

## **BPY 011- PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN PERSON**

### **COURSE INTRODUCTION (4 CREDITS)**

Any philosophical enquiry begins with “wonder,” with questions. This wondering involves two things: a being that wonders and something that is wondered at. The ancient Indian and Greek philosophers were taken up by the things they perceived, during the medieval times it was the concept of God; later during the Renaissance and Reformation that ushered in the next phase of philosophical thinking, especially with the philosophy of Descartes, the main object of philosophy became human being and human knowledge. Even during the ancient times human person was not completely neglected, thinkers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle tried to understand the nature of human. Philosophy of Human Person can be interpreted as a philosophical investigation into the fundamental structure and nature of human in the light of metaphysical principles. It aims at understanding the transcendent nature of human, above and beyond all appearances and environmental aspects that affect a human person.

This course has four blocks comprising of sixteen units which will provide us with relevant insights into the philosophical nature of human person.

**Block 1** introduces us to the Philosophy of Human Person, showing the development in history of the concept of ‘human.’ We also study the different approaches to the whole course.

**Block 2** deals with the origin and end of human person, highlighting the various theories and perspectives put forward by various thinkers.

**Block 3** forms the main body of the course by probing into the Nature of human person. This block deals with human person as a biological and spiritual being endowed with spiritual faculties of intellect and will.

**Block 4** probes into the nature of human person and one’s relationship with the society. It also deals with human person as inter-subjective, cultural and linguistic being, with all rights and duties.

All blocks aims at giving a clear view of how human person is looked upon from various philosophical perspectives, from ancient time to this day.

## **BLOCK 1**

The present block looks at human from a transcendental point of view. It is an interplay of both ontological and scientific aspects. Philosophy of human person raises questions regarding the nature of human person, irrespective of one's caste, race or any other social background. This enquiry has been inspired by the views of several thinkers of the past. Among the Western thinkers we have the views of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Pascal, Spinoza, Locke, Barkley, Hume, Kant, Marx, Anthropologists and Existentialists. Among the Eastern thinkers, we have the philosophies of the Upanisads, Confucianism, Buddhism, Jainism and Islam.

This block contains four units which introduce us to the philosophy of human person, the historical development of human person and different approaches to the study of human person.

**Unit 1** is on the Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Person. First of all, we define the subject matter, compare and contrast it with all other disciplines. Here, we are concerned about the methods followed by this discipline, its objective and importance.

**Unit 2** studies the development of the concept of human person in the historical context. These units deal with both the eastern and western course of development. In the western tradition we begin with the Greek philosophers, then proceed to the medieval thinkers and Modern and Contemporary philosophers. In the Eastern tradition we have the philosophical concept of human person in the Upanisads, Chinese thought, Buddhism, Jainism and Islam.

**Unit 3** familiarizes us with the different approaches to the study of Human Person. This unit mainly focuses on the western perspective: Etymology and definition of 'human', the concept of life, sensation, intellection, human will, human soul, love, death and hope.

**Unit 4** probes into the nature of human by considering the Indian approaches. The Indian philosophy understands humans by placing them side by side with 'self'. "*Atmanam viddhi*," "know thyself," would be the crux of Indian approach. Within the self is the spirit, the core of our being. Human is the conscious centre of all experience. The optimistic view of human person is seen in the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and in different schools of Indian philosophy.

This block introduces us to the philosophy of human person. This enquiry has been a venture undertaken from the ancient time. But in recent times it has drawn our attention calling into

question the very identity of human threatened by the unfolding of a host of environmental and other socio-political issues.



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## UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN PERSON

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### 1.0. OBJECTIVES

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The main objective of this unit is to introduce the course in Philosophy of Human Person, a course in philosophy that helps us to understand the nature of human being. After defining what Philosophy of Human Person is, the unit deals with its distinguishing characteristics vis-à-vis other branches of Anthropology and Psychology. There are other disciplines that study human beings. Hence an attempt is made to differentiate them from Philosophy of Human Person. Different courses in philosophy make use of different methods and Philosophy of Human Person has its own method. Without going into details of the different philosophical methods, the unit examines the methods that Philosophy of Human Person employs. We have also discussed briefly the question of objectivity of this discipline. The question assumes importance when we consider the fact that any study of human person tends to become subjective. A section on the importance of this course in the overall plan of philosophy makes the unit complete. All in all, the unit enables the student to take a plunge into the world of human person from a philosophical perspective. Thus by the end of this Unit the student should be able:

to have a basic understanding of what Philosophy of Human Person is;  
to differentiate it from other akin disciplines;  
to understand the method used in Philosophy of Human Person;  
to gauge how objective the discipline is; and,  
to understand the importance of Philosophy of Human Person.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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Philosophy begins with a sense of wonder. Human being wonders at God, the world and his/her very being. Among the ancient Greek thinkers, philosophy was mainly a wonder at the cosmic realities around them. However, in the medieval times, the focus of philosophy was shifted to God. But with Renaissance and Reformation that ushered in the next phase of philosophical thinking, and more especially with the philosophy of Descartes, the main object of philosophy became human being. This does not mean that early philosophers were unaware of the importance of appreciating the human person. In fact, we find Socrates and few other thinkers attempted at understanding human person. With the rise of experimental sciences in the modern times, human person has become the primary and exclusive object of many disciplines like psychology, psychoanalysis, sociology, anthropology, political science, etc. Now-a-days even in theology, there is an anthropological trend. However, the approach and object of Philosophy of Human Person is quite different from these sciences as we shall discuss them at a later stage.

Philosophy of Human Person could be roughly understood as an attempt to unify disparate ways of understanding behaviour of humans as both creatures of their social environments and creators of their own values. Although the majority of philosophers throughout the history of philosophy can be said to have a distinctive 'anthropology' that undergirds their thought, Philosophy of Human Person itself, as a specific discipline in philosophy, arose within the later modern period as an outgrowth from developing methods in philosophy, such as phenomenology and existentialism. The former, which draws its energy from methodical reflection on human experience (first person perspective) as from the philosopher's own personal experience, naturally aided the emergence of philosophical explorations of human nature and the human condition. The latter, with its major concern on interpersonal relationships and the ontology

involved during these relationships, also helped in the growth of Philosophy of Human Person. Among these relationships, inter-subjectivity is a major theme, which studies how two individuals, subjects, whose experiences and interpretations of the world are radically different in understanding each other and relate to each other.

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## **1.2 DEFINITION OF PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN PERSON**

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Philosophy of Human Person can be defined as the science of human beings which interprets the data of experience in the light of metaphysical principles. It has two sources, namely, the data of experience supplied mainly by everyday experience, which is confirmed by experimental sciences and the metaphysical principles supplied by ontology or by metaphysics. Thus Philosophy of Human Person is a combination of science and metaphysics.

Again, we can consider Philosophy of Human Person as that branch of philosophy which concerns itself with trying to respond to those deepest and perennial questions about human beings - questions that have plagued humans ever since history began. Here, our attempt is to respond to these issues, and not answer them. For, the word 'answer' seems to imply more or less complete and thorough rejoinder to the matter, an exhaustive conclusion 'once-and-for-all.' But we must remember that we are dealing with human being who is a mystery to be understood more and more than a problem to be solved once and for all. We cannot demand a conclusive, authoritative answer but only a response.

Some of the typical questions that Philosophy of Human Person raises are: What do humans have in common with the rest of the material world? What are the implications of this common bond between humans and the rest of the material world? Which are those aspects of human that set him/her apart from the rest of the animal world? How significant are these differences? Is there some explanation that gets to the root of human's uniqueness? Is this explanation defensible in the forum of reason? What is the origin of human life? What is its goal? The bulk of Philosophy Human Person is basically an exploration into the above mentioned questions and into the ramification of the answers generated by them. Thus the key issues that this course will



tackle are life and evolution, knowledge, language, will, freedom, life, inter-subjectivity, person, death and immortality and self-transcendence.

Philosophy of Human Person is also known as Philosophical Anthropology. But it is not same as Social Anthropology (which is often loosely called Anthropology), Biological Anthropology or Cultural Anthropology. The word 'Anthropology' comes from the Greek words *anthropos* which means 'human' and *logos* which means 'science.' Social Anthropology is a study of human being from an ethnic perspective. It deals with the variations in social customs and practices from one ethnic group to another. A social anthropologist, therefore, would ask questions such as: What is the origin of such-and-such a tribal practice? Are there other tribes that exhibit the same customs? Could there be some explanation to account for these common features?

Biological Anthropology includes the study of human evolution, human evolutionary biology, population genetics, our nearest biological relatives, classification of ancient hominids, palaeontology of humans, distribution of human alleles, blood types and the human genome project. Biological Anthropology is used by other fields to shed light on how a particular folk got to where they are, how frequently they have encountered and married outsiders, whether a particular group is protein-deprived, and to understand the brain processes involved in the production of language.

Cultural Anthropology is often based on ethnography, a kind of writing used throughout anthropology to present data on a particular people or folk often based on participant observation research. Ethnology involves the systematic comparison of different cultures. Cultural Anthropology is also called Socio-cultural Anthropology or Social Anthropology. Cultural Anthropology also covers economic and political organization, law and conflict resolution, patterns of consumption and exchange, material culture, technology, infrastructure, gender relations, ethnicity, childrearing and socialization, religion, myth, symbols, worldviews, sports, music, nutrition, recreation, games, food, festivals, and language.

Philosophical Anthropology instead, would ask questions about human being regardless of his/her race or social background. For instance, when Philosophical Anthropology investigates



the question of immortality; it is not simply intent on finding out whether the Amerindians or the African Bushmen believe in immortality. Rather, it is intent on finding out whether the survival of the human being after death can, in some way, be established through a consideration of the intrinsic nature of human beings as such.

The traditional philosophy entitled Philosophy of Human Person as *Psychologia Superior*, Superior Psychology, to distinguish it from *Psychologia Inferior*, Inferior Psychology. This is because the former was concerned with the study of the superior psyche, or the soul, that is proper to human person. The latter studied the activities of sub-human life, inferior soul. We abandon such classification because it already presupposes a certain understanding of life in general and human life in particular, namely, human life is superior for it has a soul.

Philosophy of Human Person has also been called Rational Psychology, to distinguish it from Empirical Psychology and Experimental Psychology. The word psychology comes from the words *psyche* which means mind and *logos* which means science. Hence, psychology can be understood as the science of mind. The adjectives aptly bring out the differences in methods in these disciplines. Whereas Empirical Psychology is defined as the science of the facts and laws of mental life, as acquired by everyday experience and Experimental Psychology tries to understand the human person in terms of reading, measurement, behaviour pattern etc. obtained from experimental observation, Rational Psychology delves deeper into the human psyche by rational reflection on the implications of his/her activity.

Shakespeare in his play *Hamlet* suggests one of the possible dissatisfactions with the strict rational approach to the study of human person, when the Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark tells his friend Horatio: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in our philosophy." The famous saying of Blaise Pascal, "The heart has its reason which the reason does not know," also points to a possible defect in this approach. Human, after all, is much more than pure reason and so an exclusively or even exaggerated rational approach to the human person results in the encounter with a truncated person or a monster.

In the Indian context, philosophy is holistic in its approach and thought. Hence it did not elaborate an isolated treatise on human person. However there is an implicit understanding of human being in the Vedas and more especially in the Upanishads. These sacred books gave a variety of names to the principle that underlie human person. The word *prana* means breath or wind. It is the vital breath, which is the principle of human being. Closely related to it, is the word *atman*, which means the breathing principle in human, after the trunk of the body, the innermost kernel of human's existence, the highest being and the Supreme Reality. The word *Purusha* - the current word for human being - refers to the soul or atman that dwells in every person. Finally, we have the word *Jiva* (root - *jiv* to live), which stands for soul and the living principle of things.

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### 1.3 PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN PERSON AND OTHER DISCIPLINES

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Philosophy of Human Person is concerned with the study of human beings. As mentioned earlier, there are so many sciences that study human beings like Psychoanalysis, Sociology, Archaeology, Linguistics and Political science. What makes Philosophy of Human Person different from all of these disciplines? To answer this question, let us now examine briefly the subject matter of these disciplines.

Psychoanalysis is a body of ideas developed by Austrian Physician Sigmund Freud and continued by others. It is primarily devoted to the study of human psychological functioning and behaviour, although it also can be applied to societies. It is a method of investigation of the mind; a systematized set of theories about human behaviour; and, a method of treatment of psychological or emotional illness.

Sociology is a branch of social sciences that uses systematic methods of empirical investigation and critical analysis to develop and refine a body of knowledge about human social structure and activity, sometimes with the goal of applying such knowledge to the pursuit of social welfare. Its subject matter ranges from the micro level of face-to-face interaction to the macro level of societies at large.

Archaeology is the study of human material culture, including both artefacts (older pieces of human culture) carefully gathered *in situ*, museum pieces and modern garbage. Archaeologists work closely with biological anthropologists, art historians, physics laboratories (for dating), and museums. They are charged with preserving the results of their excavations and are often found in museums. Typically, archaeologists are associated with 'digs,' or excavation of layers of ancient sites. Archaeologists subdivide time into cultural periods based on long-lasting artefacts: for example the Palaeolithic, the Neolithic and the Bronze Age.

Linguistics is the study of language. Linguistic Anthropology (also called Anthropological Linguistics) seeks to understand the processes of human communication, verbal and non-verbal, variation in language across time and space, the social uses of language, and the relationship between language and culture. It is the branch of Anthropology that brings linguistic methods to bear on anthropological problems, linking the analysis of linguistic forms and processes to the interpretation of socio-cultural processes.

Political science is a social science concerned with the theory and practice of politics and the description and analysis of political systems and political behaviour. Politics is a process by which groups of people make decisions. The term is generally applied to behaviour within civil governments, but politics has been observed in all human group interactions, including corporate, academic and religious institutions. Political scientists study the allocation and transfer of power in decision-making, the roles and systems of governance including governments and international organizations, political behaviour and public policies.

From this brief analysis, we can say that the above mentioned disciplines study certain aspects of human beings from an empirical perspective. They make use of scientific methods of observation and experiment to study their subject matter. As against these akin disciplines which also deals with the study of human being, Philosophy of Human Person studies human being as a whole by asking those questions that pertain specifically to him as a human being, and by seeking their answers in terms of ultimate explanations. It's true that Philosophy of Human Person makes use of empirical methods but it goes deeper into metaphysical realms. It studies

human being not merely as an object in nature. In fact, human being is more than an object; he/she is a subject, an ego, I. Thus, Philosophy of Human Person is the study of human being in what makes him/her typically a human being.

**Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) What is Philosophy of Human Person? Can we call it as Philosophical Anthropology or Rational Psychology?

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2) How does Philosophy of Human Person differ from other disciplines which study about human beings?

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**1.4 METHOD OF PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN PERSON**

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For our study of Philosophy of Human Person we need a method. A method is a way of doing something, especially in a systematic way. In science, method is a series of steps taken to acquire knowledge. Philosophy of Human Person, being a rational investigation into the nature of human being, needs a method so that it can bring out its subject matter in a lucid and logical manner.

We know that every investigation on natural objects begins with observation. The same is also true of studies concerning human person. But a mere scientific study of human person is

insufficient as it gives only partial view of human reality (as is the case with all the empirical disciplines dealing with human being) while philosophers attempt to understand the ultimate causes, a total and complete picture of the human person. Hence we ought to begin the course in Philosophy of Human Person by enlisting our observations regarding human beings, without yet attempting to interpret or draw speculative conclusions from our data. What we first propose to do, in short, is to present a phenomenology of human existence. In this method, all data related to the being of human person is assembled.

Once that is done, we shall scrutinise our findings to see whether they give us a clue to some deeper truths about human being. As a methodological tool to this effect, we shall adopt the famous Thomistic principle: *Agere sequitur esse* (as a being is, so does it act). In other words, the way a being acts gives us a clue to its intrinsic nature. This second phase that follows the phenomenology of human existence is referred to as the transcendental phase, where the ultimate meaning of the data is sought, that profound meaning which confers upon the data a meaning and renders this same data possible. Transcendental method searches for a justification and explanation that is final, conclusive and exhaustive for all human behaviour – activities, manifestations, cultural products, etc. It is also hermeneutical in nature because we interpret all the significant data phenomenology provides.

We use these two methods – phenomenological and transcendental - because human beings have two aspects, namely, the physical and the psychic. We need both objective observation and introspection. Thus, our method is inductive in character – we move from phenomena and study them profoundly with the aim of discussing their origins and their ultimate causes.

A Phenomenological survey of human existence and the subsequent transcendental reflections upon them brings some pieces of important information concerning human person, which are elaborated during the course of study of Philosophy of Human Person.

Human being is a living organism who, by virtue of his/her anatomical structure, is indubitably a part of the animal kingdom. On the other hand, there are certain characteristics unique to humans, that set them apart from the rest of creation

While animals do possess consciousness, human being alone possesses self-consciousness, or the capacity for reflection.

While animals possess a high degree of instinct and some even possess a high degree of intelligence, humans alone possess abstract intelligence or rationality.

While animals do communicate with one another, their communication is very limited. They cannot communicate ideas or information pertaining to the past or future. Humans alone seem capable of this because of their capacity for abstraction.

Animals are thoroughly dominated by needs, drives and instincts, and are therefore attentive to those features in their environment which appeal to these forces. But animals are unable to rise above them and look at them in a disinterested way. Human being alone seems capable of contemplating nature. He/she is the only aesthetic animal.

Animals cannot objectify. To know an object as an object is to know it somehow as not-I, and this would call for self-consciousness. Humans, instead, because of self-consciousness, is also capable of objectifying his world.

Human's ability to objectify enables him/her to name things, to speak about them and to engage in cultural pursuits. Consequently, he/she is the only creature such that one generation can carry on from where the previous generation left off. Instead, animals continue to live today as their forbears lived centuries ago.

While animals do make choices, there does not seem to be any deliberate-ness in their acts of choosing. Humans alone choose self-consciously and wilfully. In short, he/she alone possesses volitional freedom.

While animals are also gregarious, society plays a far bigger role in making a human being be what he/she is. His/her participation in the world as a human being is one that has been elicited by others. No one could ever possibly be a 'self-made' person. We are all social animals.

Every animal species exhibits more-or-less the same behavioural patterns wherever members of that species are found. It is not so with human beings. Every human being is a product of a particular era and culture. The way in which he/she relates to the world around him/her is influenced by historical, cultural, and social factors. Human is, in short, a hermeneutical animal. Nevertheless, a human's culture and history do not insulate him/her within a limited circle. He/she can make himself/herself 'at home' with people of all climes, times and places.



Toil and work are inevitable aspects of all animal life. But with humans, work assumes a profound and new dimension. Work, for a human being, is not simply a pre-requisite for survival. Rather, work humanises human being, giving him/her a chance to live life more fully. Though all animals must die someday, and though all instinctively resist it, humans seem to be the only animal whose entire life is moulded by his/her awareness of death. How a human being lives his/her life depends largely on the way in which he/she views death.

Humans seem to be the only creature that lives in the hope of immortality. Immortality appears to be the one great factor that restores meaning to life in the face of death.

Humans possess a natural openness to transcendence. He/she is the only creature who has a spontaneous urge to ask ultimate questions, to speak of the invisible, to believe in a 'beyond'. Moreover, whenever human being addresses himself/herself to these issues, it is always with a sense of reverence, awe and fascination. Thus, human being seems to have an innate sense of religiosity.

### Check Your Progress II

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) What methods do you employ in studying Philosophy of Human Person?

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2) Can you explain some of the important reflections that we gain from the philosophical study of human person?

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## 1.5 HOW OBJECTIVE IS PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN PERSON?

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Philosophy of Human Person is a philosophical investigation concerned with questions such as the status of human beings in the universe and the purpose or meaning of human life. When the empirical sciences are concerned with the investigation of the physical, chemical and biological phenomena of things, Philosophy of Human Person is concerned with the fundamental characteristics, the ultimate questions concerning human beings. Although a phenomenological analysis is made on human person, the primary concern is the rational analysis of the data thus derived. It aims at arriving at an objective understanding of human person.

But the question arises: how objective can we be in our study of Philosophy of Human Person? This question stems from the fact that the cultural background of people is very diverse. Often these cultural diversities are not shared by others or even understood by them. Shouldn't we therefore refrain from providing answers in the name of the whole of humankind?

By way of an answer, we must make some clarifications. To be objective does not mean setting aside our social or cultural background while we ask questions and seek answers. In fact, the science of Hermeneutics has made it amply clear, that it is impossible to study any aspect of reality from an 'Archimedean' standpoint.

Every question we ask is always based on certain presuppositions and on a certain conceptual-linguistic framework. To waive aside all frameworks in the interest of objectivity is to eliminate the very possibility of asking any significant question. What requires revision, rather, is our very concept of objectivity. Objectivity is always contextual. Any theory (whatever concepts it may involve) is said to be objective if it offers a sufficient and cogent explanation for the observable relevant facts on hand, without implicating the proponent as an individual in the theory proposed. In a certain sense, it is inevitable that we provide answers in the name of the whole of humankind, even though we are well aware that our questions stem from a certain background which others may not share.

Consider for instance, the question of immortality. A Christian would most probably pose the question like this: "Is the human soul immortal? Does it survive after death?" It would be pointless to argue that a materialist does not acknowledge the existence of the human soul and that our answer therefore applies only to Christians and to those who believe in the soul. If we

did argue that way, we would end up with the absurd idea that Christians have souls but materialists don't have souls. The only way to evade this absurd conclusion is to make claims for all human beings (even though others may disagree with our claims) and then hold them up for debate against alternative claims.

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## 1.6 IMPORTANCE OF PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN PERSON

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Philosophy of Human Person forms an important treatise in the study of Philosophy. After all, human existence is an inescapable part of philosophic thought. Almost everyone has been puzzled from time to time by such essentially philosophic questions as "What does life mean?" "Did I have any existence before I was born?" and "Is there life after death?" Most people also have some kind of philosophy in the sense of a personal outlook on life. Even a person who claims that considering philosophic questions is a waste of time is expressing what is important, worthwhile, or valuable. A rejection of all philosophy is in itself philosophy.

By studying Philosophy of Human Person, people can clarify what they believe, and they can be stimulated to think about ultimate questions. A person can study philosophers of the past to discover why they thought as they did and what value their thoughts may have in one's own life. Philosophy has had enormous influence on our everyday lives. The very language we speak uses classifications derived from philosophy. For example, the classifications of noun and verb involve the philosophic idea that there is a difference between things and actions. If we ask what the difference is, we are starting a philosophic inquiry.

It was Socrates, the great Greek philosopher, who turned philosophy from the study of great philosophical questions to the study of human being. He preferred to postulate on ethics rather than the meaning of the world. He used to go to the ancient Greek market (*agora*), talk to people and help them realize that they already knew the "truth," by examining their selves. The "know thyself" motto is attributed to Socrates. He used to say that "The only thing I know is that I don't know nothing." He also believed that the limits of human knowledge were such that prevented us from searching the ultimate truth for metaphysical problems. That is why he thought that postulating on human matters is what a true philosopher should do.

We can say that knowing human person from a rational perspective is of utmost importance because human person is fabulously rich and complex in nature. He/she is a kind prodigy, a combination of apparent antitheses. There is constant tension in human being. He/she lives in history but wants to go towards a trans-historic existence. He/she constantly transcends himself/herself in all that he/she thinks, projects, desires, produces, etc. Thus, a better understanding of the human person is vital in comprehending the various other realities with which he/she is in constant communion.

**Check Your Progress III**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) How objective is the study of Philosophy of Human Person?

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2) Reflect on the importance of the study of Philosophy of Human Person.

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**1.7 LET US SUM UP**

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In this unit we have briefly introduced the Philosophy of Human Person, by giving certain definitions and clarifying them in the course of this unit. The unit also highlighted the importance of this treatise in the overall study of philosophy. A proper understanding of the nature, composition and destiny of human person makes it possible for anyone to get a good grip of other realities. We also found that we may not find any ready-made answers to the ultimate questions concerning human being because he/she is a complex mystery. This does not imply that we are wasting our time in philosophizing. The very probing into the various phenomena concerning human person itself is praiseworthy. We have also discussed the methodology that this discipline follows in unravelling the various mysteries that are associated with the human person. The question how objective is the study of Philosophy of Human Person is also discussed in the context of people writing it off saying that it is merely a subjective analysis of human person. Finally we conclude the unit with a short consideration of the importance of Philosophy of Human Person.

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## 1.8 KEY WORDS

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**Archimedean Standpoint:** The Archimedean Standpoint is where we choose to stand in order to form the idea of the totality of meaning.

**Inter-Subjectivity:** The word inter-subjectivity means the sharing of subjective states by two or more individuals. It emphasizes that shared cognition and consensus is essential in the shaping of our ideas and relations.

**Mystery:** Mystery does not mean that which is unknowable. Instead, as Gabriel Marcel says, mystery is not an 'object' of perception, but is a 'presence' which is capable of being recognized.

**Person:** The term person (from Latin *persona*), in common usage means an individual human being. Philosophically, the term person could be defined as a subsisting, distinct, complete being of an intellectual nature.

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## 1.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## 1.10 ANSWERES TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check your progress I

Considering the many definitions that define Philosophy of Human Person, we can say that it is that branch of philosophy which concerns itself with trying to respond to those deepest and perennial questions about human beings - questions that have plagued humans ever since history began. Some of these questions include: What do humans have in common with the rest of the material world? What are the implications of this common bond between humans and the rest of the material world? What is the origin of human life? What is its goal? Philosophy of Human Person is called Philosophical Anthropology to distinguish it from other branches of Anthropology. Now Anthropology is the science of human being and Philosophical Anthropology studies human person from a philosophical perspective. Similarly, Philosophy of

Human Person is also called Rational Psychology, which distinguishes it from other branches of Psychology. Rational Psychology goes deeper into the human psyche by rational reflection.

Disciplines like Psychoanalysis, Sociology, Archaeology, Linguistics, Political Science, Cybernetics, etc. studies about human being. They study human beings from certain aspects making use of empirical methods. But Philosophy of Human Person studies human being as such by asking those ultimate questions that pertain specifically to his/her very nature and answering them from a metaphysical perspective.

### **Check your progress II**

To study Philosophy of Human Person we employ both phenomenological and transcendental or hermeneutical methods. Phenomenologically, we assemble all data related to the being of human person by analysing the different activities that he/she does. We then scrutinise these findings to see whether they give us a clue to some deeper truths about human being. The transcendental method through a hermeneutical approach searches for a justification and explanation that is final, conclusive and exhaustive for all human behaviour – activities, manifestations, cultural products, etc. that we discovered phenomenologically. We find that these behaviours make human being a unique being quite different from other beings.

Among the many important reflections (those which distinguish human beings from other animals) that we gain from the philosophical study of human beings, we can name some of them: While animals possess a high degree of instinct and some even possess a high degree of intelligence, humans alone possess abstract intelligence or rationality.

While animals do communicate with one another, their communication is very limited. They cannot communicate ideas or information pertaining to the past or future. Humans alone seem capable of this because of their capacity for abstraction.

Animals cannot objectify. To know an object as an object is to know it somehow as not-I, and this would call for self-consciousness. Humans, instead, because of self-consciousness, is also capable of objectifying his world.



While animals do make choices, there does not seem to be any deliberate-ness in their acts of choosing. Humans alone choose self-consciously and wilfully. In short, he/she alone possesses volitional freedom.

Human being is a hermeneutical animal. Nevertheless, a human's culture and history do not insulate him/her within a limited circle. He/she can make himself/herself 'at home' with people of all climes, times and places.

Toil and work are inevitable aspects of all animal life. But with humans, work assumes a profound and new dimension. Work, for a human being, is not simply a pre-requisite for survival. Rather, work humanises human being, giving him/her a chance to live life more fully.

Humans seem to be the only creature that lives in the hope of immortality. Immortality appears to be the one great factor that restores meaning to life in the face of death.

Humans possess a natural openness to transcendence. He/she is the only creature who has a spontaneous urge to ask ultimate questions, to speak of the invisible, to believe in a 'beyond'.

Moreover, whenever human being addresses himself/herself to these issues, it is always with a sense of reverence, awe and fascination. Thus, human being seems to have an innate sense of religiosity.

### **Check your progress III**

To answer the question how objective is the study of Philosophy of Human Person, we need to know what objectivity means. Objectivity does not mean setting aside our social or cultural backgrounds. In fact, every question on human being is always based on certain presuppositions and on a certain conceptual-linguistic framework. To waive aside all frameworks in the interest of objectivity is to eliminate the very possibility of asking any significant question. Thus what requires revision is our very concept of objectivity. Objectivity is always contextual. Any theory (whatever concepts it may involve) is said to be objective if it offers a sufficient and cogent explanation for the observable relevant facts on hand, without implicating the proponent as an individual in the theory proposed. Hence it is possible to provide answers in the name of the whole of humankind even though these questions arise from certain background.

By studying Philosophy of Human Person, people can clarify what they believe about themselves, and they can be stimulated to think about ultimate questions concerning human



person. Human person is fabulously rich and complex in nature. He/she is a kind prodigy, a combination of apparent antitheses. There is constant tension in human being. He/she lives in history but wants to go towards a trans-historic existence. He/she constantly transcends himself/herself in all that he/she thinks, projects, desires, produces, etc. Thus, a better understanding of the human person is vital in comprehending the various other realities with which he/she is in constant communion.



## UNIT 2 HISTORICAL CONCEPT OF HUMAN PERSON

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  - 2.5. A Comparative Synthesis of the Concept of Human Person
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### 2.0. OBJECTIVES

Our prime objective in this unit is to present the historical concept of the human person. Hence, we shall study a person in history. We shall analyze the concept of the human person in different eras: *Cosmocentric*, *Theocentric* and *Anthropocentric*. We shall make this analysis with the help of some of the philosophers and their thinking both Western and Eastern. Among the Western thinkers we shall highlight the views of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Pascal, Spinoza, Empiricists, Kant, Marx, Schopenhauer, Anthropologists and Existentialists. On the other hand we shall also make our study on the concept of the human person according to the views coming from the Eastern philosophies and thoughts: Upaniśad, Confucian thought, Buddhism, Jainism and Islam. Finally, we shall synthesize the concept of the human person comparatively, observing the similar aspects found in and coming from both Western and Eastern thoughts. Lastly we shall sum up our study. In this unit we shall be able:-

- To highlight the historical concept of the human person.
- To describe this concept according to different eras
- To present the different views on this concept coming
- To have a comparative synthesis on the concept of the human person.

## 2.1. INTRODUCTION

The term “Person” has its derivation from the Latin word “Persona”, which is equivalent to the Greek word *prosopon*. The term was applied to denote the mask worn by an actor. Later this same term also referred to the role, the actor played on the stage, and thus to any individual with that character.

The term “person” we are dealing with here refers to all human beings, each and every individual man and woman. In this chapter, our aim is to focus on the historical concept of the human person. Thus, we would like to highlight the concept of “person” in different eras. We would basically, analyze “person” in these perspectives: *Cosmocentric*, *Theocentric* and *Anthropocentric*. Let’s consider them one by one. Finally we will analyze them according to Western and Eastern thoughts.

In general, we can say, human person is the subject matter who is studied in all eras from different perspectives.

## 2.2. DESCRIPTION OF CONCEPTS: COSMOCENTRIC, THEOCENTRIC AND ANTHROPOCENTRIC

In the *Cosmocentric* era human person is studied or understood in relation to the Cosmos. Here, the Cosmos is at the centre. Hence, the Cosmos is given great importance. Thus, all the creatures have to follow the natural law or the law of the nature including a human person. He too has to live accordingly. He has to follow the law of nature for his survival. Here, we see he is not the master of all creation rather he is a part of it. Thus, human person can be known in relation to the whole creation. The whole Greek philosophy gives importance to the cosmos or nature. Their thoughts and philosophies are in view of nature, and the human person is a part of it. As we said above, a person here refers to all human beings, and thus to all mankind.

The next era is the Christian era or period (*Theocentric*) where human person is being studied or understood in reference to God. Here, human person is considered to be the image of God. He is being created by God, in His own image and likeness as it is mentioned in the first chapter of the book of Genesis in the Bible. In this period philosophers, church fathers and scholastics studied human person as God's creature. Thus, human person has to follow God's law to live a proper life in the society with others.

With the modern age the study on human person takes an *anthropocentric* turn leaving aside both *cosmocentric* and *theocentric* perspectives. Here, human person himself is the point of the departure. He himself becomes the basis and object of the study matter.

### Check Your Progress I

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1) What is your general understanding of human person?

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2) Explain the different concepts of human person according to different eras: *Cosmocentric*, *Theocentric* and *Anthropocentric*?

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### 2.3. WESTERN CONCEPTS OF HUMAN PERSON BY THE PHILOSOPHERS IN DIFFERENT ERAS

After the explanation of the different concepts: *Cosmocentric*, *Theocentric* and *Anthropocentric* in general, now let's try to know the concept of "person" viewed by different philosophers in different eras.

*Concept of “person” expressed by the Greek philosophers(Plato and Aristotle) in the Cosmocentric era*

Early Greek philosophers, being cosmologists considered human person in his objective aspect and thus as one item in the cosmos, rather than in his subjective aspect, as the subject of knowledge or as the morally willing and acting subject. Hence, we see that their main focus was on cosmos and not on person.

In the course of time, Sophists identified person as a miracle among the miracles of the cosmos. They started speaking about person’s self consciousness. Hence, for the first time, it is they who considered a bit the subjective aspect of human person.

For Plato, the idea is the only reality that exists. Hence, his reference is mainly to the world of ideas. For him, a human person exists with his two realities, two distinct substances body and soul, hence the idea of a dichotomy. After all, his consideration is only towards the soul. Thus, we can say, for him a human person is recognized through his spiritual aspect that is the soul which is immaterial. This soul is enslaved in the body and wishes to be liberated from it. Hence, here we see that for Plato, a human person is understood in reference to his spiritual element. His basic problem was that he could not reconcile the unity between two realities: material and spiritual or body and soul.

For Aristotle, there is only one substance, composed of substantial form and prime matter and not two substances as Plato thought. Thus, for him a human person is a composition of body and soul. Aristotle speaks in terms of act and potency. The substantial form is the active principle act in a human person for every activity. Matter has potency which is being actualized through the same substantial form. This formula of Aristotle is applied to explain the physical composition of all material realities. It also explains the human composition of body and soul.

Among all other Greek Philosophers, Plato and Aristotle too studied human person in relation to other creatures. Human being was considered as one of the items or objects of the cosmos.

*Concept of human person expressed by the Mediaeval philosophers (Augustine and Thomas) in the Theocentric era*

Augustine of Hippo views human person, in relation to person's spiritual character. In the mediaeval or Christian era a human person was considered to be a created being in the image and likeness of God. Thus, if anyone desired to know about a human person, his study had to include the relationship between God and person. Now when we speak of the likeness of God, we already admit the person's spiritual aspect.

Augustine introduced the theory of illumination. Through the light of illumination a human person could reach or come to the vision of His creator. He could assimilate himself to God. What was the purpose behind it? The main aim of a human person in his life was to obtain salvation. Since, a human person is a composition of body and soul he also ran the risk of falling into sin, and thus live in a sinful state. For this, he required to come out from the bondage of evil. As Augustine would say "Evil is the absence or privation of good", because all that is good comes from God. Hence, a human person had to overcome such a privation.

Here we see human person in his relation to God. A human person needs to obey or follow God's law to reach his final destiny that is salvation. Augustine derived the study of a human person from Plato and Plotinus. Both these philosophers over-emphasized on soul and *νοῦς* respectively without giving due importance to body. Plato spoke of the liberation of the soul from the body and Plotinus emphasized the return of the *νοῦς* to the One or to the Creator.

According to Thomas Aquinas too, a human person is composed of body and soul. Thomas Aquinas is a follower of Aristotle and thus his philosophy was influenced by Aristotle's philosophy, also the philosophy of human person. He has drawn the idea of the unity between substantial form and prime matter, from Aristotle's *hylomorphic* theory. However, his philosophy is not totally a copy of Aristotle. Being a Christian thinker, he too lays the stress on the spiritual aspect of a human person. He also speaks of the human soul, its nature and its destiny. He further mentions the two faculties of a human person intellect and will. These are the faculties by which a human person has intelligence and freedom. When we come to the point of a free act, we mean specially the freedom of choice, between good and bad acts. Thus, it is the human person who has the responsibility to lead himself to his destiny, to salvation through freedom of choice.



*Concept of human person as expressed by some Modern and Contemporary philosophers in the Anthropocentric era*

With Rene Descartes, we enter into the modern thinking about a human person. As we mentioned above, in the modern era, the person is the fundamental subject matter of one's thinking. A person is the main objective of modern philosophers. This gives us an indication of a human person's subjective aspect and thus, here we will try to emphasize a human person's subjective aspect in our study. Descartes' concern about the person's existence can be seen in his affirmation, "Cogito ergo sum", that means "I think therefore I exist". Thus, according to Descartes a human person's existence is revealed in his thinking activity. This aspect of a human person, presents his whole existence. We can know a human person through this activity in him. Though Descartes gives importance to the person's thoughts, he also accepts the other side of him that is his body, the extended reality. Thus, a human person is in a way, a composition of *res cogitans* and *res extensa* or thinking and body (extended reality). They are very distinct and clear realities, which help us to know a complete person. However, we can still say that Descartes gives priority to the human person's thinking activity than his extended physical reality. This aspect is very much evident in his affirmation made, "Cogito ergo sum". Hence, here we see, a human person is studied and understood through his own thinking activity.

According to Pascal, the person occupies an important place in the way to God. In the opinion of Spinoza, a human person gets rid of his servitude only through understanding. It is through this process of understanding that a human person reaches summit of his being identified with nature. At this level, a human person becomes aware of his mind's eternity and a human person enjoys his intellectual love of God.

Empiricists considered the notion of a human person in their own perspectives. For Locke, a human person is a substantial identity which consists in a thinking thing and also includes the bodily continuity. For Berkeley, a human person is finite spirit, who is active and also a substantial subject whose existence consists in perceiving activity. For Hume, a human person is a repudiation of substance, of inhesion and of the identity of the self. He is a permanent reality superior to constant unfolding of impressions and ideas.



According to Kant, a human person is considered to be phenomenally determined and *noumenally* free. He further says that a human person is a synthetic unity of the universe, the microcosm which thinks the macrocosm or God and the world. Besides, the person as a subject constructs experience through self positing.

According to Schopenhauer, a human person occupies an important place between the Idea and the Will, between the multiplicity of *phenomenal* and *noumenal* unity, between the outside and the inside of the world, between appearance and the thing in itself as it is. Thus, here we see a human person with both his aspects *phenomenal* and *noumenal*. A human person shares with the brutes at the level of body and sensation but he differs from them through his reasoning power.

Marx emphasized human as a practical and objective being. For him, the highest expression of human species was in objective human activity. Human was the subjectivity of objective essential power, whose action has to be something objective. And labour implied the principal medium of human's objective being. Through labour, human transforms the world and makes it his own reality. Thus, whole humanity was proved in work for its survival. And therefore, the element of labour represented the objectification of human life. We see in our analysis that human's objective being implied in social being. Human as a social being, activated his nature and produced human common life. And therefore the social essence applied to all the individuals, to their activities and lives.

Anthropologists' conception of human person has its basis in the evolution theory. This theory implies a slow change or growth or progress from one state to another. Biology presents the data of human growth and describes how the growth of human body has taken place.

The existentialists stress on human person's concrete existence. They refer to his contingent nature, his personal freedom and his consequent responsibility for what he does and makes himself to be. They consider that the human person is not only central in existence but he is the only true existential being because he has his being or existence as an individual in the world.

## Check Your Progress II

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) Highlight the concept of human person mentioned by Plato and Aristotle in the *Cosmocentric era*?

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2) What do Mediaeval philosophers: Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas say about the concept of the human person?

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3) How is the concept of the human person presented by Modern philosophers: Descartes, Spinoza, Empiricists, Kant, Marx, Schopenhauer and Anthropologists?

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4) How do Existentialists present the concept of a human person in Contemporary Philosophy?

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## 2.4 EASTERN CONCEPT OF HUMAN PERSON

*Concept of human person in Upaniṣad*

Vedas are earliest documents of human minds. Each Veda consists of three parts- Mantras, Brahamanas and Upanisad. Mantras are the work of poets, Brahamanas are the work of priests and finally Upanisad is the outcome of philosophers. The Upanisads affirm the existence of one reality, *Ekam Sat*. Even in Vedas, we see the transition from the objective aspect to the subjective, mantras to Upanisad as we saw in the Greek philosophy. Even in the Vedas the cosmos is at the centre or the main focus of study. In Upanisad, self is mentioned. The “self” in Indian term is called “the atman”. As there is only one reality, the destiny of a human person is self –realization, the realization of atman into Brahman and thus a human person can say “*Aham Brahma asmi*”, I am Brahma. With our analysis, we can state that atman is a part of Brahma or a human person is a part of the Supreme Being.

#### *Concept of human person in Chinese (Confucian) thought*

According to the Confucian thought, a human person is considered to be a part of the temporal social order in front of the Divine Order of the world. There is no concept of any personal God in Chinese thought. Hence, we cannot ascribe any personal identity of a human person. Human person is understood to be a member of society, of his kin, of his rank or of his nation. Confucians give emphasis on the harmony of the universe. And therefore, an individual has to live in harmony with himself by adapting himself to the law of the all embracing whole. Thus, the unity of the whole needs the mutual alliance of Heaven, Earth and a human person. In order to be harmonized, a human person has to be identified with the universe.

#### *Concept of human person in Buddhism*

In Buddhism a human person is explained in terms of five basic elements: earth, air, fire, water and space. Buddhism views the person as a composition of matter and form or *nama-rupa*. They consider that a human person’s existence is impermanent. He is in continuous flow. Nothing is permanent. Whatever exists, it is only momentarily. On account of this argument, Buddhism affirms the theory of impermanence or *Kshanikavada*.

#### *Concept of human person in Jainism*

According to Jain philosophy, a human person is a composition of material and spiritual aspects. A human person's soul is bound in the particles that which is called Karma. It is because of this aspect or condition that a human person is imperfect but on the other hand since he has the spiritual aspect as well he can liberate his soul from the matter through his own efforts. There is no concept of absolute or creator. Thus, a human person has to get rid of his bondage by the control over his senses and thought. He can attain perfect happiness and freedom through his own good work. For all the good and bad works he himself is responsible and thus he will receive the fruits accordingly.

*Concept of human person in Islam*

The Divine origin of a human person is seen even in Islam. There are two basic concepts of a human person found in Islam. The Semitics view a human person as the image of God and Hellenists view him as a microcosm. Thus, we see two different views on a human person in Islam. On the one hand, he is subjected to the Divine Will whereas on the other hand, he becomes the mediator between God and the macrocosm.

**Check Your Progress III**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) How is the concept of a human person mentioned in Upanisad?

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2) What do Confucians say about the concept of a human person?

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3) What do Buddhists say about the concept of a human person?  
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4) How is the concept of a human person explained in Jainism?  
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5) How does Islam present the concept of a human person?  
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## **2.5. A COMPARATIVE SYNTHESIS OF THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN PERSON**

In the *Cosmocentric* era, we see that a human person is one of the objects of the cosmos. He is studied in view of the nature or cosmos. He remains as a part of it. Initially, he was seen only with his objective aspect by the cosmologists but from the sophists onwards even the subjective aspect of a human person is known. All Greek philosophers put a human person in nature itself, always in relationship with the cosmos. Such similar element is observed even in *Vedas* and *Upaniṣad* where a human person is considered to be one of the creatures in the universe or cosmos. He is recognized to be a part of the Absolute or assimilation of the self to the Absolute, Atman to Brahman.

In the *Theocentric* era, a human person is studied in relation to God or Absolute reality. He is considered to be a created being by His Creator. To live in a worthy way a human person has to follow the laws of God. By following them, he will be able to attain the salvation or return back to his creator. Almost all the Mediaeval thinkers study a human person always in relation to God or Supreme Being. This sort of thinking is found even in the Eastern philosophies, the presence of Divinity. In Islam divinity is highlighted, a human person is subjected to God. In all the theistic thoughts or wherever the divinity is considered, a human person is understood in

relation to the Supreme Being or in reference to the Creator. Hence, on account of such thinking a human person is accepted as subject to the Absolute Being as it is seen in Western thinking too. In the *Anthropocentric* era, a human person is the main focus of the study. Thus, he places himself at the centre. He is understood with his different aspects. He himself becomes the eminent subject matter to be dealt with. He presents himself with various dominant and leading roles. As we have analyzed with the help of some modern philosophers, all of them considered a human person in their thinking. Hence, we observe in modern era, a human person became an autonomous creature. He considered himself not as a part of the universe as it was thought in the Greek era and even not as a subjection to God as His creature in mediaeval era but as a free being. Consequently, he began to dominate nature. He considered himself as a self sufficient being and mastery over all. We can realize it today, with the tremendous progress of science and technology that there is no place even for Absolute Being or God. Among the Eastern thoughts, we see all those who do not admit any divine being, they emphasize the role of a human person in view of liberation from their bondage. As a human person is bound with the *Karma system*, he himself has to free from such bondage through good deeds. He himself has to free his soul from the corrupt body. Thus, he has an important role. The salvation of his soul is in his own hand. These aspects too manifest the dominant characteristics of a human person. Thus, a human person is the main focus of our concern in the present time.

#### **Check Your Progress IV**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) What similarities found on the concept of a human person among Greek Philosophers and in Vedas and Upaniśad?

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2) Is there any similar aspect found in the explanation of the concept of a human person, explained by Mediaeval Christian thinkers and in Islam?



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3) Point out the similar elements found on the concept of a human person among the Western Modern thinkers and the Non-theistic Eastern thinking?

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**2.6. LET US SUM UP**

Let us summarize now what we have dealt with in our unit. We started with the reference to the general concept of person and in a special way we specified it with the application and reference of person to all human beings. Thus, our aim was to study the person in history, hence dealing with the historical concept of “person”. We did our research on the concept of a human person in view of different eras and also in both the contexts Western and Eastern. We presented some of the important figures and their views on the concept of human person. Finally, we tried to synthesize both Western and Eastern thoughts on the concept of a human person comparatively. Today it is the time or era of human being (person), where a person considers himself all in all, he places himself at the first place. He accepts himself as the master of all.

However, in my opinion we shall not forget and neglect the presence of the cosmos and the divine power. After all human person is in the cosmos and the very presence of his soul indicates to its origin that is God or Absolute Being. Thus, a human person should not boast considering himself as the master of all creation, he cannot take the place of the Creator a Supreme Being. Rather he has to remain as a created being, one among others though superior to all other creatures in the cosmos.

**2.7. KEY WORDS**

***Cosmocentric***: Literally it means that the Cosmos is placed at the centre, thus a person is studied in reference to Cosmos.



**Theocentric:** A person's study is done in relationship with God or Absolute Being.

**Anthropocentric:** It implies that a person is at the centre, he is the point of departure of his own study.

**Hylemorphism:** Aristotelian theory of matter and form.

**Res Cogitans:** refers to the thinking reality.

**Res Extensa:** indicates to the extended reality.

**Phenomenon:** things as they appear.

**Noumenon:** things as they are in themselves.

**Atman:** Self.

**Brahman:** Absolute Being.

**Nama-Rupa:** composition of matter and form.

**Kshanikavada:** Buddhist theory which says that things have momentary existence. Things are in continuous flow.

**Karma system:** a system where a person is directly involved into his action and its consequences. It is a chain or bondage from where a person has to liberate himself through the performance of good deeds.

## 2.8. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## 2.9. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

### Answers to Check Your Progress I

1) Encyclopedia explains that the concept of “person” has its derivation from the Latin word “Persona” which means a mask which is worn by an actor during the show. It is rather a literal meaning of a person. The concept of “person” we deal here has a different significance. It implies all the human beings. Thus, the concept of a person refers to the human person.

2) A human person can be understood in the history in relation to different eras. Thus, the historical concept of a human person may differ according to his place in relationship with others and in the manner he is understood.

In the *Cosmocentric* era, a human person is placed in the Cosmos or nature. He is one of the creatures or one among them present in the nature. In this era, the Cosmos is the principal point of view and the human person is understood in relationship with it. He has to follow the natural law as others. Initially, he was comprehended with his objective aspects but slowly his subjective element too was recognized.

In the *Theocentric* era, a human person is studied in relationship with God or Absolute Being. He is understood as one of the created beings. He follows here the divine law for his perfection.

In the *Anthropocentric* era, a human person is at the centre. He becomes the point of the departure. He is the starting point of his own study. He is the central point of view.

### **Answers to Check Your Progress II**

1) For Plato, a human person is composed of two substances body and soul, two realities. The soul of a human person is enslaved in the body and wishes to be liberated. After all, being an idealist Plato gives priority to the existence of immaterial or spiritual reality, hence, a human person too is understood through his spiritual aspect in Plato.

For Aristotle, a human person is one substance, a composition of two different aspects body and soul. The soul is the active principle of every act of a person and the body being its potency is being actualized. He presents the theory of act and potency.

2) Augustine considers a human person as a being created by the creator. His final destiny is to acquire salvation or assimilate with his creator. He can fulfill it through the act of illumination. Here, too a human person is a composed being.

Thomas Aquinas too presents a human person as a composite being, composed of body and soul. Being a Christian thinker, he too studies human person in relation to God. He also mentions two active faculties, intellect and will in a person.

3) For Descartes, a human person is a thinking reality. The human person is known through his subjective aspect. But Descartes also admits the other aspect of a person that is his body (extended reality). His prime thought is “I think therefore I exist”, thus a person’s existence is known by his thinking act.

According to Spinoza, a human person is known through his act of understanding. It is by this process a human person is identified with the nature and he becomes aware of mind’s eternity and enjoys his intellectual love of God.

Among Empiricists, Locke considered human person as a substantial identity which consists in a thinking thing and also includes the bodily continuity. Berkeley speaks of a human person as a finite spirit, who is active and also of a substantial subject whose existence consists in perceiving activity. Hume mentions human person as a repudiation of substance, of inhesion and of the identity of the self. Human person is a permanent reality superior to constant unfolding of impressions and ideas.

Kant considers person as *phenomenally* determined and *noumenally* free. He says that the human person is a synthetic unity of the universe, the microcosm which thinks the macrocosm or God and the world. And also human person as a subject constructs experience through self positing.

Schopenhauer says a human person occupies an important place between the Idea and the Will, between the multiplicity of *phenomena* and *noumenal* unity, between the outside and the inside of the world, between appearance and the thing in itself as it is. A human person shares with the brutes at the level of body and sensation but differs from them through his reasoning power.

Marx explains person as a practical and objective being. For him, the highest expression of person’s being was in objective human activity. Person was the subjectivity of objective essential power, and the labour was the principal medium of person’s objective being. Through labour, a human person transformed the world and made it his own reality. Thus, whole humanity was proved in work for its survival.

Anthropologists consider that person’s existence has its basis in the evolution theory. And this theory implies a slow change or growth of human body from one state to another.

The existentialists emphasize the human person's concrete existence, his contingent nature, his personal freedom and his consequent responsibility for what he does and makes to be himself. According to them, he is the only true existential being because he has his being as an individual in the world.

### **Answers to Check Your Progress III**

- 1) The concept of self is mentioned in Upaniṣad. The Self in Indian term is called "atman". There is only one reality (*Ekam Sat*) and thus the destiny of a human person is his self – realization, the realization of atman to Brahman where a person can say "*Aham Brahma asmi*", I am Brahma. We see that a person is considered to be a part of Supreme Being.
- 2) Confucians place human person to be a part of the temporal social order in front of the Divine Order of the world. A human person is understood to be a member of society, of his kin, of his rank and of his nation. Confucians lay emphasis on the harmony of the universe. And thus, in order to be in harmony, a person has to be identified with the universe.
- 3) Buddhists explain a human person in terms of five basic elements: earth, air, fire, water and space. They view that a human person is a composition of matter and form or *nama-rupa*. They consider that his existence is impermanent. He is in continuous flow.
- 4) Jainism presents human person as a composition of material and spiritual aspects. His soul is bound in the particles, called Karma. Because of this aspect a person is imperfect but with the very presence of spiritual aspect he can liberate his soul from the matter through his own efforts. A human person has to get rid of his bondage by the control over his senses and thought. And thus, he can attain perfect happiness and freedom through his own good work.
- 5) Two basic concepts of a human person are found in Islam. The Semitic view of a human person as the image of God and the Hellenists' view him as a microcosm. On one side, he is subjected to the Divine Will and on the other side he becomes the mediator between God and the macrocosm.

### **Answers to Check Your Progress IV**

1) In the *Cosmocentric* era, Western Greek Philosophers Placed human person in the Cosmos. They considered him as one of the creatures in the cosmos. Thus, he was a part of it. Even in the Eastern thinking we find something similar to it. According to Upaniṣad there is only one reality that exists (*Ekam Sat*). A human person is a part of it. He assimilates with the Absolute Being in his self realization, *Aham Brahma asmi*, I am Brahma.

2) Mediaeval philosophers put God or Absolute Being at the centre, hence it is called *Theocentric* era. In this period a human person's existence is known in relationship with God. A human person is a created being and thus is subjected to his creator. A similar thinking is observed even in Eastern philosophy in Islam. A human person is considered to be an image of God.

3) *Anthropocentric* era puts a person at the centre. Here, human person is the point of departure. He is the primary subject matter of any study. Western Modern philosophers observe this view of keeping person at the centre. Here, he is neither explained as the part of Cosmos nor in the relationship with God rather he is the central point of view. The main focus is on the human person himself.

Some kind of similarity we see in Eastern philosophy as well especially among those thinkers who are non-theistic, those who have no place for divinity or divine power. They emphasize a person's role for his own life in a particular way with regard to attain salvation or liberation of oneself from the bondage of *karma system*.



## **UNIT 3 DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF HUMAN PERSON - I (WESTERN)**

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### **3.0 OBJECTIVES**

This course deals with the central part of philosophy that deals with the very person who studies philosophy. Many thinkers decipher to unravel the puzzles of human existence. Hence the study of human person from philosophical perspective becomes relevant and interesting. One needs to explore the knowable and the unknown that elevated the human mind. In this course we will honestly make an attempt to search for truth about ourselves. In this course we ask questions like “What am I? How is my living different from animals and birds? Who am I? Am I dignified? What is the meaning of human existence? Is there life after life?”



### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Philosophy of human person intends to find the physical and metaphysical nature of what human is, what one is beyond appearances and differences caused by external reality. It raises some of the fundamental questions about human beings. Is man a vegetative being? Is man a sentimental being or rational being? The description of these aspects will be Philosophical Anthropology from the western perspectives.

The method we apply in this subject to learn about a human person is determining the specific characteristics of creation by beginning from experience and existence and proceed to search for the nature and the dignity of the human person. Our perspective in this unit is wholly Western.

### **3.2 DEFINITION**

The word 'human' comes from Sanskrit word 'manush' giving rise to English word Man, meaning 'creature with feelings and emotions'. The Greek word for man is 'anthropos', which means one who looks from below. In Latin the word equated to man is 'homo' which means earth or ground. All these languages recommend us that man is not merely a living creature, but is a transcendental human person. We possess certain faculties and potentials which the non rational species do not. To conclude what would be the near possible definition of Human would include four fundamental elements. 1. Autonomy in being: through which a person is distinct from all others. 2. Self-consciousness: through which a person recognizes he or she is unrepeatable and unique. 3. Communication: one establishes relationship with others and 4. Self-transcendence: through which one moves beyond the constraints of life issues. Here one is elevated to eternity.

### **3.3 THE CONCEPT OF LIFE**

Life is essential for all the human beings. "Of all the forms of human action, the most elementary and fundamental one and the one which at the same emerges as the most complex and rich with

content, is life". Since life has got its primary and fundamental character with respect to other human activities it is necessary that we begin our study from an examination of the phenomenon of life.

### **Life: A Simple Understanding**

Is a sleeping dog alive or dead? Well we are sure that it is alive. What is the criterion? There is a movement in its body when it inhales and exhales air. The criterion of life is movement, in particular self-movement.

### **Life: Scientific Conception**

Scientifically the following elements suggest the concept of life: 1. Cellular constitution: All living bodies are constituted by cells. 2. Metabolism: A set of chemical reactions that happen in living organism to maintain life. 3. Unstable equilibrium: An organism constantly changes as long as it has life. 4. It is protoplasm that constructs organism and this structure is very important to all living beings. The growth and the activity shown by the plants and animals are not random process but are controlled. The activity reveals us that the living organisms grow well co-ordinated and systematically organized.

### **Life: A philosophical Conception**

A philosopher tries to explain life looking at the various activities of living beings as well as non-living beings. All living beings possess immanent activities, whose effects remain within the acts of the subject. E.g. I dream, the dreaming starts from me and remains in me. The activities of all non-living beings are transient, whose effects pass into another, E.g. I throw a ball, the activity begins in me but the effect continues to move. All living beings show forth a certain amount immanent activities. The degree their immanence varies. Nutrition, Growth and Reproduction are the common immanent activities shared by all. Hence life may be defined as Savundra puts "that which makes a being naturally capable of self-perfective immanent activity".

Life is not found in non-living beings. We can seek the explanation for life with two theories namely Mechanistic and Vitalistic.

#### Mechanicism

Albert Szent Gyorgyi says that “there is no real difference between cabbages and kings; we are all recent leaves on the old tree of life.” Life is an ordinary material energy which can be eventually explained by the laws of physics and chemistry. Mechanicism is a philosophical perspective that holds that phenomena are solely determined by mechanical principles therefore they can be well explained only with the mechanical principles. According to this principle living body is nothing more than a complex machine.

#### Vitalism

Vitalism comes from the root word ‘Vita’ meaning life. Vitalism holds that there is life in all living beings. The proponents of this theory Hans Driesch and specifically Henri Bergson hold that the mechanistic principle cannot account for some of the activities of living beings. Nature could not be divided into analyzable units. There are irreducible vital forces that pervaded the natural worlds. The activities of living beings cannot be explained unless there is living principle. Battista quotes P. J. Barthez saying that the vital principle of man is the cause which produces all the phenomena of life in a human body.

The name of the cause is absolutely indifferent and can be chosen to one’s own liking like Nous, One, God, Supreme intelligence or spirit, etc. the mechanical cause which is at work in every living being is under the direction of some guiding principle, which steers their activity toward the realization of the specific type of this plant or that animal.

#### Check Your Progress I

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Elucidate the philosophical conception of life

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.....

2. What is the mechanistic concept of life?

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### **Operations of Humans and their Resources**

Immanence characterizes the operations of living beings. The fundamental existential principle of any living being is TO BE. Humans are corporeal substance and possess many operations that are common with lowest level of living beings, the plants. We have the ability to understand and to will. With these operations we transcend from the level of matter. We therefore possess and share the operations of understanding and willing and the material operations on the vegetative and sensitive plane. All these are attributed to us. Philosophically this is called a 'Supposit'. The difficulty arises when we see the essential principle that we possess which is the subsistent soul. The soul in no way would depend upon the matter for its existence and operations.

Since humans have two different sources of operations the body, material and the soul, spiritual is a human person one or multiple? Philosophers identify three kinds of operations: vegetative, Cognitive and Appetitive Operations. Let us briefly throw light on these.

#### **Vegetative Operations**

*Nutrition, Growth and Reproduction* are three kinds of vegetative operation. *Nutrition* is an immanent operation by which a corporeal being assimilates food into its own substance. The food is kept in a good state and it fills up the lost energy. During life two simultaneous processes are continual progress – a building up and a breaking down. The two processes are together called metabolism. The constructive is anabolism and the destructive is catabolism. In a healthy organism the constructive process exceeds the destructive process.

So nutrition is for the preservation of the organism. It is a self-perfective immanent act. *Growth* is the activity by which a living body attains its due quantitative development. Growth may be defined as the expansion or development of a being from within. *Reproduction* or regeneration is an operation by which a living corporeal being gives rise to individuals of same species. Only animate substances reproduce.

### 3.4 SENSATION

Before we know something about the sensation we will try to understand some notion on knowledge. Knowledge is a complicated process. The process begins from outside with an object and ends within the mind. There is a relationship between the object outside and the mind but how they function is not clear. It is to say that one influences the other. Knowledge thus results in the act of awareness. When I say this is a pen, through the process of knowledge, the pen that is outside my mind has somehow come into my mind. What is reality outside my mind has become the reality inside my mind. Some elements of knowledge come from senses that come in contact with objects that exist outside the mind. So mutually the subjective elements (senses) and object outside to arrive at knowledge.

Sensitive knowledge is obtained through the faculties of five external senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch) and four internal senses (common sense, imagination, memory and estimative sense).

External sensation

External sensation refers to an awareness of material singulars. Our senses perceive objects individually and not universally. This external sense has a Sense power consisting of a Faculty and an organ.

Internal senses

Internal sensations have no body or organ attached to it. Through the Sense Memory we recall the past and retain them. Imagination has two functions, reproductive and imaginative. The reproductive imagination retains and reproduces the images. The received images can be combined in several ways. This is creative imagination. Central sense/Common sense perceives different characteristic in one and the same object.

Since there is various external sense impressions put together it is called unifier or synthetic. The synthesis of various impressions received from various external senses is properly called perception. The estimative sense may be defined as an internal cognitive power whereby an animal perceives in an external object an aspect of suitability or unsuitability. To conclude, in this chapter we have discussed about an important human activity, namely sense perception. Sense perception requires not only physical organs but a vital power.

### **3.5 INTELLECTION**

In this chapter we are going to examine the nature of the intellect. Is this intellect a material sense organ or something superior to sense organ? What are the activities we as humans perform through the faculty of intellect? There are certain activities humans perform which do not appear in the sense realm such as Symbolic communication, Ideas and concepts formulation, reflection, Acts of judgment and reasoning.

#### **Symbolic communication**

Speech distinguishes humans from animals. Humans apply symbolic signs called language. As for Descartes, animals can never use words. This is an essential difference between human and subhuman. This communication is not merely oral. There is no necessary link between the content of communication and the manner whereby it is made. Language signifies thought and it is of a natural sign but an artificial one. Animals cannot symbolically communicate but humans can. So only the intellectual; beings can communicate a sign as a sign. Language cannot be purely physical. A physical sound is not purely physical. The ability to translate tells us of the suprasentient (the word has more than physical meaning) intelligence. The language has significant role in relation to human thought and its meaning. Meaning is prior to communication



thus language is not required for meaning. This aspect of language is not sensible but only intelligible.

Ideas or concepts

Knowledge understood is obtained by the intellect, by reason and observation, and concepts are the means by which it is expressed. An idea is the representation of the essence of a thing in the mind. It is an intellectual intentional image. By the idea we have intellectual knowledge of an essence. This knowledge is abstracted by the mind working upon the findings of sense. Certain ideas are formed by a second abstraction from ideas already in the mind, and these are called abstractive or derived ideas. The ideas of things around us in this bodily world are formed directly by the mind from sense-findings; these are intuitive ideas. An idea is a mental representation or intentional image or a grasp of something. The idea of a thing is not analyzable. It is a simple idea. All ideas except the idea of a being is a simple idea. Idea of being is compound. A concept or an idea is a sign. The concept signifies things that exist or can exist. Plato divided ideas into universal and particular. An idea is always universal. When the term applies to some members of the family, it is **particular**. Eg. Some men, majority of men, a few students. **Universal** terms refer to all members of a group. Eg. Each man, every man, etc. Universals cannot be sensed. What is common is universal and what is common cannot be sensed. Thus what is universal is intelligible and suprasentient.

### **Reflection**

Reflection is an effort to understand intellect. It is bending back upon itself. No material thing can reflect perfectly because material things have part outside of parts.

### **Judging**

The mind tends to compare the ideas and concepts that it has acquired. It notices the likenesses and differences, and to pronounce upon its findings. This pronouncing of the mind on the agreement and disagreement of ideas is the operation called judging. Judging is a basic process

of thinking and the fruit of the judging is judgment. An idea is not a judgment. It is a mere grasp of an essence in which mind merely takes the root-meaning, without saying anything about it.

### **Reason**

Reasoning is the process of thinking things out. When the mind cannot make a judgment on the agreement or disagreement of two ideas as it is not clear about their relations then it employs a third idea which mediates reaching judgment. The result of the fruit of reasoning process is a piece of reasoning.

### **Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. How is sensitive knowledge obtained?

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2. Write a short note on Ideas or concepts

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.....

### **3.6 Human Will**

#### **Defining Will**

All of us have desires in life. But where does this desire arise from? Is there any faculty? This desire originates from a capacity. I look at a car and desire to possess it. Where does this desire arise from? Simply by knowing the car? Now I choose not to desire for it. The ability on my part to buy or not to buy originates from a capacity. This capacity is centered on a faculty that is

called 'WILL'. Some deny the existence of will. They say if only we have the knowledge of something, we opt for it.

If we agree upon this argument then we can conclude that the appetitive activities must be proportions to cognitive activities. If we possess immaterial cognitive faculty then we must also possess an immaterial appetitive faculty. The very fact that we can control and discipline us points us that there is human will.

Object of the will

The formal object of the intellect is truth. The formal object of will is goodness at soul. The will desires something because it is or it seems good. The will strives towards some good that is presented to it by the intellect. Since the will is not a cognitive faculty it does not know object's goodness. Desire/Appetite refers only to cognitive agents: Appetite seeks what is suitable and avoids what is not suitable. As we have sense knowledge and intellectual knowledge. We have rational appetite and sense appetite.

### **Rational Appetite**

Will means an immaterial power of appetite that desires things in rational order. As this will is in rational order we call this as rational appetite. How do we know that there is a rational appetite? We seek not only sensible perceptible good but also intellectually apprehended good.

For E.g. My love for my family tells me not only to give up drinking but also to take bitter medicine to be healthy to support my family. Thus we may conclude that we seek or desire good at three different levels.

Sensible good in a sensible way

Supra sensible way and

Intelligible goods in an intelligent way.

Aristotle in his treatise on the soul says "The will is born in human reason". The intellect and will are interdependent though they operate at two different levels.

## **Freedom of the Will**

We are humans because we are free. Freedom lies at the core of human existence. Our freedom is situated in physical and material structures that limits and at the same time help to release it. Its awareness is coupled with our will. We are conscious of being free but at the same time freedom appear to be an illusion.

### **(i) Definition of freedom**

Freedom means the absence of restraint or constriction. Physical freedom is absence of physical restraint/obligations. Moral freedom is absence of moral restrictions. Psychological freedom is absence of psychological restraint

### **(ii) Determinism**

Contemporary philosophers deny the freedom of the will. They are called the determinists and their school is known as determinism. Matter is determined, and man a purely material being is determined and that which is determined has no freedom. Man can be predicted and hence he has no freedom. Biologically man's life is moved and determined by psychological factors. Psychologically and socially one is determined by conduct. Mondin says theologically our lives are directed by God that everything is blindly necessitated by the one all pervading divine. There is of partial truth in these forms of determinism. E. Fromm says that we have lost the culture of spontaneity. Love is the component of this spontaneous culture. The super imposed self of the society can be overcome only with freedom.

### **Arguments for freedom of the will**

#### **Arguments from common consent**

Many people believe that their will is free. This conviction is of practical importance for the whole of our life. If deterministic theory says that we are destined to be such and such there can't be order. Ordinary people accept this argument.

### **b) Psychological argument**

There are certain acts that we choose freely to perform. We have an awareness of our freedom of choice while choosing it and not to be led by blind impulses. This decision is from the core of our personality, from our own free will.

### **c) Ethical argument**

If there is no freedom, there is no real responsibility, no virtue, no moral obligation, no duty & no morality. Hence obligation supposes freedom. The determinists deny the existence of duty.

Dimensions of freedom

#### **Personal freedom**

At the personal level, freedom means the capacity to be with one's self. It means the autonomy for reflecting choosing and directing one's life according to one's ideal, values from one's centre of conscience. Here one can decide about oneself as a whole to become a person self.

#### **Social Freedom**

Being human involves being with others. This is related to others freedom. It is to accept that the other in his or her otherness and freedom. At this social level, human freedom means absence of social structures and oppression that blocks the personal freedom of others to live a full life with human dignity. Therefore it is promoting personal freedom of all.

#### **Transcendental Freedom**

In this transcendental freedom, a human being fulfills his longing for the infinite. It is freedom from selfishness and fear. Freedom, to conclude is an integral part of human existence. It is interplay of activities between the will and the intellect. While the intellect is directed to truth, the will is attracted by good. Human freedom can perfect human beings.

### 3.7 HUMAN SOUL

There is no human person without human soul. The source of various activities in the rational order is the human soul. It is a vital principle of the human person. The Latin word for soul is 'anima'. It originated from the Greek word 'anemos', meaning 'wind' or 'breath'. Human persons perform many immaterial acts that proceed from intellect and will. These acts form the very nature and substance of the human person. Soul is the substantial form of the human person. A being is said to be simple if it has no distinctive parts. Soul being a non-composite has no essential parts. Thus the soul, the vital principle of the human person is essentially simple.

#### **Soul's origin**

Where does the form of the human person come from? It is not possible that the immaterial soul comes from matter. Are our parents then responsible for the production of our soul? Unthinkable! For their souls are also simple and immortal. Let us look into the views of some philosophers

#### **Plato**

According to Plato the soul is immaterial and the real me, produced by the demiurge prior to coming into the body. It pre-exists the human body.

#### **Aristotle**

He said God could have produced the human soul. He denied the pre-existence of soul.

#### **Ex-nihilo**

Human souls could be created out of nothing by God alone. The creation of souls become complicated as the human body is involved. When is the soul infused into the human body? There are two views 1. *Immediate animation theory* which maintains that human soul is infused into the fertilized ovum immediately after conception. 2. *Mediate animation theory* which says since the embryo cannot perform rational activity it is vegetative. The vegetative stage will



develop into sentient and then to rational stage. In this rational stage human soul is received. Everything takes place with the hand of God..

### **Soul Needs Body**

Does soul needs body to perform vital acts? The soul intrinsically depends on matter for all its sentient and vegetative activities. An animal is a psychosomatic composite. An animal or plant soul is not a substance for the efficient cause of the plant or an animal is dog or plant. In humans, the efficient cause of vegetative and sentient activities is the composite of body and soul. Therefore we may say that human soul is intrinsically dependent upon the body for its vegetative and sentient acts. Unlike plants and animal's human soul can perform spiritual acts which do not require matter. Human spiritual acts flow from intellect and will, which are inherent in soul. So to be spiritual or immaterial is to be independent of matter. Though the human soul is independent of matter however it needs body to perform its work. The human soul is both intrinsically independent on matter and extrinsically dependent on matter.

### **Soul as substance and Form**

The human soul is a substantial form of the body. Since it performs spiritual acts we can deduce that the human soul is a spiritual substance. As the soul does not intrinsically depend on matter, it has an existence of its own. Then the question arises what is body for the soul? The intimacy of intellect and senses in the act of knowing implies the close union of soul and body. The soul is therefore both subsistence and form.

### **Immortality of soul**

Human soul is immortal. If that is so then it continues to exist even after its separation from dead body. The mystery is that we don't have access to it. Immortality of soul is complete substance because it is gifted with its own act of being. St Thomas Aquinas opines that the soul prolongs in being even after its separation from human body. Since human soul is intrinsically independent of matter. This he calls subsistent, meaning soul is truly the form of the body and unites with it to

form one essence. Soul is also incorruptible, since it is not composed of parts. He combined the views of Plato and Aristotle and came up with a new phrase 'substantial form'.

### **3.8 I AM MY BODY**

Human person is embodied spirit. He is part of the world. He shares in composition with mineral kingdom, plant kingdom and animal kingdom. He is being-in-the-world. My body is that which makes me possible to exist. My human body is a subjective body as it intimately participates in my subjectivity. More than 'mine', it is 'me'. Through my bodiliness I am open to the world. The self and the bodiliness are inseparable. Body, therefore should not be despised but marveled.

### **3.9 HUMAN LOVE**

Human love cannot be understood apart from human person. Humans are finite beings and in and through this finiteness we sense the transcendence. Humans are constant seekers who open up doors to new vistas. Humans are structurally beings for others.

This is revealed in communication where one shares meaning and care where one watches over the other. The culmination of the drives in us reaches love. When we love our being becomes the being-for-another. An existential analysis of love shows that love is an authentic human experience. Our being is realized only in love and that the being of ours is open to love. This love is a free gift of person to person. The opposite of love is appropriating the being of other to oneself. Our own conquest will enslave us in the process. Every attempt to make another's being exclusively a being-for-me ends in making my being a being-for-that-other. Kavanaugh elucidates that a human being is not completely a human being until one has been "loved in and by the act of a person to whom (one) can give (oneself) freely and who will freely give (one)-rather be for one – the anchor in being that (human being) so desperately needs". Personality is constituted not merely by 'I' but by 'we'.

### **Check Your Progress III**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1. Does soul need body?

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2. What are the dimensions of freedom?

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**3.10 HUMAN DEATH AND HOPE**

Human is bound to die. Death conveys a message for us. Heidegger uses the term 'being-for-death' for man. If that is so should not we conclude our existence is meaningless? On the other hand religions believe that there is life after death. The salvation project the religions offer seems escaping the reality.

**Ignoring Death**

Man in his individual reality is an accident in nature. Those who fear death are those who cling to their individual existence which is insignificant. Death as a philosophical idea can satisfy our reason but do not explain the data experience. Thus a level of anxiety is inevitable when we face death. That we are 'beings-for-death' is as dreadful as it is certain.

**Apprehensions before death**

Observation on death will certainly lead us to depressing final. Let us observe the views of philosophers.

**Sartre**

“Death is total OTHERNESS for me” says Sartre. We need not be concerned about death for it is the end of our experience. We may think over our death but cannot think death. My own death becomes an event for others and not for me. Death is foreign to our life. Therefore human life is absurd with this uneasy death.

### **Heidegger**

When a man is born he is already old to die. Death is not an accident but already written in human conception. Man’s death is written in his essence and he is the only living being aware of his death. Death is a significant aspect of human life. We experience death in our temporality. The authentic human existence consists in awareness of here and now about our death. We should bear the anxiety of our death.

### **Gabriel Marcel**

Marcel says, “I live in the death of my friends”. When someone closer to us dies we experience pain and suffering. There is a breakup of the love and communion. There is something within us dies along with the death of our friend.

### **3.11 LET US SUM UP**

Human has natural desire for eternal happiness. This possibility is rooted in one’s freedom and values. Though man is a limited being, he is also a being conscious in this world that helps him to raise metaphysical and religious questions. This desire for fulfillment is natural that it flows from his very essence. Phenomenology may not help us find this quest but our inferential reason would help us reflection the problem of life after death.

2. A natural desire cannot be futile. Every human being has a natural desire for happiness. This desire is futile when death blocks life. To overcome this fact one has to accept that there is life after death. But rather than believing in absurdity if we start our argument saying human life is

meaningful then there must exist a possibility satisfying our fulfillment. Let us not start with absurdity but with meaning.

3. The above argument that there is life after death is not a proof but a belief that our life is meaningful. We are led to this conclusion with a Philosophical faith and hope. Not that there is life after death but there is a possibility without which certain requirements of human essence cannot be met. In the absence of certainty one has to opt the philosophical faith similar to Kant's *Postulates of practical reason*.

4. Death is a call that we live each moment and relish it totally. This worldly life is not prison house that one has to endure till his death. Rather it is a commitment in contrast with escapist spirituality of dualism. Our attitude in relation to life after death should enable us to take life seriously so that we can find meaning for our lives. In other words we got to be conscious-being-in-and-at-the-world who is bound to incarnate the spiritual and eternal values in the world.

### 3.12 KEY WORDS

**Nous:** Nous is intellect or mind. Aristotle asserted *nous* as intellect, as distinguished from sense perception. He divided it into an active and passive *nous*. The passive is what receives intelligible forms, and the active is what illuminates the passive and makes potential knowledge into actual knowledge.

**Judgment:** Judgment is an act of the intellect in which we say something of an object by way of affirmation or denial.

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### **3.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

#### **Answers to check your progress I**

1. A philosopher tries to explain life looking at the various activities of living beings as well as non-living beings. All living beings possess immanent activities, whose effects remain within the acts of the subject. The activities of all non-living beings are transient, whose effects pass into another. All living beings show forth a certain amount immanent activities. The degree their immanence varies. Nutrition, Growth and Reproduction are the common immanent activities shared by all. Hence life may be defined as Savundra puts “that which makes a being naturally capable of self-perfective immanent activity”. Life is not found in non-living beings.

2. Mechanicism is a philosophical perspective that holds that phenomena are solely determined by mechanical principles therefore they can be well explained only with the mechanical principles. According to this principle a living body is nothing more than a complex machine.



John Alphonso Borelli observed that the animal body is a well-contrived machine, with its levers (bones), its pump (heart), its bellows (lungs), etc. Mechanistic theory is often criticized for overlooking the organic independent relationships found within a being, its incompatibility with freewill and oversimplification of complex phenomena.

### **Answers to check your progress II**

Sensitive knowledge is obtained through the faculties of five external senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch) and four internal senses (common sense, imagination, memory and estimative sense). **External sensation:** External sensation refers to an awareness of material singulars. Our senses perceive objects individually and not universally. This external sense has a Sense power consisting of a Faculty and an organ. **Internal senses:** Internal sensations have no body or organ attached to it. Through the Sense Memory we recall the past and retain them. Imagination has two functions, reproductive and imaginative. The reproductive imagination retains and reproduces the images. The received images can be combined in several ways. This is creative imagination. Central sense/Common sense perceives different characteristic in one and the same object. Since there is various external sense impressions put together it is called unifier or synthetic. The synthesis of various impressions received from various external senses is properly called perception. The estimative sense may be defined as an internal cognitive power whereby an animal perceives in an external object an aspect of suitability or unsuitability.

2. Knowledge understood is obtained by the intellect, by reason and observation, and concepts, the means by which it is expressed. An idea is the representation of the essence of a thing in the mind. It is an intellectual intentional image. By the idea we have intellectual knowledge of an essence. This knowledge is abstracted by the mind working upon the findings of sense. Certain ideas are formed by a second abstraction from ideas already in the mind, and these are called abstractive or derived ideas. The ideas of things around us in this bodily world are formed directly by the mind from sense-findings; these are intuitive ideas. An idea is a mental representation or intentional image or a grasp of something. The idea of a thing is not analyzable. It is a simple idea. All ideas except the idea of a being is a simple idea. Idea of being is compound. A concept or an idea is a sign.

### Answers to check your progress III

1. Does soul needs body to perform vital acts? The soul intrinsically depends on matter for all its sentient and vegetative activities. An animal is a psychosomatic composite. An animal or plant soul is not a substance for the efficient cause of the plant or an animal is dog or plant. In humans, the efficient cause of vegetative and sentient activities is the composite of body and soul. Therefore we may say that human soul is intrinsically dependent upon the body for its vegetative and sentient acts. Unlike plants and animal's human soul can perform spiritual acts which do not require matter. Human spiritual acts flow from intellect and will, which are inherent in soul. So to be spiritual or immaterial is to be independent of matter. Though the human soul is independent of matter however it needs body to perform its work. The human soul is both intrinsically independent on matter and extrinsically dependent on matter.

2. Freedom means the capacity to be with one's self. It means the autonomy for reflecting choosing and directing one's life according to one's ideal, values from one's centre of conscience. Here one can decide about oneself as a whole to become a personnel self. Being human involves being with others. This is related to others freedom. It is to accept that the other in his or her otherness and freedom. At this social level, human freedom means absence of social structures and oppression that blocks the personal freedom of others to live a full life with human dignity. Therefore it is promoting personal freedom of all. In this transcendental freedom, a human being fulfills his longing for the infinite. It is freedom from selfishness and fear. Freedom, to conclude is an integral part of human existence. It is interplay of activities between the will and the intellect. While the intellect is directed to truth, the will is attracted by good. Human freedom can perfect human beings.

## UNIT 4

### DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF HUMAN PERSON - II (INDIAN)

#### Contents

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Vedic concept of Human
- 4.3 Concept of Human in the Upanishads
- 4.4 Chandogya Upanishad
- 4.5 Taittiriya Upanishad
- 4.6 Mandukya Upanishads
- 4.7 Katha Upanishad
- 4.8 Concept of Human in *Bhagavadgita*
- 4.9 Atman and Brahman
- 4.10 Human in need of liberation
- 4.11 *Buddhists* understanding of a human person
- 4.12 Jainism and Samkhya
- 4.13 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.14 Key Words
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- 4.16 Answers to Check Your Progress

#### 4.0 OBJECTIVES

The main aim of every Indian system is to show the way to salvation. The way to salvation is written in the language of renunciation (*Sannyasa*). But this idea cannot be said to represent the whole life of every Indian. Therefore for a complete philosophy of man one has to read the systems as well as *the activities of humans*, the ethical codes and the epics. Keeping in mind what the ancient sages said about sacred literature we will evolve the idea of human. The main literature for the ancients is *Vedas*. The poetries in *Vedas* are meant to teach the *Vedic* way of life.

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of Human person is very clearly derived from the western perspective. In the Indian tradition the concept seems to be strange and sometimes absent. The problem lies only in the method. The nature of the operation we are engaging in will be different. We will begin with the approach available in the Indian tradition rather than delving ourselves into fabrications. The Indian philosophy understands humans by placing them side by side with 'self'. "Atmanam viddhi" know thyself, would be the crux of Indian philosophy. Within the self is the spirit, the core of our being. Man is the conscious centre of all experience. The optimistic view of human person is seen in *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and in different schools. In this course let us study the concept of person as it emerged from these traditions.

## 4.2 VEDIC CONCEPT OF HUMAN

*Vedas* explore human's living in the universe. Among the *Vedas* the *Rig* and the *Atharvan* only explore a human's concrete and spontaneous experience in the universe. The *Sama* and the *Yajur* emphasize sacrificial rituals. The entire universe is seen as an extension of one's life. The initial approach to human life is his or her very breath. The *Rig Veda* terms human soul or self as *Atman*. The word *Atman* is derived from 'an' means to breath, 'at' means to move and 'va' means to blow. Hence it is the breath of life, the vital force. Hence the soul is the principle of breathing and controller of all activities. This spiritual principle is not opposed to body. Soon the human is identified with the whole of existence. According to *Purusa-Sukta* the human is conceived as a thousand headed and thousand footed giant, who is sacrificed (*Yajna*) by God. Accordingly the entire universe and the world of gods were made out of primordial human, the *Purusa*. The *Atharva Veda* begins with material composition of human and seeks to understand the unity behind the complexity. "Unified am I, quite undivided, unified my soul. Unified my sight, unified my hearing my breathing-both in and out- Unified is my continuous breath. Unified quite undivided am I, the whole of me" (*Atharva Veda* XIX, 51). In the *Brahmanas*, *Prajapati* same as *Purusa* is the primeval human being. In the *Taittiriya Brahmana* there is an indication that the gods, the plants, etc, are various parts of humans. In *Rig Veda*, the *Atman* is sometimes referred to as animating principle or the essence. *Brahman* is the universal

self. The term *Atman* is applied to *Brahman* in this sense. *Brahman* is known as *Paramatman*. 'Para' means ultimate and all other *Atmans* are called without 'Para' that they are not ultimate. *Atman* signifies the essence or the ultimate self of human. *Jiva*, the empirical self that stands for the totality of a human's transient sense faculties is contrasted with *Atman*. The *Atman* is "Unborn, undying, eternal, seated in the cavity (i.e., in the deepest recess of human) the human body and one's empirical self are subject to destruction. They are there to support the immortal self *Atman*. When a person dies the *Jivatman* will join again with *Paramatman*.

#### **4.3 CONCEPT OF HUMAN IN THE UPANISHADS**

Human nature is not a substantial unity of body and soul. Behind and beyond this unity *Atman* is the true constitution. The human body disintegrates and changes are inevitable. The changeless aspect of human persons can be arrived at, only through introspection. This helps one to transcend the empirical aspects to reach the inner reality of *Atman*. In *Rig Veda Atman* means breath or vital essence. Gradually *Atman* acquired the meaning of the soul or self. The *Upanishads* distinguish four states of consciousness where each determines a specific concept of the self. Only the last state identifies the true self. 1 The self may appear in the waking state in which it has the consciousness of the external world and the experience of gross objects. 2 The self may appear in the dreaming state in which it experiences subtle objects and has the consciousness of an internal world. 3 The self may appear in dreamless sleep in which there are no objects, gross or subtle, and no subject. In this state there is no pain or desire. In this state there is the shadow of supreme bliss. 4 The self may appear in the fourth state of pure consciousness in which like in deep sleep there is enjoyment of positive bliss. This pure bliss is called *Turiya*. The analysis of these four states will lead to an understanding of the One, the *Paramatman*, the universal Self or *Sarvatman*.

#### **4.4 CHANDOGYA UPANISHAD**

In the *Chandogya Upanishad*, The definition of self is seen in four stages: A) Body-self B) the empirical-self C) the transcendent self D) the absolute self. The *Upanishads* reject the self from being identified with these first three stages. This has diverted the Indian thinkers from the study of empirical man. Indian philosophers focus their attention on the cosmic reality, which may not exclude human in their empirical state but definitely lacks the deep analysis of the same. A human is always related to cosmic principle. Just as there are elements like water, fire and wind that are present in the universe, so too is explained the body of a cosmic Human. Universal



reality is the basis for human beings. This cosmic order is governed by gods and the physical universe is a replica of the cosmic universe. God is the within all things and humans cannot exclude God.

#### **4.5 TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD**

In the *Taittiriya Upanishad* it is elucidated that the search for *Brahman*, the deepest center of the human is not outward but inward. *Brahman* is the eternal truth, he is the wisdom and he is present in the innermost hidden cave without losing his transcendent presence in the highest heaven.

#### **4.6 MANDUKYA UPANISHADS**

The *Mandukya Upanishad* looks at human consciousness as illuminated consciousness. The Human is beyond wakeful, dream, deep sleep and etc. We may speak of the four states of the individual, namely: the gross (*Sthula*), the Subtle (*Suksma*), the causal (*Karana*) and the self of human (*Atman*). The *Mandukya Upanishad* maintains that this fourth state, *Atman* is “neither internally nor externally conscious, nor conscious in both the ways, it is neither conscious nor unconscious; it is invisible, intractable, inapprehensible, indefinable...”

#### **4.7 KATHA UPANISHAD**

The *Katha Upanishad* explains human-on-earth: The creator of humans pierced the holes of his senses outward so that a human person naturally looks without. Some sages, the so called wise men searching for immortality looked within and found the self. Self-realization begins with the awareness of the earthbound body-self (*Annamayakosa*) dependent on and ultimately composed of food, a self which has shape and size and extension in space like other material objects, but is also alive, penetrated and vivified by breath. *Pranamayakosha* – the self of breath, which takes its shape form the *Annamayakosha*. *Pranamayakosha* gives *Annamayakosha* the power of transforming nourishment, growth, movement, sensation, sense perception in all its form. Humans have another sheath called *Manomayakosha* or the emotional body, which spreads throughout the body enlivened by the *Prana*. This is the body of feelings which may react or respond to any stimulus offered to any part of the body not only by physical yielding or resistance, but also by movements inspired by imagination, emotion, reflective reasoning as well as instinct. The feelings have made the life forms mobile and evolved into animals. There is a further depth of interiority, the dimension of intelligence and intuition. The development of



intellect with the *vijnamayakosa* made animal forms human. Last of all is the *Anandanayakosa*, the interior, non-dual self. This sheath makes humans divine.

### Check Your Progress I

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Explain the Vedic Concept of Human Person

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2. How are the Kosas described in Katha Upanishads

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### 4.8 CONCEPT OF HUMAN IN *BHAGAVADGITA*

The *Bhagavatgita* is more syncretic than synthetic. It combines the dualism of *Samkhya* with the absolutism of *Vedanta* and the personalist theism of *Bhakti* religion. *Bhagavatgita* says 'every human is powerless and made to work by the constituents born of nature'. These constituents are seen as *Sattva*, goodness and purity, *Rajas*, understood as energy and passion and *Tamas* that stands for darkness, dullness and laziness (of will). *Prakrti* is the combination of all these three strands. In the evolution of matter *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas* have irreducible functions. 'There is a function of reflection displayed in thought, which is reduced to *Sattva*, a function of dynamism and creativity termed as *Rajas* and a function of limitation and individuality termed as *Tamas*'. The physical body, the five senses, the ego, the mind and the soul belong to the *Prakrti* of human. We can say that the soul stands nearest to the *Purusa*. The soul consists of intellect and will and is subject to the influence of *Gunas*. The senses and the ego can act through the mind and influence the soul, if the set up of *rajas* and *tamas* are predominant, the soul will be led astray. If *sattva guna* is strongly present then the soul can discriminate between *Prakrti* and *Purusa* and remain integrated. Soul has to coordinate the *Prakrti* of human into functioning by keeping the *Gunas* in perfect balance. Otherwise *Purusa* and *Prakrti* can never reach the integrated stage in the process of evolution. In the process of evolution *Purusa*

remains just a witness, unaffected by the evolution of matter. Matter around can obscure the *Purusa* in its pure consciousness.

#### 4.9 ATMAN AND BRAHMAN

Already we have grasped some notion about *Atman* and *Brahman* when we were enquiring about the concept of the human person in the *Vedas*. In this chapter we will probe the link between *Atman* and *Brahman*.

##### *Atman as Brahman*

*Brahman* is 'the magic power' that is derived from sacrificial performance. From this arose the meaning of the power that creates and pervades the totality of the universe, the supreme reality. It is the 'Real of the real' (*Satyasa satyam*). *Atman* is the individual self. It is the highest and the most valuable type of being that we experience. But the self that we experience is not the absolute self. The individual self is the mixture of real and unreal, a product of knowledge and ignorance. Our investigation in this section about the true self will give access to the essence of *Brahman*, the absolute reality. The *Upanishads* identify *Atman* as *Brahman*. *Brahman*, which is the objective principle underlying the world, the mysterious power and the first cause of all that exists and *Atman*, that forms the essence of the human self are ultimately the same. The identification of *Brahman* with *Atman* reveals the spiritual nature of the absolute reality. This accounts for the existence of the selves and the physical world. *Brahman* is called "Saccidananda" where Sat is being, Cit is spirit and *Ananda* is peace, bliss. *Brahadaranyaka Upanishad* says:

He is the unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the unthought thinker, the understood understander. Other than he there is no seer, other than he there is no hearer, other than he there is no thinker, other than he there is no understander; he is your Self, the inner controller, the Immortal (Br. Up. 3. 7. 23)

The seers of the *Upanishad* thought that there cannot be any distinction between the essence of the inner reality of the cosmos, the *Brahman* and the inner reality of human, the *Atman*. This is because *Brahman* cannot be seen in parts. As the distinction between the *Paramatman* and the *Jivatman* dwindled, both are identified as one without the second. *Brahman* is the basis of the world. *Brahman* is the first principle in the universe, known through *Atman*, the same principle in human. *Chandogya Upanishad* states that the entire world is *Brahman*.

The *Upanishads* identify *Brahman* with *Atman* and these are termed as identity statements (*Mahavakyani*). For instance: “*Prajnanam Brahma*” – *Brahman* is consciousness. “*Ayam Atman Brahma*” – this *Atman* is *Brahman*; this *Brahman* is *Atman*. By discovering the identification of *Atman* and *Brahman* the individual discovers in the depths of his or her being the cosmic abundance of God. The oft quoted *Mahavakya* is “*Tad Tvam asi*” (Thou art that). This means that the divine reality (*Tad*) is in the heart of the disciple (*Tvam*). *Tad* and *Tvam* are Identical. The real self (*Tvam*) is no other than *Brahman* (*Tad*). Another phrase is “*So aham asmi*” (I am he or I am *Brahman*), “*Aham Brahma asmi*” (I am *Brahman*).

Knowledge of *Brahman – Atman*

*Atman*’s identical experience with *Brahman* is a trans-empirical experience. “*Brahman* is known to him who says he does not know it.” (*Kena Up.*, 2, 3) We can only indicate that the absolute reality exists. One cannot describe *Brahman* in positive terms. Like *Brahman* is this, that and so on. But in terms of negative terms: ‘*neti-neti*’ method (not this, not that). The supreme *Brahman* is called “*Nir-guna*”, without any qualities, totally simple (“*ekam eva advitiam*”, the one without a second).

*Atman* as distinct from *Brahman*

In all our above contentions we could understand that a human’s *atman* is completely identified with *Brahman*. This view is supported by *Mandukya Upanishad* and *Sankara* in his *Advaita*. But there are some *Upanishads* that maintain a distinction between *Atman* and *Brahman*. The *Atman* is one with *Brahman* as long as it is a part of *Brahman* and has its being outside time, but the *Atman* is distinct from *Brahman* in that it does not share *Brahman*’s creative activity in time. The *Atman* may participate in *Brahman* but not *Brahman* Himself. *Katha Upanishads* speaks about this.

More subtle than the Subtle, greater than the great,

The self (*Brahman*) is hidden in the heart of creatures (here):

The human without desire, (all) sorrow spent, beholds it,

The majesty of the Self (*Brahman*), by the grace of the ordainer. (*Katha Upanishad.*, 2.20)

According to *Bhagavatgita*, since the *Atman* is part of *Brahman* it is beyond the category of time, it is never born, it never dies, and it is eternal:

“Never it is born nor dies; never did it come to be nor will it ever come to be again; unborn, eternal, everlasting is this Self, - primeval. It is not slain when the body is slain. If a human knows it as indestructible, eternal, unborn never to pass away, how and whom can one cause to be slain or slay?”

(*Bhagavatgita*, 2.20-21).

Since *Atman* shares *Brahman*'s mode of being, *Atman* is said to be part of *Brahman*. And as it is perceived as minute part of *Brahman*, it should not be identified with *Brahman*. If *Gita* acknowledges the distinction between *Brahman* and *Atman* then it also admits that one *Atman* is different from another *Atman*.

#### 4.10 HUMAN IN NEED OF LIBERATION

We are ultimately *Atman*. *Atman*'s existence is dependent on material embodiment. Dependency to something would mean that *Atman* is tied to something and *Atman* is not free. In other words *Atman* is in a state of 'bondage' to the body (*Sthula* and *Suksma*). Bondage implies that *Atman* needs liberation. But when will this *Atman* be liberated? Can a human get out of the body and be liberated when one dies?

Liberation in Hinduism is controlled by the notions of *Karma* and *Samsara*. *Karma-Samsara* is a doctrine of reward and punishment in the Hindu system. All the systems in the Indian thought including the heterodox groups like Jainism and Buddhism seeks after the means of liberation from one's chains of slavery. Both *Karma* and *Samsara* are well knit to each other.

*Karma*

*'Karma pradhan vishva rachi rakha*

*Jo jas karai so tas fal chakha'*

As it goes in Ramayana, the entire universe is governed by the Law of *Karma* and the most important section and the fundamental principle of this law is '*Jo jas karai so tas fal chakaha*' As you sow, so shall you reap. Thus the law of *karma* is the law of action and reaction, cause and effect and effort and destiny. The law of cause and effect forms an integral part of Hindu philosophy. This law is termed as '*Karma*' which is derived from the root '*kr*' which means 'to make, to do, to act'. *Karma* literally means to make a deed, action or cause. The concise oxford Dictionary of current English defines it as the "sum of person's actions in one of his successive states of existence, viewed as deciding his fate for the next". In Sanskrit, *karma* means

“volitional action that is undertaken deliberately or knowingly”. So this details self-determination and a strong will power to abstain from inactivity. The law of *karma* is valid in physical, psychical and moral spheres. Every time we think or do something, we create a cause, which in time will bear its corresponding effects. It is a personality of a human being or the *Jivatman* - with its positive and negative actions.

*Karma* could be both the activities of the body or the mind, irrespective of the consideration whether the performance brings fruition immediately or at a later stage. However, the involuntary or the reflex actions cannot be called *karma*. When we deal with *karma* our intention is not the cause – effect relationship of the physical world. Our concern is anthropological. The problem of evil, which we call sin, should be understood within the frame work of *Karma*. If one suffers physical tragedy it is due to his past action. In the *Rig veda*, evil and sufferings are result of sin. This can be translated as ‘*enas*’ meaning offence, ‘*agas*’ which means fault, ‘*antra*’ meaning unrighteousness and ‘*drughda*’ meaning misdeed. Sin here is a ritual error rather than offence against gods and their friendship. Ritual and sacrificial impurity is very much stressed as sin in *Brahmanas*. Immoral acts make humans ritually impure. Therefore one can be purified by means of sacrifices. In the *Upanishadic* period the understanding of sin was given a different turn. It was not considered an offence against gods but a lack of knowledge or ignorance (*Avidhya*).

Ignorance (*Avidhya*), desire (*Kama*) and action (*Karma*) are sins because they prevent the attainment of right knowledge by human. When one attains the right knowledge the distinctions between *Atman* and *Brahman* disappears. One is beyond good and bad. It is the highest level of truth that one attains. *Gita* stresses on the attachment to fruits. So if one expects some reward for one’s action it is an action desired, attached and even self aggrandized action. These actions are sinful. *Bhagavatgita* promotes ‘*Niskama karma*’ which is the action without fruit.

### *Samsara*

The Sanskrit word *Samsara* means “the repeated passing of souls through different worlds-or subtle.” Thus, *Samsara* means going through the cycle of repeated births and deaths. Under the influence of *karma*, the soul moves upwards and downwards on the wheel of rebirth, the round of birth, death and rebirth undergone by all living beings. It is a cycle of transmigration from one living form into another.



The concept of *Samsara* is mentioned in *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. The belief in *Samsara* is connected with Hindu belief in *Karma* which we have dealt with already above.

“When a caterpillar has come to the end of a blade of grass, it reaches out to another blade, and draws itself over to it. In the same way the soul, having coming to the end of one life, reaches out to another body, and draws itself over to it. A goldsmith takes an old ornament and fashions it into a new and more beautiful one. In the same way the soul as it leaves one body, looks for a new body which is more beautiful.”

(*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* 4:4.3-6a)

The atman is in bondage as long as one clings on to the subtle body (*Suksma sarira*) ‘*Suksma sarira*’ is called ‘*linga sarira*’ (*li*-to dissolve, *gam*-to go out). The subtle body accompanies the spirit after cremation. The *linga sarira* is an essential link in the continuity of life because it is not destroyed by life as it continues to activate it throughout ‘*Samsara*’ until it becomes one with the *Brahman*. Misfortunes in our present life are the result of acts that we have committed in the past. So it necessarily follows that if a person has committed evil in this life then as retribution he will have some other mode of existence in the next life. This results in the endless chain of births and deaths. In every new birth one is given a new body by means of which one can counterbalance the deeds of the disintegrated body of the previous existence. The new body is a better one or the worst depends on the *karma*. If one has done good deeds he would get a better body and a worst body for bad deeds. The cycle of rebirths can either generate a progressive spiritual evolution or of deterioration of material enslavement. The *Atman* can never attain salvation when it is enslaved in the matter. It has to reach the succession of life into a superior body which helps leaving the impressions of *karma* and be integrated in the ideal equilibrium with the *Atman*. In this way the very subtle body becomes an expression of the perfect harmony that exists between God and the world. The goal of human life is to be free or liberated from repeated births. Such liberation is called *Moksha* or *Mukti*. *Moksha* can be attained only through the God realization.

### Check Your Progress II

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit



1. How is Atman Identified with Brahman?

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2. Write a short note on Karma

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#### **4.11 BUDDHISTS UNDERSTANDING OF A HUMAN PERSON**

Buddhism offers a wide range of explanation for human person more than any other religion and philosophy. Buddha was very much interested in the human predicament. He begins with a supposition that our individual existence is root of the human malady. Buddha remained silent about the reality of world and God. He was convinced that the metaphysical theories would not provide consolation for a sick human. Does a soldier shot by a gun in battle enquire about the nature and origin of that gun? He would desire to be relieved from pain here and now. As for Buddha human life is a long series of miseries: “*Sarvam Dukkam*” in the first of the four noble truths of Buddhism. Can this suffering be treated with strong drugs to provide someone happiness? So what causes this ‘*Dukkam*’ (suffering) in human? Desires and thoughts pursue unattainable goals that cause self misery and suffering. There is the origin for suffering. This is the second noble truth of Buddhism. The self feels that these desires and thoughts are stable. In fact nothing is permanent and stable. It is just the ego which gives this false consciousness. Buddha says everything is becoming, flux (“*Sarvam Anityam Bhava*”). So a human is not a permanent ego, not a self, not a soul. If so what is a human? Humans are ever changing Psycho – Physical states: (*Nama – Rupa*). A human therefore is a succession of states. Human person is an ever changing component with the permanence of his or her soul or self. Salvation is achieved when one detaches oneself from the false permanence of the self. In so doing one begins to experience “*Nirvana*” which is happiness in its purest state without being attached to thoughts and desires. Buddha discouraged metaphysical discussions. As for him *Nirvana* is not immortality. *Nirvana* means a ‘blowing out’. It is a state reached here and now above the worldly miseries through the ‘blowing off’ of the fire of all passions.

#### 4.12 JAINISM AND SAMKYA

These two schools hold an identical dualistic vision of reality. While Samkya holds the dualism of *Prakriti* and *Purusha* (matter and spirit), Jainism holds the dualism of *Jiva* and *Ajiva* (life and non life). Within this dualistic context how do these systems understand Human person? Samkya

According to Samkya, *Prakriti* is the cosmic reality in constant movement. *Prakriti* includes all that changes whether physical or psychical (sensations, feelings, desires, thoughts). *Purusha* is purely spiritual and stable. It is perfect. Where do humans stand between these basic constituents of reality? Samkya advocates that the true human is the individual perfect *Purusha*. It is wrong to conceive that one is the mixture of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. If one perceives this mixture as true then that becomes the cause of one's misery. The pure essence of a human, the perfect *Purusha* is revealed through the practice of yoga.

#### Jainism

According to Jainism reality comprises of the duality of *Jivas* (Many living souls) and *Ajiva* (One cosmic lifeless reality). Life is the highest value. If one kills a life, he is doing a greater crime. All living beings have soul which indicates the sacred character of that being. These souls are pure and perfect as though divine. But the *Ajiva* which is impure and material by its very nature can contaminate the pure soul. *Jiva* can thus be entangled by the *Ajiva*. Through the practice of rigorous asceticism and purification process of successive reincarnations one can liberate oneself from the bondage of material reality.

#### Check Your Progress III

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Describe the Buddhist concept of human person?

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2. Explain the dual nature of life found in Jainism

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#### 4.13 LET US SUM UP

Indian approach to human person is more 'religious' than properly philosophical. It tells us very little of what human 'is' and deals more with what human 'should be'. The concerns of Indian philosophy of human person are how one attains salvation or enlightenment. It is concerned with 'here and now'. While suffering holds the central place in Buddhism, One has to renounce one's individuality and lose oneself with the divine Being. On the other hand more or less all the systems in Indian Philosophy believe that human reality is a condemned state of existence. A true human has to liberate himself or herself from this condemnation. *Upanishad* suggest s that the individual self has to become Universal self (*Atman-Brahman*) and lose in it. Samkya-Jainism Suggest that the empirical self must be purified from *Prakriti – Ajiva*. Buddhists propagate that the empirical self must be given up to reach the state of *Nirvana*.

#### 4.14 KEY WORDS

**Karma:** Karma is the concept of "action" or "deed," understood as that which causes the entire cycle of cause and effect originating in ancient India and treated in Hindu, Jain, Sikh and Buddhist philosophies.

**Samsara:** Samsara is the cycle of birth, death and rebirth within Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Vaishnavism and other Indian religions. Colloquially, "Samsara" can also refer to a general state of subtle sufferings that occur in day to day life.

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#### **4.16 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

##### **Answers to Check Your Progress I**

1. Vedas explore human's living in the universe. Among the Vedas the Rig and the Atharvan only explore human's concrete and spontaneous experience in the universe. The Sama and the Yajur emphasize sacrificial rituals. The entire universe is seen as an extension of one's life. The initial approach to human life is his or her very breath. The Rig Veda terms human soul or self as Atman. The word Atman is derived from 'an' means to breathe, 'at' means to move and 'va' means to blow. Hence it is the breath of life, the vital force. Hence the soul is the principle of breathing and controller of all activities. This spiritual principle is not opposed to body. Soon the human is identified with whole existence.

2. Katha Upanishad explains human-on-earth: The creator of humans pierced the holes of his senses outward so that human person naturally looks without. Some sages the so called wise men wishing immortality looked within and found the self. Self-realization begins with the awareness of the earthbound body-self (Annamayakosa) dependent on and ultimately composed of food, a self which has shape and size and extension in space like other material objects, but is also alive, penetrated and vivified by breath. Pranamayakosha – the self of breath, which takes its shape form the Annamayakosha. Pranamayakosha gives Annamayakosha the power of transforming nourishment, growth, movement, sensation, sense perception in all its forms. Humans have another sheath called Manomayakosha or the emotion body, which spreads throughout the body enlivened by the Prana. This is the body of feelings which may react or respond to any stimulus offered to any part of the body not only by physical yielding or resistance, but also by movements inspired by imagination, emotion, reflective reasoning as well as instinct. The feelings have made the life forms mobile and evolved into animals. There is a further depth of interiority, the dimension of intelligence and intuition. The development of intellect with the vijnamayakosa made animal forms human. The last of all is the Anandanayakosa, the interior, non-dual self. This sheath makes humans divine, the Antaryamin.

##### **Answers to Check Your Progress II**

Atman is the individual self. It is the highest and the most valuable type of being that we experience. But the self that we experience is not the absolute self. The individual self is the

mixture of real and unreal, a product of knowledge and ignorance. Our investigation in this section about the true self will give access to the essence of Brahman, the absolute reality. Upanishads identify Atman as Brahman. Brahman, which is the objective principle underlying the world, the mysterious power and the first cause of all that exists and Atman, that forms the essence of the human self are ultimately the same. The identification of Brahman with Atman reveals the spiritual nature of the absolute reality. This accounts for the existence of the selves and the physical world. Brahman is called “Saccidananda” where Sat is being, Cit is spirit and Ananda is peace, bliss. Upanishads identifies Brahman with Atman and these are termed as identity statements (Mahavakyani). For instance: “Prajnanam Brahma” – Brahman is consciousness. “Ayam Atman Brahma” – this Atman is Brahman; this Brahman is Atman. By discovering the identification of Atman and Brahman the individual discovers in the depths of his or her being the cosmic abundance of God. The oft quoted Mahavakya is “Tad Tvam asi” (Thou art that). This means that the divine reality (Tad) is in the heart of the disciple (Tvam). Tad and Tvam are Identical. The real self (Tvam) is no other than Brahman (Tad). Another phrase is “So aham asmi” (I am he or I am Brahman), “Aham Brahma asmi” (I am Brahman).

As it goes in Ramayana, the entire universe is governed by the Law of Karma and the most important section and the fundamental principle of this law is ‘Jo jas karai so tas fal chakaha’ As you sow, so shall you reap. Thus the law of karma is the law of action and reaction, cause and effect and effort and destiny. The law of cause and effect forms an integral part of Hindu philosophy. This law is termed as ‘Karma’ which is derived from the root ‘kr’ which means ‘to make, to do, to act’. Karma literally means to deed, action or cause. The concise oxford Dictionary of current English defines it as the “sum of person’s actions in one of his successive states of existence, viewed as deciding his fate for the next”. In Sanskrit karma means “volitional action that is undertaken deliberately or knowingly”. So this details self-determination and a strong will power to abstain from inactivity. The law of karma is valid in physical, psychical and moral spheres. Every time we think or do something, we create a cause, which in time will bear its corresponding effects. It is a personality of a human being or the Jivatman – with its positive and negative actions.

### **Answers to Check Your Progress III**

Humans are ever changing Psycho – Physical states: (Nama – Rupa). Human therefore is a succession of states. Human person is an ever changing component with the permanence of his or her soul or self. Salvation is achieved when one detaches oneself from the false permanence of the self. In so doing one begins to experience “Nirvana” which is the happiness in its purest state without being attached to thoughts and desires. Buddha discouraged metaphysical discussions. As for him Nirvana is not immortality. Nirvana means a ‘blowing out’. It is a state reached here and now above the worldly miseries through the ‘blowing off’ of the fire of all passions.

According to Jainism reality comprises of the duality of Jivas (Many living souls) and Ajiva (One cosmic lifeless reality). Life is the highest value. If one kills a life, he is doing a greater crime. All living beings have soul which indicates the sacred character of that being. These souls are pure and perfect as though divine. But the Ajiva which is impure and material by its very nature can contaminate the pure soul. Jiva can thus be entangled by the Ajiva. Through the practice of rigorous asceticism and purification process of successive reincarnations one can liberate oneself from the bondage of material reality.





## **BLOCK 2**

One of the fundamental questions that challenges us in our everyday activities is: 'what is life?' This question baffles even the most learned of scholars. Other questions very much related to this are, 'where do we come from?' 'What is the beginning of life?' etc. Scientists agree that life did not always exist on earth. They approximate it that life might have begun around four billion years ago. The evolutionary theory put forward by Darwin is the basis. But even this is under contention. All the scientists agree that evolution has occurred, but they are uncertain about the extent of evolution and about its explanation. Another side of this is the Eastern tradition or in particular the Indian Vedic tradition that rejects that life has evolved from simple organisms. Instead, they claim that all species, including humans, have "devolved", or come down, from a highly evolved, super-intelligent being, which is pure consciousness itself. Today, there are several competing theories for how life arose on Earth. Some question whether life began on Earth at all, asserting instead that it came from a distant world, from a fallen comet or asteroid. Some even say life might have arisen here more than once.

This block consists of four units which give us a brief view of what eminent thinkers and different disciplines opine on the origin and end of life.

**Unit 1** introduces some of the Theories of Origin of Life. First of all we define life, taking into account its biological and biochemical perspective. Some important theories of origin of life discussed are: Creationism or Intelligent Design (I.D.), Abiogenesis, or the beginning of life from non-living earthly matter, Panspermia or Exogenesis, and Extraterrestrial Origin. Even the Vedic view on life as 'devolved' is discussed.

**Unit 2** familiarizes us with the Theory of the Origin of Human Person. From discussing about origin of life in general, this unit particularly pays attention to the origin of human person. The study of different theories of human origin identifies two main opposing theories: vitalism and mechanism. Vitalism considers life as a singular, originary phenomenon, irreducible to matter.

**Unit 3** highlights in particular the Evolutionary perspectives of Human Person. This unit aims at explaining mainly the mechanistic approach to human origin and its further development in the philosophical outlook. Evolution is the main theme dealt with in this unit. Some scientific evidences that support these theories are briefly introduced. A special emphasis is given to Darwin's theory of evolution.

**Unit 4** probes into the different perspectives regarding End of Human Person. Human is exposed to death. Death is a daily possibility. It is one of the most difficult topics to be discussed, because although all humans are exposed to it, nobody has experienced it in such a way that one can speak about the experience of death. Topics that are closely associated with death are soul, immortality, the state of a person after death and transmigration of souls.

The questions about life and death are the ones that trouble humans most. All of us experience life and death, yet they surpass us. End of life is much dependent on one's attitude towards life itself and human's attitude towards life is largely determined by one's attitude towards death.



## UNIT 1

## THEORIES OF ORIGIN OF LIFE

### Contents

1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Definition of Life

1.3 Theories on the Origin of Life

1.4 Let Us Sum Up

1.5 Key Words

1.6 Further Readings and References

1.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

### 1.0 OBJECTIVES

Ever since the dawn of human consciousness, we have been plagued by questions regarding our origin: Where did we come from? And as we grew in our understanding of the natural world around us, came the query: Where did these things come from? The current assumption of solar system formation is the Nebular hypothesis, first proposed in 1755 by Immanuel Kant and independently formulated by Pierre-Simon Laplace. It states that our solar system was formed from a gaseous cloud called the Solar nebula.. As we understand it, the superheated, rotating disc of dust and gaseous matter aggregated and broke away, cooling down to form the planets and eventually, the rocks, atmosphere and water on Earth. There does not seem to be much debate on this issue, considering that the galaxies hold sufficient examples of such systems in formation.

During your study of this unit you may ask the following questions:

Why is the debate still raging on the origin of life?

What is it that makes living things so very different from the non-living, that we cannot accept a simple, straightforward theory of spontaneous generation?

What makes life so unique and complex, that it cannot be explained in the manner of other natural phenomena?

Why is it that we look at several different theories including that of creationism, to explain it?

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

For answers to these questions, we shall have to look at a definition of life itself. The Earth is estimated to be about 4.5 billion years old, and for much of that history it has been home to life in one strange form or another. Indeed, some scientists think that life appeared the moment our planet's environment was stable enough to support it. The earliest definite evidence for life on Earth comes from fossilized mats of cyanobacteria called stromatolites in Australia that are about 3.4 billion years old. Ancient as their origins are, these bacteria (which are still around today) are already biologically complex—they have cell walls protecting their protein-producing DNA, so scientists think life must have begun much earlier, perhaps as early as 3.8 billion years ago. Despite knowing approximately *when* life first appeared on Earth, scientists are still far from answering *how* it appeared.

## 1.2 DEFINITION OF LIFE

As we all know, living things are differentiated from the non-living by certain characteristics: Respiration, Response to stimuli, Locomotion, Metabolism, Growth and Reproduction. But what is it that causes these special characteristics to occur in living things?

To get to the heart of the matter, we shall have to look at life from a very fundamental perspective, that of the cellular structure. Very simply described, each cell is constituted of a cell wall or membrane, the protoplasm or fluid substance within, and the organelles floating inside such as the Nucleus and the Mitochondria. These organelles contain biochemical information in the form of chains of molecular bases linked to sugar or phosphate groups, that code for every structure and function in the body, and drive every cellular process from metabolism to replication. These chains of bases with the attached backbone of sugar and phosphate molecules, constitute the ordered sequences of nucleic acids that hold the key to every life-process. It could be said therefore, that these building blocks of nucleic acids are the very basis of life. In other words, out of clusters of essentially 'lifeless' biochemical molecules, spring the basic processes

and functions that define 'life'. These nucleic acids are in fact, the master codes for the synthesis of proteins. As living organisms are complex systems, the multitude of daily functions are helped to be carried out by the hundreds of thousands of proteins existing inside each one of us. These proteins are produced locally, assembled piece-by-piece to exact specifications. An enormous amount of information is required to manage this complex system correctly. This coded information, detailing the specific structure of the proteins inside our bodies, is stored in the set of molecules called nucleic acids that comprise the DNA and RNA. Proteins are made up of amino acids, and generally have from about a hundred up to several hundred amino acids arranged in a precise order or sequence. Twenty different kinds of amino acids are found in proteins, so it may be said that the protein "language" has twenty letters. Just as the letters of the alphabet must be arranged in a precise sequence to write this sentence, or any sentence, so the amino acids must be arranged in a precise sequence for a protein to possess biological activity.

To sum up, we can say that the macromolecules of life are structured in the following manner: Proteins are organic compounds that are essential biomolecules of all living organisms. Amino acids are the building blocks of proteins and they are arranged in a precise sequence to form various proteins. They are composed of the elements hydrogen, carbon, oxygen, nitrogen and sulphur. Human bodies only make use of 20 amino acids but in meteorites we can detect over 70 amino acids. The direction for the assembly and synthesis of amino acids to form proteins is carried out from the code detailed by the DNA and RNA in cells. These nucleic acids are organic molecular structures consisting of nitrogenous bases attached to a chain of sugar and phosphate molecules. In addition, there exists a group of fatty acids known as lipids which are a large group of organic compounds constituting cell membranes, and which have a multitude of other important roles.

### **Life: A biochemical phenomenon?**

So how could the bio-molecules, which are the basis of life, have come to exist? The subject matter is generally divided into five stages:

The synthesis of organic compounds

The synthesis of biochemical substances (experiments have mainly reported on the production of amino acids under presumed pre-biological conditions).

The production of large molecules such as proteins.

The origin of organized cellular structures.

The evolution of macromolecules and metabolism.

We thus have a basic definition from which to explore the possible ways that life could have originated on planet Earth.

### **1.3 THEORIES ON THE ORIGIN OF LIFE**

The theories can be broadly classified as follows: Creationism or Intelligent Design (I.D.), Abiogenesis or the beginning of life from non-living earthly matter, Panspermia or Exogenesis, and Extraterrestrial Origin.

#### **CREATIONISM**

In the recent past, the challenge to scientific theory has come from a new breed of sophisticated, scientifically trained creationists who are pushing the theory of “intelligent design” or I.D. The ‘ID-ers’ do not interpret the Bible literally. They accept fossil records as evidence of the evolution of human beings from apes, and they accept that the earth is about 4.6 billion years old (and not 6,000 years old, as the earlier generation of Biblical creationists believed.) But they draw the line at natural selection, the hallmark of Darwinian evolution. They insist that the complexity in biological structures - the intricacy of the eye, for example - could not have come about by natural causes alone. From this they surmise that there must be an intelligent designer responsible for the wondrous complexity of life.

#### **Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**



1) Explain briefly the basic elements of life.

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2) Enumerate the five stages of the development of bio-molecules?

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## **ABIOTENESIS**

Leading scientific theories based on abiogenesis or the spontaneous origin of life on Earth could be divided into two main groups: a) the 'RNA world' hypothesis b) origin under high temperature and pressure. The formation of amino acids and other organic compounds is presumed to have been a necessary step in the genesis of life; it is certain, at least, that somewhere along the line all life became dependent on DNA and RNA for reproduction. Scientists thus presume that the first self-replicating molecules were similar to the nucleic acids of modern organisms. (These early molecular systems need not have been as complex as the self-replicating systems that comprise modern cells. Researchers have recently shown, by detecting genes that even the genetically simplest bacteria alive today can reproduce with much less than their full natural complement of DNA.) Once molecules that could self-replicate were formed, the process of evolution would account for the subsequent development of life.

### **The 'RNA world'**

Many researchers believe the first self-replicating molecule was RNA. This is because RNA can do various things in addition to carrying genetic information. Some of these activities seem

similar to what would be required for self-replication, something that DNA can't do, strictly speaking. DNA needs the help of other molecules to copy itself. Also, since RNA still exists in living cells and performs various functions many scientists think RNA must have been there from the beginning. Most biologists consider the RNA world hypothesis at least plausible, but it has some problems. It is not easy to explain how the first self-replicating RNA molecules might have arisen. One of the most promising explanations is as follows: RNA molecules tend to fall apart under warm conditions outside of cells. This would prevent the buildup of the rather long, complex RNA molecules that would probably be needed to conduct life processes, according to Laura F. Landweber and her colleagues at Princeton University in New Jersey. Various conditions can prevent RNA molecules' breakdown, the researchers argue. These include various types of water solutions, and freezing. But freezing may have been the one that most likely occurred on early Earth.

These scientists argue that ice might have been a favorable environment to generate the first self-replicating molecules, a precondition for life. New findings are backing up a theory that life originated in ice. If it's true, it could boost the chances that life might turn up in places considerably colder than our planet. The theory departs from mainstream thinking on the origins of life, which usually assumes a warm, or hot and wet environment was necessary.

Conditions associated with freezing, rather than 'warm and wet' conditions, could have been of key importance for the chemical reactions that led to life, wrote four researchers in the July 21 advance online issue of the *Journal of Molecular Evolution*, a research publication. These molecules would be of the type called ribonucleic acids, or RNA—a cousin of DNA which makes up genes.

Freezing usually slows down chemical reactions, which is why cold places are generally considered hostile to life. But freezing actually speeds up some of RNA's key activities, Landweber and colleagues argue. This is because ice contains hard, tiny compartments that hold the molecules in one place, where they can react together. Some of these reactions result in the creation of bigger RNA molecules.

In liquid water by contrast, the molecules don't come close enough together often enough to react as much. Thus they tend to fall apart faster than they can react to create bigger products. In essence, the small compartments in ice play the role that cells today play in bringing the molecules together to react, Landweber and her colleagues say. Dehydrated substances could also have provided a function similar to ice.

### **Origin under high temperature and pressure**

Some scientists believe that the young Earth was too inhospitable a place for life to have developed on its surface at all. Lacking Oxygen, the atmosphere would also have lacked its present-day stratospheric layer of ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), which screens large quantities of harmful ultraviolet radiation from the surface. They believe that a more likely environment for abiogenesis (life from pre-life) was in the vicinity of deep-sea vents, which are gaps in the crust under the ocean from which hot, mineral-laden water flows.

A controversial theory put forward by Thomas Gold in the 1990s has life first developing not on the surface of the earth, but several kilometers below the surface. It is now known that microbial life is plentiful up to five kilometers below the earth's surface in the form of archaea, which are generally considered to have originated around the same time or earlier than bacteria, that mostly live on the surface including the oceans. It is claimed that the discovery of microbial life below the surface of another body in our solar system would lend significant credence to this theory.

In the 1980s, Gunter Wächtershäuser in his Iron-Sulfur world theory postulated the evolution of (bio) chemical pathways as fundamentals of the evolution of life. He presented a consistent system of tracing today's biochemistry back to ancestral reactions that provide alternative pathways to the synthesis of organic building blocks from simple gaseous compounds.

Instability is a most fundamental objection to any type of system that can be proposed to bridge the gap between molecules and living cells. All of the proposed models suffer this basic and fatal weakness. One of the reasons living cells are stable and can persist is that they have membranes

that protect the system within the membrane and hold it together. The membrane of a living cell is very complex in structure and marvelous in its function. A coacervate or a protein microsphere may have a pseudomembrane, or a concentration or orientation of material at the point of contact with the surrounding medium, that gives it the appearance of having a membrane.

### **Origin of life breakthrough**

A team of Japanese researchers announced that they had managed to recreate the conditions from which life itself may have sprung. In a major breakthrough in the never-ending debate about how life started, Koichiro Matsuno and colleagues at the Nagaoka University of Technology, Japan, built an artificial system simulating the environment of undersea thermal vents, where water heated deep below erupts through the seabed into cooler ocean water. By this they were able to produce some of the elementary building blocks from which proteins essential to life are formed. Writing in the journal *Science*, Matsuno described how his team simulated a process called polymerisation in which complex molecules are formed from simpler amino acids. This process was likely to be repeated numerous times, possibly aided by heating in dry and wet conditions, day-and-night cycles, tidal waves and dry-wet conditions in lagoons.

An Indian researcher A.K. Lal has mentioned in his paper the existence of 'extremophiles', which are usually unicellular microbes that can survive in the harshest of environments on earth. "Such microorganisms thrive in extreme cold, extreme heat, extreme acidic, and extreme alkaline conditions. Some thermophiles have been found to flourish at a depth of 2.8 km in gold mines in South Africa, while methane-oxidising microbes have been reported to be thriving at a record depth of 1.62 km beneath the Atlantic seabed at simmering temperature of 60-100 degree Celsius," he writes in the paper.

### **New research links origin of life to ponds**

Debunking the popular theory that life emerged from oceans, latest research effort shows it could have emanated from fresh water ponds. Most theories on the origin of cellular life presume that

the first step was the formation of a spherical membrane called vesicle, that could enclose self-replicating chemical chains—the ancestors of modern DNA. The theory is that the ingredients for simple membranes were all present on the early earth and at some point spontaneously formed vesicles in water. It seemed most likely that this had taken place in the sea rather than in freshwater, largely because of the sheer size of the oceans. With their unique chemistry, deep-sea thermal vents and tidal pools are generally believed to be the most likely sites for such formation.

Now research by a team of graduate students led by Charles Apel of the University of California, Santa Cruz, has written off the ocean- theory claiming they were able to create stable vesicles using freshwater solutions of ingredients found on the early earth, and not with salty solutions. They have reported their findings in a popular issue of astrobiology.

"When sodium chloride or ions of magnesium or calcium were added, the membranes fell apart," Apel says. This happened in water that was even less salty than what the oceans are today. Geologist Paul Knauth of Arizona State University points out that the earth's early oceans were 1.5 to 2 times saltier than what they are today, making it even more unlikely that viable cells could have arisen there. Giant salt deposits called evaporates that formed on the continents have actually made the seas less salty over time.

"No one in his right mind would use hot sea water for laboratory studies on early cellular evolution," says biochemist David Deamer of the University of California, Santa Cruz, who is reporting the work along with Apel. "Yet, for years we all have accepted without a question that life began in a marine environment. We were just the first to ask if we were really sure of that."

## **PANSPERMIA OR EXOGENESIS**

Did the first microorganisms arrive from space, riding piggyback on meteors that crashed into earth billions of years ago? Were the first seeds of life actually extraterrestrial 'spores', floating around in the infinite space on comets? This theory, known as Panspermia, is one that originated in the 19th century in opposition to the theory of spontaneous generation. It claims the 'spores' took root on primitive earth more than four billion years ago after the earth was bombarded by meteors for around 700 million years. Panspermia propounded that reproductive bodies of living

organisms exist throughout the universe and develop wherever the environment is favorable. The basic tenet of panspermia is that primitive life, which originated some where else, was deposited on the Earth's surface by means of a collision with some object that carried it. This theory has been re-popularized by the realization of the improbability that life formed through abiogenesis on earth, and is now more commonly called Exogenesis. The full theory of panspermia requires two events to explain the presence of life on earth:

The generation of life outside the earth, and then the transfer of this life to earth

Many scientists have objected that the generation of life cannot occur, or have occurred, outside of a planetary environment, where heavier elements are plentiful. Almost the only elements present in interstellar space are hydrogen and helium--and the latter, being an inert or noble gas, is not a component of life in any form known to man.

The generation objection by itself would not destroy panspermia. But the transference event requires a transit through space, followed by a passage through the earth's atmosphere and then an impact on the ground or at sea. Either of these events is fraught with danger. The unprotected space outside of an atmosphere is subject to unfiltered radiation in various forms. These include the products of radioactive decay, cosmic rays (the highest-energy form of electromagnetic radiation known to man), and the stellar wind, a stream of particles that fly out from any star as it continuously burns. Even if any life forms could survive the spatial passage, it must then somehow penetrate the atmosphere and risk incineration from sheer friction, and then must survive the impact.

A test done by attaching a piece of bacteria-smearred rock to a returning Russian spacecraft in September 2008 showed the difficulty of life surviving a fall through Earth's atmosphere, with temperatures on the rock reaching 1700 degrees Celsius, despite an entry speed which was a little more than half that a meteorite would experience.

## **EXTRATERRESTRIAL ORIGIN**

If we surmise that life was created from non-living chemicals, another possibility is that amino acids that were formed extra-terrestrially arrived on Earth via comets. Why is the 'Extraterrestrial origin of Life' theory necessary? Scientists suspect that the early days on Planet



Earth were hot, dry and sterile. It is now clear that space debris bombarded the young planet, creating cataclysms equivalent to the detonation of countless atomic bombs. Impacts of this kind, common until 4.0 billions years ago, surely aborted any fledgling life struggling to exist before that time. The short time span for life to emerge implies that the process might have required help from space molecules.

Astronomers see signatures of a range of organic compounds throughout the universe, especially among the clouds. For example, a decade of research conducted by Allamandola and others has revealed that polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons are the most abundant class of carbon-bearing compounds in the universe, trapping as much as 20 percent of the total galactic carbon in their molecular lattices.

Experiments reveal that even at the extremely low temperatures and pressure of space, UV radiation can break chemical bonds. When the atoms are locked in ice, this bond-breaking process can make molecular fragments recombine into unusually complex structures that would not be possible if these fragments were free to drift apart. Bertein started with a simple ice of frozen water, methanol and ammonia - in the same proportions seen in space ice - the experiment yielded complex compounds such as the ketones, nitriles, ethers and alcohols found in carbon-rich meteorites. They also created hexamethylenetetramine, or HMT, a six-carbon molecule known to produce amino acids in warm, acidic water. David W. Deamer found that some of the molecules in the cloud-chamber ice grains form capsule-like droplets in water. These capsules are strikingly similar to extracts from the Murchison meteorite.

Researchers found that interstellar amorphous ice too can flow, when exposed to radiation such as that found in deep space. Thus, it could be an explanation of how organic molecules may endure and react within the ice.

Emerging consensus in planetary science agree that the early pre-biotic atmosphere was a neutral one rich in carbon dioxide and molecular nitrogen. Early CO<sub>2</sub>-rich atmospheres are implied by 'hot accretion' scenarios for Earth, in which core formation takes place quickly, leaving the upper mantle in an oxidized state. The short photo dissociation lifetimes of methane and ammonia in model paleo atmospheres reinforce this conclusion. There is a dense CO<sub>2</sub> content in

the early terrestrial atmosphere, consistent with the early 'faint sun paradox'. Synthesis of key pre-biotic molecules such as hydrogen cyanide and formaldehyde would have been much more difficult in CO<sub>2</sub> atmospheres than in reducing ones.

A long standing objection to extraterrestrial origin is that the organic compounds would be totally dissociated by the heat of cometary atmosphere passage and the ensuing impact. However, researchers speculated that aerobraking (slowing by atmospheric drag) and uneven distribution of shock energy throughout the impacting projectile will conspire to yield some region of the comet for which temperatures remain low enough to allow at least the hardier organics to survive. Because gas-phase results on shock pyrolysis are not available, it is estimated that the amino acid Alanine could withstand temperatures of upto 700K for 1 second, whereas other amino acids should withstand temperatures in the range of 600 to 800K. Through modelling, it is shown that dense CO<sub>2</sub> atmospheres allow intact cometary organics to be delivered in large amounts to the surface of the planet.

### Check Your Progress I

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1) Write a short note on RNA.

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2) What do you understand by *panspermia*?

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#### 1.4 LET US SUM UP

Together with Lal we may conclude that prevailing theories like abiogenesis, RNA-World, iron-sulphur world (deep-sea-origin of life) and panspermia (life arrived from outer space) fail to provide clues on the exact origin of life. But it is not necessary to invoke scenarios of multiple universes or life-laden comets crashing into ancient Earth. Instead, life must have started with molecules that were smaller and *less complex* than RNA, which performed simple chemical reactions that eventually led to a self-sustaining system involving the formation of more complex molecules which began their journey about 13.7 billion years ago when the Universe flared forth into being. The Universe billowed out in every direction with its powerful elementary particles that stabilized themselves to enable the first atomic beings of hydrogen and helium to emerge. A billion years of uninterrupted activity enabled the Universe to prepare itself for the galactic clusters of about 100 billion galaxies, including our own Milky Way Galaxy. Each Galaxy contained its own unique interval dynamics with about 100 billion stars in each of them. About five billion years ago, our Milky Way gave birth to ten thousand new stars including the Sun. The Sun blasted off all the clouds of elements and spined the rest into a multibanded dice of matter out of which arose the solar system with our Sun and other nine planets such as Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto about four billion years ago, *Aries*, the first prokaryotic cells appeared on earth. On account of the balance of earth's own internal dynamics and its position in the structure of the solar system, matter existed as solid, liquid, and gas and flowed from one form into another to provide an incessantly creative chemical womb from which arose *Aries*, the first prokaryotic living cell. The primal prokaryotic cells had the power to organize themselves as did the stars and galaxies. The cells could also remember significant information, even the patterns necessary to knit together another living cell. The cells also possessed a new order of creativity to catch the pockets of energy hurled by the Sun at the speed of light and to use these quanta as food. *Aries* and the prokaryotes hydrogen from the ocean had released oxygen into Earth's system, which saturated the land and the seas. However, the prokaryotes unknowingly pushed Earth's system into an extremely unstable condition by altering earth's chemistry with this element of explosive power. Consequently, the prokaryote communities perished as their interiors were set ablaze by the oxygen. But out of this crisis arose *Vikengla*, a new and radically advanced being. *Vikengla* was the first eukaryotic cell which was capable of shaping oxygen's dangerous energy for its own purposes. The

eukaryotes invented meiotic sex by which the universe's diversity expanded a hundredfold, through sexual union. Finally, the eukaryotes took that daring step of submerging themselves into a larger mind as trillion of them gathered together and evoked Argos, the first multicellular animal. About 600 million year ago, there arose multicellular organism. They included the coral, worm, insects, clams, starfish, sponges, spiders, vertebrates, leeches and other form of life. The animals followed the plants onto land heaved with amphibians, reptiles, insects and dinosaurs. About 67 million years ago there was an astronomical collision that changed earth's atmosphere and climate which nearly destroyed all forms of animal life on earth, including the dinosaurs. But such destructions opened up new possibilities seized upon by the birds and the mammals. The mammals entered earth's life about 200 millions year ago. They developed emotional sensitivity, a new capacity within their nervous systems for feeling the universe. This mammalian emotional sensitivity was deepened with the human nerval capability, the self-consciousness. Four million years ago in Africa, humans stood up on just two limbs and by two million years ago they began to use tools. Beginning around thirty-five thousand years ago, they began a new form of celebration that displayed itself in cave paintings deep within Earth. About 12 thousand years ago the first Neolithic villages were formed in Jericho, Catal Hiyyik and Hassuna. It was the most radical social transformation ever to occur in the human venture. In this period, the decisive developments in language, religion, cosmology, arts, music and dance took their primordial form. The urban civilization began to shape itself about five thousand years ago giving rise to new power centres: Babylon, Paris, Persopolis, Banaras, Rome, Jerusalem Constantinople, Sion, Athens, Baghdad, Tikal of the Maya, Cairo, Mecca, Delhi, Tenochtitlan of the Aztec, London, Cuzeo, the Inca City of the Sun. Europeans initiated the third of humanity's great wandering about five hundred years ago. The first had brought *Homo erectus* out of Africa to spread throughout Eurasia. The second was that of the *Homo Sapiens* who wandered until they reached the Americas and Australia. The principal differences of the third wandering was that now the Europeans encountered humans wherever they went and they colonized them. More about the origin and development of human life we shall discuss in the next unit.

### 1.5 KEY WORDS

**Homo Erectus:** *Homo erectus* (from the Latin *erigere*, “to put up, set upright”) is an extinct species of hominid that originated in Africa from the end of the Pliocene epoch to the later Pleistocene, about 1.8 to 1.3 million years ago.

**Homo Sapiens:** *Homo sapiens* (Latin: “wise human” or “knowing human”) is the only extant member of the *Homo* genus of bipedal primates. Humans have a highly developed brain, capable of abstract reasoning, language, introspection, and problem solving. This mental capability, combined with an erect body, frees the hands for manipulating objects, has allowed humans to make far greater use of tools than any other species.

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## 1.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I



1. We can say that the macromolecules of life are structured in the following manner: Proteins are organic compounds that are essential biomolecules of all living organisms. Amino acids are the building blocks of proteins and they are arranged in a precise sequence to form various proteins. They are composed of the elements hydrogen, carbon, oxygen, nitrogen and sulphur. Human bodies only make use of 20 amino acids but in meteorites we can detect over 70 amino acids. The direction for the assembly and synthesis of amino acids to form proteins is carried out from the code detailed by the DNA and RNA in cells. These nucleic acids are organic molecular structures consisting of nitrogenous bases attached to a chain of sugar and phosphate molecules. In addition, there exists a group of fatty acids known as lipids which are a large group of organic compounds constituting cell membranes, and which have a multitude of other important roles.

2. So how could the bio-molecules, which are the basis of life, have come to exist? The subject matter is generally divided into five stages:

The synthesis of organic compounds

The synthesis of biochemical substances (experiments have mainly reported on the production of amino acids under presumed pre-biological conditions).

The production of large molecules such as proteins.

The origin of organized cellular structures.

The evolution of macromolecules and metabolism.

### **Answers to Check Your Progress II**

1. Many researchers believe the first self-replicating molecule was RNA. This is because RNA can do various things in addition to carrying genetic information. Some of these activities seem similar to what would be required for self-replication, something that DNA can't do, strictly speaking. DNA needs the help of other molecules to copy itself. Also, since RNA still exists in living cells and performs various functions many scientists think RNA must have been there from the beginning. Most biologists consider the RNA world hypothesis at least plausible, but it has some problems. It is not easy to explain how the first self-replicating RNA molecules might



have arisen. One of the most promising explanations is as follows: RNA molecules tend to fall apart under warm conditions outside of cells. This would prevent the buildup of the rather long, complex RNA molecules that would probably be needed to conduct life processes, according to Laura F. Landweber and her colleagues at Princeton University in New Jersey. Various conditions can prevent RNA molecules' breakdown, the researchers argue. These include various types of water solutions, and freezing. But freezing may have been the one that most likely occurred on early Earth.

2. Did the first microorganisms arrive from space, riding piggyback on meteors that crashed into earth billions of years ago? Were the first seeds of life actually extraterrestrial 'spores', floating around in the infinite space on comets? This theory, known as Panspermia, is one that originated in the 19th century in opposition to the theory of spontaneous generation. It claims the 'spores' took root on primitive earth more than four billion years ago after the earth was bombarded by meteors for around 700 million years. Panspermia propounded that reproductive bodies of living organisms exist throughout the universe and develop wherever the environment is favorable. The basic tenet of panspermia is that primitive life, which originated someplace else, was deposited on the Earth's surface by means of a collision with some object that carried it. This theory has been re-popularized by the realization of the improbability that life formed through abiogenesis on earth, and is now more commonly called Exogenesis. The full theory of panspermia requires two events to explain the presence of life on earth: The generation of life outside the earth, and then the transfer of this life to earth

## UNIT 2

## THEORY OF THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN PERSON

### Contents

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Theories of the Origin of Human in Indian Philosophy

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2.4 Theories of the Origin of Human in Islam

2.5 Evolutionary Theories on the Origin of Human

2.6 Let Us Sum Up

2.7 Key Words

2.8 Further Readings and References

2.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

There are different theories and perspectives to explain the origin of human person. They are religious, philosophical, scientific and secular views expressed in varied ways. Understanding of human is more complex because of vast advancement of education, research, science and ideologies. Opinions on the origin of human person is also varied. In this unit you are expected:

To enquire into different theories of origin and understanding of human as individual and social.

- To understand the origin of human from Indian perspectives
- To comprehend the origin of human from Christian perspectives
- To grasp the origin of human from Islamic perspectives, and
- To look at the situation of human from evolutionary perspectives

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the morning I wake up and open my eyes and look around I understand what I see. My consciousness is at work in the act of seeing. I perceive myself at once as awareness to an outside world or as subject open to objects. This fundamental experience reveals two facts (a) first is my subjectivity. My mode of being is totally different from the mode of being of surrounding objects. I exists as a subject an inner spiritual world, it is the microcosm' of personal consciousness. (b) Second my objectively relates me at once to every thing that surrounds me. It projects me outside myself. Thus I see, I touch, I feel, I understand something else. My subjectivity is a mode of relation a window open to the outside world. Here I wake up and become conscious. There arises in me an awareness of 'I' and the non I', or the other. My self is not pure' subject but is a subject in the world. I am part of the world. I am a being in this world. I am a conscious being having an amount of illumination. Human exists as a being with the other beings of this world. Here we will go to explore the origin to understand Human nature as individual and corporate as a community.

## **2.2 THEORIES OF THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY**

Indian philosophy is divided into two parts (1) Astika (theistic) and (2) Nastika. In Astika there are monistic Advaita Vedanta, Vashistadvaita and Madhva's Dwaida. Though all the systems centre on karma, they accept any ideology of the human origin which they try to absorb or assimilate.

When we try to understand origin of human person from the perspective of Saiva Sidhanta human state is explained as 'sat cit ananda' (existence, knowledge and bliss). It can be explained as the absolute can be identified as three states 'saccidananda'. In Saiva Sidhanta there are pati (god) pasu jeevan (life) pasam (Bondage). There are souls which exist eternally. Because of karma soul takes body. Here life is not created. Human life Jeeva exists always. This life takes body according to its past karma. Bondage are in three stages Anava Karma, Maya, Malas. The origin of human person is according to the karma. Karma decides the origin. Every being has souls. *Thiruvacakam* speaks of the birth and rebirth. One can be born as dog or insect or grass

etc. Because of rebirth soul can be released. The extinction of rebirth is counted as the release of human.

Upanishads speaks of Brahman as absolute being. That is the only existence in Advaita Vedanta. Sankara interprets that Human is under Avidhya, bound by maya. Because of ignorance he/she thinks that the human person has a separate existence different from the ultimate reality Brahman. Origin of human being is because of Karma. Human transcends from stage to stage, i.e., from Annamaya Kosa to pranamaya kosa, from pranamaya kosa to vijanamaya kosa, from vijanamaya kosa to anandamaya kosa. That is the knowledge of Aham Brahmasmi: I am Brahman. The origin of human person now is according to one's previous karma.

Human is the spark of the one soul life as fire and spark. Human existence is under karma. Brahma is called as paramathma. Human is called as Jeevatma. Only one is existent hence human can be called as Atman. Atman is bound by karma. It longs for release from the body. Human body is always under destruction but the soul is eternal.

Philosophically talking body is the material cause and soul is efficient cause. Human does not have separate identity in Advaita Vedanta. Knowledge of Brahman brings release from karma and rebirth. Ramanuja proposes Vashistadvaita as a panentheistic model. He says world is real. Human is also real. Brahman and soul has ultimate relationship. Body and soul are inseparable likewise world and Brahman are also inseparable. He brings the Isvara concept to understand Brahman. Brahman is characterized, human has also character. Soul completely depends on Brahman. Human identity is accepted in Vashistadvaita. The origin of human person is depending upon Brahman and Karma.

Madhva's view is purely dualism. God is different from human entity. The origin of human person is on the basis of karma. The concept of Maya in Madhva's stream is more powerful in the hands of Brahman. Brahman makes use of karma for origin of human body. Maya is absolute power in the hands of Brahman.

When Krishna spoke to Arjuna that soul is not to be killed. It will be born again and again according to karma. The origin of human person is according to the Karma says the Bhagavad-Gita.

Buddhism comes under Nastika philosophy. Buddhism disbelieves in the existence of soul. Human origin is out of material cause. Because of greed human is under Dhukha. This Dukha brings human into suffering. Human can release from the suffering through his/her effort of discipline. Buddha suggested an eightfold path for getting enlightenment and to have eternal existence in this world.

Jainism accepts that all the beings as having souls. Human is also evolved and existing as other beings. Human has the knowledge of protecting all the Jeevas by keeping Ahimsa. No harm can be done to any beings including human being. The origin of human being is on the basic of Karma.

Nyaya School says that soul is under Avidhya hence the origin of human body and existence of human life. The soul must have an epistemological knowledge. Self is a spiritual substance. If it has consciousness then it is a being. Vaiseshika says that human body consists of five elements. The elements are atomic. The self in human body is eternal.

In Sankhya system the human person is in Karma samsara prakriti- purusha concept. Because of interaction human beings are originated. Prakriti destroys and come agains. Pursha exists even in human body.

Yoga system accepts human beings making themselves and discipline. Yuj means yoking to join with the Supreme Being restraint of the senses and mind control. Yoga makes human into satva gunas and keeps the three gunas (satva rajas, tama) in balance.

### **Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1) How does Upanishads understand the origin of human?

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2) How does Buddhism interpret the origin of human?

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**2.3 THEORIES OF THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN IN CHRISTIANITY**

Christian understanding of the origin of human person is based on the faith in God. It is believed that the human was created by God. One perspective is that God created by his word. In Genesis 1:27 we can see that God created human in his image through the power of his word. This idea goes back to Greek philosophy of logos. Apostle John in his Gospel speaks of God's word and word became human in Jesus.

The book of Genesis also gives another perspective that human is created from mud (Adam taken from earth). Here God is giving a form and breathed into nostrils the '*rephesh*' the breath of life and the mud became human being or the man. From him woman originated. God was moving as *Ruah* (spirit) on the water. Here the origin of human being is from spirit and mater. The unity of matter and spirit is human being. By faith God involves in the beginning human. Bible speaks of wisdom of God (*Sophia*), that God is love (*phileo*). Philosophically creation of Human being is full of wisdom. Humanity descended from the first parents. Human being is



originated for a purpose. That is to relate himself with the other (God) and other beings including human being. Relationality of matter and spirit is human being.

The purpose of life is not only relate but be fruitful to produce, protecting the land and having a meaningful life. We can see that the existence of human beings involves suffering. Why there is suffering? When we see philosophically, the estrangement of human from God and with other beings and breaking relationships are the causes for suffering. Hence we can put human being into three orders the first originated human. They are (a) Essence of Human, (b) Estrangement of Human and (c) Existential nature. Existential nature is sinful, broken, divided distracted etc. The study of the origin of Human being helps us to understand in order to save humanity and to promote the essence of human nature which brings perfection.

In Gen 1.28 ff., according to Moltmann, the creation of human beings as the image of God is followed by the blessing of God, and the human calling to be fruitful and rule over the non-human creation. Human rule over the earth is to correspond to the will and command of the creator who loves his creation. Human beings are to "till and keep" the earth (Gen. 2:15) and to rejoice in it. Only where human dominion over the earth corresponds to the creator's lordship over the world do human beings fulfil their creation in the image of God. Plundering, exploitation, and the destruction of nature contradict their right and dignity. Therefore human dominion over the earth includes a sense of community with the earth.

Human rule is only then made legitimate when it is exercised in cooperation and community with the environment, and leads to life-giving symbioses between human society and the natural environment. The right of human beings to rule over the non-human creation must therefore be balanced by their respecting the "rights" of the non-human creation.

If the right to the earth is given to human beings, it follows that each and every human being has the basic economic right to a just share in life, nourishment, work, shelter, and personal possessions. The concentration of the basic necessities of life and the means of production in the hands of a few should be seen as a distortion and perversion of the image of God in human beings. It is unworthy of human beings. The widespread withholding of basic economic rights, the impoverishing of whole peoples and population groups, and worldwide starvation caused by political and economic imperialism in our divided and strife-torn world, are a desecration of the image of God in people and of God's claim upon each and every person. Without the realization

of the fundamental economic rights of human beings to life, nourishment, work, and shelter, neither their individual nor their social rights can be realized.

If, along with the right of human beings to the earth, "rights" of the earth over against human beings are recognized, then basic ecological duties are also bound up with these basic economic rights. It is not possible to increase basic economic rights at will simply by responding to increased demands, because economic growth is determined by ecological limits. The human struggle for survival and world domination cannot be carried out at the expense of nature, since in that case "ecological death" would anyway prepare the way for the end of human life altogether. Economic human rights should therefore be brought into line with the basic cosmic conditions for the survival of humanity in its natural environment. These rights can no longer be realized through uncontrolled economic growth, but only through the growth of economic justice within the "limits of growth". Economic justice in the provision and distribution of food, natural resources, and the industrial means of production will have to be directed towards the survival and the common life of human beings and nations.

This is the only way of attaining ecological stability in mutual survival as well as in a common life alongside the non-human creation. Today economic and ecological justice mutually condition each other and thus can only be realized together.

Human beings in all their relationships in life - with each other and in community with the non-human creation - have, as the image of God, a right to self-determination and responsibility for their future. Their true future lies in the fulfilment of their being destined to the glory of their fellowship with God, with other human beings, and with the whole creation. In human history, with the kingdom of glory not yet realized, human beings correspond to this dignity for which they were created through their openness for this future and through their responsibility for the present in the face of this future. By virtue of their "citizenship in the kingdom of God", through which they gain their dignity, human beings have a right to their true future as well as corresponding duties in the shaping of life in the present.

#### **2.4 THEORIES OF THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN IN ISLAM**

Muslim faith declares that God is the relational Lord of the universe. It testifies that there is a strong linkage from God's side with the world and with humans. The Absolute God is also the Beneficent Creator and Ruling Lord, who has a claim on the world and on humanity which

belong to God. The Quran, “the Word of God,” does not present a disinterested deity, but one who is concerned about his creation. God created the world out of nothing. He created the heavens and the earth in six days. He set the sun as a lamp and the moon as a light. He added the various elements of nature in their proper proportion. God created earth, water, fluid and clots of blood in creating humans.

Verily We created man from a product of wet earth; Then placed him as a drop (of seed) in a safe lodging; Then fashioned We the drop a clot, then fashioned We the clot a little lump, then fashioned We the little lump bones, then clothed the bones with flesh, and then produced it as another creation. So blessed be Allah, the best of creators! (23:12-16).

Some modern Muslims interpret this Quranic verse as a prediction of the idea of evolution. The process of creation teaches that humans are of humble origin with the life of humans totally dependent on God. The humans are also constituted of a spiritual nature, which is the basis of their obedience. The element of frailty and mortality is still another side to the creation of human. Immortality is not a natural endowment. For, the Quran teaches that ‘every soul shall taste of death’ (21: 34-35) to which all humans are predestined.

Predestination signifies that God is in real control of His creation. Some argue that the reality of God’s rule implies absolute control, while others are of the view that divine control and human responsibility are both necessary for true religion, and hence predestination refers to the context of human’s life and not to the actions themselves. In classical times the Muslims opted for a strict doctrine of predestination, whereas in modern times they choose a combination of divine control and human responsibility. The main points of the traditional doctrine of predestination are the following: 1. God alone is the Creator; there cannot be more than one Creator. 2. God has foreordained all that is and all that happens; everything is recorded in advance in God’s eternal decree. 3. What God has eternally decreed is commanded to happen in history. 4. Both good and evil have their origin in predetermination and predestination. 5. The faith and piety of the believer and the unbelief and impiety of the unbeliever are equally produced by God, but the latter is not by God’s pleasure. 6. What reaches someone could not possibly have missed that person, and what misses persons could not possibly have reached them.

This teaching on predestination suggests that there is no way a person can interfere with what has been decreed by God. A person cannot will what God has not already willed. This interpretation has resulted in fatalism and passivism that are part of the psychological heritage of many Muslims. However, modern Muslims have taken up cudgels against this view which, in their view, is not in quite conformity with the fundamental teachings and principles of the Quran, particularly as contained in the Quranic passage: 2:27-39. A close look at the following principles can convince us of this view: 1. The world is a becoming being created and sustained by God. Historical events take place in accordance with God's will and plan. 2. Human is also created by God to be his viceroy on earth. Human is chosen to cultivate earth and enrich life with knowledge, virtue, purpose and meaning. All things are created for humans and are made subservient to them. Life on earth is not a prison for humans, nor is it a punishment for the previously committed sins that have cast them into this world from another world. 3. Knowledge is an integral part of human that qualifies one to be the viceroy of the creator and entitles to command the respect and allegiance even of the angels of God. 4. The first phase of life on earth began not in sin or rebellion against the creator. The 'Fall' from the Garden of Eden and what followed thereafter was no surprise to the creator, nor was it an accident. Rather, it was designed to discipline the first humans, to give them actual experience of fall and rise, moral defeat and triumph, straying from and reconciliation with the Creator. In this way, human would be better equipped for life and its uncertainties. 5. Eve was not the weaker partner of the first human couple. She did not tempt Adam to eat of the forbidden tree nor was she alone responsible of the expulsion from the Garden. Both were equally tempted and responsible; both were remorseful, repentant, and were blessed with the forgiveness and compassion of God. It declares in no uncertain terms that the belief in the moral inferiority of women is unfounded and that the double standard is totally unjustifiable. The Quran makes it very clear that both man and woman are equally capable of virtue and weakness. 6. Human is a free agent with responsibility towards the creator. Without human's relative free will, life would be meaningless and God's covenant with human would be in vain. 7. Life, which is neither eternal nor an end in itself, emanates from God. After its transitional phase, it shall return to the creator. 8. Human is a responsible agent with moral obligations. Responsibility for sin is borne by the individual alone. Every individual is responsible for one's own deeds. 9. Human is a dignified honourable being infused with the

spirit of the creator. Such dignity is not confined to any special race, colour, or class. It is the natural right of every human. 10. All these point to the deep-seated roots of the Oneness of God and the unity of humankind. It shows that human's highest virtues are piety and knowledge. When such knowledge is acquired in accordance with divine will, human's blissful destiny will be assured and one's life will be serene.

## **2.5 EVOLUTIONARY THEORIES ON THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN**

Charles Darwin was born in 1809 in Shrewsbury, England. His grand father Erasmus Darwin put forward the idea of evolution of species. Darwin did not believe in these ideas and trained himself as a priest. Then he studied geology and biology.

In 1859 Darwin published the famous book called *Origin of Species*. In 1871 he published another book in the title *The Descent of Man*. Later readers of Darwin developed the Evolutionary theory of Human person after his death in 1882. Darwin studied Botany under Professor John Henslowe which helped him to produce the concept of natural selection.

Darwinian ideology helped to promote the knowledge of Human origin. The scientist Alfred Russell Wallace (1823-1913) contributed much to the knowledge of evolution. Scientists say that each person is unique. He/She inherits the characteristics of their parents. Genetic study brought the origin of human from generation to generation. Scientific study talks of DNA molecules which forms human being with 100000 genes and 46 human chromosomes.

The discovery of the DNA molecules was a collaboration effort of James Watson, American biologist born 1928, Rosalind Franklin a British born, Biochemist (1928-58) and Francis crick British (Born on 1916) scientist. These people together worked out and brought this theory of human person. Another person Maurice Wilkins Born 1916 also contributed. For this contribution in 1962 Nobel Prize was given. They shared this award.

Here we can understand that searching truth is a collaborative venture. Hence the theory of human origin varies but the knowledge and truth would be achieved together.



Naturalists say that life is a matter of Mathematical complexity. Life will simply evolve by pure chance. Something happens such as life formation from existence of two coming together. Dr. Jeyam Kannan explains how a human life starts from two human genes, the chromosomes of man and women. She explains every week how the growth happens and after ten months a human person is born. Here life comes out of the existence of two human person's interaction. The same way the togetherness of cells evolved into humans. Science may try to explain what is happening. But philosophy gives the correct knowledge through enquiry into the subject. Sciences realm is the horizontal axes, philosophy's realm is the vertical axes where some thing exist. Science and philosophy describe life and origin in different perspectives.

## **2.6 LET US SUM UP**

Human life is in a complete situation. Because of the advancement in science and communication the humanness of life is challenged. Community life is scattered and individualism disturbs human character, culture and heritage. Here some questions come to us! Who is a Human? What it means to be human beings? Why human life is brought down to the level of material value? Whether there is any spiritual nature in human? Why I am called a Human? What is my origin? Here we tried to understand by studying different theories and perspective of Human origin.

In this study we have read to a small extent the perspectives of religion, philosophy and science related with origin of human person and its nature. Human is a subjective being conscious of objective relation. Philosophy helps to synthesize these perspectives. It promotes the purpose of life. Philosophers increase the human enjoyment towards a meaningful end. Religion and philosophy relates human into the spiritual realm. It protects from meeting wrong ends.

Human is a spiritual soul using a material body. Human is a united personality of different aspects of life. All beings are sacred hence Human beings are sacred. Human is rooted, gifted and situated in a context but within a constant change. Human person is in an ever changing psycho-physical state. Human is alert with consciousness of one's birth and death. Human beings



are not alone and free from the situations. Human is a product of environment forces for some propose. Knowledge of the origin of this human person is limited. Human is unique in the sense of relationships. The 'I and thou' relationship with the ultimate and with the other is what makes us humans. Relativism makes human into progress and perfection. We can say that when a chunk of salt is thrown in water, it dissolves into the very water and it cannot be picked up in any way. Yet from whichever place one may take a sip the salt is there. In the same way this immense being has no limit or boundary and is a single mass of perception, (Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad 2.4.12)

### Check Your Progress II

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) What do you understand by the Christian understanding of human as 'image of God'?

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2) Briefly explain the Islamic teaching on creation.

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### 2.7 KEY WORDS

**Self consciousness:** Ego is the subject or I opposed to the objective. I is the uniqueness of a person. Personhood is a collective word. Self is referred as individual power. Subjective

experience depends upon the given organism. Self is the content of subjective experience. Self consciousness is the knowledge by this life itself. Self conscious makes a person to be determinative.

**Mind:** Mind is used in two principle senses (i) The individual mind is self subject that perceives, remembers, imagines, feels, conceives, reason wills etc (2) Mind generally considered is metaphysical substance pervades all individual minds and that is contrasted with material substance. Mind and body are related. Body mind relation is explained as dualistic or non-dualistic (Monistic).

**Dualism:** Philosophy of two independent and mutually irreducible substances. Body and mind separate entities related. God and world are different entities related. God human are different entities but related. Dualism insists relativity of every thing. But Non dualism accepts only one entity of anything.

## 2.8 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## 2.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

### Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Upanishads speaks of Brahman as absolute being. That is the only existence in Advaita Vedanta. Sankara interprets that Human is under Avidhya, bound by maya. Because of ignorance

he/she thinks that the human person has a separate existence different from the ultimate reality Brahman. Origin of human being is because of Karma. Human transcends from stage to stage, i.e., from Annamaya Kosa to pranamaya kosa, from pranamaya kosa to vijanamaya kosa, from vijanamaya kosa to anandamaya kosa. That is the knowledge of Aham Brahmasmi: I am Brahman. The origin of human person now is according to one's previous karma.

2. Buddhism comes under Nastika philosophy. Buddhism disbelieves in the existence of soul. Human origin is out of material cause. Because of greed human is under Dhukha. This Dukha brings human into suffering. Human can release from the suffering through his/her effort of discipline. Buddha suggested an eightfold path for getting enlightenment and to have eternal existence in this world.

### **Answers to Check Your Progress II**

1. Human beings in all their relationships in life - with each other and in community with the non-human creation - have, as the image of God, a right to self-determination and responsibility for their future. Their true future lies in the fulfilment of their being destined to the glory of their fellowship with God, with other human beings, and with the whole creation. In human history, with the kingdom of glory not yet realized, human beings correspond to this dignity for which they were created through their openness for this future and through their responsibility for the present in the face of this future. By virtue of their "citizenship in the kingdom of God", through which they gain their dignity, human beings have a right to their true future as well as corresponding duties in the shaping of life in the present.

2. Muslim faith declares that God is the relational Lord of the universe. It testifies that there is a strong linkage from God's side with the world and with humans. The Absolute God is also the Beneficent Creator and Ruling Lord, who has a claim on the world and on humanity which belong to God. The Quran, "the Word of God," does not present a disinterested deity, but one who is concerned about his creation. God created the world out of nothing. He created the heavens and the earth in six days. He set the sun as a lamp and the moon as a light. He added the various elements of nature in their proper proportion. God created earth, water, fluid and clots of blood in creating humans.

## UNIT 3

## EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES OF HUMAN PERSON

### Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Evolution of human being
- 3.3 Scientific evidences
- 3.4 All embracing evolution
- 3.5 Let us sum up
- 3.6 Key words
- 3.7 Further readings and references
- 3.8 Answers to check your progress

### 3.0. OBJECTIVES

The study of different theories of human origin identifies two main opposing theories: vitalism and mechanism. Vitalism considers life as a singular, originary phenomenon, irreducible to matter: that it traces its origin to the one, the Nous, the Logos, God, an angelic Intelligence, the Spirit. Criticizing vitalism to be an ideological cover for determined religious concepts and certain political systems, mechanism is of the conviction that life sprang as a fruit of chance or necessity.

The objective of this unit is to explain mainly the mechanistic approach to human origin and its further development in the philosophical outlook. Evolution is the main theme dealt with in this unit. Various evolutionary approaches to human origin would enable us:

- to look at human origin from scientific point of view and
- to understand philosophical reflections on the phenomenon of human origin.

### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

Where did we come from? It is a question that has haunted the entire history of humanity. Thousands of years ago, our ancestors sought to answer the question with myths. Today, we are still struggling with the same question—only today we seek to answer this mystery with science. Following the scientific revolutions in the West, various developments in the natural sciences, including geology and biology, led to new perspectives on the humankind's origins.

Organic evolution traces the development of simple unicellular forms to more complex forms, ultimately to the flowering plants and vertebrate animals, including humans. The Earth contains an immense diversity of living organisms: about a million different species of animals and half a million species of plants have so far been noted described. Some religions deny the theory of evolution, considering its conflicts with their belief that God created all things. But most people accept that there is overwhelming evidence that the diversity of life arose by a gradual process of evolutionary divergence and not by individual acts of divine creation. There are several lines of evidence: the fossil record, the existence of similarities between different groups of organisms, genetics, embryology, and geographical distribution.

The emergence of human being as a distinct species about a quarter of million years ago marks the beginning of a new chapter in the long evolutionary scale of billions of years. Human being (*Homo sapiens*) has evolved as unique being with qualities different from other animals, not only in degree but also in kind. However, he/she keeps his/her continuity with the lower forms of life and hence many modern scientists would emphasis 'the descent of human being' from lower forms and his/her common features with other animals. It is believed that new qualities emerge when lower forms of life evolve into more complex and advanced ones. And the new qualities which are manifested at successive stages move in the direction of more consciousness, more freedom and greater capacity for love.

### **3.2. EVOLUTION OF HUMAN BEING**

According to the theory of Organic evolution, origin of life must have taken place in this world. The first organism was very minute and in the form of unicellular structure. As the time passed on, most of the unicellular forms were transformed into multi-cellular forms under the various

environmental oscillations. Gradually the simple form of animals was converted to very complex type of animals. As a matter of fact, the geo-environment of the earth underwent a process of continuous change and influenced the animal forms. Complex forms of animals evolved out of the simple forms in a slow and steady way.

Before Darwin, several scientists and philosophers expressed their views regarding the evolution. Carl Linnaeus (1707 – 1778) placed man in the order of Primate along with apes and monkeys, but did not suggest any common ancestry for them. Mon boddo (1714 – 1790) by observing the origin of species, traced the evolution of man from the monkeys, by observing the origin of species. Bonnet (1720 – 1793) also worked on the process of evolution and proposed a ‘scale of beings’. His proposition went on an ascending order from the mineral to man. Many more scientists worked with the origin of man. Among them, the contribution of Erasmus, Darwin (1731 – 1802), Karl von Baer (1792 – 1876), Schopenauer (1788 – 1860) and Charles Lyell (1797 – 1875) seem to be indispensable for proper understanding of the facts of evolution. Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) proposed that the man be descended from the monkey.

The first systematic attempt was made by Jean Baptiste Lamarck (1744 – 1829), a French biologist who was an eminent pre-Darwinian student of evolution. He proposed the ‘inheritance of acquired characters’ during the life time of the individual. Following Lamarck’s proposition, Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace jointly proposed the theory of the ‘Origin of Species’ by *Natural Selection*. Darwin’s evolutionary theory had its base on the accumulation of small fluctuating variations. He had realized that heredity was an essential factor in the study of evolution, though he did not put much importance to it. August Weismann realized the importance of heredity better than Darwin did. He emphasized on the ‘continuity of the germ plasm’ and tried to project the transmission of inherited qualities from generation to generation by the germ cells. Hugo de Vries, one of the re-discoverers of Mendel’s laws of heredity, announced mutation theory of evolution in 1901. He considered *mutation* (i.e. sudden heredity changes) as a factor behind evolution. Natural selection found very little or no place in his mutation theory. But, later, the geneticists, biometricians, and palaeontologists revived the faith in *natural selection*. Of these, the most important development took place in the field of genetics; the natural selection began was started to be restudied and reinterpreted by the geneticists.



Theodore Dobzhansky and R.B. Goldschmidt laid foundation for the Neo-Darwinian theory. The genetic theory of Natural Selection is therefore referred to as Neo-Darwinism. R.S. Fisher, J.B.S. Haldane and Sewall Wright made valuable contribution to the statistical analysis of population, and secured own position among the principal proponents of Neo-Darwinism. The current theory of evolution, called neo-Darwinism, combines Darwin's theory with Austrian biologist Gregor Mendel's theories on genetics and Hugo de Vries's discovery of genetic mutation.

The scholars, like C. Llyod Morgan, who upheld emergence theory of evolution, came with doctrines to cope with the influence of Darwinism as Philosophy by providing a way of interpreting evolution without having recourse to vitalistic, mechanistic, reductionist and preformationist ideas. The interpretations given by those four theories were rejected by C. Llyod Morgan and others:

- (1). the vitalistic attribution of them to the action of a unique, undetectable life force;
- (2). the mechanistic attribution of them to the operation of physiochemical laws alone;
- (3). the reductionist contention that whatever has happened in evolution is at bottom a reshuffling of certain fundamental units, which themselves remain unchanged;
- (4). the preformationist contention that organic variety, diversity and complexity are simply actualizations of potentialities contained all along in living substances.

In opposition to these views the concept of emergence implies that the variety, diversity and complexity engendered by evolution are irreducible, cumulative features of the creative advance of nature. From time to time the evolutionary process has produced items the like of which had never been previously exemplified anywhere in its history.

### **Darwin's theory of evolution**

Darwin's theory is based on four main postulates:

#### **Prodigality of Nature**

All species have a tendency to produce more and more off-springs in order to increase the number of population. The basic reason behind this huge production is to ensure the survival.

#### **Struggle for Existence**

All progeny produced by any generation do not complete their life cycle; many of them die during juvenile stages. Darwin therefore proposed his concept of 'Struggle for Existence'.

According to him, the struggle for existence may be of different types. It may be a Struggle to overcome adverse environmental conditions (like cold or drought), or to obtain food from a limited source of supply. It may be a fight for occupying a living space, or even to escape from the enemies. However, any of these said situations leads the members of a group towards competition in order to meet their requirements.

#### Organic Variation

Variation is a universal phenomenon. Even the two leaves of a plant show easily recognizable differences. Therefore individuals of a single species must vary from each other. At times, an entire population may exhibit a definite pattern of variation for which it is distinguished from the rest of the species. Such a population showing definite pattern of variation is referred to as subspecies. Darwin believed that, in course of time, this subspecies would be subjected to further variation to give rise a new species.

#### Natural Selection

Individuals differ from each other because of organic variation, which evidently means that some individuals are better adapted to survive under the existing environmental conditions than others. In the struggle for existence, the better-adapted individuals possess a better chance of survival than those who are less adapted. The traits having greater survival value are preserved in the individuals and transmitted to the off-springs, who are supposed to be the progenitors of the next generation. Darwin called this principle, by which preservation of useful variation is brought about, as natural selection. The same principle (national selection) is designated by Herbert Spencer as 'survival of the fittest'.

Darwin's theory may be summed up this way: The organisms always struggle to maintain their existences as nature decides the survival of the fittest ones. Adaptive traits preserved through natural selection gradually change the characteristics of species and thus evolution occurs.

The human ancestry was discussed by Darwin in his book, "The Descent of Man" which was published in 1871. He said that life ascended from simplest form of minute organisms to the complex forms through different stages of evolution where man is found at the summit.

The theory of the origin of species by natural selection, though is regarded as a major advancement in evolutionary thought, it lacked the knowledge of heredity, which was essential

for the understanding of evolutionary studies. It was unfortunate that Darwin never came across Mendel's work, who by then invented the basic principles of heredity.

### **Mutation theory of Hugo De Vries**

Hugo De Vries' Mutation theory focused attention upon the importance of mutation in evolution. In this theory, De Vries declared that evolution is not a slow and gradual process involving accumulation of numerous small changes by natural selection. Conversely, the evolutionary changes appear suddenly and are a result of large jumps, which he designated as mutation. Mutation theory distinguished heritable variations from environmental variations, which Darwin failed to understand in his 'Natural Selection'. As a consequence, in the early years of twentieth Century, Darwin's natural selection was totally rejected in explaining the process of evolution.

### **Theory of Gregor Mendel**

The real mechanism of mutation was properly understood through the work of Gregor Mendel and the recent discoveries in the field of molecular biology. The mutation as understood today is concerned with genes, the discrete units of heredity, which occupy particular loci on the chromosomes. It tells that each gene controls a specific developmental process and is responsible for the appearance of specific traits in an organism.

Mendel used the term 'factor', when he described his 'Law of Inheritance'. But in 1900 the term was replaced by the new term 'gene' and a new science gradually developed with the name 'Genetics'. Now it is known that a gene represents a specific segment of the DNA molecule. The product of a gene action, in many cases, is a protein; and the developmental process in a given organism depends on specific kind of proteins produced under the instruction of a particular set of genes. A mutation in a gene often causes corresponding changes in the protein concerned. If mutation occurs in the germ cells of an organism, the change will be inherited by its off-spring. Therefore, only those mutations that cause changes in the reproductive cells of the organism are of evolutionary significance. But the structural changes of chromosomes can not be undermined because they often bring considerable effects in the evolution as found in many plants and a few animals.

### **Synthetic Theory of Evolution (Neo-Darwinism)**

In the middle of twentieth Century, Scientists had come to a consensus to employ all sorts of knowledge – genetic, ecological, geographical, morphological, palaeontological, etc., in order to understand the actual mechanism of evolution. Due importance was given to both mutation and natural selection, among other forces of evolution. This led to the emergence of a synthetic theory of evolution, which we also call as Genetical Theory of Evolution or ‘Biological Theory of Evolution’. Some authors have called this new theory as Neo-Darwinism.

After the development of the science of genetics, it has been known that a population shares a common gene pool. Accordingly, the evolution denotes a change of gene – frequency in the gene pool of population over certain span of time. The synthetic theory of evolution does not discard all previous propositions, rather considers them as partially important. Therefore, we find amalgamation of various concepts, namely, Natural Selection, Mendelian principles, Mutation, population genetics in this theory of evolution. However, at present evolution appears to be a complex process involving several complex forces.

### **Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) What are the early theories of human origin opposed by Emergence theory?

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2) Explain Organic evolution in short.

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### 3.3. SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCES

The scientific evidences that support evolutionary perspectives are studied here briefly:

#### Comparative Anatomy

The three main evidences from comparative anatomy are based on: (i). the similarities which are found in organic structures of various animals; (ii). the vestigial organs found in many animals; (iii). the difficulty of systematic classification of plants and animal species.

(i). when, for instance, we study the structure of the forelimbs of vertebrates we find great similarities among them. They include similar bones, in the same relative positions, but to perform different functions, e.g., the hand of man, the leg of horse and the wing of bat. Their similarity in structure and diversity in function all point to a common ancestor and an evolutionary process.

(ii). the vestigial organs found in quite a number of animals, are of no possible use. Such are the vestigial eyes of many cave animals, the vestigial wings of certain species of birds, the rudiments of hind limbs in some snakes and in the whale-bone. These rudiments might have been actually used by their ancestors.

(iii). it is difficult to distinguish between certain animal and plant species. A considerable number of organisms falls between the groups which have been set up, constituting transitional forms. This is easy to explain if they descend from common ancestors.

#### Data from Palaeontology

Palaeontological observations have been documented as far back as the 5th century BC. The science became established in the 18th century as a result of Georges Cuvier's work on comparative anatomy, and developed rapidly in the 19th century. Fossils found in China since the 1990s have provided new information about the earliest evolution of animals, early fish, dinosaurs and the evolution of birds and mammals. Palaeontology lies on the border between biology and geology, and shares with archaeology a border that is difficult to define. It now uses techniques drawn from a wide range of sciences, including biochemistry, mathematics and engineering. As knowledge has increased, palaeontology has developed specialized subdivisions, some of which focus on different types of fossil organisms while others study ecological and environmental history, such as ancient climates. The study of fossils, gives us some evidence for organic evolution. Fossils are portions of organisms of the past ages, preserved by being



incorporated in stratified rocks or in trees. The older strata of rocks give the fossils of simpler types of organisms while the more recent ones give the fossils more complex and developed types. However, the fossils record is incomplete, as certain connecting links are missing.

#### Biogeography

How can we explain the origin of the animal species on the oceanic islands? The best explanation is that in the distant past the forebears of these animals reached these islands from the continent, either by their own power (swimming, flying) or swept along by wind or water currents or borne on the branches of uprooted trunks of trees. The absence on these islands of any animal form which could not have travelled in any such way confirms this explanation. But these animals differ considerably from the species which live on the nearest continents. The dissimilarities increase in proportion to the distance of each island from the continent, and they may go all the way to a difference not only in species but in genus or in family. The theory of evolution holds that the species which landed on these islands long ago, having evolved in isolation from their continental counterparts, have developed their own characteristics during the course of their separate evolution.

#### Embryology

Embryology deals with the study of the development of individuals from egg to the adult stage. It has been observed that the preliminary course of ontogeny in different animals belonging to different classes shows certain similarities. For instance, the young embryos of different vertebrates possess long tails and gill. Again, the manner of development of various classes of vertebrates shows a striking similarity. These are also instances which indicate relationships within a class or between classes. These observations in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century led many biologists to conclude that higher animals in their embryological development passed through stages which correspond to the adult stages of lower animals which according to the theory of evolution would be their ancestors. The German biologist Ernest von Haeckel was the first to notice this striking similarity. His famous 'biological law' or 'theory of recapitulation' states that embryonic stages of a higher animal resemble the adult stages of its ancestors. This theory which was once ardently supported is not accepted by modern biologists, as postulated by Haeckel, for various reasons.

#### Genetics



Geneticists can, to a certain extent, see evolution occurring under their very eyes in the laboratory. A careful study of hundreds of generations of short-lived animals, such as the fruit-fly, discovers slight changes in their inherited characteristics, resulting in many new races. Some of these races may eventually differ enough from each other to be viewed as new species. These changes may happen spontaneously. In other cases, they may be induced by the geneticist himself.

### Check Your Progress II

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for answer  
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) How far Palaeontology can help us to explain evolution?

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2) Explain evolutionary change and genetics.

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### 3.4. ALL EMBRACING EVOLUTION

Evolution is not limited to the sphere of living things, but embraces all reality. Thomas Henry Huxley points out three sectors of reality or three phases of evolutions: (i). the inorganic or cosmological; (ii). the organic or biological; (iii). the human or psycho-social. These three sectors differ radically in their extent, both in space and time, in the methods and mechanisms by which their self-transformations operate, in their rates of change, in the results which they produce and in the levels of organization which they attain.

Darwin was preoccupied with the evolution at the organic level. But modern biologists, like Huxley, Simpson and Dobzhansky, are equally concerned with the evolution at the human phase when new trends are expressed, especially by the formation of culture.

### **Human Cultural Evolution**

Self-preservation, reproduction and greed are biological imperatives. They arose from millions and billions of years of biological evolution. They are as much a part of human life as any other life on earth.

However, humans are not just biological creatures. We are also social creatures, the most social on earth. The ways we deal with each other, from personal to international relationships, can have as much an influence on our behaviour as our instinctive reactions. But our societies and cultures did not spring all of a sudden. They grew and developed during millions of years of cultural evolution. And the closer our primate ancestors approached being human, the less biological evolution influenced our behaviour, and the more cultural evolution took over.

This does not mean that biological evolution ended. On the contrary, it remained as important as ever. It simply altered direction. The emerging human body evolved to fit its ecological niche, to survive as a living creature. The emerging human mind now evolved to fit its cultural niche, to survive as a social creature.

We can never know for certain about our primate predecessors' cultural evolution. Unlike bone and stone, culture doesn't fossilize. Nevertheless, it is possible to make educated guesses. We can start with some assumptions:

- 1) Humans are biological creatures. We have all the characteristics of biological creatures, such as genes, chromosomes, DNA and RNA, cellular structure, etc..
- 2) We are as sensitive to our environment as any other organism. When presented with environmental problems such as lack of air, food or water, we die, just like other organisms.
- 3) We evolve as an adaptation to the environment, just like any other living organism. The archaeological record shows alterations in human structure and behaviour (although often the last is an educated guess) as the environment, according to geological evidence, changed.
- 4) Our primate ancestors behaved similarly to today's primates. Genes guide how a body develops; bodies develop to cope with the conditions in its environmental niche; we are 99.6%

genetically like chimpanzees. It is reasonable to assume we, at one time, lived lives similar to chimpanzees.

Cultural evolution began to occur during the most recent Ice Age, or within the last hundred or fifty thousand years. This is when the tools for sophisticated hunting are found; for example the spear thrower, the fully barbed harpoon, and the flint master tools that were used to make all the hunting tools. Cultural evolution took shape because human had the flexibility of mind to recognize inventions and to turn them into community property. The Ice Ages forced human to depend less on plants and more on animals, also the ice changed the strategy in which human hunted. Instead of stalking single animals, the better alternative was to follow herds and not to lose them, to learn to anticipate and in the end to adapt their habits, including their wandering migrations. It is adapting the earliest forms of hunting, because it is pursuit, where the animals go and how fast they go there set the pace of life and the geography where they lived. Also it has the later qualities of herding, because the animal is tended and stored as a mobile reservoir of food. This change from a vegetarian to an omnivorous diet, gave human more free time to spend in more direct ways. Meat is a more concentrated protein than plant, and eating meat cuts down the bulk and the time spent in eating by two thirds. Human would become totally dependent on the animal that he/she hunted, not only for food but for other products to be used for his/her livelihood.

Cultural evolution as a theory in Philosophy of Human Person was developed in the 19th century, and it was an outgrowth of Darwinian evolution. Cultural evolution presumes that over time, cultural change such as the rise of social inequalities or emergence of agriculture occurs as a result of humans adapting to some non-cultural stimulus, such as climate change or population growth. However, unlike Darwinian evolution, cultural evolution was considered directional, that is, as human populations transform themselves, their culture becomes progressively complex.

### **Teilhard de Chardin's Cosmic evolution**

Teilhard de Chardin's Cosmic evolutionism too is all embracing and characterizes much more than living things. He contended that long before things appeared on the earth, the basic stuff of the cosmos was undergoing irreversible changes in the direction of greater complexity of

organization. This law of complexification was illustrated by the vast array of organic forms which have appeared in evolutionary history. The most recent of these forms is human being.

When viewed 'from without' by the physical sciences, human being is a material system in the midst of other material systems. But each individual human being experiences himself/herself 'from within' as a conscious being. Consciousness is thus directly identifiable as 'spiritual energy'. The physical evolution of the cosmic stuff is at the same time an evolution of consciousness.

The more highly integrated a material system, the more developed its psychical interior will be. Thus, in the human brain an intense concentration or 'involution' of cells has led to the emergence of self-conscious thought.

Human being is now a single, interbreeding species expanding on the finite, spherical surface of the planet and still showing signs of biological immaturity. Furthermore, his capacity for self-conscious thought and the production of cultures has added a new 'layer' to the earth's surface, which Teilhard calls the 'noosphere', distinct from, yet superimposed on the biosphere. The noosphere, or 'thinking layer', forms the unique environment of human being, making him/her off from all other animals.

A movement toward psychical concentration will occur, so that the noosphere will become involved in a Hyperpersonal Consciousness 'at a point of which we might call Omega.' Here evolution will reach the terminal phase of convergent integration. The integration of all personal consciousness at Omega will be achieved through love, which forms *le milieu divin*, the spirit of Christ at work in nature.

Teilhard's concept of Point Omega is obscure, like other aspects of his evolutionism, because it is essentially the expression of a mystical vision.

### **Check Your Progress III**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1) Explain cultural evolution.

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2) What is cosmic evolution according to Teilhard de Chardin?

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**3.5. LET US SUM UP**

Science believes that human beings are the products of organic evolution, and that an understanding of the evolutionary processes that shaped the human lineage provides the ultimate explanation to our origin. Philosophically, the problem of life's origin does not present any prominent difficulties. It is human life that characterizes human person, and it is therefore from this life that we need to depart if we wish to have an authentic comprehension of his/her being. Human life is of a sort that reaches very elevated spiritual levels, levels that one always seeks to surpass. His/her gaze is always directed forward. Therefore, his/her significance can only be grasped by discovering the goal to which he/she is directed what is the final goal of human life.

**3.6. KEY WORDS**

**Evolution** – the doctrine according to which higher forms of life have gradually arisen out of lower.

**Palaeontology** – the study of prehistoric life, including organisms' evolution and interactions with each other and their environments.

**Mutation** – discontinuous variation or sudden inheritable divergence from ancestral type.

**Genetics** – the science of heredity and variation in living organisms.

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### 3.8. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress I

1. Vitalism, Mechanism, Reductionism and Preformationism were the theories existing before Emergence theory could emerge in the interpretation of evolution.

(1). the vitalistic attribution of them to the action of a unique, undetectable life force;

(2). the mechanistic attribution of them to the operation of physiochemical laws alone;

(3). the reductionist contention that whatever has happened in evolution is at the bottom a reshuffling of certain fundamental units, which themselves remain unchanged;

(4). the preformationist contention that organic variety, diversity and complexity are simply actualizations of potentialities contained all along in living substances.

In opposition to these views the concept of emergence implies that the variety, diversity and complexity engendered by evolution are irreducible, cumulative features of the creative advance of nature. From time to time the evolutionary process has produced items the like of which had never been previously exemplified anywhere in its history.



2. Organic evolution is the theory that all existing forms of animal and plant life have descended with modification from previous simpler forms or from a single cell. Organic, or biological, evolution is to be distinguished from other phenomena to which the term evolution is often applied, such as chemical evolution, cultural evolution, or the origin of life from nonliving matter.

Slow gradual process of change from one form to another, as in the evolution of the universe from its formation to its present state, or in the evolution of life on Earth. In biology, it is the process by which life has developed by stages from single-celled organisms into the multiplicity of animal and plant life, extinct and existing, that inhabits the Earth. The development of the concept of evolution is usually associated with the English naturalist Charles Darwin who attributed the main role in evolutionary change to natural selection acting on randomly occurring variations. These variations in species are now known to be adaptations produced by spontaneous changes or mutations in the genetic material of organisms. In short, evolution is the change in the genetic makeup of a population of organisms from one generation to another. Evidence shows that many species of organisms do not stay the same over generations. The most dramatic evidence of this comes from fossils.

Evolution occurs via the following processes of natural selection: individual organisms within a particular species may show a wide range of variation because of differences in their genes; predation, disease, and competition cause individuals to die; individuals with characteristics most suited to the environment are more likely to survive and breed successfully; and the genes that have enabled these individuals to survive are then passed on to the next generation, and if the environment is changing, the result is that some genes are more abundant in the next generation and the organism has evolved.

Evolutionary change can be slow, as shown in part of the fossil record. However, it can be quite fast. If a population is reduced to a very small number, evolutionary changes can be seen over a few generations. Because micro-organisms have very short life cycles, evolutionary change in micro-organisms can be rapid. Micro-organisms can evolve resistance to a new antibiotic only a few years after the drug is first used. As a result of evolution from common ancestors, we are able to use classification of organisms to suggest evolutionary origins.

**Check your progress II**

Palaeontology lies on the border between biology and geology, and shares with archaeology a border that is difficult to define. It now uses techniques drawn from a wide range of sciences, including biochemistry, mathematics and engineering. As knowledge has increased, palaeontology has developed specialized subdivisions, some of which focus on different types of fossil organisms while others study ecological and environmental history, such as ancient climates. The study of fossils, gives us some evidence for organic evolution. Fossils are portions of organisms of the past ages, preserved by being incorporated in stratified rocks or in trees. The older strata of rocks give the fossils of simpler types of organisms while the more recent ones give the fossils more complex and developed types. However, the fossils record is incomplete, as certain connecting links are missing.

2. The mutation as understood today is concerned with genes, the discrete units of heredity, which occupy particular loci on the chromosomes. It tells that each gene controls a specific developmental process and responsible for the appearance of specific traits in an organism. The new science, 'Genetics,' explains that a gene represents a specific segment of the DNA molecule. The product of a gene action, in many cases, is a protein; and the developmental process in a given organism depends on specific kind of proteins produced under the instruction of a particular set of genes. A mutation in a gene often causes corresponding changes in the protein concerned. If mutation occurs in the germ cells of an organism, the change will be inherited by its off-spring.

Geneticists can, to a certain extent, see evolution occurring under their very eyes in the laboratory. A careful study of hundreds of generations of short-lived animals, such as the fruit-fly, discovers slight changes in their inherited characteristics, resulting in many new races. Some of these races may eventually differ enough from each other to be viewed as new species. These changes may happen spontaneously. In other cases, they may be induced by the geneticist himself.

### **Check your progress III**

Cultural evolution as a theory in Philosophy of Human Person was developed in the 19th century, and it was an outgrowth of Darwinian evolution. Cultural evolution presumes that over time, cultural change such as the rise of social inequalities or emergence of agriculture occurs as

a result of humans adapting to some non-cultural stimulus, such as climate change or population growth. However, unlike Darwinian evolution, cultural evolution was considered directional, that is, as human populations transform themselves, their culture becomes progressively complex.

Self-preservation, reproduction and greed are biological imperatives. They arose from millions and billions of years of biological evolution. They are as much a part of human life as any other life on earth. However, humans are not just biological creatures. We are also social creatures, the most social on earth. The ways we deal with each other, from personal to international relationships, can have as much an influence on our behaviour as our instinctive reactions. But our societies and cultures did not spring all of a sudden. They grew and developed during millions of years of cultural evolution. And the closer our primate ancestors approached being human, the less biological evolution influenced our behaviour, and the more cultural evolution took over. This does not mean that biological evolution ended. On the contrary, it remained as important as ever. It simply altered direction. The emerging human body evolved to fit its ecological niche, to survive as a living creature. The emerging human mind now evolved to fit its cultural niche, to survive as a social creature.

In giving a spiritual connotation to the word "evolution" for a large audience, Teilhard situated the human being in a cosmos that did not spit it out accidentally but brought it to birth as its highest and greatest creation. Biological evolution, Teilhard's chief interest as a scientist and the prime barrier to faith for educated people in the century he wrote in, was no enemy of this view, but its clearest evidence. The fossil record that he spent his life studying was, for him, but the immediately tangible manifestation of a great drift toward divinity that every atom of the universe has been secretly engaged in from the beginning. Everywhere Teilhard looked in the natural world, and he spent his entire life looking at it very closely, he saw evidence of the larger spiritual world which underlay and gave birth to the material, and into which it would eventually return, in a higher, transformed condition. The emergence of human consciousness on earth was, for him, the latest and most portentous step in a process of divinization that would ultimately encompass not only all of life, but all of matter itself. The universe and all it contained would, Teilhard believed, ultimately be lifted up into a state above the matrix of space and time altogether; a state that Teilhard, following the language of the New Testament, termed Omega.

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## **UNIT4                    THE END OF HUMAN PERSON**

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### **4.0 OBJECTIVES**

The end of human person depends on one's attitude towards life. A human's attitude towards life is largely determined by one's attitude towards death. Hence to know the end of human person you should know what happens of human person with death. We clarify and articulate certain facts in relation with human life and death and thereby try to know the end of human person. In this unit you are expected to know:

Phenomenon of life

Phenomenon of death

Meaning of immortality

Possibilities of various modes of existence

Various views concerning survival after death

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The term that can contain the entire reality of the being of human is 'person'. The Latin word *persona* is interpreted as *per se unum*, meaning 'one in itself'. Hence the term 'person' signifies the uniqueness, unrepeatability, absolute value and sacredness of the individual. Human as human person is involved in time and history. In a much deeper level one is also exposed to death. In death the question "What is human?" remains as an enigma. It reveals the absurdity of human life. This is the point of great anxiety that lies at the heart and centre of man, because the instability of his existence by the set backs and disappointments of life in love, the process of growing old, the death of loved ones and others that ceases all communication with them etc., abandons him in solitude. Hence the question "What is the meaning of life if it inevitably ends in death?" seeks an answer.

#### **4.2 HUMAN PERSON AND DEATH**

Human person in existence is exposed to death. Death is a daily possibility. The study of death is very difficult for various reasons. First of all, because anyone who speaks of it must do so without having experimented with it and the one who has experimented with it can no longer speak of it, because he can no more be there to speak. Secondly, it is difficult because of the accumulation of contrasting and contradictory responses already existing on this argument. In our study on death we take three things into account: firstly, it is an undeniable fact that man dies. Secondly, death is an event concerning a being gifted with self-consciousness, self-transcendence, freedom, spirituality and subsistence in the areas of spirit and personality. Thirdly, we are not completely ignorant of death, although we lack direct experience of it. We have some knowledge of this undeniable fact, though we cannot have full certain knowledge about it.

In fact, we possess a twofold indirect knowledge of death: the first is the sight of others who die; the second is the cognizance that life is a constant and progressive yielding and subjection to death, so much so that we can say every day cedes to death a part of the days which have been assigned to me for my life. As St. Augustine says, "From the moment a man begins to exist in a body which is destined to die, he is involved all the time in a process whose end is death".

#### **Death: Separation between Body and Soul**



Traditionally death is described as the separation of body and soul. This implies that the spiritual principle of life in man, his soul, assumes in death, a different relation to the body. Separation of body and soul does not mean that the transcendental relation of the soul to the body ceases to be, but rather this relation is changed.

Even before death the spiritual soul through its embodiment is already in principle open to the whole world, and is therefore never a closed monad without windows, but is always in communication with the whole world. Such comprehensive relation to the world means that the soul, by surrendering its limited body structure in death, becomes open towards the universe and co-determining factors of the universe precisely in the latter's character as the ground of personal life of other incarnate spiritual beings.

As the soul by its substantial union with the body has its essential form, it also has a relation to this radial unity of the universe. The separation of body and soul in death does not mean the absolute cessation of this relation to the world so that the soul becomes absolutely acosmic, and other-worldly as held by the neo-Platonics. Rather, in death the human soul enters into a much closer and intimate relationship to that ground of unity of the universe which is hard to conceive yet is very real. It is through their mutual influence upon each other, all things in the world are communicated. Moreover, this is possible precisely because the soul is no longer bound to an individual bodily structure.

#### **4.3 UNDERSTANDING OF DEATH**

Modern understanding of human person and death consists in the appraisal of human life and its meaning in the face of death. We study it under two titles; first, the phenomenology of human life; second, the meaning of death.

##### **The Phenomenology of Human Life**

We can see a twofold development in a man who has fully developed his life from birth to death in accordance with the inner dynamics of his existence. First, there is the development of the *external man* which is the development of the biological organism, its maturation and the progressive differentiation and specialization of various capacities. Second, there is the growth of cognitive power, the widening of the horizon of knowledge, a gradual acquaintance with friendship, the ability to deal with the world and oneself, and an opening up to the power of surrender and devotion in love. Man conquers the world in its several manifestations: the world of things, the world of cognition, the world of acknowledgment of other individuals.



When man gives himself up to his world task by ceding to his development of the biological and cognitive faculties, the world begins to use up his power. In using up his power by the world man gets exhausted of the biological forces, that his organic system loses its faculty of adaptation. In the course of his existence, man sees that in spite of occasional successes, he has not fulfilled what he essentially dreamed of, and longed for. He has failed in his work, in shaping the world, in friendship and in love. Life loses its freshness, and his powers of external actions desert him. Gradually, the outer man has worn himself out, and in the end becomes a corpse that will decay in the earth, or a handful of ashes to be scattered to the winds.

But in the very experience of one's own limit, and of *external collapse*, something meaningful occurs if the life has been lived honorably by the development of the *inner man*. In the collapse of the *external man* something is formed, that is the person. The energies of the external man are not simply used up, but are transformed into certain *inwardness*. Thus in the midst of disappointments, the mature man is formed, an essence that is independent of all external conditions.

### **The Meaning of Death**

As we saw, man uses himself up, and thus becomes a person. This person uses himself up in death and becomes something entirely new in eternal co-existence with the Absolute. Death is the *location* of the ultimate interiorization of man. In death the outer man disappears entirely. This is bound up with increase in inwardness. Being oneself means selflessness. The complete expression of self can come about only in complete extinction. The law of *kenosis* prevails in love, friendship and search for truth. Applying this to death we find that total inwardness comes about in death. Hence man is fully himself only in death; then he becomes a substantive person, a wholly self-sufficient source of decision.

Death is the location of integral decision. The Absolute is reached in death. It is an *I-thou relationship* in freedom wherein the man is not dissolved in death, but becomes a full person for the first time. The event of death is co-existence with, or rejection of the Absolute person by a finite person who has wholly come to be himself (the final 'yes' or 'no'). Death is wholly a personal total decision in regard to a personal God. The total realization of the inward man in death is wholly a personal co-existence of a finite being with the infinite Being, a full participation of God. It is a participation in love, which means that the being of the other becomes our own being; and we come to be ourselves fully. Since the fullness of the Absolute

cannot be fully assumed by any finite being, in eternity everything static and quantitative is transformed into an unlimited dynamic process advancing into infinity.

**Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1) What do you understand by substantial union of body and soul?

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2) Explain briefly the phenomenon of death

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**4.4 IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL**

Immortality, perhaps, is the central concept of the end of human person. In it contains the scope and potentiality of the soul for self transcendence. We make an inquiry into the meaning and reality of immortality.

**Meaning of Immortality**

Etymologically the term immortality as “in (non)-mortality” means “lack of death” or “unceasing duration of life”. According to St. Thomas, “Immortality signifies a certain power to always live and to not die”. Thus, concretely, immortality means the continued and perennial existence of the spiritual dimension of man, the soul rather than of its biological life, nor of its

temporary revival after death. Therefore immortality has nothing to do with survival of someone in the memory of a family, friends, or descendants; rather it is synonymous with the ontological survival in the identity of the proper unique and unrepeatable being, after the death of the body.

Immortality is to be distinguished from eternity. An immortal being has a beginning, but will not end. The eternal being on the other hand has neither beginning nor end. That is why immortality is an attribute that is referred only of man, not God. Immortality of the soul means human soul which has a beginning has no end. God is attributed with eternity that is without beginning or end. Therefore the question of immortality is referred to man and his existence.

Immortality means immune from corruption in any way. Corruption in general means ceasing to be, breaking into parts. Immortality of the soul implies that human soul can neither cease to exist nor can be decomposed or dissolved. It does not cease to exist because it is created to exist rather than to be annihilated. It is not decomposed or dissolved because it is not composed of constituent parts. Moreover, it is independent of matter. Thus human soul as immortal is with unceasing duration of life.

### **Proofs of the Immortality of the Soul**

The immortality of the soul is explained mainly based on certain factual and metaphysical experiences of life. We articulate them here as three proofs. They are metaphysical proof, proof from natural capacities and proof from the moral order.

### **Metaphysical or Ontological Proof**

Human soul is not subject to any corruption. It cannot corrupt of itself, for it is simple and inextended. Not being composed, it cannot break up into parts because it has none. It cannot, besides, be subject to any corruption by the accident because it is spiritual and intrinsically independent of matter. Not depending wholly upon the body for its rational operations and therefore not for its being, it will not cease to exist when the body dies. The human soul is thus immortal by nature.

The soul which is immortal by nature can cease to exist by annihilation by God. But God to annihilate what is immortal by nature would be inconsistent and unreasonable. Moreover, it will be a contradiction of his design. Such imperfection is impossible to conceive with the nature of God. Therefore the soul is immortal in fact.

### **Proofs from Natural Capacities**

The immortality of the soul is clear from the very nature of the unlimited capacities of our intellect and will. The intellect has an unlimited capacity of knowing what ever is or can be. This is a capacity for truth. The more a man knows the greater is his desire to learn. The most brilliant intellectuals are painfully aware of all there is yet to know. A thousand lifetimes would not suffice to fill up one's intellect completely.

The will has a capacity for unlimited goodness. Its object being goodness as such, there is nothing which it cannot desire. However much it may possess, it can always want more. True, we may rightly expect a reasonable amount of happiness in this life, but even those who claim to be quite content are capable of more. No matter how much we feel we are loved, we are all heart-hungry in the sense that we want fuller and more adequate exploration of our capacity to love. The songs, the poetry, the world conquests all attest to the nature of the human will as made for unlimited good. Moreover, even the nicest finite things tire us after a while. True happiness demands an object which we can never exhaust, a never-ending fountain of new delights with which we can never become bored.

These unlimited capacities of intellect and will can never be fully satisfied in this life, nor with anything less than an eternity with God. Only when the intellect can feed upon the inexhaustible intelligibility of Him who is Infinite Truth will our curiosity be sated. Only when our wills possess the infinite goodness and beauty of goodness itself will they rest content. Therefore the human soul must continue to a state where its two highest basic capacities are satisfied by an adequate object: Infinite Knowledge and Love.

### **Proof from the Moral Order**

It is a fact that people generally experience moral obligation and a sense of responsibility. The question here is what the validity of such a widespread phenomenological fact is, if the soul is not immortal. We see people trying to do what they see to be right, and receiving no reward in this life. Others literally get away with murder. Still others are punished unjustly for crimes they did not commit. What rationality is there in moral values? Why should anyone experience a

sense of obligation and responsibility? There is no adequate sanction in this life. Unless there is a life after death in which everything will be squared up and people will receive what they deserve, the whole notion of obligation makes no sense at all. Therefore the soul must be immortal, or there is no adequate foundation for our notions of good and evil, for responsibility and human dignity, for the very fabric of social and political structure.

#### **4.5 SURVIVAL AFTER DEATH**

Let us now make an inquiry into the state of the interior man after death. That is, what happens to soul after death? We understand it in two ways in which human soul considered as surviving after death. They are transmigration and resurrection.

##### **Transmigration of Souls**

Transmigration is a common belief to many cultures that the soul after death passes from one body to another. To understand this doctrine, let us see its meaning and ground in the eastern as well as in the western cultures.

##### **Meaning of Transmigration**

This doctrine variously called as reincarnation of souls, metempsychosis, palingenesis, and rebirth, has been and is widely held in various cultures, at all times and all over the world in one form or another. *It is the belief in the immortality of the soul that migrates from one body to another.* It is the doctrine that the deeper self of man can successively be somehow united with the different material bodies, and may thus have several successive lives. This view has been held by philosophers such as Pythagoras, Empedocles, Plato, Plotinus, Hume, Schopenhaur and Bergson; and by religious systems such as Gnosticism, Catharism, Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Theosophism, Occultism and Spiritism.

Para-psychology and psychic researchers report actual occurrences of conscious reincarnations. According to Indian beliefs, men can be reborn as gods, spirits, and animals and even as plants. Rebirth can take place not only on earth, but in a multiplicity of heavens and purgatories.

Prevalent belief is that rebirth takes place immediately after death (but in Buddhism, soul transmigrates 49 days after death). In Indian thought there is large speculation about the embryological mechanics of rebirth, i.e., as to how spirit with a given karma goes in search of a fetus that would suit it.

### **Arguments for Transmigration**

There are six points presented here based on certain facts and beliefs of our daily life experience to prove transmigration of the human soul.

First, the eternity of the soul: souls are eternal; but the normal condition of a soul is to be associated with a body. Hence it is likely that the soul in the past and future has a virtually everlasting succession of bodies.

Secondly, natural endowments: children have instinctive capacities and natural inclinations such as particular dispositions to mathematics, music, etc., natural and spontaneous antipathies and sympathies and phobias. All these are but virtual memory of previous lives and experiences. Similarly child geniuses such as Mozart and a host of others, indicate prenatal training.

Third, actual remembrance of past lives: persons of deep spiritual insights, such as Yogis and Buddhist Saints claim to remember their past lives. Others say that they have recollections of Pythagoras, Annie Beasant, etc. The reason why not all have such remembrance is that both birth and death are traumatic experiences which normally cause amnesia.

Fourth, Paramnesia: it is the experience of the *already seen* and *already known*, persons, places etc. not in this life, because of a previous life.

Fifth, solution to the problem of evil; inequalities and sufferings are the results of past karma. There must be many lives in different bodies to exhaust the karma.

Sixth, scope for adequate self-perfection: if the world is viewed as a theatre for moral striving, and if no man can achieve perfection in one life, only the doctrine of rebirth provides for the possibility of a long process of self-perfection.

### **Transmigration in Indian Philosophy**

From a careful examination of the Vedas and Upanishads it is found that the ancient Hindus did not believe in the doctrine of transmigration, but held, as so many theosophists do, that "once a man, always a man," but of course there is the exception of the case where men live bad lives persistently for ages. But it also seems very clear that the later Brahmins, for the purpose of having a priestly hold on the people or for other purposes, taught them the doctrine that they and



their parents might go after death into the bodies of animals. Though it may not be acceptable for many, some hold it as a belief because they saw the Hindu and the Jain alike acting very carefully as to animals and insects, avoiding them in the path, carefully brushing insects out of the way at a great loss of time, so as to not step on them. This, they say, is because they think that in these forms their dead friends or relatives may be living.

Today, the belief in transmigration is common to many religions in the world and Hinduism has given to it a metaphysical and ethical interpretation. There are four main principles involved in the Hindu theory of rebirth.

First, the permanence of the essential self: the essential self, the Supreme Being is believed to exist in all serenity and aloofness, for without the assumption of a permanent entity, the talk of rebirths meaningless.

Second, the operation of the original ignorance: the whole process of rebirth is made possible by the operation of the original ignorance, *avidya*, in causing the essential self to assume individuality. There it is conditioned by the mind-body complex, and is involved in the world of human existence.

Third, the possibility of union with the Supreme Being: the self is under ignorance and is united to the body. There are two possibilities: either the individual through true knowledge returns to the original state of the essential self, that is, attains liberation- *moksa*, or the individual continues his pilgrimage through various rebirths until he finally reaches the goal of liberation.

Fourth, the doctrine of karma: the doctrine of karma is the solution offered by Hinduism to the great riddle of the origin of suffering and inequalities which exist among men in the world. According to this theory, the law of causation operates in the moral world in an invariable and inviolable manner as it does in the physical world.

Every action of an individual inevitably leads to some results, good or bad, and his life becomes conditioned by the consequences of these acts. *We cannot think of any act which do not produce any result, nor of any result which have no antecedents* – This is the inexorable law of Karma. Since all actions do not fructify in our life, we must assume a series of life in order that all the actions maybe fructified.

The doctrine of rebirth is the corollary of the doctrine of karma. The present life of the individual is conditioned by the acts of his previous life, which did not produce results during that life, and his future life will be conditioned by the similar acts of this life.

## **Refutation of Transmigration**

The theory of transmigration is best refuted by the substantial union of soul and body. As we saw already, man is made of two complex substances, *prime matter and subsistent substantial form*, that is, body and soul which constitute one human being. Soul and body are related as acts and potency. Though the soul can exist independently of the body, it is individuated by matter in such a way that it has transcendental relation to this matter; so that a particular soul can be individual only by a particular body.

For the soul to migrate it should lose this relation and acquire another, which is impossible; for this transcendental relation to the body is essential to the substantial form. Hence the very fact that this relation is changed, the very substantial form would change essentially, in its whole reality, and so would lose its identity.

In other words, a soul that is individuated by matter cannot have two successive bodies, because it remains so, and any union with a new body can only be accidental, since it cannot individuate the soul. Hence a soul that has transmigrated will constitute with the body as a whole which is *unum per accidens*, not *unum per se*.

### **4.6 LET US SUM UP**

Soul separated from the body is seen to be not a complete man in any case. Even if its highest powers are satisfied, and happiness therefore essentially achieved, the soul still seems to have a certain incompleteness. Even if the soul shall be much absorbed in enjoying God without being distracted by any bodily desire for pleasure because all pleasures are contained in God equivalently and to a super eminent degree, the soul is incomplete without body to form man, for soul is not an angel, but to be a man.

In the Platonic vision, the body is something harmful to the soul. It is its prison and hence should have no part to play in afterlife. In the later philosophical perspectives, however, the body is seen in a much positive and healthier light.

Unlike Plato, Aristotle viewed the matter in general and the body with much more sympathy and appreciation. Keeping line with Aristotle Aquinas formulated an integral view of the two revealed truths which seemed to be mutually exclusive; that is an integrated view of the human composite plus total personal immortality.

In reconciling the two Aquinas made a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic dependence. He remarked, knowing and willing can transcend or abstract from matter. But they need matter to get started. I cannot, for example, form any abstract idea or build up the notion of anything supersensible without first passing by way of matter. I can only arrive at the notion of God or the First Cause by seeing, hearing, touching or tasting the tangible things of this world. Or, to take another example, I can only form the notion of truth (an abstraction) starting from my sense perception of true sensible data. Thus, my spiritual activity of thinking (and it can be shown of willing too) is at least indirectly dependent on matter for its functioning. He called this extrinsic dependence. The spiritual activities of knowing and willing (and consequently their spiritual principle, the human soul) are dependent on matter only for the beginning of these activities. For their continuance and completion they can carry out without the help of matter. They can 'transcend' it, as we say.

Our other human activities- those we have in common with animals (sensitive life and locomotion) and plants (nourishment, repair, growth and reproduction) - however, are intrinsically dependent on matter. They involve matter all the way through, i.e., the beginning, continuance and completion of their activities. Now, we apply the famous metaphysical principle of *as is the operation so is the agent*.

Humans have some activities (operations) which are only extrinsically dependent on matter, i.e., require matter only to start off; subsequently, they can carry on without matter. Therefore, the agent of these actions- in effect our spiritual soul- only needs matter to being its existence. Thereafter it can continue to exist without matter, i.e., when the material element, at death, decomposes. Hence there is life after death, and it is something natural to the soul and can be proved rationally.

The destiny of the body after death is a different matter. At death, the body corrupts while the soul lives on. Therefore a special divine intervention is required, whereby it is resurrected. Until the body is raised, of course, the souls of those who have died will be deprived of their necessary counterpart.

### **Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1) What is the distinction between immortality and eternity?

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2) How do you refute the argument for transmigration?

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**4.7 KEY WORDS**

**Resuscitation:** Resuscitation is a procedure designed to restore normal breathing after cardiac arrest that includes the clearance of air passages to the lungs, mouth-to-mouth method of artificial respiration, and heart massage by the exertion of pressure on the chest

**Transmigration:** Transmigration of souls or metempsychosis is a belief common to many cultures, in which the soul passes from one body to another, either human, animal, or inanimate. Metempsychosis is a fundamental doctrine of several religions originating in India. In Hinduism, the individual soul enters a new existence after the death of the body. The sum total of past moral conduct, or karma, determines the condition of the soul and the quality of its rebirth.

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#### **4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

##### **Answers to Check Your Progress I**

1. As the soul by its substantial union with the body has its essential form, it also has a relation to this radial unity of the universe. The separation of body and soul in death does not mean the absolute cessation of this relation to the world so that the soul becomes absolutely acosmic, and other-worldly as held by the neo-Platonics. Rather, in death the human soul enters into a much closer and intimate relationship to that ground of unity of the universe which is hard to conceive yet is very real. It is through their mutual influence upon each other, all things in the world are communicated. Moreover, this is possible precisely because the soul is no longer bound to an individual bodily structure.

2. Death is the location of integral decision. The Absolute is reached in death. It is an *I-thou relationship* in freedom wherein the man is not dissolved in death, but becomes a full person for the first time. The event of death is co-existence with, or rejection of the Absolute person by a finite person who has wholly come to be himself (the final 'yes' or 'no'). Death is wholly a personal total decision in regard to a personal God. The total realization of the inward man in death is wholly a personal co-existence of a finite being with the infinite Being, a full participation of God. It is a participation in love, which means that the being of the other becomes our own being; and we come to be ourselves fully. Since the fullness of the Absolute cannot be fully assumed by any finite being, in eternity everything static and quantitative is transformed into an unlimited dynamic process advancing into infinity.

##### **Answers to Check Your Progress II**

1. Immortality is to be distinguished from eternity. An immortal being has a beginning, but will not end. The eternal being on the other hand has neither beginning nor end. That is why immortality is an attribute that is referred only of man, not God. Immortality of the soul means human soul which has a beginning has no end. God is attributed with eternity that is without beginning or end. Therefore the question of immortality is referred to man and his existence.

2. The theory of transmigration is best refuted by the substantial union of soul and body. As we saw already, man is made of two complex substances, *prime matter and subsistent substantial form*, that is, body and soul which constitute one human being. Soul and body are related as acts and potency. Though the soul can exist independently of the body, it is individuated by matter in such a way that it has transcendental relation to this matter; so that a particular soul can be individual only by a particular body.

For the soul to migrate it should lose this relation and acquire another, which is impossible; for this transcendental relation to the body is essential to the substantial form. Hence the very fact that this relation is changed, the very substantial form would change essentially, in its whole reality, and so would lose its identity.

In other words, a soul that is individuated by matter cannot have two successive bodies, because it remains so, and any union with a new body can only be accidental, since it cannot individuate the soul. Hence a soul that has transmigrated will constitute with the body as a whole which is *unum per accidens*, not *unum per se*.





### **BLOCK 3**

The physical body is the one immediate obvious aspect that we are all aware of. But it is not only the body that constitutes the whole Nature of Human Person, but there is something within. Beyond this visible and tangible body there are certain spiritual aspects that make this material body into a complete one. Although there are a number of functions that our body performs and are common to all animals including human beings, it is the spiritual nature that makes human beings different and unique from other beings. Human beings are able to reflect and think, affirm and deny, whereas the animals cannot. Humans are blessed with two important faculties namely the spiritual intellectual faculty and the spiritual appetitive faculty. The intellect is a faculty which by its very nature strives actively towards truth or knowledge or intelligibility. The will is conceived as a rational appetency or power to strive for an intellectually perceived good and to shun an intellectually perceived evil. These two faculties reside in a spiritual coordinating principle: the soul.

This block contains four units that take us to the very subject matter of the course, i.e., who we are, our bodily make up and spiritual make up.

**Unit 1** deals with Human Person as a Bodily being. We begin understanding Human Person as a Bodily being and what its rich dimensions are. We shall also have a recap of how great philosophers interpreted the bodily nature of humans. Different topics included in this unit are phenomenology of Human Body, functions of bodiliness, inter-relationship between soul and body.

**Unit 2** deals with another aspect of Human Person as a Spiritual being. Human person is a combination of matter and spirit. The body signifies the matter and the spirit is due to the spiritual faculties of intellect and will. Intellect is the faculty of intelligibility and knowledge and will is the appetitive faculty. Intellect knows and the will chooses.

**Unit 3** highlights the nature and functions of the Human Intellect and Knowing. The human intellect is an immaterial or spiritual cognitive faculty. A faculty is that by means of which human beings perform mental or conscious activities, and a mental faculty is concerned with the mental operations. We delve into some of the proofs that affirm the existence of intellect, its functions, an understanding of human knowing, and the formation of ideas and judgement.

**Unit 4** familiarizes us with another spiritual faculty of the human person: Human Will and Freedom. Will is the capacity to choose between the good and the evil that is known by the intellect. The end of the will is always good. We also reflect on some of the proofs for the existence of will, relationship between intellect and will, acts of will, freedom and the possibility of freedom.

The first thing that strikes us in our discussion on the nature of the human person is the physical body. But we know that even the animals have a body and many physical functions are common to both. It is the spiritual or immaterial functions of the human person, that makes a human different and unique from all other beings. This block forms the core of the whole course.

## UNIT 1 HUMAN PERSON AS A BODILY BEING

### Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Phenomenology of the Human Body
- 1.3 Functions of Bodiliness
- 1.4 Inter-relationship between the Soul and the Body
- 1.5 A Liberative Understanding of the Human Embodied Person
- 1.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.7 Key Words
- 1.8 Further Readings and References
- 1.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

### 1.0. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit – Having understood the different approaches to the study of human person (Block 1) and reflecting upon the origin and end of human person (Block 2), we now enter into the very subject matter of who we are. We begin understanding Human Person as a Bodily being and what are its rich dimensions. We shall also have a recap of how great philosophers interpreted the bodily nature of humans. A truly liberative understanding of our bodiliness will help us to live a fulfilled life in this world.

Thus by the end of this Unit you should be able:

- to have a basic understanding of human person as a bodily being;
- to use the right terminology while speaking about human nature; and
- to appreciate our bodily nature and promote the same to others.

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

A simple incident: As soon as the mother entered the home, little Sanjay began to cry. When questioned, “What’s the matter son?” He replied, “I am hurt Mom...while playing.” “And when was it son?” “An hour ago!” “Oh I am so sorry! But why you didn’t cry then?” “Because you weren’t around Mom.”

The above incident captures in a nut-shell the importance of physical presence. Our bodily presence makes a world of difference to others even though some may give importance only to our spiritual dimension. If actions speak louder than words then the subsequent sections will help us to understand our embodied nature from a closer angle. As earthly beings we are rooted in the world and we shape the world by our bodily presence. A positive understanding of the body-soul interaction should help us to overcome all the negative prejudices held against the body as a ‘prison house’. Finally a liberative understanding of person as a bodily being will be a launching pad to grow holistically on this planet earth and promote the same values among others.

## **1.2 THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE HUMAN BODY**

The body is the first and most obvious dimension we become aware of as soon as we awake. Yet, it does not constitute the entire human reality since it is intimately related with the soul. A brief phenomenological analysis of the body and its primary functions will help us to reflect metaphysically on the rapport between body and soul.

The human body is a marvel in itself viewed not so much in its external structures (because of physical deformities, age); but because of its internal structures like the various systems of the human body such as the nervous, respiratory, skeletal, digestive, reproductive and so on. Each system of the human body is a marvel to behold. We feel at a loss of words when we see how the brain functions, how our blood gets purified through the kidneys, how our senses of sight, touch, hearing work.

**(a) In commonness with observable reality:** We also look at the phenomena around us and are obvious that there are three kinds of beings with whom we are associated with traditionally

called the 'mineral kingdom', the 'vegetative kingdom' and the 'animal kingdom'. Compared to the *mineral kingdom*, our bodies are 65% oxygen, 18% carbon, 1.5% calcium, 1.5% phosphorous and 1.5% other elements. There is no chemical element in the human body that is not found in nature. Someone has rightly said, "We are cousins of stones and our sisters are the stars." Don't we have doctors who sometimes prescribe us some iron to our diet?

The *vegetative kingdom* is characterized by four basic "living" activities namely growth, reproduction, nourishment and repair. As living beings, humans too share in these basic functions.

In addition to the vegetative activities the *animal kingdom* has also locomotion ("self-motion"). Animals can move around and go elsewhere for food and rest. There is clear evidence of sensation too as they can see, hear, smell, taste and touch. These activities of the animals are ours too.

**(b) Superiority over animals:** Compared to animals who are born with a body already specialized through the instincts to perform determined operations, and only those determined operations like the birds building their nests and the honey bees their bee-hive; human beings have to learn things from the scratch. As the infant grows into maturity, s/he is able to perform various bodily activities and that too with expertise. The musicians, dancers, artists demonstrate this through their music, dance and art. Even riding the bicycle is a feat in itself as our bodies get acclimatized with the movement and the balancing act.

We have also shown superiority over animals with respect to the care and maintenance of our bodies through medicine, surgery, physical training etc. We have hospitals, clinics, and gymnasiums to make our bodies beautiful and energetic.

The beauty and singularity of the human body is also contributed by its vertical position. This position gives us mastery over our movements and allows us an agility and elegance. The erect position is also highly symbolic as it allows us to direct our glance to the sky rather than keep it

fixed on the ground like the animals. The erect posture also signifies life, health, vigilance, force and command.

### 1.3 FUNCTIONS OF BODILINESS

The human body possesses some functions in common with animals like nutrition, growth, movement, reproduction, etc. But there are some other functions as listed by Battista Mondin which are proper to humans namely: (a) Worldly function (b) Epistemological function (c) Function of Possession and (d) Ascetic function. Let us discuss these briefly.

*Worldly Function:* Because we are corporeal or bodily beings, we are also “worldly” meaning, each one of us is ‘being-in-the-world’. We are part of the world because we share the same elements of the world and are subject to the laws of nature. This truth was ignored by classical philosophy but thanks to the Existentialists (Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty) who have brought to light the fact that bodiliness or being embodied situates us in the world of things and makes us participate in its spatial restrictions. Bodiliness assigns us a particular place in this world. Whoever dies is definitely alienated from the space of the living beings.

My physical body also becomes a point of reference to other things in the world. Things acquire meaning as long as they come under the purview of ‘my surroundings’, ‘my horizon’. There is a wonderful exchange taking place between the world and me. E. Barbotin rightly says, “Thanks to this rhythmic to-and-fro, the whole universe dwells in me and I have the whole universe for my dwelling” (E. Barbotin, *The Humanity of Man*, Orbis Books, Markknoll, N. Y., 1975, p. 37 as quoted by Battista Mondin, p. 234)

*Epistemological Function:* It’s a fact that the body is the necessary instrument of knowledge, at least sensitive knowledge. Through our bodiliness we experience self-consciousness. In self-consciousness we cannot disentangle ourselves completely as Descartes had admitted. Don’t we even sigh with relief after a nightmare knowing that we are safe as we become conscious of our bodily presence? Our knowledge of the world is also conditioned by our bodily categories. No matter how hard we try, we will not be able to describe the world of colours to the blind or sound to the deaf. Our bodily nature also helps us to unify our knowledge and take stock of the given



situation. It's our common experience that we love to work in familiar surroundings and avoid strange places.

“It is thanks to my body that things and possessions exist for me ... Because it is inseparably subjective and objective, my body mediates between my ‘I’ and the world of things and is the place of encounter between my consciousness and the universe of objects...One need only acknowledge the lived experience of the body in order to transcend the subject-object dualism and the blind alleys of idealism.” (Barbotin, pp. 83-84, quoted by Mondin, p. 235)

*Function of possession:* It is because of my body I can possess things and claim as mine only those things with which my body can contact with. Explorations on land, sea or space manifest a desire to claim the unknown domains. It is only when a person is physically present over there, can one say that s/he has truly conquered that area. “The various machines launched into aerial or terrestrial space are only forerunners: the child’s kite...the space laboratory... the soundings taken by navigators...all express a desire for the kind of journey which would enable [humans] to take bodily possession of the new domain.” (Barbotin, p. 74, quoted by Mondin, p. 236)

*Ascetic function:* Down the ages, spiritual growth has been closely associated with the control of the human body. Some (Plato, Plotinus, Augustine) thought that the body, with its passions and weaknesses, represents a danger, an obstacle; and that the body impedes the soul’s ascension towards the world of the spirit. Therefore, they promoted the ascetics of total detachment from the body. Others (Aristotle, Thomas, Teilhard de Chardin, etc.) instead have believed that the body, has an essential dimension which should be directly involved in its process of perfection. This depends in large measure on the bodily habits that a person succeeds in acquiring. Our body is undoubtedly involved both in good and evil actions. Our experiences teaches us that the exercise of a certain virtue (example chastity), just as the practice of a vice (lust or intemperance) are due in large part to the habits which our body has succeeded in acquiring. For example the body of a non-smoker has an aversion to smoke. Therefore our bodies have a great function to play in our ascetic and spiritual life.

### **Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1) How are human beings related with lower forms of life?

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2) Discuss some of the functions proper to humans.

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#### **1.4 INTER-RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SOUL AND THE BODY**

Between the soul and the body there exists an essential distinction but at the same time they share a profound bond. The two are essentially distinct because the soul belongs to the spiritual sphere while the body is material. They cooperate with each other to make up what a human being is. How the two components of body and soul relate to each other has been popularly termed as the 'problem of the bridge'.

Regarding the intimate co-operation existing between the soul and the body, philosophers down the ages are divided into two groups *Platonic* and *Aristotelian*. According to the *Platonic solution* (followed by Plato, Plotinus, Augustine, Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, etc.); the soul and the body are two complete substances, each on its own account, and therefore are contingently and accidentally united during earthly life without effectively forming a single substance. The soul by itself constitutes the true essence of a person. The elimination of the body is the necessary condition to re-install the soul to its original position of perfect happiness.

According to the *Aristotelian solution* (followed by Aristotle, St. Thomas, Albert the Great, Rosmini, etc.); the soul and the body are two incomplete substances (like matter and form) and together give origin to a single complete substance, human being, who is essentially soul and body. The soul and body form a single whole. By itself soul is not a person, but only together with the body. The substantial union between the two constitutive elements is caused by the fact that a single act of being, that of the soul, also maintains the being of the body.

Modern philosophers propose new interpretations for this relationship between the soul and the body. According to David Hume (Materialist) the relationship is only apparent and not real; just as knowledge for Hume is only subjective association between the ideas of sensation and ideas of reflection. Whereas Kant (Idealist) remains uncertain about the objective situation of the human being and therefore cannot say anything definite. According to Kant, all the arguments devised by philosophers to resolve the problem of relationship between soul and body are nothing more than fallacies.

After Kant the problem of relationship between soul and body, in most of the cases disappeared from the scene either by eliminating the body by the Idealists, or the soul by the Materialists.

*Choosing our option:* Since we are constituted of two profoundly distinct and substantially different elements, soul and body, we cannot accept the solutions of the Materialists and the Idealists. We will have to opt between the *Platonic* solution and the *Aristotelian* solution – that is, between accidental and substantial solution.

The only satisfying solution is the substantial union because it is evident enough that there is a profound unity between the soul and the body in human operations where there is always a contribution both from the soul and the body. But the most profound reason is deduced from our human substantiality. As a human being, I am a substance, and this substantiality coincides neither with the soul nor the body. *The body by itself is not a substance*, because it does not have its own act of being, it is not self-sufficient, not subsistent. The *soul* too, though *being gifted with its own substantiality*, is made in such a way as not to constitute an autonomous being, because even to perform the activities which are proper to it, it has need, at least initially, of the body's

contribution. Therefore we conclude that “the body and soul form a single substance: they have a single act of being, that of the soul, and in this act of being the body participates at the moment of its generation.” (Mondin, p. 239)

Being two substantial and not accidental elements, the body and the soul are two incomplete substances, which are found to be related to each other according to the Aristotelian scheme of matter and form, or better still, of act and potency. In fact the soul unites itself to the body as its form since it perfects or actualizes the body and makes it into a human species. The soul therefore can be called the act of the body, precisely because it confers a perfection, a specific determination to the body (matter). It deserves the title of act because it communicates the act of being to the body where the soul has a priority in the order of existence. The body unites itself to the soul and is related to it as matter and potency. As matter because it confers individual characteristics to the soul. As potency because it is disposed to receiving perfections conferred by the soul, from the perfection of being to the perfection of life, speech, and other sense operations.

*To sum up:* there is essential difference between body and soul. Neither of them identify themselves with the person’s substantiality. Neither of them are two simple accidents or two complete substances. According to Thomistic philosophy, the human person is not a composite of “body and soul”, it is rather “prime matter informed by the human soul, which is its substantial form, that accounts for the human reality.” (Cyril Desbruslais, *The Philosophy of the Human Person: An Introduction to Philosophical Anthropology*, JDV Pune, 1997, p. 16) In the order of nature, the soul has a priority and therefore nothing prevents it from being the human body’s form and raise it to a higher level. (See. St. Thomas, *C. Gentiles II*, c. 68 quoted by Mondin, p. 240-41)

### **Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1) How does *Aristotelian position* differ from *Platonic position* with respect to the relationship between the soul and the body?

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2) Why is the soul called the act of the body?

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### **1.5 A LIBERATIVE UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMAN EMBODIED PERSON**

Cyril Desbruslais borrowing on Gabriel Marcel's terminology considers human person as a "mystery-question" rather than a "problem-question" mainly because we cannot detach ourselves from the reality we are discussing. We ourselves are a part of the question and no exhaustive definition of the human person is possible. Every definition of a person is limited and often one-sided (e.g. "rational animal" leaves out the emotional dimension; "social being" limits his/her individual uniqueness). Therefore we need to be cautious with the use of terminology while communicating with others. "An authentically liberative philosophy of human person is one which affirms all the various complementary and/or contrasting traits in this mysterious being and seeks to promote them *all*." (Desbruslais, p. 8)

Besides the academic interests, we must also remember that human person in the world is hungry and poor. There is not shortage of food but justice! "The trouble is food is being grown in the wrong places and at prices that the poor cannot afford. Statistics reveal that enough food is produced on earth to feed 10% more than the entire population of the earth." (Desbruslais, p. 9) At the root of social evil is the crisis of values. "Our creeping consumer-society-mentality and its inter-related 'built-in-obsolescence' values have taught us that 'to be more' (power, wealth, influence) is far more important than 'to be more' (human). Success, maturity, dignity – all these are measured solely in terms of what one has been able to accumulate, either by her/his own (questionable?) efforts or by inheritance." (Desbruslais, p. 10) As beings with flesh and blood, the external reality counts a lot.

Much harm has been done by giving more importance to the spiritual dimension (soul) and forgetting that our bodily nature also deserves due importance. We may recall Plato's anthropology who viewed human being as primarily a spirit or a soul and the body was nothing but a prison-house where the real self was chained. One had to denounce the "body" and rise above its oppressiveness and live a life of contemplation reflecting on the ideal forms. The traditional spirituality too invited its followers to despise the things of this world and love the things of heaven. Death was a welcome relief as the soul was liberated from the prison-house of the body. Religion was considered as the opium of the poor people according to the Marxist view. Even the classical Indian systems of philosophy are overtly bent in liberating the *purusa* from the apparent bondage of the *prakriti* (See Sankhya-Yoga). The theory of re-incarnation too is based on dualistic anthropology. The soul migrates from one body to the other. The body is seen as a replaceable appendage to the real self *atman*. Liberation or *moksha* is possible only by severing all links of the authentic self from the world of matter.

Considering human person as an embodied being has a wealth of meaning to offer in our contemporary world. No doubt there is much progress in our understanding today from being merely spiritual being to the acceptance of a being holistically giving importance to our embodied nature. Aristotle was right to a certain extent in grounding the Platonian human soul to earth when he brought the two principles of body and soul together as primary matter and substantial form untied in one substance. The scholastic definition of the human person as 'rational animal' also deserves our merit as it accepts the reality of commonness with other animal beings yet having an edge over the lower forms of life because of our rationality. Marx considers human person as an economic being or "a worker" signifying that our human nature finds concrete expression in projects we undertake. "The true human being, for Marx, is not the armchair philosopher, busily rationalizing her/his animality in abstract thought, but the worker who applies her/his reasoning ability to some concrete project." (Desbruslais, p. 19)

There are some more prominent views which give us a wider understanding of the human person as an embodied being which are listed below. The list is not exhaustive and one is always free to



add more names. Some of the references are from Desbruslais' *Philosophy of the Human Person* (pp. 19-34)

**Karl Rahner:** He was a German Jesuit who has two major philosophical works titled: *Spirit in the World* and *Hearers of the Word*. According to Rahner, human being is Spirit but not in anti-thesis with matter. It is Spirit which is meant to be in the World and be involved in the affairs of the World to be what one is called to be. This also implies that one is called to be the *Hearer of the Word* meaning being open to the Divine Word and arrive at one's fullest self-realization. Because we are not "pure spirit" but "spirit in the world", the world becomes necessarily the "locus of the theological event." God speaks to the human person in the context of the world and its history.

**Teilhard de Chardin:** The Jesuit priest-scientist in his works *The Phenomenon of Man* and *The Divine Milieu* digs into evolutionary history and observes a pattern, a dynamic progress of matter evolving into consciousness. With human beings on the evolutionary scale, 'thought is born'. It is up to humans to chalk out the future course of evolution. For Teilhard, matter was "solidified spirit". He refrains from making a clear cut distinction between matter and spirit. To use Aristotelian language, it is matter actualizing itself into higher forms of spirit.

**Use of terminology:** Terms too reveal our world-view and prejudices. The term "man" signify the most human characteristic, that is, one who possesses a mind (Latin *mens* – of the Sanskrit *manas* and subsequently *manushya*). But the word "human" suggests a better integrated approach as it signifies that we are *humus* (Latin, earth) and *mens* – meaning earthy minds. This conception comes close to Rahner's *Spirit of the World*.

**Learning from Vatican II:** According to Vatican II, "The human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one." (GS, 5) Human beings are not finished products. We continue to 'become' rather than just 'being' as a static finished product. The Church document also encourages us not to abdicate our responsibilities to this world (GS, 21). "Our vision of human being should be one which brings out clearly...[that] there is an inherent and integral link between religion...and our responsibilities of society, to the building up of structures that contribute to making all people more fully human, more fully alive." (Desbruslais, p. 23)

**John Paul II:** The Archbishop of Newark, John Joseph Myers, in his Pastoral Letter, “And the Word became Flesh (Jn 1:14)” offers a *theological reflection on the Human Body* drawing his inspiration from John Paul II’s teaching on the “theology of the body”. *The theme is developed from the perspective of Christ’s incarnation, death and resurrection.* He says, “For a Christian, the body's significance is good, inescapable, and central; Christianity itself cannot be understood apart from an appreciation of the body.” (no. 4) Commenting on Jesus’ death he adds, “We don't say, ‘Jesus’ body died for us,’ but, ‘Jesus died for us.’ His body is no appendage, not something borrowed. His identity as God incarnate and the fullness of his redemptive life and death both are bound up with his human body.” (no. 8) *Our own experience too speaks about the importance of the human body.* “Thinkers over the centuries sometimes have sought to downgrade the body's significance and, instead of recognizing the body as a constitutive element of the human person, spoken of it as something apart from our core identity...Everyone knows perfectly well that the body is intrinsic to his or her identity. Think how we speak. If I suddenly and unexpectedly struck you, very likely you would demand, ‘Why did you hit me?’ Not ‘Why did you hit my body?’ but ‘Why did you hit me?’ We all know that someone or something that touches our bodies is touching us. That is why crimes like assault and battery are crimes against the person, not just property violations.” (no. 10)

**Joseph Maréchal:** He was a Belgian Jesuit priest, philosopher and psychologist. He tried to merge the theological and philosophical thought of St. Thomas Aquinas with that of Kant. Maréchal’s real interest was Psychology rather than Philosophy. His work had a great influence on contemporary theologians and philosophers like Rahner and Bernard Lonergan. His contention was that there is an “intellectual dynamism” in the process of knowledge oriented towards God or Ultimate Being. From the experience of limited existence, we move on to grasp the unlimited or pure existence, namely God. (See Desbruslais, p. 31) The external world collaborates in our human quest by pointing beyond itself to the Ultimate Reality. It is the nature of the symbol to point beyond itself. Contemporary thinkers have referred to humans as *animal symbolicum* – i.e. “symbol using animal” (See Desbruslais, pp. 33 – 34). We need symbols to give fuller expression to our feelings and emotions. Drawing on Marechal’s study, Desbruslais says, “Human being, inasmuch as s/he is embodied, incarnate, enfleshed cannot envisage (much less relate to in any inter-personal depth) a totally disembodied, un-incarnate and un-fleshed reality. Somehow her/his embodiedness must also enter into the relationship, else her/his

personhood would experience an un-ignorable element of frustration. After all, we aren't pure spirits but (in Rahner's phrase) spirit in the world. Hence, in order to ensure the full meaningfulness of inter-personal relationships, we have to somehow 'embody the disembodied'. Thus our bodily dimension can enter into the relationship and find its fulfilment. Now, to 'embody the disembodied' is to do none other than make a symbol. That is why, when you love somebody we have to embody this love through hand-shakes, embraces, the giving of gifts, going out together and like. For that reason, too, we need statues, holy pictures, religious rites." (Desbruslais, p. 34) Joseph Donceel, rightly said that a human being is "an embodied loving affirmation of God." (Desbruslais, p. 30)

**Maurice Merleau-Ponty:** was a French phenomenological philosopher, strongly influenced by Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. He is also associated with Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. At the core of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is a sustained argument for the foundational role that perception plays in understanding the world as well as engaging with the world. In his *Phenomenology of Perception*, he developed the concept of the body-subject as an alternative to the Cartesian "cogito." This distinction is extremely important in his philosophy because he perceives the essences of the world existentially, as opposed to the Cartesian idea that the world is merely an extension of our own minds. The world, consciousness and the human body that perceives are intimately connected in the knowing process. One's own body is not only a thing, a potential object of study for science, but is also a permanent condition of experience, a constituent of the perceptual openness to the world. There is an inherence of consciousness and of the body of which the analysis of perception should take account. In the *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty wrote: "Insofar as I have hands, feet; a body, I sustain around me intentions which are not dependent on my decisions and which affect my surroundings in a way that I do not choose." (1962, p. 440). (See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maurice\\_Merleau-Ponty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maurice_Merleau-Ponty))

**Gabriel Marcel:** He was a French Philosopher and author of about 30 plays. He focused on the modern individual's struggle in a technologically dehumanizing society. Though often named as one of the first French existentialists, he dissociated from figures such as Jean-Paul Sartre. *The Mystery of Being* is a well-known multivolume book authored by him. While Marcel recognized that human interaction often involved objective characterization of "the other", he still asserted the possibility of "communion" - a state where both individuals can perceive each other's subjectivity. In *The Existential Background of Human Dignity*, Marcel refers to a play he had

written in 1913 entitled *Le Palais de Sable*, in order to provide an example of a person who was unable to treat others as subjects. The main character Roger Moirans is shown as heartless in considering the genuine plea of his two daughters Therese (who wants to divorce her unfaithful husband) and Clarisse (who wants to join the Convent). In this case, Moirans is unable to treat either of his daughters as a subject, instead rejecting both because each does not conform to her objectified image in his mind. Marcel notes that such objectification “does no less than denude its object of the one thing which he has which is of value, and so it degrades him effectively.” (See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriel\\_Marcel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriel_Marcel))

**Emmanuel Levinas:** Levinas became one of the very first French intellectuals to draw attention to Heidegger and Husserl, by translating Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* and by drawing on their ideas in his own philosophy. Levinas derives the primacy of his ethics from the experience of the encounter with the Other. For Levinas, the irreducible relation, the epiphany, of the face-to-face, the encounter with another, is a privileged phenomenon in which the other person's proximity and distance are both strongly felt. “The Other precisely **reveals** himself in his alterity not in a shock negating the I, but as the primordial phenomenon of gentleness.” At the same time, the revelation of the face makes a demand, this demand is before one can express, or know one's freedom, to affirm or deny. One instantly recognizes the transcendence and heteronomy of the Other. (See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emmanuel\\_Levinas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emmanuel_Levinas))

### Check Your Progress III

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) Why is dualistic anthropology narrow given our present context?

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2) Citing some of the views you have read draw out the significance of the human person as an embodied being.

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## 1.6. LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to understand the human person as an embodied being who shares a commonality with other beings in the world. Even though a person is a 'being-in-the-world', s/he is superior to the lower forms of life and possesses some specific functions. We have also reviewed the body-soul relationship from the two basic perspectives: Platonic and Aristotelian and have demonstrated how soul has an edge over the body and yet is dependent on it to a great extent. Finally, we proposed a better or a liberative understanding of the human person as a bodily (or embodied) being citing views of prominent philosophers and the Church.

## 1.7. KEY WORDS

*Phenomenology*: A philosophy or method of inquiry based on the premise that reality consists of objects and events as they are perceived or understood in human consciousness and not of anything independent of human consciousness.

*Substantial Form*: Aristotle distinguishes between "substantial" and "accidental" forms. A substantial form is a second substance (species or kind) considered as a universal; the predicate human, for example, is universal as well as substantial.

*Potency and Act*: Potency refers, generally, to the capacity or power of a virtual reality to come to be in actuality. In broad terms, potency is a capacity, and actuality is its fulfillment.

*Embodiedness*: It refers to our physical nature as en-fleshed beings. It's a better expression than saying, "I have a body."



## 1.8. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## 1.9. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

### Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Human beings have a lot of affinity with the lower forms of life. We are related to the three kingdoms namely mineral, vegetative, and animal. Our bodies are composed of matter a major part of it being minerals or water like 65% oxygen, 18% carbon, 1.5% calcium, etc. With the vegetative kingdom we share in the activities like growth, nourishment, reproduction and repair. Besides these functions, we also have self-movement and sensations like the animals.

2. Even though as humans we have some similarity with the lower forms of life including animals; yet we are superior in ways more than one. With age and practice we are able to achieve mastery in many fields like art and science. We can boast of well-equipped hospitals and



gymnasiums to take care of our bodies. In addition our vertical position allows us to be agile, elegant and self-confident. Besides these there are some functions proper to humans by virtue of being embodied namely (i) worldly function (ii) epistemological function (iii) function of possession and (iv) ascetic function. By being 'worldly' means we are 'beings-in-the-world'. We are situated and things acquire meaning depending on our location or 'horizon'. Epistemologically our bodily nature helps us to acquire knowledge from the world of experience. Moreover it is due to our bodily capability we are able to possess or have a hold on things or areas external to us as the explorers testify. Finally, the control over the body is a must to live an ascetic life.

### **Answers to Check Your Progress II**

1. The soul and body are essentially distinct yet they share a wonderful relationship. As to how the two are related, philosophers down the ages are divided into two groups *Platonic* and *Aristotelian*. According to the *Platonic solution* the soul and the body are two complete substances accidentally united. The soul itself constitutes the true essence of a person. The elimination of the body is necessary for the good of the soul to regain its original position. According to the *Aristotelian solution* which is more acceptable the soul and the body are two incomplete substances (like matter and form; or potency and act) and together compose a single complete substance, human being, who is essentially soul and body. By itself soul is not a person, but only together with the body. The substantial union between the two constitutive elements is caused by the single act of being, that of the soul, which also maintains the being of the body.

2. The soul is called the act of the body because the body by itself is not a complete substance as it does not have its own act of being. All its perfection is drawn from the soul. The soul unites itself to the body as its form since it perfects or actualizes the body and makes it into a human species. The soul therefore can be called the act of the body, precisely because it confers a

perfection, a specific determination to the body. It deserves the title of act because it communicates the act of being to the body where the soul has a priority in the order of existence.

### **Answers to Check Your Progress III**

1. Dualistic anthropology holds for the belief that humans are composed of body and soul. Leaving aside the question of how they relate to each other (essentially distinct yet the soul perfects the body); often dualistic anthropology give greater importance to soul and the body is seen just as an appendage not having much importance for the soul. One had to denounce the “body” and live a life of contemplation. The traditional Christian spirituality as well as some schools of Indian thought propagated this belief. Considering human person as an embodied being there is much progress in our understanding today. There is a wonderful exchange between the soul and the body as both help to enhance the perfection of a single being. Our inner self often communicates through the sacramentality of the body. Even by looking at the face of another person we know what s/he is going through at that moment. We must give due importance to body in our effort to grow spiritually.

2. Going by the Hindu tradition, it's a privileged gift to be born as a human being. Keeping aside the negative treatment accorded to our bodies as ‘prison houses’; being embodied has its own merit. While we favour Plato's view for safeguarding the essence human nature as primarily a soul; Aristotle's view too is valid, i.e., we are substantial beings. To use a better expressions, we are ‘beings-in-the-world’ (Heidegger) or ‘spirit in the world’ (Karl Rahner). As embodied beings we are rooted in the world and are called upon to be engaged in the affairs of the world. The world becomes a ‘theological event’ for God to act through us. Marx was right in saying that our human nature finds expression in the projects we undertake. John Paul II offers a theological reflection to understand the significance of our bodies by citing Christ's own incarnation, death and the resurrection event which offers a hope to our own resurrection after death. Even in our day to day experience, we communicate our inner expressions using bodily gestures or symbols or gifts. According to Desbruslais our embodiedness must enter into the relationship, otherwise our personhood would experience an un-ignorable element of frustration. In his study of

perception, Merleau-Ponty was led to recognize that our bodies are not mere objects of science but a permanent condition for experience. Our bodies are a correlate for the external world as well as our internal domain. Gabriel Marcel as well as Emmanuel Levinas too in their philosophies expounded the beauty of our embodied nature that reveals our subjectivity as well as the face of the Other.



## UNIT 2 HUMAN PERSON AS A SPIRITUAL BEING

### Contents

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Human Being as Living Being
- 2.3 Human Being as Spiritual
- 2.4 Existence and Nature of Human Soul
- 2.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.6 Key Words
- 2.7 Further Readings and References
- 2.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

We live in a world of scientific advancement, a world in which everything is measured through the mirror of science. We have even reached a stage to create human beings outside the womb with the advancement of science. As result human beings, their life is seen as an object or mixture of some molecular compounds. But the truth is human or neither merely living beings made of some molecular organisms nor merely a rational or sensitive being human are also spiritual. There is in them an inbuilt spiritual mechanism. So the main objective of this unit is to discover that spiritual mechanism and open new avenues of meaning to human life as such.

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

‘Know thyself’ is a fundamental philosophical quest. It is a quest for meaning of life. This philosophical tradition insisted that the unexamined life is not worth living. In turn who am I? Where did I come from, what is the purpose and meaning of my life, what are my relations to the nature, community and God were some of the perennial fundamental questions raised by human person. Shakespeare in his work Hamlet speaks this way,  
What is a piece of work is man how noble is reason! How infinite in faculty!

In form, in moving how express and admirable!

In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god!

The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals!

And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust? Hamlet (1601) act 2, Sc. 2, 1. 316

Even the Indian classical traditions identified *atmavidya* with *atmasaksthkara* – knowing is becoming. Hence human person is indeed a source of wonder and question.

But down through the centuries this typical nature of wonder was not merely an outward looking which directed its attention more to the world surrounding man than to man himself rather it enabled human person in philosophical traditions to discover the truths/mysteries of himself. That he is the centre and crown of creation, the point where the whole of reality converges, in whom the whole of existence turns into a subject, becomes logos and gets transformed into self transparency and self consciousness. That is why the progress of philosophy is expressed above all in the anthropocentric orientation. Anthropocentrism is more important than any scientific theory about physical nature. Philosophical thought cannot remain outside of this universal movement. Therefore in this unit one of our primary concerns is not only to show human person as a living person, a rational being, a sensitive being, having the operative faculties of intellect and will but to show how through them that there is a immaterial or spiritual functioning in the operative system which in turn presupposes an one ego principle the soul. Hence this way of studying human person brings us to a foundation that Humans are spiritual.

## 2.2 HUMAN BEING AS LIVING BEING

### Concept of life

Most people are unable to give a satisfactory answer to this question, what is life? although the ordinary person can always distinguish a living being from a non living being. The nature of life is mysterious; its effects or manifestations are familiar to all. It is by a study of these manifestations that we try to discover the nature of life itself. From the visible effects we go back to the invisible cause, from the accidents to the nature.

The most usual criterion of life is movement, in particular self-movement. In other words life is the capacity for self-movement. That is why in philosophical language we define life as that which makes a being naturally capable of self –perfective immanent activity. This is the great

difference between living and non-living being. Human beings as the living beings possess immanent activities. An immanent activity is one whose effects remain within the subject which acts. For example the thinking starts in me and its effects remain in me thinking is an immanent activity; so are growing, seeing, willing etc. Whereas, all the activities of the non-living beings are purely transitive. A transitive activity is one whose effects pass into another being. When I throw a ball the effects are passed on to the ball.

### **Origin of life**

**Spontaneous Generation:** Ancients held the view that a certain number of living being spontaneously originated from inorganic matter. However today it is generally held that in the present state of earth every living being derives from a living being. By this we do not claim that matter – that is, mineral substances – had no share in the first production of life. However, we do deny that the first living beings were produced by matter and chance alone, by the mere instrumentality of the physico-chemical factors at work in the inorganic world. For an effect can never be superior in perfection to its total cause. But if inorganic matter should, by its own forces, produce life, the effect would be superior in perfection to the cause. Therefore, by itself alone, inorganic matter cannot produce any living being, and spontaneous generation, in the sense of absolute emergence, appears impossible.

**Scientists:** They agree that life did not always exist on our earth. They estimate that it began about a billion year ago. According to chemical evolution the earth's early atmosphere had large quantities of hydrogen containing compounds like ammonia, methane and water. Energy from such sources as sunlight, lightning and volcanoes produced reactions among these compounds and they produced simple biological molecules combined and formed more complex molecules. These complex molecules became organized into the first living organisms.

**Evolution Theories:** The theories of evolution especially the pioneering research by Lamarck, Darwin and De Vries shows that the various living species in existence today are the result of a long process of gradual change governed by a few basic rules such a natural selection and environmentally induce mutation.



**Religion:** Religion generally traces the origin of life to the creative power of God/gods. According to Rig Veda everything originated as a result of the sacrifice of the Purusa (Rv .X. 90). Bible claims that God directly created everything out of nothing (gen1). Having briefed the concept of life and its origin in human persons now let us study how a human person works in pursuit of knowledge or how does one operative himself in the process of knowing.

**Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer  
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) What is the distinguished character of human beings as living beings?

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2) Spontaneous generation, in the sense of absolute emergence, appears impossible, why?

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**2.3 HUMAN BEINGS AS SPIRITUAL**

In the study of human beings one cannot be merely satisfied with the saying that human is a living being, made up of some organic components, having a rational appetite etc., The philosophical investigation into the knowledge process of human discover to us the realm of spiritual functioning in the operative dimensions of human persons. Hence he or she is spiritual in nature and in its essence and function. To discover this truth let us turn to the operative functions in human beings

**Operative Dimensions of Human Beings**

## **Sense Knowledge**

It is that which is obtained through senses. Not all organisms have the same number of senses. Unicellular living beings possess only the sense of touch, while the higher mammals and humans are endowed with a great variety of senses. Traditionally they have been enumerated as the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. These senses examine material objects in their singularity and provide us with knowledge about particular and individual thing.

### **Content of sense knowledge**

Our senses know their objects only insofar as they affect us, not as they are in themselves. Our intelligence knows them, at least to some extent, noumenally, as they are in themselves independent of our knowledge of them. In ordinary mental activity the senses and the intelligence always work together. The intellect gives us universal and abstract knowledge which we apply to individual objects by means of our senses. In addition to external senses we can also speak of the internal senses, which are not directly in contact with external reality but refer to it indirectly, through the agency of the external senses. There are four internal senses: the Central sense, Imagination, Memory and the Estimative power. Whether these senses are really distinct, or only four aspects of one power, is undecided.

### **Central Sense (Common Sense):**

It is where all the data of the external senses are collected and integrated. Three main functions are generally ascribed to the central sense: first it makes the animal and human on the sense level aware of the activity and the objects of its external senses. Second the central sense distinguishes between the different sensations deriving from the various senses. And finally the central sense integrates the data of the external senses and refers them to their common object.

### **Memory and Imagination**

Memory is the function which retains, reproduces and recognizes the representations of objects formerly perceived. It represents to the consciousness data obtained in the past, conserving their

temporal connotation. It is the faculty of the past. Imagination concerns the data gathered by the common sense and reproduces it even when the objects are absent. It can also reassemble them in a manner different from how they are found in reality. There are three different kinds of memory - motor memory, mental memory and pure memory. Motor memory is the memory of the living body in motion. Walking, talking, writing, reading, using tools are different manifestations of motor memory. Mental memory stores its acquisitions in the form of knowledge, consisting in memory images, ideas, judgments or conclusions. This kind of memory frequently operates in conjunction with motor memory. Pure memory is the result of the spontaneous inscription in our mind of some event we have experienced. This kind of memory just “remembers,” whereas motor memory “learns how to” and mental memory “memorizes.”

### **Estimative Power**

Human also possesses an estimative power. That power involves some kind of judgment, but a judgment which uses no ideas, which is singular, concrete and pragmatic. In human this power is called the cognitive power. Its scope is wider than that of the estimative power in animals. The cognitive power in human is the bridge between the intellect and the senses. It is, so to speak, the extension of human’s spiritual powers into the field of sense knowledge. The phantasm, human’s highest form of sense knowledge, is formed in the cogitative power under the unconscious guidance of the agent intellect. By means of this power human applies one’s abstract concepts and universal judgments to the concrete objects and individual situations of experience. This in turn gives a scope for spiritual function in human person.

### **Co-operation between External and Internal Senses**

Every act of knowledge supposes the unification of its raw data. What kind of unification must the subject impose upon the form which is passively received in the sense faculty? The unification is a unification of space performed by means of time. But time itself needs unification. Time will be unified only if each passing moment is not entirely lost but persists somehow in you. This is the function of memory, which retains something of every moment of

the past. So time, which unified space, is itself unified by memory. Therefore every sensation or perception supposes the co-operation of memory. The external senses suppose the continual co-operation of the internal senses.

### **Human Intelligence**

Human is both an animal and a spirit. As an animal one possesses a cognitive function which makes one able to adapt oneself to new circumstances and to learn from experience. As a spirit one is endowed with a cognitive function akin to the angelic intellect, which makes one capable of reflecting on one's own intellectual activity and of being conscious of oneself as a subject. Human intelligence is neither of these two functions but may be considered a combination of both. In human intelligence the material element is represented by the power of learning from experience, whereas the formal element consists in the purely spiritual function of self-reflection. Because of its formal element, human intelligence is totally different from its animal counterpart. Human is capable of formally knowing universals and relations, while the animal discovers them only materially if at all. Thinking is the typical activity of human intelligence. The senses perceive, memory recalls, imagination pictures objects before the mind; intelligence alone thinks. How does this entire process work and what exact is the nature of our human intellect?

Our intellect is not material in the way a stone is material; it cannot be seen or touched or photographed like a stone. Our intellect is immaterial: this means, it is intrinsically independent of matter. The brain is that portion of matter which has the closest relation to the operations of our intellect. We claim, therefore, that our intellect is not intrinsically dependent on our brain, that our brain is not a cause of the operations of our intellect, that it does not think. Since we cannot study our intellect directly, we must turn to its internal operations and show that they are immaterial. For, *as a being is, so it acts*. If the operations of our intellect are immaterial, their cause, our intellect, must likewise be immaterial.

### **Operations of the intellect: idea, judgment and reflection.**

In order to understand the spiritual operations of the intellect better one need to compare it with those of the senses, both external and internal, and show that there is a radical difference between them and also reasons for difference.

**Ideas:** Sensations are always of single objects or single groups of objects. I see *this* cat, I hear *this* plane, I touch *this* table, I see *this* crowd. Images likewise always refer to a single object or group of objects. I cannot imagine a tree which is at the same time a coconut tree and a teak, big and small, with leaves and without leaves. The clearer my image is, the better I realize that it applies only to one individual object or group of objects. My ideas, on the other hand, are universal. They apply to each and every individual of a species. Not only are my ideas universal, I am also aware of their universality. Hence there is an essential difference between sensations and images, on one hand, and ideas, on the other hand. The root difference is in the materiality of my senses as opposed to the immateriality of my intellect. Therefore my ideas are not intrinsically dependent on matter and my intellect, which produces them, is strictly immaterial or spiritual.

**Judgments:** Judgment is the center of human's knowledge by which one affirms or denies something of something. When human knows an object, one does so in a judgment. The judgment becomes evident as soon as we consider the dynamism, the movement, the activity, the striving of our intelligence. But a concept as such is a static representation. It cannot be the foundation of our intellectual life, that the foundation must consist in some activity. The judgment, the affirmation, is such an activity. Sensations and images are always of contingent objects or actions. That means that the objects which I perceive or imagine do exist, but do not exist necessarily; they might also not exist. But in all judgments there is an element of necessity. Even a judgment referring to a contingent event contains a core of absolute necessity. Even here the radical difference between them emerges from the materiality of sensation and imagination, as opposed to the immateriality of the judgment. Therefore the judgments produced by my intellect are not intrinsically dependent on matter, and my intellect itself is strictly immaterial or spiritual.

**Reflection:** One of the most remarkable properties of my intellect is its power of reflecting perfectly on its own activity. I think that I think, I am aware of being aware, I am conscious of being conscious. The intellect not only performs an activity, but it knows that activity while it is going on. The senses too possess the factor of reflection but it is of no perfect self-reflection. My eye sees, but it does not see that it sees. My imagination imagines, but it does not imagine its own imagining. But one can see a kind of imperfect reflection in central senses whereas the intellect is capable of more perfect self-reflection. Even here the difference is based upon the



materiality of the senses, as opposed to the immateriality of the intellect. But question here is what are we speaking about when we say immateriality of the intellect? Does the process of knowing needs no support of matter? Or What is the relationship of senses in the process of intellect? These would be some radical question that will enable us to understand the process of intellect better.

### **Senses and intellect**

No process of the intellect can ultimately deny the possibility of the role of sense the perception with the corresponding images provides an intelligible expression, an affirmed concept or idea. Without an image no impression will be formed in the intellect. As the picture becomes visible only when the beam of light, having passed through the film, hits the screen, so the impression becomes conscious, is transformed into an idea, only when in actual contact with the image it is actively impressed upon the possible intellect. This explains why we can become aware of our ideas only by turning to the corresponding image. However the intellect, on the other hand, although needs the collaboration of the senses, transcends the domain of the senses and can reach supra-sensory reality. It is capable of complete self-reflection. The point of view of the intellect is not relative, but absolute because it is the point of view of a spirit.

### **Human Will: Existence and nature**

The existence of sense appetite, of the many drives by which human strives towards pleasure and away from pain, is strongly emphasized by modern psychologists. But quite a number of them deny that human has a rational appetite, a will, essentially different from and superior to the sense drives. Others admit the existence of the will but deny its freedom. Therefore, in this section, we will demonstrate the existence of the will and existence of the will is really demonstrated only when we have established that human's highest tendency is freedom.

The philosophical demonstration of will is rather simple. It rests on the supposition that if human possesses an immaterial cognitive faculty, one must also possess an immaterial appetitive faculty. An empirical confirmation of this philosophical argument is derived from everyday experience. Every act of real self-control is an implicit manifestation of the will. In such an act we are conscious of the fact that some tendency in us is held in check by a higher tendency. That higher tendency is the will. As the intellect knows that it knows, the rational appetite wills its own willing. It can move itself, it can command itself to will and also command other faculties to perform their actions. It commands the intellect to think, the memory to remember, the eye to



see and the leg to move. We must remember that the intellect and the will are not distinct autonomous realities but only distinct power of one undivided autonomous reality which is the human being.

### **Argument for the Freedom of the Will**

Against the determinists who say that every human action is a definite and determined. There were some who argued for the freedom of will. We shall consider four arguments, which may be called: (1) the argument from common consent, (2) the psychological argument, (3) the ethical argument, (4) the philosophical argument.

**Argument from Common Consent.** The great majority of humans believe that their will is free. This conviction is of the utmost practical importance for the whole of human life. Therefore, if there is order in the world, the majority of humankind cannot be wrong in this belief. Hence the will is free.

**Psychological Argument.** We have said that most people naturally hold that the will is free. Why do they cling to that conviction? Because they are directly and indirectly aware of the freedom of their own decisions. They are directly aware of their freedom in the very act of making a free decision; they are indirectly aware of it because of the many instances of behaviour which can only be explained by admitting the freedom of the will.

**Ethical Argument** If there is no freedom, there is no real responsibility, no virtue, no merit, no moral obligation, no duty, no morality.

**Philosophical Argument:** Every kind of knowledge evokes a corresponding kind of striving as my knowledge is always knowledge of (after) 'something'. In knowledge my mind freely tends or strives towards the object of my knowledge. This follows from the fact that knowledge and striving are the two fundamental immaterial functions or aspects of a rational being.

### **Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

- 1) Explain - Estimative power as the extension of human spiritual power

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2) What is the function of Brain in Human intelligence?  
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3) Briefly explain the relationship between the Senses and the Intellect  
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4) Is human Will Free, Explain?  
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## **2.4 EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF HUMAN SOUL**

### **Existence of the Soul**

In the preceding sections we have demonstrated that human possesses an immaterial intellect and a free will. The intellect is not human, nor is the will: both are powers through which human operates. Technically we call them faculties (accidents) – that, the immediate principles of mental operations. Since these faculties are not the person self, they must exist in the person. But since they are immaterial, they cannot exist in the person's body, which is material. Hence

there must be in the human person, besides one's body, some other component in which one's spiritual faculties inhere. We call this component the soul. Therefore our first provisional definition of the soul might be: that component of human in which the intellect and the will inhere; or, that component which manifests itself in human's thinking and willing.

## **Nature of the Soul**

### **Human Soul is Spiritual /immaterial**

Spiritual means intrinsically independent of matter. A being is spiritual if it does not require matter as co-cause of its operations and of its existence. But we have demonstrated that the intellect and the will, through which the soul acts, are intrinsically independent of matter. But as a being is, so it acts. Therefore the human soul is also intrinsically independent of matter, it is spiritual.

### **Human Soul is Simple**

The human soul is simple in the sense that it is not composed of matter. There are no substance and accidents in the soul. Being immaterial, human soul is not only undivided but also indivisible. The human soul is not only a substance that which exists in itself but also a subsistence. Because it exists by itself. Human body and other material things are not the substratum that supports and sustains the human soul in existence.

### **Human Soul is Immortal**

Immortal means not subject to death or to destruction, destined to exist forever. A being's essence can be destroyed directly by decomposition, indirectly by loss of essential support. A being's existence is destroyed by annihilation. The human soul cannot be destroyed by *decomposition*. Only composite, or material, beings can be decomposed. The human soul cannot also be destroyed by *loss of essential support*. There is loss of essential support when a being which is intrinsically dependent on matter for its operations and for its existence loses the support of that matter. For our soul is not intrinsically dependent on matter for its specific

operations. Therefore it cannot be destroyed by loss of essential support. The third way in which a being can be destroyed is by *annihilation*. Since God creates the soul as a being destined to exist forever. His will is immutable. Therefore He does not annihilate a being which he creates as a being destined to exist forever. Therefore human soul is immortal.

### Check Your Progress III

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) Define - Human Soul

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2) Human soul is spiritual – Explain

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### 2.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, ‘Human person as spiritual’ we have tried to establish the view that if our operations are spiritual then our faculties are also spiritual, if the faculties are spiritual then the one ego principle the soul is also spiritual and if the soul is spiritual, the human need to be spiritual. This term spiritual here refers to immaterial, whether completely immaterial, without even extrinsic dependence on matter, or incompletely, with some extrinsic dependence on matter. In the first case we have a pure spirit and in the second a spirit in matter. This discovery of the spiritual nature is very vital for human existence, for it opens the horizons of self-knowledge, self-volition, self-consciousness and self-position. It is the Ego or I the prime focus of

anthropological foundation. This spiritual nature keeps human moving beyond finite objects and quest for truth and goodness. This power of transcendence is what adds new meaning and opens new avenues to the reality of life as humans.

## 2.6 KEY WORDS

**Anthropocentrism**- Person Centered

**Immanent**- effects remain within the subject which acts.

**Simple** - not composed of matter, not divided

## 2.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## 2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

### Answers to Check Your Progress I

In philosophical language we define life as that which makes a being naturally capable of self – perfective immanent activity. This is the great difference between living and non-living being. Human beings as the living beings possess immanent activities. An immanent activity is one whose effects remain within the subject which acts. For example the thinking starts in me and its effects remain in me. Thinking is an immanent activity; so are growing, seeing, willing etc.

Ancients held the view that a certain number of living being spontaneously originated from inorganic matter. However today it is generally held that in the present state of earth every living being derives from a living being. By this we do not claim that matter – that is, mineral substances – had no share in the first production of life. For an effect can never be superior in

perfection to its total cause. But if inorganic matter should, by its own forces, produce life, the effect would be superior in perfection to the cause. Therefore, by itself alone, inorganic matter cannot produce any living being, and spontaneous generation, in the sense of absolute emergence, appears impossible.

### **Answers to Check Your Progress II**

Human also possesses an estimative power. In human this power is called the cognitive power. In human is the bridge between the intellect and the senses. It is, so to speak, the extension of human's spiritual powers into the field of sense knowledge. The phantasm, human's highest form of sense knowledge, is formed in the cogitative power under the unconscious guidance of the agent intellect. By means of this power human applies one's abstract concepts and universal judgments to the concrete objects and individual situations of experience. This in turn gives a scope for spiritual function in human person.

The brain is that portion of matter which has the closest relation to the operations of our intellect. We claim, therefore, that our intellect is not intrinsically dependent on our brain, that our brain is not a cause of the operations of our intellect that it does not think.

No process of the intellect can ultimately deny the possibility of the role of sense the perception with the corresponding images provides an intelligible expression, an affirmed concept or idea. Without an image no impression will be formed in the intellect. As the picture becomes visible only when the beam of light, having passed through the film, hits the screen, so the impression becomes conscious, is transformed into an idea, only when in actual contact with the image it is actively impressed upon the possible intellect. This explains why we can become aware of our ideas only by turning to the corresponding image. But when my intelligence carrying an impression, in its connection with the lower term of the relation, the multiplicity of the senses, I call it the understanding. When I consider my intelligence, carrying the impression, in its connection with the higher term of the relation, the unity of Being, I call it the intellect. Both understanding and intellect are aspects of the selfsame human intelligence.

Free will is the ability of the will, all conditions for action being present, to decide whether to act or not to act and whether to act in this manner or in that manner. Freedom (in the widest sense) is absence of external coercion or force; (in the narrow sense) it is the will which is free from



intrinsic necessity or determination in at least some of its acts, i.e., will is capable of choice when all the conditions for acting are present. Therefore human will is free but it does not mean that will is free in every respect.

### **Answers to Check your Progress III**

1. Since the faculties are not the person self, they must exist in the person. But since they are immaterial, they cannot exist in the person's body, which is material. Hence there must be in the human person, besides one's body, some other component in which one's spiritual faculties inhere. We call this component the soul. Therefore our first provisional definition of the soul might be: that component of human in which the intellect and the will inhere; or, that component which manifests itself in human's thinking and willing

2. Spiritual means intrinsically independent of matter. A being is spiritual if it does not require matter as co-cause of its operations and of its existence. But we have demonstrated that the intellect and the will, through which the soul acts, are intrinsically independent of matter. But as a being is, so it acts. Therefore the human soul is also intrinsically independent of matter, it is spiritual.

## UNIT 3

## HUMAN INTELLECT AND KNOWING

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

Human beings have a life entirely different from plants and animals. Human beings think, reflect, reason, affirm and deny. They acquire knowledge, possess ideas and manifest capacity for understating. They have sense knowledge, ability for imagination. They can recall things and state of consciousness of the past. They continually search for truth. They have the power of self-consciousness. These are typically human acts. How do we explain these mysterious phenomena? In this unit we shall answer some of these questions:

By analysing the nature of the human intellect and the phenomenon of human knowledge.  
By examining the meaning of human intellect, its object and specific operations.

By exploring the nature of human knowledge with special reference to sense knowledge and intellectual knowledge, the kind of relationship that exists between the senses and the intellect, and a note on the relationship between intellect and will.

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The intellect is a faculty which by its very nature strives actively towards truth or knowledge or intelligibility. We are aware of this striving in our intellectual operations. This striving is a natural appetite of the intellect.

The human intellect is an immaterial or spiritual cognitive faculty. A faculty is that by means of which human beings perform mental or conscious activities, and a mental faculty is concerned with the mental operations. Immaterial or spiritual signifies something which is not intrinsically dependent of matter, not requiring matter as an auxiliary cause for its existence or for its operation. Since thinking is an immaterial or spiritual operation, the faculty by means of which it occurs is the intellect and is itself immaterial.

### 3.2 EXISTENCE OF THE INTELLECT

Some philosophers, usually materialists, sensists and positivists deny that human beings possess immaterial knowledge that is essentially different from sense knowledge. Hence they deny the existence of the intellect. According to them, human brain is required for thinking, since any serious impairment of the brain makes thought impossible. Against this view we maintain that brain is a necessary *condition* not a cause of thinking. A necessary condition is one that enables a cause to produce its effect, without actually contributing towards the product itself.

#### *Proof from acts of judgement*

The human brain is not a cause of thinking can be proved through the metaphysical principle “as a being so it acts” (*agere sequitur esse*). Since the brain is a material substance, concrete, visible, tangible, singular, existing in space and time, contingent and not necessary, its effects also must exhibit these characteristics.

Human beings make judgements and they contain ideas. Ideas are products of the intellect and they are universal, not limited to space and time, not extended, not concrete. Every ordinary

judgement of the intellect also contains elements of necessity, true at all times, and in all places. For example, “whatever is, is”; “everything that comes to be has a cause”; “two plus two make four”, etc. These require a power that is beyond time and space and free from the contingency of matter. This immaterial, spiritual power is called intellect.

*Proof from acts of reflection*

Human beings are capable of reflection. When a human person knows, he or she is also aware that he or she knows. In this ‘awareness of being aware’ the subject and object coincide (that is, the thinker and the thought are the same). This cannot occur in purely material beings. The human self-presence or act of reflection or self-consciousness is a proof that human beings possess an immaterial, spiritual power of thinking called the intellect.

*Human intellect is intrinsically independent of matter*

We have already seen above that every being acts according to its nature (‘as a being so it acts’). Accordingly, the intellect must also act according to its nature. The operations of the intellect are: formation of ideas, judgement and reasoning. These operations are immaterial. Hence the intellect is immaterial. Our intellect is not intrinsically dependent on matter (brain). Brain is not the cause of the operations of the intellect. Brain does not think though it is in close relation to the operations of the intellect. Animal knowledge is material and there is an essential difference between this kind of knowledge and human knowledge.

*Human intellect is extrinsically dependent on matter*

Although the human intellect is not intrinsically dependent on the brain, it is extrinsically dependent on it. Without the brain in good condition, our intellect in ordinary circumstances cannot produce its operations. It can be proved in the following way:

If there is a serious impairment of the brain, either by some accident or intoxication, intellectual operations are difficult or impossible. Every idea of ours is accompanied by an image. But this image is a product of the senses intrinsically dependent on matter.

Every human operation is the action of a being composed of form and matter. Therefore, no human operation is possible without some co-operation of matter. Hence we admit an extrinsic dependence of our intellect on matter for its operations.

*Truth as the formal object of the intellect*

The object of the intellect here refers to what it can know. The proper object of the intellect refers to the things it knows naturally and easily. Thus the proper material object of the intellect

comprises of all objects that can be perceived by the senses. But the formal object of the intellect is the “quiddity” or “whatness” of the material objects. The intellect knows beings from the point of view of their truth or intelligibility. Thus the adequate *material object* of the intellect is *being* and its adequate *formal object* is *truth* or intelligibility. But because of the dynamism of the intellect, its scope extends beyond the realm of mere material things. The total or adequate object of the intellect is being in all its extension, whether material or immaterial.

#### *Intellect forms ideas through abstraction*

The process of intellectual knowledge proceeds as follows: the information gathered regarding an object by the senses is brought together in the image (also called phantasm). This image is singular, individual, concrete and material (eg. this individual tree, with its individuating features: small, dark, a mango tree with leaves,, etc). From this individual representation we pass to a universal, general idea by means of *abstraction*, which is an activity of the intellect. The intellect in abstracting drops the individuating concrete features contained in the image (eg. dark, small, the fact that this happens to be a mango tree, with leaves, standing here and now, etc) and retains only the universal idea or concept (eg. ‘treeness’ of the tree). Ideas (concepts) thus formed are central to intellectual knowledge.

#### *Intellect is capable of perfect reflection*

Intellect has the capacity of reflecting on its own activity (eg. ‘I think that I think’, ‘I am aware of my awareness’). The intellect not only performs an activity but it *knows* that activity while it is going on. The senses possess no perfect self-reflection. My eyes see but they are not aware that they see. No external sense is aware of its own activity. The central sense (common sense) is not aware of the activity of the external senses.

Since the intellect is capable of perfect self-reflection whereas none of the senses is, there is an essential difference between the sense and the intellect. This difference is based on the materiality of the senses as opposed to the immateriality of the intellect. Perfect self-reflection means self-consciousness, a very high quality of consciousness. But consciousness is opposed to matter, and self-consciousness excludes any intrinsic dependence on matter.

#### *Dynamism of the human intellect*

Human intellect is a dynamic faculty, that is, a faculty which strives actively towards its object, towards knowledge, truth and intelligibility. We are aware of that striving in each of our intellectual operations. That striving is not an elicited but a *natural* appetite, that is, an appetite

which is not preceded by knowledge. Every act of knowledge is a passage from potency to act, a real movement. And every real movement has an end.

But no knowledge of this or that particular thing or any collection of particular beings can satisfy the human intellect. The striving of our intellect goes beyond them both extensively and intensively, extensively because we want to know *many more beings*; intensively because we want to know in a *more perfect manner* the beings which we do know. A human person therefore strives, albeit unconsciously, for the knowledge of a reality without any restriction or limitation. In other words, the intellect strives towards knowledge of the unlimited being. The nature of the striving of the intellect is therefore infinite. Nothing can satisfy it except infinite knowledge or infinite truth. Such knowledge is of the infinite being, which we call God or Brahman or whatever else we may conceive as the infinite and ultimate reality. It may be recalled that Joseph Marechal (1878-1944) was a philosopher who tried to prove the existence of God from the dynamism of the human intellect.

### 3.3 HUMAN KNOWING

Knowledge is one of the greatest mysteries confronting the human mind. Knowledge seems to come in many varieties: we know people, places and things. We know how to perform a task, we know facts. The phenomenon of knowledge is so common. It is so continually with us but we do not realise how mysterious it is.

Indian philosophy uses several terms for 'knowledge' such as *vidya* (learning or science), *jnana* (meditative or contemplative knowledge), *prajna* (spiritual understanding or wisdom) and *samjna* (clear comprehension or intellectual grasp, in some contexts innate awareness).

In Indian philosophy knowledge is not treated merely as an epistemological factor but as a basic element in the path to salvation or liberation for knowledge can break the cycles of *samsara* (birth-death-rebirth). The essence of true knowledge is therefore knowledge of the eternal. The Upanishads, Samkhya, Nyaya, Advaita Vedanta of Sankara and Buddhism are typical examples of systems of thought that present knowledge as the way to ultimate liberation (*moksa, nirvana*).

#### *Meaning of human knowing*

Human knowing may be described as *acts of apprehending* or seizing a certain something so that that 'certain something' is present to the subject apprehending it.



Knowing is an *immanent action*, more perfectly immanent than nutrition, growth and reproduction. It begins and ends within us. Often the objects of our knowledge are things outside us. But only when they are interiorised we have knowledge. By knowing an object we become in a certain sense that object, that is, we identify ourselves with the thing known.

Knowledge is fundamentally in our *consciousness*. To be conscious means to identify oneself with oneself. For example, I say, "I am" only when I am conscious of myself and I will myself. Hence to know means to *identify oneself with the thing known* by overcoming the subject-object duality.

Only with animals that we begin to speak of knowledge. Animals know objects, but they are not aware that they are knowing. They are not capable of reflection or self-knowledge. But in human beings there is real knowledge because they are capable of self-reflection.

#### *Different kinds of human knowledge*

Human knowing is a complex operation. We acquire various types of knowledge which nevertheless can fundamentally be reduced to two: *sensitive knowledge* which human beings have in common with animals, and *intellectual knowledge*, which is specifically human. In human beings the two types of knowledge are not water-tight compartments or two separate planes, but they are closely bound together and so the functioning of the intellectual plane is strongly conditioned by the functioning of the sensitive plane and vice versa.

#### *Sense Knowledge*

Human knowledge has its origin in direct perception of material sensible realities. It is difficult to give a clear definition of sensation or perception. It can be described as the most elementary cognitive reaction of an organism to a simple stimulus. A sensation presupposes the interaction of some stimulus with a specialised part of the organism. This specialised part is called sense organ.

#### *External senses*

Sense knowledge is that which is obtained through the senses. Traditionally the sense organs of human beings are considered as five: eye = sight (visual), ear = hearing (auditory), nose = smell (olfactory), tongue = taste (gustatory), skin = touch (tactile). They are called external senses because the organs by means of which their action develop are found on the external surface of the body. Sense knowledge examines material things in their singularity, both as object taken as a whole or as a part. Human beings do not experience pure sensation. It is always connected with

an object located in space and time. For example, red colour with something which is red, sound with sound of something. The characteristics of sensation are: *quality* which helps us to distinguish one category of sensation from all others, *intensity* and *duration* both of which help clarity.

Indian philosophy uses the term *indriya* for the organs of sense by means of which we have direct perception of the world around us. The above said five senses are called *jnanendriya* ('knowing agents'). Some schools of Indian philosophy also speak of a sixth sense, namely, *manas* (mind) which is the seat of images.

#### *Internal senses*

Human beings are gifted with four internal senses: common sense (central sense), fantasy (imagination), memory and instinct (estimative power). The internal senses are senses which are not directly in contact with external reality, but refer to it indirectly.

Common sense (*sensus communis*) is the mental power which gathers, compares, distinguishes and synthesizes the objects and operations presented by the active external sense. It is also called central sense. Common sense helps one to distinguish between different sensations. For example, black from white, sweet from bitter. The result of the activity of the common sense is the image (phantasm). The image completes the knowledge of the thing at the sensory level. It is the final product of sensorial knowledge. The intellect forms its ideas by turning its attention upon the image. By means of abstraction the intellect grasps the essential elements of the thing represented in the image, leaving aside the individualizing material determinations. The result of the abstractive process is the idea or concept.

The fantasy conserves the data gathered by the common senses and reproduces them in a manner different from how they are found in reality (i.e. breaks up the images and reassembles them, for example, a centaur). This faculty is also called imagination. Memory is the faculty of recollection or remembrance. It is the power to recall past objects and states of consciousness and recognise them as having been present in former experiences (eg. image of my teacher as I saw her on the first day of class in college). The instinct or estimative power is the capacity to perceive something useful, harmful, painful, or pleasurable to the species. For example, a rat evades a cat. This power involves some kind of judgement, but a judgement which uses no ideas.

The rat does not know that cats in general are dangerous. Human beings also possess estimative power, but it is called cognitive power.

#### *Value of sense knowledge*

Human sensation is something which is intrinsically dependent on matter in as much as it is intrinsically depend on the brain, the nerves and sense organs. Sensation gives pragmatic certitude. Hence some philosophers such as Carvacas, hedonists, Epicureans, Buddhists and the empiricists and positivists in general have exaggerated its importance. The Buddhists who are radical empiricists speak of extrasensory perception also as a valid source of knowledge. Sensation is neither subjective nor objective but *relative*. Through sensation we know things *as they affect us*. Thus sensation is relative. If our senses are altered, reality would be different to us. For example, in the case of colour-blind people. This means that our senses alone will not provide certitude but senses in conjunction with the intellect.

Human intellect is 'present' in the senses animating them throughout the sense experience. Hence human sense knowledge without the intellect is impossible to conceive. In other words, there is a combination of sensorial knowledge and intellectual knowledge in each instance of perception.

#### *Intellectual knowledge*

The second form of knowledge in human beings is intellectual knowledge. It is also a complex process.

#### *Clarification of some basic concepts*

When we study human intellect and human knowing we come across a number of key concepts. Clear distinction between them is necessary in order to understand the complexities of human knowledge and to avoid possible confusion of terms. Some of the important concepts are the following:

#### *Mind*

Mind is often taken as a vague, general term which includes all human cognitive powers but the senses.

#### *Intellect*

Intellect when used technically refers to the immaterial faculty in human beings, which is responsible for abstraction and possesses the natural striving towards infinite knowledge or truth.

### *Intellection*

Intellection is universally recognised as comprising three distinct *processes*: formation of ideas or concepts, judgements and inferences.

Concept or *idea* is the intellectual representation of a thing. It represents what a thing is. Animals have therefore no idea or concept because they have no intellect.

*Judgement* is the pronouncement of agreement or disagreement between two ideas. Judgement is the first act of the intellect by which we affirm or deny something about a reality.

*Inference* is the reasoning process in which from the truths known, we conclude to a truth previously unknown.

### *Intelligence*

Intelligence means the *power of learning* from experience or the ability to adapt to new circumstances. Intelligence is opposed to instinct (a type of inborn knowledge that excludes learning). Taken in this sense intelligence is present not only in human beings but also in animals (“animal intelligence”) is current in psychological literature.

### *Intellectualism*

Intellectualism generally designates a philosophical or theological system in which intellect is accorded primacy as opposed to will. It is also applied in pejorative sense mainly by modern thinkers, to refer to philosophers who stress abstract generalisation and rationalisation to the exclusion of subjective and existential concerns.

### *Insight*

Insight is the act by means of which the mind *understands* a certain state of affairs.

### *Understanding*

Understanding is the power of the intellect which perceives the truth and validity of idea and principles on the basis of *direct and immediate* evidence. It develops according to age and education and differs from individual to individual.

### *Formation of ideas is the first operation of the intellect*

Formation of ideas or concepts is the “first” operation of the intellect. Ideas are the centre of human knowledge. The seat of the ideas is the intellect.

But ideas are not inborn in us. Senses have a part in their formation. From the sense knowledge we pass to intellectual knowledge, from image (phantasm) we derive an idea or concept. Image (phantasm) is a terminology used to designate the highest product of the combined senses. It is

material. But an idea is immaterial. Here a problem arises; how do the material senses influence the immaterial intellect? Various answers have been given to this problem, such as the following:

According to empiricism, the intellect receives the ideas from the imagination as the imagination receives its images from the senses, and as the senses receive their sensations from the outside world. This view leads to materialism and if we follow it, we would not know spiritual realities. There are philosophers who say that ideas are inborn in us. This is the solution of Plato (427-347 BC) who claimed that we 'remember' the ideas which we contemplated in a previous existence. According to occasionalism, we receive our ideas directly from God (Nicholas Malebranche, 1638-1715 AD). This idea was defended in a slightly different way by Rene Descartes (1596-1650 AD), G.W. Leibniz (1646-1710 AD) and Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677 AD). God puts ideas directly into our mind. But ordinarily he does not do it. He generally uses secondary causes. Hence everything is an occasion for God to put the corresponding idea in our mind. For example, I receive a prick with a pin and I feel pain. The prick is the occasion for God to put the idea of pain into my mind. If ideas cannot come from senses, if they are not inborn in us and if they are not directly caused by God, they are produced by the intellect itself. As we have already seen, the intellect abstracts the idea from the images. To abstract means to leave out consideration of all that is material, individual, concrete features of the image and keep only the general and universal features. This is the view generally held by most philosophers.

### Check Your Progress I

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

***1. What is the nature of the human intellect?***

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2) How do you show that the human intellect is extrinsically dependent on matter?  
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### 3.4 IDEAS ARE PREDICTABLE OF MANY

When we have an idea we embrace unconsciously but really the whole extent of reality. In other words, ideas have a peculiar quality: they are predictable of many (universal). The first contact with a new object yields a universal idea. It will be an imperfect one, but it is a universal idea nevertheless. For example, “something black”. This is a universal idea. Then I realise that it is a deer. Concepts like, being, beautiful, man, woman, child, dog, house, stone, etc., are applicable to many realities. Hence *all ideas are universal*.

*Ideas are universal yet reality known is individual*

Every reality which actually exists is individual. By the principle of no-contradiction no reality can be at the same time and under the same aspect one and multiple. In other words, in our everyday knowledge we know first the singular, individual, concrete people and objects (eg. concept of ‘human person’ as this man or this woman). But they are known by the whole person, intellect and senses combined. The intellect knows only the intelligible features of the object and they coincide with its substantial form which is the same in all individuals of the same species. Therefore, to know only the *substantial form* of an object is to know only that which the object has in common with other individuals of the same species (eg. ‘treeness’, ‘cowness’ etc.). What distinguishes one individual from another is relation to *quantified matter*. But a spiritual power such as the human intellect cannot directly know quantified matter. Therefore, it does not know that which distinguishes one individual from another. But in our ordinary knowledge we always use *intellect and senses together*. The intellect gives us the universal intelligible features, the senses apply and restrict them to particular individuals.

*Judgement is the Second Operation of the Intellect*



Judgement is the “second” operation of the intellect. To judge means to affirm or deny a thing. Every concept presupposes a judgement since it originates in a judgement. For example, “This is a cow”; “It is not a tree”. Both are judgements. Often what would seem to be a mere concept is actually a simple judgement. Thus judgement is the central point of our intellectual life. There is no consciousness of the object of our intellect until we have an intellectual expression of it. This expression takes the form of judgement and we have knowledge.

*Inference is the third operation of the intellect*

Inference (reasoning) is the “third” operation of the intellect. In order to acquire new knowledge the intellect has recourse to inferred truths using *deduction* and *induction*. These methods are used for reaching evidences and proving that such and is or is not the case. Mathematics (which uses abstract logical forms) and experimental sciences (which use the method of hypothesis and verification through experimentation) also use ‘reason’ in order to acquire new knowledge, though the laws and theories founded on the experimental method cannot be definitely true and unchangeable. Nevertheless, whatever law or theory which is verified is considered as true due to the logical law that necessarily governs the procedure.

### **3.5 LEVELS OF INTELLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE**

There are three levels of intellectual knowledge: ordinary, scientific and philosophical.

**First level:** Ordinary knowledge is that knowledge of things which from the age of reason on could be obtained, and obtained without any force, without mathematical and profound studies. It is the knowledge which is the fruit more of good sense than of reasoning. Though apparently superficial this knowledge can be very profound and may even contain solution to ultimate questions.

**Second level:** Scientific knowledge is an ordered and systematic knowledge of determined aspects of reality. It is essentially specialised knowledge (eg. medicine, biology, astronomy, physics etc.). But this knowledge is superficial and cannot deeply delve into things and history. Effectively it explains many things but it does not know what is life, time, history, consciousness, truth, liberty, virtue, justice, goodness, love, etc. Unfortunately, today, there are some scientists who pretend to explain everything with scientific knowledge.

**Third level:** Philosophical knowledge constitutes the third level of intellectual knowledge. Its fields of research are the ultimate problems (of knowledge, being, will, metaphysics, ethics, etc). Its method is pure reasoning. The data of philosophical knowledge is furnished either by ordinary knowledge or by scientific knowledge.

### 3.6 DIRECT AND REFLEXIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

A human being is gifted with two types of consciousness, namely direct consciousness and reflexive consciousness.

**Direct consciousness** (also called immediate or concomitant consciousness): Every act of knowledge, just as any other activity, carries with itself an implicit, indirect, concomitant cognizance of the subject which accomplishes the action.

**Reflexive consciousness:** It is that moment of knowledge in which a person concentrates his or her attention on himself or herself, on his or her operations, his or her acts, his or her being, diverting his or her attention from the world, from things or objects. This explicit consideration of oneself, making oneself the object under consideration is an act of **self-perception** (a perception from the inside). It is a privileged knowledge which each one of us can have of our own.

### 3.7 CO-OPERATION BETWEEN INTELLECT AND SENSES

Human beings do not have pure intellectual knowledge devoid of sense knowledge or pure sense knowledge without the involvement of the intellect. In every concept we distinguish both intellectual and sensible elements. In us there are no innate ideas. Ideas have their sources outside the intellect and the intellect must derive them from the things. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) says: "There is nothing in the intellect which has not been first to the senses except the intellect itself". Thus in all cases of our intellectual knowledge there is a collaboration of *a priori* and *a posteriori* elements. The *a posteriori* elements come from the senses and ultimately make up an image (phantasm). The *a priori* elements come from the intellect itself. They consist in the basic ontological affirmations of which the first one is 'this is' or 'something exists'.

#### *Substantial unity between intellect and senses*

The substantial unity implies not only the unity of body and soul in a human being but also that of human senses and intellect. As the soul is to the body, so the intellect to the senses. Intellect

does not stand above the senses but *it is in them* so that an object never affects the senses without at the same time affecting the intellect. Whatever enters the human senses at once falls within the range of the human intellect. In reality there is *only one knowing subject*, composed of both body and soul. This means that the intellect is already at work in the senses and in the formation of the images. It animates the formation of the images and then through the activity of abstraction produces the universal idea.

*All human knowledge is analogical*

Analogy is application of a term to different realities partly with the same meaning and partly with a different meaning. All our human knowledge is analogical, and this is especially true of immaterial realities. Words are *indicative* of reality. There is no one to one correspondence between the words we use and the things they refer to. We do not have pure knowledge of anything. All knowledge is therefore analogical. In the analogical knowledge of an immaterial reality, we use a material representation. Our representation is partially true and partially false, and what we mean implies *affirmation, negation and transcendence..* For example, we really mean that the soul permeates the whole body (affirmation), not however in the manner of a fluid (negation), but in a more perfect, immaterial way (transcendence).

*Is there intuitive knowledge in human beings?*

A pure spirit knows through intuition, that is, directly and without the mediation of mental pictures or representation. Human beings are finite spirits-in-matter. In them the intuition is so imperfect that it is *not intuition in the strict sense of the term*. Only the first principles of all knowledge may be considered as intuitive knowledge in human beings. But of themselves they yield no knowledge since they are only potentially conscious and need the intervention of an object derived through the senses in order to emerge into consciousness.

Yet in the human intellect there is an element which corresponds in some degree to the intuitive knowledge found in pure spirits. But it is *intuition only in the wider sense of the word*. When we affirm an object we are aware of the fact of affirming it. That *awareness* requires no concept or judgement whatsoever. It is direct and intuitive. And since the object of our knowledge is always the object of an affirmation, the object falls indirectly under this intuition. Therefore in human beings *affirmation is the substitute* for the intuition of pure spirits.

### **3.8 RELATION BETWEEN INTELLECT AND WILL**

The relation between intellect and will can be considered on the level of *structure* and on the level of *activity*. Structurally speaking a human being is a rational being because of the intellect. The intellect distinguishes human nature from every other nature. Again, nothing can be desired or willed unless it is perceived in some manner. The desire to possess something springs from the cognition of it. Thus *on the level of structure priority belongs to the intellect*.

But the primacy of the intellect does not exclude primacy of the will. The will is the radical principle of all human activity. *There is primacy of the will in the area of practical, moral, technical and artistic activity*. For this reason good will renders the whole person good. Operatively and morally speaking human being is his or her will. A human being is good if his or her will is good and bad if his or her will is bad. Just as the intellect qualifies radically human *nature*, the will qualifies radically human *activity* making a human morally good or bad.

On the level of operation (psychological level) the intellect and the will condition each other. Thus we can speak of a *reciprocal influence* of both intellect and will. Eg. I see because I want to see; I study because I want to study.

### **3.9 LET US SUM UP**

We have analysed the nature of the human intellect and have come to know that it is an immaterial or spiritual faculty which has truth or knowledge as its formal object. The specific operations of the intellect are formation of ideas, judgment and reasoning. The human intellect is also capable of self-reflection which is a very high level of spiritual activity. The intellect is dynamic by nature and it tends towards infinite truth and knowledge. Human knowledge is a complex operation. Since a human being is a spirit-in-matter, there is an intrinsic relationship between the senses and the intellect in their operations. Thus all human knowledge begins in the senses and ends in the intellect. This means that in human beings there is no pure sense knowledge or pure intellectual knowledge but a combination of both. Finally, there is an intimate relationship between intellect and will, but at the structural level the intellect has primary over the will, though at the level of activity the primacy belongs to the will.

### **Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

**1. Show that in human knowledge there is co-operation between intellect and senses**

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### **3.10 KEY WORDS**

#### ***Intellect***

The intellect is a faculty which by its very nature strives actively towards truth or knowledge or intelligibility. The human intellect is an immaterial or spiritual cognitive faculty. Immaterial or spiritual signifies something which is not intrinsically dependent of matter.

#### ***Human knowing***

Human knowledge is an *immanent action*. Knowledge is fundamentally in the *consciousness*. To know means to *identify oneself with the thing known* by overcoming the subject-object duality. Only with animals that we begin speak of knowledge. Animals know objects, but they are not aware that they are knowing because they are not capable of reflection. But in human beings there is real knowledge because they are capable of self-reflection.

#### ***Abstraction***

Abstraction is the process by which the human intellect arrives at an idea or a concept. The Intellect removes from the image everything that is singular, individual, concrete and material and retains only the universal element contained in it, which is called idea.

#### ***Understanding***

Understanding is the power of the intellect which perceives the truth and validity of ideas and principles on the basis of *direct and immediate* evidence. Understanding develops according to age and education and differs from individual to individual.



### **Reason**

Reason is the power of the intellect which perceives the truth and validity of ideas and principles on the basis of *indirect and mediate* evidence.

### **3.11 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES**

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### 3.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

#### Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Intellect is a cognitive faculty which by its very nature strives towards truth or knowledge or intelligibility. The nature of the human intellect is immaterial or spiritual. By immaterial or spiritual we mean something which is not intrinsically dependent of matter.

2. The human intellect is extrinsically dependent on matter can be shown in the following way: Without the brain in good condition, the human intellect in ordinary circumstances cannot produce its operations. If there is a serious impairment of the brain, either by some accident or intoxication, intellectual operations are difficult or impossible. Human intellect abstracts ideas from images. But images are products of the senses which are intrinsically dependent on matter. Every human operation is the operation of a being composed of form and matter. Therefore, no human operation is possible without some co-operation of matter. Hence there is an extrinsic dependence of the human intellect on matter for its operations.

#### Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. Human beings do not have pure intellectual knowledge devoid of sense knowledge or pure sense knowledge without the involvement of the intellect. Ideas have their sources outside the intellect and the intellect must derive them from the things. Thus in every concept we can distinguish both intellectual and sensible elements. This means that in all cases of our intellectual knowledge there is a collaboration of *a priori* and *a posteriori* elements, that is intellectual and sense elements, respectively. Hence Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) says: "There is nothing in the

intellect which has not been first to the senses except the intellect itself". Therefore in human knowledge there is always co-operation between intellect and senses



## UNIT 4

## HUMAN WILL AND FREEDOM

### Contents

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Kinds of Good
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### 4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall discuss an important aspect of our mental life, namely, the functioning of our will. We ask questions such as:

Do we have a will?

What is its nature?

How can we prove that we have a will?

Is our will free?

What is the meaning of freedom?

Are we free agents?

What does it mean to choose freely or act freely?

What is it to be morally responsible for one's actions or choices?

In the process of answering these questions we will also discuss related topics, such as, the theory of determinism, limits of human freedom, ambivalence of freedom as a dual power which can be adopted either for good or for evil and human will as a power to self-transcendence.

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The term 'will' comes from the Latin *voluntas* ('action'). The will is conceived as a rational appetency or power to strive for an intellectually perceived good and to shun an intellectually perceived evil. Will is also identified as the capacity of self-determination in a person. The psychic activities, such as, choosing, intending, deciding, desiring, consenting, using, loving, enjoying (and their contraries) are considered as instances of willing. The will is an immaterial spiritual faculty and is generally distinguished from knowing. The object towards which the human will strives has been traditionally called the 'end' of the will and it is always some good. Thus the *will by its very nature tends to good*. Every positive willing is a tendency towards good. Negative volition is a tendency away from some object that is apprehended as evil. Our experience shows that we strive for material, concrete, particular objects, which seem good for us, such as, food, sleep, exercise, health, money, house, etc. We strive for supra-sensible and spiritual things such as, scientific knowledge, virtues, love, esteem, fame, power, approval, etc. Thus human beings necessarily strive towards good in general. But the good in general is realised in particular good. This means that good is the natural tendency of the will. It never desires or strives for evil as such.

#### 4.2 KINDS OF GOOD

Philosophy distinguishes between different types of good such as the following:

*Ontological good:* A being is said to be ontologically good when it is a good in its very reality. In this sense every being is good in as much as it exists.

*Physical good:* A physical good is one that satisfies the demands of the *nature of a being*. Every being has its own corresponding nature and definite end and purpose. A being is said to be physically good when it satisfies the demands or suits the nature of a being. For example, the well functioning of the organs in a human being is a physical good (eg. a person can see, feel, hear, walk, talk; the digestive system is in order; the brain functions well, etc.)

*Moral good:* A moral good is one which is good for human beings *as free beings*. When something has everything demanded of it by the moral law, it is considered as moral good. For example, an action of saving a drowning person by another person is considered as a morally good action.

*Absolute good and relative good:* Any reality which a being possesses whether substantial or accidental is absolute good *for that being* irrespective of other beings. For example, physical organs, capacity to smile, etc are absolute good in a human being. A relative good is anything which is suitable *for another being*. For example, food, water, shelter, etc. are good for human beings, animals, etc.

*Objective and subjective good:* An objective good is anything which is *good in itself*. For example, a beautiful painting is good in itself. Subjective good is the *actual possession of the objective good*. For instance, I like the painting and therefore I purchase it for myself.

*Real and apparent good:* A good is real when it is judged to be *good for a being*. For example, virtue for a human person is a real good. An apparent good is something which is objectively evil but *appears as good*. For example, poison which tastes sweet or a sinful pleasure.

*Disinterested good, delectable good and useful good:* A disinterested good is any good considered merely as *giving perfection*. For example, love of the parents for the child. A delectable good is a relative good which *gives pleasure and enjoyment*. For example, food, drinks, friendship, etc. A useful good is a *means for acquiring a perfection* or pleasure. For example, a basket ball game is a useful good for the body and provides enjoyment.

### **4.3 PROOFS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF WILL**

The existence of the will is denied or ignored by many modern philosophers and psychologists. They attribute the function of the will to some other aspects of mental life like sensation, feeling, etc. For instance, for the British empiricist philosophers like Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), will is a function of the person rather than a distinct power. But existence of the will can be shown from a study of one's personal experiences and from the observation of the behaviour of other persons. We propose the following proofs for the existence of the will:

Metaphysical proof

It is generally admitted and follows from the very nature of the appetite that the appetitive faculties correspond to the nature of the cognitive faculties. Therefore, if a human person has immaterial cognitive faculty, which we call intellect, the person must also have an immaterial appetitive faculty. In other words, there is in us an immaterial tendency not intrinsically dependent on matter, which we call will.

In one's own consciousness there are moments of decision, commitment to some ideal or people or conscious choosing to do or not to do some action. These activities can be explained by concluding that a human person is endowed with a special ability or a power to make such decisions which we call will.

Proof from control of emotions

Every act of real control of emotions is a manifestation of the will. In such an act we are conscious of the fact that some tendency in us is held in check by a higher tendency. That higher tendency we call will.

Proof from willing an object repugnant to the body

We sometimes will an object which is repugnant to our body and our sense tendencies. For instance, when we swallow a bitter medicine or submit to a painful operation or perform a disagreeable duty. In all these cases we are not attracted by a material, sensible good but by some good presented by our intelligence. This shows that we have a faculty called will.

Proof from voluntary attention

Sometimes we have experiences of voluntary attention. Some events or objects force us to be attentive. Others require that we force our attention on them. For example, a beautiful song, an interesting story, a fire engine on the street. These force us to be attentive. Whereas a lecture on philosophy, a difficult passage from a classical text, etc., require that we make special effort to be attentive. Thus the experience of voluntary attention is a proof of the existence of will.

Proof from resolving in a task

When a task is proposed to us, we are conscious that it rests on us to accept or refuse it. But when we are resolved in a task we experience a certain determination on our part to carry it out. For example, a student who has completed his or her Masters degree has before him or her the possibility to be a lecturer in a university college or a sales manager in a company or an officer in the army. From the three possibilities the student resolves to become a sales manager. The faculty that is engaged in resolving is called will.



Proof from control of impulses and desires

Impulses and desires are the springs of action and normally they lead to the execution of the actions prompted by them. It is clearly evident in animals. But in human beings it is quite different. They have self-control. Hence they can control their lower tendencies for intellectual and moral reasons. This again proves that human beings possess the faculty of will.

Proof from readjustment to new mode of life

Through illness, financial reverses, death in the family, collapse of business etc. people are forced to adopt a new way of life. The readjustment is often painful and difficult. The natural inclination prompts people to adopt the former course. Yet they manifest a determination to readjust to the new mode of life. This tendency shows that human beings have a faculty called will which is responsible for the resolve to readjust to the new mode of life.

#### **4.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTELLECT AND WILL**

There is an intimate relationship between intellect and will. Will strives towards some good presented by the intellect. The will itself does not know the good because it is not a cognitive faculty. Hence every free act must be preceded by an intellectual cognition. For Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) freedom of choice is not a function of will alone but a joint activity pertaining formally to the intellect and materially and substantially to the will. J.F. Donceel compares this relation of the will to the intellect as analogous to that which exists between the engine and the steering wheel of a car. The movement comes from the engine, the direction of this movement from the wheel. It is the will which tends towards the good and it is the intellect which specifies the kind of good towards which the will actually strives. We must remember that the intellect and the will are not distinct autonomous realities but only distinct powers of one undivided autonomous reality which is the human person. Ultimately it is not the intellect which knows nor the will which strives or chooses but the *human person* who knows through his or her intellect and wills and chooses through his or her will.

Question has been asked whether the will is superior to the intellect or not? There have been some philosophers who exalted the will over the intellect. Such a view is called *psychological voluntarism*. Its contrary view is called *intellectualism* which exalts the intellect over the will. But in general, the philosophers are of the opinion that both the intellect and the will are equally important in the psychological constitution of the human being.

## Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) What is human will?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

2) What is the object of human will?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

### 4.5 FACULTIES ACTING ON THE WILL

The most important of the powers in a human person that influence the choices of the will is the *intellect*. But the will is also affected indirectly by objects of *sense powers* in so far as such objects are presented with a vividness rarely found in intellectual activity. Sense impressions are physical states and as a consequence they can influence a person's intellectual deliberation and choice. For example a) *an inherited physical make up* whereby a person tends to react more readily and with greater emotion than another person, b) *organic disposition* of a certain age group (eg. being young or old), c) *organic modification* acquired by an individual which is either transitory or more or less fixed (eg. being under heavy drug or certain pathological conditions) can also affect one's choices.

Acts of the will

The most basic act of the will is *loving*. Volitional love means affective approval of an intelligible good. All other positive acts of will may be regarded as variants of the fundamental

action of loving. The volitional response to universal good (Absolute good) is called *necessary* volition. But where the object is presented as a particular good of limited appeal, the volitional response is called *deliberate* volition, and it is free.

The activity of the will is closely linked with desires and motives. *Desire* is the longing aroused by the conscious representation of an absent good. For example, desire for a holiday. We desire only those things which are good.

A *motive* is anything which promotes or executes the will to action. Motivating factors impel, urge, incline, dispose, stimulate to certain acts of the will but do not determine the will. It gives a *reason* for willing something. The motivation is meant to arouse the will from a state of inaction to action. Hence the more powerful a motive, the easier it is for the will to pass from indecision to decision.

Motives reside in the intellect. A motive may be for *physical good* (eg. shelter, wealth, pleasure, etc) or for *intellectual good* (eg. for knowledge of philosophy, science, technology, etc) or for *moral good* (eg. for praise, admiration, reward, growth in virtue, etc.). Hence a double factor is involved in motive, namely the goodness of the object or the experience (*objective* factor), and the apprehension of the intellect of something as good (*subjective* factor).

#### **4.6 MEANING OF FREEDOM**

Nowadays everybody speaks about freedom. Yet when we really come to ask 'what is freedom' it is not easy to answer. Today freedom is understood in different ways by different people. Thus it is necessary to clarify what we mean by freedom.

The term 'free will' is customarily regarded as a translation of the Latin expression *liberum arbitrium* ('free choice' or 'free decision').

Freedom is the capacity for self-determination or the ability to make up one's mind and is associated with the will. Freedom refers primarily to a condition characterised by the absence of coercion or constraint imposed by another person. A person is said to be free to the extent that he or she chooses between alternatives available to him or her.

The actions which a human person performs are generally divided into two: 'human acts' (*actus humanus*) and 'acts of man or woman' (*actus hominis*).<sup>1</sup> A 'human act' (eg. choosing to drink coffee rather than tea) is one which involves some kind of deliberation (use of will and freedom)

on the part of the person, whereas the 'act of man' (eg. breathing, digestion, etc) is not preceded by deliberation.

Freedom is the basis for asserting one's subjectivity, unique dignity among creatures as well as for maintaining that one is a person. Free will is also the foundation for responsibility, accountability and morality.

Freedom is possible only with regard to finite goods

In our personal experience of desiring, choosing, and refraining from possible actions freedom is evident. The will can be attracted to an object only in so far as it recognizes this as some kind of good. A good that can satisfy only to a limited extent is called a positive *finite good* whereas one that can satisfy in every conceivable respect is called universal or *supreme good*. Freedom of choice is exercised only with regard to objects regarded as particular goods or finite goods. Before the supreme good the will is not free.

Types of freedom

Freedom can be of various types such as the following:

*Physical freedom* is the absence of physical restraint. For example, a prisoner is physically free only when he or she is released from prison.

*Moral freedom* is the absence of restraint through oppressive forces of the moral order such as rewards, punishments, laws, threats, etc.

*Political freedom* is the absence of political pressures. For example, in a democratic country the citizens are free to express their opinion on the formation of the government through the exercise of their franchise, criticise the functioning of the government, etc.

*Psychological freedom* is defined as that capacity which a human being possesses for choosing to do or not to do a thing when all the conditions for action are already present. It is also called freedom of choice since it allows the free subject to choose between different courses of action. For example, a hungry person can decide to refrain from taking food, and a soldier freighted by a heavy bombardment can choose to stay at his post. In Philosophical anthropology our main concern is with psychological freedom.

Under psychological freedom we need to mention various kinds of *false freedom* which is due to illusory attractions. Here the will is, at a certain moment, not able to follow a judgement which tells the truth. The will stops at a judgement which shows a *value* in the pleasure which one

derive from an act (eg taking drugs). But the value that is presented is only an *apparent* one. Thus dependencies are obstacles to true freedom.

*Freedom of exercise* is freedom to accept or reject a particular good. *Freedom of specification* is freedom to choose between one particular good and another.

*Positive freedom* means the ability and resources to pursue one's dreams and ambitions and to be the master of oneself. *Negative freedom* is the absence of coercion or constraint. It means 'being free from', 'not being bound', 'not being determined' and 'not being forced'. Erich Fromm (1900-1980) has called positive freedom 'freedom to' and negative freedom 'freedom from'. *True freedom* consists then in judging according to the truth, tending towards true values and turning away from false values.

Absence of coercion is intimately related to fundamental human rights, such as, freedom of thought and speech, freedom of association, freedom of assembly, freedom of worship, freedom of movement, freedom in the use or disposal of one's property, freedom in the choice of one's occupation or employer, etc.

#### **4.7 MEANING OF DETERMINISM**

Many modern philosophers and psychologists deny freedom of the will. They are called "determinists" and their system is called "determinism". Determinism holds the view that the history of the universe is fixed in such a way that nothing can happen otherwise than it does because everything that happens is necessitated by what has already gone before.

Determinism is opposed to freedom of the will, according to which human beings are forced or determined in all their actions. The possible determining factors include fate or God, laws of physics, heredity and environment, unconscious motives, psychological or social conditioning, hidden controllers, etc. All materialists and sensists are necessarily determinists. For them human beings are purely material beings. Matter is perfectly determined and does not possess any freedom. When we know a material system perfectly we can foresee and predict all its future activities.

For the Indian materialists like the Carvacas and Ajivacas human beings are guided by *niyati* ('fatality') and therefore there is no freedom of will. For those who believe in the doctrine of *karma* (when taken to mean that the whole world rests on rigid principles dominated by the immutable laws of cause and effect) a free soul is difficult to conceive.



Protestant reformers like Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564) strongly denied freedom of the will basing their arguments on the Biblical texts, especially of Paul. According to the theory of historical materialism of Karl Marx (1818-1883) social conditions are determined by underlying economic forces.

#### Types of determinism

Determinism can take several forms such as the following:

a) *Biological determinism*: According to biological determinism physiological factors exert a compelling influence in a person's life. We do what we do because of the kind of body we have inherited from our parents (a sort of 'we are born that way' mentality).

b) *Psycho-social determinism*: According to psycho-social determinism human beings are compelled by drives and tendencies in the psychic side and continual pressure of the environment such as customs, traditions, fashion, etiquette, propaganda and education, especially education received during the first few years of life.

c) *Cultural determinism*: According to cultural determinism our interpretation of the world is inescapably rooted in our particular cultural milieu.

d) *Psychological determinism*: According to psychological determinism human beings are under the compulsive influence of various motives. These compel the individual to act in a certain way. When two motives are presented to each other, the stronger one necessarily prevails.

e) *Theological determinism*: According to theological determinism our life is irresistibly directed by God. The omnipotent God does not leave any room for the exercise of human freedom. We may be under the impression that we are free but this impression is false since our actions are determined by the Divine will.

f) *New forms of determinism*: It can happen that within a society, a group of people may enjoy such control over property or the means of production or over the educational system or the media communication that they are able to determine within a fairly narrow range the alternatives between which their fellow citizens can choose. The weak can be exploited in order to prevent them from attaining what they would wish to attain. Since there is inequality of power, *those who have power* can 'determine' to some extent the lives of others.

It may be noted here that theories of determinism of the physical world have been undermined by quantum mechanics, relativity and chance theory, all of which postulate the fundamentally



indeterminate nature of the universe. Determinism as a philosophical stance has been challenged by existentialists and phenomenology which emphasise freedom.

Is freedom compatible with determinism?

Whether freedom is compatible with determinism, is a much discussed topic in philosophical anthropology. The compatibilists argue that freedom is compatible with determinism because freedom is essentially a matter of not being constrained or hindered in certain ways when one acts or chooses. Thus a normal adult human being in normal circumstances is able to act and choose freely. But the incompatibilists hold that freedom is not compatible with determinism. They point out that if determinism is true, then everyone of our action is determined. Consequently we cannot hold that we are truly free and that we are morally responsible for our actions. We cannot agree with the view of the incompatibilists as they fail to satisfy our natural conviction about the nature of moral responsibility.

#### **4.8 DEMONSTRATION OF THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL**

In the field of anthropology the indispensable data is that human beings are free. Since there are some philosophers and philosophical systems which deny that human beings are free, we need to demonstrate that human will is free. This can be done in the following ways:

Argument from common consent

A great majority of the people believe that their will is free. This conviction has of the utmost practical importance for the whole of human life. Therefore, if there is order in the world the majority of mankind cannot be wrong in this belief. Hence the will must be free.

Metaphysical argument

The will tends to good as such. It never desires evil in itself. Will therefore has a natural appetency to good as such. When the intellect perceives something good in an object, the will can desire it and strive for it. In so far as the intellect perceives something disagreeable in an object the will can reject it. Now there is no created object which is absolutely good or absolutely evil. All objects have good aspects as well as deficiencies which make them more or less desirable. Inasmuch as every object contains some good, the will can desire it, and in as much as it contains some deficiency the will can reject it. Since a created object is neither absolutely good nor absolutely evil, the will can desire it or reject it. Hence before all finite or created goods the will is free. The will is not free only before the absolute good.

### Psychological argument

Most people naturally hold that their will is free because they are directly or indirectly aware of the freedom in their own decisions. They are directly aware of their freedom in the very act of making a free decision. They are indirectly aware of it because of the many instances of behaviour which can only be explained by admitting the freedom of the will.

Every moment we are exercising our freedom and we are aware of it. We can know it by introspection. For example, I want to lift my hand or sing a song or talk. The only motive is that I merely want to, and it is *my will to do so*. The will acts simply because it decides to act rather than not to act in the described manner and there is nothing that is compelled.

### Ethical argument

The very fact that human beings are held responsible morally and by law for certain of their actions is enough to indicate freedom of the will. If there is no freedom there is no real responsibility, no virtue, no merit, no moral obligation, no duty and no morality. This is a strong argument because the sense of duty and the belief in morality and moral obligation come naturally to human beings and even those who deny their existence in theory live in practice as if they admitted it.

According to Thomas Aquinas human beings have free choice. Otherwise counsels, exhortations, commands, prohibitions, rewards and punishments would make no sense. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) believed that the existence of freedom was not demonstrable by pure reason. Nevertheless he was convinced that human beings are free and that it could be proved from practical reason. He based this conviction on the categorical imperative which says that “good must be done and evil must be avoided”.

### Mechanism of free decision

In every free decision we can distinguish several steps such as the following:

**Attraction exercised by the good:** The first step in free decision is the attraction exercised by some good either on the will or on some other drive. For example, while studying I hear a beautiful song. I am immediately attracted to it. My senses are attracted to it and also my will. The will is drawn by the good. Such an attraction is unavoidable. No freedom is involved at this stage and therefore there is no responsibility and no possible guilt.

**Examination:** The second step consists in examining the attractive good. An examination of the attractive good shows that it has both desirable and undesirable aspects. Because there are good

sides to the subject we are attracted. Because there are bad sides to the same object we are not forced and we remain free. For example, the melody of the song is good but the lyric is not appealing.

**Deliberation:** The third step is deliberation in which the reasons for and against a course of action are examined by the intellect. This step may take a long time or it may be instantaneous. For example, if I listen to the song, I cannot study, and in that case I will do badly in the following day's test. The stronger motive prevails.

**Decision:** The fourth step consists in making the decision, for example "this is good for me now". We overlook the bad features of the object and concentrate on its attractiveness. Once the decision has been reached, the will must follow it and choose the object presented by the intellect. For example, I decide to get back to study rather than listen to the song.

It is to be remembered that the decision is not purely an intellectual process. Many factors such as our character, habit, social pressure, past education, etc. also play a role in decision. But all these factors can only *influence* our decision, they *cannot determine* it.

Limits of freedom

Human beings are free but they are not unboundedly free as Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) wishes, nor are they totally determined as the materialists and some empiricists argue. The limits of freedom are different in each person and vary according to age, character and stage of spiritual development. Human freedom is *finite*. Freedom is a property of human beings and is *limited like other properties* which they possess, like, life, ability to think, speak, work, etc. Human beings are *not free from being corporeal, social, sexual, etc.* Again, human beings are *not free in tending towards good*. Just as the human intellect naturally tends towards truth, the will necessarily tends to good. Human beings are *dependent on the world, society, and history*. Every human being is *conditioned by his or her passions*. But one is never determined by them. They can exercise an indirect influence on the will through their object which is presented to the will by intellect.

A human person is not an isolated being but by nature a *social being* and therefore he or she must realise himself or herself in society, on the basis of an open relationship with others based on I-Thou (i.e. a subject to subject relationship). A human being must exercise his or her freedom *with and for others*. Again, a human being is an *incarnate spirit*, a being in the world, and therefore he or she must develop inside and within nature and not outside it. In other words,

human beings must construct their personality by using their freedom in harmony with the Supreme Being (God), their neighbour and with nature.

#### **4.9 THE AMBIVALENCE OF HUMAN FREEDOM**

Freedom is the greatest power given to human beings. It is the foundation for human subjectivity and human dignity. But it is also a delicate and dangerous power. With freedom a human being is not only simply the master or mistress of his or her own acts but also of himself or herself. By using one's freedom each one constructs his or her personality. Freedom is a weapon of dual power: it can be adopted either for good or for evil. It can be utilised for the full realisation of one's being. But it can also serve to obtain the opposite effects to degrade, humiliate, and annihilate his or her own fellow beings. With good use of freedom a person can become a hero or a saint or a great benefactor of humanity. But with its misuse one can become a dictator, tyrant, a parasite, a terrorist and a nemesis of humanity. The will qualifies radically all human activity. For this reason good will renders the whole person good. Operatively and morally speaking a person is his or her will. A human being good if his or her will is good and bad if his or her will is bad.

This means that formation of human will through proper education of conscience is very important for every human person.

##### **Note on free will and liberty**

Free will is the power of choosing between opposite values. It is not an end in itself but only a means. The end is the acquisition of perfect liberty. Liberty consist in this, that the elicited, conscious acts of our will shall coincide more and more with the natural, unconscious striving of the same faculty. All human beings are free in the sense that they possess the power of choosing. All human beings must become free in the sense that they should *acquire perfect liberty*. The main purpose of education, psychotherapy, ascetical practices and all other attempts at self-improvement should be the acquisition of this perfect liberty.

##### **Note on dominant inclination**

The influence of the past on our free decisions has been called "dominant inclination". It is an inclination because it inclines or pushes the will towards certain kinds of objects. However, it is not a determining inclination, because the will can always reject it. It is called dominant inclination because its influence tends to prevail more and more in the process of one's

decisions. One's habit, character, environment, education etc. affect one's decisions of the will. Dominant inclinations can be for good or for evil. For example, constant stealing can make one a real thief. Constant practice of virtue can make one owner of a good character.

#### **Note on free will and Divine omniscience**

The concept of free will has been a contentious one in religious context. It has been argued that if our actions are prefigured in the divine plan, they cannot be free and we cannot be held responsible for them. A variety of answers have been given to this problem. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) argued that freedom and pre-destination are compatible partly because to be truly free means to know and follow the divine will. The solution presented by Islam and some other religious traditions is that while our ultimate destiny may be predetermined, we exercise free will in our individual actions. Nevertheless it is to be admitted that the fact of God reconciling human freedom with his divine omniscience is a mystery to our finite human intellect.

#### **Note on final option**

According to the theory of 'final option', a series of free decisions which succeed each other in a person's life culminates at the very moment of death (and this even in the case of coma apparently deprived of any kinds of consciousness) in a final, momentous decision or option by which he or she chooses either the objective good or his/her own subjective good or advantage. That is, he/she will humbly and lovingly accept God or proudly and egoistically assert himself or herself as the centre of everything. This choice is free and fully conscious. It is more fully conscious and freer than any choice made by him or her during his or her life. Through it he or she fixes his eternal attitude towards God and himself or herself. This option stands very much under the influence of the dominant inclination. If one constantly chooses God to his or her own egoistic pride, he or she will almost certainly (but not necessarily) confirm his or her previous choices, in the final choice.

The final option is the final act of a persons' life. But the final option is *not* made in the light of eternity. It remains free. It is, as it were, the irrevocable signature which a person in full consciousness puts down under the script of his or her life. It is the last act of his or her moral life and all moral decisions of his or her whole life have been but rehearsals for his or her last all encompassing option. This last free choice will be decisive for a person's attitude for eternity and will have features which differentiate it from the free decisions of everyday life.

#### **Will and the power of self-transcendence**



The human will has unbounded power of self-transcendence. The will by its very nature is a desire for total good. It cannot but will good in its plenitude without any limits and reservation. Human will is never content with that which it has performed or acquired. There is in will a potent impulse to transcend itself. It continues to choose and reject, to do and to abandon. This unbound power of self-transcendence is evident not only in the sphere of will but also in that of passions. This means that there is a transcendence of the will over particular good. The choices of any particular good takes place within and not outside the tendency of the will towards total good and freedom is the instrument of self-transcendence. The transcendental intention inherent in the action of the will proceeds from the attraction of infinite happiness and it will be satisfied only when it encounters the perfect good or supreme good, which theistic religions consider as God and others as Ultimate Reality.

Maurice Blondel (1861-1949) has used the action of the will to prove God's existence. According to him there is dynamism of the will which is a striving for the infinite, and in every thrust of our voluntary activity the supernatural is implied, at least implicitly and forces us to affirm the reality of infinite good.

#### **4.10 LET US SUM UP**

Human beings possess will. The will naturally tends to good and never to evil as such. But there are some philosophers and philosophical systems that deny that human beings have a separate faculty called will. The human persons do have a will and it can be proved from the empirical data of experience. Human will is essentially free, though the determinists deny this. But it can be proved from empirical experience that the will is free. If a person is not free, all our talk about virtue, vice, responsibility, accountability, morality, etc. will be useless. But human will is free only before the finite goods and not before the supreme good. Freedom is the foundation for human subjectivity and human dignity. But human freedom is not absolute but finite, and is conditioned by certain factors in as much as one is inserted into the world and dependent on the laws of the world. Freedom is a power which can be used positively or negatively. Human will is also a power to self-transcendence. There is a transcendental intention inherent in the action of the will which will be satisfied only when it encounters the perfect good or supreme good.

#### **Check Your Progress II**



**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

**1. What is psychological freedom?**

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**2. What do you understand by “ambivalence of human freedom”?**

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**4.11 KEY WORDS**

**Will**

Will is identified as the capacity of self-determination in a person. Activities, such as, choosing, intending, deciding, desiring, consenting, using, loving, enjoying (and their contraries) are considered as instances of willing. Will by nature always tends to good.

**Good**

Good is that towards which the human will *naturally* strives. It is also called the ‘end’ of the will. Every positive willing is a tendency towards good.

**Freedom**

Freedom is the capacity for self-determination or the ability to make up one’s mind and is associated with the will. A person is said to be free to the extent that he or she chooses between alternatives available to him or her.

**Determinism**

Determinism is opposed to freedom of the will, according to which human beings are forced or determined in all their actions. All materialists and sensists are necessarily determinists.

#### **Dominant inclination**

The influence of the past on a person's free decisions is called "dominant inclination". It is an *inclination* because it inclines or pushes the human will towards certain kinds of objects. It is called *dominant* inclination because its influence tends to prevail more and more in the process of one's decisions. Dominant inclinations can be for good or for evil.

#### **Final option**

'Final option' is a series of free decisions which succeed each other in a person's life which culminates at the very moment of death in a final, momentous decision or option by which he or she chooses either the objective good or his/her own subjective good or advantage. It is the final act of a persons' life.

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#### **4.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

##### **Answers to Check Your Progress I**

1. Will is a capacity whereby a person is psychologically attracted to some object which is apprehended as 'good' or psychologically repelled as it is apprehended as 'evil'. The term 'will' comes from the Latin voluntas ('action'). Will is also identified as the capacity of self-determination in a person. Human beings not only affirm and judge but also will and choose. They have in themselves the power to will what they prefer and decide what they will. This power is called the faculty of the will.
2. The object of the will is good. It means that the will by its very nature tends to be good and never desires or strives for evil as such. Every positive willing is a tendency towards good. Negative volition is a tendency away from some object that is apprehended as evil. Thus human

beings necessarily strive towards good in general. But the good in general is realised in particular goods.

### **Answers to Check Your Progress II**

1. Psychological freedom is defined as that capacity which a human being possesses for choosing to do or not to do a thing when all the conditions for action are already present. It is also called freedom of choice since it allows the free subject to choose between different courses of action. For example, a hungry person can decide to refrain from taking food, and a soldier freighted by a heavy bombardment can choose to stay at his post.

2. It means that, though freedom is the greatest power given to human beings and the foundation for human subjectivity and human dignity, it is also a delicate and dangerous power. In fact freedom is considered as a weapon of dual power which can be adopted either for good or for evil. It can be utilised for the full realisation of one's being. But it can also serve to obtain the opposite effects to degrade, humiliate, and annihilate his or her fellow beings. With good use of freedom a person can become a hero or a saint or a great benefactor of humanity. But with its misuse one can become a dictator, tyrant, a parasite, a terrorist and a nemesis of humanity.

## **BLOCK 4**

One of the definitions of the human person is that human is defined as a social being. Human is inter-subjective and thus connected to other humans. The process of birth of a human person is the consequence of the inter-subjective act. Human person lives in a family, community or a society. One grows in the company of one's fellow-beings and is engaged in all the activities which include human persons. The society or the family in particular has a great impact on each and every person, and will determine what the person will be in future. Humans are cultural beings, for they are products of one or other cultural influence. We live and grow only in the company of other beings and here language plays a very important role as a tool of communication by which a social group co-operates. We exist together with others and ours is a shared world. In this shared world each one's individual freedom comes into question. It requires a going beyond. Besides, there are certain rights that are universal to all human persons.

This block consists of four units looking at the nature of human person from the point of view of social phenomena, taking into account the inter-subjectivity, cultural and linguistic phenomena and the rights that every person possesses.

**Unit 1** highlights the nature of Human Person as Inter-subjective. We are the result of inter-subjective acts of some other human beings. We are connected to the persons around us in various kinds of relations. Our human nature is inter-subjective from physiological and psycho-philosophical perspectives.

**Unit 2** studies the nature of Human Person as Cultural and Linguistic beings. Human beings live in the company of other beings and in such a situation language forms a very important role in communication and cooperation. Language is one of the products of the large culture that the person inherits. We are products of both history and nature.

**Unit 3** highlights the relationship between the Human person and Human Rights. It is universally accepted that each and every human being has certain rights. Apart from the rights that each and every country or society prescribes to its members, there are certain basic rights like right to life that are universal. The various rights have developed historically through various stages.

**Unit 4** discusses the issues regarding Gender and Human Person. The objective of this unit is to bring to the awareness the gender issues, aiming at empowering the status of women and

bringing them to the mainstream of life. This unit understands women going beyond the gender issues that are prevalent today and suggests some ways of getting rid of these biases.

The social aspect of the human person is very essential because all the activities that we are indulged into have their origin and basis in the society in which we live. We are inter-dependent beings and hence our fellow-humans constitute an important part in all our undertakings. But this does not reduce the privileges and rights that one is supposed to have.





## UNIT 1

## HUMAN PERSON AS INTER-SUBJECTIVE

### Contents

#### 1.0 Objectives

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#### 1.2 Physiological Perspective

#### 1.3 Developmental Perspective

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#### 1.5 Martin Buber

#### 1.6 Emmanuel Levinas

#### 1.7 Let us Sum Up

#### 1.8. Key Words

#### 1.9. Further Readings and References

#### 1.10. Answers to Check Your Progress

### 1.0 OBJECTIVES

This course is offering an insight into the intersubjective nature of human persons. Intersubjectivity refers to nature of being dependent on each other. In the present day situation, we find that man has an illusion as if he can manage everything by himself. This self-centeredness is affecting the family life itself. Hence it is important for the students to know how the human nature is intersubjective and adopt his life accordingly. In this Unit we discuss:

- The Physiological aspect of interdependency
- The developmental aspect of interdependency
- The Psycho-philosophical aspects of intersubjectivity.

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In philosophy, man is considered as one of the three major mysteries – God, man and world. Human persons are those who are called as the highest form of the creatures on earth. Aristotle

defined them as rational animal. Rationality refers to the thinking and reasoning power in a person and the animal nature refers to the sentient, living, bodily substances. This definition distinguishes human beings as different from the animals, but at the same time having all the elements of the animals who are sentient, living, bodily substances. Even though we are different from the animals, we are also participating with other substances in terms of their feelings, life, body and substance. St. Thomas Aquinas considered human person as rational subsistent. The word 'subsistent' refers to individuality, substance and nature. The person is the individual and concrete man, in all his uniqueness and unrepeatability, while human nature is only a part of the person, though the fundamental or substantial part.

The word, 'Intersubjective' refers to the connected nature of human beings. This concept of intersubjectivity came up in the philosophical thinking as a result of the evils of the two World Wars. It is mostly after the First World War that this kind of intersubjective nature was exposed. Before then, people were thinking only in terms of the individuality of the human person right from 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Too much of individualism led to the slaughter of human beings in the World Wars and human beings considered themselves only in terms of their groups and country and they were not able to think beyond these factors. Hence the need arose to think in terms of our intersubjective nature. Only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century we find philosophers reflected on the intersubjective nature of man. There are many philosophers who showed man is intersubjective: Mounier, Nedoncelle, and Ricoeur of France, Scheler, Martin Buber, and Guardini of Germany, Berdjaiev of Russia, Stefanini of Italy, Ortega and Gasset of Spain, Brightman of America and Wojtyla of Poland. In this chapter we shall see in what all ways we are intersubjective and the teachings of some of the above philosophers.

Human nature is intersubjective in the sense that human beings are born by the intersubjective acts of a man and a woman on one side and the reaction between the will of God and desire of the human persons on the other side. Thus human beings are intersubjective in the process of their birth. During his growth also man needs other persons like parents, siblings, aunts and uncles, grandfather and grandmother in order that they all together shape the person to be a human being. In the school a child learns manners and taboos and social values in the interaction with the teachers and schoolmates. As a teenager a boy or a girl finds his or her own talents and

individuality only in relation to his peer group. As a young adult, he chooses a life partner to experience this intersubjectivity in depth. As an old person, one depends on his or her children for their sustenance and happiness. Thus from birth to death a human person is intersubjective.

## **1.2 PHYSIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

All human beings are born as a result of union between a sperm and an ovum of a man and a woman respectively. Once the sperm fertilizes the ovum, the ovum becomes a fertilized ovum technically known as *zygote*. This single cell develops into a complicated composition of trillions of body cells and yet containing the same genetic material as was inherited at the time of conception. The Zygote, the fertilized ovum consists of semi-fluid mass called *Cytoplasm* and within the cytoplasm there is a nucleus, which contains the *chromosomes*. These chromosomes exist always in pairs. In human zygote there are 23 pairs of chromosomes, of which 23 were contributed by the father and 23 by the mother and so both father and mother are equal partners in their transmission of hereditary characteristics.

Chromosomes possess a thread like structure and are made up of very small units called *genes*. It is estimated that there are more than 1000 genes in each human chromosome cell. Consequently the possibility regarding the combination of 30,000 characteristics each from mother and father may help us to understand well the uniqueness of each individual. These genes are the contribution of not only the parents of the child, but of parents, grand parents and great grand parents. These 14 persons jointly give each child these pairs for 30,000 genes. One child may get the nose of one grand parents and its sibling may get the genes for the nose of another grandparent. Normally the ratio is 25:50:25. Thus the grand parents give a greater share and so many children are like their grandparents. Thus the physiological contributions from 14 persons tell the fact that human beings are intersubjective in their physical composition.

## **1.3 DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE**

As a child is born, its first relationship is with the mother. Then it identifies its father and other family members. As the child grows with the human persons, it grows as a human being. If the

child is to grow among animals it may learn only what the animals do. For example, a girl child was abandoned by her mother in a jungle. The wolfs took pity on the child and they fed her. As she grew among the wolfs, she learnt to walk with both hands and legs and she made noise like wolfs only. The girl was identified by some sisters of the Missionaries of Charity in the jungles of Orissa. She was brought to Bangalore and given training to walk on her legs, like any human being. This shows that we become like the beings with which we grow. If a child grows with aggressive parents, the child will also be aggressive in its behaviour. If the child grows with loving parents, the child will also be loving in his or her behaviour. The developmental psychologists point out the importance of good social environment as a necessary condition for the better growth of the children. It is to be realised that we grow as boy or girl only because we have grown with intersubjective relationship with other human beings. In this process, not only the parents and siblings, but also the uncles and aunts and the grandparents play important role in helping us to learn the social behaviour.

As we enter the school, it is the teachers and classmates as well as the schoolmates play a major role in helping us grow with strength or grow with guilt feelings. A student was given promotion from 1<sup>st</sup> standard to 3<sup>rd</sup> standard, as he was good in studies. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> standard, the mathematics teacher appreciated him for his ability to narrate the mathematical tables correctly. This appreciation made him do the mathematical homework first from 3<sup>rd</sup> standard to 11<sup>th</sup> standard. This made him score 98 marks in the S.S.L.C. examination. There are many other examples, which may not tally with this example. Another boy was poor in mathematics. Once his teacher told him 'mathematics will not enter your mind'. This made the boy realise that he cannot do well in mathematics and so he showed least importance to mathematical studies all through his life. Thus the developmental aspect of a boy or a girl depends on the words of their teachers to great extent.

As the boys and girls reach their teenage, they have first attraction towards the members of the same sex and then towards the members of the opposite sex. As they experience the attraction towards the members of the same sex the peer group becomes more important than the family members. There are many who have taken up solid future plans on account of the help of the peer groups. Equally, there are many who have taken to destructive ways of life like smoking,

drinking of alcohol, drugs and looting and stealing as well as robbery or murder on account of the pressure of the peer group. Thus their life is affected by the intersubjectivity of the peer group. Among the girls also there are many who have taken to a life of service to humanity on account of the peer group. Equally there are girls who have been led to drugs, prostitution and other negative behaviours on account of the peer group.

Later as they become young adult, they try to find a job. There are also the relationship with the masters of the job and the co-workers. Once they get married the relationship with spouse and children has a lasting impact on them. There are many who show their imbalance in the office situation to the members of the family; there are many who show their imbalance at home to the members in the office. There are parents who are worried about the studies of their children, especially when they are away from home. There are equally boys and girls, who are worried about their parents if they are old or single, due to the loss of their spouse.

**Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1) What do you understand human nature as intersubjective?

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2) Show that humans are intersubjective in their physical composition.

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## 1.4 PSYCHO – PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

### E. Mounier

According to Mounier human nature is an incarnate existence and it has the following properties in its intersubjective nature:

Vocation: “Every person has such a meaning that he cannot be substituted for in the place he occupies in the universe of persons”.

Action: the life of a person is incessant action, “it is the research until death for an anticipated, longed-for unity that is never realized.

Communication: encounter with others: “the first movement revealing a human being in the prime of infancy is a movement towards others: the baby of six to twelve months of age, leaving vegetative life, discovers himself in others, recognizes himself in some attitudes regulated by his gaze at others. It is only later, at about three years of age, that he will have his first wave of conscious egocentrism.. The first experience of the person is the experience of the second person: the *You*, and therefore the *we* comes before the *I*, or at least accompanies it. It is in the material nature that exclusion reigns, in that one space cannot be occupied twice; the person, instead, through the movement that makes him exist, express himself, he is by nature communicable, and is even the only one who can be himself”.

To struggle in favour of the person is, according to Mounier, the fundamental task of our times. To struggle for the person means to struggle against those innumerable forms of alienation, which risk annihilating man and putting him into a rule-bound conformism and destroying him spiritually. But, Mounier specifies, to struggle for the person means at the same time to struggle for the community, because the true community is the personal one where the most profound bond is in the interiority of the incarnate existences living in communion, vibrating in unison, and tending to the realization of a justice that frees millions of the suffering and the poor from debasement and humiliation. The community of persons is the community of the neighbour, of the ‘I’, and of others capable of realizing a “we”. One arrives at this through a cultural revolution, which finds its most direct adversary in impersonalising individuality. To realize this



end, we need above all to recognise and understand what we are, to return to ourselves, to repossess ourselves. Who has lost the sense of being, who has voted for things and not for men, has fallen into the most painful of alienations. What will be spoken of is to bring man back to himself, again making him conscious of his dignity, value, grandeur, and vocation.

### **1.5 MARTIN BUBER**

Martin Buber is the one who has given more rigour to the intersubjective concept of the person. He says, the world is twofold for man in accordance with his twofold attitude. The attitude of man is twofold in accordance with the two basic words he can speak. The basic words are not single word but word pairs. One basic word is the word pair I-You. The other basic word is the word pair I-It; but this basic word is not changed when He or She takes the place of It. Thus the I of man is also twofold. For the I of this basic word I-You is different from that in the basic word I-It.

Basic words do not state something that might exist outside them; by being spoken they establish a mode of existence. Basic words are spoken with one's being. When one says You, the I of the word pair I-You is said, too. When one says It, the I of the word pair I-It is said, too. The basic word I-You can only be spoken with one's whole being. The basic word I-It can never be spoken with one's whole being. Thus the word I-you is one of relationship and communion. This is the genuine relationship of realization in which both parties are subjects confronting each other as they are.

The life of a human being does not exist merely in the sphere of goal-directed verbs. It does not consist merely of activities that have something from their object. I perceive something; I feel something; I imagine something; I want something; I sense something; I think something. The life of a human being does not consist merely of all this and its like. All this and its like is the basis of the realm of It. But the realm of You has another basis. Whoever says You does not have something; he has nothing. But he stands in relation. The world as experience belongs to the basic word I-It. The basic word I –You establishes the world of relation. Since the I-You is one

of authentic relationship, it is characterized by such features as reciprocity, presentness, directness, involvement, ineffability and intensity. The world of I-it and I-You can be distinguished as follows:

Three are the spheres in which the world of relation arises. The first: life with nature. Here the relation vibrates in the dark and remains below language. The creatures stir across from us, but they are unable to come to us and the You we say to them sticks to the threshold of language. The second: life with men. Here the relation is manifest and enters language. We can give and receive the You. The third: life with the spiritual beings. Here the relation is wrapped in a cloud but these beings reveal themselves, this lacks but creates language. We hear no You and yet feel addressed; we answer – creating, thinking, acting: with our being we speak the basic word, unable to say You with our mouth.

Let us see these three kinds of relation in detail: 1. When I see a tree, I can accept it as a picture: a rigid pillar in a flood of light, or splashes of green traversed by the gentleness of the blue silver ground. I can feel it as a movement: the flowing veins around the sturdy, striving core, the sucking of the roots, the breathing of the leaves, the infinite commerce with earth and air – and the growing itself in its darkness. I can assign it to a species and observe it as an instance, with an eye to its construction and its way of life. I can overcome its uniqueness and form so rigorously that I recognize it only as an expression of the law- those laws according to which a constant opposition of forces is continually adjusted, or those laws according to which the elements mix and separate. Throughout all of this the tree remains my object and has its place and its time span, its kind and condition. Whatever belongs to the tree is included: its form and its mechanics, its colour and its chemistry, its conversation with the elements and its conversation with the stars – all this in its entirety. The tree confronts me bodily and has to deal with me as I must deal with it – only differently. One should not try to dilute the meaning of the relation: relation is reciprocity. What I encounter is neither the soul of a tree nor a fairy tale, but the tree itself.

When I confront a human being as my You and speak the basic word I-You to him, then he is no thing among things nor does he consist of things. He is no longer He or She, limited by other Hes

and Shes, a dot in the world grid of space and time, nor a condition that can be experienced and described, a loose bundle of named qualities. Not as if there were nothing but he; but everything else lives in his light. Even as a melody is not composed of tones, nor a verse of words, nor a statue of lines – one must pull and tear to turn a unity into a multiplicity – so it is with the human being to whom I say You. I can abstract from his the colour of his hair or the colour of his speech or the colour of his graciousness; I have to do this again and again; but immediately he is no longer You. The human being cannot be said You in any Sometimes and Somewhere. I can place him there and have to do this again and again, but immediately he becomes a He or a She or an It, and no longer remains my You. The human being to whom I say You I do not experience. I stand in relation to him, in the sacred basic word. Only when I step out of this do I experience him again, Experience is remoteness from You. The relation can obtain even if the human being to whom I say You does not hear it in his experience. For You is more than It knows. You does more, and more happens to it, than it knows. No deception reaches this far: here is the cradle of actual life.

The life with spiritual beings: This is the eternal origin of art that a human being confronts a form that wants to become a work through him. It is something that appears to the soul and demands the soul's creative power. What is required is a deed that a man does with his whole being: if he commits it and speaks with his being the essential word to the form that appears, then the creative power is released and the work comes into being. The deed involves a sacrifice and a risk. The sacrifice: infinite possibility is surrendered on the altar of the form; all that a moment ago floated playfully through one's perspective has to be exterminated; none of it may penetrate into the work; the exclusiveness of such confrontation demands this. The risk: the essential word can only be spoken with one's whole being; whoever commits himself may not hold back part of himself; and the work does not permit me to seek relaxation in the It-world; it is imperious: if I do not serve it properly, it breaks, or it breaks me. The form that confronts me I cannot experience nor describe; I can only actualise it. And yet I see it, radiant in the splendour of the confrontation, far more clearly than all clarity of the experienced world. It is present to me; tested for its objectivity, the form is not there at all; but what can equal its presence? It is an actual relation; it acts on me as I act on it.

The relation to the You is unmediated. Nothing conceptual intervenes between I and You, no prior knowledge and no imagination; and memory itself is changed as it plunges from particularity into wholeness. No purpose intervenes between I and You, no greed and no anticipation; and longing itself is changed as it plunges from the dream into appearance. Every means is an obstacle. Only where all means have disintegrated, encounters occur. Before the immediacy of the relationship, everything that mediate becomes negligible. For the real boundary, albeit one that floats and fluctuates, runs not between experience and non-experience, not between the given and the not-given, nor between the world of being and the world of value, but across all the regions between You and It: between presence and object.

The present exists only insofar as presentness, encounter, and relation exist. Only as the You becomes present does presence come into being. The I of the basic word I-It has only a past and no present. He has nothing but objects; but objects consist in having been. Presence is not what passes but what confronts us, waiting and enduring. And the object is not duration but standing still, ceasing, breaking off, becoming rigid, standing out, the lack of relation, the lack of presence. What is essential is lived in the present, objects in the past.

The essential act that establishes directness is usually understood as a feeling. Feelings accompany the metaphysical and metapsychical fact of love, but they do not constitute it; and the feelings that accompany it can be very different. Feelings dwell in man, but man dwells in his love. Love does not cling to an I, as if the You were merely its object; it is between I and You. Love is responsibility of an I for a You: in this consists what cannot consist in the feeling—the equality of all lovers, to love man. Relation is reciprocity. My You acts on me as I act on it.

## 1.6 EMMANUEL LEVINAS

Emmanuel Levinas does not present a dialogical view. He views individualism as a step towards dialogical nature. He speaks of these two as two levels of liberation.

The first liberation proceeds from indetermination (abstract) to particularization (specific). This indeterminateness is a situation of “there is” (IL Y A) while the particularization is the state of ‘I’ or subjectivity. The situation of “there is” is a situation of horror and darkness. From this horror, the human subject starts looking for a way of liberating itself. This process takes place as a growing and interiorising movement of self-identification. It will establish itself as a separate and independent “self” within the being. It is a state of localization of consciousness in terms of space and time. Localization is a prerequisite of the consciousness to become possible. The concrete condition of the possibility of localization is the ‘body’. By establishing itself, the body turns the possibility of every subjectivity into reality.

The I-YOU WORLD	The I-IT WORLD
Relationship	Experience
Meeting	Utilizing
Presence	Object
Being	Having
Destiny	Fate
Freedom	Arbitrary Will
Risk	Security

Once the subject has established itself, it faces the oppressive feeling of being completely responsible for itself.

Subjectivity involves freedom and freedom leads to loneliness. This loneliness is fundamental to the subject. Even though the subject relates with other creatures by means of a look, a touch, sympathy, joint effort etc. These relations are transitory. Within all these relations “I” still remains lonely because I am not the other person. It is possible to exchange anything among beings except the being itself.

Freedom immediately includes responsibility. It is responsibility to oneself. Taking the being upon oneself is an inevitable task. In my body I experience the being as a having. It is this responsibility and the effort linked to it that the subject fears. Thus freedom from “there is” inspires fear. Hence there is a hesitation in the movement of appropriation of (taking hold of) the self. This hesitation leads to laziness and weariness. The weight of the subjective existence becomes a new situation of evil. Thus withdrawing from self becomes a need. This is the movement towards the second liberation.

As I find that my daily experiences of material needs are remedied by the economic world, “I” turns towards it. Hence the economic activity and struggle for more prosperity immediately get a meaning of redemption. The economic world helps to avoid the danger of falling back to the condition of “there is”.

But the economic liberation is only a halfway through. In spite of the fact that the economic world brings the “I” outside itself, it leads it back to itself. “I” draws the world egocentrically and subjects the world to itself. “I” makes itself the centre of totality – the world is there for itself. Thus the world, which is the “Other” is reduced and “I” makes itself the measure of all things. The world becomes food for its enjoying its existence. The nucleus of enjoyment exists in converting the strange matter, to my own energy. Even though the economic life compensates misfortunes of life, the tragedy of being alone is not touched.

The economic world appeals to the knowledge and knowledge helps it to put more progressivism, methodology and systematics in its economic activity, so that nothing escapes from it. Knowing is a relation of one with the other, in which the other is reduced to the one and is undone of its strangeness. Knowing is the mere exercise of freedom of totalising the “I”. Here



the thought relates to the other but the other is no longer different, since it has already been appropriated as mine.

But even the most audacious knowledge does not bring liberation for the “I”, because in the end the “I” is and stays lonely. In contradiction to the popular opinion that knowing brings us outside ourselves, it makes the self of the “I” more voluminous and heavier.

The same counts for the all-embracing knowledge in the theological field. By reducing God to the function of the understanding, “I” involuntarily coincides with itself, so that its weight grows. “I” understands God in its own image and resemblance and hence its theological exodus stays half way through. “I” sets out to God, but only to fall back and elevate itself. This self-elevation via the thought of God leads to self-alienation.

The second liberation happens in the following manner. Only the “Radical Other” can liberate me from myself. But the failure of its attempts to have itself on its own initiative, “I” discovers that the liberation from himself is only possible by the Other except himself. The I cannot supply this alterity. It can only look out for it, and accept it in all modesty and gratitude when the Other offers itself as a gift. The second liberation is a desire for alterity, which is radically different and it can no longer be reduced to the “I”.

This does not mean we have to avoid the redemption offered by economic world and knowledge. That is the first and the real way of liberating from the initial materiality or non-identity. But they are not the end. If we have not experienced the liberation offered by the world (economy and knowledge), we would know its frustrations and we will be dreaming of the liberation they promise. On the other hand, as I feel that all my attempts to liberate myself leads me back to myself, I realise that I am not able to liberate myself. Hence I am forced to a start looking outside myself for an alterity, which is so strong that it can loosen me from myself.

If the Other is one among the others, he or she cannot bring me liberation. The Other affects me and forces itself into my economic and noetic (relating to intellect) existence. Thus the Other is the condition of possibility for my liberation from myself. Levinas speaks of “the Face of the

Other”. The face appeals to me. Here the face is not the human face but the whole of the human nature. The Face creates in me an ethical movement of answering with responsibility for the Other. It is the responsibility through the Other and the responsibility for the Other. It is a responsibility not for my deed, not for what matter to me but for what happens to me in the face of the Other. The Other makes me responsible for him without waiting for his response. Levinas says, “Since the Other looks at me I am responsible for him..... I am responsible for him without waiting for his reciprocity.... I am responsible for a total responsibility, which answers for all others and for all in the others, even for their responsibility. The I always has one responsibility more than all the Others.”

How to develop intersubjective relationship?

In order to establish a particular relationship means,

Spend more time with another.

Do things with another (talking, sharing).

Begin to feel comfortable in talking about relatively important issues.

Develop a respect and perhaps a liking for another.

Care about, being concerned about another.

Develop a sense of give-and-take, or mutuality, in sharing.

Be willing to discuss at least certain problems with another.

Feel comfortable with another.

Be willing to help another.

Relationship with groups

Learn how to listen to others, to be actively with others as they talk about themselves.

Respond to others concretely, about both the feelings and the content that constitute their messages.

Let others know what you like about them, what you see them doing well in relating to you and to others.

Let others know what holds you back from getting involved with them – what they do that scares you, annoys you, causes you to withdraw.

Let others know how you would like to change certain behaviours in your interpersonal style – what you would like to drop and what you would like to add.

Ask feedback on your own interpersonal style and the quality of your interactions in the group.

It is important to be concrete while speaking about experiences.

Many people feel that one should not expose feelings in public or private. But it is important to express one's feelings in speech so that the other is able to listen not only the words but also the feelings with which the words come.

Equally it is important to listen empathetically. This empathetic listening involves not only understanding the words but also understanding the feelings in the words.

Equally it is important to respect the difference in the others – their ideas, their interest, their goals, their way of expression, their mannerism – all these will differ in the other. If you learn to respect these differences in the other, you can make good friends and build good interpersonal relationship.

### Check Your Progress II

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1) What are the three spheres in which the world of relation arises?

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2) Explain the first level of liberation in Levinas.

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### 1.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have seen how our human nature is intersubjective from physiological, developmental, psycho-philosophical perspectives. We have given certain tips for developing interpersonal relationships as well. As we live in a society where people are afraid to relate with others, this chapter will help them to understand that they are to be related in order to be fully human.

In birth, man is intersubjective; in growth, man is intersubjective; philosophically man is called to be intersubjective. But we find that man is more prone to interobjectivity, that is, he considers others as an object to be experienced and not as a person to be related. This objectivity makes others feel used by the agent and not loved by the other.

### 1.8. KEY WORDS

**Empathy:** Empathy is the capability to share another being's emotions and feelings.

**Freedom:** Freedom is the state of not being imprisoned, enslaved, or otherwise constrained. It is the power of choice.

**Responsibility:** Responsibility is a duty, obligation or liability for which someone is held accountable.

### 1.9. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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### 1.10. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

### Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Human nature is intersubjective in the sense that human beings are born by the intersubjective acts of a man and a woman on one side and the reaction between the will of God and desire of the human persons on the other side. Thus human beings are intersubjective in the process of their birth. During his growth also man needs other persons like parents, siblings, aunts and uncles, grandfather and grandmother in order that they all together shape the person to be a human being. In the school a child learns manners and taboos and social values in the interaction with the teachers and schoolmates. As a teenager a boy or a girl finds his or her own talents and individuality only in relation to his peer group. As a young adult, he chooses a life partner to experience this intersubjectivity in depth. As an old person, one depends on his or her children for their sustenance and happiness. Thus from birth to death a human person is intersubjective.

2. All human beings are born as a result of union between a sperm and an ovum of a man and a woman respectively. Once the sperm fertilizes the ovum, the ovum becomes a fertilized ovum technically known as *zygote*. This single cell develops into a complicated composition of trillions of body cells and yet containing the same genetic material as was inherited at the time of conception. The Zygote, the fertilized ovum consists of semi-fluid mass called *Cytoplasm* and within the cytoplasm there is a nucleus, which contains the *chromosomes*. These chromosomes exist always in pairs. In human zygote there are 23 pairs of chromosomes, of which 23 were contributed by the father and 23 by the mother and so both father and mother are equal partners in their transmission of hereditary characteristics.

### Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. Three are the spheres in which the world of relation arises. The first: life with nature. Here the relation vibrates in the dark and remains below language. The creatures stir across from us, but they are unable to come to us and the You we say to them sticks to the threshold of language. The second: life with men. Here the relation is manifest and enters language. We can give and receive the You. The third: life with the spiritual beings. Here the relation is wrapped in a cloud

but these beings reveal themselves, this lacks but creates language. We hear no You and yet feel addressed; we answer – creating, thinking, acting: with our being we speak the basic word, unable to say You with our mouth.

2. The first liberation proceeds from indetermination (abstract) to particularization (specific). This indeterminateness is a situation of “there is” (IL Y A) while the particularization is the state of ‘I’ or subjectivity. The situation of “there is” is a situation of horror and darkness. From this horror, the human subject starts looking for a way of liberating itself. This process takes place as a growing and interiorising movement of self-identification. It will establish itself as a separate and independent “self” within the being. It is a state of localization of consciousness in terms of space and time. Localization is a prerequisite of the consciousness to become possible. The concrete condition of the possibility of localization is the ‘body’. By establishing itself, the body turns the possibility of every subjectivity into reality.





## UNIT 2 HUMAN BEING AS LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL

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2.6 The Relationship Between Language and Thought

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2.9 Humans and Culture

2.10 Definition of Culture

2.11 Elements of Culture

2.12 Humans as Cultural Beings

2.13 Classification of Cultures

2.14 Valuation of Cultures

2.15 Let Us Some Up

2.16 Key Words

2.17 Further Readings and References

2.18 Answers to Check Your Progress

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall examine both language and culture. With regard to language we shall see its importance for human life, how it differs from communication among animals, why and how philosophers have concerned themselves with language, the various functions of language and the criteria for judging the meaningfulness of language.

Concerning culture we shall study its various components, why we say that humans are cultural beings, the way cultures can be classified and the criteria for judging cultures.

Through this unit we will

- realize how language and culture are important characteristics of human life;
- become aware of the reason why linguistic studies gained prominence in the last century;
- learn the various functions of language;
- study the different elements of culture;
- acquire some understanding of the criteria that may be used for determining the meaningfulness of language and the significance of culture.

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

By our nature we human beings are social. That is, we grow and develop only in relationship with other human beings. One of the tools or instruments that enables us to enter into relationship with others is language. We learn and inherit many things (e.g. language, customs, values) from the society in which we live. What we acquire from society as member of a society is culture. Culture and language are interrelated as we shall see.

## 2.2 DEFINITION AND ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE

Language has been defined by the U.S. Linguists Bernard Bloch and George L. Trager in the following way: “A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates” (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia*, “Language,” p. 566). The word ‘tree’ is not the real tree. It is only a vocal symbol (sign) for the tree. Battista Mondin describes language as that activity by which humans, through vocal or written signs, put themselves in communication with their own peers or with some other intelligent being, for instance God, to express their own sentiments, desires or knowledge.

People have made many attempts to discover how and when language originated. However, they have not been able to arrive at a commonly accepted theory. Spoken language, in one form or

another, is as old as *homo sapiens*. The earliest records of written language that we have goes back no more than about 4,000 or 5,000 years.

### **2.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LANGUAGE IN HUMAN LIFE**

One of the abilities specific to humans is the use of language. Only human beings, so far as we know, speak a language. Language is so specific to human beings that according to Martin Heidegger it is the ability to speak that makes one specifically a human being. He says: “It is said that man is by nature a speaker, ... Saying this, we do not only intend to say that man possesses, besides other capacities, also the one of speech. We intend to say that it is exactly language that makes of man that living being that he is, inasmuch as he is man” (*On the Way to Language*, p. 112).

Human beings communicate not only by using words. They can communicate through signs (sign language), the tone of voice, facial expression, etc.

### **2.4 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANIMAL AND HUMAN COMMUNICATION**

Both animals and human beings have the capacity for communication. However, the ability to communicate that humans have differs from that of animals at least in two important ways:

**Variety:** In animal communication, which is done mainly through vocal noises or some other means, there is very little variety. Humans, on the other hand, are unrestricted in what they can talk about. There is no area of experience that cannot be communicated (at least partially) although one may have to adapt one’s language to cope with new experiences or new thoughts.

**Time and Space:** Animals are unable to communicate things of the past or the future and they cannot communicate knowledge about things that are not in their immediate field of vision. The only exception to this is the bees. Bees are able, through the movements they make, to

communicate to other bees the locations and strength of nectar sources. But they can communicate only about nectar sources and about nothing else. According to the linguist Joseph Greenberg, human beings have achieved 'semantic universality.' That is, we can convey information about all aspects, domains, properties, places or events in the past, present, or future, whether actual or possible, real or imaginary, near or far.

## **2.5 PHILOSOPHICAL PREOCCUPATION WITH LANGUAGE AND THE LINGUISTIC TURN IN PHILOSOPHY**

Language, like any other human reality, can be the object of either scientific investigation or philosophical reflection. When language is studied using scientific methods (experimental verification) it is called linguistics. Linguistics studies the structure, development, etc., of a particular language, its relationship to other languages and the laws which regulate linguistic activity.

The philosophical investigation of language is called semantics. It tries to comprehend the phenomenon of language considered in itself, or in relation to those who use it, the society which creates it and the culture of which it forms an essential element. It concerns itself with questions like: i) what is it for a linguistic expression to have a certain meaning? ii) Are there different kinds of meanings, for example, is there any distinction between cognitive and emotive meaning?

Up to the end of the Nineteenth Century, linguistics and semantics made up a single discipline. A clear distinction between linguistics and semantics was reached only in the Twentieth Century through the works especially of F. De Saussure, a great linguist.

Philosophers have been interested in language and issues related to it right from early times.

Language is a much debated topic in Indian philosophy. There is a clear concern with it in the Vedic texts, where efforts are made to describe links between earthly and divine reality in terms of etymological links between words. The earliest Sanskrit grammar which has survived is

Panini's intricate *Astadhyayi* (Eight Chapters) It dates from about 350 BC. It describes the Sanskrit language in great detail but does not contain much reflection on the nature of language. Such reflections begin to appear in Patanjali's 'Great Commentary' on Panini's work, the *Mahabhasya* (Great Commentary) written around 150 BC. Bhartrhari, the great fifth-century grammarian, is the author of *Vakyapadiya* (Treatise on Sentences and Words). He developed the theory of the sphota, a linguistic entity distinct from a word's sounds. Sounds convey the meaning of sphota. Among the classical systems Mimamsa is concerned with language especially from the perspective of textual interpretation.

Among the issues debated by these philosophers were what can be described as i) the search for minimal meaningful units, and ii) the ontological status of composite linguistic units. In the realm of language this leads to questions like: Do words and sentences really exist? If so, how can they, given that the phonemes that constitute them do not occur simultaneously?

Analysis of concepts and clarification of language has been a prominent part of philosophical activity in the West. Socrates is represented as having devoted a great deal of time to asking questions like "What is justice?"; "What is happiness"? A large part of Aristotle's works is taken up with attempts to arrive at adequate definitions of terms like 'cause', 'good', 'motion', and 'knowledge'. Through the analysis of concepts they tried to bring about greater clarity about the basic ideas we employ in thinking about the world and human life.

In the first half of the Twentieth Century some German-speaking philosophers began to argue that the basic philosophical questions do not concern being (metaphysics) or truth (epistemology) or the good (ethics), but rather the meaning of words, that is, semantics. They gave rise to what is known as Linguistic Philosophy. According to them most of the philosophical problems are caused by linguistic confusion. They can be solved by a correct analysis of language. Ludwig Wittgenstein, one of the prominent members of this school of thinking states: "Most of the propositions and questions of philosophy arise from our failure to understand the logic of our language" (*Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, prop. 4.0016). All branches of philosophy have been influenced by Linguistic Philosophy. This direction taken by all branches of philosophy, under

the influence of linguistic philosophy, whereby they give importance to an analysis of the language that is being used by them, is known as the "linguistic turn" in philosophy.

**Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1) What is language and what is its significance in human life?

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2) What are the main differences between animal and human communication.

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3) What do you understand by the "linguistic turn" in philosophy?

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## 2.6 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT

The relation between thought and speech is not completely clear. In earlier times it was believed that humans as rational and thinking creatures invented language to express their thoughts. This belief is today considered to be a great oversimplification. Many are of the opinion that language emerged not as a medium to express already formulated judgments, questions and the like but as the means for the very activity of thinking. It is further held that the rationality of human beings developed together with the development of their capacity for speaking. In other words, it is not only that thought gives rise to language but language also affects thought.

This intimate connection between language and thought gives rise to the possibility that different languages and language structures might give rise to different ways of understanding and thinking about the world. This does not imply necessarily that different people have totally different ways of understanding the world but that their understanding might differ at least partially.

## 2.7 THE MAIN FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE

Philosophical reflection has brought about the awareness that language is used in a variety of ways. Ludwig Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations* points out many uses of language such as describing objects, reporting an event, expressing one's speculations about an event, making up a story, creating and telling a joke, translating from one language to another, asking, greeting, cursing, giving orders and praying.

This wide variety of functions that language performs in human communication can be brought together under four main categories: the informative, the expressive, the directive and the performative. When language does more than one of these, as is usually the case in a discourse, we can speak of a fifth function, the multiple function.

i) The Informative Function

When language is used to describe the world or to reason about it, then it serves the informative function. Ordinarily this is done through formulating propositions (sentences) to affirm or deny something about reality. For example, 'Today is a bright day,' or 'It is not cold today.' The best example of informative discourse is the language of empirical sciences, which is characterized by clarity, precision, and objectivity.

With regard to propositions one may try to determine whether they are true or false. For example, if one says that it is a bright day, we can check and verify whether it is really so.

#### ii) The Expressive Function

Language serves the expressive function whenever it is used to give vent to (to express) or to arouse feelings, emotions and attitudes. Thus one may express joy and appreciation by shouting, "Well done!"; disappointment by saying, "Oh, how very unfortunate!" The poet expresses complex and concentrated emotions through a poem. Religious persons may express their feelings of wonder and awe at the mystery of the universe by reciting the Gayatri Mantra, the Lord's Prayer, the Fatihah or any other prayer. In all these cases language is used not to communicate information but to communicate (express) one's feelings, emotions or attitudes.

Expressive discourse is used both to express the speaker's feelings and emotions and also to *evoke* certain feelings in the listener.

Expressive discourse as *expressive* is neither true nor false. It just expresses the emotion or feeling. One may try to determine whether it is sincere or insincere, valuable or useless.

#### iii) The Directive Function

Language serves the directive function when it is used to cause or prevent certain actions. The clearest examples of this are commands and requests. When the mother tells the child to stop playing and start studying, the intention is not to communicate any information or to evoke any particular emotion, but to get the child to study. When the passenger tells the ticket-seller 'two

tickets to Delhi,' language is being used directly, to produce *action*. So too, questions can be considered as directive discourse when, as is ordinarily the case, they are posed to get answers.

Directive discourse is also neither true nor false. A command such as 'shut the door' cannot be true or false in any real sense. Such commands can be reasonable (if the door is open) or unreasonable (if the door is closed); proper (if it is very cold and closing may help to keep the room warm) or improper (if it is very hot inside); but not true or false.

#### iv) The Performative Function

A performative utterance is one which, when uttered in appropriate circumstances, actually performs the act it appears to report or describe. Thus, when at the end of the marriage ceremony the priest/poojari/magistrate says, "I now pronounce you husband and wife," the man and the woman really become husband and wife. In the same way, when at an inaugural function the president says, "I now declare the meeting open," the meeting really begins. Other examples are: "I congratulate you...; I apologize for ...; etc.

#### v) Multiple Functions

Except in occasional cases, in ordinary communication, people make use of all the different functions of language. Thus a religious instruction, which may predominantly be directive, may express and evoke sentiments and include some information. And a scientific treatise, essentially informative, may express something of the writer's own enthusiasm and at least an indirect invitation to the reader to verify for himself/herself the conclusions arrived at.

Ceremonial use of language (phrases of greeting; solemn language in religious services) is a mixture of expressive and directive discourse. For example, greetings at social gatherings express and evoke goodwill and sociability. The solemn language of a marriage ceremony expresses the solemnity of the occasion (expressive function) as well as impresses upon the couple the duty and obligation to truly live their new roles as husband and wife (directive function).

## 2.8 CRITERIA OF VALIDITY AND MEANINGFULNESS

We have seen that language has different functions. We should not absolutize or privilege any one function and hold that the others are less important. We should not also apply the same criteria of validity and meaningfulness to the different functions of language. Language that does not give information may be useful for expressing or evoking feelings and emotions. When the poet says, 'The flowers are dancing in the breeze' one should not say that the poet is saying something untrue and meaningless because flowers do not have legs and they cannot really dance. The poet is using language to express beauty, communicate sentiments and evoke emotions. The reader can feel with the poet and grasp what the poet is trying to communicate. Hence poetic, religious, directive and performative language, because they do not always give information, should not be dismissed as useless or meaningless. They have other uses in human discourse and their validity should be judged by standards proper to them.

### Check Your Progress II

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1) What are the main functions of language?

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2) Can the same criteria be used to judge the meaningfulness of different functions of language?

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## 2.9 HUMANS AND CULTURE

Together with language culture is something specific to human beings. The notion of culture, as something that characterizes human life, gained prominence at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as a reaction against the Enlightenment's belief in the unity of humanity and universal progress.

### 2.10 DEFINITION OF CULTURE

Scholars differ on the definition of culture. In 1952 Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn gathered 164 definitions of culture in their book entitled *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. Culture is a term which is used in at least three different senses: elitarian, pedagogical and anthropological.

In the elitarian sense culture refers to a great amount of knowledge. Anyone with vast knowledge in any field (physics, chemistry, philosophy) can be said to be cultured.

In the pedagogical sense culture signifies refinement and elegance attained through education and formation. In this sense we can say that someone is a cultured person.

Although anthropologists differ on what exactly constitutes culture, in the anthropological sense culture, according to the classical definition given by Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, is something "acquired by man as a member of society" ( Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, London, 1913, I:1). It includes knowledge, belief, morals, customs, types of economy and technology, art and architecture, modes of entertainment, legal systems, religion, systems of education and upbringing and everything else one acquires from society. Thus culture refers to all the aspects of human life in so far as they are acquired or determined by membership in a society. The fact

that one eats or drinks is not in itself cultural; it is a biological necessity which someone carries out in order to preserve life. That one eats particular foods and refrains from others though they may be edible and nourishing (some are vegetarians while others are non-vegetarians), and that one eats at particular times and places (in many European countries people have their evening meal around 6.00 p.m.) are cultural inasmuch as they are inherited from a particular society.

Culture distinguishes one human group from another. At the same time cultures are very porous, constantly evolving, open to influences from outside and inside in unpredictable ways and liable to be divided into subcultures. While individuals are shaped by culture they are not prisoners of culture and can influence, react against and contribute to the development of the culture in which they are.

Culture is not something accidental for human beings. It is a constitutive element of human essence, makes up part of the nature of human beings. Culture distinguishes human beings from animals as much as do reason, will and language.

### **2.11 ELEMENTS OF CULTURE**

The principal elements that constitute culture are language, techniques, customs and values (religion).

#### **i) Language**

Language is perhaps the most important element or part of culture. Language (at least the mother tongue) is acquired culturally, that is through the society to which one belongs.

While it is true that language is transmitted culturally, it is equally true that culture as a whole is transmitted very largely through language. Through the use of language, skills, techniques, products and modes of social conduct can be explained and the result of anyone's study, research and inventiveness can be made available to others.



## ii) Techniques

Techniques refer to the procedures used by humans to produce results that are useful. Every society develops its own techniques (methods, tools) for various types of activities. Thus for example, for procuring food different cultures have developed hunting, fishing, agriculture, the herding of cattle, etc. Even though many of these activities are common to different cultures, the particular way in which each culture carries them out will be different. Thus while some people use the milk of cows others use that of buffaloes. While some still use bows, arrows and spears for hunting, others use guns.

It goes without saying that development of techniques and scientific progress go together.

## iii) Customs

Each culture gives rise to its own customs with regard to almost everything; food, clothing, care for children, concern for the aged, initiation into various stages of life (puberty, marriage), religious beliefs, social, political, and economic organization, etc.

More than anything else it is the customs which give expression to the affective life of a society. The customs manifest whether the society as a whole is violent, arrogant, tolerant, friendly, respectful, chaste, lustful, sincere, faithless, etc.. In this sense we may say that customs reveal the heart of the people.

## iv) Values (Religion)

Though the values that different societies uphold may be different there is no society that does not uphold any values. The values upheld by a culture find an explicit expression in religion, in law and in morals. They find an implicit enunciation in techniques, politics and economics. Values give unity, consistency and cohesiveness to culture. Because of the importance of religion (values) in culture, some hold that religion is the heart of culture.

### Check Your Progress III

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) What is culture?

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2) Which are the main elements of culture?.

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<b>2.12 HUMANS AS CULTURAL BEINGS</b>
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Classical Western Philosophy (Plato, Aristotle) considered the human being as a natural being, that is a being who receives an immutable essence from nature at birth, which remains constant all through one's life. A similar understanding of human beings underlies the classical theory of caste system. One's caste is determined by the Supreme Being or gods and it is not to be changed. If 'act according to nature' was the slogan of Greek philosophy it may be said that 'act according to your caste duty' (Gita 3:35; 18:47-48) had been the watchword of the Indian ethos for a very long time.

Modern philosophers (Hegel, Sartre, Heidegger, and philosophers like M.N. Roy of communist allegiance) consider the human being as a historical being, who creates his/her own essence

through the choices that one makes and the projects one accomplishes in history. In the words of Karl Marx, “the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In reality it is the ensemble of the social relations” (*Thesis on Feuerbach*, 1845, thesis no. 6). Jean Paul Sartre holds that a human being begins as nothing (no-thing) and makes himself/herself through the choices that one makes all through life. So “man is nothing else but what he makes of himself ... Man is nothing else than his plan, he exists only to the extent that he fulfils himself, he is therefore nothing else than the ensemble of his acts, nothing else than his life” (Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, p. 36, 47).

However, it is more correct to say that human being is neither only a natural being nor only a historical being, but rather a cultural being. This means that not all of the human being is a product of nature, nor of decisions made in history, but partly of nature and partly of history. Certainly we receive our organs and faculties from nature. However, how we care for and develop our organs and faculties, what we do with them and what choices we make as we live in history depend, to a great extent, on the culture in which we are.

### 2.13 CLASSIFICATION OF CULTURES

Depending on the criteria (e.g. literacy, promotion of religion) being used, anthropologists, philosophers and historians have classified cultures differently. We shall enumerate a few of them.

i) **Preliterate and Literate Cultures:** Preliterate cultures are those which lack a written script and literate cultures are those which have one. Studies have shown that preliterate cultures are not necessarily inferior to or older than literate cultures. Hence it would be wrong to apply adjectives like ‘primitive’ to preliterate cultures.

ii) **Peasant and Citizen Cultures:** Peasant culture is the one which develops in the villages, in essentially rural settings while citizen culture is that which develops in great cities.

iii) Popular and Official Cultures: Popular culture is characterized by simplicity, spontaneity, sentiment and imagination whereas the official culture makes everything subject to the control of reason with little room for sentiment and fantasy. Official culture is less rich in myths, rites, symbols and less favourable to popular religious manifestations. It is to be noted that at times, the same people who behave normally according to the rules of the official culture act also according to popular culture and vice versa.

iv) Scientific and Humanistic Cultures: Scientific culture is one that gives preference in studies to scientific disciplines like physics, chemistry, mathematics, medicine and astronomy. Humanistic cultures give priority to humanities like literature, art, history and philosophy. It would make humanity poorer if we were to disregard either the scientific disciplines or the humanities. While science can enrich us with better things, it is humanities which tell us what is right and wrong and how to use things in such a way as to promote our integral wellbeing.

v) Secular and Religious Cultures: Secular culture is one that keeps religion out of state legislation, civil code, political decisions, scholastic education, etc. Religious culture includes religion as an essential part of all aspects of socio-political life. When we say that India is a secular country it does not mean that Indians have no regard for religion or religion is not important for the Indians. It only means that the State (country), by its Constitutions, does not favour and propagate any one religion as the official religion of the country. In Saudi Arabia, for example, Islam is the official religion. In the USA, most people are Christians but there is a strict separation between the State and religion.

vi) Material and Ideological Cultures: Material culture refers to the economic structure of society which may be also considered as the base structure of society. Ideological culture refers to the superstructure made up of politics, art, religion, philosophy, etc. The Marxist philosophers consider material culture as primary for human existence and ideological culture as only secondary. However, because human being is an intrinsic union of both matter and spirit, to give primacy to the material is to have a lopsided understanding of human existence.

We have enumerated different ways in which cultures have been classified. In as much as they remain on the descriptive and scientific level, they are helpful for understanding the way human beings live and behave. However, if these classifications are used in a valuative sense, that is, to attribute superiority or inferiority to any culture, they can be dangerous leading to “unjustified discrimination, arbitrary preferences and injurious conflicts” (Mondin, *Philosophical Anthropology*, p. 169).

## 2.14 VALUATION OF CULTURES

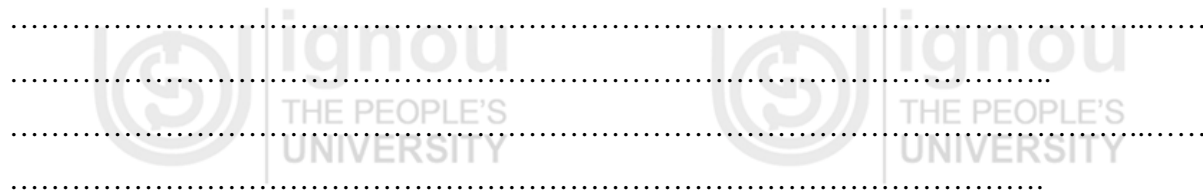
Can we judge cultures and is it legitimate to do so? We have already said that attributing superiority or inferiority to cultures can have very adverse consequences. Yet, because culture is at the service of human beings, it is legitimate to pass moral judgment (to say whether it is good or bad, right or wrong) on culture or on elements of culture. But what criteria will we use in order to say whether a culture is good or bad? The criteria cannot be given by cultural anthropology whose task is mostly to study cultures and describe them. As cultural data belief is as legitimate as unbelief, polygamy as legitimate as monogamy. So it belongs to the philosopher (using ethics) and the theologian (using religious standards) to judge cultures. And they should judge them from the perspective of spiritual and moral values because they are the elements that matter most for finding meaning in life. Thus a culture is good or evil, ethically, according to whether it favours or obstructs the spiritual growth of its members, the integral development (physical, psychological, spiritual) of its members.

### Check Your Progress IV

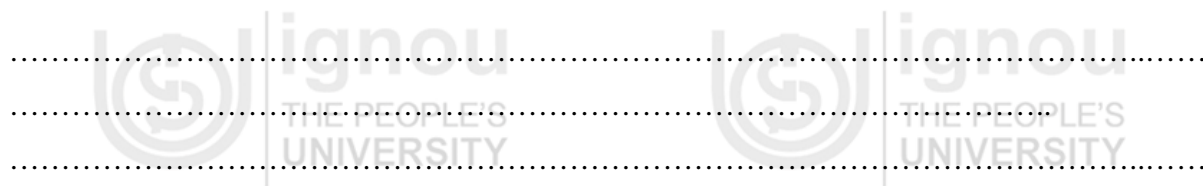
**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) Are human beings products of nature or culture alone?



3) Mention some classifications of cultures. What criteria can we use to judge cultures?



**2.15 LET US SUM UP**

In this chapter we have tried to look at two characteristics specific to human beings, namely language and culture. After defining language we studied its importance for human life. Because it is important philosophers have concerned themselves with various aspects of language from ancient times. Linguistic analysis, which became prominent towards the middle of the twentieth century, has affected all branches of philosophy. Linguistic philosophers have made us become more aware of the various functions of language. As language has different functions, all language cannot be judged using the same criteria for meaningfulness.

Culture is what humans inherit as members of a society. We are neither products of nature nor of history alone, but of both. Culture is constituted by many elements. Classifying cultures can be useful for study and description but attributing inferiority or superiority to cultures uncritically can be destructive. From an ethical perspective we may say whether a culture is good or bad depending on whether it promotes values significant for the wellbeing of human beings.





## 2.16 KEY WORDS

Homo sapiens = modern human beings regarded as a species

Enlightenment = 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophy that placed too much emphasis on reason and tried to shed the light of knowledge on the mind and conscience of people.

Faculty = material or spiritual power in human beings that help them to carry out different types of acts (e.g. sight, will, intellect)

Phoneme = distinct unit of sound.

## 2.17 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## 2.18 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

### i) Answers to Check Your Progress I

Language can be described as a system of arbitrary symbols by which human beings cooperate among themselves.

Language is a quality specific to human beings. Animals cannot communicate in the same way as human beings. Martin Heidegger considers the ability to use language as that quality (characteristic) which sets human beings apart from other beings and makes us really human.

Animal and human communication differ in two important ways. a) Variety: Human beings can communicate much more than animals. There is no area of experience that human beings cannot communicate. b) Time and space: Animals can communicate only in the present. They cannot speak of the past or the future. They can communicate only about things which are in their field of vision.

Philosophers have been concerned about language from ancient times. However, in the first half of the twentieth century some German-speaking philosophers claimed that many of the problems in philosophy are due to confusion in the way we use language. These problems can be solved if we use language correctly. This gave rise to great interest in the analysis of language. Studying philosophical issues using also linguistic analysis has affected all branches of philosophy. This attention to language in dealing with philosophical questions is known as the 'linguistic turn' in philosophy.

### ii) Answers to Check Your Progress II

The main functions of language are a) informative function, b) expressive function, c) directive function, d) performative function and e) multiple functions. Language performs the informative function when it is used to give information, e.g. language of physics, chemistry. It performs the expressive function when used either to express or evoke feelings, emotions, attitudes, etc. Examples -- poetic language and language of worship. When language is used to cause or prevent actions it performs the directive function, e.g. commands. When language is used to make actual or perform what it says it plays the performative function, e.g. declaring two people husband and wife. When any type of discourse carries out different functions we say that it performs multiple functions, e.g. a religious instruction.

Because the functions they perform are different, the same criteria cannot be used to judge the meaningfulness of different types of language. Thus with regard to a statement of information we can ask whether it is true or false. With regard to poetic statements like 'the flowers are dancing in the breeze' we cannot ask whether it is true or false because flowers cannot really dance. Although flowers cannot dance we cannot say that this statement is meaningless or senseless. This statement is meaningful as it expresses the deep experience of a poet in which we too can share.

### **iii) Answers to Check Your Progress III**

Culture has been described differently by different people. Following the definition given by E.B. Tylor we may say that culture is whatever one acquires as member of a society. It includes things like knowledge, morals, belief, customs, types of economy and technology, art and architecture, legal systems and religion.

The main elements of culture are a) language, b) techniques, c) customs and d) values (religion). We acquire, especially our mother tongue, as we grow up in society. Language is acquired through culture, and culture is transmitted through language. Techniques refer to the procedures we use in order to produce useful results. Every society develops its own techniques for performing various activities. Each culture gives rise to customs with regard to almost everything like food, clothing and the way of practicing religion. All cultures uphold values although the values which different cultures uphold may be different at least partially. Values give unity, consistency and cohesiveness to a culture. Values are mostly mediated through religion.

### **iv) Answer to Check Your Progress IV**

We receive our organs, our faculties and some of our characteristics by birth. In this sense we are partly a product of nature. We develop and shape ourselves through the choices we make as we live in history. So we are partly products of history. Combining these two (nature and history) we can say that we are cultural beings. That is, we receive some characteristics from nature and we develop ourselves through choices that we make in history, and both these take place within a culture and depending on culture.

Cultures can be classified as preliterate and literate, peasant and citizen, popular and official, scientific and humanistic, secular and religious, and material and ideological.

Cultures are at the service of human beings. So we can judge a culture as good or bad depending on whether it promotes or obstructs the total growth of the person, which includes the material, the psychological and the spiritual dimensions.



## UNIT 3

## HUMAN PERSON AND HUMAN RIGHTS

### Contents

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Human Person and Freedom

3.3 Contribution of Psychology in Understanding Human Person

3.4 Human Rights

3.5 Let Us Sum Up

3.6 Key Words

3.7 Further Readings and References

3.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to understand:

- from a philosophical perspective the nature of human person
- how the notion of Human Rights is related to the idea of person.

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of 'person' is something that needs to be clarified from various perspectives. Philosophically the first definition was offered by Boethius, "*Persona est rationalis naturae individua substantia*," ("A person is an individual substance of a rational nature.") He also called it a "*suppositum*." Hence, the basic characteristic of the person is the reason. Rationality makes the human being stand out as a special creature, and gives a unique position to it. It is true that it is not Boethius's definition that is operative in contemporary discussions about persons.

We need to go beyond the definition of Boethius and look for additional notions to reach an adequate definition or description of person. One of the important aspects of person is the

'bodiliness' or reference to the body; the notion of person or personal identity without this connotation is incoherent. One may say the notion of person can refer to angels and deity, who have no bodies. Perhaps, here we may have to keep theological notion aside to make the human person stand out, because philosophically 'person' makes no sense without the physical. The absence of any mention of the bodily and an explicit reference to the rational only runs the risk of fostering dangerously the false view of the human being, giving the impression that the emotional, the imaginative, the artistic, the historically embodied, are not as integral to person as rational.

Another important aspect connected to the person is the phenomenon of *time*. Just as time is divided into moments so also extension is divided into points; but one will never get any duration by adding moments just as one will not get any extension by adding points. Moments and points are the divisions of duration and extension, not their parts; so that time is what lies between moments and extension, what lies between points. In the case of time this means in particular that time is not to be in a moment but to be during moments. Hence, if what is in time is not in a moment but during moments, then it is not in the present moment either but *through* the present *from* the past *into* the future. In other words whatever is must endure through time and through the change that measures. Therefore it is not possible to accept the empiricist position that person is a succession of conscious states. *A person has to be something enduring despite all the changes that may take place.* Those who speak of persons stress the fact that persons are *individuals, unique and irreplaceable*. This is one of the important features of the persons quite often insisted upon.

Perhaps, one of the questions that may arise is, in this context how to account for the notion of reason in the definition of person? *Reason* is not to be understood in the sense of the instrumental and mathematical sciences but as the fundamental capacity to be aware of or to be known, and to order actions, traits of character, emotions, etc. Reason's range is only limited by the range of knowables. The knowables cannot be limited to the range of the physical experiences; the notions of beauty, goodness, dignity, and so on are part of reason even though they are not knowable as understood in the restricted sense – they are objects of feeling or imagination or intuition or something of the sort. But we have to admit that it is reason that brings about the fullness of the human being because it opens up persons to the fullness of what is; without it



emotions and feelings and intuitions would be blind or empty. Our 'being' lies, not just in mere existing, but in the exercising of our existence, in the actual living out of what we are. In traditional philosophy this may be considered as accident. Perhaps, what is required is also doing away with this mechanical interpretation of this substance/accident distinction. To speak of accidents was considered to be inferior or lesser, but truly to speak of accidents is to speak of substance, understood as articulated and perfected through its ways of being, not as bare standing out from nothingness. If substance by itself is first in the order of mere existence, substance as formed through its ways of being first in the order of perfection and completion; and this is possible only through accidents.

Another important aspect of the person is the capacity to follow the moral law, or to recognize others and their dignity, or to value life, and understand the full meaning of temporality. While focusing on the practical and moral side of the person, they should not play down the contemplative and leisurely dimension.

### **3. 2. HUMAN PERSON AND FREEDOM**

Our existence is a co-existence and a pro-existence. We exist together with others and ours is a shared world. Hence our freedom involves a certain transcendence (going beyond oneself). In order to exist as a community we need to experience others' presence and offer ourselves in freedom to others. The presence of the other both 'limits,' and also 'enhances' my freedom.

Freedom is inherent to the human person, and freedom is present all through human existence, and is never totally 'lost.' But it becomes obscured and restrained in inauthentic mode of human existence when the human being forgets his/her future possibility-of-being and is completely absorbed in the present preoccupations. Freedom discloses itself in its 'concrete reality' only in the authentic mode of human existence when he/she actively identifies himself/herself with the task of realizing his/her future possibility-of-being by means of his/her present personal decisions and responsible actions. However, freedom persists as the basic condition of human existence constituted in its basic structures as freedom that can be supposed to have 'fallen' into 'inauthentic' existence and that must hence regain it through 'authentic' existence.

The idea of freedom is also further related to the concepts of 'dread' and 'death.' Dread reveals man's inherent 'nothingness,' which is of the nature of freedom, and failure to face dread results in the 'fallenness' of human existence (e.g. persons being carried away by public opinion), inauthentic mode of existence. Dread has to be faced by accepting the inherent nothingness of the human being, by practicing it in the exercise of personal choice and disinterested activity. One can lead a life of freedom only when death is accepted in its proper perspective, i.e., as the capital possibility of the human existence (Heidegger) or as inevitable end of human existence. Death reduces the human existence to nothing, and it must be accepted as such if the individual is to attain freedom within the human condition. The anticipatory conception of death 'frees' the individual from the delusion of the false permanence of the world, and daily preoccupations, freedom from public opinion, and leads the individual towards the potentiality-of-being. Failure to accept death in the proper perspective creates in the individual a false sense of permanence.

Freedom becomes a necessary condition for human beings to express themselves meaningfully. The notion of freedom has been manipulated by some to the extent of qualifying the enjoyment of it as *hubris*. Freedom is a gift, which is a task and a responsibility. Human life has value when it is lived with others (*Mitsein*). Living with others brings in 'responsibility' and 'rights.' It is through the intersubjective existence of human beings that they achieve their humanity; and for such intersubjective existence freedom becomes a presupposition. We can sum up the basis of freedom as: "In choosing for myself I choose for others also; I am responsible for myself and for everyone else."

It is in *presence* and *participation* that human beings come to freedom and the great value of freedom. When I 'incarnate' myself through presence and participation I enter into *communion* with others; and this can in no way be experienced except in freedom. This experience results in the formation of the community wherein people experience *concern* and *sharing*; these too cannot be demanded, but they are to be experienced in freedom. Such an experience is possible only in the I-Thou relationship of love. As Gabriel Marcel, the great philosopher says: "If I treat the other as Thou I treat him and apprehend him *qua* freedom ... because he is also freedom, and is not only nature; I collaborate with his freedom. The formula sounds paradoxical and self-contradictory, but love is proving it to be true."

It is possible to build up a fraternity which experiences freedom through 'creative fidelity,' 'faith' and 'hope.' Fidelity implies a commitment to the other. There is a close connection between fidelity and loyalty without which free community cannot be built up. As Gabriel Marcel has pointed out, "fidelity is the active perpetuation of presence." As a result of creative fidelity, faith, hope and love human being attain to a form of existence which we can call *intersubjectivity*. It is connected with participation, commitment and community, hence necessarily with freedom.

Freedom comes to light in being able to free oneself from exterior constraint. Hence, we have to become self-conscious, be ourselves and master ourselves in order to be free. Human being is conditioned in every sense, and freedom means *deconditioning* of the human, his/her liberation. This liberation is at once a *freedom from* (our bondages) and a *freedom to* (realize ourselves in our plenitude). There is a double invitation to us; not to allow ourselves to be crushed by culture and nature, by Men, society and the Gods, and also not to dream of a denouement in a horizontal or vertical future that nobody will ever see, but rather to envision a transhistorical present and that neither denies the temporal nor drowns in it. Human freedom is possible and real, not merely for our successors, or in an *other worldly* existence; but now, in the *tempiternal* present, in the deepest core of the *humanum*.

### **3. 3. CONTRIBUTION OF PSYCHOLOGY IN UNDERSTANDING THE HUMAN PERSON**

Personality is the unique pattern of traits which characterizes the individual. We may describe personality as the whole person, including his/her external appearance and behaviour, his/her inner awareness of self as a permanent organizing force in his/her life, and his/her particular pattern of measurable traits. Most of the definitions attempt in one way or another to include the whole person – all the abilities, tendencies, and other innate or acquired characteristics that are more or less consistent, and distinguish him/her from other people. When social scientists use the word personality, they are not thinking of a mysterious something. They are in all probability using it to mean of three things about a person: (1) his/her external appearance and behaviour, what may be called the social stimulus value; (2) his/her awareness of self as a permanent organizing force in his/her life; or (3) his/her particular pattern or organization of measurable

traits, both “inner” and “outer” ones. Although none of the three aspects of personality can be strictly separated from the others, each lends itself to particular techniques of measurement and study.

Another part of psychological understanding of personality is from the point of notion of selfhood. The individual’s concept of self is an important factor in guiding both his/her immediate behaviour and the further development of his personality. There is a consistent form of behaviour in terms of the personality that one is or considered to be. In addition to the conscious self, a person’s intrapersonal organization includes elements of which even he/she may not be directly aware; these may be called the deeper, unconscious levels of personality.

A still another approach to personality is to study the *measurable traits* of the individual. Traits are defined as characteristics – such as mental ability, mechanical aptitude or talent, masculinity, introversion/extraversion, sociability – that can be observed and tested objectively or inferred from observable, measurable behaviour. These are often called *dimensions* of personality because they can be measured on quantitative continuum. Psychologists have consistently shown how heredity and environment influence the development of the personality. Besides these they also acknowledge now the fact the *self* is also a determinant. There are various theories about personality and personality development but we cannot go into these as this paper’s goal is not that. The study of the *unconscious* by Sigmund Freud and others has revolutionized the theory of personality.

### Check Your Progress I

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit. Try to be creative in providing the answer.

1) How do you understand the human person in its various dimensions?

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2) What are the contributions of psychology and other sciences to the understanding of the human person?

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### 3.4 HUMAN RIGHTS

We should approach the topic of Human Rights with great fear and respect. It is not merely an “academic” issue. Human Rights are trampled upon in the East and in the West, in the North as in the South of our planet. Granting the part of human greed and sheer evil in this universal transgression, could it not also be that Human Rights are not observed because in their present form they do not represent a universal symbol powerful enough to elicit understanding and agreement? No culture, tradition, ideology, or religion can today speak for the whole of humankind, let alone solve its problems. Dialogue and intercourse leading to a mutual fecundation are necessary. But sometimes the very conditions for dialogue are not given, because there are unspoken conditions which most partners cannot meet. It is a fact that the present-day formulation of Human Rights is the fruit of a very partial dialogue among the cultures of the world; it is only recently that this question has been acutely felt. Today Human Rights have become a subject of great debate as their violation continues unabated, and yet many people seek redress of their rights when they are violated. Human Rights is a twentieth century term for what has been traditionally known as natural rights or the rights of man.

The first documentation on Human Rights is seen in the Charter of the United Nations adopted in San Francisco on June 25, 1945. Its preamble itself says that its object is to affirm faith in the fundamental Human Rights. On December 10, 1948 the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was adopted by the General Assembly of the UN. The purpose of this beautiful document was put in these terms: “It is the basic international statement of the inalienable rights of all members of the human family. It is intended to serve as a common standard achievement for all peoples and all nations in the effort to secure universal and effective recognition and observance of the rights and freedoms it lists.” Neither the Charter nor the Universal Declaration had any binding force. This deficiency was sought to be removed by the U. N. General Assembly by adopting in



December 1966 two covenants for the observance of Human Rights: (1) The Covenant on civil and political rights, (2) The Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights. The covenant on civil and political rights related to legally enforceable rights of the individual, while the covenant on economic, social and cultural rights was addressed to states to implement them by legislation. The two covenants came into force in December 1976 after ratification by the requisite number of states, i.e. 35. Many other states have ratified subsequently numbering 69 at the end of 1981. The USA and some other nations have not ratified these covenants. The effect of ratification is that the ratifying states are obliged to bring legislation to ensure that the rights proclaimed in the covenants are made enforceable.

### **The Notion of Rights and Human Rights**

Today all of us acknowledge the fact that all human beings have certain rights. But the term 'right' itself is a bit ambiguous. In the first place we can think of right as something which is conceded and enforced by the law of the realm. The right to vote, the right for free speech, right to form assembly, etc., are such rights. But there may be other positive laws of the state which may not be applicable to all. They may be called *positive rights*. Further, we can think also of *moral rights*. But the moral right is not enforceable like the positive right. We need to keep in mind the distinction between what *is* and what *ought to be*. Human rights are universal because they are not derived from a particular position of person or the work he/she performs; they are belonging to the human person.

The human rights are justified not because they are enforceable but precisely because they are acknowledged as rights of all human beings. These rights cannot be 'justified' like other rights which are earned or are acquired by the enactment of special roles. They are not bought, nor are they exclusive. Rights such as 'the right to property,' 'the right to liberty,' 'the right to freedom of religion,' etc., belong to the set of Human Rights. Almost all the constitutions of the different countries acknowledge and approve the Human Rights, although very many governments do not enforce them, and are negligent in punishing the guilty. The mighty nations violate globally the Human Rights but are not punished because of the power they wield. Through globalization and economic colonization the violation of Human Rights go on unabated.



At least in some nations Human Rights commissions are powerful and they call to account the governments and the agencies that violate the rights.

The basic rights enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights are the right to life, which will include the right to protect life in its entirety and to have proper means of livelihood so that one can maintain one's life. Protection from attacks, dangers, war, etc., is included in this right. The right to liberty will consist of freedom of movement, and freedom of speech and expression, and also freedom of peaceful assembly and association. These are curtailed by many nations under various pretexts. Right to property is acknowledged as a human right. Everyone has the right to whatever property he has honestly and lawfully acquired, except that which is lawfully demanded of him as taxation by the system of government under which he lives. Besides these, human being has various social and economic rights which are acknowledged and recommended by the Charter of Human Rights. Equality of all human beings and security of all are considered as human rights. Similarly right to education is considered to be one of the human rights, and parents can determine what education should be given to their children; it should be directed to the fulfilment of one's personality. Political life and freedom are considered as the rights of the human being. An individual has the right to engage in whatever occupation he/she finds worthwhile. Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy arts and to share in the scientific advancement and its benefits. All human beings have the right to work and free choice of employment, and also the right to just and favourable conditions of work and protection against unemployment. The payment for work has to be done without discrimination. The right to form trade unions is considered to be one of the basic rights. Similarly all have the right to leisure, reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Some important basic assumptions that are involved in the notion of Human Rights may be mentioned here. The first and most important is the *dignity of the human person*. There is a need to distinguish the person from the individual. The individual is a selection of a few aspects of the person for practical purposes and is an abstraction. An individual may be considered as an isolated knot, while the person is the entire fabric around that knot, woven from the total fabric of the real. The limits of the person are not fixed; they depend utterly on his or her personality. There will not be agreement on my aggressive defense of my individual rights, but there will be unanimity on protection of the rights and dignity of the person. This is one of the reasons why

feelings of revolt arise in us when we hear of the ill-treatment meted out to others on basis of caste or race or ethnicity. Human rights are intimately connected to democracy, and individuals need to be protected from the oppression of structure. Human Rights acts as a legal device for the protection of smaller numbers of people (the individual or the minority) faced with the power of greater numbers. What is important to be achieved through the implementation of the Human Rights is the protection of the *humanum*.

### Check Your Progress II

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit. Providing additional material through your reading and reflection will carry more weight.

1) What do you understand by Human Rights, and what are the implications?

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2) Which are the most important rights enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights?

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### The Indian Context and Fundamental Rights

It may be in place to mention a few words in relation to the Indian context with regard to the notion of Human Rights. In ancient Indian discussions or systems of philosophy we do not come across an exact equivalent for the term 'human rights.' It is after independence that we have

developed the concept of “Fundamental Rights.” Perhaps, the most suitable term we can discover in the Indian thought is an all-embracing one namely *dharma*, which can be translated both as ‘duty’ and ‘right.’ This term comes from the root *dher-* which means to support, strengthen, etc. In India they seem to have given importance to the concept of ‘duty’ than ‘right.’ When each one performs his/her *dharma* the society will be functioning as a well-oiled machine. Also the *dharma* was considered to be executed at various levels – there is *dharma* at the level of the society as human beings, *mānava-dharma*, there is *dharma* at the level of the group, *kula-dharma*, and finally the individual’s *dharma*, *svadharma*, which also has various ramifications like *rājadharmā* (the duty of the kings), *pitṛ-dharma* (duty of the father), etc. For the smooth functioning of the society all these aspects of *dharma* have to be fulfilled. Then there will not be violations of rights; each one will be concerned about the protection of the rights of others.

There is a close similarity between the Charter of Human Rights and the Fundamental Rights in the Indian Constitution. The notion of fundamental rights enshrined in our Constitution is, indeed, unique. There were no fundamental rights under any of the Government of India Acts because they were founded on the English doctrine of sovereignty of Parliament which was repugnant to any limitations upon the authority of Parliament, by way of safeguarding individual rights. For the same reason, the Simon Commission had rejected the idea of enacting declarations of fundamental rights on the ground that they were practically useless. But nationalist opinion since the time of the Nehru report was definitely in favour of a Bill of Rights because the experience gained from the British regime was that a subservient legislature might occasionally help the executive in committing inroads upon individual liberty. Hence, a number of Fundamental Rights are enshrined in the Constitution of India in Part III, which are available not only against the executive but also are limitations upon the powers of the legislature. Although the model has been taken from the United States, the Indian Constitution does not go that far, and rather effects a compromise between the doctrines of parliamentary sovereignty and judicial supremacy. These rights are basic and human; hence they flow from natural rights and human rights. These rights provide an atmosphere suited for the growth and smooth functioning of the society. These rights are wide ranging and comprehensive and fall under six heads: right to equality, right to freedom, right against exploitation, right to freedom of religion, cultural and educational rights, and right to constitutional remedies. These are not privileges or favours but

basic rights to which every citizen is entitled. However, since they are not absolute or unlimited, their exercise can be reasonably restricted by the State on various grounds.

There are a few philosophical assumptions which seem to be at the basis of the Declaration on Human Rights as well as the Fundamental Rights in the Indian Constitution.

1. At basis of the discourse on Human Rights and Fundamental Rights is the assumption of a universal human nature common to all peoples. Implied in these rights is the notion that this human nature must be *knowable*. Further, the organ by which this human nature is known is also universal namely *reason*. These rights are considered as *natural* rights inherent in man. It is also implied that this human nature is essentially *different* from the rest of reality. Man is the master of himself and the universe. In today's terminology he is understood as the *shepherd* of reality. 2. The second assumption is that of the dignity of the individual. Human Rights defend the dignity of the individual vis-à-vis society at large and the State in particular. This also implies not only the distinction but also the *separation* between individual and society. In this view the human being is fundamentally the individual. Society is a kind of superstructure, which can easily become a menace and also an alienating factor for the individual. Human Rights and Fundamental Rights are primarily to protect the individual, especially from harassment. Further, it indicates the *autonomy* of humankind vis-à-vis and often versus the Cosmos. The Cosmos is seen as a kind of understructure; the individual stand in between the Society and the World. These declarations of rights defend the autonomy of the individual. It resonates also with the idea of Man as *microcosmos* and reverberations of the conviction that Man is *imago dei* (image of God); but at the same time we need to go beyond the ontological and theological formulations. The individual has inalienable dignity because he is an end in himself and a kind of 'absolute.' 3. The third assumption is that of a *democratic social order*. Society is assumed to be not a hierarchical order founded on a divine will or law or mythical origin, but a sum of "free" individuals organized to achieve otherwise unreachable goals. Society is seen not as a family or a protection, but as something unavoidable which can easily abuse the power conferred on it. The Society crystallizes in the State, which theoretically expresses the will of the people, or at least of the majority. This implies that each individual is seen as equally important and thus equally responsible for the welfare of the society. Hence the individual has the right to stand by his/her convictions and propagate them or to resist impositions against his/her inherent freedom. It

further indicates that Society is nothing but the sum total of the individuals whose wills are sovereign and ultimately decisive.

### Check Your Progress III

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit. Try to be as creative as possible in your answers.

1) Human Rights and Fundamental Rights seem to resemble, do you see any differences between them?

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.....  
.....

2) Why do Human Rights and Fundamental Rights become so urgent and imperative in our contemporary world? Answer by giving violations of Human Rights and Fundamental Rights in recent history. Your philosophical perception of them is very important.

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.....

### 3.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit our main concern is to get as best an understanding as possible about the human person and his/her rights. We have started with a classical analysis of the person and then went on to analyze the notion various perspectives especially from contemporary philosophy and psychology. Person is a complex phenomenon and needs to be considered from various angles. Reason is an important characteristic of the person, but at the same time his/her emotions, feelings and other aspects also play important roles. A distinction needs to be made between individual and person, and person and society. There are various psychological factors that go to make the human personality, and we just pointed some of them. Then basing on the fact the



human person has various rights we went on to analyze the Human Rights in some detail. We indicated the historical development of these rights and how they grew up to the present state through different stages of development. These rights although a very 'sacred' document has not been given sufficient importance by various governments and other agencies.

### 3.6 KEY WORDS

**Natural Rights:** Natural rights are rights which are not contingent upon the laws, customs, or beliefs of a particular society or polity. Natural rights are thus necessarily universal, whereas legal rights are culturally and politically relative.

**Human Rights:** **Human rights** are basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled. Proponents of the concept usually assert that all humans are endowed with certain entitlements merely by reason of being human.

**Fundamental Rights:** The fundamental rights are certain human rights given a high degree of judicial deference in conflicts between individual liberty and governmental intrusion.

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### 3.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

#### Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. The understanding of the human person: For Boethius, one of the earliest philosophers, “person is an individual substance with a rational nature.” Rationality or reason constitutes one of the important elements of a person. Person is one with a capacity for relationships and self-evaluation. Another important aspect is the ‘bodiliness’; a being endowed with a body, in other terms the physical aspect. Human person is one who is physically embodied. Very much connected to the notion of person is the phenomenon of time. A person is one who moves *through* the present *from* the past *into* the future. Hence, a person is not a mere succession of conscious states. A person has to be something enduring despite all the changes that may take place. Persons are *individuals, unique* and *irreplaceable*. A person has the capacity to follow moral law, or to recognize others and their dignity, or to value life, and understand the full meaning of temporality. There is also a contemplative and leisurely dimension. The most important dimension of the human person is *freedom*. It is constitutive of his nature. Freedom is inherent to the human person, and freedom is present all through human existence, and is never totally ‘lost.’ Together with freedom human being experiences dread, nothingness, death, etc. Freedom brings in also the notion of the community; only in the context of the community true freedom can be experienced. Accompanying freedom is also the notion of responsibility.

2. Psychology did not have an independent existence about two centuries back; it was considered to be part and parcel of philosophy. But with the study of human mind evolving from an empirical point of view, psychology became an independent science. Psychology, especially abnormal psychology, has done a lot of studies on the human personality. By the notion of personality we understand all the abilities, tendencies, and other innate or acquired characteristics that are more or less consistent, and distinguish him or her from other people.

Psychology has brought out an important dimension of personality as *selfhood*. A special approach to personality which psychology adopts is the study of the *measurable traits* of the individual. The notion of self is a determinant in the study of personality. The study of the unconscious popularized by Sigmund Freud and others revolutionized the approach to the human person.

## Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. The declaration of Human Rights was, indeed, a great achievement, a symbol of legal victory of the thought of “human equality.” The slogan of “Liberty, Fraternity and Equality” of the French Revolution had a strong influence on the movement towards the declaration of the Human Rights. These rights belong to man precisely because of his/her being human. Human Rights are justified not because they are enforceable but because they are acknowledged as rights of all human beings. In India we know how the low castes were oppressed and were denied equal rights, which happens even now in some parts of our country. The various implications are that human being is a *microcosm*, also from a religious perception he/she is *imago dei* (image of God). Dignity of the human person is another important assumption; and also the distinction between the individual and the person.

2. As we see the basic rights enshrined in the declaration are right to life, which will include the right to protect life and right to means of livelihood, so that one can maintain one’s life. There is right liberty which will consist of freedom of movement, freedom of speech and expression, and also freedom of peaceful assembly and association. Right to property is acknowledged as a human right. Also human beings need to enjoy various economic and social rights. Equality of all and security of all are considered as human rights. Right to education and the parents’ right to determine the children’s education is also part of the Human Rights. Political freedom, individual’s right to engage in whatever occupation which is worthwhile, the right to work and free choice of employment and to get the payment without discrimination, right to participate in the cultural life of the community, the right to form trade unions, right to leisure with reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay, etc., are the important rights mentioned in the Charter.

### Answers to Check Your Progress III

1. The Human Rights and the Fundamental Rights in the Indian Constitution have a lot resemblance. The notion of fundamental rights is, indeed, unique. The Britishers never could think of fundamental rights because they upheld the sovereignty of the Parliament; hence the fundamental rights of the individual were alien to them. Fundamental rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution are safeguards against the executive as well as the legislature. These are basic and human; hence they flow from natural rights and human rights. These rights provide an atmosphere suited for the growth and smooth functioning of the society; and they are wide ranging and fall under six heads: right to equality, right to freedom, right against exploitation, right to freedom of religion, cultural and educational rights, and right to constitutional remedies.

2. In answering this question one has to exercise a lot of reflection and also must try to analyze the happenings in recent history from a perspective of the Human Rights. One needs to look at events like war (e.g. Vietnam war, Iraq war, etc), caste or racial or gender discrimination. Starvation and death due to lack of food, denial of basic needs of man, etc., will all come under violation of the Human Rights. Religions also can commit violation of Human Rights. Right to food has to be recognized as an important right of the human beings. Global warming and climate change need to be highlighted. One has to reflect in a philosophical manner on the violation of rights that are daily taking place in our midst.

## UNIT 4

## GENDER ISSUES AND HUMAN PERSON

### Contents

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Description of Gender
- 4.3 Gender Stereotypes
- 4.4 Gender and Sex Differences
- 4.5 Nexus between Gender and Caste
- 4.6 Combination of Caste and Class against Women
- 4.7 Gender-based Division of Labour
- 4.8 Domestication of Women Through 'Sexist' Language
- 4.9 Towards a Gender-just Society: Some Challenges
- 4.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.11 Keywords
- 4.12. Further Readings and References
- 4.13 Answers to Check Your Progress

### 4. 0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit – the fourth one in “Human Person and Society” – is to give you an awareness and understanding of Gender Issues with a view to ensure women’s empowerment and gender justice for women in all walks of life. It is also to look at gender analysis as more than a study of women. It is an analysis of gender relations and of gender as a structuring principle in all human societies. Another objective is to foster co-responsibility, mutual respect and partnership of women and men for the good of humanity and the universe. By the end of this Unit, you will be able:

- to grasp the meaning of ‘gender’
- to be aware of the implications of gender relationships/ caste/ class
- to differentiate gender and sex terminology

- to challenge existing social inequalities based on gender bias

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

There has been a growing interest in gender studies ever since the United Nations Declaration on the Decade of Women (1975-1985) that acknowledged the Women's Movement as essential to the promotion of fundamental human rights. Serious efforts have been made in recent times, both on the part of governments and developmental agencies, to address gender-related issues. In fact the emerging gender concerns have been increasingly taking centre stage in the political arena as well as at the social level demanding revolutionary changes.

One of the most encouraging features of the Indian Constitution is its commitment to gender equality/equity. A few important provisions for women are:

Article 14 - equal rights and opportunities in the political, economic and social spheres.

Article 15 - prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex.

Article 15 (3) - enables affirmative discrimination in favour of women.

Article 39 - equal means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work.

Article 42 - just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

Article 51(A)(e) - fundamental duty to renounce the practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

Apart from the above mentioned provisions, the legislation has also made certain policies like National Policy for empowerment of women 2001. In various Five Year Plans such as - Seventh Plan, Eighth Plan (1992-1997), Ninth Plan (1997-2002) and the Tenth Plan, various schemes and policies were introduced.

Nevertheless, we have a long way to go in the realization of gender justice for women. Sadly women's humanity/personhood is yet to find due recognition and affirmation among all sections of our society. Religions too, in lesser or greater degree are guilty of gender discrimination in their beliefs and practices. A cursory look at the caste and class divisions, whether motivated by

a theoretical doctrine or practical need evokes vivid images of the ways in which unjust structures have been instituted and perpetuated. As long as decision-makers continue to operate within a patriarchal framework, the road to gender equality and equity gets longer and problematic. Keeping this paradoxical context as a backdrop, we shall undertake a brief study on Gender Issues and Human Person.

At the outset it must be clarified that gender analysis is more than the study of women. As V.A. Belsare expresses succinctly, “it is the analysis of gender relations and of gender as a structuring principle in all human societies...” Gender-based discrimination persists in the family, workplace, housing, education, disaster relief, health care, and countless other areas. Gender issues are to be dealt with at the social, cultural, religious, economic and political levels. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to cover all gender issues.

#### **4.2 DESCRIPTION OF GENDER**

Gender is the cultural definition of behaviour acknowledged as appropriate to the sexes in a given society at a given time. It may be described as a set of cultural roles, defined by existing power relations and social practices. In other words, gender is inscribed on women and men through individual and collective socialization. According to Webster’s Dictionary, “gender” derives from the Latin *gener-*, genus, birth, race, kind, gender. It refers to (1) Sex “A subclass within a grammatical class (as noun, pronoun, adjective, or verb) of a language that is partly arbitrary but also partly based on distinguishable characteristics (such as shape, social rank, manner of existence, or sex) and that determines agreement with a selection of other words or grammatical forms.” As Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza points out, in English, gender is a classificatory dualistic system, distinguishing the sexes as male and female, masculine and feminine, man and woman. Already before birth we are indexed either as girls or boys. Countless questionnaires continue to re-inscribe this classification when they invite us to identify either as male (m) or as female (f).

In the context of a patriarchal culture, which not only glorifies men’s achievements but also privileges men’s choices and interests over and above those of women, *gendered socialization*



has crippled women's growth. With its multiple meanings such as 'ideology, social process and social product' (Maithreyi Krishnaraj), and as an analytical term, 'gender' expresses socio-cultural definitions of man and woman, the way societies categorize men and women and assign them social roles (Kamla Bhasin). While men are rated by the masculine standards of independence, power and self-confidence, women are called to fulfil their "true 'feminine' nature and destiny through self-sacrificing service and loving self-effacement"(Kochurani Abraham).

Using gender as a key analytical category, feminist theorists have elaborated on Simone de Beauvoir's dictum "wo/men are not born but made." They have "argued that gender is not a natural given but a societal construct, a socio-cultural principle of classification that imposes psychological, social, cultural, religious, and political meaning upon biological sexual identity. The category of gender questions seemingly universal beliefs about wo/men and men and unmasks their cultural-societal roots" (E. Schussler Fiorenza) All vehicles of culture – family, religion, education, language, media – to name a few play a significant role to transform gender socialization into stereotypes.

#### **4.3 GENDER STEREOTYPES**

Most of the so-called masculine or feminine traits are learnt by men and women as part of socialization process, which in the course of time become stereotypes. Rita Noronha observes that the process of gender-role stereotyping the feminine and the masculine occurs in various sites of social relations: the family, neighbourhood, school and worship places. Through this process of gendering that begins with birth or rather in the womb itself, girls and boys are trained to manifest the characteristics assigned to them by society. Consequently, they learn to live up to patriarchal traditions, norms and myths. Norwin Rego provides the following:

A stereotype is a simplified and/or standardized conception or image with specific meaning, often held in common by people about another group. A stereotype can be a conventional and oversimplified conception, opinion, or image, based on the assumption that there are attributes that members of the other group hold in common. Stereotypes are sometimes formed by a previous illusory correlation, a false association between two variables that are loosely if at all

correlated. Stereotypes may be positive or negative in tone. Persons may be grouped based on racial group, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age or any number of other categories. By way of illustration, we shall use the list of stereotypes below given by Philomena D'Souza:

**Feminine**

Timid  
Heart  
Obedient  
Nurturing  
Dependent  
Sensitive  
Gentle  
Submissive  
Passive  
Religious  
Chaste  
Emotional  
Subjective  
Weak  
Intuitive  
Lacks Confidence  
Silent  
Follower

**Masculine**

Brave  
Head  
Commanding  
Working  
Independent  
Ambitious  
Rough  
Aggressive  
Active  
Secular  
Virile  
Rational  
Objective  
Strong  
Logical  
Self-Confidence  
Serious  
Leader

Despite the faulty belief of some people as exemplified in the book *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, 'masculine' and 'feminine' are two sides of the same creative principle and two ways of being human. Both are human qualities which exclude claims of superiority or inferiority. While acknowledging the biological differences between the sexes, we affirm that both male and female humans are called to develop their full personhood.

**4.4 GENDER AND SEX DIFFERENCES**

The term 'gender' is used both in academic discourse and in the media as interchangeable with 'sex'. As Lerner rightly remarks, such usage "hides and mystifies the difference between the biological given - sex - and the culturally created - gender." Unlike the physiological difference between male and female, gender roles are the creation of humans. Hence they are 'neither universal nor static.' Since they are learned, they can also be unlearned. What is considered to be "womanly" and "manly" varies widely between different times and places, whereas the purely biological distinction of being female or male is universal.

The term 'sex-gender' introduced by the anthropologist Gayle Rubin, has found wide acceptance among feminists. It refers to the institutionalized system which allots resources, property and privileges to persons according to culturally defined roles. Thus, it is sex which determines women's child-bearing role, whereas it is the sex-gender system which assigns their child-rearing responsibility. Feminist scholars argue that women's subordinate and secondary position is due to socially constructed and not naturally occurring patterns of gender division.

The distinction between 'sex' and 'gender' as advanced by Robert Stoller represents an influential piece of analysis:

With a few exceptions, there are two sexes, male and female. To determine sex one must assay the following conditions: chromosomes... One's sex, then, is determined by an algebraic sum of all these qualities, and, as is obvious, most people fall under one of the two separate bell curves, the one of which is called 'male', the other 'female'. Gender is a term that has psychological and cultural rather than biological connotations: if the proper terms for sex are 'male' and 'female', the corresponding terms for gender are 'masculine' and 'feminine'... Gender is the amount of masculinity and femininity found in a person, and obviously, while there are mixtures of both in many humans, the normal male has a preponderance of masculinity and the normal female a preponderance of femininity.

Joan Scott's definition of gender involves two interrelated but analytically distinct parts. Gender is "a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and a primary way of signifying relationships of power." This definition has far-reaching

implications. Power does not merely manifest itself in and through gender relations but gender is constitutive of power itself. It points, among other things, to the possibility of the association of gender with a sexed body and to the gendered nature of all power relations.

### Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit. Try to be as creative as possible in your answers.

1) What do you understand by the term 'Gender'?

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2) Write your observations/experiences on gender stereotypes

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### 4.5 NEXUS BETWEEN GENDER AND CASTE

In the context of India, caste and gender hierarchy have been the organizing principles of the Brahmanical social order (Uma Chakravarti). Caste has emerged as the essence of the Hindu way of life. Caste is born of the *varna*, and like a ladder, *varna* structured the functions of the society as unevenly graded institutionalized situations ( K. T. Rao). In fact the theory of *varna* (ritual ranking) provides the doctrinal basis for the hierarchy and discrimination between castes and the

exclusion of certain castes as 'untouchables' and outcasts. Although repugnant to our moral and social sense, caste mentality seems deeply ingrained in the psyche of most sections of Indian society. Despite deep religiosity and spirituality, 'casteist mentality' operates in all religious traditions and in all areas of life: choice of marriage partners, the conservation of ancestral and acquired properties within the family and caste, choice of social circles and the like.

Exploring the relationship between caste and gender, Uma Chakravarti has pointed out the central reason for the subordination of the upper caste women, namely, the need for effective sexual control over such women to maintain not only patrilineal succession but also caste purity – the institution unique to Hindu society. In the pretext of protecting their rights and personal security, women are forced to come under the complete control of men and made fully dependent upon them from birth till death. In the laws of Manu, their social mobility, economic freedom and personal liberty are more or less fully curtailed and brought under the control of the men-folk in the family (Ravi Tiwari). The situation, however, seems to be improving in our contemporary India, especially among the educated people.

An insightful essay by Nur Yalman on the castes of Ceylon and Malabar shows that the sexuality of women more than men is the subject of social concern. Yalman argues that a fundamental principle of social organisation is to construct a close structure to preserve land, women and ritual purity. The three are structurally linked and it is impossible to maintain all three without stringently organizing female sexuality. Since women's identity is essentialized to constitute the communal identity, upholding the patriarchal Hindu family, caste inequality and "the submissive and sacrificing Aryan woman as an ideal" have become the objective of communal ideology and practice.

Amazingly both upper caste and lower caste women succumb to this ideology designed to keep housewives under control. Moreover, casteism further reinforces the notion of male superiority and female inferiority with a strict control over women's sexuality and glorification of the wife and mother roles.

#### **4.6 COMBINATION OF CASTE AND CLASS AGAINST WOMEN**

Without any exaggeration, it may be said that “a deadly combination of caste and class is working against women.” Sex ratio is a powerful indicator of the status of women in society. In her thought-provoking statistical data, Mythiliy Sivaraman provides the following:

It is the sex ratio of the country that has been consistently declining over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, going down from 972 women per 1000 men in 1901 to 933 women per 1000 men in 2001. So, how many women are missing, taking a cue from Professor Amartya Sen’s famous line on the missing women of India. One quick calculation shows that we have in this country some five crore less women today than what should have been there if normal and natural situations had prevailed. Five crore women missing or one woman missing for every 11 women present, the missing woman finished off before birth or after birth, or let to die undercared... The very prosperous states of Haryana, Punjab, Gujarat and Maharashtra figure in the bottom half of the list in terms of sex ratio.

As regards sex ratio among children below the age of six, the pattern is the same. According to reliable sources, the latest National Family Health Survey – 3, carried out in 2005-06, finds that the child sex ratio has dropped further to 918 girls to 1000 boys from 927 during the 2001 census. The only states where this ratio fell below 900 girls to 1000 boys in 2001 are the prosperous states of Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat and Delhi.

On the one hand, we can be proud of our country’s progress, prosperity and technological development. On the other, we have to be ashamed of the fact that modern technologies like amniocentesis and ultra-scan have been employed to destroy the female foetus, despite the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique Prevention Act. It is recorded that in some parts of the country several doctors get 90% of their income from such illegal tests and abortions. As Prof. Ashish Bose points out: “This, to our mind, is a symptom of civilizational collapse.” Surprisingly, educated families have worse child sex ratio compared to uneducated families. At this juncture it should be noted that one of the reasons for son preference is the internalization of the myth of male superiority with all its claims of preserving the family status apart from increasing wealth and prosperity.



This patriarchal mindset makes the girl child a liability to her family and society. She is projected as a commodity to be sold, used and abused in today's consumer culture promoted under the new economic regime. To quote Prof. Rajini Palriwala: "Dowry as it is practiced today has never been part of the tradition or reflected in the Shastras.... In a concentrated form, dowry encapsulates contemporary and intensified inequalities and oppressions - caste, class and gender; it encapsulates the ... consumerist desires of today, the new religion of liberalization."

Gender stereotypes together with caste and class factors have contributed to the gender-based division of labour, a point that will be discussed in the following section.

#### **4.7 GENDER-BASED DIVISION OF LABOUR**

At its simplest, the gender-based division of labour can be seen as the allocation of particular tasks to particular people. For example, in most cultures, women look after children because they have 'always' done so. Similarly, motherhood is such an essential component of women's gender identity that it is seen as the 'natural' expression of womanhood. Equally, there are powerful norms about masculinity that work against men taking on the role of 'mothering' and domestic work, to do so would be to violate the prescribed gender roles. As Naila Kabeer rightly observes, "what may have started out as a way of organising labour takes on a normative significance so that values become embodied in the tasks and in who does them."

As these divisions of labour become an accepted norm, they form the basis of new constraints on practice. Most societies operate on what is known as 'hegemonic forms' of masculinity and femininity which constrain the actual practices of men and women, but do not determine them. Some societies are relatively flexible with regard to their rules and practices that shape gender relations. Others, on the other hand, enforce them severely and punitively. Nevertheless, most societies have set their normative standards, which exercise greater or lesser pressure for conformity.

Along with individual gender identities, family and kinship relations are systems for organising rights, responsibilities and resources for different categories of members in different social groups. Whitehead characterises relationships within the familial domain as gender-ascriptive: “in them, to describe the position is to describe the gender.” Thus to be a husband, a wife, a mother, a father, uncle, niece, and so forth, is to be either a man or a woman. These relationships are governed by social 'rules' which determine how assets are to be distributed between the occupants of the different relationships, how authority and status are to be assigned, and how labour is allocated. Familial relationships are a primary mechanism through which social meanings are invested in, and social controls exercised over women's bodies, labour, sexuality, reproductive capacity and life choices.

It should be acknowledged that the patriarchal ideology and its gender-based division of labour affect poor women more severely than the upper class women. Their workload is doubled as they shoulder the major part of the burden in agricultural production, along with domestic chores. The majority of women work 14 hours a day, but their contribution is not recognised as they are paid always lower than men. Bina Agarwal observes that agricultural growth strategies pursued since the mid 1960's have not made any significant dent on the incidence of absolute poverty. Instead, male-female differentials in employment and earnings among the poor in many states have increased. There has been a preoccupation with growth at the cost of both distributional and ecological considerations. This has deepened class and regional disparities.

A large number of women in India are employed in agriculture and the rest in non-agricultural works, working in organized as well as unorganized sectors of the economy. It is estimated that most Indian women work in the unorganized sector. “Census data shows that between 1991 and 2001, the share of female workforce in rural areas increased from 32% to 36% while that of men declined from 68% to 64%.” It is noted that in the agricultural labour alone, women's share is nearly equal, at 47% in 2001. Another important aspect to bear in mind is that “the largest increase for women is in the marginal worker category,” where they are forced to remain jobless much of the time. Nonetheless, together with the unpaid domestic work of women - an integral part needed to sustain productive labour – the rural female spends 57 hours on productive and reproductive work, while a rural male spends just 46 hours. Thus, as M. Sivaraman emphatically

states, “for the total work time required to sustain national economy, women shoulder 55% of the burden and men, 45%, for the country as a whole.”

Whether they work in organized or unorganized sector, women are subjected to various forms of exploitation. The State entitlement to benefits such as health insurance, pensions and welfare payments are looked into primarily through women’s relationship with men. The rape of women and their physical and sexual assaults are treated lightly by police and law. The increased commercialization of women in the media is another form of exploitation. Even appointments to public office in the judiciary, the civil service and industrial planning are not shared equally between men and women. In spite of the promises and programmes in favour of women’s empowerment, women have yet to overcome many hurdles like the ‘Women’s Reservation Bill’. As Jyotsna Chatterji observes:

The types of discrimination and oppression of women fall into two categories, one practised on the basis of caste and class, and the other on the basis of sex. When these two combine as in the case of Backward caste, Scheduled caste and Tribal women, the oppression becomes all the greater. Within each of these areas there are different sections of women who are subjected to oppression, such as the rural and urban poor belonging to the above sections, the working women and the educated and economically better off women. These specific sections have their own concerns and areas of struggle that will involve all women.

**Check Your Progress II**

**Note: Use the space provided for your answer**

1) Mention briefly how caste and class have worked against women in the Indian context.

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2) Explain the term gender-based division of labour.

#### 4.8 DOMESTICATION OF WOMEN THROUGH 'SEXIST' LANGUAGE

Another area of concern is 'sexist' language and its impact on women and men. Just as we try to eradicate various social evils like poverty, illiteracy, casteism, fundamentalism, classism, racism, etc., so too we need to focus attention on the problem of sexist language.

Because of the inter-relatedness between language and experience, feminists challenge 'sexist' or exclusive language that takes the humanity of male human beings as normative for all. While language is a medium of communication, it has the power to shape our attitudes and life-patterns, as well as the capacity to control and limit our experiences. Every language is composed of analogies, concepts, images, figures of speech, metaphors and so on, and is developed within a particular cultural framework. Since most cultures of the world are patriarchal in nature, the language reflects the ethos of a male-dominated society. The capacity of language to fashion and determine people's mores is incredible.

The power of language is immediately evident when we look at the Scriptures of World Religions. The perception of God only through the masculine experience has a negative impact on the psychology, spirituality and belief of men and women, resulting in superior-inferior relationship between them. In the Indian context, with its caste system, the preference for sons, female foeticide, infanticide, dowry deaths and other evils, it becomes all the more important for us to discover new paradigms, inclusive of the experiences of male and female. Lina Gupta, in her fascinating rediscovery of the power of Kali writes:

The evidence that the systematic subjugation of women has often been sanctioned by mythological stories, symbols and images in world religions is too overwhelming to overlook. However, we have reached a point in history when it is simply not enough merely to recognise and analyse the patriarchal mindset and its effects on our religious and social lives. It is essential for us to seek new forms of religious experience and expression, either through the

reinterpretation and reconstruction of our traditions or through alternative models of Ultimate Reality that will emphasise as well as include female experience.

Reflecting on the goddess Kali from the perspective of four central Hindu notions: *Sakti* – energy; *Prakriti* – nature (this is a feminine category); *Avidya* – (absence of knowledge); and *Maya* – (a deceptive and apparently negative power), Gupta unearths the pervasive male fear of women’s power – a power to act creatively in the world, to critique and create societal structures. That power is also one that can be destructive of the limitations of patriarchy.

### The Need for Inclusive Language

The term ‘inclusive language’ may be defined as a language free from exclusively male or female connotations. It balances both male and female symbols, images and concepts. Words such as men, sons, brothers, brethren, brotherhood and family of men are no longer accepted as generic terms by feminists, viz, women and men who have developed a holistic approach to reality. Although from the perspective of the history of language, these words once had a broader meaning, today their usage has become ambiguous. Hence the use of inclusive language in conversation, public relations, communications, in school/college textbooks, in prayer and worship, in books of theology, spirituality and other disciplines, has become a necessity today.

Sexist or exclusive language may be replaced (unless the word refers specifically to male human being) with inclusive terms. Some examples:

Man: human being/human person

Men: men and women, people

Family of men: human race/humankind/community/all people

Sons: sons and daughters/children

Brothers/brethren: brothers and sisters

Brotherhood: brotherhood and sisterhood

Forefathers: ancestors/forefathers and foremothers

He: he/she

Manhood: adulthood

Fatherhood: fatherhood and motherhood

Sonship: sonship and daughterhood

The use of inclusive terms helps us realize that neither male nor female alone can comprehend the mystery of God, humans and the world, but both together. It also highlights the fact that partial experiences cannot respond adequately to the needs of full humanity. An ideology or spirituality that perceives the vision of God and humankind solely through masculine experience is defective and incomplete. Hence we are called today to develop a holistic approach to Divine-human realities.

#### **4.9 TOWARDS A GENDER-JUST SOCIETY: SOME CHALLENGES**

The fact that women and men are equal sharers of a common human nature signifies equality of rights, mutual respect of each other's personhood, a common vocation to image God and to take on responsibility for the rest of creation. This vision of a common humanity lays the groundwork for a 'holistic' approach to all reality, whereby, as Galiardi says, the unity and interrelatedness not only of women and men but of all creation is established as the decisive value for civilization, as against the tendency of patriarchy to separate, divide and organize reality according to the criteria of competition and hierarchical structures.

Education has been identified as the major instrument for raising the status of women. It is a key factor in creating awareness about injustice and discrimination, of unequal distribution of power between sexes and, above all, in bringing about a much needed social change. Along with women's education, conscientization programmes for men are essential for bringing about attitudinal changes in them. Denial of proper education as well as early marriage has prevented the development of woman's personality and her ability for self-assertion. A direct link exists among education, employment and social status enjoyed by women in any society. It has been noted that traditionally, the education of women was meant to improve their role-functionality assigned by tradition and not for assuming any social role outside the family by themselves. Thus, the absence of an economic or broader social motif is recognized as the main cause for the slow development of women's education in India. Moreover, as Vasanti Devi, an activist-



academician observes, education of women has a continued setback in the hands of various fundamentalist groups.

Next in importance is the networking of women's organizations. The emergence of women's groups has been one of the most significant achievements of our time. Surprisingly, as Vibhuti Patel observes, this solidarity has probably never been used systematically to examine the dependent and disempowering nature of women's lives. Autonomous women's groups and organizations are in great demand, but they have to actively link themselves to the wider socio-political movement. To combat sexism, casteism and communalism, women's networks must evolve strategies to ally with other protest movements, and work in collaboration with justice-based mass organizations.

An egalitarian society is possible only with the cooperation of both women and men who are committed to social justice. In order to ensure gender justice for women in the civil society as well as in religion, we propose the following:

Affirm the personhood of women and their right to a dignified way of life as guaranteed by the Indian Constitution.

Educate women and men to acknowledge that women too are subjects of human rights, hence, deserving dignity, liberty and equal opportunity for development in all spheres of life.

Build up healthy families to overcome gender discrimination. Since a family is the basic unit of a society, the formation towards gender-friendly relationships has to begin from the family itself.

Conscientize people to value women's contributions in building up family, society and the nation.

Initiate/promote programme for economic empowerment of women by way of self-help groups and self-employment schemes.

Foster political awareness and art of self-governance at the local, regional and national levels with a view to enhancing women's leadership.

Organize and strengthen nationwide literacy drive among women and girls, particularly in the most backward regions of the country.

Ensure that women's education is aimed at their empowerment and not at enslavement to oppressive customs and traditions which cripple their intellectual, psycho-spiritual and emotional growth.

Empower women with sound knowledge in all disciplines: social, cultural, economic, political and religious, in order to effectively participate in discussions and deliberations.

Promote gender-just political structures which would bring women's perspectives, experiences and values to the central stage in policy formulation and allocation of resources.

Work towards gender-just economic structures that would enhance a culture of "sharing control over productive assets" (Rita Noronha).

### Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) What is the need for an inclusive language?

2) What would be your contribution towards a gender-just society?

### 4.10 LET US SUM UP

The gender and women's issues in India are unique, as they are bound up with caste-class factors and with sexism *per se*. Empirically, class and gender tend to be mutually constituted; biological differences are always highlighted in the context of intersecting social inequalities. As R. K. Murthy aptly observes, forms of discrimination through which these power relations manifest themselves most strongly like violence against women, male control over women's sexuality and reproduction, as well as over mainstream political processes, fall outside the ambit of most of these frameworks. When we examine gender relations as power relations, it is evident that men are favoured by the institutions within which gender relations occur and that they enjoy and exercise power in commanding these resources. Gender inequality is therefore an outcome of an asymmetry in power, where men are in a position of privilege and women in

subordination. We realize that women's age-old condition as peripheral and subjugated beings has been perpetuated by male-biased and partial readings of culture and religious traditions.

In the feminist view, justice connotes recognition of a person's integrity and acceptance of full humanity of male and female alike. Such an understanding of justice manifests itself in co-responsibility, mutual respect and partnership of women and men for the good of humankind and the universe. It is of vital importance to develop strategies, which help promote the acceptance of new research findings, the feminist method and the egalitarian model of society, conscious of the fact that the march towards dignity and equality of women (as well as men) is an ongoing march in the civilizing process of humankind. Both women and men shall commit themselves to uphold and advance an inclusive gender policy at various levels in the decision-making structures.

#### 4.11 KEY WORDS

**Gender:** Gender is the wide set of characteristics that are seen to distinguish between male and female. In ordinary speech, it is used interchangeably with 'sex' to denote the condition of being male or female. In the social sciences, it refers specifically to socially constructed and institutionalized differences such as gender roles.

**Gender and Sex:** **Sex** refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women. **Gender** refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

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#### **4.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

##### **Answers to Check Your Progress I**

1) The term 'gender' may be described as a set of cultural roles, defined by existing power relations and social practices. It is not a natural given but a societal construct. In other words, gender is inscribed on women and men through individual and collective socialization. Many feminists point out that Simone de Beauvoir's classic statement "woman is made not born" remains a fair summary of the claims that gender is socially constructed not biologically determined. While sex encompasses biological differences, gender is 'learnt traits.'

2) Having understood and grappled with 'Gender Stereotypes' (see 3.1), you are expected to articulate your personal reflections on this issue.

### **Answers to Check Your Progress II**

1) Gender is interwoven with class, caste, race and other social inequalities. In our Indian situation, the patriarchal family/society is at the root of the caste system. Just as class remains the organizational basis of capitalism, gender constitutes the hierarchical principle of patriarchy. As discussed above (see section 4), male-female sex ratio is one indicator of the "deadly combination of class and caste against women." Despite India's economic growth, the sex ratio of the country has been consistently declining. To quote Sivaraman, "More are the missing women when the wealth generated is more and when the caste layer is higher."

2) Many of the gender roles ascribed to men and women are largely due to the existing structure of the society and the attitudinal predispositions which perpetuate patriarchal power relations. To cite examples, women are expected to perform family oriented jobs, whereas men are assigned a more risky and outgoing roles. Started as a way of organizing labour, the allocation of particular tasks to particular people has resulted in unequal man-woman relationships. One important area that needs critiquing is the common tendency to devalue women's unpaid domestic work. Both within and across institutions, gender operates "as a pervasive allocational principle."

### **Answers to Check Your Progress III**

1) Inclusive language challenges 'sexist' language, an offshoot of 'sexism' that devalues women and contributes to their invisibility. It underscores the fact that neither male nor female alone can represent humanity, but both together. Moreover, Divine-human realities perceived and articulated solely through masculine experience, terms and symbols reinforce male superiority and female domestication. Aware of the capacity of language to shape and govern people's mores, everyone has to make conscious efforts to replace sexist language with inclusive terms, wherever required.

2) Several suggestions have been offered in section 8. The purpose of the question is to stimulate you and provide you space for articulating your own reflections.

