



## Goa University

### Discipline of Philosophy, School of Sanskrit, Philosophy and Indic Studies

#### Report on *"From Ascriptive Ethics to Human Dignity: A Reappraisal of Indian Moral Thought"*

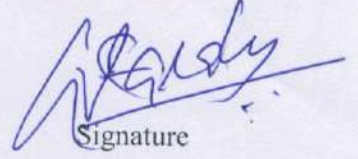
1. Title of the Event/Activity/program	Monthly online guest lecture titled, <i>"From Ascriptive Ethics to Human Dignity: A Reappraisal of Indian Moral Thought"</i>
2. Date and Time	27 June 2025 (Friday) from 3:30 PM to 5:30 PM IST.
3. Mode of conduct (Physical/Online)	Online: <a href="https://meet.google.com/fyn-smfb-nio">meet.google.com/fyn-smfb-nio</a>
4. School	School of Sanskrit, Philosophy and Indic Studies
5. Details of the Resource Person (Brief biodata)	<p>Prof. P. Kesava Kumar is a faculty member in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Delhi. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Hyderabad and previously taught at Pondicherry University before joining the University of Delhi (DU). His areas of specialization include Social and Political Philosophy, Contemporary Indian Philosophy, Continental Philosophy, and Dalit Studies. At the University of Delhi, he has introduced several innovative M.A. Philosophy courses, including Philosophy of B.R. Ambedkar, Critical Philosophical Traditions of India, Critical Reading of Western Philosophy, and Indian Materialism. These courses aim to offer alternative perspectives that challenge the dominant narratives within philosophical discourse.</p>

	<p>Prof. Kumar is the author of Political Philosophy of Ambedkar: An Inquiry into the Theoretical Foundations of the Dalit Movement, Jiddu Krishnamurti: A Critical Study of Tradition and Revolution, and Dalita Udyamam: Velugu Needalu (a collection of essays on the Dalit movement in Telugu). He is an active commentator on Dalit literary and cultural politics and has recently published two poetry collections in Telugu: Aadima Pourudu and Yegire Pallem, Nadiche.</p>
<b>6. Total number of participants</b>	34
<b>7. The objectives of the Program/activity/event</b>	<p>This talk aimed to critique the dominant Vedic ethical framework, particularly the Purushartha-Varnashrama model, for perpetuating caste hierarchies and social exclusion. It highlights alternative perspectives from Śramaṇa traditions and modern reformist thinkers that challenge this model. By contrasting spiritual idealism with lived inequality, the study seeks to recover a more inclusive, dignity-based vision of Indian ethics rooted in human autonomy and justice.</p>
<b>8. Description of the Program/activity/event</b>	<p>General Intro - Sanket Revankar.  Welcome Address- Akash Salgaonkar  Talk- Prof. Kesava Kumar (60 minutes)  Q&amp;A session - Siya Sangodkar (30 minutes)  Vote of Thanks - Diksha Rai.</p>
<b>9. Benefit/Key outcomes of the Program/activity/event</b>	<p>As a result of the talk, attendees were introduced to the profound tension in Indian ethics between metaphysical ideals and social realities, emphasizing how dominant dharma-based frameworks have historically justified systemic marginalization. It highlights the contributions of counter-traditions, like the Śramaṇas and thinkers such as Ambedkar and Phule, in reshaping the ethical discourse towards human dignity and moral autonomy. The study prompts a re-evaluation of entrenched paradigms and encourages critical reflection on the ethical underpinnings of Indian thought. Ultimately, it advocates for an ethical framework that celebrates personhood over pedigree, steering Indian philosophy toward a more egalitarian and socially responsive vision of the moral life.</p>



**10. Enclosures with the report**

YouTube link -  
[https://youtu.be/9\\_Sa4WVc\\_0w](https://youtu.be/9_Sa4WVc_0w), Poster,  
Attendance, screenshots.



Signature

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# From Ascriptive Ethics to Human Dignity: A Reappraisal of Indian Moral Thought

27 June 2025 (Friday)  
3:30 PM to 5:30 PM IST

An online talk by  
**Prof. P. Kesava Kumar**  
Professor,  
Department of Philosophy,  
University of Delhi

**Meet Link:** [meet.google.com/fyn-smfb-nio](https://meet.google.com/fyn-smfb-nio)

## Abstract

India possesses a remarkably rich and diverse heritage of ethical thought. However, the dominant discourse on Indian ethics has often been narrowly framed through the lens of the Vedic tradition, particularly the framework of Purusharthas and Varnashrama Dharma. This model, historically central to Hindu philosophy, has served to legitimize social hierarchies, including untouchability, slavery, and other forms of structural inequality. Rather than promoting a moral society grounded in human dignity and self-respect, this system has institutionalized segregation, marginalization, and dehumanization.

Alternative philosophical traditions, notably the Śramaṇas, emerged in opposition to this caste- and birth-based ethical system. These traditions questioned the moral legitimacy of social stratification and offered more egalitarian visions of human flourishing. Despite this, many modern scholars have continued to uphold the Purushartha–Varnashrama model without a sufficient critical examination of its ethical content and social implications.

In comparison with Western ethical theories, scholars like McKenzie argued that while the West developed systematic ethical philosophies, Hindu thought emphasized dharma rather than ethics. In response, prominent Indian philosophers such as S. Radhakrishnan, M. Hiriyanna, and T.M.P.

Mahadevan sought to defend dharma-based ethics by grounding them in metaphysical and spiritual ideals. For these thinkers, ethics in the Indian tradition is not concerned primarily with worldly happiness or moral virtue, but with guiding the individual toward a transcendent experience that is supramoral and supramental. As Radhakrishnan succinctly stated, “the perfect ideal of our life is found only in the eternal Reality.”

This tension—between ascribed moral ideals rooted in metaphysical absolutism and the lived experiences of social exclusion—defines the core of the debate on Indian ethics. In contrast to the dominant model, an alternative philosophical and ethical discourse has developed, one that centers human dignity, self-respect, and the moral autonomy of individuals. This shift marks a movement in Indian ethical thinking: from varna to virtue, from subjugation to the celebration of personhood. Modern Indian thinkers such as Jotirao Phule, E.V. Ramasamy Periyar, and B.R.

Ambedkar contributed significantly to this tradition. By interrogating and challenging the dominant ethical paradigms, they laid the foundation for a more inclusive and humanistic vision of Indian ethics.

## Bio

Prof. P. Kesava Kumar is a faculty member in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Delhi. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Hyderabad and previously taught at Pondicherry University before joining the University of Delhi (DU). His areas of specialization include Social and Political Philosophy, Contemporary Indian Philosophy, Continental Philosophy, and Dalit Studies. At the University of Delhi, he has introduced several innovative M.A. Philosophy courses, including Philosophy of B.R. Ambedkar, Critical Philosophical Traditions of India, Critical Reading of Western Philosophy, and Indian Materialism. These courses aim to offer alternative perspectives that challenge the dominant narratives within philosophical discourse.

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Dr. Koshy Tharakan

Kesava Kumar

Bindu Chintada

Budhan singh sinku

Akash Naik Salgeon...

Walter Menezes

NILAN JAN ROY

17 others

M.A. Philosophy Part-2

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15:00 27-06-2025

Dr. Koshy Tharakan

Kesava Kumar

NILANJAN ROY

Siya Sangodkar

Sanket Shantaram Revankar

Walter Menezes

Sagar Yadav

13 others

M.A. Philosophy Part-2

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15:28 27-06-2025

First name	Last name	Email	Duration
Snigdha		bard*****@***.com	14 min
SK KAWSAR	ALI	askk*****@***.com	7 min
BIPADTARAN	BAGDI	bipa*****@***.com	1 hr 18 min
Yogita Dilip	Chhatre	yogita@unigoa.ac.in	12 min
Bindu	Chintada	bchi*****@***.in	1 hr 18 min
Shruti	Choudhury	shru*****@***.com	59 min
Bara	Elizabeth	philosophy.bara@unigoa.ac.in	1 hr 18 min
Vidya Mary	George	philosophy.vidya@unigoa.ac.in	1 hr 29 min
Sureharam	Gethees	sure*****@***.com	23 min
Saloni	Govil	salo*****@***.com	1 hr 18 min
jomon	joy	jomo*****@***.com	19 min
Mohd.	Kaif	mdka*****@***.com	41 min
Dr.	Koshy Tharakan	koshy@unigoa.ac.in	1 hr 32 min
Anshu	Kumar	ansh*****@***.com	20 min
Kesava	Kumar	pkes**@***.com	1 hr 33 min
Mayuri	Kuttikar	mayu*****@***.com	26 min
Francis	Lawrence Xavier Raj	xavi*****@***.com	1 hr 28 min
Walter	Menezes	menezes@unigoa.ac.in	1 hr 33 min
Debarati	Mondal	deba*****@***.com	11 sec
Akash	Naik Salgaonkar	philosophy.akash@unigoa.ac.in	1 hr 24 min
Meera	Narayanankutty	meer*****@***.com	55 min
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Aruvi	Rajamanickam	philosophy.aruvi@unigoa.ac.in	52 min
Udai	Ratna	udai*****@***.com	27 min
Sanket Shantaram	Revankar	philosophy.sanket@unigoa.ac.in	1 hr 49 min
NILANJAN	ROY	itis*****@***.com	1 hr 30 min
Dipanki	Saikia	saik*****@***.com	38 min
Siya	Sangodkar	philosophy.siya@unigoa.ac.in	1 hr 33 min
Vasudha	Sawaiker	sawa*****@***.com	1 hr 19 min
Jatin	Sharma	jati*****@***.com	16 min
Budhan singh	sinku	sink*****@***.com	1 hr 10 min
Mark	Stephen J	mark*****@***.in	1 hr 31 min
Alok	Tandon	alok*****@***.com	1 hr 15 min
Sagar	Yadav	saga*****@***.com	1 hr 36 min