

social expectations; therefore, they conform to mores of the group to get along with their companions. E.g. moral legitimacy given to the demands of dowry given its social acceptance.

- **Cultural Relativism** highlights that moral standards consist of customs, conventions and accepted social conducts worked out by the members of diverse social groups. These standards are subject to change with changing social dynamics.

Thus, moral principles/standards have been formulated over time drawing from various sources - philosophy, religion, culture or social norms. Moreover, these standards are subjective in nature as it keeps on changing with passing time.

Therefore, morality is considered as a social practice that is subject to constant evolution with time and fixing it would reduce its utility for the people and societies. Moreover, behaving morally is not obeying either a universal law or a universal principle of reasoning rather it is a **matter of conforming to groups' mores** for larger societal benefit.

3. *(b) Explain different aspects of the 'right conduct' taught by Mahavira to attain a life full of happiness and content.* (150 words) 10

Approach:

- Briefly state the three-jewel philosophy of Mahavira.
- Explain the concept of 'Right Conduct'.
- By highlighting its five components, explain how it would help in achieving a happy life.
- Conclude on the basis of above points.

Answer:

Lord Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankara of Jainism, preached to live rightly by following the '**three jewels**' of Jain ethics i.e. **Right Faith or Perception, Right Knowledge and Right Conduct**. Right perception is about understanding the truth of reality, which comes from having right belief and right thinking. Right perception brings right knowledge i.e. ability to differentiate between right and wrong thus freeing oneself from doubts. From right knowledge comes the desire for right conduct, which is the manner in which one lives to achieve **kaivalya** i.e. omniscience.

At the heart of the 'Right Conduct' lie the five great vows, which bring contentment and happiness to a person in his/her present life and ultimately liberation of one's self. These great vows include:

- **Non-violence:** It is to be observed in action, speech, and thought. Right conduct would be to not injure, abuse, oppress, enslave, insult, torment, torture, or kill any living being. It is rooted in **love and compassion for every soul**.
- **Truthfulness:** Practicing truthfulness involves more than avoiding lies. Since anger, greed, fear, jealousy, ego, and frivolity are the breeding grounds of untruth, only those who have conquered them can speak the truth. It requires **moral courage** to develop truthfulness.
- **Non-stealing:** Stealing consists of taking another's property without his/her consent, or by unjust or immoral methods. Further, stealing involves taking anything which does not belong to the person, even if it is lying unclaimed. To take more than one's need is also considered stealing. This conduct is rooted in **personal integrity, justice and sustainable lifestyle**.
- **Non-attachment/non-possession:** Mahavira says that desires have no end and worldly wealth creates attachment. This attachment leads to greed, jealousy, selfishness, ego, hatred, violence, etc. It helps in detachment of a person from materialistic things and development of the habit of giving away or charity.
- **Celibacy/chastity:** It involves abstinence from sensual pleasure as well as pleasure from all five senses. The ascetics are to follow this vow strictly, while the householders must not have any physical relationship with someone other than their own spouse. This conduct prevents the ascetic from **indulgence** and maintains **peace** in the family of a householder.

Right conduct taught by Mahavira ultimately leads to development of virtues such as love, compassion, moral strength, forgiveness, humility, honesty, sacrifice etc. All of these virtues are essential for resolving the day-to-day dilemma and keeping the conscience of a person clean. This brings mental peace, satisfaction, content and ultimate happiness to a person's life.