



# Indian Philosophy II

**COURSE CODE: M23PH06DC**

**Discipline Core Course  
Postgraduate Programme in Philosophy**

**SELF LEARNING MATERIAL**



**SREENARAYANAGURU  
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The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

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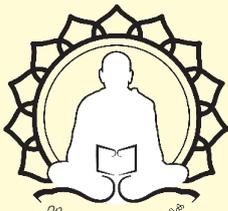


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# MESSAGE FROM VICE CHANCELLOR

Dear learner,

I extend my heartfelt greetings and profound enthusiasm as I warmly welcome you to Sreenarayanaguru Open University. Established in September 2020 as a state-led endeavour to promote higher education through open and distance learning modes, our institution was shaped by the guiding principle that access and quality are the cornerstones of equity. We have firmly resolved to uphold the highest standards of education, setting the benchmark and charting the course.

The courses offered by the Sreenarayanaguru Open University aim to strike a quality balance, ensuring students are equipped for both personal growth and professional excellence. The University embraces the widely acclaimed “blended format,” a practical framework that harmoniously integrates Self-Learning Materials, Classroom Counseling, and Virtual modes, fostering a dynamic and enriching experience for both learners and instructors.

The university aims to offer you an engaging and thought-provoking educational journey. The postgraduate programme in Philosophy is designed to be a continuation of the undergraduate programme in Philosophy. It maintains a close connection with the content and teaching methods of the undergraduate programme. It advances the more nuanced aspects of philosophical theories and practices. The university has recognised that empirical methods have limitations when explaining philosophical concepts. As a result, they have made a deliberate effort to use illustrative methods throughout their content delivery. The Self-Learning Material has been meticulously crafted, incorporating relevant examples to facilitate better comprehension.

Rest assured, the university’s student support services will be at your disposal throughout your academic journey, readily available to address any concerns or grievances you may encounter. We encourage you to reach out to us freely regarding any matter about your academic programme. It is our sincere wish that you achieve the utmost success.



Warm regards.  
Dr. Jagathy Raj V. P.

21-08-2024

# CONTENTS

<b>Block 1</b>	<b>Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika</b>	<b>1</b>
Unit 1	Introduction to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Philosophy	2
Unit 2	Nyāya Epistemology	16
Unit 3	Vaiśeṣika Metaphysics	41
<b>Block 2</b>	<b>Sāṅkhya- Yoga</b>	<b>59</b>
Unit 1	Sāṅkhya Dualism	60
Unit 2	Theory of Evolution in Sāṅkhya	73
Unit 3	Yoga	86
<b>Block 3</b>	<b>Pūrva Mīmāṃsā</b>	<b>105</b>
Unit 1	Introduction to Pūrva Mīmāṃsā	106
Unit 2	Validity and Invalidity of Knowledge in Mimāṃsā Philosophy	120
Unit 3	Ethics of Mimāṃsā	134
<b>Block 4</b>	<b>Vedānta Philosophy</b>	<b>144</b>
Unit 1	Philosophy of Advaita Vedānta	145
Unit 2	Ramanuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita and Madhva's Dvaita	165
Unit 3	Vallabha and Nimbārka Schools of Vedānta Philosophy	185



**BLOCK 1**  
**Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika**

# UNIT 1

## Introduction to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Philosophy

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ understand the importance of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy within the systems of Indian philosophical tradition
- ▶ understand the epistemological and metaphysical framework of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy
- ▶ know the criteria for determining the validity and reliability of knowledge claims within Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika epistemology
- ▶ understand the concept of invalid knowledge (Aprama) and its implications for understanding ignorance, error, and misconception
- ▶ recognize the primary texts and secondary sources to deepen understanding of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy

### Background

Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, two of the six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy, have played important roles in shaping the intellectual landscape of ancient and medieval India. The origins of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika can be traced back to the rich intellectual tradition, characterised by flourishing debates and dialogues in royal courts and academic circles. Both of these traditions flourished alongside other philosophical schools such as Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā, and Vedānta, contributing to the establishment of Indian philosophical discourse. Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika thinkers actively engaged in serious debates and dialectical exchanges, thereby shaping their doctrines and methodologies through intellectual scrutiny and critical inquiry. Through these engagements, they underwent periods of growth, consolidation, and interaction with rival philosophical schools. They demonstrated adaptability to changing intellectual currents, assimilated insights from diverse traditions, and developed philosophical

frameworks to address emerging challenges. In the medieval period, commentators and scholars further enriched Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika literature through detailed explanations, critical analyses, and synthesis with other philosophical systems.

## Keywords

Ānvīkṣikī, Tarkavidyā, Vadavidyā, Dialectics, Viśeṣa, Samānatantra, Prama, Aprama

## Discussion

► Systematic approach and elimination of blind faith

The Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools of Indian philosophy keep their uniqueness from other systems by their analytical approach, emphasising common sense and scientific inquiry in most of the matters they dealt with. While other philosophical traditions often engage with speculative metaphysics concerning the universe as a whole, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika focus on detailed analysis and logical study of specific phenomena. Central to the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika approach is their rejection of blind faith or mere adherence to authority. These schools advocate for a systematic investigation of the sources and methods through which we acquire knowledge. They argue that information gathered from scriptures or sensory experiences should not be accepted at face value; it must be subjected to critical inquiry. This emphasis on critical examination goes along with the very meaning of ‘ānvīkṣikī’ the root word for Nyāya, which signifies a systematic quest for knowledge.

► The world within and the world without

The Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools of Indian philosophy take up the familiar concepts of traditional philosophy, such as space, time, cause, matter, mind, soul, and knowledge and examine their significance for human experience. Within these traditions, two distinct departments emerge as central: the logical and the physical. Nyāya explores the ‘world within,’ examining the mechanisms of knowledge acquisition. Here, they counter sceptical arguments that nothing can be known for certain. On the other hand, the Vaiśeṣika school focuses on the ‘world without,’ analysing experience to formulate general principles that apply to everything we know, whether through senses, inference, or even established authorities.



## 1.1.1 Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika Darśana: A General Introduction

► Epistemological and analytical approach

The Nyāya philosophy holds an important position in Indian intellectual tradition, earning respect over centuries. Nyāya's uniqueness lies not in its discussion of the soul and liberation but in its critical examination of epistemological issues. Scholars like Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara stress the importance of Nyāya's analytical approach in distinguishing it from other philosophical traditions. Vacaspati further clarifies Nyāya's purpose as the critical evaluation of objects of knowledge using logical principles. Jaynavalkya identifies Nyāya as one of the four limbs of the Veda, further elevating its status within Hindu philosophical discourse.

► Tarkavidyā and Vadavidyā

Nyāya has been influenced by dialectical discussions involving the exchange of ideas and arguments, typically structured, to uncover truth or resolve philosophical questions. These discussions serve as a cornerstone of Nyāya's philosophical approach. Nyāya is sometimes called Tarkavidyā, the science of debate, and Vadavidyā, the science of discussion, highlighting its deep engagement with argumentation and logical reasoning. It is through debate and discussion that Nyāya philosophers explore and refine their understanding of various philosophical concepts and truths.

► Nyāya's influence foundational to Indian philosophical thought

The influence of Nyāya extends beyond its own philosophical framework. Every major system of Indian thought acknowledges the fundamental principles of Nyāya logic. Even when critiquing the Nyāya system, scholars employ Nyāya terminology and logic, attesting to its impact and enduring relevance. Nyāya thus functions as an opening to systematic philosophy, providing a common starting point for philosophical inquiry. Its methodology and analytical tools lay the groundwork for understanding and engaging with diverse philosophical perspectives. In this way, Nyāya serves as an indispensable introduction to Indian philosophical thought, guiding everyone towards deeper insights into the nature of reality and the human condition.

Gautama, the founder of the Nyāya school of philosophy, was influenced by the intellectual environment of his time, characterised by lively dialectical tournaments in the courts of kings and the halls of philosophers. He recognised the need for regulation and structure to avoid the chaotic and sometimes unproductive nature of these debates. This realisation led him

► Nyāya begins with systematic approach to debate

to develop a systematic approach to debates, which in turn laid the foundation for the development of logical theory within the Nyāya tradition. Through his contributions, Gautama shaped the Nyāya tradition and influenced the broader development of logical theory in Indian philosophy.

► The emergence of Nyāya philosophy

The Nyāya school of philosophy traces its roots back to the pre-Buddhistic period in ancient India. While the origins of Nyāya can be found in this early period, it was during the time around the emergence of Buddhism that a systematic and scientific treatment of Nyāya began to take shape. Unfortunately, historical records of the development of Nyāya prior to the composition of its foundational text, the Nyāya Sūtra, are very rare. We have limited information about the early stages of Nyāya's evolution and much of what we know comes from later texts and commentaries. Despite the lack of detailed historical documentation, it is evident that Nyāya had already gained prominence and significance within the intellectual landscape of ancient India by the time of its systematic exposition in the Nyāya Sūtra. This suggests that Nyāya philosophy had been actively studied and discussed for some time before its formalisation in written form. The Nyāya Sūtra, composed by the sage Gautama, serves as a foundational text for the Nyāya school. It systematically presents the principles and methods of Nyāya philosophy, providing a framework for logical reasoning, epistemology, and metaphysics.

► Vaiśeṣika emphasises particularity, focuses on distinctions in existence

The Vaiśeṣika system gets its name from 'viśeṣa,' which means 'particularity' or 'specificity'. It emphasises that true individuality exists in the specific elements of the world, especially in the particular imperceptible souls and atoms. Even though these individuals have connections to the cosmos and society, which help them realise themselves, they still maintain their distinctiveness despite these relationships. In other words, Vaiśeṣika philosophy focuses on distinctions. It is not concerned with creating a grand synthesis that encompasses everything, bringing all the diversity of the sensory and intellectual worlds under a single, all-encompassing formula. Instead, Vaiśeṣika seeks to identify the most general characteristics of observed phenomena. It examines different aspects of experience and assigns each to its appropriate category. As a result of this approach, Vaiśeṣika philosophy appears fragmented rather than comprehensive. It focuses on understanding the pieces of existence rather than constructing a unified theory that explains everything at once.



► Vaiśeṣika opposes Buddhist phenomenalism, affirming substantial existence

The Vaiśeṣika system originates from its opposition to Buddhist phenomenalism. This is not a complete opposition rather by acknowledging certain aspects of Buddhist epistemology, such as perception and inference as sources of knowledge, it criticises the Buddhist negation of the substantial existence of souls and substances. Contrary to the Buddhist notion of these entities as illusory, the Vaiśeṣika maintains that they are concrete realities.

► Historical precedence of Vaiśeṣika philosophy

The Vaiśeṣika system appears to have a longer history than the Nyāya school of thought. The Sutra of Kanada, a foundational text of the Vaiśeṣika system, does not exhibit as much influence from Nyāya. However, the Sutra of Gautama and the Bhāṣya of Vatsyayana, key texts associated with Nyāya, show notable influence from Vaiśeṣika perspectives. This suggests a historical precedence and influence of the Vaiśeṣika system over Nyāya, as reflected in the foundational texts of these philosophical traditions. Originating in a period marked by intellectual flexibility and scepticism, the early form of Vaiśeṣika primarily focused on physics and metaphysics. However, later developments added logical discussions into its framework. While sharing foundational principles with Nyāya, such as the nature of the self and the atomic theory of the universe, Vaiśeṣika distinguishes itself through its unique characterisation of philosophical categories, as well as its development of the atomic theory.

### 1.1.2 A Brief Sketch on the Literary Works of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika Philosophy

► Nyāya's foundational text is the Nyāya Sūtra

The history of Nyāya literature spans over around twenty centuries. The foundational text of Nyāya is the Nyāya Sūtra, attributed to the sage Gautama. This text is comprised of five books, each containing two sections. According to Vātsyāyana, a prominent commentator on the Nyāya Sūtra, Gautama's treatise follows a structured method of enunciation, definition, and critical examination. The first book of the Nyāya Sūtra introduces the sixteen topics that are further elaborated upon in the subsequent books. These topics include various aspects of logical inquiry and philosophical analysis. The second book of the Nyāya Sūtra deals with the nature of doubt, the means of proof, and their validity, laying the groundwork for logical reasoning and epistemology. The third book explores concepts related to the self, body, senses, cognition, and mind, offering insights into metaphysical and psychological phenomena.

► Integration of brahmanical thought with religious and philosophical dogmas

In the fourth book, the Nyāya Sūtra addresses volition, sorrow, suffering, and liberation. It mainly discusses philosophical themes related to ethics and liberation from suffering. It also discusses the theory of error and the relationship between whole and parts that stress metaphysical problems. The final book of the Nyāya Sūtra examines unreal objections and occasions for sharp criticism, aiming to refine the process of philosophical debate and inquiry. Through its comprehensive coverage of diverse topics, the Nyāya Sūtra attempts to integrate the insights of brahmanical thought with religious and philosophical dogmas, providing a logical defence of theistic realism.

► The enhancement of Nyāya tradition through commentaries

Vātsyāyana's Nyāya Bhāṣya is considered as the classic commentary on the Nyāya Sūtra. It offers interpretations and insights into Gautama's teachings. While Vātsyāyana is not Gautama's immediate successor, his commentary reflects the culmination of earlier discussions within the Nyāya school. Other developments in Nyāya philosophy are attributed to subsequent figures such as Nāgārjuna, Dignāga, Uddyotakara, and Dharmakīrti. These scholars engage in debates and defend their philosophical positions through commentaries and critical analyses. Uddyotakara's Nyāyavārttika, Dharmakīrti's Nyāyabindu, and other works contribute to the ongoing dialogue within the Nyāya tradition. They addressed criticisms against Nyāya and added new perspectives to enhance the system. Vācaspati, Udayana, Jayanta, Bhāsarvajña, and Vardhamāna are among the later commentators who further enrich Nyāya literature with their insights and interpretations.

► Later works on Nyāya integrate Vaiśeṣika into it

In later works on Nyāya, there is a notable acceptance of Vaiśeṣika categories, which are incorporated under the concept of prameya, or objects of knowledge, or under artha, one of the twelve kinds of prameya. Varadarāja's Tārkikarakṣā, an important treatise of the syncretist school from the twelfth century A.D., plays a crucial role in this integration. He categorises the twelve objects of Nyāya along with the six categories of Vaiśeṣika under prameya. Kesava Miśra's Tarkabhāṣa, composed towards the end of the thirteenth century, is another noteworthy work that combines Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika perspectives. This synthesis reflects a broader trend within Nyāya literature towards inclusivity and integration of diverse philosophical views.

Nyāya works from later periods dealt with diverse topics



► Later Nyāya focuses on pure logic and dialectic

such as atoms, souls, rebirth, God, the world, and the nature of knowledge. While earlier Nyāya philosophy often intertwined metaphysical and logical inquiries, Buddhist and Jaina thinkers prioritise the purely logical aspects. This emphasis laid the groundwork for the development of modern Nyāya, characterised by its focus on pure logic and dialectic. Gaṅgeśa's Tattvacintāmaṇi stands as a standard text of the modern Nyāya school, with Vardhamāna and Jayadeva continuing the tradition through their writings. Succeeding logicians from this tradition, such as Jagadīśa and Gadādhara in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, respectively, further enriched the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school. Annam Bhaṭṭa, in the seventeenth century, attempts to synthesise ancient and modern Nyāya with Vaiśeṣika philosophy, with his works Tarkasaṅgraha and Dīpikā serving as popular guidebooks in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika tradition.

► Vaiśeṣika Sutra by Kanada is structured into ten books

The Vaiśeṣika philosophy got a systematic exposition in the Vaiśeṣika Sutra of Kāṇāda, also known as Kaṇabhuk, or Kaṇābhakṣa. The name 'Vaiśeṣika' etymologically signifies 'atom-eater,' possibly reflecting the fundamental tenets of the system, which is also referred to as Aulūkyā Darśana. The supposed real name of the author of the Sutra is believed to be Kāṇāda. This foundational text is structured into ten books, each engaging with different aspects of philosophical inquiry. Book I of the Vaiśeṣika Sutra introduces and discusses the five fundamental categories: substance, quality, action, generality, and particularity. These categories form the foundational framework for understanding the nature of reality according to Vaiśeṣika philosophy. Book II examines various substances, excluding the soul and mind, which are addressed in Book III along with the objects of the senses and the principles of inference. Book IV centres on the atomic structure of the universe, explaining the composition of matter according to Vaiśeṣika metaphysics. Book V shifts focus to a detailed examination of the nature and types of action, while Book VI engages with ethical considerations. Book VII confronts the questions regarding quality, self, and inherence. The final three books of the Vaiśeṣika Sutra address logical issues, exploring problems of perception, inference, and causality.

► Commentaries on Vaiśeṣika philosophy

Another important work on Vaiśeṣika philosophy is Padarthadharmasaṅgraha written by Prashastapada. It is not a mere commentary on Kanada's Vaiśeṣika Sutra but an independent work within the realm of Indian philosophy. The scholars even argue that Prashastapada's mature philosophical

perspectives are merely a progression of the ideas proposed in Kanada's original work. Prashastapada introduces several distinct contributions to the Vaiśeṣika tradition, including his elaboration on the twenty-four qualities, his theories on the creation and destruction of the world, his understanding of inference and analysis of fallacies. Another important Vaiśeṣika treatise that draws from Prashastapada's work is Candrācārya's Daśapadārthaśāstra, which survives in a Chinese version dating back to A.D. 648. Four commentaries were composed on Prashastapada's Padarthadharmasangraha, including Vyomavatī by Vyomaśekhara, Nyāyakandalī by Śrīdhara, Kiranāvalī by Udayana, and Lilāvatī by Śrīvatsa. Among these, Vyomavatī is considered the oldest.

### 1.1.3 The Relation between Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika Philosophy

The Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems often had been treated as parts of one whole. Referred to as samānatantra or allied systems, they share beliefs in concepts like the plurality of souls, a personal deity and the atomic nature of the universe. Some scholars propose that they emerged as independent branches from a common source, which dealt with the nature of knowledge and the means of acquiring it. Later texts treat these systems as interconnected parts of a single discipline that share somewhat same teachings. Even within foundational texts like Vatsyayana's Nyāya Bhāṣya, the boundaries between Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika are not strictly maintained. Vaiśeṣika principles are often integrated into Nyāya discussions, indicating a complementary relationship between the two. Uddyotakara's Nyāyavārttika similarly incorporates Vaiśeṣika doctrines. Scholars note that the merging of these schools began early and seemed complete by the time of the Nyāyavārttika's composition.

► The inter connectedness of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika

► Nyāya focuses on epistemology, Vaiśeṣika on metaphysics

Despite this close association, we can also find differences that distinguish Nyāya from Vaiśeṣika. Nyāya primarily focuses on building a systematic framework for valid reasoning and the acquisition of knowledge. This highlights the epistemological emphasis of the Nyāya system. Vaiśeṣika, on the other hand, focuses on developing metaphysical and ontological theories. Its core principles revolve around the concept of atoms (paramāṇu), which are considered the ultimate constituents of reality. This is visible in their categorisation of reality and their treatment of valid means of knowledge. While Vaiśeṣika identifies seven categories and recognises perception and inference as the only



valid means of knowledge, Nyāya expands the categorisation to sixteen and acknowledges perception, inference, comparison, and verbal authority as separate and distinct pramāṇas. This difference in emphasis states the distinct roles played by each system within the broader philosophical landscape.

### 1.1.4 Valid and Invalid Knowledge

There are two possible approaches regarding the knowledge of validity. Firstly, knowledge may cognize its own validity, but according to Nyāya, this is untenable. Knowledge perceives objects external to itself and cannot introspectively assess its own validity. Secondly, the validity of one knowledge may be assessed by another, but this too has limitations. The second knowledge can only recognise the first as an object and cannot independently verify its truth or falsity. Thus, both approaches fail to establish a reliable means of validating knowledge. This dilemma extends to the validation of methods such as perception and inference. If the validity of knowledge itself is uncertain, then determining the validity of methods becomes even more challenging. This creates a circular predicament where the validity of knowledge depends on the validity of the methods, yet the validity of methods is assessed based on the knowledge derived from them. To address these challenges, ancient Nyāya scholars undertook a critical examination of knowledge in relation to reality, following Gautama's Nyāya-Sutra. Their successors further engaged with logical and metaphysical issues, resulting in a comprehensive philosophical system.

► The dilemmatic situation of validity of knowledge

Nyāya proposes four fundamental conditions for all valid knowledge which facilitate the process of acquiring knowledge about the world. The first condition is the pramātṛ, which translates to the 'knower' or the conscious entity actively engaged in acquiring knowledge. This knower can be an individual or even a collective consciousness. The second condition is the prameya, the object to which the process of cognition is directed. It is the entity, concept, or phenomenon that the pramātṛ seeks to understand. Once the pramātṛ encounters the prameya, a cognitive experience arises within them. This experience, known as pramiti, represents the resulting state of cognition. The final and crucial element is the pramāna, which translates to the 'means of knowledge' or the instrument through which the pramātṛ acquires knowledge of the prameya. These four conditions are closely linked and indispensable for achieving valid knowledge. The pramātṛ interacts with the

► Four fundamental conditions for all valid knowledge

prameya through the instrument of pramāna, resulting in the cognitive state of pramiti. This interconnectedness ensures a strong foundation for acquiring reliable knowledge about the world.

► Two primary categories: anubhava and smriti

Nyāya makes initial division of knowledge into two primary categories: ‘anubhava’ or presentation, and ‘smriti’ or memory. Anubhava involves a direct, immediate apprehension of objects, perceived as original experiences rather than reproductions of past knowledge. On the other hand, smriti, or memory, involves the recollection or reproduction of past experiences. Here, knowledge is seen as derived not solely from the objects themselves but also from our previous cognitions of those objects. Further subdivision occurs within each of these categories, resulting in the distinction between valid (yathartha) and invalid (ayathartha) forms of knowledge. Valid knowledge corresponds accurately with the real nature of its object, while invalid knowledge fails to do so.

► Prama: seeing things as they truly are

Within the realm of presentation or anubhava, as mentioned above both valid and invalid forms of knowledge exist. Valid presentation, termed as ‘prama’ - the correct apprehension of an object. It refers to seeing things as they truly are. This means that when we perceive or understand something, our grasp of it denotes its actual nature. Consider the experience of encountering a red rose in a garden or tasting a ripe mango. In these instances, the mind apprehends sensory information, such as colour, smell and taste, reflecting the essence of knowledge as described by Nyāya. The Nyāya tradition identifies four distinct types of prama: perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāna), comparison (upamāna), and testimony (sabda). In each of these forms, there is a direct presentation of the object as it truly is, thus constituting valid knowledge according to Nyāya.

► Valid knowledge reveals truth of the external reality

According to Nyāya, every instance of knowledge is essentially a revelation or manifestation of objects (arthaprakāśo buddhih). This concept draws an analogy between knowledge and a lamp: just as a lamp illuminates physical objects placed before it, knowledge illuminates and reveals all objects that come within its horizon. In this view, knowledge serves as a guiding light, shedding clarity on the nature of reality and facilitating understanding of the world around us. Nyāya forms this characterisation of knowledge from the correspondence theory of truth, which asserts that truth



lies in the correspondence between a proposition and reality. In other words, valid knowledge corresponds to the actual state of affairs in the external world.

► Aprama is either false or not true but not necessarily false

In Nyāya philosophy, there are cases where our understanding of things seems like a presentation, but actually not. These cases fall into a category called ‘aprama’ or invalid presentations. Aprama includes all cognitions that are either false or not true but not necessarily false. It includes doubt, error, and hypothetical reasoning. Doubt (Samshaya) arises when there is uncertainty in cognition. It is like being unsure whether something is true or false. For instance, if you are walking in the dark and see a coiled shape on the ground, you might doubt whether it is a rope or a snake. Error (Viparyaya) occurs when our perception does not correspond to reality. It is like seeing things incorrectly. For example, mistaking a coiled rope for a snake due to poor lighting or fear-induced confusion is an instance of error. Hypothetical Reasoning (Tarka) involves making logical deductions based on hypothetical situations. While it is a form of reasoning, it does not provide real knowledge because it deals with imagined scenarios rather than actual observations. For instance, reasoning that ‘if there were no fire, there cannot be smoke’ is hypothetical, as it does not entail direct observation of fire or smoke.

► Memory is representative rather than presentative cognition

Memory, known as ‘smṛti’ in Nyāya philosophy, refers to our ability to recall our past experiences. Although essential in daily life, is not considered valid knowledge according to Nyāya. Unlike direct perception, memory involves recalling past experiences, making it representative rather than presentative cognition. Memory can be either true or false. True memory aligns with the real nature of the remembered objects, while false memory does not match with the reality. In our waking life, we experience both types of memory. However, in dreams, our cognitions are considered false memory-cognitions because they do not accurately reflect the real nature of the objects perceived in dreams. Dreams involve a kind of memory that does not correspond to reality but rather presents a distorted representation of it.

## Summarized Overview

The Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools of Indian philosophy distinguish themselves by their analytical approach and emphasis on common sense and scientific inquiry. Central to their approach is the rejection of blind faith, advocating instead for systematic investigation of knowledge sources and methods. Nyāya holds a venerable position in Indian intellectual tradition, emphasising critical examination of epistemological issues. It is characterised by dialectical discussions, earning it the titles of Tarkavidyā (science of debate) and Vadavidyā (science of discussion). Vaiśeṣika system on the other hand, originating from opposition to Buddhist phenomenalism, emphasises distinctions and particularities. While sharing foundational principles with Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika distinguishes itself through its unique categorisation of philosophical concepts and development of the atomic theory.

Nyāya literature spans over twenty centuries, with the Nyāya Sūtra serving as its foundational text. Later commentaries and works synthesise Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika perspectives, reflecting a trend towards inclusivity and integration of diverse philosophical views. The relation between Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika is characterised by both close association and distinctions. While both systems share beliefs and principles, Nyāya emphasises epistemology while Vaiśeṣika focuses on metaphysical and ontological theories.

## Self-Assessment

1. What is the significance of the term 'ānvīkṣikī' in Nyāya philosophy?
2. Describe the analytical approach of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika towards understanding reality.
3. How does Nyāya differ from Vaiśeṣika in terms of their focus within philosophy?
4. Explain the concept of valid knowledge (pramā) according to Nyāya philosophy.
5. Discuss the synthesis of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika perspectives in later philosophical works.



## Assignments

1. Explain the central themes discussed by Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika within their respective traditions.
2. Discuss the foundational texts of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, and their respective contributions to Indian philosophy.
3. Evaluate the contributions of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika philosophy to the broader landscape of Indian philosophical thought
4. Discuss the relationship between Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, highlighting both their similarities and differences.
5. Enumerate the types of invalid knowledge outlined by Nyāya and provide examples for each.

## Reference

1. Radhakrishnan, S. (1999). *Indian Philosophy. (Vol. II)*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
2. Sharma, C.D. (1960). *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
3. Dasgupta, S.N. (2004). *A History of Indian Philosophy. (Vol. I)*. Delhi: MLBD Publishers.

## Suggested Reading

1. Chatterjee, S. & Datta, D.M. (1984). *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*. (8th ed.). Calcutta: University of Calcutta.
2. Frauwallner, E. (1973). *History of Indian Philosophy (Vol. 2)*. (V. M. Bedekar, Trans.). Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
3. Hiriyanna, M. (1994). *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
4. Radhakrishnan, S. (1999). *Indian Philosophy. (Vol. II)*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
5. Sharma, C.D. (1960). *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.

## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU



## UNIT 2

# Nyāya Epistemology

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ understand the concept of perception in Nyāya philosophy and the key factors involved in perception
- ▶ get to know the role of anumāna in deducing unseen truths from known perceptual data through logical reasoning
- ▶ familiarise Nyāya's conception of upamāna and its significance as a means of acquiring valid knowledge
- ▶ understand the verbal testimony or śabda as a valid source of knowledge
- ▶ have an awareness on the theory of error in Nyāya philosophy and identify the subjective nature of error

### Background

In ancient India during the Vedic period, knowledge was mainly passed down orally through the Vedas, the sacred texts. People believed that these texts contained divine wisdom revealed to enlightened seers. This divine origin gave the Vedas authority and guided people's lives in various aspects, like rituals and ethics. The Upanishads appeared as the end part of Veda, which was primarily focused on philosophical questions about life, like what reality is, who we are, and what the ultimate truth is. Instead of rituals, they encouraged people to look inside themselves through meditation and self-reflection to find answers. The Upanishads emphasised realising the connection between our individual selves and the universal self. This shift from outer rituals to inner contemplation marked a significant change in Indian philosophical thinking. Inspired by the Upanishadic teachings, scholars further developed philosophical systems that

interpreted the Vedic teachings differently. Among these systems of thought, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools put a lot of emphasis on understanding how we know things. They developed systematic ways of thinking to help us figure out what is true and how we can be sure of it. They formulated different ways to gain knowledge, sharpen our ability to think logically and make conclusions based on evidence.

## Keywords

Pramāṇa, Pratyakṣa, Anumāna, Upamāna, Śabda, Sannikarṣa, Pakṣa (the minor term), Sādhyā (the major term), Hetu (the middle term), Anyatha

## Discussion

► Bridging the gap between intuitive knowledge and reflective analysis

The Nyāya philosophy is an ancient Indian school of thought that prioritises valid reasoning and the acquisition of true knowledge about the world. The very term ‘Nyāya’ signifies its nature as the science of logical reasoning and systematic understanding. This approach is distinct from the vague and unexamined perceptions or uncritical acceptance often prevalent in our initial encounters with knowledge. It established principles and methodologies essential for comprehending everything within our sphere of understanding. In Nyāya philosophy, scholars find a transition from basic comprehension to a sophisticated, analytical grasp of objects and phenomena. Nyāya bridges the gap between intuitive knowledge based on faith and a deeper, mediated understanding rooted in reflective analysis.

### 1.2.1 Pramāṇa Theory

► Methods for attaining reliable knowledge

The concept of pramāṇa occupies an important position in Indian philosophy, serving as the foundation for acquiring valid knowledge about the world. Literally translating to ‘instrument of valid knowledge,’ pramāṇa can be understood as a multifaceted toolset. Each instrument within this set represents a distinct method for attaining reliable knowledge of our surroundings. These methods empower us to differentiate between genuine understanding and mere opinion or illusion. Pramāṇa was defined as that which was always accompanied by right knowledge, and was at the same time not disjointed from the proper instruments (the eye, ear, etc.) and from the soul. The importance of pramāṇa is understood by the notion that with-



out it, true knowledge remains unattainable. It acts as the key that unlocks the door to comprehending the true nature of objects. Just as a map guides us through an unfamiliar cityscape, pramāṇa functions similarly, directing us towards accurate information about the world. Various schools of Indian philosophy propose distinct types of pramāṇa, including perception, inference, and testimony. An examination of these instruments of knowledge promises to enrich our understanding of how we acquire valid knowledge about the world.

► Interplay of physical, physiological, and mental factors

As stated above, pramāṇa is essential for acquiring knowledge, but it is a complex concept that involves various factors. These factors are not just physical but also include the psychological and mental aspects of the knower. Every instance of knowledge, physical, physiological, or mental, is the culmination of a long and complex interplay. For example, consider the seemingly straightforward act of perceiving a jar. This simple act is conditioned by a confluence of factors. Physical contact between the eyes and the object itself plays a role. However, the process does not end there. Internal operations within the visual organ come into play, followed by its interaction with the mind (manas). Finally, the mind coordinates the received sensations and completes the complex process of perceiving the jar.

► Different means for attaining knowledge

Nyāya school identifies four distinct and independent methods or pramāṇas as a means of knowing. They are perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāna), comparison (upamāna), and verbal testimony (śabda). All methods, according to the Nyāya view, hold equal value and importance in terms of the objects they can potentially reveal. However, certain objects can only be known through specific methods. For instance, we can perceive a flower directly, but to understand the concept of a flower in general, we might rely on inference.

► Senses interact with objects

### 1.2.1.1 Perception or Pratyakṣa

Imagine a garden on a bright sunny day where you notice a beautiful red rose blooming amidst the greenery. Your eyes catch sight of the vibrant colour, and you cannot help but admire its delicate petals and sweet fragrance. What makes you want to have this experience? Nyāya school would describe it as perception. For Nyāya philosophy, perception is like a light bulb turning on when an object interacts with one of our senses. In simpler terms, it is when something we see, hear, smell, taste, or touch triggers a response in our sense organs. The Nyāya school defines perception as the valid knowledge resulting from

the contact between an object and a sense organ. This means that perception, as a reliable form of knowledge, arises when a sense organ is stimulated by an external object. This shared and essential characteristic forms the basis of defining perception as the valid cognition of an object, distinct from feelings and volition and dependent on the contact between the object and a specific sense organ.

► Importance of direct perception

Vatsyayana emphasises the important role of perception in the journey of acquiring knowledge. He suggests that even when individuals receive information from trustworthy sources, through verbal communication, or by inference, there remains an inherent longing to confirm this knowledge through direct perception. This longing stems from a fundamental human instinct to seek validation through personal experience. This desire for direct perception reflects our innate curiosity and the need for first-hand experience to truly comprehend something. Once we have this first-hand experience, all other forms of understanding fade into the background, and a sense of contentment takes place. It is like finally reaching the destination of a long journey and feeling a deep sense of fulfilment. In that moment of direct perception, doubts dissolve with a feeling of completeness.

► Immediate apprehension beyond senses

In Nyāya philosophy, the term ‘pratyakṣa’, originally associated with sense-perception, soon evolved to include all forms of immediate apprehension, whether facilitated by the senses or not. This evolution reflects the expansiveness of the concept, transcending its initial sensory connotations. According to Gaṅgeśa, pratyakṣa denotes direct apprehension, emphasising the immediacy and unmediated nature of the knowledge acquired. Unlike other modes of cognition, such as inference or verbal testimony, where knowledge is derived from premises, similarities, or conventions, pratyakṣa involves a direct and unmediated grasp of reality. Here, pratyakṣa implies a form of knowledge that is not dependent on antecedent conditions. It transcends the limitations of human cognition, being unmediated by any other form of knowing.

Gautama, the founder of Nyāya philosophy, provides a comprehensive definition of sense perception. He defines perception as “that knowledge which arises from the contact of a sense organ with its object, unexpressible by words, unerring and well defined”. This definition underlines the process involved in perception, highlighting four key factors. Firstly,

► Four key factors in perception

Gautama acknowledges the existence of sense organs, which are inferred to exist based on the fact that perception occurs. For example, the ability to perceive colour relies on the presence of a visual organ, such as the eye. He asserts that there are five senses corresponding to the five characteristics of knowledge: visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactual. These senses are located in different anatomical sites, such as the eyeball, earhole, nose, tongue, and skin. This recognition of sense organs forms the foundation of the perceptual process. Secondly, there are the objects of perception, known as artha. These objects encompass a wide range of stimuli, including physical entities like objects, sounds, tastes, textures, and smells, as well as abstract concepts or qualities. The third element is the contact of the senses with their objects, referred to as sannikarṣa. This moment of interaction marks the commencement of sensory perception, as the senses come into contact with external stimuli, initiating the process of cognition. Lastly, there is the cognition produced by this contact, known as jñānam. This cognition represents the knowledge or awareness that arises as a result of sensory perception.

► The manas as the mediator between the self and the senses

Apart from the five senses, the concept of ‘manas,’ or mind, plays a crucial role in the process of perception. It serves as a mediator between the self and the senses, facilitating the interaction between the external world and our inner consciousness. When we deeply immerse ourselves in a particular activity or study, our focus becomes so intense that we may not register sensory stimuli, such as the sound of the wind. Although the sound may affect our organs of hearing and the self remains connected to it, the mind’s absorption in the study overrides our awareness of the external stimulus. When multiple senses are simultaneously engaged with their respective objects, there is not a simultaneous perception of all these objects. This non-simultaneity is attributed to the fact that while the mind may be in proximity or contact with one object, it is not in contact with others. This highlights the indispensable role of the mind in every act of perception, as it selectively directs our attention and consciousness to specific stimuli while filtering out others.

In Nyāya philosophy, perception is explained in two distinct stages: the indeterminate (nirvikalpaka) and the determinate (savikalpaka) stages. The first stage, indeterminate perception, marks the initial phase of knowledge acquisition, characterised by a bare awareness of the object of knowledge. However,

- ▶ Two stages - indeterminate (nirvikalpaka) and determinate (savikalpaka)

perception lacks specificity and clarity in this stage, making it inadequate for generating cognisable knowledge. At this stage, individuals are unable to differentiate perceived objects from other stimuli or establish connections with them. Radhakrishnan, in his exposition of Nyāya philosophy, portrays indeterminate perception as an ‘undifferentiated non-relational consciousness,’ devoid of the processes of assimilation, discrimination, analysis, and synthesis. It represents a form of raw, unprocessed consciousness devoid of contextualisation or relational understanding. This phase lays the groundwork from which determinate perception emerges, serving as the raw material for subsequent cognitive processes.

- ▶ Determinate perception involves assimilation and discrimination.

The determinate (savikalpaka) perception represents a more advanced stage compared to the indeterminate perception, characterised by greater clarity and specificity. In this stage, individuals possess a comprehensive understanding of the perceived object, including its classification within a broader category or genus. This knowledge enables them to discern a particular object from other members of the same class, thus achieving a higher level of cognitive precision. Radhakrishnan exposes the determinate perception as a “mediate, differentiated, relational mode of consciousness involving the results of assimilation and discrimination.” Here, perception is characterised by its relational nature, as individuals establish connections between the perceived object and its attributes through processes of assimilation and discrimination.

- ▶ Different views on indeterminate and determinate perception

Vātsyāyana distinguishes between determinate and indeterminate perception based on the presence or absence of the name of the object. If the object is perceived with its name, it falls under determinate perception; otherwise, it is categorised as indeterminate. This classification emphasises the role of linguistic labels in shaping our cognitive understanding of perceived objects. Gaṅgeśha, another prominent scholar of Nyāya philosophy, conceptualises indeterminate perception as the non-relational apprehension of an object devoid of specific characteristics such as name, genus, or differentia. Similarly, Annam Bhaṭṭa describes indeterminate perception as the immediate apprehension of the object and its qualities, although without establishing any relational connections between them.

In Nyāya philosophy, perception is categorised into ordinary (laukika) and extraordinary (alaukika) perception. This division is based on how the senses interact with their respective objects.



► Division of Nyāya perception as ordinary (laukika) and extraordinary (alaukika)

Ordinary perception occurs when the contact between the senses and objects happens in the usual manner. On the other hand, extraordinary perception occurs when this contact takes place through extraordinary means, often involving a medium beyond the typical sensory channels. Ordinary perception further subdivides into external (bāhya) and internal (mānasa) categories. External perception occurs when the external sense organs, such as sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell, come into contact with objects in the external world. These five types of external perception correspond to the five senses and their respective objects. On the other hand, internal perception refers to the perception of mental states or psychological phenomena that occur when the mind comes into contact with internal mental states, such as affection, pleasure, pain, aversion, and cognition. Unlike external perception, which involves contact with objects in the external world, internal perception relates to the inner workings of the mind and its interactions with subjective experiences.

► Three kinds of extraordinary (alaukika) perception

In Nyāya philosophy, there are three kinds of extraordinary (alaukika) perception. They are, sāmānyalakṣaṇa, jñānalakṣaṇa, and yogaja. Sāmānyalakṣaṇa perception involves the perception of universals or class characteristics that Nyāya considers to be separately real. This raises the question of how we perceive these universal characteristics, which any of the individual senses cannot apprehend. According to Nyāya philosophy, when we perceive a particular object belonging to a universal class, we also simultaneously perceive the essential characteristics shared by all members of that class. For example, when we perceive a specific table, we also perceive the quality of 'tableness' that is present in all tables. This perception of tableness serves as the medium through which we recognise and perceive all tables, as it is the inherent quality shared by every individual table. This concept views Nyāya's understanding of perception as not merely the apprehension of individual objects but also the recognition of the essential characteristics that define their class or category.

► Perception through previous knowledge

The second kind of extraordinary perception in Nyāya philosophy is termed jñānalakṣaṇa, wherein the perception of an object occurs through previous knowledge of itself. In this form of perception, the object is not directly presented to any of the senses but is recalled from memory due to past sensations. Scholars illustrate this concept with examples such as perceiving ice as cold, tea as hot, stone as hard, or grass

as soft. Take, for instance, the perception of a stone as hard. When we observe a stone visually, the sensation of hardness associated with it is not directly perceived through sight but is evoked from memory due to past tactile experiences. In other words, our previous encounters with stones, where we felt their hardness through touch, inform our current perception of hardness when we see a stone. Therefore, the sensation of hardness experienced through visual perception, triggered by the recollection of past sensations, exemplifies a *jñānalakṣaṇa* perception. This shows Nyāya philosophy's recognition of perception extending beyond immediate sensory experiences, highlighting the role of memory and prior knowledge in shaping our understanding of the world.

The third type of extraordinary perception in Nyāya philosophy is termed *yogaja*, which represents an exceptional form of perception transcending the limitations of time and space imposed by the senses. *Yogaja* perception is characterised by an intuitive and immediate apprehension of all objects, across past, present, and future temporal dimensions. This perception is often compared with the intuitive insights attained by yogis who have developed their extrasensory abilities through dedicated meditative practices. Scholars interpret *yogaja* perception as a manifestation of sharp consciousness, enabling individuals to perceive reality beyond the constraints of sensory experiences. C. D. Sharma, a prominent scholar, establishes parallels between *yogaja* perception in Nyāya philosophy and similar concepts in other philosophical traditions. He equates *yogaja* with *kevalajñāna* in Jainism, *Bodhi* in Buddhism, *kaivalya* in Sāṅkhya-Yoga, and *Aparokṣānubhūti* in Vedānta, emphasising its role in the quest for spiritual realisation.

► Extrasensory perception beyond time and space

### 1.2.1.2 Inference

In our understanding of the world, we acknowledge the inherent limitations of our sense organs. It is true that our sensory faculties are indispensable for our perception of the surrounding environment. However, they are inherently restricted in their ability to grasp the complexities of reality. This limitation forms the basis for the recognition that perception alone cannot meet our logical needs or provide a complete understanding of the world. While our senses offer valuable information about the immediate environment, they often fail to provide a complete picture, especially when it comes to abstract concepts, distant phenomena, or subtle nuances. In response to the short-

► Understanding beyond senses through logical reasoning.



comings of perception, Indian philosophical thought introduces the concept of 'anumāna', or inference. Anumāna facilitates the expansion of knowledge beyond the confines of sensory experience by employing logical reasoning.

In Nyāya philosophy, the term 'anumāna' literally translates to 'measuring after something.' This concept signifies a form of knowledge that follows or comes after another type of knowledge. Anumāna operates by deducing from known perceptual data to infer unseen or inaccessible truths. It involves the application of logical principles and inference techniques to draw conclusions that extend beyond the immediate reach of perception. In other words, by transcending the limitations of sensory perception, anumāna enables us to gain insights into abstract concepts, causal relationships, and unseen phenomena.

► Measuring after something

Vātsyāyana provided a definition of inference that emphasises its relationship with perception. He articulated that every instance of inference is preceded by perception, indicating a sequential process of knowledge acquisition. According to Vātsyāyana's formulation, inference occurs subsequent to perception. This means that the initial stage of knowledge acquisition involves direct perception of a particular object or phenomenon. Following this perception, inference comes into play to derive knowledge about other aspects or properties that are not directly perceived but can be inferred from what has been perceived. For instance, when observing smoke rising from a hill, one infers the presence of fire on the hill because smoke is invariably associated with fire.

► Vātsyāyana's approach to inference

In the Nyāya philosophical tradition, the structure of inference is explained based on the number of propositions and terms involved in the inferential process. Nyāya demands that an inference must consist of no fewer than three propositions and no more than three terms, similar to the major, minor, and middle terms of a syllogism. These terms are integral to the process of inference, facilitating the logical progression from observed phenomena to inferred conclusions. In Nyāya inference, the three essential terms are 'pakṣa' (the minor term), 'sādhya' (the major term), and 'hetu' (the middle term). Each term plays a distinct role in the inferential process. Pakṣa represents the subject or locus where the inferred character is present or manifested. Sādhya denotes the predicate of the proposition that represents what is to be proved or inferred. Hetu serves as the indicator or mark that establishes the connection

► Basic structure of inference

between the minor and major terms.

► Classical example of smoke and fire

The relationship between the elements of Nyāya inference pakṣa, sādhyā, and hetu can be explained with the classical example of smoke and fire. Consider a scenario where an individual observes smoke coming from a hill. In this context, the hill represents the minor term or pakṣa, which is the subject under consideration. The observation of smoke serves as the middle term or hetu, connecting the minor and major terms. Smoke, being the middle term, acts as the link between the observed hill and the inferred phenomenon, which in this case is fire. Fire represents the major term or sādhyā, which is what we seek to establish or prove through inference.

► The importance of vyāpti in inference

In the process of logical inference within Nyāya philosophy, the presence of the middle term (hetu) in the minor term (pakṣa) alone is not sufficient to warrant a valid inference. Instead, it must be accompanied by a universal relationship between the middle and major terms known as 'vyāpti jñāna'. Vyāpti refers to the knowledge of the invariable association or universal relation between the middle term (hetu) and the inferred character (sādhyā). This consistent correlation between smoke and fire serves as the foundation for inference, commonly termed the 'nerve of inference'. In the case of smoke and fire, vyāpti represents the recognition of the consistent relationship between the presence of smoke and the existence of fire. This knowledge is derived from repeated observations where the association between smoke and fire remains uncontradicted. Nyāya philosophy emphasises that vyāpti is established through empirical experience, grounded in the consistent observation of unbroken correlations. This knowledge of vyāpti forms the basis for logical inference, as the middle term (hetu) leads to the knowledge of the inferred object (sādhyā).

Nyāya philosophy provides five important characteristics to the middle term (hetu) to provide guidelines for ensuring the validity of logical reasoning. They are:

**Presence of the middle term in the Minor Term (Paksadharmatā):** The middle term (hetu) must be inherently present within the minor term (pakṣa). This means that the observed phenomenon (pakṣa), such as a hill in the classic example of smoke and fire, must contain the characteristic represented by the middle term (hetu), which is smoke.



**Presence of the middle term in Positive Instances (Sapakṣasattva):** The middle term must be present in all positive instances where the major term (sādhya) is present. For example, if smoke exists in a kitchen, then there is fire. This condition establishes the consistent correlation between the middle term and the major term across various instances, reinforcing the basis for inference.

**Absence of the middle term in Negative Instances (Vipakṣāsattva):** Conversely, the middle term must be absent in all negative instances where the major term is absent. This condition ensures that the absence of the middle term correlates with the absence of the major term further.

**Non-Incompatibility of the middle term with the Minor Term (Abādhita):** The middle term must not contradict or invalidate the minor term. For example, the presence of smoke should not lead to the conclusion that fire is cool, as this contradicts the observed nature of fire. This condition safeguards against logical inconsistencies that may arise from misinterpretations of the middle term.

**Absence of Counteracting Reasons (Aviruddha):** The middle term must not be contradicted by counteracting reasons that lead to a contradictory conclusion. This condition ensures that the inference remains coherent and free from contradictory interpretations.

► Five characteristics to the middle term

### Classification of Inference

Nyāya philosophy mainly gives three distinct classifications of inference, with the first one stressing the purpose behind inferential knowledge. According to Nyāya, each inference serves to clarify certain subjects related to oneself or demonstrate truths to others. Based on these purposes, the inference is categorised as svārthanumana and parārthanumana. The former works on an individual level, focusing only on internal reasoning processes, but the latter stresses the demonstration of truths to others. Svārthanumana serves as a tool for individuals to explore and deepen their comprehension of various subjects, trusting introspection and personal understanding. It does not require external confirmation or validation, as individuals rely on their own convictions and logical deductions to arrive at conclusions. This mode of inference underlines the importance of trusting one's cognitive faculties and intuition, fostering a sense of intellectual autonomy and self-reliance.

► Classification based on the purpose behind inferential knowledge

► Demonstration of truths to others

Parārthanumana, in contrast to svārthanumana, serves a distinct purpose in Nyāya philosophy, focusing on convincing others or demonstrating truths to others. It is conducted with the explicit intention of engaging external observers or audiences. A key characteristic of parārthanumana is its reliance on formal proofs and structured presentation. In order to effectively convey inferential knowledge, parārthanumana adopts a syllogistic format. This ensures clarity and precision in the presentation of arguments, allowing for logical reasoning to be communicated effectively. By presenting compelling arguments and supporting evidence, it aims to convince external observers of the validity of certain truths or conclusions.

Nyāya philosophy presents parārthanumana in a structured syllogistic format consisting of five essential components, termed 'avayavas'. These components represent a blend of both formal and material logic, ensuring a systematic approach to reasoning. They are,

**Pratijnā (Proposition):** It is the logical statement to be proved. This proposition articulates the central claim or thesis that the inference aims to establish through reasoned argumentation.

**Hetu (Reason):** It states the rationale or justification for the establishment of the proposition and also provides the logical grounds or evidence supporting the truth of the proposition.

**Udāharana (Example):** The Udāharana introduces the concept of universal concomitance by offering an illustrative example. This member of the syllogism demonstrates the principle that supports the inference, showing that a certain relationship holds true universally.

**Upanaya (Application):** Upanaya represents the application of the universal concomitance established in the udāharana to the specific case under consideration. This member bridges the gap between the general principle illustrated in the example and its application to the particular situation being analysed.

► Five essential components of Nyāya syllogism

**Nigamana (Conclusion):** Finally, the syllogism culminates in the Nigamana, which denotes the conclusion drawn from the preceding propositions. It synthesises the evidence presented in the proposition, reason, example, and application to affirm the truth of the initial proposition. The conclusion represents the logical outcome of the inference process.



► Movement from particular to particular through the universal principles

By presenting the syllogistic format as presented above, Nyāya philosophy gives a unique perspective on inference, contrasting with the traditional Western framework that often distinguishes between deductive and inductive reasoning. Instead of viewing deduction and induction as separate entities, Nyāya recognises their inherent interconnection. Unlike the Western tradition, which categorises inference as either moving from the general to the specific (deduction) or from specific instances to general principles (induction), Nyāya emphasises the movement from particular instances to other particular instances through the universal principles that govern them. This holistic approach highlights the complex relationship between specific observations and universal principles.

► Classification based on the principles of causation

Gautama makes another classification of inference based on the principles of causation and coexistence. These classifications provide insights into the different ways humans reason and draw conclusions. They are pūrvavat, śeṣavat, and sāmānyato dr̥ṣṭam. This classification discovers the process by which humans move from the known to the unknown based on logical reasoning. Pūrvavat inference involves inferring the unperceived effect from the perceived cause. In this type of inference, the observation of a cause leads to the deduction of its effect. For example, when one observes dark clouds in the sky, the inference of rain in future is made. Here, the perceived cause (dark clouds) prompts the inference of the effect (rain). However, this type of inference is not restricted to causal relationships but extends to drawing conclusions based on past experiences. On the other hand, śeṣavat, inference entails inferring the unperceived cause from the perceived effect. In this scenario, the observation of an effect leads to the deduction of its cause. For instance, upon witnessing swift, muddy floodwaters in a river, one may infer that rain occurred in the past. Here, the perceived effect (muddy floodwaters) prompts the inference of the cause (rain).

The third type, sāmānyato dr̥ṣṭam inference, relies less on direct causation and more on the consistency of past experiences. For example, upon seeing a horned animal, inferring that it has a tail fall under this category. This inference is grounded in the uniformity of past observations rather than direct causal links. Uddyotakara, a commentator on Nyāya philosophy, supports this notion and provides an example where the appearance of cranes indicates the presence of water in a particular location, emphasising the inference drawn from repeated observations.

► Inferring from the uniformity of past observations

Sāmanyato dr̥ṣṭam inference also has the potential to extend beyond the empirical realm to cover the inference of metaphysical or suprasensible truths. For instance, perceiving phenomena such as aversion or affection leads to inferring the existence of a soul. These emotional experiences, which cannot be physically quantified or measured, hint at something beyond the material realm, the presence of a soul. Through sāmanyato dr̥ṣṭam inference, individuals infer from observable effects to postulate the existence of an unseen, immaterial entity. Similarly, observing the changing positions of the sun allows for inferring its movement, even when not directly observable.

Annam Bhatta, another important thinker of Nyāya philosophy, categorises the middle term into three types, each corresponding to a specific type of inference. They are, kevalānvayi, kevala-vyatireki and anvaya-vyatireki. Kevalānvayi inference occurs when the middle term consistently relates positively to the major term without any instances of negation. This form of inference establishes the universal invariable relation (vyāpti) between the middle and major terms only through positive instances of agreement in presence. The following argument can be considered as an example for kevalānvayi,

All knowable objects are nameable  
The table is a knowable object  
Therefore, the table is nameable.

► Classification based on middle term's relation with the major term

In the above given example of kevalānvayi, the major premise is the universal affirmative proposition in which the predicate 'nameable' is affirmed of all knowable objects. This type of inference relies only on affirmative instances to establish the universal relationship between the middle and major terms.

► Kevala-vyatireki and anvaya-vyatireki inference

Kevala-vyatireki inference involves the middle term being negatively related to the major term, without any positive instances. In this form of inference, the universal relation (vyāpti) is established only through negative instances of agreement in absence. For example, consider the statement 'all creatures with animal functions have souls.' While we can prove that items like chairs and tables, without animal functions, lack souls, we cannot find positive examples or provide positive instances to support the assertion. In anvaya-vyatireki inference, the middle term is associated with the major term in both positive and negative instances. For example, the



relationship between smoke and fire demonstrates this type of inference. Wherever there is smoke, there is fire, as seen in a kitchen where fire exists. Conversely, where there is no fire, there is no smoke, such as in a lake where fire is absent. In this type of inference, the presence or absence of the middle term invariably corresponds to the presence or absence of the major term, establishing a reliable universal relationship.

### Hetvābhāsas or The Fallacies of the Middle Term

In Nyāya inference, the process of drawing conclusions based on premises, relies heavily on the validity of the hetu, or reason, employed in the argument. Hetu acts as the link between the minor term (pakṣa) and the major term (sādhya), forming the basis of logical connection. However, suppose the middle term is defective, meaning it does not genuinely support the conclusion being drawn; in that case, it weakens the entire process of inference and can lead to faulty reasoning and erroneous inferences.

► Nyāya accepts five kinds of fallacies that can occur due to defective hetu.

Asiddha or Sādhyasama: The fallacy occurs in such situations where the middle term of the syllogism remains unproved or unsupported. This means that the middle term, which is crucial for establishing the logical connection between the minor and major terms, lacks validation and remains merely an assumption. Asiddha manifests in three primary forms they are aśraysiddha, svarūpāsiddha, and vyāpyatvāsiddha. In the case of aśraysiddha, the middle term lacks a valid locus point within the minor term. A fundamental requirement for a valid middle term is its presence within the minor term. However, if the minor term itself is unreal or lacks validity, the middle term cannot establish a meaningful relationship with it. For example, consider the assertion, 'The sky lotus is fragrant because it belongs to the class of lotus.' Here, the minor term 'sky lotus' is unreal, rendering the middle term 'class of lotus' unable to apply to it.

► Lack of presence of the middle term within the minor term

Svarūpāsiddha occurs when the middle term cannot be proven to be real in relation to the minor term due to its intrinsic nature. In such inferences the middle term is wrongly associated with the minor term based on an unfounded premise. For instance, consider the statement 'sound is eternal because it is visible.' Here, the middle term 'visible' is erroneously linked to the minor term 'sound,' leading to a fallacious conclusion. Vyāpyatvāsiddha represents a scenario where the middle term is conditional and lacks a universally applicable relation to the

► The fallacies of svarūpāsiddha and vyāpyatvāsiddh

major term. In other words, there is an absence of the invariable relation, known as *vyāpti*, which forms the foundation of inference. Without this essential element of universal connection, the inference loses its logical validity and becomes unreliable.

► Fallacy from irregular middle

**Savyabhichāra or Anaikāntika:** Savyabhichāra, also known as Anaikāntika, represents a fallacy within the Nyāya system of logic originating from an irregular middle term, which results in contradictory or opposing conclusions. This fallacy occurs when the middle term leads to both the affirmation and negation of the major term, creating ambiguity and inconsistency in the inference process.

Nyāya philosophy describes Savyabhichāra into three distinct categories; they are, *sādhārana*, *asādhārana*, and *anupasamhāri*. The *sādhārana*, or the ordinary fallacy, occurs when the middle term is too wide and makes its presence in both positive and negative instances. In the *asādhārana* or the extraordinary fallacy, the middle term is excessively narrow, restricting its presence to particular instances without extending to both positive and negative instances. In such cases, the middle term fails to fulfil the essential condition that it must be present in the *sapakṣa*, or positive instances. The third kind of Savyabhichāra, known as *anupasamhāri* or the indefinite fallacy, happens when the middle term is associated with a minor term representing neither a specific individual nor a defined class of individuals but instead includes all objects indefinitely. This lack of specificity and clarity in the relationship between the middle and minor terms contributes to the ambiguity and uncertainty.

► Sādhārana, asādhārana, and anupasamhāri

► Contradiction with equal weight

**Satpratipakṣa:** Satpratipakṣa occurs when the middle term of an inference is contradicted by another middle term or when one inference is contradicted by another inference. This situation arises when two conflicting pieces of evidence or reasoning are presented, both carrying equal weight, thereby preventing either from gaining predominance.

► Contradicted by another means of knowledge

**Bādhita:** This fallacy occurs when an inference is contradicted by a non-inferential source of knowledge. In simpler terms, this occurs when the conclusion drawn from an inference is invalidated by evidence or information obtained from a different reliable source of knowledge, other than inference itself. In such cases, the middle term, which is the basis for the inference, fails to establish the relationship with the major term due to the presence of contradictory evidence. For example, suppose an inference concludes that a certain



fruit is sweet based on its colour and shape. However, upon tasting the fruit, it is found to be bitter. In this scenario, the inference drawn from visual perception is contradicted by direct sensory experience (taste), which serves as a non-inferential source of knowledge. The middle term, which links the fruit's colour and shape to its sweetness, fails to hold true in the face of contradictory evidence obtained through taste.

► Self-contradiction within an inference

**Viruddha:** It denotes a logical fallacy characterised by self-contradiction within an inference. In simpler terms, when viruddha occurs, instead of supporting the existence of the major term within the minor term, the inference disproves the very assertion it seeks to establish. This occurs when the middle term, which serves as the connecting link between the minor and major terms, is present in instances where the major term does not exist. For example, sound is eternal because it is caused. In this example, the middle term 'caused' is erroneously used to support the major term 'eternity of sound.' In this example, the middle term 'caused' does not prove the major term 'eternity of the sound'. Rather, it proves its non-eternity because everything that is caused will perish.

### 1.2.1.3 Upamana or Comparison

**U**pamāna, also known as comparison, is a method through which we attain valid knowledge of a particular thing by recognising its resemblance or similarity to another thing that we are already familiar with. However, it is important to note that mere comparison or similarity, whether it is complete, partial, or considerable, does not automatically lead to the acquisition of knowledge. In cases where the resemblance is complete, there is no room for new knowledge to emerge. For example, if we observe a crow sitting on a coconut tree and another crow perched on the roof of a house, we do not gain any new knowledge by noting their similarity. Similarly, if the resemblance between two objects is only partial, attempting to draw conclusions based on this limited similarity may lead to erroneous knowledge. For instance, concluding that mango and guava trees are similar based on a few shared traits is not valid knowledge. Even when the resemblance between objects is considerable, the knowledge gained from it may still be invalid. This shows the importance of discerning the significance and relevance of the shared traits in establishing valid knowledge through comparison.

► Knowledge attained from recognising resemblance or similarity

► The resultant knowledge is upamiti

The term 'upamāna' originates from the Sanskrit words 'upa', which means resemblance or similarity, and 'mana', which means knowledge. Thus, upamāna refers to the knowledge derived from comparison, specifically recognising similarities between two things. The knowledge obtained through upamāna is termed as 'upamiti'. In Nyāya philosophy, upamāna holds a significant place as the third independent source of valid knowledge. This form of knowledge typically unfolds in a structured manner. Initially, an authoritative figure describes an unknown object, drawing parallels with a known object. Subsequently, when an individual encounters an unknown object and perceives its similarities with the known object described by the authority, they are able to draw conclusions regarding its classification or category.

In Nyāya point of view, four essential factors are involved in the process of gaining knowledge through upamāna:

**Authoritative Statement:** The process begins with an authoritative figure providing a description or statement about an unknown object, highlighting its similarities with a known object. This statement serves as the foundation for subsequent recognition and understanding.

**Perception of Similarity:** Upon encountering the unknown object, the individual perceives its similarities with the known object described by the authoritative person. This perception of resemblance is crucial for initiating the process of recognition and inference.

**Recollection of Descriptive Statement:** The person remembers what the authority said about the unknown thing and compares it to what they see. This helps them link the similarities they notice with the previously provided information.

**Resulting Knowledge or Upamiti:** Through the synthesis of the authoritative statement, perception of similarity, and recollection of descriptive details, the individual forms a conclusion or knowledge of the unknown object. This resulting knowledge, termed upamiti, represents an understanding of the relationship between the word used to describe the object and its denotation or referent.

The example commonly used to explain upamāna involves a scenario where an individual encounters an unknown animal,

► Four essential factors involved in upamana



► The classical example of upamāna

the gavaya or wild cow, for the first time. Prior to this encounter, the person had heard about the gavaya from others and had been told that it shares certain similarities with a cow. However, the individual has never seen a gavaya themselves. As the individual goes into the forest unexpectedly comes across an animal that bears a resemblance to the description of the gavaya provided to them earlier. Drawing upon their memory of the similarities between the gavaya and a cow, the person concludes that the animal they have encountered is the gavaya. In this situation, the recognition or knowledge of the animal being a gavaya arises through the process of comparison or upamāna.

► Upamāna in other philosophical traditions

In various philosophical traditions such as Buddhism, Sāṅkhya, Vaiśeṣika, and Jainism, upamāna, or comparison, is not considered an independent source of valid knowledge, unlike in Nyāya philosophy. Buddhist philosophy reduces upamāna to perception and testimony, offering no new insights beyond what these sources provide. Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika assimilate upamāna into inference, considering the knowledge derived from comparison equivalent to that from inference. Jainism reduces upamāna to recognition or pratyabhijñā. While the Mīmāṃsā school recognises upamāna as a distinct pramāṇa, their interpretation differs from Nyāya's understanding. These different perspectives show the varied interpretations of upamāna across different philosophical frameworks.

#### 1.2.1.4 Śabda or Verbal Testimony

► Knowledge derived from trustworthy individuals' statements

Śabda, literally translating to verbal knowledge, includes the understanding of objects derived from words or sentences. However, not all verbal knowledge is automatically considered valid. In Nyāya philosophy, a verbal statement gains validity when it originates from someone who possesses knowledge of the truth and speaks truthfully for the benefit of others' understanding. Yet, it is evident that a sentence or statement alone does not provide knowledge of objects. Similarly, merely perceiving the words of a sentence does not lead to comprehension or knowledge about the referred objects. True understanding only occurs when one perceives the words and grasps their meanings. Therefore, while the validity of verbal knowledge is contingent upon its foundation in the statement of a reliable person, its actuality depends on the comprehension of that statement's meaning.

The śabda, or testimony, involves several key steps that culminate in the attainment of valid verbal knowledge. It begins

► Key factors involved in śabda pramāṇa

with the perception of the words contained within a sentence or proposition, which are articulated by a trustworthy individual. This perception may occur through auditory means when the statement is spoken or through visual means when it is written. However, mere perception of the words is insufficient; the second step involves understanding the meaning conveyed by these words. It is through this understanding of word meanings that the final step is reached, namely, acquiring verbal knowledge about objects or truths conveyed by the statement.

► The difference between śabda and other pramāṇas

Śabda is distinguished from other pramāṇas by its dependence on the knowledge of words or sentences. Unlike perception, which arises from sense-object contact, inference, which originates from the recognition of universal relations, and upamāna, which is based on the perception of similarities or dissimilarities, śabda is uniquely tied to the understanding of language and the meanings conveyed by words. Thus, while śabda shares similarities with other pramāṇas in its role of facilitating knowledge acquisition, its distinctiveness lies in its dependence on linguistic comprehension and the interpretation of verbal statements. There are two ways in which all verbal knowledge has been classified in the Nyāya philosophy.

► Vatsyayana's classification of śabda pramāṇa

Vatsyayana classifies the verbal knowledge into *dr̥ṣṭārtha* and *adr̥ṣṭārtha*. The former includes knowledge about ordinary sensible objects that fall within the scope of our worldly experiences. This category includes trustworthy assertions made by individuals, saints, and scriptures regarding perceptible objects. It pertains to information that can be perceived through the senses and is part of our everyday reality. On the other hand, *adr̥ṣṭārtha* relates to suprasensible entities that transcend ordinary perception. It deals with knowledge beyond the realm of ordinary perception, focusing on concepts that are not directly perceivable. This category includes pronouncements made by scientists, teachings of prophets concerning moral virtues and vices, and scriptural passages discussing metaphysical entities like God, heaven, and the afterlife.

► Two types of verbal testimony *vaidika* and *laukika*

According to later Naiyayikas, there are two types of verbal testimony; they are, *vaidika*, which comes from scriptures like the Vedas and is considered perfect because it is believed to be created by God, and *laukika*, which comes from ordinary people and could be true or false. Among ordinary people's testimony, only trustworthy ones are accepted. It is noteworthy that while *vaidika* śabda is inherently reliable due to its divine

origin, laukika śabda's validity depends on the trustworthiness of its source. Unlike the earlier classification, which focused on the nature of the objects of knowledge, this classification highlights a distinction based on the source of knowledge conveyed through testimony. Whatever the case, all Naiyayikas agree that testimony must always come from a reliable source, whether human or divine.

## 1.2.2 Theory of Error or Anyathakhyativada

In Nyāya philosophy, the concept of error is tied to the idea of expectations versus reality. When we encounter something, whether it is an object, a situation, or an experience, we often have certain expectations about it. These expectations are shaped by our past experiences, beliefs, and perceptions. We create an idealised version of what we anticipate based on these factors. Let us imagine a scenario where reality does not match our idealised version. This is where the concept of error or illusion comes into play. For example, if we see a white object from a distance and immediately assume it is silver, our expectation is that we have found something valuable. However, upon closer inspection, if we realise it is just a piece of shell, our present reality contradicts our initial expectation. This contradiction between what we expect and what we actually experience is what makes us conscious of our error.

► Expectations versus reality

In Nyāya philosophy, error is rooted in the complete objective basis of reality. This principle asserts that what does not exist cannot be perceived, and likewise, a non-existent thing cannot give rise to cognition. Nyāya thinkers apply this principle in formulating their theory of error. According to Nyāya, defective cognition, or error, can only occur in the presence of real objects. This means that for an error to arise, there must be a tangible, existent object involved in the perception process. The incorrect apprehension of something, such as mistaking a shell for silver, can only happen because the shell, a real object, shares some common qualities with silver. When we mistake a shell for silver, Nyāya philosophy suggests that our perception is flawed because we are attributing qualities of silver to something that is not silver. However, this error is only possible because the shell exists in reality and possesses certain characteristics that resemble those of silver. By emphasising the presence of real objects as the foundation of error, Nyāya thinkers provide a framework for understanding how misperceptions can arise within the context of tangible, observable phenomena.

► What does not exist cannot be perceived

► Error is due to misapprehension

In the Nyāya philosophy, this realisation of error is crucial because it highlights the disagreement between our mental constructs and the objective reality. It shows us that our perceptions can sometimes be misleading or mistaken. Nyāya calls this type of error 'anyathakhyati'. Here, 'anyatha' means 'elsewhere' or 'elsewise.' The error arises when we perceive an object as something else, although it exists elsewhere. Here, the object we perceive (the presented object) is mistaken for something different (the represented object), which exists somewhere else. According to Nyāya, even though our perception might have some basis in reality, when we misplace and misinterpret those facts, we end up with a false understanding of what is really happening. This perspective on error is not unique to Nyāya alone. Jaina logicians and Kumārila, among others, also share a similar viewpoint regarding the nature of error in their philosophy.

## Summarized Overview

In Nyāya philosophy, knowledge is attained through pramāṇās, and Nyāya accepts four kinds of pramāṇas, they are perception, inference, comparison, and verbal testimony. Perception or pratyakṣa, offers direct apprehension of the external world through the senses. Inference, or Anumāna, extends knowledge beyond direct perception through logical reasoning, depending on the identification of a middle term and the absence of fallacies to draw valid conclusions. Within the framework of Nyāya, inference is mainly classified into three distinct manners. Each type serves distinct epistemic purposes, reflecting temporal, causal, or analogical relationships. Understanding these classifications provides insight into the diverse modes of reasoning employed within Nyāya philosophy and their respective applications. Another important concept discussed in Nyāya's epistemology is the concept of Hetvābhāsas, or the fallacies of the middle term, which arise due to defective reasoning in inference. These fallacies, including asiddha, savyabhichāra, satpratipakṣa bādhita, and viruddha, weaken the validity of inference by introducing errors in the middle term or its relationship with the major and minor terms. Understanding and avoiding these fallacies are crucial for maintaining the integrity of logical reasoning and ensuring the validity of conclusions drawn through inference in Nyāya philosophy.

The third pramāṇa accepted by Nyāya is upamāna, which acquires knowledge through analogy or comparison, aiding in grasping unfamiliar concepts by relating them to known ones. Śabda, on the other hand, emphasises the importance of verbal testimony and authoritative sources in expanding knowledge. Nyāya philosophy also discusses the theory of error, known as anyathakhyativada, which explores how misconceptions arise and seeks to rectify them through logical analysis and critical thinking.



## Self-Assessment

1. Discuss the different types of pramāṇa recognised in Nyāya philosophy.
2. What are the distinguishing features of valid perception according to Nyāya?
3. Define inference (anumāna) in Nyāya philosophy.
4. Describe the different types of inference in Nyāya philosophy.
5. Explain the concept of hetvābhāsa with examples.
6. Discuss the conditions that must be met for upamana to be considered a valid source of knowledge.
7. Discuss the criteria for determining the reliability of verbal testimony according to Nyāya.
8. Define anyathakhyativada and its importance in Nyāya epistemology.

## Assignments

1. Explain the Nyāya concept of perception (pratyakṣa) and its role in acquiring knowledge about the external world. Provide a detailed study on two different stages of perception in Nyāya philosophy.
2. Define inference (anumāna) in Nyāya philosophy and explain the process of inference according to Nyāya epistemology.
3. Describe the different types of inference recognised in Nyāya philosophy. Provide examples to illustrate each type of inference.
4. Critically evaluate the Nyāya conditions for determining the validity of upamana.
5. Discuss the concept of verbal testimony (śabda) in Nyāya philosophy and its role in the acquisition and validation of knowledge.
6. Discuss the relevance of Nyāya's theory of error for addressing contemporary challenges in knowledge acquisition, including misinformation, cognitive biases, and the proliferation of pseudo-scientific beliefs.

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## Suggested Reading

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## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU

## UNIT 3

# Vaiśeṣika Metaphysics

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ understand the metaphysical teachings of Vaiśeṣika narrated through the explanation of seven categories
- ▶ identify and explain the six categories of padārthas in Vaiśeṣika philosophy
- ▶ analyse the later addition of the seventh category, non-existence (abhāva)
- ▶ comprehend the concept of substance (dravya) and its various types, along with the theory of atomism
- ▶ understand the Vaiśeṣika theory of Asatkāryavāda

### Background

In Indian philosophy, the earliest metaphysical ideas can be traced back to the Vedas, particularly in Rigveda, which contains hymns and speculations about the origin of the universe, the nature of gods, and the underlying unity of existence. The concept of ṛta, or cosmic order, played an important role in these early texts, suggesting a harmonious and orderly universe governed by natural laws. The Upanishads that emerged as the end part of Vedas played a great role in the development of Indian metaphysical thought. These texts engage with deeper philosophical questions and present more systematic explorations of concepts such as Brahman (the ultimate reality) and Atman (the individual self). The Upanishads emphasised the unity of Brahman and Atman, proposing that realising this unity is the key to liberation (Mokṣa). This period also saw the development of early theories of causation and the nature of existence, laying the groundwork for later metaphysical systems.

When one looks into the history of Indian metaphysics before Vaiśeṣika, one could find various contributions in it. Prominent among these were the Sāṅkhya and



Yoga schools, which offered dualistic accounts of reality involving puruṣa (consciousness) and prakṛti (matter). Jainism and Buddhism also made meaningful contributions to Indian metaphysics with their unique perspectives on the nature of the self, karma, and liberation. Jainism emphasised a pluralistic metaphysical view with an infinite number of jīvas (souls), while Buddhism, particularly with its doctrine of no-soul theory, challenged the notion of a permanent self and introduced the concept of dependent origination. These diverse philosophical traditions set the stage for the development of Vaiśeṣika philosophy, which sought to provide a more detailed and systematic classification of reality.

## Keywords

Vaiśeṣa, Categories, Atomism, Causation, Paramāṇu, Asatkāryavāda

## Discussion

► Genuine individuality resides within the particulars

The Vaiśeṣika system, deriving its name from ‘vaiśeṣa’ or particularity, stresses the individuality inherent in the specific elements of the world, particularly emphasising the imperceptible souls and atoms. The philosophy of Vaiśeṣika is fundamentally about distinctions, preserving the independence of selves and objects without attempting to dissolve them into a perfect unity. It suggests that genuine individuality resides within these particulars. Vaiśeṣika is also not concerned with constructing a synthesis that includes all existence under a singular formula. Instead, it articulates the most fundamental characteristics of observed phenomena, compartmentalising different aspects of experience into appropriate categories. Developed during a period of intellectual flexibility and scepticism, the early form of Vaiśeṣika mainly focused on physics and metaphysics. However, later works incorporated logical discussions into their philosophy. Despite essential principles shared with Nyaya, the Vaiśeṣika distinguishes itself through its unique classification and characterisation of categories and the development of its atomic theory, creating an important space within the tradition of Indian philosophy.

### 1.3.1 Categories

For a long time in India, intellectual tradition was dominated by Buddhist teachings. In their view, things existed only because of their relationships with other things. But the Vaiśeṣi-

► Difference between  
Vaiśeṣika and  
Buddhist teachings

ka school thought that things do have their own unique qualities and existence. They believed in what people could see and feel, the things that seemed separate and real to us. So, while Buddhists focused on how everything is linked together, the Vaiśeṣika school emphasised the independent aspect of everything. When we observe the external world, we encounter a material realm consisting of various entities and their arrangements. These are the observable, physical aspects of existence that can be perceived through sensory experience or inferred through empirical observation. Apart from this, through introspection, we also discern a non-material domain, including abstract concepts such as souls (ātman), which are considered integral to the understanding of consciousness and personal identity within Vaiśeṣika philosophy. These non-material entities are characterised by their immaterial nature, existing beyond the limits of physicality and sensory perception. Thus, the foundation of philosophy lies in an analytical examination of reality, considering both material and non-material aspects. The Vaiśeṣika tradition fulfils this requirement through its systematic analysis of the doctrine of padārthas.

► Padārthas include  
physical entities and  
abstract concepts

The term ‘padārtha’ literally means ‘the meaning of a word’ or ‘that which is referred to or signified by a word’. A padārtha is an object which can be thought (artha) and named (pada). They include all objects of experience, not limited to physical entities but also including abstract concepts and phenomena. In the Nyaya tradition, there are sixteen padārthas. However, it is essential to note that these sixteen padārthas are not intended to be a thorough analysis of existing things. Instead, they constitute a list of central topics within the logical science of Nyaya. On the other hand, the categories of the Vaiśeṣika tradition aim for a comprehensive analysis of all the objects. Unlike the Nyaya system, which focuses on central topics within logical science, the Vaiśeṣika categories engage with the detailed examination of the fundamental constituents of reality. Through this analysis, the Vaiśeṣika philosophy tries to provide a systematic understanding of the various aspects of existence that includes both tangible entities and abstract concepts.

The Vaiśeṣika philosophy classifies padārthas into six, which include substance (dravya), quality (guṇa), action (karma), generality (sāmānya), particularity (viśeṣa), and inherence (samavāya). Later, a seventh category, non-existence (abhāva), was added by Vaiśeṣika scholars. The inclusion of non-existence among the padārthas suggests a shift from an ontological position to an epistemological one. The Vaiśeṣika philosophy



► The classification of padārthas

puts these categories into two groups. The first three, substance, quality, and action, are considered to possess a real, objective existence, while the other three, generality, particularity, and inherence, are products of intellectual discrimination and are regarded as logical categories. According to Kālīdāsa, the first three categories, referred to as artha, are objects that can be felt, signifying their tangible nature. In contrast, the latter three categories are seen as emerging from intellectual discernment, indicating their conceptual rather than tangible nature. The reality of these last three categories is said to be established through logical inference rather than direct apprehension.

### 1.3.1.1 Dravya or Substance

► The differing nature of substance from its qualities

In philosophical terms, substance refers to a fundamental entity that exists independently and possesses inherent qualities or characteristics. It is often considered the primary building block of reality and acts as the material cause from which composite entities derive their existence. This definition suggests that substance is not merely a passive container but rather the foundational element in which all attributes and actions reside. In Vaiśeṣika thought, substances are inherently intertwined with qualities and are defined as entities possessing these qualities. This perspective emphasises the effort within Vaiśeṣika philosophy to affirm the existence of entities that can accommodate qualities without being reduced to mere attributes themselves. It highlights the necessity of maintaining a clear distinction between substances and qualities to accurately characterise the nature of reality.

► The unique existence of substance

In Vaiśeṣika philosophy, the concept of substance is conceived as the substratum or foundation upon which qualities and actions manifest. In other words, substance provides the underlying support for the existence of qualities (guṇa) and actions (karma). Without substance, these qualities and actions would lack a basis and would not be able to exist. Imagine substance as the canvas on which qualities and actions are painted. Just as a painting cannot exist without a canvas to support it, qualities and actions in Vaiśeṣika philosophy cannot exist without substance. The concept of substance as the substrate of qualities and actions emphasises the inseparable relationship between substance and its attributes. While qualities and actions can be conceptually separated from substance, they inherently exist within it. This distinction asserts the real and objective existence of substance within Vaiśeṣika philosophy.

► The relation between substance, qualities and actions

Substances, as the material cause of their effects, can exist independently of qualities and actions. This notion implies that while qualities and actions contribute to the nature of substance, they are not essential for its existence. Instead, qualities and actions are considered non-inherent causes of substance, as they can be present or absent without affecting the substance itself. For instance, consider the example of a cloth made from threads. Threads serve as the inherent cause of the cloth, as without them, the cloth cannot exist. In contrast, the green colour of the threads is a non-inherent cause, as it can be separated from the substance without fundamentally altering its nature. The distinction between inherent and non-inherent causes illustrates that while qualities and actions contribute to the manifestation of substance, they are not essential for its existence. Substance, as the inherent cause, forms the foundational material from which effects arise, while qualities and actions are secondary attributes that may accompany it.

► Nine material and spiritual substances

The classification of substances includes nine categories, including both material and spiritual entities. This classification stresses the pluralistic and realistic nature of Vaiśeṣika philosophy, which acknowledges the existence of material and spiritual realms. The nine substances are Earth (prthivi), Water (Ap), Fire (tejas), Air (vāyu), Ether (ākāsha), Time (kala), Space (dik), Spirit (ātman), and Mind (manas). These substances collectively provide the foundation for the diversity and complexity of existence observed in the universe. Vaiśeṣika philosophy, while pluralistic and realistic, differs from materialism by acknowledging the existence of spiritual substances along with material ones.

► Unique characteristics of elements

In Vaiśeṣika philosophy, the elements of earth, water, fire, and air do not refer to the passing compound objects, but they are ultimate, eternal, partless atoms. These atoms are unique and individual. Ether (ākāsha), on the other hand, is infinite and eternal, not composed of atoms. Together, these five are known as elements (bhūta) and are considered physical. Each element has a distinctive quality; for example, earth has smell, water has taste, fire has colour, air has touch, and ether has sound. These qualities are perceived by our external senses, which are themselves constituted by these elements. Vaiśeṣika also recognises time (kāla) and space (dik) as substances that are eternal, all-pervading, and indivisible. These entities are imperceptible and infinite, although we conventionally speak of them as having parts and divisions. Time is responsible



for our perceptions of past, present, and future, as well as concepts of younger and older. Space provides the basis for our understanding of directions and locations, such as east, west, here, and there. Unlike ether, which is the substratum for the quality of sound, time and space do not serve as the basis for any sensory qualities.

► Unique characteristics of soul and mind

Vaiśeṣika also posits the existence of innumerable souls, each of which is an independent, individual, eternal, and all-pervading spiritual substance. The soul is the substratum of consciousness, which is not considered an essential or inseparable quality of the self, as it is absent during deep sleep. Consciousness, along with other qualities like desire and volition, resides in the self. Mind (manas) is another substance in Vaiśeṣika philosophy. It is the internal sense and is atomic, though, unlike the other atomic substances, it does not create composite objects. Each self possesses a mind, which acts as the organ through which the self interacts with objects. The mind's existence is inferred from the necessity of perceiving internal states such as cognition, desire, and conation. The mind is selective and active in perception, directing attention to specific objects of perception.

### 1.3.1.2 Guna or Quality

► Qualities can be conceived, thought, and named independently

In the Vaiśeṣika philosophical tradition, the concept of guna or quality constitutes a fundamental category of existence, distinct from both substance and action. As we saw in the previous discussion, the substance stands as a foundational entity capable of existing on its own accord without depending on any external factors. In contrast, quality, or 'guna,' lacks this independence. It depends on the substance as its substratum. Without substance, quality cannot manifest independently and has no qualities of its own. Despite this dependence, qualities are considered independent realities because they can be conceived, thought, and named independently of the substances in which they reside. This independence gives qualities as objective entities capable of being conceptualised and identified on their own.

► Vaiśeṣika altogether accepts twenty four qualities

Within the Vaiśeṣika tradition, qualities are categorised into seventeen primary attributes. These include colour, taste, smell, touch, number, size, individuality, conjunction, disjunction, priority, posteriority, knowledge, pleasure, pain, desire, aversion, and effort. Along with this, Prasastapada expanded this list by including seven more qualities: heaviness, fluidity, viscosity, merit, demerit, sound, and faculty. The qualities

include both material and mental properties that capture the diversity of existence. Material qualities include attributes such as smell (associated with earth), taste (associated with water), colour (associated with fire), touch (associated with air), and sound (associated with ether). Mental qualities include aspects such as cognition, pleasure, pain, desire, aversion, and volition, which are inherent in the self.

### 1.3.1.3 Karma or Activity

**K**arma, often translated as movement or action, is the energy that drives things to move or change. Now, everything that moves or changes, whether it is a substance like a rock or a quality like colour, has Karma associated with it. To understand this better, think of qualities as things that are seen around, like the heaviness of an object; Karma is what happens when that object actually falls. Vaiśeṣika identifies the distinction between Guna and Karma. The former refers to qualities that stick around, like the colour of an object. The latter, on the other hand, is the action or movement that happens but does not stick around. It is important to note that Karma is often short-lived. It happens in a flash, like when an object drops, or it can persist as a tendency, like when something keeps moving in a particular direction. Karma either stops when the substance it is associated with changes or when the substance itself is destroyed. The entities such as ether, time, space, and the soul, though considered substances are devoid of action due to their incorporeal nature.

► The force of movement and change

When we talk about types of Karma, we can think of five main kinds: upward movement, downward movement, contraction, expansion, and locomotion. Upward movement occurs when an object moves toward a higher position. For example, when a stone is tossed into the air, it is moving upward and comes into contact with a higher region. Downward movement is the motion of an object towards a lower position. An example is a fruit falling from a tree, which moves downward and makes contact with the ground or a lower area. Contraction of an action involves parts of an object moving closer together. For instance, when the fingers of a hand are compressed into a fist, they undergo contraction. Expansion refers to parts of an object moving further apart. An example is spreading the fingers of a hand apart from each other. Lastly, locomotion is the fundamental basis for all other types of motion. It involves the movement of an entire body from one place to another. Examples of locomotion include walking, running, and swimming..

► Five main kinds of karma



### 1.3.1.4 Sāmānya or Generality

When we observe a property that is common to many things, we term it 'sāmānya' or generality. For example, the property of 'redness' that is common to all red objects can be termed as generality. On the contrary, if we focus on a property that differentiates these objects from others, we call it 'viśeṣa' or particularity. Kaṇāda views generality as a conceptual construct. However, Prasastapada moves away from this conceptual perspective towards a more realistic doctrine. He sees generality as eternal, singular, and inherent in multiple things within categories like substance, quality, or action. Generality, or sāmānya, which allows different individuals to be grouped into a single class, is an independent category. It is described as eternal (nitya), singular (eka), and present in many entities. It exists in all objects of its class with an identical nature, and it is the basis for the notion of harmony. For instance, the generality of 'treeness' is what allows us to classify all oak, pine, and coconut trees under the single category 'tree,' despite their differences. Kaṇāda posits that generality and particularity are concepts relative to thought, serving as intellectual tools to classify the diversity of phenomena we encounter. He explains that quality is considered 'sāmānya' (general) when it is conceived as present in many individuals and 'viśeṣa' (particular) when it is used to distinguish between objects. For instance, 'treeness' is a general concept when viewed as a property common to all trees, but it is particular when it differentiates trees from other objects. This intimate relation highlights the interconnectedness of universals and particulars within the realm of reality.

► Generality includes shared properties while particularity distinguishes

Generality can be divided into two types: higher and lower. The highest form of generality is 'being'. This highest generality includes the widest range of entities and embraces everything without being included in anything else. It does not fall under any higher category or genus. Basically, 'being' is the only true universal. Below the highest generality, we have other universal particulars such as substance, quality, and action. These categories are more specific than 'being' but still cover a wide range of things. For example, the generality of 'substance' includes various substances like water, air, and earth. These categories are considered lower generalities because they are subsets of the higher generality of 'being'.

► The higher and lower generality

### 1.3.1.5 Viśeṣa or Particularity

When we analyse the empirical objects down to their simplest components, which lack divisible parts, we must

► Qualities that differentiate something from all others

assume that each simple substance possesses a unique quality that differentiates it from all others. This uniqueness is referred to as particularity or *Viśeṣa*. Particularity is fundamental for the basis of exclusion, allowing us to identify the uniqueness and individuality of each entity. According to Kaṇāda, particularity, much like generality, is relative to thought. However, Praśastapāda views particularity as an independent reality inherent in eternal substances, which serves to differentiate them. Atoms of time, space, souls, and mind all possess particularities that distinguish each individual entity, not just classes of entities. Schools of thought such as those of Kumārila, Prabhākara, and the Vedānta reject the doctrine of *viśeṣa*. They argue that if things are fundamentally different, it becomes impossible to find a common characteristic among them. This rejection stems from the belief that inherent differences negate the possibility of any shared attributes, thus undermining the necessity of particularities as a distinct category.

### 1.3.1.6 Samavāya or Inherence

► The inseparable connection between things

Kaṇāda defines *samavāya* or inherence as the relationship between cause and effect. Praśastapāda, describes it as the relationship existing among inseparable entities, similar to the relationship between a container and its content, which forms the basis of the idea ‘this is in that.’ The scholars also differentiate inseparability from identity since the two entities involved remain distinct. For instance, the heat of a fire and the ball of iron it heats are not identical, though inseparably connected. Generally, *samavāya* applies to various connections such as between a substance and its qualities, a whole and its parts, motion and the object in motion, an individual and the universe, and cause and effect. These relationships are unified to represent a single, coherent whole. This relationship of *samavāya* is not directly perceptible but can be inferred from the inseparable connection between things. For example, the relation between a substance and its qualities, or between parts and the whole, demonstrates inherence through their inseparable nature. Thus, while we cannot see *samavāya* directly, we understand it through logical inference based on the permanent and inseparable nature of the connected entities.

Inherence, or ‘*samavāya*,’ is considered eternal because its creation would lead to an infinite regress. If inherence existed before the creation of the object, there would be no object for the inherence to reside in, making its existence inconceivable. If inherence and the object were to come into existence at



► The eternity of  
inherence

exactly the same moment, there would be a problem because inherence requires an already existing object to support it. Imagine making a cloth from threads, first you have the threads, then you weave them together to create the cloth. Inherence is the relationship that keeps these threads together to form the cloth. For inherence to exist, the cloth (the object) must already be present. If both the cloth and inherence started existing simultaneously, it would mean the cloth was already a complete object ready to support inherence, even though inherence is needed to hold the threads together. Therefore, for inherence to occur, the cloth and the relationship binding it cannot begin at the same time. If inherence appeared after the object was formed, the object would already exist without inherence, contradicting the idea that inherence is necessary for the object's existence. So, inherence must be eternal because it cannot be produced or destroyed without affecting the existence of the object it relates to. This eternity is relative in the sense that inherence is unproduced and indestructible as long as the object exists.

Samavāya, or necessary connection, contrasts with samyoga, or accidental conjunction, which is merely a quality of things. The following are the major differences between samyoga and samavāya.

Samyoga	Samavāya
Objects have separate existences before their conjunction.	objects are inseparably connected.
The relationship ends when the conjoined entities are separated.	Relationship is indestructible and does not end.
Involves two independent substances.	Entities involves in a container-contained relationship.
Occurs between two similar natured things that exist independently and are temporarily conjoined.	Internal relation where the connected entities form a real, coherent whole.

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The relationship is initiated by the action of the entities involved.	The relationship is not initiated by the action of either member.
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Entities can be separated without destroying either entity.	Entities cannot be separated without destroying at least one of them.
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### 1.3.1.7 Abhāva or Non-existence

The seventh category in the Vaiśeṣika system is ‘abhāva,’ or non-existence. This concept was not initially included by Kaṇāda, the founder of the Vaiśeṣika school, but was later integrated into the system. Different from the first six categories, which are positive and describe things that exist, abhāva deals with the absence of things. This peculiarity makes it unique and negative in nature. Abhāva is relative, meaning it depends on the context of what is being negated or absent. For example, the absence of a table in a room is relative to the room where the table is expected to be. As realists, Vaiśeṣikas believe that the knowledge of an object is separate and distinct from the object itself; that is, an object exists independently of whether someone knows about it. Similarly, the knowledge of the absence of an object (abhāva) is different from the object that is absent. For example, the awareness that ‘there is no table in the room’ is a distinct form of knowledge separate from the actual table. This distinction exposes the realist belief that objects and their absences exist independently of our knowledge or awareness of them. In Vaiśeṣika philosophy, non-existence manifests in various forms, each providing distinct insights into the absence or negation of entities within the sphere of existence. These forms are listed below:

► The category that denotes the absence of things

**Anyonyābhāva (Mutual Negation):** This form of non-existence denotes the absence of one thing in another. Expressed as ‘S is not P’, it signifies exclusion and opposition to identity. This concept highlights the idea that certain entities cannot coexist or manifest simultaneously. It is perpetual, both beginningless and endless.

**Sansargabhāva (Non-existence of Correlation):** It declares that one entity cannot exist within another. For example, coolness amidst a fire. This type of non-existence is further classified into three categories. They are:



► Various forms of non-existence

- i. Prāgbhāva (Antecedent Non-existence): This refers to the absence of a thing before its production or creation. For instance, a chair did not exist before a carpenter built it or because it is made of wood.
- ii. Pradhavaṁsābhāva (Subsequent Non-existence): This type denotes the non-existence of an effect after its destruction. It has a beginning but no end. For example, when a jar is broken into pieces, the non-existence of the jar in its pieces illustrates subsequent non-existence. Denying this form of non-existence would imply the eternal nature of all things.
- iii. Atyantābhāva (Absolute Non-existence): This refers to the absence of something in something else across all times past, present, and future. Absolute non-existence is eternal, neither created nor destroyed, and perpetually exists. Denying absolute non-existence would imply the everlasting presence of everything, contradicting the principles of absence and negation.

► The smallest, indivisible components of any composite entity

### 1.3.2 Atomism in Vaiśeṣika

According to Vaiśeṣika philosophy, the fundamental or basic particles of all composite objects in the universe are indivisible, partless, and eternal particles known as atoms or paramāṇu. These atoms are believed to be created by the elements of earth, water, fire, air, and ether. They differ from one another both in quality and quantity and are considered the smallest, indivisible components of any composite entity. Just as a cake is created by combining flour, sugar, eggs, and other ingredients in precise proportions, the entire universe is formed from the combination and arrangement of these fundamental particles. Atoms in Vaiśeṣika philosophy are described as spherical or globular (parimandala) in shape. This particular form is considered fundamental to their nature and plays a crucial role in the formation of composite objects. In their natural state, atoms are inactive and motionless. This inactivity persists during periods of cosmic dissolution, where the universe is in a state of dormancy. The transition from inactivity to activity in atoms is facilitated by an unseen force known as adṛṣṭa. This Unseen Power is responsible for imparting motion to the atoms, enabling them to combine and form various composite objects.

In the Vaiśeṣika philosophy, the creation and dissolution of the universe are explained by the interaction of atoms. Creation takes

► The creation and dissolution of the world by adṛṣṭa

place with the combination of atoms in different proportions. Imagine a potter making a clay pot. Each movement of the potter's hands sets the tiny clay particles in motion, coming together in various arrangements to form the desired shape and structure of the pot. Similarly, in the cosmic creation, atoms combine and recombine to give rise to the different kinds of objects and phenomena in the universe. It is important to note that in Vaiśeṣika philosophy, the combination of atoms happens during creation not by addition but through multiplication. When two atoms combine, they form what is known as a dyad, and three dyads result in a triad, the smallest visible substance in the material world. This step-by-step process illustrates how the universe, with all its diversity and complexity, emerges from the interactions of these fundamental particles. However, creation is only one part of the cosmic cycle. When the dissolution takes place, the combinations of atoms return to their elemental forms. This process of dissolution is essential for the regeneration and renewal of the cosmos, paving the way for new cycles of creation to unfold. Throughout this process of creation and destruction, the unseen force or adṛṣṭa plays an important role. Just as the wind gently guides a leaf as it falls from a tree, adṛṣṭa imparts motion to the atoms, arranging their movements and interactions.

### 1.3.3 Theory of Causation

► The effect is not an inherent part of the cause but emerges as a novel entity

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy follows the doctrine of Asatkāryavāda, which asserts that the effect does not pre-exist in its cause. According to this doctrine, the effect is not an inherent part of the cause but emerges as a novel entity when the appropriate conditions are met. This viewpoint emphasises that the creation of an effect is a new beginning, a fresh creation that did not exist before. This theory, also known as Ārambhavāda, proposes that the effect originates freshly and is a new beginning, not a pre-existing form hidden within its cause. Consider the example of a pot made from clay. In this example, the pot does not exist in the clay before it is formed. The creation of the pot represents the emergence of a new entity, distinct from the clay itself. This principle emphasises that creation is not merely a revelation of pre-existing forms but entails the generation of entirely new entities. It sharply contrasts with the Satkāryavāda, which states that the effect pre-exists in the cause in some form and that becomes manifest through certain conditions.

Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy presents arguments to establish



► Necessity of causal activity and fulfilment of purpose

the doctrine of Asatkāryvāda, which asserts that the effect does not pre-exist in its cause and is instead a new creation. They argue that if the cause and the effect were not different, there would be no need for a causal process to produce the effect from the cause. However, we observe that causal activity is indeed required, suggesting that the cause and effect are inherently different. This differentiation implies that the effect originates as a new creation, something that was not present in the cause. The second argument is that if the effect were real in the cause, the cause itself should fulfil the purpose of the effect. However, causes and effects serve different purposes. For example, while a piece of cloth serves the purpose of covering the body, the threads that make up the cloth do not. This difference in functionality clearly shows the distinction between cause and effect, supporting the notion that the effect is a new creation.

► Meaning of creation, name and form

The third argument states that if the effect were considered real within the cause, the concept of the effect being created by the cause would be meaningless. The very idea of creation implies that the effect is brought into existence through the causal process, not that it was already existent in the cause. For example, stating that a sculpture is created from a block of marble implies that the sculpture did not pre-exist in the marble; it is the sculptor's actions that bring the sculpture into being. The final argument states that if the effect were real within the cause, we must question from where the distinct name and form of the effect arose after its creation. The fact that an effect has a specific name and form that did not exist in the cause further supports the argument that the effect is a new beginning. For instance, the transformation of milk into curd involves a complete change in name, form, and properties, showing that curd is not merely a transformation of milk but a new entity altogether.

► Precedence of the cause before the effect

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school of philosophy offers insights into the fundamental characteristics that define the relationship between cause and effect. These characteristics provide an understanding of how causation operates in the universe.

1. Antecedence: It refers to the temporal precedence of the cause before the effect. In simpler terms, the cause must come before the effect in time. For example, consider the process of pottery making. Before a pot comes into existence, the potter engages in various activities, such as shaping the clay and firing it in an oven. These activities

► Consistent relationship between the cause and its effect

► The indispensable connection between the cause and its effect

must occur before the pot can be said to exist. The potter's actions precede the creation of the pot, illustrating the principle of antecedence.

2. Invariability: It asserts that the cause must invariably lead to the effect under the right conditions. This means that a consistent relationship exists between the cause and its effect. Taking the example of pottery making again, if the same actions are applied to the same type of clay under similar conditions, they will consistently result in the creation of a pot.
3. Unconditionality: It emphasises the indispensable connection between the cause and its effect. The cause must exist unconditionally with the effect, meaning that the presence and actions of the cause are necessary for the production of the effect. Returning to the pottery example, the potter's involvement is essential for the creation of the pot. Without the potter's actions, the pot would not come into existence.

## Summarized Overview

Vaiśeṣika philosophy, founded by Kaṇāda, offers a systematic understanding of reality through its theory of categories, atomism, and causation. It classifies existence into seven fundamental categories (padārthas) such as substance (dravya), quality (guṇa), action (karma), generality (sāmānya), particularity (viśeṣa), inherence (samavāya), and non-existence (abhāva). Substances, such as earth, water, fire, air, ether, time, space, self, and mind, form the basis of all entities. Qualities are attributes inherent in substances, while actions are their movements. Generality and particularity help to classify and distinguish entities, inherence explains inseparable relationships, and non-existence addresses the concept of absence. Vaiśeṣika is also known for its atomistic theory, positing that the universe is made up of indivisible, eternal atoms (paramāṇus). These atoms, differing in quality and quantity, are the smallest units of matter, forming the building blocks of all composite objects. Atoms are considered inactive until motion is imparted by an unseen force (adr̥ṣṭa), leading to the creation and dissolution of various objects through their combination and separation. In its theory of causation, Vaiśeṣika accepts the theory of Asatkāryavāda, asserting that the effect does not pre-exist in its cause. This doctrine, also known as Ārambhavāda, views the effect as a new beginning or creation, distinct from its cause.



## Self-Assessment

1. What are the seven fundamental categories (padārthas) in Vaiśeṣika philosophy?
2. How does Vaiśeṣika classify substance (dravya)?
3. What is the importance of quality (guṇa) in Vaiśeṣika's philosophy?
4. Explain the concept of inherence (samavāya) and its role in Vaiśeṣika philosophy.
5. How does Vaiśeṣika philosophy define non-existence (abhāva)?
6. Describe the process of creation and dissolution in Vaiśeṣika's atomism.
7. Explain the doctrine of Asatkāryavāda in Vaiśeṣika philosophy.
8. What are the three essential characteristics of a cause according to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika?

## Assignments

1. Discuss the seven fundamental categories (padārthas) in Vaiśeṣika philosophy. How do they contribute to understanding the nature of reality?
2. Critically evaluate the concept of non-existence (abhāva) in Vaiśeṣika philosophy. How does it differ from the other categories?
3. How does Vaiśeṣika philosophy explain the creation and dissolution of the universe through the combination and separation of atoms?
4. Explain the doctrine of Asatkāryavāda in Vaiśeṣika philosophy. How does it contrast with Satkāryavāda?

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## Suggested Reading

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## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



SGOU



**BLOCK 2**  
**Sāṅkhya- Yoga**



SRI VENKATESWARA  
UNIVERSITY

# UNIT 1

## Sāṅkhya Dualism

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ understand the origin and significance of Sāṅkhya philosophy and its fundamental concepts.
- ▶ grasp the dualistic philosophy of Sāṅkhya in connection with Puruṣa and Prakṛti.
- ▶ get a glimpse of Prakṛti as the foundational force behind the universe and the guṇas associated with it.
- ▶ comprehend the arguments raised to prove the existence of Puruṣa as well as its significance and characteristics.

### Background

In the historical context of Indian philosophy, dualist ideas trace back to the ancient Sāṅkhya system. This worldview provided a framework for understanding the relationship between the spiritual and material realms. As Sāṅkhya philosophy developed, it impacted subsequent schools of thought in Indian philosophy, such as Yoga, Vedānta, and aspects of Buddhist thought. The emphasis of Sāṅkhya philosophy on the distinction of the self from the material world, along with its rejection of a creator God, originates many debates and dialogues within the philosophical landscape of ancient India. This rich intellectual tradition laid a strong foundation for Indian philosophy, influencing how people thought about metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics for centuries. It is a crucial milestone because it sparked the rise of dualist thinking and led to deep questions about nature and consciousness.

## Keywords

Sāṅkhya-sūtra, Atheistic Sāṅkhya, Prakṛti, pariṇāma, Puruṣa,

## Discussion

► Sāṅkhya the philosophy of right knowledge

► The relation of Sāṅkhya with other systems

► Major works on Sāṅkhya philosophy

Sāṅkhya is a very old system of thought that marks a shift from strict formalist thinking patterns. It is the philosophy of right knowledge (samyak khyāti or jñāna). This system is mainly intellectual and theoretical. Yoga, the counterpart of Sāṅkhya, focuses on action or practice and shows how the theoretical teachings of Sāṅkhya can be realised in practice. Together, Sāṅkhya and Yoga form a complete system, with Sāṅkhya being the theoretical aspect and Yoga being the practical aspect. The Sāṅkhya system did not emerge in pure isolation, but pre-existing ideas and doctrines influenced it. References to Sāṅkhya-Yoga doctrines are found in several Upanishads, such as the Chhāndogya, the Prashna, the Katha, and particularly in the Shvetashvatara. These doctrines are also mentioned in the Mahābhārata, the Gita, the smṛtis, and purāṇās.

There are views about the connection between early Buddhism and Jainism with the Sāṅkhya system. However, while Sāṅkhya philosophy might have been influenced by Buddhist philosophy, the core ideas of Sāṅkhya existed before Buddhism. The main goal of both systems is to end suffering by removing ignorance. Denunciation of ascetic extravagances, indifference to theism and the belief in the constant becoming of the world are common to both. Despite these similarities between Buddhism and Sāṅkhya, there are important differences. Buddhism does not accept the Sāṅkhya concepts of inactive puruṣa, three guṇas, and the ultimate nature of prakṛti.

Unlike other philosophies, Sāṅkhya focuses on the continuity of the universe and sees the world as evolving, not created by God. Some thinkers believe the term 'Sāṅkhya' refers to 'numbers,' as this system deals with twenty-five categories. The great sage Kapila is considered the founder of the Sāṅkhya system. Kapila lived before Buddha and probably



composed the Sāṅkhya-sūtra, which was unfortunately lost long ago. Ishvarakrishna's Sāṅkhya-kārikā is the earliest available and most popular work of this system. Other important texts include Gaudapada's Sāṅkhya-kārikā-bhāṣya, Vachaspati Mishra's Tattva-Kaumudi, and Vijnanabhikshu's Sāṅkhya-pravachana-bhāṣya.

► Sāṅkhya philosophy believes in the reality of puruṣa and prakṛti

The Sāṅkhya philosophy breaks away from rigid thinking patterns. It rejects the strict categories of other philosophies like Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, seeing them as unfit to describe the dynamic world. This philosophy does not support the idea of a creator God bringing the world into existence with a single command. Instead, it sees the world as a result of interactions between countless spirits and the potential of nature, similar to Plato's concept of nature as the source of all creation. Sāṅkhya philosophy believes in the reality of both individual soul (Puruṣa) and nature (Prakṛti) because we cannot explain our experiences without acknowledging a knower and something known. It aims to make sense of our experiences and how we learn things.

► The dualistic nature of Sāṅkhya philosophy

As stated above the Sāṅkhya philosophy maintains that there are two fundamental aspects of reality: puruṣa (spirit) and prakṛti (undifferentiated matter). It views the world as a duality between these two realities. Sāṅkhya holds the reality of the plurality of puruṣa and is thus known as pluralistic spiritualism. Unlike Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, which acknowledges various ultimate realities like atoms, mind, soul, space, and time, Sāṅkhya focuses only on the realities of puruṣa and prakṛti. Sāṅkhya is dualistic because it says only spirit and matter are eternal and basic, while other things are just the evolutes of this matter (prakṛti). With these unique expositions Sāṅkhya remains as an important philosophical system in India aiming to understand the world and human experience.

► Prakṛti is considered the ultimate and uncaused cause of the universe

### 2.1.1 Prakṛti

The Sāṅkhya philosophy tries to explain nature as an ever-changing collection of elements. It believes that everything in the universe unfolds from the resources of nature in a hierarchical manner. The hierarchy begins with physical matter, which originates from sub-material elements. To avoid an endless chain of causes, Sāṅkhya argues that there must be an ultimate and uncaused cause. Based on the principle of causality, Sāṅkhya deduce that this uncaused ultimate cause is the unmanifested prakṛti. The Sāṅkhya Kārika provides the following

arguments for the existence of prakṛti;

- a. Individual things are limited, suggesting they depend on something more permanent and universal. So, the finite individual cannot be the source of the universe.
- b. All individual things share specific universal characteristics, indicating a common source of origin.
- c. Evolution has a guiding force larger than its products and it is immanent in everything it makes.
- d. Effects differ from causes, so it cannot be said that the finite world cannot be the cause of itself.
- e. The universe shows an obvious unity, which points to the existence of a single cause.

Sāṅkhya believes in the continuity of the world from the lowest to the highest, where products evolve and dissolve in a definite order. Everything that comes into existence has a cause, and nothing comes out of nothing. The cause must have more or at least equal reality compared to the effect. The excess would not be produced from the desired cause. Sāṅkhya describes the world as the transformation of prakṛti, and thus, it is the cause. Prakṛti is the foundational force behind everything (except the spirit which is uncaused) in the universe. Thus, prakṛti is the cause of all effects. But, prakṛti itself is not caused by anything; it is self-caused. Prakṛti is called pradhāna because every effect is produced from it. It is also called Brahma because everything grows from it, and it is known as māya because it measures and limits things. Sāṅkhya acknowledges the impossibility of deducing the self or puruṣa from prakṛti.

► Prakṛti is the foundational force behind everything in the universe

► Prakṛti is neither created nor destroyed.

The particular things around us, like objects and creatures, are created and depend upon others for their existence. But prakṛti, the underlying essence of nature, is independent and not created by anything. Also, particular things are many in number and are limited, existing within space and time, but prakṛti is everlasting and present everywhere. Prakṛti cannot be destroyed, so it could not have been created either. An intelligent force cannot be the cause of the inanimate material world because spirit cannot transform into matter. Also, the power to act does not belong to the spirit; it belongs to the self-sense or ahamkāra, one of the evolutes of prakṛti.

What is real for us is usually the things we directly experience.



► Prakṛti, although not directly perceptible, is considered real

In that sense, prakṛti might seem like it does not really exist because it is not something we can easily perceive like other objects. Perception can fail when objects are too close or too far away. Problems with our senses or mind, the presence of other objects, or distractions can also hinder perception. Prakṛti's subtle nature makes it imperceptible. Vyāsa describes prakṛti as neither completely real nor entirely unreal. It is something that is unmanifested and without specific characteristics, yet it is the fundamental background of everything. If what exists serves the self, then prakṛti is considered non-existent in a sense, but not as impossible as something like a square circle. This means that prakṛti exists but is not in a visible form like other objects in the world.

► The comparison between Sāṅkhya and Materialism

Prakṛti contains all possibilities for creation, meaning everything that exists or could exist is already within it, waiting to manifest. It serves as the foundation for all physical and mental changes. As our knowledge is limited to the phenomenal ground, we do not fully comprehend the real nature of prakṛti. The Sāṅkhya philosophy says that everything in the world comprises one fundamental substance. The different things in the world are just different configurations of this same substance. This view is similar to materialism, which says the world is all made up of one fundamental material. Both Sāṅkhya and materialism agree that an eternal, unchanging substance underlies all diversity. Unlike materialism, which views this substance as purely physical, Sāṅkhya acknowledges that prakṛti is neither mere matter nor conscious. It is responsible not only for the physical elements but also for the psychical. Prakṛti operates without consciousness while driving the continuous activity in the universe.

► The guṇas are the constituent element of prakṛti.

### 2.1.1.1 Prakṛti and its Guṇas

The primary substance, prakṛti, is constituted of three powers or guṇas, such as sattva, rajas and tamas. Guṇa is considered as the constituent element or component and not the quality of prakṛti. It is like a cord made of three strands. The three guṇas are said to be in a state of equilibrium. The guṇas cannot be perceived but inferred from their effects. All objects of the world, from the intellect to the ordinary objects, possess these three characteristics, capable of producing pleasure, pain and indifference, respectively. The same thing may appear pleasurable to someone, painful to another, and neutral to some others. Sāṅkhya called these three guṇas sattva, rajas and tamas, re-

spectively.

The first *guṇa* is *sattva*. It is the potential consciousness that brings pleasure to individuals. Etymologically, *sattva* comes from the word ‘*sat*’, which means real or existent. *Sattva* also means perfection; thus, it is linked with what produces goodness and happiness. It possesses the nature of pleasure, buoyancy, light and brightness, and its colour is white. This means that *Sattva* embodies attributes that promote mental clarity, positivity, and a sense of brightness or illumination in thought and experience. In other words, predominance of *sattva* fosters spiritual growth, intellectual clarity, and emotional stability, enabling individuals to experience higher states of happiness and contentment. Pleasure in various forms, such as happiness, joy, satisfaction, bliss, contentment, etc., is produced through *sattva*.

► *Sattva* associated with potential consciousness, happiness, brightness, and pleasure.

The second *guṇa* in *Sāṅkhya* philosophy is called *rajas*, which represents the principle of activity. The term ‘*rajas*’ literally means foulness. *Rajas* is characterised by movement and the ability to induce movement in other things, thus possessing qualities of being mobile and stimulating. Its nature is associated with pain, as it is the cause of all painful experiences. *Rajas* generates restlessness, feverish effort, and intense stimulation, often symbolised by the colour red. It fuels actions such as the spreading of fire, the blowing of wind, and the quest of sensory experiences by our senses, leading to a restless state of mind. *Rajas* brings enjoyment in life but also contributes to feelings of restlessness. Importantly, *rajas* supports the functions of *sattva* and *tamas*, which are naturally inactive and motionless, thereby facilitating their roles in the cosmic balance according to *Sāṅkhya* philosophy.

► *Rajas* is the principle of activity

*Tamas* is the third *guṇa*, the principle of inertia. It literally means darkness. *Tamas* opposes *sattva* as being heavy and obstructing the manifestation of objects. It also opposes *rajas* or activity as it hinders progress and motion. It counteracts the power of manifestation in the mind, intellect, and other things, producing ignorance and darkness and leading to apathy, indifference, sloth, confusion, passivity, negativity and bewilderment. *Tamas* induces sleepiness, drowsiness, and laziness by obstructing activities. Its colour is black.

► *Tamas* is the principle of inertia. It induces sleepiness, drowsiness, and laziness.

Each *guṇa* plays a specific role in *Sāṅkhya* philosophy. *Sattva* brings clarity, *rajas* drives action, and *tamas* brings restraint. These qualities influence our experiences, resulting



► The unity and presence of three guṇas

in feelings of pleasure, pain, or indifference. According to Sāṅkhya, everything in the world is made up of these three guṇas, which constantly interact and cooperate with each other. The three guṇas are always found together and cannot exist independently. Similar to how oil, wick, and flame work together to produce light in a lamp, the guṇas collaborate to create everything in existence. While every object may possess all three qualities in varying degrees, one guṇa dominates. This dominant guṇa determines the nature of the object, while the other guṇas remain latent. The diversity we observe in things arises from their unique combinations of these guṇas. Every entity contains different proportions of sattva, rajas, and tamas, defining its inherent nature. When the guṇas are balanced or in a state of equilibrium, it is called Prakṛti.

► The internal change in guṇa is called svarūpa pariṇāma

Guṇas are subtle and constantly changing, even when things seem stable. Change is inherent to the very essence of guṇa. When Prakṛti is in a state of equilibrium, the guṇas still undergo continuous change. It is a kind of internal change within themselves. This does not lead to evolution because they do not interact with each other to disturb the equilibrium of the guṇas. This internal change is called homogeneous change or svarūpa pariṇāma. This transformation occurs within each guṇa individually. Sattva changes within sattva, rajas within rajas, and tamas within tamas. This stage is referred to as pralaya or dissolution, where the guṇas remain in their inherent states without external interaction or change.

► Evolution begins due to virūpa- pariṇāma.

Evolution begins when a disturbance occurs in the equilibrium, and the guṇas start to interact with each other. This change is known as heterogeneous change or virūpa- pariṇāma. In this change, one guṇa becomes dominant over the other two due to their interactions. These heterogeneous interactions create all the diversity we see in the world. The dominant guṇa determines the visible characteristics of something, while others remain dormant. Tamas is dominant for things at rest, while rajas is dominant for things in motion.

### 2.1.2 Puruṣa

The other co-present, co-eternal reality in Sāṅkhya philosophy is Puruṣa, the essence of pure consciousness. Puruṣa represents the soul, the self, the spirit, the subject, and the knower. It is distinct from the body, senses, brain, mind (manas), ego (ahankara), and intellect (buddhi). Puruṣa is not a substance that possesses consciousness as a quality; rather,

► Puruṣa is the essence of pure consciousness

consciousness is its essential nature. It stands as the ultimate knower, the foundation of all knowledge, and exists as pure, transcendental consciousness. Puruṣa remains the pure subject and can never be an object of knowledge itself. It serves as the silent witness, the emancipated, the neutral observer, and the peaceful eternal being. Beyond time, space, change, and activity, puruṣa remains as the unquestionable reality, the basis of knowledge. Puruṣa is described as nistraigunya (beyond the gunas), udāsīna (neutral), akartā (non-doer), kevala (alone), madhyastha (neutral observer), sākṣī (witness), draṣṭā (seer), sadāprakāśasvarūpa (eternally luminous), and jñāta (knower).

► Puruṣa is eternal, unchanging consciousness, unaffected by anything.

Puruṣa is considered an uncaused, eternal, and all-pervading reality. It has no beginning or end, exists everywhere, and is not created by anything. Puruṣa is completely free from attachment and is unaffected by all objects. It does not get influenced or changed by the things it encounters. Consciousness, which is the essence of puruṣa, remains constant in all states of being, whether we are dreaming, awake, or in deep sleep. Puruṣa is not the cause or result of these states but is the light that makes us aware of the world around us. Without relying on anything else, puruṣa makes all other things understandable to us. Our mental faculties, like intellect and mind, help us process and interpret our experiences, but they do not fully explain what consciousness is or why it exists. Puruṣa is incapable of movement, meaning it does not move or change location. It is not limited in size or atomic in size, thus remains beyond physical dimensions. Puruṣa does not engage in any activities. It is a passive observer, not an active participant in the events of the world. According to Sankhya, puruṣa must be devoid of all qualities because, if it had qualities, it could not achieve liberation. The nature of puruṣa is unchangeable and remains the same always. Experiences of happiness or misery do not belong to it because they are part of the physical and mental realms, not the realm of puruṣa.

Sāṅkhya philosophy provides five arguments to prove the existence of puruṣa:

1. Everything in the world exists for the sake of another. A bed, made up of different parts, exists for the person who sleeps on it. Similarly, all compound objects exist for the sake of puruṣa. The body, senses, mind, and intellect help to realise puruṣa's purpose. In other words, there is Puruṣa, the enjoyer, for whom everything has been created.



2. All objects are composed of the three guṇās, which logically presuppose the existence of puruṣa, the witness of these guṇās. The three guṇās imply the existence of something beyond them (nistraiguṇya), which is puruṣa.
3. There must be a pure consciousness to coordinate all experiences. All knowledge assumes the existence of the self which is the foundation of all knowledge. Without the self, experiences would not be possible and that is puruṣa.
4. Non-intelligent prakṛti cannot experience its products. There must be an intelligent principle to experience the products of prakṛti. Prakṛti is the enjoyed, so there must be an enjoyer and that is puruṣa.
5. Some people seek freedom from the sufferings of the world. This desire suggests that someone is capable of achieving that liberation. This deep desire for liberation implies the existence of a puruṣa.

► Comparison of Sāṅkhya's puruṣa with other systems

In Sāṅkhya philosophy, the concept of puruṣa differs from Advaita Vedanta. While Advaita Vedanta teaches that there is a single, universal consciousness (Brahman) that underlies all existence and that individual identities (Jiva) are ultimately illusory, Sāṅkhya believes in the existence of multiple puruṣas. These puruṣas in Sāṅkhya are similar to the Jivas in Jainism, the souls in Ramanuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedanta, and the monads in the philosophy of Leibniz. They are considered qualitatively alike and quantitatively distinct. That is, in Sāṅkhya, Puruṣas are seen as fundamentally alike because they all possess consciousness, but they are separate entities, each with its own individuality. This view contrasts with Advaita Vedanta's assertion of a single, non-dual consciousness where individual distinctions are ultimately rejected.

Sāṅkhya system gives the following arguments to prove the plurality of puruṣa.

1. Individuals differ in birth, death, and sensory and motor abilities, indicating that one person's experiences and characteristics do not apply to others. Unique sensory organs and actions show separate life cycles. Some may experience positive outcomes like heaven, while others undergo negative ones like hell. This suggests the existence of dif-

ferent consciousnesses. Similarly, the birth, death, blindness, or deafness of one person does not mean the same for all. If everyone had the same self, the birth, death, blindness, or deafness of one would apply to all. Therefore, the distinctness of each person's experiences points to the existence of multiple selves or consciousnesses

2. If the self were one, then the bondage of one would mean the bondage of all, and the liberation of one would mean the liberation of all. Similarly, if the self were one, the actions of one would influence everyone else to act, and the sleep of one would induce sleep in all others. However, this is not what we observe. When one person sleeps, others might be awake and active, and vice versa.
3. There are various types of living beings: humans, animals, birds, and so on. If they all shared the same self, these differences would not exist. But in reality, these differences do exist. Even among humans, there are differences; some are more dominated by goodness (sattva), while in some activity (rajas) is dominant, and in some, lethargy (tamas) is dominant. So, it is well evident that there are many selves. These souls are eternal and intelligent subjects of knowledge, unlike prakṛti, which is eternal and one and the non-intelligent foundation of the object of knowledge.

► Arguments for proving the plurality of puruṣa

► The difference between prakṛti and puruṣa

According to Sāṅkhya, puruṣa is eternal, timeless, without qualities, subtle, and present everywhere. It is described as an eternal observer beyond the reach of the senses, mind, and intellect, as well as beyond the limitations of time, space, and causality. Puruṣa is uncreated, and it does not create anything. Its eternity is not just about lasting forever but also about being unchanging and perfect. Puruṣa does not know things in the usual sense because empirical knowledge relies on the limitations of the body, as it is the form of consciousness. Puruṣa is separate from prakṛti, the material world. It is like a silent, disinterested observer. The qualities of prakṛti and puruṣa are opposite: prakṛti lacks consciousness, while puruṣa is conscious; prakṛti is active and ever-changing, while puruṣa is inactive; prakṛti is variable, but puruṣa remains constant. Prakṛti is the object, and puruṣa is the subject.



## Summarized Overview

**S**āṅkhya philosophy, one of the oldest systems of Indian Philosophy, offers a new perspective on the universe, emphasising its continuous evolution rather than a single divine creation. Founded by the great sage Kapila, it sees the world as a dynamic interplay between two fundamental realities: puruṣa (spirit) and prakṛti (undifferentiated matter). Prakṛti, the foundational active force behind everything, comprises three guṇas or qualities such as sattva, rajas, and tamas, which interact and drive the evolution of the universe, where one guṇa usually dominates over the other two in order to determine the nature of an object. Puruṣa, on the other hand, is the eternal, conscious self, unaffected by physical changes, existing as the ultimate knower and observer. While prakṛti represents the material world, puruṣa embodies consciousness, and their interaction forms the basis of Sāṅkhya philosophy, which aims to understand the world and human experience through these two fundamental principles.

## Self-Assessment

1. Explain the concept of prakṛti and its significance in Sāṅkhya philosophy in order to understand the universe.
2. Describe the three guṇas of prakṛti (sattva, rajas, tamas) and their roles in the evolution of Sāṅkhya philosophy.
3. What arguments does the Sāṅkhya philosophy provide for the existence of puruṣa?
4. Write a note of the characteristics of puruṣa as described in the Sāṅkhya philosophy.
5. How does Sāṅkhya philosophy explain the plurality of puruṣas?

## Assignments

1. Compare and contrast the characteristics of prakṛti and puruṣa according to the Sāṅkhya system. Discuss how these fundamental principles explain the dynamic nature of the universe.
2. Critically analyse Sāṅkhya cosmology from an ecofeminist perspective, focusing on the independent existence or dualism of puruṣa and prakṛti in addressing current environmental exploitations. Consider how dualist thinking leads to environmental degradation and propose alternative approaches for ecological harmony.
3. Write a note on the nature and characteristics of two fundamental realities of Sāṅkhya, Prakṛti and Puruṣa.

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## Suggested Reading

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## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



SGOU

## UNIT 2

# Theory of Evolution in Sāṅkhya

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ understand Sāṅkhya theory of causation and its significance in grasping the cause-effect relationship
- ▶ differentiate between satkāryavāda and asatkāryavāda
- ▶ know the evolution process of Sāṅkhya, focusing on the interaction of prakṛti and puruṣa
- ▶ analyse the psychical and physical stages of evolution in Sāṅkhya philosophy
- ▶ evaluate the implications of the Sāṅkhya theory of evolution for understanding the purpose of existence

### Background

One of the six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy, Sāṅkhya offers a comprehensive understanding of the universe, cause-effect relation, and the relationship between the individual self (puruṣa) and the material world (prakṛti). The theory of evolution and causation is central to Sāṅkhya philosophy, which explains how the universe manifests from its unmanifested state and the principles governing cause-effect relationships. The theory of evolution of Sāṅkhya explains the process through which the material world evolves from its primal state, with prakṛti as the fundamental substance and puruṣa as the witnessing consciousness. Understanding the process of evolution and causation in Sāṅkhya philosophy provides insights into the nature of reality, the purpose of existence, and the path to spiritual liberation (mukti). Widely accepted within Indian philosophy, the cosmological explanations of Sāṅkhya enrich metaphysical understanding, challenging monistic philosophies like Vedānta with its dualistic ontology. Noteworthy for its atheistic



nature, Sāṅkhya denies a creator deity, emphasising self-realisation over devotion. Its principles continue to shape spiritual practices and foster diverse perspectives on existence and enlightenment.

## Keywords

Satkāryavāda, Asatkāryavāda, Ārambavāda, Parināmavāda, Vivartavāda

## Discussion

► Different views on evolution in Indian Philosophy

Indian philosophical schools offer different views on evolution. They are generally rooted in their metaphysical and spiritual frameworks. Vedānta, for instance, sees Brahman as the unchanging reality from which the universe manifests through Maya, the power of illusion. This manifestation involves the gradual unfolding of diverse forms and beings. Buddhism, on the other hand, explains evolution through dependent origination, where all phenomena arise based on multiple causes and conditions. Jainism views evolution as the soul's journey through cycles of birth, death, and rebirth, guided by the principles of karma and ethical conduct. The soul evolves by shedding karmic particles through purification, aiming towards liberation from worldly attachments.

► Spiritual and ethical aspects of evolution

Indian philosophies generally highlight the spiritual and ethical aspects of evolution, going beyond physical change to focus on the transformation of consciousness or soul towards a higher state of existence. Spiritual evolution, as seen in Vedānta, involves realising the unity of the self (Atman) with Brahman. Buddhism emphasises following the Noble Eightfold Path to attain nirvana, the cessation of suffering. Jainism stresses ethical living and spiritual purity to attain moksha, liberation from karmic bondage. These expositions reveal that evolution in Indian philosophy unfolds the growth and transformation towards a higher state of consciousness or ultimate liberation. Here progress is marked by spiritual practices and ethical living that lead individuals through distinct stages of development.

Does Sāṅkhya philosophy propose same kind of process in

evolution? Or does it follow different and unique approach in evolutionary process. The following discussion will explore Sāṅkhya's theory of evolution rooted in its dualistic metaphysics. Engaging with the same will clearly show the difference in focus on the fundamental nature of reality where a dynamic interplay between consciousness (puruṣa) and matter (prakṛti) take place.

## 2.2.1 Theory of Causation

Imagine a potter sitting at his wheel, moulding clay into various shapes. As he shapes the clay, a fundamental question arises in philosophical inquiry: does the pot already exist within the clay before it is formed, or does it come into existence as a new creation through the potter's skill? This question lies at the heart of theories of causation in Indian philosophy. Those who argue that the effect does not exist beforehand are known as Asatkāryavādins. They believe each effect is a new creation, with a real beginning. For them, the effect does not pre-exist in its material cause. This perspective challenges the idea that a pot already exists in clay or cloth in threads, suggesting why a potter would need to make a pot from clay or why threads cannot automatically become cloth. According to Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Hīnayana Buddhism, Materialism, and some followers of Mimāṃsā, this view is upheld. This view is also known as Ārambavāda, representing production as a new beginning. On the other hand, Satkāryavādins argue that the effect is not a new creation but a manifestation of what was already implicit in its material cause.

► Does the effect already exist within the cause before it is formed, or does the effect come into existence as a new creation

Sāṅkhya philosophy follows Satkāryavāda. Satkāryavāda means kariyam(cause) already exists (Sat). It defines the cause as the entity in which the effects subsist in a latent form. According to this view, all material effects are already present as modifications within Prakṛti. They exist eternally within prakṛti and simply emerge from it during creation and return to it during dissolution. In this perspective, there is no new creation or complete destruction. Production is seen as a process of development or manifestation (āvīrbhāva), while destruction is understood as a process of envelopment or dissolution (tirobhāva). Therefore, production is considered as evolution, and destruction as involution in Sāṅkhya philosophy.

► No new creation or complete destruction

In Sāṅkhya philosophy, causes are categorised into two types: efficient and material. The material cause is integral to



► Efficient and material cause

the effect, while the efficient cause influences from outside. Even though the effect is potentially within the cause, another force is needed to bring it out of its causal state. For example, oil is obtained by pressing seeds, and grains are extracted by beating paddy. Without this accompanying effort the effect cannot arise. Removing barriers is essential to realise this potential. Sāṅkhya philosophy also distinguishes between two types of effects. They are simple manifestation and reproduction. For example, when cream is produced from milk, it is an example of a simple manifestation, whereas making a jewel from gold illustrates reproduction.

Sāṅkhya philosophy gives the following grounds in support of Satkāryavāda.

► Effect Pre-exists in and emerged from material cause

**Asatkaranāt:** It asserts that if the effect does not exist within its material cause before the production, then no effort can bring it into existence. It is something impossible, like trying to turn sugar into salt. So, when the effect is created from a material cause, it is said that it has already existed potentially in the material cause, and the effect comes out only when the right conditions arise. For instance, coconut oil is produced by pressing or crushing of coconut. The oil is already there in the coconut, but what is needed is crushing or pressing to get oil. If oil were really non-existent in the material cause, then no effort of crushing or pressing can bring oil into existence. Hence, this argument says that things cannot create something out of nothing.

► The effect is mere manifestation

**Upādānagrahanāt:** The effect is a mere manifestation of the material cause because the material cause can only produce the specific effect to which it is causally linked. Material causes and effects are always invariably related. For instance, pots can only be made from clay and cloth from threads. This shows that pot and clay, as well as cloth and thread, are causally related. A material cause cannot generate an effect that is unrelated to it. This proves that the effects are inherently pre-existing within the material cause.

► Only desired effects can be produced from the desired cause

**Sarvasambhavābhāvāt:** Not everything can be made from anything. Only desired effects can be produced from the desired causes. Cloth is produced from thread only, meaning the effect is already there in the cause. If it were not, we could make anything from anything, like a potter using milk or threads to make pots instead of clay.

► The effect came only from the respective potent cause

**Saktasya Sakya Kāranāt:** Only that with the necessary potency possesses causal efficiency. An efficient cause can produce the desired effect only from the potent cause. Cause and effect are invariably related, showing that the effect is potentially contained in the material cause before the manifestation. This means that the cause is like the unmanifested version of the effect, and the effect is like the manifested version of the cause. Thus, it can be argued that the effect came only from the respective potent cause. In short, this argument says only something with the necessary potency can cause change.

► The effect identical or similar to the material cause

**Kāranabhāvāt:** The effect is not something different from the cause but identical or similar to the material cause. Therefore, if the cause is there, the effect must also exist. Both cause and effect are the different forms of the same substance. Cloth is not entirely different from threads, and pot is not different from clay. The effect appears in different shapes and forms but is identical to the cause. It shows that the effect pre-exists in the cause.

► Two different forms of satkāryavāda: Parināmavāda and Vivartavāda

Satkāryavāda has two different forms: (1) Parināmavāda and (2) Vivartavāda. According to Parināmavāda, when the effect is produced from the cause, the material cause is transformed into the effect. In Parināmavāda, the material cause undergoes complete transformation (parināma) into the effect. For example, clay is transformed into a pot and thread is transformed into cloth. While Vivartavāda suggests that the change of the material cause into the effect is only apparent. For instance, when a shell appears as silver, the shell is not actually transformed into silver; instead, it appears to be silver. Advaita Vedāntins accept Vivartavāda, while Sāṅkhya accepts the Parināmavāda conception of causality.

► Evolution is due to the saṁyoga between the puruṣa and prakṛti

## 2.2.2 Theory of Evolution

For Sāṅkhya, Prakṛti is the fundamental substance from which the world evolves. Prakṛti is the combination of the three guṇas, such as sattva, rajas, and tamas, which are in a state of equilibrium (sāmyāvastha) in their unmanifested state. The natural condition of Prakṛti is rest, but this does not mean there is no inclination to act. It is not a state of inactivity but rather a state of tension. Tendencies toward manifestation (sattva) and activity (rajas) are balanced by tendencies toward non-manifestation and non-activity (tamas). But, when there



occurred a disturbance in the equilibrium of guṇas, Prakṛti began to evolve. The disturbance in the equilibrium of the guṇas occurred due to the proximity of puruṣa. Prakṛti alone cannot initiate evolution because it is unconscious, and puruṣa alone cannot initiate evolution as it is inactive. Thus, evolution is due to the contact (saṁyoga) between the puruṣa or the self with prakṛti or matter. In creation the active prakṛti moves with the intelligence of puruṣa.

► Evolution begins with the cooperation of active prakṛti and the intelligent puruṣa.

The evolution in Sāṅkhya philosophy, or how prakṛti and puruṣa cooperate in the evolutionary process, can be illustrated using an analogy. Imagine a blind man and a lame man working together to escape from a dense forest. Just as they rely on each other's strengths and weaknesses to navigate the forest, puruṣa and prakṛti similarly cooperate in Sāṅkhya philosophy's concept of evolution. Here, active prakṛti (nature) and intelligent puruṣa (consciousness) collaborate to initiate the process of evolution. This cooperation is termed 'prakṛti parināmavāda' in Sāṅkhya philosophy. When puruṣa interacts with prakṛti, it disrupts the equilibrium of guṇas (qualities of nature). Initially, rajas (activity) evolve first due to its inherent dynamism. Rajas then stimulates the other two guṇas, leading to further evolution.

► Mahat or intellect is the first evolute of prakṛti.

The first evolute of prakṛti is mahat or intellect. For Sāṅkhya, from the cosmological aspect, this vast world of objects originates from mahat; hence, it is referred to as 'mahat' or the great one. From the psychological aspect, this is called buddhi or the intellect, and it is present in individuals. Buddhi enables us to understand the distinction between subjects and other objects and helps us make decisions. The natural function of buddhi is to reveal itself and other things. Buddhi or mahat emerged due to the predominance of sattva guṇa in prakṛti. Mahat in the Sāttvik state possesses attributes like virtue, knowledge, detachment, and excellence. However, when it is affected by tamas, it shows opposite traits like vice, ignorance, attachment, and imperfection. Buddhi is the subtle essence of all intellectual processes in individuals. However, buddhi or intellect should not be equated with puruṣa because buddhi is material, whereas consciousness transcends all physical attributes. Despite this, buddhi closely mirrors the awareness of puruṣa, giving the appearance of consciousness and intelligence. It allows puruṣa to perceive all existence and distinguish itself from prakṛti, thereby playing an important role in Sāṅkhya philosophy's understanding of the relationship between consciousness and matter.

► Ahañkāra or ego is the second evolute of prakṛti.

Ahañkāra, or the ego, is the second evolute of prakṛti, which emerged after mahat. At first, we perceive the objects through our senses. Then, our mind reflects on them and categorises them as belonging to certain types. Afterwards, there is a sense of appropriating those objects as our own and personally involved with them. Precisely this sense of self as 'I' (aham) and objects as 'mine' (mama) is called Ahañkāra. Ahañkāra determines our attitude towards the object of the world. Ahañkāra is said to be the practical element of buddhi. Due to ahañkāra, different individual spirits acquire distinct mental backgrounds. The function of ahañkāra is for the self to look upon himself as the doer or initiator of actions, as well as a seeker of goals and a possessor of possessions.

► From sāttvika ahañkāra, eleven organs emerge.

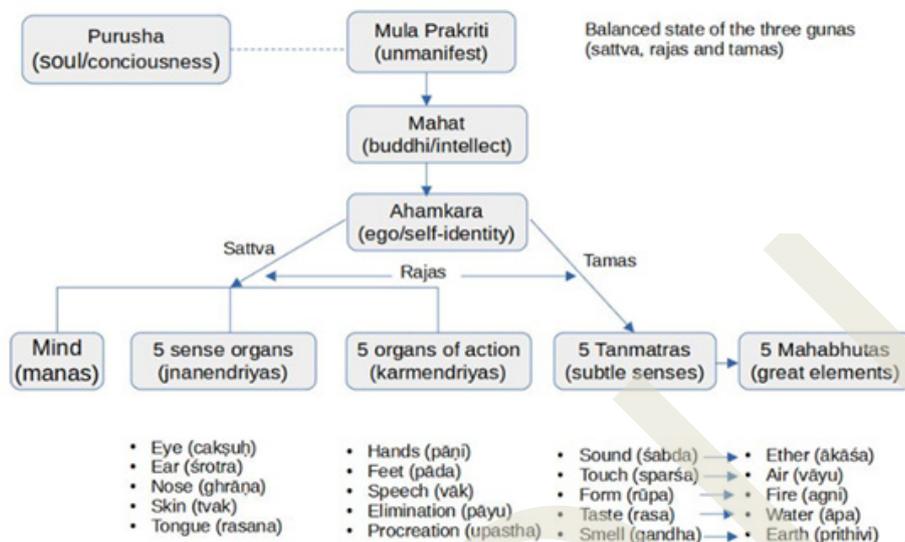
Ahañkāra is said to be of three kinds, according to the predominance of one of the three guṇas. When the sattva element predominates in it, it prompts good deeds and is called vaikārika or sāttvika; when the elements of rajas predominate, it prompts evil ones and is called tajāsa or rājasa; when the element of tamas predominates, it stimulates indifferent deeds and is called bhuṭādi or tāmasa. According to Vācaspati Mīśra, from sāttvika ahañkāra, eleven organs emerge, including the five organs of perception/ sensation (jñānendriya), the five organs of action/ motor organs (karmendriya), and the mind. From tāmasa ahañkāra come the five subtle elements or tanmātras. From the tanmātras, the five gross elements or mahābhūtas arise. The rājasa ahañkāra contained within the first and the third provide the energy required to transform sattva and tamas into their products.

► Vijñānabhikṣu's views on ahañkāra

In the process of evolution, even if one of the guṇas is dominant, the others still perform their roles and contribute to the evolution of the universe. According to Vijñānabhikṣu, an important scholar and commentator of Sāṅkhya and Yoga systems, the mind (manas) is the only sense that manifests from sāttvika ahañkāra. The other ten organs, which include the five sense organs and the five motor organs, are derived from rājasa ahañkāra. The five subtle elements come from tāmasa ahañkāra. This differentiation illustrates how each aspect of ahañkāra contributes uniquely to the formation of the senses, organs, and elements in the universe.



### Samkhya Chart 25 Tattvas (elements)



(<http://yogawithsubhash.com/images/25tattvas.jpg>)

► The third evolute of prakṛti is called the manas or mind.

The third evolute Sāṅkhya philosophy is called manas or mind. The role of the mind is important in synthesising sensory data into determinate perceptions. The mind proposes various courses of action and executes will through the organs of action. The manas is compared to a doorkeeper, while the senses are equated to the doors. The manas assumes different forms with different senses, and its cooperation is essential for perception and action. For example, when you see a flower, your eyes send the visual information to your mind, which then processes and identifies it as a flower. Without the mind's synthesis, the senses alone would provide fragmented data. In Sāṅkhya's point of view, manas is not eternal, as it possesses movement and action. They view it as an internal sense organ that perceives objects from the past, present, and future.

► Five organs of sensation are the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch.

From sāttvika ahaṅkāra, five senses of perceptions emerged. The five organs of sensation are the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch, and they perceive the corresponding physical qualities of colour, sound, smell, taste and touch. Each sense is specialised in perceiving one particular quality. These five buddhindriyās emerge due to our needs and desires, and they are not made of physical elements. For Sāṅkhya, sense is an imperceptible energy or force residing within the organs of perception, enabling them to apprehend objects. Senses themselves are not the physical organs, like the ears, but rather the power of hearing that resides within them. Therefore, the

senses are not directly observable but can be inferred from the functions they perform.

► Five motor organs include organ of mouth, hands, feet, anus and the sex organ

Besides the five sensory organs, five motor organs evolved from *sāttvika ahaṅkāra*. *Karmendriyās* or motor organs include organ of mouth, hands, feet, anus and the sex organ. They perform functions respectively as speech, handling, locomotion, excretion and reproduction. *Karmendriyās* are integral to the functioning of the human body and play a crucial role in facilitating bodily functions. They are very essential for engaging with the external world. The *manas*, or mind, is the central organ which blends aspects of both *jñānendriyās* and *karmendriyās*. Mind guides these organs and ensures they interact effectively with their respective objects. Despite being incredibly subtle, the mind comprises parts, allowing it to connect with multiple senses simultaneously. *Manas* plays an important function in synthesising sense data into determinate perceptions and transmitting them to the ego, which then executes the commands of the ego through five motor organs.

► The *antaḥkaraṇa* and *bāhyakaraṇa*

Among these, evolutes of *prakṛti*, *mahat*, *ahaṅkāra* and *manas* represent psychological aspects of knowing, willing and feeling, respectively. They are the material elements derived from *prakṛti*, shine through the light of *puruṣa*, and thus possess consciousness. These three evolutes, such as *mahat*, *ahaṅkāra* and *manas*, are regarded as the internal organs or *antaḥkaraṇa*. While the five sensory organs and five motor organs are regarded as the external organs or *bāhyakaraṇa*. These ten external organs, or *bāhyakaraṇa*, condition the function of internal ones, or *antaḥkaraṇa*. The three internal organs and ten external organs were altogether known as the thirteen *karaṇās* or organs of *sāṅkhya* philosophy.

► Five *tanmātras* produce *mahabhūtas*: ether, air, fire, water, earth

The five *tanmātras*, or subtle elements, emerge from *tāmasa ahaṅkāra* are the essence of sound, touch, colour, taste, and smell. From these *tanmātras* arise the gross physical elements, or *mahabhūtas*, namely ether, air, light or fire, water, and earth. Ether, originating from the essence of sound, possesses the quality of sound. Air emerges from the essence of sound and touch, inheriting the attributes of both sound and touch. Light or fire emerges from the essence of sound, touch, and colour, possessing all three attributes of sound, touch and colour. Water arises from the subtle essence of sound, touch, colour, and taste, embodying these four qualities. Finally, earth emerges from the essence of sound, touch, colour, taste, and smell, incorporating all five attributes. Each of the five



physical elements, ether, air, light or fire, water, and earth, respectively, possesses specific properties such as sound, touch, colour, taste, and smell.

► The psychical and the physical

The whole course of evolution from prakṛti to the gross physical elements is classified into two stages, namely, the psychical and physical. The evolutes of prakṛti, such as mahat, ahankāra, manas, five sense organs and five motor organs, are the psychical stages, whereas five tanmatrās and mahābhūtas belong to the physical stages.

► Evolution involves 24 principles from prakṛti and puruṣa stands apart as the twenty-fifth principle

In Sāṅkhya philosophy, the concept of evolution involves identifying twenty-four principles that originate from prakṛti, the original substance of nature. These principles cover various stages and aspects of existence, from subtle elements to more tangible physical forms. Puruṣa, in contrast, stands apart as the twenty-fifth principle, embodying pure consciousness and remaining distinct from the unfolding processes of evolution. The twenty-three principles that arise from prakṛti are classified as effects within this philosophical system. They differ from both prakṛti and puruṣa in their fundamental nature and characteristics. These principles possess specific qualities such as growth and assimilation, reflecting the inherent attributes of pradhāna, the primary material source. Acting as tools for puruṣa, they enable the conscious entity to engage with and experience the material world.

## Summarized Overview

This unit explores the theories of causation and evolution in Sāṅkhya philosophy. The theory of causation, known as satkāryavāda, asserts that effects exist in their material causes in latent form, in contrast with the asatkāryavāda of other schools, which holds that effects are new creations. Sāṅkhya posits Prakṛti as the fundamental material cause, with all effects being the modifications of Prakṛti, revealing what is hidden within it. Evolution in Sāṅkhya begins with the disturbance in the equilibrium of guṇa in Prakṛti due to proximity to puruṣa, resulting in the emergence of mahat (intellect), ahankāra (ego), and manas (mind), followed by the senses and motor organs, then the subtle and gross elements. This evolution proceeds through psychical and physical stages, culminating in the manifestation of the universe. Sāṅkhya teaches that this evolutionary process is not a random process but serves the ultimate goal of spiritual liberation (mukti), attained through moral training and realising the true nature of the self.

## Self-Assessment

1. What is Satkāryavāda, and how does it differ from Asatkāryavāda in explaining the relationship between cause and effect?
2. How important is the interaction, or saṁyoga, of prakṛti and puruṣa in the process of evolution? Explain.
3. Explain the first evolute of prakṛti and its nature.
4. Which elements are referred to as antaḥkaraṇa and bāhyakaraṇa in Sāṅkhya philosophy, and what do they represent?
5. Write a note on the psychical and physical evolutes of prakṛti in Sāṅkhya philosophy.
6. What are jñānendriyas and karmendriyās, and how do they function in the evolutionary theory of Sāṅkhya philosophy?

## Assignments

1. Compare Sāṅkhya's Satkāryavāda with Vaiśeṣika's Asatkāryavāda. Use examples to evaluate their implications on cause and effect.
2. Analyse Sāṅkhya's theory of evolution, focusing on Prakṛti, Puruṣa, and the guṇas. Discuss the evolution of the twenty-four principles and its reflection on the universe's development.
3. Explore the psychological evolutes in Sāṅkhya philosophy: Mahat, Ahaṅkāra, and Manas.

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## Suggested Reading

1. Larson, G. J. (2011). *Classical Sāṃkhya: An Interpretation of its History and Meaning*. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
2. Mohanty, J. N. (2000). *Classical Indian philosophy*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
3. Puligandla R. (1997). *Fundamentals of Indian Philosophy*, New Delhi: D. K. Print World.

## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

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## UNIT 3

### Yoga

#### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to;

- ▶ know Chitta in Yoga philosophy, including its stages and modifications.
- ▶ get an idea of the impact of Chitta on spiritual realisation.
- ▶ understand the Ashtāṅga Yoga and their significance.
- ▶ differentiate between external and internal aids in Yoga.
- ▶ realise the significance of yoga in achieving liberation and spiritual emancipation.

#### Background

The roots of Yoga in Indian philosophy can be traced back to the ancient Vedic texts, particularly the Rigveda and Atharvaveda. In these texts, Yoga appeared as a set of practices aimed at spiritual development. These early references emphasised ritualistic elements and the cultivation of inner states that are helpful in attaining spiritual realisation. The Yoga Sutra of Patanjali, is the oldest textbook of the Yoga school. Patanjali himself calls his work 'Anusasana', where the preposition 'anu' implies that his statement follows a primary revelation, and is not itself the first formulation of the system. Vyasa's commentary on the Yoga Sutra gives the standard exposition of the Yoga principles. Patanjali systematised the conceptions of the Yoga and sets them forth on the background of the metaphysics of the Sāṅkhya., which he assumes with slight variations. The eight limbs, or Aṣṭāṅga Yoga, offer a systematic approach to spiritual growth and self-realisation, helping individuals transcend the limitations of the material world. This path, often called Rāja Yoga, emphasises moral and ethical principles, physical postures, breath control, and meditation techniques to quiet the mind and attain union with the divine. Patanjali's yoga teachings inspire countless practitioners to realise their highest potential.

Following the classical period, Yoga continued to evolve, and diverse schools and practices emerged. One among them is Hatha Yoga, which focuses on physical postures and breath control to purify the body and prepare it for meditation. Another is Kundalini Yoga, influenced by Tantric traditions, aimed at awakening the spiritual energy (kundalini) through practices like mantra recitation and visualisation. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, figures like Swami Vivekananda and later teachers introduced yoga philosophy and practices to the West. This period marked the beginning of Yoga's global influence as it gained popularity beyond its traditional Indian context. The yoga tradition continues to offer diverse paths for individuals seeking spiritual growth, mental clarity, and physical well-being. In the following discussion, we emphasise the philosophy of Yoga proposed by Patanjali and his followers, focusing mainly on Aṣṭāṅga yoga.

## Keywords

Chitta, Ekāgra, Niruddha, Vṛttis, Aṣṭāṅga Yoga,

## Discussion

► Patanjali's Yoga is the crystallisation of ideas on ascetism

► Yoga aims to achieve spiritual freedom by controlling the body, mind, and senses.

Analytical study of the Yoga sutra brings the conviction that the sutra does not constitute an original attempt, but is a masterly and systematic compilation which was also supplemented by fitting contributions. Thus, the original yoga beliefs and practices must have been older than the philosophical discourses on them as found in the Yoga sutra of Patanjali. To Patanjali, yoga meant stoppage of all mental transformations. He defined the Yoga as a philosophy of restraint of all mental activities (chittavritthi nirodha)

The term 'yoga' has many meanings; it simply means 'union', referring to the spiritual union of the individual soul with the universal soul. Unlike the general concept of union, Patañjali, defines it as a systematic effort to separate puruṣa (soul) from prakṛti (nature). This effort is directed towards realising the true nature of the self, which is distinct from the physical and mental realms. Yoga is the path to discovering our transcendental self, the divine and eternal aspect of our being, a state of spiritual freedom or Samādhi. Though Yoga can refer to this state, it generally denotes the path or methods leading to it. Yoga involves disciplined effort and practices aimed at controlling the mind and senses. These practices



purify the body and mind, preparing them for higher spiritual goals. Patanjali's Yoga is a systematic effort to control both physical and mental aspects of human nature. The ultimate aim of Yoga is to achieve kaivalya, or liberation, where the soul is free from the cycles of birth and death and the influences of prakṛti. By following the path of Yoga, the practitioner learns to distinguish between puruṣa and prakṛti. This realisation of the self, distinct from the material world, leads to spiritual freedom and liberation.

### 2.3.1 Relation between Sāṅkhya and Yoga

Patanjali systematised the principles of Yoga within the framework of Sāṅkhya metaphysics, incorporating its concepts with slight variations. Yoga accepts the twenty-five principles of Sāṅkhya without having any conflict. In this system, the universe is seen as uncreated and eternal, undergoing constant change. In its fundamental state, it is called prakṛti, which is always associated with the guṇas. There are countless individual souls that animate living beings, which are pure, eternal, and unchanging. However, when associated with the universe, these souls experience joys and sorrows and take on various forms throughout the cycle of saṁsāra.

► The similarities between Sāṅkhya and Yoga

Yoga groups the three internal organs of Sāṅkhya under chitta, not recognising ahankara and manas as separate from buddhi. It views the sense organs as material, finding no need for a subtle body. Ignorance of the true nature of things causes desires and suffering. Even in pralaya, individual chittas return to prakṛti, retaining their avidyās. At each new creation, these avidyās re-manifest, leading to kleśas or afflictions, which result in various forms of rebirth and experience. Yoga accounts for creation through God and avidya. Avidya transforms prakṛti into the mental and material world, while God, though outside prakṛti, removes obstructions. God adjusts prakṛti's modifications to the needs of puruṣas. In Yoga, individuals have more freedom than in Sāṅkhya and can achieve liberation with God's help. In both Sāṅkhya and Yoga, the liberation comes from distinguishing puruṣa from prakṛti. While Sāṅkhya relies on knowledge for liberation, Yoga emphasises concentration and active striving, including the conception of God, thereby earning the title of 'theistic Sāṅkhya' (seśvara- Sāṅkhya).

► Difference between Sāṅkhya and Yoga

The following tables shows the major similarities differences between Sāṅkhya and Yoga philosophy:

### Similarities between Sāṅkhya and Yoga

Characteristic	Sāṅkhya and Yoga
Metaphysical Foundation	Both accept the existence of puruṣa and prakṛti as fundamental principles.
Goal of Liberation	Both accept liberation (moksha) from the cycle of birth and death.
Concept of Gunas	Both acknowledge the three Gunas: Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas.
Nature of the Universe	For both the universe is eternal and undergoes constant change.
Role of Ignorance	Both accept Ignorance (avidya) is the root cause of bondage and suffering.
Classification of Elements	Both classify elements and principles in a similar manner (24 principles in Sankhya).

### Difference between Sāṅkhya and Yoga

Characteristic	Sāṅkhya	Yoga
Concept of God	Atheistic; does not accept the existence of a creator God.	Theistic; accepts the existence of God (Ísvara) as a guide.
Method of Liberation	Emphasises knowledge (jñāna) and understanding of the principles.	Emphasises practice (abhyāsa) and discipline, including meditation and ethical living.
Role of puruṣa and prakṛti	Puruṣa is the observer; Prakṛti is the observed.	Similar, but emphasises the role of Ishvara in aiding liberation.



## 2.3.2 Major works on Yoga Philosophy

► Major literary works on Yoga philosophy

The first systematic exposition of Yoga philosophy can be seen in Yoga-sūtra or Patañjala-sūtra written by Patañjali. The Pātañjala-sūtra is divided into four sections, called pādas. The first section, Samādhipāda, explains the nature, goal, forms, the changes in the Chitta, and different methods to attain yoga. The second section, Sādhanapāda, covers kriyāyoga as a means to attain samādhi. The third section, Vibhūtipāda, talks about the inner aspects of yoga and the supernormal powers gained through practising yoga. The fourth section, Kaivalyapāda, describes nature, forms of liberation, the reality of the transcendent self, and the other world. Vyasa's commentary on the Yoga-sūtra (fourth century A.D.) gives the standard exposition of the Yoga principles. Vācaspati wrote a glossary on Vyasa's Bhāṣhya called Tattvavaiśārādī (ninth century). Vijñānabhikṣhu's Yogavārttika, a running commentary on YogaBhāṣhya and Yogasārasaṅgraha, are useful manuals in understanding Yoga system of thought. The major content of the Yogasārasaṅgraha attributed to Vijñānabhikṣhu deals with the systematic presentation and explanation of Yoga principles and practices. It serves as a concise guide that summarises essential teachings and concepts of the Yoga system.

## 2.3.3 Chitta

► Chitta reflects puruṣa, enabling awareness and interaction with objects

In the Sāṅkhya system, the term 'mahat' refers to the first product of prakṛti. In the Yoga system, this concept is called 'chitta' - a comprehensive term that includes all mental functions. Chitta includes the intellect, self-consciousness, and mind. It is influenced by the three guṇas and undergoes changes based on their predominance. Chitta itself is not conscious. It becomes conscious by reflecting the puruṣa, which is always present with it. The reflected consciousness of puruṣa in chitta makes it seem as though chitta is the experiencer. Chitta can change its form to match the objects presented to it, but it cannot perceive them on its own since it is unconscious. In reality, chitta is like a spectacle, with the puruṣa as the observer by reflection. Chitta allows puruṣa to become aware of objects and interact with the world. Knowledge arises when puruṣa is reflected in chitta, which takes the form of the object it perceives. In all knowledge, chitta is influenced by both the subject (self) and the object. Although chitta changes, knowledge remains constant because the self, the true knower, is constant.

► Different manifestations of mind - kārāṇa-chitta and kārya-chitta

In Yoga philosophy, chitta is conceived as all-pervading, similar to space (ākāśa), and there are as many chittas as there are puruṣas. Each puruṣa has a chitta connected to it. The chitta can contract or expand depending on the body it inhabits. It contracts in an animal body and expands in a human body. The concept of chitta is divided into kārāṇa-chitta and kārya-chitta. Kārāṇa-chitta is the causal mind that remains constant and is always connected with puruṣa. It stores accumulated impressions and potentialities from past actions and experiences across lifetimes, determining the conditions of future existences based on past karma. Upon rebirth, kārāṇa-chitta manifests as kārya-chitta, which is the active or functional mind. The formation of the new body is influenced by apūra, the material aspects of prakṛti. This process of forming a new body and manifesting the kārya-chitta is determined by the past merit or demerit of the individual, which refers to the accumulated results of their previous actions. Yoga aims to return chitta to its original, all-pervading state by suppressing the qualities of rajas and tamas. When chitta reaches this state, the yogin gains omniscience.

► Different levels of mental stages are known as 'Chitta Bhumi'

Chitta exists in five stages, representing the various levels of mental life that help to realise the true nature of the self. Each level of chitta is determined by the varying degrees of the elements (Guṇas) present within it. These different levels of mental stages are known as 'Chitta Bhumi'. Each stage involves some form of control over the mental modifications. The five stages of Chitta are:

► The restless mind

**Kṣipta (Concentrated):** In this stage, the guṇas, rajas and tamas dominate the mind. The mind is drawn to sensory objects and the quest for power. Here, the mind constantly jumps from one thing to another without resting on anything. This is the lowest level of Chitta, and it is unfavourable to Yoga because, at this stage, the control is very less over the mind and senses.

► Dull and inactive mind

**Mūḍha (Torpid):** The second stage of Chitta is called Mūḍha. Here, the mind is dominated by tamas. This leads to ignorance, sleep, and lethargy. The mind is dull and inactive, tending towards a state of unconsciousness or laziness. There is a lack of clarity and alertness in this state.

► The instability of mind, switching between focus and distraction

**Vikṣipta (Distracted):** Here, the Chitta or mind, is free from tamas guṇa but still has a bit of rajas guṇa. It can focus on various objects and promote virtues, knowledge, etc. At this stage, the mind experiences moments of clarity and focus, but these are interrupted by periods of distraction and activity.



The mind is not stable and keeps switching between focus and distraction.

► The purified and concentrated mind

**Ekāgra (Concentrated):** The fourth level of Chitta is called ekāgra or concentrated. At this level, sattva dominates, and rajas and tamas are subdued. The mind here becomes purified, allowing for single-pointed concentration on one object. This stage marks the beginning of sustained concentration of the Chitta on one object to reveal its true nature, preparing for the cessation of all mental modifications. However, even here, the mental processes are not entirely stopped. This stage is favourable to Yoga as it leads to prolonged focus and prepares the mind for higher stages.

► The calm and tranquil mind

**Niruddha (Restrained):** This is the final and highest level where all mental modifications are entirely stopped. The mind (chitta) returns to its original state of calmness and tranquillity at this stage. The mind here is dominated by the sattva element, which helps to achieve the ultimate goal of liberation. At this stage all mental activities are stopped, and the mind experiences pure consciousness without any thoughts or distractions.

### 2.3.4 Modification of Chitta

► Chitta manifests puruṣa in its physical medium

When the chitta relates to any object, it takes on the form of that object. This form is called a vṛtti, or modification. The light of consciousness that comes from puruṣa illuminates this form. This illumination is called jñāna or knowledge. Puruṣa is pure consciousness and is free from the limitations of prakṛti. However, puruṣa wrongly identifies itself with its reflection in chitta and appears to undergo changes and modifications. Therefore, chitta is the physical medium through which the puruṣa is manifested. To explain this with an analogy, imagine a red-hot iron ball. The formless fire appears spherical due to the shape of the iron ball, and the cold iron ball appears hot because of the fire. Similarly, when puruṣa reflects in chitta, puruṣa seems to change, and chitta appears conscious. When puruṣa realises that it is entirely separate and merely a passive observer beyond the activities of prakṛti, it stops identifying with its reflection in chitta. As a result, the light is withdrawn, and the modifications of chitta cease. This cessation of chitta's modifications through meditation is called yoga - the return of puruṣa to its original and perfect state.

The mental states or modifications in the chitta can be classified into five types.

1. **Right Cognition (Pramāna):** There are three kinds of right cognition: perception, inference, and verbal testimony. The pramāṇas explained by Yoga are almost the same as those described in Sāṅkhya.

► Perception is concerned with the specific features of the object

**Perception (Pratyakṣa):** Perception in Yoga philosophy occurs when the mind (chitta) is influenced by an external object through the sense organs. This interaction creates a mental modification that is directly related to the object. Objects have both generic and specific features. In perception, we are more concerned with the specific features of the object. Yoga philosophy accepts the reality of external objects. When an object changes, only its form is modified. If all forms are destroyed, the object returns to its primary or noumenal state. Sensations occur whenever sensible objects stimulate the senses. Although the presented object remains the same, the resulting sensations may differ. This is because the mind receives impressions under the influence of the three guṇas (qualities). The three guṇas sattva, rajas, and tamas affect how the mind perceives and processes information from the senses. The mind's state, influenced by these qualities, determines how we experience the external world.

► The mental process by which we understand the general nature of objects

**Inference (Anumāna):** Inference is the mental process by which we understand the general nature of objects. Inference involves right cognition occurring when the mind (chitta) grasps the general nature of things. It relies on the recognition of invariable concomitance, which means that if two things are always connected, perceiving one allows us to infer the existence of the other. For example, seeing smoke allows us to infer the presence of fire. Inference depends on recognising patterns of consistent connection. When two things are always linked, seeing one confirms the existence of the other.

► Knowledge received through spoken or written words from a reliable source

**Verbal Testimony (Shabda):** It refers to information or knowledge received through spoken or written words from a reliable source, such as a teacher, sage, or sacred text. Shabda is essential because it provides knowledge that might not be accessible through direct perception or inference, especially regarding spiritual truths, ethical guidelines, and practices described in the scriptures. The process involves listening, understanding, and reflecting on the teachings, relying on the authority and wisdom of the source.

2. **Wrong Cognition (Viparyaya):** It is the positive wrong knowledge or erroneous knowledge of objects, such as



perceiving them as something they are not. It is a misconception, such as mistaking a rope for a snake. This can also involve doubt and uncertainty.

3. **Imagination (Vikalpa):** Imagination occurs when mental images are formed by words without real objects corresponding to them, like imagining a hare's horn. It is just a verbal idea created by words with no actual facts.
4. **Sleep (Nidra):** Sleep or nidrā, is a mental modification in Yoga philosophy. It occurs when the waking and dreaming states are absent. Sleep is considered a mental modification, or vṛtti, because when we wake up, we remember the type of sleep we had. This memory indicates that there was some mental activity during sleep. Vyasa, an important commentator on Yoga philosophy, explains that if there were no experiences during sleep, we would not have any memory of them upon waking. The memory of sleep is based on the experiences during that state. In Yoga practice, sleep is recognised as a specific kind of mental state or pratyaya. Even this modification needs to be controlled during deep meditation, or samādhi, to achieve a state of complete mental stillness and focus.
5. **Memory (Smṛti):** Recollection is remembering past experiences through impressions without changing or adding anything new.

► Puruṣa is pure consciousness beyond all bodily and mental modifications

All our mental experiences fall into these five stages of mental modification. When our mind (chitta) goes through these changes, it seems like we are experiencing different states, such as birth, growth, decay, and death, or activities like sleeping, waking, and remembering. However, our true self (puruṣa) is pure consciousness that exists beyond these bodily and mental experiences. It is the mind (chitta) that performs these functions, but the puruṣa mistakenly identifies with the states of the chitta. The self appears to be involved in these functions because it is reflected in the mind, much like a person sees their reflection in a mirror. This mistaken identity leads us to believe we are experiencing these mental ups and downs, causing different kinds of suffering or kleśas. The five kinds of afflictions or kleśas are:

- i. Ignorance (avidyā): Ignorance is the wrong knowledge of mistaking the non-eternal as the eternal, the non-self as the

self, the unpleasant as the pleasant, and the impure as the pure.

- ii. Egoism (Asmitā): Egoism is the wrong conception of identity, believing that the puruṣa and the prakṛti are the same, thinking that there is no difference between them, and identifying the self with the buddhi or the mind.
- iii. Attachment (rāga): Attachment is the strong desire or cravings for worldly pleasures and the means to attain them.
- iv. Aversion (dveṣa): Aversion is the feeling of jealousy and anger towards others.
- v. Fear of Death (abhiniveśa): It is the clinginess to life and having an instinctive fear of death.

As we discussed, the bondage of the self is due to the wrong identification of the self with the different mental modifications. Liberation helps to cease this wrong identification by understanding the difference between the self (Puruṣa) and the mind (Prakṛti), and it is possible to cease the mental modifications through yoga.

### 2.3.5 Aṣṭāṅga Yoga

In the human body, we find the physical body, vital dynamism, psychic principles, and the puruṣa. The puruṣa is hidden behind layers of flesh and a restless mind, which hinder the practice of Yoga. In Yoga, the connection between the body and mind is important because pain, misery, unsteadiness of the body, and irregular breathing patterns accompany distractions. Humans cannot be viewed as physical machines with spiritual life attached from the outside. The body is an instrument for expressing spiritual life. Instead of renouncing the material basis, Yoga accepts it as part of the spiritual problem. According to Yoga, as long as the mind is tainted with impurities and negative thoughts, one cannot realise spiritual truths. Liberation is attained by gaining spiritual insight into the reality of the self as the pure, immortal spirit, which is distinct from the body and mind. Spiritual insight can only be attained when the mind is free from all impurities and remains perfectly calm and serene. Achieving true awareness of the self requires strict discipline and the redirection of consciousness. Yoga teaches that we can calm the mind through practice,

► Yoga proposes an eightfold path for the purification of Chitta



which helps to overcome desires. Yoga proposes an eightfold path, known as Ashtanga Yoga or the eight limbs of Yoga, to overcome afflictions and purify the mind (Chitta).

The following are the eightfold method given by Yoga system of thought:

1. Yama (Abstention)
2. Niyama (Culture)
3. Āsana (Posture)
4. Prānāyāma (Breath Control)
5. Pratyāhāra (Withdrawal of the Senses)
6. Dhāraṇa (Attention)
7. Dhyāna (Meditation)
8. Samādhi (Concentration)

### **Yama (Abstention)**

The first discipline in Yoga practice is yama, which means abstention. It gives importance to the ethical preparation necessary for the practice of Yoga and involves practising five fundamental principles: ahimsā, satya, asteya, brahmacharya, and aparigraha. The most important among them is ahimsā, or non-violence, and all other virtues are considered to originate from it.

- a. Ahimsā (Non-Violence): It is not just non-violence but also non-hatred, abstaining from violence in thought, word, and deed. Cultivating friendliness, sympathy, cheerfulness, and calmness towards things that are pleasant or painful, good or bad, helps produce serenity of mind. We must be free from jealousy and not indifferent to the suffering of others. While we can hate sin, we must be gentle with the sinner.
- b. Satya (Truthfulness): Satya means abstention from falsehood, which means honesty or truthfulness in thoughts and speech.
- c. Asteya (Non-stealing): Asteya means abstention from stealing. This means not taking what does not belong to you.
- d. Brahmacharya (Control of Desires): Abstention from un-

controlled sexual desires. This means managing and controlling sexual desires and passions.

- e. Aparigraha (Non-acceptance of Unnecessary Gifts): Aparigraha means non-possessiveness or non-attachment. It involves letting go of greed, possessiveness, and the accumulation of unnecessary material possessions. Aparigraha fosters simplicity, contentment, and freedom from material desires, leading to inner peace and spiritual liberation.

► The ethical preparation necessary for the practice of Yoga

Yoga explains these practices in detail and stresses the importance of strictly following them. A healthy mind exists only in a healthy body; someone who cannot control their desires and impulses cannot be healthy. Constant distractions by negative actions and thoughts prevent proper focus and attention. This is why it is crucial for anyone practising yoga to completely avoid all negative behaviours and tendencies.

## 2. Niyama (Culture)

The second discipline in the eightfold path of yoga is Niyama, which involves cultivating positive habits and behaviours. The five practices of Niyama include;

- a. Śauca (Purification): Śauca means purification. It includes internal as well as external purifications. External purification (Bāhya) means purifying the body by washing and consuming pure food. Internal purification (Ābhyantara) recommends purifying the mind by cultivating positive emotions and attitudes, such as friendliness, kindness, and cheerfulness towards others, and developing an attitude of indifference towards the vices of others.
- b. Santosa (Contentment): Developing the habit of being content with whatever comes naturally, without excessive effort.
- c. Tapas (Penance): Tapas involves developing the habit of enduring physical hardships, such as cold and heat and practising austerity.
- d. Svadhyaya (Self-study): The practice of regularly studying religious or spiritual texts.
- e. Isvaranidhana (Devotion to God): Practicing meditation and surrendering to the will of God.



► Positive habits and behaviours are necessary for the practice of Yoga

Yama (restraints) and Niyama (observances) are the first two disciplines in Aṣṭāṅga yoga, which focus on the ethical and moral preparation necessary for practising yoga. These disciplines emphasise the importance of controlling negative behaviours and cultivating positive ones to create a healthy mind and body. By adhering to these principles, individuals can achieve the deep concentration needed for self-realisation, known as samādhi.

► Āsana is the practice of steady and comfortable postures.

### 3. Āsana (Posture)

Āsana focuses on disciplining the body through steady and comfortable postures. There are various types of āsanās like padmāsana, vīrāsana, and bhadrāsana. These postures should ideally be learned with the guidance of experienced teachers. It is not mere physical exercise; rather, the preparation of the body to have deep concentration. So, before starting meditation, it is important to find a posture where you can sit comfortably. According to Patanjali, this posture should be stable, pleasant, and relaxed. When your body is healthy and free from ailments, it becomes easier to focus your mind. Therefore, yoga provides detailed guidelines for maintaining bodily health to support focused thinking. Āsanās recommended in yoga effectively promote physical health and illness prevention. They also guide in preserving energy, strengthening the body and mind, and controlling the nervous system, thereby preventing disturbances in the mind. By effectively practising these postures, one can confirm that the body supports the goal of achieving deep concentration and mental clarity.

### 4. Prānāyāma (Breath Control)

► Prānāyāma emphasises the regulation of breath.

Prānāyāma emphasises the regulation of breath, although Patanjali mentions it as an optional practice. This suggests the serenity of the mind can be attained through regulating the breath. Breath control is considered to have a steadying influence on the mind. It plays an important role in Haṭha Yoga, where it is valued for its ability to develop occult powers. Even today, respiratory exercises are recognised as highly beneficial for strengthening the heart, improving its function, and maintaining health. However, practising these techniques can be dangerous for those who are physically weak; that is why the science of concentration (Yogavidya) is often kept secret. Prānāyāma involves the suspending of the breathing process in three ways. They are:

- a. **Reçaka (Exhalation):** It is the process of expelling air from the lungs, also known as outward breathing.
- b. **Pūraka (Inhalation):** It draws air into the lungs, also known as inward breathing.
- c. **Kumbhaka (Retention):** The process of holding air in the lungs, also known as the retention of the vital breath.

► Breath control improves concentration.

Yoga extends the idea of breath control to improve concentration, as it helps to stabilise both the body and the mind. As breathing continues, the mind fluctuates and notices the airflow in and out. The mind can achieve undisturbed concentration when breathing is suspended. By practising breath control, a yogin can suspend breathing for extended periods, helping them maintain a prolonged state of concentration.

### 5. Pratyāhāra (Withdrawal of the Senses)

► Withdrawal of the senses from their natural outward functioning

Pratyāhāra means controlling our senses. In pratyahara, one stops the mind from receiving impressions from the outside world. This practice involves consciously turning the focus inward, away from external stimuli. The goal is to gain control over the senses and prevent them from distracting the mind. By doing so, the mind can achieve a state of calm and concentration, which is essential for deeper meditation and self-awareness. Pratyahara is a key step in Yoga that helps prepare the mind for further practices by reducing sensory distractions. Pratyāhāra means controlling our senses.

► The first five stages of the eightfold path are termed bahiraṅga-sādhana

The first five states of the eight-fold path of yoga, Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prānāyāma, and Pratyāhāra, are considered external aids to yoga, also known as bahiraṅga-sādhana. These steps help to prepare the body and mind for more profound levels of practice. The last three states of the eightfold path, such as Dhāraṇa, Dhyāna and Samādhi, are known as antaraṅga-sādhana or internal aids of yoga. These three steps are more directly related to achieving a deep state of meditation or yoga.

► Dhāraṇa involves fixing the mind on a specific point

### 6. Dhāraṇa (Attention)

The ultimate truth can be known by consistently withdrawing our attention from external actions and internal thoughts, which requires focused attention. For this purpose, yoga introduces the state of Dhāraṇa, the practice of focusing the mind on a single point or object. There is a normal tendency



in our mind to naturally shift from one object to another. In dhāraṇa, we try to keep the mind focused on one specific point. For example, you might choose a candle flame as the point of focus. While focusing on the flame, your mind might wander to other thoughts. When this happens, you gently bring your focus back to the flame. The aim of this practice is to reduce how often the mind shifts away from the chosen point. By practicing dhāraṇa, you train your mind to stay engaged with one object and bring it back quickly if it starts to wander. This helps in developing concentration and mental stability.

### 7. Dhyāna (Meditation)

Dhyana, or meditation, is an advanced step following dharana, which is concentration. In dharana, the practitioner focuses on one object and brings the mind back when it wanders. Dhyana goes a step further. In this stage, the practitioner can maintain concentration on the object for a longer period without interruption. The mind becomes deeply absorbed in the object of focus. This continuous and unbroken attention helps the practitioner understand the true nature of their mind, or citta. Imagine sitting quietly and focusing on a single object, like a candle flame. In dhyana, your mind remains steady, continuously focusing on the flame without wandering. Over time, this practice can lead to samādhi, where you no longer feel the presence of your body or mind, and only the flame remains in your awareness.

► Dhyāna involves the steady contemplation of an object.

### 8. Samādhi (Concentration)

Samādhi is the state to be attained before reaching liberation in Yoga philosophy. It is a state of deep concentration and union with the object of meditation. This state disconnects the individual from the outer world, allowing the soul to experience a pure, eternal existence. There are different levels of samādhi, including Saṁprajñāta (conscious) and asaṁprajñāta (super-conscious). In Saṁprajñāta samādhi, the mind is fully aware of the object of meditation. The mind becomes one with the object, experiencing a sense of unity and understanding. This state removes mental afflictions and loosens the bonds of karma. For example, if someone is meditating on a candle flame in the state of Saṁprajñāta samādhi, they become completely immersed in the flame, losing the distinction between themselves and the flame. They experience a deep sense of joy and understanding, feeling as if they are the flame. Saṁprajñāta samādhi involves various forms of concentration, such as savitarka, savichāra, sānanda, and sāsmitā.

► Samādhi is the state of deep concentration and union

- a. Savitarka: When the Chitta is concentrated on a gross object of meditation like the tip of the nose or the mid-point of the eyebrows or the image of the deity.
- b. Savichāra: When the Chitta is concentrated on a subtler object of meditation like the tanmātrās.
- c. Sānanda: When the Chitta is concentrated on a still subtler object of meditation, which produces joy, like senses.
- d. Sāsmitā: When the Chitta is concentrated on the ego-substance with which the self is generally identified. Here, we have conscious ecstasy where individuality persists.

► Divine madness  
or perfect mystic  
ecstasy

In asaṁprajñāta-samādhi, the consciousness of the object disappears, leading to a state described as ‘superconscious.’ In this state, the buddhi (intellect) stops functioning, and its activities (vṛttis) become dormant or disappear. This means not only the lower vṛttis, which are influenced by rajas and tamas, are overcome, but also those arising from sattva. When, in the final form of asaṁprajñāta-samādhi, the buddhi is completely focused on the self, it ceases to exist, leaving the puruṣa isolated and independent. This is a state of clear, intuitive knowledge, where the truth of things is seen as they really are. In this state, called nirvicāra samādhi (super-reflective), the yogi gains inner calm and a vision of truth that does not follow the usual discursive knowledge. This insight is filled with truth, and there is no trace of misconception. Once this intuition is achieved, it dominates all other impressions, leading to a state of final perfection where the past, present, and future are understood as one whole. This highest form of samādhi is where the self is fully realised and separate from the activities of the mind. The seer abides in themselves, free from confusion between the self and the mind. It is the highest form of Yoga, divine madness and perfect mystic ecstasy. This state is complex to describe in linguistic format and more challenging to attain.



## Summarized Overview

**Y**oga philosophy provides a systematic approach to spiritual and mental discipline. It aims to unite individual consciousness with universal consciousness. Rooted in ancient Indian thought, Yoga is closely linked with Sankhya philosophy, which defines the dualism of puruṣa (consciousness) and prakṛti (matter). While Sankhya provides a metaphysical framework, Yoga offers practical methods for achieving spiritual freedom through disciplined practices. The major point of discussion in Yoga philosophy is chitta, which undergoes modifications (vṛttis) influenced by external stimuli and internal processes. These changes can hide the true nature of the self, hindering spiritual growth.

Ashtanga Yoga, also known as the Eight Limbs of Yoga, outlines a step-by-step path to spiritual realisation. It starts with ethical guidelines (yamas and niyamas) that promote moral conduct and self-discipline. The subsequent limbs - āsana (postures), prānāyāma (breath control), pratyāhāra (withdrawal of senses), dhāraṇa (concentration), dhyāna (meditation), and samādhi (absorption) are built upon each other to cultivate mental focus, emotional equilibrium, and deep inner peace. Practitioners of Ashtanga Yoga strive to attain samādhi, a state of unified consciousness where individual limitations dissolve, allowing for union with the divine. This systematic approach highlights Yoga's transformative potential in achieving spiritual liberation and realising the interconnectedness of all existence.

## Self-Assessment

1. Explain the concept of Chitta in Yoga philosophy.
2. Describe the five stages of Chitta (Chitta Bhumi) and their characteristics in the context of Patanjali's Yoga Sūtras.
3. Discuss the five types of Chitta Vṛtti (modifications of Chitta) and their impact on mental clarity and spiritual progress.
4. Explain the concept of Kleśas (afflictions) in Yoga and their role in obstructing spiritual progress.
5. Examine the role of Yamas and Niyamas in the ethical foundation of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga practice.
6. Explain Āsana and the various types of Prānāyāma, the third and fourth limbs of Ashtanga Yoga.
7. Make a short note on the distinction between Antaraṅga-sādhana and Bahiraṅga-sādhana of yoga philosophy.

## Assignments

1. Analyse the concept of Chitta in Yoga philosophy. Discuss the five stages of Chitta (Chitta Bhumi) and the five types of Chitta Vṛtti (modifications of Chitta) according to Patanjali, how do these stages and modifications impact one's path to spiritual realisation?
2. Examine the eight limbs of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga described by Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras. How do these eight states collectively contribute to the holistic development of an individual, both physically and spiritually?
3. Compare and contrast the functions of Dharana, Dhyana, and Samādhi as internal aids in Yoga. How do these practices collectively facilitate the attainment of spiritual enlightenment and the cessation of mental modifications?

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## Suggested Reading

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## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU



**BLOCK 3**  
**Pūrva Mīmāṃsā**

# UNIT 1

## Introduction to Pūrva Mimāṃsā

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ understand the basic concepts of Mimāṃsā philosophy mainly its focus on dharma, Vedic rituals, and the authority of the Vedas
- ▶ identify major works and scholars of Mimāṃsā philosophy
- ▶ comprehend the different pramāṇas (means of knowledge) in Pūrva Mimāṃsā
- ▶ evaluate the influence of Mimāṃsā philosophy on Hindu rituals, law and ethics
- ▶ compare and contrast Mimāṃsā philosophy with other Indian philosophical systems, highlighting differences in epistemological frameworks

### Background

With the development of Vedas, Vedic rituals became a central part of ancient Indian religious practice. These rituals, known as yajñas, were elaborate ceremonies performed by priest to invoke the gods and ensure cosmic order (Ṛta). The rituals were based on the instructions found in the Vedas, particularly the Brahmanas, which provided detailed guidelines on the performance of these rituals. They were believed to sustain cosmic order and societal harmony, ensuring prosperity, health, and protection from evil forces. The emergence of Mimāṃsā philosophy, particularly through the foundational texts of Jaimini's Mimāṃsā Sūtra and subsequent commentaries, brought significant changes to the ritualistic tradition. This school of thought elevated the authority of the Vedic texts, especially the Brahmanas and the Samhitas, arguing that the Vedas are eternal, authorless (apauruṣeya), and infallible.

Mimāṃsā shifted the focus from the immediate benefits of rituals to the broader concept of dharma (duty/righteousness). Performing Vedic rituals was seen as an

essential duty that upholds dharma and cosmic order. Mimāṃsā also developed a theory of knowledge (pramāṇa), particularly emphasising śabda (verbal testimony) as the most reliable means of knowledge regarding dharma, thus strengthening the primacy of the Vedas. This school stressed the precise execution of rituals, insisting that the correct performance according to scriptural injunctions was necessary for their effectiveness. Later the Mimāṃsā interpretation of Vedic texts influenced Hindu law and ethics, integrating ritualistic duties with broader social and moral obligations.

## Keywords

Vedas, Dharma, Yajña, Pramāṇa, Arthāpatti, Anupalabdhi

## Discussion

► Mimāṃsā ensures exact interpretation of Vedic rituals

The Pūrva Mimāṃsā is so called because it is earlier (pūrva) than the Uttara Mimāṃsā, not so much in the chronological as in the logical sense. The Mimāṃsā philosophy emerged from the need to ensure the proper performance of Vedic sacrifices, which mainly depend on the interpretations of Vedic texts. With the development of the rituals there also arose uncertainties that led to the development of rules clarifying how sacrifices should be conducted. These interpretations were discussed and fixed as they emerged and the resulting decisions documented in the Brāhmaṇas. However, the Brāhmaṇas' accounts are often fragmented, obscure, and incomplete, necessitating supplementary guidance from the oral tradition. For a long time, Vedic texts and this oral tradition were the dual authorities guiding the performance of religious duties. As various Vedic schools began to establish themselves, the authority of the sacred texts, preserved through an unbroken tradition, became so important. Thus, Mimāṃsā philosophy emerged to address the need for precise ritual interpretation, maintaining the integrity of Vedic traditions.

Just as Sāṅkhya and Yoga, as well as Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya, are seen as allied systems, Mimāṃsā and Vedānta are also regarded as closely related. Both schools are based on the Vedas and aim to interpret them. There has been a family



► The close relation of karma and jñāna

of pre-śaṅkara Vedānta teachers, with Maṇḍana Mīśra being notable among them, who viewed Mimāṃsā and Vedānta as a unified system advocating the combination of action and knowledge, known as Karma-Jñāna-samuccaya-vāda. These teachers believed that Karma (action) and Upāsanā (meditation) were essential for the attainment of true knowledge. Even Śaṅkarāchārya, who treated action and knowledge as fundamentally opposed, acknowledged that Karma and Upāsanā purify the soul, although they are not the direct cause of liberation. He admitted that the study of Pūrva Mimāṃsā, while not essential for Vedānta, aids in the purification of the soul. Scholars like Rāmānuja and Bhāskara believe that Pūrva and Uttara Mimāṃsā form a single science, with the study of the former being necessary before the latter.

► Jaimini's role in the development of Mimāṃsā philosophy

The Vedas, excluding the Upaniṣads, mainly provide teachings on dharma, emphasising ritualistic duties. These ritualistic duties are seen as initial steps that prepare individuals for attaining the higher wisdom and truth. To uphold the concept of dharma, Pūrva Mimāṃsā asserts the reality of the soul, viewing it as a permanent entity that possesses a body and receives the outcomes of its actions. The emergence of Buddhism challenged the followers of Vedic dharma, compelling them to reexamine, and validate their knowledge. This process culminated in the creation of systematic treatises in the form of sūtras. Jaimini's work in this context is particularly noteworthy as he undertook the task of systematising the principles of Mimāṃsā, thereby affirming their validity. His efforts aimed at organising the rules of Mimāṃsā into a comprehensive and authoritative framework, ensuring the preservation and continuity of Vedic ritual practices.

► Vedic ritual interpretation and philosophical investigation

The term 'Mimāṃsā' literally means 'revered thought' and initially referred to the interpretation of Vedic rituals. Today, the word denotes any critical investigation. The Mimāṃsā school justifies both meanings by providing rules for interpreting Vedic commandments and offering a philosophical justification for Vedic ritualism. Pūrva Mimāṃsā is inclusive of various philosophical perspectives, provided they do not undermine its central premise: the importance of dharma in its ritualistic interpretation. This philosophical flexibility has allowed different scholars to interpret Mimāṃsā's philosophical views in diverse ways while maintaining harmony on the importance of dharma. The influence of Pūrva Mimāṃsā extends beyond religious rituals into the realm of modern Hindu law.

Many principles derived from Mimāṃsā have been integrated into the legal interpretations and applications of Hindu law. For example, the emphasis on the authority of the Vedas and the methods for resolving scriptural ambiguities have shaped how legal texts and laws are interpreted within the Hindu legal tradition.

► The contribution of Mimāṃsā system to Hindu religion

Pūrva Mimāṃsā holds significant importance for the Hindu religion, providing the interpretative framework necessary for understanding the scriptures that guide the daily lives of Hindus. The principles and rules established by the Mimāṃsā system are essential for accurately interpreting the Vedic texts, which are central to Hindu religious practices. One of the key contributions of Pūrva Mimāṃsā is its detailed methodology for interpreting the Vedas, including understanding the correct performance of rituals, the implications of various injunctions, and the contextual meanings of Vedic verses. This system offers a structured approach to resolving ambiguities and doubts regarding ritualistic practices, ensuring that these practices are carried out correctly and effectively.

### 3.1.1 Major works on Pūrva Mimāṃsā

► Mimāṃsā Sūtra the major work on Mimāṃsā philosophy

The earliest foundational work of the Mimāṃsā system is the ‘Mimāṃsā Sūtra’ authored by Jaimini, which offers a systematic inquiry into the nature of Dharma. This text is the largest among all philosophical sūtras, addressing around one thousand topics. It gives a detailed exposition on various sacrifices and their purposes, introduces the theory of apūrva (a concept relating to the unseen effects of ritual actions), and presents several philosophical propositions. The work comprises twelve chapters, with the first chapter holding significant philosophical importance as it explores the sources of knowledge and the validity of the Vedas. Jaimini’s ‘Mimāṃsā Sūtra’ is dated to the fourth century BCE, reflecting familiarity with both the Nyāya and Yoga Sūtras. Śabara is the author of the primary commentary on Jaimini’s work. Śabara’s commentary is foundational, serving as the main basis for all subsequent Mimāṃsā writings.

Prabhākara and Kumāṛila Bhaṭṭa, despite their differences, established the two main schools of Mimāṃsā, both of which largely depended on the work of Śabara. Prabhākara’s primary work, the ‘Bṛhatī,’ closely adhered to Śabara’s interpretations and was further elucidated by Śālikanātha, who also composed another important treatise, the ‘Prakaraṇapañcikā’. On the



► Prabhākara and Kumārila Bhaṭṭa are the major commentators on Mimāṃsā philosophy

other hand, Kumārila sometimes disagreed with Śabara's perspectives, showing a difference in their interpretations. Kumārila's extensive contributions to Mimāṃsā philosophy are organised into three parts such as 'Ślokavārttika,' 'Tantravārttika,' and 'Ṭuṭṭikā.' The 'Ślokavārttika' addresses various philosophical issues, such as the nature of dharma (duty), the authority of the Vedas, and the methods of interpreting Vedic texts. The 'Tantravārttika' deals with the practical aspects of ritual and dharma, examining the application of Vedic injunctions in various contexts and providing insights into the rituals prescribed by the Vedas. The 'Ṭuṭṭikā' focuses on specific and technical aspects of Mimāṃsā, offering clear explanations and additional arguments to support Kumārila's interpretations. This text is essential for understanding the logical structure of Mimāṃsā thought.

### 3.1.2 Pramāṇās in Pūrva Mimāṃsā

► Differences in number of pramāṇas accepted by scholars of Mimāṃsā philosophy

In Indian philosophy, the concept of pramāṇas, or means of knowledge, plays a crucial role in understanding how we acquire valid knowledge. Jaimini, ancient philosopher, recognises three pramāṇas: perception, inference, and testimony. Perception (Pratyakṣa) refers to direct sensory experience or observation, where knowledge is acquired through the immediate interaction of the senses with objects. Inference (Anumāna) involves logical reasoning based on observed patterns or premises, allowing us to draw conclusions about things not directly observed. Testimony (Śabda) is the knowledge derived from authoritative sources, such as scriptures or trustworthy individuals. Prabhākara acknowledges the three pramāṇas accepted by Jaimini and expands them by including two more: comparison and implication. Comparison (Upamāna) is the knowledge gained through analogy. Implication (Arthāpatti) is a form of presumptive reasoning where knowledge is derived from the contextual implication of certain facts.

► Anupalabdhi: the knowledge of non-existence

Kumārila, another important scholar of Mimāṃsā philosophy, further extends the list of pramāṇas by adding non-apprehension (Anupalabdhi). This pramāṇa involves the knowledge of non-existence. It provides a means of understanding the absence of an entity based on the lack of its expected presence. Prabhākara refuted *anupalabdhi* as an independent source of knowledge. In his opinion, what can be attained by the non-perception or *anupalabdhi* is possible to attain with

the perception. They also reject some epistemic means for instance, rumour (Aitihya) is rejected because the validity of the resulting cognition is uncertain without definite information about the trustworthiness of the source. Similarly, recollection (Smṛti) is excluded from the scope of pramāṇas since it only informs us of things previously perceived and does not provide new or current knowledge.

### 3.1.2.1 Perception or Pratyakṣa

In Mimāṃsā philosophy, perception is conceived as the direct apprehension that proceeds from the contact between the senses and their objects. Kumārila Bhaṭṭa explains perception as the capacity of the subject (the perceiver) to reveal the object through sense contact. He limits this perceptual capacity to sensible objects (objects that can be directly experienced through the senses). According to Kumārila, sense-contact cannot yield knowledge of suprasensible objects, which lie beyond the reach of direct sensory perception. Prabhākara on the other hand, offers a different account arguing that the senses apprehend not just mere objects but also substances, classes, and qualities. This means that perception involves recognising an object's various attributes, including its substance, class, and qualities. Prabhākara maintains that while perception involves these additional layers, it still fundamentally arises from sense-contact. Thus, both philosophers agree on the role of the senses in perception but differ on the extent and nature of what is perceived.

► The difference in conception of perception by Kumārila and Prabhākara

► Mimāṃsā emphasises indeterminate perception over determinate perception.

Mimāṃsā thinkers slightly deviate from the Nyāya theory of perception regarding the division of perception into determinate (savikalpaka) and indeterminate (nirvikalpaka) types. The Nyāya school views these as two stages in the perceptual process. They consider determinate perception, which involves the recognition and classification of an object, as the real or mature form of perception. Indeterminate perception, on the other hand, is seen as an earlier stage where the object is apprehended without the recognition of its specific qualities or its classification. Mimāṃsā philosophy, however, places more importance on indeterminate perception. Kumārila and Prabhākara both accept the validity of both determinate and indeterminate perception but differ in their interpretations. According to Kumārila, indeterminate perception apprehends the object itself without attributing any universal (sāmānya) or



particular (viśeṣa) qualities. This means that while these qualities are indeed present in the object, they are not recognised at this stage of perception. For Kumārila, indeterminate perception provides a raw, unanalysed apprehension of the object. Prabhākara, while largely agreeing with this view, suggests that indeterminate perception apprehends both the universal and particular qualities of the object but lacks a definite recognition of the class character of the object. In other words, it perceives the object and its qualities without categorising it into a specific class. Determinate perception, in contrast, involves the subject remembering other objects in the same class and taking into account the resemblances and differences, thus leading to a more comprehensive and classified understanding of the object.

### 3.1.2.2 Inference or Anumāna

Inference (anumāna) in Mimāṃsā philosophy is closely related with the Nyāya school's understanding but includes certain distinctions as interpreted by prominent Mimāṃsā thinkers Prabhākara and Kumārila. Like the Nyāya school, Mimāṃsā philosophy distinguishes between two types of inference, Svārthanumana and Parārthanumana. The former is the inference for oneself, used for personal reasoning and understanding, while the latter is the inference for others, where we need to convince another person. In Parārthanumana both philosophers accept the structure of inference involving three essential components. This structure contrasts with the five-member syllogism in Nyāya, which adds two more components upanaya (application) and nigamana (conclusion). The three-member syllogism accepted by Mimāṃsā philosophy includes,

► Mimāṃsā inference mirrors Nyāya but simplifies structure

**Pratijñā (Proposition):** The statement or assertion that needs to be proved.

**Hetu (Reason):** The major premise that states the general rule along with an instance. This includes the reason that connects the proposition to the evidence.

**Udāharāṇa (Example):** The minor premise that provides a specific instance to illustrate the general rule, thereby supporting the proposition.

One of the important discussions in Mimāṃsā philosophy

► Prabhākara and Kumārila differs on inferential novelty

regarding inference is related with the novelty of inferential knowledge, where Prabhākara and Kumārila give differing viewpoints. Prabhākara does not recognise novelty in inferential knowledge. According to him, inference involves the recognition of a previously known universal relationship (vyāpti) and applies this relationship to things already known. In other words, inferential knowledge is not new but rather a reapplication of known relations to specific instances. For Prabhākara, the process of inference is about reaffirming existing knowledge rather than generating novel insights. In contrast, Kumārila considers novelty an essential attribute of inferential knowledge. While he acknowledges that the universal relationship involved in inference is previously known, he argues that the knowledge derived from the inference itself carries the freshness of new information. For Kumārila, each act of inference, even though it builds on known universal relations, results in new and distinct knowledge about a specific instance. This aspect of novelty makes inferential knowledge valuable and significant in its own right.

### 3.1.2.3 Comparison or Upamāna

► Nyāya and Mimāṃsā differ on the comparison

In Nyāya philosophy, upamāna is conceptualised as a form of knowledge arising from comparison between a word and the object it denotes. An authoritative figure describes an unknown object, drawing parallels with a known object. Then, when an individual encounters an unknown object and perceives its similarities with the known object described by the authority, they are able to draw conclusions regarding its classification or category. This comparison is grounded in the recognition of resemblance or similarity between the word and its referent. Mimāṃsā philosophy deviates from the Nyāya conception of upamāna. While Nyāya emphasises the relationship between a word and its object, Mimāṃsā focuses on the comparison between two perceived objects, one of which is remembered based on similarity. In Mimāṃsā, comparison leads to the knowledge of a remembered object in connection with a perceived one. Suppose a person sees a wild cow and recalls a remembered cow based on similarity. The resemblance between the perceived wild cow and the remembered domesticated cow is what facilitates this cognitive process. This recognition is not based on linguistic association, as in Nyāya, but rather on the perceived resemblance between the two objects.



### 3.1.2.4 Verbal Testimony or Śabda

In Mimāṃsā philosophy, śabdapramāṇa, or verbal testimony, holds the highest importance among the other means of knowledge (pramāṇas). Śabda is defined as the knowledge produced by understanding the meanings of words. It is considered a valid source of knowledge when the words are correctly interpreted and understood in their proper context. Kumāriḷa Bhaṭṭa categorises testimony into two types: personal (pauruṣeya) and impersonal (apauruṣeya). Personal testimony comes from trustworthy individuals (āptavākya). Its validity is not inherent; instead, it is inferred from the reliable character of the person providing the testimony. Personal testimony is susceptible to doubt, error, and contradiction, as it relies on human sources that can be fallible. On the other hand, impersonal testimony refers specifically to the testimony of the Vedas (Vedavākya). Unlike personal testimony, Vedic testimony is considered valid in itself, possessing intrinsic validity. Prabhākara takes a different approach on testimony. He recognises only Vedic testimony as true and reduces human testimony to inference. For Prabhākara, the validity of human testimony depends on the inferred trustworthiness of the person delivering it, thus it does not stand as an independent source of knowledge.

► Personal from trustworthy individuals and impersonal from the testimony of the Vedas

Prabhākara classifies Vedic statements into two main types: siddhārtha vākya (statements of existent objects) and vidhāyaka vākya (injunctive statements). Siddhārtha vākya refers to declarative statements that describe existing states of affairs or facts. These statements provide information about the world, presenting knowledge that is seemingly factual and descriptive. Vidhāyaka vākya, on the other hand, consists of injunctions that command certain actions or prohibit others. These statements are central to the Mimāṃsā interpretation of the Vedas, as they provide direct guidance on what ought to be done to achieve dharma. Prabhākara places a strong emphasis on the primacy of these injunctive statements. He argues that the ultimate purpose of the Vedas is to prescribe actions that lead to favourable outcomes in both the worldly and transcendental realms. According to him, the Vedic injunctions are not only authoritative but also essential for guiding human behaviour and ensuring the proper performance of rituals that maintain cosmic order. Kumāriḷa Bhaṭṭa agrees with Prabhākara on the distinction between Siddhartha vākya and vidhāyaka vākya in the Vedas but diverges in his interpretation of their signif-

► The statements of existent objects and injunctive statements

icance. Kumārila acknowledges both types of statements but restricts the primary scope of the Vedas to injunctive propositions. According to Kumārila, the Vedas primarily deal with injunctions, which command actions that lead to merit (punya) if followed and demerit (pāpa) if neglected.

### 3.1.2.5 Implication or Arthāpatti

Where the perception of a thing (artha) cannot be explained without the assumption of another thing, this assumption is a case of arthāpatti, or implication. Both Kumārila and Prabhākara acknowledge arthāpatti as a valid source of knowledge. Mimāṃsākas assert that arthāpatti serves as a pramāṇa, a means of valid cognition specifically employed to resolve inconsistencies in perceived facts. This cognitive tool operates in scenarios where the perception of a particular event or circumstance cannot be logically explained without assuming the existence of another related event or circumstance. Prabhākara interprets arthāpatti as a pramāṇa aimed at eliminating doubt from one's understanding. In his view, when faced with conflicting or confusing observations, arthāpatti serves as a method to clarify knowledge, removing any uncertainties or ambiguities. Contrastingly, Kumārila regards arthāpatti as a means to reconcile inconsistencies between two established facts. For Kumārila, this cognitive process is not merely about dismissing doubt but rather about harmonising conflicting pieces of information to arrive at a coherent understanding of a situation. Unless we are certain that a person is alive and he is not at home, we cannot presume that he is somewhere else.

► Arthāpatti resolves conflicting observations and inconsistencies

In Nyāya philosophy, however, arthāpatti is not recognised as an independent pramāṇa. Instead, Nyāya thinkers assimilate it into the category of inference (anumāna), considering it as a specialised form of inferential reasoning rather than a distinct source of knowledge. A classic example given by Mimāṃsā philosophy to illustrate the application of arthāpatti is the scenario of Devadatta being described as fat despite his supposed habit of not eating during the day. Here, the perceived contradiction between Devadatta's fatness and his daytime fasting is reconciled through the logical assumption that he must be consuming food at night. This inference bridges the gap between the observed facts, providing a reasonable explanation for Devadatta's weight without compromising the reliability of the known information regarding his dietary habits.

► The classical example of Arthāpatti



### 3.1.2.6 Non-apprehension or Anupalabdhi

► Knowledge concerning the non-existence of an entity

In Kumāriḷa Bhāṭṭa's philosophical framework, anupalabdhi, or non-apprehension, holds a position of supreme importance. He emphasises that immediate knowledge concerning the non-existence of an entity is attainable through anupalabdhi. He illustrates this concept with the example of perceiving the absence of a jar on earth. According to Kumāriḷa, the non-existence of the jar is apprehended through the absence of its perception. When an individual asserts the absence of a jar in a specific location, it leads to the cognition of the jar's non-existence, a phenomenon not accessible through perception alone. Kumāriḷa further states that the perception of an empty space triggers the recollection of the absent jar, facilitating the cognition of its non-existence. He stresses the distinction between non-apprehension and perception, arguing that perception operates solely through the contact between the senses and objects, whereas there is no tangible entity with which the senses could establish contact to perceive non-existence. In contrast, both Prabhākara and Nyāya schools do not accord anupalabdhi the status of an independent pramāṇa (source of knowledge). Prabhākara posits that the absence of an object is inferred from the non-perception of something that would have been perceived had it been present. According to him, non-apprehension serves as a basis for inference rather than constituting a distinct means of knowledge acquisition. Similarly, Nyāya philosophy categorises anupalabdhi either as a form of perception or as a subset of inference, thereby reducing it within existing epistemological frameworks.

## Summarized Overview

**M**imāṃsā philosophy, one of the six classical schools of Indian philosophy, focuses on the interpretation of the Vedas, particularly the ritualistic and dharma aspects. Founded by Jaimini, it aims to provide a systematic exposition of Vedic texts to establish the authority of Vedic rituals as means to achieve dharma (righteousness). Mimāṃsā emphasises the eternality and self-evident nature of the Vedas, viewing them as the ultimate source of knowledge and guiding human actions through prescriptive and prohibitive injunctions. The philosophy stresses the importance of rituals in maintaining the cosmic order and achieving liberation. The foundational text of Mimāṃsā philosophy is the ‘Mimāṃsā Sūtras’ by Jaimini, which lays out the principles of ritual interpretation and duties. The ‘Śabara Bhāṣya,’ a comprehensive commentary by Śabara, further explains Jaimini’s sūtras, providing detailed explanations and addressing interpretative issues. Kumārila Bhāṭṭa’s ‘Tantravārttika’ and Prabhākara’s ‘Bṛhatī’ are significant later works on Mimāṃsā doctrines.

In Pūrva Mimāṃsā, pramāṇas are means of valid knowledge. The founder Jaimini accepts three pramāṇas: perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāna), and testimony (śabda). Prabhākara added two more comparison (upamāna), postulation (arthāpatti) and Kumārila added one non-apprehension (anupalabdhi). Perception (pratyakṣa) is the direct knowledge through sensory experience but inference (anumāna), on the other hand, is the knowledge derived from logical reasoning based on observation; comparison (upamāna) is the knowledge gained through analogy or similarity whereas testimony (śabda) is the knowledge based on authoritative verbal testimony, particularly the Vedas; postulation (arthāpatti) is the knowledge obtained by assuming a necessary fact to explain an observed inconsistency while non-apprehension (anupalabdhi) is the knowledge of non-existence derived from the absence of perception. Kumārila Bhāṭṭa and Prabhākara differ in their interpretations of these pramāṇas. These differences show the sophisticated nature of Mimāṃsā epistemology.

## Self-Assessment

1. Explain the historical context in which Mimāṃsā philosophy developed.
2. Who are the key authors and commentators associated with Mimāṃsā literature?
3. List and describe the pramāṇas accepted in Pūrva Mimāṃsā.
4. Explain the role of arthāpatti (postulation) in Mimāṃsā with an example.
5. What is anupalabdhi (non-apprehension) according to Kumārila Bhāṭṭa, and how does it function as a pramāṇa?



## Assignments

1. Give an exposition on the origin and development of Mimāṃsā philosophy. Discuss its primary objectives and its consequence in the context of Indian philosophical traditions.
2. Explain the concept of pramāṇa in Pūrva Mimāṃsā. Examine the different pramāṇas accepted in Pūrva Mimāṃsā in comparison with Nyāya
3. How Mimāṃsā philosophy used arthāpatti as a pramāṇa to resolve inconsistencies in perceived facts.
4. Discuss the significance of anupalabdhi (non-apprehension) in the philosophy of Kumārila Bhāṭṭa. How does it differ from perception and inference?

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## Suggested Reading

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## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU



## UNIT 2

# Validity and Invalidity of Knowledge in Mimāṃsā Philosophy

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ understand the concept of intrinsic validity (Svatahprāmānyavāda) of knowledge in Mimāṃsā philosophy
- ▶ differentiate between Mimāṃsā's intrinsic validity and Nyāya's extrinsic validity of knowledge
- ▶ comprehend the four criteria for valid knowledge in Mimāṃsā philosophy
- ▶ understand Prabhākara and Kumārila's theories of knowledge within Mimāṃsā philosophy
- ▶ differentiate between Prabhākara and Kumārila's theories of error

### Background

Indian philosophical thought developed through various schools, each offering distinct perspectives on the validity and invalidity of knowledge. These schools mainly confronted questions about how we acquire knowledge and determine its truthfulness within the context of human existence and spiritual inquiry. In the previous blocks we have already studied some of the schools of the earliest philosophical systems in which Nyāya clearly explained what constitutes valid knowledge, stressing logical coherence and empirical verification as essential standards. Vaiśeṣika, closely related to Nyāya, focused on the analysis of substances and their qualities, contributing to epistemological discourse by defining specific categories of valid knowledge based on perceptual and inferential processes. Sāṅkhya philosophy explored the dualistic nature of reality, distinguishing between consciousness (puruṣa) and material nature (prakṛti). In Sāṅkhya, valid knowledge arose from discerning the pure consciousness separate from the changing material world. Advaita Vedānta, influenced by Upanishadic teachings, posited the ultimate validity of knowledge attained through the realisation

of the non-dual nature of Brahman and the individual self (Ātman). This perspective emphasised the direct experience (anubhava) of spiritual truths as the highest form of valid knowledge, transcending conventional epistemological frameworks. These schools provided different approaches to understanding reality, consciousness, and the human quest for truth, influencing philosophical discourse for centuries to come.

## Keywords

Validity, Invalidity, Svatahprāmānyavāda, Paratahprāmānyavāda, Akhyāti, Tri-putīsamvit

## Discussion

► Pramāṇa acquires new knowledge about unknown things

In Mimāṃsā philosophy, pramāṇa is considered as the method or means through which we acquire new knowledge. For pramāṇa to be effective, it must help us gain knowledge about things we have not yet learned. If we already know something, there is no need to seek knowledge about it again. Therefore, the focus of pramāṇa is to discover and understand things that are not already known. In the previous unit we have already discussed pramāṇas accepted by Mimāṃsā thinkers and also exposed their difference in approach compared to Nyaya Philosophy. The following discussion will explore the validity and invalidity of knowledge in Mimāṃsā philosophy focusing on the ideas of Prabhākara and Kumārila the two major scholars of this tradition.

### 3.2.1 Debate between Mimāṃsā and Nyāya

► Extrinsic validity of knowledge

The debate between the Mimāṃsā and Nyāya schools of philosophy on the validity of knowledge is a classic one. Nyāya philosophers advocate the theory of extrinsic validity of knowledge, known as paratahprāmānyavāda. This theory posits that knowledge is initially neutral. It is neither valid nor invalid on its own. The validity or invalidity of knowledge is determined only after the knowledge has arisen, based on its results and correspondence with reality. In other words, validity and invalidity are not inherent properties of knowledge but are instead determined by external conditions. According to



Nyāya philosophy, the validity of knowledge is tested through its practical outcomes. If knowledge leads to successful and practical results, it is considered valid; if it fails to do so, it is considered as invalid. Validity results from the presence of excellence (guṇa) in the causes of knowledge, while invalidity arises from defects (doṣa) in these causes. Thus, knowledge initially arises in a neutral state and is later assessed for validity based on external criteria.

► Intrinsic validity of knowledge

While Mimāṃsā philosophers agree with Nyāya regarding the extrinsic nature of invalidity (aprāmānya), they strongly oppose the notion of extrinsic validity. They present its perspective on knowledge through the theory of Svataḥprāmāṇyavāda - the theory of self-validity or intrinsic validity of knowledge. Mimāṃsā argues that all knowledge is intrinsically valid. If validity, like invalidity, depended on external conditions, it would be impossible to establish any knowledge as valid. Mimāṃsā philosophers assert that neutral knowledge, a state where knowledge is neither valid nor invalid, is an impossibility. In our experience, knowledge is always either valid or invalid; there is no third, neutral option. The view that knowledge initially lacks logical value is absurd because it negates the very nature of knowledge. Mimāṃsā philosophers argue that the conditions Nyāya considers external such as excellence, fruitful activity, and correspondence are actually intrinsic to the causes of valid knowledge. Excellence is essentially freedom from defects while fruitful activity indicates the absence of contradiction, and correspondence means accurate representation of the object. These conditions are not external tests but essential prerequisites for the generation of valid knowledge. When these conditions are met, knowledge naturally arises as valid, along with the belief in its validity. If validity relied on external factors such as excellence, correspondence, or fruitful activity, it would lead to an infinite regress. Each piece of knowledge validating another would require further validation, and so on indefinitely, making the validation process impossible to complete.

Imagine a morning walk scenario, in which you are in a park early in the morning for a walk and you hear a melodious sound of a bird singing. This experience of sound provides you with the knowledge that a bird is singing. According to Mimāṃsā, this knowledge is valid as soon as it arises because it comes directly from your sensory perception, which is functioning properly without any defects or contradictions.

► Validity of knowledge arises immediately from perfect sensory perception

There is no need for further validation to confirm this knowledge. However, suppose later you discover that the sound you heard was actually a recording being played through a hidden speaker. This new information would contradict your initial knowledge and invalidate it. But until such a contradiction is encountered, your original perception of the bird singing is considered intrinsically valid. This example highlights the Mimāṃsā principle that knowledge is supposed to be valid from the birth, based on the reliability of our immediate sensory experiences, as long as they are free from errors and contradictions.

► Cognition is valid by its very nature; error is considered exceptional

Prabhākara and Kumāriḷa, two major thinkers in the Mimāṃsā tradition, both advocate for this intrinsic validity. Prabhākara argues that all forms of cognition are valid by their very nature. If a cognition is found to be invalid, it is because it is not related with the true nature of its object. Kumāriḷa agrees with this conception of knowledge, stating that the essence of valid knowledge lies in its ability to correctly apprehend an object. Invalidity, then, arises when there is a difference between the perception and the actual nature of the object. Although we infer the invalidity of certain knowledge, the primary assumption is that knowledge is valid. This intrinsic validity does not rely on inference. Within Mimāṃsā philosophy, truth is seen as the norm, and error as the exception. Belief in the validity of our knowledge is natural, while disbelief is not. This perspective on self-validity applies to both the generation of knowledge (uṭpatti) and its recognition (jñāpti).

### 3.2.2 Conditions for Validity

► Mimāṃsā philosophy sets four conditions for valid knowledge

The Mimāṃsā philosophy gives four conditions for determining the validity of knowledge. These four conditions ensure that knowledge is reliable and accurate, eliminating any potential errors or defects. The first criterion focuses on the origins of knowledge. For knowledge to be valid, it must arise from causes that are free from defects (Kāraṇadoṣrahita). If the cause of knowledge is flawed, then the knowledge itself will be defective. Therefore, valid knowledge must be derived from a sound and reliable source. This principle ensures that the foundation of knowledge is solid and trustworthy. The second condition requires that valid knowledge must be free from contradictions (Bādhakajñānahita). Logically, a statement and its negation cannot both be true at the same time. Therefore, for knowledge to be valid, it must not contain any



internal contradictions. This means that the knowledge must be coherent and logically consistent, without any conflicting information.

► Knowledge must be Aṅgrhītagrāhi and yathārtha

The third criterion demands that knowledge must bring something new, different from what is already there (Aṅgrhītagrāhi). According to Mimāṃsā philosophy, valid knowledge cannot be merely a repetition of what is already known. This is why memory, which simply recalls past experiences, is not considered a valid means of knowledge. For knowledge to be valid, it must present new insights or information. The final condition is that knowledge must accurately represent the objects it refers to (Yathārtha). This means that the knowledge must correctly show the reality of the object it describes. If the representation is false or misleading, then the knowledge cannot be considered valid. Accurate representation ensures that knowledge is a true reflection of reality.

### 3.2.3 Prabhākara's Theory of Knowledge

► Awareness of the knower, known, and knowledge in every cognition

Prabhākara is a supporter of tripuṭīsamvit which states that the knower, the known, and the knowledge are all presented simultaneously in every act of cognition. This means that in any act of knowing, all three elements, the self (the knower), the object (the known), and the awareness (the knowledge) are inherently linked and revealed together. In other words, when we have a thought 'I know this', we experience three components: the subject, the object, and the conscious awareness. Prabhākara states that whenever you learn or understand something, you are also aware of yourself doing it. For instance, when you are reading an Indian philosophy book, you are aware of the book and its contents, and at the same time, you are aware that you are the one reading it. This self-awareness is a constant function of your mind. However, he also points out that the knowledge of the object may not always be direct like the knowledge of the subject. For instance, when we make an inference, the object is not directly in front of us. Even though the object is not directly seen in this case, our awareness of knowing it is clear. This means that while the object might not be directly presented, our own act of knowing is something we are directly aware of.

Prabhākara's concept of cognition is self-illuminated. When we know something, the act of knowing does not need external validation. It is like a light shining on its own, revealing what-

► Cognition is self-illuminating and inherently self-aware

ever is within its reach. When we comprehend something, that act of cognition is inherently clear and self-evident. Just as a light bulb does not need another light to see itself, cognition does not need another process to know itself. Similarly, cognition does not need another process to know itself. If cognition needed another process, it would lead to infinite regress. Each cognition would need another cognition to perceive it endlessly. Prabhākara believes knowing and knowing that we know are inseparable. It is impossible to have knowledge without being aware of it.

► Knowledge is self-evident yet reflects external interactions

Considering knowledge as self-luminous, Prabhakara faces the risk of leading to subjectivism which states that our knowledge and understanding are based entirely on our personal experiences and perceptions. If we take this idea too far, we might start to question whether anything exists outside of our own minds. For instance, if I know something about a tree, according to this view, what is truly certain is my knowledge of the tree, not necessarily the tree itself. Prabhakara tries to address this by arguing that even though our cognitions are self-evident, they still reflect interactions between our minds and the real world, thus acknowledging the existence of objects outside our own consciousness. According to him, the self-illuminated cognitions are also inferred and thus conclude that while cognitions are self-evident, their existence is inferred through the interaction of the mind and the self, which produces conscious awareness. For example, when you read a book, you are aware of the words and their meanings. The cognition of reading and understanding the text is not something you can see. You know it is happening because you are processing the information and understanding the content. The book's words and their meanings are directly perceived, but the act of reading is inferred through your awareness of the text.

► The non-discrimination between what is perceived and remembered

### 3.2.4 Prabhākara's Theory of Error

Prabhākara argues that what we often call 'false knowledge' (viparyaya) is not actually false. In his philosophy, all cognition is self-luminous (svaprakāsha) and therefore true (yathārtha). This means that every act of knowing is inherently valid and true in its own context. However, this raises a critical question: if all knowledge is self-valid, how can error arise? Imagine you see a shiny object on the ground and think, 'This is silver.' Later, you pick it up and realise it is actually a piece



of shell. According to Prabhākara, the initial cognition ‘This is silver’ is not erroneous in itself. The error arises because of a failure to distinguish between the actual object (the shell) and the idea or memory of silver. This mix-up happens because we combine the perceived element with the remembered element into one mental impression. The mistake occurs because we do not properly differentiate between what is given (the shell) and what is remembered (the silver). This non-discrimination is called akhyāti. The perceived element ‘the shell’ and the remembered element ‘silver’ are both true individually. However, the error lies in not distinguishing them as separate. The similarity between the shell and silver causes the memory of silver, leading to the confusion. The confusion leads to action, like picking up the shell thinking it is silver.

► Error is not a case of misapprehension but of non-apprehension

Prabhākara, adhering strictly to his view of the intrinsic validity of knowledge, does not admit the concept of error in the logical sense. He asserts that all knowledge is valid in itself. According to him, to experience something is always to experience it validly. Therefore, what we commonly call an error is actually a partial truth or imperfect knowledge. All knowledge, as far as it goes, is valid, though it may not be perfect. Imperfect knowledge is simply incomplete; it does not misrepresent its object but merely fails to apprehend it fully. Thus, for Prabhākara, error is not a case of misapprehension but of non-apprehension. It is about not fully grasping the object rather than misrepresenting it.

► Error is not false knowledge but incomplete knowledge

Let us describe the same with another example, while you are walking you see something long and thin on the ground and instantly think, ‘It is a snake’ you freeze in fear, only to realise a moment later that it is just a piece of rope. According to Prabhākara, your initial thought, ‘It is a snake,’ is not entirely wrong. In this situation, the rope is what you are actually seeing in the dim light. This is the perceived element. The snake, however, is something which comes from your memory, a remembered element. Your mind combines these two elements into one perception due to the poor lighting and the similarity in shape between the rope and a snake. The rope (perceived) and the snake (remembered) are both valid in their own contexts. The error happens because you did not distinguish correctly between what is in front of you (the rope) and what your mind recalls (the snake). This mix-up is what Prabhākara calls akhyāti, or non-discrimination. Prabhākara argues that this kind of error is not about having false knowledge but about having incomplete knowledge.

### 3.2.5 Kumārila Bhaṭṭa's Theory of Knowledge

► Kumārila attributes 'knownness' - a new property to knowledge

Kumārila Bhaṭṭa holds that knowledge cannot know itself directly. This means that when you know something, the knowledge you have cannot be the object of itself. Kumārila believes that the awareness of the awareness episode is not perceptual. Instead, the process involves inferring awareness based on changes in the object. When we become aware of an object, the object gains a new characteristic. This characteristic is called 'knownness' or 'apprehended-ness,' which means the object is now known. For example, if you see a tree, your knowledge of the tree is about the tree, not about the act of knowing. You do not directly see the act of knowing. Instead, you infer that you know the tree because the tree has the property of 'knownness.' Kumārila says that this 'knownness' is a new property the tree gains when you see it. For him, knowing is a process or activity of the self. This process gives the object a new property called 'manifestedness' or 'knownness.' This means the tree is not just a tree anymore; it is now a 'known tree.'

► Cognition is inferred from the relationship between the knower and the known

Every act of cognition establishes a relationship between the perceiver (you) and the perceived (the tree). This relationship implies that the perceiver is actively engaged in the process of knowing. The presence of this relationship allows us to infer that cognition has taken place. The cognition itself is inferred from the relationship between the knower (you) and the known (the tree). This relationship is understood through internal perception, which is the mind's ability to perceive itself. Without this mediating factor, the self (you) could not relate to the object (the tree). Thus, from the specific relation involved in knowledge between the subject (you) and the object (the tree), the existence of cognition is inferred. For instance, when you hear music, you recognise it as music. The music now has the quality of being heard. You do not directly perceive your hearing process. From the understanding that music is now known, you infer hearing has occurred. Kumārila explains that awareness is known through inference rather than direct perception. This process helps us to recognise that while we cannot directly perceive our awareness, we can infer it.

According to Kumārila, the relationship between consciousness and its object cannot be shown by the same cognition that shows the object. This is because the relationship



► The relationship between consciousness and its object cannot be shown by the same cognition

does not exist at the exact moment the cognition is created. When you have a thought or perception, it immediately shows you the object, like a tree or a book. The connection between your mind and the object is not part of that first moment of cognition. Since cognition happens in an instant, it cannot first show the object and then show how it is connected to your mind. This instant nature of cognition means it only has time to show the object itself, not the relationship. Let us consider the above example again, when you see a tree, your immediate thought is of the tree itself. You see its shape, colour, and size. Your mind understands ‘there is a tree,’ but it does not, at that same moment, understand ‘my mind is aware of the tree.’ The awareness of the tree happens instantly. The relationship between your mind and the tree cannot be shown by the same instant awareness. This relationship would need a different thought or perception to be understood.

► Cognitions are imperceptible but capable of manifesting their objects

Followers of Kumārila argue that the relationship between the self and the object is an object of internal perception. This internal perception allows us to recognise the connection between our awareness and the object of our awareness, confirming the presence of the cognitive process. The existence of cognition is demonstrated by the unique impact it has on its object. This notion must be acknowledged even by those who believe that the cognisor, the cognised object, and the cognition itself are all manifested by consciousness. Kumārila’s followers argue that if cognition were considered perceptible, it would require another cognition to perceive it, leading to an infinite regress. Therefore, they regard cognitions as imperceptible but capable of manifesting their objects. According to the Mimāṃsākas, knowledge is intrinsically valid. Kumārila states that all sources of right knowledge possess intrinsic validity because a power that does not exist independently cannot be brought into being by another. Although knowledge may be mediated by the senses, inferential marks, and other means, it inherently reveals objects and asserts its own validity. If we were to wait to verify the purity of the causes, we would need another cognition, leading to an infinite regress.

Nyāya Vaiśeṣika philosophers disagree with Kumārila. They argue that knowledge cannot change or transform its object. For example, knowing a tree does not change the tree in any way. Kumārila, however, insists that by knowing an object, it does change. It becomes a ‘known object’ with the property of ‘knownness.’ He viewed knowledge as supersen-

► The difference between Nyāya Vaiśeṣika and Kumāriila

sible and therefore always inferred; consequently, it cannot be an object of introspection. A cognition on his view is always known only by an inference which uses knownness as a reason. However, no matter whether the truth of a cognition is apprehended by a mental perception or anuvyavasāya or whether it is inferred on the ground of knownness of the object which serves as a mark, truth is not apprehended by the knowledge to which that truth belongs. Kumāriila's view starts with the idea that knowledge is not something we can sense directly. We cannot directly look at our minds and see knowledge. Instead, we infer that we have knowledge based on a property called 'knownness' in the objects we know. This means when you see a tree and know it, you do not see the knowledge itself but see the tree's 'knownness,' which tells you that you know the tree. Knowledge is always known through this process of inference. Whether you understand the truth of something directly with your mind or infer it from the object's knownness, the truth itself is not directly shown by the knowledge you have. The knowledge helps you understand the truth, but you do not directly see the truth in the knowledge.

### 3.2.6 Kumāriila Bhaṭṭa's Theory of Error

► Kumāriila and Prabhākara differ in understanding error

Kumāriila agrees with Prabhākara that knowledge is valid by itself. This means that when we know something, the knowledge we have is considered true without having further proof. For example, when you see a tree, your knowledge of the tree is accepted as valid without needing another piece of knowledge to confirm it. While both Kumāriila and Prabhākara see knowledge as intrinsically valid, they differ in how they understand error. Prabhākara believes error is simply a failure to notice something correctly. For instance, if you see a rope in dim light and think it is a snake, Prabhākara would say you failed to see the rope clearly. Kumāriila, however, believes error is more than just a failure to notice. He thinks it is a mistake in understanding. So, in the same example, Kumāriila would say you did not just fail to see the rope; you actually misinterpreted the rope as a snake.

Kumāriila Bhaṭṭa's theory of error is known as Viparīta-Khyāti (Misapprehension). He believes that error is not just failing to notice something but actively misinterpreting it. When we make an error, it is not a combination of two incomplete pieces of knowledge but a single mistaken belief. For example, if you think a mirage in the desert is water, you



► Errors can occur by omission and by commission

are not combining two wrong ideas; you are having one incorrect understanding that the mirage is water. In his opinion, errors can occur by omission (leaving something out) and by commission (adding something wrong). For example, when someone mistakenly thinks a shell is silver, they perceive the shell but remember silver because both have similar qualities like whiteness and brightness. Kumārila says that this is not just failing to distinguish between the shell and silver but actually combining these perceptions wrongly. In the error of seeing a shell as silver, two elements are involved: the shell is seen as something that misses its shell-like quality, and silver is remembered only as 'silver,' missing its separate existence.

► Error is a single unitary cognition

Kumārila argues that error happens because of a positive wrong synthesis. This means the mind wrongly combines the perceived and remembered elements into one incorrect understanding. This synthesis is what makes the error a single unitary cognition. When someone mistakes a shell for silver, the error is not just about not seeing the shell correctly. The person actively misperceives the shell as silver. This misapprehension comes from some defect in the causes of knowledge, like poor lighting or a faulty memory. Once the error is realised, a new, correcting knowledge sets aside the mistaken belief. Kumārila holds that even though an error is wrong, it is still valid as knowledge when experienced. The intrinsic validity of this erroneous knowledge can be questioned by external factors, like a clearer perception or a logical contradiction. Kumārila acknowledges that error has a subjective or mental component. When error is seen as misapprehension, it includes a subjective element because it is about how the mind processes and combines perceptions and memories.

## Summarized Overview

Mimāṃsā and Nyāya are two schools of Indian philosophy with different views on knowledge and error. Mimāṃsā focuses on the intrinsic validity of knowledge, meaning knowledge is valid by itself without needing external validation. Nyāya requires knowledge to be validated by external means, like perception or inference. Prabhākara, a Mimāṃsā philosopher, believes that knowledge is self-validating and immediately known to be true. He views error as a failure to notice something correctly (non-apprehension) rather than actively misinterpreting. Kumārila Bhaṭṭa agrees with the intrinsic validity of knowledge but distinguishes between truth and error. He sees knowledge as a process that gives an object a new property called 'knownness,' meaning the object is recognised as known. Unlike Prabhākara, Kumārila believes error involves active misinterpretation (misapprehension). For example, mistaking a shell for silver combines the perception of the shell with the memory of silver, creating a single incorrect belief. He acknowledges that errors can be corrected by acquiring accurate knowledge.

## Self-Assessment

1. How does Mimāṃsā philosophy define intrinsic validity of knowledge?
2. Explain Prabhākara's view on how knowledge is validated.
3. How does Prabhākara distinguish between knowledge and error?
4. According to Prabhākara, what causes error in perception?
5. How does Kumārila Bhaṭṭa explain the process of knowledge gaining the property of 'knownness'?
6. What is the key difference between Prabhākara's and Kumārila Bhaṭṭa's theories of error?
7. How does Kumārila Bhaṭṭa define error in the context of misapprehension?



## Assignments

1. Describe the main points of agreement and disagreement between Mimāṃsā and Nyāya philosophers on the validity of knowledge.
2. Explain the conditions for the validity of knowledge in Mimāṃsā philosophy. Do you really feel that these conditions are enough for attaining valid knowledge.
3. Outline Prabhākara's and Kumārila's theory of knowledge and its key components. Discuss the merit and demerits of both theories
4. Compare and contrast Prabhākara's and Kumārila Bhaṭṭa's views on the nature of error.

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## Suggested Reading

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## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU



## UNIT 3

# Ethics of Mimāṃsā

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ explain the concept of Dharma and its ethical meaning in Mimāṃsā
- ▶ define Apūrva and discuss its role in connecting actions to their outcomes
- ▶ describe the Mimāṃsā perspective on Moksha and its means of attainment
- ▶ discuss the Mimāṃsā view on the existence and role of God in ethics

### Background

Ethical teachings in Indian philosophy are often centred on the Puruṣārthas; the four goals of life. They are dharma (moral and ethical duties), artha (wealth and prosperity), kāma (pleasure and desires), and moksha (liberation from the cycle of birth and death). Dharma represents moral and ethical duties, guiding individuals in their responsibilities towards themselves, their families, society, and the universe. It includes duties such as honesty, non-violence, and truthfulness. Artha refers to wealth and prosperity, involving the material success and financial stability. It is essential for sustaining life and fulfilling responsibilities. Kāma includes the physical and emotional pleasures adding love and companionship to life. This goal encourages individuals to seek joy and satisfaction while maintaining balance with the other goals.

Moksha is the final goal that liberates one from the cycle of birth and death. It represents the ultimate spiritual aim of life. The way to achieve moksha is through self-realisation and detachment from material possessions and desires. Attaining moksha brings freedom from reincarnation and union with the divine. These four goals are interrelated and meant to bring a balance in life. Dharma provides the ethical foundation for artha and kāma, making sure that material success and pleasure are sought righteously. Moksha transcends the temporal aspects of life, guiding individuals towards spiritual fulfilment. Among the four Puruṣārthas, Mimāṃsā philosophy places a strong emphasis on dharma. Mimāṃsā's emphasis on rituals and actions aligns with

the broader Indian ethical principle of karma. However, its detailed focus on Vedic rituals sets it apart from schools that emphasise meditation, knowledge, or devotion. By interpreting dharma through Vedic rituals, Mimāṃsā helps maintain social and cosmic order. It provides a structured approach to fulfilling one's duties as prescribed by the Vedas.

## Keywords

Dharma, Obligatory Action, Optional Action, Prohibited Action, Apūrva, Moksha

## Discussion

► Importance of Vedic rituals in Mimāṃsā philosophy

Ethics in Mimāṃsā Philosophy is based on the analysis of Vedic texts. Mimāṃsā philosophy believes that the Vedas are eternal and authoritative, providing complete guidance for ethical behaviour and moral conduct. Scholars in this school have faith in the Vedic teachings that provide all necessary knowledge for living a righteous life. They use various methods to understand ethical guidelines in Vedas, examining the context and purpose of Vedic passages to resolve any contradictions. Mimāṃsā scholars have methods for interpreting the Vedas to ensure that their teachings are applied correctly in daily life. By following the teachings of the Vedas, individuals can live a harmonious and righteous life. The Vedas prescribe many rituals and ceremonies, and Mimāṃsā philosophy teaches that these rituals are essential for maintaining order and the well-being of individuals. Ethical behaviour, according to Mimāṃsā, is closely linked to the correct performance of these rituals. These rituals are believed to bring spiritual and material benefits not just for individual benefit but for the welfare of society.

### 3.3.1 Dharma

► Dharma is a command or injunction

Mimāṃsā philosophy begins the discussion of ethics by explaining the concept of dharma. Dharma according to them is a way of right living. Jaimini defines dharma as an ordinance or command. Codanā or injunction, is the sign of dharma. It is similar to how laws are defined by jurists. According to the scholar Śābara, injunction refers to statements that drive people to act. This implies that the source of duties is external, revealed by a power outside ourselves. The goal of dharma is happiness, as acknowledged by the Pūrva Mimāṃsā



school. Actions that cause loss or pain are not considered dharma. Dharma leads to happiness by following prescribed actions. Ignoring these commands results in sorrows and potential suffering. To put it in a simple language, if we follow dharma, we perform actions that benefit us and others, leading to a happier and more fulfilling life. If we disregard dharma, we face the consequences of unhappiness and suffering. Thus, dharma guides us towards a life of right actions, ensuring our well-being in the future. Practicing dharma means aligning our actions with what is commanded and finding harmony between our inner desires and external world.

In Mimāṃsā philosophy, actions are divided into three categories. They are obligatory, optional, and prohibited:

► Actions should be performed

**Obligatory actions:** They must be performed. If you do not perform them, it results in sin, but doing them does not bring any special reward. Obligatory actions are further divided into two types. The first type is daily obligatory actions, like daily prayers. The second type is occasional obligatory actions, which must be performed on specific occasions, such as certain rituals during festivals.

► Actions may or may not be performed

**Optional actions:** They are those that are not obligatory but are performed for achieving specific desires or benefits. They may or may not be performed. These actions are called *kāmya karma*. Doing these actions brings merit, which means you get positive results, but avoiding them does not result in any negative consequences.

► Actions should not be performed

**Prohibited actions:** These actions must not be performed. Doing these actions leads to sin and negative consequences, like going to hell. However, not performing these actions does not bring any merit. There are also another kind of actions called *prāyaścitta*. These are performed to reduce or cancel the negative effects of previously performed prohibited actions. If someone has done something wrong, they can perform these expiatory acts to try to fix their mistakes and avoid further negative consequences.

The followers of Prabhakara provide a detailed analysis of voluntary action. Prabhakara explains the steps of voluntary action as follows: first, there is the consciousness of something that needs to be done, called *kāryatājñāna*. This is the feeling of duty. Next is the desire to do it, known as *cikirṣā*,

► The steps of voluntary action

which includes the belief that it can be done, called *kṛtisādhyatājñāna*. Then comes the volition, or *pravṛtti*, followed by the motor reaction. Finally, the act itself, or *kriyā*, is performed. Prabhakara emphasises the sense of duty over the consciousness of good. However, the consciousness of good is still present in optional actions (*kāmya karmas*). In Vedic sacrifices, the injunctions by their verbal power lead the person to perform the actions towards the desired end.

### 3.3.1 Apūrva

► A connecting link with the action and its fruits

When a person performs a ritual or any prescribed action, he/she does it with a specific goal in mind, such as gaining health, wealth, or happiness. However, the results of these actions are not always seen right away. For instance, if you perform a ritual today, you might expect the benefits to come much later. To explain how the action leads to the result after a delay, *Mimāṃsā* philosophers introduce the idea of *apūrva*. *Mimāṃsā* philosophy makes a necessary connection between the action and its outcome. As a connecting link with the action and its fruits Jaimini introduced the concept of *apūrva*. This term refers to an unseen force or link that connects an action with its eventual result. According to Jaimini, when an act is performed, it creates an *apūrva*, which persists even after the action itself has ended. This *apūrva* is what ensures that the action's intended result will occur in the future.

► Metaphysical link between an action and its result

*Mimāṃsā* thinkers considers *apūrva* as a metaphysical link between an action and its result. It is not something that can be perceived directly but is understood to exist based on the observed connection between actions and their outcomes. They propose that the results of sacrifices and rituals are often not immediate but are expected to occur after a long time. This delayed result is possible only because of the presence of *apūrva*. Without this unseen link, there would be no way to guarantee that a ritual performed today would produce its intended result in the future. The *Mimāṃsā* philosophers are cautious about attributing the results of actions to the will of a deity. They argue that if a single divine will was responsible for all outcomes, it would be difficult to explain the variety of results seen from different actions. Instead, they propose that *apūrva* provides a more consistent explanation for why specific actions lead to specific results.



### 3.3.2 Moksha

Jaimini and Sabara, early Mimāṃsā philosophers, did not focus on the concept of ultimate release from the cycle of rebirth, known as samsara. They emphasised achieving a good life in heaven through performing prescribed actions. However, later Mimāṃsā thinkers, influenced by other philosophical schools, could not ignore the idea of liberation. According to Prabhakara, liberation involves the complete cessation of dharma (righteous acts) and adharma (unrighteous acts), which are the causes of rebirth. Prabhakara defines liberation as the absolute cessation of the body, caused by the disappearance of all dharma and adharma. In samsara, or the cycle of rebirth, pleasures are always mixed with pain. Recognising this, individuals seek liberation to escape this cycle. To achieve liberation, they must avoid both prohibited actions and prescribed actions that bring about any form of happiness in this world or the next.

► For Prabhakara, liberation means the complete cessation of dharma and adharma

To progress towards liberation, one must undergo necessary expiations to exhaust accumulated karma from past actions. Through true knowledge of the soul, along with contentment and self-control, individuals can eventually free themselves from their bodily existence. However, Prabhakara emphasises that mere knowledge alone cannot lead to freedom from bondage. Liberation requires the complete freedom from all actions. Knowledge in this context helps to prevent the accumulation of further merit and demerit. The followers of Prabhakara believe that karma, if done with the expectation of rewards, only leads to further births. Our desires and aversions shape our future existences, and to attain liberation, we must break free from this cycle. Liberation, according to Prabhakara, is not a state of bliss because the soul, being without attributes, cannot experience bliss. Instead, liberation is the natural state of the soul, free from both pleasure and pain.

► Liberation is the natural state of the soul

According to Kumāṛila, moksha, or liberation, is the state of the atman (soul) in its pure form, free from all pain. Some people believe that moksha involves experiencing the bliss of the atman. However, Kumāṛila disagrees with this view. In moksha, the self is devoid of characteristics such as pleasure, pain, and other qualities. It can be considered a state of consciousness without any objective cognition or feelings. This perspective is similar to the Advaita (non-dual) philosophy, which also sees moksha as realising the true nature of

► Liberation is the state of the atman in its pure form

the self. However, Kumārila believes that knowledge alone is not enough to achieve liberation. He asserts that moksha can be attained through a combination of karma (righteous actions) and jñāna (knowledge). Imagine a person who has been wandering in a desert, feeling intense thirst and discomfort. Reaching an oasis and drinking water brings relief, ending their pain and discomfort. In Kumārila's view, moksha is similar to this relief from the desert's suffering. It is not about experiencing joy at the oasis but about the cessation of the suffering experienced in the desert. Thus, moksha is the state where the soul is free from all forms of pain and suffering, existing in its pure, unmanifested form.

### 3.3.3 God

The Purva Mimāṃsā philosophy introduces a number of deities to whom prescribed offerings are made. This philosophy does not go beyond these gods because following Vedic dharma does not need the existence of a supreme power. Jaimini, the founder of Mimāṃsā, does not deny God but rather ignored that aspect and stressed the importance of Dharma. The earlier Mimāṃsā thinkers following the path of the founder only believed in dharma. They also rejected the attempts to view the Veda as God's work. In this philosophy, the rewards of sacrifices are not attributed to a beneficent God. When results do not appear immediately, the principle of apūrva is produced. There is no reliable evidence to prove the existence of an omniscient being.

► Jaimini stressed the importance of Dharma than God

► Universe as a whole has no beginning or end

The succession of actions and their effects is continuous and eternal, like the cycle of seed and plant. Mimāṃsā rejects the idea of periodic creation and dissolution of everything. The process of becoming and passing away is constant. It is seen as unnecessary to assume that a supreme Lord stops all activities at one point and then starts a new creation. Prabhakara acknowledges that the universe has parts that begin and end, but he believes the universe as a whole has no beginning or end. We do not observe divine intervention in the creation of human and animal bodies, which come from their parents. There is also no belief in a divine supervisor of dharma (righteousness) and adharma (unrighteousness). These qualities belong to intelligent individuals. One being, no matter how great, cannot know the dharma and adharma of another. God cannot perceive the imperceptible dharma of others through His senses or mind because it is outside His body.



► Kumārila's critique of the Nyāya views on God

Kumārila criticises the Nyāya view that argues for the existence of God using reasoning and that the Vedas are composed by God. According to Nyāya, if the Vedas, which are believed to be God's work, state that God is the creator of the world, such a statement should hold value. However, Kumārila questions this reasoning by asking who can verify that God created the world. Kumārila further questions how God could create the world. If God does not have a material body, he cannot have any desire for creation. If he does have a body, it cannot come from himself, requiring another creator. If God's body is considered eternal, Kumārila asks from what constituents it is made since earth and other elements are not yet produced. If matter exists before God's creative activity, there is no reason to deny the existence of other objects. He also questions the purpose of God in creating a world filled with misery. God cannot create out of pity since there are no beings to show compassion to. If God is compassionate, only happy beings should have been created. The argument that creation is not possible without pain does not hold because, according to Nyāya, nothing is impossible for God. If God is limited by other considerations, then he is not omnipotent. If it is said that atoms act under the will of God, Kumārila asks how God's will arise. If it is driven by a cause like unseen force, then that cause might as well be responsible for the world. If God depends on other things, his independence is compromised.

## Summarized Overview

The ethics of Mimāṃsā revolve around the concepts of dharma, apūrva, and the authority of the Vedas. Dharma refers to the duties and moral obligations prescribed by the Vedas. It is central to Mimāṃsā ethics, guiding both individual and social conduct. Mimāṃsā scholars spend considerable effort interpreting Vedic texts to determine these duties. They believe that adhering to dharma ensures order and well-being in society. Apūrva is a concept describing an unseen force generated by performing Vedic rituals. This force connects the performance of rituals with the attainment of desired results, even if the results are not immediate. Moksha refers to liberation from the cycle of birth and death. However, unlike other philosophical schools, Mimāṃsā does not focus on Moksha as the ultimate goal. Instead, it emphasises the correct performance of rituals and duties.

Following dharma and performing rituals may lead to favourable outcomes, which can eventually contribute to liberation, but this is not the primary focus of Mimāṃsā. The role of God in Mimāṃsā is minimised. Mimāṃsā does not emphasise the existence

or involvement of a supreme God in ethical behaviour or the creation of the world. The philosophy relies on the authority of the Vedas and the principle of Apūrva to explain the effectiveness of rituals and ethical conduct. Scholars like Kumārila critique views that attribute the creation and maintenance of the world to a divine being, emphasising the self-sufficiency of Vedic teachings.

## Self-Assessment

1. What is the definition of dharma in Mimāṃsā philosophy?
2. Why does Mimāṃsā place less emphasis on moksha as the ultimate goal compared to other Indian philosophical schools?
3. What is the position of Mimāṃsā on the existence and role of a supreme God?
4. How do Mimāṃsā scholars determine the duties and moral obligations prescribed by the Vedas?
5. Why is apūrva crucial in ensuring the efficacy of Vedic rituals?
6. How do the concepts of dharma, apūrva, and the authority of the Vedas interrelate in Mimāṃsā ethics?

## Assignments

1. Analyse the concept of dharma in Mimāṃsā philosophy and its importance in guiding moral and social conduct.
2. Examine the concept of apūrva in Mimāṃsā ethics and its connection to the performance and outcomes of Vedic rituals.
3. Compare and contrast the emphasis on moksha in Mimāṃsā philosophy with that in other Indian philosophical schools.
4. Critically assess the position of Mimāṃsā on the existence and role of a supreme God and its implications for ethical conduct.
5. Explore how the concepts of dharma, apūrva, and the authority of the Vedas interrelate to form a cohesive ethical framework in Mimāṃsā philosophy.



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## Suggested Reading

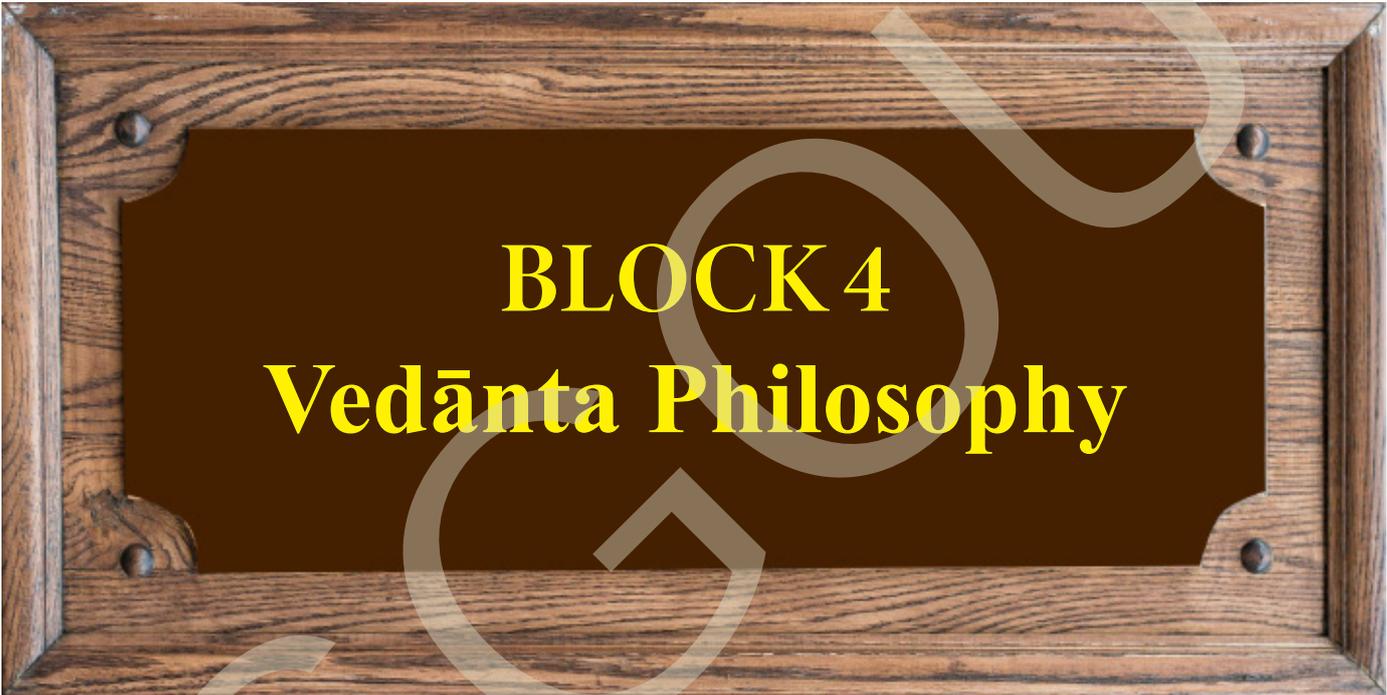
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## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU





**BLOCK 4**  
**Vedānta Philosophy**

# UNIT 1

## Philosophy of Advaita Vedānta

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ know the origin and development of Advaita Vedānta of Sankara
- ▶ understand the Advaitic or monistic reality of Brahman and Ātman
- ▶ describe the three levels of reality in Advaita Vedānta
- ▶ explain the concepts of māya and moksha and their significance in Advaita Vedānta
- ▶ comprehend the theory of error; Anirvachanīyakhyāti put forward by Sankara in Advaita Vedānta

### Background

About the period 780 A.D., Gauḍapāda revived the monistic teaching of the Upanishads through his commentary on the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad in verse called Māṇḍūkya-kārikā. His disciple Govinda was the teacher of Sankara (788-820 A.D). Sankara's commentary on the Brahma-sutras is the root from which sprang forth a host of commentaries and studies on Vedantism of great originality, vigour and philosophic insight. The teachings of Sankara prioritise knowledge, or jñāna mārga, over the ritual practices, or karma mārga, which were dominant during his time. According to Sankara, one can attain liberation or moksha by understanding the true nature of reality. This makes Advaita Vedānta accessible to everyone, regardless of their background or practices. Advaita Vedānta challenges the reality of the physical world that we see and experience. It suggests that the world is an illusion, known as māyā, that the only true reality is Brahman, and that there is no difference between Brahman and Ātman, the individual self. Advaita views reality as non-dual, meaning that all distinctions and separations are merely illusory. This perspective encourages individuals to seek self-knowledge and understand their true nature. By realising the unity of Ātman and Brahman, one can transcend the illusions of the material world and attain spiritual liberation.



## Keywords

Upanishads, Brahman, Ātman, Māya, Moksha,

## Discussion

### 4.1.1 Origin and Development of the Vedānta

Vedānta philosophy is the system of thought which claims to be the exposition of the philosophy taught in the Upanishads and summarised in the Brahma-sutras of Badarayana. The Vedas, the oldest scriptures of Hinduism, are divided into four: Ṛig, Sāma, Yajur, and Atharva. Each Veda consists of four parts: Mantras, Brāhmaṇas, Āranyakas, and Upanishads. Thus, the Upanishads form the last part of the Vedic literature, and its philosophy is therefore also called sometimes the U-tara-Mimāṃsā. The word Upaniṣad literally means 'sitting down of the disciple near his teacher in a devoted manner'. This shows the esoteric nature of the Upaniṣad, as it is secret and shared only with the selected disciple. Upaniṣad is the culmination of Vedic teachings that provide inner or secret meanings of the Vedas. They were the final segment or the concluding portion of the Vedic literature; thus, it is called 'Vedānta', which means 'the end of the Vedas'. The Upanishads are called 'the end of the Vedas' not only because they are the last texts in the traditional sequence of study following Mantras, Brāhmaṇas, and Āranyakas but also because they were traditionally studied last by those seeking a deeper understanding of the universe.

► 'Vedānta' literally means 'the end of the Vedas'

► Different interpretations of the Brahma Sūtra gave rise to various schools of Vedānta

The Upanishads contain various philosophical ideas and teachings in scattered form, which Bādarayana systematised in his Brahma Sūtra, also known as the Vedānta Sūtra. The Brahma Sūtra aimed to harmonise the different teachings of the Upanishads, addressing their coherence, logical consistency, means of realisation, and the ultimate results of such philosophical inquiry. Due to their briefness, these sūtras were open to various interpretations, leading to the creation of multiple commentaries and the establishment of different schools of Vedānta. Different interpretations of the Brahma Sūtra gave rise to various schools of Vedānta, each differing in their views on the relationship between the self (jīva) and God (Brahman).

Each school of Vedānta has its own foundational commentary. These commentaries established distinct Vedānta traditions, such as the Advaita or non-dualism of Sankara, the Viśiṣṭādvaita or qualified non-dualism of Rāmānuja, the Dvaita or dualism of Madhva, the Shuddhādvaita or pure non-dualism of Vallabha, and the Dvaitādvaita or Bhedā-abheda of Nimbārka. Each school developed a theoretical framework and attracted communities of monks and lay followers who practised its teachings. The extensive body of Vedānta literature includes numerous sub-commentaries and independent treatises, further elaborating and defending the philosophical positions of each school.

► Different approaches of various schools of Vedānta

Sankara's Advaita Vedānta teaches that the self and God are identical, promoting a monistic view. Viśiṣṭādvaita, or qualified monism of Rāmānuja, holds that the self and God are related like parts to a whole. Madhva's Dvaita argues that the self and God are distinct entities, upholding a dualistic perspective. Other views include Bhedā-abheda, which suggests a relationship of identity-in-difference between the self and God. The foundational texts of Vedānta include the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gītā, and the Brahma Sūtra, collectively known as the Prasthānatrayi or the triple canon of Vedānta. Despite these differences, Sankara and Rāmānuja's schools are the most prominent and widely discussed.

► The uniqueness of Sankara's Advaita Vedānta

Sankara's Advaita Vedānta stands out for its intellectual rigour and logical depth. It is unique in its strict adherence to reasoning and focuses solely on philosophical inquiry. Sankara's writings reveal a mind of remarkable insight and deep spirituality. His deep commitment to stating only what could be proven made him a heroic figure among the religious thinkers of medieval India. His philosophy is self-contained and well-balanced, requiring no additional context to be understood.

► The prerequisites for those who get on the path of philosophy

Sankara sets forth specific prerequisites for those who get on the path of philosophy. The first is the ability to distinguish between the eternal and the non-eternal. It is a skill that serves as a catalyst for metaphysical exploration. The second is renouncing worldly rewards because true contentment lies beyond the empirical world. Philosophy finds its purpose and validation in the disillusionment with life. The truth seeker must detach from the world and nurture a superior mind. Moral preparation is the third prerequisite, and the last is a longing



for liberation. A mind oriented towards eternal life is essential, as Sankara's ideal of philosophy prioritises wisdom and spiritual freedom over mere knowledge and logical learning.

#### 4.1.1.1 Birth and Childhood of Sankara

► Sankara was a prodigy

Sankara was born in an orthodox Brahmin family to Sivaguru and Aryamba in Kalady, a village in the district of Ernakulam, Kerala. Sankara's father died when he was very young, and his mother performed his upanayanam (initiation into student life). At the age of eight, Sankara mastered the four Vedas and displayed his remarkable scholarship. Later, he travelled north, searching for a Guru, and met Govinda Bhagavatpāda on the banks of the Narmada River. Govinda Bhagavatpāda, impressed by Sankara's understanding of Vedas, took him as a disciple and instructed him to write a commentary on the Brahma Sūtra. When Sankara travelled to Kashi, he met his first disciple, Sanandana. Sankara wrote his famous commentaries (Bhāshyas) and philosophical treatises (Prakarana granthās) in Badari.

► The debate between Mandana Misra and Sankara

One of Sankara's most notable debates was with the ritualist Mandana Misra, who argued that the householder's life was superior to that of a monk. Mandana Misra's wife, Ubhaya Bharati, acted as the referee. After fifteen days of debate, Mandana Misra accepted defeat. Ubhaya Bharati then challenged Sankara on subjects related to sexual life, which he had no knowledge of as a celibate monk. Sankara used the art of 'para-kaya pravesa' (entering another's body) to acquire this knowledge by temporarily inhabiting the body of a dead king. After gaining the necessary knowledge, he returned to his body and answered all her questions. Ubhaya Bharati accepted Sankara's victory, and Mandana Misra became his disciple, taking the monastic name Suresvaracharya. Sankara's life and teachings significantly influenced the development of Advaita Vedānta and continue to inspire millions worldwide.

#### 4.1.2 Nature of Brahman and Ātman

The Upanishads deal with the nature of reality, seeking to understand the ultimate source of everything and the essence of knowledge that reveals the unknown. They also investigate the path to immortality. According to the Upanishads, there is an all-encompassing reality that underlies and

► The reality is all-encompassing, non-contradictory and perfect

permeates everything, known as Brahman. According to Sankara, the ultimate reality is non-contradictory, perfect, and the highest form of knowledge. For him, the criteria of non-contradiction are the test of truth. For him, Brahman is the only unchanging and permanent reality, both within and beyond the world. In the Upanishads, the unchanging reality is sometimes referred to as God (Brahman), Self (Ātman), or simply Being (Sat). Sankara's famous phrase, 'Brahma satyam jagat mithyā, jivo Brahmaiva naparah', means 'Brahman alone is the ultimate reality; the empirical world (Jagat) is an illusion, and there is no distinction between Ātman (individual soul) and Brahman (God).'

► 'Tat Tvam Asi' - the true self and the ultimate reality are one

The terms Brahman and Ātman are used interchangeably. Brahman is understood by analysing the external world, while Ātman is understood by analysing the internal world. The idea that Ātman and Brahman are the same is expressed by the phrase 'Tat Tvam Asi' (You are that). This means that the true self and the ultimate reality are one and the same. Brahman is impersonal because personality implies a distinction between self and not self. Brahman is not an object of knowledge or a knower, but it is the one who knows and embodies eternal knowledge. Through the knowledge of Brahman, everything else can be understood. It does not will because willing implies change and mutation. It is not an active agent because activity would make it mutable and non-eternal. It does not experience joy and sorrow because it is beyond that. Brahman transcends all moral categories and is beyond vice and virtue.

► The best way to describe Brahman is with 'Neti Neti' (not this, not this)

Brahman is not an object of perception; rather, it is the all-pervasive and underlying reality that makes perception and existence possible. It is beyond all categories of thought and language, making it indescribable and beyond human comprehension. Brahman is indeterminate and non-dual, meaning it cannot be described using conventional terms because it is beyond the senses, speech, and mind. According to Advaita Vedānta, Brahman cannot be known through ordinary means. The best way to describe Brahman is with 'Neti Neti' (not this, not this), indicating it is beyond all specific attributes. Brahman can only be known through direct, intuitive experience transcending ordinary perception and all intellectual understandings.

Sankara's Advaita Vedānta shows that, as the ultimate reality is non-dual, it is thus contrasted with the ever-changing, impermanent empirical world (Jagat). Brahman transcends all



► Ultimate reality is non-dual; it is thus contrasted with Jagat

dualities and distinctions found in the empirical world. The apparent multiplicity we see in the world (Jagat) is false and ultimately due to an illusion. Though the empirical world is perceived as real in our everyday experience, it is ultimately an illusion (Māya) when compared to the absolute reality of Brahman. The world has only a dependent, relative existence and does not affect the true nature of Brahman. There is no other reality comparable to Brahman. The relationship between Brahman and the world is unique and complex. Brahman is the substratum upon which the world appears. However, Brahman remains untouched and unaffected by the changes and multiplicities of the world. Brahman is the foundational essence that pervades everything and is the source of all existence. Advaita Vedānta underlies that all the diversity we see in the world is due to a single reality: that is Brahman. Brahman is both the creator and the material cause of the world. This is somewhat similar to gold as being the underlying substance behind various gold ornaments.

► Brahman is described as Sat-Chit-Ananda

Brahman is described as Sat-Chit-Ananda: absolute being (Sat), absolute consciousness (Chit), and absolute bliss (Ānanda). Such descriptions are not the attributes of Brahman, but the very essence of Brahman and it highlights the nature of Brahman as eternal, aware, and full of bliss. Unlike the transient and limited things in the phenomenal world, Brahman is identified as infinite, unchanging, and perfect. Brahman is not only the foundation of reality but also the ultimate source of joy. Worldly pleasures are mere reflections of this infinite joy. The Self is the source of all love and joy. True happiness comes from identifying with the Ātman, leading to unity with the infinite joy of Brahman. Sankara describes Brahman as pure consciousness (jñānasvarūpa) or the consciousness of the Pure Self (svarūpa jñāna), devoid of all attributes (nirguṇa) and categories of the intellect (nirvishesa). Brahman is an absolutely undifferentiated pure identity, without any differences. It is devoid of homogeneous differences (like the difference between two trees), heterogeneous differences (like the difference between a tree and a stone), and internal differences (like the difference between the leaves, flowers, and fruits of the same tree). Brahman, the pure consciousness, does not admit to any parts or distinctions. Advaita Vedānta explains Brahman in two ways: from a relative standpoint and from an absolute standpoint. From the relative standpoint, the Brahman is apara or lower Brahman and from the absolute standpoint, the Brahman is para or higher Brahman.

### 4.1.2.1 Lower Brahman (Apara Brahman):

► Brahman conditioned by Māyā (illusion) is called Saguna Brahman or Īshvara

**B**rahman, from a relative standpoint, is described by the term ‘tatashta lakshana’. Tatashta lakshana refers to the temporary or accidental attributes that are superimposed on the true nature of the Brahman. From the relative standpoint, Brahman conditioned by Māyā (illusion) is also called Saguna Brahman or Īshvara (God). Īshvara, the personal aspect of Brahman, is seen as the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe. This concept helps the common people to understand Brahman more easily and worship Īshvara as the Lord. Worshipping Īshvara leads to gradual liberation. This Apara Brahman or Īshvara is conditioned, determinate, and qualified by attributes. It is empirical and phenomenal; here, the Brahman is associated with its potency (Shakti). This form of Brahman is the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the world. This concept helps the commoners to understand the nature of Brahman more easily.

► Saguna Brahman means Brahman with attributes

Īshvara is seen as a perfect personality with all good qualities; this is because he is called Saguna Brahman (Brahman with attributes). Īshvara controls the world, governing it from within. Because of this, he is called Antaryāmin, the inner controller. He is immanent (existing within the world) and transcendental (beyond the world). Īshvara is the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the universe. People worship Īshvara and see him as the source of moral inspiration. Īshvara is considered real only in our everyday, empirical life. Thus, Saguna Brahman (Īshvara) is worshipped as the Lord. Īshvara combines the essence of Brahman with the material world (Prakṛti). Unlike pure consciousness, Īshvara is a self-conscious personality.

### 4.1.2.2 Higher Brahman (Para Brahman):

► From an absolute standpoint, Brahman is called Nirguna Brahman

**F**rom an absolute standpoint, Brahman is referred to as Nirguna Brahman or Para Brahman. It is characterised by the term ‘Svarūpa Lakṣaṇa,’ which denotes its essential nature. Brahman is called Nirguna Brahman because the ultimate reality is unconditional and devoid of all attributes. Brahman is Nirākāra, meaning it has no specific form, and it is unchanging or immutable. This unchanging, formless Brahman is known as the higher Brahman or Para Brahman. It is trans-empirical, non-phenomenal, and transcendental. Higher Brahman is



► Realising Nirguṇa Brahman leads to Jīvanmukti

completely indeterminate and non-dual, meaning it is the only reality. It is beyond all intellectual categories and thus is indescribable. This is why it is called Anirvachanīyam, meaning it is indescribable.

Nirguṇa Brahman is the ultimate, formless, unchanging reality beyond all descriptions and intellectual understanding. Brahman is the ultimate reality that is both external and internal, beyond ordinary perception and knowledge. It is the true essence that exists beyond the apparent world of diversity and change. When we try to understand Brahman with our intellect, we fail to grasp its true nature, and it becomes limited by our definitions. It is indefinable and inexpressible, comprehensible only through direct intuition. Realising Nirguṇa Brahman leads to Jīvanmukti (liberation while living).

#### 4.1.2.3 Ātman (Soul)

► Ātman is the universal, undifferentiated, infinite and pure consciousness

According to Sankara, Ātman is the universal self, identical to Brahman. It is the absolute, supreme, ultimate reality and is single, eternal and pure consciousness. The apparent differences between individual selves Brahman are due to ignorance (Avidya). When this ignorance is dispersed through self-knowledge, one realises the non-duality (Advaita) of Ātman and Brahman, recognising that they are one and the same. This realisation is not merely intellectual but a transformative experience that leads to liberation. The Upaniṣhads analyse that the self is distinguishable between its outer layers (body, senses, mind, intellect) and its inner essence (Ātman). The body and senses are transient, but the Ātman is the eternal and unchanging reality. This true self is pure consciousness, infinite and undifferentiated, which is identical to the universal consciousness or Brahman.

Sankara believes that the existence of the self is obvious to everyone and is self-established. Simply questioning the nature and source of knowledge confirms its existence. Everyone constantly feels 'I am' and never thinks 'I am not'. Sankara determines the reality of the self by examining the four states. The Self or Ātman remains uncontradicted in all four states of consciousness: waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and turiya (the state of pure consciousness). The following are the four stages of the soul described in the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣhad:

1. Waking State (Jagrata): In this state, the self has a physical body and experiences the outside world.

► The soul is 'sākṣin', meaning the principle of pure consciousness, a seer, spectator, or observer

2. Dreaming State (Svapna): In this state, the self experiences subtle objects through dreams.
3. Deep Sleep State (Susupti): In this state, the duality of subject and object is transcended; there is no distinction between the self and the outside world.
4. Transcendental State (Turiya): This is the original nature of the self. It is unthinkable, unnameable, serene, gracious, and free from duality.

The essence of the soul remains constant in all these states. He refers to the soul as 'sākṣin', meaning the principle of pure consciousness, a seer, spectator, or observer. The soul witnesses all states but is not witnessed by anything else. It is essentially indescribable because no description can fully capture it. It transcends all intellectual categories, as the knower cannot be known. Believing that the soul is in bondage is a misunderstanding. Once the true nature of the soul is realised, the illusion or bondage disappears.

► The Ātman is the foundation of all knowledge and experience.

The Ātman goes beyond the duality of subject and object and the three components of knower, known, and knowledge. It surpasses all intellectual categories and is self-evident. It cannot be proven by traditional means of knowledge, as these means rely on the Ātman to function. The Ātman is the basis for all valid knowledge and exists before any means of knowing. Ātman is the essence of undifferentiated consciousness, revealing our empirical self, it is beyond empirical experience. The Ātman is one, eternal, and pure in nature, without beginning or end. It is an eternal, undifferentiated consciousness that is the foundation of all knowledge and experience. It remains constant through various states of consciousness, ultimately existing in a pure, transcendental state beyond all dualities and intellectual distinctions.

► Realising the true self (Ātman) is considered the highest form of knowledge

The Katha Upanishad states that the Ātman is hidden in all things but can be perceived by those with keen insight. Realising the true self (Ātman) is considered the highest form of knowledge, superior to all other forms of learning. This realisation requires control over the lower self, mastery of desires and impulses, deep contemplation, and repeated meditation. This path is challenging and demands a prioritisation of what is truly good over what is merely pleasant. The Upanishads critique Vedic sacrifices, arguing that they cannot achieve the



highest goal of immortality. True liberation and cessation of rebirth come from realising the unity of one with Brahman.

### 4.1.3 Levels of Reality

There exist three levels of reality, according to Advaita Vedānta. They are:

1. Prāthibhāsika
2. Vyāvahārika
3. Pāramārthika

#### 1. Prāthibhāsika (The Illusory Level of Reality)

Prāthibhāsika is the lowest and most imaginary level of reality according to Advaita Vedānta. This level is due to personal ignorance and is characterised by illusions and dreams. Dreams are a good example of Prāthibhāsika reality. In the dreaming state, the objects and events we experience seem real as long as the dream lasts. However, when we wake up, we realise they are not real. While we are dreaming, we cannot comprehend that the dream is unreal. To understand that a dream is not real and only an illusion, one must awaken from it. This lowest level of reality is referred to in Advaita Vedānta as the Prāthibhāsika level of reality.

► Prāthibhāsika is the lowest and most imaginary level of reality

#### 2. Vyāvahārika (Empirical Experience)

Vyāvahārika is the empirical level of reality in Advaita Vedānta. In this realm, cause and effect operate, and human intellect functions. At this level, the phenomenal or empirical world exists and is considered to be real because we perceive it. However, when one attains higher knowledge, the phenomenal world is seen as mere appearance or illusion. From a relative perspective, things in the Vyāvahārika world can be said to exist on their own, while from the ultimate perspective, the state of existence of phenomenal objects is described as ‘in-describable’ or ‘māya’ (illusion). For those who have realised Brahman, the external world is seen as māya or indescribable. For those who have not realised Brahman due to ignorance (avidya), the external world is perceived as real, existing, and ultimate. In Advaita Vedānta, the dreaming state and the empirical state are not on the same level of reality; the phenomenal world has a higher degree of reality compared to the

► At Vyāvahārika level, the empirical world exists and is considered to be real

dreaming state. We realise the relative nature of the phenomenal world only when we could reach the Pāramārthika level, the highest level of reality. Until then, we continue to believe that the phenomenal world is the ultimate and real.

### 3. Pāramārthika (Ultimate Spiritual Experience)

The Pāramārthika level is the highest and absolute level of reality, where Brahman is considered the only reality and the world is deemed unreal, as expressed by the phrase ‘Brahma Satyam Jagat Mithyā’ (Brahman is the only truth, and the world is an illusion). This level represents pure existence or ultimate truth. At the Pāramārthika level, reality is self-existent and does not depend on anything else. It can only be realised through direct spiritual experience, often achieved through the highest knowledge known as Brahma-vidya (knowledge of Brahman). This higher knowledge helps one to see beyond the illusions of both the dream state and the waking state, revealing the ultimate reality.

► At Pāramārthika level, Brahman is considered the only reality

► At the Pāramārthika level, all plurality or distinctions disappear, leaving only pure monism

► Māyā is essential for understanding how the seemingly real world is ultimately an illusion

Pāramārthika is the transcendental level of reality in Advaita Vedānta, meaning it is beyond the realm of human intellect. Our ordinary thinking and reasoning cannot fully grasp it. The Upaniṣhads describe the nature of this Ultimate Reality using the phrase ‘Neti, Neti’, which means ‘not this, not this’. This defines Brahman by stating what it is not rather than what it is because Brahman is beyond all human concepts, descriptions and attributes. At the Pāramārthika level, all plurality or distinctions disappear, leaving only pure monism. This ultimate level of reality is the highest realisation one can achieve, where the true essence of existence, Para-brahman or higher Brahman, is understood, and the illusion of the world is transcended.

#### 4.1.4 Māyā

The concept of Māyā is central to the philosophy of Advaita Vedānta. Sankara explained the appearance of multiplicity in the world and his concept of Advaitic or monistic reality by using the concept of Māyā. Māyā is essential for understanding how the seemingly real world is ultimately an illusion. It is also crucial for grasping the perspectives on reality, ignorance, and liberation of Advaita. Māyā is the inherent power (shakti) of Brahman and is dependent on and inseparable from Brah-



man. Brahman is the locus and object of māya, but Brahman remains untouched by it. Māyā is beginningless (anādi), material, and unconscious (jada). It is neither real nor unreal but is indescribable (anirvachanīya). Māyā is neither completely existent nor non-existent, nor can it be both.

► The phenomenal world that we perceive is due to the creation of Māyā

Māyā is commonly translated as ‘illusion’; it is responsible for the illusion of the world. Māyā is described as cosmic neuroscience or ignorance. It is Māyā that makes the infinite Brahman appear as the finite world. The phenomenal world that we perceive is due to the creation of Māyā. Due to the misapprehension of Māyā, the world seems real to us, and plurality, multiplicity, and differentiation appear. Māyā hides the true nature of Brahman. This Māyā or illusion is somewhat similar to the appearance of a snake on a rope or silver on a shell. Māyā exists as long as we are ignorant of the true nature of Brahman. When true knowledge or Brahmagyā dawns, this illusion or Māyā dispels. Those who attain the highest knowledge or Brahmagyā perceive the world as mere illusion and identify the oneness of Ātman with Brahman.

► Māyā is described as neither real nor unreal (sadasadvilaksana)

Māyā is both non-apprehension and misapprehension. It causes not only the absence of true knowledge but also the presence of wrong knowledge. Māyā makes the infinite appear finite, and the non-dual Ātman appear as multiple individual souls (jīvas). Māyā is not existent because only Brahman is truly existent. It is not non-existent because it causes Brahman to appear as the world. This paradoxical nature of Māyā is described as neither real nor unreal (sadasadvilaksana). Māyā is considered false (mithyā) but not a complete non-entity like a sky lotus. It is a positive force (bhāvarūpa) and the potency of God. Māyā has a phenomenal and relative character (vyāvahārikasatta) and is of the nature of superimposition (adhyāsa).

► From the ultimate standpoint or pāramārthika level, only Brahman is real, and the world becomes an illusion

Māyā is considered positive (bhāvarūpā) because it projects the world, but ultimately, it is unreal because it vanishes upon the true realisation of Brahman. Only from an empirical standpoint or vyāvahārika level does the world appear real and function under the laws of cause and effect. But from the ultimate standpoint or pāramārthika level, only Brahman is real, and the world becomes an illusion. This dual perspective helps reconcile the experience of the world with the philosophical assertion of non-duality. Thus, Māyā operates only in the phenomenal and relative level of reality. It superimposes

the attributes of the non-real world on the real Brahman, creating a false sense of duality. By realising non-dual truth, one transcends the illusion and attains liberation.

Māyā has two main functions:

(1) Āvarana (concealment): Āvarana is the negative aspect of Māyā. It hides the true nature of Brahman.

(2) Vikshepa (projection): Vikshepa is the positive aspect of Māyā. It projects the world of plurality and multiplicity onto the ground of non-dual Brahman.

In Vedānta, terms like Māyā, Avidyā (ignorance), Bhranti (delusion), Adhyāsa (superimposition), Vivarta (apparent transformation), and Ajnāna (ignorance) are used synonymously. However, distinctions between Māyā and Avidyā are often made. Māyā is considered the positive force and the cosmic power responsible for the creation of the entire universe, while Avidyā is the subjective experience of Māyā. Avidya is the negative force and individual ignorance that causes a person to mistake the self (Ātman) for being separate from Brahman. When Brahman reflects through Māyā, it is perceived as Īshvara (God in manifested form). Māyā conditions Īshvara (God), predominantly made of sattva (purity). Avidyā conditions Jīva (individual soul) and comprises all three gunas: sattva, rajas, and tamas. Māyā is called Mulāvidyā or root ignorance, while Avidyā is called Tulāvidyā or the ignorance that conceals.

► Māyā conditions  
Īshvara (God) and  
Avidyā conditions  
Jīva (individual soul)

### 4.1.5 Moksha

In Advaita Vedānta, the philosophy of liberation or Moksha revolves around the understanding of the true nature of reality and the self. According to Sankara, the ultimate reality is Nirguṇa Brahman, which is pure consciousness beyond all attributes and distinctions. Brahman is not something separate from us but the essence of the self (Ātman). The individual self (Jīva) is always caught with ignorance (Avidya), recognising itself with the body, mind, and ego. This ignorance leads to a sense of individuality and suffering. Liberation, therefore, is the removal of this ignorance through the attainment of true knowledge (Jñāna). True knowledge (jñāna) serves the sole drive of dispelling ignorance. This involves realising that our true self (Ātman) is identical to Brahman, the ultimate reality.

► Liberation is the  
removal of ignorance  
through the attain-  
ment of true knowl-  
edge



Liberation is not a new state to be attained but a timeless truth to be realised, bringing peace and fulfilment. This realisation recognises our innate nature, which has been hidden by ignorance.

The path to liberation involves rigorous spiritual practices:

**Śravaṇa:** It involves study and discussion of the Upanishads with the assistance of a guru who has realised the truth of the Upanishads. It signifies that the ultimate philosophic truth is to be learnt through a study of the revealed texts. Also, it emphasises the need of a competent teacher, if the study is to be fruitful.

**Manana:** It requires reflecting deeply on these teachings to remove doubts and intellectual obstacles thereby ensuring a clear understanding.

**Nididhyāsana:** It demands meditating intensely on the truths learned and cultivating direct experience (anubhava) of oneness with Brahman. This leads to the dissolution of the illusory sense of separateness.

► Attaining moksha in this life

The mukti stage is one in which the pure light of Brahman as the identity of pure intelligence, being and complete bliss shines forth in its unique glory, and all the rest vanishes as illusory nothing. Advaita Vedānta identifies three possible ways of mukti. They are:

1. Jīvanmukti or Liberation during a person's life.
2. Kramamukti or Gradual liberation.
3. Videhamukti or Liberation after the physical death.

**Jīvanmukti:** Advaita discusses the possibility of attaining moksha in this life. Jīvanmukti is the attainment of liberation while one is alive. Those who have realised the ultimate reality are considered liberated, even when she/he is living. Once true knowledge dawns, it permanently removes ignorance and, thereby, all forms of bondage. Liberation (moksha) is thus the eradication of ignorance through knowledge. Those who attain this knowledge and are liberated while living is called a Jīvanmukta. The Adhikari or the person qualified for Jīvanmukti is the tīvra mumukshu.

The moment one becomes an ātmajñāni, one is immedi-

► The ātmajñāni is immediately freed from the shackles of samsāra

► Jīvan mukta is a 'Brahma vid Brahmaiva Bavati'

► Krama mukti is the attainment of liberation through gradual and systematic stages.

► Videha mukti meaning 'liberation after death' or literally 'liberation from the body'

ately freed from the shackles of samsāra. Here, the individual realises his oneness with Brahman even in the physical body. Such an individual perceives the body as a temporary vessel, like the snake sheds its skin, leaving it behind without any attachment. Even after attaining true knowledge, the body may continue to exist for a while, experiencing the consequences of past actions until its natural end. The jñāni lives out the days in the present life till the stock of prārabda karma is exhausted. A Jīvanmukta is free from all desires and attachments, experiencing eternal bliss and unaffected by worldly dualities.

Jīvanmukta is a 'Brahma vid Brahmaiva Bavati'. He realises himself as pure intelligence. He is not attracted to sense objects, and no sin is attached to him. He is neither attracted nor repelled by anything. He is self-contained and self-satisfied. However, in his body, he has no body consciousness. He is firmly established in his true sense. And so, pleasure and pain, good and evil, do not affect him in the least. Thus, a Jīvanmukta neither care for his body nor for his needs. He merges in Brahman and becomes one with it. He does not return to an embodied state. In other words, he attains immortality.

**Kramamukti:** It is the attainment of liberation through gradual and systematic stages. It is the ethical kind of mukti. Jīvanmukti and kramamukti requires a rigorous, physical or mental discipline. Kramamukti recommends absolute faith in the scripture as the fundamental requirement, which takes one to the aprokṣhanubhūti of Brahman.

**Videha Mukti:** Videha mukti comes from the Sanskrit meaning 'liberation after death' or literally 'liberation from the body'. It means liberation after one's physical death. It is the mukti after the separation of the soul from the body, where the soul merges completely with Brahman. The scriptures suggest that physical death is the only delay in achieving this ultimate freedom. It is sometimes contrasted with the term jīvanmukta, which refers to one who has achieved liberation while alive. It is the liberation from the witness state.

### 4.1.6 Theory of Error

Sankara, in Advaita Vedānta, explains elaborately about error in perception, in contrast to the views held by other philosophical schools. For Mimāṃsakas, all immediate knowledge is inherently true, which denies the possibility of error in per-



► Advaita Vedānta differs from the Mīmāṃsakas in its conception of error

► For Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, the perceptual error occurs because of a vivid memory

► The theory of error in Advaita is called *anirvachanīya khyāti* or indescribable

ception. Mīmāṃsakas had the view that mistaking a rope for a snake involves a mix of perception as well as memory. They suggest that when we perceive something, it triggers memories that coexist alongside the perception, and they do not merge into a single cognitive thought but coexist separately. This contrasts with the view held by Advaitins that the world is fundamentally unreal and an illusion. For Advaitins, in perceptual errors such as mistaking a rope for a snake, there is a single cognitive act where the mind identifies the rope as a snake. This identification leads to the reaction of fear, which would not occur without this mistaken belief that there is a snake.

For the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, perceptual error, such as mistaking a rope for a snake, occurs because of a vivid memory. For instance, if someone has seen a snake before and encounters a rope in dim light, the memory of the snake is so strong that it overlaps with the current perception of the rope. According to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, this overlapping occurs due to the vividness of the memory, which projects itself onto the present experience. They argue that what appears as an illusion is not the perception of something eternally unreal. Instead, it is a case where a past memory strongly influences and misrepresents the current perception, which creates the illusion of seeing a snake where there is only a rope. The explanation of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika highlights how the vivid memories of the mind can alter our perception of reality, leading to errors.

Advaitins reject the interpretation proposed by such schools as unrealistic and argue that such errors stem from ignorance, which conceals the true nature of the object and substitutes it with an illusory appearance. In the case of the rope-snake illusion, due to the ignorance of the true nature of rope, one mistakenly sees it as a snake. The failure to perceive the true form of an object can be due to factors like defective sense organs or insufficient light, etc. This misperception is a temporary creation (*srsti*) of ignorance, neither fully real nor completely unreal. It is the experience of a relatively real object, which is neither an absolute being (*sat*) nor an absolute non-being (*asat*) nor both. Accordingly, it is called *anirvachanīyakhyāti* or indescribable. This process is called *anirvacaniya srsti*, an indescribable creation. Despite its appearance, Advaitins assert that behind every illusory perception lies the pure existence (*Brahman*), which is neither unreal nor merely subjective.

► The theory of the appearance of the indescribable

When a shell is mistaken for silver, the shell limiting consciousness is the ground (adistana) on which silver and its cognition are illusorily imposed by ignorance. What happens here is the contact of the defective sense organ with the glittering shell and then a mental modification answering to the form of 'this object'. Through the operation of ignorance, the past impression of silver is received by the similarity between the object seen as 'this' and 'silver', with the result that silver comes into being also with the cognition of silver. Hence, the cognition of silver is a cognitive modification of ignorance. Silver, which thus comes into being, has a relative reality. It is not real because it is contradicted by later experience, such as when the shell is known. It is not unreal because it appears as silver as long as the illusion lasts, maybe for a very short time. It cannot be both, for real and unreal cannot exist together. Therefore, this theory of illusion is called the theory of the appearance of the indescribable (anirvacanīyakhyāti-vāda).

Advaita Vedānta distinguishes between two types of appearance:

1. Mūlavidya: The root of ignorance creating our everyday world perception. It is the material cause for the entire vyāvahārika Jagat.
2. Tūlavidya: It is the temporary ignorance causing short-lived and transient illusions.

This appearance or ignorance is destroyed only when Brahma jñāna is attained. Regarding illusions like mistaking silver for a shell, Advaitins argue that such experiences are presentations of a relatively real object, termed as prātibhāsika sattā or illusory existence. The 'silver' appearing in a shell is not an absolute being (sat) or absolute non-being (asat), but something in between—an inexplicable manifestation caused by ignorance.



## Summarized Overview

The Advaita Vedānta of Sankara emphasises non-dualism, teaching that the self (Ātman) and God (Brahman) are identical in nature. The apparent differences between the individual self and Brahman are due to ignorance (Avidya). He explained that Brahman is the ultimate, unchanging reality, while the empirical world or Jagat is merely an illusion or Māya. It is due to Māya that the world appears as real and hides the true nature of Brahman, which is described as Sat-Chit-Ānanda (Being, Consciousness, Bliss). Advaita Vedānta identifies three levels of reality: Prāthibhāsika (illusory), Vyāvahārika (empirical), and Pāramārthika (ultimate). Only from the ultimate or Pāramārthika level can the reality of Brahman and its identity with the Ātman be realised. Sankara argued that spiritual liberation or moksha is achieved through knowledge (jñāna mārga) rather than ritual practices (karma mārga). Only through true knowledge can ignorance be removed. This realisation can result in Jivanmukti (liberation while one is alive). The theory of perceptual error, such as mistaking a rope for a snake, was identified by Sankara as indescribable (anirvachanīya), being neither fully real nor unreal.

## Self-Assessment

1. Describe Sankara's view of the relationship between the self (Ātman) and God (Brahman). How does avidya play a role in this relationship?
2. What are the three levels of reality according to Advaita Vedānta, and how do they differ? Provide examples for each level.
3. Explain 'Tat Tvam Asi' in Advaita Vedānta and explain how it relates to the identity of Ātman and Brahman.
4. Define Māyā according to Advaita Vedānta and explain its role in the illusion of multiplicity and differentiation.
5. Write down the functions of Āvarana and Vikshepa in the context of Māyā. How do these functions contribute to the concealment of the true nature of Brahman?
6. Describe Sankara's theory of error in Advaita Vedānta.
7. What is the significance of 'Neti, Neti' in describing Brahman in Advaita Vedānta? How does this phrase relate to the concept of Māyā and the realisation of Brahman?

## Assignments

1. Compare and contrast the concepts of Saguṇa Brahman and Nirguṇa Brahman. How do these concepts help individuals at the different stages of their spiritual journey?
2. Describe the relationship between Ātman (individual self) and Brahman in Sankara's Advaita Vedānta. How does the analysis of the four states of consciousness (waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and turiya) illustrate the nature of the Ātman?
3. Discuss the concept of Māya in Sankara's Advaita Vedānta. How does Māya contribute to perceiving the empirical world as an illusion? What is the significance of understanding Māya in the journey of liberation?
4. Discuss the three types of liberation in Advaita Vedānta: Jīvanmukti, Kramamukti, and Videhamukti. How do they differ in terms of process and attainment?
5. Explain the concept of Anirvachanīya Khyāti (indescribable error) in Advaita Vedānta. How does this theory differ from Mimāṃsakas and Nyāya's theory of error?

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## Suggested Reading

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## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU

## UNIT 2

# Ramanuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita and Madhva's Dvaita

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ understand the historical backgrounds and fundamental theories put forth by Sri Rāmānuja and Madhva
- ▶ get a clear idea about the qualified non-dualism of Rāmānuja and the dualism of Madhva
- ▶ evaluate the ontology and epistemology put forth by Rāmānuja and Madhva
- ▶ grasp the relationship between Brahman, Ātman and the world
- ▶ analyse the path to liberation and the way to it through the integration of knowledge and devotion

### Background

The Upanishads serve as the foundation for the Vedānta school, which is a systematic philosophy founded on them. The term 'end of Vedas' refers to Vedānta. The need for a cohesive interpretation of the entire corpus of Upanishads led to the development of deliberately held, unique, and individualised philosophical stances among those who interpreted this sacred text. They then developed their own philosophical systems by building upon some of the ideas presented in the many Upanishads. They then arranged and systematised the Upanishads' doctrines in accordance with these. Thus, a Vedānta school emerged as an intellectual tradition. Therefore, there naturally arose corresponding variances among the doctrines of the philosophers adhering to the Vedānta school, based upon the differing viewpoints regarding which of the several doctrines in the Upanishads was recognised as the fundamental truth. The three main schools of Vedānta are Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita. They offer the broadest range of philosophical perspectives that might arise from the interpretation of the Prasthānatrayi, or the triune authority of the Vedānta, throughout the medieval era of Indian history. The medieval period saw the emergence and development of



different Vedānta schools, each presenting distinct interpretations and philosophies based on the foundational texts and commentaries. Vedānta philosophy shaped the understanding of Hindu philosophy, emphasising concepts such as non-duality (Advaita), non-duality (Viśiṣṭādvaita), and dualism (Dvaita).

## Keywords

Pramāna, Dharma-bhūta-jñāna , Prapatti, Cit, Acit, Māyā, Bhakti

## Discussion

### 4.2.1 Introduction

► Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita emphasises qualified monism; Madhva's Dvaita stresses dualism

Rāmānuja and Madhva are two prominent thinkers within the Vedānta tradition. Their teaching not only shaped theological debates but also offered insights into the nature of reality. Rāmānuja, the eleventh century South Indian philosopher, is the chief proponent of Viśiṣṭādvaita. He provides a systematic theistic interpretation of the philosophy of the Vedas and he advocates epistemic and soteriological significance of *bhakti*, or devotion to a personal God. The system is also called Udayavedānta, because it accepts both Prastānatraya and Tamil Prabhāntas. It is combination of reason and faith. According to him absolute is an organic unity. It is a concrete whole (Viśiṣṭa) of which jīva and prakṛti are Viśeṣaṇas. Rāmānuja's two major contribution to philosophical writings are *Śrī Bhāṣya* and *Vedārthasaṅgraha*. His major aim was to expound and popularise the cult of Vaiṣṇavism. The philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita lies in holding the fact that Brahman qualified by cit and acit is the only reality and this Brahman is indicated by Rāmānuja as Narayana or Vishnu. Madhva, known for his radical dualism hailed from Karnataka. The Dvaita Vedānta of Madhva upheld realism in Indian thought against the forces of idealism and acosmism following the collapse of the Sāṅkhya and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika realisms due to the dialectic assaults of Advaitins. For the previous seven centuries, it has therefore had to engage in a battle royal on its own turf against Indian monism.

► Dvaita's rise over Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita

The Rāmānuja School fully faded into obscurity as the Dvaita system rose to prominence as a top-tier philosophical system with recognition throughout all of India. The eminent intellectuals of the Sankara and Madhva schools were clearly superior to the logical and dialectical thinkers of the Viśiṣṭādvaita, according to Dasgupta. Madhva's philosophy asserts an absolute distinction between Brahman, individual souls and the material world. Both Rāmānuja and Madhva provides a comprehensive system of thought that addressed fundamental questions about the nature of existence, the role of devotion, and the ultimate aim of human life. Their philosophy highlights the spiritual fulfilment and quest for ultimate truth.

## 4.2.2 Viśiṣṭādvaita of Rāmānuja

► Rāmānuja reconciled Ālvārs' devotion with Vedānta.

Rāmānuja (1017 to 1137 C.E) was born at Śrīperumbūdur, Tamil Nadu. He reconciled the Prastānatraya with the theism and philosophy of Ālvārs poet-saints. The Ālvārs are ancient Vaiṣṇava poet-saints of South India. They poured out, in the regional language of Tamil, their love of God and their vision and experiences of the divine through ecstatic, soul-stirring and moving metaphors and symbols. The collection of the hymns of these Ālvārs consists of four thousand verses, which is known as Nālāyira-divya-prabandham (The Book of Four-Thousand Divine Stanzas). It contains the four thousand songs of the Vaishnavite saints. These songs are regarded as the primary source book for the philosophy of Rāmānuja and his followers. The Ālvārs were succeeded by the theologian-philosophers called Alagiyas or the Achaaryas who provided a philosophical basis for the personal theism of the Ālvārs and tried to reconcile bhakti with the Vedānta.

### 4.2.2.1 Metaphysics

In Rāmānuja's metaphysical scheme, the central idea put forth is that reality is non-dual but qualified by diversity (Viśiṣṭa). Brahman, the ultimate reality is not abstract, indeterminate, qualityless or pure differenceless being, as Sankara holds. It is purely a personal God with attributes and qualities (saviśeṣa). Brahman is identified with Vishnu or Narayana and is endowed with qualities (saguṇa) including omniscience, omnipotence, benevolence and infinite bliss. The Absolute is Brahman, and it is He who has for His body the individual



► Reality is non-dual but qualified by diversity

souls and the material world. When Brahman exists with its body, the individual souls and the material world in a subtler and finer form, it is called the Brahman in the causal state (kāranāvasthā). When it exists with its body, the world and souls in the ordinary manifested form, it is called Brahman in the effect state (kāryāvasthā). Brahman is both the material cause (upadana karana) and efficient cause (nimittā karana) of the world. Rāmānuja believed in satkāryavāda. The effect is simply a different outcome of the original cause. Therefore, the manifested world of matter and souls that make up the body of God is considered to be the result of a previous existence in a more subtle or refined state. Unlike Sankara, Rāmānuja accepts the reality of the world. The world is real, dependent and continuous manifestation of Brahman. The world was created for God's pleasure and to help the individual souls fulfil their ultimate goal.

► The three primary categories are known as tattva-traya

Rāmānuja's metaphysics, as articulated in his Viśiṣṭādvaita includes a detailed analysis of substance and categories. He broadly classifies reality into three primary categories and they are as follows:

1. achit (matter)
2. chit (soul)
3. God (Īśvara)

The three together are known as tattva-traya. The first two are absolutely dependent on God, and they are the attributes of God. The supported entities, the Jīva-Jagat, are incapable of separate existence from God the supporter (prthak-siddhi-anarha). The inseparable relation between the body and the soul, between a substance and its attributes, and between parts and its whole is known as Aprthaksiddhi. It is an inner, vital, inseparable and organic relation.

► The division of Acit as Prakṛti, Kala and Śuddha-satva

Acit is again classified as:

1. Prakṛti: Prakṛti containing the three qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas is admitted as the primal matter and is completely dependent on God. Prakṛti along with its three guṇas passes through many stages and at last exhibits the phenomenal world. And it is that which produces happiness and misery in accordance with a man's destiny (adrṣṭa) and good or bad deeds.

2. Kāla (time): Kāla, or time, is devoid of the three guṇas (sattva, rajas, tamas). It resides within the Supreme Being, and through time, the Supreme Being activates Prakṛti, which is submerged within Him, leading to the evolution of various categories.
3. Śuddha-satva: It is the pure immaterial stuff made up of pure sattva. The ideal world and the bodies of God and of eternal and liberated souls are made up of this stuff.

As mentioned in the epistemological viewpoint of Rāmānuja the self is distinct from knowledge and objects. The self is an eternal, atomic, self-luminous and self-conscious subject possessing dharma-bhūta-jñāna as its eternal attribute. It is the eternal substratum of consciousness, but it is not pure consciousness. All individual souls are pervaded by God and form the body of God. On liberation when they realise themselves as the body of God, they only become similar to God but do not merge into him as the Advaitins believe. According to Rāmānuja, all objects are real and even in a dream or an illusion it is always the real which is presented to consciousness. It is also wrong to hold that the pure subject or the pure object can never be an object of consciousness. Ramanuja's establishment of the body-soul (Sarīra-Sarīrī) relationship between Brahman and the Universe not only solidifies the logical connection of an irrevocable union between them, but it also establishes the ontological foundation for his ethical and devotional doctrines, which emphasise serving God as the pinnacle of a Jīva's destiny.

► The self is distinct, eternal, pervaded by God

► Rāmānuja views knowledge as relational

#### 4.2.2.2 Viśiṣṭādvaita Epistemology- Sources of Knowledge

Rāmānuja accepts three sources of knowledge; perception, inference and Verbal testimony. He believes that knowledge always involves difference and functions as both a substance and an attribute. It is a substance because it possesses the qualities of contraction and expansion and it is also an attribute because it belongs to a self or to God. Knowledge is never for itself, but is always for another, for the self. While the self is self-luminous and can reveal itself, it cannot reveal objects. In contrast, knowledge can reveal both itself and its object. For Rāmānuja, all knowledge is intrinsically valid



or self-valid (Svataḥprāmāṇyavāda). In his view the knower, knowledge and the object known are distinct but related entities. The self is the knower and knowledge are the means through which the self apprehends objects. This triadic relationship emphasises that knowledge is a relational process involving the self and the world.

► Discrimination is essential to all knowledge

Rāmānuja admits the distinction between determinate and indeterminate perception. Indeterminate perception is not the bare apprehension of an absolutely undifferentiated object. All knowledge involves some differentiation. Discrimination is essential to all knowledge. Even in indeterminate perception the object is perceived together with its class character, which differs from the Nyāya theory of perception. Although he differs slightly from the Nyāya theory of perception, he agrees with the Nyāya theory of inference.

► Rāmānuja supports the combination of action, knowledge, and devotion

Rāmānuja considers scripture (śruti) as a means of knowledge, or pramāṇa. Scripture, which includes the Vedas, is a specific set of texts that are self-justifying. It guides people to understand and recognise entities like Brahman by showing them how to perceive Brahman. Without scripture, one would not know what to look for. However, sensory perception cannot confirm the accuracy of scripture's contents, and reason alone cannot provide proof of its truth. Rāmānuja adds a unique perspective to Indian philosophy by stating that bhakti (devotion) is itself a form of knowledge. According to Rāmānuja, knowing Brahman involves directly perceiving it. Unlike Sankara, he supports the combination of action, knowledge, and devotion (karma-jñāna-samucchaya). Thus, Rāmānuja's approach highlights the important role of scripture and devotion as a means to attain true knowledge.

► Knowledge always belongs to and exists for the self

The self is a self-conscious subject and its essence is knowledge. But it is not pure-consciousness as the Advaitins believe. There is nothing like pure-consciousness, as knowledge is always qualified; it belongs to the self and points to an object. Unlike the self which is atomic, changeless and self-conscious, knowledge is an all pervading attribute of the self which contracts and expands, but cannot know itself or the object it reveals. Knowledge is called dharma-bhūta-jñāna, meaning it always belongs to and exists for the self. It is co-eternal with the self. Rāmānuja believes all knowledge is valid and matches its object. Errors occur due to misperception, known as Satkhyāti or Yatharthakhyāti. Unlike Sankara,

who holds that erroneous objects are neither real nor unreal (anirvachaniya khyāti), Rāmānuja argues that error involves the misperception of real objects and thus the objects of erroneous cognition are real in some context.

► Balanced approach of Rāmānuja's epistemology

Thus, Rāmānuja's epistemology integrates sensory perception, logical inference and scriptural testimony and also recognises the vital role of divine grace and devotion in search of true knowledge. His approach provides a balanced view that affirms the reality of the world and the importance of spiritual practice.

#### 4.2.2.3 Theory of Causality

Rāmānuja's theory of causality is called Satkāryavāda or Parināmavāda. It says, the effect pre-exists in the cause before its manifestation. Thus, the universe pre-existed in the Brahman. The creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world is controlled by Brahman. Even as curd is a real transformation of milk, so is the world a real transformation of God. He advocates Brahmaparināmavāda which states that the entire universe including matter and individual souls are a real modification of Brahman. The individual souls and matter are entirely dependent on God and are controlled by God from within; just as a body is controlled from within by the soul. Creation means that the subtle prakṛti evolves into gross elements and the souls become embodied due to their past karma. Creation is also thus a process by which the souls reap the fruits of their past deeds. Rāmānuja considers the creation and dissolution of the world as the līlā of God.

► The entire universe is a real modification of Brahman

#### 4.2.2.4 God

In Viśiṣṭādvaita of Rāmānuja, God is identified with the absolute. God may be viewed in two stages; as cause and effect. In the state of dissolution (pralaya), God remains as the cause with the subtle matter and the unembodied souls forming his body. In the causal state (kāranāvastā) the whole universe lies latent in him. In creation (sṛṣṭi), the subtle matter becomes gross and the souls become embodied according to their karmas. In the effect state (kāryavastā) the whole universe becomes manifest. God is the immanent inner controller (antaryaami), the qualified substance (prakāri) who is himself changeless and is the unmoved mover of this world process.

► God is the absolute, immanent and inner controller of the universe



As in the case of a normal individual where only the body undergoes change and the soul is changeless, so does only the body of God undergo change, while he himself as their essence remains changeless. His attributes are inseparable from him and are absolutely dependent on him.

► God is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe

God is the transcendent and perfect personality. He has a divine body (aprākṛtadehaviśiṣṭa). It is karma and not embodiment which is the cause of bondage. God, though embodied is not bound as he is the Lord of karma. He is devoid of all demerit and possesses all merits. He has infinite knowledge and bliss. He has a divine body and is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. God is Narayana and his consort is Lakshmi, the symbol of power and mercy. He lives in Vaikunta which is made of pure sattva or nityavibhuti. He is knowledge to the ignorant, power to the powerless, mercy to the guilty, grace to the afflicted, parental affection to the impure, perennial attachment to those who fear separation, nearness to those who yearn for him and kindness to all. The world is the result of His playful spontaneity (līlā) and He is absolutely benevolent and His qualities are for the sake of others rather than for Himself.

Though one in himself, God manifests in five forms to help his devotees:

1. As the inner controller (antaryaamin)
2. As the transcendent personal Lord (Para)
3. As the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe he reveals himself through the four-fold Vyuha form.
4. When he descends down on this earth in human or animal form to protect the good and punish the wicked and preserve the dharma, he is Vibhava or Avataara.
5. When he takes the form of idols enshrined in the recognised temples like Shrirangam so that his devotees might get the opportunities to serve him physically, he is archāvatāra.

#### 4.2.2.5 Viśiṣṭādvaita doctrine of Jīva

Rāmānuja considers chit or the individual soul as an attribute or mode of God (Īśvara) and forms part of His body,

► Souls are eternal, real, embody karmas, reborn until release

yet it is also a spiritual substance in itself and absolutely real. The self is embodied in the state of creation. In the state of dissolution, it is tinged with past karmas and become embodied to reap the fruits of its karmas. However, the soul remains unchanged in its nature through all processes, including birth and death. It is reborn many times into the world and departs from it, maintaining its identity throughout. During each pralaya, or world destruction, the forms of the souls are destroyed, but the souls themselves are indestructible. They carry the consequences of their past actions and are reborn with appropriate attributes. Birth or death refers to the soul's association with or dissociation from bodies, affecting its intelligence. Until release, souls are attached to bodies, even during pralaya, where they are connected to a subtle, undifferentiated state.

► The soul is the real knower, real agent and real enjoyer

The souls in samsara are either seeking enjoyment or deliverance. Until the soul attains release, it must be reborn to experience the results of karma. The essential nature of the soul is self-consciousness, which is not just an attribute that could disappear. Self-consciousness is fundamental to the soul's being. Without this self-awareness, there would be no reason to seek liberation. In both bondage and release, the soul retains its nature as a knowing subject (jñātā). The soul is also an active agent, meaning it can perform actions and thus experience their consequences. However, just because the soul can act, it does not mean it always does. As long as souls are attached to bodies due to karma, their actions are largely determined. When freed from bodies, they fulfil their desires by mere will. In liberation the soul enjoys absolute bliss untouched by karmas. According to Rāmānuja, the soul is conceived as a real knower, real agent and real enjoyer. Individual self is only a part or a mode of God. They are organically related to God. If souls share in the divine nature, they must have once had freedom and purity. However, it is unknown how they lost this and came under the power of karma. Ramanuja explains that neither reason nor scripture can tell us how karma first bound the souls because the cosmic process is beginningless (anadi).

Rāmānuja describes three classes of souls:

- Nitya-mukta (eternally free) - souls which were never bound and are ever free from karma and prakṛti and are in constant service of the Lord.
- Mukta (Released or Liberated) - souls who were once bound but who obtained liberation through their action, knowledge and devotion.



- Baddha (Bound) - souls who are wandering on account of ignorance and bad karmas.

#### 4.2.2.6 Bondage and Liberation

► Karma binds the soul to the cycle of rebirth

In Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita, ignorance is the root cause of bondage for the soul. Actions performed under ignorance create karma, binding the soul to the cycle of rebirth through good and bad deeds. These actions arise from desires and attachment to material pleasures. To escape samsara, the soul must remove its karmic particles. Rāmānuja teaches that this is achieved through a combination of bhakti (devotion) and knowledge. Bhakti involves dhyana (meditation) and upāsanā (constant contemplation) of God, which help to focus the mind on the divine and reduce attachment to the material world.

True knowledge, according to Rāmānuja, lies in understanding the nature of Brahman as the Supreme Being. This knowledge is attained through studying scriptures and receiving guidance from a guru. Rāmānuja also emphasises bhakti, which involves complete surrender to God. This surrender purifies the soul and brings it closer to liberation. In addition to knowledge and bhakti, Rāmānuja believes that God's grace is essential for freeing the soul from the cycle of karma and attaining moksha (liberation). This grace, known as prasāda, is the highest form of devotion, called prapatti. Prapatti is seen as the most effective means to attain liberation, relying entirely on God's grace.

► True knowledge, bhakti, prapatti lead to liberation

Rāmānuja advocates three types of Bhaktis and they are;

1. Sādhana Bhakti: practice of devotional means
2. Parā Bhakti: Higher devotion
3. Paramā Bhakti or prapatti: Supreme devotion

Sadhana bhakti is converted to prema bhakti by seven means called sādhanā-saptāka and they are as follows:

1. Viveka (discrimination)
2. Vimoka (resist impulse of passions, anger and sexuality)
3. Abhyāsa (practice of japa, worship)
4. Kriyā (duties to God Rishis, ancestors, man and brute creations)

5. Kalyāna (practice of truth, virtues and kindness)
6. Anavasāda (freedom from despair, pessimism and positive cheerful attitude of mind)
7. Anusraddha (not to yield to excitement, depression and preserve temperament in all situations).

The four stages leading to the attainment of the summum bonum (Latin expression which means ‘highest good’) through prapatti are as follows:

1. Jñāna-dosa: The state in which through the instructions of the teacher the devotee attains self-knowledge in relation to God.
2. Varana-dosa: The state in which the devotee adopts God in a spirit of helpless surrender as the only protector.
3. Prapti-dosa: The state in which he realises God.
4. Prapyanubhava-dosa: The state in which, having realised God, he attains the summum bonum.

By liberation, Rāmānuja does not mean the merging of the individual soul with the Absolute, instead it is the realisation by the individual soul of its own essential nature as a mode of God. Rāmānuja does not believe in jīvanmukti because karma persists as long as soul remains associated with the body. The liberated soul only becomes similar to Brahman, not identical with Brahman. Vaikunta is depicted as a divine realm where the liberated souls coexist in harmony sharing the collective bliss of His presence.

► The realisation of soul's essential nature

► Dvaita Vedānta is realistic, pluralistic, and theistic

### 4.2.3 Madhva's Dvaita

**D**vaita Vedānta is the strongest response to the excessively idealistic and almost solipsistic movement that dominated Sri Sankara's non-dualistic Vedānta. It is a philosophical system that emphasises realistic, pluralistic, and theistic doctrine. The principles of Dvaita Vedānta are derived from important sources, including the Puranas, the Mahabharata, and the three authoritative prasthānas, or fundamental texts: the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavad Gītā, and the Vedānta sutras. Madhva, who developed Dvaita Vedānta, disagreed with Sankara's ideas, which were widely accepted at the time. Despite Rāmānuja's theistic uprising against Sankara, Madhva



disagreed with him on numerous aspects of Theistic theory. Madhva aimed to provide a fresh philosophical outlook and inspire new ways of thinking for his followers, addressing gaps he saw in both Sankara's and Rāmānuja's systems.

Madhva was an Indian philosopher and theologian who lived in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. He was from Tulunād, in Karnataka. Along with Sankara and Rāmānuja, he is regarded as one of the three major exponents of Vedānta philosophy. He produced an in-depth commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā, the Upaniṣads and the Vedas. His teachings have a great impact on Hindu philosophy and culture, especially in South India. Madhva developed an intriguing and self-contained system of Theistic philosophy, worked out its unique characteristics, and established it on a solid foundation of textual support and logical coherence.

► Madhva's contribution to Indian philosophy

His major works are:

- a. Commentary on Brahmasūtra called Madhva-bhāṣya
- b. Anuvyākhyana
- c. Gīta-bhāṣya
- d. Bhāgavta-tātparya-nirnaya
- e. Mahābhārthatātparya-nirnaya
- f. Vishnu-tattva-nirnaya
- g. Tattvodyota

#### 4.2.3.1 Dvaita Metaphysics

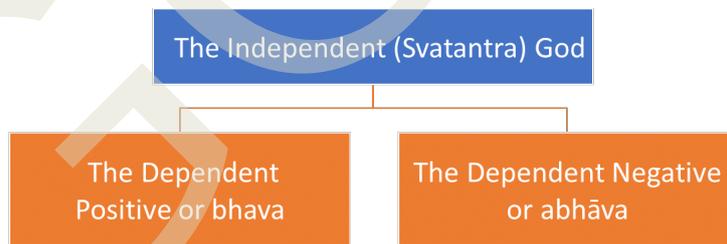
Madhva's metaphysical ideas centre on the concept of bhēda, or difference. According to Madhva, independence, including freedom of action and consciousness, is the highest form of existence. His Dualism recognises two principles: God as independent and everything else as dependent. Even though these principles together constitute reality, Madhva's highest ontological principle is that Brahman is the source of all reality, consciousness, and action in the finite realm. Brahman is described as the ultimate reality, beyond all comparisons. Madhva rejects Sankara's division of reality into three categories such as, prātibhāsika, vyāvahārika, and pāramārthi-

► God is independent and everything else is dependent

ka arguing that the world is not an illusion but a real creation of God. For Madhva, the empirical world is not illusion but a real creation of God. The empirical world has a concrete and objective existence that is not undermined by any higher level of reality and is not a mere appearance.

► Independent reality underlies all other existence

According to Madhva's philosophy, reality (padārtha) is categorised into two main types: independent (svatantra) and dependent (paratantra). The only independent reality is God, who is regarded as the supreme person and exists without relying on anything else. This independent reality is the foundation upon which all other forms of existence are based. Dependent reality includes all entities that rely on the independent reality for their existence. These are classified into two groups: positive (bhāva) and negative (abhāva). Positive entities include conscious beings (cetana), such as individual souls, and unconscious beings (acetana), such as matter and time. Unconscious existence is further divided into three types: eternal entities like the Vedas, entities that are both eternal and non-eternal like prakṛti, time, and space, and non-eternal entities, which are products of prakṛti and are subject to change.



► The five great distinctions (Panchabēda) of Madhva's philosophy

Madhva's philosophy is characterised by a firm stance on unqualified dualism, which is a central aspect of his Dvaita Vedānta. In this system, Madhva emphasises the five great distinctions (Panchabēda) that exist in the universe. The first distinction is between God and the individual soul. In Madhva's view, God is the supreme, independent reality, while individual souls are dependent beings. These souls, though capable of consciousness and possessing free will, are fundamentally different from God in essence and attributes. The second distinction is between God and matter. Madhva asserts that matter, which includes all physical elements and objects in the universe, is distinct from God. While God is the creator and sustainer of matter, He remains separate from it. The third distinction Madhva highlights is between the individual soul and matter. He argues that while souls are conscious enti-

ties, matter is unconscious. This difference in nature sets them apart fundamentally. The fourth distinction is between one soul and another. Madhva believes that each individual soul is unique and has its own distinct identity. Souls differ in their qualities, capacities, and destinies. Lastly, the fifth distinction is between one part of matter and another. Madhva holds that material objects are not identical but vary in their properties and characteristics. This diversity within the material world underscores the variety and complexity of creation.

► Vishnu as Supreme; jīvas distinct, dependent, hierarchical

Madhvāchārya, like Rāmānuja, adopted the path of Vaiṣṇavism, which emphasises devotion to Vishnu as the Supreme Being. In Madhvāchārya's doctrine, God is viewed as a personal and saguna entity, meaning that God possesses specific qualities and attributes. He identified Vishnu as the metaphysical incarnation of the Vedic Brahman, the ultimate reality. According to Madhvāchārya, Vishnu is the only Supreme Being, distinct and separate from all other beings and entities. Jīvas (individual souls) are always dependent on the Supreme Being, Vishnu. The jīvas are considered reflections or shadows of the divine but are never identical to the divine, even after achieving moksha, or liberation. Each jīva has a nature that reflects some attributes of God, such as truth, consciousness, and happiness, but in varying degrees. Importantly, Madhvāchārya's philosophy asserts that jīvas who attain liberation do not become equal to Brahman (Vishnu) or to one another. There is always a distinction between the Supreme Being and the individual souls, and among the souls themselves. This distinction underscores the fundamental dualism in Madhvāchārya's system, where the ultimate reality is not a single undifferentiated unity but includes distinct, hierarchically ordered beings.

#### 4.2.3.2 Dvaita Epistemology

In the philosophy of Madhvāchārya, two types of knowledge are discussed: Sākṣijñāna and Vṛttijñāna. Sākṣijñāna refers to the knowledge or awareness that is witnessed directly by the self, also known as the Sākṣin or witness. It is considered a form of intuitive perception that transcends sensory and mental activities. The Sākṣin is not merely an observer but is seen as an essential instrument for validating all forms of knowledge. This concept emphasises that true knowledge must be validated by this internal witness, which ensures that the knowledge is not only apparent but also valid and reliable.

- ▶ Two types of knowledge Sākṣījñāna and Vṛtījñāna

Sākṣījñāna serves as the ultimate criterion for truth. It is beyond any doubt and error, and is considered the foundation for any valid epistemological inquiry. Vṛtījñāna, on the other hand, is the knowledge acquired through mental processes. This type of knowledge is mediated by the mind and senses and is subject to errors and doubts. Unlike Sākṣījñāna, Vṛtījñāna is not self-validating. The validity of such knowledge depends on the correctness of the mental and sensory processes involved. It is also distinguished by its provisional nature, as it can be corrected or refuted by further investigation or the testimony of the Sākṣin.

- ▶ Madhva accepts three pramāṇas, pratyakṣa, anumāna, and śabda

Madhva accepts three primary sources of knowledge: perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāna), and scriptural testimony (śabda). He views that these are essential for understanding reality. However, Madhva views comparison (upamāna) not as a separate source but as a subset of inference. Pratyakṣa involves direct perception through the senses, allowing individuals to have direct contact with an object and its attributes. Madhva rejects the distinction between Savikalpaka (determinate perception) and Nirvikalpaka (indeterminate perception) that is recognised in the Advaita and Nyāya systems. According to Madhva, all perceptions inherently involve some level of determination or definiteness, as they always include specific attributes and characteristics of the objects perceived. For him, perception is limited because it only deals with facts accessible to the senses. Similarly, inference, while useful for organising and testing information gathered from other sources, does not introduce new facts. Therefore, Madhva argues that perception and inference alone cannot fully explain the complexities of the universe.

- ▶ Emphasis on the scriptural testimony or knowledge from Vedas

For Madhva, the scriptural testimony or knowledge from Vedas are important for obtaining exact knowledge of reality. He emphasises the authority of the Vedas in their entirety, without differentiating between the hymns, the Brahmanas, and the Upanishads. Madhva makes a distinction between two types of testimony: one based on personal authority (pauruṣeya), which can be fallible, and another that is not attributed to any individual author (apauruṣeya), which is considered absolutely valid and infallible. Madhva holds the Vedas to be apauruṣeya, meaning they are not created by any person and are therefore authoritative and infallible.

The knowledge, regardless of the means by which it is obtained, directly evidences the existence of the object being



► Madhva upholds the intrinsic validity of knowledge

apprehended. The tools or instruments that facilitate this apprehension do not themselves appear within the apprehension process. This establishes a direct and immediate relationship between the knower and the known. According to Madhva, every apprehension of a fact is valid and implies the existence of that fact, even if it only exists for the moment of apprehension. If we consider a knowledge invalid, it is because another valid knowledge contradicts it. For example, we initially perceive sunrise and sunset as actual events until further knowledge informs us that the sun neither rises nor sets. Madhva upholds the intrinsic validity of knowledge and disputes theories that regard knowledge as merely illusory or a mere appearance.

► Error happens when something appears different from its actual nature

Madhva's theory of error is known as 'Abhinavanyathākya-ti,'. It provides a distinct explanation of illusion. According to this theory, an illusion occurs when something appears different from its actual nature. Madhva argues that for knowledge to be considered erroneous, it must still reveal some aspect of reality and indicate objective existence. This means that even in cases of illusion, something real is presented to consciousness, although its nature may be misinterpreted due to sensory defects or other errors in the means of knowledge. In instances of false perception, such as seeing a rope as a snake or a shell as silver, the error arises because the observer does not perceive the object fully. This incomplete perception leads the observer to confuse the given data with something similar but different. Thus, every case of illusion involves two positive entities: the actual object (e.g., the rope or shell) and the mistakenly perceived object (e.g., the snake or silver). This theory clearly affirms that the world is not unreal in its entirety; rather, there is a real basis for what is perceived, even if it is mistaken for something else.

► Liberation means uncovering the veil of māyā and finding inherent happiness

#### 4.2.3.3 Soteriology or Theory of Salvation

Svabhavajñānavāda is the term used by Madhva to refer to his theory of the origin of bondage, which holds that souls are ignorant of their own real nature and are dependent on the Supreme Brahman. Madhvāchārya says that because of ignorance or avidyā brought on by māyā, jīva cannot perceive its expression of essential characteristics and is hence ignorant of its true essence. For every jīva, liberation means uncovering the veil of māyā and discovering its inherent happiness. In Madhva's opinion, only through God's mercy and jīva's

own self-effort may one attain liberation. Mukti-yogyas (jīvas qualified for liberation) can withdraw themselves from worldly pleasures and develop faith in God by engaging in vairāgya practice.

► Different paths for attaining liberation

Jñāna (knowledge), Bhakti (devotion), and Karma (positive work) are the three aspects of self-effort that make jīva worthy of nirvana. Such sādhanā is carried out by Sādhaka using śravaṇā, manana, and nididhyāsana. The Sādhaka achieves emancipation through the grace of God through this sādhanā. Madhva prescribes various sādhanās or spiritual practices to help individuals towards the path of devotion and ultimately attain liberation. Vairāgya is the primary requisite of a true aspirant. It refers to developing a sense of detachment towards worldly pleasure and material possession. This includes renunciation and discipline. Sadachara or righteous conduct is yet another pre-requisite which includes moral living and owing to one's duties and responsibility. This is followed by upāsana, which includes deity worship and meditation. Then comes tapas or self-control, seva or service to God and finally satsanga or association with wise, which implies associating with other devotees and spiritual seekers.

► The key to spiritual liberation is Aparok-sajñāna

Madhva gave supreme importance for bhakti, or devotion to God, considering it as the central path to liberation. He believed that for true devotion and wisdom to flourish, one must achieve control over bodily impulses, maintain a serene mind, practice impartial behaviour, and cultivate a deep love for God. According to Madhva, the key to spiritual liberation is Aparoksajñāna, which refers to the direct perception or realisation of God. This realisation occurs when an individual perceives God in His aspect as the Bimba, or the reflected image of God within oneself. It is the starting point of mukti, or liberation, where the soul begins to experience the infinite joy of self-realisation and God-realisation. This marks the initial stage of moksha, where the soul attains a state of eternal freedom and union with the divine. For Madhva, bhakti is not just an emotional expression but a disciplined practice that involves both the mind and the heart, leading to the ultimate goal of liberation.



## Summarized Overview

Rāmānuja was the pioneer of the theistic school of thought that holds God is the Absolute and the Absolute is God. His philosophy is qualified non-dualism. The ultimate reality is one and indivisible. He thoroughly acknowledges the distinctions between God, jīva and prakṛti. Jīva and Prakṛti are united with Brahman and are dependent on God for its existence. He emphasises the importance of bhakti and self-surrender in the attainment of moksha. True knowledge and bhakti are the ways to liberation and he highlights the importance of true knowledge, which can only be attained through the study of Vedic scriptures. In contrast to the strict monism espoused in Sankara's Advaita, Rāmānuja maintains that matter and individual souls are different yet integral aspects of Brahman.

Similar to Rāmānuja, Madhva has applied his intellectualism to the defence of a devotional mind-set that is deeply influenced by the highest human emotions. Madhva subscribes to the Atyantabheda School of absolute difference. There are no two objects alike. The objects of the world are entirely different from one another and their attributes are also different. The fivefold difference is key to reality. Though it is possible to distinguish between the object and Difference, Difference is inherent in the thing. Madhva proposes a category called visesa, and its purpose is to create differentiation where there is not a true difference. He advocates the difference between Brahman, souls and matter. The world of multiplicity is an ultimate reality. The individual souls are forever distinct from Brahman and retain their individuality even in liberation. Liberation is attained through pure devotion.

## Self-Assessment

1. Explain the nature of reality in Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita?
2. Give a brief account of Rāmānuja's theory of knowledge?
3. How do Madhva conceive of the theory of error?
4. What are the two types of knowledge accepted by Madhva?
5. Why the scriptural testimony is more important than other pramāṇas in Madhva's philosophy?
6. What is the major difference between Ramanuja's and Madhva's theory?
7. What is the role of sādhanās in attaining liberation?

## Assignments

1. Describe the concept of 'qualified non-dualism' (Viśiṣṭādvaita) in the context of Rāmānuja's metaphysics. How does it differ from Sankara's Advaita Vedānta?
2. Explain the relationship between the Brahman and the world in Rāmānuja's philosophy. How does he address the nature of reality?
3. Compare and contrast Rāmānuja's approach to knowledge with that of Sankara's Advaita Vedānta. How does Rāmānuja validate the perception of the material world?
4. Discuss the role of 'Śabda' (verbal testimony) in Rāmānuja's epistemology. Why is it considered a crucial means of knowledge?
5. Discuss the role of 'prapatti' (self-surrender) in achieving liberation in Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita. How does it differ from other paths like karma or jñāna?
6. Explain the fundamental tenets of Madhva's Dvaita Vedānta. How does Dvaita Vedānta differ from other schools of Vedānta like Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita?
7. Describe the concept of 'Panchabēda' or fivefold differences in Madhva's Dvaita Vedānta. How does this concept define the nature of reality?
8. What is the concept of Moksha (liberation) in Madhva's Dvaita Vedānta? How does it differ from the concept of liberation in Advaita Vedānta?

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## Suggested Reading

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## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU

## UNIT 3

# Vallabha and Nimbārka Schools of Vedānta Philosophy

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ understand the nature of supreme reality put forth by Vallabha and Nimbārka
- ▶ get a glimpse of the historical backgrounds and fundamental theories put forth by Vallabha and Nimbārka
- ▶ get an overview of Vallabha and Nimbārka metaphysics
- ▶ reflect on the general estimate of their soteriology
- ▶ analyse the significance of bhakti and grace by Vallabha and Nimbārka

### Background

Realising the Non-dual Sat-Cit-Ananda, the source of all existence, is the goal of all Vedānta schools. The only way the various Vedic schools diverge is in how they define oneness in regard to diversity. As a result, every school of Vedānta has its own interpretation of how unity with diversity relates to one another. Despite these interpretations and differences, all schools of Vedānta reject the existence of anything other than Sat-Cit-Ananda. The schools of Vedānta that are not Sankaraites are associated with the worship of Viṣṇu, Shiva, or Shakti. The significance of devotion, or Bhakti, as the main way to attain liberation is emphasised in both the Nimbārka and Vallabha Vedānta. The simultaneous difference and non-difference between the individual soul and the ultimate reality is emphasised by Nimbārka. His ideology emphasises how salvation and spiritual advancement depend on divine mercy. According to Vallabha Vedānta, both the universe and individual souls are real and are just pure, non-dual expressions of Brahman. He declares that the universe is real and that it is divine. With an emphasis on Kṛiṣṇa worship, he was influential in reforming and uniting the many Vaishnava sects.



## Keywords

Bhedabeda, Dvaitādvaita, Śuddhādvaita, Pustimarg, Bhakti, Svabhāvikābheda, Avikṛtapariṇāmavāda, Jīva, Akṣara Brahman

► Brahman is both advaita and dvaita

Nimbārka also known as Nimbādiya or Niyamananda is the founder of Dvaitādvaita or the Dualistic-nondualistic school of Vedānta. He was an influential philosopher and his teachings were deeply influenced by the ancient Vedic texts especially the Upaniṣhads, Brahma Sūtras and the Bhagavad Gītā. His teachings can be traced from the famous book Vedāntapārijātasaurabha, which is a commentary on Brahma-sūtra and the Dasasloki or the Siddhantarātna. Nimbārka asserts that Brahman has a dual nature, meaning that it is both advaita and dvaita, nirguṇa and nirakara, or arupa and svarupa. He recognises Lord Kṛiṣṇa as the Highest Brahman, based on the assumption that he is Ramākānta and Purusottama. He possesses limitless natural abilities and qualities such as omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence.

### 4.3.1 Metaphysics

► The difference-in-non-difference

Dvaitādvaita, which means ‘duality in unity,’ is only a synonym for Bheda-bheda, and this denotes difference-in-non-difference. This concept explains how Brahman, the ultimate reality, presents itself as the multifaceted realm of being, composed of Jīvas (individual souls) and Jagat (the world). Brahman is the one ultimate existence, serving as both the material and efficient cause of the world, meaning it is the source and the agent that brings the universe into being. A key difference between Rāmānuja’s Dvaita (duality) and Nimbārka’s interpretation is that Nimbārka rejects the idea that the universe and Jīvas are attributes (Viśesana) of God, as the term ‘attribute’ implies that its possessor is different from others. Since Brahman encompasses everything that exists, it cannot be identified by any attribute. Although Nimbārka does not oppose the view of the world being called Sarīra (body) and Brahman being called Sarīrī (soul), he believes it is more accurate to refer to Brahman as both different and non-different. Therefore, he calls his interpretation of Vedānta as Dvaitādvaita (diversity in unity) rather than Viśiṣṭādvaita.

Nimbārka divided reality into conscious and unconscious

categories. The only other conscious existence besides Brahman is Jīva. Non-conscious entity is of three and they are:

► The bodies of emancipated beings

**Aprakṛta or Super-Natural Stuff:** This non-material substance is not derived from Prakṛti (primordial matter). It serves as the basis for the bodies of emancipated beings, the Lord's abode, and the various objects encountered in that realm.

► Time is eternal, no beginning or end

**Kala or Time:** Kala, or time, is an eternal and infinite entity that has no beginning or end. It is a fundamental aspect of reality and influences everything created from Prakṛti. Time is regulated by Puruṣottama, the highest being, who uses it as an instrument for creation, sustenance, and disintegration. Kala is essential for understanding all temporal concepts such as past, future, present, late, and soon. It is the instrument used by the Lord for creation, sustenance, and disintegration.

► The Prakṛti is primordial matter from which the physical universe is formed

**Prakṛti or Primordial Stuff:** Prakṛti is the primordial matter from which the physical universe is formed. It is completely dependent on God and serves as the material for His cosmic play. Prakṛti undergoes modifications in two forms: Sṛṣṭi and Pralaya. Sṛṣṭi, or projection, refers to the creation and manifestation of the universe. Pralaya, or dissolution, involves the universe returning to its causal condition, a state of potentiality before the next cycle of creation begins.

► Creation and destruction cyclically originate from Brahman

The Lord is the true creator in all cases, with ether, air, fire, water, and earth originating from Him at the beginning of creation. The process of destruction is the reverse of creation, where earth submerges in water, water in fire, fire in air, air in ether, and finally, ether merges back into the Lord. This cyclical process highlights the continuous nature of creation and destruction. The term *acit*, also referred to as *Jagat* (the world), is the outcome of this process and remains an integral component of Brahman, indicating the interconnectedness of the physical universe and Brahman. According to Nimbārka's philosophy, the ultimate reality is Kṛiṣṇa, identified as Brahman, who is devoid of all six types of alterations (*vikāras*) including birth, existence, development, transformation, decay, and death. Kṛiṣṇa is unaffected by the *kleśas* (afflictions) and the fruition of karma (actions), and He transcends the cycle of cause and effect that governs the material world. Brahman manifests through meditation and passionate devotion, allowing devotees to experience Kṛiṣṇa's presence by engaging in deep meditation and expressing intense love and devotion.



► Natural difference and non-difference between Jīva, Jagat, and Brahman

Nimbārka advocates Satkāryavāda, similar to Sāṅkhya philosophy. He states that cause and effect are not the same. Brahman is the cause, while Jīva and Jagat are the effects. Brahman and Jīva differ like a part differ from the whole. Jīva, as a part of Brahman, experiences both bondage and salvation. Jagat is gross and unconscious, yet Jīva and Jagat are ultimately Brahman. There is a natural difference and non-difference between Jīva, Jagat, and Brahman. Non-difference means essential dependence, not absolute identity. Jīva and Jagat depend on Brahman but are not identical to it. The relationship of difference and non-difference is consistent and real. Scriptures confirm the natural difference and non-difference between Jīva, Jagat, and Brahman. Nimbārka's philosophy shows that difference and non-difference coexist harmoniously.

► The relationship between Jīva, Jagat, and Brahman is harmonious

The bhedābheda relation or the difference and non-difference can be illustrated using the analogy of a tree and its branches. In this analogy, Brahman is represented by the tree trunk. Jīva and Jagat are represented by the branches. The trunk is the source and material cause of the branches. The branches rely on the trunk for their existence. Without the trunk, the branches cannot grow or function. This illustrates how branches are connected to the trunk and share its essence. The branches are distinct from the trunk but cannot exist without it. Similarly, Jīva and Jagat are connected to Brahman. They share Brahman's essence while maintaining their individuality. Nimbārka's philosophy holds that Jīva, Jagat, and Brahman are both different and non-different. Their relationship is natural and harmoniously integrated.

#### 4.3.1.1 Brahman

► Srikṛiṣṇa is the ultimate reality

Nimbārka believes that Srikṛiṣṇa is the ultimate reality. The word 'Brahman' refers to Him, and He is the greatest of all due to his limitless, incomprehensible, innate nature, qualities, abilities, and so on. The universe's beginning and extinction are solely the result of Brahman. Every form and name originate from Him and returns to Him. Nimbārka in his Vedānta-pārijātasaurabha defines Brahman as "Brahman is that from whom arise the origin and the rest of this world."

Brahman possesses the attributes of truth, knowledge and infinitude and only way of knowing Brahman is through scriptures. According to Nimbārka, Brahman cannot be known through inference as Brahman is beyond the reach of the mind

► Veda alone is the only means for knowing Brahman

and senses and inference is a cognitive process dependent on mind which cannot grasp something that is beyond its reach. Inference relies on sensory data but Brahman is non-empirical and not an object of sense perception. Therefore, the Veda alone is the only means by which the creator of the world can be discovered.

► Brahman shows unity and diversity through Vyūhas and Avataras

Nimbārka's view of Brahman combines a personal, loving connection with the divine and acknowledges the balance of unity and diversity in the ultimate reality. According to Nimbārka, Brahman shows Himself in various forms throughout creation. The Vyūhas and Avataras are two ways in which Brahman manifests. Vyūhas are different forms of Brahman used for meditation and to show various stages of creation. Avataras are specific incarnations of Brahman that appear in the world to guide and help. These forms help people understand and connect with the divine in different ways.

There are four Vyūhas:

1. **Vāsudeva** - Supreme Lord and also known as Kṣetrajña
2. **Sañkarṣaṇa** – manifest itself as the individual self.
3. **Pradyumna** – mind of all beings.
4. **Aniruddha**. – manifest itself as the entire universe.

#### 4.3.1.2 Jīva

► Jīva is a conscious entity, distinct yet connected to Brahman

Nimbārka considers jīva as an eternal, individual soul which is a conscious entity distinct from Brahman but also inherently connected to it. In his Vedāntakāmadhenu, he described the following qualities of the Jīva: By nature, the Jīva is knowledge; it is atomic, distinct in many bodies; it is infinite and knower; it is dependent on Vishnu and capable of being linked to and separated from a body. As the fundamental aspect of the jīva, knowledge exists in all stages, including walking, dreaming, deep sleep, swooning, and death. Since the soul is knowledge, it naturally acts as a knower, capable of understanding and perceiving reality. There is no contradiction between being knowledge and being a knower because the soul is not just a possessor of knowledge; it is knowledge itself.

Nimbārka's view of the jīva (soul) describes it as an active agent that performs actions according to its desires. This ac-



► Jīva is eternal, conscious, and dependent on Vishnu

tivity continues not only in everyday life but also in the state of salvation. The jīva, as a knower, doer, and enjoyer, is entirely dependent on Vishnu, the Supreme Being, even in salvation. The soul is described as innumerable and atomic in size, meaning there are countless small souls. Each jīva is a part of the Highest Self (Vishnu), sharing some qualities with Him but not being identical to Him. According to Nimbārka, the jīva is eternal, not born, and not subject to death. It is self-conscious, meaning it is aware of itself as the 'I.' The soul resides in the heart but extends throughout the body, experiencing life through it. The essence of the jīva is consciousness, which is both its fundamental nature and its primary attribute. Although the jīva is a free agent with the ability to make choices, this freedom is limited by the will of Īsvara (Vishnu).

► Bound souls suffer due to ignorance; liberated souls experience bliss

Nimbārka admits two types of Jīva and they are:

1. **Baddha** (Bound Soul): They are entangled in the cycle of birth, rebirth (samsara) due to their avidya and attachment to material desires. The ignorance of their true nature is the cause of bondage. The soul is also bound by its past actions (karma), which continue to affect its future lives. As a result, the soul lacks ultimate bliss, experiencing only the transient elements of the material world while being unable to realise true happiness and freedom.
2. **Mukta** (Liberated Soul): They have attained moksha and are no longer bound by the cycle of birth and death. They have realised their true nature and their eternal relationship with Brahman in the liberated state. They experience infinite bliss, freedom and unity with the Divine.

► Blending of dualism and non-dualism

### 4.3.2 Liberation or Moksha

Nimbārka's view on salvation includes ideas from both dualism and non-dualism. He believes that the soul (jīva) is a part of Brahman, meaning it shares the same essential nature as Brahman but still keeps its individuality. The main reason for the soul's bondage is ignorance. This ignorance makes the soul believe it is separate from Brahman and leads it to identify with its body and mind, which are created by Prakṛti (nature). This mistaken identity is called avidya. Because of this false sense of ego, the soul thinks it is independent and acts according to its desires. However, despite this sense of freedom, the soul ultimately experiences sorrow and suffering.

► Bhakti leads to Mukti only after death

Nimbārka stressed that bhakti, or devotion, is the main way to achieve salvation. This devotion should be selfless and focused on serving God, without seeking any personal gain. Even though the jīva (soul) is different from God, it recognises that it shares the same essential nature as God. When the jīva realises this, it can leave behind the cycle of life and death. At this point, the soul becomes free from all past actions (Karma) and reaches Mukti, or liberation. In Nimbārka's teaching, there is no concept of liberation while still alive (Jīvanmukti). Instead, Mukti is achieved only after the soul's current body has died and all past Karma (known as Prarabdha Karma) has been exhausted. This state of Mukti does not refer to the Jīvas' loss of individuality. What the Jīva realises in liberation is 'non-difference in difference' with the Paramātman.

► Two paths to liberation, Jñāna and Bhakti Yoga

Nimbārka teaches two paths to liberation: Jñāna Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. Jñāna Yoga, the path of knowledge, involves understanding one's inner self as part of Brahman, seeing oneself as both different from and non-different from Brahman. When the soul (jīva) breaks free from its connection to Prakṛti (nature), it realises this dual nature and reaches emancipation. The second path, which Nimbārka emphasises as very important, is Bhakti Yoga. Bhakti Yoga, the path of devotion, means fully surrendering to God. This surrender is similar to the concept of prapatti in Rāmānuja's philosophy. Through Bhakti Yoga, the devotee gives themselves entirely to God and achieves liberation. Nimbārka puts forth the concept of Panca-sadhanas for attaining liberation and they are as follows:



### 4.3.3 Vallabāchārya

► Vallabha's Śuddhādvaita sees all as divine

Vallabhachārya was a Telugu Brahmin, whose Advaita philosophy is generally referred as Pustimārga, which means the path of grace. In Vallabha's philosophy, Pusti refers to the grace of God. This grace is received through devotion to God. All the great Vaishnava Acharyas Rāmānuja, Nimbārka and Madhva had preceded Vallabhachārya. His philosophy is Śuddhādvaita, or Pure non-dualism. He has written a commentary on the Brahmasūtra called Anubhāsyā, and his commentary on Bhagavata is called Subōdhini. To him, Brahman is the independent reality and is identified with Sṛīkṛiṣṇa. About the relationship between the two realities, the world and God, he believes that God or Brahman is pure or non-dualistic. The essence of Brahman is existence, knowledge and bliss. Souls and matter are His real manifestations. They are like the parts of the Brahman. He is the abode of all good qualities and includes even the seemingly contradictory qualities. The difference between Sankara Advaita and Vallabha Advaita is that, in Sankara's philosophy, the soul, nature and everything else are Brahman but look different because of the illusion created by the ignorance or avidya and the veil of māyā. In Vallabha's philosophy, the soul, nature and everything else are real but appear distinct from Brahman until one is totally engrossed in the bhakti of Kṛiṣṇa; at that time, everything is realised as God.

#### 4.3.3.1 Metaphysics

► Everything in this universe is an actual expression of Brahman

In metaphysical discussion, Vallabha focus on the concept of 'pure non-dualism' or Śuddhādvaita which is a key to his philosophy. It rejects the idea of Māyā as an illusion separate from Brahman. Brahman, also known as Sat-Chit-Ananda, is pure truth and cannot have any illusion or deception. Only Brahman exists as a separate reality. There is nothing independent of Him; He is perfection in himself. Everything in this universe is actually an expression of Him. Therefore, Māyā is understood as Brahman's true power that creates real effects rather than false appearances. By virtue of His māyā power, He is capable of taking on any form He desires. There are moments when He combines even contradictory qualities. The most important aspect of Śuddhādvaita is the rejection of Māyā as a false or illusory principle. The world created by Brahman is real and not a result of anyone's imagination due

to Avidya, or ignorance. Vallabha accepts the idea of superimposition in a way that maintains the reality of the universe as created by God. Due to Avidya, the Jīva, or individual soul, misunderstands the world. This ignorance is caused by attachments and desires, leading the Jīva to see the world from a self-centred perspective rather than recognising it as a playful manifestation of the Lord.

► Brahman's powers include manifestation and concealment

Brahman possesses endless divine powers. The concepts of Āvirbhāva and Tirobhāva are integral in understanding the dynamic aspects of God's interaction with the world and devotees. Āvirbhāva is the power of manifestation and Tirobhāva is the power of concealment. Creation is undertaken by Brahman using these powers. Āvirbhāva implies that Brahman partially or fully withholds His characteristics as Ānanda and Caitanya and presents Himself as lesser categories (inanimate). Brahman can also manifest as Akṣara, where He greatly suppresses His Ānanda aspect but does not change His essence. As Akṣara, Brahman is the Impersonal Absolute and indwells everything as Antaryāmin, the inner controller. Akṣara, as Puruṣottama, is the foundation from which everything originates. Brahman is the source of all manifestations, and His real nature is not changed but only veiled in creation. Vallabha conceives the whole creation as His Līla, where Brahman hides His true nature. This hidden nature can be revealed only by God's will.

► Jīva possesses Cit and Sat but lacks Ānanda

In Vallabha's philosophy, the Jīva, or individual soul, is an integral part of Brahman. It possesses consciousness (Cit) and existence (Sat) but lacks bliss (Ānanda) in its ignorant state. Vallabha conceives Jīva as both the enjoyer and the agent of actions. It is atomic and limited in its ignorant state but becomes all-pervasive when its Ānanda nature is partially restored in liberation. Even in liberation, the unique qualities of the Jīva are preserved. Unlike being a mere reflection, the Jīva is an integral part of Brahman. It is inherently pure and blissful, and this purity remains unaffected by the soul's entanglement in the material world.

Vallabha categorises Jīvas into three primary classes based on their capacities: Pravāhinī, Maryāda, and Puṣṭi. Pravāhinī Jīvas are destined to repeat cycles of birth and death due to their innate desire for Samsara. Maryāda Jīvas possess divine tendencies, follow Yoga, Jñāna, or Vedic disciplines, and believe in self-effort in spiritual matters. After spiritual development, they unite in Akṣara Puruṣa, a direct manifestation of



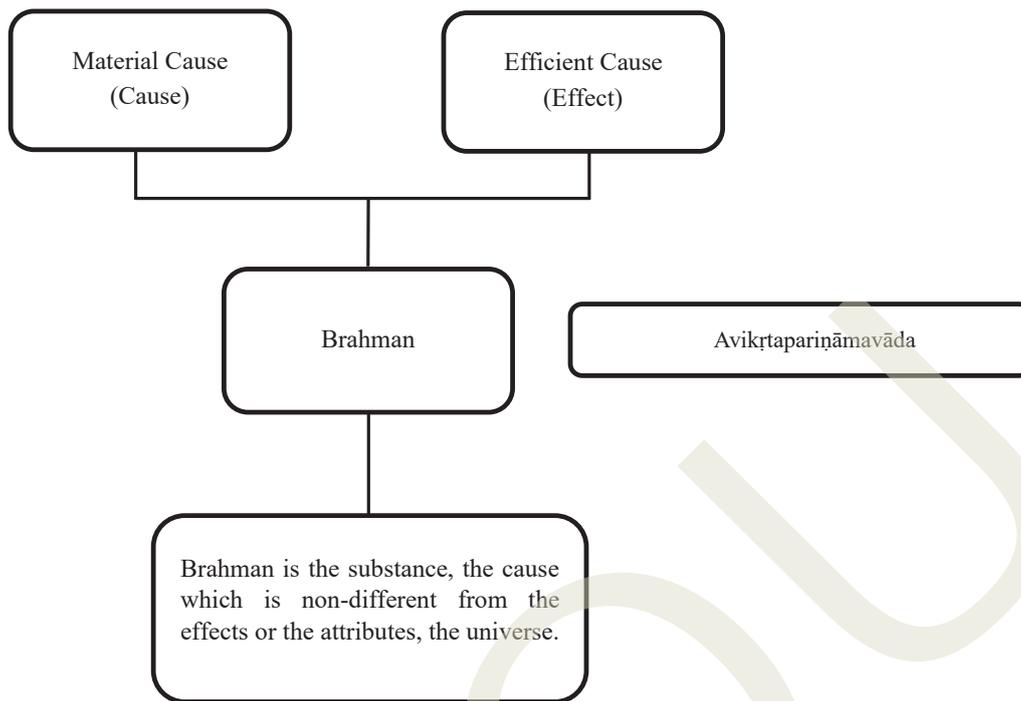
► Jīvas classified into Pravāhinī, Maryāda, Puṣṭi

Kṛiṣṇa with the Ānanda aspect mostly concealed. Puṣṭi Jīvas are the highest kind, receiving unique spiritual nourishment through God's grace. Chosen by God, they are recognised as His own and are characterised by deep-rooted, unwavering love and devotion to the Lord. Puṣṭi Jīvas have a divine connection with the Lord, show unconditional and selfless devotion, and lead lives filled with grace, marked by a sense of divine presence and guidance, leading to inner peace and spiritual development. Vallabha's classification emphasises the different spiritual capacities and paths of Jīvas, highlighting the role of divine grace and devotion in spiritual progress.

#### 4.3.3.2 Avikṛtapariṇāmavāda

► The world transforms Supreme reality without change in His essential nature

Māyā or avidyā is His power through which He manifests Himself as many. This manifestation is neither an error nor an illusion. It is the real manifestation. Vallabha's view is neither Vivarta (unreal) nor Parināma. It is something in between the two and is called Avikṛtapariṇāmavāda. The theory states that the world is a transformation of the Supreme reality but without any change in His essential nature. The world is a manifestation of Kṛiṣṇa and is not separate from Him. This manifestation does not imply any real change or modification in the essential nature of Him. Accordingly, Vallabha added that the cause and effect, the substance and its attributes are identical in nature. Therefore, the relation between cause and effect, the substance and attributes are of tādātmya or identity and rejects the relation of samavāya. Tādātmya basically means the concept of identity or non-difference. It implies that Brahman is the substance, the cause which is non-different from the effect or the attributes that is the universe. Vallabha believes that Brahman is both the material and the efficient cause. So, the Brahman manifests himself as the universe without undergoing any change. The Vallabha system is sometimes called Brahma-vāda. Unlike Sankara's system, which focuses on the concept of Māyā, Vallabha's system emphasises the unity and sole existence of Brahman.



#### 4.3.3.3 Grace and Bhakti

► Three kinds of grace are the Swabhavika kripa, the Atyantik kripa, and Prasāda kripa

► Puṣṭi-bhakti holds that bhakti results from God's grace

Vallabha emphasises the importance of grace and bhakti. He categorises these concepts in specific ways to articulate the path of spiritual growth and liberation. Grace is seen as the divine favour that provides sustenance for the soul and opens the door to spiritual fulfilment. Three kinds of grace exist: the Swabhavika kripa, which is inherent and bestowed by God upon living beings; the Atyantik kripa, which is selective and granted to those selected by God and leads to the ultimate freedom of the soul. The final type of grace is called Prasāda kripa, and it is obtained through receiving divine favours, frequently as a result of dedication and service.

The concept of bhakti in Vallabha centers on the belief that devotion is a gift from God rather than something that can be achieved solely through personal effort or rituals. Vallabha's followers adhere to the puṣṭi-bhakti, which holds that bhakti results from God's grace. In his view, practising specific rituals or duties is not necessary to achieve bhakti. Instead, bhakti is given through God's grace and is not dependent on one's actions. Devotion grows through love for God, fostered by listening to religious texts and chanting God's name. This love further develops by focusing on God while performing everyday tasks. Like other Vaishnava schools, Vallabha also

accepts nine forms of devotional disciplines mentioned in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. These disciplines outline various ways to cultivate and express devotion to God. Each form represents a unique approach to connecting with the divine. These are:

1. Smaraṇa - remembering and meditating the divine.
2. Kīrtana - singing hymns and songs in praise of God.
3. Sravaṇa - listening to religious teachings, scriptures and the like.
4. Pādaseva - performing rituals and offerings, acts of service to honour the deity.
5. Vandana - performing acts of reverence and respects to the deity.
6. Archana - offerings to God, formal worship of the deity
7. Dasya - serving God with humility and dedication.
8. Sakhya - developing a bond with God in an intimate way.
9. Ātma-nivedana- self-surrendering oneself to God.

► The interdependency of grace and bhakti

In Vallabha's philosophy, grace and bhakti are interdependent. As grace deepens, the intensity and purity of devotion strengthens leading to further grace. Sri Kṛiṣṇa says in the Bhagavata, "I am subordinate to the Bhakta, and am therefore without freedom, as it were. Being too fond of my devotees, my heart is under their control." For Vallabha, Moksha signifies the ultimate oneness with the Lord. He views it as the ultimate kind of realisation and encourages the perfect devotee to partake of the Lord's līlā. Such an attitude fits towards a refined humanism and reverence for creation.

## Summarized Overview

Nimbārka, also known as Nimbādiya, founded the Dvaitādvaita school of Vedānta, which blends dualism and non-dualism. He was influenced by the Vedic texts, including the Upaniṣhads, Brahma Sutras, and the Bhagavad Gītā. His key texts include Vedāntapārijātasaurabha and Dasasloki. Nimbārka's philosophy teaches that Brahman, the ultimate reality, has both dual and non-dual aspects. Brahman is both unity and diversity, with Jīvas (individual souls) and the world (Jagat) being part of its manifestation. He rejects the idea that the universe and Jīvas are mere attributes of God, asserting that they are both different and non-different from Brahman. Nimbārka identifies Lord Kṛiṣṇa as the supreme Brahman, possessing infinite abilities. He categorises reality into conscious (Brahman and Jīva) and unconscious elements (Aprakṛta, Kala, and Prakṛti). The conscious Jīva is dependent on Brahman, while the unconscious elements play roles in

the creation and dissolution of the universe. Nimbārka explains that the ultimate goal is liberation (Mokṣa), achieved through devotion (Bhakti) and knowledge (Jñāna), which allows the soul to realise its unity with Brahman while maintaining individuality.

Vallabāchārya, another prominent philosopher, founded the Pustimārga tradition and is known for his Śuddhādvaita or Pure Non-Dualism. He wrote commentaries on key texts like the Brahmasūtra and Bhagavata. Vallabha's philosophy posits that Brahman, identified with Kṛiṣṇa, is the ultimate reality, and everything else is a manifestation of Him. Unlike Sankara's view of Māyā as illusion, Vallabha considers the world as a real manifestation of Brahman's power, without altering His essential nature. He divides Jīvas into Pravāhinī (bound to cycles of rebirth), Maryāda (pursuing spiritual practices), and Puṣṭi (recipients of divine grace). Puṣṭi Jīvas have a special, deep devotion to Kṛiṣṇa and receive direct divine grace. Vallabha emphasises grace (kripa) in spiritual progress, categorising it into Swabhavika (inherent), Atyantika (selective), and Prasāda (obtained through devotion). He teaches that true devotion leads to Mokṣa, or ultimate unity with Kṛiṣṇa, achieved through practices like meditation and self-surrender.

## Self-Assessment

1. What are the three types of unconscious entities identified by Nimbārka, and what roles do they play in his philosophy?
2. How does Nimbārka describe the relationship between Jīva, Jagat, and Brahman?
3. According to Nimbārka, what is the ultimate reality, and how can it be known?
4. What are the three types of grace (kripa) in Vallabāchārya's philosophy, and how do they contribute to spiritual progress?
5. Describe the categories of Jīvas according to Vallabāchārya. What distinguishes Puṣṭi Jīvas from the other types?
6. Explain Vallabāchārya's concept of Avikṛtapariṇāmavāda. How does it relate to the idea of Māyā?



## Assignments

1. Discuss the main teachings of Nimbārka and explain the concept of Dvaitādvaita. How does Nimbārka's interpretation of Vedānta differ from that of Rāmānuja?
2. Analyse Nimbārka's division of reality into conscious and unconscious categories. Describe the roles of Aprakṛta, Kala, and Prakṛti in his philosophy.
3. Explain Nimbārka's view on the nature of Brahman, Jīva, and Jagat. How does he reconcile the concepts of difference and non-difference?
4. Discuss Vallabāchārya's classification of Jīvas. How do Pravāhinī, Maryāda, and Puṣṭi Jīvas differ in terms of their spiritual capacities and paths?
5. Explain Vallabāchārya's concept of Avikṛtapariṇāmavāda. How does this concept address the relationship between cause and effect in the context of Brahman's manifestation?

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## Suggested Reading

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## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

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# Indian Philosophy II

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