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CHAPTER 3

RELIGION
& PHILOSOPHY

- Religion is the most comprehensive and intensive manner of valuing known to human beings. Religious beliefs mold an individual's sociology and psychology and an individual's religion (religious beliefs, religious denomination, strength of religious devotion, etc.) is linked to their cultural beliefs and background.
- There is an inter-play among religion, community, and culture. Community is essentially formed by a group of people who share common activities or beliefs based on their mutual affect, loyalty, and personal concerns.
- Participation in religious institutions is one of the most dominant community engagements worldwide. Religious institutions are widely known for creating a sense of community by offering various material and social supports for individual followers. In addition, the role that religious organizations play in communal conflicts is also crucial. As religion deals with the ultimate matters of life, the differences among different religious beliefs are virtually impossible to settle.
- While religion affects cultures, it itself is also affected by culture, as religion is an essential layer of culture. For example, the growth of individualism in the latter half of the the decline in the authority of the religious institutions in modernized society has not reduced the important role of religion and spirituality as one of the main sources of calm when facing painful experiences such as death, suffering, and loss.
- When cultural specifications, such as individualism and collectivism, have been attributed to religion, the proposed definitions and functions of religion overlap with definitions of culture.
- Following are the common characteristics of religion:
 - ▶ Notion of a deity or absolute, that which is of ultimate concern and importance
 - ▶ Ideas on the nature of human beings
 - ▶ The idea of divine providence, destiny, fate
 - ▶ The idea and meaning of human history
 - ▶ Problem of evil explained
 - ▶ Description of the central problem of human life and suffering idea of an afterlife-life after death
 - ▶ A concept of the world
 - ▶ Ideas of human community and ethics-a moral code

Religion in India:

- India known as the land of spirituality and philosophy was the birthplace of some major religions existing in the world. Religion played an important part in the lives of the Indians from the earliest times. It assumed numerous forms in relation to different groups of people associated with them. Religious ideas, thoughts and practices differed among these groups, and transformations and developments took place in the

various religious forms in course of time. Religion in India was never static in character but was driven by an inherent dynamic strength.

- ▶ The most followed religion in India is Hinduism which is one of the ancient religions in the world. Around 500 BC two other religions developed in India, namely, Buddhism and Jainism. In ancient times Jainism and specially Buddhism were very popular in India and the Buddhist philosophy spread not only within the Indian sub-continent but also to kingdoms east and south of India.
- ▶ These three ancient religions, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, are seen as the molders of the India philosophy. In 'modern' period new religions were also established in India.
- ▶ One comparatively new religion in India is Sikhism and it was established in the 15th century. There were other attempts to create new religions in India but they did not always succeed. For example, a Mughal emperor, Akbar, who reigned between 1556-1605, tried to establish a new religion, Din-e-Elahi, but it did not survive.
- ▶ There are other religious philosophies whose believers see themselves as a separate religion, but they do not always get this recognition. For example Lingayat of south India see themselves as a different religion, while others see them as a sect of Hinduism.
- ▶ Along with the religions that developed in India, there are followers of non-Indian religions. Two major non-Indian religions existing in India is Islam and Christianity. There are also followers of Zoroastrians and Judaism in India. There are also a few thousand of Jews in India.
- ▶ Indian spirituality is deeply rooted in ancient philosophical and religious traditions of the land. Philosophy arose in India as an enquiry into the mystery of life and existence. Indian sages called Rishis or 'seers', developed special techniques of transcending the sense and the ordinary mind, collectively called yoga. With the help of these techniques, they delved deep into the depths of consciousness and discovered important truths about the true nature of human being and the universe.
- ▶ The sages found that the true nature of the human being is not the body or the mind, which are ever changing and perishable but the spirit which is unchanging, immortal and pure consciousness.
- ▶ Religion in ancient India meant a way of life which enables a human to realize his true nature and attain Moksha. Thus philosophy provided a correct view of reality, while religion showed the correct way of life; philosophy provided the vision, while religion brought about the fulfillment; philosophy was the theory, and religion was the practice. Thus, in ancient India, philosophy and religion complemented each other.

Religion in the Indus valley civilization:

- The religion and belief system of the Indus Valley people have received considerable attention, especially from the view of identifying precursors to deities and religious practices of Indian religions that later developed in the area. However, due to the sparsity of evidence, which is open to varying interpretations, and the fact that the Indus script remains undeciphered, the conclusions are partly speculative and largely based on a retrospective view from a much later Hindu perspective.
 - ▶ No building has been discovered at any Harappan site that can be positively identified as a temple, but the Great Bath at Mohenjo-daro may have been used for ritual purposes, as were the ghats (bathing steps on riverbanks) attached to later Hindu temples.
 - ▶ Female figurines from the more westerly sites have been viewed as icons for worship with a prevalence of a goddess cult. This possibility is based in part on the continuing worship of various goddesses later in India.
 - ▶ A linga-yoni of a type similar to that which is now worshiped by Hindus has also been found. Some emphasis on fertility rituals seems evident, but whether these were elaborate ceremonies, remains uncertain.
 - ▶ Fertility rituals would not be unusual given the prevalence of these in other chalcolithic cultures of the subcontinent. Some small oval structures containing ash have been interpreted as fire altars, but they could equally well be hearths.
 - ▶ A shamanistic religion has also been suggested, but the urban character of the civilization is unlikely to have been conducive to shamanism.
 - ▶ A few Indus valley seals displayed swastika sign which were there in many religions, especially in Indian religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.
 - ▶ A few motifs continue from Harappan times till present times, such as the *peepal* worship, which was revered by some later religious sects. Much speculation focuses on whether a seated figure on a seal known as Pashupati represents a proto-Shiva.

- ▶ The identification of the figure is uncertain and the evidence for the link with Shiva is tenuous. It would perhaps be more apposite to regard these representations as contributing to the evolution of a later religious mythology and iconography, rather than insisting that a later icon be imposed on an earlier period.
- ▶ To explore the meaning of such an icon in its own context would perhaps be more meaningful than to give it an instant label derived from an icon of a much later period. The figure could equally well be identified as depicting a yogic position, as indeed female figures in trees on some seals could be linked to the evolving of the idea of *apsaras*, celestial maidens associated with trees.

Evolution and Growth of Hinduism:

- In a strict sense there was no 'Hinduism' before modern times, although the sources of Hindu traditions are very ancient. Hinduism is not a single religion but embraces many traditions. Thirdly, Hinduism has no definite starting point. The traditions which flow into Hinduism may go back several thousand years and some practitioners claim that the Hindu revelation is eternal.
- Hinduism originated on the Indian subcontinent and comprise of several and varied systems of philosophy, belief, and ritual. Its many sacred texts in Sanskrit and vernacular languages served as a vehicle for spreading the religion to other parts of the world, though ritual and the visual and performing arts also played a significant role in its transmission. From about the 4th century CE, Hinduism had a dominant presence in Southeast Asia, which lasted for more than 1,000 years.
 - ▶ From the archaeological findings in the pre and proto-historic sites, it seems that these people believed in the sanctity of the creative force and venerated the male and female aspects of divinity. It appears that they were worshippers of the forces of nature like the Sun and the Moon.
 - ▶ Religion in the Indus valley seems to have involved rituals and ritual bathing in the 'great bath' found at Mohenjo-Daro. There is some evidence of animal sacrifice at Kalibangan. A number of terracotta figurines have been found, perhaps mother goddess images, and a seal depicting a seated figure surrounded by animals that some scholars thought to be a prototype of the god Shiva.
 - ▶ There may be continuities between the Indus Valley civilization and later Hinduism as suggested by the apparent emphasis on ritual bathing, sacrifice, and goddess worship. But ritual purity, sacrifice and an emphasis on fertility are common to other ancient religions.
 - ▶ Early vedic religion centred around sacrifices, and ritual offering of food and drink to fire in honour of the Gods. The term 'sacrifice' (*homa*, *yajna*) is not confined to offering animals but refers more widely to any offering into the sacred fire (such as milk and clarified butter).
 - ▶ Some of the vedic rituals were very elaborate and continue to the present day. Sacrifice was offered to different vedic gods (*devas*) who lived in different realms of a hierarchical universe divided into three broad realms: earth, atmosphere and sky.
 - ▶ Earth contains the plant god Soma, the fire god Agni, and the god of priestly power, Brhaspati. The Atmosphere contains the warrior Indra, the wind Vayu, the storm gods or Maruts and the Rudra. The Sky contains the sky god Dyaus (from the same root as Zeus), the Lord of cosmic law (or *rta*) Varuna, his friend the god of night Mitra, the nourisher Pushan, and the pervader Vishnu.
 - ▶ Indian religious life underwent great changes during the period 550–450 BCE. This century was marked by the rise of breakaway sects of ascetics who rejected traditional religion, denying the authority of the Vedas and of the Brahmins and following teachers who claimed to have discovered the secret of obtaining release from transmigration. By far the most important of these figures were Siddhartha Gautama called the Buddha, and Vardhamana called Mahavira, the founder of Jainism.
 - ▶ There were many other heterodox teachers who organized bands of ascetic followers, and each group adopted a specific code of conduct. They gained considerable support from ruling families and merchants. The latter were growing in wealth and influence, and many of them were searching for alternative forms of religious activity that would give them a more significant role than did orthodox Brahmanism or that would be less expensive to support.
 - ▶ The Brahmins were very influential, but there was opposition to their large-scale animal sacrifices—on moral, philosophical, and economic grounds—and to their pretensions to superiority by virtue of their birth. The doctrine of transmigration was by then generally accepted, though a group of outright materialists—the Charvakas, or Lokayatas—denied the survival of the soul after death.
 - ▶ Popular religious life largely centred around the worship of local fertility divinities (*yakshas*), cobra spirits (*nagas*), and other minor spirits in sacred places such as groves. Although these sacred places were the main centres of popular religious life, there is no evidence of any buildings or images associated with them, and it appears that neither temples nor large icons existed at the time.

- ▶ The orthodox Brahmanical teachers reacted to these tendencies by devising the doctrine of the four ashramas, which divided the life of the twice-born after initiation into four stages: the brahmacharin (celibate religious student); the grihastha (married householder); the vanaprastha (forest dweller); and the sannyasin (wandering ascetic). This attempt to keep asceticism in check by confining it to men of late middle age was not wholly successful. Thereafter Hindu social theory centred on the concept of varnashrama dharma, or the duties of the four classes (varnas) and the four ashramas, which constituted the ideal that Hindus were encouraged to follow.
- ▶ The first great empire of India, the Mauryan empire, arose in the 3rd century BCE. Its early rulers were non-Brahmanic; Ashoka (reigned c. 265–238 BCE), the third and most famous of the Mauryan emperors, was a professed Buddhist. Although there is no doubt that Ashoka's patronage of Buddhism did much to spread that religion, his inscriptions recognize the Brahmans as worthy of respect.
- ▶ A Brahmanic revival appears to have occurred with the fall of the Mauryas. The orthodox religion itself, however, was undergoing change at this time, as theistic tendencies developed around the gods Vishnu and Shiva.
- ▶ After 200 BCE, several schools of thought were formally codified in the Indian philosophy, including Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Purva-Mimamsa and Vedanta.
- ▶ Hinduism, otherwise a highly theistic religion, hosted atheistic schools and atheistic philosophies. Other Indian philosophies generally regarded as orthodox include Samkhya and Mimamsa.
- ▶ The centuries immediately preceding and following the dawn of the Common Era were marked by the recension of the two great Sanskrit epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata (the latter incorporating into it the Bhagavad Gita). The worship of Vishnu, incarnate as Krishna in the Mahabharata and as Rama in the Ramayana, developed significantly during this period, as did the cult of Shiva, who plays an active role in the Mahabharata.
- ▶ Inscriptions, iconographic evidence, and literary references reveal the emergence of devotional theism in the 2nd century BCE. Several brief votive inscriptions refer to the god Vasudeva, who by this time was widely worshipped in western India. At the end of the 2nd century, Heliiodorus, a Greek ambassador of King Antialcidas of Taxila (in Pakistan), erected a large column in honour of Vasudeva at Besnagar in Madhya Pradesh and recorded that he was a Bhagavata, a term used specifically for the devotees of Vishnu. The identification of Vasudeva with the old Vedic god Vishnu and, later, with Vishnu's incarnation, Krishna, was quickly accepted.
- ▶ The Vedic god Rudra gained importance from the end of the Rigvedic period. In the Svetashvatara Upanishad, Rudra is for the first time called Shiva and is described as the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe. His followers are called on to worship him with devotion (bhakti).
- ▶ The tendency for the laity to form themselves into religious guilds or societies—evident in the case of the yaksha cults, Buddhism, and Jainism—promoted the growth of devotional Vaishnavism and Shaivism. These local associations of worshipers appear to have been a principal factor in the spread of the new cults. Theistic ascetics are less in evidence at this time, though a community of Shaivite monks, the Pashupatas, existed by the 2nd or 3rd century CE.
- ▶ By the time of the early Gupta empire the new theism had been harmonized with the old Vedic religion, and two of the main branches of Hinduism were fully recognized. The Vaishnavas had the support of the Gupta emperors, who took the title paramabhagavata ("supreme devotee of Vishnu").
- ▶ Vishnu temples were numerous, and the doctrine of Vishnu's avatars (incarnations) was widely accepted. Of the 10 incarnations of later Vaishnavism, however, only two seem to have been much worshipped in the Gupta period (4th–6th century). These were Krishna, the hero of the Mahabharata, who also begins to appear in his pastoral aspect as the cowherd and flute player, and Varaha, the divine boar, of whom several impressive images survive from the Gupta period.
- ▶ The Shaivites were also a growing force in the religious life of India. The sect of Pashupata ascetics, founded by Lakulisha (or Nahulisha), who lived in the 2nd century CE, is among the earliest of the sectarian religious orders of Hinduism. Very important in this period was Surya, the sun god, in whose honour temples were built. The solar cult had Vedic roots but later may have expanded under Iranian influence.
- ▶ Several goddesses gained importance in this period. Although goddesses had always been worshipped in local and popular cults, they play comparatively minor roles in Vedic religion. Lakshmi, or Shri, goddess of fortune and consort of Vishnu, was worshipped before the beginning of the Common Era, and several lesser goddesses are attested from the Gupta period. But the cult of Durga, the consort of Shiva, began to gain importance only in the 4th century, and the large-scale development of Shaktism (devotion to the active, creative principle personified as the mother goddess) did not take place until medieval times.

- ▶ From 500 CE we can recognize many elements in present day Hinduism, such as bhakti (devotion) and temple worship. This period saw the development of poetic literature. These texts were composed in Sanskrit, which became the most important element in a shared culture.
- ▶ From 500 CE we have the rise of devotion (bhakti) to the major deities, particularly Vishnu, Shiva and Devi. With the collapse of the Gupta empire, regional kingdoms developed which patronised different religions. For example, the Cholas in the South supported Shaivism.
- ▶ This period saw the development of the great regional temples such as Jagannatha in Puri in Orissa, the Shiva temple in Cidambaram in Tamilnadu, and the Shiva temple in Tanjavur, also in Tamilnadu. All of these temples had a major deity installed there and were centres of religious and political power.
- ▶ Later, not only religious literature in Sanskrit developed but also in vernacular languages, particularly Tamil. Here poet-saints recorded their devotional sentiments. Most notable are the twelve Vaishnava Alvars (6th–9th centuries), including one famous female poet-saint called Andal, and the sixty-three Shaiva Nayanars (8th–10th CE).
- ▶ Subsequent key thinkers and teachers (acharyas or gurus) consolidated these teachings. They formulated new theologies, perpetuated by their own disciplic successions (sampradaya).
- ▶ **Shankara** (780–820 CE) travelled widely, defeating scholars of the unorthodox movements, Buddhism and Jainism, which around the turn of the millennium had established prominent seats of learning throughout India. He re-established the authority of the Vedic canon, propagated advaita (monism) and laid foundations for the further development of the tradition known as the Vedanta.

Developments in Vaishnavism and Shaivism:

- The medieval period was characterized by the growth of new devotional religious movements centred on hymnodists who taught in the popular languages of the time. The new movements probably began with the appearance of hymns in Tamil associated with two groups of poets: the Nayanars, worshipers of Shiva, and the Alvars, devotees of Vishnu. The oldest of these date from the early 7th century, though passages of devotional character can be found in earlier Tamil literature.
- The term bhakti, in the sense of devotion to a personal god, appears in the Bhagavadgita and the Shvetashvatara Upanishad. In these early sources it represents a devotion still somewhat restrained and unemotional. The new form of bhakti, associated with singing in the languages of the common people, was highly charged with emotion and mystical fervour, and the relationship between worshiper and divinity was often described as analogous to that between lover and beloved.
- The Vaishnava philosophers Ramanuja (1017–1137 CE), Madhva (13th century) and others followed, writing their own scriptural commentaries, propounding new theologies and establishing their own successions. Ramanuja qualified Shankara's impersonal philosophy, and Madhva more strongly propounded the existence of a personal God.
- Shaivism similarly developed during this period with important philosophers such as Abhinavagupta (975–1025 CE) writing commentaries on the Tantras, an alternative revelation to the Veda, and other texts.
- The Tantras became revered as a revelation that fulfilled or superseded the Veda. Some of these texts advocated ritually polluting practices such as offering alcohol, meat and ritualised sex to ferocious deities but most of these texts are simply concerned with daily and occasional rituals, temple building, cosmology and so on.
- By that time, most of the main divinities of later Hinduism were worshipped. Rama, the hero of the epic poem, had become the eighth avatar of Vishnu, and his popularity was growing, though it was not yet as prominent as it later became. Similarly, Hanuman, now one of the most popular divinities of India and the most ready helper in time of need, was rising in importance. Krishna was worshipped, though his consort, Radha, did not become popular until after the 12th century. Harihara, a combination of Vishnu and Shiva, and Ardhanarishvara, a synthesis of Shiva and his consort Shakti, also became popular deities.
- The devotional cults further weakened Buddhism, which had long been on the decline. The philosophers Kumarila and Shankara were strongly opposed to Buddhism. Only in Bihar and Bengal, because of the patronage of the Pala dynasty and some lesser kings and chiefs, did Buddhist monasteries continue to flourish.
- Buddhism in eastern India, however, was well on the way to being absorbed into Hinduism when the Muslims invaded the Ganges valley in the 12th century. The great Buddhist shrine of Bodh Gaya, the site of the Buddha's enlightenment, became a Hindu temple and remained as such until recent times.
- Alongside the development of Hindu traditions, most widespread in the South, was the rise of Islam in the North as a religious and political force in India. Muslim political power began with the Turkish Sultanate around 1200 CE and culminated in the Mughul Empire (from 1526). Akbar (1542–1605) was a liberal

emperor and allowed Hindus to practice freely. However, his great grandson, Aurangzeb (1618–1707), destroyed many temples and restricted Hindu practice.

- During this period we have further developments in devotional religion (bhakti). The Sant tradition in the North, mainly in Maharashtra and the Punjab, expressed devotion in poetry to both a god without qualities (nirguna) and to a god with qualities (saguna) such as parental love of his devotees.
- The Sant tradition combines elements of bhakti, meditation or yoga, and Islamic mysticism. Even today the poetry of the princess Mirabai, and other saints such as Tukaram, Surdas and Dadu are popular.
- During British rule, the Brits did not interfere with the religion and culture of the Indian people, allowing Hindus to practice their religion unimpeded. Later, however, missionaries arrived preaching Christianity. Shortly after, the first scholars stepped ashore, and though initially sympathetic, were often motivated by a desire to westernise the local population.

Hindu reformers:

- The nineteenth century saw the development of the 'Hindu Renaissance' with reformers such as Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833) presenting Hinduism as a rational, ethical religion and founding the Brahma Samaj to promote these ideas.
- Another reformer, Dayananda Sarasvati (1824–83), advocated a return to vedic religion which emphasised an eternal, omnipotent and impersonal God. He wanted to return to the 'eternal law' or sanatana dharma of Hinduism before the Puranas and Epics through his society, the Arya Samaj.
- Both of these reformers wished to rid Hinduism of what they regarded as superstition. These groups were instrumental in sowing the seeds of Indian nationalism and Hindu missionary movements that later journeyed to the West.
- Another important figure was Paramahansa Ramakrishna (1836–86), who declared the unity of all religions. His disciple Vivekananda (1863–1902) developed his ideas and linked them to a political vision of a united India.
- Gandhi drew much of his strength and conviction from the Hindu teachings, such as the notion of ahimsa (non-violence), and propounded a patriotism that was broad-minded and magnanimous.

Hindutva:

- During the resistance to colonial rule, the term 'Hindu' became charged with cultural and political meaning. One central idea was hindutva (hindu-ness), coined by V.D. Savarkar to refer to a socio-political force that could unite Hindus against 'threatening others'.
- Cultural organisations such as the RSS (Rashtriya Svayam-Sevak Sangh) and VHP (Vishva Hindu Parishad) have embraced and developed this ideal, which found political expression in the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party).

General nature of Hinduism

- More strikingly than any other major religious community, Hindus accept and indeed celebrate the organic, multileveled, and sometimes pluralistic nature of their traditions. This expansiveness is made possible by the widely shared Hindu view that truth or reality cannot be encapsulated in any creedal formulation, a perspective expressed in the Hindu prayer "May good thoughts come to us from all sides." Thus, Hinduism maintains that truth must be sought in multiple sources, not dogmatically proclaimed.
 - ▶ Across the sweep of Indian religious history, at least five elements have given shape to the Hindu religious tradition: doctrine, practice, society, story, and devotion. Moreover, each strand develops out of a history of conversation, elaboration, and challenge. Hence, in looking for what makes the tradition cohere, it is sometimes better to locate central points of tension than to expect clear agreements on Hindu thought and practice.
 - ▶ The first of the five strands of Hinduism is doctrine, as expressed in a vast textual tradition anchored to the Veda ("Knowledge"), the oldest core of Hindu religious utterance, and organized through the centuries primarily by members of the learned Brahman class.
 - ▶ Here several characteristic tensions appear out of which three major concerns have been:
 - ◆ Relationship between the divine and the world.
 - ◆ Disparity between the world-preserving ideal of dharma and that of moksha (release from an inherently flawed world).

- ◆ Individual destiny, as shaped by karma (the influence of one's actions on one's present and future lives), and the individual's deep bonds to family, society, and the divinities associated with these concepts.
- ▶ Another dimension drawing Hindus into a single community of discourse is narrative. For at least two millennia, people in almost all corners of India—and now well beyond—have responded to stories of divine play and of interactions between gods and humans.
- ▶ These stories concern major figures in the Hindu pantheon: Krishna and his lover Radha, Rama and his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana, Shiva and his consort Parvati (or, in a different birth, Sati), and the Great Goddess Durga, or Devi, as a slayer of the buffalo demon Mahisasura.
- ▶ Often such narratives illustrate the interpenetration of the divine and human spheres, with deities such as Krishna and Rama entering entirely into the human drama. Many tales focus in different degrees on genealogies of human experience, forms of love, and the struggle between order and chaos or between duty and play.
- ▶ These narratives serve to articulate tensions connected with righteous behaviour and social inequities. Thus, the Ramayana, traditionally a testament of Rama's righteous victories, is sometimes told by women performers as the story of Sita's travails at Rama's hands.
- ▶ Bhakti ("sharing" or "devotion"), a broad tradition of a loving God that is especially associated with the lives and words of vernacular poet-saints throughout India contributes to the unity of Hindu experience through time.
- ▶ Devotional poems attributed to these inspired figures, who represent both genders and all social classes, have elaborated a store of images and moods to which access can be had in a score of languages.
- ▶ Bhakti verse first appeared in Tamil in south India and moved northward into other regions with different languages. Individual poems are sometimes strikingly similar from one language or century to another, without there being any trace of mediation through the pan-Indian, distinctly upper-caste language Sanskrit.
- ▶ With its central affirmation that religious faith is more fundamental than rigidities of practice or doctrine, bhakti provides a common challenge to other aspects of Hindu life. At the same time, it contributes to a common Hindu heritage—even a common heritage of protest.

Hindu notions of Time:

- Hindus in general believe that time is cyclical, much like the four seasons, and eternal rather than linear and bounded. Yuga in Hinduism is an epoch or era within a four-age cycle. A complete Yuga starts with the Satya Yuga, via Treta Yuga and Dvapara Yuga into a Kali Yuga.
- ▶ During the Satya Yuga people were pious and adhered to dharma (law, duty, truth) but its power diminishes over time until it has to be reinvigorated through divine intervention.
- ▶ With each successive age, good qualities diminish, until we reach the current iron or **dark age (kali yuga)** marked by cruelty, hypocrisy, materialism, and so on. Such ideas challenge the widespread, linear view that humans are inevitably progressing.

Doctrine of Atman-Brahman:

- Most Hindus believe in brahman, an uncreated, eternal, infinite, transcendent, and all-embracing principle. Brahman contains in itself both being and nonbeing, and it is the sole reality—the ultimate cause, foundation, source, and goal of all existence. As the All, brahman either causes the universe and all beings to emanate from itself, transforms itself into the universe, or assumes the appearance of the universe.
- ▶ Brahman is in all things and is the self (atman) of all living beings. Brahman is the creator, preserver, or transformer and reabsorber of everything.
- ▶ Hindus differ, however, as to whether this ultimate reality is best conceived as lacking attributes and qualities—the impersonal brahman—or as a personal God, especially Vishnu, Shiva, or Shakti (these being the preferences of adherents called Vaishnavas, Shaivas, and Shaktas, respectively).
- ▶ Belief in the importance of the search for a One that is the All has been a characteristic feature of India's spiritual life for more than 3,000 years.

Karma, Samsara, and Moksha

- Hindus generally accept the doctrine of transmigration and rebirth and the complementary belief in karma. The whole process of rebirth, called samsara, is cyclic, with no clear beginning or end, and encompasses lives of perpetual, serial attachments.

- ▶ Actions generated by desire and appetite bind one's spirit (jiva) to an endless series of births and deaths. Desire motivates any social interaction (particularly when involving sex or food), resulting in the mutual exchange of good and bad karma.
- ▶ In one prevalent view, the very meaning of salvation is emancipation (moksha) from this morass, an escape from the impermanence that is an inherent feature of mundane existence. In this view the only goal is the one permanent and eternal principle: the One, God, brahman, which is totally opposite to phenomenal existence.
- ▶ People who have not fully realized that their being is identical with brahman are thus seen as deluded. Fortunately, the very structure of human experience teaches the ultimate identity between brahman and atman.
- ▶ One may learn this lesson by different means: by realizing one's essential sameness with all living beings, by responding in love to a personal expression of the divine, or by coming to appreciate that the competing attentions and moods of one's waking consciousness are grounded in a transcendental unity—one has a taste of this unity in the daily experience of deep, dreamless sleep.

Dharma and the three paths:

- Hindus acknowledge the validity of several paths (margas) toward such release. The Bhagavadgita, an extremely influential Hindu text, presents three paths to salvation:
 - ▶ The karma-marga ("path of ritual action" or "path of duties"), the disinterested discharge of ritual and social obligations;
 - ▶ The jnana-marga ("path of knowledge"), the use of meditative concentration preceded by long and systematic ethical and contemplative training (Yoga) to gain a supra-intellectual insight into one's identity with brahman; and
 - ▶ The bhakti-marga ("path of devotion"), love for a personal God.
- These ways are regarded as suited to various types of people, but they are interactive and potentially available to all.
- Although the pursuit of moksha is institutionalized in Hindu life through ascetic practice and the ideal of withdrawing from the world at the conclusion of one's life, many Hindus ignore such practices.
- The Bhagavadgita states that because action is inescapable, the three paths are better thought of as simultaneously achieving the goals of world maintenance (dharma) and world release (moksha).
- Through the suspension of desire and ambition and through detachment from the fruits (phala) of one's actions, one is enabled to float free of life while engaging it fully. This matches the actual goals of most Hindus, which include executing properly one's social and ritual duties; supporting one's caste, family, and profession; and working to achieve a broader stability in the cosmos, nature, and society.
- The designation of Hinduism as sanatana dharma emphasizes this goal of maintaining personal and universal equilibrium, while at the same time calling attention to the important role played by the performance of traditional religious practices in achieving that goal.

Emergence of Heterodox Sects

- The sixth century BC witnessed the emergence and growth of Non-Vedic and Pro-Vedic ideologies. However, in the crowd of various types of belief systems, examples of violent religious conflicts were almost absent in India. In fact, these systems resorted to the method of arguments and debates for the propagation of their respective belief system, which is a unique feature of Indian religion, or the ideological system.
 - ▶ Against the background of complex nature of Later Vedic rituality, a need was felt of such belief system, which would give simple-clear thought and would suggest cheap, manageable rituals in understandable language.
 - ▶ Against the background of rigid Vedic religion, based on sacrifices & polytheism, the 6th century India witnessed the rise of heterodox & monotheist belief systems like Jainism, Buddhism, and Ajivakas etc.
 - ▶ These systems opposed complex and time-labor-money consuming Vedic rituals and sacrifices. Besides, they also rebelled against the growth of Brahmans as a superior socio-religious and economical authority in the society. They provided an ideological alternative and base, on which the society flourished in sixth c. BC.
 - ▶ Also, economically superior Varna like Vaishya and politically superior non-Kshatriya rulers and people were in need of socio-religious sanctions to them or legitimacy in society. Hence, in 6th c BC, Non-Vedic cults emerged who fulfilled all the requirements mentioned above and provided legitimacy to Vaishya and non-Kshatriya powerful people and rulers.

- ▶ The non-Vedic religions were deeply rooted in Indian culture. Initially, they seem to be drastically debating each other, but, in due course of time, they followed similar lines and approaches for the propagation of their respective religions.

Vedic Philosophy

- Religion of the Rig Vedic people was very simple in the sense that it consisted mainly of worship of numerous deities representing the various phenomena of nature through prayers. It was during the later Vedic period that definite ideas and philosophies about the true nature of soul or Atman and the cosmic principle or Brahman who represented the ultimate reality were developed. These Vedic philosophical concepts later on gave rise to six different schools of philosophies called shada darshana. They fall in the category of the orthodox system as the final authority of the Vedas is recognised by all of them.

Nyaya School

- Nyaya is considered as a technique of logical thinking. Nyaya applied the analytical and logical method to spiritual matters. **Aksapada** Gautama is said to be the author of the Nyaya Sutras. According to Nyaya, valid knowledge is defined as the real knowledge, that is, one knows about the object as it exists.
 - ▶ It took up the ordinary stock notions of traditional philosophy as space, time, cause, matter, mind, soul and knowledge and after investigation set forth the results in the form of a theory of universe. This system serves as an introduction to all systematic Hindu philosophy because from its very nature logic is the basis of all studies.
 - ▶ According to Nyaya philosophy there are four methods or sources for the acquisition of knowledge viz. Pratyakasha (intuition), Anumana (inference), Upamana (comparison) and Sahda (verbal testimony) Perception take place when the manas (mind) operates in conjunction with the senses but not otherwise.
 - ▶ Nyaya system deals with the causes of doubt in details and analyses them thoroughly. Doubt is due to lapse of memory or aberrations in recognition or perception.
 - ▶ Truth is that which reveals itself to those who have sounded the depths of experience and cannot be ascertained by a mere counting of heads. The soul is held to be real with its incorporeal attributes of desires, aversions, volitions etc. and consciousness cannot exist apart from it "as the brilliance of the flame cannot live apart from it."
 - ▶ The system believes in the theory of transmigration and freedom from bondage is held to be the summum bonnum.
 - ▶ Nyaya system believes in a God who is a personal being possessing existence, knowledge and bliss. He is omnipotent and omniscient. Adrista or God is the limit of explanation in Nyaya philosophy.
 - ▶ It can be concluded that Nyaya System attempts a logical and analytical investigation of Hindu religion and philosophy with a view to rationally synthesizing the ends of life and of religion, to establishing a rational relationship between body and soul, and showing a way of salvation.

Vaisesika School

- Vaisheshika system is considered as the realistic and objective philosophy of universe. It was essentially a system of particularity and derives its name from its doctrine of atomic individualities (viseshas) and is also known as the 'Philosophy of Discrimination'. Its logic is similar to that of the Nyaya system. **Kanada** wrote the basic text of Vaisheshika philosophy.
 - ▶ One of its fundamental doctrines is that of Padartha, which are divided into six categories viz. substance (dravya), quality (guna), activity (karma), generality (samanya), particularity (vivesa), and inherence (samavaya). A dravya (substance) has an independent existence apart from its qualities. Earth, water, light, air, ether, time, space, soul and manas are the nine substances.
 - ▶ Vaisheshika thinkers believe that all objects of the universe are composed of five elements—earth, water, air, fire and ether. According to this system the ultimate constituents of concrete things are atoms.
 - ▶ They believe that God is the guiding principle. The living beings were rewarded or punished according to the law of karma, based on actions of merit and demerit. Creation and destruction of universe was a cyclic process and took place in agreement with the wishes of God. A number of treatises were written on this text but the best among them is the one written by Prashastapada in the sixth century AD.
 - ▶ Vaisheshika School of philosophy explained the phenomena of the universe by the atomic theory, the combination of atoms and molecules into matter and explained the mechanical process of formation of Universe.

- ▶ It may be noted that this theory differs the Greek hypothesis of Democritus to whom atoms have only quantitative and not qualitative differences, while in Kanada's hypothesis the atoms are different in kind each having its own distinct individuality. The Greek view of the universe was a mechanical one while Kanada believed in souls.
- ▶ The most important contribution of this school of Hindu philosophy is its concept of atom, its analysis of the phenomenal world, its theory of propagation of sound and its observations about heat and light.

Sankhya School

- It is the oldest of the six systems of Indian philosophy and some mention about it can be found in the Bhagavad-Gita as well as Upanishads. The propounder of this philosophy was Kapila, who wrote the Samkhya sutra.
 - ▶ This system rejects the rigid categories of the Nyaya-Vaisesika system as inadequate instruments for defining the universe. It substituted evolution for creation.
 - ▶ The Samkhya philosophy holds that reality is constituted of two principles one female and the other male i.e. Prakriti, Purusha respectively. Prakriti and Purusha are completely independent and absolute. According to this system, Purusha is mere consciousness, hence it cannot be modified or changed. Prakriti on the other hand is constituted of three attributes, thought, movement, and the change or transformation of these attributes brings about the change in all objects.
 - ▶ Purusha deluded by Maya and drawn by the glamour of Prakriti, the Purusha plunges into the former and gets caught in the web of samsara and karma. Thus there is a fall from its original state of blissful peace and the Purusha gets entangled in the web of samsara. It can acquire salvation only if it acquires supreme wisdom which will reveal to the soul the snares and illusions of material existence and will help it to realise its true nature and original condition.
 - ▶ According to Sankhya system prakriti is the primary form of being from which different forms and orders of existence issue. The Prakriti is developed out of three gunas—sattva (goodness, truth, purity etc.), Rajas (passion for activity) and Tamas (inertia, stolidity, obstruction etc.). These gunas do not exist quite separately but generally intermingle with one another. Sattva and rajas are held in check by tamas.
 - ▶ This theory of three Gunas was adopted by many schools of Hindu philosophy and formed the basis of the Buddhist philosophy.

Yoga School

- Yoga literally means the union of the two principal entities. The term has been used in the Upanishads and in Bhagavad-Gita to denote union of the soul with the Supreme. The origin of yoga is found in the Yogasutra of Patanjali believed to have been written in the second century BC in which he has state that Yoga is a methodical effort to attain perfection through the control of the physical, mental and astral elements of human nature.
 - ▶ By purifying and controlling changes in the mental mechanism, yoga systematically brings about the release of purusha from prakriti.
 - ▶ The Yoga system accepts the presumptions of Sankhya, but does not attach that much importance to knowledge as a means of liberation and emphasize that liberation can be attained only by methods of devotional exercises and mental discipline.
 - ▶ Yoga admits the existence of God as a teacher and guide. The chitta is the basis of Yoga and its distraction has to be fully controlled. Yoga aids the development of super-sensory perception by strengthening the body and transforming the psychic organism. It helps the individual to go beyond the limits of sense perception and attain Samadhi or the stage in which the soul gets beatific vision and is reunited with God.
 - ▶ This freedom could be attained by practising self-control (yama), observation of rules (niyama), fixed postures (asana), breath control (pranayama), choosing an object (pratyahara) and fixing the mind (dharna), concentrating on the chosen object (dhyana) and complete dissolution of self, merging the mind and the object (Samadhi).
 - ▶ The first six are a sort of ethic preparation for the practice of Yoga, while the last two represent the culmination. Dhyana is the resulting state of an even current of thought undisturbed by others. The condition of Samadhi represents the stage when the connection with the outer world is broken and the seer abides in himself and attains perfect tranquility and thoughts flow in the clearest possible manner.

- ▶ In the Yoga system freedom or final liberation is a state of absolute independence in which the purusa is freed from the fetters of prakriti. The law of Karma is also accepted and self-control is considered to be the chief factor which leads to liberation.
- ▶ By passing through the various stages of self-control the yogi attains marvelous and magical powers called siddhis. The final object of meditation according to Patanjali is not the attainment of union with God but the absolute separation of purusa from Prakriti.

Purva Mimansa School

- This school of Hindu philosophy differs from other schools in so far as it is purely a school of exposition, instead of salvation. Mimamsa philosophy is basically the analysis of interpretation, application and the use of the text of the Samhita and Brahmana portions of the Veda.
 - ▶ Its main text is known as the Sutras of Gaimini which have been written during the third century BC. The names associated with this philosophy are Sabar Swami and Kumarila Bhatta.
 - ▶ According to Mimamsa philosophy Vedas are eternal and possess all knowledge, and religion means the fulfillment of duties prescribed by the Vedas and lays stress on the ritualistic part of Vedas.
 - ▶ It held that soul is a reality and is distinct from the body and the senses. The soul can be liberated only by faithfully following the orthodox rites and ceremonies prescribed in the Vedic texts, which being divinely inspired, are sacred, eternal and infallible.
 - ▶ It explained the esoteric significance of sacrifices and rituals and tried to reconcile action with knowledge. According to Purva Mimamsa school here are two kinds of karmas—nitya karmas and kamya karmas. The non-observance of the nitya karmas begets sin, while the later are to be performed for special ends.
 - ▶ It may be noted that Jaimini did not deal with the problem of final liberation and the later writers dilated upon it. Liberation is defined as the absolute cessation of the body caused by the disappearance of all dharma and adharma. Karma can never lead to liberation. In the scheme of things envisaged by the Purva Mimamsa, the benevolent or active God is not considered necessary.
 - ▶ This philosophy encompasses the Nyaya-Vaisheshika systems and emphasizes the concept of valid knowledge. As a philosophical view of the universe, the Purva Mimamsa cannot be said to be complete. It concerned itself with purely mechanical ethics and did not touch the problems of ultimate reality. Its concern was karma kand, a mere performance of sacrifices, without anything to touch the heart and make it glow."

Uttar Mimansa (Vedanta)

- The most of the prominent features of modern intellectual Hinduism were contributed by this school. Among different schools of philosophy was found one philosophy which reached the climax of philosophic thought that the human mind can possibly reach, and that is known as the Vedantic philosophy.
 - ▶ The basic text of this system is Brahma Sutras attributed to Badarayana, written early in the Christian era. In this work he made an attempt to systematize the teachings of the Upanishads.
 - ▶ During the subsequent centuries a number of scholars commented on the Brahma Sutras. Shankaracharya wrote the commentaries on the Upanishads, Brahmasutras and the Bhagavad Gita. Shankaracharya's discourse or his philosophical views came to be known as Advaita Vedanta. Advaita literally means non-dualism or belief in one reality.
 - ▶ Shankaracharya expounded that ultimate reality is one, it being the Brahman. According to Vedanta philosophy, 'Brahman is true, the world is false and self and Brahman are not different, Shankaracharya believes that the Brahman is existent, unchanging, the highest truth and the ultimate knowledge. He also believes that there is no distinction between Brahman and the self. The knowledge of Brahman is the essence of all things and the ultimate existence.
 - ▶ The other prominent philosophers who made valuable contributions of this philosophy included Ramanuja, Nimbarka and Vallabha. According to this philosophy, the Brahma is a fundamental Reality and is the source, support and liquidator of the universe. It does not possess and specific qualities of attributes. It pervades the whole universe and is unaffected by the changes.
 - ▶ The individual soul of the atman is only a fraction of the Brahma and is not different from it. The Brahma does not possess any shape or form of its own and assumes different names and forms. This can be explained with the help of an example. Just as the various vessels made of clay may bear different names and forms, but in reality they are nothing but clay.

- ▶ The fundamental teachings of Vedanta philosophy is that all this universe is Brahma; from him does it proceed, into Him it dissolves, in Him it breathes, so let in everyone adore Him calmly.”
- ▶ However, the individual soul is unable to identify itself with the Brahma and gets entangled in the miseries of existence. The soul can get its emancipation only through real knowledge or vidya, which reveals the identity of the atma with the Brahma.
- ▶ In other words salvation is possible through the spiritual awakening which follows a spiritual reconstruction through the detachment of the mind from worldly things and through the awareness of this fundamental unity in diversity.

Major causes of the emergence of Non-Vedic Cults

- During Later Vedic period, the sacrifices became mandatory for receiving favour of God or fulfilling any wish. The scriptures suggested various types of sacrifices, which were time-money consuming and filled with violence. Besides, similar to the sacrifices, various types of specialized priests and multiple Gods also emerged in the society. In all, the entire system became very complex and, except favorable to priest class, beyond the limits of common person.
- The later Vedic culture based on rigid caste-system. The Vedic culture represented with the hierarchy of castes, proliferation of castes and sub castes, humiliating condition of women and Shudras etc. The non-Kshatriya rulers and economical superior trader class, along with common person, found no prestigious place or respect in this system.
- The Vedic literature was varied and specialized, however, it was written in ambiguous Sanskrit language, which was known to only Brahmins. Hence, it was necessary for the common person to know their religion in understandable and clear language and literature.
- Even among Vedic people, many thinkers were dissatisfied by the ritual extremity of Later Vedic period. Hence, they created a different kind of Vedic literature, i.e. the Upanishads. The Upanishads preferred meditation and introspection to the extravagant sacrifices of Vedic scriptures. However, the meditation of Upanishads was revolving around the subjects like atman, Brahma, dvait-advait etc.; even more abstract than the rituals themselves. Hence, people were in need of a new, unambiguous, simple thought or belief systems.

Buddhism

- Buddhism arose in north India in late 6th century which was a period of great social change and intense religious activity. At this time in India, there was much discontent with Brahmanic (Hindu high-caste) sacrifice and ritual.
 - ▶ Buddhism, religion and philosophy developed from the teachings of the Buddha and spreading from India to Central and Southeast Asia, China, Korea, and Japan, and played a central role in the spiritual, cultural, and social life of Asia.
 - ▶ The most important sects to arise at the time of the Buddha, however, were the Ajivikas (Ajivakas), who emphasized the rule of fate (niyati), and the Jains, who stressed the need to free the soul from matter.
 - ▶ Although the Jains, like the Buddhists, have often been regarded as atheists, their beliefs are actually more complicated. Unlike early Buddhists, both the Ajivikas and the Jains believed in the permanence of the elements that constitute the universe, as well as in the existence of the soul.
 - ▶ In the centuries following the Buddha's death, Buddhism developed in two directions represented by two different groups.
 - ▶ One was called the Hinayana (Sanskrit: "Lesser Vehicle"), a term given to it by its Buddhist opponents. This more conservative group, which included what is now called the Theravada (Pali: "Way of the Elders") community, compiled versions of the Buddha's teachings that had been preserved in collections called the Sutta Pitaka and the Vinaya Pitaka and retained them as normative.
 - ▶ The other major group, which calls itself the Mahayana (Sanskrit: "Greater Vehicle"), recognized the authority of other teachings that, from the group's point of view, made salvation available to a greater number of people. These supposedly more advanced teachings were expressed in sutras that the Buddha purportedly made available only to his more advanced disciples.
 - ▶ As Buddhism spread, it encountered new currents of thought and religion. In some Mahayana communities, for example, the strict law of karma (the belief that virtuous actions create pleasure in the future and nonvirtuous actions create pain) was modified to accommodate new emphases on the efficacy of ritual actions and devotional practices.

- ▶ During the second half of the 1st millennium CE, a third major Buddhist movement, Vajrayana (Sanskrit: “Diamond Vehicle”; also called Tantric, or Esoteric, Buddhism), developed in India. This movement was influenced by gnostic and magical currents pervasive at that time, and its aim was to obtain spiritual liberation and purity more speedily.
- ▶ Despite these vicissitudes, Buddhism did not abandon its basic principles. Instead, they were reinterpreted, rethought, and reformulated in a process that led to the creation of a great body of literature.
- ▶ This literature includes the Pali Tipitaka (“Three Baskets”)—the Sutta Pitaka which contains the Buddha’s sermons; the Vinaya Pitaka which contains the rule governing the monastic order; and the Abhidhamma Pitaka which contains doctrinal systematizations and summaries.
- ▶ These Pali texts have served as the basis for a long and very rich tradition of commentaries that were written and preserved by adherents of the Theravada community. The Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions have accepted as Buddhavachana (“the word of the Buddha”) many other sutras and tantras, along with extensive treatises and commentaries based on these texts.

Philosophy of Buddhism

- The Buddhist philosophy comprises of four arya-satya, ashtang-marga, panchashila, four brhamavihara and classical concepts like pratityasamutpada, anityavada, anatmavada.
- The Buddha based his entire teaching on the fact of human suffering and the ultimately dissatisfying character of human life. Existence is painful. The conditions that make an individual are precisely those that also give rise to dissatisfaction and suffering. Individuality implies limitation; limitation gives rise to desire; and, inevitably, desire causes suffering, since what is desired is transitory.
 - ▶ Living amid the impermanence of everything and being themselves impermanent, human beings search for the way of deliverance, for that which shines beyond the transitoriness of human existence—in short, for enlightenment.
 - ▶ The Buddha’s doctrine offered a way to avoid despair. By following the “path” taught by the Buddha, the individual can dispel the “ignorance” that perpetuates this suffering.
 - ▶ Buddha’s teachings are very practical and suggest how to attain peace of mind and ultimate liberation from this material world. The knowledge realized by Buddha is reflected in the following **four noble truths**:
 - ◆ **There is suffering in human life:** There is pain with birth. Separation from the pleasant is also painful. All the passions that remain unfulfilled are painful. Pain also comes when objects of sensuous pleasure are lost. Thus, life is all pain.
 - ◆ **There is cause of suffering:** It is desire that motivates the cycle of birth and death. Therefore, desire is the fundamental cause of suffering.
 - ◆ **There is cessation of suffering:** When passion, desire and love of life are totally destroyed, pain stops. This Truth leads to the end of sorrow, which causes pain in human life. It involves destruction of ego (aham or ahamkara), attachment, jealousy, doubt and sorrow. That state of mind is the state of freedom from desire, pain and any kind of attachment. It is the state of complete peace, leading to nirvana.
 - ◆ **Path of Liberation:** Initially starting with pessimism, the Buddhist philosophy leads to optimism. Although there is a constant suffering in human life, it can be ended finally. Buddha suggests that the way or the path leading to liberation is eight-fold, through which one can attain nirvana.
- ▶ **Eight-fold Path to Liberation (Nirvana):**
 - ◆ **Right Vision:** One can attain right vision by removing ignorance. Ignorance creates a wrong idea of the relationship between the world and the self. It is on account of wrong understanding of man that he takes the non-permanent world as permanent. Thus, the right view of the world and its objects is the right vision.
 - ◆ **Right Resolve:** It is the strong will-power to destroy thoughts and desires that harm others. It includes sacrifice, sympathy and kindness towards others.
 - ◆ **Right Speech:** Man should control his speech by right resolve. It means to avoid false or unpleasant words by criticizing others.
 - ◆ **Right Conduct:** It is to avoid activities which harm life. It means to be away from theft, excessive eating, the use of artificial means of beauty, jewellery, comfortable beds, gold etc.

- ◆ **Right Means of Livelihood:** Right livelihood means to earn one's bread and butter by right means. It is never right to earn money by unfair means like fraud, bribery, theft, etc.
- ◆ **Right Effort:** It is also necessary to avoid bad feelings and bad impressions. It includes self-control, stopping or negation of sensuality and bad thoughts, and awakening of good thoughts.
- ◆ **Right Mindfulness:** It means to keep one's body, heart and mind in their real form. Bad thoughts occupy the mind when their form is forgotten. When actions take place according to the bad thoughts, one has to experience pain.
- ◆ **Right Concentration:** If a person pursues the above seven Rights, he will be able to concentrate properly and rightly. One can attain nirvana by right concentration (meditation).
- ▶ **Pancha-shila:**
 - ◆ The Buddhist monks expected to follow certain moral values, like,
 - ◆ Ahimsa not to trouble any living being by violence
 - ◆ Satya leaving of false speech and thoughts
 - ◆ Asteya not to wish which is not belong to us or given to us
 - ◆ Brhamacharya to remain abstain from sexual relationships
 - ◆ Aparigraha not to possess which is not needed
- ▶ **Brahma-vihara:**
 - ▶ For cleansing our soul, Buddha suggested following methods, like,
 - ◆ Maitri sustaining kindness towards all leaving beings and leaving of anger, jealousy and breach of trust
 - ◆ Karuna to be sensitive towards the sorrow of others
 - ◆ Mudita to be glad towards the happiness or progress of others
 - ◆ Upeksha awareness of the bounded life of human being with his actions, which create happiness and misery,
- In short, to put an end to the desires and attain moksha, Buddha provided logic of arya-satya, and then suggested solutions in the forms of ashtanga-marga, panchashila and Brahma-vihara.

Pratityasamutpada (the concept of cause-effect)

- According to Buddhism, every things or action has some causes behind them; and, both, the cause and its effect are separate entities. **They say:**
 - ▶ Initially, the entity which we call as cause is finished then the entity, called as action emerged
 - ▶ The cause holds no power to produce any action.
- This concept refutes the atmavadi's principle according to which, the powers in causes gave birth to actions which is happened through some kind of external principle

Anityavada:

- According to Buddhists, everything/being/action/quality is mortal and existed only for time being. Besides, nothing is stable and always succumbs to changes.
- Thus, it refutes the concept of Vedic culture of stability of soul, which is caused by some immortal principle.

Anatmavada:

- Anatmavada questions the existence of soul. According to Vedic everything/being has soul, which is stable and everlasting. Buddhist refutes this concept. They state that 'this so called soul' cannot be experienced, hence, we must agree to such principles, which can be experienced.
- In short, Buddhism refutes the claim of Vedic that everything has some stability and definite principles behind them. Instead, they suggested that there is no stable, immortal principle like soul; in fact, everything is changing & mortal (anatmavada) and independent from the other one as stated in Pratityasamutpada.

Reasons for the spread of Buddhism

- Within a short span of period, Buddhism spread into distant lands of India and abroad. Some of reasons of such popularity can be summarized as follows:
 - ▶ Buddha left his worldly possession and strived in search of truth and solution for human misery. Such a sacrifice was the ideal for the common people. After receiving enlightenment, Buddha shared his knowledge to the common people in their own language and with simple method. Such a chaste, sacrificial, knowledgeable character of Buddha remains an ideal for the common people.
 - ▶ Stress on People's-language The Vedic knowledge and religion was in Sanskrit language, which was ambiguous to the common person, whereas Buddha preached in people's language, i.e. Pali. Hence, people could easily understand Buddha's preaching and codes of conduct.
 - ▶ Philosophy Due to complex and ritualistic nature of Vedic religion and ill systems like that of Varna, common man, as also the trader and ruler class were remained out of its purview. Against this background, Buddha preached in understandable language and provided simple codes of conduct, largely based on universal moral values.
 - ▶ The mechanism of Buddhist Sangha provided a framework and constant supply of missionaries to the people. These missionaries were renowned by their scholarship and chaste-simple characters. They used to mix with public and propagate Buddhism in understandable manner. The people were attracted to this concept and showed respect to the Sangha.
 - ▶ The traders and artisans, although economically superior in society, kept away from Vedic fold. Buddhist gave socio-religious sanctions and legitimization to them. In turn, they supported the Sangha in generous manner. They provided large sum of funds to Buddhist religious constructions and propagation. The missionaries traveled with the caravans of traders, hence their journey became secured and fruitful which helped in propagation. A large number of the rulers also showered favour upon Buddhist religion.

Four Grand Assemblies:

- After the mahaparinirvana of Buddha, Buddhism witnessed the crowd of various versions of Buddha's preaching. Hence, to remove such discrepancy and reach to unanimous platform, a need was felt to rearrange and compile Buddha's original preaching and codify them. For this purpose, grand assemblies of Buddhist followers organized from time to time.
 - ▶ Immediately after the death of Buddha, around 483 BC, during the reign of Ajatshatru of Haryaka dynasty, the first grand assembly organized in the caves of Saptaparni, close to Rajgriha. It was presided by Mahakashyapa. The assembly came up with collection of Buddha's preaching in pitakas. Under the supervision of Upali, Vinaya Pitaka compiled whereas Sutta-pitaka compiled under the supervision of Ananda.
 - ▶ Then during the reign of Kalashoka of Shishunaga dynasty, in 387 BC, second grand assembly organized at Vaishali. In this, monks of Pataliputra and Vaishali introduced some rules, however, debated by monks of Avanti and Kaushambi. The debate not reached to any conclusion; hence, Buddhism witnessed its first major division under the names of Mahasanghika and Sthavirvadis. The Mahasanghik supported new rules whereas the Sthavirvadi decided to stick to the rules, compiled under Vinaya pitaka.
 - ▶ During the reign of Ashoka of Maurya dynasty, in 251 BC, third grand assembly organized at Pataliputra, presided by Moggaliputta Tissa. The assembly came up with the collection of Buddha's philosophy under the volume called as Abhidhammapitaka. The assembly also drove away 60000 monks who were not following Buddha's rules.
 - ▶ In the background of waves of new thinking, Kanishka of Kushana dynasty called the fourth grand assembly at Kundalvana (Kashmir). The assembly came up with the collection of treaties on three pitakas. However, due to the debates between new thinking and traditional scholars, the earlier division was dissolved and united under the name of Hinayana, whereas the new thinkers known as Mahayana.

Hinayana and Mahayana:

- During second grand assembly at Vaishali, Buddhism witnessed its major dissensions due to the intense arguments by the monks of Kaushambi and Avanti and those of Pataliputra and Vaishali. They are called as Sthavirvadis (those who stressed on strict observance of Vinaya-rules) and Mahasanghikas (those who wished to introduce new rules and changes), respectively.

- ▶ After Mauryas, the rulers started favoring Vedic religion than Buddhism. Besides, Vedic religion, in reaction to the popularity of Buddhism, started introspecting itself and making improvisation in their philosophical and practical approaches. At this time, foreign rulers and concepts of art were making entry into Indian soil. Besides, to enlarge mass base, every belief systems were adhering to the process of deification and idol-worship. Hence, these systems started considering Sanskrit language for their scriptures to compete Vedic religion.
- ▶ Against this background, forth grand assembly was organized at Kundalvana. Many Buddhists thinkers, to enlarge mass base were inclined to idol-worship and appealing for other drastic changes in Buddhism. To oppose them, the earlier divisions of Sthavirvadis and Mahasanghikas united under Hinayana, whereas, the new thinkers were called as Mahayana.

Major differences between Hinayana and Mahayana:

- Hinayana stress on Buddha's original preaching whereas Mahayana has been always ready to make changes as per need
- Hinayana strictly adhere to the codes of conduct whereas Mahayana maintained people-oriented flexibility
- Hinayana stress on personal upliftment whereas Mahayana stresses on upliftment of mass
- Hinayana used pali as literary language whereas Mahayana used Sanskrit as literary language
- Hinayana believed in symbols worship whereas Mahayana adopted worship of Buddha's idol

Decline of Buddhism:

- Buddhism witnessed clash of philosophy and stress on codes among various versions. In due course of time, it gradually declined and, around the end of 7th century, became almost invisible from the Indian land. Major causes of such a decline were:
 - ▶ **Loss of Patronage:** The favour and support of rulers were one of the causes for the spread of Buddhism. However, after the Mauryas, India was mushroomed with those kings who favoured Vedic religion. In fact, the rulers and their officers started resurrecting Vedic religion by performing huge sacrifices and giving donations. It hampered the support of Buddhism.
 - ▶ **Introspection of Vedic religion:** The speedy growth of non-Vedic religions forced Vedic religion to introspect within their own belief systems. Thus, they made some reforms in the erstwhile rigid ritualistic Vedic religion. It became people oriented. It introduced concepts like temples for mass-congregation, idol-worships, devotional mode of prayers, simple code of conducts, establishment of monasteries, pilgrimages etc. Hence, crowds of people were attracted to Vedic religion.
 - ▶ **Dissensions in Buddhism:** Immediately after the departure of Buddha, Buddhism faced with dissensions. To curb such conflicts and reach to unanimity, contemporary rulers organized grand assemblies from time to time. However, they proved in vain. Besides, for the people orientation, Buddhism also accepted the concepts like idol-worship, Sanskrit-language, concept of heaven & hell, cycle of birth etc. Such concepts marred the individualistic identity of Buddhism, which was originally revolutionary and heterodox in nature.
 - ▶ **Foreign invasion:** Except Menander and Kanishka, almost all foreign rulers were followers of the Vedic religion. Especially, the aggressive Huna tribe was the follower of Shaiva cult. It destroyed Buddhist monastery and learning centres. It was a final blow of dispersed Buddhists at that time.
- By introducing religion based on simple philosophy and codes of conduct Buddhism presented a challenge to the then ritualistic, complex and isolated Vedic religion. Due to Buddhism, India witnessed the true religion of common person. Besides, it is credited of spreading Indian culture into distant foreign lands.

Jainism

- Along with Hinduism and Buddhism, Jainism is one of the three most ancient Indian religious traditions still in existence and an integral part of South Asian religious belief and practice. While often employing concepts shared with Hinduism and Buddhism, the result of a common cultural and linguistic background, the Jain tradition must be regarded as an independent phenomenon rather than as a Hindu sect or a Buddhist heresy, as some earlier Western scholars believed.
 - ▶ The name Jainism derives from the Sanskrit word ji, "to conquer." It refers to the ascetic battle that, it is believed, Jain renunciants (monks and nuns) must fight against the passions and bodily senses to gain enlightenment, or omniscience and purity of soul.

- ▶ The most illustrious of those few individuals who have achieved enlightenment are called Jina (literally, “Conqueror”), and the tradition’s monastic and lay adherents are called Jain (“Follower of the Conquerors”), or Jaina. This term came to replace a more ancient designation, Nirgrantha (“Bondless”), originally applied to renunciants only.
- ▶ Like the Charvakas, the Jains too do not believe in the Vedas, but they admit the existence of a soul. They also agree with the orthodox tradition that suffering (pain) can be stopped by controlling the mind and by seeking right knowledge and perception and by observing the right conduct.
- ▶ The Jaina philosophy was first propounded by the tirthankar Rishabha Deva. The names of Ajit Nath and Aristanemi are also mentioned with Rishabha Deva. There were twenty-four tirthankaras who actually established the Jaina darshan.
- ▶ The first tirthankar realised that the source of Jaina philosophy was Adinath. The twenty-fourth and the last tirthankar was named Vardhaman Mahavira who gave great impetus to Jainism. He strongly believed in the importance of celibacy or brahamcharya.
- ▶ The centre of Jainism is the concept of atman; the basic philosophic approach is the stress on ahimsa, and its foundation is anekantavada. Jainism or the philosophy of Jain revolved around these basic concepts. Here, we would take a brief review of the philosophy of Jainism and its major contributions to the Indian culture, like, syadavada and tools of moksha.

Anekantavada (Non-absolutism)

- The concept of Anekantavada is the foundation of Jaina philosophy, at the same time; it is an inclusive approach to look at the world. According to this concept, no single definite, decisive or conclusive aspect (ek-anta) of anything is existed; on the contrary, various kinds of possibilities or meanings (aneka-anta) were existed when we make a statement about anything.
 - ▶ According to Jain, if we wish to make statements about anything, instead of one decisive argument, seven kinds of possible statements can be made. This concept is called as ‘**Syadavada**’. According to this concept, our knowledge about anything is always one-ended, i.e. one-sided (ek-antaka). However, the truth about any thing is, in actual, multi-dimensional or open-ended (aneka-anta). That is why; we can explain the truth in many possible ways.
 - ▶ Hence, a common person who is bounded by his actions or delusions (the karmabaddha jiva) should abstain himself from making extreme or decisive comments of any things. Instead, he should be compassionate in his approach to the world.
 - ▶ In short, the concept appeals compassion and inclusive spirit among us and thus protests the fanatics who excludes. It is an elaboration of the concept of ahimsa, which appeals to remain abstained from violation of thoughts or views of other people.

Jiva (soul) & Moksha (true knowledge)

- The Jain believed that every living thing on earth has a jiva (soul) in its body or physical structure. According to them, the soul is bounded by various actions and hence it is originally impure. To gain true knowledge (Moksha), it has to be pure or un-bound itself from those actions which pollute it and make it impure. When, it is freed from any bound, it receives the knowledge (keval-dnyana). Then only, it can receive true knowledge of any thing, i.e. the stage of Moksha.
- However to reach to the stage of understanding of the true knowledge, the soul has to travel through some stages. The Jainas believe that the natural and supernatural things of the universe can be traced back to seven fundamental elements. They are jiva, ajivaa, astikaya, bandha, samvara, nirjana, and moksa.
 - ▶ **Jiva (soul)**, which is different from the body, which is full of senses. The soul encourages one to engage in activities, which are good or bad. It also suffers from the effects of its actions, good or bad. **Ajiva** means unconscious and life-less.
 - ▶ Various kinds of actions/deeds (karma) flows (strava) to the soul (jiva) and pollute it. Such flow of activities or pollution is called as **astrava**. However, if the actions which bound the soul are good (**shubha**)- effecting then it is called as **Punya**. In other case, it is pap. Due to the flow of activities or pollution, the soul became bounded, called as **Bandha**. To control and stop the flow of such activities which pollutes and bound the soul is called as **Sanvara**.
 - ▶ However, by stopping only the flow does not mean that the soul is freed from any bondage. It should clear those actions, which was already stored and bounded the soul. This is called as **Nirjara** and it can be achieved after a great penance.

- ▶ After clearing the stored pollution (nirjara) and stopping the flow of activities or pollution (sanvara), the soul is freed from the bondage and this stage is called as '**Moksha**'.
- ▶ Substances like body which exist and envelope (like a cover) are astikaya. Anastikayas like 'time' have no body at all. The substance is the basis of attributes (qualities). The attributes that we find in a substance are known as dharmas.
- ▶ The Jainas believe that things or substance have attributes. These attributes also change with the change of kala (time). From their point of view, the attributes of a substance are essential, and eternal or unchangeable. Without essential attributes, a thing cannot exist. So they are always present in everything. For example, consciousness (chetana) is the essence of the soul; desire, happiness and sorrow are its changeable attributes.

Three Jewels & Five Maha-vratas

- **The Three Jewels** constitute the basis of the Jain doctrinal and ethical stance. Three jewels of Jainism are right faith (Samyak Darsana) , right knowledge (Samyak jnana) and Right conduct (Samyak Caritra).
- Right knowledge, faith, and practice must be cultivated together because none of them can be achieved in the absence of the others. Jainas are expected to have right faith, right knowledge and right conduct because these together constitute the path of salvation.
 - ▶ **Right Faith:** Belief in the seven aspects of Reality (Tattvas) as described by Jina or Arihanta is right faith.
 - ▶ **Right knowledge:** The right knowledge is one by which the person becomes free from attachment and his soul is purified. We can achieve the Right knowledge by strong faith in the teaching of aritantas and through the study of their scriptures.
 - ▶ **Right Conduct:** Withdrawl from the immoral conduct and devoting one's self to the moral conduct is the right faith. Without moral observance, the spiritual practices can not be sustained.
- The practice of right conduct has been described as of two kinds- the partial and the complete. House holders (sravakas) start practicing the right conduct partially and in due course of time, if they becomes monks, they practice it completely. The right conduct is based on the practice of **Five Maha-vratas (Main Vows)**, i.e.,
 - ▶ Ahimsā (non-violence),
 - ▶ Satya (truth),
 - ▶ Asteya (not stealing),
 - ▶ Brahmacharya (celibacy or chastity)
 - ▶ Aparigraha (non-attachment)
- It should be emphasized that the Right Conduct also includes all religious and spiritual practices like worship, prayer, charity and so on.
- Right faith leads to calmness or tranquillity, detachment, kindness, and the renunciation of pride of birth, beauty of form, wealth, scholarship, prowess, and fame.
- Right faith leads to perfection only when followed by right practice. Yet, there can be no virtuous conduct without right knowledge, the clear distinction between the self and the non-self. Knowledge without faith and conduct is futile.
- Without purification of mind, all austerities are mere bodily torture. Right practice is thus spontaneous, not a forced mechanical quality. Attainment of right practice is a gradual process, and a layperson can observe only partial self-control; a renunciant, however, is able to observe more comprehensive rules of conduct.
- Two separate courses of conduct are laid down for the ascetics and the laity. In both cases the code of morals is based on the doctrine of nonviolence (ahimsa). Because thought gives rise to action, violence in thought merely precedes violent behaviour.
- Violence in thought, then, is the greater and subtler form of violence because it arises from ideas of attachment and aversion, grounded in passionate states, which result from negligence or lack of care in behaviour.
- Jainism enjoins avoidance of all forms of injury—whether committed by body, mind, or speech—and subscribes emphatically to the teaching that “nonviolence is the highest form of religious practice.” For Jains, this principle, which manifests itself most obviously in the form of vegetarianism, is the single most important component of their tradition's message.

The Spread of Jainism

- By tradition, Jainism was existed before Mahavira. However, due to tenuous efforts of Mahavira and his new contributions like consolidation, reinterpretation of philosophy and codes of conduct, a separate set of codes for laymen, hierarchical systemized monachism; he was credited as an actual founder of Jaina religion.
 - ▶ Among his 11 disciples or ganadharas, Arya Sudharma became the first main preacher or thera. During the period of Nanda dynasty, Sambhutavijaya propagated Jainism. Bhadrabahu, the sixth thera, was contemporary to Chandragupta Maurya.
 - ▶ The basic reason of the spread of Jainism was the support and favours of contemporary rulers. Great rulers like Bimbisara, Ajatshatru, Chandragupta Maurya, Kharvela (north) and southern dynasties like Ganga, Kadamba, Chalukya, Rashtrakuta, and Shilahara accepted Jainism as their personal and royal religion.
 - ▶ They extended their support to Jain for their propagation and consecutive spread. The Jain were mainly concentrated in the region of Mathura; however, due to the patronage of Chalukya rulers of Gujarat and notable dynasties of South, it spread in Gujarat and south India.
 - ▶ Apart from rulers, the trader and artisan's class also accepted Jainism. It spread on the financial base provided by these classes.
 - ▶ Due to the patronage of rulers, Jaina literature and art also flourished. Vast collections of Jaina literature created in the public-language like ardhmagadhi and then Sanskrit, too. Besides, caves-viharas-temples constructed to accommodate the worshipers for large congregations. These places served as educational centres where renowned works and researches on Jainism were undertaken by various scholars, like, Mathura and Shravanbelagola were the most renowned research institutions of Jainism.
 - ▶ The stress of Jainism on the adherence of strict codes of conduct hampered its spread; however, on the other hand, by these, it could retain its oldest form until today.

Jain Assemblies

- During the draught of 12 years in Magadha, Bhadrabahu, with his disciples departed to Shravanbelagola, in South India, whereas, some Jain, mostly Shvetambaras, remained in Magadha under the leadership of Sthulbahubhadra.
 - ▶ Around 300 BC, he organized first grand assembly at Pataliputra. The assembly came up with the classification of Mahavira's preaching in 12 Angas. When, Jain from south India, mostly Digambaras, returned to Magadha, they refuted these Angas and stated that all the original scripture were lost.
 - ▶ After many years, in 512 AD, second grand assembly was held at Vallabhi (Gujarat) presided by Deavardhimani Kshamashramana. Meanwhile, the 12th Anga was lost. Hence, the assembly tried to consolidate and compile the scripture. They created new texts like Upanga and supplemented to remaining Angas.

Digambara & Shvetambara

- Earlier, Jaina remained without cloths. During Chandragupta Maurya's time, most of the Jaina under the leadership of Bhadrabahu left Magadha towards south India. After some period, they returned to Magadha. Meanwhile, the Jaina at Magadha were resorted & become habitual to cover their body with white cloth.
 - ▶ Besides, they have softened some codes of conduct, like permission of women in Jain order, whereas, the Jaina, who returned from south were attached to earlier strict rules and remained cloth-less, and their arrival created dissensions among Jaina.
 - ▶ It divided between the two cults, the Shvetambaras (clad in white-dress) and Digambaras (cloth-less). The Digambara Jaina believed remaining cloth-less and they are against permitting women in the fold of religion, whereas, the Shvetambara Jaina supports participation of women and accepted the white (shveta) cloth to wear.
 - ▶ In due course of time, both these major cults came up with their own version and scriptures of Jainism. Generally, the Digambaras were mostly concentrated in the southern part of India whereas north populated by the Shvetambaras.

The Ajivakas

- During the birth of heterodox religions like Jainism and Buddhism, the cult of Ajivakas also emerged in north India. As there are no available scriptures of this belief system; hence, based on references scattered in Buddhist and Jain literature information about Ajivakas has been deduced.
 - ▶ Makkhaliputra Goshal is perceived as the founder of this cult. According to some, before Goshala, since 117 years, this cult was existed under the leadership of Nandabachcha, Kisasankichcha etc. Goshala was contemporary to Mahavira. In fact, he was the initial disciple of Mahavira and spent six years with him. However, due to debates on the issues of codes of conduct, Goshala left Jainism and founded his new cult-the Ajivaka at Shravasti. Within short span of time, large crowds of people were attracted towards Ajivakas. Especially he had considerable amount of followers in potter community.
 - ▶ It expanded in the area from Avanti (western Madhya Pradesh) to Anga (Bihar). Ashoka and his grandson donated rock-cut caves for Ajivakas in the hills of Barabar and Nagarjuni. These were the earliest known caves in the history of rock-cut cave architecture in India.

Philosophy of Ajivakas

- Ajivaka means one who disregards restrictions, has faith upon destiny, live by his natural tendencies and thus follows free life. They have faith that every being has soul within it, which takes rebirth after each life. However, they disregard the importance of any action and have faith on destiny.
 - ▶ According to them, anything reaches to its predetermined destination without any force of supportive action; natural and spiritual progress is a process happened through the continuous cycle of birth & rebirth; Nothing/being/quality is caused by human action, in fact, it is to be existed due to its own destiny. Whatever happiness and sorrow is there they do not have any cause and cannot avoided.
 - ▶ These concepts gave birth to the philosophy of akarmanyavada i.e. believing on no-action. Goshala says, natthi karma, natthi kiriyam, natthi viriyam (no action, no deeds, and no power). Hence, he called as maskari-ma-karanshila means one who does no action.
 - ▶ The determinism of Goshala gave rise to his concept of amorality. He refutes the kriyavada, i.e. who believes in actions. That leads to his protest against the principle, which believes that due to moral behaviour an individual and society progress.
 - ▶ In short, if one agrees that the things happened without any action, then, the criteria of moral or immoral conscious are naturally remained useless. Hence, Goshal's reliance on destiny and concept of non-action naturally led to the defense of immoral behaviour.
