

VEL700 Human Values and Technology
Major Test

Max. Marks: 60
Duration: 2 h

November 20, 2016

1. Read the following passage extracted from the writings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, entitled *A Human Approach to World Peace*, and answer the questions given below, in your own words.

When we rise in the morning and listen to the radio or read the newspaper, we are confronted with the same sad news: violence, crime, wars, and disasters. Even in these modern times it is clear that one's precious life is not safe. No former generation has had to experience so much bad news as we face today; this constant awareness of fear and tension should make any sensitive and compassionate person question seriously the progress of our modern world. It is ironic that the more serious problems emanate from the more industrially advanced societies. We can only conclude that there must be something seriously wrong with our progress and development, and if we do not check it in time there could be disastrous consequences for the future of humanity. Science and technology, though capable of creating immeasurable material comfort, cannot replace the age-old spiritual and humanitarian values that have largely shaped world civilization, in all its national forms, as we know it today. Thus it is only logical to try to strike a balance between material developments on the one hand and the development of spiritual, human values on the other. In order to bring about this great adjustment, we need to revive our humanitarian values.

Of the many problems we face today, some are natural calamities and must be accepted and faced with equanimity. Others, however, are of our own making, created by misunderstanding, and can be corrected. One such type arises from the conflict of ideologies, political or religious, when people fight each other for petty ends, losing sight of the basic humanity that binds us all together as a single human family. We must remember that the different religions, ideologies, and political systems of the world are meant for human beings to achieve happiness. We must not lose sight of this fundamental goal and at no time should we place means above ends; the supremacy of humanity over matter and ideology must always be maintained.

Broadly speaking there are two types of happiness and suffering, mental and physical, and of the two, I believe that mental suffering and happiness are the more acute. Hence, I stress the training of the mind to endure suffering and attain a more lasting state of happiness. However, I also have a more general and concrete idea of happiness: a combination of inner peace, economic development, and, above all, world peace. To achieve such goals I feel it is necessary to develop a sense of universal responsibility, a deep concern for all irrespective of creed, colour, sex, or nationality.

The premise behind this idea of universal responsibility is the simple fact that, in general terms, all others' desires are the same as mine. Every being wants happiness and does not want suffering. If we, as intelligent human beings, do not accept this fact, there will be more and more suffering on this planet. If we adopt a self-centred approach to life and constantly try to use others for our own self-interest, we may gain temporary benefits, but in the long run we will not succeed in achieving even personal happiness, and world peace will be completely out of the question.

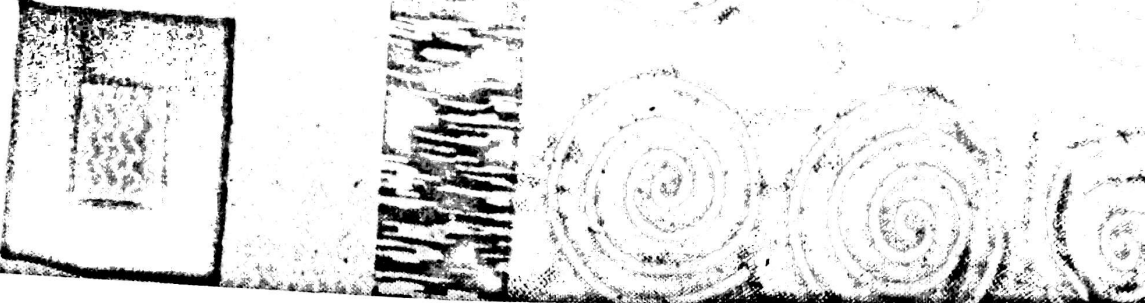
All this calls for a new approach to global problems. The world is becoming smaller and smaller - and more and more interdependent - as a result of rapid technological advances and international trade as well as increasing trans-national relations. One nation's problems can no longer be satisfactorily solved by itself alone; too much depends on the interest, attitude, and cooperation of other nations. A universal humanitarian approach to world problems seems the only sound basis for world peace. What does this mean? We begin from the recognition mentioned previously that all beings cherish happiness and do not want suffering. It then becomes both morally wrong and pragmatically unwise to pursue only one's own happiness oblivious to the feelings and aspirations of all others who surround us as members of the same human family. The wiser course is to think of others also when pursuing our own happiness. This will lead to what I call 'wise self-interest', which hopefully will transform itself into 'compromised self-interest', or better still, 'mutual interest'.

Although the increasing interdependence among nations might be expected to generate more sympathetic cooperation, it is difficult to achieve a spirit of genuine cooperation as long as people remain indifferent to the feelings and happiness of others. When people are motivated mostly by greed and jealousy, it is not possible for them to live in harmony. A spiritual approach may not solve all the political problems that have been caused by the existing self-centered approach, but in the long run it will overcome the very basis of the problems that we face today.

On the other hand, if humankind continues to approach its problems considering only temporary expediency, future generations will have to face tremendous difficulties. The global population is increasing, and our resources are being rapidly depleted. Look at the trees, for example. No one knows exactly what adverse effects massive deforestation will have on the climate, the soil, and global ecology as a whole. We are facing problems because people are concentrating only on their short-term, selfish interests, not thinking of the entire human family. They are not thinking of the earth and the long-term effects on universal life as a whole. If we of the present generation do not think about these now, future generations may not be able to cope with them.

- a. Write a summary of the above passage in 3-4 sentences (200 words). (5)
- b. Summarize the author's views on science & technology, spirituality and religion (200 words). (5)
- c. What universal responsibility and humanitarian approach is the author referring to? Does it make sense in today's world? (200 words) (5)
- d. What is the role of spirituality in today's world according to the author? How does it resonate with the theme of VEL700? What are your views on these? (400 words) (10)

(P.T.O.)

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2. Write in about 200 words the message conveyed by the ANY TWO of the following videos used in the course: (10)
 - a. Modern Technology – The Untold Story
 - b. His Goodwill
 - c. Meals Ready
 - d. Doing Time, Doing Vipassana
 3. You may have observed the fanfare during the festival *Rendezvous*. You may also be aware that the budget for the celebration of such a festival runs into tens of million rupees. You would also recall the exercises on dream salaries, interview of a person from lower economic stratum and happiest moments in life. Connect these and express your views on such large scale, high profile celebrations. (400 words) (10)
 4. Write in about 200 words about ANY TWO of the methods of Self-Development, and explain how the method works in an individual who adopts the method. (10)
 5. Discuss about ANY ONE of the invited talks (Kabir-Preeti Vajpeyi / Jaya Prakash Dabral) in about 200 words, on what you were most impressed with, and why. Relate the message of the talk to the theme of VEL700 course. (5)