

Evaluation On Values and Ethics in Hinduism with Special Reference to Philosophical Perspectives

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Abstract:

Hinduism, one of the world's oldest living religious and philosophical traditions, offers a comprehensive framework of values and ethics that continues to influence individual conduct, social relationships, and spiritual development. Adopting a qualitative and analytical research methodology, the study investigates the interrelationship between religious beliefs, ethical practices and philosophical interpretations within Hinduism. The particular emphasis is placed on the applicability of Hindu ethical principles in addressing present-day challenges such as social inequality, environmental degradation, consumerism, and the erosion of moral values. By integrating spiritual wisdom with practical ethics, Hinduism offers a dynamic and inclusive approach to human well-being. The study concluded that the philosophical perspectives embedded within Hindu traditions contribute significantly to the development of ethical awareness and can serve as valuable resources for promoting a more just, harmonious, and ethically conscious society. In this article, evaluation on values and ethics in Hinduism with special reference to philosophical perspectives were discussed.

Keywords: Values, Ethics, Hinduism, Religion, Philosophy.

I. INTRODUCTION:

The nature of God, the cosmos, the self (Atman), ultimate reality (Brahman), morality, liberation (Moksha) and the link between humans and the divine are all explored in the vast and ancient Hindu philosophy of religion. The Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and later intellectual writings are just a few of the religious books and philosophical schools that contributed to its development. The idea of Brahman, the ultimate and eternal reality that is the basis of all existence, is a fundamental component of Hindu philosophy. According to the Vedanta tradition, spiritual liberation results from realizing the close connection between the individual soul (Atman) and Brahman. This relationship is interpreted variously by several schools, including dualism (Dvaita), qualified non-dualism (Vishishtadvaita), and non-dualism (Advaita). The ethical concepts of Dharma (just duty), Karma (moral law of action), Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), compassion, self-discipline, and spiritual knowledge are all emphasized in Hindu philosophy. These principles direct people toward leading fulfilling and balanced lives. Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, and Raja Yoga are among the various routes to spiritual realization that the philosophy offers. Moksha, or freedom from ignorance and the cycle of birth and death (Samsara), is the ultimate aim of Hindu religious philosophy. Dharma, which stands for moral obligation, justice, and the appropriate way of living, is a central idea in Hindu philosophy. Dharma directs people to carry out their duties with fairness, compassion, and honesty. Every action has repercussions, according to the karma principle, which motivates people to behave morally and sensibly. Hindu religious thought also acknowledges various methods for achieving spiritual realization. The path of selfless action (Karma Yoga) teaches that people can attain spiritual progress via responsible deeds without attachment to consequences; the path of knowledge (Jnana) emphasizes wisdom and self-realization; and the path of devotion (Bhakti) focuses on love and surrender to God. Moksha is regarded as the ultimate purpose of human existence. It signifies freedom from the cycle of life and death, ignorance, and pain. Hindu philosophy holds that realizing the unity between the ego and the ultimate reality, meditation, ethical behavior, and spiritual awareness are the paths to liberation. Hindu philosophy also encourages values such as truth (Satya), non-violence (Ahimsa), tolerance, compassion, self-control, and respect for all living forms. These ideas have influenced conversations about morality, peaceful cohabitation, and social harmony. As a result, the Hindu philosophy of religion offers a moral code for societal and personal life as well as a spiritual framework. According to Hindu philosophy, Brahman is the ultimate, eternal reality that serves as the universe's foundation. It clarifies the connection between this ultimate truth and all of existence. Hindu philosophy places a strong focus on the relationship between the individual self (Atman) and the universal reality (Brahman). It is believed that achieving spiritual wisdom requires self-realization. Hindu philosophy acknowledges various spiritual methods that demonstrate flexibility in reaching spiritual objectives, such as Jnana Yoga (knowledge), Bhakti Yoga (devotion), Karma Yoga (selfless action), and Raja Yoga (meditation). Moksha, or freedom from ignorance and the cycle of birth and death via spiritual realization and inner transformation, is considered the

ultimate goal of human existence. Hindu philosophy upholds principles that are still pertinent in today's ethical debates, such as truth, non-violence, compassion, tolerance, self-control, and respect for the natural world. Hinduism promotes harmony between people, society, and the natural world by highlighting the interconnection of all beings. Hindu philosophy's tenets still impact contemporary perspectives on spirituality, harmony, the environment, self-improvement, and moral judgement (Hussain, A., 2021). The objective of the study is to evaluation on values and ethics in Hinduism with special reference to philosophical perspectives.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

A research methodology delineates the procedures and techniques employed to identify and examine data relevant to a specific area of inquiry.

Research Design:

The research design comprises the methods and tactics selected by a researcher for conducting a study. Qualitative research design entails the collection and analysis of non-numerical data to comprehend concepts, opinions, or experiences. This study utilized a qualitative research design. In this research, a qualitative research design was used.

Data Source:

A third party, apart from the user, collected secondary data. This signifies the availability and analysis of the data. Secondary data sources include periodicals, newspapers, books, journals, electronic resources, and documentary evidence. This analysis utilised secondary data sources. In this research, secondary data sources were used.

Methodology:

In this research, a qualitative research design and secondary data sources were used. The textual method involves the examination, interpretation, and critical analysis of written, spoken, or visual texts, e-resources (such as books, articles, reports, laws, interviews, social media posts, etc.). The analytical method involves breaking down complex social phenomena into components to understand their relationships and causes. A number of sources, including publications, books, journal articles, websites, reports, records, e-resources etc. were used for this study to the exposure of Hinduism with special reference to values and ethics. Also, due to the unavailability of statistical data, charts, graphs, etc., the quantitative research design and primary data were not applicable in this study.

Analysis:

Descriptive research analysis is a methodological approach that aims to elucidate the features of an event or subject under inquiry. Descriptive research analysis is a crucial instrument for scientific inquiry, allowing researchers to observe, document, and examine the intricacies of a certain subject. The analysis was based on the following:

- Hinduism: Values and Ethics.

In this research, descriptive research analysis was used.

III. PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF HINDUISM:

One of the world's oldest surviving religious traditions, Hinduism is founded on a deep philosophical framework that examines the essence of reality, human life, morality, and the connection between the individual and the cosmos. The Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and other Indian philosophical schools (Darsanas) are the primary sources of its philosophical underpinnings. Brahman, the eternal, limitless, and universal reality that is the origin of all existence, is the primary philosophical concept of Hinduism. According to the Upanishads, Brahman is the ultimate truth behind the material world and beyond human perception. Hindu philosophy places a strong emphasis on the Atman, or a person's inner self or spiritual essence. According to the Upanishadic philosophy, spiritual freedom results from realizing the unity between Atman and Brahman, and Atman is eternal. Every action has repercussions, according to the karma principle. People are accountable for their thoughts, words, and actions, which impact their experiences both now and in the future. Hindu ethics are based on the concept of karma. Dharma refers to the values that uphold social and cosmic order as well as moral obligation and ethical responsibility. Hinduism urges people to carry out their responsibilities with integrity, empathy, and self-control. Samsara, the perpetual cycle of life, death, and reincarnation, is central to Hindu philosophy. The soul undergoes various experiences before becoming freed from attachments to the material world. Moksha, or liberation from the cycle of Samsara, is the ultimate goal of Hindu philosophy. Self-realization, spiritual understanding,

dedication, and moral behavior are the means by which it is attained. Jnana yoga, Bhakti yoga, Karma yoga, and Raja yoga are among the various routes to spiritual development recognized by Hindu philosophy. Hindu philosophy embraces various perspectives about reality. It emphasizes the unity of existence while acknowledging the existence of various intellectual interpretations and forms of worship. Hinduism's intellectual underpinnings encourage values such as truth (Satya), non-violence (Ahimsa), compassion (Daya), self-control (Sanyama), tolerance, and harmony. Hinduism's philosophical underpinnings offer a holistic outlook on life that links ethics, spirituality, and human responsibility. Its concepts of Brahman, Atman, Karma, Dharma, and Moksha offer a framework for comprehending life and reaching spiritual enlightenment. Hinduism's philosophical underpinnings reflect a profound investigation of the essence of existence, the meaning of life, and the connection between the individual soul and the ultimate reality. Hindu philosophy offers a methodical explanation of knowledge, ethics, consciousness, and liberation in addition to religious actions. Hindu philosophical systems also acknowledge various approaches to attaining spiritual realization. Jnana Yoga promotes knowledge and self-inquiry, Bhakti Yoga focuses on devotion and love towards the divine, Karma Yoga teaches unselfish action, and Raja Yoga highlights meditation and mastery of the mind. Thus, the intellectual roots of Hinduism provide a complete perspective of life by uniting spirituality, morality, and self-realization. They inspire individuals to pursue inner wisdom, perform their obligations responsibly, and establish harmony between themselves, society, and the universe. Hindu philosophy provides a complete view of reality, human existence, and spirituality by studying the connection between the individual self and the cosmos. The notion of Brahman reflects the ultimate reality and underscores the belief that all existence is interconnected through a universal spiritual force. The concept of Atman highlights the eternal aspect of the self, implying that human identity is derived from spiritual consciousness and transcends physical existence. By explaining that people are accountable for their moral decisions and that human actions have repercussions, the karma principle provides a solid ethical basis. By encouraging responsibility, fairness, honesty, compassion, and responsible action, dharma plays a vital role in directing society and personal life. While the quest of Moksha symbolizes the ultimate objective of emancipation and spiritual realization, the idea of Samsara explains the cycle of birth and rebirth. Hindu philosophy acknowledges several avenues for spiritual growth, such as meditation (Raja Yoga), selfless action (Karma), devotion (Bhakti), and wisdom (Jnana). Hinduism's philosophical traditions reflect the idea of unity within variety, promoting tolerance and acceptance of diverse approaches to reality. Hindu philosophy is based on ethical principles like honesty, self-control, compassion, and non-violence, which are still important in today's world. Hinduism's intellectual underpinnings continue to shape moral, cultural, and spiritual viewpoints, offering direction for personal development and societal harmony (Naranje, S., 2015).

CONCEPT OF DHARMA (RIGHTEOUS DUTY):

A key idea in Indian philosophy, dharma relates to moral obligation, ethical behaviour, virtuous duty, and the values that uphold harmony in social and personal life. The word comes from the Sanskrit root 'Dhr', which means 'to hold, support, or sustain'. 'Dharma', then, stands for the principles and deeds that uphold justice, balance, and order in both the cosmos and human society. According to Hindu philosophy, dharma is the proper way of living that is founded on duty, self-control, justice, truth, and compassion. It directs people to carry out their responsibilities in accordance with their positions, circumstances, and life stages while upholding moral integrity. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna teaches Arjuna the value of carrying out one's duty (svadharma) without regard for one's own interests. This is a notable discussion of the concept of "dharma". Dharma encompasses moral principles, including integrity, nonviolence, respect, kindness, and social duty, in addition to religious rituals. It highlights that each person has obligations to themselves, their families, society, the environment, and the wider world. In this way, Dharma serves as a compass for attaining both communal harmony and personal growth. Dharma is interpreted differently in different Indian traditions. The teachings and precepts that guide people toward wisdom and emancipation are referred to as Dharma in Buddhism. Dharma in Jainism places a strong emphasis on self-control, truth, non-violence (ahimsa), and moral discipline. Dharma is the pursuit of morality and moral behaviour in all traditions. The idea of dharma is still relevant in today's world because it motivates people to behave morally in social, professional, and personal contexts. It helps build a harmonious and balanced society by encouraging moral decision-making, justice, collaboration, and respect for others. The cornerstone of a moral life is dharma. It links individual responsibility with universal moral principles and directs people toward moral behaviour, personal development, and social well-being. The moral precepts, obligations, and responsibilities that direct human behaviour toward harmony and justice are referred to as dharma. It is a more comprehensive philosophy of ethical life rather than just a religious concept. According to dharma, each person has obligations to their family, society, the world, and themselves. A person promotes societal order and personal development by carrying out these responsibilities with integrity, empathy, discipline, and justice. Dharma is regarded as the cornerstone of a meaningful existence in Indian philosophy. It inspires people to follow morals and the truth even in the face of adversity. The concept of "svadharma" (one's own duty) emphasises that people

should fulfil their obligations in accordance with their circumstances, positions and talents rather than acting solely for their own gain. Through Krishna's lectures to Arjuna, the Bhagavad Gita explains Dharma, stressing that fulfilling one's obligations with commitment and without selfish attachment is crucial for leading a moral life. This method links obligation to moral responsibility and selflessness. Dharma also encompasses universal ethical principles such as truth (Satya), non-violence (Ahimsa), kindness, patience, respect, and justice. It helps people strike a balance between their social obligations and their aspirations. As a result, Dharma serves as a moral framework that enables individuals to discern between right and wrong behaviour. The study of dharma shows that ethical responsibilities are universal values essential to social progress and human advancement, in addition to being religious commitments (Sanjeevankarpavithra, Sanjeevankarvital, 2017).

KARMA THEORY AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY:

A key ethical and philosophical idea in Indian traditions like Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism is karma theory. "Karma", which translates to "action" or "deed", refers to the idea that every deliberate action has repercussions. This idea holds that as previous actions impact present and future experiences, people are ethically accountable for their thoughts, words, and deeds. While destructive or unethical behaviours result in suffering and unfavourable outcomes, good actions yield positive outcomes. Karma theory's concept of moral responsibility places a strong emphasis on personal accountability. People believe that a person's behaviour and decisions shape their moral destiny. Karma encompasses more than just outward deeds; it also refers to the consciousness, purpose, and intention behind deeds. As a result, leading an ethical life necessitates self-control, empathy, honesty, nonviolence, and accountability to others. According to Hindu philosophy, karma is linked to the law of cause and effect, which states that deeds have an impact on the cycle of birth and reincarnation (samsara). Karma is directly linked to intention and the growth of moral consciousness in Buddhist philosophy. According to Jain philosophy, karma is a subtle substance that binds the soul as a result of immoral deeds and can be overcome by right knowledge, right faith, and right behaviour. Karma theory teaches that individuals are inherently connected to the consequences of their actions, establishing the foundation for moral responsibility. It promotes the pursuit of a moral life, personal responsibility, and ethical awareness. Instead of concentrating solely on individual repercussions, it also emphasises the value of compassion and social responsibility. Karma theory thus portrays morality as an ongoing process in which human decisions influence society, character, and spiritual advancement. Because it encourages accountability, moral decision-making, and knowledge of the consequences of human behaviour, it is still important in today's world. Karma theory explains the relationship between human actions and their effects. Karma theory thus links morality and individual accountability by arguing that people actively shape their fates through their decisions. It offers a moral framework that inspires people to live thoughtfully and make constructive contributions to society. Karma theory demonstrates that human behaviour has ethical outcomes that affect social and individual lives by establishing a strong link between actions and their consequences. Human freedom of choice is the foundation of moral responsibility since people are held responsible for their ideas, intentions, and deeds. The study of karma shows that moral judgement is heavily influenced by intention; an action's ethical worth is determined by its motivation as well as its outcome.

THE CONCEPT OF MOKSHA AND SPIRITUAL ETHICS:

Moksha is a fundamental notion in Indian philosophical and religious traditions, denoting the ultimate emancipation of the soul from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (samsara). It is the paramount spiritual objective wherein an individual achieves self-realisation, inner tranquillity, and communion with the ultimate reality. Moksha is interpreted differently across traditions: in Hinduism, it is commonly perceived as the realisation of the true self (Atman) and its unity with Brahman; in Jainism, it denotes the liberation of the soul from karmic bondage via right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct; and in Buddhism, a comparable spiritual ideal is articulated through liberation from suffering and attachment. Spiritual ethics denotes the moral concepts and activities that direct individuals toward spiritual advancement and elevated consciousness. It underscores principles including veracity, empathy, non-violence, self-restraint, humility, forgiveness, and detachment from egocentric desires. Spiritual ethics establishes the basis for the purification of ideas, acts, and intentions, facilitating individual advancement toward liberation. The connection between Moksha and spiritual ethics is profound, as ethical behavior is regarded as the pathway to spiritual liberation. By regulating impulses, engaging in virtuous activities, and cultivating ethical consciousness, individuals mitigate adverse influences and attain spiritual advancement. Activities like meditation, introspection, devotion, and altruism foster inner peace and consciousness. The notion of Moksha and spiritual ethics is pertinent in modern life, as it urges individuals to transcend material accomplishments and concentrate on inner tranquillity, ethical accountability, and universal principles. It advocates for a harmonious existence that integrates personal growth with empathy, societal cohesion, and moral integrity. Moksha is defined as the ultimate stage of spiritual emancipation, wherein an individual attains freedom

from ignorance, attachment, and the perpetual cycle of birth and death. It signifies the attainment of inner liberation, self-actualization, and alignment with the ultimate reality. In Indian philosophical thinking, Moksha represents not simply an escape from worldly existence but a condition of total awareness, tranquility and spiritual fulfillment. Spiritual ethics establishes the moral framework necessary for achieving Moksha. It underscores the refinement of thoughts, behaviour and character through ethical principles, including truth, compassion, non-violence, self-discipline, forgiveness, and humility. These principles assist individuals in regulating cravings, diminishing ego and attachment, and cultivating an elevated state of consciousness. The relationship between moksha and spiritual ethics indicates that freedom is attained not solely via knowledge or spiritual activities but also through ethical conduct. An individual who adheres to ethical standards cultivates inner peace and gains the ability to comprehend the profound purpose of being (Malla, M.A., 2018).

CORE ETHICAL VALUES IN HINDUISM:

Hindu ethical principles are fundamentally anchored in the notions of dharma (righteous duty), karma (moral behavior and its repercussions), and moksha (spiritual freedom). Hindu philosophy underscores the development of moral integrity, self-discipline, compassion, and the equilibrium between the individual, society, and the broader cosmos. These ethical concepts offer direction for individual behavior, societal accountability, and spiritual growth. Dharma constitutes the fundamental basis of Hindu ethics. It embodies the tenets of morality, ethical obligation, fairness, and accountable existence. It directs individuals to fulfill their social, personal, and spiritual obligations while preserving equilibrium and harmony throughout society. Ahimsa is a major ethical principle in Hinduism. It fosters reverence for all life forms and urges individuals to refrain from doing damage through thoughts, words, or deeds. It embodies the principles of compassion, benevolence, and harmonious cohabitation. "Satya" denotes the dedication to veracity and integrity. Hindu doctrines regard truthfulness as a fundamental characteristic for ethical integrity. It promotes authenticity, openness, and ethical conduct in interpersonal and societal connections. The idea of karma asserts that every action yields consequences. It promotes responsible and ethical behavior, recognizing that moral decisions impact both individual growth and societal welfare. Daya emphasizes compassion and empathy for all sentient beings. It fosters empathy, generosity, and compassion for the suffering and well-being of others, thereby enhancing human relationships and social cohesion. Self-discipline is a crucial element of Hindu ethical conduct. It entails regulating wants, emotions, and senses to cultivate inner equilibrium, mental tranquillity, and spiritual advancement. Shaucha denotes the purity of the body, mind, and actions. It underscores cleanliness, moral rectitude, and the cultivation of constructive attitudes and behaviors essential for ethical and spiritual advancement. Aparigraha imparts liberation from excessive attachment to material belongings and wants. It advocates for simplicity, contentment, moderation, and a balanced perspective on worldly existence. Seva embodies the act of helping others devoid of self-serving aspirations. Hindu traditions regard service to humanity as a spiritual practice and a manifestation of compassion and devotion. Hindu philosophy advocates reverence for varied beliefs, customs, and spiritual journeys. It fosters tolerance, harmonious cohabitation, and the concept of unity among all entities. The fundamental ethical principles of Hinduism offer a thorough framework for virtuous conduct, including compassion, truth, self-discipline, responsibility, and spiritual consciousness. These concepts persist in shaping personal morality, societal ethics, and modern discourse on global cohesion and human values.

ROLE OF BHAGAVAD GITA IN HINDU ETHICS:

The Bhagavad Gita is pivotal in influencing Hindu ethical philosophy by offering direction on virtuous life, moral obligation, self-regulation, and spiritual growth. It portrays ethics not solely as a collection of societal norms but as a means to achieve equilibrium among personal responsibilities, community, and the supernatural. A major ethical notion in the Bhagavad Gita is dharma (righteous duty). The debate between Krishna and Arjuna underscores the necessity for individuals to fulfill their tasks with sincerity and integrity, without evading duties due to personal concerns or attachments. The concept of Nishkama Karma (selfless action) represents a significant contribution of the Gita to Hindu ethics. It advocates for doing with commitment and ethical purpose while refraining from undue attachment to the outcomes of actions. This fosters integrity, accountability, and equilibrium in both personal and professional spheres. The Bhagavad Gita emphasizes self-discipline, veracity, empathy, humility, and non-attachment as fundamental attributes of a morally advanced individual. It elucidates that ethical conduct arises from the regulation of impulses, the transcendence of ego, and the cultivation of spiritual consciousness. The notion of karma (law of moral consequences) in the Gita asserts that every action yields ethical repercussions. Beneficial behaviors foster spiritual development, but detrimental actions induce suffering and ethical discord. This promotes individuals to make judicious decisions. Moreover, the Gita ties ethics with Moksha (liberation) by depicting moral existence as a pathway to self-realization. It asserts that an individual who embodies wisdom, commitment, and discipline can achieve inner tranquillity and emancipation. The Bhagavad

Gita is a paramount work in Hindu philosophy and ethics. It offers a structured comprehension of how individuals ought to lead an ethically accountable and spiritually significant existence. The Gita's ethical doctrines are based on the principles of dharma (duty), karma (activity), self-discipline, and spiritual insight. The Gita elucidates that each human has specific tasks and responsibilities in life. Krishna's and Arjuna's dialogue illustrates that righteousness, not personal emotions, fear, or self-interest, should guide ethical choices. The Gita views the sincere and dedicated execution of one's responsibilities as a significant ethical guideline. A key ethical doctrine of the Gita is Nishkama Karma, signifying the execution of activities devoid of attachment to the outcomes. This concept advocates for individuals to prioritize sincere effort, accountability, and ethical aim over the influence of success or failure. It fosters a balanced perspective on life. The Gita emphasizes the value of mastering the mind and senses. Ethical behavior emerges when individuals transcend greed, wrath, ego, and excessive desires. Self-discipline fosters the development of attributes such as patience, compassion, humility, and tolerance (Frazier, J., 2021).

HINDU VIEWS ON HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS AND SOCIAL ETHICS:

Hindu philosophy offers an extensive understanding of human interactions and societal ethics through concepts such as 'dharma' (duty/righteousness), 'karma' (moral action and consequences), 'ahimsa' (non-violence), 'satya' (truth), 'daya' (compassion), and 'seva' (selfless service). In Hindu philosophy, human connections are perceived as interrelated and governed by ethical obligations to family, society, nature, and the broader cosmos. In Hindu tradition, the family is regarded as the fundamental institution for moral growth. The notion of Grihastha Ashrama underscores obligations to parents, spouse, offspring, and relatives. Respect for elders, care for dependents, mutual affection, and collaboration are regarded as fundamental responsibilities. The principle of Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava (seeing mothers and fathers as divine), emphasises the necessity of gratitude and respect in family relationships. The principle of Dharma constitutes the cornerstone of Hindu social ethics. It promotes individuals to execute their responsibilities with integrity and foster social cohesion. Dharma encompasses not only individual ethics but also obligations to the community and humankind at large. An ethical individual is anticipated to advocate for the well-being of others and uphold fairness, tranquillity, and equilibrium throughout society. Hindu ethical principles underscore compassion (Daya) and reverence for all sentient beings. The concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam ("the world is one family") advocates for universal brotherhood and posits that humanity possesses a shared moral bond. This philosophy promotes tolerance, empathy, and harmonious cohabitation among diverse communities. Hindu scriptures emphasise the importance of loyalty, trust, and altruism in friendships and social connections. The relationship between Krishna and Arjuna in the Mahabharata exemplifies direction, faith, and moral support among humans. Hindu social ethics advocates Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Aparigraha, and Seva. These principles promote responsible conduct, social collaboration, and ethical existence. Hindu philosophy perceives humans as integral components of a broader cosmic framework. Nature is considered sacrosanct, and ethical life necessitates reverence for animals, rivers, woods, and the environment. This ecological viewpoint links social ethics to environmental accountability. The tenets of obligation, compassion, self-discipline, and universal harmony form the foundation of Hindu perspectives on interpersonal relationships and social ethics. Hindu philosophy, by prioritising Dharma, respect, and interconnectivity, offers an ethical framework that directs individuals towards responsible interactions and a harmonious community. Hindu philosophy perceives human existence as an intricate web of relationships regulated by ethical obligations, responsibilities, and spiritual principles. An individual is not regarded as distinct from society; instead, a person is perceived as an integral component of a broader social and cosmic framework (Khan, T.R. & Tantray, M.A., 2019).

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS IN HINDUISM:

Hinduism's environmental ethics are founded on the principle that nature is sacred and that humans bear a moral obligation to preserve harmony with the natural environment. Hindu philosophical traditions perceive the environment as an integral component of existence, rather than a distinct entity from human life. The principles of dharma (moral obligation), ahimsa (non-violence), and the sanctity of nature constitute the basis of Hindu ecological philosophy. Hindu scriptures underscore the spiritual relationship between humanity and the environment. The Vedas portray nature as a divine manifestation, regarding elements such as earth, water, fire, air, and space as sacred. The concept of "Prakriti" (nature) embodies the creative and sustaining force of the universe, and humanity is obligated to honour and safeguard it. Divine entities frequently associate rivers, forests, mountains, and fauna with their conservation. The notion of ahimsa encompasses not only human interactions but also all sentient beings. Hindu ethics advocate compassion towards animals and reverence for all life forms, embodying the belief in the interconnectedness of all beings. The principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam ("the world is one family") emphasises the interconnectedness of humanity, nature, and all living entities. Hindu

traditions likewise highlight sustainable life and self-discipline. The concept of curbing excessive consumption and achieving equilibrium with nature embodies ecological responsibility. The five elements—earth (Prithvi), water (Jal), fire (Agni), air (Vayu), and space (Akasha)—are considered essential constituents of existence and are venerated as sacred forces. This conviction motivates individuals to conserve natural resources and use them judiciously. The principle of ahimsa (non-violence) constitutes a significant foundation of Hindu environmental ethics. It advocates for compassion and reverence for all life forms, encompassing animals, plants, and ecosystems. Given the interconnection of all living species, doing harm to nature is regarded as a breach of ethical obligation. Hindu religions likewise emphasise the value of harmony and equilibrium with nature. Holy rivers, woods, trees, and fauna possess cultural and spiritual significance, which has historically fostered conservation efforts. The veneration of rivers such as the Ganges and the preservation of sacred groves exemplify the conviction that nature warrants reverence and stewardship. The philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, meaning "the world is one family", conveys the notion that humans, animals, and nature constitute a singular interrelated system. This notion promotes global environmental accountability by fostering collaboration and sustainable practices. In modern civilisation, Hindu environmental ethics offer direction for tackling ecological issues such as climate change, pollution, and resource depletion. It advocates for a lifestyle centred on moderation, conservation, and reverence for the Earth, rather than excessive consumption. Consequently, Hindu environmental ethics integrates spiritual convictions and ethical responsibilities to build a vision of sustained harmony between humanity and the natural environment. Hindu environmental ethics posits that nature is considered sacred and intricately linked to human existence. The environment is regarded not just as a resource for human exploitation but as a living system worthy of respect and preservation. The principle of dharma asserts that safeguarding nature constitutes a moral obligation. Humans are accountable for sustaining ecological equilibrium and safeguarding the natural order. Hindu philosophy underscores the interconnectedness of all living entities. The philosophy of Ahimsa (non-violence) promotes compassion for animals, plants, and all life forms (Zepa, N., 2022).

HINDUISM AND UNIVERSAL HUMAN VALUES:

Hinduism, among the most ancient philosophical and spiritual traditions globally, underscores the cultivation of moral integrity, self-discipline, compassion, and coexistence with all life forms. The teachings assert that an ethical life is fundamental for attaining personal development and societal well-being. Hindu philosophy articulates numerous common human principles that surpass cultural and religious confines, fostering a harmonious and equitable society. The notion of 'dharma' is fundamental to Hindu philosophy, embodying justice, duty, moral obligation, and ethical behaviour. Dharma promotes actions characterised by integrity, fairness, self-discipline, and altruism. It establishes a basis for ethical life and fosters social cohesion. The principle of ahimsa (non-violence) advocates for respect for all sentient beings and promotes harmonious coexistence. It encompasses not only the avoidance of physical damage but also the cultivation of kindness, tolerance, and compassion in both thoughts and actions. This notion has shaped international ethical initiatives advocating for peace and human dignity. Satya (truthfulness) constitutes a significant human value within Hindu philosophy. The quest for truth is regarded as a means of moral and spiritual advancement. Honest life fosters trust, integrity, and reciprocal respect among individuals and communities. Hinduism underscores karuna (compassion), seva (selfless service), and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is one family). These principles emphasise universal fraternity, equality, and the obligation to serve humanity. They promote the transcendence of self-interest in favour of communal well-being. The notion of self-realisation in Hindu philosophy advocates for inner discipline, wisdom, and an understanding of the interconnection of human existence. Individuals pursue equilibrium between personal growth and societal accountability through disciplines such as meditation, yoga, and ethical living. In contemporary society, Hindu universal principles continue to be pertinent in confronting issues like violence, intolerance, environmental degradation, and socioeconomic inequity. The focus on peace, respect, compassion, and togetherness establishes a conceptual foundation for advancing global ethics and fostering harmonious human interactions. Hinduism contributes to universal human values through its focus on justice, non-violence, truth, compassion, and the interconnectedness of all beings. These ideas persist in motivating ethical contemplation and promoting harmonious cohabitation and sustainable life (Dash, B., Priyanka, J. & Narasimham, G.L., 2024).

ETHICAL CHALLENGES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY:

Modern society encounters numerous ethical dilemmas stemming from swift social, technological, economic, and cultural changes. The growing intricacy of human connections has engendered novel moral quandaries concerning individual obligations, social equity, and communal welfare. A significant ethical dilemma is the influence of technology and artificial intelligence. Concerns such as data privacy, cybercrime, misinformation, digital addiction, and the ethical use of AI raise questions about human dignity, accountability, and equity. Ensuring that technological advancement benefits society without inflicting harm is a key ethical issue. A significant challenge is societal inequality and injustice. Economic inequalities, discrimination based on gender,

caste, ethnicity, religion, and social status, together with unequal access to education and healthcare, raise ethical concerns regarding human rights, equality, and social responsibility. Advancing inclusivity and fairness has emerged as a fundamental ethical obligation of contemporary society. Environmental ethics constitutes a significant concern. The issues of climate change, pollution, deforestation, and overconsumption underscore the tension between human advancement and ecological sustainability. Modern ethics underscores the necessity for ethical resource use and safeguarding future generations. Professional and institutional ethics encounter difficulties stemming from corruption, unethical corporate conduct, conflicts of interest, and insufficient openness. Upholding honesty, accountability, and integrity in both public and private organisations is critical to building social trust. Shifts in familial and societal norms engender ethical discussions concerning personal liberty, interpersonal connections, cultural customs, and obligations to others. Reconciling individual decisions with communal principles is an ongoing ethical dilemma. Moreover, globalisation and cultural diversity prompt enquiries about respect for diverse views, the preservation of cultural identity, and the cultivation of universal human values. Ethical discourse and reciprocal respect are essential for harmonious coexistence. The ethical dilemmas of modern society necessitate an equilibrium between personal liberty and societal obligation. Principles such as compassion, fairness, honesty, respect, and sustainability are crucial for confronting contemporary ethical dilemmas and fostering a more humane society.

HINDU ETHICAL PHILOSOPHY:

Hindu ethical philosophy encompasses the moral concepts, values, and practices formulated within the extensive heritage of Hindu thought that direct human behaviour towards personal perfection, societal harmony, and spiritual enlightenment. It is intricately linked to principles such as Dharma (duty/righteousness), Karma (moral law of conduct), Moksha (liberation), Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truth), and self-discipline. Hindu ethics prioritise not only external deeds but also the purity of thought, intention, and character. A fundamental tenet of Hindu ethical philosophy is dharma, signifying moral order, responsibility, justice, and responsible existence. It asserts that each individual possesses obligations corresponding to their life stage, societal responsibilities, and personal circumstances. Adhering to Dharma preserves equilibrium between personal goals and societal benefit. The idea of karma posits that every action yields moral repercussions. Virtuous behaviours yield beneficial outcomes, but unethical actions engender misery. This principle promotes responsible behaviour, self-regulation of desires, and the cultivation of moral consciousness. Hindu ethical philosophy emphasises ahimsa (non-violence) as a primary moral goal. It fosters empathy, reverence for all sentient beings, and harmonious cohabitation. Likewise, Satya (truthfulness) promotes honesty, integrity, and adherence to ethical principles. The notion of self-control (Sanyama) and discipline constitutes a significant element in Hindu ethics. Individuals endeavour to transcend selfish cravings and attain inner peace through the regulation of their senses, meditation, and spiritual practices. The primary objective of Hindu ethical philosophy is the realisation of the self (Atman) and the attainment of Moksha, wherein an individual transcends ignorance and achieves spiritual liberation. Consequently, Hindu ethical philosophy offers an extensive moral framework that integrates human character, social responsibility, and spiritual development. Its principles persist in shaping dialogues on ethics, tranquillity, ecological stewardship, and interpersonal connections in modern culture.

CONTRIBUTION OF HINDU PHILOSOPHY TO MORAL THOUGHT:

Hindu philosophy has substantially contributed to moral thought by formulating an extensive comprehension of human obligations, values, self-regulation, and the connection between individual existence and universal order. In contrast to a strictly rule-based ethical framework, Hindu moral philosophy prioritises the integration of personal behaviour, social obligations, and spiritual growth. A fundamental contribution of Hindu philosophy is the concept of 'dharma', denoting moral responsibility, morality, and the principles that uphold social and cosmic order. Dharma instructs individuals to fulfil their duties in accordance with their function, context, and life stage, while fostering justice, truth, and harmony. The concept of karma has significantly impacted ethical reasoning by emphasising that human actions have consequences. It promotes responsible behaviour, discourages detrimental actions, and emphasises the significance of ethical decisions in influencing personal and societal existence. Karma associates moral behaviour with individual development and responsibility. Hindu philosophy emphasises the value of ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truthfulness), compassion, self-discipline, and purity of mind and deed. These values have influenced international ethical discourse around peace, tolerance, and harmonious coexistence. The Bhagavad Gita offers a significant ethical foundation through the principle of Nishkama Karma (selfless action).

IV. FUTURE RELEVANCE OF HINDU ETHICAL TEACHINGS:

Hindu ethical teachings will remain pertinent in the future as they offer ideas that tackle personal morality, societal cohesion, and global issues. Principles such as dharma (duty and righteousness), karma (moral accountability of deeds), ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truthfulness), self-discipline, compassion, and reverence for all life provide significant direction in an ever-evolving world. Hindu ethics can foster personal integrity and responsible citizenship by promoting a balance between material advancement and spiritual and moral development. The notion of dharma can motivate individuals to fulfil their obligations to their families, society, and the environment. The notion of karma underscores accountability by highlighting that acts yield consequences. Hindu ethical principles are pertinent in confronting modern challenges, including environmental conservation, social disparity, violence, and ethical quandaries in technology and science. The instruction on harmony between humanity and nature promotes sustainable living, while the concept of universal interconnection fosters respect for diversity and peaceful coexistence. Moreover, Hindu ethical principles can enhance contemporary professional and societal ethics by fostering honesty, empathy, collaboration, and self-discipline. In an age shaped by globalisation and swift technological progress, these enduring principles can foster a more equitable, ethical, and compassionate society. Consequently, Hindu ethical teachings extend beyond historical confines; they continue to serve as a significant source of moral direction for constructing a responsible and compassionate future.

V. CONCLUSION:

The philosophical traditions of Hinduism—including Vedanta, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Nyaya—offer diverse yet interconnected perspectives on ethics and values. These schools emphasize the cultivation of virtues such as compassion, self-discipline, tolerance, honesty, humility, and respect for all forms of life. The study finds that Hindu ethics are not merely theoretical constructs but practical principles intended to shape personal character, familial relationships, social harmony, and ecological consciousness.

Furthermore, Hinduism's value system remains highly relevant in contemporary society. In an age characterized by materialism, ethical dilemmas, environmental degradation, and social fragmentation, Hindu philosophical teachings provide meaningful insights into sustainable living, peaceful coexistence, and moral accountability. The principles of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (“the world is one family”) and *Lokasangraha* (“welfare of all”) underscore the universal and inclusive nature of Hindu ethics, encouraging a sense of global citizenship and collective responsibility.

The study also highlights that Hindu ethical values have significantly influenced Indian culture, education, governance, and social institutions over centuries. Despite changes in social and historical contexts, these values continue to inspire individuals and communities across the world. Their adaptability and universality demonstrate the dynamic character of Hindu philosophical thought.

In conclusion, the evaluation establishes that the values and ethics of Hinduism constitute a rich philosophical heritage that contributes to both individual spiritual development and societal progress. Hinduism offers an integrated vision of life wherein ethical conduct, intellectual inquiry, and spiritual aspiration are harmoniously united. Therefore, the continued study and application of Hindu ethical principles can play a vital role in addressing contemporary moral challenges and fostering a more just, compassionate, and sustainable world.

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