewed education as a tool of liberation. Discuss how his message "Educate, Agitate, and Organise" can be applied to address present-day inequalities.
3. Periyar taught that questioning blind beliefs is a moral duty. Analyse how rational thinking can serve as a virtue in promoting equality and justice in contemporary society.
4. Compare the approaches of Sree Narayana Guru and Gandhi in promoting moral and social reform. How do their ideas together help us rethink the meaning of virtue in public life?
5. Choose one virtue - truth, compassion, equality, or courage - highlighted in the lives of these reformers. Explain how practicing this virtue in your own life can contribute to personal growth and social transformation.

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UNIT 2

Personal Efforts and Chance Elements

Learning Outcomes

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

- explain the concepts of *pauruṣa* (personal effort) and *daivam* (chance) and their combined role in shaping human outcomes
- analyse the importance of balancing effort and acceptance of uncertainty to cultivate equanimity in success and failure
- recognise the philosophical value of simplicity and humility in contrast to the pursuit of wealth and luxury
- assess the role of *svadharma* (one's own nature and duty) in choosing meaningful work that aligns with personal abilities and values
- justify why knowledge is regarded as the highest wealth in Indian thought, and how it sustains human dignity more than material possessions

Prerequisite

Every individual, at some point in life, wonders about the balance between what they can control and what lies beyond their reach. Students prepare for examinations, athletes train for competitions, and farmers cultivate their fields with hope and discipline. Yet, despite careful planning and effort, outcomes are not always predictable. This uncertainty often leads to questions: Why do some plans succeed while others fail? Why does hard work sometimes not bring the expected results? Such questions are not only practical but also philosophical, as they invite us to reflect on the relationship between human effort and the larger forces of life. From ancient times, thinkers and teachers have tried to understand this relationship in order to guide people toward living with wisdom and balance.

At the same time, another set of questions has always occupied human minds: what is the real source of happiness and dignity? Is it wealth, social recognition, or something more lasting? We see people striving for money, possessions, and status, yet we also see that these do not always bring peace or satisfaction. Some appear to have very little but live with contentment, while others possess much yet remain restless. Such contrasts invite us to think carefully about what truly matters in life. They challenge us to reflect on how work, wealth, knowledge, and values are connected, and how each of these shapes the meaning of human existence. These reflections open the path for deeper understanding and prepare us to explore ideas that can guide us in building a thoughtful and responsible life.

Keywords

Puruṣa, Daivam, Svadharma, Equanimity, Humility, Knowledge

Discussion

3.2.1 Human Effort (*Puruṣa*) and Chance (*Daivam*)

Human life is a combination of personal efforts and chance elements. Every individual plans and works with the hope of achieving certain results. Yet, even when efforts are made with care, the result is not always as expected. This truth is highlighted by Muni Narayanaprasad in his work *Pure Philosophy Simplified for Youth*. He reminds us that "your efforts also have to bear fruit as part of nature's unpredictable unfoldment of events." This means that human actions take place within the larger course of nature, and nature's events cannot be fully predicted. A farmer may prepare his field, sow seeds, and tend them with dedication. But the final harvest also depends on rainfall, sunlight, and soil conditions; factors that are beyond the farmer's control. In this way, effort alone does not determine the outcome. There are also external or chance elements that influence the result.

In Sanskrit, personal effort is called *puruṣa*, which refers to human initiative and action. The chance element is called *daivam*, which refers to those aspects of fate or circumstances that are not in human hands. Both *puruṣa* and *daivam* work together in shaping the outcome of events. Recognising this truth is important for developing the right attitude towards life. It teaches that one must make sincere effort, since effort is a natural ability and a duty. At the same time, one must accept that the result is not always in one's control. A student, for instance, must study sincerely to succeed in examinations. Yet, the student must also realise that health, examination conditions, and other unexpected elements can influence the result. Accepting this reality prevents arrogance in success and despair in failure. According to Narayanaprasad, this awareness "enables one to face all life situations with a sense of calmness and equanimity." It encourages determination without arrogance and acceptance without despair. Thus, the teaching of personal efforts and chance elements helps individuals to

live responsibly while remaining humble in the face of life's uncertainties.

Having seen the role of pauruṣa, or human effort, it becomes necessary to look more closely at daivam, or chance. Daivam, or chance, represents the factors outside human control. Weather, accidents, opportunities, and other natural or social conditions are part of this element. Narayanaprasad explains that "your chance elements are concurrent in what makes the intended result appear." This means chance does not work separately from effort, but alongside it. A farmer may labour tirelessly, but without rain there is no harvest. Similarly, unexpected opportunities may open paths even when efforts seem small. Recognising this truth deepens one's understanding of life. It shows that results are neither fully in human hands nor entirely left to fate. Instead, they arise from the interplay of both. A wise person, therefore, works sincerely but accepts outcomes with patience and balance.

3.2.2 Simplicity, and High Thinking

From the awareness of effort and chance arises another teaching; the importance of simplicity and humility. Narayanaprasad points out that when a person realises the vastness of the universe and the fleeting nature of individual existence, the need for simple living becomes clear. Those who live with inflated egos often seek luxury and boastful lifestyles, usually driven by the pursuit of money. But money, Narayanaprasad reminds us, is only a "means of exchange" created by humans. It is not produced by nature and cannot by itself satisfy basic needs. "When you are hungry, you cannot eat money," he writes. True necessities food, water, air come from nature, not from wealth. This realisation encourages humility and a life guided by higher values. Narayanaprasad observes that "the more money you accumulate, the more it makes you peace-less." Indian wisdom describes wealth as a "receptacle of worries." Earning, saving, and spending each come with their own anxieties. The rich may live in luxury but often lack peace, while the poor may sleep soundly without fear. This shows that wealth cannot ensure happiness. Money is necessary for essentials like education, health, and livelihood, but beyond that, it should not dominate life. Used wrongly, it distracts people from deeper values. Used rightly, it supports simple living and meaningful pursuits.

The mistake often made is to accumulate wealth for children in a way that leaves them without effort. Narayanaprasad warns that giving children an effortless life leads to idleness and corruption. Nature has given every person the ability to work with hands and mind. Denying children the chance to use their own abilities harms them. Parents should save enough for education and necessities but avoid providing so much that it destroys self-reliance. True dignity is not gained through inherited wealth but through effort, humility, and wisdom. Human excellence lies not in wealth but in high thinking. Narayanaprasad explains, "The higher one's thoughts, the nobler life becomes." This means that a truly human life is marked by noble reflection and simple living, not by luxury.

3.2.3 Right Work, True Wealth, and Human Dignity

Choosing the right kind of work is an important aspect of personal effort. Muni Narayanaprasad explains that effort is not only about doing work with discipline but also about doing the right work that suits one's inner nature, or *svadharma*. The term *svadharma* refers to one's own duty or natural path in life. It does not mean duty imposed by others, but work that matches one's character, abilities, and inner tendencies. When a person engages in work that is in harmony with their *svadharma*, the work

itself becomes meaningful. Such work gives joy, and the individual feels a natural flow while performing it. Time passes smoothly, and the person does not feel overburdened. Effort in this context does not appear as a heavy demand but as an expression of one's own nature. On the other hand, work that does not match a person's *svadharma* leads to dissatisfaction and struggle. If one chooses a profession or study path only for wealth, without considering one's true nature, it often results in frustration. Narayanaprasad reminds us that livelihood should not only be a means of survival but also a way of living in tune with one's inner self. Choosing work without self-reflection may bring temporary success, but it cannot bring lasting peace.

The question of righteousness is also important. Work that is unrighteous or harmful to others does not only create unhappiness but also reduces personal dignity. Wealth or position gained at the cost of moral values weakens the foundation of life. Therefore, Narayanaprasad suggests that one must seek a balance between material needs, moral values, and personal inclinations. This balance ensures that livelihood becomes a path of growth rather than a source of conflict.

Indian thought gives a clear classification of wealth, not merely in terms of material possession but also in terms of how it is acquired. According to Narayanaprasad, wealth earned through one's own honest effort is called *uttama-dhana*, or the best kind of wealth. This is because it arises from personal initiative, discipline, and responsibility. It reflects self-reliance and becomes a source of inner satisfaction, as the person knows that the fruits of effort belong to them in a rightful way. The second type is *madhyama-dhana*, or medium wealth, which refers to inherited wealth. Though it may bring comfort and security, it does not carry the same moral strength as wealth earned by one's own actions. The last category, *adhama-dhana*, or inferior wealth, includes all other forms of wealth gained through dishonest or unrighteous means, such as cheating, exploitation, or corruption. Such wealth does not contribute to a person's dignity, nor does it create lasting happiness.

Among all forms of wealth, Indian philosophy gives the highest place to knowledge. Unlike material possessions, knowledge cannot be stolen or destroyed easily. It grows when it is shared and serves as a guide in times of difficulty. Material wealth may bring comfort, but it is always uncertain and temporary. It can vanish due to misfortune, misuse, or change in circumstances. In contrast, knowledge remains as a constant companion, shaping decisions, actions, and one's understanding of life. For this reason, knowledge is called the greatest wealth compared to all. It shows that the true measure of wealth is not what one possesses externally, but what one cultivates within. A person rich in knowledge contributes positively to society and maintains personal integrity, even if material wealth is limited.

Narayanaprasad concludes, "Human dignity is not enhanced by money and the luxurious life it buys. It is high thinking that enriches the life of man." For the youth, this message is particularly important: live simply, work sincerely, think deeply, and accept outcomes with equanimity. In this way, personal efforts and chance elements are harmonised, leading to a life of peace and meaning.

Recap

- Human life is shaped by both effort and chance.
- Effort alone cannot guarantee results.
- One must work sincerely and accept outcomes.
- Awareness of effort and chance brings equanimity.
- Chance includes factors beyond human control.
- Results depend on both effort and chance together.
- Money is useful but cannot ensure peace or happiness.
- Simple living and high thinking give true dignity.
- Right work gives joy, meaning, and moral strength.
- Wealth earned by effort is best, but knowledge is highest.
- Life is enriched by effort, humility, and noble thought.
- Success without effort does not build true character.
- Failure can become a teacher if accepted with patience.
- Personal dignity lies in righteous living, not in riches.
- Work chosen only for wealth leads to dissatisfaction.
- Inherited wealth has value but cannot replace hard work.
- Knowledge guides life even when wealth is lost.
- Balancing material needs with moral values gives harmony.

Objective Questions

1. What is *uttama-dhana* (the best kind of wealth) according to Narayanaprasad?
2. What is *madhyama-dhana* (middle type of wealth) in the Indian tradition?
3. Which form of wealth is considered the highest among all?

4. What remains as a guiding force in life when material possessions fade?
5. What is the meaning of *svadharma* in the context of work?
6. How does Indian tradition classify different kinds of wealth?
7. Which type of wealth is considered inferior in the Indian tradition?
8. Why are material possessions described as temporary?

Answers

1. Wealth earned through one's own honest effort
2. Wealth inherited from family or ancestors.
3. Knowledge.
4. Wisdom.
5. One's own duty or the work that suits one's nature.
6. Uttama-dhana, madhyama-dhana, and adhama-dhana.
7. Adhama-dhana
8. Because they fade or can be lost.

Assignments

1. Can human freedom truly exist if the outcomes of actions are influenced by chance (*daivam*)? Discuss with reference to the relationship between *pauruṣa* and *daivam*.
2. How does the recognition of uncertainty in life contribute to the development of philosophical equanimity and moral strength?
3. In what way does the teaching of "effort and chance" reflect a synthesis of determinism and free will in Indian philosophical thought?
4. How does the concept of *svadharma* offer a philosophical solution to the problem of alienation in modern work life?
5. Discuss the statement, "High thinking, not luxury, enriches human life," as a philosophical vision of human dignity and fulfilment.

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UNIT 3

Conscience

Learning Outcomes

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

- explain the concept of conscience as an inner voice and moral compass guiding human actions
- analyse Muni Narayanaprasad's view of conscience as *ātma-samyamana* (self-restraint) in shaping moral behaviour
- distinguish between true conscience and socially conditioned customs or habits
- evaluate the relationship between conscience, inner wealth, justice, and social harmony
- interpret Kant's conception of conscience as an "inner judge" and "inner court" of moral self-examination

Prerequisite

Human beings often face situations where they must decide between right and wrong, good and bad, or just and unjust. These choices are not always easy, and they are not always guided by external rules or instructions. At times, people rely on something within themselves that seems to guide their actions, caution them when they are about to do something harmful, or give them peace when they have done the right thing. This inner guide is often spoken of as "conscience." From early childhood, people experience moments where they feel a quiet voice inside them urging them to act in a particular way. For example, a child who thinks of hiding a mistake may feel uneasy until the truth is told. Similarly, an adult who faces the temptation of an unfair gain may feel restrained by a sense of inner responsibility. These ordinary experiences show that conscience is not an abstract idea but something that plays a role in daily life. It is this role of conscience in human decision-making that has

attracted the attention of thinkers, philosophers, and religious teachers throughout history. By reflecting on this inner guide, people have tried to understand where it comes from, how it functions, and why it holds such power over human behaviour.

Keywords

Moral compass, Ātma-samyamana, Justice, Inner wealth, Social harmony, Responsibility, Moral law, Self-examination

Discussion

3.3.1 Introduction

Conscience has been described in many ways as an inner voice, as the seat of moral awareness, or as a source of motivation toward right conduct. It has also been seen as a form of inner reflection that allows human beings to place moral considerations above personal desires or social pressures. Across cultures and traditions, conscience has been valued as an essential aspect of human life because it influences not only individual actions but also relationships and society as a whole. Without conscience, the bonds of trust, responsibility, and fairness would be difficult to maintain. It provides a foundation for moral life by linking knowledge, motivation, and reflection in a unique way. Exploring the idea of conscience, therefore, opens the door to a deeper understanding of human morality and decision-making.

3.3.2 Understanding Conscience

Conscience is one of the important psychological forces in human life. It guides our actions and often prevents us from engaging in deeds that are harmful or unjust. According to Muni Narayanaprasad, conscience acts as a natural part of our inner being. While the outer flow of actions may be shaped by desires, habits, or social influences, conscience serves as an inner check that restrains us. He calls this self-imposed restraint on external actions *ātma-samyamana*, meaning self-control. This means that conscience does not simply stop us from doing wrong but also guides us to align our behaviour with higher moral values. This idea regarding conscience is important because it shows that true discipline comes not from external pressure but from listening to the inner voice that constantly evaluates right and wrong. Conscience, therefore, can be seen as an inner compass that helps us make decisions and live harmoniously with others. When we ignore this inner voice, we are often led into conflict, both within ourselves and with others. When we follow it, we feel peace and confidence in our actions. In this sense, conscience is not something external or imposed from outside; rather, it is an essential part of our nature that needs to be nurtured and respected. Thus, the study of conscience gives us a framework for understanding how to balance our personal desires with social harmony.

3.3.3 The Nature of Conscience

Conscience can sometimes be misunderstood because of the influence of social customs, traditions, and relative values. Narayanaprasad points out that conscience, when not conditioned by relativistic social mores, never deceives us. It always acts as

a true guide. This means that conscience is not about following rigid social norms but about understanding what is universally right and just. For instance, in some societies, practices such as discrimination were once justified as traditions. Yet, conscience, when free from such conditioning, shows that treating people unequally is wrong. This highlights the difference between the true inner voice and the external voices shaped by social habits. Conscience, therefore, is best understood when seen as universal and not relative. It does not change with time, place, or culture because it is rooted in the natural order of life. However, human beings often suppress this voice and justify their actions with clever arguments. Narayanaprasad warns that it is only when we haggle with conscience that we resort to such subtleties. In daily life, this means that whenever we try to rationalise an action that we know to be wrong, we are essentially trying to silence conscience.

Modern life often measures success in terms of material wealth. People earn wealth in different ways, and Narayanaprasad explains that in Indian tradition, the highest wealth is the wealth of knowledge, and wisdom is the highest form of knowledge. In this sense, conscience itself is a kind of inner wealth. It enriches our life not by providing material possessions but by helping us live truthfully and justly. When we act in line with conscience, we preserve the true wealth of character and wisdom. Material possessions may come and go, but the wealth of knowledge and the guidance of conscience remain with us always. In fact, it is this inner wealth that helps us handle material wealth responsibly. A person may have vast resources, but without conscience, those resources can be misused. On the other hand, even with little material wealth, a person who follows conscience can live a meaningful and respected life. Thus, conscience must be seen as a treasure that guides us to use all forms of wealth, knowledge, and resources in a rightful way.

3.3.4 Conscience and Justice

Happiness in life is closely connected to how we treat others. Narayanaprasad explains that to be happy in relationships and social interactions, one must practice justice. Conscience always urges us to be just, and justice is nothing but the order that preserves harmony. Goodness is defined as the love of order that creates harmony, while justice is the order that preserves it. Both goodness and justice are inseparable, and conscience guides us to realise this unity. For example, if a student cheats in an examination, external success may be achieved for a moment, but the conscience will remind the person that the act was unjust. Justice, in this context, is not only a social principle but also an inner realisation that helps preserve balance within the individual. When actions are aligned with justice, they preserve the natural order of life. When justice is neglected, disorder and conflict follow. Narayanaprasad emphasises that to live in accordance with nature is the best goodness and dignity. Preserving the natural order, both in ourselves and in society, becomes the real expression of justice. Conscience reminds us that real happiness lies in being just, even if it demands sacrifice. Thus, justice guided by conscience is the true foundation of a peaceful and meaningful life.

3.3.5 Kant's Conception of Conscience

Immanuel Kant, one of the most influential philosophers in modern moral thought, placed conscience at the heart of his ethics. For Kant, conscience is not about giving us new knowledge of what is right or wrong. That knowledge, he argued, comes from practical reason - the faculty of reason that provides us with universal moral principles such as duty and law. Instead, conscience is about

how we respond to those moral principles once we know them. It functions as both a motivational force and a reflective activity. Kant describes conscience as the "internal judge" that examines our actions, urges us to do our duty, and holds us accountable when we fail. In this sense, conscience is not the law itself, but the voice within that constantly reminds us to respect the moral law and to live in harmony with it. By placing conscience in this way, Kant avoided the idea that conscience is merely a source of instinct or feeling; he insisted it is deeply tied to our capacity for rational self-examination.

Although Kant is often thought of as a philosopher who distrusted feelings, he actually emphasised that certain moral feelings are essential to being a responsible moral agent. He believed that all human action involves desire, but not all desire arises from inclinations or personal impulses. Some desires come directly from reason itself, such as the desire to act out of respect for the moral law. These rational desires also produce specific feelings, and one of them is conscience. In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant listed four feelings that come from reason: (a) moral feeling, (b) conscience, (c) love of humanity, and (d) respect. Conscience is a particular kind of feeling associated with judging ourselves. Before acting, it can give us a sense of unease or approval depending on our motives. After acting, it can give us satisfaction if we have done our duty or remorse if we have failed. These feelings are not optional; they are built into our nature as rational beings. Without them, we would not be capable of responsibility. Thus, for Kant, conscience as moral feeling is not about blind emotion, but about reason expressing itself through our capacity to feel approval or disapproval toward our own actions.

Kant also described conscience as an "inner court" where we judge ourselves. He compared this process to a real courtroom. In this inner court, there is an accuser (who points out where we may have failed), a defender (often our self-love, trying to excuse us), and finally a judge (our rational self, applying moral law). All these "voices" exist within the same person, but they act as if they were distinct roles in a trial. The accuser appeals to the law, the defender tries to justify, and the judge delivers a verdict of guilt or innocence. This courtroom analogy was not meant as a mere metaphor. For Kant, conscience really functions as a legal process within us because we are both the authors and subjects of moral law. This means that conscience is not simply about feelings of guilt or relief, but about rationally holding ourselves accountable under universal principles. Through this process, we experience both warning before action and judgment afterward. By using the image of a court, Kant highlighted that conscience is not about arbitrary opinions or social conditioning but about fairness, law, and reason applied inwardly.

For Kant, duties are divided into those we owe to others and those we owe to ourselves. Among the duties to oneself, the most fundamental is the duty to act as our own moral judge. Conscience is central to this duty. Kant insisted that we cannot choose whether to have a conscience; it is part of what makes us human. But we do have a duty to listen to it, to exercise self-examination honestly, and to avoid self-deception. In his view, ignoring conscience is always morally blameworthy. Duties connected to conscience are what he called perfect duties, meaning they admit no exceptions. Conscience warns us before action and pronounces guilt or acquittal afterward. This shows that conscience is both preventive and corrective. Kant also clarified that conscience does not exist to punish us in the sense of depriving us of happiness. Conscience instead works to keep us aligned with our moral dignity. The pain of guilt is not punishment but a natural

outcome of recognising failure to live up to moral law. In this way, conscience preserves our dignity as rational agents capable of improvement.

A striking aspect of Kant's conception is that he denied the possibility of an "erring conscience." Conscience does not create moral laws or invent new duties; rather, it only applies them to our own actions. If someone claims their conscience tells them to do something immoral, Kant would say that is not conscience but mistaken judgment. True conscience always reflects the universal law of reason. Its role is not to replace moral principles but to make sure we face them honestly in our lives. Kant also warned against unhealthy forms of self-examination, such as obsessive guilt or religious self-punishment. For him, conscience is about constructive reflection aimed at moral growth, not despair or self-condemnation. The command of conscience is to "know yourself" and to strive for moral improvement without falling into extremes of self-hatred or self-deception. This conception continues to influence moral philosophy today, as it emphasises that conscience is neither a mere feeling nor a voice of society, but the exercise of rational self-judgment at the core of human dignity.

Recap

- Conscience is described as inner voice, moral awareness, and guide for right conduct.
- It places moral values above personal desires or social pressures.
- Conscience is valued across cultures for sustaining trust and fairness.
- It links knowledge, motivation, and reflection in moral life.
- Studying conscience deepens our understanding of morality and decision-making.
- Conscience guides action and prevents harmful deeds.
- Narayanaprasad sees it as a natural inner force.
- It restrains outer actions through *ātma-samyamana* (self-control).
- True discipline comes from within, not from external pressure.
- Conscience gives peace when followed and conflict when ignored.
- Conscience can be clouded by social customs and traditions.
- Narayanaprasad says true conscience, free from such influence, never deceives.
- It shows universal justice beyond cultural habits.

- Justifying wrong actions is a way of silencing conscience.
- Conscience is inner wealth, higher than material possessions.
- Knowledge and wisdom are the highest wealth guided by conscience.
- Happiness depends on being just in relationships.
- Conscience always commands justice.
- Goodness creates harmony; justice preserves it.
- Cheating or unjust acts disturb inner balance despite external success.
- Living by justice preserves natural order and dignity.
- True happiness lies in justice, even with sacrifice.
- Kant placed conscience at the center of moral life.
- Conscience applies moral principles but does not create them.
- It is both motivational force and reflective activity.
- Conscience is a rational feeling of approval or remorse.
- Kant described it as an "inner court".
- Kant denied the idea of an "erring conscience."
- True conscience reflects universal moral law, not opinions.

Objective Questions

1. What is conscience often compared to in human life?
2. Which philosopher said conscience cannot be erroneous?
3. How many moral feelings did Kant identify?
4. Who connected conscience with duty in moral life?
5. What is the function of conscience in human conduct?
6. What does the Sanskrit term 'samyamana' signify?
7. According to Kant, what is the voice of conscience related to?
8. Which moral concept is preserved through conscience?

9. Which quality helps balance self-interest and universal values?
10. What inner force directs people toward moral responsibility?

Answers

1. Inner voice
2. Kant
3. Four
4. Kant
5. Moral guidance
6. Self-restraint
7. Duty
8. Justice
9. Conscience
10. Conscience

Assignments

1. Explain how conscience functions as an "inner compass" in human life. Illustrate with examples from daily situations.
2. Muni Narayanaprasad describes *ātma-samyamana* as self-control. Discuss how this idea connects to the role of conscience in guiding human behaviour.
3. Conscience is said to be universal and not relative to customs or traditions. Critically examine this claim with reference to examples where social norms conflicted with moral conscience.
4. "Conscience is a kind of inner wealth." Explain this statement by comparing the value of conscience with material wealth in ensuring a meaningful life.
5. How does conscience act as a foundation for justice and harmony in society?

6. Immanuel Kant described conscience as an "inner court." Explain this analogy and discuss its significance in moral decision-making.

7. Kant insisted that ignoring conscience is morally blameworthy. Do you agree? Justify your answer with arguments from his conception of conscience.

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UNIT

Self-restrain

Learning Outcomes

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

- explain the meaning of self-restraint and its role in living a virtuous life
- differentiate between needs and wants and understand how regulating desires brings balance to life
- describe the practice of self-restraint through control of senses, discipline of the mind, moderation in speech, and wise use of resources
- analyse the effects of lack of self-restraint, such as restlessness, dissatisfaction, wasted energy, and conflicts in relationships
- evaluate the personal, social, and spiritual value of self-restraint, including its role in character building, harmony, and self-realisation

Prerequisite

Every individual seeks a meaningful life, but the journey toward it is not always straightforward. From childhood, we are taught to chase success, comfort, and happiness, yet very often these pursuits leave us restless rather than fulfilled. Think of how easily one's attention shifts today from phones to games, from food to fashion, from trends to desires. These constant pulls shape how we live and how we decide. In fact, many people spend their energy running after things that seem attractive from the outside but bring only short-lived satisfaction. At the same time, history and experience remind us that true peace of mind cannot be purchased or borrowed; it emerges from the way we think, choose, and act. Great thinkers and leaders of the past lived simple lives but carried immense strength within, which

guided their words and deeds. This strength was not accidental but the result of a conscious practice of inner discipline. This is where the question arises: what really makes a person strong, peaceful, and wise?

The search for an answer leads us to reflect on the way human beings are different from other creatures. Unlike animals, guided mostly by instinct, human beings carry intelligence, imagination, and willpower. These faculties allow us to dream beyond our needs, but they also expose us to confusion and conflict when not properly directed. We can build nations, discover knowledge, and change the world, but we can also lose our focus by chasing endless wants. That is why societies across time have valued not only education and talent but also the inner quality that brings balance and direction to life. Every culture, in its own way, has reminded us that strength is not in how much we possess but in how wisely we manage our thoughts, words, and actions.

Keywords

Harmony, Conscience, Happiness, Desires, Willpower, Restlessness, Mind, Simplicity

Discussion

3.4.1 The Meaning of Self-Restraint

Self-restraint is an important discipline for human life. According to Muni Narayanaprasad, to live in harmony with nature and to lead a virtuous life, one must practice watchfulness and self-control. All living beings desire happiness. Animals reach this goal through instinct, but humans depend on willpower, intelligence, and skills. These human faculties must be guided by conscience, which serves as an inner light. Happiness does not come from outside objects. It arises from within, though objects may awaken it. For example, food does not create happiness on its own. When hunger is satisfied, the joy we feel is simply the happiness already present in us being expressed. This shows that real happiness is independent of external possessions. Self-restraint means not being carried away by external attractions but realising that joy is within.

Self-restraint can also be seen as mastery over desires. Desires are natural, but uncontrolled desires can mislead a person. Muni Narayanaprasad explains that by controlling our senses and actions, we bring order to our inner life. Without this order, the mind runs after endless objects, leading to restlessness and dissatisfaction. Practicing restraint allows us to use our energy wisely instead of wasting it on passing pleasures. For instance, if a student spends all his time on entertainment instead of studies, his life becomes unbalanced. Restraint does not mean suppressing desires completely but regulating them so that they do not dominate us. It helps to recognise the difference between needs and wants. Needs are limited, while wants can be endless. Restraint teaches us to give priority to real needs and keep unnecessary

wants in check.

3.4.2 The Practice of Self-Restraint

The practice of self-restraint begins with the control of the senses. The senses constantly pull us towards attractive objects, sounds, tastes, and pleasures. According to Muni Narayanaprasad, self-restraint requires one to remain alert and prevent the senses from overpowering reason. For example, the tongue may crave delicious but harmful food, or the eyes may get distracted by constant entertainment. By practicing moderation, we keep the senses from weakening our will. Just as a rider controls a horse with reins, the mind must control the senses with awareness. This does not mean denying the senses completely, but it does mean setting limits. Eating in moderation, speaking truthfully, and using time productively are examples of such control.

Self-restraint also involves training the mind. Desires and emotions arise from the mind, and without discipline, they grow unchecked. A mind without restraint easily becomes restless. Muni Narayanaprasad points out that calmness of mind comes only through regulation of thoughts and actions. Daily practices such as meditation, reflection, and discipline in daily habits strengthen self-control. For example, a person who cultivates the habit of waking up early and studying regularly trains the mind to act with order. Similarly, controlling anger, jealousy, or greed helps in maintaining peace within. Without training, the mind can be compared to a garden full of weeds, but with restraint it becomes like a cultivated field, full of useful crops.

Another important part of self-restraint is control of speech. Words have great power. They can heal or hurt, encourage or discourage. Unrestrained speech often leads to conflicts. Muni Narayanaprasad stresses that self-restraint includes speaking only what is necessary and beneficial. It means avoiding harsh words, gossip, or falsehood. A person who cannot control speech may regret words spoken in anger or carelessness. By contrast, restraint in speech brings respect and trust. Silence at the right time is also a form of restraint. Just as a river contained by banks flows usefully, so too speech, when controlled, flows meaningfully. Thus, speech discipline is an essential aspect of self-restraint in daily life. The practice of self-restraint also extends to the use of resources. In modern life, people often waste food, money, or energy without real need. This habit comes from lack of restraint. Muni Narayanaprasad observes that being content with what is sufficient leads to peace of mind. Unrestrained consumption, however, results in dissatisfaction and exploitation of nature. For example, wasting water or electricity may bring short-term comfort but harms society and future generations. Restraint teaches the value of simplicity and careful use of resources. Living with moderation ensures that both our needs are met and nature is preserved. Therefore, self-restraint is not just personal but also social in its practice.

3.4.3 The Value of Self-Restraint

Self-restraint contributes to personal growth. It strengthens character, builds patience, and creates inner balance. Muni Narayanaprasad notes that without self-control, human intelligence and willpower cannot function properly. For example, a student with restraint can resist distractions and focus on studies, leading to success. On the other hand, lack of restraint results in wasted time and energy. Restraint also helps in decision-making, because it allows a person to think calmly rather than act impulsively. A restrained person gains freedom from being controlled by

desires. In this sense, self-restraint is not a limitation but true freedom. It frees us from slavery to impulses. The value of self-restraint is also seen in relationships. In family, friendship, and society, restraint helps in avoiding conflicts and maintaining harmony. A person who practices restraint controls anger, speaks kindly, and respects the needs of others. Muni Narayanaprasad explains that restraint prevents selfishness and promotes cooperation. For example, when two people disagree, restraint in speech and action prevents the situation from worsening. Without restraint, the same situation may lead to quarrels and broken relationships. Thus, restraint builds trust and understanding. It allows people to live together peacefully and contribute to social well-being.

Self-restraint also has spiritual value. Muni Narayanaprasad points out that self-restraint is necessary for self-realisation, because uncontrolled desires block inner awareness. By reducing dependence on external pleasures, one becomes free to look inward. For example, saints and philosophers have shown through their lives that true joy does not come from material possessions but from inner peace. Practices like meditation, fasting, or silence are forms of self-restraint that support spiritual growth. In this way, restraint is not just about denying pleasures but about directing life toward higher goals.

Self-restraint is a guiding principle for both personal and social life. It means regulating desires, controlling the senses, disciplining the mind, moderating speech, and using resources wisely. Happiness is not produced by external objects but comes from within. Self-restraint helps us to realise this truth by freeing us from unnecessary desires. It brings order to life, promotes harmony in relationships, and supports spiritual growth. Without restraint, life becomes restless and dissatisfied. With restraint, it becomes balanced and meaningful. Thus, self-restraint is both the foundation and the goal of virtuous living.

Recap

- Self-restraint is essential for a disciplined human life.
- It helps us live in harmony with nature.
- Humans rely on willpower, intelligence, and conscience.
- Real happiness comes from within, not from objects.
- Objects only awaken the happiness already in us.
- Self-restraint means not being carried away by attractions.
- Desires are natural but must be regulated.
- Without restraint, the mind becomes restless.
- Needs are limited; wants can be endless.

- Self-restraint begins with control of the senses.
- Moderation prevents the senses from overpowering reason.
- The mind must be trained through discipline and practice.
- Meditation and good habits strengthen self-control.
- Wise restraint makes speech meaningful and respectful.
- It promotes personal growth, patience, and balance.
- Self-restraint brings harmony in society and supports spiritual growth.

Objective Questions

1. Through what do animals attain happiness?
2. On what do humans depend for attaining happiness?
3. Which inner guide should direct human faculties like willpower and intelligence?
4. From where does real happiness arise?
5. What happens to the mind when there is no inner order?
6. What is the difference between needs and wants?
7. What is the first step in the practice of self-restraint?
8. Which daily practices help in training the mind for self-control?
9. How does self-restraint contribute to personal growth?
10. Why is self-restraint considered essential for self-realisation?

Answers

1. Instinctual satisfaction
2. Willpower, intelligence, and skills
3. Conscience

4. From within oneself
5. It runs after endless objects, leading to restlessness and dissatisfaction
6. Needs are limited, while wants can be endless
7. Control of the senses
8. Meditation, reflection, and discipline in daily habits
9. It strengthens character, builds patience, and creates inner balance
10. Because uncontrolled desires block inner awareness

Assignments

1. How does self-restraint transform the human search for happiness from an external pursuit to an inner realization?
2. In what ways can the practice of self-restraint be seen as true freedom rather than limitation? Discuss philosophically with reference to human desires and willpower.
3. "Restraint is not suppression but regulation." Analyse this statement in the context of the difference between needs and wants in modern living.
4. Can self-restraint serve as a bridge between personal ethics and environmental responsibility? Discuss how moderation contributes to harmony with nature.
5. Reflect on how self-restraint can shape one's path toward self-realisation and inner peace. What does it reveal about the relationship between body, mind, and spirit?

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BLOCK

Glimpses of Morality

UNIT

Samyag-Dristi and Samyag-Sankalpa

Learning Outcomes

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

- understand the nature and importance of ethical thought
- explore the connection between ethics and religion
- understand the ethical teachings of buddhism
- apply ethical concepts to daily living

Prerequisite

Before one can fully grasp the ideas discussed in this unit, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of the fundamental difference between right and wrong, as well as the role ethics plays in human society. It is also important to be familiar with the concepts of free will, moral agency, and the human ability to make conscious ethical choices, which sets human beings apart from other living beings. A general awareness of the world's major religions and their shared ethical values, such as compassion, non-violence, and truthfulness, is helpful, along with an introductory knowledge of Indian philosophical traditions, especially the distinction between Śruti (revealed texts) and Smṛti (remembered texts). Some familiarity with key Buddhist teachings particularly the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and the ethical precepts is also advantageous. In addition, understanding Sree Narayana Guru's teachings on non-violence, detachment, and universal compassion will help one to appreciate the deeper context of the content presented.

Keywords

Ethics, Religion, Buddhism, Four Noble Truths, Eightfold Path

Discussion

Introduction

The ethical systems of Buddhism and Sree Narayana Guru share profound similarities in their emphasis on moral clarity, right understanding, and purposeful conduct. Buddhist ethics, particularly as expressed in the Noble Eightfold Path, begins with Samyag Drishti (Right View) and Samyag Sankalpa (Right Intention). Samyag Drishti involves understanding the true nature of reality, the impermanence of all things, and the principle of dependent origination. It is the intellectual foundation of ethical life, emphasizing wisdom and the rejection of ignorance. Samyag Sankalpa represents the moral commitment arising from this wisdom—intentions of renunciation, goodwill, and harmlessness. Together, these two aspects form the ethical and psychological basis of moral transformation in Buddhism.

Sree Narayana Guru, the modern Indian philosopher and social reformer, proposed an ethical system deeply rooted in spiritual knowledge and social equality. For Guru, the concept of right and wrong is not merely based on social conventions but on the inner realization of unity and compassion. He taught that the highest morality lies in the recognition of the oneness of all beings—"One caste, one religion, one God for humanity." Right action, therefore, arises from true knowledge (jnana) and universal love, similar to the Buddhist emphasis on wisdom and compassion.

Comparatively, both ethical systems aim at liberation—Buddhism through the cessation of suffering (Nirvana) and Sree Narayana Guru through self-realization and social harmony. While Buddhism focuses on the individual's inner purification through mindful conduct, Guru extends ethical awareness to collective well-being and social justice. Thus, Samyag Drishti and Samyag Sankalpa in Buddhism and Sree Narayana Guru's concept of right and wrong both stress knowledge-based morality, compassionate intention, and the ultimate unity of ethical and spiritual life.

4.1.1 Ethical Thoughts and Their Importance in Human Culture

Ethical thought is an important human endeavour aimed at developing codes and principles of moral conduct. This has always been an indispensable part of human culture, cutting across all civilisations and all periods of history. Why is ethical thinking such a productive and necessary aspect of human life? The answer lies in the unique nature of human beings. Unlike other species, human beings are endowed with free will, an ability divinely given to make independent choices. Because of this free will, humans possess the capacity to take responsibility for their actions and to consciously direct the course of their lives. Without the freedom to choose, human life would lose all meaning and dignity, reducing individuals to passive instruments of fate.

However, this freedom must not be misunderstood as absolute or unrestrained. Human beings do not exist in isolation; they are an integral part of a broader whole

comprising nature, society, and their fellow beings. While each person enjoys a certain degree of freedom in their actions, no one has full control over the natural world or the events that unfold within it. Therefore, a tension arises: a conflict between the individual's desire to act freely and the need for both individual and collective harmony with nature and society. To resolve this tension, one must learn to regulate one's freedom in a manner that aligns with natural laws and promotes social well-being.

This requires that one exercise their freedom with due consideration to the consequences of their actions, not only for themselves but also for others and the environment. This tension forms the very foundation of ethics: the branch of philosophy that deals with right and wrong conduct. Ethics thus enables individuals to assess and reflect on their choices, guiding them to act in ways that fulfil their moral responsibilities. Ethical thought calls for a balanced and thoughtful mode of living, where freedom is exercised responsibly. Though we shall not delve deeply into the various theories of ethics here (as many have been developed over time), it must be remembered that ethics is essentially about the responsible use of freedom.

4.1.2 Ethics and Religion

Moral values are deeply rooted in religious traditions. All major religions promote ethical living through certain forms of guidance, be it commandments, duties, or moral codes. Though each religion has its own set of scriptures and practices, the values they promote are strikingly similar. Principles such as honesty, compassion, non-violence, and self-discipline are commonly upheld across faiths. This similarity is due to the universal nature of human desires for peace, happiness, love, justice, and so on. People from all cultures and societies aspire to live a meaningful life and realise their highest potential. This shared human aspiration leads to common ethical values, despite differences in religious belief systems.

In the Indian philosophical tradition, scriptures are typically classified into two categories: Smṛti (that which is remembered) and Śruti (that which is heard). Smṛtis are texts that offer guidance on social, moral, and legal matters. Their aim is to instruct individuals on how to lead a life of ethical responsibility. Śrutis, on the other hand, are considered revealed truths. They contain teachings related to metaphysics, philosophy, spiritual knowledge, and ultimate reality. This distinction between Śruti and Smṛti is a hallmark of Indian philosophy and spiritual literature. No other religious or philosophical traditions, not even Buddhism, classify their texts in this manner. In most other systems, such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and the Far Eastern traditions, both moral and philosophical teachings are found within the same texts. This unique division in the Indian tradition sets it apart by offering a nuanced and structured approach to both worldly conduct and spiritual understanding.

4.1.3 Buddhism and Ethics

Buddhism is unique among Indian religious traditions in that its moral teachings are remarkably clear-cut and straightforward. Unlike purely philosophical systems, Buddhism lays strong emphasis not only on reflective thought but also on practical moral actions and conscious ethical decisions in day-to-day life. Its ethical framework is divided into two parts: Prohibitions (Niṣedhas) – What one should avoid doing, Prescriptions (Vidhis) – What one ought to do

4.1.3.1 The Five Precepts (Pañca-śīlas)

Buddhist ethics begin with five foundational precepts, known as the Pañca-śīlas or the 'Five Noble Habits.' These are

basic ethical disciplines to be followed by all lay practitioners and followers of Buddhism: the first is to refrain from stealing, respect the property of others, and earn one's living through rightful means. Secondly, to refrain from killing is to practise non-violence and kindness towards all human beings and living creatures. Thirdly, to refrain from illegitimate sexual conduct is to be respectful in relationships and act with responsibility and integrity. Fourthly, to refrain from lying is to speak truthfully at all times and avoid deceiving others. Finally, to refrain from intoxicants is to avoid substances that cloud the mind, in order to preserve self-control and clarity of awareness. These five precepts are not seen as rigid rules but as a starting point for a life of moral discipline. They help reduce the harm we cause to ourselves and others, and they serve as a solid foundation for further spiritual development. Through the practice of these precepts, individuals cultivate inner peace, self-discipline, and social harmony.

4.1.3.2 The Four Noble Truths (Ārya-Satyas)

The ethical life in Buddhism is deeply connected to its central philosophical insight, which is articulated through the Four Noble Truths. These truths were declared by the Buddha as the essence of his teachings:

1. **The Noble Truth of Suffering (Duḥkha)** – All existence is marked by some form of suffering or dissatisfaction. This includes physical pain, loss of pleasure, emotional sorrow, frustration, and the inevitable suffering caused by birth, ageing, disease, and death.

2. **The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering (Dukha Karana)** – The root cause of suffering is craving (taṇhā or āśā)—the deep desire for things to be other than they are. This craving includes attachment to sensory pleasures, material possessions, and rigid ideas.

3. **The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering(Dukha Nirodha)** – Suffering can be ended by overcoming craving and attachment. When desire ceases, suffering ceases, and the cycle of dissatisfaction is broken.

4. **The Noble Truth of the Path to the Cessation of Suffering(Dukha Nirodha Marga)** – There exists a practical way to end suffering: by following the Noble Eightfold Path.

4.1.3.3 The Noble Eightfold Path (Aṣṭāṅga-Mārga)

The Noble Eightfold Path outlines eight interlinked practices that guide a person towards ethical living, mental discipline, and ultimate wisdom. These are not meant to be followed in a rigid sequence but as an integrated approach to life:

a. Right Understanding (Samyag-dṛṣṭi) – A clear comprehension of the Four Noble Truths and a realistic view of life.

b. Right Thought or Intention (Samyak-saṅkalpa) – Cultivating thoughts of goodwill, non-violence, and renunciation of selfish desires.

c. Right Speech (Samyag-vāk) – Speaking truthfully, kindly, and avoiding gossip or words that harm others.

d. Right Action (Samyak-karmānta) – Acting ethically by avoiding killing, stealing, and improper conduct.

e. Right Livelihood (Samyag-ājīva) – Earning one's living

through honest and harmless means.

f. Right Effort (Samyag-vyāyāma) – Making a sincere effort to improve oneself, overcome negative habits, and develop wholesome qualities.

g. Right Mindfulness (Samyak-smṛti) – Maintaining awareness of thoughts, emotions, and actions in the present moment.

h. Right Concentration (Samyak-samādhi) – Developing deep meditation to achieve inner stillness and insight.

Together, these eight principles aim at the complete transformation of the individual from a life of suffering to one of liberation or nirvāṇa. The Eightfold Path is not simply a set of external rules; rather, it is a comprehensive process of ethical, mental, and spiritual training. By following this path, one develops wisdom (prajñā), compassion (karuṇā), and peace of mind (śānti).

4.1.4 What is Right Understanding (Samyag-dṛṣṭi)?

Hurtfulness and disappointment are not restricted only to our thoughts or feelings. Buddhism recognises that to live rightly is not an achievement, but a continuous effort. This view respects the presence of human free will. The Law of Karma also shares this understanding. The intention behind an action, the will to act, and the awareness of the ethical outcome of that action together make an action morally significant. This is what is meant by Right Action. In the same way, Buddhist teaching and practice give importance to cultivating Right Intention. Along with this, it encourages Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Concentration, and Right Mindfulness. All of these stem from Right Understanding, which holds great merit.

The Right Understanding becomes a way of recognising the state of things as they are, especially the principle of non-hurting. Once this is truly understood and acknowledged, it becomes easier to let go of distorted interpretations of events. This leads one to discover a sense of dignity and inner worth. In Buddhism, evil is not defined by external laws or rules imposed from outside. Rather, evil is understood as anything that causes harm, suffering, or moral corruption. Evil arises from a person's intention to harm. According to Buddhist thought, evil actions originate from three unwholesome states of mind, known as the three poisons: Greed (lobha), an excessive craving or desire for material or sensory pleasures. Anger (dveṣa) includes hatred, resentment, or aggression. Delusion (moha) is a state of ignorance or misunderstanding of reality.

According to Muni Narayana Prasad in his book *Pure Philosophy Simplified for Youth*, there are three unwholesome states of mind that are considered the roots of evil. These are seen as the foundation of all harmful thoughts and actions. From these mental defilements arise various unethical behaviours. For example, killing is considered the gravest evil in Buddhism because it violates the sanctity of life. Stealing, or taking what is not freely given, and improper sexual conduct, where relationships are misused to satisfy selfish desires, also stem from these defilements. Similarly, harmful speech arises from these roots of evil. This includes: Lying, which breaks trust and creates false beliefs. Slander, which causes division and tension. Harsh or abusive language which emotionally wounds others. Idle or meaningless talk wastes the true potential of speech.

Moreover, greed can express itself through constant longing and jealousy of others' possessions, while cruelty and wrong views,

such as denying moral responsibility or rejecting the law of karma, further deepen one's ethical downfall. All these actions originate from the three unwholesome roots of the mind. In contrast, the wholesome roots are the antidotes to these defilements:

- Freedom from greed brings contentment, sufficiency, and satisfaction.
- Freedom from anger leads to patience, kindness, and forgiveness.
- Freedom from delusion results in clarity, wisdom, and right understanding.

A person who cultivates these wholesome qualities gradually frees themselves from suffering. Such a person gains a clear moral vision, which helps in making wise decisions and living a life rooted in humility and compassion. Right Understanding may be summed up as a deep realisation of the Four Noble Truths. These are: The First Noble Truth: Suffering (duḥkha) is a part of life. It includes physical pain, illness, loss, aging, and emotional frustrations.

The Second Noble Truth: The cause of suffering is craving (taṇhā or āśā), which is the desire for things, people, or experiences. The Third Noble Truth: Suffering ends when craving ends. This cessation of desire leads to peace. The Fourth Noble Truth: The path to ending suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path.

To fully grasp Right Understanding, one must have a Right Understanding of Right Understanding itself. That is, one should not just memorise these truths, but deeply reflect on them and realise them through personal spiritual experience. Another crucial aspect of Right Understanding is the realisation of impermanence (anicca). The Buddha taught that everything our body, mind, thoughts, and feelings is composed of five ever-changing elements (skandhas or aggregates): Form (rūpa) the physical body and external matter Feeling (vedanā) – the sensory experience Perception (saṃjñā) interpretation and recognition of sensations Mental formations (saṃskāras) habits, emotions, volitions Consciousness (vijñāna) the state of awareness All these aggregates are impermanent; they arise, change, and eventually cease. By realising this, one learns to let go of attachments and ego-based identities and begins to experience life in its true, fluid, interconnected, and ever-changing nature.

4.1.5 What is Right-mindfulness (Samyak-saṅkalpa)?

Right-mindfulness (samyāk-saṅkalpa), also translated as right thought or right intention, is the second step in the Noble Eightfold Path. It refers to the internal orientation or mental attitude that guides and motivates one's actions. Moral value does not lie in the action itself, which may be neutral or mechanical, but in the thought or intention behind it. Intention—rooted in wisdom or delusion—determines whether an action is wholesome or unwholesome. Thus, understanding and judgment depend on the view or intention that shapes them. A clear distinction exists between thought and purpose. Purpose refers to a desired future outcome and is non-actual, while thought is an inward movement of the mind rooted in the present. Thoughts that arise spontaneously without craving or ego can lead to pure and untainted actions (kariyā). The term saṅkalpa implies coordinated and harmonious thinking, free from selfishness or fragmented mental states. Right thought, therefore, arises from right understanding and directs the mind toward ethical conduct.

The Buddha emphasised that thoughts are the source of speech and action. As

stated in the Dhammapada, if one acts with a defiled mind, suffering follows; but if one acts with a pure mind, happiness follows like a shadow that never leaves. Thoughts have powerful effects, both internally and externally. Unwholesome thoughts like greed, hatred, and delusion pollute the heart and produce harm, while wholesome thoughts create peace and clarity. According to Muni Narayana Prasad in his book Pure Philosophy Simplified for Youth, Right-mindedness consists of three essential thoughts. The Thought Free from Sensuality (nekkhamma-saṅkappa) – overcoming attachment to sensual pleasures by cultivating detachment and aspiring for inner peace. The Thought Free from Ill-will (avyāpāda-saṅkappa) – nurturing loving-kindness, goodwill, and forgiveness while letting go of anger and resentment. The Thought Free from Cruelty (avihiṃsā-saṅkappa) – developing compassion for all beings and ensuring that one's thoughts, speech, and actions do not cause harm.

In the Discourse on the Twofold Thought, the Buddha explains how he carefully observed and classified his thoughts before enlightenment. He abandoned those rooted in sense desire, ill-will, and harm because they obstructed wisdom and caused suffering. He cultivated those based on renunciation, goodwill, and compassion because they led to inner peace, intuitive wisdom, and ultimately, liberation. Removing evil thoughts does not require suppression but mindful observation and gradual cultivation of their wholesome opposites. One must be aware of how unwholesome thoughts arise and take deliberate steps to replace them. For instance, renunciation counters sensuality, loving-kindness dissolves anger, and compassion heals cruelty. This is a challenging but necessary practice requiring steady effort and determination.

The Buddha's method of teaching was gradual. To those not yet ready for higher truths, he began with simple teachings such as generosity (dāna), moral conduct (sīla), and the benefits of good deeds. Only when a person's mind became calm, clear, and receptive did he reveal the deeper Dhamma—suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the path. Right-mindedness supports and is supported by right understanding. When free from desire, hatred, and delusion, the mind becomes capable of seeing truth as it is. Together, right understanding and right thought form the foundation of wisdom (sam-mā-paññā) and pave the way for ethical living and spiritual liberation. Right-mindedness is not a passive state but an active commitment to pure, kind, and compassionate thinking that transforms one's entire life.

Recap

- Ethical thinking arises from human free will and responsibility, giving life meaning and dignity.
- Individual freedom must align with nature and society for harmony.
- Ethics means using freedom responsibly toward others and the environment.
- All religions share common ethical values based on human aspirations.

- Indian tradition uniquely separates Œruti and Smṛti for spiritual and ethical guidance.
- The Five Precepts offer a simple moral guide for self-discipline and harmony.
- Suffering comes from craving and ends through the Eightfold Path.
- The Eightfold Path guides ethical living and spiritual growth toward liberation.
- Buddhism views moral living as an ongoing effort based on intention and Right Understanding.
- In Buddhism, evil arises from greed, anger, and delusion, and Right Understanding helps overcome them.
- All harmful actions in Buddhism arise from the three unwholesome roots—greed, anger, and delusion.
- Freedom from these defilements leads to contentment, compassion, and wisdom.
- Wholesome qualities free us from suffering and guide moral clarity.
- Right-mindedness (samyâk-saṅkalpa) is the intention behind actions that determines their moral value.
- Right-mindedness means cultivating pure thoughts, as they shape our words, actions, and outcomes.
- The Buddha taught to replace unwholesome thoughts with renunciation, goodwill, and compassion for inner peace.
- Right-mindedness is a commitment to pure thinking that leads to wisdom and liberation.

Objective Questions

1. What are the three poisons according to Buddhism?
2. What are the Three Essential Thoughts that make up Right-mindedness (Samyak-saṅkalpa)?
3. Which is considered the gravest evil in Buddhism?

4. What is the final goal of following the Eightfold Path?
5. What is the primary basis of ethical thought in human life?

Answers

1. Greed, anger, delusion
2. Freedom from sensuality, ill-will, and cruelty
3. Killing
4. Nirvâṇa (liberation)
5. Free will and responsibility

Assignments

1. Examine the ethical and spiritual objectives of the Noble Eightfold Path. In what ways do the eight values work together for personal and social transformation?
2. What is Right Understanding (Samyag-dṛṣṭi) in Buddhism? How does it connect to suffering, karma, and impermanence?
3. Contrast the ethical role of Œruti and Smṛti in Indian philosophy. How does this contrast imply a distinctive approach to ethics and spirituality?
4. Describe the significance of the Five Precepts (Pañca-śīlas) in Buddhist ethics. How does this promote self-discipline and social responsibility?

Suggested Reading

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UNIT 2

Samyag-Vak and Samyak-Karma

Learning Outcomes

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

- understand the Concept of Right Speech (Samyag-vāk)
- identify the Four Qualities of Right Speech
- understand the Concept of Right Action (Samyak-karma

Prerequisite

Buddhism is a religion based on the teachings of Gautama Buddha, who lived and preached in the 6th century BCE. It shows the way to overcome human suffering and attain liberation, known as nirvāṇa. One of the central teachings of Buddhism is the Noble Eightfold Path, which serves as a guide for both ethical conduct and mental development, with the ultimate aim of freeing oneself from suffering. The Eightfold Path consists of eight aspects of right living, among which Right Speech and Right Action fall under the category of Sīla, or moral discipline. These two practices teach us how to use our words and physical actions in a responsible and ethical way in everyday life. By following these disciplines, a person develops self-control, compassion, and a sense of responsibility for how their words and actions affect others. Sometimes, people may find it difficult to see how simple ethical behaviour connects with deep spiritual progress. But when practised with awareness, these moral disciplines help in purifying the mind, building healthy relationships, and contributing to peace and harmony in society. Understanding the principles of Sīla, especially through Right Speech and Right Action, forms the moral foundation of Buddhism and highlights its focus on truthfulness, non-violence, and compassion.

Keywords

Right Speech, Right Action, Killing, Stealing

Discussion

Introduction

Buddhist philosophy emphasizes the Eightfold Path as the means to liberation from suffering (dukkha). Among its eight elements, Samyag-Vāk (Right Speech) and Samyak-Karma (Right Action) are two essential components of the Śīla (ethical conduct) aspect. Samyag-Vāk advocates truthfulness, harmony, and compassion in communication. It discourages falsehood, harsh language, gossip, and divisive speech, which generate mental defilements. Samyak-Karma extends this ethical discipline into bodily action—promoting non-violence, honesty, and moral restraint. Together, they represent an integrated moral consciousness, linking thought, word, and deed to spiritual purity.

Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy, while rooted in Advaitic insight, also gives primacy to ethical and social action. His Jñāna–Karma synthesis bridges the dichotomy between spiritual knowledge (jñāna) and worldly action (karma). For Guru, true wisdom is not merely intellectual realization but manifests as compassionate service and social upliftment. In his view, jñāna without karma remains incomplete, and karma without jñāna lacks direction. He redefines liberation (mokṣa) as collective well-being achieved through enlightened action, rather than solitary renunciation.

A comparative reading reveals that both traditions converge on the inseparability of moral discipline and insight. In Buddhism, Samyag-Vāk and Samyak-Karma purify the mind and prepare it for higher wisdom (prajñā). In Sree Narayana Guru's thought, Jñāna and Karma form a dynamic unity where knowledge expresses itself as moral and social responsibility. While Buddhism emphasizes ethical self-restraint as the foundation of spiritual progress, Guru extends this ethical ideal into the domain of social reform and equality. Both perspectives affirm that right knowledge and right action must coexist for the realization of truth and universal harmony.

4.2.1 What is Right Speech (Samyag-Vak)

According to Muni Narayana Prasad in his book *Pure Philosophy Simplified for Youth*, samyag-vāk or Right Speech is explained from the Buddhist perspective. Right Speech (samyag-vāk) is the first division under Right Conduct (Sīla) in the Noble Eightfold Path of Buddhism. It holds a central place in ethical training because if the tongue is well-controlled, the rest of one's conduct naturally follows. Speech is a powerful tool; a single word can uplift or harm, bring peace or conflict. Therefore, the Buddha laid great emphasis on purifying verbal actions as a foundation for moral and spiritual progress. Right Speech is defined through four abstentions. They are :

a) Abstention from falsehood (musāvāda)

b) Abstention from slanderous or divisive speech (pisuṇa-vācā)

c) Abstention from harsh or abusive language (pharusa-vācā)

d) Abstention from idle or frivolous talk (samphappalāpa)

Though these are worded negatively, they should not be misunderstood as mere prohibitions. Like a field that must be cleared of weeds before sowing seeds, a person must first remove unwholesome tendencies from speech and action before cultivating moral virtues. The human mind is often clouded by lobha (greed), dosa (hatred), and moha

(delusion), and when the mind is impure, its verbal and physical expressions are also unhealthy. Thus, abstinence from wrong speech is not a passive restraint but an active effort toward purification and transformation.

Abstaining from harmful speech demands mental strength, effort, and self-awareness. Many people wish to do good but struggle to refrain from behaviours that are inappropriate. However, true ethical conduct arises not from suppression but from positive qualities such as compassion, love for truth, and the desire to avoid harm. This is the essence of sīla, the moral discipline that protects and guides speech and bodily actions, and lays the groundwork for inner development and freedom.

Speech is a sacred gift. Through it, we share thoughts, communicate emotions, build relationships, and contribute to society. But when left uncontrolled, the tongue—though soft and boneless—can become a source of great harm. Speech dominated by greed, anger, jealousy (issā), pride (māna), or wrong views (diṭṭhi) leads to misunderstanding and conflict. The Buddha warned that a person addicted to talk risks all four forms of wrong speech, and such conduct results in rebirth in unfortunate realms. Excessive speech also disrupts mental calm and clarity. Right Speech, therefore, is not only about what not to say, but also about actively cultivating verbal expressions that are rooted in truth, kindness, harmony, and purpose. According to the Buddha, Right Speech is marked by four positive qualities:

Truthfulness: One must be committed to speaking truthfully at all times. Avoiding lies, deception, and distortion reflects integrity and builds trust. Truth is the foundation of moral character. A person who speaks the truth earns respect and contributes to a just and honest society.

Harmony: Right Speech discourages slander, gossip, or any talk that causes division. Instead, one must strive to unite others through words of peace, encourage reconciliation among those in conflict, and strengthen harmony where it already exists. The aim is to foster unity through speech.

Gentleness: Harsh or rude language should be replaced with words that are kind, patient, and filled with compassion. Even in disagreement or correction, one should speak calmly and with respect. Such speech not only avoids harm but also brings joy, encouragement, and healing.

Meaningfulness: Avoiding idle chatter or pointless conversation is essential. Words should be spoken at the right time, with good intention, and should serve a useful purpose. Mindful speech contributes to clarity, wisdom, and spiritual discipline. Silence, when rightly practised, is a valuable form of communication and self-restraint.

In the Buddhist ethical tradition, Right Speech is more than just polite language it is a profound spiritual discipline. It purifies the mind, cultivates mindfulness, and promotes compassion. Through truthful, harmonious, kind, and meaningful speech, individuals can transform themselves and contribute to the creation of a peaceful and morally upright society. When speech aligns with inner virtue, it becomes a force for good in the world.

4.2.2 What is Right Action (Samyak-karma)

Right Action is the fourth step in the Noble Eightfold Path of Buddhism. It refers to the ethical conduct expressed through our physical actions, what we do with our bodies in relation to other living beings. Rooted in the principles of ahiṃsā (non-harming), compassion, and moral responsibility, Right Action is not only about abstaining from wrongdoing but also about actively living in a way that upholds peace, dignity, and the welfare of all beings. It is a vital part

of sīla (virtue), which forms the moral foundation for spiritual development. The Buddha identified three primary abstentions under Right Action:

a) Abstention from killing (pāṇātipāta)

b) Abstention from stealing (adinnādāna)

c) Abstention from sexual misconduct (kāmesu micchācāra)

These precepts are rooted in love and compassion. Actions such as killing, stealing, or engaging in improper sexual behaviour are driven by cruelty, greed, and ignorance never by kindness or a clear conscience. A person's thoughts influence their actions; an untrained mind seeks excuses to justify harmful behaviour. Therefore, cultivating mental discipline is essential, as ethical conduct begins with mindfulness and self-control. The Buddha clearly emphasised that a person is known by their actions. He taught: A fool is known by his actions, and so is a sage. By conduct is knowledge made bright.

Those with wrong bodily behaviour, wrong speech, and wrong thought are to be regarded as fools. On the other hand, a sage is one who upholds right bodily behaviour, right speech, and right thought. Thus, the Buddha instructed his disciples to train themselves by giving up the behaviour of the fool and cultivating the conduct of the sage. Let us now explore the three pillars of Right Action in more detail:

1. **Give Up Killing;** Practise Compassion. The first and foremost principle of Right Action is the abstention from killing or harming any living being, human, animal, or even the smallest insect. A practitioner of the path is encouraged to live without weapons, not just physically but also mentally by giving up aggression, hatred, and cruelty. This principle calls for one to become an embodiment of mettā (loving-kindness) and karuṇā (compassion), treating all life as sacred and worthy of respect. True morality arises from a heart that cherishes and protects life in all forms.

2. **Give Up Stealing; Respect What Belongs to Others.** The second guideline is to refrain from stealing or taking anything that is not freely and rightfully given. This includes theft by force, deceit, manipulation, or any form of dishonesty. Practising this precept means honouring others' property, effort, and trust. A person who respects the boundaries of ownership and maintains fairness in all dealings becomes a reliable, dignified, and honourable member of society.

3. **Give Up Unlawful Sexual Conduct; Uphold Purity and Responsibility.** The third aspect of Right Action is to abstain from sexual misconduct. This means avoiding relationships that are exploitative, harmful, or socially and morally unacceptable, such as engaging with someone underage, already married, or under the care of others. Right Action in sexuality requires consent, mutual respect, emotional responsibility, and alignment with social ethics. It aims to protect individuals, families, and communities from the pain caused by betrayal, exploitation, and abuse.

In Buddhism, Right Action is not just about personal virtue but about collective harmony. Every ethical deed contributes to

the well-being of society and reflects the wisdom and compassion within an individual. When one acts with mindfulness, love, and responsibility, their actions become instruments of peace, leading to both personal liberation and the upliftment of the world around them.

Recap

- Right Speech means avoiding falsehood, slander, harsh words, and idle talk to support moral growth.
- Abstaining from wrong speech is an active step to purify greed, hatred, and delusion.
- True ethics is based on compassion, truth, and the will to avoid harm.
- Uncontrolled speech causes harm, conflict, and spiritual decline.
- Right Speech cultivates truth, harmony, kindness, and purpose, guiding one toward inner purity and a just society.
- Right Action means acting with compassion and non-harming to promote peace and well-being.
- Harmful actions stem from greed and ignorance; true nature is shown through mindful, ethical conduct.
- The Buddha urged abandoning foolish conduct and living with right action, speech, and thought.
- Right Action means not harming and showing compassion to all life.
- Respect others' property and be honest to live with dignity.
- Right Action in sexuality means being respectful, responsible, and ethical.

Objective Questions

1. What is the third component of the Noble Eightfold Path in Buddhism?
2. The fourth step in the Noble Eightfold Path is called as?
3. What is the first abstention of Right Speech?
4. What should one avoid to uphold Right Action in relation to others' property?

Answers

1. Right Speech
2. Right Action
3. Abstention from falsehood
4. Stealing

Assignments

1. Compare and contrast the focus of Right Speech and Right Action. How do they interact in establishing a morally responsible and socially peaceful life?
2. Describe why Right Speech is an important moral and spiritual development in Buddhism. How can speech be powerful as a means of truth and peace?
3. Right Action is not simply abstaining from wrong action, but taking positive action. Explain this alongside the three main conditions of Right Action.

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UNIT 3

Samyag-Ajiva and Samyak-Smṛti

Learning Outcomes

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

- understand the ethical foundations of Right Livelihood
- recognise the role of mindfulness in spiritual and ethical living
- identify and apply the Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Prerequisite

In order to understand the teachings of Right Living (samyag-ājīva) and Right Attentiveness (samyak-smṛti) within the Noble Eightfold Path, one should be familiar with the basic principles of Buddhism, especially the Four Noble Truths, which provide a foundational framework for addressing human suffering (duḥkha) and guiding the seeker towards liberation (Nirvāṇa). It is also helpful to have a basic knowledge of key concepts like ahiṃsā (non-violence), śīla (ethical conduct), samādhi (mental discipline), and prajñā (wisdom). Understanding the meaning of moral responsibility in day-to-day life, the law of karma (moral causation), and the connection between inner intentions and outer actions is equally important. Moreover, an openness to the spiritual value of mindfulness, meditation, and compassionate living can greatly support one's comprehension of how an ethical livelihood and attentiveness not only uplift the individual but also contribute to a more harmonious and compassionate society in accordance with the Buddhist way of life.

Keywords

Right Livelihood, Right Attentiveness , Mindfulness, Ethical life

Discussion

Introduction

In Buddhist philosophy, the Āryāṣṭāṅgamārga or Noble Eightfold Path represents the comprehensive framework for moral and spiritual liberation. Among its components, Samyag-Ājīva (Right Livelihood) and Samyak-Smṛti (Right Mindfulness) hold significant roles in maintaining ethical purity and cultivating awareness. Samyag-Ājīva refers to earning one's living in a righteous way, avoiding professions that cause harm to others or support deceit, exploitation, or violence. It emphasizes the principle that economic activity should be guided by compassion and moral responsibility. Samyak-Smṛti, on the other hand, represents the cultivation of constant awareness of body, feelings, mind, and phenomena. It enables the practitioner to live in the present moment, to observe experiences without attachment or aversion, and to nurture insight into the true nature of existence.

Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy of ethical life and right mindfulness harmonizes closely with these Buddhist ideals, though it arises from an Advaitic (non-dual) understanding of reality. For the Guru, ethical life is the external manifestation of inner purity and wisdom. He emphasized self-control, non-violence, truthfulness, and service to humanity as the foundations of a moral life. Right mindfulness, in his vision, is the awareness of one's divine self and the recognition of the same divinity in others. It is not merely psychological attention, but a spiritual consciousness that integrates thought, word, and action toward universal welfare. The Guru's dictum, "One caste, one religion, one God for man," reflects an ethical and mindful awareness of human unity beyond superficial distinctions.

Comparatively, both Buddhism and Sree Narayana Guru highlight the essential connection between moral conduct and mental awareness. In Buddhism, Samyag-Ājīva ensures that livelihood supports spiritual growth, while Samyak-Smṛti refines perception and consciousness. In Sree Narayana Guru's thought, ethical living and right mindfulness lead to social harmony and self-realization. Both systems advocate a life grounded in compassion, awareness, and right understanding. Thus, ethical livelihood and mindfulness are not separate disciplines but complementary aspects of a holistic spiritual path, guiding humanity toward freedom, equality, and inner peace.

4.3.1 What is Right Livelihood (Samyak Ājīva)

According to Swami Muni Narayana Prasad in *Pure Philosophy Simplified for Youth*, right livelihood is considered essential for a righteous and ethical life. It is the fifth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path and refers to earning one's living through ethical and non-harmful means. The Buddha taught that livelihood must be rooted in ahiṃsā (non-violence), satya (truth), and dayā (compassion), and should align with the broader principles of Dharma. It is not merely about survival or material gain but about promoting moral integrity and spiritual development through one's daily work. According to the Pāli Canon, the Buddha specifically warned against five harmful professions: trading in weapons, living beings (slavery or exploitation), meat or animals for slaughter, intoxicants, and poisons. These professions promote suffering and violate the Five Precepts by encouraging greed, hatred, and delusion the very poisons the spiritual path seeks to remove. While these were

particularly relevant in the Buddha's socio-economic context, the principle remains: any livelihood causing harm, exploitation, or moral corruption is considered wrong.

Right Livelihood applies to both laypeople and rulers. Lay practitioners are urged to earn a living legally, peacefully, and honestly without deception, coercion, or harm. Wealth, if earned ethically, should be used for sustenance, family care, and charitable support not for luxury or indulgence. Rulers and administrators, too, are called to practice dhammacariya (righteous conduct), guided by the dasarājadhamma the ten duties of a righteous king including generosity, truthfulness, patience, and non-violence. Leadership, in this view, is a moral role model for societal harmony.

For monastics, the standard is even higher. Right Livelihood demands complete purity no deceit, manipulation, or pursuit of fame or gain. A monk's life should be marked by simplicity, contentment, and restraint, accepting only what is freely given by the lay community and avoiding even subtle forms of dishonesty or flattery for gain. Right Livelihood is also a spiritual practice. It calls for inner awareness and motivation. Even seemingly neutral jobs become harmful if driven by greed, ego, or selfishness. Therefore, the practitioner must regularly ask: 'Does my work promote compassion and reduce suffering? Does it reflect my ethical values?' Work becomes sacred when aligned with one's spiritual path.

Importantly, the Buddha acknowledged the connection between material well-being and ethical living. In the Kūṭadanta Sutta, he taught that poverty and social injustice often lead to crime and immorality. Thus, improving people's economic conditions through fair wages and just opportunities is foundational to social stability and personal virtue. Right Livelihood supports both individual transformation and collective well-being. Ethical professions foster trust, social responsibility, and inner peace. In contrast, unethical work can lead to moral numbness, disconnection, and societal harm. In a world of constant change, Right Livelihood provides a stable foundation rooted in virtue, allowing individuals to integrate their economic life with their spiritual values. The Right Living is about more than avoiding harm—it is a mindful, compassionate way of life. It aligns intention with consequence, promoting inner clarity, social harmony, and progress toward liberation.

4.3.2 What is Right Attentiveness (samyak-smṛti)?

Right Attentiveness or Right Mindfulness (samyak-smṛti in Sanskrit, sammā-sati in Pali) is the seventh factor of the Noble Eightfold Path, regarded by the Buddha as the direct path to mental purification, liberation from suffering, and ultimately, the realisation of Nirvāṇa. It is defined as the continuous, clear, and non-judgmental awareness of one's body, feelings, mental activities, and inner reality. It embodies the power of mental presence, sustained observation, and ethical awareness in every moment of life. This attentiveness is not a passive or vague state—it is a dynamic, discriminative, and purposeful awareness that guides thought and behaviour with insight and clarity. It enhances focus, removes distractions, and corrects errors in both physical and mental actions, making one's conduct more accurate, efficient, and morally sound. Unlike goal-oriented worldly attention, right attentiveness is grounded in spiritual intention and the inner transformation of consciousness.

At its core, right attentiveness is direct experiential awareness free from hearsay, tradition, and emotional bias. It allows the practitioner to examine the constituents of action motives, bodily states, feelings, mental

patterns, and their interdependent causes and effects. Such introspective clarity helps in seeing all phenomena as impermanent (anicca), unsatisfactory (dukkha), and non-self (anattā). It breaks the illusion of a permanent ego and opens the door to insight and release. Right Attentiveness is cultivated through the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (cattāro satipaṭṭhānā / satipaṭṭhāna), which form the structure of mindful living and meditative insight: Mindfulness of the Body (kāyānupassanā): This involves full awareness of the body its posture, movements, breathing, and eventual decay. By practising mindful breathing, walking, and observation of bodily sensations, the practitioner becomes grounded in present-moment reality and overcomes attachment to the physical form.

Mindfulness of Feelings or Sensations (vedanānupassanā): This is the observation of feelings, pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, as they arise and pass. The aim is to observe without clinging to pleasure or resisting pain. Understanding how feelings trigger craving and aversion leads to emotional clarity and equanimity. Mindfulness of the Mind (cittānupassanā): This involves awareness of the current state of mind—whether it is angry, joyful, restless, or calm. The practitioner simply observes these states without judgment, recognising their impermanence and conditional nature. This awareness liberates one from reactivity and habitual responses. Mindfulness of Mental Objects or Phenomena (dhammānupassanā): This includes awareness of internal realities such as thoughts, intentions, desires, doubts, and insights. It also covers contemplation of key Dharma teachings, including the Five Hindrances, Seven Factors of Enlightenment, and the Four Noble Truths. This foundation deepens understanding of the mind's workings and leads to spiritual insight.

Right Attentiveness, when practised properly, becomes a way of living with awakened presence. It transforms the ordinary into the sacred by calling attention to the subtle processes of thought, feeling, and action that shape our lives. It demands that the practitioner step out of the autopilot mode and pay close attention to every thought, word, and deed—not becoming entrapped by pleasure, pain, or distraction, but meeting life with full awareness and ethical intention. A key element of right attentiveness is non-reactive awareness—to witness thoughts and emotions without becoming entangled in them. This discipline breaks the cycles of craving, aversion, and delusion, which perpetuate suffering. Right attentiveness is closely supported by clear comprehension (samprajanya), ensuring that awareness is correctly directed, and by heedfulness (appamāda), which the Buddha emphasized as the essence of spiritual progress. His final words, "Strive on with heedfulness," capture the importance of continuous, conscious effort in this practice.

As Right Attentiveness matures and becomes firmly established, it provides the foundation for the development of Right Concentration (samyak-samādhi) and supports every other factor of the Noble Eightfold Path. It sharpens the intellect, refines ethical behaviour, and sustains mental clarity. Ultimately, it leads to a life of wisdom (prajñā), compassion, and liberation (mokṣa or Nirvāṇa). As the tradition beautifully puts it, "Mindfulness is like salt in all curries"—an indispensable element in all wholesome and liberating actions.

Recap

- Right livelihood means earning a living ethically, without harm, based on non-violence, truth, and compassion.
- Right Livelihood urges all to earn and use wealth ethically, with rulers leading by moral example.
- For monastics, Right Livelihood means pure, mindful living aligned with compassion and ethics.
- Right Livelihood connects ethical living with well-being, fostering virtue, harmony, and compassion
- Right Attentiveness is mindful awareness that guides ethical living and leads to liberation.
- Right Attentiveness is clear, unbiased mindfulness that reveals impermanence and non-self.
- The Four Foundations of Mindfulness develop clarity, balance, and inner freedom.
- Right Attentiveness is mindful, non-reactive living guided by awareness and ethical intention.
- Right Attentiveness sustains the path to wisdom and liberation, like salt in every wholesome act.

Objective Questions

1. Name the fifth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path?
2. Which principle is not part of the five harmful professions mentioned by the Buddha?
3. What is the Sanskrit term for Right Attentiveness?
4. What are the three ethical values that form the basis of Right Livelihood?
5. According to the Buddha, what leads to crime and immorality, as taught in the Kūṭadanta Sutta?

Answers

1. Right Livelihood
2. Trading in medicines
3. Samyak-smṛti
4. Ahiṃsā, Satya, Dayā
5. Poverty and social injustice

Assignments

1. Explain the concept of Right Livelihood (Samyak Âjîva) as taught by the Buddha. How does it contribute to personal and social well-being?
2. Discuss the three ethical principles—ahiṃsā, satya, and dayā—that form the foundation of Right Livelihood. Illustrate with an example
3. Describe the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna). How does each help in developing deeper self-awareness and insight?
4. Explain how Right Attentiveness contributes to the practice of the other factors of the Noble Eightfold Path.

Suggested Reading

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UNIT 4

Samyag-Samadhi and Kindness of Life

Learning Outcomes

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

- understand the concept of Right Concentration (samyak-samâdhi) and explain its path and methods of meditation.
- explain the principle of ahiṁsā (non-violence) and its significance in ethical living.
- analyse ethical choices in food consumption and reflect on the impact of their dietary habits on living beings

Prerequisite

The philosophical study of the Noble Eightfold Path in Buddhism focuses particularly on its final factor, Right Concentration (samyak-samādhi). This section examines how meditative absorption is cultivated through mindfulness, moral practice, and disciplined effort, ultimately leading to wisdom (prajñā) and liberation (nirvāṇa). The second part, Kindness of Life, broadens the discussion into a wider ethical horizon shaped by the principle of ahiṁsā (non-violence). It draws upon classical Indian philosophy, including the Upaniṣadic concept of a common Self (Ātman), as well as the reflective poetry and thought of early 20th-century reformers like Sree Narayana Guru. The goal is to awaken a sense of conscience and personal responsibility in addressing contemporary ethical concerns such as meat consumption and the moral implications of violence and to encourage lifestyles rooted in compassion, unity, and moral responsibility.

Keywords

Right Concentration, Kindness of Life, Ahimsa, Non-violence

Discussion

Introduction

In Buddhist philosophy, Samyag-Samādhi (Right Concentration) constitutes the final step in the Āryāṣṭāṅgamārga or Noble Eightfold Path. It represents the disciplined unification of the mind through meditation, leading to insight (vipassanā) and liberation (nirvāṇa). Samyag-Samādhi aims to cultivate deep mental stability, clarity, and detachment from worldly cravings. The practitioner progresses through various stages of meditative absorption (jhāna), gradually purifying the mind of defilements and achieving equanimity. Along with wisdom (prajñā) and mindfulness (smṛti), right concentration forms the higher training (adhicitta-sikkhā) essential for enlightenment. Buddhism also associates true meditation with compassion and loving-kindness (maitrī), ensuring that inner peace manifests as outward benevolence.

Sree Narayana Guru's concept of Samādhi in Darsanamala reflects a similar vision of inner realization, though framed within the Advaitic (non-dual) tradition. For the Guru, Samādhi is not mere meditative absorption but the experiential realization of unity between the individual self (jīva) and the ultimate reality (Brahman). It is the culmination of self-purification, detachment, and wisdom where the mind becomes still and reflects pure consciousness. In Darsanamala, he describes Samādhi as the state where dualities dissolve and the seeker experiences truth beyond thought and perception. This spiritual stillness is inseparable from ethical life, as true realization expresses itself through compassion and service.

The Guru's doctrine of Jīva Karuṇyam—kindness towards all living beings—extends the meditative ideal into ethical practice. Compassion is not merely an emotion but a spiritual responsibility born from the realization of oneness. Just as Buddhism links Samyag-Samādhi with loving-kindness, Sree Narayana Guru integrates Samādhi with universal empathy and moral action. Both traditions affirm that inner illumination must radiate as compassion in daily life. Thus, Samyag-Samādhi and Jīva Karuṇyam together embody a synthesis of spiritual depth and ethical sensitivity, guiding humanity toward peace, equality, and universal love. The path to enlightenment, whether through Buddhist meditation or Guru's non-dual realization, finds fulfillment in kindness—the living expression of truth.

4.4.1 What is Right Concentration (Samyak-Samādhi)?

Right Concentration (samyak-samādhi) is the eighth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path and represents the culmination of mental discipline in Buddhist practice. It refers to the still, steady, and focused state of one-pointedness of mind (cittekaggatā), where all mental faculties are unified in the act of cognition. At any given moment, the mind must be aware of something, a sensory perception or a mental object, and right concentration ensures that this awareness is centred and undistracted. The function of this mental unification is to direct the mind's attention wholly to its object, bringing clarity, stability, and precision to experience.

Right Concentration is not mere intellectual focus but a cultivated meditative absorption characterised by calm, clarity, and insight. It is an active, conscious experience in which the mind becomes free from scattered thoughts and distractions. Rather than being passive or trance-like, it involves deep awareness of one's inner states and leads to insight (vipassanā), mental purification,

and ultimately to liberation (nirvāṇa). The Buddha's own meditative path combined both concentration (samatha) and insight (vipassanā), recognising that while samatha calms the mind, only insight uproots the underlying causes of suffering.

This concentration is developed through meditation practices known as the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna):, Contemplation of the Body (kāyānupassanā): Mindfulness of bodily activities, breathing, posture, and the physical nature of the body. Contemplation of Feelings (vedanānupassanā): Observing sensations, pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral and understanding their impermanent nature. Contemplation of the Mind (cittānupassanā): Observing mental states like anger, joy, distraction, or calm without judgment. Contemplation of Mental Objects (dhammānupassanā): Investigating mental phenomena such as hindrances, factors of enlightenment, and the Four Noble Truths.

In Buddhist psychology and meditation theory, Jhāna refers to the state of deep meditative absorption where the mind becomes completely unified, calm, and detached from sense desires. The term originates from the Pāli word jhāna (Sanskrit: dhyāna), meaning "to meditate" or "to contemplate." It signifies the transformation of the mind through sustained concentration (samādhi) and the gradual refinement of consciousness. The Jhānas form an essential aspect of the Samyag-Samādhi (Right Concentration), the eighth step of the Āryāṣṭāṅgamārga or Noble Eightfold Path. They represent the progressive stages through which the practitioner transcends ordinary perception and attains inner tranquility and insight.

When the mind becomes deeply absorbed in meditation, it enters the state of Jhāna. There are four progressive stages of Rūpa Jhāna (Form Jhānas), each signifying increasing depth of concentration and purity of mind:

First Jhāna: The meditator experiences initial detachment from sense desires and unwholesome thoughts. This stage is characterized by deep joy (pīti), happiness (sukha), and active thought and reflection (vitakka-vicāra). The mind becomes one-pointed yet remains lightly engaged in evaluating the meditative object.

Second Jhāna: In this stage, discursive thought and reflection subside, replaced by stronger concentration and more profound joy. The mind becomes inwardly steady and unified. Awareness is focused, serene, and free from the effort of initial thought, producing a deeper sense of inner stillness.

Third Jhāna The joy of the earlier stage gives way to tranquil contentment and balanced equanimity (upekkhā). The meditator remains fully aware and mindful but free from excitement or disturbance. This stage marks the beginning of emotional stability and profound inner peace.

Fourth Jhāna: The highest level of form absorption is characterized by complete mental stillness, purity, and detachment from both pleasure and pain. There is neither joy nor sorrow—only perfect equanimity and mindfulness (sati). The mind rests in an unwavering, luminous awareness, untouched by external or internal fluctuations.

Beyond these four Rūpa Jhānas, Buddhism also recognizes four higher Arūpa Jhānas (Formless Attainments) in which the meditator transcends all perceptions of material form, experiencing dimensions of infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, and neither-perception-nor-non-perception. These states refine concentration to its subtlest level and prepare the mind for the development of Vipassanā (insight meditation), through which the practitioner perceives impermanence (anicca), non-self

(anattā), and the cessation of suffering (nirvāṇa).

Thus, Jhāna is not merely a passive state of calm but a disciplined process of mental purification and spiritual evolution. It represents the bridge between ethical living (sīla), mental cultivation (samādhi), and wisdom (prajñā). Through sustained practice, the Jhānas enable the practitioner to attain clarity, compassion, and liberation — the ultimate goal of the Buddhist path.

These absorptions are not ends in themselves but are preparatory for deeper insights. While jhāna stills the mind and suppresses the five hindrances (sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness, and doubt), it is insight meditation (vipassanā) that leads to wisdom and freedom. Insight focuses on the three marks of existence: impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and non-self (anattā), revealing the true nature of reality and dismantling delusions of permanence, satisfaction, and a fixed self.

Right Concentration is supported by Right Effort (samyak-vyāyāma) and Right Mindfulness (sammā-sati). The Four Right Efforts purify the mind and sustain concentration: a) Prevent unwholesome states from arising, b) Abandon already arisen unwholesome states. c)Cultivate unarisen wholesome states. d)Maintain and perfect existing wholesome states. Meditation subjects (kammaṭṭhāna), such as recollection of the Buddha (buddhānussati), mindfulness of death (maraṇānussati), or elemental analysis (catudhātuvavaṭṭhāna), are employed to refine concentration. Through repeated practice, preliminary concentration (parikamma) strengthens into access concentration (upacārasamādhi) and then into full jhānic absorption (appanāsamādhi).

Ultimately, true Right Concentration is more than mental stillness—it is the culmination of ethical living, mindful awareness, and disciplined effort. It leads beyond tranquillity to deep experiential wisdom. In the Mahācattārīsaka Sutta, the Buddha connects Right Concentration to Right Knowledge (sammā-ñāṇa) and Right Liberation (sammā-vimutti), completing the path of spiritual perfection. Insight into the void (suññata), the signless (animitta), and the desireless (appaṇihita) becomes the gateway to emancipation (vimokkha), revealing the emptiness of all phenomena, the absence of permanence, and the futility of craving. The Right Concentration (samyak-samādhi) is the inner stillness that opens the way to profound insight, the purification of the mind, and the realisation of nirvāṇa. It is not only a meditative state but the ripened fruit of the entire Noble Eightfold Path—a mind disciplined, ethical, aware, and ultimately free.

4.4.2 Kindness of Life

In Indian philosophy, the kindness of life is expressed through key ethical principles such as compassion (Karuna), non-violence (Ahimsa), selfless service (Seva), and righteous living (Dharma). All these values arise from the belief that all living beings are interconnected and share the same divine essence. When we recognize this unity, kindness naturally becomes a way of life.

Ahimsa (Non-Violence) Ahimsa, or non-violence, is one of the most important teachings in Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. It means not only avoiding physical harm but also being gentle in our words and thoughts. Ahimsa teaches us to respect and care for all living beings, knowing that every creature has its own awareness and right to live. The principle of non-violence to refrain from harming and to be kind to all living creatures is one of the loftiest values upheld by the world's great religions and moral philosophies. It forms the heart of Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, and even modern humanism. At its core, morality is not about rituals or abstract ideas; it begins

with how we treat other beings who share this planet with us.

As human beings, we are gifted with consciousness, conscience, and compassion. These qualities enable us to reflect on our actions and choose kindness over cruelty, empathy over indifference. The ancient Indian ideal of Ahimsa reminds us of our moral duty to honour the universal longing for life that exists in every being. To harm another unnecessarily is not only unkind it is unjust and weakens our moral character.

Dharma (Righteousness and Duty): Dharma means living a life of truth, responsibility, and moral order. It guides us to do what is right in every situation toward family, society, and the world. When we follow our Dharma with honesty and sincerity, it brings balance, peace, and a deep sense of purpose to life. Living according to Dharma helps maintain harmony within ourselves and with the universe.

Karuna (Compassion) and Maitri (Friendliness): Karuna, or compassion, and Maitri, or friendliness, are virtues that teach us to be kind and caring toward all beings. In both Buddhist and Hindu philosophy, these are signs of spiritual maturity. When we cultivate compassion and friendship, we remove hatred and suffering from our hearts and help create a more peaceful and loving world.

Seva (Selfless Service): Seva means serving others without expecting anything in return. It is a to express love and gratitude through action. Helping others with a pure heart benefit both the community and the individual, bringing inner joy and peace. True Seva teaches that real happiness comes from giving rather than taking.

Karma (Action and Consequence) The law of Karma teaches that every action has consequences. Good actions bring positive results, while harmful actions lead to suffering. This understanding encourages us to think carefully before we act and to choose goodness in thought, word, and deed. When we live with awareness of Karma, we become more responsible, mindful, and kind-hearted.

The Spiritual Foundation of Kindness The Upanishads and Vedantic philosophy declare that there is one universal consciousness, or Ātman, present in all beings. If this is true, then to harm another being is, in essence, to harm oneself. This realization forms the foundation of compassion and the root of all true ethics. When we see the same Self in all, our thoughts and actions become pure, and our lives more peaceful. In the modern world, especially in cities, people are often disconnected from nature and other living beings. This distance can lead to indifference toward the suffering of others. When convenience replaces awareness and care, we may unknowingly support harm or exploitation. Cultivating compassion restores our connection with life and strengthens our sense of moral responsibility.

Recap

- Right Concentration is the unified focus of the mind, bringing clarity and stability in the Noble Eightfold Path.
- Right Concentration calms the mind, develops insight, and leads to liberation.

- The Four Foundations of Mindfulness develop Right Concentration through contemplation.
- Deep absorption leads to the four stages of jhâna, ending in mental stillness.
- Jhâna prepares the mind for insight into impermanence, suffering, and non-self.
- Right Effort and Right Mindfulness strengthen and purify Right Concentration.
- True Right Concentration leads to liberation and nirvâṇa through ethical living and wisdom.
- Kindness is expressed through compassion, non-violence, selfless service, and righteous living.
- Ahimsa means respecting and caring for all living beings.
- It is our moral duty to honour the universal longing for life in every being.
- Dharma is living truthfully and responsibly to bring balance and peace.
- Compassion and friendliness remove hatred and create a peaceful world.
- True happiness comes from giving, not taking.
- Every action has consequences, so we must choose goodness.
- All beings share the same Self (Ātman), which is the basis of compassion.

Objective Questions

1. Which mental quality does Right Concentration primarily involve?
2. Name the tree stages of Jhana in Buddhist meditation
3. Write three marks of existence observed in vipassana
4. Name any one of foundations f Mindfulness
5. What is the ultimate goal of right concentration

Answers

1. One-pointedness of mind (cittekaggatâ).
2. Impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and non-self (anattâ).
3. Concentration (samatha) and insight (vipassanâ).
4. Contemplation of the Body (kâyânupassanâ).
5. Liberation (nirvāṇa).

Assignments

1. Explain the role of Right Concentration in the Buddhist path to liberation. Discuss the stages of jhāna and the relationship between samatha and vipassanā meditation.
2. Discuss the ethical importance of ahiṁsā (non-violence) as described in the text. How does it shape our relationship with other living beings?
3. Explain how the principles of Ahimsa (Non-violence), Dharma (Righteousness), Karuna (Compassion), Seva (Selfless Service), and Karma (Action and Consequence) together express the idea of the kindness of life in Indian philosophy.

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BLOCK

Major Moral Instructions

Fivefold Purities :Five great sacrifices

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit learner will be able to:

- understand the ethical foundation of happiness and unity in Indian philosophy
- recognize and interpret the Five Great Sacrifices (Pañca Mahāyajñās) as responsibilities to different dimensions of life
- identify and apply the Fivefold Purities (Śuddhi-Pañcaka) as a guide to personal discipline and inner transformation

Prerequisite

To best prepare students for considering the concepts of The Ethical Ideal: Happiness in Harmony, they should have a basic understanding of moral values and the application of ethics as a purpose for moral behaviour in society and personal life. It would be helpful for learners to have some introductory concepts from Indian philosophical thought as a reference, such as dharma (duty), karma (action and response), and the idea of 'unity in diversity'. A basic familiarity with Indian sacred texts, such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita, will probably help, as well as ethical teachings from spiritual leaders like Sree Narayana Guru. The students should be capable of reflecting on their habits, behaviour, and relationships within the context of wider social and ecological commitments. Students should also have an awareness of the feelings around environmental issues, an openness towards the idea of purification and spiritual development, and an openness towards considering the interconnectivity of all beings to deeply understand the foundational concepts of Śuddhi-Pañcaka (Fivefold Purities) and Pañca-Mahāyajñas (Five Great Sacrifices). Respect for cultural diversity and traditional teaching will help move the learners toward viewing these teachings not as ritual but as a pathway toward inner peace, social harmony, and ecological sustainability.

Keywords

Ethics, Fivefold Purities (Śuddhi-Pañcaka), Five Great Sacrifices.(Pañca Mahāyajñās)

Discussion

Introduction

Sree Narayana Guru, one of the most revered spiritual and social reformers in modern Kerala, emphasized a philosophy of moral purification and social harmony based on the concept of the Fivefold Purities and the Five Great Sacrifices. His teachings sought to transcend the rigid barriers of caste, religion, and inequality by focusing on moral elevation and universal brotherhood. Guru believed that true religion lies in the purification of the self and in the service of humanity, rather than in rituals or external symbols.

The Fivefold Purities (Suddhi Panchaka) represent the essential moral disciplines necessary for an individual's inner development. These include purity of body, word, mind, behavior, and livelihood. According to Sree Narayana Guru, these purities form the foundation of ethical living and are indispensable for spiritual progress. They lead to self-control, compassion, and social responsibility. When these moral virtues are practiced, an individual contributes not only to personal enlightenment but also to collective welfare.

Similarly, the Five Great Sacrifices (Pancha Maha Yajnas) are expressions of one's duty toward all beings and the environment. They represent the moral obligations an individual has toward the divine, ancestors, teachers, fellow human beings, and all living creatures. In Guru's reinterpretation, these sacrifices are not merely ritualistic offerings but moral acts rooted in love, respect, and service. They remind humans of their interconnectedness with the universe and encourage a life of gratitude, humility, and righteousness.

Together, the Fivefold Purities and the Five Great Sacrifices form the ethical backbone of Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy. They integrate personal morality with social ethics, promoting the ideal of "One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man." Guru's moral vision thus provides a holistic framework for inner purification and social transformation—one that continues to inspire moral education and humanistic thought even today.

5.1.1. The Ethical Ideal: Happiness in Harmony.

The quest for happiness drives all activities of all beings. Happiness (sukha) is the fundamental motivation for every desire, intention, and endeavour. For humans blessed with self-awareness, reason, and the capacity to reflect on their behaviour, this quest in life is an ethical one. Humans are not isolated beings; rather, each being is a part of a totality, the cosmic totality of beings and forces. Thus, in seeking one's own happiness, one should never cause harm to the happiness of others or disrupt the harmony of the cosmos. While liberty is sacred, humans must exercise their liberty in reasonableness and responsibility. The fact that liberty comes with responsibility and the management of that tension has been a long-standing preoccupation of many philosophers throughout history. They have proposed many principles to guide moral behaviour. The ethical principle that naturally arises from the pure philosophy described

in previous chapters of Indian wisdom is this: The action that ensures happiness for oneself while ensuring happiness for all other beings is the ethical ideal.

When an individual behaves only for their selfish gain, to the exclusion of others' needs and welfare, they are acting unethically. Their actions interrupt social and ecological equilibrium and impoverish the individual spiritually. By turning away from the truth of unity, the selfish individual creates a psychological and spiritual 'Hell' for themselves. The ropes of ethics explained here have been conveyed due to the presence of a deep metaphysical insight: that for one being and for all beings there is only one Reality. Non-dual awareness (advaita-jñāna) is the mode of being on which every ethical life relies on. Upon realising the unity of being, one can shift out of selfishness as it then becomes a selfish act of self-offering, and action then is redefined in a sense as sacrifice (yajña). Moral Guidance in Indian Sacred Texts.

Indian sages and saints have bestowed humanity with a vast collection of moral documentation in the form of sacred texts. This treasure, bequeathed in many texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Smṛtis (Puranas), and philosophical literature such as the Ātmopadeśa Śatakam, includes numerous moral teachings that hinge upon different forms of social duty and personal transformation. There are two primary means of establishing both an inner and outer purity of life: Fivefold Purities (Śuddhi-Pañcaka), which connotes cleanliness and discipline on a personal level. Five Great Sacrifices (Pañca-Mahā-Yajñās) – are performed on a social/ cosmic level of responsibility.

5.1.2. Fivefold Purities (Śuddhi-Pañcaka)

The Fivefold Purities (Śuddhi Pañcakam) is an important teaching in the Indian wisdom traditions that emphasises holistic purification of one's life: body, speech, mind, senses, and home. All five aspects represent pathways for self-presentation and social accord, ethical performance, and spiritual advancement. Those who have sustained these five purities are better able to lead a healthy, prosperous, and peaceful life. No matter the caste, creed, religion, or status of the individual, the practice of these purities elevates the person and creates harmony in the family or larger community.

1. Purity of the Body (Kāya-śuddhi)

Physical purity is foundational to a healthy and balanced life. This duty includes personal hygiene and being clean in one's living and working spaces. Daily bathing with clean water, wearing clean clothes, trimming one's nails, brushing teeth, eating clean food, and drinking clean water are all examples of habits that contribute to physical health and well-being. Furthermore, breathing clean air and ensuring bodily cleanliness is a reflection of self-respect and reverence for the body, which in Indian philosophy is the temple of the ātman (inner Self). This purity also extends to keeping one's actions clean - caring, diligent, orderly, and responsible. of one's duties and your actions in your day-to-day life.

2. Purifying of Speech (Vāk-śuddhi)

Speech is very powerful; it can raise us up, destroy us, heal us, and hurt us. Purity of speech means speech that is truthful, clear, gentle, and appropriate. Kind and thoughtful speech creates peace, trust, and friendship. In the Academy for the Future, we're encouraged to 'say only what we mean'; to only use words that are meant to be encouragement, happiness, direction, comfort; not to deceive, or insult. Vāk-śuddhi includes pleasant speech, not harsh, harsh or painful, respectful or inconsiderate speech, and silence if in the moment it applies. Wise speech, of any sort, entitles you to

be respected and welcomed by all. This is the form of purity that shapes one's identity and how one is viewed socially.

3. Purifying of Mind (Manas-śuddhi)

The mind is where intentions, feelings, and decisions originate. A pure mind is tranquil, altruistic, free of anger, hate, envy, and greed, and has a tendency to be mindful. Practising manas-śuddhi can be cultivated through awareness of the self, meditation, humility, authenticity, and kindness. To achieve manas-śuddhi, one is to strive to feel alignment of thought, speech and action (integrity), work with a spirit of service, and to embody patience, forgiveness, equanimity, etc. Engaging in mental purity includes happiness, hopefulness, and an overall positive sense of those around us. In a pure mind, light of wisdom (jnāna) will shine through clearly, just as light shines straight through a clean mirror without distortion.

4. Purity of the Senses (Indriya-śuddhi)

The senses—sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell—are the gateways to the world. Therefore, purity of the senses means self-restraint so that the senses are not misused or overindulged. This includes: Avoiding harmful sights and sounds (such as pornography or vulgarity), not misusing your eyes or senses (ie, not gawking at things we should not be looking at), eating moderately and being mindful of what we put into our bodies, and avoiding temptation or unnecessary material desire. Indriya-śuddhi allows the mind to stay concentrated and the body to stay energised. It cultivates detachment while deepening inner stillness, preparing us for deeper levels of spiritual practice.

5. Purity of the Home (Gṛha-śuddhi)

The home is important and should not be regarded as just shelter. The home is one of the sacred spaces where peace, love, and values can be nurtured. It is critical that the home be kept clean, orderly, and spiritually charged so families can live to their highest potential. Gṛha-śuddhi includes: Daily sweeping and cleaning of the house and surrounding area, Keeping the home open to sunlight and fresh air in all rooms, Keeping clean hygiene practices with waste disposal, Avoiding urination and excrement near the house, Burning incense (agarbatti) or a natural fragrant every morning and evening,

Placing sacred or inspirational images in clean areas. When a home is clean and sacred, we have a fertile ground for feelings of love, harmony, and mutual respect, for family members in particular. It is also a very rich environment for praying, meditating, and ethical living.

5.1.3 Pañca Mahāyajñās (Five Great Sacrifices).

In the Indian worldview, life is not private property but a sacred gift of the cosmos. We live, not in isolation, but as portions of a cosmic whole; a myriad of relationships—natural relationships, relationships with all other beings, relationships with our ancestors, relationships with other human beings, and relationships with the Divine. From this understanding, the pañca-mahā-yajñās, literally, Five Great Sacrifices, represent five parts of our everyday responsibilities that support the moral and spiritual construction of our life, which can be thought of as five kinds of relationships. With the Five Great Sacrifices, we find elements of social responsibility that are more than simply ritual; they are instructions for living with thanks, service, and awareness. These functions contribute to harmony both internally within a person and externally within the world. Sree Narayana Guru prettied up the "yajñas" as the recommitment of inner disciplines based on sincerity, purification of self, and social responsibility; he understood and articulated these forms of relationships as more than

mere ritualism.

1. Brahma-Yajña (Responsibility to the Absolute or Brahman) This is the sacrifice that is offered to the Supreme Truth or Absolute Reality, Brahman. It is a vocation to align oneself with the highest knowledge and truth. In a traditional sense we already know that this is expressed in the ‖ Shānti Mantra of our ancient traditions and represented by the "sankalpa", the "beginning of the sūkta". The previous traditions of responsible yoga rituals demonstrate just how this manifestation of the social responsibility spread, recorded or feelings in the controlling practices of state-sanctioned civil rights and social responsibility. We understand in our sacred tradition service to our ancestors and to the Divine, viz. sacrifices expected from us.

Flattening the Character Spawner Script. However, as Sree Narayana Guru noted, the preparation stage of Brahma-yajña is not primarily about performing a ritual, but living the truth of the ritual. In fact, we can go through a whole life without discovering that we are not, in reality, responsible for only some aspect of the sacrificial responsibility to the gods and ancestors; the responsibility is regard to the truth which applies to all. This stage is about honest self-inquiry (ātma-vicāra), becoming transformed into the truth through wisdom, respecting the truth by living compassion, unity, and truth in our life. This aspect of the sacrifice links us to the inner Self and the larger truth of the world. (Cf. Ātmopadeśa Śatakam, Verses 2, 53, and 63.)

2. Pitṛ-Yajña (Responsibilities to Ancestors) Pitṛ-yajña is respect for our ancestors and lineage—our reverence for those who have provided us only with our ancestry, culture, and values. Traditionally, this has included the act of śrāddha to the souls of the ancestors that have passed, with sincere prayers and reverence, however the even deeper meaning is living our actions with respect for our forebears: living a virtuous life, attitudes of cultural values, attitudes of the dissemination of cultural practices, and ultimately begetting and raising noble children. This is about the assurance of dharma across generations. Sree Narayana Guru taught that, when regarded in the proper way, it is key here we hold moral standards and improvement. We regard our elders, care for our parents and raise the next.

3. Deva-Yajña (Responsibility to Natural Forces) Deva-yajña is an expression of appreciation and respect for the natural and divine forces that support life, represented as deities like Agni (fire), Vāyu (wind), Varuṇa (water), and Sūrya (sun). In ancient times, deva-yajña encompassed rituals involving fire (homa), chanting, and offering tributes. In modern terms, deva-yajña means caring for Mother Earth. Preserving a balanced ecosystem, taking care not to pollute the air, water, or soil, reducing waste, and leading a sustainable lifestyle are just some of the meaningful ways we can perform deva-yajña today. Sree Narayana Guru saw the Divine in all of Creation and advocated for harmony with nature. This way of performing yajña calls for us to live ecologically and cosmically aware.

4. Bhūta-Yajña (Responsibility to Other Living Beings) When we say bhūta-yajña, we refer to the sacrifice made for the well-being of other (non-human) beings: animals, birds, insects, and also microorganisms. It acknowledges that life is sacred and interconnected. In the practice of bhūta-yajña, one can serve animals and birds in ways that protect biodiversity and avoid cruelty against any life. It is in this sense that the practice of bhūta-yajña is the practice of ahiṃsā (non-harming) where it is abundantly recognised as a fundamental ideal of ethics in India. Sree Narayana Guru recognised compassion for all beings as essential, and understood that without kindness to all beings spiritual development is impossible. The ritual of bhūta-yajña, through its activities, cleanses

one's heart, compels empathy, and allows us to live in harmony with the ecosystem.

5. Manuṣya-Yajña (Obligation to Other Humans) Manuṣya-yajña, commonly known as Nṛ-yajña, is the sacrifice of giving to others, other human beings. Manuṣya-yajña includes hospitality, generosity, acts of service, and giving care in society. Examples of Manuṣya-yajña include hosting guests, assisting others in cooperative, amenity consumption, feeding the church, aiding other people and charitable organisations on their spiritual journeys of wisdom, among needs in education of the poor, and opportunities and lives of dignity for workers and the poor.. Manuṣya-Yajña as a given, promotes community and mutual respect. Sree Narayana Guru exemplifies this ideal with his supporting and founding of schools, temples and institutions based on his view of upliftment of the marginalised communities. Guru said, service to humanity is service to God. Manuṣya-yajña confirms that we are part of a shared human family, providing opportunities for group fitness and cosmic spirituality.

Recap

- True ethics means finding happiness without harming others or nature.
- True ethics means realising the unity of all and acting selflessly as a form of sacrifice (yajña).
- Indian texts teach ethics through inner purity and social duty

Objective Questions

1. What does Kāya-śuddhi mean?
2. What yajña is related to duty towards nature?
3. What is the basic intention of all actions, according to Indian philosophy?
4. Who promoted the interpretation of yajñas as inner disciplines and social responsibilities?
5. What form of speech falls under Vāk-śuddhi?
6. Bhūta-Yajña is concerned with responsibility towards:
7. The Quran describes humans as:
8. Manuṣya-Yajña promotes:
9. Advaita-jñāna means:

Answers

1. Physical or bodily purity
2. Deva-Yajña
3. Sukha (happiness)
4. Sree Narayana Guru
5. Truthful, kind, and appropriate speech
6. Animals and other living beings
7. Stewards (khalifa) of the Earth
8. Acts of service and generosity to other human beings
9. Non-dual awareness

Assignments

1. Compare and contrast the roles of Deva-Yajña and Bhūta-Yajña in maintaining ecological balance
2. Explain the concept of happiness (sukha) as the ethical ideal in Indian philosophy.
3. Discuss the Fivefold Purities (Śuddhi-Pañcaka) as a foundation for ethical and spiritual living.

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UNIT 2 Instructions in the Taittiriya Upanishad: The three da's.

Learning Outcomes

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

- recognise the moral and social responsibilities given at the time of samāvartana in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad
- interpret the Three Da's from the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad as universal moral instructions
- understand the ethical principles of giving, self-study, and respect for elders as expressions of sacred living

Prerequisite

In digesting the moral lessons contained within both the Taittirīya and the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣads, students should have at least a grasp of several important concepts from Indian traditional and philosophical history. Gurukula was an educational system where students lived in the home of their teacher and studied pedagogies such as samāvartana, which is the ceremonial initiation into their new responsible adult life, signifying the termination of their studies. The Upaniṣads are sacred texts that teach profound truths about living a meaningful life, drawing on values such as truth (Satyam), righteous action (Dharma), self-study (Svādhyāya), and sacrifice (Yajna). The following phrases are considered sacred: Satyam vada (speak the truth), Dharmam cara (perform your duty), and Mātṛ devo bhava (regard your mother as divine). An important teaching from the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad is the essence of the Three Da's: Dāna (charity), Dama (self-restraint), and Dayā (compassion). All beings, whether gods, minimus, or demons, depend upon the foundation each of these qualities provides. Students should also come to realise the foundation for respect (in order): Parents, Gurus/Teachers, and Guests; thankfulness; kindness; and the reverence for good role models (elders). Using these lessons will require a willingness to embrace spiritual and moral possibilities; otherwise, the meanings and, indeed, the behaviours will not truly be reflected in their lives.

Keywords

Taittirīya Upaniṣad, Three Da's, Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, Dāna, Dama, Dayā

Discussion

Introduction

The Taittiriya Upanishad, one of the principal texts of the Vedic corpus, offers profound moral and philosophical insights into human life and ethical conduct. Among its significant teachings is the doctrine of the Three Da's—Dama (self-control), Dana (charity or generosity), and Daya (compassion). These moral instructions are presented as divine admonitions to humanity, symbolizing the essential disciplines required for maintaining harmony within oneself and in society. The Three Da's encapsulate the ethical foundation of Indian thought, guiding human behavior toward self-restraint, social responsibility, and universal benevolence.

According to the Upanishadic narrative, when the Creator instructed the gods, humans, and demons with the syllable "Da," each group interpreted it differently—self-control for the gods, charity for humans, and compassion for demons. This symbolic teaching emphasizes that moral perfection is achieved through balancing inner discipline and external action. Dama restrains the senses and curbs desires, Dana cultivates a spirit of sharing and social justice, while Daya fosters empathy and non-violence. Together, these virtues constitute an integrated moral framework that promotes both individual enlightenment and collective welfare.

Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy resonates deeply with these Upanishadic ideals. Guru emphasized moral purification and human equality through the practice of self-control, compassion, and service. His teachings on the Fivefold Purities and the Five Great Sacrifices align closely with the spirit of the Three Da's, as both stress inner moral discipline and social harmony. For Guru, true religion meant ethical living and the realization of oneness among all beings. Just as the Taittiriya Upanishad teaches the balance of restraint, generosity, and compassion, Sree Narayana Guru envisioned a society rooted in these same values—where moral conduct becomes the path to spiritual liberation and social unity.

Thus, the moral vision of the Taittiriya Upanishad and Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy converge in their emphasis on ethical self-discipline, altruism, and universal love. Both uphold the idea that the ultimate goal of human life is not merely personal salvation, but the realization of harmony between the self, society, and the divine.

5.2.1 Moral Instructions from the Taittirīya Upaniṣad

As a student completes his/her formal education to abdicate the gurukula (the teacher's home), the Taittirīya Upaniṣad provides a comprehensive, sacred regime of moral observances. This exit from the gurukula is called samāvartana, which signifies, among other meanings, a threshold cross over: going from a student to a member of society with duty. The ceremonial guidance provided as a student prepares to leave is not just dharma teachings, but observations for everyday living. The moral observances outlined involve the fear of being a misanthrope, living a life based upon truthfulness, service, and interior presence.

The first observance is foundational to the ground of being: "Speak the truth and practice righteousness" (satyam vada, dharmam cara). This establishes that truthfulness and dharma are not just nice qualities to embody, but they are essential duties to perform. They are the foundation of integrity and trust in oneself, as well as in society. Truthful speech and a righteous life guarantee justice, trust, and peace in relationships and community.

After that, the Upaniṣad educates - "Do not forget about your learning" (svādhyāyan mā pramadah). More specifically, education is not merely a phase to be completed; rather, education represents an ongoing practice of reflection, of spiritual inquiry, of intellectual growth. Svādhyāya (self-study) is a practice that facilitates the observance of learning rather than seeing learning as an end to an educational sequence This obligation reflects a pitṛ-yajña the sacrificial exchange of giving respect to honored ancestors, particular obligations that are taken seriously and demonstrate the ethical significance of honoring the elders that have come before us and honoring the customs and tradition of our ancestors.

The continuance of the ethical instructions to diligently hold certain standards in moral living is to always recognise and act responsibly in regards to truth (satyāt na pramaditavyam), in terms of dharma and righteousness (dharmāt na pramaditavyam), in terms of personal utility, gain or kutalya (kuśalāt na pramaditavyam, bhūtyai na pramaditavyam). That ethical living and right livelihood are not mutually exclusive, and form the basis of happiness and prosperity.

Moreover, the Upaniṣad does instruct as well that the sacred study of this knowledge should never be neglected: "Let self-study and teaching not be neglected" (svādhyāya-pravacanābhyām na pramaditavyam). Tasks towards the deities and the ancestors (deva-pitṛ-kāryābhyām) likewise have to be remembered. The completion of these tasks aids in establishing a good balance between the sacred and the secular, and contributes towards a harmonious tension between individual life, interaction with others, and life with society.

One of the most poignant or profound avenues of expansion of the obligatory duties is the moralising of certain everyday relations into sacred obligations, i.e. the Upaniṣads instruct:

"Let your mother be a god to you, not her" (mātṛ devo bhava),

"Let your father be a god to you, not her" (pitṛ devo bhava),

"Let all teachers be a god to you, not her;" (ācārya devo bhava),

"Let your guest be a god to you, not they" (atithi devo bhava)

The sacred lines emphasise respect or veneration, responsibility or devotion, and gratitude toward those who take care of us, who we are learning from, or who help us along the way. Looking upon these individuals as sacred will inspire us in our responsibility to honour and serve them with humility. Another important guideline is to only act in accord with the good deeds of our elders and the good deeds of our teachers, and not everything that they do. Discernment is obviously paramount to ethical imitation. When we don't know how to behave, the Upaniṣad says to observe wise self-restrained people who have an understanding of their dharma and let them be examples when we have ethical choices to make. The Upaniṣad does have unambiguous comments on the topic of giving (dāna). It teaches us that we can avoid giving thoughtlessly, and we can also avoid doing so out of pride. Rather, we should: Give generously, Give with humility, Give with awe and reverence,

Give with complete awareness of what is being given, to whom it is given and for what reason. Such acts of giving are not only charitable but are an expression of a greater ethical spirit—one that is logical reasoning on the basis of gratitude, understanding, and compassion. It is a type of giving that recognises that all life is interrelated and all people are responsible for other people.

5.2.2 The Three Da's from the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad

The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad contains one of the most moving and valuable teachings, a three-syllable set of sounds (the Three Da's) that answer the ethical questions of the human condition. The Three Da's are: Dāna (charity), Dama (self-restraint), and Dayā (compassion). The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad describes this teaching in the context of a symbolic story whereby the Creator (Prajāpati) had given the same instruction--"Da"--to three types of beings, gods (devas), humans (manuṣyas), and demons (asuras), but they all interpreted it in the way that was most appropriate for their being:

The gods understood "Da" to be Dama, or self-restraint.

The humans understood "Da" to be Dāna, or charity.

The demons understood "Da" to be Dayā, or compassion.

While the three beings interpreted "Da" in different ways, each of the three is an essential and universal ethical principle.

5.2.2.1. Dāna (Charity)

Dāna encourages us to generously and freely give (to another). Dāna is the antidote to greed and selfishness. The essence of charity is not ostentatiousness or expecting something in return. It is simply acknowledging that what you have (wealth, knowledge, time) belongs to others as well. Giving in this way helps to balance society, level the playing field, and increase our humanity.

5.2.2.2. Dama (Self-Control)

Dama is the mastery of the desires and impulses we all experience in daily living. Dama is not repression, but a wise regulation of desires, knowing when to say "no" to short-term gratifications for long-term wellbeing and inner peace. Self-control reduces both self-harm and harm to others. It yields clarity and wisdom. Self-control is an act of inner strength that sustains personal and social order.

5.2.2.3. Dayā (Compassion)

Dayā is an open, heartfelt empathy for all living beings. Dayā is more than pity; it is the impulse to act, kindly and compassionately, to relieve suffering wherever possible. Dayā create the space for no longer distinguishing between self and other. Dayā is the foundation of ahimsa (non-violence), of human service, and ethical living. In a world too often defined by ego, passions, and conflict, dayā causes us to remember the sacredness of all living systems. Collectively, these three Da's create a timeless approach to living a moral life. Regardless of whether we are divine, human, or devilish, these virtues contribute to a world of peace and balance - personally, socially, and spiritually.

Recap

- The Three Da's—self-control, charity, and compassion—form the moral core of the *Taittiriya Upanishad*.
- Moral perfection comes from balancing discipline, generosity, and compassion.
- Sree Narayana Guru echoed the Three Da's through his call for purity, equality, and service.
- Both teachings aim at harmony between self, society, and the divine through ethical living.
- The Taittirîya Upaniṣad guides students transitioning to responsible social life
- Truth and righteousness form the core of ethical living.
- Lifelong learning and respect for ancestors are essential virtues.
- Truth, righteousness, and right livelihood lead to true happiness.
- Duties to gods and ancestors maintain balance in life.
- Honor parents, teachers, and guests with reverence and service.
- Follow the good deeds of wise elders as moral examples.
- Give generously and humbly, with awareness and compassion.
- The Bṛhadâraṇyaka Upaniṣad teaches the Three Da's—charity, self-control, and compassion—as ethical guides for life.
- Dâna is selfless giving that defeats greed and builds harmony.
- Dama is self-control that brings peace and order
- Dayâ is compassion that nurtures non-violence and kindness.
- The Three Da's form a timeless path to moral and spiritual harmony.

Objective Questions

1. What is the term for the ceremony that marks the end of a student's stay in the gurukula?
2. Which two principles are expressed in the phrase "Satyam vada, Dharmam cara"?

3. What does "Svâdhyâyan mâ pramadah" instruct a student to never neglect?
4. According to the Upaniṣadic teaching, how should one give (dāna)?
5. Which Upaniṣad contains the teaching of the Three Da's?
6. What does "Atithi devo bhava" teach us?

Answers

1. Samâvartana
2. Truth and righteousness
3. Self-study and learning
4. With humility and awareness
5. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad
6. Let your guest be like a god to you

Assignments

1. What is the importance of the moral command "Satyam vada, Dharmam cara"? How do truth and righteousness support personal and social harmony?
2. Describe how the Upaniṣad guides us in the act of giving (dāna). What qualities should a person cultivate while giving?
3. Compare and contrast Dâna, Dama, and Dayâ. How can these three values be applied in your own life as a student and a member of society?
4. What does the Upaniṣad mean when it instructs "Mātṛ devo bhava, Pitṛ devo bhava"? Why is it important to treat parents, teachers, and guests as divine?

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UNIT 3

Moral Teachings in Christianity: Ten Commandments

Learning Outcomes

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

- understand the ethical significance of the Six Universal Moral Commandments and their role in shaping individual and social life
- develop self-awareness and moral responsibility through the teachings of Jesus on judgment and inner transformation
- interpret the teachings of Jesus as a foundation for self-control, forgiveness, and ethical relationships

Prerequisite

Before delving into the ethical teachings of the Bible--especially the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Jesus--students should have a basic understanding of religious traditions and moral language. They should know the Ten Commandments are rooted in Jewish tradition, and shared moral guidelines in Christianity and Islam. The general distinction between spiritual duties (to God) and social duties (to others) is essential. Students should be familiar with everyday morals, such as truth, justice, respect, loyalty, self-restraint, and compassion. They need to be able to read and understand parables and symbolic teachings, and be interested in their own behaviours. Most important is that they should have an open mind to fundamental human values, -such as forgiveness, empathy, humility, and gratitude, -before fully appreciating the ethical teachings in Jesus's life and message

Keywords

Christianity, Ten Commandments, Moral Command, Moral Behavior, Moral Conduct.

Discussion

Introduction

Christianity, as one of the major world religions, is founded upon the moral and spiritual teachings of Jesus Christ, which emphasize love, compassion, forgiveness, humility, and service to humanity. The core moral principles of Christianity are derived primarily from the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, the Ten Commandments, and the life of Christ himself. These teachings call for a life guided by selfless love (agape), faith in God, and responsibility toward fellow beings. Moral life in Christianity is thus centered on the ideal of loving one's neighbor as oneself, promoting peace, justice, and mercy as the true expressions of divine faith.

The Christian emphasis on moral transformation through love and service finds notable resonance in the philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru. Although Guru's thought emerged from the socio-religious context of Kerala and is rooted in the Indian spiritual tradition, his ethical vision transcended all boundaries of caste, creed, and religion. Guru proclaimed the message of "One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man," which echoes the Christian ideal of universal brotherhood and the oneness of humanity under one divine source. His teachings on compassion (daya), self-restraint (dama), and service (seva) parallel the Christian virtues of love, humility, and charity.

Both Christianity and Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy uphold the dignity of the individual and the necessity of moral conduct as a path to spiritual realization. In Christianity, moral life is expressed through faith in action—manifesting love through good deeds. Similarly, Guru emphasized that true religion is not in ritual practice but in moral purity and service to others. The emphasis on forgiveness, compassion, and equality in both systems reveals a deep ethical harmony aimed at inner purification and social welfare.

Thus, a comparative understanding of Christian moral teachings and Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy reveals shared ethical foundations. Both advocate for love as the supreme moral value, compassion as the guiding principle of human life, and service as the practical expression of spirituality. Their teachings inspire humanity to rise above divisions and live in unity, peace, and moral integrity.

5.3.1 The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments (or Decalogue) are understood to be a direct revelation of God to the prophet Moses, constituting the moral core of the Jewish tradition and respected and followed in Islam and Christianity. Thus, the Ten Commandments have become a common ethical inheritance of all the world's major religions. The Ten Commandments are timeless lessons on how we might lead a more righteous and purposeful life. Whereas the first four commandments describe commitments and obligations of spiritual adherence—e.g., belief in one God, and observing the Sabbath—the last six commandments govern our relations with each other. It is these six commandments that are instilled universally, because they establish and regulate a collective social moral norm that also facilitates maintaining justice and peace in the public sphere.

5.3.2 Six Universal Moral Commandments

1. Honour your father and mother. Honouring your father and mother signifies how a person must respect and acknowledge their parents, who allowed them to enter this world and fostered their growth. Noticing the lives your parents sacrificed to raise you is an exercise in gratitude. Honouring your parents, while personally virtuous, is a collective obligation that strengthens the family as the fundamental unit of society. The more children honour their parents, the more successors belong to their generational chains, and the greater the chance of fostering a culture of care and similar obligations.

2. You shall not kill. This commandment is a fundamental rule for respecting the value of life. It states that to take another person's life is the ultimate breach of established moral law. Life is sacred, and it ought to always be sacred. By prohibiting murder, this commandment creates non-violence, peace, and respect for the dignity of all people.

3. You shall not commit adultery. To commit adultery is to breach trust at an intimate level between life partners. Adultery destroys families. This commandment promotes loyalty, integrity, and responsibility, specifically in intimate relationships. However, being faithful in marriage also establishes a more stable and trustworthy family environment, which is undoubtedly essential to everyone who lives in that family, including children.

4. You shall not steal. To steal is to ignore their rights and property. This commandment lays out the responsibilities of fairness, justice, and respect for another person's belongings. A society in which individuals steal from each other is a fearful and dangerous society. By prohibiting stealing, the moral world and societal trust are preserved.

5. You shall not bear false witness against your fellows. This commandment lays out a duty of veracity to others, especially at times where someone's words may have a significant impact on another person's life or reputation. As part of this duty, we have a responsibility to speak the truth in a way that minimises harm to others. Slander, false accusations or simple lies have the capacity to destroy friendships, damage reputations, or subvert justice. Speaking the truth is, and can be, a powerful edifying act; one that honours the dignity of the other person.

6. You're not to covet anything that is your neighbour's. Covetousness is the longing desire to acquire what belongs to another - whether it is the house of their neighbour, the spouse of their neighbour, the wealth of their neighbour, or their neighbour's abilities, success, or privilege. This commandment is about being satisfied with what you have and learning how to stop the feelings of jealousy and greed. It's a lesson that peace

and happiness do not come from gaining more, but rather from being satisfied and grateful.

The Two Commandments of Jesus. While giving testimony to the Ten Commandments, Jesus gave an extensive and meaningful moral vision by condensing them into two primary commandments that capture the heart of all: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." (Mark 12:30–31)

These two Commandments summarize the heart of the spiritual and ethical life. Loving God involves recognising the God-nature in all of life and living under the auspices of that transcendent truth. Loving our neighbour as we love ourselves asks us to show empathy, kindness, and compassion toward all people, just as we naturally seek our own wellbeing. Together, these two principles cover the entire field of ethics-vertical (our relationship with God) and horizontal (our relationship with others). Jesus' understanding of love is not characterised by emotion or affection only; it is an entraining, moving energy expressed in action-deeds of helping others, forgiving wrongdoing, patience, and justice. When one has awakened to the understanding that we all are enveloped with divinity, then loving others is simply an extension of loving God.

In a world where ambition and speed are prioritised, many young people grapple with uncertainty about how ethical behaviour ought to play out in their relationships. Whether it's dishonesty, showing disrespect for others (especially their parents), selfish behavior, or emotional conflict, these issues arise daily. Jesus has given us a timeless rule of conduct: "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them." (Matthew 7:12) This teaching is known as the Golden Rule. It is an incredibly powerful guide to what ethical behaviour should look like. We can consume ourselves with what other people are doing, but this simple rule actually shifts that focus onto ourselves. Think about the decision you need to make in your relationship, and before you make that decision, you ask yourself the following question: Would I want to be treated like that? If the answer is no, then you do not do that to someone else.

Following this guide to human interaction promotes fairness, empathy, and mutual dignity, which are the ground rules for human relationships that are respectful and caring. Honouring one's parents is another central value that Jesus affirms from the Old Testament. In Matthew 19:19, he states, "Honour your father and mother," because it is important to respect the people who raised us. This respect for our parents naturally extends to all older people, as all elders hold experience and wisdom in our society. In fact, the Bible advises us, "You shall rise before the grey-headed and honour the appearance of an old man." (Leviticus 19:32). These teachings strongly resonate with the cultural values of India, in which elders are viewed as teachers and mentors and deserve to be held in high regard.

5.3.3 Moral Behaviour and Self-Control

Jesus not only accepted the commandments but importantly defined them in ways that were meaningful and achievable. In Matt 19:18, He emphasises: "You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness". The commandments remain indispensable anchors of moral behaviour for constructing a community characterised by trust, respect and justice. When behaviour is in accordance with these beliefs, they help to construct a community where people feel safe, valued and respected.

The greatest moral dilemma facing the world at this time is intolerance—intolerance of the opinions, religions, language, or lifestyles of other people. Indeed, this intolerance leads to anger, division, and ultimately violence. Jesus offers a radically different pathway based on forgiveness and sympathy. He teaches: "To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic also." (Lk 6:29) Forgiveness does not mean enabling injustice or endorsing oppression. Forgiveness means attempting to break the chain of hatred or vengeance. Forgiveness is not weakness; it is moral power and can bring healing to both the victim and the perpetrator of a wrong. Forgiveness and acceptance have always required moral strength.

5.3.4 Moral Conduct and Self-Control

Not only did Jesus respect the commandments, but he also reaffirmed the commandments in ways that would communicate their meaning. In Matthew 19:18 Jesus reaffirms: "...You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness." These commandments are still vital moral foundations for building a society based on trust, respect, and justice. When people live according to these teachings, they are helping to build a community where people feel safe, valued, and respected.

In the modern world, one of the great challenges is intolerance: the intolerance of other people's opinions, religions, languages, and ways of life - intolerance that leads to anger, division and even violence. Jesus offers a different radical approach based on forgiveness and compassion. Jesus teaches: "To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either." (Luke 6:29) Of course, this does not mean we allow injustice, or accept oppression, it means we are taught to break the cycle of hatred and revenge. Forgiving someone does not indicate weakness; in fact, it is a moral strength that heals both victim and offender. It is the expression of human choice for love instead of anger and peace instead of revenge.

In another profound moral teaching, Jesus addresses our intense emotional inclination to judge others for their imperfections while ignoring our own. Jesus portrays the moral absurdity through a graphic imagery: "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck that is in your eye' when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye?" (Luke 6:41-42). Jesus' message is to turn the lens of focus inward and to reflect on our ability to criticize, prior to accusing anyone else. It is a message of humility, a call for self-awareness; it is about fixing our own imperfections instead of judging someone else. Real morality doesn't begin by controlling what other people believe or do; it begins by purifying our own thoughts, actions and intentions.

Recap

- The Ten Commandments guide faith and ethics, forming a shared moral foundation for justice and peace.
- Honouring parents shows gratitude and builds a caring society.
- Respecting life fosters peace, non-violence, and dignity.
- Adultery breaks trust; fidelity builds stable relationships.
- Stealing breaks trust; respecting property upholds justice.
- Truth protects dignity; lies destroy trust.
- Coveting brings unrest; gratitude brings peace.
- Love for God and others forms the core of ethics, expressed through compassion and just action.
- Jesus' Golden Rule promotes empathy and self-reflection as the basis for ethical relationships.
- Respecting elders fosters empathy, dignity, and harmony
- Jesus upheld the commandments to foster justice and trust.
- Jesus' teaching on forgiveness offers a powerful path to peace in a divided world.
- Jesus upheld the commandments as the basis for a just and respectful society.
- He taught forgiveness as moral strength that heals and ends cycles of hatred.
- True morality, he said, begins with self-awareness and correcting our own faults.

Objective Questions

1. Which commandment promotes respect within the family unit?
2. What is the 'Golden Rule' taught by Jesus?
3. Which moral quality is central to Jesus' response to violence and hatred?
4. The teaching "You shall rise before the grey-headed..." appears in which book?
5. Which commandment promotes self-control over jealousy and greed?

Answers

1. Honour your father and mother
2. Do to others what you want them to do to you
3. Forgiveness
4. Leviticus
5. You shall not covet

Assignments

1. Compare and contrast the value of "Honour your father and mother" in both the Ten Commandments and Jesus' teachings. How is this value reflected in Indian culture as well?
2. Explain the Two Great Commandments of Jesus and show how they summarise the core of both spiritual and social morality.
3. Discuss the ethical relevance of the Ten Commandments in today's world. How do the last six commandments help in maintaining peace and justice in society?

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UNIT 4

Moral Teachings in the Qur'an

Learning Outcomes

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

- recognize the Importance of Intention, Sincerity, and Moral Integrity in Islamic Ethics
- understand the Universal Ethical Principles in the Quran
- identify the role of the Human Being as a Moral and Spiritual Caretake

Prerequisite

Before students engage with the moral teachings of the Quran, they need to have a few fundamental concepts of Islamic thought and ethics on hand. The very first thing students will need to understand is that the Quran is not just a holy book; it is more accurately a comprehensive textbook on ethics, social justice, soulfulness and gratitude, and environmental responsibility. Students will also need a basic understanding of concepts like taqwa (God-awareness), niyyah (the value of intentions), khalifa (humans' stewardship of Earth), and mīzān (natural balance) in order to understand the Quran's vision of a moral life. Having a grasp of Islamic ethics also requires understanding that Islamic ethics balances individual intentions with outwardly socially accountable behaviour and witnesses to the values of a more benevolent society, honesty, kindness, justice, temperance, and self-control, to name a few. Similarly, students will need to have a sense of the Quran's larger message about human equality, respect for other faiths, the nature of spiritual detachment (tawakkul), emotional balance (sabr and shukr), and how they compare with similar ethical ideas in Christian, Jewish, and other traditions. This creates a lot of valuable context for students to appreciate the Quran's invitations to moral transformation, - not just ideal beliefs about life but how they imagine and act, in and through our actions every day.

Keywords

Quran, Ethics, Spirituality, Moral Guidances

Discussion

Introduction

The Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, stands as one of the most profound sources of ethical, spiritual, and moral guidance in the history of human civilization. It provides a comprehensive framework for right conduct (akhlaq), faith, and social responsibility, emphasizing the unity of God (Tawheed) and the moral accountability of humankind. The Qur'an teaches that morality is not merely a set of external rules, but a reflection of divine will within the human heart. Its central moral themes—truthfulness, justice, compassion, patience, humility, and service—are designed to guide individuals toward inner purification and social harmony. By encouraging self-restraint, charity, and forgiveness, the Qur'an presents a holistic vision of ethics that unites spiritual growth with righteous living.

The Qur'anic concept of morality focuses on the idea that human beings are trustees (khalifah) of God on earth, entrusted with the duty to uphold goodness and prevent evil. A moral life, according to the Qur'an, is one lived in awareness of God (taqwa), where ethical actions become acts of worship. The spiritual discipline of Islam thus links faith with moral responsibility, calling for balance between devotion to God and service to humanity. The Qur'an consistently reminds believers to act with justice (adl), compassion (rahmah), and generosity (ihsan), emphasizing that true piety lies in moral behavior rather than in ritual observance alone.

This moral and spiritual vision finds notable parallels in the philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru. Although Guru's teachings emerged from a different cultural and religious background, both traditions share a deep concern for ethical living, equality, and universal brotherhood. Guru's message of "One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man" resonates with the Qur'anic affirmation of the unity of humanity under one God. His emphasis on purity of thought, compassion (daya), self-control (dama), and social justice mirrors the Qur'anic values of inner discipline, mercy, and fairness. Both systems regard moral transformation as the true measure of spiritual progress.

Thus, the Qur'an and Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy, though distinct in form and context, converge in their vision of a morally enlightened human being who lives in harmony with self, society, and the divine. Both teach that genuine spirituality must be reflected in moral conduct, compassion for all beings, and dedication to the welfare of humanity.

5.4.1 The Quran: A Book of Ethics, Spirituality, and Moral Guidances

The Holy Quran, or the Koran, is the scripture of Islam. It is considered the direct message from God to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). It is not merely a book of faith rituals or historical accounts. It is a book about ethics, spirituality, and law. Its purpose is to provide people with rules of character and direction to lead a life of meaning and responsibility. The Quran provides direction in how we conduct ourselves in all aspects

of life: from personal behaviour, to family relationships, to engagement with the public, to economic interactions, to political justice, and stewardship of our environment — all things human behaviour is supposed to be based on morality, justice, and compassion.

At the core of the Quranic worldview is the principle of human equality. The Quran clearly states that all human beings have equal standing before God — irrespective of race, gender, wealth, nationality, or social standing. What makes one person distinct from another, in the eyes of God, is not their external identity, but rather their taqwa — that is, righteousness, God consciousness, and moral character. This teaching motivates the universal brotherhood of humanity. It reminds people that we share a community of humanity and have a shared origin and must treat one another with dignity, fairness, and respect. This was a revolutionary idea, and its importance is far greater today, when the world continues to suffer from prejudice, discrimination, and inequity.

The Quran delineates two broad categories of actions which are considered immoral. The first type encompasses harmful or unjust actions including activities such as lying, cheating, stealing, murder, cruelty, exploitation, and injustice. This sort of behaviour is condemned in all societies, as it causes suffering and destroys the ethical foundations of society. The Quran admonishes individuals to refrain from acting in this fashion, describing it as a violation of divine law and human conscience. Travel to any part of the world and individuals will condemn these behaviours, regardless of religion or culture.

The second type of categorical behaviour is in regard to shameful or dishonourable actions—actions that people are ashamed to enact in the face of their families or societies. Shameful acts cannot be committed out in public or overtly, but instead rely upon hypocrisy, deception or some ulterior motive. Oftentimes, though they are cited within the Quran, in reality they are not tied directly to the physical pain of another person, but instead a violation to the person's moral integrity. Though, it is worth noting that the Quran provides one clear outcome of action. Regardless of whether a behaviour is considered harmful, the Quran makes a clear distinction about the perception of God and oneself in its teachings. God must see one's behaviour in public and similarly in private; therefore, ethical conduct should be based upon true, sincere behaviour rather than the appearance of an act.

This dual emphasis on socially harmful acts and personal moral failings reflects the expectation that the Quran is asking of a complete ethical transformation of the individual. The goal of achieving goodness is far more profound than simply appearing to be good; one must be goodness, good being, in thought, word and deed. The Quran is not just negative (as in prohibiting bad actions), but also positive (as in good actions). There are two main categories. The first are good actions which benefit oneself and help the community, like: honesty, kindness, charity, honouring parents and keeping promises, and helping neighbours. These all create a community that is based in trust, cooperation, and care.

The second category is higher acts of altruism, or good acts done for the benefit of humanity regardless of the personal gain one might receive. There are many examples of incredible altruistic acts, including: speaking up for justice when it might be unpopular, protecting another from the oppression of others, advocating for the orphan, the poor, maintaining peace, and having mercy towards all creation. These thematic values support all, regardless of culture, time, or other enablers, and provide insight into how the Quran seeks to form a real ethical society that is founded on compassion, justice.

A significant value to these types of actions within the Islamic tradition is the intention (niyyah) that one has when doing the good act. One small act of goodness may be highly spiritual for a Muslim, but one very large act of charity (like being a millionaire philanthropist), will not be accepted as anything but a negative deed if it was done for attention (for one's status). By focusing on intention, the Quran connects morality to spiritual awareness, which leads the believer to be aware that every action is a step toward God.

The Quran instructs about the natural world as well. One of its more valuable contributions is its framing of humans as caretakers (khalifa) of the Earth. The Quran specifically describes the Earth as a sacred trust (amanah) that God has given to humankind for the benefit of all creatures created by God. This is very important because nature should not be abused, but rather controlled and handled appropriately, as nature exists in a perfect equilibrium (mīzān), and to disturb the equilibrium is a morally and spiritually unjust act. Exploitation of nature for immediate personal gain—irresponsibly disposing of the forests, using the rivers as runoff, or senseless killing of animals (killing of animals just for recreation) is himsa. This is not only unjust to the environment, but also unjust to future generations. For all of this, the Quran speaks to moderation in consumption, it warns against wasteful spending (isrāf) and praises those who tread lightly (an environmental consciousness). This constantly explores moral responsibility, competent with respect for life in all of its forms. Importantly, the Quranic message does not profess exclusive claim to truth: it has identified that there is wisdom and morality in differing traditions, and that all communities have righteous persons. This acceptance is a sophisticated comprehension that an entity does not limit the truth, and that morality itself is universal in its essence.

Values such as honesty, compassion, justice, and peace are also expressed and particularly emphasised in non-religious philosophies, secular ethics, conventional spirituality, and humanism. The value of a moral teaching, regardless of religious affiliation, is not its religiousness but its motivational capacity to elevate the human spirit, enrich society and clarify our moral obligations. In this view, ethics can be seen as something embraced by humanity collectively, where people of different communities find things and ways of being similarly virtuous. Two major, time-honored ethical principles are revealed considering the richness of themes emerging from Quranically-influenced moralities. The first principle has to do with detached action. This is not ordinarily the first thing that comes to mind, but simply attempting to care while fulfilling one's natural duties—personal, social and professional, with integrity and diligence and being cognizant that it is ultimately Allah or Nature who is responsible for the outcome. Practicing this form of spiritual detachment frees a person from anxiety, ego and selfish will, so that one can act judiciously and generously without fear of success or failure, to motivate themselves or others with their well-meaning human dignity. The second principle includes equanimity—the ability to sustain a state of calm balancing joy and sorrow, success or failure. The Quran communicates that believers should be grateful in times of ease (shukr) and patient in times of suffering (sabr). Emotional and spiritual stability, the balance of joy and sorrow, success and failures is the benchmark of one's moral function. It empowers them to have peace, and have resilience and strength that is not circumstantial.

These ideas resonate not only in Islamic mysticism (Sufism) but also in the Bhagavad Gita, Buddhist texts, Stoicism, and modern psychology as well. They illustrate that good ethics is not just about behavior but

also about how we live, feel, and develop in response to the inevitable suffering of life. Most importantly, the teachings are intended to be enacted, not memorized or quoted. It should be evident in the way we treat each other, speak to one another, deal with emotionally charged situations, use our financial resources, relate with nature, and understand our role in the universe. Morality is not a sporadic behavior it is a daily exercise. These values can only modify our character and help create a more just and compassionate world if we consistently reflect and act upon them. When we look at the different religious and philosophical traditions- the Quran, the Upanishads, the Bible, the Dhammapada, or the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru- the moral understanding is surprisingly close to the same. Overall the clear message remains: tell the truth, be living compassionately, seek to clean our inner self, and honour the world.

This shared ethical vision draws attention to our common humanity. No matter our differences in language, culture or belief, we all want to have justice, truth, and peace. In a world filled with conflict and competition, these lessons remind us of what matters most: every life has dignity, the Earth is sacred, and we are all responsible for realizing the humanity of this world.

Recap

- A guide to ethical living, offering moral direction based on justice, compassion, and responsibility.
- Guides all aspects of life with justice, compassion, and spiritual responsibility.
- Condemns harmful acts as violations of divine law and human conscience.
- Calls for sincere actions, the same in public and private, free from hypocrisy.
- Urges goodness in all actions to build a caring, ethical community.
- Encourages selfless acts to build a just, compassionate society.
- In Islam, sincere intention gives moral and spiritual value to every deed.
- Humans are Earth's caretakers, tasked with preserving its balance through moderation and respect for all life.
- Ethical living is grounded in detached action and equanimity, fostering integrity and inner peace beyond outcomes.
- True morality is daily practice, rooted in truth, compassion, and inner purity across all traditions.

Objective Questions

1. What is the primary purpose of the Quran, apart from rituals and history?
2. What is taqwa in the Quranic context?
3. Which term refers to humans as caretakers of the Earth in the Quran?
4. According to the Quran, who is considered superior in God's eyes?
5. Which two emotional virtues help maintain spiritual balance in the Quranic teaching?

Answers

1. Ethics, spirituality, and law
2. Righteousness and God-consciousness
3. Khalifa
4. The righteous
5. Sabr and shukr

Assignments

1. Explain how intention influences the moral value of actions in Islam. Include examples from the Quran and Islamic teachings to show how sincerity and purpose determine whether an action is truly ethical.
2. comparing the Quranic concept of khalifa (vicegerency/stewardship) with modern ecological ethics. Discuss similarities and differences in how both systems approach human responsibility toward nature
3. Discuss the idea of universal morality in the Quran. How does the Quran provide ethical guidance that applies to all human beings regardless of religion, culture, or background?

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BLOCK

The Goal of Life

UNIT

Happiness

Learning Outcomes

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

- explain that true happiness comes from Self-Realisation, not external objects
- recognise that fulfilment comes from harmony between one's own and others' happiness
- describe how seeing life as a divine play fosters detachment, acceptance, and joy

Prerequisite

To understand Sree Narayana Guru's vision of life and happiness, one should first recognise the universal human quest for meaning, purpose, and lasting happiness, especially among thoughtful individuals and youth in today's fast-changing world. It is important to be familiar with the idea that life is not a burden or a meaningless struggle but a playful expression of one Supreme Reality, manifesting as Consciousness in countless forms. One should also grasp that true happiness is not found in external pleasures but lies within, in the Self. It is the awareness of the unity of all beings, the understanding that the distinction between 'I' and 'other' is only superficial. Such insight fosters balance, compassion, and inner freedom. With this foundation, one can better explore Guru's teachings, which call us to awaken to our true nature, live ethically, and realise lasting joy through harmony with all existence.

Keywords

Spiritual awareness, Bliss, Self-manifestation, Pure Consciousness, selfless action

Discussion

Introduction

The ultimate goal of human life has been a subject of deep philosophical reflection across all cultures and spiritual traditions. In the philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru, the goal of life is not material success or transient pleasure, but the attainment of true happiness—a state of inner peace, moral purity, and realization of oneness with the divine. For Guru, happiness (sukham) is not merely an emotional or sensual experience, but the natural outcome of self-realization and righteous living. It is the realization of truth, love, and unity that brings about enduring joy and freedom from sorrow. Thus, happiness in Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy is both the means and the end of human existence.

Guru viewed human life as a spiritual journey from ignorance (avidya) to knowledge (vidya), from selfishness to selflessness, and from bondage to liberation. True happiness, according to him, arises when one transcends ego, desires, and social divisions, and recognizes the divine presence within and around. This vision of happiness is inseparable from ethical and spiritual discipline. The Fivefold Purities (purity of body, speech, mind, behavior, and livelihood) and the Five Great Sacrifices (duties toward the divine, ancestors, teachers, society, and living beings) form the moral framework that leads to such happiness. Guru's teachings emphasize that inner happiness cannot be achieved without compassion, self-control, and service to humanity.

Unlike the worldly pleasures that depend on external possessions or circumstances, the happiness Sree Narayana Guru speaks of is permanent, universal, and rooted in spiritual awareness. It is the bliss that arises from harmony with oneself and with the world. Guru often stated that the realization of oneness—"One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man"—is the highest expression of happiness, for it liberates the individual from prejudice, hatred, and fear. When a person lives in truth and love, serving others selflessly, that person experiences real joy and fulfillment.

Therefore, the goal of life in Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy is the attainment of eternal happiness through self-knowledge, moral purity, and universal love. His concept of happiness integrates the individual and the social dimensions of human life, offering a path of inner peace and social harmony. It teaches that true happiness is not something to be acquired externally but realized within, through the awakening of divine consciousness.

6.1.1. The Meaning and Goal of Life: A View from Sree Narayana Guru's Philosophy

What is the meaning of this life? What should we attain in life? Why were we born at all? These questions often trouble thoughtful minds, especially among the youth. From the perspective of Sree Narayana Guru's vision, life is a sportive self-manifestation of the one underlying Reality, the all-encompassing Consciousness. All individual forms, their birth, life, and dissolution, are expressions of this one Reality, manifesting itself in countless ways across all worlds.

As this reality also underlies our own existence, our lives should also be understood as part of this playful manifestation. Every experience, pleasurable or painful, is part of the divine sport. Just as a game is not to be mourned over, but enjoyed regardless of its outcome, so too is life to be lived in a spirit

of acceptance, detachment, and joy. When seen this way, life becomes a flow of inner sportiveness, where even old age and death are not tragic ends but a remerging into the source, the eternal Self. In today's world, the dominant aim of most youth is to secure a lucrative job. But why this craving? A job offers money, which buys necessities, which in turn give us comfort, and comfort gives us happiness. Therefore, it is not money, but happiness that is the ultimate goal. All our possessions, achievements, and relationships are sought not for their own sake, but for the happiness we believe they will bring.

Happiness is that which we seek for its own sake. It is never a means, but the end. Everything else, wealth, status, even love, is a means toward this end. Happiness has two facets: the avoidance of suffering (negative) and the attainment of felicity (positive). True happiness lies where these two facets meet and dissolve into a state of balance. Everything we come across evokes a response: we like it, dislike it, or remain indifferent. This reaction depends on the value it holds for us, the happiness or suffering it brings. But where does the feeling of happiness originate from the object or from within? On deeper reflection, it becomes clear that happiness wells up from within. The external object merely triggers its emergence.

So where was this happiness hidden? Nowhere but in the core of our being. This inner core of our true Self is pure Consciousness. It knows, feels, and judges. It is the source of all experience. Therefore, the happiness we experience is not separate from our Self; it is our own essence. Just as Consciousness is uncreated and unending, so too is real Happiness eternal and intrinsic. Realising this transforms life. Life becomes meaningful when we realise that Happiness is already within us. This awareness frees us from dependence on external pleasures, which are fleeting and unreliable, and turns our attention inward toward a lasting source.

Does this mean we must suppress our senses? No. The senses are meant to be in contact with their objects. The mind, memory, and ego all perform their functions naturally. The key is to understand these as expressions of our Consciousness and Happiness, not as separate from it. When stabilised in this vision, we become detached witnesses to all these experiences. We live in the world, yet remain untouched by its ups and downs. This detachment is not denial; it is wisdom. It allows us to participate fully in life without being entangled. We feel, we think, we act, but with an inner freedom that stems from Self-awareness.

Sree Narayana Guru expresses a profound ethical insight in verse 22 in his work *Atmopadesasathakam*:

priyamaparanteyatenpriyam; svakiya-

priyamaparapriyamiprakāramäkum

nayamatinale narannu nanma nalkum-

kriyayaparapriya hētuvāyvarēṇam

in English translation is

The happiness of another is my happiness;

One's own joy is another's joy; this is the guiding principle.

An act that is good for oneself should bring happiness to others as well.

This reveals the social and ethical dimension of happiness. Just as individuals seek their own joy, they must recognise and honour the happiness of others. The guiding principle is mutual joy, svakiya-priyam, becoming parapriya. Love, kindness, and compassion dissolve the barriers of separation. The 'other' becomes 'not-other.' The 'I' and 'you' merge into 'we.' Sree Narayana Guru teaches that all beings,

from the simplest worm to the greatest seer, act out of a desire for happiness. Even a minor movement like adjusting one's seat or coughing has the motive of seeking relief and comfort. Our entire life is an ongoing pursuit of a better state of being. Our senses are the tools of this pursuit. Sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing all bring us joy in unique ways. Yet even here, we must see that happiness arises not from the external, but from the harmony between the senses, the mind, and the Consciousness that illumines them.

Often, our actions begin with a latent urge like hunger that seeks satisfaction through interaction with the world. But we do not just want to eat, we want a clean setting, friendly company, pleasant smells, beautiful presentation, tactile pleasure, and good taste. Each step adds a layer of happiness. But this happiness is still conditional. We mistakenly view it as coming from outside. Narayana Guru warns against this confusion. True happiness is not an incoming object but an expression of the inner Self. To mistake the outer for the source of joy is to remain deluded.

Real joy arises when we overcome the illusion of separateness. The idea of 'That Alone', the non-duality of all existence, is at the heart of Sree Narayana Guru's teaching. When 'I' and 'you' become 'we', the boundary between self and other fades. Love is born from the merging of interests, and happiness becomes mutual. Consider two people in love, or in friendship. Each wishes to make the other happy. Sacrifices are made gladly. This shared joy, based on mutuality and tenderness, exemplifies the ideal of svakiya-priyam. This bilateral joy contrasts with unilateral, selfish action. A brute forcefully pursues pleasure. A rapist seeks personal gratification without regard for the other. What makes such acts horrifying is not the action itself, but the disregard for mutuality. True happiness must consider both sides it must be universal, not ego-centric.

Beyond urges and objects, behind all feelings and perceptions, lies a hidden source, the luminous Self, the very ground of all existence. It is because of this ground that anything exists. We exist only through participation in this Being. Existence, awareness, and joy are not separate entities. They are one unified experience sat-cit-ānanda (Being-Consciousness-Bliss). Whether it is the joy of a sunset, a delicious meal, music, or love it is all part of one happiness. This is the universal happiness pervading all. When we understand this, we see that everything, objects, people, and events, are interconnected. The Self in one is the Self in all. The 'paran' or 'other' is only a surface difference. Deep down, it is the same Being. "Tat tvam asi" That Thou Art. You are That.

All action stems from motivation. A person becomes a doctor out of personal interest and to help others. The patient also seeks healing. Both benefits. But a realised person sees beyond even this. For such a soul, like Christ or the Buddha, serving others is not serving another; it is serving oneself in all. The doctor cures the world-body that is his own. The patient sees divine benevolence in the doctor. There is mutual gratitude. A teacher, a plumber, an artist all engage in action not just to fulfil roles, but to serve the whole. This vision transforms work into worship, labour into love.

Narayana Guru, as a realised sage, calls upon humanity: "Do not see others as others. See yourself in them. Let your actions bring happiness to all." By acting from both directions, from the inner urge and the universal vision, we correct ourselves twice over. This ensures that our happiness is not isolated, but shared. Thus, life becomes an unending celebration of unity, joy, and meaning

Recap

- Life, according to Sree Narayana Guru, is the playful expression of one all-encompassing Reality in many forms.
- Life is a joyful play of the Self, where true happiness, not money, is the real goal behind all pursuits.
- True happiness comes from within; outer things only trigger it.
- Happiness is the very essence of our true Self, eternal, uncreated, and already within us.
- True detachment is inner freedom through awareness that all experiences arise from our own Consciousness.
- Happiness is shared joy, rooted in inner harmony, not in outer things.
- True happiness flows from the inner Self; seeking it outside is delusion.
- True happiness comes from shared love and oneness, not selfishness.
- All joy flows from the one Self Being, Consciousness, Bliss, showing all life is one and divine
- Selfless action serves the One Self, making work worship and duty love.
- Seeing oneself in others, life becomes joyful, united, and meaningful

Objective Questions

1. What is the ultimate goal of all human pursuits according to the passage?
2. According to Sree Narayana Guru, what is the nature of life?
3. Where does true happiness come from?
4. What is the meaning of 'svakiya-priyam' in the Guru's verse?
5. What does 'parapriya' mean?
6. What is the guiding ethical principle mentioned in verse 22 of Atmopadesa Œatakam?

7. What is the Sanskrit phrase that means "You are That"?

8. What are the three aspects of ultimate reality according to the passage?

9. What makes a selfish act like rape horrifying, according to the passage?

10. What transforms work into worship according to the realised vision?

Answers

1. Happiness.

2. A sportive self-manifestation of the one underlying Reality.

3. From within the Self

4. One's own joy.

5. Another's joy.

6. One's happiness should also bring happiness to others.

7. Tat tvam asi.

8. Sat-cit-ânanda (Being-Consciousness-Bliss).

9. Disregard for mutual happiness.

10. Seeing the Self in all and serving all as oneself

Assignments

1. Discuss the distinction made between external pleasures and inner happiness in Sree Narayana Guru's teachings. Why is true happiness said to come from within?

2. Analyse the ethical dimension of happiness as expressed in Verse 22 of Atmopadesa Œatakam. How does this verse reflect the idea of mutual joy (svakiya-priyam and parapriya)?

3. How does Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy address the modern youth's

pursuit of success, wealth, and comfort? What does he identify as the ultimate goal behind all pursuits?

4. Describe how the sense organs, mind, and inner Self interact in the pursuit of happiness according to the Guru's teaching. What role does harmony among them play?

Suggested Reading

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UNIT

Freedom

Learning Outcomes

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

- freedom is inner, arising from self-awareness and letting go of false identities
- happiness is our natural state as pure Consciousness, independent of circumstances
- knowing the Self enables free, harmonious living without inner bondage

Prerequisite

In today's world, freedom is commonly understood in terms of political rights, civil liberties, or economic independence. While these external forms of freedom are valuable, they do not address the deeper human need for inner liberation. Despite living in politically free nations or achieving financial success, many individuals continue to feel anxious, dissatisfied, or bound. This is because true freedom goes beyond societal structures; it lies in psychological, emotional, and spiritual release from inner bondage. The deeper truth, often overlooked, is that most of our bondage is self-created, rooted in mistaken identifications and the illusion that happiness lies outside ourselves. To understand and attain real freedom, we must turn inward and discover our true nature.

Keywords

Happiness, Consciousness, Human dignity, Harmony, Self-discovery

Discussion

The concept of freedom has been a central concern in both Western and Eastern philosophical traditions. In modern political philosophy, freedom is primarily understood as the condition that allows individuals to act autonomously, without external restraint or oppression. Thinkers such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, and Karl Marx have offered diverse interpretations of freedom, linking it variously with natural rights, social contract, individual liberty, and economic equality. For modern political thought, freedom is a political and social ideal that guarantees human dignity, democratic participation, and the protection of civil rights. It is often defined in two interrelated forms—freedom from external control (negative liberty) and freedom to realize one's potential (positive liberty).

Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy, though rooted in spiritual and moral foundations, presents a profound and complementary understanding of freedom. For Guru, true freedom (mukti or swatantrya) is not merely political or social emancipation but liberation of the mind and soul from ignorance, egoism, and moral impurities. He viewed external freedom as incomplete without inner freedom. In his view, political liberty must be accompanied by self-knowledge, ethical living, and compassion for all beings. The realization of the self as one with the universal consciousness is the ultimate form of freedom. Thus, in Guru's philosophy, freedom becomes both an individual and collective pursuit—freedom from bondage of caste, religion, and inequality, and freedom for universal love, unity, and peace.

While modern political thinkers emphasize institutional and structural mechanisms for ensuring liberty, Sree Narayana Guru highlights the moral and spiritual dimensions of human freedom. His message of "One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man" is a declaration of universal freedom that transcends social hierarchies and religious divisions. Guru's conception of freedom integrates external justice with internal transformation, suggesting that social liberation must begin with moral awakening and self-purification. This holistic vision connects personal autonomy with social responsibility and inner realization with outward harmony.

Therefore, a comparative study between modern political philosophies and Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy reveals both convergence and divergence in their understanding of freedom. While modern thought views freedom primarily as a socio-political right, Guru interprets it as a spiritual condition leading to peace, equality, and universal brotherhood. Both, however, share a common aspiration—to create conditions in which the individual and society may live in dignity, harmony, and truth.

In the modern world, the idea of freedom is often equated with political rights or economic independence. Nations struggle for political sovereignty, individuals fight for civil rights, and societies aspire for prosperity through economic development. While these aspects of freedom are important, they do not capture the whole meaning of what it truly means to be free. Despite progress in these external fields, many individuals still feel deeply bound, dissatisfied, or anxious. Why does this happen? Because the deeper levels of human freedom, psychological, emotional, existential, and spiritual, are often ignored.

The root of this confusion lies in the dominance of political and economic interests in modern thought. These are tangible and

measurable, so they easily become the focus of both personal and collective ambition. However, the overemphasis on them has led to a narrow understanding of human life. True freedom is much more than voting rights, job security, or financial success. It involves being free at all levels of life, free in mind, heart, and spirit. When we examine closely, we find that most of the bondage we experience is self-imposed and arises from mistaken identifications.

What do we really want to be free from bondage? And what is bondage? It is the state of being tied to something, dependent on something, or limited by something. Bondage happens when we start identifying ourselves with what we are not. This includes family, community, religion, nationality, culture, institutions, and even personal preferences and habits. These identifications are not wrong by themselves, but when we believe that our happiness depends on them, we become bound by them.

It all starts from a subtle illusion: that our happiness lies outside ourselves. We are taught by society, education, and culture that we will be happy if we possess certain things, achieve a certain status, or belong to certain groups. Slowly, we begin to depend emotionally and psychologically on these external factors. We think: "My happiness comes from my family," or "I must succeed in this job or I will be nothing," or "My religion or caste defines who I am." In each case, we become tied to that external source and lose our inner freedom. This is how a human being, though born free, becomes a prisoner of his own mind. He lives in chains of his own making, chains made of desires, fears, beliefs, and social expectations. Modern life, with its constant competition and comparison, only strengthens these chains. Thus, despite all apparent freedom, most people live as though enslaved worrying constantly, reacting emotionally, and feeling incomplete.

Is it possible to break free from this web of illusions and identifications? Yes, it is. But not through running away from the world or rejecting society. Real freedom is not geographical or social. It is psychological and spiritual. The first step is to recognise the root cause of bondage: the mistaken belief that our happiness depends on something or someone outside us. Ask yourself honestly: Were you not born alone? Will you not die alone? Then why not learn to live in your essential aloneness too? This doesn't mean loneliness or isolation. It means inner independence a freedom that exists even when you are in the middle of society, doing your duties, fulfilling your roles. This inner freedom is possible only when you stop identifying yourself with what you are not and start identifying yourself with your real nature.

And what is your real nature? It is pure Consciousness, self-luminous, ever-contented, undivided, and free. You are not the body, the name, the role, or the personality. You are the witnessing Awareness that experiences all of these. When you truly realise this, the source of your happiness is no longer outside; you realise that happiness is your very nature. This is the wisdom of the sages: "Know thyself and be free." Real freedom is not attained by fighting external battles, but by gaining knowledge of the self. This is not book knowledge or academic learning. It is a deep inner realisation of what you truly are. Once you awaken to this truth, your relationship with the world changes. You stop clinging to people and things as sources of happiness. Instead, you relate to them in freedom and love, without dependence or fear.

One who is free in this way can live fully in the world, engaging with people, fulfilling duties, and participating in society, without becoming bound. He becomes a witness, an instrument, a participant—not a prisoner. His work becomes a natural expression of his unique nature, not a burden or compulsion.

Even pain and loss do not disturb him deeply, for he knows he is not defined by external events. Once self-knowledge is attained, a new path opens up. You begin to live as a unique expression of the One Reality. You realise that behind all beings and all forms, there is only one essence pure Being or Consciousness. You are not separate from it. Your life, then, is a creative unfolding of that infinite Reality.

Just as each wave is an expression of the ocean, you too are a unique expression of the total Reality. Discover what makes you unique your talents, qualities, interests, and inclinations. This is not ego-building, but self-discovery. Choose a vocation, a lifestyle, and a path that expresses your true nature. When your actions match your inner nature, there is harmony, energy, and joy. This alignment is essential for a truly free life. However, you must also remember that everything happens as part of the whole. Your actions are not truly 'yours'; they are part of Nature's grand play. You are merely an instrument through which the universal force expresses itself. This awareness frees you from pride, guilt, worry, and attachment to results. It gives you the ability to act without inner bondage—without fear or craving.

To be liberated, you do not have to abandon the world. Liberation is possible right in the midst of life. The key is self-awareness, detachment, and deep inner clarity. Know that your essential nature is untouched by events. Know that your happiness is not something to be acquired it is to be uncovered from within. Know that all actions are part of a greater Whole and that you are a conscious participant in it. When you live with this understanding, you are no longer affected by success or failure, praise or blame. You are no longer a slave to fear, anxiety, or insecurity. You are inwardly free, even as you move through the challenges of life. You become like the lotus leaf that remains untouched by water, even while floating on it. Such freedom is the ultimate goal of life not as a vague ideal, but as a living reality. The sages of old discovered it, lived it, and taught it. Now, it is for each of us to rediscover it in our own way, in our own time.

Recap

- True freedom goes beyond politics and economics—it includes inner psychological and spiritual freedom.
- True freedom is inner freedom, not just political or economic.
- Bondage comes from thinking happiness depends on externals.
- Seeking happiness outside traps us in inner bondage.
- True freedom comes from inner independence, not withdrawal from life.
- Freedom is realising you are pure Consciousness and happiness is within.
- A self-realised person lives freely, unaffected by the world, as the one Reality's

- Freedom is living your true nature as an instrument of the whole.
- Liberation is inner freedom amidst life's changes.

Objective Questions

1. What is the root cause of bondage?
2. What kind of freedom does the passage describe as most important?
3. What is the first step toward real freedom?
4. How does one relate to work after attaining self-knowledge?
5. What attitude results from the awareness that one is part of Nature's grand play?
6. What is the ultimate goal of life according to the passage?

Answers

1. Mistaken identification with what we are not
2. Psychological and spiritual freedom
3. Recognising that happiness does not depend on external factors
4. As an expression of their true nature
5. Freedom from attachment to results
6. Attaining inward freedom through self-realisation

Assignments

1. Describe the difference between external freedom and inner freedom as explained in the passage. Why is inner freedom considered more essential?

2. Discuss how mistaken identifications lead to inner bondage. What are some common identifications people fall into?

3. Explain the concept of "real nature" or pure consciousness as mentioned in the passage. How does realising this help us attain true freedom?

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Emotion

Learning Outcomes

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

- compare Indian and Western views on emotion
- explain how emotions can harm or liberate
- analyse emotions as embodied, value-based experiences

Prerequisite

To fully engage with the comparative exploration of emotions in Indian and Western philosophical traditions, readers should have a foundational understanding of key philosophical concepts and terms from both traditions. In Indian philosophy, familiarity with concepts such as puruṣa (pure consciousness), prakṛti (nature), guṇas (qualities of nature), mokṣa (liberation), dharma (moral duty), bhakti (devotion), and rasa (aesthetic experience) is essential. Awareness of major schools like Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Advaita Vedānta, and Bhakti traditions helps contextualise the emotional framework within metaphysical and spiritual goals. Similarly, a basic grasp of Western philosophical ideas, including Stoicism, Romanticism, cognitivism, and contemporary emotion theories (such as appraisal theory, neo-Jamesian models, and narrative ethics), is necessary to appreciate how Western thought has addressed the role of emotion in ethics, rationality, and identity. Additionally, a general understanding of modern psychology, particularly how emotions are defined in terms of physiological arousal, cognitive appraisal, and expressive behaviour, provides a useful background. With these prerequisites, readers can better appreciate how Indian and Western traditions offer distinct yet complementary insights into the nature and ethical significance of emotional life.

Keywords

Universal love, Empathy, Ethical emotions, Freedom, Self-inquiry, Bhāva, Vikāra, Vedanā, Rasa

Discussion

Introduction

The concept of emotion occupies a vital place in both Indian and Western philosophical traditions, as it concerns the fundamental nature of human experience and behavior. Emotions influence moral judgment, social relations, and spiritual life, making them an essential subject of philosophical inquiry. In Western philosophy, emotion has been viewed from psychological, ethical, and metaphysical perspectives. Thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, and Kant explored emotions as forces that either aid or obstruct rational thought. While Plato and Kant regarded emotions as potential distractions from reason and moral duty, Aristotle and Spinoza emphasized their role in achieving moral balance and human flourishing. In modern Western thought, emotions are often seen as integral to personal authenticity, empathy, and moral sensitivity.

In contrast, Indian philosophy interprets emotion (bhava) as a natural expression of human consciousness that can either bind or liberate the individual, depending on one's awareness and control. The classical systems of Yoga and Vedanta view emotions as modifications (vrittis) of the mind, which must be disciplined through self-knowledge and meditation to attain inner peace (chitta shuddhi). The Bhakti tradition, however, transforms emotion into a path of spiritual realization—devotion (bhakti) becomes purified emotion directed toward the Divine. Thus, Indian thought does not condemn emotions but seeks their sublimation, harmonizing feeling with reason and spirituality.

Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy offers a unique synthesis of these approaches. He recognized emotion as a natural and vital force within human life, capable of guiding individuals toward self-realization when refined by moral purity and wisdom. Guru emphasized that unregulated emotions such as anger, greed, and hatred are sources of bondage and suffering, while emotions like love, compassion, and kindness lead to liberation and happiness. His vision of emotional life is deeply ethical and spiritual—rooted in the realization of oneness among all beings. For Guru, the highest emotion is universal love (viswa sneham), which transcends personal attachments and expresses the unity of humanity with the divine.

A comparative study of Indian and Western perspectives with Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy reveals a harmonious convergence: while Western thinkers analyzed emotion through reason and ethics, Indian philosophy spiritualized it, and Guru integrated both views. His teaching transforms emotion from a source of instability into a medium of enlightenment and social harmony. In this synthesis, the emotional and rational dimensions of human life are balanced, leading to self-control, compassion, and universal peace.

6.3.1 Emotions in Indian and Western Philosophical Thought

The concept of emotion in modern psychology and Western philosophy is generally defined as a subjective mental

state involving physiological arousal, cognitive appraisal, and expressive behaviour. Emotions are often approached as internal experiences that influence moral decision-making, rationality, and personal identity. However, this conception does not directly align with Indian philosophical traditions, which engage with emotional experience through a range of distinct but interrelated terms such as bhāva (disposition or feeling), vedanā (affective tone or sensation), vikāra (disturbance or transformation), and rasa (aesthetic sentiment). Rather than isolating emotions as mere mental events, Indian systems view them as deeply embedded within metaphysical, ethical, and spiritual frameworks.

6.3.2 Indian Thought: Embodied and Ethical Emotions

In Indian philosophy, emotions are seen as manifestations of embodied consciousness, emerging from the interaction between mind (manas), body (śarīra), society, and cosmic order (ṛta). Emotional states are not merely psychological phenomena but are linked to karma (action and consequence), dharma (moral duty), and mokṣa (liberation). Thus, emotional life can either lead one toward spiritual bondage or become a transformative pathway to insight and freedom.

In dualistic systems such as Sāṃkhya and Yoga, the self (puruṣa) is pure, unchanging consciousness, while emotions belong to prakṛti, the realm of change. Emotions are understood as modifications of the mind (citta-vṛttis), shaped by the interplay of the three guṇasm sattva (clarity), rajas (passion), and tamas (inertia). Liberation involves cultivating sattva and diminishing rajas and tamas, thereby refining emotional life into clarity and equanimity. Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras describe this goal as the cessation of mental fluctuations (citta-vṛtti-nirodha), achieved through the aṣṭāṅga yoga path: ethical disciplines, bodily postures, breath regulation, sensory withdrawal, concentration, meditation, and absorption. Emotional transformation here is not repression but refinement aligning feeling with awareness and stillness.

In Advaita Vedānta, emotions are understood as products of avidyā (ignorance) and false identification with the body-mind complex. The true self (ātman) is changeless and unaffected, while emotional disturbances belong to the empirical self (jīva) trapped in saṃsāra. Liberation (mokṣa) is attained through self-inquiry (ātma-vicāra) and realisation of non-dual awareness (Brahman), wherein emotions are neither indulged nor suppressed but transcended as illusory modifications of the mind.

Yet, Indian traditions are not uniformly renunciatory. In both aesthetic and devotional paths, emotions are positively valorized. The Rasa theory, developed in Nāṭyaśāstra and expanded by Abhinavagupta, articulates how emotions such as love, valour, sorrow, and tranquillity can be transformed into rasa, a universalised aesthetic experience. Through art, music, and performance, emotions are refined and uplifted, fostering moral sensitivity and spiritual resonance.

Similarly, Bhakti traditions including Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, and Śāktism celebrate emotional devotion as the core of spiritual life. Emotions like longing, ecstasy, grief, and surrender are seen as vehicles of divine communion. Saints such as Mīrābāī, Caitanya, and Nammāḻvār expressed sacred emotions through poetry and music, turning emotional vulnerability into instruments of transcendence. Even the pain of separation (viraha) from the Divine is rendered spiritually ennobling.

Indian thought also posits an integrated psychology, in which manas (mind), citta (mind-heart continuum), and buddhi (intellect) work together, blending cognition

and emotion. Ethical emotions such as compassion (karuṇā), friendliness (maitrī), sympathetic joy (muditā), and equanimity (upekṣā) are essential in Yoga and Buddhist practice. Emotional regulation is thus not only a matter of psychological refinement but also a cosmic imperative, aligning the individual with dharma, ṛta, and the path to liberation.

6.3.3 Western Philosophy: Rationality, Value, and Perception

In contrast, Western philosophical traditions have historically struggled with the place of emotion in moral and rational life. In ancient Greek thought, both Stoics and Epicureans considered emotions as irrational disturbances. The Stoics believed that virtue is knowledge, and emotions arise from false judgments, advocating emotional detachment. Similarly, Skeptics recommended the rejection of beliefs to attain peace of mind (ataraxia). However, this view was challenged by the Romantic tradition, which emphasised the constructive role of emotion in forming moral identity and individuality. Thinkers like Rousseau and Schiller saw emotion as essential to authentic human expression and moral development.

Philosophers such as Max Scheler later argued that emotions are not mere reactions but perceptions of value a view echoed by contemporary thinkers like Tappolet. Scholars like D'Arms and Jacobson contend that emotions possess their own internal criteria of appropriateness, distinct from conventional moral rules. Cognitivist approaches, dominant in the 20th century, treat emotions as evaluative judgments. Thinkers like Robert Solomon, Jesse Prinz, Ronald de Sousa, and Martha Nussbaum argue that emotions reflect structured appraisals evaluating events as admirable, threatening, or shameful. Yet critics note that such models often struggle to explain the motivational force, bodily basis, and persistence of irrational emotions.

To bridge these gaps, various hybrid theories have been proposed. Prinz's neo-Jamesian model, influenced by neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, views emotions as perceptions of bodily changes that signal environmental significance. The appraisal theories of Lazarus and Scherer integrate beliefs, desires, goals, and bodily states, while Reisenzein emphasises belief-desire dynamics in emotional arousal. Other theorists such as Robert Roberts with his concern-based model, and Bennett Helm with his intentional feeling theory highlight the personal significance of emotion, portraying feelings as revealing what matters most to us. Meanwhile, de Sousa and Richard Rorty introduce a narrative dimension, arguing that emotions are shaped through "paradigm scenarios" shared cultural scripts that define emotional norms.

Motivational theories treat emotions as drivers of action-readiness. From Basic Emotion Theory (Tomkins, Ekman) to behavioural ecology and enactivism, emotions are viewed as embodied, context-sensitive responses evolved for survival and social interaction. Emotions here are not fixed entities but dynamic constructs, shaped through continuous interaction with the environment and society.

6.3.4 Toward a Synthesis: Emotion as Embodied Meaning

Despite their distinct origins, both Indian and Western philosophical traditions converge in recognizing that emotions are not merely irrational disruptions, but rather meaning-ful, value-laden, and embodied experiences. Indian philosophy integrates emotion into a broader ontological and soteriological frame-work, treating emotional transformation as an essential component of liberation (mokṣa).

Western thought, especially in its recent philosophical and psychological developments, increasingly acknowledges the cognitive, affective, cultural, and motivational dimensions of emotion, thus moving beyond the reason-emotion dichotomy. Both traditions affirm the ethical and aesthetic significance of emotion, whether through rasa theory or narrative ethics, bhakti or moral imagination. Emotions can be either ethically disruptive or transformative, depending on how they are cultivated, interpreted, and situated within a life-project. They shape not only personal identity but also our shared moral and cultural worlds. In essence, emotions, whether seen as tools for liberation, perceptions of value, or embodied narratives, are central to what it means to live a meaningful human life. Indian and Western philosophies, when read together, offer complementary insights into the complexity, depth, and possibility of emotional life as a pathway to wisdom, ethics, and self-realisation.

Recap

Objective Questions

1. In Indian philosophy, which term refers to aesthetic sentiment?
2. Which Indian philosophicakl school regards emotions as modifications of the mind (citta-vṛttis)?
3. According to Advaita Vedânta, emotional disturbances are due to:
4. Which Western philosopher is known for arguing that emotions are perceptions of value?
5. The Stoic view of emotion regards it as:
6. Who developed the 'paradigm scenarios' theory of emotion?

Answers

1. Rasa
2. Yoga
3. Avidyâ (ignorance)
4. Max Scheler
5. An irrational disturbance caused by false judgment
6. Ronald de Sousa

Assignments

1. Compare the treatment of emotions in Indian spiritual systems (like Yoga and Advaita) with modern Western theories such as appraisal and narrative theories. What do they reveal about the nature and function of emotion in human life?
2. Discuss the role of emotion in moral and spiritual transformation using examples from both Indian (e.g., Bhakti or Rasa theory) and Western (e.g., Scheler, Nussbaum, Rorty) philosophies.

3. Emotions have been viewed as both obstacles and pathways to liberation or ethical life. Critically evaluate this dual role of emotion from the perspectives of Sâṃkhya-Yoga and contemporary Western moral psychology.

4. Using Indian concepts such as bhâva, rasa, karuṇâ, and mokṣa, explore how Indian thought constructs an integrated emotional life that blends cognition, affect, and spirituality.

5. How do Indian and Western philosophical traditions view the relationship between emotion and identity? In what ways can emotions be seen as central to the project of self-realisation?

Suggested Reading

1. Narayanaprasad, S. M. (2024). *Pure Philosophy Simplified for Youth*, Kerala: DK Printworld.

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UNIT

Religion and Prayer

Learning Outcomes

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

- explain why humans naturally form religious or belief systems, even without formal religion
- recognise that all religions aim for harmony with Reality and human happiness
- understand Sree Narayana Guru's inclusive, non-sectarian approach and focus on unity and self-realisation
- differentiate between selfish prayer and selfless prayer aligned with universal truth
- appreciate shared insights of spiritual and scientific perspectives on unity and compassion

Prerequisite

Religion, in its essence, is not merely a set of rituals or beliefs tied to a particular tradition it is a deeply human response to the mystery of life and the search for meaning. Regardless of whether one adheres to a formal faith or identifies as an atheist, the impulse to seek purpose, harmony, and happiness reveals a spiritual dimension that transcends all labels. This universal tendency is rooted in the unique nature of human beings: we are not only conscious of our existence but are also capable of reflection, intention, and the pursuit of goals. One of the most profound insights about religion lies in its capacity to bridge the apparent conflict between human freedom and the deterministic course of Nature. While we are free to choose our aims and actions, we remain subject to forces beyond our control, such as birth, death, and the unpredictability of life. This tension between autonomy and helplessness creates a

spiritual gap that religion seeks to fill. Rather than attempting to dominate Nature, mature religious thought invites individuals to harmonise their personal will with the universal order whether called God, Nature, or Truth. Sree Narayana Guru, the visionary Indian philosopher and spiritual reformer, emphasised that all religions, despite their outward differences, ultimately point to the same truth: the realisation of inner unity and self-fulfilment. In his inclusive vision, the true essence of religion is not found in dogma, division, or blind ritual, but in the pursuit of lasting peace, wisdom, and compassion through self-awareness and shared humanity.

Keywords

Religion, Prayer, Rational Mind, Inner Spirituality, Spiritual liberation, Prophetic, Non-Prophetic, .

Discussion

Introduction

Religion and prayer occupy a central place in the spiritual and philosophical vision of Sree Narayana Guru, one of the most enlightened reformers and thinkers of modern India. Guru redefined the meaning of religion, freeing it from ritualistic practices, sectarian divisions, and blind faith. For him, true religion was not confined to temples, texts, or ceremonies, but was rooted in the realization of truth, love, and unity. He proclaimed the message "One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man," emphasizing that religion should unite, not divide, humanity. In Guru's view, religion is a path to self-knowledge and moral perfection—a means to realize the divine within oneself and in all beings.

Sree Narayana Guru saw religion as a universal and ethical way of life rather than a system of dogmas or institutions. He believed that all religions point toward the same ultimate truth and that the essence of every faith lies in compassion, righteousness, and selfless service. His reformation of temple worship and religious practice in Kerala symbolized a shift from external ritualism to inner spirituality. By consecrating mirrors and inscriptions like "Truth, Ethics, Compassion, and Love" in temples, Guru sought to convey that God resides within the purified heart and not merely in idols or structures. Thus, religion, for him, was a living experience of truth and moral consciousness.

Prayer, in Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy, is not a mere recitation of words or a request for material gains but a meditative process of inner purification and communion with the divine. He interpreted prayer as an act of self-surrender, self-discipline, and awakening of divine consciousness. Through sincere prayer, an individual attains peace, humility, and spiritual strength. It is a means of aligning one's thoughts, emotions, and actions with truth and virtue. Guru taught that true prayer should lead to moral transformation and service to humanity, for serving others is the highest form of worship.

In essence, the concepts of religion and prayer in Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy transcend narrow boundaries and emphasize universal values. They integrate the ethical, spiritual, and social dimensions of human life,

making religion a force for unity, equality, and peace. Guru's vision continues to inspire the idea of a religion that harmonizes faith with reason, devotion with morality, and prayer with active compassion—a timeless path toward human and spiritual liberation.

6.4.1. Understanding Religion and Sree Narayana Guru's Vision

In today's world, almost everyone has some kind of religious identity, even if they do not realise it. A person may not belong to any specific religion or may even be against organised religion. Still, in a subtle way, they show signs of being religious. This identity seems to come naturally, yet it is not something we are born with. The answer lies in the special nature of human beings. Humans are thinking animals. Among all living creatures, only human beings seem to have religion. This is because only humans think deeply about life. We reflect on questions like: "What is the purpose of my life?" Based on our thinking, we form ideas right or wrong about what our goal in life should be. Once we have a goal, we begin to work toward it. This goal-seeking nature sets human beings apart from all other animals. Other animals simply live their lives, but humans try to lead their lives in a certain direction. We live with a sense of purpose. The direction we choose is based on the goal we have in mind. And importantly, everyone is free to choose this goal.

To reach a goal, we also need to choose the right means or method. This involves effort. So, human beings not only choose a goal freely, but also choose the way to reach it. If we are not free to choose our goal or the means to reach it, our life loses meaning. In short, life becomes meaningful when we can freely choose both our purpose and our path. This deep need for freedom is natural for human beings—it is part of who we are. However, this is only one side of the story. There is another side to human life. We are not completely free, because our lives are part of Nature. The events that happen in our lives are often beyond our control. While we may set a goal and make an effort, whether we succeed or not depends on how things unfold in Nature. We have no power over many things that affect us.

So, human beings live in a strange situation. On one hand, we feel free to choose and act. On the other hand, we are totally dependent on Nature. This creates a conflict between freedom and helplessness. To live a happy life, we must find a way to bring these two sides our freedom and Nature's control into harmony. We often try to find this harmony in our daily lives. For example, when someone asks, "How are you?" they are actually wondering whether things are going well for us whether our efforts are succeeding in line with Nature's course. Now the question is: how do we bring our will into harmony with Nature's will? There are three possible ways: Try to make Nature follow our will, try to raise our will to match Nature's will, or try to meet halfway. But we know that we have no control over Nature's will. So the first option is impossible. Even meeting halfway is not possible because we can't control Nature even partly. That leaves us with only one choice: raising our own will to match the unknown will of Nature.

We can control our own actions and intentions. By changing the way we think and act, we can bring ourselves in tune with the flow of Nature. In Sanskrit, the element of chance or fate in Nature is called daivam, and the effort made by human beings is called pauruṣam. The Mahābhārata, the great Indian epic, says that true fulfilment in life comes when daivam and pauruṣam come together in balance. This combination of destiny and effort gives life its meaning. This conflict between human effort and the unknown forces of Nature creates a gap in human life. Religion steps in to help us bridge this gap.

Both believers and non-believers feel this need in some way. Religion offers guidance about the ultimate Reality whether we call it God, Nature, or Truth. It also teaches us how-to live-in line with that Reality, by controlling and guiding our intentions and actions. Although all religions aim to serve this purpose, they follow different paths to reach it.

There are two types of religions: prophetic and non-prophetic. Prophetic religions include Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. They are based on the teachings of prophets special individuals believed to be messengers of God. In these religions, God revealed the Truth to the prophets, along with instructions for how humans should live. The prophets then taught these truths to others and encouraged people to follow God's commandments. Following these commandments is seen as a way to live in harmony with God's will or Nature's flow.

Non-prophetic religions include Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Taoism, and Shintoism. These religions were founded on the wisdom of enlightened teachers and seers. Many of them remain unknown. A special case is the Buddha, whose life is well known. However, he never claimed to be a prophet or messenger of God. Instead, he is called "Buddha," which means "the Enlightened One."

Prophetic religions rely on faith or belief. They ask followers to trust in the revelations of the prophets. In contrast, non-prophetic religions depend more on reasoning and personal understanding. These traditions encourage people to become aware of the one universal Reality that exists in both Nature and the individual. When a person realises that both they and Nature are expressions of the same Reality, the conflict between human will and Nature disappears. The person no longer feels separate from the world. This harmony happens naturally without any effort—when one attains deep wisdom.

Whether they are prophetic or non-prophetic, all religions teach the same core Truth. All the masters, prophets, and seers saw the same Reality behind life. Since life, the world, and the ultimate goal of human beings are one, what they saw and taught was essentially the same. The differences between religions are only in the languages they used, the stories and examples they gave, the cultures they came from, and the people they addressed. These are only outer differences. The inner message is the same. The core purpose of all religions is the same: to improve human life and to bring happiness. This happiness comes when the will of the individual is in harmony with the will of the total Reality, whether we call it God, Nature, or Truth.

Sadly, we often see fighting between religious groups. But such conflicts never came from the prophets or spiritual teachers. All of them taught love, peace, and unity. It is a shame that religions, which teach love and compassion, have sometimes led to hatred and conflict. Religious conflicts are not battles between good and evil; they are conflicts between good and good. Every religion is good in itself. One religion cannot destroy another. Only the people who fight may suffer and perish.

Once we understand this, we can step away from religious hatred and rivalry. We can begin to see the common message behind all religions. This helps us live peacefully and happily in the world. We remain unique individuals, but we also feel connected to the whole of humanity and Nature. Just as we can live as happy individuals who respect other faiths, we can also live as responsible citizens of the world, even while being loyal to our own nations. In modern life, this global outlook has become essential.

Even those who do not believe in religion or God must accept that life must be lived in

tune with Nature's flow. This is a truth that all religions try to express. So, even non-believers and atheists are religious in their own way. They, too, search for happiness and try to teach others how to achieve it. For example, Marxists, who reject religion and belief in God, still believe that a person finds happiness by becoming one with society. In their view, the state or society represents the total order like Nature. Similarly, atheists believe that reasoning power alone can bring happiness. This ability to reason is a universal human quality. But even this belief is not scientifically proven. It is still just a belief just like belief in God. In the end, people, whether religious or not, hold some kind of belief. All these beliefs aim at one thing: to find happiness in life.

This inclusive, deeper view of religion finds a powerful expression in the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru, a visionary Advaitin (non-dualist) who saw all religious paths as expressions of the One Absolute Reality. For him, religion is not an end in itself but a means to realise the inner unity and attain Self-happiness (Ātma-sukham). His concept of religion transcends dogma, ritual, and sectarian identity, focusing instead on universal human values and the essential unity behind diverse religious expressions. According to Guru, all religions ultimately aim at the happiness and fulfilment of the Self. In Ātmopadeśa Śatakam (verses 44–49), he emphasises that although faiths appear different externally, their essence is the same. Verse 49 clearly states that all beings are always striving for happiness; this search itself is the true religion. Thus, the essence of all religions is one and the same: the pursuit of bliss or Self-realisation.

Guru viewed religion as a relative way to reach the Absolute Truth, not as the ultimate end. Conflicts arise when people identify with outer forms and fail to understand the core purpose of religion. Instead of clinging to beliefs and customs, one must focus on the higher value that every religion points to unity with the Self or God. Narayana Guru uses terms like Ātma, Arivu (awareness), Karu (primordial cause), and God to refer to the One Supreme Reality. Religions are relevant only when a person seeks to consciously relate to this Reality. Religious differences are only superficial, rooted in partial understanding. In verse 44, he compares religious disputes to blind men describing an elephant each seeing only a part and missing the whole.

Guru rejected the idea that one religion is superior to another. In verse 45, he points out that each religion criticises others based on limited perspectives. He opposed religious conversion campaigns and sectarian pride. Instead, he advocated learning from each other with mutual respect. His well-known statement was: "Whichever the religion, it suffices if it makes a man better." He emphasised a Unitive (Advaitic) approach to religion, where differences are harmonised in the vision of the One. This vertical approach resolves dualities and promotes peace. He called for spiritual regeneration by cultivating intuitive understanding and self-awareness, beyond dogma or ritual.

His religious ideal was inclusive, non-sectarian, and universal. He organised the historic All Religions Conference at Alwaye in 1924, inviting representatives of all faiths to learn from each other not to argue and win, but to "know and let know." He also envisioned a Mata Mahapathashala (Great School of Religion) at Sivagiri to teach all religions, promoting mutual understanding and human unity. Guru did not just preach unity but lived it. In 1888, he founded an ideal casteless society at Aruvippuram, where he installed a Śiva Liṅga for all to worship, breaking caste barriers. He proclaimed: "We meet here without walls of caste or race or hatred of rival faith." This action was a concrete expression of his religious vision a society free from discrimination and united

by love and truth.

6.4.2 Prayer: A Universal Expression of Human Aspiration

Prayer is an essential and age-old practice found in every religion across the world. From ancient times to the present day, people have turned inward in prayer to seek comfort, strength, understanding, or guidance. Interestingly, even those who do not follow any specific religion, often called agnostics or atheists, also engage in acts that resemble prayer. While they may not address a deity, their heartfelt wishes for goodness, peace, or well-being express a similar inner yearning. These expressions may be spoken aloud or whispered silently within. In such cases, who or what is expected to fulfil these wishes? Since no personal God is invoked, the answer seems to be an unknown force perhaps something as vast and impersonal as Nature itself. In this way, all prayer, whether religious or secular, suggests a belief, conscious or unconscious, in a greater power or order that governs life.

However, for many, prayer becomes an appeal for personal favours. People pray to pass an exam, to get a promotion, to win love, or to avoid suffering. The subtle assumption behind such prayer is that human beings can decide what should happen in their lives, while God or some higher force is expected to implement those wishes. But this reverses the deeper spirit of prayer. If one believes that God or Nature governs all that happens, then a mature prayer would not demand that things happen according to one's personal will. Rather, it would be a humble acceptance of the divine order. Such a prayer might say:

"O Dear God (or Nature), let Thy will be done. Grant me the wisdom to understand and follow Thy will with a peaceful heart."

In such a prayer, the one who prays the small and limited "I" seeks to align itself with the vast, infinite "I," the universal or cosmic consciousness. The essence of a principled prayer is not to bend the universe to personal desires, but to dissolve one's ego in the higher will or universal truth. If any request is made at all, it should not be selfish or limited. It should express a noble desire perhaps for the well-being of all, for collective peace, or for the light of understanding to dawn in all hearts. This shift from ego-centred prayer to selfless prayer is a mark of spiritual maturity.

Human beings, broadly speaking, tend to incline toward one of two types of thinking. Some are naturally religious in temperament. They are guided by emotion, faith, and devotion, and are comfortable embracing the unseen with reverence and love. Others are scientific in outlook. They are drawn to reason, evidence, and critical inquiry. At first glance, these two paths may appear to diverge. But when we look at the lives and insights of the greatest minds whether saints or scientists—we find an astonishing harmony in their conclusions about life, happiness, and truth. Both paths, when pursued sincerely, lead to a deep recognition of unity, compassion, and the limitations of ego.

In the spirit of this shared wisdom, let us explore two concluding reflections one from a devotional perspective, the other from a rational, scientific view. The first is a poetic prayer inspired by a work of Sree Narayana Guru, the great philosopher-saint of India. The second is a profound insight from Albert Einstein, one of the most celebrated scientists of the modern age.

6.4.2.1 A Prayer for the Devout: Inspired by Sree Narayana Guru's Daiva Dasakam

Sree Narayana Guru composed Daiva Dasakam ("Ten Verses to God") for the children and students at Sivagiri Mutt and Advaita Ashram, Kerala. Though rooted in the Advaita philosophy (which teaches oneness and often goes beyond personal prayer), the Guru wrote this prayer for spiritual seekers who needed a personal, heartfelt connection with the Divine. What makes this prayer special is its universal spirit. It does not beg for personal gain but prays for the well-being of all. It aligns with all religions and encourages the devotee to grow in knowledge, humility, and devotion.

The first verse of Daiva Dasakam beautifully expresses the idea of life as a vast ocean, filled with challenges. God is imagined as the captain of a ship a wise guide who steers us across the ocean of life. The ship is the divine word especially the teachings in the Bhagavad Gita which helps us cross this sea safely. The word "God" (from the root Div, meaning "to shine") represents Knowledge. Sree Narayana Guru believed that God is the shining light of wisdom. Thus, prayer is asking this divine light to illuminate our minds, remove ignorance, and guide us through the storms of life.

Many people feel life is full of suffering and confusion, like being lost at sea. In this sea, we need a captain (God or Guru), and a ship (spiritual teachings) to reach the shore of peace. Just like a drowning person needs a lifeboat, we need the grace of knowledge to rescue us from ignorance, fear, and ego. The word padam in the verse is sometimes misunderstood as "feet," but it really means "word" or "teaching." While bowing to the feet of the Guru is a symbol of reverence, the real purpose is to receive the Guru's wisdom. A Guru is not just a teacher but one who has realised the truth and helps us discover the divine knowledge within ourselves.

The aim of prayer and spiritual practice is not just temporary comfort, but the attainment of Supreme Knowledge the knowledge of the Self or Brahman. According to the Kaṭhopaniṣad, this knowledge is captured in the sacred sound AUM (Pranava), which contains the entire essence of the Vedas. This knowledge is like a powerful ship that takes us beyond suffering and ignorance to liberation (moksha). Daiva Dasakam, though simple in words, leads us toward this highest knowledge. The prayer ends with the wish: "Let us stay submerged always in the deep ocean of Your eternal knowledge, O God. Let us live a full and meaningful life."

6.4.2.2 A Reflection for the Rational Mind:From Albert Einstein

For those who do not believe in God in a traditional way but seek truth through reason, the words of Albert Einstein offer a profound spiritual insight, grounded in science: "A human being is part of the whole, called by us 'Universe,' a part limited in time and space. We now experience ourselves, our thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest... a kind of optical delusion of our consciousness. This delusion is a prison for us." Einstein believed that our sense of being separate from the rest of the universe is an illusion caused by our limited perspective. This illusion creates isolation, selfishness, and suffering. But in reality, we are not separate from the world we are all deeply connected to one another and to Nature.

He further said: "Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of Nature in her beauty." Even though Einstein did not speak

in religious terms, his message is close to the core of spiritual realisation. Whether we pray to God or seek truth through science, our deepest human goal remains the same: to overcome selfishness, grow in compassion, and live in harmony with all of life

Recap

- Most people today hold a human-made yet deep-rooted religious identity.
- Humans alone seek purposeful goals in life, shaping their direction through reflective thought.
- Life becomes meaningful when we can freely choose both our purpose and our path.
- The only choice we have is to raise our own will to match the unknown will of Nature.
- Fulfilment comes when destiny and effort are in balance.
- Prophetic religions follow prophets who share God's commands.
- Non-prophetic religions rely on enlightened teachers' wisdom.
- Realising one reality unites human will with nature.
- All religions teach the same truth harmony with reality brings happiness.
- Conflicts come from people, not prophets; every religion is good.
- Knowing the common message of religions helps us live peacefully.
- Even non-believers hold beliefs aimed at happiness.
- Narayana Guru saw all religions as paths to the One Reality.
- Guru said differences are superficial; the goal is unity with the Self.
- Guru's ideal was inclusive, promoting unity and a casteless society
- All prayer shows belief in a higher power or order.
- Mature prayer aligns with divine will, not personal wishes.
- True prayer is selfless, seeking good for all.
- Religion and science differ but agree on unity and compassion.
- Devotional and rational views both offer deep life insights.

- Daiva Dasakam is a universal prayer for all, promoting wisdom and humility.
- Its first verse shows God as a captain guiding us with divine light.
- The Guru's wisdom saves us from ignorance, fear, and ego.
- Its goal is Supreme Knowledge for liberation and a meaningful life.
- Einstein said our sense of separation is an illusion causing selfishness.
- He urged compassion for all life, uniting science and spirituality.

Objective Questions

1. According to the passage, what makes humans different from other animals?
2. What is the Sanskrit term for human effort?
3. According to the passage, why is religious identity considered natural in modern society?
4. What is the central message of all religions, according to the passage?
5. Sree Narayana Guru believed that religious differences are:
6. In the Daiva Dasakam, what does the 'ship' symbolise?
7. According to the Mahâbhârata, fulfilment in life comes from the balance between:
8. Which event was organised by Sree Narayana Guru to promote religious harmony?
9. Albert Einstein's quote suggests that:

Answers

1. Ability to reflect on life and its purpose
2. Puruṣam
3. Humans have a deep desire to find purpose and meaning
4. The pursuit of bliss or Self-realisation
5. Superficial and based on partial understanding
6. Divine teachings or wisdom
7. Daivam and Puruṣam
8. All Religions Conference at Alwaye
9. The illusion of separateness causes suffering

Assignments

1. Explain the conflict between human freedom and dependence on Nature. How does religion help resolve this conflict?
2. Discuss the difference between prophetic and non-prophetic religions. What are their respective approaches to truth and human happiness?
3. How does Sree Narayana Guru's vision of religion promote peace and unity? Give examples from his life and teachings.
4. Analyze the concept of prayer as explained in the text. How does mature prayer differ from personal or ego-based prayer?
5. Compare and contrast the religious and scientific outlooks on life as presented in the concluding reflections. How do they lead to similar insights about human happiness and unity?

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SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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Name : ……...

FIFTH SEMESTER BA PHILOSOPHY EXAMINATION

DISCIPLINE ELECTIVE - **B21PH05DE SREENARAYANAGURU DARSANA SIMPLIFIED FOR YOUTH (**CBCS - UG)

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any ten of the following questions in one word or sentence. (1x10=10)

1. Who defined philosophy as "the creation of concepts"?
2. Which branch of philosophy studies the nature of knowledge?
3. Who said that philosophy is the creation of concepts?
4. What is the central question explored in metaphysics?
5. The Sanskrit term *Ātman* refers to _____.
6. Which branch of philosophy deals with moral principles?
7. According to Sreenarayanaguru, virtue leads to _____.
8. What is meant by *Dharma* in the moral philosophy of Guru?
9. Which quality, according to Guru, purifies human life?
10. Which term denotes righteousness in action in Indian moral tradition?
11. What is the essence of Guru's teaching "One Caste, One Religion, One God"?
12. What does Sreenarayanaguru emphasise as the true basis of religion?
13. What is the highest aim of human life according to Sreenarayanaguru?
14. Which Indian philosophical concept denotes liberation from suffering?
15. What does the term *Mokṣa* literally mean?

SECTION B

Answer any ten of the following questions in one or two sentences. (2x10=20)

16. Define philosophy.
17. Name the four major branches of philosophy.
18. What is meant by 'philosophising'?
19. What is the meaning of *Āstika* and *Nāstika*?

20. Mention two heterodox schools of Indian philosophy.
21. What does the term *virtue* mean in Sreenarayanaguru's ethics?
22. Mention two features of a virtuous person.
23. What is the role of *self-control* in moral life?
24. Define *Dharma* in simple terms.
25. Mention two practical instructions given by Guru for social improvement.
26. What does Guru mean by "progress through education"?
27. What is meant by *Ahimsa*?
28. How does self-knowledge lead to liberation?
29. What is meant by "freedom from ignorance"?
30. Mention two qualities of a liberated person.

SECTION C

Answer any five of the following questions in one paragraph. (5x4=20)

31. Explain the meaning and purpose of philosophy.
32. Describe the concept of *Ātman* and *Brahman* as found in the Upaniṣads.
33. Discuss the moral foundations of Sreenarayanaguru's ethical teachings.
34. What is the importance of self-restraint (*Dama*) and compassion in morality?
35. Explain the social and ethical implications of "One Caste, One Religion, One God."
36. How does philosophy help in attaining *Mokṣa*?
37. Discuss the relationship between knowledge, virtue, and liberation.
38. Explain how Guru connects education with moral and social progress.
39. Examine the value of simplicity in Sreenarayanaguru's teaching.
40. How does Sreenarayanaguru's thought reflect harmony between reason and spirituality?

SECTION D

Answer any two of the following questions in 300 words. (2x10=20)

41. Explain the origin, meaning, and method of philosophy.
42. Discuss Sreenarayanaguru's views on the nature of the self and the world.
43. Evaluate the ethical and spiritual relevance of virtue in Guru's philosophy.
44. Critically analyse the goal of life as interpreted by Sreenarayanaguru.

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE: ……

SET-2

Reg.No:…….....
Name : ……...

FIFTH SEMESTER BA PHILOSOPHY EXAMINATION

DISCIPLINE ELECTIVE - **B21PH05DE SREENARAYANAGURU DARSANA SIMPLIFIED FOR YOUTH (**CBCS - UG)

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any ten of the following questions in one word or sentence. (1x10=10)

1. Philosophy is derived from which Greek words?
2. What is the study of reasoning called?
3. Who authored *What is Philosophy*?
4. *What is the meaning of Axiology?*
5. What does *Prajñānam Brahma* mean?
6. What is meant by *virtue* in Sreenarayanaguru's ethics?
7. Which quality is essential for a moral person according to Guru?
8. What is the literal meaning of *Dharma*?
9. Which virtue symbolises the harmony of life in Guru's thought?
10. What does *Ahimsa* signify?
11. The philosophical study of beauty and art is called _____.
12. Which teaching emphasises equality and unity of humanity?
13. The ultimate purpose of human life, according to Guru, is _____.
14. Which philosopher proposed the shift from "knowledge-inquiry" to "wisdom-inquiry"?
15. What does *metaphysics* study?

SECTION B

Answer any ten of the following questions in one or two sentences. (2x10=20)

16. What is meant by philosophy as 'love of wisdom'?
17. Mention two purposes of studying philosophy.
18. Distinguish between *Āstika* and *Nāstika*.
19. What is the concept of *Ātman* in Indian thought?
20. What does *virtue* mean?

21. Mention two characteristics of moral conduct.
22. What is the significance of *truthfulness* (*Satya*) in ethics?
23. Define *Dharma* briefly.
24. Mention two important instructions of Sreenarayanaguru for society.
25. What is the meaning of "progress through education"?
26. What is *Mokṣa*?
27. What is meant by *freedom from ignorance*?
28. Mention two qualities of a liberated person.
29. What is meant by *self-realisation*?
30. Define *spiritual freedom*.

SECTION C

Answer any five of the following questions in one paragraph. (5x4=20)

31. Explain the act of philosophising.
32. Discuss the significance of *Ātman* and *Brahman* in Vedānta.
33. Describe the moral guidelines proposed by Sreenarayanaguru.
34. How do self-control and compassion contribute to moral progress?
35. Explain Guru's social vision in the light of "One Caste, One Religion, One God."
36. How does Guru connect moral life with liberation (*Mokṣa*)?
37. Compare Guru's idea of ethical living with the Upaniṣadic ideal.
38. How does Guru's philosophy integrate knowledge and devotion?
39. Explain the importance of simplicity and humility in achieving spiritual freedom.
40. Discuss how philosophy shapes human personality and social harmony.

SECTION D

Answer any two of the following questions in 300 words. (2x10=20)

41. Discuss the meaning, nature, and method of philosophy.
42. Explain the Indian philosophical view of the self and world.
43. Evaluate the ethical and spiritual dimensions of Sreenarayanaguru's teachings.
44. Analyse the goal of life as presented in Guru's philosophy.

സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യയാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

കൂരിരുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ
സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം
സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം
നീതിവൈജയന്തി പാറണം

ശാസ്ത്രവ്യാപ്തിയെന്നുമേകണം
ജാതിഭേദമാകെ മാറണം
ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ
ജ്ഞാനകേന്ദ്രമേ ജ്വലിക്കണേ

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DON'T LET IT BE TOO LATE

SAY NO TO DRUGS

LOVE YOURSELF AND ALWAYS BE HEALTHY

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