

Max. Marks: 50
Duration: 2 h

1. Read the following extract from the article written by Sh. T.S. Ananthu on Scientific Explanation for existence of God and answer the questions given below it, in about 3-4 sentences each.

One has naturally been troubled by the question of whether there is a God and if so why He allows so many terrible things to happen to us. I was born with a questioning mind, and so refused to accept an 'unproven' hypothesis. But that did not mean I rejected it out of hand, either. I would have liked to prove or disprove it, but saw no way of doing either. My studies in science and engineering introduced me to the modern way of arriving at the truth: what is called the Scientific Method.

The first step in the scientific method is the accumulation of "facts". This is often done through elaborate experiments in laboratories, though this is not a must – any observation of any kind constitutes a scientific 'fact', provided that the observation is objective, i.e., independent of the observer. If the observation of a fact makes us 'think', it leads us to the second step in the scientific method. If this thinking is rational, it leads to an 'objective' analysis of the situation that we have observed. The Principles of Rationality (thinking logically) and Objectivity (observing without the observer's prejudices) are thus the two pillars on which the Scientific Method stands. If we apply them, we are in a position to speculate on a Law which made the fact happen. If we apply the above method to examine the hypothesis "Is there a power (whom we call God) who is both all powerful as well as all love", the obvious answer is "No": for the 'facts' of the 'real' world around us abound in situations where love seems to be absent, and so if there is a God who is all-powerful He could not be all love, and vice versa.

It is worth noting what Einstein had to say about the relationship between observation and theory:

"It is quite wrong to try founding a theory on observable magnitudes alone. In reality, the very opposite happens. It is the theory which decides what we can observe."

The above statement rebels against everything that the "Scientific Method" stands for. As we have seen, the Scientific Method divides the world into two sections: the real ('objective') world of facts, and the imaginary ('subjective') world residing within the mind of the scientist. The essence of the scientific method is to give primacy to the former. What Einstein is saying is that this is not possible, for the facts themselves are a function of the 'theory' already resident in the mind of the scientist. Einstein's assertion is so very different from what is generally perceived as the 'scientific' way to arriving at the truth, that it is worth a careful analysis. This method of arriving at the truth seemed to be a totally different approach to what I had learnt in science. But as I reflected over this carefully, I realized that the Scientific Method as practised today has a major flaw. This flaw centres around the definition of objectivity. "An observation, to be classified as objective, must be independent of the observer", say the science books – and the assumption is that if we record our data faithfully, we are being 'objective'.

The notion of the ego, or sense of I-ness (my theory, my money, my children, my religion, my family, my country etc), forms an extremely important ingredient in our day-to-day functioning, and colours our vision of the world without our realizing the role it plays. That is the message Einstein was trying to get through when he insisted that our theory determines our observations. Therefore, if we want to be really 'objective' as demanded by the Scientific Method, we need to remove this sense of I-ness from our mind – and this is precisely what spiritual training is all about. It is an extraordinarily difficult process but is the only path to Truth. As Buddha put it, "when self enters the picture, Truth is not".

How and why does eliminating the ego lead to Truth? By enhancing our ability at direct perception. If we reflect carefully about our condition, we will realize that we are blind to the most important things around us. For example, when we look at another person, what we can see is only his body. We know there is more to him than his body – emotions, desires, personality, character, and so forth. But we cannot see these. We might infer some things about emotions, desires, character and so forth, but these are based upon conjectures, never on direct and incontrovertible data. Spiritual training improves our scientific capability in two important ways – it enhances our range of direct perception, as well as makes us truly objective by removing the I-ness from the mind. This I-ness is the cause of all deviations from objectivity, for it identifies us with a narrow part of the world and thus obscures our true vision.

- (a) Summarize the passage in 2-3 sentences. (4)
 - (b) What according to the passage is the flaw in the Scientific Method? Do you agree? Comment. (4)
 - (c) What is the meaning of Einstein's quote in the passage? Does this make his approach non-scientific? Discuss (4)
 - (d) What does Ananthuji advocate as the way to be truly objective? Give your views on this. (4)
 - (e) Comment on the meaning of the word "spiritual training" used in the passage. What are the methods discussed in our course? (4)
2. Write short notes (150 words) on any three of the following: (15)
- a. Genetic codes of materialistic worldview in modern technology (any 2)
 - b. The learning from the video "His Goodwill"
 - c. Classification of happiness
 - d. "I help myself by doing good to others"
3. Taking example of any one unethical practice prevalent in the student community at IIT Delhi, with reference to what you learnt in this course, discuss the following: (15)
- a. What is the common justification given for this practice?
 - b. What is the role of the prevailing worldview in giving rise to this practice and its justification?
 - c. What is the role of rules, punishment and peer influence on this practice?
 - d. What change is needed in one's thinking in order to correct the situation?
 - e. Discuss how any one method of inner development would help an individual in the process of self-correction.