Indian Philosophy I

COURSE CODE: M23PH02DC

POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME IN PHILOSOPHY

SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

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

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Mission

To be benchmarked as a model for conservation and dissemination of knowledge and skill on blended and virtual mode in education, training and research for normal, continuing, and adult learners.

Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.

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Semester - I

Discipline Core Course
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Dear

I greet all of you with deep delight and great excitement. I welcome you to the Sreenarayanaguru Open University.

Sreenarayanaguru Open University was established in September 2020 as a state initiative for fostering higher education in open and distance mode. We shaped our dreams through a pathway defined by a dictum 'access and quality define equity'. It provides all reasons to us for the celebration of quality in the process of education. I am overwhelmed to let you know that we have resolved not to become ourselves a reason or cause a reason for the dissemination of inferior education. It sets the pace as well as the destination. The name of the University centres around the aura of Sreenarayanaguru, the great renaissance thinker of modern India. His name is a reminder for us to ensure quality in the delivery of all academic endeavours.

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The university is committed to provide you stimulating learning experience. The PG programme in Philosophy is conceived to be a continuum of the UG programme in Philosophy as it has organic linkage with the content and the form of treatment. In fact is a progression of the finer aspects of theories and practices. Having realised the limitations of empirical methodology in exposing the concepts in Philosophy, the university has taken special care to follow illustrative methodology throughout the discussions. It is expected to a lesson the heaviness of the content. We assure you that the university student support services will closely stay with you for the redressal of your grievances during your studentship.

Feel free to write to us about anything that you feel relevant regarding the academic programme.
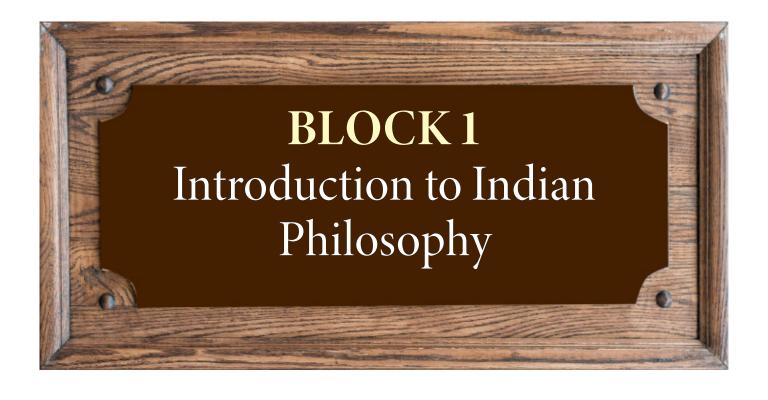
Wish you the best.

Regards,
Dr. P. M. Mubarak Pasha   01.01.2024

C O N T E N T S

BLOCK 1
Introduction to Indian Philosophy

UNIT 1
General Characteristics of Indian Philosophy

Learning Outcomes

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

- examine the concept of *Darśana* as a profound vision of reality within Indian philosophy
- understand the general characteristics of Indian philosophy
- describe the integration of spirituality and philosophy in Indian tradition
- know how intuition and rationality complementarily support each other in Indian philosophy

Background

The study of philosophy concentrates on the fundamental problems of reality, knowledge, existence, and ethics. Each philosophical school of thought in the world has distinct characteristics and views that convey various concepts and understandings. Indian philosophy, in particular, stands out for its unique characteristics and contributions to the field. It presents an extraordinary range of interpretations and insights within the diverse field of study. Indian philosophy employs allegories, stories, and symbols to convey deep philosophical concepts and teachings. These narratives offer in-depth understanding of reality and the human condition. It has performed investigations of numerous facets of the human experience and the external environment throughout history.

One of the striking features of Indian philosophy is the multitude of viewpoints it encompasses. This can be observed through the six fundamental systems and numerous subsystems, the four principal schools of Buddhism, the two schools of Jainism, and the materialistic philosophy of the Cārvāka. Such diversity highlights

the richness of Indian philosophical thought. The conclusions drawn from these philosophical quests have been just as far-reaching as those found in other philosophical traditions. The question of what makes Indian philosophy unique can be addressed by analysing the various features that distinguish it from other traditions. Identifying the uniqueness of Indian philosophy makes it a valuable and distinctive tradition within the broader landscape of global philosophical thought.

Keywords

Darśana, Spiritual nature, Self-realisation, Intuition, Rationality

Discussion

- Indian philosophy ponders on reality, existence, knowledge, consciousness

The development of Indian philosophy has shaped the intellectual, spiritual, and cultural environment of the Indian subcontinent for thousands of years. At its core, Indian philosophy engages with fundamental questions that have captivated people throughout history. It explores the nature of reality, seeking to unravel the mysteries of existence and the ultimate truth that lies beyond the material realm. It ponders upon the purpose of human existence and questions the meaning and significance of life itself. Indian philosophy also examines the nature of knowledge and how people learn about and comprehend the world around them. It also looks into the complex structure of consciousness, the nature of self and the mind.

- Vedic roots shape Indian philosophy

The roots of Indian philosophy can be traced back to the ancient texts known as the Vedas, which serve as the foundation for philosophical inquiry and contemplation. These sacred scriptures, composed in Sanskrit, contain deep insights into the nature of reality, human existence, and spiritual liberation. They form the foundation from which various schools of Indian philosophy have emerged and evolved. Throughout its long history, Indian philosophy has played an important role in shaping the intellectual and cultural development of the Indian subcontinent. Its philosophical insights, ethical teachings, and spiritual practices have permeated various aspects of society, influencing not only the philosophical discourse but also the arts, literature, music, and everyday life of the people.

1.1.1 *Darśana*: A Profound Vision of Reality

In the philosophical tradition of India, the term '*Darśana*' holds a special significance. It is not merely about the physical act of seeing, but rather about developing a deep insight and understanding of reality. It carries a dual meaning in Indian philosophy that signifies both 'vision' and the 'instrument of vision.' This concept represents the direct, immediate, and intuitive vision of Reality, the actual perception of Truth, and also encompasses the means that lead to this realisation. The Sanskrit root '*dṛś*,' from which the term *Darśana* is derived, implies the act of seeing or perceiving. However, in the context of Indian philosophy, *Darśana* expands to encompass a comprehensive worldview that includes philosophical doctrines, methodologies, and perspectives.

Darśana entails a comprehensive approach to unravelling the fundamental nature of reality, the self, knowledge, and the relationship between individuals and the world. It provides a structured framework through which philosophical inquiries are explored, and addresses a wide range of philosophical questions that include metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and ontology. Within the Indian philosophical tradition, there are various schools, each presenting its unique set of doctrines and perspectives on these fundamental questions. Each school offers a distinct lens through which the world is understood and interpreted, allowing individuals to engage with philosophical concepts and gain deeper insights into reality and the nature of existence.

• *Darśana* unravels reality, self and knowledge.

Darśana in its holistic approach to knowledge acquisition and understanding establishes a perfect blend of intuition and rationality. Intuition in Indian philosophy is considered a direct and immediate apprehension of truth or reality that transcends ordinary conceptual understanding. Intuition is believed to arise from a deeper level of consciousness or the intuitive faculty of the mind. It is associated with the 'higher self' or the 'transcendental consciousness' that goes beyond the limitations of the individual ego. On the other hand, rationality represents the intellect, the faculty of discriminative thinking, and logical reasoning. Rationality involves the use of analytical thought processes to understand the world and make decisions. It relies on conceptual knowledge, logical deductions, and evidence-based reasoning.

• Intuition: direct apprehension, transcending conceptual understanding

The thinkers of the Indian tradition form a harmonious combination of rationality and intuition which they considered essential for the pursuit of truth, understanding reality and the development of holistic knowledge. Rationality holds a significant position in Indian philosophy, evident in schools such as Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika. These schools emphasise logical analysis, critical thinking, and examining concepts and arguments. Nyāya *Darśana*, for instance, provides a structured approach to logic and epistemology. It analyses the nature of valid sources of knowledge (*pramāṇas*) and employs logical reasoning, rigorous debate, and analysis to establish a solid foundation for understanding reality.

- Blending of Intuition and Rationality

In contrast, intuition holds a distinct place in Indian philosophy, particularly in schools such as Yoga and Vedānta. Yoga Darśana focuses on the experiential dimension of spirituality and self-realisation. Through practices such as meditation and introspection, individuals can directly experience and apprehend higher states of consciousness, unveiling truths that transcend conceptualisation. Vedānta Darśana, especially in its non-dualistic (Advaita) form, advocates the direct realisation of ultimate reality (Brahman) through intuitive means. It asserts that the nature of reality can be directly apprehended by transcending dualistic conceptualisation.

- Use of intuitive means in Indian philosophy

The synthesis of rationality and intuition in Indian philosophy does not view these modes of knowledge as contradictory, but as complementary. Rather than isolating one from the other, Indian philosophers seek to integrate rationality and intuition harmoniously. Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, prominent philosophers of contemporary times, emphasised the need to combine intellectual rigour with a deep exploration of inner experience. They viewed intellect and intuition as two sides of the same coin, working together to reveal different dimensions of truth. The synthesis of rationality and intuition enables individuals to engage in critical thinking, logical reasoning, and empirical investigation while remaining open to intuitive insights and direct experiences. It allows for a more comprehensive and holistic approach to knowledge acquisition, encompassing both the objective and subjective dimensions of reality.

- Harmony of rationality and intuition: Integrated knowledge.

This integration acknowledges that rationality alone may be limited in its ability to grasp the complexity of existence. Intuition provides a means to access deeper truths beyond

the confines of conceptualisation and logical analysis. At the same time, intuition needs to be grounded in rationality to prevent subjective biases and ensure a coherent understanding of reality. The synthesis of rationality and intuition is not a mere intellectual exercise but a transformative process. It encourages individuals to cultivate a balance between critical thinking and intuitive insights, fostering a deeper understanding of the self and the world. It invites individuals to engage in self-reflection, contemplation, and meditation, facilitating direct experiential exploration.

1.1.2 The Significance of Indian Philosophy

Indian philosophy holds a unique position in the history of philosophy for its philosophical insights and contributions to various domains. It developed over thousands of years, has shaped the intellectual, spiritual, and cultural fabric of India and continues to influence philosophical discourse globally. One significant aspect of Indian philosophy is its exploration of fundamental questions about the nature of reality. Schools such as Vedānta focus on metaphysical inquiries, offering insights into the nature of existence, the self, and the ultimate reality (Brahman). Advaita Vedānta, in particular, posits a non-dualistic perspective that emphasises the unity of all things and the interconnectedness of the universe.

Indian philosophical schools also address the questions related to epistemology. The Nyāya and Vaisheṣika schools provide systematic approaches to the question concerning valid sources of knowledge. These schools emphasise critical thinking, logical analysis, and empirical evidence. By establishing a rigorous epistemological framework, Indian philosophy contributes to the understanding of how knowledge is acquired, validated, and applied in various domains of human inquiry. They also foster a holistic and integrated approach to knowledge by interconnecting multiple aspects of human experience, such as philosophy, religion, science, art, and daily life. This holistic perspective encourages individuals to seek a comprehensive understanding of reality by integrating different modes of inquiry, such as reason, intuition, introspection, and direct experience.

Ethics and moral philosophy are other areas where Indian philosophies have made significant contributions. The concept of Dharma, prevalent in Hindu and Buddhist philosophies, offers a comprehensive understanding of ethi-

- Balanced synthesis of rationality and intuition; a transformative integration.

- Influence of Indian philosophy on the global discourse

- Holistic integration of knowledge.

cal conduct, social harmony, and individual responsibilities. For instance, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, a text that combines ethical teachings with spiritual guidance, analyses the notion of duty, virtue, and the path to self-realisation. Indian ethics provides valuable insights into ethical decision-making and the pursuit of a righteous way of life.

Without recognising these aspects, there has been an exclusion or marginalisation of Indian philosophy from the mainstream discourse. In the past, some Western philosophers may have overlooked or dismissed Indian philosophy due to unfamiliarity with its concepts, texts, and cultural context. This misunderstanding could be attributed to the limited availability of translations and scholarly works on Indian philosophy, as well as a Eurocentric bias that considered Western philosophy to be the pinnacle of philosophical inquiry. For instance, in his book *History of Philosophy*, Frank Thilly argues that not all societies have developed systematic and extensive philosophical traditions. Many cultures, including the Hindus, Egyptians, and Chinese, primarily possess mythological and ethical doctrines rather than fully developed systems of thought. However, in recent times, there has been a growing recognition and appreciation of Indian philosophy within Western academic circles. Scholars and philosophers have increasingly acknowledged the depth, complexity, and intellectual rigour present in Indian philosophical traditions. They recognise the philosophical insights and unique perspectives offered by Indian philosophy in addressing fundamental questions about reality, consciousness, ethics, and the nature of existence.

1.1.3 Characteristics of Indian Philosophy

Indian Philosophy is characterised by several distinctive features that set it apart from other philosophical traditions. These characteristics shape the way Indian philosophy approaches knowledge, reality, ethics, and the spiritual aspect of human existence. Understanding these characteristics provides valuable insights into the nature and scope of Indian philosophical thought. The following discussion will give a detailed account of the chief characteristics of Indian philosophy.

(a) The Pre-eminence of the Spiritual Aspect: Both in daily life and in the realm of philosophy, the spiritual aspect takes precedence in India. Barring the materialistic school

of thought represented by Cārvāka and related doctrines, Indian philosophy considers humans to be essentially spiritual beings who are primarily concerned with their spiritual destinies. Furthermore, it establishes a connection between individuals and universe that is also recognised as being fundamentally spiritual. According to Indian philosophy, neither humans nor the universe is viewed as purely physical entities. Material well-being is not regarded as the ultimate goal of human existence, except in the case of the Cārvāka School.

(b) The Interconnectedness of Philosophy and Religion: In Indian philosophical thought, a close and intimate relationship exists between philosophy and religion. Philosophy itself is seen as a spiritual quest or adventure, and both philosophy and religion share a common motivation, which is the pursuit of a spiritual way of life in the present and the eventual spiritual salvation of humans in relation to the universe. Throughout the history of Indian philosophy, from its early roots in the Vedas to the present day, a central aim has been to bring about socio-spiritual reform in the country. Philosophical aspects can be seen in various forms of literature such as mythological, popular, or technical, depending on the prevailing circumstances, in order to promote and support this spiritual way of life. The problems and inquiries of religion have consistently provided depth, power, and purpose to the Indian philosophical mind and spirit.

(c) Philosophy as a Way of Life: In Indian tradition, philosophy is not confined to mere oral transmission or the dogmas of schools. Instead, every doctrine has the potential to transform completely an individual's nature. Engaging with philosophical doctrines is not considered a mere intellectual exercise but is intimately connected to practical application in daily life. It goes beyond intellectual pursuits and aims to seek the truth that will liberate individuals. Merely knowing the truth is not sufficient; the truth must be lived and realised. The ultimate goal for an Indian philosopher is the realisation and unity with the truth.

(d) The interplay of philosophy and social transformation: Indian philosophy has historically aimed to bring about socio-spiritual reform in society by recognising the interplay between philosophy and social transformation. It addresses human suffering, inequality, and injustice through the practice of ethical conduct, self-realisation, and the pursuit of a righteous way of life. Emphasising the practical application

- Spirituality prevails in Indian life and philosophy.

- Indian philosophy intertwines with religion seeking spiritual salvation

- Transformative and practical pursuit of truth

of philosophical principles, it emphasises the need for individuals to lead virtuous lives, cultivate moral virtues, and act in ways that promote the well-being of others. By fostering self-realisation and spiritual awareness, it aims to inspire a personal transformation that can lead to positive change in society. Indian Philosophy guides individuals in adopting a righteous way of life based on moral and spiritual values, promoting love, compassion, selflessness, and service to others. By striving for socio-spiritual reform, Indian Philosophy seeks to create a more compassionate, just, and harmonious society.

(e) The Introspective Nature of Indian Philosophy: The search for truth in Indian philosophy has consistently been centred on the inner life and self of individuals, rather than the external world of physical nature. While physical sciences thrived during India's Golden Age, they were not regarded as the path to the ultimate truth. Instead, truth is sought and found within. That is, in Indian philosophy, the subjective aspect takes precedence over the objective. This does not imply that Indian thinkers have neglected the study of the physical world. On the contrary, India has made significant contributions to positive sciences, particularly in fields such as algebra, astronomy, geometry, zoology, botany, medicine, and more. However, throughout history, Indians have held the belief that the inner spirit of individuals holds the most significant clue to their reality and the reality of the universe, surpassing the importance of the physical or external aspects.

(f) The Dominance of Idealistic Tendencies: Indian philosophical systems exhibit a prevailing inclination towards monistic idealism, which posits that ultimate reality is one and fundamentally spiritual. While some systems may initially appear to advocate dualism or pluralism, they are deeply infused with a monistic character. This inclination towards monistic idealism is evident across Indian philosophy, as there is a tendency to interpret life and reality through this philosophical lens. The acceptance of idealism, in its various forms, serves as a unifying element within Indian philosophy, reflecting its distinctive character. This acknowledgement of idealism as the dominant perspective underscores the unique nature of Indian philosophy and its emphasis on the spiritual dimensions of reality.

(g) The Acceptance of Authority: While the systems of Indian philosophy vary in their specific relationship to ancient texts (*śruti*), none of the systems, except the Cārvāka, openly violate

- Indian philosophy's transformative vision

- Inner quest as the essence of Indian philosophy

- Ultimate reality is one and fundamentally spiritual

the intuitive insights of the ancient seers. The intuitive vision of the Upaniṣadic seers, the enlightenment experience of the Buddha, and the wisdom of Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, are all considered sources of intuitive wisdom. Reverence for authority in Indian philosophy does not hinder progress but rather fosters a unity of spirit and provides continuity of thought. In other words, this reverence has not transformed Indian philosophy into a dogmatic religious creed, as it is sometimes alleged, but rather has given rise to a single tone or trend of thought on fundamental issues. The diversity of systems, even in their fundamental conceptions, demonstrates that this reverence for authority has not restricted Indian philosophy to a fixed dogma.

- Reverence for wisdom in Indian philosophy

(h) The Synthetic Nature of Indian Philosophy: Indian philosophy is distinguished by its synthetic approach to the various aspects of experience and reality. Unlike the analytic approach of Western philosophy, the Indian mind seeks to bring together different domains and concepts, such as religion and philosophy, knowledge and conduct, intuition and reason, man and nature, God and man, and noumena and phenomena. The synthetic tendency of the Indian mind aims to harmonise these diverse elements, perceiving them as complementary and contributing to a holistic vision of reality. With this attitude they could foster intellectual and religious tolerance throughout its history. The Indian mind, characterised by its adaptability and openness, embraces diverse religious and philosophical traditions, recognising the inherent value and interconnectedness of different perspectives. This inclusive and tolerant attitude has been a prominent feature of Indian thought, allowing for the coexistence and mutual enrichment of various communities and groups.

- Holistic vision in Indian philosophy

Summarised Overview

Indian philosophical tradition has greatly influenced the intellectual, spiritual, and cultural landscape of the Indian subcontinent. It deeply analyses fundamental questions about the nature of reality, human existence, knowledge, consciousness, and the mind. The roots of Indian philosophy can be traced back to the Vedas, sacred scriptures that provide the foundation for philosophical inquiry. Various schools of Indian philosophy, known as *Darśanas*, have emerged from these texts, offering unique perspectives and doctrines.

Indian philosophy integrates rationality and intuition, considering them complementary rather than contradictory. It prioritises the spiritual aspect of human existence and recognises the interconnectedness of philosophy and religion. It considers philosophy a way of life and emphasises practical application and self-realisation. Indian philosophy aims at socio-spiritual reform and addresses ethical conduct and social harmony. It has an introspective nature, focusing on inner experience and self-realisation. There is a prevailing inclination towards monistic idealism and reverence for authority and ancient texts. Indian philosophy takes a synthetic approach, harmonising diverse elements to provide a holistic understanding of reality.

Self-Assessment

1. What is meant by the concept of *Darśana* in Indian philosophy?
2. How does Indian philosophy integrate rationality and intuition?
3. What are the distinctive characteristics of Indian philosophy?
4. How does Indian philosophy approach authority and ancient texts?
5. How does Indian philosophy view the interconnectedness of philosophy and religion?

Assignments

1. Discuss the concept of *Darśana* in Indian philosophy. What does it signify, and how does it contribute to the exploration of fundamental questions about reality, knowledge, and the self in Indian thought?

2. Analyse the synthesis of rationality and intuition in Indian philosophy. Discuss the role of rationality and intuition in acquiring knowledge and understanding reality.

3. Describe the characteristics of Indian philosophy that set it apart from other philosophical traditions. Analyse the pre-eminence of the spiritual aspect and the interconnectedness of philosophy and religion in Indian thought.

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Suggested Reading

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UNIT 2
Historical and Cultural Context of Indian Philosophy

Learning Outcomes

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

- know the historical and cultural roots of Indian philosophy in the Vedic period
- comprehend the gradual development of Indian philosophy through different periods such as, the Vedic, Epic, Sūtra, and the Scholastic Periods
- understand the classification of Vedas and the major subject matters that discussed in each Veda
- familiarise the four sections of each Veda such as, Saṃhitās, Brāhmanas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads

Background

Understanding the depth and richness of Indian philosophical thinking requires an examination of its historical development and cultural influences. The symbols and artefacts discovered at sites such as Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa reveal a reverence for fertility and the environment, which had a lasting impact on Indian philosophical thought. It was through the endeavours of these ancient civilisations that the philosophical and spiritual beliefs influencing Indian philosophical traditions were established. The arrival of the Aryans, a group of Indo-European nomads, brought about a significant turning point in Indian history. Their migration to the Indian subcontinent and settlement in the north-western regions introduced Sanskrit, their distinctive language, and unique cultural practices.

In parallel, the Dravidians, an indigenous population of South India, played an essential role in shaping the cultural and philosophical landscape of ancient India. Dra-

vidian culture and language influenced various aspects of Indian civilisation, including religious practices, art, and literature. Their contributions enriched the diversity of philosophical thought in India, expanding the range of ideas and perspectives. The union of these diverse cultural influences created an environment favourable to the emergence of distinct philosophical traditions. Consequently, over time, various philosophical schools and systems arose, such as Vedānta, Nyāya, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, and Buddhism.

Keywords

Vedic period, Vedic literature, Epic Period, Sūtra Period, Scholastic Period

Discussion

- Four periods that shaped Indian philosophical traditions

Throughout history, the development of various philosophies has been influenced by the cultural, historical, social, religious, and intellectual factors. The same can be said for the origin and evolution of Indian philosophy. What makes Indian philosophy unique is its close connection to the region's earliest spiritual and religious traditions. It emerged as a result of contemplation on the fundamental questions of existence, reality, and the nature of human experience. To understand the historical and cultural context of Indian philosophical thought, we can identify four major periods of development leading up to its gradual decline around 1700 CE. These periods are the Vedic, Epic, Sūtra, and the Scholastic Periods. Each period represents a significant milestone in the growth and diversification of Indian philosophical traditions. During these periods, distinct philosophical insights, methodologies, and systems emerged, shaping the intellectual landscape of ancient and medieval India. By exploring these periods, we gain a deeper understanding of the enduring impact of Indian philosophy and its influence on global philosophical traditions.

1.2.1 Vedic Period

The Vedic period in ancient India has historical and cultural importance as it marks the emergence of the Vedas, a collection of sacred texts that became the basis of Indian philosophy, spirituality, and cultural practices. The Vedic texts, composed during this period, encompass a wide range of knowledge, including hymns, prayers, rituals, and philosoph-

ical speculations. They explore insightful questions about the nature of the divine, the human condition, and the principles governing the universe. They also played a transformative role in shaping religious and philosophical traditions in India by providing the basic framework for religious rituals, ethical principles, and philosophical reflections.

The Vedic civilisation was agrarian, with society organised into distinct classes known as varnas. The dominant priestly class were *Brahmins*, responsible for performing rituals and sacrifices, and preserving the knowledge of the Vedas. The other classes were the *Kṣatriyas* (warriors and rulers), *Vaiśyas* (merchants and farmers), and *Śūdras* (labourers and servants). This social structure formed the basis of the later caste system in India. The Vedic society placed great importance on maintaining cosmic order and performing religious duties. Rituals and sacrifices were seen as a means to seek blessings, protection, and prosperity from the gods. The Brahmins held significant influence and authority in society due to their role as mediators between humans and the divine.

The Vedas represent the oldest known literary records of the Indo-European race offering insights into ancient India's intellectual and spiritual traditions. However, determining the exact origin of the Vedas is challenging due to the lack of historical documentation and varying scholarly opinions. Scholars have proposed different dates, ranging from around 4000 B.C. to 1200 B.C., but it is important to recognise that these dates remain speculative and have not been definitively proven. Believed to have originated around 1500 BCE, the Vedic period coincided with the migration of the Aryans, a nomadic Indo-European people, to the Indian subcontinent. Their settlement in the north-western regions impacted on ancient India's cultural, linguistic, and intellectual landscape. Fusion of Aryan and indigenous cultural elements led to the development of a unique civilisation characterised by a dynamic synthesis of ideas and practices.

Regarding their authorship, the ancient thinkers held a unique perspective on the composition of the Vedas. They believed that the Vedas were not created by human authors but were revealed knowledge. According to this belief, the hymns and verses of the Vedas were transmitted through divine revelation to enlightened sages known as 'seers' or 'rishis.' Through their deep spiritual insights and connection

with the divine, these seers received the wisdom encapsulated in the Vedas. The texts were considered either directly taught by God or self-revealed to the seers. This belief added a sense of authority and sacredness to the texts, which were seen as a direct channel to the divine realm. The Vedas were regarded as a divine gift, providing spiritual guidance and insights into the nature of existence.

Beyond their role in religious rituals and practices, the Vedas were also a source of philosophical insights that examined the nature of reality, the purpose of life, and fundamental concepts that shaped Indian philosophy. One of the key concepts expounded in the Vedas is dharma, which refers to the moral and ethical duties and responsibilities that individuals should uphold. Dharma encompasses righteousness, justice, and social harmony. The Vedas provided guidelines for living a righteous life and emphasised the importance of adhering to one's dharma to maintain social order and balance. Karma, another fundamental concept in the Vedas, refers to the law of cause and effect. It suggests that every action has consequences, whether in this life or in future life. The Vedas emphasised that individuals are responsible for their actions and that their actions shape their destinies. The Vedas also touched upon the concept of *mokṣa*, which signifies liberation from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. It explores the ultimate goal of human existence, the release from suffering, and attaining spiritual enlightenment. The Vedas presented different paths and practices that could lead to *mokṣa*, emphasising the importance of spiritual realisation and the transcendent nature of the self.

1.2.1.1 Classification of the Vedic literature

The literature of ancient India, known as the Vedic literature, is a substantial body of work that reflects the achievements of the Indian people over a long period. This literature is diverse in nature, encompassing a wide range of subjects and themes. It consists of four main texts the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sama Veda, and the Atharva Veda. Each Veda serves a specific purpose and contains different types of content.

Rig Veda: Of these four, the Rig Veda is the oldest and most important Veda. It comprises a collection of hymns, praises, and prayers dedicated to various deities. These hymns were chanted during religious rituals and ceremonies. The Rig Veda offers deep insights into the early spiritual and cultural thinking of ancient Indian society. It serves as the foundational

text of the Vedic period and provides valuable insights into ancient India's religious, social, and cultural beliefs. Comprising 1,028 hymns organised into ten books called Mandalas, the Rig Veda was composed by various seers known as *Rishis*. These hymns are dedicated to deities such as Indra, Agni, and Varuṇa, praising the gods, expressing spiritual aspirations, and touching upon cosmological and philosophical themes.

The Rig Veda holds ritual significance, intended to be recited during Vedic rituals and sacrificial ceremonies. The language in which it is written is Vedic Sanskrit, characterised by its complex grammar, poetic meter, and rich imagery. It offers glimpses into the Vedic people's society, economy, and lifestyle, reflecting their agricultural practices, social divisions, and deep connection with nature. The Rig Veda's influence extends beyond its historical context, shaping subsequent religious and philosophical traditions in India. It continues to be revered for its spiritual insights, poetic beauty, and historical significance, providing a window into ancient Indian civilisation.

Yajur Veda: The Yajur Veda holds great importance in ancient Indian religious and cultural traditions. It is an extensive collection of texts and rituals that provide detailed instructions for the performing of *yajñas* (the sacrificial rituals) conducted by priests and performers. It primarily serves as a practical guidebook for the execution of rituals, outlining the precise procedures, mantras, and hymns to be recited during the *yajñas*. It offers a comprehensive framework for conducting various types of sacrifices, ensuring that the rituals are performed correctly and in accordance with established traditions. The rituals mentioned in the Yajur Veda involve offerings to various deities, prayers for blessings, and acts of worship aimed at invoking divine forces and seeking their favour.

However, the significance of the Yajur Veda goes beyond its practical instructions. It also contains philosophical and symbolic elements that explore the deeper meaning and purpose of the rituals. The texts within the Yajur Veda address questions about the nature of the divine, the interconnectedness of the universe, and the role of sacrifice in spiritual growth. They emphasise the symbolism and inner transformation associated with the rituals, highlighting the idea that the external actions performed during the yajñas reflect internal states of consciousness. The Yajur Veda also played a crucial role in

- Rig Veda is the oldest and significant Vedic text

- Ritual significance, poetic beauty, historical insight Rig Veda

- Yajur Veda is the essential guide to sacrificial rituals

- Rituals intertwine with philosophical symbolism

shaping Hindu traditions and practices, serving as a foundation for religious and spiritual life. Its influence can be seen in various aspects of Indian culture, including temple rituals, daily worship, and religious ceremonies. The hymns and mantras from the Yajur Veda continue to be recited and chanted by priests and devotees in present-day rituals, preserving the ancient wisdom and traditions passed down through generations.

Sama Veda: The Sāma Veda distinguishes itself by primarily consisting of melodies or musical notations derived from the hymns of the Rig Veda. It guided singers and musicians who performed during religious ceremonies, highlighting the importance of sound, rhythm, and melody in invoking spiritual experiences and establishing a harmonious connection with the divine. The Sāma Veda's melodic chants and musical notations, known as *Sāmans*, transformed the *Rig Vedic* hymns into specific patterns that were sung during rituals, believed to have a great impact on the listeners. By recognising the power of music to evoke emotions and elevate consciousness, the Sāma Veda played a crucial role in Vedic rituals, particularly those associated with the *Sōmayāga*, creating a sacred environment and facilitating a deeper spiritual experience. Its emphasis on music as a transformative medium goes beyond the ritualistic aspects, conveying spiritual and philosophical messages of unity, interconnectedness, and the pursuit of inner harmony. The Sāma Veda's unique fusion of music, spirituality, and philosophical insights provides valuable insights into ancient India's cultural and religious practices.

Atharva Veda: It is a collection of hymns, chants, and spells that cover various subjects, including healing, protection, love, marriage, prosperity, and rituals for various life events. Unlike the other three Vedas, which primarily focus on religious and sacrificial rituals, the Atharva Veda is more diverse and inclusive, incorporating elements of folk traditions, magic, and practical knowledge. It addresses the needs and concerns of ordinary people, offering practical solutions to everyday challenges. It recognises the pursuit of happiness in human life and the importance of the material and emotional well-being of life. Despite its unique content, the Atharva Veda shares common themes with the other Vedas, such as the reverence for the divine, the quest for knowledge, and the belief in the interconnectedness of all beings. It reflects the ancient Indian worldview, which sought to harmonise the spiritual and material dimensions of existence.

- Musical melodies for spiritual transcendence

- Atharva Veda provides Practical wisdom for holistic well-being

The Atharva Veda consists of 20 books containing around 730 hymns. These hymns are attributed to various Sages and Seers, reflecting different cultural and regional influences. The verses in the Atharva Veda are poetic and often employ symbolic language and metaphorical expressions to convey their meanings. One of the distinguishing features of the Atharva Veda is its emphasis on the practical aspects of life. It contains a wealth of knowledge about medicine, healing, and using plants and herbs for various ailments. The hymns in this Veda describe rituals and incantations that were believed to have the power to cure diseases, ward off evil spirits, and protect individuals and households from harm. They also touch upon social and ethical issues, guiding moral conduct, family life, and social harmony.

1.2.1.2 The Divisions of Vedic Texts

Each Veda is divided into four sections. The first section is the Samhitā, which comprises a collection of hymns, prayers, and chants dedicated to various deities. It is the core portion of each Veda and contains poetic expressions of devotion and praise. The Rig-Veda Samhitā is the oldest and most important among the four Saṃhitās. It contains hymns addressed to gods like Agni, Indra, and Soma. The Yajur-Veda Samhitā provides prose and verse formulas used in rituals and sacrifices. It also provides instructions for conducting rituals and sacrifices. The *Sāma Veda Samhitā* consists of verses meant for singing during rituals, emphasising the melodic and rhythmic aspects of chanting during rituals. The *Atharva Veda Samhitā* contains hymns, spells, and incantations related to daily life, healing, and protection.

The Brāhmaṇas constitute the second section of the Vedic texts. They are prose treatises that examine the significance and symbolic interpretations of the sacrificial rites and ceremonies described in the Saṃhitās. The Brāhmaṇas aim to provide detailed instructions on performing these rituals correctly, highlighting their precise methods and the importance of adhering to the prescribed procedures. They inquire into the underlying symbolism and metaphors associated with various elements of the rituals, connecting the physical actions to the spiritual realm. The Brāhmaṇas emphasise the concept that the sacrificial acts have cosmic implications and serve as a means to establish communication and harmony between the human realm and the divine forces. The Brāhmaṇas also contain

- Healing knowledge of *Atharva Veda*

- Samhitā include Hymns, rituals, and chants dedicated to deities in each Veda

- Brāhmaṇas are the prose treatises interpreting rituals and their cosmic significance.

mythological narratives and legends related to the deities and the origin of the universe. These narratives provide a broader context for understanding the rituals and their place in the larger cosmic order. Through their rich and elaborate explanations, the Brāhmaṇas offer insights into the conceptual framework of Vedic society, its religious practices, and its understanding of the divine.

The Āraṇyakas, the third section, are the transitional 'forest texts' that bridge the gap between the ritualistic Brāhmaṇas and the more philosophical and mystical teachings of the Upanishads. The term 'Āraṇyaka' means 'belonging to the forest,' implying that these texts were studied and contemplated in seclusion or solitude, often in natural surroundings. The Āraṇyakas contain philosophical and mystical speculations related to the rituals and sacrifices described in the Brāhmaṇas. The significant difference between Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas is that while the former focuses primarily on the external aspects and procedures of the rituals, the latter examines deeper into their inner meanings and symbolic significance. The Āraṇyakas explore the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions of the rituals, seeking to uncover their hidden truths and connections to the larger cosmic order. In them, philosophical reflections and contemplations become more prominent as the texts deal with topics such as the nature of the self, the role of sacrifice in attaining spiritual realisation, and the pursuit of spiritual liberation. The Āraṇyakas introduce concepts like meditation, inner sacrifice, and self-realisation, laying the foundation for the spiritual and mystical dimensions further explored in the Upaniṣads.

- The bridge between rituals and Upaniṣads, exploring deeper meanings and spiritual dimensions

The Upaniṣads form the final section of the Vedic literature and are regarded as the philosophical and mystical culmination of the Vedas. These texts deal with metaphysical and spiritual inquiries, seeking to uncover the nature of reality, the self, and the ultimate truth. They are revered as the foundation of Hindu philosophy and spirituality. The Upanishads shift from the external rituals and sacrifices of the earlier Vedic texts to the internal exploration of the self and the nature of existence. They emphasise pursuing knowledge (*Jñāna*) and realising the ultimate truth to attain spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*).

- Upaniṣads explore the nature of reality

One of the central themes explored in the Upaniṣads is the nature of reality. They inquire into the fundamental nature of existence and the underlying unity that connects all beings. Concepts such as *Brahman* (the ultimate reality), *Ātman* (the

individual self), and Māyā (the illusion of the material world) are extensively discussed. The Upaniṣads seek to transcend the limitations of the material realm and unveil the deeper, unchanging reality that underlies it. The Upaniṣads also deal with the nature of consciousness and the self. They explore the relationship between the individual self (*Ātman*) and the universal self (*Brahman*), asserting that realising the unity of these two leads to spiritual awakening and liberation. Through contemplation, meditation, and self-inquiry, the Upaniṣads guide the seeker towards self-realisation and the direct experience of the ultimate reality.

1.2.2 The Epic Period

The Epic Period, a significant phase of history, is widely acknowledged as a time of intellectual flourishing and philosophical exploration in India and other parts of the world. This era witnessed the emergence of diverse philosophical speculations, paving the way for the development of different schools of thought and belief systems. Parallel philosophical movements also took place in other parts of the world during this time, such as Greece, China, and Persia. Thinkers and philosophers in these regions were engaged in deep philosophical inquiries, exploring concepts in various fields such as ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, and political philosophy. During this period, ancient Indian society witnessed major changes in political structures, social dynamics, and religious practices. The two epics, the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa provide rich narratives that offer insights into the historical, cultural, and philosophical aspects of this period.

The Epic Period witnessed the emergence of heterodox systems of thought in the philosophical tradition of India, notably Buddhism and Jainism. These philosophical traditions presented alternative paths to liberation and enlightenment, diverging from the dominant Vedic Brahmanical traditions. Buddhism focused on alleviating suffering through the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. Jainism emphasised the practice of non-violence (*ahiṃsā*) and asceticism as means of attaining spiritual liberation. Alongside the heterodox systems, the Epic Period also laid the foundation for the orthodox systems of philosophy. The philosophies of Vedānta, Nyāya, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, and Mimāṁsā emerged during this period, each offering unique perspectives on the nature of reality, the self, knowledge, and the paths to liberation.

- Quest for reality, self-realisation, and divine experience

- Intellectual flourishing across the globe in the Epic Period.

- Diverse philosophies emerged in the Epic Period

The Epic Period is a phase of intellectual development in India estimated to have occurred between 500 or 600 B.C. and around 200 A.D. During this period, philosophical doctrines were indirectly presented through non-systematic and non-technical literary works, emphasising the two great epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The Mahābhārata, one of the longest epic poems in the world, explores philosophical themes such as duty, righteousness, morality, and the nature of the self. It contains philosophical discourses on various life paths such as *jñāna yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, and *karma yoga*. *Jñāna yoga*, the path of knowledge, emphasises understanding one's true nature and the ultimate reality. *Bhakti yoga*, the path of devotion, encourages the cultivation of unwavering love and devotion towards the divine. *Karma yoga*, the path of selfless action, emphasises the importance of performing one's duties without attachment to the results.

The *Bhagavad Gītā*, a significant section of the *Mahābhārata*, stands as a philosophical masterpiece in its own right. It presents a dialogue between Lord Krishna, the embodiment of divine wisdom, and Prince Arjuna, a skilled warrior, on the eve of a great battle. Krishna expounds on the concept of duty, emphasising the importance of fulfilling one's responsibilities in alignment with righteousness and cosmic order. The paths to spiritual liberation are unveiled, with Lord Krishna stressing the significance of selfless action, devotion, and knowledge in attaining spiritual enlightenment and liberation from the cycle of birth and death. This discourse also provides teachings on various philosophical subjects, shedding light on the nature of the self and the nature of the divine.

The *Rāmāyaṇa*, another ancient epic, revolves around the story of Rama and his quest to rescue his wife, Sita, from King Ravana. One of the central philosophical inquiries explored in the *Rāmāyaṇa* revolves around the concept of dharma, which can be understood as righteousness, duty, and moral order. It engages with the intricate realms of ethical decision-making, highlighting individuals' challenges and conflicts in their pursuit of righteousness. Love, both romantic and familial, is explored in depth, showcasing the bonds that transcend physical boundaries and endure in the face of adversity. The characters in the epic grapple with complex moral dilemmas and are faced with difficult choices that test their adherence to dharma. As the embodiment of righteousness, Rama becomes a moral compass, setting a high standard for ethical conduct and inspiring contemplation on the nature of virtuous actions.

In addition to the epic literature, the Epic Period is notable for compiling the *Dharmaśāstras*, which guide ethical conduct and social organisation. These treatises, classified as *smṛtis* or traditional texts, mark a shift from the earlier Vedic literature known as *śruti*, which is considered authentic scripture. The *Dharmaśāstras* provide comprehensive instructions on various aspects of life, including social organisation, family structure, legal systems, and religious obligations. They outline the duties and responsibilities of individuals based on their caste and stage of life, aiming to create a just and harmonious society. The compilation of these treatises reflects the growing complexity of Aryan society and the need for a structured framework of moral and ethical guidelines.

* *Dharmaśāstras* shape societal norms

1.2.3 The Sūtra Period

The Sūtra Period, also known as the Classical Period, is a significant phase in the history of Indian philosophy. This period marked a shift from the pre-critical level of philosophical thought and discussion to a more self-conscious and reflective approach. It laid the foundation for logical analysis, epistemological investigations, and the systematic exploration of metaphysical and ethical questions. The sūtras became tools for philosophical inquiry, providing a framework for organised study, analysis, and debate. Philosophers during this period were interested in more than just presenting their own ideas but also in refuting the ideas of others. This critical attitude allowed for a deeper understanding and refinement of philosophical concepts, leading to the development of more solid and well-argued philosophical systems.

* Sūtras refine philosophical discourse

The Sūtra Period is characterised by the composition of numerous philosophical texts known as sūtras, which are concise aphorisms or verses that provide a systematic and concise presentation of philosophical ideas. During the Sūtra Period, various philosophical schools and systems flourished, each offering its own unique insights and perspectives on fundamental philosophical questions. These sūtras were composed of prominent philosophers and scholars who sought to organise and codify the philosophical teachings of their respective traditions.

* Condensed sūtras shaped diverse philosophical systems.

In earlier periods, philosophical thought and discussions focused more on constructive imagination and spontaneous insights. The ideas put forward were not subjected to rigorous scrutiny or critical evaluation. However, with the advent of

the Sūtra Period, a more systematic and analytical approach emerged in philosophy. The sūtra themselves reflect this shift towards critical thinking. The concise and aphoristic statements present philosophical doctrines and engage in logical reasoning, analysis, and debate. The sūtras address the strengths and weaknesses of different philosophical systems, offering arguments and counterarguments to support their claims. They demonstrate a higher level of self-conscious thought and reflection, where philosophical ideas are examined and evaluated based on logical consistency, coherence, and empirical evidence.

During the Sūtra Period in Indian philosophy, a significant development took place with the presentation of six major philosophical systems in sūtra form. These systems played a crucial role in shaping the philosophical landscape of ancient and medieval India, covering a wide range of metaphysical, epistemological, ethical, and spiritual aspects. The Nyāya system focused on logic, epistemology, and reasoning. It emphasised the use of logical inference to gain valid knowledge and provided a framework for logical thinking and argumentation. The Vaiśeṣika system, on the other hand, explored the nature of reality and the classification of objects. It posited a realistic pluralistic view of the universe, analysing the characteristics, relations, and classifications of distinct substances.

The Sāṅkhya system presented an evolutionary dualism, focusing on the analysis of matter (Prakṛti) and consciousness (Puruṣa). It aimed to attain liberation by recognising the distinction between these two fundamental entities and realising the transcendence of the self from material existence. The Yoga system, popularised by Patanjali's Yoga sūtras, emphasised disciplined meditation and the control of the mind and senses. It offered a systematic approach to spiritual enlightenment and self-realisation through physical postures, breath control, and meditation. Another important system, Pūrva Mimāṁsā, focused on studying and interpreting the ritualistic aspects of the Vedas. It provided a comprehensive analysis of Vedic rituals, sacrificial ceremonies, and the ethical principles underlying them. Uttara Mimāṁsā, also known as Vedānta, explored the metaphysical and philosophical aspects of the Vedas. It dealt with concepts such as the nature of reality, the self, and the relationship between the individual and the ultimate reality.

1.2.4 The Scholastic Period

The Scholastic Period, although not restricted to a specific timeframe, is generally acknowledged to have spanned from the Sūtra Period to the seventeenth century. Central to this period was the practice of writing commentaries on the Sūtras, which were considered fundamental texts necessitating elaboration and explication. The Sūtras, being concise aphorisms, often posed challenges in terms of comprehension without proper interpretation. Therefore, scholars of the Scholastic Period undertook the crucial task of composing commentaries to offer thorough explanations and insights into the meaning and significance of the Sūtras. However, their scholarly endeavours extended beyond merely commenting on the Sūtras themselves. They engaged further into the realm of commentaries on commentaries, resulting in the creation of an extensive corpus of literature.

The tradition of commentary flourished as scholars engaged in a meticulous exploration of the philosophical concepts encapsulated within the Sūtras. By exploring deeper into the original texts and engaging in critical analysis, commentators sought to shed light on the insightful ideas presented in the Sūtras and foster a more comprehensive understanding of them. However, it is worth noting that the literature of this period also reflected a strong polemical element. Scholars engaged in vigorous debates, often critiquing and challenging the interpretations put forth by others. These polemical exchanges sometimes took on an intense and aggressive nature. The philosophers of the Scholastic Period have not only expanded and enriched existing philosophical systems, but they have also made significant contributions to various branches of Indian philosophy. Their works span a wide range of topics, including metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, logic, and theology.

For instance, scholars like Sankara, Kumarila, Sridhara, Ramanuja, Madhva, Vacaspati, Udayana, Bhaskara, Jayanta, Vijnanabhiksu, and Raghunatha, have made contributions that go beyond traditional commentary. Their insights and rigorous reasoning have advanced philosophical discourse and left a lasting impact on India's intellectual and philosophical traditions. They have emerged as creators of their own philosophical systems despite being known as commentators. Their elaborations and expansions upon the original systems they supposedly commented on have resulted in new expositions

- Scholars interpret Sūtras, expand commentaries, and create literature

- Scholars deepen understanding, engage in controversial debates

- Scholars transcend commentary, shape new philosophical systems

rather than mere explanations. It becomes clear with the analysis of the three major forms of Vedānta developed by Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva, while stemming from the same *Vedānta Sūtra* of Badarayana, represent distinct and elaborate systems of thought. This exemplifies the unique approach of Indian philosophers who maintain respect for the past while allowing for the free development of thought guided by insight and reason.

Summarised Overview

Indian philosophy is deeply rooted in ancient and medieval India's historical and cultural context. It emerged as a result of deep contemplation on fundamental questions of existence, reality, and the nature of human experience. Influenced by cultural, historical, social, religious, and intellectual factors, Indian philosophy is closely connected to the region's earliest spiritual and religious traditions. The development of Indian philosophy can be understood through four major periods: the Vedic Period, the Epic Period, the Sūtra Period, and the Scholastic Period.

The Vedic Period is characterised by the composition of the Vedas, which contain hymns, rituals, and philosophical speculations. The Epic Period is marked by the Mahābhārata and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which explore philosophical themes through captivating narratives. The Sūtra Period introduces systematic treatises in the form of sūtras, and commentaries are written to elaborate on them. Finally, the Scholastic Period witnessed the writing of commentaries upon commentaries, with scholars going beyond being mere commentators and developing their own philosophical systems. Throughout these periods, Indian philosophy evolved, diversified, and engaged with different philosophical insights, methodologies, and systems. It shaped the intellectual landscape of ancient and medieval India, offering thoughtful reflections on the nature of reality, human existence, ethics, and spiritual liberation. By exploring these periods, we gain a deeper understanding of the historical and cultural context of Indian philosophical thought and its enduring impact on global philosophical traditions.

Self-Assessment

1. How did the Vedic Period contribute to the development of Indian philosophy?
2. What distinguishes the Epic Period from other periods in Indian philosophy?
3. How did the Sūtra Period shape the philosophical landscape of ancient India?
4. What are the main characteristics of the Scholastic Period in Indian philosophy?
5. How did the philosophers of the Scholastic Period go beyond traditional commentary and create their philosophical systems

Assignments

1. Analyse the Vedic Period in Indian philosophy. Discuss the significance of the Vedic texts in shaping the philosophical ideas of that era.
2. Discuss the Sūtra Period in Indian philosophy. Explore the importance of the sūtras and their commentaries in the development of philosophical systems.
3. Discuss the significance of the Epic period and Sūtra Period in the evolution of Indian philosophy.

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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.

UNIT 3
The Vedic Metaphysics

Learning Outcomes

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

- know the concepts of polytheism, henotheism, monotheism, and monism and how these belief systems shaped the understanding of reality in Vedic Metaphysics
- identify the gradual transition from a sacrificial focus to the recognition of Brahman as the supreme principle
- familiarise the concept of *Ṛta* as the cosmic order and moral principle in Vedic Metaphysics
- examine the significance of *Ṛta* in understanding the interconnectedness and harmony of the universe

Background

Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy that explores fundamental questions concerning the nature of reality, existence, knowledge, and the relationship between mind and matter. The literal meaning of 'metaphysics' can be understood as 'beyond physics' or 'after physics.' The term was coined by early scholars who used it to refer to the branch of philosophy that dealt with topics beyond physical science, such as the nature of reality, existence, being, causality, and the ultimate principles and foundations of the universe. The origins of metaphysical thought in Western philosophy can be traced back to ancient Greece, particularly in the works of pre-Socratic philosophers like Thales, Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides, who sought to comprehend the underlying principles of the world and speculated about the nature of reality.

In Indian philosophy, metaphysical concepts emerged in ancient Vedic times. The early development of metaphysics in India can be observed in the Vedic texts, specifically in the Upaniṣads, which are considered the philosophical culmination of the Vedas. These texts made detailed enquiry regarding the questions related to the nature of reality, the self (*Ātman*), and the ultimate reality (*Brahman*). The Upaniṣads explore concepts such as the non-dual nature of reality, the cycle of birth and death, and the path to liberation. The metaphysical ideas presented in Vedas reflect deep philosophical contemplations and contribute to the richness of Indian philosophical traditions.

Keywords

Polytheism, Henotheism, Monotheism, Monism, Cosmic order, Moral principle, Ṛta

Discussion

Vedic Metaphysics focuses on understanding the fundamental nature of reality based on the teachings found in the ancient Vedic texts. Scholars and philosophers study the Vedic texts to gain insights into the nature of existence, consciousness, and the ultimate reality. Its rich history spanning thousands of years provides a comprehensive understanding of these subject matters. At the heart of Vedic metaphysics lies the Vedas, a collection of sacred texts comprising hymns, rituals, and philosophical dialogues. These revered scriptures have an intense quest to reveal the mysteries of the universe and gain a deeper comprehension of the essence of existence.

- Vedic Metaphysics explores the nature of ultimate reality

Vedic texts often use metaphors and allegories to describe reality in symbolic and poetic language. Vedic Metaphysics seeks to interpret and understand these metaphors to uncover deeper meanings and insights. Through the exploration of metaphors, the thinkers of this tradition gain insights into the interconnectedness, transience, depth, and mystery of reality, thereby expanding their understanding of the ultimate truths conveyed by the texts. These thoughtful philosophical engagements have left a remarkable impact on the intellectual, spiritual, and cultural heritage of Indian philosophy.

- Vedic Metaphysics interprets metaphors to uncover deeper insights

The important metaphysical discussion in Indian philosophy is centred on *Brahman*, which is eternal, infinite, and beyond the grasp of ordinary human comprehension. However, one must understand that the notion of *Brahman* as an absolute principle of everything was not a rapid development in Vedic metaphysics. This concept gradually developed through different evolutionary processes. In the Rig Veda, the term '*Brahman*' had various meanings attributed to it by Sāyaṇa, a renowned commentator of the Vedas. According to Sāyaṇa, the word '*Brahman*' could refer to food or food offerings, the chant of the *sāma*-singer, magical formula or text, duly completed ceremonies, the chant and sacrificial gift together, the recitation of the *hotā* priest, and greatness.

- Evolution of the concept of Brahman in Vedic metaphysics

While the Rig Veda primarily focused on the ritualistic aspects of sacrifice, it was in later texts like the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* that the concept of Brahman acquired a more deep and all-encompassing meaning. Here, Brahman is recognised as the supreme principle, transcending the gods and serving as the underlying force that empowers their actions. This transition from a primarily sacrificial focus to the recognition of Brahman as the supreme principle would become foundational for the philosophical system of Vedānta, which explores the nature of reality, consciousness, and the ultimate truth. The following discussion will shed light on how the polytheistic tendencies prevalent in the early Vedic period reached the stage of monism in the history of Indian thought.

- Evolution of Brahman from ritualistic sacrifice to monism

1.3.1 Polytheism, Henotheism, Monotheism and Monism in Vedic Metaphysics

In the Vedas, ancient texts from India, there are many stories and descriptions of gods and goddesses. These gods and goddesses are like extraordinary beings representing different things in nature, such as the wind, fire, the sun, the moon, darkness, dawn, and the earth. The people who followed the Vedic tradition believed these natural forces had special powers and qualities beyond what humans could do. They saw them as divine or god-like beings. These gods and goddesses became an essential part of Hinduism, the religion that developed from the Vedic tradition. The people might pray to them, offer gifts or sacrifices, or perform rituals and ceremonies. This way of worshipping many gods and goddesses is called polytheism. It is a common feature in many ancient religions, and it is still practised by millions of people worldwide today.

- Vedic gods personify natural forces in polytheism

Polytheism is a term derived from the Greek words 'poly,' meaning 'many,' and 'theos,' meaning 'God.' It refers to a religious belief system in which the existence and worship of multiple gods are acknowledged. In polytheism, each deity has a distinct role and unique powers and characteristics. However, at the same time, each god is considered a part of a larger, interconnected group known as a pantheon rather than being isolated or unrelated entities. This interconnectedness creates a cohesive and coherent group of gods, each contributing to the overall religious framework.

During the Vedic period, deities such as Agni, Varuṇa, Mitra, Adhiti, Indra, Prajāpati, and Viśhvakarma were considered gods in different periods. They were worshipped and venerated through hymns, chants, and sacrificial rituals known as *yajña*. The following hymn from the Rig Veda is an example that expresses the devotion and admiration of the worshipper towards Indra and highlights his qualities as a benevolent and dependable deity.

"To him I sing a holy prayer, incessant, new, matchless, common to the earth and heaven, Who marks, as they were backs, all living creatures: ne'er doth he fail a friend, the noble Indra."

Another hymn addressed to the deity Agni, who is revered as the god of fire in the Vedic tradition. It expresses the worshipper's daily approach to Agni, recognising Agni's radiant presence even in the darkness and offering prayers and adoration.

"Thee, O Agni, we approach day by day, O (god) who shiniest in the darkness; with our prayer, bringing adoration to thee—."

The following hymn is dedicated to the Sun, often referred to as the deity Surya in Vedic literature. It praises the Sun's swiftness, visibility, and role as the illuminator of the world.

"Swift-moving, visible to all, Maker of light thou art, O Sun, Illuming all the shining space."

Likewise, we can find hymns that address the God Viṣṇu, Uṣas, Vāta (Vāyu) Bṛhaspati- the God of prayer and Pṛthivi. However, scholars differ in opinion regarding the polytheistic tendencies present in Vedas. Surendranath Dasgupta states that the plurality of gods in Vedic Metaphysics may give

the impression of polytheism. Still a discerning reader would recognise that neither polytheism nor monotheism is explicitly present in the Vedic texts. Instead, the Vedic faith represents a primitive stage of belief that serves as the foundation for both polytheism and monotheism. The gods in the Vedic tradition do not maintain fixed positions as they would in a polytheistic faith. Instead, their significance varies depending on the context of worship or reverence.

In Dasgupta's opinion, Vedic poets, being deeply connected to nature, found inspiration and awe in the natural world. They experienced wonder, admiration, and adoration for natural phenomena. For instance, they marvelled that a rough and red cow could produce soft and white milk. The sun's rising and setting also evoked a sense of awe in the minds of the Vedic sages, who gazed at it with wonder-filled eyes. In essence, the Vedic poets' appreciation for the natural world and their sense of wonder contributed to the diverse and dynamic understanding of the gods in the Vedic tradition. This understanding cannot be easily classified as polytheism but represents a unique and foundational stage of a belief that served as the basis for developing the later theological concepts.

In Vedic metaphysics, there is a clear transition from polytheism to henotheism, where we find a shift towards worshipping a single deity while acknowledging the existence of other gods. Scholars like Max Muller state that this transition involves recognising and elevating a particular deity as the supreme god at a given time without denying the existence or importance of other gods. In this belief system, individuals would focus their devotion on one primary deity while still acknowledging the existence of other divine beings. This shift to henotheism reflected a deepening understanding and a more nuanced approach to the divine. It allowed for a more personal and intimate connection with the chosen deity, considered the most supreme and powerful in a particular context or for a specific purpose. This shift did not diminish the significance of other gods; instead, it emphasised the preference for a specific deity within a given situation.

The inclination to elevate and honour a particular god as the greatest and most supreme gradually paved the way for monotheistic inclinations within the Vedas. Although strict monotheism is not found in the Vedas, there are discernible tendencies that lean towards a monotheistic understanding of

the divine. This development was not a deliberate generalisation process but rather a natural progression stemming from the human mind's capacity to conceive of a deity possessing the highest moral and physical power, even if its direct manifestation remained imperceptible. Notably, these tendencies towards monotheism within the Vedas do not negate the prevalence of polytheistic elements. Instead, they represent an evolving understanding and exploration of the divine nature, gradually moving towards the conceptualisation of a singular supreme entity. For instance, in Vedas, the term 'Prajāpati' was used as an epithet for other deities in Vedic texts. However, over time, it acquired recognition as a distinct deity, separate from the others, and was revered as the highest and greatest of them all. This can be seen as a significant step towards a more monotheistic inclination within Vedic literature.

- Presence of monotheistic tendencies towards supreme deity

As time passed and philosophical ideas evolved within the Vedic tradition, there was a shift from worshipping many gods and goddesses to focusing on a single, ultimate reality. This transition from naturalistic polytheism to monotheism eventually paved the way for a philosophical concept known as monism in the Indian philosophical tradition. This development forms a significant philosophical doctrine within the Vedic tradition, which is further carried over into the Vedanta, the highly developed system of Indian thought. The crowded pantheon of gods and goddesses in Vedic polytheism became intellectually burdensome, leading to an inclination to identify one god with another or to synthesise all the gods together. This tendency towards systematisation naturally culminated in monotheism, which offered a more straightforward and logical alternative to the chaotic multitude of deities conflicting with one another.

- Transition from Polytheism to monotheism to monism

However, even during the period of monotheism, the singular Supreme Being did not escape criticism. The human mind yearned for more than an anthropomorphic deity. The pursuit of truth necessitated a different standard and object of worship. As a result, monotheism failed to satisfy the later Vedic thinkers, eventually leading to the rise of philosophical monism, which advocates for the worship of an impersonal, unknowable One. This transition from monotheism to philosophical monism represents the culmination of the Vedic intellectual journey, driven by the desire to explore the nature of the divine and the ultimate reality beyond the limitations of anthropomorphic conceptions. It reflects the inclination of the

- Monotheism's limits surpassed by philosophical monism

human mind to seek truths and spiritual understanding beyond personal comfort and traditional forms of worship.

1.3.2 The Concept of *Ṛta*

In Vedic Metaphysical discussions, *Ṛta* plays a crucial role as the underlying order and harmony that ensures the proper functioning and balance of the cosmos. *Ṛta* literally means 'to move' or 'to flow' and encapsulates the idea of 'the course of things' or 'the way things naturally unfold.' It refers to the cosmic order, natural law, and the underlying principle that governs the functioning of the universe. *Ṛta* carries implications for ethics, spirituality, social harmony, and understanding the fundamental nature of reality. Embracing *Ṛta* entails aligning one's actions, thoughts, and intentions with the natural order, leading to personal and collective well-being. It also guides individuals in fulfilling their responsibilities towards themselves, others, society, and the divine, forming the basis for ethical and moral principles summarised in the concept of dharma.

- *Ṛta* as a cosmic order guides ethics and spirituality

Ṛta is the cosmic law that maintains balance and harmony in the universe. It implies that there is an inherent order and regularity in the cosmos, which governs the functioning of all phenomena. This order ensures that everything in the universe operates in a synchronised and harmonious manner. It also highlights the regularity and predictability of the cyclical nature of time, seasons, and celestial movements. The movement of the sun, moon, planets, and stars follows a consistent pattern, allowing for the calculation of calendars and astronomical events. *Ṛta* acknowledges that these regular patterns are not arbitrary but are part of the larger cosmic order.

- Cosmic law maintains balance and harmony

Ṛta is not a human construct but an inherent and timeless order that underlies all aspects of existence. Its presence ensures predictability, regularity, and stability in cosmic processes, establishing cosmic equilibrium and harmony. According to Ṛta, all elements of existence in the universe are interconnected and interdependent. The cosmic order recognises that no phenomenon or entity exists in isolation, but rather, they are part of a larger web of interconnections. This interconnectedness emphasises the unity and interplay of diverse elements within the cosmos. Ṛta upholds that the cosmic order maintains a delicate balance and equilibrium. It acknowledges the dynamic interplay of opposing forces, such as creation and destruction, light and darkness, and order and chaos. The cosmic order en-

- Entities exist as a part of a larger web of interconnections

sures that these opposing forces are balanced and harmonised, preventing extreme imbalance or disruption.

Ṛta, besides its cosmological implications, also carries a moral and ethical dimension. It is seen as the moral law that guides human conduct and ethical behaviour. It is believed that there is an inherent order and righteousness in the universe, and aligning oneself with Ṛta means conforming to this moral law. It provides a framework for individuals to understand their responsibilities and obligations in the larger scheme of existence. Adhering to Ṛta implies aligning one's actions, intentions, and moral choices with the inherent order of the universe. It requires individuals to recognise the interconnectedness of all beings and act in harmony with this interconnected web. By aligning with Ṛta, individuals strive to maintain balance, justice, and righteousness in their thoughts, words, and deeds. They also adhere to moral principles, acting ethically and upholding virtues such as truth, honesty, compassion, and non-violence.

Associated with truthfulness and honesty, Ṛta emphasises the importance of supporting one's thoughts, words, and actions with the inherent truth of the universe. Truthfulness is seen as a moral imperative that upholds the natural order. Conversely, deviating from truth and embracing falsehood disrupts Ṛta and leads to moral transgressions. Beyond its physical and ethical dimensions, Ṛta carries deep spiritual and existential implications. Recognising the importance of Ṛta is seen as a transformative path towards self-realisation and spiritual awakening. By living in harmony with the cosmic order, individuals deepen their connection to the divine, transcend the limitations of the ego, and realise their true nature.

In Indian philosophy, the relationship between Ṛta and Dharma is deeply intertwined and holds significant importance. Dharma represents the righteous path and moral duty individuals are expected to follow. It provides guidelines for human behaviour that are believed to be in harmony with the cosmic order of Ṛta. In other words, living in accordance with Dharma ensures balance, harmony, and ethical conduct at both individual and societal levels. It includes personal and social responsibilities, ethical principles, and values that guide individuals in leading a virtuous life. Adhering to Dharma means aligning one's actions and choices with the inherent order of the universe, promoting righteousness, justice, and social welfare.

- *Ṛta* is a moral guide for ethical conduct

- Truth, ethics, and spiritual awakening are intertwined

- The interconnection between *Ṛta* and Dharma in Indian philosophy

Both play a crucial role in decision-making, personal growth, and spiritual development, contributing to the overall well-being of individuals and society.

Summarised Overview

Vedic Metaphysics revolves around understanding the fundamental nature of reality based on teachings found in the ancient Vedic texts. It involves an understanding of the ultimate reality by exploring various belief systems, including polytheism, henotheism, monotheism, and monism. Polytheism recognises multiple gods and goddesses as distinct entities with their own powers and attributes. Henotheism acknowledges the existence of multiple deities but focuses on worshipping a single deity as the supreme god. Monotheism asserts the existence of a single, all-powerful and all-encompassing God. Monism, on the other hand, posits that there is an underlying unity or oneness that pervades all existence.

The concept of *Ṛta*, representing the cosmic order and moral law, is another key element in Vedic Metaphysics. *Ṛta* guides individuals to align their actions, thoughts, and intentions with the natural order, leading to personal and collective well-being. It carries implications for ethics, spirituality, and understanding the fundamental nature of reality. *Ṛta* is closely connected to Dharma, which represents the righteous path and moral duty individuals are expected to follow in accordance with the cosmic order. Following one's Dharma is essential for maintaining balance and harmony in the world and attaining spiritual progress.

Self-Assessment

1. Describe the transition from polytheism to henotheism in Vedic metaphysics.

2. How did monotheistic tendencies develop within the Vedic tradition?

3. What is the significance of the concept of *Ṛta* in Vedic metaphysics?

4. Explain the moral and ethical implications of aligning with *Ṛta.*

5. How does *Ṛta* relate to the concept of Dharma?

Assignments

1. Explain the transition from polytheism to henotheism in Vedic metaphysics. How did this shift towards the worship of a single deity while acknowledging the existence of others contribute to a deeper understanding of the divine?

2. Discuss the tendencies towards monotheism within the Vedas. How do these tendencies reflect an evolving understanding of the divine nature?

3. Explore the concept of *Ṛta* in Vedic metaphysics. What does Ṛta signify in terms of cosmic order and harmony?

4. Examine the relationship between Ṛta and Dharma in Indian philosophy. How do these concepts complement each other in promoting balance, harmony, and ethical conduct at individual and societal levels?

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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.

BLOCK 2
Upanishad and Bhagavat Gita

UNIT 1
Introduction to Upanishads

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- understand the etymology and development of Upanishads in Indian philosophical tradition
- recognise the philosophical significance of Upanishads in the Indian tradition of thought
- familiarise principal Upanishads that enriched Indian philosophy
- appreciate the diversity of ideas and perspectives presented in the major Upanishads

Background

The early Vedic period witnessed the composition of Mantras, which are hymns and prayers used in rituals and sacrifices. While the Mantras focused on the performance of religious ceremonies, the intellectual climate gradually shifted, prompting the emergence of the Brāhmaṇas. These prose texts expanded upon the rituals mentioned in the Mantras, offering explanations, interpretations, and mythological narratives. As seekers yearned for a more contemplative and ascetic way of life, the Āraṇyakas (Forest Treatises) emerged as another stage of development. These texts, composed during the forest-dwelling stage of the Vedic tradition, provided rituals and meditative practices suitable for individuals seeking solitude and a deeper understanding of spirituality.

However, it was the Upaniṣads that truly revolutionised philosophical thought in ancient India. As the culmination of the Vedic literature, the Upaniṣads focused more on metaphysical and philosophical inquiries. They shifted the emphasis from external rituals to internal contemplation, exploring the nature of reality, the self, and

the ultimate truth. The transitions from Mantras to Brāhmaṇas, from Brāhmaṇas to Āraṇyakas, and from Āraṇyakas to Upaniṣads signify a progressive shift from ritualistic practices to deeper philosophical inquiry and spiritual wisdom. The development of the Upaniṣads can be attributed to various factors, including the influence of religious and cultural practices, interactions with other philosophical traditions, and the search for deeper spiritual understanding.

Keywords

Philosophical evolution, wisdom literature, oral tradition, *śruti*

Discussion

- Upaniṣads made a shift from ritualistic practices to metaphysics

The Upaniṣads emerged towards the end of the Vedic period, which lasted from around 1500 BCE to 500 BCE. It brought a significant change in the history of Indian philosophical tradition with philosophical and metaphysical questions. These texts are considered the cream of Vedic thought, representing a crucial shift from ritualistic practices to a more serious exploration of metaphysics. The Upaniṣads were composed in various regions of ancient India by different sages, ascetics, and philosophers. They were not the work of a single author or produced within a specific time frame; instead, their development spanned a considerable period, reflecting the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual climate that prevailed throughout the ancient Indian subcontinent. Through their deep contemplation and philosophical insights, these sages and thinkers sought to unravel the mysteries of existence and explore the nature of consciousness and reality.

2.1.1 Etymology and Development of Upaniṣads

- Upaniṣads provide diverse ideas and reflections on existence

The Upaniṣadic period was when diverse philosophical ideas were contemplated, and various schools of thought were taking shape. The development of Upaniṣads is a response to this intellectual and spiritual climate, offering reflections and teachings on the fundamental nature of existence and the purpose of human life. The development of the Upaniṣads represented a departure from the traditional Vedic rituals and a move towards deeper introspection and philosophical inquiry. These texts became a source of inspiration and guidance for

seekers who were no longer satisfied with mere external rituals but were yearning for a deeper understanding of the nature of reality and their own selves.

The Upaniṣads cover a wide range of philosophical themes, collectively called Vedanta, which means 'the end of the Vedas' or 'the culmination of Vedic knowledge.' They explore the concepts of Brahman, the ultimate reality or universal consciousness, and Ātman, the individual self or soul. The Upaniṣads try to establish a connection between these two principles and unravel their underlying unity. Max Muller, a renowned scholar, describes Vedanta as a system where human speculation has reached its peak.

Despite the vast temporal distance between the Upaniṣads and the present day, their ideas remain relevant even in the present time. They had a deep influence on subsequent philosophical and spiritual traditions in India. The central ideals that preoccupied the Upaniṣadic thinkers, such as man's ultimate bliss, the attainment of perfect knowledge, and the vision of reality, continue to be cherished in contemporary times. The Upaniṣads form an integral part of Vedanta philosophy, which encompasses various schools of thought, such as Advaita (non-dualism), Vishiṣṭādvaita (qualified non-dualism), and Dvaita (dualism). These schools interpret and expound the Upaniṣadic teachings, contributing to diverse philosophical perspectives.

The significance of the Upaniṣads within Indian philosophy lies in their ability to awaken individuals to the deeper realities of existence and guide them to the path of self-discovery and spiritual growth. They illuminate the interconnectedness of all beings, emphasising the unity that underlies apparent diversity. The Upaniṣads have thus contributed to developing a holistic and inclusive worldview that recognises every individual's intrinsic divinity and inherent worth. The teachings of the Upaniṣads transcend the boundaries of time and culture. They also inspired and guided countless philosophers, spiritual leaders, and seekers throughout history, fostering deep contemplation, self-inquiry, and the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment.

The term 'Upaniṣad' has an etymology that is still a matter of debate among scholars. It is derived from the Sanskrit verb 'sad,' which is preceded by the pre-verbs 'upa' and 'ni'. The most common meaning of 'sad' is 'to sit.' The pre-verb

- Vedantic exploration of ultimate reality and self

- The enduring relevance of the diverse philosophical perspectives of Upaniṣads

- Upaniṣads focuses on unity, timeless wisdom and spiritual enlightenment

'*upa*' conveys the idea of proximity or nearness, while the pre-verb '*ni*' indicates a downward motion. Consequently, 'Upaniṣad' can be translated as 'sitting down near' someone. Traditionally, the term is understood to refer to the act of a student sitting down at the feet of a teacher to receive secret teachings about Ātman (the individual soul) and Brahman (the ultimate reality or universal soul).

The notion of 'sitting down near' someone also implies a close and intimate connection between the student and the teacher. It symbolises a receptive and humble attitude, as the student seeks to gain deep knowledge and insight from the teacher's wisdom. The act of sitting down near the teacher also implies a sense of proximity and accessibility to the teachings, emphasising the importance of direct transmission and personal instruction in understanding the concepts of Ātman and Brahman. The Upaniṣads, therefore, are seen as a sacred body of texts where spiritual seekers engage in deep philosophical and metaphysical discussions with their revered teachers. Through these interactions, the seekers gain insights into the nature of the self and the absolute reality, ultimately leading to spiritual enlightenment and liberation.

The Upaniṣads are generally believed to have consisted of 108 works, with about ten of them being considered the most significant, as they were commented upon by the great scholar Sankaracharya. These ten Upaniṣads also hold a special place as the oldest and most authoritative among the 108 Upaniṣads. The precise dates of their emergence remain uncertain, but scholars agree that they predate the rise of Buddhism, with a few composed after the time of Buddha. The composition of the Upaniṣads is believed to have taken place between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE, bridging the gap between the completion of the Vedic hymns and the emergence of Buddhism.

The oldest Upanishads are written in prose. These non-sectarian works include the *Aitareya*, *Kauṣītaki*, *Taittirī*ya, *Chāndogya*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, and parts of the *Kena* Upaniṣads. The Kaṭha Upanishad is even more recent and incorporates elements of the Sāṅkhya and Yoga systems. It also made references to other Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The Upaniṣads associated with the Atharva-Veda are also considered to have developed later. The Maitrī Upaniṣads contain elements of both the Sāṅkhya and Yoga systems. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* was composed during a period when various philosoph-

ical theories were emerging. It demonstrates familiarity with the technical terminology of orthodox systems and mentions several of their prominent doctrines.

The Upaniṣads hold a significant position within Hinduism as *śruti*, which means authoritative sacred text. In Hinduism, there are two distinct categories for sacred texts śruti and smṛti. The term śruti refers to 'that which is heard' and encompasses the oldest Sanskrit texts, including the four Vedas, the ritual Brāhmaṇa and Āraṇyaka texts, and the principal Upaniṣads. On the other hand, *smṛti* means 'that which is remembered' and includes works on the six Vedāṅgas (auxiliary Vedic sciences), the epic poems *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, legal literature, and the mythological texts of the Purāṇas. While both categories of texts are considered authentic, the texts classified as *śruti* hold a higher level of authority.

- *śruti* means 'that which is heard', and *smṛti* means 'that which is remembered'

The śruti texts are traditionally transmitted orally from generation to generation, from teacher to student. This oral transmission highlights their authenticity, which emphasises the importance of hearing the teachings directly from experienced persons. The direct transmission from teacher to student fosters a sense of lineage and authenticity, enabling the teachings to be preserved in their original form. Writing down the *śruti* texts was not at all appreciated, as their oral transmission ensured the preservation of their sanctity and authenticity. By passing down the *śruti* texts through oral recitation, the wisdom and teachings of the Upaniṣads are kept alive, ensuring the continuity and purity of their message.

- Oral transmission preserves the sanctity and authenticity of *śruti* texts

2.1.2 Significance of Upaniṣads in Indian Philosophy

The Upaniṣads occupy a position of great significance within Indian philosophy. They are regarded as the crown jewels of Vedic literature and have exerted tremendous influence on India's philosophical and spiritual landscape. The Upaniṣads are revered for their deep, insightful teachings and timeless wisdom, which continue to influence seekers and scholars alike. As the concluding portions of the Vedic texts, the Upaniṣads represent the culmination of centuries of intellectual and spiritual inquiry. They bring together the accumulated knowledge, contemplation, and revelations of India's ancient sages and seers.

- Upaniṣads are considered the crown jewels of Indian philosophy

The Upaniṣads have inspired and influenced various philosophical systems and schools of thought, ranging from the non-dualism of Advaita Vedanta and Viśiṣṭadvaita to the dualism of Dvaita Vedanta. These ancient texts explore concepts such as Brahman (the ultimate reality), Ātman (the individual self), Māya (illusion), Karma (action and its consequences), and *Mokṣa* (liberation). The central theme of the Upaniṣads revolves around the fundamental problem of philosophy: the search for truth and ultimate reality. These ancient texts address the inherent dissatisfaction with the transient nature of worldly things and the quest for understanding the deeper aspects of existence. They raise questions about the nature of our origins, the purpose of our lives, and what lies beyond our mortal existence. In the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, we encounter the questions posed by seekers, 'Whence are we born, where do we live, and whither do we go? O, ye who know Brahman, tell us at whose command we abide here, whether in pain or pleasure. Should time or nature, or necessity or chance, or the elements be considered to be the cause, or he who is called Puruṣa, the man that is the Supreme spirit?' These inquiries reflect a deep yearning to understand the underlying truth and ultimate source of our existence.

Similarly, in the *Kena Upaniṣad*, the pupil asks about the origins and directives behind the functions of the mind, breath, speech, and the senses: At whose command does the first breath go forth, at whose wish do we utter this speech? What god directs the eye or the ear?' These questions challenge the notion that our experiences and mental faculties are self-existent and suggest the possibility of a higher power or reality beyond our immediate understanding. The Upaniṣadic thinkers did not take sensory experience and common sense as final and absolute truths. They recognised the limitations of finite and conditioned knowledge, mind, and senses, and the need for something ultimate and unconditioned in which the mind can find rest.

The Upaniṣads go beyond the realm of philosophy and address the broader aspects of human existence. In the realm of morals, they acknowledge the inadequacy of finding true happiness and fulfilment in the finite and transient pleasures of the world. The seers of the Upaniṣads recognise that only the infinite can offer lasting joy and contentment. In matters of religion, they express a deep yearning for eternal life and the search for a spiritual reality that transcends the temporal and

- The quest for truth, existence, and ultimate reality

- Upaniṣads challenge the truth claims of sensory experience

mortal aspects of existence. The seers of the Upaniṣads guide us towards the central reality, which they describe as infinite existence (*sat*), pure consciousness (*cit*), and bliss (*ananda*). They invite us to shift our focus from the realm of the unreal and transient towards the realm of the real and everlasting. This quest encompasses the fulfilment of our deepest desires and the realisation of our inherent connection with the timeless and spiritual aspects of existence.

2.1.3 Brief Sketch of Major Upaniṣads

Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad: The Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad consists of only eighteen short verses that address several significant themes and concepts. It touches upon the path of knowledge (*Jñāna*) and the path of action (*Karma*), explores the paradoxical nature of the Ātman (the individual self), and engages with the characteristics of a non-attached sage. However, one of its most crucial teachings is the assertion that neither knowledge of the supernatural nor knowledge of the natural alone can lead to true wisdom. It implies that a balanced and comprehensive understanding is necessary for true enlightenment. This viewpoint contrasts with certain later schools of Indian philosophy that emphasise the unreality or illusory nature of the empirical world.

By recognising the importance of both the supernatural and the natural aspects of existence, the Īśā Upaniṣad highlights the interconnectedness of the physical and metaphysical realms. It suggests that a holistic approach, integrating knowledge of both realms, is essential for a complete understanding of reality. The Upaniṣads invite individuals to transcend the limited perspective of perceiving the world as solely empirical or illusory. It emphasises the need to transcend dualistic thinking and embrace a wider worldview that includes both the empirical and the transcendental aspects of existence.

Kena Upaniṣad: The Kena Upaniṣad derives its name from the question it poses, 'By whom?' It deals with the inquiry of who is the ultimate power behind the functioning of the universe, both externally in nature and internally within human beings. In response, the Upaniṣad presents the concept of a single unitary reality known as the Ātman, which serves as the inspirer and underlying force behind the functions of both individuals and the entire universe. The Kena Upaniṣad explains that the Ātman is responsible for the various sensory

and cognitive functions within human beings, as well as the functions of the elements in the external world. It emphasises the interconnectedness and unity between the individual and the larger cosmic reality.

The Upaniṣad also explores the concept of knowledge and its significance in attaining liberation. It suggests that true liberation can only be achieved through the knowledge of the unqualified Absolute, referring to the transcendental and ultimate reality. The Kena Upaniṣad is well-known for its statement, 'It is not understood by those who say they understand it. It is understood by those who say they understand it not.' This declaration highlights the paradoxical nature of comprehending the Absolute, whether it is referred to as Brahman or Ātman. It suggests that the true nature of the Absolute goes beyond intellectual comprehension and cannot be grasped solely through conceptual understanding. It is only through a humble surrender of preconceived notions and a readiness to embrace the mystery and transcendence of the Absolute that one can come to truly one with it.

Kaṭha Upaniṣad: It is regarded as one of the most philosophical Upaniṣads that explores concepts and engages in thought-provoking dialogues. This Upaniṣad is characterised by several significant features that contribute to its philosophical depth. One notable feature of the Kaṭha Upaniṣad is the dialogue between Naciketas, a young seeker, and Yama, the god of the world of departed spirits. Their conversation revolves around the immortality of the self. Naciketas demonstrates great wisdom and determination by choosing knowledge and spiritual realisation above all worldly blessings. This dialogue serves as a powerful exploration of the nature of the self and the pursuit of higher truth. The Upaniṣad also presents the theory of the superiority of the good (*śreyas*) over the pleasant (*preyas*). It asserts that genuine spiritual growth and lasting fulfilment come from relating oneself with actions and choices that lead to the ultimate good, rather than being solely driven by temporary pleasures and immediate gratification.

Kaṭha Upaniṣad also puts forth the view that the Ātman, the true self or soul, cannot be known through sensory perception, intellectual reasoning, or mere accumulation of knowledge. Instead, it emphasises the importance of intuitive insight and direct realisation. It suggests that true understanding of the Ātman can only be attained through a deep and expe-

- Liberation through knowledge of the unqualified Absolute

- Dialogue on self and spiritual growth

riential connection with one's inner self, transcending the limitations of the senses and intellectual faculties. Furthermore, the Upaniṣad introduces the doctrine of the body as the chariot of the self. This symbolic depiction highlights the relationship between the body and the eternal essence within. The body is compared with a chariot, and the self is seen as the eternal driver of this chariot. This concept emphasises the temporary and transient nature of the physical body and emphasises the importance of realising the eternal essence beyond the body.

Praśna Upaniṣad: The Praśna Upaniṣad is one of the principal Upaniṣads belonging to the *Atharva Veda*. It consists of six sections, or Praśnas, each containing a series of philosophical questions posed by different seekers to the sage Pippalāda. The Praśna Upaniṣad begins with six students approaching Pippalāda with their respective questions. Each question reflects the seeker's quest for deeper understanding and spiritual realisation. The first Praśna addresses the fundamental question of the origin of the universe. The sage explains the process of creation and the various levels of existence, ultimately leading to the realisation that the entire universe is interconnected and governed by a single cosmic principle. The second Praśna focuses on the nature of the self. The sage addresses the different components of the human being, including the physical body, the senses, the mind, and the eternal self or Ātman.

The third Praśna deals with the nature of dreams and the dream state. It explores the relationship between the waking state, dream state, and deep sleep state, shedding light on the nature of consciousness and the illusionary aspects of reality. The fourth Praśna investigates the concept of meditation and the various techniques and objects of meditation. The sage explains the significance of different forms of meditation and their effects on the mind and consciousness, guiding the seekers towards a deeper understanding of spiritual practices. The fifth Praśna explores the concept of life energy or prāṇa and its role in sustaining the physical body and supporting various physiological functions. The sixth and final Praśna inquires about the nature of liberation or Mokṣa. The sage Pippalāda explains the path to liberation, stressing the need for self-discipline, self-control, and spiritual wisdom.

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad: The Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad holds a distinct place among the Upaniṣads as one of the most poetic and beautifully expressed texts. One notable aspect

- intuitive and direct realisation of Ātman

- Questions regarding the origin of the universe and the nature of the self

- The questions related to Dreams, meditation, life energy and liberation

of the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad is the exploration of two types of knowledge, namely the higher knowledge (*parā*) and the lower knowledge (*aparā*). The higher knowledge refers to the understanding of the eternal, transcendental truths, the nature of the self, and the ultimate reality. This knowledge leads to spiritual enlightenment and liberation. On the other hand, the lower knowledge pertains to worldly and practical knowledge, including the sciences, arts, rituals, and social conventions.

The Upaniṣads derive its name from the word '*Muṇḍaka*,' which means 'shaven.' This name is believed to have been given to emphasise the significance of the life of *sannyāsa*, which refers to the path of renunciation and austerity. The image of being 'shaven' symbolises the shedding of ignorance and the abandonment of attachment to worldly pursuits and religious rituals. It also deals with the nature of the self and the quest for self-realisation. The Upaniṣads encourage seekers to transcend the limitations of the material world and discover the eternal truth within them. In addition, the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad emphasises the role of the guru, the spiritual teacher, in guiding the seeker to the path to self-realisation. It highlights the importance of surrendering to a qualified guru who possesses the higher knowledge and can impart it to the disciple.

Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad: The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, named after the sage-teacher Māṇḍūkya, holds immense significance within Indian thought. It introduces a renowned theory known as the 'four states of consciousness,' which had a great influence on both psychological and metaphysical aspects of subsequent Indian philosophy. The Upaniṣads present a comprehensive exploration of four states of consciousness: waking (*jāgrat*), dreaming (*svapna*), deep sleep (*suṣupti*), and the fourth state (*turīya*). It emphasises that while the first three states are transient and subject to change, the fourth state, *turīya*, is the only one that represents ultimate reality. The Upaniṣads establish a deep connection between these states and the sacred syllable 'Om,' elucidating their relationship to this mystic sound.

Psychologically, the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad engages with the nature of human consciousness and highlights the different levels of awareness experienced in the waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states. It recognises that our perceptions and experiences vary across these states, offering insights into the complex workings of the human mind. Metaphysically, the

Upaniṣad asserts that the fourth state, turīya, represents the highest form of consciousness, transcending the limitations of ordinary waking and dreaming experiences. It signifies a state of pure awareness, where the individual realises their true nature and establishes a direct connection with the ultimate reality or Brahman.

Taittirīya Upaniṣad: The Taittirīya Upaniṣad stands out for its unique approach to presenting ethical teachings through a discourse between a teacher and his pupils. The Upaniṣad provides valuable insights into the ethical principles prevalent during its time. One notable aspect of the Taittirīya Upaniṣad is its doctrine of the 'Five Sheaths' (*pañcakōśa*) of the self. These sheaths represent different layers or coverings that envelop the true nature of the self. The Upaniṣad identifies these sheaths as food (physical nourishment), breath (vital energy), mind (mental processes), intellect (discriminative faculty), and bliss (the ultimate state of happiness). Through this conceptual framework, the Upaniṣad explores the various dimensions of human existence and their connection to the deeper aspects of the self.

Taittirīya Upaniṣad also introduces a 'calculus of bliss' that progressively leads to the realisation of the ultimate bliss of Brahman. It outlines a spiritual journey wherein one can cultivate and experience increasing levels of happiness and fulfilment. This calculus provides a roadmap for seekers to transcend ordinary worldly pleasures and relate themselves with the ultimate source of bliss, which is Brahman, the ultimate reality. Beyond these distinctive features, the Taittirīya Upaniṣad covers a wide range of philosophical and metaphysical concepts. It explores the nature of the self, the interconnectedness of all beings, and the ultimate goal of spiritual realisation. The Upaniṣad imparts teachings on various spiritual practices and rituals that aid seekers in their quest for self-discovery and spiritual growth.

Aitareya Upaniṣad: The Aitareya Upaniṣad, named after its association with the larger Aitareya Āraṇyaka, offers insights into various philosophical and metaphysical concepts. While addressing multiple themes, two aspects stand out in particular: the idea of life after death and the doctrine of the Ātman as intellect. The Upaniṣad provides a distinctive exploration of the concept of life after death. It offers a clearer exposition of this idea compared to other Upaniṣadic texts. The Aitareya Upaniṣad deals with the nature of existence beyond

the physical realm, suggesting the continuation of life and consciousness beyond bodily death. This exploration sparks contemplation on the nature of the soul, its journey, and its connection to the ultimate reality.

However, the most renowned aspect of the Aitareya Upaniṣad is its doctrine of the Ātman as intellect. It presents the idea that the Ātman, the individual self, is intimately linked to the intellect. The Upaniṣad elucidates the connection between the subjective experience of the self and the faculty of intellect. It explores the nature of consciousness and its relation to the higher cognitive functions, highlighting the interplay between the self and the intellect in the pursuit of knowledge and self-realisation. The Upaniṣad's emphasis on the intellect as a vehicle for spiritual growth has influenced subsequent philosophical and spiritual traditions, shaping the exploration of the mind and its role in the pursuit of truth. Aitareya Upaniṣad also touches upon various other philosophical themes. It explores the nature of creation, the relationship between the individual self and the universal self, and the ultimate reality underlying the manifest world.

Chāndogya Upaniṣad: The name '*Chāndogya*' is derived from the word '*chandas*,' which means meter. It signifies that the Upaniṣad is composed in a metrical style, making it suitable for recitation and chanting. This aspect reflects the poetic nature of the Upaniṣad, which adds to its beauty and appeal. It encompasses various important teachings, with notable passages that have become widely recognised and celebrated. One of the most beloved stories in Chāndogya Upaniṣad is that of Satyakāma Jābāla and his truthful mother. The narrative highlights the principle that one's social status or position as a *brāhmin* is determined by their character and qualities rather than their birth or lineage. The story emphasises the significance of truthfulness and integrity as the defining factors of an individual's worth.

At the heart of the Upaniṣad is the central teaching associated with the philosopher Āruṇi. It expounds the fundamental doctrine of the identity of the Ātman, the individual self or soul, and the Brahman, the universal consciousness. This concept is encapsulated in the well-known statement '*Tat tvam asi*,' which means, 'That thou art.' It signifies that the essence of the individual self is inseparable from the ultimate reality or universal consciousness. The Chāndogya Upaniṣad also deals

- The subjective experience of the self and the faculty of intellect

- Emphasise on truthfulness

- Identity of Ātman and Brahman – '*Tat tvam asi*'

with the significance of the sacred syllable '*Om*.' It offers a deep exploration of the mystical and spiritual implications of this syllable, highlighting its role as a powerful tool for meditation and attaining higher states of consciousness.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad: The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, often referred to as the 'great forest-book,' holds a significant place among the Upanishads. It is renowned as the longest and one of the oldest Upanishads, containing insightful teachings and passages. One notable section within the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad is the famous dialogue between the revered sage Yājñavalkya and his wife, Maitreyī. This discourse presents an expression of philosophical idealism, emphasising the concept of the transcendental Ātman, the universal and undifferentiated consciousness. Through this dialogue, the Upanishad offers deep insights into the nature of ultimate reality and the interconnectedness of all existence.

The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad is particularly renowned for popularising the doctrine of '*Neti, Neti*,' which is translated as 'not this, not this.' This doctrine signifies the indescribable nature of the Absolute. It emphasises that the ultimate reality cannot be fully captured or defined by any conceptual or linguistic framework. The doctrine encourages seekers to transcend all limited descriptions and concepts in order to approach the ineffable truth that lies beyond them. Throughout the Upaniṣad, there are significant passages dedicated to the exploration of Brahman, the ultimate reality. The text deeply contemplates the nature of Brahman, offering different perspectives and theories regarding its essence and characteristics.

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad: The Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad holds a significant place among the later Upaniṣads. It represents a culmination of various philosophical ideas and influences, including the Sāṅkhya and Yoga schools of thought. The dualistic systems of Sāṅkhya and Yoga find clear expression in the text. One notable characteristic of the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad is its inclination towards theistic concepts rather than the emphasis on Absolutism found in many other Upaniṣads. It incorporates elements of devotion and the worship of the divine. This theistic inclination sets it apart from other Upaniṣads that predominantly focus on the realisation of the ultimate reality or the transcendental Self.

The Upaniṣad derives its name from the sage or teacher believed to have imparted its teachings to his disciples. The

- Dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī is an expression of philosophical idealism

- '*Neti, Neti*,' the ineffable nature of the Absolute

- Synthesis of Sāṅkhya and Yoga

name '*Śvetāśvatara*' signifies the association of the Upaniṣad with this sage, highlighting his role as the source of its wisdom and insights. While the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad encompasses diverse philosophical perspectives, its overarching purpose is to provide guidance and spiritual wisdom to its readers. It reflects the intellectual and philosophical climate of its time, presenting a synthesis of ideas and teachings that were prevalent during its composition. The Upaniṣad serves as a testament to the evolving nature of Indian philosophy, incorporating various strands of thought and offering a broader understanding of the spiritual quest.

Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad: The Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad, named after the sage Kauṣītaki, is renowned for its philosophical insights and its emphasis on prāṇa, the vital life force or the breathing spirit. It explores the concept of *prāṇa* as the prime mover of the universe and establishes its connection with the higher subjective reality. Central to the Upaniṣad is the idea that *prāṇa* is not only the life force but also the subject of all knowledge and the ultimate object of knowledge. It is the same as the intelligential self or *prajñātman* and is described as blissful, ageless, and immortal. The Upaniṣad presents *prāṇa* as a divine force that transcends the influence of good or bad actions. It states that prāṇa does not become greater with good actions or lesser with bad actions. Instead, *prāṇa* guides individuals according to their own will, leading them to perform either good or bad actions based on their divine purpose.

The Upaniṣad recognises *prāṇa* as the world-protector, the world-sovereign, and the lord of all. It encourages individuals to realise the truth that prāṇa is their true self. By identifying with prāṇa and understanding its essential nature, one can attain spiritual insight and liberation. The Kauṣītaki Upanishad presents a unique perspective on the relationship between *prāṇa*, intelligence, and existence. It engages with the deeper realms of consciousness and highlights the significance of *prāṇa* as the vital force that animates all aspects of life. Through its teachings, the Upaniṣad encourages individuals to recognise the divine nature of *prāṇa* and to realise their essential identity with it.

Maitrī Upaniṣad: The Maitrī Upaniṣad is a philosophical text that is part of the ancient Upaniṣadic literature. It takes its name from the sage Maitreya, who is believed to be the teacher of this Upaniṣad. It is considered one of the later

- Wisdom from the sage that includes diverse teachings

- *Prāṇa* as the divine life force

- *Prāṇa* as the true self

Upaniṣads and is written in the form of a dialogue between the sage Maitreya and the sage Brahma. It explores various philosophical concepts and provides insights into the nature of the self, the universe, and the ultimate reality. One of the significant themes in the Maitrī Upaniṣad is the exploration of the nature of the self, known as Ātman. It discusses the concept of the individual self (*jivātman*) and its relationship to the universal self (*paramātman*) or Brahman. The Upaniṣad emphasises the idea that the individual self is inherently connected to the universal self and that realising this unity leads to liberation and transcendence.

Another key aspect of the Maitrī Upaniṣad is its exploration of the nature of creation and the manifestation of the universe. It deals with the cosmological principles and metaphysical concepts that explain the origin and functioning of the world. The Upaniṣad presents the idea of the universal self as the underlying reality from which all existence emerges. It also addresses ethical and moral teachings, emphasising the importance of virtuous conduct and righteous actions. It discusses the virtues of truthfulness, self-control, and compassion, emphasising the need to cultivate these qualities in order to lead a fulfilling and purposeful life. Maitrī Upaniṣad also touches upon the concept of reincarnation and the cycle of birth and death. It explores the idea of the eternal journey of the soul and the process of liberation from the cycle of *saṁsāra* through self-realisation and spiritual awakening.

Summarised Overview

The Upaniṣads, a collection of ancient philosophical and spiritual texts, are of significant importance within Indian philosophy. The term 'Upaniṣad' is derived from various proposed etymologies but generally refers to the act of a student sitting down near a teacher to receive secret teachings. These texts emerged during the latter part of the Vedic period, between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE, and deviated from the predominant ritualistic focus of the Vedas. Composed by various sages and philosophers across ancient India, the Upaniṣads developed over time, reflecting the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual ferment of the era. The major Upaniṣads provide insights into various aspects of Indian philosophy. Each Upaniṣad offers unique perspectives and teachings, inviting individuals to explore the depths of consciousness, self-realisation, and the nature of reality.

The Upaniṣads hold immense significance within Indian philosophy, shaping its philosophical and spiritual traditions. Exploring fundamental concepts such as the nature of the self (Ātman) and the ultimate reality (Brahman), the Upaniṣads emphasise the quest for knowledge, self-realisation, and liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Their teachings had a great influence on subsequent philosophical systems and spiritual traditions in India, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.

Self-Assessment

1. What is the literal meaning of the term 'Upanishad' and how does it reflect the nature of these texts?

2. Explain the historical development of the Upaniṣads and their relationship to the Vedic literature.

3. Discuss the role of the Upaniṣads in shaping the foundation of Indian philosophical thought.

4. Provide an overview of the key teachings and themes of the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad*.

5. Explain the significance of the dialogue between Naciketas and Yama in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*.

6. Discuss the concept of the 'four states of consciousness' and its significance in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*.

Assignments

1. Explore the etymology of the term 'Upaniṣad' and trace the historical development of the Upaniṣads and their relationship to the Vedic literature. Discuss the key factors that contributed to the emergence and evolution of the Upaniṣadic teachings.

2. Analyse the significance of the Upaniṣads in shaping the foundation of Indian philosophy. Discuss how the Upaniṣads influenced subsequent philosophical schools and the development of metaphysical and spiritual thought in India.

3. Choose three major Upaniṣads and provide a comprehensive overview of their teachings, themes, and philosophical insights. Explain the significance of these Upaniṣads in the context of Indian philosophy.

4. Compare and contrast the philosophical perspectives presented in different major Upaniṣads. Analyse the similarities and differences in their views on topics such as consciousness, existence, and the nature of reality.

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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.

UNIT 2
Major Themes in Upanisads

Learning Outcomes

In completion of this unit the learner will be able to:

- know the concept of Ātman and its characteristics and significance in Indian philosophy
- understand the concept of Brahman or the universal consciousness, and its role as the source and essence of the entire universe
- compare the nature of Ātman and Brahman, exploring their unity and inseparability according to Upaniṣadic teachings
- differentiate between the cosmic and acosmic view of Brahman, where it is perceived as both immanent and transcendent within the universe
- describe the five sheaths that envelop the true nature of Ātman, from the physical body to the innermost core

Background

The Upaniṣads are a collection of ancient texts that explore timeless questions about existence, consciousness, and the nature of reality. They offer deep insights and meditations on the nature of reality, providing seekers with wisdom and practical guidance for spiritual transformation. Composed as the concluding portion of the Vedas, the Upaniṣads stand apart from the earlier ritualistic practices and hymns, engaging with the depths of human inquiry to unravel the deeper mysteries of life. Within these texts, the sages and seers of ancient India sought to address the fundamental questions of human existence.

The Upaniṣads are characterised by their poetic and metaphorical language, using vivid imagery and allegories to convey abstract philosophical concepts. They pres-

ent dialogues and teachings between spiritual seekers (disciples) and enlightened masters (Gurus), with the latter imparting wisdom and guiding their disciples on the path of self-realisation. Through these dialogues, the Upaniṣads explore the nature of the individual self (Ātman), its relationship to the ultimate reality (Brahman), and the methods for transcending the limitations of worldly existence. These themes offer seekers a comprehensive framework for understanding the nature of reality, the purpose of human life, and the path to ultimate truth and liberation.

Keywords

Infinite self, *Turī*ya, Saguṇa Brahman, Nirguṇa Brahman, Microcosm, Macrocosm

Discussion

- Upaniṣads seek timeless truth beyond momentary experiences

The Upaniṣads focus on the problems of philosophy and the search for ultimate truth. The seekers in these ancient texts express a sense of dissatisfaction with the contingent aspects of life, prompting them to raise fundamental questions about the nature of existence. The thinkers of the Upaniṣads do not take the sensory experience at face value; rather, they question the data perceived through the senses. They explore whether the mental faculties that process experiences are self-existent or merely effects of something eternal. This search for a timeless and self-existent reality stem from the recognition that finite experiences and objects in the world are impermanent and incapable of providing lasting happiness.

- Upaniṣads seek timeless, self-existent reality beyond phenomena

In the realm of metaphysics, the Upaniṣads search for the ultimate reality that is beyond the finite and conditioned. They describe this reality as infinite existence (*sat*), pure consciousness (*çit*), and bliss (*ānanda*). It is a timeless, spiritual entity that forms the fulfilment of human desires and the goal of philosophical inquiry and religious aspiration. The Upaniṣads also address various philosophical aspects concerning the nature of the world and the problem of creation. They think about the origin of the mind and its faculties, the role of divine agency in directing sensory perception, and the interrelationship between physical objects and their causes. These contemplations lead to the conviction that there must be a self-existent reality underlying all phenomena, wherein the mind can find its ultimate resting place.

2.2.1 Concept of Ātman in Upaniṣads

The Upaniṣads offer a unique perspective on understanding the ultimate reality by complementing the Vedic scholars' objective vision with a subjective one. In the Vedic hymns, we find the idea of '*Ekam Sat*' (one reality) manifesting in diverse forms, and this concept gains strength in the Upaniṣads. The thinkers explore the self (Ātman) through philosophical analysis, gradually defining its nature. Initially referred to as the vital essence in the Rig-Veda, the term 'Ātman' evolves to signify the soul or self. In the dialogue between Prajāpati and Indra, in Chāndogya Upaniṣad, we can see how the Upaniṣads unfold the concept of Ātman in four stages. In this dialogue, the Upaniṣad presents a gradual development of the concept of the self, ultimately revealing the timeless and eternal nature of the Absolute Self that transcends all temporary experiences and phenomena. The true self is the foundational and all-pervading reality that underlies and includes the entire universe, making it the subject of all knowledge and understanding.

The story unfolds in Chāndogya Upaniṣad like this: the gods and the demons send Indra and Virochana, respectively, to Prajāpati to learn the nature of the self. To qualify for this knowledge, Prajāpati asks them to undergo a thirty-two-year penance. After fulfilling the conditions, both Indra and Virochana return to Prajāpati to receive the teachings. Prajāpati initially explains that the self is the reflection seen when looking into another's eye, water, or a mirror. While Virochana is content with this teaching and leaves, Indra raises doubts. He questions whether the self can merely be a reflection of the body or be identified with the body itself.

Indra reasons that if the body undergoes changes or perishes, then the self should also suffer the same fate, which makes this understanding unsatisfactory. He seeks further clarification from Prajāpati, who then teaches him that the dreaming self, the one experienced when freely roaming in dreams, is the true self. However, Indra remains dissatisfied, as this self seems to be affected by emotions, fear, and pain even when free from bodily defects. Again, Indra returns to Prajāpati and expresses his doubts. This time, Prajāpati reveals that the self is the enjoyer of deep dreamless sleep. However, Indra still finds difficulties with this understanding, as the self in deep sleep appears to be a mere abstraction, unconscious and devoid of experiences. Impressed by Indra's eagerness to know, Pra-

- Upaniṣads reveal the timeless, all-pervading Absolute Self.

- Exploration of the nature of self in Chāndogya Upaniṣad

- Self transcends waking, dreaming, and sleep states

jāpati finally imparts the teaching. He clarifies that the body, dream experiences, and even the abstract form of deep sleep are not the true self. Instead, they all exist for the self, acting as instruments and objects. The self is the ground of waking, dreaming, and sleep states, transcending them all.

The universal self is both immanent and transcendent, encompassing the entire universe within it. It is the ultimate subject that moves the entire world, and nothing exists outside of it. Implicitly, all consciousness of objects is contained within this infinite self, encompassing everything in the universe, both within us and beyond. All states of consciousness revolve around this central light, and without it, they would cease to exist. This self represents the permanent subject underlying waking and dreaming, life and death, bondage and liberation. The Upaniṣads emphasise that this subject is the universal ground present in all individuals, hidden within all things, and permeating all of creation. It is both the universal subject and the universal object.

- Infinite self is transcendent, immanent, all-encompassing existence

The universal self, as expounded in the Upaniṣads, transcends the realm of perception. It is not an object of experience, yet it illuminates individual consciousness and makes all experiences possible. As described by Sankara, the witness self sheds light on consciousness but remains beyond its grasp. This self is not a thought, yet it underlies all thoughts. It is not something seen, but it is the very essence of all seeing. The Upaniṣads firmly reject identifying the self with the physical body, a series of mental states, the stream of consciousness, or any relational or connective construct. It is not a mere series of experiences or a bundle of mental contents; instead, it is a universal consciousness that underlies all contents of consciousness.

- Self is the essence of universal consciousness

According to Upaniṣadic teachings, the concept of Ātman is an unquestionable reality. It cannot be doubted or negated, as it forms the very basis of all conscious experiences. Although the self is intangible and cannot be grasped like an ordinary object, its existence is affirmed through its constant presence and role as the underlying principle of all subjective experiences. The Upaniṣads challenge us to recognise this fundamental unity and embrace the reality of the universal consciousness, which goes beyond the limitations of the individual self and connects us to the very essence of existence. By acknowledging the reality of the Ātman, one gains insights

- Ātman is the intangible essence connecting all conscious experiences.

into the nature of reality and the interconnection that binds all beings and experiences in the cosmic fabric of existence.

The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad provides an analysis of consciousness similar to Chandogya. According to its teachings, the soul or self experiences four distinct conditions: waking, dreaming, sleeping, and *turīya*. In the first state of wakefulness, the self is conscious of the external world and its gross objects, closely tied to the body and the material realm. The second state is dreaming, where the self encounters more subtle experiences and creates a new world of forms using the materials of waking experiences. During this phase, the spirit roams freely, liberated from the constraints of the physical body.

The third state is deep sleep or *suṣupti*, in which the self experiences neither dreams nor desires and attains a state of bliss, temporarily merging with Brahman. In a deep sleep, the self transcends duality and experiences a pure objectless-knowing subject condition. The mind's usual phenomena of duality are absent during this state. The Upaniṣad emphasises that in dreamless sleep, one experiences the nature of absolute bliss and becomes detached from the distractions of the external world. The soul, inherently divine but limited by the physical body, is said to reclaim its true nature in this state, temporarily liberated from the physical constraints.

However, the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad goes further and introduces a fourth state, turīya, which surpasses even the dreamless sleep. *Turīya* is a state of pure intuitional consciousness devoid of any knowledge of internal or external objects. In this state, the soul dwells in absolute union with Brahman, transcending the ever-changing sensory experiences. *Turīya* represents the positive aspect of the negative state of deep sleep, denoting a level of consciousness that surpasses all others. The Upaniṣad describes the turīya state as unseen, transcendent, inapprehensible, and beyond comprehension. It is the ultimate realisation of the Ātman, representing the highest form of consciousness that goes beyond all limitations and reveals the indivisible unity of the self with the supreme reality.

2.2.2 The concept of Brahman in Upaniṣads

The word 'Brahman' is derived from the Sanskrit root '*Brh*,' signifying growth or evolution. Initially, it denoted the act of sacrifice, later evolved to represent prayer, and eventually

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- Four states of self are waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and turīya

- The state of deep sleep is a state of bliss- a temporal liberation

- *Turīya* is the absolute consciousness, transcending all limitations.

assumed its present meaning as the ultimate reality that unfolds itself as the entire universe. Brahman is considered the fundamental and supreme reality that underlies all existence. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, Brahman is described as '*Tajjalān*.' This term can be understood as follows: '*Tat*' refers to 'that,' representing Brahman, the ultimate reality. '*Ja*' signifies 'from which,' indicating that the world arises or emerges from Brahman. '*La*' means 'into which,' implying that the world returns or merges back into Brahman. '*An*' stands for 'by which,' suggesting that Brahman is the support and sustainer of the universe, giving life to all that exists.

- Brahman is the supreme reality behind all existence - *Tajjalān*

In the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, Brahman is defined as the origin and essence of all beings. It is the principle from which all living entities are born, the force that sustains their lives, and the destination into which they merge or dissolve. This definition emphasises Brahman's all-encompassing nature, as it is the underlying reality that governs the existence of all entities in the universe. In one part of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, a son approaches his father to learn about the nature of reality from which everything in the world originates and where it ultimately returns. The father imparts the general features of Brahman, the ultimate reality, and asks the son to explore what satisfies these characteristics.

- Brahman is the origin, essence, and destination of all

The Upaniṣads teach that to understand reality truly, we must go beyond ordinary thinking and intellectual understanding. In '*turīya*,' where we can directly experience reality, the individual merges with the absolute, and there is no distinction between the knower, the known, and the knowledge. This state of unity and fulfilment is called '*ānanda*,' which means delight or bliss. It is not about nothingness but about the highest fulfilment of being. Describing *ānanda* is challenging because it goes beyond our usual ways of thinking in terms of abstract or concrete concepts. It is the most inclusive and highest principle from which everything arises, is sustained, and dissolves back into it.

- Knower, known, knowledge are merged in the state turīya

However, this idea challenges the notion that the ultimate reality is indefinable. When people attempt to grasp reality comprehensively, they often end up with a concrete and well-defined whole. To reconcile the defined reality of *ānanda* with the undefined ultimate reality, we must understand that *ānanda*, in this context, is not the absolute or eternal reality that exists independently and inherently. Instead, it is the high-

est conceivable reality that human thought can grasp. The Upaniṣads imply that when we contemplate pure being, we create nothing as the principle of distinction and difference, is equally fundamental. The self-conscious God, who later evolves into the organised whole of existence, represents the maximum of being and the minimum of non-being. This divine consciousness is minimally affected by objectivity and external influences.

In the world, the One (Brahman) is revealed through the various existences, and we can determine the degrees of reality possessed by different objects by measuring their distance from the One. Each lower degree of reality corresponds to a reduction of the higher degrees. Throughout the scale of existence, from the highest to the lowest, we encounter both the revelation of Brahman and the common characteristics of space, time, and causation. The lower aspects of existence are more distant from the simple being than the higher ones. Hence, the 'ānandamaya' of the Upaniṣads, the concrete Brahman of Ramanuja, and the Īśvara of Sankara are all relatively closer to the ultimate reality. In other words, nothing closer to the absolute Brahman can be conceived. The supreme Brahman or ānanda, when seen from the level of self-consciousness, becomes the personal Īśvara with a voluntary limitation. The following discussions on the nature of Brahman will bring clarity to the above-mentioned matters.

2.2.3 Cosmic and Acosmic View of Brahman

In the Upaniṣads, Brahman, the ultimate reality, is described in two distinct ways, reflecting different aspects of its nature. On the one hand, Brahman is depicted as cosmic, all-encompassing, and full of divine qualities. This aspect is referred to as 'Saprapañcha,' meaning with attributes, 'Saguṇa,' meaning with qualities, and 'Saviśeṣa,' meaning with distinctions. It is the Brahman that is associated with the world of creation and is often identified with God or Isvara, the personal aspect of the Absolute. On the other hand, Brahman is also portrayed as acosmic, without attributes, indeterminate, and beyond description. This aspect is called 'Niṣprapañcha,' meaning without attributes, 'Nirguṇa,' meaning without qualities, 'Nirviśeṣa,' meaning without distinctions, and 'Anirvachanīya,' meaning indescribable. This form of Brahman is the transcendental and impersonal aspect, often referred to as the higher Brahman or the Absolute.

- *Ānanda* is the highest conceivable reality, embracing diversity

- Brahman revealed in diverse existences, varying realities

- Two aspects of Brahman are Saguṇa and Nirguṇa.

The distinction between these two aspects of Brahman forms the basis of the renowned philosophical difference highlighted by Sankaracharya, the great Advaita Vedanta philosopher. According to Sankaracharya, the lower Brahman, or Isvara, represents the personal aspect of God, the divinity associated with the manifested world. It is the cosmic view of Brahman, Saguna Brahman, or Brahman with attributes and qualities. On the other hand, the higher Brahman, or the Absolute, is the impersonal aspect, the *Niṣprapañcha* and Nirguṇa Brahman, are beyond attributes and distinctions.

However, Ramanuja, another prominent philosopher belonging to the Vishiṣṭādvaita Vedanta School, challenges this distinction. According to Ramanuja, the Absolute is not solely an impersonal entity but the personal and immanent God. For him, God is the all-pervading, all-embracing reality that manifests in all matter and all selves. Matter and selves are not separate from God but are part of His divine manifestation. Ramanuja interprets the Upaniṣads in the sense of '*Brahmapariṇāma-vāda*,' which means that Brahman truly transforms itself into the world of matter and souls. In this view, God is the soul of nature and the soul of all individual souls. On the other hand, Sankaracharya's interpretation aligns with '*Brahmavivarta-vāda*,' meaning that Brahman appears as the world of matter and souls only superficially or illusorily, due to ignorance or Māya. Sankaracharya does not deny the existence of a personal God; rather, he acknowledges God as the highest appearance within Advaita Vedanta.

In the Upaniṣads, the cosmic Brahman is depicted as the ultimate cause of the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the entire universe. All beings and phenomena emerge from Brahman, exist within it, and eventually merge back into it. An analogy used in the Upaniṣads to illustrate the relationship between Brahman and the world is that of sparks arising from fire, earthenware being made from clay, or gold ornaments being fashioned from gold. Similarly, the entire creation emerges from Brahman, like various manifestations arising from a single reality. By knowing Brahman as the cause, one can understand the true nature of all effects, which are mere names and forms, with Brahman being the underlying reality.

In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, nature is described as the body of God, with Brahman as its soul. All elements of nature, such as earth, water, fire, air, and ether, along with celestial bodies like the sun, moon, and stars, are considered the

body of God. God, as the *Antaryāmin* (inner controller), immanently resides in all beings and phenomena, sustaining and controlling them from within. However, while God knows everything and holds creation together, individual beings do not fully comprehend God as the soul of nature, just as the body cannot fully comprehend its own soul. God is also not just the soul of nature but also the soul of souls. In relation to their bodies, souls are distinct entities, but in relation to God, they become part of His cosmic body. Just as the spokes of a wheel are connected to the axle and held together by it, all individual souls are interconnected and united in the Supreme Soul, emanating from it like sparks from a fire.

The acosmic Brahman refers to the transcendental Absolute, also known as *Turīya* or the Fourth state of consciousness. It is beyond the realm of the empirical world and cannot be fully described or grasped by the discursive intellect. The Upaniṣads use negative language to describe it, stating what it is not rather than defining it positively. It is considered foundational consciousness and the fundamental postulate of all knowledge, underlying both the subjective and objective aspects of reality. The Absolute is the ultimate knower, presupposed by all affirmations and negations, and cannot be made an object of knowledge. It is self-luminous and self-proved, and all intellectual attempts to comprehend it fail always.

Despite the apparent negation, the Absolute is not reduced to nothingness; it is the source of all existence and the foundation of reality. It cannot be fully expressed or understood by finite concepts, and its true nature is best realised through direct experience or intuitive knowledge. In the *Kena Upaniṣad*, it is emphasised that the Brahman is beyond speech, mind, sight, hearing, and breath, yet it is the underlying reality that enables these faculties to function. Those who think they know the Absolute fully are mistaken, as it transcends all conceptual limitations. The philosophy of *neti neti*, or 'not this, not this,' implies negating all finite descriptions and conceptual limitations attributed to Brahman while affirming its infinite and all-encompassing nature. It goes beyond both negation and affirmation and culminates in the realisation of the transcendental Absolute.

2.2.4 Brahman and Ātman

The 'Ātman' and 'Brahman' are used interchangeably to refer to the same ultimate reality, seen from the subjective

Sidebar notes:

- God is nature's soul, immanent and interconnected

- Acosmic Brahman is transcendental, beyond comprehension and self-luminous

- The Absolute is the unfathomable source, transcending finite concepts

and objective sides, respectively. The Absolute, as revealed in the Upaniṣads, transcends both subject and object. It is as certain and self-evident as the individual self (Ātman) and as vast and infinite as the universal reality (Brahman). The Upanishadic sages recognised this synthesis of self-consciousness, where the individual self merges with the universal. The famous saying '*Tat Tvam Asi*,' meaning 'That thou art,' embodies this concept, emphasising the identity of the individual self with the universal reality. The Upaniṣads declare, 'I am Brahman,' and 'Ātman is Brahman,' indicating the unity between the self and the ultimate reality. This realisation leads to the understanding that the individual self is no longer just an individual entity but the manifestation of universal consciousness. The microcosm and macrocosm are harmoniously blended, with the individual representing the microcosm and the universe representing the macrocosm.

In the microcosm, the individual self experiences four states of consciousness, namely, waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and the 'fourth', respectively known as *jāgrat, svapna, suṣupti,* and *turīya.* The 'fourth' or *turīya* is the transcendental reality beyond the three states. In the macrocosm, these states correspond to different aspects of the universal reality, such as waking corresponds to the manifest universe (*Virāṭ*), dreaming to the cosmic intelligence (*Hiraṇyagarbha*), deep sleep to the cosmic controller (*Īśvara*), and the fourth state to the ultimate reality (Brahman). The Absolute, also known as '*Sachchidānanda*,' combines pure existence, pure consciousness, and pure bliss. It is described as *Satyam* (Truth), *Jñānam* (Knowledge), and *Anantam* (Infinite). Knowing the Absolute leads to a transformation, where the unseen becomes the seen, the unknown becomes the known, and the unthought becomes the thought. It is a state of supreme realisation and enlightenment.

In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, there is a dialogue between Uddālaka, the father, and his son Śvetaketu, where the nature of reality is beautifully described. Uddālaka begins by teaching his son that in the beginning, there was only one ultimate reality, which is referred to as 'Sat'- eternal existence. This Sat, in its infinite wisdom, thought, 'May I be many,' and from that thought, the entire manifold world and universe evolved. In this teaching, Uddālaka blends the subject (Śvetaketu) with the object (the world), the indubitable (the self) with the infinite (Brahman), and the microcosm (individual self) with the mac-

- The identity of the individual self with the universal reality

- The convergence of microcosm and macrocosm

- Uddālaka enlightens Śvetaketu about the one inseparable reality

rocosm (universal reality). The realisation conveyed through the statement '*Tat Tvam Asi, Śvetaketu*!' means 'That thou art, Śvetaketu!' This teaching signifies that the individual self (Shvetaketu) is not separate from the universal reality (Brahman), but rather, it is an inseparable part of it.

2.2.5 Pañcakōṣa Theory

The doctrine of the five sheaths (*kōśas*) in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad,* explains the evolutionary progression of existence from the lowest level of matter (*annamaya*) to the highest state of non-dual bliss (*ānandamaya*). Each sheath represents a different aspect of reality and marks a stage in the spiritual evolution towards the ultimate truth, Brahman. At the level of the *Annamaya*, we encounter the material world consisting of physical matter. This material world is unconscious and devoid of life on its own. Brahman, the ultimate reality according to the Upaniṣads, cannot find its complete expression or fulfilment in this inert and lifeless matter alone. Matter, by itself, cannot account for the complexity and diversity of existence.

- The evolutionary progression of matter to non-dual bliss

The purpose of matter, within the context of this evolutionary perspective, becomes evident when life emerges from it. Life is the dynamic force that animates matter, transforming it from mere physical existence to a higher state of vitality and expression. Life represents the awakening of the potential inherent in matter, and it is the next stage in the evolutionary progression. In this understanding, life is considered the highest state of matter. Life is more than just the biological processes or physical functioning of living beings; it encompasses the entire range of experiences, sensations, and vitality associated with living organisms. It is the essence that makes beings conscious and responsive to the environment. Without life, matter remains in its inert and lifeless state. It is life that gives purpose and meaning to matter, allowing it to be part of a grander cosmic order. Life serves as the bridge between the physical realm and the higher states of consciousness and self-awareness.

- Life is the bridge from matter to consciousness

The *Prāṇamaya* is the second state of evolution and represents the realm of life. It is situated on the biological plane and emerges as a result of the transformation of inorganic matter into organic life forms. At this stage, life becomes the vital force that permeates the entire universe, connecting all living beings with the rest of creation. Life is a dynamic and fundamental aspect of the cosmos. It is not limited to a specific

species or a single planet; rather, it is a universal phenomenon that manifests in various forms throughout the vast expanse of existence. From the tiniest microorganisms to the grandest creatures, all living beings are expressions of this vital force. The significance of life lies in its role as a conduit between the physical realm and the higher realms of consciousness and cognition. It serves as a bridge that connects matter with mind and sets the stage for the further development of self-awareness and intelligence.

The *Manōmaya* is the third state of evolution, situated on the mental or psychological plane. At this stage, consciousness becomes more refined and complex, and it is experienced predominantly at the level of instincts and reflex actions. Both lower animals and humans share this state of consciousness. In the *Manōmaya*, consciousness operates at the level of the mind, which encompasses a range of mental processes, such as perception, sensation, emotion, and cognition. It is the realm of the individual's subjective experience, where thoughts, feelings, and sensory perceptions arise and intermingle. Lower animals primarily function within the boundaries of this mental plane, where instincts and reflex actions play a significant role in their behaviour and survival. For instance, animals have inherent instincts for survival, reproduction, and territorial behaviour, which guide their actions and responses to various stimuli.

For human beings, the Manomaya constitutes an essential aspect of their conscious experience. Although humans possess higher cognitive faculties compared to other animals, this state still involves elements of instinctual and reflexive responses. However, what sets humans apart is their aspiration to evolve further into self-conscious reason. While lower animals may remain limited to the instinctual level, humans have the potential for self-awareness and the capacity to reason, reflect, and think critically. Human beings seek to understand their thoughts, emotions, and experiences, questioning the nature of reality, the purpose of existence, and their own identity. The development of self-conscious reason marks a significant advancement in the evolution of an individual's consciousness.

Through self-conscious reason, humans can explore philosophical and ethical questions, ponder the nature of truth, seek knowledge, and discover their place in the larger scheme of the universe. This level of consciousness opens the door

to the pursuit of higher knowledge, arts, science, culture, and spirituality. While the Manomaya represents a significant step in the evolutionary process, the journey does not end here. The human aspiration is to continue evolving and striving for higher states of consciousness, transcending the limitations of the mind and embracing deeper insights into the nature of reality and existence.

The *Vijñānamaya* is the fourth state of evolution, situated on the metaphysical plane, and it is unique to human beings. At this stage, consciousness has evolved to a higher level of self-conscious reason, distinguishing humans from lower animals. In the *Vijñānamaya*, reason becomes self-conscious, which means that human beings are not only capable of reasoning and thinking logically but also aware of their thought processes and cognitive abilities. This self-awareness is a fundamental aspect of human consciousness and plays a crucial role in their intellectual and spiritual growth. At this stage, human beings possess the ability to reflect upon their thoughts, analyse their beliefs, and question their assumptions. They can engage in critical thinking, abstract reasoning, and problem-solving. This capacity for self-awareness allows them to explore complex concepts, contemplate abstract ideas, and ponder the deeper meaning of existence.

The development of self-conscious reason opens up vast possibilities for human creativity, exploration, and intellectual pursuits. The empirical trinity of knower, knowledge, and known has evolved at this stage. Human beings are aware of themselves as the knower, capable of gaining knowledge through perception, reason, and intuition. They become conscious of the known, the external world, and the objects of their study and experience. Moreover, they recognise the process of acquiring knowledge becoming aware of the methods and limitations of their understanding. This self-conscious reason enables humans to go beyond the limitations of instinctual consciousness and perceive the world through a more sophisticated lens.

However, even at this advanced stage of evolution, the journey of human consciousness does not end. Beyond self-conscious reason lies the fifth and the highest state of evolution, the *Ānandamaya kōśa*, the state of non-dual bliss or mystical experience. In this state, the empirical trinity of

knower, knowledge, and the known is transcended, and human consciousness merges with the transcendental unity of the Absolute. The *Ānandamaya kōśa* is the fifth and highest state of evolution, situated on the mystic plane. At this stage, the empirical trinity of knower, knowledge, and known has been transcended and fused into a transcendental unity. This is the realm of non-dual bliss, where the subject-object duality is dissolved, and the individual consciousness merges with the Absolute - the Abode of Bliss.

- Blissful unity with the Absolute

In the *Ānandamaya kōśa*, the limitations of ordinary consciousness are transcended, and the individual experiences a sense of unity with all of existence. The boundaries between the self and the external world dissolve, and a sense of interconnectedness with everything arises. It is a state of oneness, where the individual realises their essential nature as part of the vast cosmic whole. The term 'non-dual bliss' refers to the experience of undivided unity and unending joy that arises when the individual consciousness merges with the transcendent reality. It is a state of pure being, where all dualities, conflicts, and limitations are dissolved, and the individual rests in a state of peace, love, and bliss. At this stage, the human intellect, which seeks to understand and analyse the world through dualistic thinking, is transcended. In the realm of non-dual bliss, the limitations of language and concepts fall away as the individual experiences a direct and intuitive connection with the underlying reality of existence.

- Unity beyond dualities and limitations

- Dissolving of the differences and the experience of non-dual bliss

In this state, the individual realises the underlying unity that pervades all of creation. The perceived boundaries between self and other, subject and object dissolve, and the individual experiences get interconnected with all of life. It is a state of all-encompassing love, where the individual recognises that their true nature is one with the universal consciousness. The experience of non-dual bliss is beyond ordinary sensory pleasures and intellectual joys. It is not dependent on external circumstances or achievements. Instead, it is a state of inner fulfilment that arises from the direct realisation of one's inherent divinity and the interconnectedness of all beings. In various spiritual traditions, this state is often described as the ultimate goal of human existence. It is the state of spiritual liberation, where the individual is free from the cycle of birth and death and attains union with the Divine.

2.2.6 Mahāvākyas in Upaniṣads

Mahāvākyas, meaning 'Great Sayings,' are statements found in the Upaniṣads, which are ancient Indian philosophical texts. These sayings include the essence of the Upaniṣadic teachings and provide insights into the nature of reality and the relationship between the individual self (Ātman) and the ultimate reality (Brahman). There are four principal Mahāvākyas, one from each of the four Vedas, and they are considered to be the most important teachings of the Upaniṣads.

'Prajñānam Brahma' - Aitareya Upaniṣad (Rig-Veda): The Mahāvākya 'Prajñānam Brahma' translated as 'Consciousness is Brahman,' and its essence lies in understanding the nature of reality and the relationship between individual consciousness and the ultimate reality. The term '*Prajñānam*' refers to consciousness, awareness, or true knowledge. It goes beyond mere intellectual understanding and points to a higher form of awareness that transcends individual perceptions. '*Brahma*,' on the other hand, represents the ultimate reality that underlies and pervades the entire universe. It is the supreme essence from which all things arise and into which everything merges.

The Mahāvākya, 'Prajñānam Brahma' emphasises the oneness of consciousness and the ultimate reality. It suggests that the essential nature of the individual self (Ātman) is not limited to the confines of the physical body or the boundaries of the personal mind. Instead, it has a relation with the all-encompassing consciousness that pervades the universe. This statement implies that the individual self is not separate from Brahman but an intrinsic part of it. By realising the identity of individual consciousness with the universal consciousness, one can attain liberation (*mōkṣa*). This realisation is often considered the ultimate goal of spiritual practice and philosophical inquiry.

'Ayam Ātmā Brahma' - Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad (Atharva-Veda): The Mahāvākya 'Ayam Ātmā Brahma' directly conveys the principle of non-duality between the individual self and Brahman. It rejects the idea of a separate, individual self and highlights the inherent unity and interconnectedness of all existence. According to this teaching, the true self (*Ātman*) is not limited to the individual body or mind but rep-

- Mahāvākyas are Upaniṣadic essences

- The unification of consciousness and ultimate reality

- The realisation of Oneness leads to liberation

resents the same reality that underlies the entire universe. By proclaiming 'This Self is Brahman,' the *Mahāvākya* invites seekers to transcend the illusion of separation and recognise their essential identity with the ultimate reality. This understanding of non-duality, according to the teachings of Advaita Vedanta, asserts that Brahman is the only true reality, and the apparent diversity of the world is a result of ignorance (*avidyā*). By contemplating and assimilating the wisdom of 'Ayam Ātmā Brahma,' seekers can attain self-realisation, which leads to the direct experience of unity with Brahman.

'Tat tvam asi' - Chandogya Upaniṣad (Sama Veda): Similar to other Mahāvākyas this too signifies that the self of an individual (represented by 'Thou' or 'You') is not distinct or separate from the universal reality (referred to as 'That' or '*Tat*'). It asserts that the true essence of the individual self is identical to the underlying cosmic reality. The statement 'Tat tvam asi' invites seekers to recognise the inherent oneness between the individual and the universal. It points to the fact that the limited identity we often associate with ourselves is merely an illusion created by ignorance (*avidyā*). In truth, the self is not confined to the boundaries of the physical body or the mind but is an eternal, unchanging essence that pervades the entire universe.

Realising the meaning of 'Tat tvam asi' leads to a transformative shift in perspective. It calls for a direct experience of one's essential identity with Brahman, the supreme reality. This realisation is known as self-realisation or *Ātma-jñāna*, and it is the ultimate goal of human life according to Advaita Vedanta. The Indian philosophical tradition has most often considered this self-realisation (inner realisation) as the fundamental purpose of philosophy. Upon grasping the truth of 'Tat tvam asi,' an individual transcends the cycle of birth and death. The realisation of non-duality dispels the illusion of individuality and separation, leading to liberation (*mōkṣa*). In this liberated state, one experiences unity with the cosmic whole, recognising the eternal nature of one's true self.

'Aham Brahmasmi' - Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (Yajur Veda): This Mahāvākya conveys a fundamental truth about the nature of the self. It declares that the individual self (represented by '*Aham*,' meaning 'I' or 'self') is not separate or distinct from Brahman, the supreme reality that underlies the entire cosmos. The statement 'Aham Brahmasmi' is an assertion of identity beyond the limitations of the body and

mind. It reminds the seeker that their true essence is not confined to the physical form or the ever-changing thoughts and emotions but is the infinite and eternal reality—the very essence of existence itself. When a seeker fully internalises the meaning of 'Aham Brahmasmi,' they recognise that the self is not an isolated individual entity but is an indivisible part of the cosmic whole. It highlights the inherent non-duality between the individual self and the universal reality.

- Identity beyond the limitations of the body and mind

The realisation of 'Aham Brahmasmi' leads to a shift in perspective and a deep understanding of one's true nature. It is not a mere intellectual understanding but a direct experiential realisation of unity with Brahman. In this state of self-realisation, the seeker recognises their essential nature as the unchanging, unbounded, and timeless consciousness that permeates the entire universe. Through contemplation and spiritual practices, seekers can reach the direct realisation of 'Aham Brahmasmi.' This realisation is liberating and transformative, as it liberates the individual from the bondage of ignorance and grants them access to the infinite and blissful realm of Brahman.

- *'Aham Brahmasmi'* reveals the true nature of the self

Summarised Overview

The Upaniṣads are a collection of ancient philosophical texts that form the foundation of Indian philosophy. They explore fundamental concepts related to the nature of existence, reality, and the self. One of the key concepts explored in the Upaniṣads is Ātman, which refers to the individual soul or self. According to the Upaniṣads, Ātman is eternal and distinct from the physical body and the mind. It is considered to be the unchanging essence of a person, unaffected by the fluctuations of life. The realisation of the true nature of Ātman is of paramount importance in the Upaniṣads. It is believed that understanding the Ātman leads to liberation (*mōkṣa*) from the cycle of birth and death. This liberation is the ultimate goal of human life, as it allows the individual soul to merge with the cosmic reality.

Brahman is another central concept explored in the Upaniṣads. It refers to the ultimate reality and universal consciousness that underlies and pervades everything in the universe. The Upaniṣads present two perspectives on Brahman: the cosmic view and the acosmic view. The cosmic view considers Brahman to be the cosmic principle responsible for the creation, maintenance, and dissolution of the universe. It encompasses all forms and phenomena, reflecting the diversity of existence. On the other hand, the acosmic view perceives Brahman as formless, attributeless, and beyond all manifestations. It is the pure, unchanging consciousness that transcends any specific expression or limitation. The *Pañcakōṣa* Theory, also known as the Five Sheaths theory, is another significant

concept found in the Upaniṣads. It presents the idea that there are five layers or sheaths that veil the true self (Ātman). These layers include the physical body (*Annamaya*), the vital energy or life force (*Prāṇamaya*), the mind (*Manōmaya*), the intellect or discriminating faculty (*Vijñānamaya*), and the innermost blissful self (*Ānandamaya*). The process of self-inquiry involves penetrating through these layers to realise the true nature of the self, which is identical to Brahman.

The Upaniṣads also contain statements known as *Mahāvākyas*, which succinctly encapsulate the essence of their teachings. These *Mahāvākyas* serve as guiding principles for seekers on the path to self-realisation and spiritual enlightenment. Examples of *Mahāvākyas* include '*Aham Brahmasmi*' (I am Brahman) and '*Ayam Ātmā Brahma*' (This self is Brahman). Meditating on these *Mahāvākyas* helps aspirants attain a deeper understanding of their true nature and realise their inherent unity with Brahman. Through this realisation, seekers can achieve liberation and break free from the cycle of birth and death, attaining the ultimate goal of spiritual existence.

Self-Assessment

1. What is the concept of Ātman in the Upaniṣads, and how does it differ from the physical body and mind?

2. Describe the concept of Brahman in the Upaniṣads. What are some of its fundamental attributes?

3. What are the two perspectives on Brahman presented in the Upaniṣads? Explain the difference between the cosmic and acosmic views of Brahman.

4. In the context of the Upaniṣads, how are Brahman and Ātman related? Why are they considered inseparable?

5. How does the concept of '*Tat Tvam Asi*' (That thou art) illustrate the identity of Brahman and Ātman?

6. What is the Pañ*cakōṣa* Theory? Enumerate the five layers (sheaths) of the *Pañcakōṣa* Theory and explain their significance in self-inquiry.

7. How do the *Mahāvākyas* in the Upaniṣads summarise the essence of their teachings? Provide examples of *Mahāvākyas* and their meaning.

Assignments

1. How does the idea of an eternal and unchanging individual soul impact our understanding of the self and personal identity?

2. Analyse the concept of Brahman in the Upaniṣads as the ultimate reality and universal consciousness. How does this concept challenge traditional notions of reality?

3. Compare and contrast the cosmic and acosmic views of Brahman in the Upaniṣads. How do these two perspectives influence our perception of the universe and the nature of absolute reality?

4. Explore the relationship between Brahman and Ātman in Upaniṣadic philosophy. How does the idea of their underlying unity challenge the conventional understanding of individuality and separateness?

5. Examine the *Pañcakōṣa* Theory (Five Sheaths theory) presented in the Upaniṣads. How does this theory offer a philosophical framework for understanding the layers of human existence and the journey towards self-discovery?

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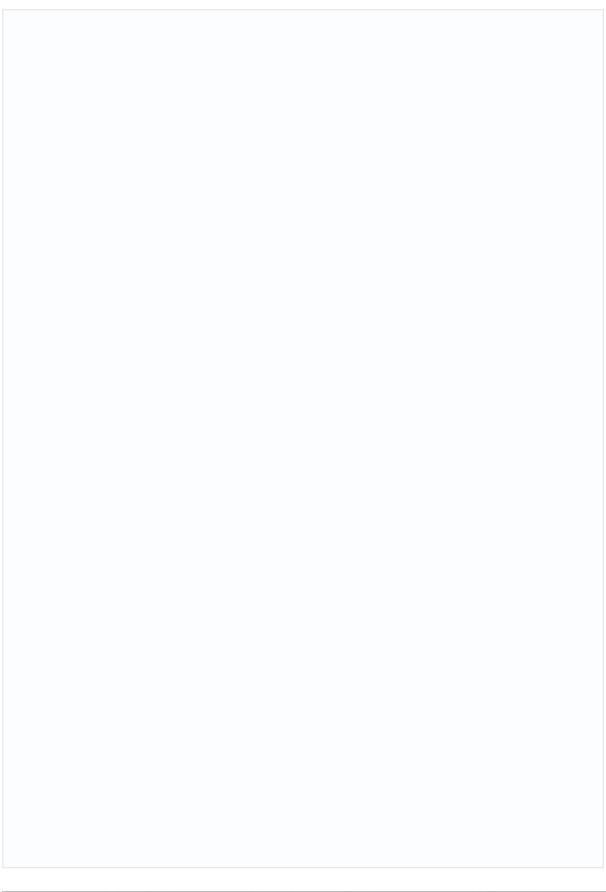
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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

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.

UNIT 3
Philosophical Concepts in Bhagavad Gita

Learning Outcomes

In completion of this unit the learner will be able to:

- identify and explain key metaphysical concepts presented in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, such as the nature of reality, the eternal soul (Ātman), and the divine essence (Brahman)
- examine the path of knowledge and understand its emphasis on self-realisation
- know the path of selfless action in achieving spiritual growth and fulfilment
- understand the path of devotion and its role in fostering a deep spiritual connection

Background

The *Bhagavad* Gītā is a famous religious poem in Sanskrit literature. This sacred text forms a significant section of the great Sanskrit epic, the *Mahābhārata*, specifically located within the *Bhīṣma-Parva* (Book of Bhīṣhma). Unlike many philosophical texts that explore concepts in monologues or essays, the Gītā takes on the form of a dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna. This conversational format facilitates a dynamic interaction that allows for clarifications, personalised guidance, and a more relatable exploration of philosophical concepts.

The Gītā is highly philosophical and has immense significance in the spiritual and intellectual realms of human lives. It deals mainly with the subjects like philosophy, religion and ethics. Although not regarded as a revealed scripture, it holds great importance as a tradition. It introduces methods accessible to all individuals: the path of action, known as Karma and the devotion to God, known as bhakti. Unlike in the

past, where only the rich could attain the blessings of the gods through sacrifices or the means of knowledge, the Gītā teaches paths of action and devotion open to anyone willing to embrace the divine.

Keywords

Jñāna, Karma, Bhakti, *Sthitaprajña*, *Lokasaṁgraha*

Discussion

- Bhagavad Gītā is the unique philosophical discourse embodying life's complexities

The Bhagavad Gītā stands as a truly unique work in the realm of philosophical literature, owing to its distinctive combination of ideas and practical wisdom. The term 'Bhagavad Gītā' can be broken down into two parts: '*Bhagavad*,' meaning 'the Lord' or 'God,' and '*Gītā*,' meaning 'song' or 'discourse.' Therefore, Bhagavad Gītā translated as 'The Lord's Song'. The poem is set during a critical moment in the life of Arjuna, the representative man. He stands on the battlefield, ready to fight the enemy, convinced of the righteousness of his cause. However, when the moment comes, he hesitates, troubled by his conscience and torn by anguish. He questions the morality of killing, especially those he loves and worships. Arjuna symbolises the individual wrestling with the burdens and mysteries of the world.

- Arjuna's transformative journey from despair to enlightenment

Arjuna's hopelessness goes beyond the typical disappointment; it is a feeling of emptiness in the heart, making him question the reality of things. In the first chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā, Arjuna is depicted as feeling deep despair, which is known among mystics as the 'dark night of the soul.' This phase is seen as an essential step in the spiritual journey, a time when one confronts inner challenges and uncertainties, leading to growth and enlightenment. As the dialogue progresses from the second chapter onwards, a philosophical analysis unfolds. The central aspect of human beings is not the physical body or the senses but the unchanging spirit within—the eternal soul. From this point onwards, Arjuna's mindset undergoes a significant shift, recognising the importance of the soul's journey.

Arjuna endeavours to reclaim his inner kingdom by resisting temptations and controlling his passions. The path of spiritual progress involves experiencing suffering and practising self-abnegation, which is giving up selfish desires for higher spiritual goals. However, Arjuna tries to avoid this rigorous process through clever arguments and excuses. Krishna, representing the voice of God, speaks to Arjuna, warning him against giving in to dejection and despair. Krishna's message is powerful, urging Arjuna to overcome the conflict within him and embrace the path of spiritual growth and self-realisation.

2.3.1 Metaphysics of Bhagavad Gītā

The Bhagavad Gītā imparts insights into the nature of reality and existence, making a clear distinction between the finite and the infinite. Its fundamental metaphysical teaching can be summarised as follows: 'That which is unreal has no true existence, and that which is real cannot be non-existent.' The scripture illustrates that anything truly existing cannot undergo continuous change, as it would already embody its ultimate form. The Gītā does not consider the material world as an authentic reality. Instead, it perceives everything in the world as subject to change, in a constant state of flux. However, within the depths of our consciousness, there exists a sense of something everlasting, something that endures. The Gītā identifies this ultimate reality as the supreme Brahman, the eternal and unchanging essence of all existence.

The Gītā presents the supreme reality as an inexhaustible and timeless essence, without a beginning and free from any qualities or attributes. When the world revolves around a cycle of existence, the supreme Brahman remains timeless and unaffected by any alteration. It is beyond any action and remains untainted, even though it exists within the physical body. Here, the Gītā does not explicitly prove that the absolute reality perceived through intuition is the logical foundation of the world. Still, it implies that the existence of an unconditioned absolute is essential for the world to have meaning and order.

Regarding the individual self, the Gītā highlights that despite existing in a limited space, the self always seeks transformation, aspiring for satisfaction and fulfilment. Even while feeling constrained, the self attains a sense of infiniteness, an acknowledgement of something beyond its immediate reality. The Gītā also deconstructs the individual self into its

constituent parts – the body, mind, and senses – to identify ever-present element. The body is impermanent and transient, not the permanent subject. The senses and mind are also subject to change. Apart from these changing constituent parts, the true self remains as the source of all knowledge. It is the unchanging principle that persists even during deep sleep. This undying element forms the foundation of the entire world of objects, including the empirical self. The Gītā describes this undying element as the lord of the body. It is unborn, eternal, and everlasting, unaffected by the destruction of the body.

The Gītā assures that the pure subject, the Ātman or the soul, remains unaffected even though the body is subject to decay. The eternal essence of the self remains undisturbed, just as the dust which covers the body does not tarnish the unchanging soul within. Krishna advises Arjuna not to grieve for the dead by explaining that death is not the end of existence. The individual's physical form may change, but the essence or the soul is not destroyed. Until one attains perfection or self-realisation, individuality persists, and the soul continues to take on new forms. This understanding of our imperishable nature, whether through endless existence or attaining perfection, forms the basis for pursuing self-knowledge and spiritual growth.

The Gītā also emphasises that it is crucial not to view the infinite and the finite as two separate and opposing realms. Perceiving them this way would limit the infinite by considering it separate from the finite. Instead, the Gītā explains that the infinite is not an external entity but rather the truth and essence within the finite. It clarifies that the distinction between the infinite and the finite arises from incomplete thinking. In reality, there is only the infinite, and the finite is merely a limited expression of the infinite. The Gītā describes the absolute as beyond conventional notions of being and non-being, form and formlessness. It reaffirms the Upaniṣadic principle that the real essence of the universe lies in the immutable self-existence underlying the entire cosmos, including space, time, and causality.

The Gītā also recognises that while we may not directly perceive the absolute reality, we can understand and relate to it through the concept of a supreme godhead known as Purushottama. In the Gītā, the impersonality of the absolute is not the only aspect that matters for human beings. It aims to make the Upaniṣadic idealism practical for everyday life by introducing

- The infinite self remains unchanging amidst change

- Infiniteness of the unchanging self

- Unity transcends apparent duality

the idea of a divine being actively participating in the world. This divine soul is the origin and cause of the universe and the unifying energy that pervades all life. The Gītā combines moral attributes with the metaphysical aspects of this divine being. The world is interconnected with the *Puruṣottama*, the supreme personal Lord. From the *Puruṣottama* downwards, all things partake in the duality of being and non-being.

This transformation of the absolute into a personal God is described as 'māya,' meaning a mystery or an illusion. It suggests that this process is beyond full comprehension. Moreover, the transformed world, though connected to the divine, is considered less real than the absolute itself. The absolute reality is initially described as inactive and without qualities unrelated to any object. However, when we try to comprehend this relationship logically, we attribute a power to the absolute. This transforms the absolute into an active and personal Lord who possesses power related to nature (Prakṛti). While the supreme God is involved in the creation and functioning of the perishable world, He also exists as the impersonal absolute, untouched by it all.

The Gītā follows the Sāṅkhya philosophy, explaining the evolution of the world from an undifferentiated and indeterminate matter. The presence of Puruṣa, the conscious self, is essential to activate Prakṛti, the material nature. Together, they form the fabric of the world. The Gītā emphasises that all activity in the universe is a combined effort of Puruṣa and Prakṛti. While the subjective world, influenced by Puruṣa, exhibits intelligence, the objective world, governed by Prakṛti, is more material in nature. Both aspects are integral to the Supreme Being and are responsible for creating and sustaining the world. It implies that the Supreme Being's nature is multifaceted, where unconscious matter and conscious intelligence coexist and interact throughout the process of creation and progress in the world.

The Gītā also asserts that God's nature remains unaffected by the diverse existence in the world. Just as the air moves everywhere but is rooted in space, all things exist within God. However, God is not tainted or influenced by the qualities of creation. The world is an expression of God's nature, but it does not take away the very self-sufficiency of God's existence. Understanding the nature of God is crucial, both in relation to the world and independent of it. God's self-identity is

maintained throughout all the changes and activities He brings about. Although God is related to the objects in the world, it does not mean that His self-identity is lost. It is essential to know God beyond the relations to objects, and yet, we must recognise how He sustains and interacts with the world.

The Bhagavad Gītā uses the concept of *Puruṣottama* to represent the personal aspect of the Supreme Being from a religious perspective. *Puruṣottama* is seen as a compassionate and impartial governor, always ready to assist those in distress. Although *Puruṣottama* may sometimes impose punishments, it does not make Him unjust or unkind, just as a mother's discipline does not make her unkind to her child. *Puruṣottama* represents the Supreme Spiritual Being with energy, while the same being in a state of eternal rest is called Brahman. The Supreme Being has two aspects; the manifested and the unmanifested. The manifested aspect involves creation and the world's activities, while the unmanifested represents the silent and immutable state, which is the highest. Both aspects together form *Puruṣottama*.

2.3.2 Ethics of Gītā

Man is a multifaceted being, combining reason, will, and emotion, and seeks fulfilment and happiness through all these dimensions of existence. These dimensions offer various paths that can lead men to the ultimate state of fulfilment, such as one can attain it through acquiring knowledge of the supreme reality, by expressing love and adoration towards the supreme person, or by submitting one's will to the divine purpose. In the search for this higher goal, harmony among these different aspects of life is crucial. Irrespective of the approach chosen, the ultimate destination remains the same.

The Bhagavad Gītā emphasises that no side of conscious life should be excluded or neglected in the journey towards ultimate fulfilment. Each aspect of man's existence finds fulfilment and completion in the integral divine life. Those seeking knowledge perceive the absolute as the eternal light, shining brightly without any darkness, much like the radiant sun at noon. For those striving for virtue, it is experienced as the eternal righteousness - steadfast and impartial. And for those with an emotional inclination, the absolute reveals itself as eternal love and beauty of holiness. Just as God embodies wisdom, goodness, and holiness, so should humans aim to live an integral life of spirit, where all aspects of their being are related.

- *Puruṣottama* is the dual nature of supreme reality that governs the creation

- Man's multifaceted paths toward ultimate fulfilment

- Integral divine life includes wisdom, virtue, love, and holiness

On the journey towards this ultimate fulfilment, obstacles encountered along the way do not hinder progress when the destination is reached. The Bhagavad Gītā offers assurance that the specific method one adopts is not a cause for concern since the different pathways, while seemingly distinct, ultimately lead to the same goal. Progress is a correlated and integrated development where knowledge, feeling, and will are different aspects of the one movement of the soul, working together harmoniously. The harmonising ideal that all these different methods aspire to achieve is the increasing unity and solidarity of the individual with the universe governed by the Supreme Being.

- Diverse paths unite toward ultimate harmony

2.3.2.1 Jñāna Mārga

The Bhagavad Gītā recognises two different kinds of knowledge: intellectual and intuitive. The former seeks to understand the external phenomena of existence through the intellect, and the latter grasps the ultimate principle underlying these appearances through the force of intuition. When the human spirit is subject to logical reason alone, it tends to lose itself in the outer world of nature. It becomes entangled in the activities of the material realm. To truly comprehend the essence and reality of existence within, one must free oneself from the trap of false identification with the external world. The intellectual apprehension of the details of existence is referred to as '*vi-jñāna*', which is distinct from '*jñāna*' the integral knowledge of the common foundation underlying all existence. However, these two forms of knowledge are merely different facets of one ultimate reality, as all knowledge ultimately leads to an understanding of the divine.

- The distinction between intellectual and intuitive knowledge

The Bhagavad Gītā suggests that to develop intuitive power and reach a deeper understanding of reality, the mind needs to be redirected, and the soul needs a transformative conversion. The Gītā encourages seeking knowledge through questioning and inquiry, but this intellectual pursuit should be complemented by selfless service to others and a turning inward to cultivate intuitive faculties. By combining investigation with service, one can unlock the higher realms of knowledge and experience the unity of all existence in the eternal spirit. Gītā emphasises that even the most sinful individual can transcend the cycle of birth and death (*saṁsāra*) by utilising the boat of knowledge.

- Intuitive power grows through inquiry, service, and transcendence

Gītā compares *saṁsāra* to an ocean, and knowledge is represented as a boat that can carry one across this vast sea of existence, rescuing them from the endless cycle of birth and rebirth. Just as a well-kindled fire consumes all fuel, the fire of knowledge has the transformative power to burn away the impurities of action. This means that when one attains true knowledge, it purifies that particular individual from all impurities. In other words, when one gains true wisdom, they no longer remain entangled in the consequences of their actions and experiences a sense of peace and tranquillity. Knowledge enlightens the seekers, dispelling the darkness of ignorance, and liberating them from the cycle of suffering.

Gītā identifies the knower with the Lord's self. This implies that the one who attains true knowledge comes to realise their inherent connection with the divine. They recognise the oneness of their self with the Supreme Self, understanding that the divine essence dwells within them. This realisation leads to a sense of unity with the universe and the recognition of the divine presence in all beings. It also encourages seekers to pursue knowledge earnestly, for The inner freedom and liberation. It illustrates that knowledge is not merely intellectual information but a deep understanding that transforms one's perception and actions. Through knowledge, one transcends the limitations of the material world and gains access to a higher level of consciousness. This realisation brings about a sense of unity and compassion, that creates internal harmony within the individual and with the world around.

2.3.2.2 Bhakti Mārga

In order to have a clear picture of Bhakti Mārga let us take an instance of a humble farmer, uneducated but with a heart full of love for the divine offer prayers with folded hands to express the unconditional love towards the divine. The farmer's emotional attachment to the divine is distinct from knowledge or scholarly understanding. Despite the lack of education, their pure and sincere love for the divine enables them to connect deeply with the spiritual realm. Their Bhakti becomes a perfect means to attain the oneness with the divine. The case is different with a learned scholar who is well-versed in ancient scriptures and philosophical concepts. They too, engage in Bhakti Mārga, but their approach is different. The scholar contemplates the divine with a mind filled with knowledge, seeking to understand the mysteries of the universe and the divine nature.

- Gītā's comparison of *saṁsāra* with ocean

- Knowledge unveils divine unity, inner freedom, compassion

- The difference between humble hearts and learned minds

Their devotion arises not just from emotional attachment but from a deep appreciation of the truths present in the divine.

The above instance asserts the inclusivity of Bhakti Mārga that welcomes people from all backgrounds regardless of their social status, education, or knowledge. Bhakti embraces the weak and the strong, the educated and the illiterate, the wise and the innocent. It does not discriminate but invites all to experience the divine through the language of the heart. As the devotees engage in their heartfelt expressions of devotion, their emotions become infused with the force of religious feelings that elevate them to be one with the divine. They feel a sacred bond forming between themselves and the divine. Their emotional devotion transcends the limitations of the ego, freeing them from the confines of self-centeredness. They feel united with the divine, experiencing a sense of oneness with the Supreme.

Bhakti Mārga is considered the easiest path among the various spiritual disciplines. It requires the sacrifice of love, which is comparatively less challenging than aligning one's will to the divine purpose, rigorous ascetic practices, or intense intellectual effort. Despite its simplicity, Bhakti is highly efficacious in realising spiritual goals. In fact, some spiritual traditions regard Bhakti as superior to other paths. This is because Bhakti, being its own fulfilment, does not seek external ends but finds its ultimate reward in the expression of devotion itself. For a devotee, Bhakti is not merely a means to an end, but a fulfilling end in itself. In the path of devotion, the act of loving and surrendering to the divine is seen as the ultimate goal and the highest achievement.

In the realm of true Bhakti, the first and foremost requirement is faith. The highest reality, often referred to as the Divine or the Supreme, must be embraced with faith until it reveals itself in the consciousness of the devotee. Faith is a crucial element because it acts as the bridge between the finite human mind and the infinite reality of the Divine. It allows the devotee to establish a connection with the Divine and get into the path of devotion. In the path of Bhakti, there are no fixed rules or rigid guidelines to follow. The human soul is free to express devotion in ways that suit with their individuality and personal connection to the divine. Bhakti manifests in various forms, each leading the human soul closer to the divine. Contemplation of God's power, wisdom, and goodness allows individuals

- The inclusivity of Bhakti Mārga

- Bhakti Mārga is simple yet potent

- Faith bridges finite to infinite

to reflect on the divine attributes and understand the greatness of the Supreme Being.

In Bhakti Mārga, devotees are availed with various symbols and disciplines that are designed to train the mind to turn toward God, making the spiritual journey more accessible and effective. For some, the practice of yoga complements their devotion, as it helps to control desires for sense-objects and distractions, allowing a deeper focus on the divine. Supreme devotion and complete self-surrender, known as bhakti and *prapatti*, respectively, are two sides of the same fact. They represent different approaches to the divine, but both lead to the realisation of God's presence and grace. In the highest fulfilment of devotion, there is certainty about the object of devotion. This experience is self-certifying in nature, meaning it carries its own proof and validation. Logical discussions and arguments are of limited value in this realm of spiritual experience. True devotees do not get entangled in vain debates about the existence or nature of God.

The Bhagavad Gītā recognises different levels of devotees. While all devotees are dear to the Lord, the one who possesses wisdom and understanding of the divine is considered the dearest. This is because the devotee with wisdom has a comprehensive knowledge of the divine reality, making his/her devotion purer and more intense. The Gītā highlights that there are three other classes of devotees. The first is the suffering devotee, who turns to God in times of distress and seeks solace and relief from their problems. The second is the seeker of knowledge, who approaches God to gain spiritual understanding and wisdom. The third is the selfish devotee, who worships God to fulfil personal desires and ambitions. While these devotees may have their own intentions and goals, their devotion may decline once their desires are fulfilled.

In contrast, the seer, or the devotee with true wisdom, worships God perpetually and purely, without any limitations of individuality. Through this intense love and devotion, the seer experiences a revelation of spiritual truth. The devotee's connection with God becomes so close that they feel incorporated into God's being, experiencing the truth of the oneness of God in the universe. The Gītā also highlights the concept of 'nirguna bhakti,' devotion to the quality-less aspect of the divine. In this form of devotion, the devotee recognises the absolute as the most ultimate category. When devotion reaches

- Different possibilities of Bhakti Mārga

- Bhagavad Gītā distinguishes devotees by wisdom, intention, and depth of devotion

- Seer's continuous and pure devotion leads to divine union

the ultimate state, the individual and God merge in spiritual ecstasy and become one. This union represents the completion of the dualism that characterises the initial stages of devotional consciousness, culminating in absolute monism.

2.3.2.3 Karma Mārga

Through the path of divine service or karma, individuals can also attain the highest spiritual realisation. Karma, in this context, refers to actions or deeds, including those that bridge the gap between the impersonal and the personal. It is believed to be a beginningless force connected with the workings of the world, although its exact nature is often complex and challenging to comprehend. Human existence is inevitably tied to actions, and the path of karma teaches the importance of the relation between one's conduct and righteousness, which, in turn, leads to both spiritual contentment and fulfilment. This pathway emphasises that through one's actions, especially those driven by the thirst for service, one can progress towards their ultimate goal.

The concept of karma asserts that positive actions contribute to an individual's liberation and the ultimate refinement of their spirit. By understanding and applying the principles of karma, individuals can navigate their existence in a way that not only leads to their own spiritual growth but also contributes to the betterment of the world around them. Thus, it is very important to grasp the Gītā's perspective on the matter of work. Contrary to an ascetic culture, the Gītā does not recommend the notion of complete withdrawal from worldly actions. Instead, it reinterprets the Buddhist principle of inaction, transforming it into a more affirmative concept. True inaction, according to the Gītā, involves performing actions without any expectations of rewards or outcomes.

The Gītā promotes the idea of *niṣkāma* or disinterestedness emphasises the importance of limiting passions like anger, desire, and covetousness, which are believed to lead to undesirable consequences. The Gītā acknowledges that not all desires are harmful; it differentiates desires, asserting that the search for righteousness is commendable. Rather than advocating for the eradication of passions, the Gītā calls for their refinement and purification. Its framework suggests that the physical-vital aspect of human nature requires purification, while the mental-intellectual aspect needs cleansing. Once these stages are fulfilled, the spiritual aspect can find its fulfilment.

Sidebar notes:

- Karma makes a bridge between the personal and the divine

- Positive Karmas refine the spirit and contribute to world's betterment.

- *Niṣkāma* refines passions for spiritual fulfilment

The Gītā rejects the notion that inertia equates to true freedom. It asserts that living beings, being embodied, cannot completely abstain from action. To continue the cycle of the world's functioning, each individual must contribute to its continuity. The Gītā acknowledges that work is inevitable until one attains freedom. Prior to liberation, individuals engage in work with the aim of attaining freedom. After liberation, work continues as an expression of one's relation with the divine plan. In this stage, the need for preparatory work or inner purification no longer applies. Liberated souls are freed from imposed rules and regulations; they act according to their inclinations. However, it is important to note that they continue to engage in meaningful actions.

In the Gītā context, an individual who performs actions with a sense of detachment and acknowledges themselves as instruments of a higher power remains perfect, much like a lotus leaf that remains unaffected by the water it rests upon. The liberated individual lacks personal motives and engages solely for the betterment of others. A parallel is drawn between such an individual and the divine, where even though the Lord has no personal pursuits, He acts for the greater good of humanity. Similarly, the liberated souls also operate for the welfare of society (*lokasaṁgraha*), guided by complete detachment, selflessness, and a lack of attachment to the outcomes of their actions. The Gītā stresses that serving humanity is equivalent to worshipping God. Performing actions selflessly and impersonally for the betterment of the world and in service to the divine does not lead to bondage.

The Gītā ideal of *lokasaṁgraha,* human welfare, is the highest principle in any country that follows democracy. '*Loka*' means 'people', '*saṁgraha'* means maintenance, protection, and welfare. Those who do not have a desire need not do anything for themselves. But the Gītā instructs everyone to do something because others are in need. This is *lokasaṁgraha.* If each person acts according to this principle it will bring happiness and welfare for millions and millions. *Lokasaṁgraha,* in this sense, is a necessary practical solution to many of the problems of any society in the modern world as well.

The Gītā uses the word '*Sthitaprajña'* to refer to the ideal liberated state attained by the individual in this world. It is a state of inner equilibrium where one enjoys the perfect unity with the ultimate reality. The *Sthitaprajña*, possessing an un-

- Karma leads to freedom and liberation

- Detached actions lead to spiritual perfection

- *Lokasaṁgraha* is the highest social ideal

wavering insight, remains detached from the outcomes of his/her actions and has successfully overcome the desires, leading to a self-mastery that governs the actions. At this stage, the ego exercises no influence over their being, and their disposition towards all sentient beings is one of unconditional love and boundless compassion, a testament to their awareness of the interconnectedness of all existence. Their presence itself becomes a reason for the liberation of the entire society.

The Gītā makes a clear distinction between two concepts: *sannyāsa* and *tyāga*. *Sannyāsa* pertains to renouncing all self-interested actions, while *tyāga* involves surrendering the desire for the outcomes of one's actions. From Gītā's point of view, the latter, *tyāga*, is broader in scope. The Gītā does not advocate for the rejection of ordinary worldly activities; rather, it emphasises the need to control selfish desires. It promotes a balanced approach that combines engagement (*pravṛtti*) with detachment (*nivṛtti*). The Gītā asserts that true renunciation is not merely about withdrawing physical action but the cessation of selfish motives.

Actions carried out in relation to the principles outlined in the Gītā reach their culmination in wisdom and spiritual insight. This transformation creates awareness of the divine essence within and around us. As we engage in actions with a selfless and divine-oriented approach, our actions gradually lead us to an understanding of the ultimate truths. The egoistic barriers that limit our perception of the greater reality begin to dissolve, allowing us to recognise the divine presence underlying all existence. The Gītā clearly states that by engaging in actions in accordance with divine principles, we develop a receptive mindset that leads to wisdom.

However, it is important to note that regardless of the path one chooses – be it wisdom, love, or service – the ultimate destination remains the same: the union of the individual soul with the supreme reality. This union is attained by purifying the mind and eliminating egoism. As the mind becomes pure and the ego dissolves, the individual becomes one with the divine. Whether one chooses the path of service to mankind or follows the path of love culminating in devotional ecstasy, the outcome is consistent: the indivisible unity of the soul and God. Irrespective of the route taken, the result is the realisation, experience, and embodiment of the divine essence in life.

Summarised Overview

The *Bhagavad* Gītā offers philosophical insights into the nature of reality and existence, distinguishing between the finite and the infinite. It conveys that what is unreal lacks true existence, while the real cannot be non-existent. The material world is subject to change, yet a sense of everlasting existence resides within our consciousness, identified as the supreme Brahman - an unchanging essence. The Gītā presents the supreme reality as timeless, unaffected by the cyclical nature of existence, and beyond actions. It introduces the concept of Purushottama, an active divine being, to bridge the gap between the impersonal absolute and practical human life. Regarding the self, the Gītā deconstructs its constituents - body, mind, senses – to identify the unchanging element. This unchanging self persists through various forms and is the foundation of all knowledge.

The Gītā shows different paths to spiritual growth: Jñāna (knowledge), Bhakti (devotion), and Karma (action). Jnana involves intellectual and intuitive understanding of the divine; Bhakti emphasises emotional connection and love for the divine; Karma encourages selfless actions and the refinement of desires. In the jñāna path, knowledge transforms perception, leading to unity with the divine. Bhakti, characterised by emotional attachment and faith, unites the devotee with the divine through love. Karma emphasises actions aligned with divine principles, leading to self-mastery and eventual liberation.

The Gītā views all paths as valid routes to the same goal - unity with the divine. It acknowledges different levels of devotees and emphasises that devotion should be pure and selfless. Ultimately, the goal is to achieve a state of unity and self-realisation. Through these paths, the Gītā provides a comprehensive framework for spiritual growth, encouraging the integration of reason, emotion, and action. It bridges the gap between the personal and the impersonal, guiding individuals towards ultimate fulfilment and the realisation of the divine essence within themselves and the world.

Self-Assessment

1. What is the fundamental metaphysical teaching of the Bhagavad Gītā regarding the nature of reality and existence?

2. Explain the distinction the Gītā makes between the unreal and the real.

3. How does *Jñāna Mārga* differentiate between intellectual knowledge and intuitive understanding?

4. Summarise the essence of Bhakti Mārga and its inclusivity for individuals from diverse backgrounds.

5. Explain the core principle of Karma Mārga and its role in facilitating spiritual development.

6. Explain how the paths of *Jñāna*, Bhakti, and Karma converge towards the realisation of divine essence.

Assignments

1. Discuss the significance of fulfilling one's duties without attachment to the results. How does Karma Yoga offer a solution to the ethical challenges posed by Arjuna's situation?

2. Examine the Gītā perspective on the nature of the self (Ātman) and its distinction from the physical body. How does this understanding impact the way individuals perceive themselves and the world?

3. Examine the Gītā's assertion that all paths are ultimately lead to the same goal of self-realisation. Discuss the advantages and limitations of each path (Karma, Bhakti, and Jñāna Mārga) in the context of achieving self-realisation.

4. Explore the Gītā's teachings on transcending dualities such as pleasure and pain, success and failure, and joy and sorrow. How does maintaining equanimity lead to spiritual growth?

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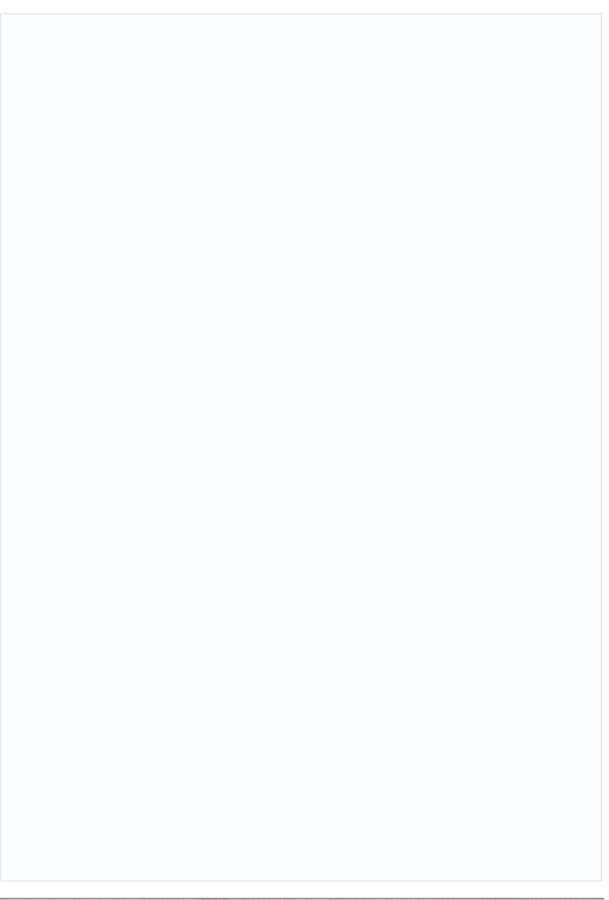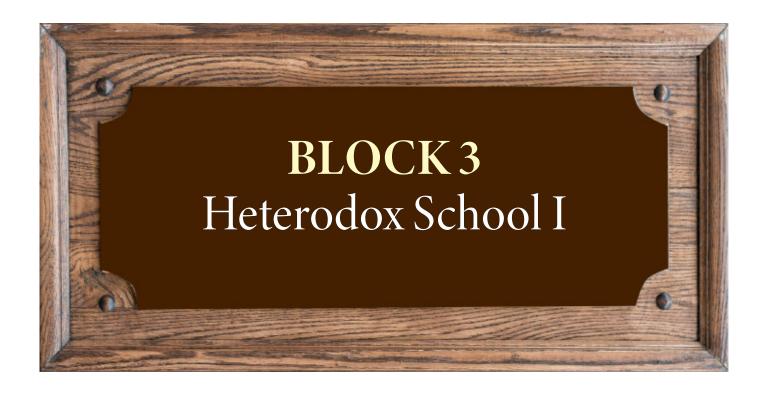
Suggested Reading

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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.

BLOCK 3
Heterodox School I

UNIT 1
Cārvāka Philosophy

Learning Outcomes

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

- know the presence of materialism within the Indian philosophical tradition
- get an understanding of the epistemological stance of Cārvāka
- comprehend the metaphysical perspective advocated by the Cārvāka system
- understand the ethical position held by Cārvāka

Background

The perception that materialism is a relatively modern concept and that Indian tradition predominantly revolves around spirituality is a common one. However, this notion does not entirely capture the full historical context of Indian philosophy. Materialistic ideas have, in fact, been part of Indian thought for a significant duration. We can trace the materialistic aspects of the Indian tradition in important texts such as the Vedas, Buddhist writings, and stories from the Indian Epics.

Among the various philosophical schools in India, the Cārvāka is that which stands out for its advocacy of materialist ideas in Indian ancient philosophical tradition. However, as already stated, it does not have comprehensive documentation or clear writings that explicitly articulate its fundamental tenets. The few surviving remnants are found in a significant Cārvāka text known as the Bṛhaspati Sutra, and these fragments are challenging to interpret. They offer only a limited knowledge of the beliefs and practices of the Cārvāka school. Consequently, researchers who seek to understand the Cārvāka tradition and its materialistic philosophy must rely on a variety of indirect sources and clues. This makes it a demanding task to gain a precise and comprehensive understanding of this ancient tradition of Indian materialism, dating back many centuries.

Keywords

Nāstik, Svabhava-vāda, Lokāyata-mata, Perception

Discussion

Cārvāka is indeed one of the oldest philosophical systems in India, characterised by its departure from the authority of the Vedas. Because it rejects the Vedas, Cārvāka, along with Buddhism and Jainism, is classified as part of the Nāstik School of Indian philosophy. The origins and meaning of the term 'Cārvāka' are a subject of some debate. It is believed that Bṛhaspati was the teacher of Cārvāka, but the exact significance of the term 'Cārvāka' remains unclear. Some propose that it might refer to the name of Bṛhaspati's first student. Others suggest that 'Cārvāka' may be derived from 'chāruvāk,' meaning 'sweet-tongued,' implying that their philosophy centres on the pursuit of pleasure and wealth. This aspect of their philosophy made their ideas appealing to the common people. Another interpretation of 'Cārvāka' relates it to the root word 'Charv,' signifying 'to chew' or 'to eat.' Thus, 'Cārvāka' is attributed to materialists who believe in enjoying life. Cārvāka is also known by the name 'Lokāyata,' and their beliefs are referred to as 'Lokāyata-mata,' signifying the philosophy of the common people with unrefined tastes.

- Cārvāka rejects Vedic authority

3.1.1 Perception as the Only Source of Knowledge

Cārvāka philosophy possesses a very distinct approach to understanding knowledge and reality. The epistemology of Cārvāka explores the valid sources of knowledge (pramāṇa) and discusses how we acquire knowledge about reality. Cārvāka's epistemology is based on its belief that perception or sensory experience is the sole and reliable means of acquiring knowledge. In perception, direct contact between objects and sense organs takes place. Cārvāka believes that only that which can be directly perceived through our senses should be considered real. The five types of perceptions are visual (perception through the eyes), auditory (perception through the ears), olfactory (perception through the nose), gustatory (perception through the tongue), and tactual (perception through the skin). Cārvāka accepts only four physical elements: earth,

- Cārvāka relies on sensory perception to understand reality

water, fire, and air. They accept these physical elements solely because they are perceptible through the senses. They entirely reject the existence of ether because it cannot be perceived.

Cārvāka views ordinary perception or sāmānyalakṣhna pratyakṣa alone as providing definite, non-erroneous, and reliable knowledge, making it the only dependable pramāṇa or source of knowledge and the infallible means of attaining true knowledge. Anything that falls beyond the realm of direct sensory experience is regarded as unreal or indeterminable. This leads Cārvāka to reject everything that cannot be directly observed, including abstract concepts and metaphysical entities, etc. With the standpoint of perception as the only pramāṇa, Cārvāka, critiques other sources of knowledge, such as inference, comparison and testimony, which were acknowledged as valid Pramāṇas by many other schools.

- Cārvāka rejects abstract and metaphysical concepts

3.1.2 Denial of Other Pramāṇās

Cārvāka denies inference or anumāna as a pramāṇa by highlighting the inherent uncertainty involved in it. The word 'anumāna' literally means 'after-knowledge.' 'Anu' means 'after,' and 'māna' means 'knowledge.' In inference, we move from something already known and experienced (known as 'hetu') to something that we have not directly observed (referred to as 'sādhya'). Here, it involves a leap in the dark, from perceived cases to unperceived cases.

For instance, consider the argument:

> There is smoke on the hill
>
> Wherever there is smoke, there is fire
>
> Therefore, the hill is fiery

In this argument, 'hill' is the 'minor term,' 'fiery' is the 'major term,' and 'smoke' is the 'middle term.' Here, we proceed from the known, perceived case of smoke (middle term) to the unknown, unperceived case of the presence of fire (major term). Vyāpti is the invariable concomitant relation between fire and smoke. Vyāpti is the bridge that connects the middle term with the major term, and it is really important in inference because it is the basis for making valid inferences. Without vyāpti, the inference is not possible.

- Cārvāka criticises inference (anumāna) due to inherent uncertainty.

Cārvāka school posits that Inference should only be accepted as a pramāṇa (a valid means of knowledge) if vyāpti is

established beyond any doubt. The Cārvāka challenge the validity of vyāpti. According to the Cārvākas, this proof of vyāpti beyond doubt is not achievable. When we infer the existence of fire on a mountain based on the observation of smoke, we essentially make a leap from the visible presence of smoke to the unobservable existence of fire. The Cārvāka school argues that this leap lacks justification solely based on the observed concomitance between smoke and fire, as it is inherently uncertain. This uncertainty arises from the fact that we cannot perceive the concomitant relation between fire and smoke in all instances of fire. Since our perception is inherently limited, it is impractical to directly observe all cases of fire existing in various parts of the world.

According to Cārvāka philosophy, the establishment of vyāpti through inference faces significant challenges due to the presence of the fallacy of petitio principii and the fallacy of infinite regress. When we endeavour to demonstrate the validity of vyāpti using inference, we are essentially attempting to prove the reliability of inference itself. However, this proof of inference's validity ultimately relies on the concept of vyāpti. This sets up a circular reasoning process: to establish vyāpti, we employ inference, and to demonstrate the credibility of inference, we depend on vyāpti. Consequently, this situation involves the fallacy of petitio principii, where the argument assumes what it is trying to prove. If this circular reasoning continues indefinitely without resolving, it results in what is known as the fallacy of infinite regress. In essence, it becomes an unending process of attempting to prove each concept with the other. Therefore, according to Cārvāka philosophy, the conclusive proof of vyāpti through inference cannot be achieved.

Cārvāka also denies the comparison as independent pramāna. Comparison is generally viewed as the testimony that arises through the knowledge of similarity. Cārvāka argues that the knowledge of similarity arises only through perception. Hence, there is no need to consider comparison as a distinct source of knowledge. In comparison, an inference is also needed to compare the similarity of knowledge. As inference is considered invalid, the comparison is also considered invalid. Along with that, Cārvāka also does not accept the notion of verbal testimony as a valid pramāṇa. Testimony is based on the words of a trustworthy person or reliable scriptures. According to the Cārvākas, the knowledge we obtain through

- Cārvāka doubts the validity of vyāpti, making inference uncertain

- Cārvāka highlights circular reasoning and infinite regress in inference

- Cārvāka rejects comparison and verbal testimony as independent sources of knowledge

testimony is acquired through words that we receive through our ears. Thus, testimony is nothing more than mere auditory perception. Cārvāka holds that if testimony provides us with knowledge related to perceptible things, it is considered valid; however, if it imparts knowledge about anything that is imperceptible, it is considered invalid.

3.1.3 Materialistic Worldview

The Cārvāka philosophy places a strong emphasis on perception as the primary source of knowledge, and this epistemological standpoint has significantly shaped their metaphysical views. According to Cārvāka, our perception only reveals the existence of four physical elements: earth, water, fire, and air. These are the only entities considered as real by Cārvākas. Notably, they reject the reality of the fifth physical element, ether or space, because its existence can only be inferred and falls completely outside the realm of what our senses can perceive. They believe that everything, either living or non-living, is made out of these elements. However, they do not believe in the atomic form of these elements because atoms are imperceptible. Everything that exists in this universe is made out of a combination of these four basic elements (earth, water, fire and air). This metaphysical standpoint of Cārvāka is known as materialism, which contrasts with the spiritual interpretation of the world.

- Cārvāka's philosophy centres on perceptible elements, rejecting the spiritual

In Cārvāka's worldview, each material element has a specific nature. When they come together in various ways, they give rise to the objects and phenomena we encounter daily. Cārvāka's rejection of external influences on the properties of objects leads to a naturalistic perspective, often termed Svabhāva-vāda, which emphasises that the qualities of objects are inherent parts of the objects themselves. As a consequence, Cārvāka denies the existence of a creator God or any transcendental reality, emphasising the primacy of the material world. Along with that, they also challenge the concept of a fixed cause-and-effect relationship, asserting that the mere observation of two events occurring together does not necessarily imply a causal connection, highlighting a probabilistic view of causality.

- Cārvāka's naturalistic worldview rejects external influences and causality

3.1.4 Rejection of the Immortality of the Soul

Cārvāka does not believe in the idea of an everlasting, unchanging, and immortal soul that exists apart from the

body. It rejects this notion because it cannot be seen or experienced. However, they do admit to the existence of consciousness but do not think there is an eternal soul that beholds consciousness. Since consciousness can be observed in a living body made up of material elements, it is considered a quality of the body itself. For Cārvāka, consciousness is not a spiritual or non-material entity, but it is merely a quality of the physical body. They see the soul as nothing more than the body endowed with consciousness. For them, everything, including the soul, is just a specific combination of the four physical elements. They think that consciousness arises when these elements come together in a certain proportion. In other words, consciousness is the by-product of matter. This idea about consciousness in Cārvāka's philosophy is called 'Bhūta Chaitanya vāda'.

Bhūta Chaitanya vāda holds that consciousness is linked to the body and disappears when the body breaks down. It is somewhat like how the combination of certain ingredients like betel leaf, areca nut, and lime creates the red colour, or how yeast in wine produces its intoxicating effect. Although the elements individually do not possess these qualities, their combination in a certain way produces a red colour and intoxicating quality. Similarly, according to Cārvāka, the four physical elements combine to create consciousness, even though they do not have it individually. When the body dies, the individual ceases to exist. This means that all inquiries regarding past lives, life after death, rebirth, and the consequences of one's actions in heaven or hell become meaningless.

The Cārvāka philosophy also does not acknowledge the existence of God. They assert that people generally have three main reasons to believe in God: as a creator, as an intellectual regulator, and as a governor of the law of karma. However, for Cārvāka, the world comes into existence due to the particular combination of four physical elements. Therefore, Cārvāka does not see a need for a creator God who brings the universe into being. Cārvāka philosophy also challenges the concept of karma and the idea of past and future lives found in various Indian philosophies. They argue that there is no empirical evidence for the existence of past or future lives, and their philosophy is grounded in the belief that one should only accept what can be directly perceived. This standpoint aligns with their characterisation as positivists.

- Cārvāka rejects an immortal soul, seeing consciousness as bodily

- Bhūta Chaitanya vāda equates consciousness with the body, denies the afterlife

- Cārvāka rejects God, karma, and past or future lives, grounded in empiricism

3.1.5 Liberation (Mokṣa)

In Ethics, the Cārvāka school of thought takes a different perspective compared to many other ethical and philosophical traditions, particularly in India. At the core of Cārvāka ethics is the belief that sensual pleasure represents the highest and most desirable good in life. Their ethical philosophy can be summarised by the famous phrase: "Eat, drink and be merry, for once the body is reduced to ashes, there is no hope of coming back here again." This outlook reflects their atheistic and materialistic worldview. Cārvāka's view on pain also has a pragmatic character in that they accept it as an inherent part of life but see no reason to forgo desirable pleasures due to it. This perspective is illustrated by the saying, 'Nobody casts away the grain because of the husk.' This philosophy encourages individuals to attain immediate pleasure and indulge in life without worrying about consequences in the afterlife.

The materialists, as represented by Cārvāka, promote a doctrine of unrestrained energy, self-assertion, and a disregard for established authority. They argue that hierarchical structures where one person rules while another obeys are inherently unjust, as all human beings are essentially composed of the same basic elements. They consider moral rules as nothing more than human conventions and question their validity. In their view, ascetic practices such as fasting and penance, as negative methods that divert individuals from life's essential aim-pleasure. They argue that those who inquire about the morality of actions like killing animals, indulging in sensory pleasures, or taking another's possessions are not acting in accordance with life's principal purpose, which, according to Cārvāka, is the pursuit of pleasure.

As already stated, the Cārvāka philosophy vehemently rejects the concepts of an afterlife, the existence of the soul beyond death, and the influence of religion. It perceives religion as a means for priests to earn their livelihood and does not consider it as a path to truth or moral guidance. In essence, they are sceptics about religious and metaphysical matters. Among the traditional four human values in Indian philosophy-Dharma (duty/righteousness), Artha (wealth/prosperity), Kama (pleasure/desire), and Mokṣa (liberation from the cycle of rebirth)-the Cārvāka school primarily emphasises Kama, or sensual pleasure, as the ultimate goal. They view Artha, the

- Cārvāka ethics prioritise sensual pleasure, and reject concerns about the afterlife

- Cārvāka promotes self-assertion, questions hierarchy, and prioritises pleasure

- Cārvāka prioritises sensual pleasure (Kama)

accumulation of wealth, as a means to realise this end, while completely rejecting Dharma (duty/righteousness) and Mokṣa (liberation) as meaningful or attainable concepts.

Before ending the discussion of Cārvāka philosophy, we must also be aware of many positive sides to Cārvāka philosophy. It played a crucial role in preventing Indian philosophy from becoming too rigid and dogmatic. They introduced new philosophical ideas and challenged the existing dogmas. These Cārvāka thinkers were sceptics and thus, they were free-thinkers who questioned all the fixed beliefs within the tradition. So, while Cārvāka philosophy may have been controversial and less appreciated in its time, it did contribute to the diversity and openness of philosophical thought in India. The Cārvāka school of philosophy came before the Āstika traditions, and even influenced or was connected to other philosophies like Jainism, and Buddhism during the classical period of Indian philosophy.

- Cārvāka brought diversity and openness, questioned dogmas

We must also consider that much of our knowledge about Cārvāka philosophy has been conveyed through the criticisms and interpretations of its adversaries. This creates a challenge in developing a comprehensive philosophy rooted in its principles. This scenario is comparable to trying to construct a genuine Advaitic perspective solely by depending on Ramanuja's critique of Shankara's Advaita philosophy. Therefore, to attain entire picture of Cārvāka philosophy, it is essential to move beyond the caricatures and criticisms that have often coloured our perception. For instance, Cārvāka's concept of pleasure can also be understood as the celebration of the present moment, embracing the experience of living fully, while suffering might be viewed as conforming to societal norms that stifle the spontaneity and vibrancy of the present. In this way, a revaluation of the philosophical tenets is possible within Cārvāka philosophy that opens the path to exploring the multifaceted interpretations that extend beyond the conventional understanding of this tradition. This broader perspective allows us to appreciate the nuanced aspects and complexities of Cārvāka philosophy, shedding light on its often-misunderstood depth.

- Understanding Cārvāka philosophy requires moving beyond caricatures, exploring nuances

Summarised Overview

Cārvāka, one of the oldest philosophical systems in India, is known for its departure from Vedic authority, classifying it as part of the Nāstik School alongside Buddhism and Jainism. The origins and meaning of 'Cārvāka' remain debated, with interpretations ranging from the name of Bṛhaspati's first student to 'sweet-tongued,' signifying the pursuit of pleasure and wealth that appealed to common people. The school is also known as 'Lokayata,' reflecting its philosophy for the common people with unrefined tastes. Cārvāka's epistemology revolves around sensory perception as the sole source of knowledge. They accept only what can be directly perceived through the senses, denying abstract concepts and metaphysical entities. The rejection of other pramāṇas (sources of knowledge) like inference, comparison, and testimony stems from their scepticism about vyāpti and inherent uncertainties in these methods.

In terms of metaphysics, Cārvāka embraces a materialistic worldview, recognising only four perceptible elements: earth, water, fire, and air, rejecting the existence of ether. They assert that everything, living or non-living, results from combinations of these elements. Cārvāka denies the presence of a creator God and challenges notions of causality, proposing a probabilistic view. They also reject the immortality of the soul, viewing consciousness as a quality of the body, and dismiss the idea of an eternal soul. Ethically, Cārvāka emphasises the pursuit of sensual pleasure as life's highest good, advocating for the enjoyment of the present without concern for an afterlife. They reject ascetic practices and see them as detracting from life's essential aim. In Cārvāka's perspective, religion serves as a means for priests to earn their livelihood, offering no path to truth or moral guidance. Despite its controversial nature, Cārvāka's philosophy played a role in preventing Indian philosophy from becoming dogmatic and rigid, fostering diverse and open philosophical thought. While most knowledge about Cārvāka comes from its critics, a deeper exploration beyond caricatures and criticisms reveals the nuanced and often misunderstood aspects of this philosophical tradition.

Self-Assessment

1. What are the different interpretations of the term 'Cārvāka,' and how do they relate to the philosophy's focus?

2. What is the primary source of knowledge according to Cārvāka philosophy, and why do they emphasise it?

3. How does Cārvāka challenge other sources of knowledge, such as inference and testimony?

4. Explain the materialistic worldview of Cārvāka, including their rejection of certain elements and their view on causality.

5. What is Cārvāka's perspective on the concept of the soul, consciousness, and the afterlife?

6. Describe Cārvāka's ethical philosophy, including their stance on pleasure, pain, and ascetic practices.

Assignments

1. Analyse the primary sources of Cārvāka philosophy. Discuss how the philosophy has been transmitted through the critiques of its opponents. Assess the challenges of formulating a comprehensive philosophy rooted in Cārvāka principles based on this source material.

2. Discuss the Pramana accepted by the Cārvāka school of Indian philosophy and provide a comprehensive explanation of how they reject the pramānas accepted by other philosophical schools.

3. Write a detailed comparison of the concepts of reality in the material world as perceived by the Cārvāka and Vedanta philosophical schools.

4. Explore Cārvāka's ethical philosophy, emphasising pleasure as the highest good. Discuss their stance on pain, ascetic practices, and religion. Compare their ethical perspective with other Indian philosophical traditions and assess the implications of their outlook on human behaviour and society.

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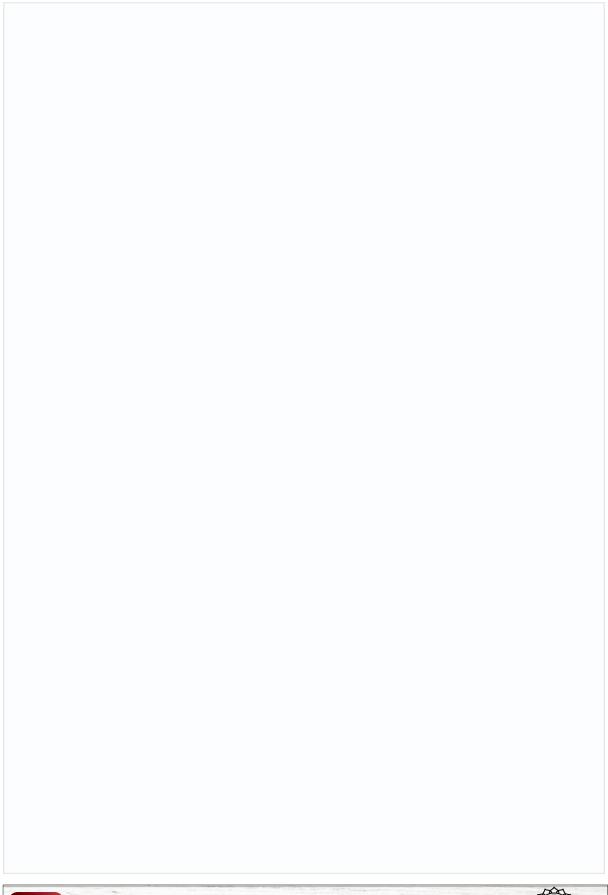
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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

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.

UNIT 2
Jaina Epistemology

Learning Outcomes

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

- get a thorough overview of Jaina theory of knowledge
- get to know the pramāṇas accepted by Jaina philosophy
- identify the metaphysical implications of Jaina theory of knowledge
- grasp the logic of plurality encrypted in Jaina system

Background

The philosophical problem of knowledge in Indian thought is generally centred on the question of the valid sources of knowledge. The reason for this way of approaching the problem of knowledge is the concern of how knowledge, in general, can be useful for practical life. However, the question of 'what is knowledge' has been addressed in the Jaina system as an allied question of metaphysical concern. The Jaina school follows the questions of knowledge along with its own contributions to the domain of multi-valued logic thus offering interesting insights into the domain of knowledge through their theory of Nayavada.

Jainism gets its name from the word 'Jina,' which means someone who has conquered their desires and weaknesses. In Jainism, there are 24 special spiritual teachers known as Tirthankaras, or the 'Founders of the Faith.' The first of these Tirthankaras was Rsabhadeva, who started the teachings of Jainism. The last and most famous one was Mahavira, also called Vardhamana. He lived around 2,500 years ago, at the same time as Buddha. While he is not the sole founder of Jainism, his teachings had a significant impact and reshaped the Jaina faith. Jaina epistemology is deeply rooted in the teachings of Mahavira. It focuses on the nature of knowledge and how humans acquire and understand it. Jain scholars have further elaborated upon and developed this epistemological framework, giving rise to a unique and distinct perspective that sets Jainism apart within the broader landscape of Indian philosophy.

Discussion

As mentioned earlier, the problem of Knowledge in Indian epistemology focused largely on the source of knowledge. Many schools, including Jainism, identified different sources as valid sources of knowledge. The validity in Indian philosophy refers to the reliability of knowledge which certain sources provide. From Jaina's point of view, only reliable knowledge can clean up the soul. Non-reliable knowledge will be misleading such that it attaches more karmic particles to the soul, resulting in the obscurity of knowledge that the soul has. Thus, according to Jaina thinkers, finding the true sources of knowledge is considered an important task. Along with this, the Jaina system claims that a complete view of the world is not possible with any sources of knowledge. Only the different aspects of reality are available to a knowing subject most of the time. This is a kind of perspectivism with regard to knowledge which Jaina advocates. Jainism also acknowledges varying levels of knowledge. Not all sources of knowledge hold the same weight in this philosophical system. However, Jainism firmly maintains that perfect knowledge remains attainable. It is crucial to understand that, in the pursuit of liberation or moksha, knowledge plays an indispensable role. This is because the very essence of the soul that seeks liberation is inherently tied to knowledge. To achieve this liberation, the soul must shed the 'veil' of karmic particles, ultimately reaching a state of perfect knowledge. Jainism emphasises that perfect knowledge is inherently within reach for the soul, and the ultimate objective is for the soul to return to a state of perfect knowledge.

- Karmic particles obstruct perfect knowledge

3.2.1 Cārvāka View Criticised

In the Indian philosophical context, it is not uncommon that different schools have had differences among each other regarding various theories and viewpoints which they propounded. The case of Jaina epistemology is also not different since they mainly criticised the theory of knowledge advocated by one of the other heterodox systems, namely the Cārvāka phi-

losophy. As we saw in the previous unit according to Cārvā-ka thinkers, or the Indian materialists, the only pramāṇa (the source of knowledge) is pratyakṣa or sense perception. The Cārvāka argument is that sense perception gives uncontradict-ed and non-misleading knowledge. Jaina system offers dif-ferent arguments against the Cārvāka view before presenting their account of knowledge. We shall briefly see those argu-ments one by one. The purpose of Jaina's criticism is that they defend many non-perceptual sources of knowledge, which the Cārvāka system refuted.

Cārvāka thinkers claim that pramāṇas like inference and testimony, which the Jaina system accepts are prone to failure since they produce knowledge which is misleading at times. Jaina thinkers, on the other hand, say that the same charge which the Cārvākas raised against inference and tes-timony etc., can be applied to sense perception as well with much more ease. Perception can go wrong, and there is am-ple evidence to support this claim. For example, a mirage is a visual delusion which we always experience while looking at the road on a hot and sunny day. Although it appears to be real, upon closer observation, it is proved that it is not real. So, Jaina's claim that sense perception is also problematic has a genuine appeal.

Cārvākas deny the existence of non-perceptible things and events. For them the non-perceptibility of such things and events is sufficient to say that those are non-existents. Thus, for example, life-after death is an event that the sense organs cannot perceive. But that does not mean that such an event is logically and actually impossible, the Jains argue. It is also the case that when Cārvākas argue with their intellectual op-ponents such as the other schools of Indian tradition, they are using various inferential steps without which such an argu-mentation is possible. The very claim that 'perception is the only source of knowledge' itself is inference since it is a prop-osition at which the Cārvākas reached through a logical argu-ment which is unknown to them. There are many such cases of non-perceptual knowledge which we yield. Another example is that in a face-to-face conversation, we 'read' the minds of others. As a matter of fact, minds are not visible, and we only see bodily expressions. The 'reading' of minds is not fully perceptual, and this weakens the Carvaka view yet again.

3.2.2 Types of Pramāṇās

Jainism mainly accepts five valid sources of knowledge, and they are the following. 1) Mati 2) Shruti 3) Avadhi 4) Manaḥparyāya and 5) Kevala. They can be translated respectively in the following manner. Mati is sensory knowledge, Shruti is Scriptural Knowledge, Avadhi is Clairvoyance, Manaḥparyāya is Telepathic Knowledge, and Kevala is Omniscience. This classification is graded based on the qualitative difference of the knowledge attained from them. This hierarchy starts from Mati and ends with Kevala. Each of them gives knowledge at different levels; thus, they must be elaborated distinctively. The process of knowing occurs in creatures in five different ways, as already mentioned. The first three are flawed and prone to inaccuracy, whereas the last two are flawless and represent the truth without error.

Jainism keeps an overarching distinction among the above-mentioned five sources of knowledge which are classified into two broad categories; a) immediate knowledge (aparoksha) and b) mediate knowledge (paroksha). The first category is defined as a kind of knowledge which the soul gains directly without the help of any sense organs or even the mind. Out of the five types of means of knowledge accepted by Jainism, the last three are immediate knowledge. They are Avadhi (Clairvoyance), Manaḥparyāya (Telepathic Knowledge) and Kevala (Omniscience). The first two such as Mati (sensory knowledge) and Shruti (testimonial knowledge) belong to mediate knowledge.

According to Jainism, consciousness or awareness is a fundamental feature of each individual soul. A soul does not require any external ways to receive information because knowledge is inherent in its essence; hence, it has omniscience or all-knowing consciousness. In a condition of bondage, however, such wisdom is obscured by the impurity of karma and is inaccessible to the spirits. As a result, the souls temporarily lose their omniscience and must rely on restricted means and intermediate sources, such as the intellect and senses to gather information and make sense of their experiences and existence. Like many other Indian systems, Jainism aims at the ideal of liberation. The graded division of knowledge is arranged in line with such a purpose. Jainism accepts three sources of knowledge for ordinary purposes: pratyakṣa, anumāna and testimony, since they provide knowledge of the

world in which the bound souls exist. These kinds of knowledge are not free from chances of error as well.

1. Mati: Mati-jñāna, the first of the two types of parokṣa-jñānas in Jain philosophy, is a concept that deals with the acquisition of knowledge, specifically focusing on the way knowledge is obtained through the mind and the senses. When mati-jñāna is acquired through the senses, it means that the mind processes the information received from the external world through the sensory organs. For example, when you see an object, the visual input is transmitted to your mind, and your mind processes and comprehends that visual information. In this case, the knowledge is rooted in the external world, as it depends on the sensory perception of physical objects. When the mind itself acquires the knowledge, it is not dependent on external sensory perception. Instead, the mind generates knowledge internally, without relying on the physical senses or external objects. This knowledge is considered to be independent of the senses and does not have a physical form (rūpa) as an external object. It is purely a product of the mind's contemplation, introspection, and mental processes. The following are the five types of mati-jñāna

Mati (Mental): This is the foundational stage of knowledge, where information is acquired through both the mind and the senses, and it deals with the ongoing or present subject matter.
Smṛti (Remembrance): Smṛti represents knowledge based on the memory of past experiences (pūrvānubhūta). This includes knowledge gained in previous lives that becomes evident in the current life.

Saṁjñā (Understanding): Saṁjñā represents knowledge that goes beyond immediate perception and memory. It involves research, analysis, and synthesis of past experiences and present observations.
Cintā (Prognostication): Cintā refers to knowledge generated by pondering over the future. This stage involves the ability to contemplate and make predictions about future events or outcomes. It requires the mind to speculate and analyse potential scenarios, using past experiences and present observations as a foundation.

Abhinibodha (Consideration): Abhinibodha represents knowledge based on estimation and assessment. It involves a

> • Mati-jñāna explores the mind and senses in knowledge acquisition

thoughtful consideration of various factors and circumstances. In this stage, individuals assess and estimate the value, consequences, and implications of their actions and decisions.

2. Śruta-jñāna: The knowledge acquired by a listener through the understanding of the spoken or written words is referred to as śruta-jñāna, which constitutes one of the two primary forms of parokṣa-jñānas, or indirect knowledge. Śruta-jñāna, often synonymous with the observation of signs, symbols, or linguistic expressions, is gained through a process involving association, concentration, comprehension, and diverse interpretations of the meaning conveyed by these words. This knowledge is obtained through indirect means, such as the act of listening, hearing, and reading, as well as research and the reliance on authoritative sources. Śruta-jñāna stands in contrast to mati-jñāna, which involves knowledge gained through personal acquaintance and direct experience with the subject matter. While mati-jñāna relies on firsthand interaction with the external world, śruta-jñāna is achieved through the description of phenomena, often shared by others or through textual sources. For instance, a young child acquires a lot of knowledges from their immediate environment. This may include stories told by grandparents, conversations overheard, or the absorption of information from various external sources.

3. Avadhi: This type of knowledge is not acquired through conventional means such as sensory perception or rational thinking. Instead, it transcends the physical realm and is obtained through psychic abilities, clairvoyance, and the ability to transcend the limitations of time and space. This form of knowledge is often described as intuitive awareness, and it operates beyond the boundaries of ordinary consciousness and cognitive faculties. Avadhi is not a form of knowledge readily accessible to everyone and is considered firsthand information. It involves a direct understanding of objects even when there is a temporal or spatial separation between the knower and the object of knowledge. Avadhi is associated with precognition-based knowledge, meaning it allows individuals to perceive information that goes beyond immediate sensory perception. It represents a level of understanding that is deeper than the typical sensory experience.

4. Manaḥparyāya: This knowledge is obtained through reading the thoughts and minds of others. It is also direct knowledge received from others via extrasensory means. Telepathy

- Knowledge from the spoken or written words, not direct experience

- Avadhi, the knowledge beyond the sensory realm

and mind reading are examples of it. Manaḥparyāya is made easier when an individual achieves or approaches perfection. In that state, the individual's ego grows dormant and silent. As a result, one can enter any consciousness at will and feel a sense of oneness with it. Through this, one can read and understand what is going on in someone else's mind. But this knowledge is not an ordinary form of knowledge like mati or śruta-jñāna. This is immediate knowledge that falls only below keva-la jnana in the hierarchy of knowledge according to Jainism.

5. Kevala: Kevala-jñāna stands as the highest stage of knowledge in Jain philosophy. It is the fifth stage of samyag-jñā-na, a state of true knowledge that ultimately leads to spiritual enlightenment. Kevala-jñāna is classified as one of the pratyakṣa jñānas, denoting direct knowledge. At its core, Kevala-jñāna is regarded as the 'supreme wisdom' through which an individual gains a comprehensive understanding of the intrinsic characteristics of all entities within the universe. This knowledge transcends ordinary perception, making the soul all-knowing (omniscient), all-seeing (omni-visionary), and attaining the peak of conscious awareness. The acquisition of Kevala-jñāna marks the culmination of rigorous penance and self-restraint and ensures liberation from the cycles of rebirth (samsara), leading to the highest state of enlightenment and spiritual liberation (moksha). Jain ascetics dedicate their lives to achieving Kevala-jñāna, viewing it as the ultimate objective in their spiritual journey. Its attainment signifies not only the realisation of supreme knowledge but also the permanent liberation of the soul from the cycle of rebirth, marking the highest level of spiritual enlightenment in Jainism.

3.2.3 The Jaina Theory of Judgement

In Jaina philosophy, knowledge assumes two distinct forms: 'pramāṇa,' which pertains to understanding a thing as it exists in itself, and 'naya,' which concerns comprehending a thing in relation to other elements. The doctrine of nayas, or standpoints, is a distinctive aspect of Jaina logic. Naya represents a specific standpoint from which statements about a thing are made. These standpoints are created and delineated through a process of abstraction, allowing individuals to focus on particular aspects or objectives. This abstraction and concentration on specific purposes result in the concept of the relativity of knowledge. What is crucial to grasp is that occupying one standpoint does not negate the validity of oth-

ers; various viewpoints hold value based on specific purposes. This relativity of knowledge is not unique to Jainism, as even in the Upanishads, glimpses of reality revealing itself differently at various stages of knowledge are evident. However, Jainism underscores the fundamental principle that truth is inherently relative to our chosen standpoints, emphasising that the overall nature of reality is best understood through several partial views. This philosophical stance challenges the notion of absolute truths and promotes a more holistic and nuanced understanding of the world, reflecting the unique and insightful character of Jaina epistemology.

In Jaina philosophy, the concept of 'Naya' is a multifaceted one, and it is classified into seven distinct categories, offering various standpoints through which we can perceive and interpret reality. These seven nayas are further divided into two groups: four pertain to objects or meanings, and three relate to words. However, what makes the understanding of these nayas unique is the recognition that viewing any of them in absolute terms can lead to fallacies or misconceptions, which are referred to as 'abhasas' in Jaina philosophy.

1. Naigamanaya is one of the seven nayas in Jain philosophy, representing the teleological standpoint. It provides a unique perspective on how we perceive actions and the overarching purpose or end that guides us. This standpoint emphasises the teleological character of life, where actions are not seen in isolation but are driven by a broader and purposeful goal. To understand Naigamanaya better, consider an everyday scenario. Imagine you encounter a person who is carrying water, fire, utensils, and other items. You inquire about their actions by asking, 'What are you doing?' In response, the person says, 'I am cooking food.' This response illustrates Naigamanaya. The person is not merely describing the individual actions of carrying water, fire, and utensils; they are conveying the overarching purpose or end that unifies these actions – cooking food. In this context, Naigamanaya highlights the idea that our actions are often part of a larger purpose or goal. It reminds us that life is not a series of disconnected, random activities but is guided by intentions and objectives.

2. Saṁgrahanaya, the class standpoint in Jain philosophy, focuses on the classification of objects based on shared common features. It emphasises that objects can be grouped into classes or categories, each characterised by general attri-

- Classifies objects by shared attributes

- Emphasises individual attributes and practical knowledge

- Focuses on momentary existence, disregards continuity and identity

- Emphasises the relative nature of word meanings in language

butes. Saṁgrahanaya is divided into two forms: Parasaṁgraha, which considers the ultimate class view, acknowledging the interconnected nature of all entities, and Aparasaṁgraha, the inferior class view, which recognises the individual traits within a class. This standpoint underscores the relativity of classifications, highlighting that how we categorise objects depends on our specific goals and perspectives. It encourages us to recognise the general features that unite objects within a class while understanding that the class itself is a conceptual framework and not a distinct entity. Saṁgrahanaya contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how we classify and relate to objects based on their characteristics, appreciating both common attributes and individual uniqueness.

3. Vyavahāranaya relates to the empirical and popular perspective, emphasising the specific and individual attributes of objects. Rooted in everyday experiences and practical knowledge, it provides a comprehensive understanding of reality based on observable facts and tangible experiences. This standpoint is associated with materialism and pluralism as it values the physical aspects of the world and recognises the diversity of entities. Vyavahāranaya is pragmatic and useful for practical purposes, aiding individuals in navigating the tangible aspects of life and appreciating the uniqueness of each entity, enriching our understanding of the world within the context of daily existence.

4. Ṛjusūtranaya offers a distinct perspective on the nature of reality. It is more specific in its focus compared to the Vyavahāranaya, which represents the empirical standpoint. Ṛjusūtranaya centres its attention on the state or condition of an object at a particular moment or time, disregarding considerations of continuity and identity. In the realm of Ṛjusūtranaya, the concept of the 'real' is synonymous with the momentary existence of a thing.

5. Śabdanaya, or the 'Verbal Standpoint,' understand the nature of language and word meanings. It acknowledges that language plays a central role in human communication, allowing us to convey our thoughts, ideas, and experiences. However, what makes Śabdanaya distinctive is its emphasis on the relative nature of word meanings. It underscores that the meaning of words is not fixed or universal but, rather, subject to variation based on the context in which they are used and the interpretation of individuals. In other words, words are not static entities with fixed meanings; they can be understood differently by different people in different situations. A crucial aspect of Śab-

danaya is its cautionary note regarding the fallacy of linguistic determinism. This fallacy arises when one mistakenly believes that language is the sole determinant of reality, and that our understanding of the world is entirely shaped by the words we use.

6. Samābhirūḍhanaya represents a specific way of understanding words and their meanings. It is closely related to Śabdanaya, the verbal standpoint, and it engages with the differentiation of terms based on their linguistic roots. This perspective emphasises the importance of linguistic analysis and how words are formed from their constituent elements.

7. Evambhūtanaya represents a specialised form of the sixth naya, Samābhirūḍhanaya, which focuses on distinguishing terms based on their linguistic roots. The core principle of Evambhūtanaya lies in its exploration of how language assigns legitimate meanings to terms, taking into account the specific aspects and manifestations of an object being described. In other words, it helps us understand that words can have different meanings based on what we are discussing, making our language flexible and adaptable to different ideas and perspectives. This perspective acknowledges that a term's current usage and its legitimate meaning are context-dependent, emphasising that the same object may require different terms for precise representation when viewed from distinct perspectives or attitudes.

Nayas is also categorised into two main perspectives: dravyārthika and paryāyārthika. The former offers insight into the unchanging aspects of things, focusing on the enduring and essential properties of objects, emphasising their intrinsic characteristics that remain consistent over time. This perspective allows Jains to explore the unalterable essence of reality, enabling an understanding of the fundamental and permanent nature of the world. In contrast, paryāyārthika nayas engage with the perishable and ever-changing attributes of objects. They consider the modifications, conditions, or temporary states that objects undergo, recognising the dynamic and evolving nature of reality. This perspective is crucial for comprehending the transient aspects of the world, acknowledging that change is an inherent part of existence.

3.2.4 Syādvāda

Jainism proposes that our judgments about reality, being inherently partial, should begin with a qualification of 'some-

- Focuses on word meanings through linguistic analysis

- Examines language's role in assigning meanings contextually

- Dravyārthika (unchanging) and paryāyārthika (changing) perspectives

how.' For example, a judgment that a table is brown would be expressed as 'Somehow, the table is brown.' This approach highlights that no judgment is ultimately true, and each judgment is only conditionally true. It acknowledges the existence of alternative perspectives for making judgments about the same object. Consider the example of a visually challenged person touching an elephant's legs and comparing it to a pillar. This judgment reflects a partial truth about the elephant. By prefixing 'somehow' (Syād) to every judgment, individuals can recognise the inherent partiality of truth within the structure of their judgments. For instance, when observing a chair in a room, stating 'Somehow, there is a chair' helps prevent the misconception that the chair has always existed in the room. It emphasises that the chair exists in the room under specific conditions. Since the word 'Syād', which means somehow, is always associated with judgments, this Jaina view is called Syādvāda. Sometimes it is also called as nayavada. Jainism argues that there are seven different ways in which judgements can be passed on any percept. The seven such forms of judgments form the framework of what is called Saptabhanginaya. It offers a general framework and thus assumes the argument form to which variables can be put to concretise judgements in context.

1. Syād asti
2. Syād nāsti
3. Syād asti ca, nāsti ca
4. Syād avyaktavyam ca
5. Syād asti ca avyaktavyam ca
6. Syād nāsti ca avyaktavyam ca
7. Syād asti ca nāsti ca avyaktavyam ca

As we already saw that every judgement is relative, the above one is a set of all possible judgement forms that the Jaina scholars have introduced. It is applicable only for imperfect individuals and not for the omniscient ones. The truth of every judgment is dependent on a contextual setting and from a standpoint that the judgement is uttered. For example, the judgment 'The elephant is like a tree' should be uttered as 'somehow the elephant is like a tree to avoid confusion. We shall use the placeholders 'S and P' which designate the subject and predicate of the judgment forms. By following

this Syād asti is translated as; somehow, S is P. Syād nāsti is somehow S is not P. Syād asti ca nāsti ca is Somehow S is P and is also not P. Syād avyaktavyam is somehow S is inde-scribable. Nyad asti ca avyaktavyam ca is somehow S is P and is also indescribable. Syād nāsti ca avyaktavyam ca can be translated into somehow S is not P and is also indescribable. Syād asti ca nasty ca avyaktavyam ca will be somehow S is P and also not P and indescribable. These kinds of judgements are called by Jains as Sapta-bhaṅgi- naya since there are seven possible alternative ways in which judgments can be passed.

To demonstrate how Sapta-bhaṅgi-naya actually works, we shall take up the following examples where the variables S and P are substituted with concrete signifiers, 'table' and 'brown' (colour).

1. Somehow the table is brown

2. Somehow the table is not brown

3. Somehow the table is brown and it is also not brown

4. Somehow the table is indescribable

5. Somehow the table is brown and is indescribable

6. Somehow the table is not brown and is indescribable

7. Somehow the table is brown and not brown and is also indescribable.

Summarised Overview

In Indian epistemology, Jainism focuses on the sources of knowledge and emphasises the importance of valid sources that provide reliable and purifying knowledge for the soul. Jainism asserts that discovering true sources of knowledge is important and that a complete view of the world is often unattainable with most sources, aligning with a form of perspectivism. They acknowledge varying levels of knowledge, but they maintain that perfect knowledge is inherent to the soul, playing a fundamental role in the search for liberation or moksha. Jainism criticises the Cārvāka philosophy, which asserts that sense perception is the sole source of knowledge. They argue that sense per-ception is also prone to error, demonstrating limitations and the existence of non-per-ceptible things. Jainism classifies five valid sources of knowledge, providing distinct qualities. Knowledge is essential for achieving moksha, and Jainism distinguishes be-tween immediate knowledge, obtained directly by the soul, and mediate knowledge, reliant on external means.

Jainism introduces the concept of 'Nayas,' which encompasses different standpoints from which statements about a thing can be made. These nayas are abstracted perspectives that allow individuals to focus on specific aspects or goals, reflecting the relativity of knowledge. Nayas is classified into seven categories, four related to objects and three to words. They include different ways of perceiving reality, emphasising the partial and context-dependent nature of knowledge. Syādvāda, another fundamental aspect of Jain philosophy, encourages the qualification of judgments with 'somehow' to acknowledge their conditional nature. Seven alternative ways of passing judgments are presented, highlighting the inherent relativity of knowledge. This approach challenges the notion of absolute truths and promotes a more holistic and nuanced understanding of the world, reflecting the unique and insightful character of Jain epistemology.

Self-Assessment

1. What are the fundamental principles of Jain epistemology?

2. How does Jainism critique the Cārvāka philosophy's assertion that sense perception is the sole valid source of knowledge?

3. Can you list and explain the five valid sources of knowledge in Jainism?

4. What is the difference between immediate knowledge and mediate knowledge in Jain philosophy?

5. Define 'Nayas' in Jain philosophy. Why it is essential to recognise the partial and context-dependent nature of knowledge.

6. Explain the concept of 'Syādvāda' in Jainism.

Assignments

1. Discuss the importance of valid sources of knowledge in Jain philosophy and how they are linked to the purification of the soul. How does non-reliable knowledge affect the soul's understanding and accumulation of karmic particles?

2. Explain the Jain criticism of the Cārvāka philosophy's assertion that sense perception is the only source of knowledge. How does Jainism argue that sense perception is also prone to error? Provide examples to support your explanation.

3. Jainism classifies five valid sources of knowledge. Describe these sources and their respective qualities. How do they contribute to the pursuit of moksha in Jain philosophy?

4. What is the significance of immediate knowledge and mediate knowledge in Jain-ism? How do these types of knowledge relate to the attainment of moksha, and what are their key differences?

5. Define and explain the concept of 'Nayas' in Jain philosophy. How do they offer different standpoints for making statements, and why is it important to acknowl-edge the partial and context-dependent nature of knowledge?

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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.

UNIT 3
Jaina Metaphysics

Learning Outcomes

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

- explore Jain metaphysical concepts, including Jiva, Ājiva, and the eternal nature of existence and ethical principles of Jainism

- engage with the Karma theory of Jaina philosophy and its impact on the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (saṁsāra)

- know the Jaina doctrine of Anekāntavāda and its influence on the acceptance of multiple viewpoints, fostering a critical and inclusive mindset

- understand the threefold path of Right Knowledge, Right Faith, and Right Conduct (Samyak Darshana, Samyak Jñāna, Samyak Chāritra) and its important role in spiritual liberation within Jaina metaphysics

Background

The philosophical and spiritual landscape of ancient India bore witness to a remarkable diversity of thought with the emergence of Jainism. As a distinct tradition, it stood apart from the dominant currents of orthodox Indian philosophy, particularly within the framework of Vedānta and other Hindu schools of thought. The Jaina tradition, originating in the Indian subcontinent over two and a half millennia ago, represents a blend of metaphysical depth and ethical rigour. Rooted in the teachings of Mahavira, the 24th Tirthaṅkara, Jainism has left a permanent mark on the religious, philosophical, and cultural fabric of India and continues to inspire millions of adherents worldwide.

Jainism emerged as a distinct religious and philosophical tradition, coexisting with contemporary movements such as Buddhism and Vedic Hinduism. Its advocacy for non-violence and ethical living has influenced not only the spiritual practices of

millions of adherents worldwide but has also left a permanent mark on Indian society at large. The beautiful Jain temples, famous for their detailed carvings and peaceful beauty, show how important this tradition is to Indian culture. Also, Jainism's ideas about what is right and wrong, how the world works, and how to find peace have greatly influenced discussions about ethics, metaphysics, and spirituality, inspiring people everywhere to seek truth and spiritual understanding.

Keywords

Anekāntavāda, pudgala, jiva, ājiva, substance

Discussion

As stated above, Jainism's metaphysical outlook is rooted in its ethical values and concerns. It stands in opposition to philosophical theories that do not prioritise the ethical dimensions of human existence. Jainism places great emphasis on the moral responsibility and spiritual freedom of the individual. One of the central critiques of Jain's metaphysics is directed towards theories that only explain the origin and nature of the world. It argues that the theories often fail to address a fundamental question: the nature of human suffering. Jain philosophy holds that any strong metaphysical framework must account for the ethical aspect of suffering – both its origin and how it can be alleviated.

- Jain philosophy critiques metaphysical theories that neglect human suffering

Jainism also rejects the notion that the individual soul, as an intelligent and conscious entity, is passive or entirely shaped by external factors, including the elements of nature. Such passivity is seen as a direct threat to the core principles of ethical responsibility and the significance of moral choices. In Jainism, the soul is regarded as an active agent capable of making moral decisions and taking responsibility for its actions. Jain metaphysics insists that the soul maintains its self-identity throughout its journey, even in the ultimate state of reality. This persistence of self-identity is crucial for the concept of moral responsibility, as it allows individuals to be accountable for their actions and their consequences. Jainism firmly opposes fatalistic viewpoints that suggest all events are predestined by nature, leaving no room for individual effort,

- Individual souls are active agents with moral responsibility

free will, or moral choices. Instead, Jainism underscores the importance of individual agency and ethical decision-making in shaping one's destiny.

3.3.1 Anekāntavāda

The Jain metaphysics is a philosophical framework that presents a unique perspective on the nature of reality, encompassing both a realistic and relativistic pluralism. This philosophy is known as Anekāntavāda, which can be translated as 'the doctrine of the manyness of reality.' It can be explained with the famous parable of the blind men and the elephant, where each blind man touches a different part of the elephant and describes it based on their limited experiences. Anekāntavāda suggests that reality is akin to the elephant in the story, full of diverse aspects, dimensions, and complexities. In the parable, each blind man's perception of the elephant is limited to the specific part they touch, such as the tail, trunk, or leg. While their descriptions are accurate from their individual viewpoints, none of them can provide a comprehensive understanding of the entire elephant. This demonstrates the relative nature of their perceptions and the inherent limitations of their knowledge.

From Jainism's point of view, this parable can be extended to philosophical notions that address several key principles of Anekāntavāda. Firstly, it highlights the manyness of reality. Rather than perceiving reality as a single, uniform entity, Jainism recognises that it is multifaceted and rich in diversity. It acknowledges that matter (pudgala) and spirit (jiva) are two fundamental aspects of this complex reality, existing independently yet interconnected. Anekāntavāda also asserts that every entity, whether material or spiritual, possesses an infinite number of characteristics or aspects. This concept aligns with the idea that the elephant in the parable has various attributes, and no single observer can comprehend them all. The recognition of these infinite aspects underscores the richness and complexity of existence.

Anekāntavāda also reminds us of the limitations of human knowledge and perception. It acknowledges that individuals can only grasp certain qualities or aspects of any given thing, much like the blind men's partial understanding of the elephant. The idea of complete knowledge, similar to seeing the entire elephant, is considered unattainable for ordinary be-

- Reality is diverse and relative

- The parable illustrates multifaceted reality with infinite aspects

ings. The philosophy of Anekāntavāda encourages a balanced perspective on reality. It invites individuals to appreciate the diverse facets of existence and to avoid the fallacy of one-sided views. In the parable, the blind men's descriptions collectively provide a more comprehensive understanding of the elephant. Similarly, Anekāntavāda advocates embracing the complexity and manyness of reality to arrive at a more holistic perspective.

Anekāntavāda provides a holistic and inclusive worldview that celebrates the multifaceted nature of existence. Instead of reducing reality to a singular viewpoint, Anekāntavāda encourages us to appreciate the richness and diversity of the universe. At its core, Anekāntavāda emphasises the coexistence of multiple independent aspects of existence, primarily distinguishing between matter (pudgala) and spirit (jiva). In Jainism, matter and spirit are considered as distinct and separate entities. Matter comprises innumerable material atoms, and there are also innumerable individual souls, each recognised as independently real. This view underscores the coexistence of diverse elements in the universe, both material and spiritual, each with its own unique characteristics.

As stated above Anekāntavāda asserts that every entity possesses an infinite number of characteristics or aspects. This means that any single perspective or description falls short of capturing the complete complexity of any given object or being. These aspects can encompass both positive and negative qualities, reflecting the intricate nature of reality. Imagine a rock in a serene garden. According to Anekāntavāda, this rock is not just a simple, inert object. Instead, it possesses multiple aspects or characteristics. Some of these aspects might include its shape, colour, weight, texture, and even its geological history. These aspects collectively contribute to the complete reality of the rock. Jainism emphasises that we can only perceive and understand some of these aspects at any given time, not the entirety of the rock's complexity.

3.3.2 Understanding the Fundamental Categories in Jainism

The Notion of Substance: The Jain perspective on existence and substance is characterised by a nuanced understanding of change, permanence, and identity. They do not view being as permanent, unchanging, or devoid of the pro-

cesses of becoming, change, and eventual dissolution. Instead, Jains maintain that everything in the universe is subject to production, continuity, and eventual destruction. The definition of substance in Jainism depends on one's standpoint and perspective. At its core, substance is that which always exists in some form, like the universe itself, which is considered to be without a definitive beginning or end. Substance serves as the underlying foundation for qualities and modifications. In essence, anything that undergoes the processes of origin, existence, and destruction can be classified as a substance.

Jain philosophy recognises the duality in the nature of things. On the one hand, substances are regarded as permanent when it comes to their underlying essence or substance, which remains relatively unchanged. On the other hand, they are seen as changeable in terms of their ever-evolving aspects and qualities. Material entities, for instance, persist as matter but exhibit continuous change when considering their specific attributes. In this view, the world is in a constant state of flux, with entities undergoing transformations, acquiring new qualities, and shedding old ones. To articulate this concept, Jains employ the theory of 'bheda-abheda' or difference in identity. It acknowledges the differences that manifest among entities while simultaneously recognising their essential identity or interconnectedness. Substance, in this context, is that which endures through various qualities and modifications, making substance and quality inseparable.

Jiva and Ajiva: Jain philosophy provides a unique perspective on the nature of the universe by introducing two fundamental, everlasting, and uncreated categories: Jiva and Ājiva. These categories play a central role in Jain cosmology and metaphysics, shaping how Jains perceive the world around them. According to Jain philosophy, the jivas, or individual souls, are initially categorised into two main groups: the liberated (Mukta) and the bound (Baddha). The bound souls are further classified into two subgroups: the mobile (trasa) and the immobile (sthāvara). The immobile souls inhabit the atoms of earth, water, fire, and air, as well as the plant kingdom, and possess only one sense, which is the sense of touch. On the other hand, mobile souls are divided into different classes based on their sensory capabilities. There are those with two senses, such as certain types of worms; three senses, like ants; four senses, exemplified by wasps and bees; and five senses, which include higher animals and humans. This hierarchical

- substance is that which undergoes origin, existence, and destruction

- Acknowledges duality – permanence in essence, change in qualities

- Jain philosophy introduces Jiva and Ājiva as everlasting categories

classification within Jainism highlights the different levels of consciousness and sensory perception among various forms of life. It emphasises the complex structure of the jiva based on its state of bondage or liberation, mobility or immobility, and the degree of sensory awareness possessed.

Consciousness is considered to be the fundamental essence of the jiva, denoted as chetanālakṣaṇo jivaḥ. It is believed that every soul, regardless of its position within the hierarchy, possesses consciousness. However, the levels of consciousness may differ depending on the karmic obstacles that each soul carries. Even the lowest forms of souls that inhabit material atoms, though seemingly devoid of life and consciousness, are believed to possess these attributes in a dormant state. The purest form of consciousness is found in the emancipated souls, devoid of any karma. Jain philosophy emphasises the fundamental equality of all souls, with differences in consciousness attributed solely to the presence of karmic obstacles. The intrinsic nature of the soul is characterised by attributes such as Infinite Faith, Infinite Knowledge, Infinite Bliss, and Infinite Power. However, in the case of bound souls, these inherent characteristics are veiled by karmic influences. Despite this, every jiva is considered a genuine knower (jñātā), a genuine agent (kartā), and a genuine experiencer (bhoktā).

Ājiva Dravya refers to the category of inanimate substances that constitute the material aspect of the universe. It is subdivided into several fundamental components, namely space referred to as ('Ākāsha'), motion ('Dharma'), rest ('Adharma'), time ('Kāla') and matter ('Pudgala'). The Jaina philosophy categorises these elements into different entities. Pudgala refers to the physical matter, Dharma symbolises motion, Adharma signifies rest, and Ākāsha stands for space. These entities, namely Pudgala, Dharma, Adharma, and Ākāsha including jiva are classified as 'asti-kāya dravyas' in Jain philosophy. This classification implies that these entities are considered substances that have constituent parts extending in space. On the other hand, the concept of time, referred to as Kala, is categorised as the only 'anasti-kāya Dravya' in Jain philosophy. This designation is used to illustrate that time does not possess extension within physical space.

Among these substances, space (Ākāsha) holds a significant place. Jain cosmology and metaphysics offer a unique understanding of space, which is categorised into two prima-

- All souls possess consciousness, levels vary due to karma

- Inanimate substances categorised as 'asti-kāya dravyas,' except time.

ry aspects: Lokākāsa and Alokākāsa. The former represents the part of space occupied by the material world. It encompasses all tangible and visible entities and objects in the universe. In contrast to Lokākāsa, Alokākāsa signifies the space beyond the material world. It is described as an absolute void and emptiness, devoid of any tangible or observable elements. In Jain thought, the terms 'Dharma' and 'Adharma' also do not carry their commonly understood connotations of moral merit and demerit. Instead, they are employed in their technical sense, referring to the conditions that facilitate movement and rest within the universe. That is, they are fundamental principles responsible for initiating and sustaining movement (dharma) and rest (adharma) in the cosmos. Space serves as the expanse within which various entities exist, while dharma governs their movement and adharma enables them to come to a state of rest.

In Jain philosophy, the concept of time, known as 'kāla,' offers a distinctive perspective that challenges conventional notions. Rather than viewing time merely as a linear progression, Jainism characterises it as both an entity and a process, integral to the fabric of the universe. Time, in this context, is considered a quasi-substance, an all-pervading form on which the successive movements and changes of the world are connected. It differs from our common understanding of time as a sum of discrete moments, instead representing a continuous and enduring process, stretching from the past into the present. Jainism distinguishes between eternal time (kāla) and relative time (samaya). Kāla, the eternal time, is formless, beginningless, and endless, transcending our ordinary understanding of time. Samaya, on the other hand, embodies our everyday perception of time with beginnings, endings, and measurable units. This relative time is subject to change and variation, such as hours and minutes. Eternal time, represented by kāla, is considered the substantial cause of relative time, samaya, highlighting the relationship between the two.

Matter, known as 'pudgala,' another category in Jainism that comprehends the nature of the universe. It is regarded as the substance from which all physical entities, objects, and phenomena in the world originate. It is also considered as an eternal substance, devoid of both a beginning and an end. This category of matter exists in six different forms, each varying in degrees of fineness and visibility, thereby facilitating the diversity found in the material world. Associated with

pudgala are essential sensory qualities such as touch, taste, smell, and colour, which shape our perception of the physical realm. Sound is regarded not as a quality, as other systems have done, but only as a modification (parināma) of matter. Pudgala also serves as the medium for energy, which is fundamentally kinetic, giving rise to two distinct forms of motion—simple motion or 'parispanda' and evolution or 'parināma.' Jainism also recognises subtle matter beyond the reach of our ordinary senses, which plays a crucial role in the doctrine of karma. Subtle matter is transformed into different degrees of karma, influencing the lives of individuals and their experiences. It is this complex connection between matter, the physical world, and the workings of karma that enriches the Jain understanding of the universe and the individual's journey within it.

3.3.3 Jaina Ethics

Jain ethics is deeply rooted in the pursuit of moksha, which is the ultimate goal of salvation in Jainism. Central to this ethical system is the belief that the interaction between jiva (the individual soul) and ājiva (non-spiritual matter) is responsible for the cycle of birth and death. The state of bondage occurs when the soul and matter interpenetrate, resulting in a cycle of rebirth. In contrast, freedom is achieved when the soul and matter separate, leading to the attainment of godhood and ultimate liberation from the cycle of birth and death. The removal of these obstacles is crucial for the soul to attain omniscience, which is a state of infinite knowledge and enlightenment. Jainism emphasises the purification of the soul through ethical living, discipline, and the elimination of karmic matter that binds the soul to the cycle of samsara (birth and death).

In Jain philosophy, the concept of karma is multifaceted. It encompasses both actions and the impressions left by these actions on the soul. Karmic matter, which is the residue of past actions, attaches itself to the soul, shaping one's present life. The accumulated karmas determine various aspects of an individual's life, including the family they are born into, their physical characteristics, lifespan, and more. Each specific type of karma is responsible for particular attributes in one's life. These karmas continue to influence an individual's life until they are dissociated from the soul, allowing the soul to progress towards liberation. The process of dissociation involves two fundamental steps: samvara and nirjarā. They play a critical role in the path to liberation. Samvara involves stopping

- Pudgala is eternal matter, shaping the physical world

- Jain ethics seeks moksha by separating soul and matter

- Jain karma involves actions and their impact, influencing one's life

the influx of new karmas, preventing further contamination of the soul. Nirjarā, on the other hand, focuses on the gradual shedding and exhaustion of the karmas already attached to the soul. Through these processes, the soul can free itself from the entanglements of karma and progress towards a state of pure consciousness and ultimate liberation.

The path to moksha in Jainism revolves around three fundamental principles, often referred to as the 'Three Jewels.' These are right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct, and together they constitute the foundation of the spiritual journey towards liberation. Jaina commentators use the analogy of medicine to explain the significance of the Three Jewels. Just as in medicine, where the cure requires three essential elements: faith in the medicine's effectiveness, knowledge of how to use it, and the actual consumption of the medicine, the path to alleviate suffering and attain liberation necessitates the application of right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct. In this analogy, faith is equivalent to trusting in the healing power of the medicine, knowledge is akin to understanding how to use it properly, and conduct relates to taking the medicine as prescribed.

Right faith also called 'Samyak Darshana,' is considered the cornerstone and the starting point of the spiritual discipline in Jainism. It is characterised by an attitude of deep respect and unwavering belief in the teachings and principles of Jainism. When individuals begin their exploration of Jaina teachings with partial faith and rationally examine the wisdom imparted by the tirthankaras (spiritual leaders), their faith gradually increases. The following are the five key signs that indicate the presence of right faith in an individual:

Tranquillity: Right faith brings about a sense of inner calm and serenity. It enables individuals to approach life's challenges with a composed state of mind. **Spiritual Craving:** Those with the right faith exhibit a deep yearning for spiritual growth and enlightenment. They possess a desire to understand the true nature of the self and to progress on the path of self-purification.

Disgust: Right faith leads to a sense of revolt towards material attachments and worldly desires. Individuals with the right faith begin to perceive the temporary nature of worldly pursuits, which can result in a sense of detachment.

• Three Jewels - Right faith, right knowledge, right conduct.

Compassion: Compassion is a natural outgrowth of right faith. It fosters a sense of empathy and concern for all living beings, driving individuals to practice non-violence (ahimsa) and engage in acts of kindness and benevolence.

Conviction: Right faith is underpinned by a deep conviction in the spiritual truths taught by the Jaina tradition. This unwavering belief serves as a firm foundation for the journey toward liberation.

In Jainism, right knowledge or Samyak Jñāna is the second Jewel and is associated with attaining a true and accurate understanding of reality. It involves comprehending the fundamental principles of Jain philosophy, including the nature of the soul (Jiva), karma, and the cycle of birth and death. According to Jainism, the right knowledge is crucial for dispelling ignorance and delusion. It enables individuals to discern the impermanence and transitory nature of the material world and recognise the eternal nature of the soul. It is developed through study, meditation, and self-reflection.

- Right knowledge (Samyak Jñāna) understands reality and dispels ignorance

Right conduct or 'Samyak Chāritra,' is the third and final Jewel. It involves living a life in accordance with ethical principles and moral values. The primary goal of right conduct is to eliminate the karmas (subtle particles of matter) that lead to bondage and, in turn, facilitate the soul's liberation from the cycle of birth and death. In Jainism, there are two levels of right conduct, each tailored to the specific circumstances and responsibilities of individuals. The rules of right conduct for householders are generally less stringent than those for monks. The Great Vows, undertaken by monks, include strict commitments to non-violence, truth, non-stealing, chastity, and non-attachment, observed with unwavering dedication in thought, speech, and action. Monks adhere to these vows with the highest level of rigour and purity, reflecting their renunciation of worldly life. In contrast, the Small Vows, followed by laymen and laywomen, offer a more flexible adaptation of these principles. While laypeople are expected to practice non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, chastity, and contentment, the application is more pragmatic, recognising the complexities of their everyday lives and the need to balance their spiritual aspirations with societal responsibilities.

- Right conduct (Samyak Chāritra) entails ethical living, key to liberation

Summarised Overview

Jainism's metaphysical framework is deeply intertwined with its ethical values, asserting the critical importance of individual moral responsibility and spiritual freedom. This philosophy critiques theories that solely explain the origin and nature of the world, highlighting their failure to address the fundamental question of human suffering. Anekāntavāda, a core element of Jain metaphysics, offers a unique perspective on reality, emphasising the multifaceted nature of existence. It uses the parable of the blind men and the elephant to illustrate the diversity and complexity of reality, underscoring that matter and spirit are integral components of this intricate whole. Anekāntavāda acknowledges the limitations of human knowledge and promotes a balanced perspective, encouraging individuals to embrace the many facets of existence for a holistic understanding.

Jain metaphysics encompasses fundamental categories like Jiva (individual soul) and Ājiva (non-spiritual matter). Jiva is categorised into liberated and bound souls, further dividing them based on sensory capabilities. Jainism emphasises the fundamental equality of all souls and attributes differences in consciousness to karmic obstacles. Ājiva Dravya refers to inanimate substances, including space, motion, rest, time, and matter. Jain ethics, deeply rooted in the pursuit of moksha, emphasises the removal of karmic obstacles through right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct. Right faith is the foundation, right knowledge dispels ignorance, and right conduct focuses on ethical living to eliminate karmas that lead to bondage. The path to moksha is guided by these 'Three Jewels,' and Jainism recognises different levels of right conduct for monks and laypeople, tailored to their specific responsibilities.

Self-Assessment

1. What is the core emphasis of Jainism's metaphysical framework, and how does it relate to ethical values and individual responsibility?

2. What is Anekāntavāda, and how does the parable of the blind men and the elephant illustrate its central principles?

3. Describe the fundamental categories in Jain metaphysics

4. Explain the concept of karma in Jainism and its role in an individual's life.

5. What are the 'Three Jewels' in Jainism, and how do they form the foundation for the path to moksha?

Assignments

1. Anekāntavāda is a fundamental concept in Jain metaphysics. Using the blind men and the elephant parable, elucidate the key principles of Anekāntavāda and its application in understanding the diversity of reality. How can this perspective help individuals develop a more holistic worldview?

2. In Jain metaphysics, what are the fundamental categories, and how are they classified? Provide a detailed explanation of the concepts of Jiva and Ājiva, emphasising their significance in Jain philosophy.

3. Discuss the 'Three Jewels' of Jainism- right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct. Explain how these principles form the foundation for the spiritual journey towards moksha and elaborate on their roles and significance.

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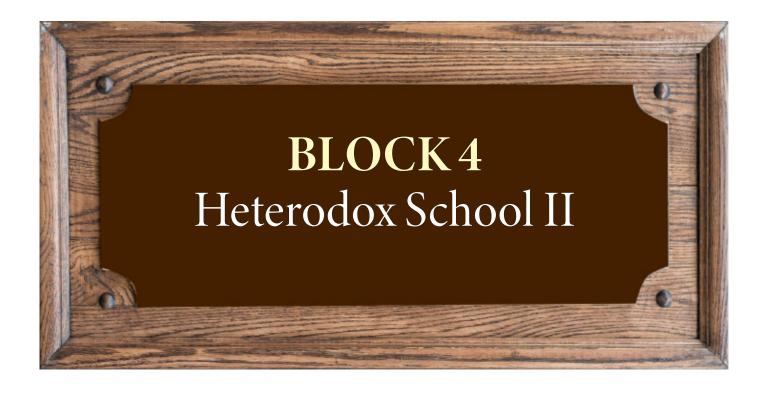
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BLOCK 4
Heterodox School II

UNIT 1
Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy

Learning Outcomes

The Unit will enable the learner to:

- understand a brief history of the philosophy of Buddhism
- know the relationship of Buddhism with Vedas and Upanishads
- have a brief idea of the humanistic elements of Buddhism
- examine the general characteristics and importance of Buddhism

Background

Buddhism is one of the heterodox schools of Indian thought, and its founder is Gautama Buddha or Siddharta. He was born in 563 or 564 B.C.E. in the province of Lumbini in Kapilavastu, which is situated in the foothills of Nepal. His father, Śuddhōdhana was the ruler of Kapilavastu. His mother, Maya Devi was a princess of the Kōsala dynasty. From his early childhood, Gautama showed a meditative bent of mind. Even as a boy, Siddharta favoured a contemplative life. Getting alarmed his father created an artificially pleasant world for him. Siddharta was not interested in married life. But his parents got him married to Yeśōdhara and they had a son named Rahula.

According to Prabhavananda, "… the king built a palace, and beside it laid out a garden opening on a park that stretched for many miles in every direction. In this palace, the young prince lived, and there grew to manhood amid beautiful surroundings and in association with youthful, happy companions. He was bright and cheerful, clever at books and games, and always exhibited a loving disposition. From his earliest years he was kind and affectionate towards all living beings, including all dumb creatures. So true was this, even when he was a little boy his friends called him 'the compassionate one.' When he had grown to be a young man, he married the beautiful Yeśōdhara, and from that time he seemed to be caught in a network of

roses. A son was born to him, whom he named Rahula. Prince Gautama was then about thirty years old. One day, during this period of his life, he bade his charioteer drive him through the city that lay beyond the park surrounding the palace, for he desired to view the city of Kapilavastu and know life as the people lived it. As he rode through the streets of the city, he saw many things, among them children playing and men and women carrying on their work. At all this he was pleased, for he cried to his charioteer, 'I see here labour, and poverty, and hunger; yet so much beauty, love and joy are mingled with them - surely life, after all, is very sweet.' No sooner had he uttered these words than there came into view, one after another, the three woes of men - weariness, disease, and death. This was the turning point of his life."

Siddharta was moved by the misery which people suffered in the world and wanted to find a solution to it. At the age of 30, he left home, family and princely life in order to discover a solution to human suffering. He began to reflect upon the vanities of life and upon the tragedy of death, disease, and old age which afflict humanity as a whole. He renounced the world and left the palace for the quest for truth. In the words of Datta and Chatterji, "As an ascetic, he was restless in search of the real source of all sufferings and of the means of complete deliverance. He sought light from many religious teachers and learned scholars of the day and practised great austerities, but nothing satisfied him. This threw him back on his own resources. With an iron will and a mind free from all disturbing thoughts and passions, he endeavoured to unravel, through continued intense meditation, the mystery of the world's miseries till, at last his ambition was crowned with success. Siddhartha became Buddha or the Enlightened. The message of his enlightenment laid the foundation of both Buddhistic religion and philosophy which, over time, spread far and wide."

As a result of organised preaching under the auspices of the Sangha, Buddhism made rapid strides even in the lifetime of the Buddha. The monarchies of Magadha, Kosala and Kausambi and several republican states and their people adopted this religion. Two hundred years after the death of the Buddha, the famous Maurya king Ashoka embraced Buddhism. This was an epoch-making event. Through his agents Ashoka spread Buddhism into Central Asia, West Asia and Sri Lanka, thus transforming it into a world religion. Even today, Sri Lanka, Burma, Tibet and parts of China and Japan profess Buddhism. Although Buddhism disappeared from the land of its birth, it continues to hold ground in the countries of South Asia, South-East Asia and East Asia. In an essay on Marxism, Abu Sayyid Ayub said, "more than two thousand years before Marx, there was another great moralist who had dedicated his life to the cause of human suffering and its removal. He was Gautama Buddha." Direct applications of his ideals can totally revolutionise human society. The Buddha passed away at the age of 80 at Kuśinagar in Eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Discussion

4.1.1 Philosophy of Buddhism: A Brief History

The Buddha delivered his first sermons at Saranath in Banaras. His first Sermon was *dharma cakra pravartanah*, setting in motion the Wheel of Law. His sermon starts by saying that man's moral life consists in avoiding the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. Nothing is to be gained by indulging your appetites and passions. Nothing is to be gained by mortifying your flesh. You must adopt the middle path, the *madhyma mārga*. It is the path which does not admit any kind of extreme position in life. Denial of the worldly life is as danger as the life of uncontrolled sensual desires.

- Middle Path, the avoidance of two extremes

The Buddha then came down to his famous doctrine called the Four Noble Truths. Life is suffering, suffering has a cause, There is a cessation of suffering; and there is a way out of it. The four fundamental truths were enunciated for the first time in Saranath. According to A.L. Basham, "Leaving the Tree of wisdom, he journeyed to the Deer Park near Varanasi (the modern Saranath), where his five former disciples had settled to continue their penances. To these five ascetics, the Buddha preached his first sermon, or, in Buddhist phraseology, 'set in motion the Wheel of the Law.' The five were so impressed with his new doctrine that they gave up their austerities and once more became his disciples. A few days later, a band of six young ascetics became his followers, and he sent them out in all directions to preach the Buddhist Dharma."

- First disciples of the Buddha

The details of the Master's address to the five monks at Saranath are discussed by A.L. Basham as follows, "There are two ends not to be served by a wanderer. What are those two? The pursuit of desires and of the pleasure which springs from desires, which is base, common, leading to rebirth, ignoble and unprofitable; and the pursuit of pain and hardship, which is grievous, ignoble and unprofitable. The Middle Way of the Tathagata avoids both these ends: it is enlightened, it

brings clear vision, it makes for wisdom, and leads to peace, insight, full wisdom and Nirvana. What is this Middle way? … it is the Noble Eight-fold Path- Right Views, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Recollection and Right Meditation. This is the Middle Way."

- Middle Path explained

The essence of the Buddha's teaching is clear in the Sermon he gave in Banaras. He said, 'He who wants to renounce worldliness should avoid both excess and undue abstinence. On the one hand, he should not be addicted to things which attract the mind merely through passion, especially through carnal desire. That is the low, vain and worthless life of ignorance fit for none but the blind worshipper of the world. On the other hand, he should not be given to self-mortification. That also is painful, ignoble and useless. There is the Bhikshus, a middle path between the two, which the *Tathagatha* (the Buddha) has found. The pursuit of this path opens the eyes and enlightens the mind. This is the way of peace of mind, higher wisdom, illumination and nirvāṇa.

- Essence of the First Sermon

He undertook long journeys to take his message far and wide. He propagated the message of humanity, love, compassion and friendliness to the whole world. His missionary activities did not discriminate between the rich and the poor, the high and the low and men and women. His message was open to all. The use of Pali, the language of the people, also contributed to the spread of Buddhism. It facilitated the spread of Buddhist doctrines among the common people.

- Buddhism spread far and wide

According to Datta and Chatterjee, "Like all great teachers of ancient Buddha taught by conversation, and his teachings were also handed down for a long time through oral instruction imparted by his disciples to successive generations. Our knowledge about Buddha's teachings depends today chiefly on the *Tripiṭakas,* or the three baskets of teachings which are claimed to contain his views as reported by his most intimate disciples. These three canonical works are named *Vinaya-pitaka*, *Sutta-pitaka* and *Abhidhamma-pitaka*. Of these, the first deals chiefly with rules of conduct, the second contains sermons with parables and the third deals with problems of philosophical interest. All these three contain information regarding early Buddhist philosophy. These works are in the Pali dialect."

- *Tripiṭaka*, the three baskets of Buddhist teachings

Gautama Buddha also organised the sangha or the religious order, whose doors were kept open to everybody, irrespective of caste and sex. The only condition required for the monks was that they would faithfully observe the rules and regulations of the Sangha. Once they were enrolled as members of the Buddhist Church, they had to take the vow of continence, poverty and faith. So, there are three main elements in Buddhism: the Buddha, Sangha and Dhamma.

The teachings of the Buddha concentrated on the middle path and held that a person should avoid the excess of both luxury and austerity. He said that the world is full of sorrows, and people suffer on account of desires. If desires are conquered, nirvana will be attained. That is, man will be free from the cycle of birth and death. His message is of permanent value and is eternal. Unlike the founders of other religions, the Buddha grounded his teachings on rational reflection and not on divine revelation. The Buddha instructed his followers on the 'Middle way' – a path between a worldly life and extremes of self-denial. He criticised Brahmanism for postulating such transcendent entities like the absolute self or the eternal soul (*ātman*) and rejects so-called unanswered questions because they are irrelevant to our earthly life and, according to him, in enquiring beyond the limits of experience, they are senseless. The truths he taught were open to all and available to anyone, fully mindful of the world around him and the workings of his own mind. His moral philosophy was also empiricist in character. Having witnessed the degeneration of faith, he emphasised experience and efforts and based his religion and ethics on faith.

4.1.2 Relationship between Buddhism and the Vedic tradition

Like Jainism, Buddhism is also a religion and philosophy. Buddhism upheld that truth is to be realised not by learning but by the purity of heart and righteousness of conduct. This was manifested in Vedas also. In the Vedas, it is written that spiritual life cannot be attained by mere study of the Vedas but by following and putting their teachings into practice. Like the sages of the Upaniṣads, the Buddha insisted that one should experience the truth for oneself. An intimate relationship between the teachings of Upanishads and Buddhism can be found. Like the Upaniṣads, Buddhism also started as a protest against the excessive ritualism of the time. The cruel rites

with which worship was accompanied shocked the conscience of the Buddha.

In spite of the above similarities, we can also find some differences. For both Upanishads and Buddhism, ignorance is the root cause of suffering. But they differ with respect to the content of *jñāna*. The difference between the two is that while the Upaniṣadic doctrine was intended for a few, the message of the Buddha was open to all. The Upanishads depended on instructions given by others, but Buddhism stressed self-effort in knowing the truth. Another difference between the teachings of the Buddha and the Vedic tradition lies in the distribution of emphasis. The "Buddha stresses the impermanence of the flux- the impermanence of everything within the limits of our sense experience. The Upanishads lay their chief emphasis upon the abiding- the permanent and the changeable reality behind the flux, beyond the limits of our sense experience."

4.1.3 Humanistic Elements in Buddhism

The very starting point of Buddhist philosophy consists in the discovery of the origin and removal of suffering. He refused to accept the concept of the human soul as an eternal entity. Instead, he envisaged a theory of self in terms of a stream of consciousness. *Pratītyasamutpāda vāda* and *Kṣanika vāda* of Buddhism can be considered the basic principles of humanism that we can discover in the teachings of the Buddha.

Buddhism gave due attention to the life of human being in this world. He prescribed a threefold ideal for human being consisting of Buddhahood, Dharma and Sangha. A concern for the wholesome development of human personality in the context of social existence is quite clear in these ideals. Even the idea of *arahant* of Buddhism has a distinctive value from the humanistic viewpoint. The attainment of *arahant-hood* can be accomplished under ordinary conditions in this very life. The eight-fold path prescribed by the Buddha for the eradication of suffering is based on self-discipline and contemplation.

The Buddha rejected all kinds of distinctions based upon caste and sex and proclaimed that every human being is eligible for the status of *arahant-hood*. Here again, we see the humanistic outlook of the Buddha, who upheld the cause of

- Difference between Buddhism and Upaniṣads

- Basic principles of humanism in Buddhism

- Principles to eradicate human suffering

equality of all beings. The message of the Buddha was open to all. This fact attains significance only when we see that during the ancient period, when the builders of the philosophical system often underestimated the nature and role of women and other downtrodden sections of society, the Buddha proclaimed this principle of equality. Thus, the Buddha's ideals were extremely revolutionary which caused a constructive upheaval in the socio-cultural situations of his time.

4.1.4 General Characteristics of Early Buddhism

Pessimism, Positivism and Pragmatism are the characteristics of early Buddhism.

Since Buddhism emphasises human suffering as real it has been interpreted as a pessimistic philosophy of life. Buddha always emphasised the reality of misery. That there is suffering in the world is a fact as long as poverty, disease, old age, death, selfishness, greed, anger, and hatred exist. 'All the waters of all seas are not to be compared with the flood of tears which has followed since the very beginning of the universe.' But the Buddha's philosophy is not a hopeless pessimism because he suggests that misery can be completely overcome in the stage of *nirvāṇa*. Buddhist philosophy, therefore, can be characterised as initial pessimism, ending in the elimination of suffering called *nirvāṇa*.

The teaching of the Buddha was positive and constructive. His philosophy excluded whatever was not positively known. The Buddha firmly believed in the law of universal causation. His approach to life was not theoretical but practical. The Buddha used to relate the parable of the poisoned arrow. Suppose a man was pierced by a poisoned arrow and his friends took him to a physician. If he is unnecessarily asked about the caste, name, height, etc., instead of taking out the arrow, the man will not be saved. The physician's attitude and behaviour are certainly foolish, and so are the speculations of the metaphysician. The Buddha did not pay much attention to the abstract and impractical problems of the philosophy. That is why he kept silent whenever his disciples raised questions about the God, the soul, the future of the world and the like.

4.1.5 *Nirvāṇa*: the Ideal Life in Buddhism

The idea of *nirvāṇa* or *nibbāna* is given in the third Noble Truth, which deals with the cessation of suffering.

- The Buddha fought against all discriminations

- Initial pessimism

- Positivistic and pragmatic approach

The word '*nirvāṇa*' means blowing out or extinguishing. This term is used to describe the cessation of a fire. What is this fire? *Ṭanha* or *tṛṣna* is the fire. It is the craving or uncontrollable desire. *Khaya* means extinction. Extinction or elimination of all kinds of craving is what is called *nirvāṇa* in Buddhism. When craving (*ṭanha/tṛṣna*) ceases, its effect, namely *duhkha*, ceases, and the result is *nirvāṇa*. Therefore, *nirvāṇa* is also known as *ṭanhaakhaya* or *tṛṣnakhaya*. The sage obtains *nirvāṇa* when his desires and passions are consumed or blown out.

Nirvāṇa is the state of void but obtains utter peace. Buddha has taught his doctrine to enable us to overcome all sufferings and attain *nirvāṇa*. Here, the ideal is said to be negative, individualistic and selfish. One can have the experience of *nirvāṇa* in perfect meditation, which is the culmination of the Eightfold path or *Aṣṭānga mārga*. This was the concept of the ideal of life in early Buddhism.

But with the advent of the later schools of Buddhism, there was a dramatic transformation in the ideal of *nirvāṇa* also. According to P.T. Raju, "The ideal of life, which appeared in the beginning as negative or at least empty because of the idea of the voidness of *Nirvāṇa*, became gradually positive. First, the state of *Nirvāṇa*, which was a mere void, became the enlightened consciousness (*bodhi*). Second, this enlightened consciousness became the self-conscious truth or reality beyond Ignorance (*Avidya*). Third, it was equated to the essential conscious being of Buddha, to his supra-mundane body. Fourth, since ultimate reality, the source of the world, and what Buddha became when he entered *Nirvāṇa* were the same, it was thought that what anyone would become when he entered *Nirvāṇa* would also be the ultimate reality. Fifth, it was, therefore, announced that everyone could become Buddha since the essential nature, source, and destiny of everyone was the same reality. Sixth, as *Nirvāṇa* is the same as the ultimate reality, the latter is the essence not only of man but also of everything else." Hence, we can say that in later schools of Buddhism, *nirvāṇa* has been described as a state of bliss where the liberated person is free from evil desires and has a steadfast mind with perfect knowledge of the Noble Truths. *Dhammapada* describes *nirvāṇa* as a state of bliss which is different from pleasure. Pleasure is transitory and is an empirical feeling; bliss gained through *nirvāṇa* is the highest good. We can say that the Buddha proved to be a practical reformer

who took note of the realities of the day and he addressed worldly problems.

4.1.6 Importance of Buddhism

Buddhism has left its abiding mark in the history of India, and it exercised a great influence on education during that period. Here, we will have a brief look into those aspects. Education, till then, was in Sanskrit, and the language of holy books – the *Vedas* – was also the same. Hence, education was confined to higher castes. But the Buddha propagated his message in the language of common people.

- Buddhism promoted the language of common people

Later, in order to preach the doctrine of their master, the disciples of the Buddha compiled a new type of literature. They enriched Pali with their writings. The early Pali literature can be divided into three categories. The first contains the sayings and teachings of the Buddha, the second deals with the rules to be observed by members of the *Sangha,* and the third presents the philosophical exposition of Buddhist teachings. These three are called *Tripiṭaka*. The Buddhist monasteries developed as great centres of learning, and special mention can be made of Nalanda and Vikramaśila in Bihar and Vallabhi in Gujarat.

- Buddhist literature and centres of learning

Again, Buddhism left its mark on the art and architecture of ancient India. The panels found at Gaya in Bihar and at Sanchi and Bharhut in Madhya Pradesh are illuminating examples of artistic activity. Gandhara Art is another example that can be cited here. The use of stone in buildings had begun before the reign of Ashoka, but it was he who built stone structures on a large scale. The most famous of them is the pillar in Saranath near Banaras. According to S. Abid Hussain, "The flower of Buddhist art is seen in the caves of Ajanta and their frescoes. These paintings executed from the second century BC to the third century AD present the characteristics of Buddhist art its best…Another characteristic of these paintings, as of all Buddhist art, is simplicity and restraint, that is, the avoidance of elaborate decoration and ornamentation as well as that of excessive emotion, which can be regarded as the direct influence of the Buddha's teachings. At the same time, the charming Bodhisatva Padmapani shows that Buddhist art combined a deep spirituality and inwardness with the capacity to take delight in physical beauty and grace."

- Simplicity and inwardness of Buddhist art

In comparison with Brahmanism, Buddhism was liberal and democratic. Buddhism made an important impact on society by keeping its doors open to women and śūdras. Since both women and śūdras were placed in the same category by Brahmanism, they were neither given sacred thread nor allowed to read the Vedas. Their conversion to Buddhism freed them from such a mark of inferiority. People were taken into the Buddhist order without any consideration of caste. Women also were admitted to the *Sangha* and thus brought on a par with men. We may conclude this unit with the words of Chandradhar Sharma, "Buddhism flourished in India for about fifteen centuries and was divided into many schools and sub-schools, sects and sub-sects. Realism, empiricism, pragmatism, idealism, subjectivism and absolutism are all found in Buddhism."

- Buddhism, an all-inclusive philosophy of ancient India

Summarised Overview

Buddhism is one of the heterodox schools of Indian thought founded by Gautama Buddha. While absorbed in meditation under a Bodhi tree at Gaya, Gautama understood the cause of human suffering. He, then, discovered its remedy and thus became the 'Buddha or the Enlightened One.' The Buddha delivered his first sermon at Saranath in Banaras. His first Sermon was *dharma cakra pravartanah,* setting in motion the Wheel of Law. His sermon starts by saying that man's moral life consists in avoiding the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. The middle way consisted of Four Noble Truths or *Āryasatyas*. The message of truth he taught was open to all and available to anyone. We can find some similarities and differences between the Upanishads, Vedas, and Buddhism. We also find that the Buddha's chief concern was the human being and the attainment of *arahant*-hood, which can be accomplished under ordinary conditions in this very life. Here, we find the humanistic elements of Buddhism. The general characteristics of Buddhism include pessimism, positivism and pragmatism. The ideal of life according to Buddhism is *nirvāṇa.* In early Buddhism, this ideal appeared as negative or at least empty because of its voidness. But in later schools of Buddhism, we find *nirvāṇa* as a state of positive bliss. Buddhism has left an indelible mark on the history of India through its transformative education and its elegant and influential art and architecture.

Self-Assessment

1. 'The teachings of Buddha were a middle path.' – Elucidate this statement.

2. Discuss the relationship between Buddhism, Vedas and Upanishads.

3. Analyse the humanistic trends in Buddhism.

4. Examine the general characteristics of Buddhism

5. Give a brief account of Nirvāna in Buddhism.

6. Discuss the contributions of Buddhism to ancient India.

Assignments

1. Discuss Gautama Buddha's journey from a life of luxury to asceticism and his ultimate enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. What motivated his quest for liberation?

2. Examine the spread of Buddhism from a regional faith to a global religion. How did Ashoka's embrace of Buddhism contribute to its dissemination?

3. Explore the humanistic aspects of Buddhism, emphasising Buddha's concern for humanity and the principles of Arhathood.

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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.

UNIT 2
Major Concepts in Buddhist Philosophy

Learning Outcomes

The unit will enable the learner to:

- understand the Four Noble Truths or *Āryasatyas* of Buddhism

- analyse the Eightfold Path of Buddhism

- examine the *Pratityasamutpāda vāda* in detail

- know about *Kṣanika vāda* or theory of momentariness

- understand the doctrine of No-soul or *Nairātmya vāda* of Buddhism

- have an idea of the Buddhist ethics.

Background

The Buddha felt that contemporary philosophy has merits, but it hardly helps in the achievement of liberation. He explained the hollowness of the prevalent philosophical system and emphasised the importance of the problems of liberation from misery. For a person who is engulfed in misery, the discussion of the fundamental nature of the self and the world seems to be mere folly. The Buddha did not pay much attention to the abstract and impractical problems of philosophy. Hence, he kept silent whenever his disciples raised questions about God, his soul and the future of the world. He said that the world is full of sorrows, and people suffer on account of desires. If desires are conquered, *nirvāna* will be attained. That is, man will be free from the cycle of birth and death. The Buddha wrote no books. Therefore, our information about his philosophy is available from the works that were compiled long after his death. These works were written in Pali, the spoken language of Magadha, an ancient city of modern Bihar. They can be classified into three divisions known as the *Tipitakas* (three baskets). They are *Sutta Pitaka, Vinaya Pitaka* and *Abhidhamma Pitaka*.

Keywords

Āryasatyas, Avidya, Nairātmya vāda, Kṣanika vāda

Discussion

4.2.1 Four Noble Truths or *Āryasatyās*

- *Āryasatyās,* the ills of the world and their remedy by the Buddha

From his spiritual experience, the Buddha became convinced of the Four Noble Truths or *Āryasatyās*. According to Jadunath Sinha, "Siddhartha or Gautama (567 B.C- 487 B.C) was overwhelmed with grief at the sight of disease, old age, and death. He was overpowered by abundant misery in the world. He renounced the world to find out the remedy for suffering. He discovered its cause and the way to stop it. He found the way to peace on earth and preached it to the world. He became enlightened or Buddha." The following are the Four Noble Truths: (1) There is Suffering in life (*dukkha*), (2) There is a cause of Suffering (*dukkha-Samudāya*), (3) There is a cessation of Suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*), (4) There is a way leading to this cessation of Suffering (*Dukha-nirodha-gāmiṇī praṭipadā*). The Buddha's explanation of the Four Noble Truths corresponds to a physician's treatment of a disease. Ascertaining the nature of the disease, he discovers the cause and suggests a cure by adopting appropriate means. As a doctor, he offers solutions to the ills of the world. People, therefore, call him *Bhaiṣajya-guru*.

- Buddha depicts life's agony

1. Life is suffering (dukkha): In the whole history of human thought, no one has painted the misery of human existence in blacker colours and with more feeling than the Buddha. Life is full of misery and pain. Birth is sorrowful. Old age is sorrowful, disease and death are sorrowful, association with the unpleasant is sorrowful, separation from pleasant is sorrowful, and not obtaining what one desires is sorrowful. In fact, everything connected with our empirical existence is subject to sorrow. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has stated this principle as "The world is full of sorrow, is full of suffering*, lokam śō-ka-hatam ca samaṣtam.* There is nothing here which can be eternal. Everything is transitory, everything passes away, nothing abides, nothing is steady. Only the permanent, the eternal, can give happiness to man. Every thinker starts on his

religious quest with a profound sense of dissatisfaction with this world." Thus, we see that the first Noble Truth of Buddhism held that the world is a valley of suffering and misery.

2. There is a cause of suffering (dukkha-Samudāya). Everything has a cause, and so suffering being a fact, it must have a cause. The second Noble Truth depends on the law of universal causation. Nothing comes out of nothing. If the cause of suffering is discovered, then its cure becomes possible. Here, we see the positivism of the Buddha. The causal law used here is the law of dependent origination (*Pratityasamutpāda*). It means 'depending on the cause, the effect arises.' The fact that life is suffering is explained in the form of twelve links known as the chain of causation.

The twelve links are: 1) Ignorance (*avidyā*), 2) Impressions of karmic forces (*samskāra*), 3) Initial consciousness (*vijñāna*), 4) Psycho-physical organism (*nāma rūpa*), 5) Six sense organs including the mind (*ṣad-āyatana*), 6) sense-object contact (*sparśa*), 7) sense experience (*vedana*), 8) Thirst for sense enjoyment(*trṣṇa*), 9) Clinging to this enjoyment (*upādāna*), 10) Will to be born (*bhava*), 11) Birth or rebirth (*jāti*), 12) Old age and death (*jarā-maraṇa*).

Out of the twelve links, the first two are related to past life, the last two to future life, and the rest to the present life. This doctrine of the twelve links is known as *Pratityasamutpāda vāda.* It is the foundation of all the teachings of Buddha. In Tibetan Buddhism these twelve links or the wheel of life are known as *bhava chakra*. It keeps on turning from one condition to another. If we should get rid of this wheel, we should break the chain of causation. The first and the most important link is ignorance. Ignorance means non-awareness of the Four Noble Truths. Knowledge about the impermanent and unsubstantial nature of things alone will lead to liberation.

3. There is a cessation of suffering (dukkha-nirōdha). This is the Noble Truth regarding the ending of sorrow. It is because of our ignorance that we crave and suffer. We are ignorant of the truth that there is no persisting self and that nothing is permanent. When this ignorance is removed, *nirvāṇa* is attained, which is a state of absolute peace. This *Āryasatya* is described by Paul Williams as "The Buddha has completed his diagnosis. Now he offers the cure. If suffering in all its forms results from craving, then it follows that if craving can

- The Second Noble Truth unveils the origin of suffering

- The twelve links, the causes of *saṁsāra*

- Whole life is turning from one condition to another

be completely eradicated, suffering will come to an end. As we have seen, the way to eradicate craving completely is to eradicate its cause, ignorance, through coming to see things in the deepest possible manner the way they really are. The complete cessation of suffering is nirvana *(nibbāna)*." Here, we see that the third Noble Truth is the extinction of suffering and is the complete destruction of thirst, craving or will to live.

4. There is a way leading to the cessation of suffering (Dukkha-nirodha-gamiṇi praṭipadā). There is a way or method by which suffering could overcome. There is an ethical and spiritual path by following which misery may be removed. This is the final Noble Eightfold Path. It consists of eight steps (*Aṣṭānga mārga*). These eight steps are as follows 1) Right View: Faith in the theories of *Kṣanika vāda* and *Nairātmya vāda*. 2) Right Resolve: This means the right motivation. One must cultivate a friendly attitude towards all beings. 3) Right Speech: This means kind and truthful speech 4) Right Action: This means actions in accordance with moral principles and peaceful conduct. 5) Right Livelihood: One should avoid such cruel means of living as in the case of being a butcher. 6) Right Effort: Self-effort is necessary for attaining liberation 7) Right Mindfulness: A person must be alert in mind and in complete self-possession. 8) Right Concentration: This is the practice of meditation that results in the final wisdom.

These eight factors are not to be understood as practices starting from the first, passing through the second, and finally reaching the eighth. All these are to be practised simultaneously according to the capacity of the practitioner. We can place all these eight factors into three groups: *Prajñā*, *Śīla*, and *Samādhi*. 1) *Prajñā*: This group contains the first two steps. 2) *Śīla*: This group contains the steps from the third to the fifth. 3) *Samādhi*: The last three steps belong to this group.

The first group of the Eightfold Path, *Prajñā* or wisdom, contains Right View and Right Resolve. Right View means understanding things as they are. One who knows the implications of the Four Noble Truths attains this understanding. This is possible when the mind is free from all impurities. Right Resolve, the second aspect of *Prajñā* is a state where one is free from all selfish desire, hatred, and violent attitudes in all domains of life.

The second group *Śīla* or Buddhist ethics, contains Right speech, action, and livelihood. Right speech means ab-

- The Third Noble Truth

- Eight steps within the Fourth Noble Truth

- Three groups within the Eightfold Path

- Right Understanding arises from the Right View

staining from telling lies, slandering, and gossiping. If one cannot do these, one should keep silent. Right action means abstention from killing and stealing. It also promotes the virtue of chastity. Right livelihood means one should avoid all professions which involve harm to others. One should not accept the occupations such as butchery, trade in arms and lethal weapons, and poisons. One's living should always be by that profession that does not pose a threat to other beings. All these moral principles are necessary for the perfection of spiritual life, according to Buddhism.

The third group *Samādhi* contains the right effort, mindfulness, and concentration. Right effort means the energetic will to prevent all unwholesome things such as greed, hatred, and delusion. Right mindfulness means to be constantly aware of the activities of one's body, sensations and feelings, mental states, and surroundings. Right concentration means the gradual attainment of four states of *dhyāna*. In the first stage, all kinds of passionate desires are discarded and joy and happiness are maintained. In the second stage, the scattered movements of the mind into different places are stopped and attained 'one-pointedness' of the mind. It also retained joy and happiness. In the third stage, all kinds of sensations are discarded, and thus, there is no joy, but happiness maintained. In the fourth stage, even the happiness itself vanishes, and pure awareness remains.

4.2.2 *Pratītyasamutpāda vāda* or Doctrine of Dependent Origination

In the Second Noble Truth of Buddha's teachings, there has been a reference to the doctrine of twelve *Nidānas*. This is the doctrine of *Pratītyasamutpāda* vāda or dependent origination. This doctrine is the main principle of the Buddha's teachings, while all others are based upon it. The doctrine of karma, momentariness, the theory of no-soul and all other Buddhist doctrines are based on the principle of dependent origination. Literally speaking, *Pratītyasamutpāda* means: 'this being given that follows or that a certain effect follows a certain cause.' Thus, the doctrine of dependent origination explains the causes of suffering in the world. *Pratītyasamutpāda* is relative as well as absolute. Relatively, it is the world, while from the absolute point of view, it is *Nirvāṇa*

- *Śīla* or ethical conduct is necessary for perfection in spiritual life

- *Samādhi*, the last stage of the Eightfold Path

- *Pratītyasamutpāda,* the main principle of Buddhist philosophy

*P*ratītyasamutpāda is a middle path between *Śāśvata vāda* or the principle of eternity and *Ucchedavāda* or the principle of annihilation. According to the former, some things are eternal. They have neither begun nor end; they are un-caused and do not depend on anything else. According to the latter view, nothing remains after the destruction of things. The doctrine of *Pratītyasamutpāda* maintains a middle way in both these extremes. According to it, things exist, but they are not eternal. On the other hand, they are never completely eradicated by something that always remains. The origin of a thing is due to the existence of another. External or mental happenings are always due to some cause. This chain of cause and effect is ever-recurring. After seeing the scenes of disease, old age and death, the Buddha left his palace to find out their solution. The solution he got is contained in the doctrine of dependent origination.

*T*he twelve links in the wheel of causation maintained by the doctrine of dependent origination have been divided into three classes, namely, the present, the future and the past. Thus, the twelve links can be presented as in the following order: Those due to the past life, present life, and those belonging to future life.

*T*hose due to the past life: (1) *Avidyā* or ignorance, (2) *samskāra* or impressions of Karmic Forces. Those due to the present life: (3) *vijñāna* or initial embryonic consciousness, (4) *nāma-rūpa* or name and form, (5) *ṣadāyatana* or the six sense organs, (6) *sparśa* or the sense – object contact, (7) *vedanā* or feeling, (8) *tṛṣṇā* or craving, (9) *upādāna* or clinging or attachment. (10) *bhava* or coming to be. Those of future life: (11) *jāti* or rebirth (l2) *jarā-maraṇa* or old age and death. Each of these links is called *nidāna,* and thus there are 12 *nidānas* in Buddhism. Let us understand each *nidāna* in detail.

(1) Ignorance (Avidyā): *Avidyā* is the basis of the *jīva*-hood or ego. This is the substratum of action. Together with karma it forms the *jīva*. It is due to it that the sufferings of the world are conceived. Ignorance causes ego-sense and the individual thinks they are separate from the remaining world. This results in attachment to life which is the root cause of all suffering.

(2) Impressions of Karmic Forces (Samskāra): Impressions of Karmic Forces means a disposition or inclination preceding to or preparing for certain activity. These

- *Samskāra*, the second link

are the subconscious forces operating in all living beings. It must be understood both in the sense of origination and the originating activity. Taking in the wider sense, it means that the power of principle which creates new existences.

- *Vijñāna*, the third link

(3) Initial embryonic consciousness (Vijñāna): It is the consciousness that descends into the embryo of the mother's womb due to the predisposition of its past existence. It disappears with the attainment of the *Nirvāna*.

(4) Name and form (Nāma-rūpa): Name (nāma) here means the psychical phenomena, and form (rūpa) means the physical phenomena. Memories, ideas, imaginations, and emotions constitute psychical phenomena; the impressions like colours, sounds, taste, smell, and touch left on us by external stimuli constitute the physical phenomena. Nāma-rūpa is, therefore, known as a psycho-physical organism. This psycho-physical organism originates from an early stage of consciousness, possibly symbolizing the commencement of sentient existence or the establishment of individual identity. This connection implies that the combination of psychical phenomena (name), physical phenomena (form), and consciousness is mutually interdependent.

- *Ṣadāyatana*, the fifth link

(5) Sense Organs (Ṣadāyatana): From the name and form and consciousness, there arise the six sense organs, that is, the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the skin and the mind.

- *Sparśa*, the sixth link

(6) Contact (Sparśa): When the sense organs are filled with their corresponding inclinations, there arise contacts with the external world. Sometimes, it is said that it is not that the seeing is due to the eye, but the eye is due to seeing. Similaly, ears, is due to hearing.

- *Vedanā*, the seventh link

(7) Feeling (Vedanā): The contact with external objects creates different types of feelings, such as pleasure, pain, attachment, and aversion. All these feelings bind human beings with the world.

- *Tṛṣṇā*, the eighth link

(8) Craving (Tṛṣṇā): The craving born out of feeling is the root cause of suffering in this world. It is this craving which takes the *vijñāna* from birth to death. Again, it is due to this the individual runs after worldly attachments like a blind person. The craving goes on, ever-increasing, and as the craving is overcome, the suffering disappears like the drops of water on the lotus flower.

- *Upādāna*, the ninth link

(9) Attachment or clinging (Upādāna): The fire of the craving is due to the fuel, and so where there is craving, there must

be clinging or attachment. It is the attachment to the worldly objects that causes the bondage of the *jīva* with the world.

(10) Coming to be (Bhava): Clinging to worldly objects leads to the desire to be born in the world. Buddhist philosopher Chandrakīrti states that *bhava* includes thoughts and actions which are responsible for rebirth.

(11) Rebirth (Jāti): *Bhava* creates rebirth, and so the *jīva* is caught in the wheel of the world and remains in it till he attains *nirvāṇa*.

(12) Old age and death (jarā-maraṇa): Rebirth causes the whole chain of worldly sufferings. All human beings are caught up in the cycle of birth, old age, and death. In fact, birth and death are different phases in the eternal process of life.

Chandradhar Sharma opined that "The doctrine of Dependent Origination is the central teaching of the Buddha and his other teachings can be easily deduced from it as corollaries. The theory of karma is based on this, being an implication of the law of causation. Our present life is due to the impressions of the karmas of the past life and it will shape our future life. Ignorance and karma go on determining each other in a vicious circle. Again, the theory of Momentariness (*kṣaṇa-bhanga-vāda*) is also a corollary of Dependent Origination. Because things depend on their causes and conditions, and they are relative, dependent, conditional, finite, they must be momentary. To say that a thing arises depending on its cause is to admit that it is momentary, for when the cause is removed the things will cease to be. That which arises, that which is born, that which is produced, must necessarily be subject to death and destruction. And that which is subject to death and destruction is not permanent. And that which is not permanent is momentary. The theory of No-Ego (*nairātmya vāda)*, the theory that the individual ego is ultimately false is also based on this doctrine. When everything is momentary, the ego is also momentary and therefore relative and false."

The Buddha believes in rebirth and in the principle of karma. He, however, does not believe in reincarnation, which claims that a soul enters a different body after leaving one body. From the Buddhist perspective, rebirth means that another birth follows every birth, or another birth is caused due to one birth. A lamp can be lighted by another lamp and yet the lights

Sidebar text:

- *Bhava*, the tenth link

- *Jāti*, the eleventh link

- *Jarā-maraṇa*, the twelfth link

- Relation between Dependent Origination and other Buddhist theories

of both cannot be identified. Similarly, in spite of cause-and-effect relations between the two, the two births are different and not identical. As a matter of fact, the Buddha has always asked the disciples not to indulge in useless discussions regarding the soul. If the soul is taken as eternal, one gets attached to it and suffers in the effort to make it happy. According to the Buddha, the love with the invisible and unproved soul is as absurd as the love of some invisible and imaginary beautiful woman. The attachment towards this soul is like preparing a ladder to mount on a place that no one has seen.

According to Buddha, man is a name for conglomeration. Just as the wheel and other parts of a chariot are together called a chariot, the body with the external form, mental states, and colourless consciousness is together called human beings. This conglomeration (*sanghāta*) is the human being. Besides this, there is no soul. So long as this conglomeration remains, the life of human being also remains; death is the name of its destruction. The Buddha has called the man the total of five *skandhās*. These five *skandhās* are changing elements and human being is more or less a collection of them. As the man dies, this collection is scattered. In the five *skandhās*, the first is the *rūpa* or the realm of matter, which includes the four great elements, namely, solidity, fluidity, heat, and motion, and the sense organs and their corresponding objects in the world. The whole physical body is an aggregate of *rūpa* or matter. The second *skandha* is *Vedana* which includes feelings like pleasure, pain and aversion. The third *skandha* is *samjñā,* which is the principle of recognition of distinctive characteristics of things. For example, by identifying different colours we recognise things around us. The fourth *skandha* is the *samskarās* or the mental formations which include all volitional activities. "Its function is to direct the mind in the sphere of good, bad or neutral activities." The fifth *skandha* is the *vijñāna* or consciousness, which is an awareness of the presence of an object.

4.2.3 Theory of Momentariness (*Kṣanika vāda*)

Kṣanika vāda also called *anityavāda,* is one of the most important doctrines of Buddhism. The Buddha explains this doctrine as follows. It is not a person but a process that acts and transmigrates. What we call 'A' is really A series - A_1, A_2, A_3 and so on. Just as a chariot wheel, while rolling rolls only at one point of the type and in resting rests only at one point, in the same way, the life of a living being, lasts only for the period

of one thought. When a particular thought constituting the self of a particular moment disappears, it leaves its mark behind, and the self of the next moment is consequently informed by it. This takes us to the doctrine of *Kṣanika vāda,* or the theory of momentariness. The most important doctrine of Buddhist philosophy is *Kṣanika vāda*. Everything is momentary, nothing is permanent, there is neither being nor non-being, but only becoming. Reality is a stream of becoming. It is applicable to both mind and matter alike. For the Buddha, the individual self is only a bundle of ideas which are constantly changing. Jadunath Sinha remarked thus when he wrote, "everything is becoming, change, flux. It is a phenomenon enduring for a moment and then passing away. It is produced by preceding phenomena. It produces succeeding phenomena. The world is a succession of transient phenomena. There is no permanent being. All things are transient phenomena. All substances are mere aggregates of impermanent qualities (*dharma*). They are void of permanence and substantiality. The world is unsubstantial and impermanent.' The similes that are usually given are those of the flowing river and the burning candle. 'One cannot step into the same river twice because the river in the two moments is only similar and not identical." Everything may continue as a series. It is the similarity of these members that gives rise to the illusion of identity. The flame of a lamp appears to be the same in a few moments. But really, it signifies two separate states which have no substantial identity. The seed becomes the tree through different stages. The rapidity of succession gives rise to the illusion of permanence.

4.2.4 The Doctrine of No-Soul (*Nairātmya vāda*)

The theory of No-Soul also follows from the doctrine of dependent origination. There is no invisible, permanent substance besides the flow of consciousness. As the body is destroyed, the five *skandhās* disappear into five elements (*panca-bhūtas*), and nothing remains as substantial. This principle is known as the theory of no-soul in Buddhist philosophy. This doctrine rejects the concept of self as something other than body and mind. The self is nothing but an aggregate of mind and body (*nāma-rūpa-skandha*). There is no self or soul apart from the psycho-physical organism. The self is said to be an aggregate of five factors - *Rūpa* (physical body), *Vedana* (feeling), *Samjñā* (perception) and *Samskara* (mental dispositions), and *Vijñāna* (consciousness). Apart from these, there is no personality or soul.

- *Kṣanika vāda* or *anityavāda*, the fundamental doctrine of Buddhism

- There is no soul apart from five aggregates

Just as there is no soul, there is no permanent thing also. All things are considered to be mere aggregates of their respective parts. Apart from the orange colour, sweetness, taste, and the like, there is no substance called an orange. The notion of a substance apart from the qualities is fiction. All this is beautifully illustrated in *Milinda Panha*, a Buddhist text which contains the dialogues between the Buddhist sage Nagasena and King Milinda. The sage makes clear the meaning of the word self. Just as a chariot is nothing more than an assemblage of the pole, wheels, axle, and framework, the term self is only a label for the aggregate of the physical and psychical factors. Thus, neither soul nor matter is a single self-sufficient entity. This is known as the theory of *Nairātmyavāda* or non-substantiality in Buddhist philosophy.

4.2.5 Buddhist Ethics

In Buddhism, *dharma* in the sense of morality proper, that is, both individual and social, has been given an important place. Buddhist ethical discipline is contained in the *Aṣṭāngamarga* of Buddhism, which is a path to the highest end of *nirvāṇa* or *nibbāna*. As stated earlier, the Noble Eightfold Path of Buddhism consists of the right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. Of these, the first two come under what is known as *prajñā*, the next three come under *śīla* and the last three under *samādhi*. More specifically speaking, it is *śīla* which represents Buddhist morality. Kedarnath Tiwari, in his book *Classical Indian Ethical Thought,* has explained this as "the first is right speech. This consists of refraining from telling a lie, back-biting, harsh talk and idle gossip. Moreover, according to it, our speech should be free from any kind of ill will and selfish interest. The second is right action, which consists of the observance of five percepts known as *Panca-śīla*. These are: (1) Not to kill, but to practice harmlessness and compassion (*ahimsa*), (2) Not to take that which is not given, but to practice charity and generosity (*asteya*), (3) Not to commit sexual misconduct, but to practice chastity and self-control (*brahmacarya*), (4) Not to indulge in false speech, but to practice sincerity and honesty (*satya*), (5) Not to take intoxicating drinks or drugs, but to practice restraint and mindfulness. The third, i.e., right living, consists in adopting a just, honestly earned and undeceitful means of livelihood which does not debar others of their just rights of the same."

- Dialogue between Nagasena and Milinda reasserts *Nairātmyavāda*

- *Panca-śīla*, the foundation of Buddhist ethics

Buddhist ethical principles contain three types of *śīlas*. They are *pañca-śīla, aṭṭha-śīla,* and *daśa-śīla,* containing five, eight, and ten ethical principles, respectively. Sinha continues: "Of the three *śīlas* mentioned above, the most important is obviously the *pañca-śīla* coming under right action. This is essential, according to Buddhism, for all, for the laity and the saint or mendicant alike. But Buddhism also speaks of *aṭṭha-śīla* and *daśa-śīla a*, the former meant for persons in the laity who are comparatively less attached to family life and the latter meant for monks. The *aṭṭha-śīla* includes the following three, besides the above five: abstaining from taking untimely meals, abstaining from dancing, singing, music, etc. and from using garlands, perfumes, cosmetics, and personal adornments; abstaining from using high seats. The *daśa-śīla* includes the following two besides the *aṭṭha-śīla*: sleeping on a mat spread on the ground (It is really not different from the eighth one of the *aṭṭha-śīla*, because it is virtually a consequence of that) and abstaining from the use of gold and silver."

The *aṭṭha-śīla* (eight moral principles) and the *daśa-śīla* (ten moral principles) meant for the laity and the monks respectively for the attainment of *nirvāṇa.* They include the *pañca-śīla* (five moral principles) also, and it consists of both individual and social morality. Buddhism emphasises on conduct and holds that the virtue of one's behaviour will redeem a person from life. Here, we can say that morality plays a dominant role in Buddhism in the attainment of *nirvāṇa. Nirvāṇa* means 'blowing out.' It is described as the state of coolness where suffering is completely extinguished. This can be attained in this life. As stated by Tiwari, "Buddhism terms liberation as *nirvāṇa,* which literally means 'cooling down' or 'blowing out.' The meaning itself shows that *Nirvāṇa* is basically a negative concept. Here, the 'blowing out' or 'cooling down' means the blowing out or cooling down of the fire of passions. It is well-known that according to Buddhism it is the passions which are the root cause of bondage or suffering. So, when the passions are blown out, liberation is attained. With the cooling down of passions, actions cease bearing fruits and consequently the cycle of birth and death stops. And that is really the complete cessation of suffering, which is the true nature of *nirvāṇa*." Here, we find *Nirvāṇa* as the complete and permanent cessation of samsara, and all types of suffering are due to the overcoming or destruction of ignorance.

The Buddha attained *nirvāṇa* when he was enlightened. Jadunath Sinha observes that *nirvāṇa* "is a state of enlightenment (*bodhi*) which removes all ignorance. It is a state of perfect equanimity which removes attachment, aversion, and delusion. It is a state of stainless purity and goodwill. It is a state of perfect self-possession and unconditioned freedom. It is a state of perfect peace. The liberated person has complete insight, complete passionlessness, unruffled calm, perfect self-control, a tranquil mind, tranquil words, and tranquil deeds. But he is devoid of egoism or the sense of individuality, since his mental grasping (*upādāna*), ignorance (*kleśa*), and craving (*tṛṣṇā*), which produce a new individual of five aggregates, are completely destroyed." The Buddha lived an active life even after the attainment of *nirvāṇa*. It is like the jīvanmukta in Upaniṣads. Here, we see that it is not the renunciation of actions, but the expulsion of all actions of attachment, and thus, the renunciation of the possibility of rebirth. The chain of causation is broken here forever, but it is not a negative state. So, some thinkers are of the opinion that this is a positive achievement where a state of perfect peace and tranquility will be achieved. *Dhammapada,* a Buddhist text written in Pali, declares: '*nibbanam paramam sukham*.' Here, it is clear that *nirvāṇa* is positive bliss. Hence, it may be noted that the Pali canon gives both the negative and positive aspects of *nirvāṇa,* and we can see that the Hinayana tradition favoured the negative description and we will discuss this in detail in the next unit.

> • Nirvāna involves the cessation of passions, breaking the cycle of birth and death.

Summarised Overview

The Buddha became convinced of the fact of *Āryasatyās* or Four Noble Truths from his spiritual experience. They are: (1) There is Suffering (*dukkha*) (2) There is a cause of Suffering (*dukkha-Samudāya*) (3) There is a cessation of Suffering (*dukkha-nirōdha*) (4) There is a way leading to this cessation of Suffering (*Dukkha-nirodha-gamiṇi praṭipadā*). His explanation of this corresponds to a physician's treatment of diseases. Through the Eightfold Path, the Buddha suggested a middle way that lies between self-indulgence and self-mortification. A person who succeeds in breaking through the circle of samsara is a worthy one. *Pratītyasamutpāda vāda* is the main principle of the Buddha's teachings and all other teachings are based upon it. According to *Kṣanika vāda,* everything is momentary, nothing is permanent, there is neither being nor bon-being, but only becoming. Reality is a stream of becoming. It is applicable to both mind and matter alike. The *Nairātmya vāda* rejects the concept of self or soul as something other than body and mind. The self is nothing but an aggregate of mind and body. Buddhist ethical discipline is contained in the *Aṣṭānga mārga*. The first two of the Eight-fold Path come under what is known as *prajñā*, the next three come under *śīla*

and the last three under *samādhi*. *Śīla* represents the Buddhist morality. Buddhism emphasises on conduct and holds that the virtue of one's behaviour will redeem a person from all the problems of life. Hence, we can say that morality plays a dominant role in the attainment of *nirvāṇa* in Buddhism.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism.
2. Discuss the importance of Buddhist ethics.
3. Examine the relevance of Kshanika vāda of Buddhism.
4. Give an account of the Eightfold Path or Astānga mārga of Buddhism.
5. Briefly explain the Nairātmya vāda of Buddhism.

Assignments

1. 'The doctrine of Dependent Origination is the central teaching of the Buddha, and his other teachings can be easily deduced from it as corollaries.' – Elucidate this statement.
2. 'Panchasila represents the Buddhist morality.' – Explain this statement analysing the relevance of Panchasila in Buddhism.
3. Explain the significance of the past, present, and future links in the wheel of cessation.

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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.

UNIT 3
Major Schools of
Buddhist Philosophy

Learning Outcomes

The Unit will enable the learner to:

- gain an overview of the major schools of Buddhism

- analyse the importance of Mahayana tradition

- examine the relevance of Hinayana tradition

- apprehend the important differences between the Mahayana and Hinayana traditions of Buddhism.

Background

Though the Buddha was himself absolutely rational and tried to prove everything by reasoning, he kept silent on some of the philosophical questions and refused to discuss some other issues. It is on these issues and problems that the later Buddhist philosophers radically differed from one another and presented widely different opinions. Very soon after the Buddha's passing away, differences of opinion arose among his followers regarding the Buddhist practice as well as doctrines. As a result of this, the development of Buddhism proceeded along two main lines - Mahayana and Hinayana. Literally, 'Mahayana' means the 'great vehicle' or the 'big ship', which can take a much larger number of people to the shore of *nirvāṇa* and they consider the Hinayana as a small vehicle.

There are four main Buddhist schools: Sautrāntika, Vaibhāṣika, Yōgacāra, and Madhyamaka. The first two form the Hinayana tradition, and the other two form the Mahayana tradition. All these schools accept the fundamental ideals of Buddhism, such as *Kṣanika vāda* and *Nairātmya vāda.* But they all differ on two questions. The first is metaphysical, and the second is epistemological. Buddhist schools address the following metaphysical issues: Is the world a mental creation, or is it independent of the mind? The epistemological issue that the Buddhist schools address is: 'How is external reality known to exist?'

Discussion

4.3.1 Hinayana Tradition

• Abhidharma Schools and Hinayana

After the Buddha's passing away, his followers split up into 18 schools. These schools have admitted Abhidharma texts as authentic, along with the *Tripiṭaka* literature. The prefix *abhi* means 'about' and 'higher'; *dharma* means the Buddha's teachings expounded in the *sūtras*. The Abhidharma is the teaching that has the dharma as its object. That is, it is a teaching about the dharma. It also contains 'higher teachings' in the sense that they go beyond the Buddhist *sūtra* literature. The *sūtras* explain the main concepts of Buddhist thought only in part for the audience in the specific situation in which that *sūtra* was taught. The Abhidharma texts explain them in full. The schools which accept Abhidharma literature are also known as Abhidharma schools. Vatsiputriyas, Sarvastivada, and Theravada were important Abhidharma schools. Later, baring Theravada, all those schools have been died out. Abhidharma tradition has then been known as Hinayana, which includes Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika as major schools.

4.3.1.1 Vaibhāṣika

• The external world exists and is perceptible

This Hinayana school is known as Vaibhāṣika because it admits the commentary *Vibhāṣa* on Abhidharma literature. This school developed out of the Sarvāstivāda. It accepts the doctrinal position of Sarvāstivāda that everything exists. The Vaibhāṣikas were realists who hold that external objects are real and they can be known by perception. Their position is thus known as *bāhyapratyaksa-vāda* or direct realism. They argue that we directly perceive the external objects. Unless we admit that we perceive external objects, their existence cannot be known in any other way. The inference is possible only through perceptual knowledge. We infer fire when we see the smoke because we have already perceived smoke and fire together. One who has never perceived fire previously cannot infer its existence from the perception of smoke. If external objects were never perceived, then they could not even be in-

ferred, simply from their mental forms or ideas. The world is not a mental creation but real. The world exists independently of our knowledge and perception of it. We cannot make a distinction between the world as such and its appearance to us.

The Vaibhāṣikas have modified the early Buddhist theory of momentariness (*kṣaṇika-vāda*), which explains the process of change in terms of arising and passing away of things. A thing arises, and it passes away and there is no duration between them. The Vaibhāṣikas incorporated two moments in this early Buddhist account. Bina Gupta writes, "The main premise of the Vaibhāṣika doctrine of momentariness is that *to exist is to be causally efficacious*. Everything real arises, produces its effects, passes away, and is replaced by its successor. Any alleged permanent substance cannot be causally efficacious, because what is permanent will never arise to produce its effects, nor pass away and be replaced by something else. Insofar as *substances* are defined as permanent and unchanging, then they cannot exist."

The Vaibhāṣikas, in line with the Sarvāstivādin account of 'everything exists', argue that both the past and future exist along with the present. Their point is this: nothing can exist by itself. Everything needs an 'objective support' (*ālambana*). The present cannot exist without the past and the future *ālambana,* and therefore, both the past and future exist. This position led the Vaibhāṣika thinkers to a logical incompatibility. "On the one hand, they accept that nothing is eternal, that all reality is momentary; on the other hand, they make every moment eternal, in as much as each dharma, the past and the future, like the present, is or exists." Different Vaibhāṣika thinkers have explained away this inconsistency. Dharmatrāta, Ghoṣaka, Vasumitra, and Buddhadeva argue, respectively, that it is not the substance that changes but the form, aspect, position, and relation that changes in reality.

4.3.1.2 Sautrāntika

Like Vaibhāṣika thinkers, the Sautrāntikas are also realists. They also accept the reality of the external world. They hold the view that external world exists independent of a perceiving mind. External objects are real. Sautrāntika does not accept the Yōgācara view that there is no external world. Yogacara argues that the external objects are illusory appearances. The Sautrāntikas do not subscribe to this view. They would

- Vaibhāṣika introduced static phase in *kṣaṇika-vāda*

- Logical incompatibility and Vaibhāṣikas' explanation

- The external world is real

argue that the existence of the external world is a precondition for the explanation of illusory experiences. If one never perceived any external object anywhere, he could never speak of the illusory appearance of externality. No sensible person would say: "Vasubandhu looks like the son of a barren woman."

There is a world outside the mind. But we do not perceive them directly. What is that which we perceive then? What we directly perceive are ideas, which are not real objects but only copies. We cannot perceive any object at any time and place, because perception depends on four different conditions and is not simply based on the mind. These conditions are:

1) There must be an object to impart its *form* to consciousness (*ālambana-pratyaya*).

- Four conditions for the perception of external objects

2) There must be the conscious mind (the state of mind at the just previous moment) to cause the consciousness of the form (*samanantara-pratyaya*).

3) The senses are called *adhipati* of knowledge. It is the normative cause. The senses *determine* the kind of consciousness. That is, whether the consciousness of that object would be visual, tactual or any other kind (*adhipateya-pratyaya*).

4) There must be favourable auxiliary conditions such as light and perceptible magnitude. The combination of all four of these will bring about the perception of the object (*sahakari-pratyaya*).

The knowledge of the external objects becomes possible due to the four causes or conditions mentioned above. The Sautrāntika do not admit that the external objects have no existence and all knowledge is in the consciousness. Nor do they believe, like the Vaibhāsika, that we know anything by direct perception. As opposed to Vaibhāsika, the Sautrāntika maintains that we have no direct perception of external objects but only the knowledge of their appearance. The existence of the objects is not perceived, because what the mind immediately knows is the copy or representation of the object. This representative theory of perception is known as *bāhyanumeya vāda* or the theory of the inferability of external objects. It is also known as representationalism or indirect realism.

- The external world can be inferred, not perceived.

4.3.1.3 Hinayana: the Buddhist Realism

Both these schools recognise the reality of external objects. The Hinayana is considered to be realistic because it admits that there is some factor in all objects which is independent of the knowing mind. There is something present as a datum in every percept. This something is called *svalakṣana*. It represents a bare particular. Literally, '*svalakṣana*' means 'like itself'. In every object there is a basic element that constitutes its unique nature. The moment we try to perceive this unique element in an object, we find that it combines itself with a number of qualities such as colour, taste and so on. When we know a thing as it is, we experience its *svalakṣana*. But we are inclined to see the *sāmānya lakṣana,* and not the *svalakṣana.* The common qualities are called *sāmānya lakṣana.* The *sāmānya lakṣana* is really the contribution of the perceiving mind. They are mental construction. They do not belong to the external world. What comes from the external world is *svalakṣana* alone. When you see a particular object, it is not entirely a creation of mind. It is 'conceptless'. Only the *sāmānya lakṣanas* are mental creations. It is in this sense that Hinayana becomes realistic.

The significance of the Hinayana tradition is stated by Datta and Chatterji in the following words, "Representing faithfully the earlier form of Buddhism the Hinayana, like Jainism, stands as an example of a religion without God. The place of God is taken in it by the universal moral law of karma or dharma which governs the universe in such a way that no fruit of action is lost and every individual gets the mind, the body and the place in life that he deserves by his past deeds. The life and teachings of Buddha furnish the ideal as well as the promise or the possibility of every fettered individual's attaining liberation. With an unshaken confidence in his own power of achievement and a faith in the moral law that guarantees the preservation of every bit of progress made, the Hinayanist hopes to obtain liberation in this or any other future life by following Buddha's noble path. His goal is Arhatship or Nibbāna, the state that extinguishes all his misery. Hinayana is, therefore, a religion of self-help."

4.3.2 Mahayana Tradition

The Mahayana Buddhism includes two sects - the Yōgacāra and the Madhyamaka. The Yōgacāra holds that the external objects and the world are non-existent and are mere cognition or *vijñāna*. But the Madhyamikas deny the absolute reality

of external objects and subjective cognitions and regard them as essence-less or substance-less and affirm the reality of the *Śūnyata*. The *Śūnya* is not void or nothing. Instead, *Śūnyavāda* holds that Reality is neither existence nor non-existence, and it is both existence and non-existence. Hence, we can say that the philosophers in the Yōgacāra or Vijñānavāda School are idealists, and the philosophers in the Madhyamaka School are not nihilists but non-substantialists.

4.3.2.1 Yōgacāra

Maitreyanātha was the founder of Yōgacāra School of Buddhism. He was the teacher of Asanga, the second great thinker in the Yōgacāra tradition. Scholars like Buston and Taranatha argue that Maitreya was only the legendary founder, and the actual founder of this School was Asanga. However, recent studies recognise Maitreya as a historical personage. Asanga converted his half-brother Vasubandhu, who was a follower of the Sautrāntika School, to Yōgacāra Buddhism. Dinnāga, the founder of Buddhist logic, also belongs to this Buddhist School. The major works of Yōgacāra are Maitreya's *Madhyāntavibhāga*, Asanga's *Abhidharmasamuccaya* and *Mahāyāna Samgraha,* and Vasubandhu's *Vimśatikā,* and *Trimśikā.* Dinnāga, in his *Pramāṇa-samuccaya* and *Ālambana-parīkṣa* has combined the Sautrāntika and Yōgacāra teachings.

Yōgacāra is known as the idealistic School of Buddhist philosophy. Vasubandhu has used the terms *vijñāna*, *vijñāpti*, *citta*, and *manas* synonymously in the beginning of his *Vimśatikā*. This Buddhist philosophy is thus known in association with these various terms. It is called Yōgacāra because it emphasises the practice of yōga. It is known as *vijñānavāda and vijñāptimātrata vāda* since it accepts only *vijñāna* as the only existing reality. It is also known as *Cittamātrata-vāda* due to its standpoint of reality as 'Mind only'.

The history of Yōgacāra idealism is very vast. It contains both absolute and subjective idealistic trends. As Chandhradhar Sharma states: "The earlier schools of Vijñānavāda, which we call Mula-Vijñānavāda, found in *Lankāvatara-sūtra* and advocated by Maitreyanantha, Asanga, Vasabhandu and Sthiramati is absolutism or absolute idealism, while its later modification, which we call Svatantra-Vijñānavāda and which is also known as Sautrāntika-yogacara and the logical school of Buddhism founded by Dinnāga and developed by Dharmakirti, Shantaraksita and Kamalashila is subjective idealism."

As against the Cārvāka position that matter is all, the Yōgacāra maintains that 'consciousness is all.' It is the mind that creates all objects. There is an inseparable connection between knowledge and objects. No knowledge does not refer to an object, and there is no object that can be conceived except as known. Therefore, every object is only an aspect of human consciousness. According to Jadunath Sinha, "Vasubandhu recognizes the reality of consciousness (*vijñāpti*) only, which manifests non-existent objects like the illusory hair, and double moon. *Citta*, *manas*, *vijñāna*, and *vijñāpti* are synonyms. Objects are self-creations of thought. The self-evolving thought or cosmic mind (*Ālayavijñāna*) transforms itself, on the one hand, into different subjects, and into different objects, on the other." Just like in a dream, the mind itself appears as the subject and the object. The dream elephant is nothing but an idea. Thus, the Yōgacāra argues against the existence of objects independent of the human mind.

In contrast to the Abhidharma philosophy, which says that consciousness arises when the sense organs are in contact with sense objects, Yōgacāra philosophers declare that it is the consciousness which produces the experience of sensations and their objects. What we call conscious experience is not the result of the togetherness of a subject and an object. Yōgacāra argues that "there is a fundamental process of consciousness that produces one's experience of subjective selfhood on the one hand and the objective world on the other. One's experiences of both oneself and the world arise dependently from a more fundamental process of consciousness."

According to Yōgacāra, the physical world has no existence apart from consciousness. Even if the existence of anything outside consciousness is admitted, it cannot be known. *Vijñāna vādins* believe that all things external to the mind are mental modifications. Thus, the knowledge of external things is impossible. Hence, the thing which appears to be external should be taken as a mental concept. As stated by Datta and Chatterji, "While agreeing with the Madhyamikas, as to the unreality of external objects, the Yōgacāra school differs from them in holding that the mind (*citta*) cannot be regarded as unreal. For them, all reasoning and thinking would be false, and the Madhyamikas could not even establish that their own arguments were correct. To say that everything, mental or non-mental, is unreal is suicidal. The reality of the mind should at least be admitted in order to make correct thinking possible.

- Consciousness is real, not matter

- Consciousness produces sensations and objects

- Argument for 'Consciousness only' theory

The mind, consisting of a stream of different kinds of ideas, is the only reality. Things that appear to be outside the mind, our body as well as other objects, are merely ideas of the mind."

It cannot be questioned here that if the object is a mere concept of the mind why does it not appear, disappear and change as desired. To this, the Vijñānavādins reply that the mind is a mere stream in which past experiences remain in the form of impression. Whenever there is a favourable condition for a certain impression, the same impression manifests and results in knowledge. This can be proved with the example of memory. There are many impressions in the mind, but at a particular time, a particular impression is recalled.

- Objects exist in the mind as impressions

The Vijñānavādins believe that the proof of things depends on something else. This is called *Paratah Pramānya vāda*. The Vijñānavādins say that experience has three natures, which they call *tri-svabhāvata*. These are *Parikalpita*, *Paratantra*, and *Pariniṣpanna*. Parikalpita is the imagined state of experience. It is purely imaginary, a mental creation, and therefore, it has no real existence. *Paratantra* is the empirical state of experience. So, it is a relative as well as a dependent experience. It depends on causality, and therefore, it has beginning, decay, and death. *Paratantra* is not as utterly unreal as *parikalpita*. It is empirically real. It is real for all practical purposes. But ultimately, it has no existence of its own. *Pariniṣpanna* literally means well-established truth. It is the experience of the highest truth. Asanga says that it is non-dual (*advaya*) because it is free from all kinds of duality. Apart from these three experiences, there is no objectification, according to *Vijñāna-vāda.* For this reason, this Buddhist School is known as a crude subjectivism and it led that Reality is only the individual momentary *vijñāna*.

- Three natures(*tri-svabhāvata*) of experience

4.3.2.2 Madhyamaka

The Madhyamika tradition owes its foundation to Nagarjuna. It is also known as '*Śūnyavāda*.' The name Madhyamika is derived from the Middle Path, which the Buddha taught. One who follows the Buddha's Middle Path doctrine is a Madhyamika, and his philosophy is known as Madhyamaka. But these two terms – Madhyamika and Madhyamaka are now used synonymously.

- Meaning of 'Madhyamaka'

There are four main periods in the history of Madhamaka Buddhism in India. The first is the period of systematic formulation of Madhyamaka philosophy by Nagarjuna and his immediate disciple Āryadeva. The major writing of Nagarjuna is *Mūlamadhyamaka Kārika*. This philosophical classic contains all the major problems discussed in Madhyamaka Buddhism. Āryadeva He was the chief disciple and successor of Nagarjuna. The second phase of Madhyamaka Buddhism in India is based on the methodological differences maintained by Buddhapālita and Bhāvaviveka. The former's method is known as *prasangika* or *reductio ad absurdum,* while the latter's method is known as *svatantra* or standard syllogism. The Madhyamaka Buddhism achieved its rigorous and orthodox form by the writings of Candrakirti and Śāntideva. This is the third phase of Madhyamaka in India. The fourth stage is a syncretism of Yogacara and Madhyamaka, represented by Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. They accepted the Sautrāntika-Vijñānavāda position with regard to the empirical and the Madhyamika with regard to the ultimate reality.

The Madhyamaka philosophy of Nagarjuna is often interpreted as nihilism or the doctrine which argues that everything is unreal. This view is caused by the very term *Śūnyavāda.* But, the meaning of *Śūnyavāda* is not at all nihilism from the point of view of Nagarjuna and his followers. The term *Śūnyavāda* is used in Madhyamaka philosophy as non-substantialism or essence-less. What is non-substantialism? It says that there is no substance or essence in this world. It is the Abhidharmika position of the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika that there is a substance. They call it *dharma* or an element of existence. The Madhyamaka Buddhists denied this doctrine of *dharma* and argued that all *dharmas* are devoid of an essence or a substance. This view is known as non-substantialism.

Nagarjuna does not admit any *svabhāva* or essence. He says that to accept a *svabhāva* is against the position of the Buddha, who says that everything is conditional or relative through his doctrine *Pratītyasamutpāda.* He equates *Pratītyasamutpāda* with *Śūnyavāda.* He says that if a thing exists and does not change, then we cannot say it originated from the past and will be destroyed in future. The Buddha's teaching of dependent origination implies that everything is interrelated and there is nothing unrelated to another thing. If everything is related to another, if everything owes its existence to the other, how can we say that a thing exists by itself? It is in this sense

- Four phases of Madhyamaka in India

- *Śūnyavāda* is not nihilism but non-substantialism

- *Śūnyavāda:* denial of *Ātmavāda* and *dharmavāda*

that Nagarjuna says everything is *Śūnya* or essence-less. It is a radical denial of the *Ātmavāda* of Vedic tradition and the *dharmavāda* of Abhidharma Buddhist tradition.

The method used by Nagarjuna to establish his theory of *Śūnyata* is called *prasanga*. It analyses the inherent contradictions of any view. He says that every possible speculative standpoint is riddled with contradiction, and so has to be rejected. Nagarjuna rejected the alternative standpoints of *is* and *is not* and their conjunction and disjunction. None of these is valid. Later, this method was known as *reductio ad absurdum* which means reducing to absurdity.

He applies these principles to the cause-and-effect relation and proves that it is self-contradictory. For example, 'If cause and effect are identical, then cause is effect and effect is cause.' There can be no relation to connecting them. If cause and effect are different like cow and horse, they can have no relation. It proves that there is no real causation. Causation is a theory which involves inherent contradictions. "Nagarjuna has clearly and emphatically explained that *Pratityasamutpāda* is only dependent or relative causation and therefore no real causation."

4.3.3 Differences between Mahayana and Hinayana Traditions

The differences between the Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhist Schools are clearly outlined by Jadunath Sinha in the second volume of his *Indian Philosophy*. He writes: "In course of time a schism took place between the Hinayana and the Mahayana which differ in many respects. First, the Hinayana is conservative, whereas the Mahayana is catholic and progressive. Secondly, the former regards the Buddha as a historical person, while the latter regards the Buddha as the transcendental, eternal, and absolute, who saves all beings through his triple body (*trikāya*), *Dharmkāya*, *Sabhogakāya*, and *Nirmanakāya*. Thirdly, the former believes in one Buddha, the historical Gautama, while the latter believes in an infinite number of Boddhisattvas who take a vow to attain perfection and liberate all sentient creatures. Fourthly, the former aims at the attainment of *Arhathood* or individual liberation, while the latter aims at the attainment of Bodhisattvahood to liberate all. The former aims at individual liberation, while the latter aims at universal liberation. Fifthly, the former believes that

- *Prasanga* or *reduction ad absurdum*: the method of Nagarjuna

- *Pratityasamutpāda* is dependent or relative causation theory

one person attained Buddhahood, while the latter believes that all may attain it because they have the Buddha-nature and desire for enlightenment (*Bodhi*). Sixthly, the former opposes *nirvāna* to *samsāra*, while the latter believes that *samsāra* is not the negation of *nirvana* which has to be achieved in and through *samsāra*. The former emphasizes the monk's life of renunciation, while the latter emphasizes the life of a householder. Seventhly, the former looks upon suffering as something to be escaped from while the latter regards it as a means to liberation. In the Mahayana, the Bodhisattva voluntarily and joyfully undergoes suffering for the liberation of all beings. Eighthly, the former regards nirvana as cessation of transmigration, while the latter regards it as transcendental experience of *Śūnyata*. The former considers it to be a negative state, while the latter considers it to be a positive state. Ninthly, the former stresses abstention from evil, while the latter stresses cultivation of perfections (*pāramitas*) and doing positive good to others. The former is negative and self-centred in outlook, while the latter is positive and altruistic in outlook. Tenthly, the former is realistic, whereas the latter is idealistic. The former believes in the reality of the external world and individual minds or streams of consciousness, while the latter believes in One Mind, *Alayavijñāna*, which constructs the imaginary world. Lastly, the former believes in the impermanence of all phenomena, physical and mental, while the latter believes in the *Śūnyata* or Emptiness, which is the noumenon behind the impermanent phenomena. Phenomena are manifestations of the noumenon, *Śūnyata*. The law of change is supreme in the world of phenomena or relativity, but *Śūnyata* is supreme in the world of *nirvāna*, which is above all relativity. The Hinayana religion is based on the Pali canon, the original teaching of Buddha, and preserves its monastic and rationalistic elements. The Mahayana religion possesses no canon, and develops a mystical and devotional religion."

The change from Hinayana to Mahayana is radical and according to Chandradhar Sharma, "… the change from Hinayana to Mahayana was a revolution from a radical pluralism (*dharmavāda*) to a radical Absolutism (*advayavāda*), from dogmatism (*dṛṣtivāda*) to criticism (*shūnyavāda*), from the plurality of the momentary elements (*dharmavāda*) to the essential unity underlying them (*dharmatavāda*), from the unreality of an eternal substance (*pudgala-nairātmya*) to the unreality of all elements (*dharmanairātmya*)."

We can see a close parallel between Buddhist thought and Western philosophy. This parallel is striking between Vijñānavāda of the Yōgacāra and the subjective idealism of Berkeley. There is a similar parallel between the *Śūnyavāda* of the Madhyamika and the philosophy of David Hume. The parallel between Hinayana and Western philosophy is not, however, so close. We can see only a rough similarity between Hinayana realism and the realism of John Locke.

We can conclude this unit with the words of Datta and Chatterji, which give us a clear picture of the four schools of Buddhism. They stated that "The fourfold classi-fication of Bauddha philosophy is based upon two chief ques-tions, one metaphysical or concerning reality and the other epistemological or concerning the knowing of reality. To the metaphysical question, 'Is there at all any reality, mental or non-mental?' Three different replies are given: (a) the Mad-hyamika's hold that there is no reality, mental or non-mental; that all is void (*śūnya*). Therefore, they have been known as the nihilists (śūnya-vādins). (b) The Yogacara's hold that only the mental is real, the non-mental or the material world is all void of reality. They are, therefore, called subjective idealists (Vi-jñānavādins). (c) Still other class of Bauddhas hold that both the mental and the non-mental are real. They may, therefore be called realists. Sometimes they are styled Sarvāstivādins (i.e., those who hold the reality of all things), though this term is used in a narrower sense by some Buddhist writers. But when the further epistemological question is asked: 'How is exter-nal reality known to exist?', this third group of thinkers, who believe in external reality, give two different answers. Some of them, called Sautrāntikas, hold that external objects are not perceived but known by *inference*. Others, known as Vaibhāṣi-kas, hold that the external world is directly *perceived*. Thus, we have the four schools, representing the four important stand-points."

Summarised Overview

Very soon after the passing away of Buddha, differences of opinion arose among his followers with regard to the doctrine as well as its practice. As a result of this, the development of Buddhism proceeded along two main lines – Mahayana and Hinayana. Literally, Mahayana means the 'great vehicle' or the 'big ship', which can take a much larger number of people to the shore of *nirvāṇa* and they consider the Hinayana as a small vehicle. The Buddhist schools are four – Yōgacāra, Mādhyamika, Sautrāntika and Vaibhāsika. The first two form the Mahayana tradition, and the other two form the Hinayana tradition. All these schools accept the fundamental ideals of Buddhism, namely, *Kṣanika vāda* and *Nairātmya vāda.* But the distinction among them is based on the question of whether the world is a mental creation or is independent of the mind. The Yōgacāra holds that the external objects and the world are non-existent and are mere cognition or *vijñāna*. But the Madhyamikas deny the absolute reality of external objects and subjective cognitions regard them as essence-less and affirm the reality of the *Śūnya*. The *Śūnya* is not void or nothing. Hinayana tradition includes two main schools of Vaibhāsika and Sautrāntika, and it adopted the standpoint of Sarvāstivāda. It holds that everything exists. Vaibhāsika holds that external objects are real and perceptible. The Sautrāntika holds that external objects are real and inferable. The fourfold classification of Bauddha's philosophy is based upon two chief questions, one metaphysical or concerning reality and the other epistemological or concerning the knowing reality.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain briefly the major schools of Buddhist philosophy.

2. Discuss the important aspects of the Yogacara tradition of Buddhism.

3. Give a brief account of the Madhyamika tradition.

Assignments

1. 'The change from Hinayana to Mahayana was a revolution from a radical pluralism to a radical absolutism.' – Elucidate this statement.

2. Bring out the differences between the Mahayana and Hinayana traditions of Buddhism.

3. Analyse the epistemological aspects of the Hinayana tradition.

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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.

സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യയാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

കൂരിരുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ
സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം
സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം
നീതിവൈജയന്തി പാറണം

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ജാതിഭേദമാകെ മാറണം
ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ
ജ്ഞാനകേന്ദ്രമേ ജ്വലിക്കണേ

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