

UNIT-III

INDIAN RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY, AND PRACTICES

Pre-Vedic and Vedic Religion

The Vedic age itself is divided into the Early Vedic Period (1500 – 1000 BCE) and Later Vedic Period (1000 – 600 BCE)*. The reason being that society underwent drastic changes from the time the first Vedas were written to the appearance of later Vedic scriptures.

Differences Between Early Vedic Age and Later Vedic Age

Early Vedic Period	Later Vedic Period
The caste system was flexible and based on profession rather than birth	The caste system became more rigid in this period with birth being the main criteria
There was no concept of Shudra or untouchables	Shudras became a mainstay in the Later Vedic period. Their sole function was to serve those of the upper-castes
Women were allowed a greater degree of freedom in this period. They were allowed to participate in the political process of the time to a certain extent	Women were restricted from their participation in society by being relegated to subordinate and docile roles
Kingship was fluid as the kings were elected for a fixed period by the local assembly known as <i>Samiti</i>	As society became more urbanized in this period, the need for stable leadership was realized. Thus the absolute rule of the Kings became more and more prominent
Early Vedic society was pastoralist and semi-nomadic in nature	Society became more settled in nature. It became centred around agriculture in general
In the Early Vedic Period, the barter system was more prevalent with little to no monetary value transaction being part of the exchange	Although the barter system was still in practice, it was largely replaced by the exchange of gold and silver coins known as <i>Krishnala</i>
Rigveda. This text is cited as the earliest text from this period	Yajurveda. Samaveda Atharvaveda

Jainism and Buddhism

The difference between the two religions is tabulated as follows:

	Buddhism	Jainism
Practices Involved	The practice of - Meditation, Eightfold Path, to perceive the right view, to get the right aspiration, to deliver a right speech, to conduct right action, to live in a right livelihood, to give the right effort, have the right mindfulness, focus with the right concentration.	The Five vows are - Truth, Non-violence, Non-stealing, Non-attachment, also control over the desires and senses. With a Greater emphasis on non-violence and also the truth. They also follow 3 jewels of the Right Perception, Right Knowledge, and the way to Right Conduct.
Place of Origin	It originated in the Magadh(modern Bihar and east UP) Indian subcontinent	Originated in Magadh (modern Bihar), India.
Belief of God	The idea of an omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent creator is rejected by the Buddhists. The Buddha himself refuted the theistic argument that this universe was created by a self-conscious God.	Jainism does not believe in the one creator that is God.
Use of Statues and Pictures	They use statues, which are used as meditation objects, and it is revered as they reflect the qualities of the leader Buddha.	Common statues.

Similarities between Jainism and Buddhism

The similarities between the two are listed as follows:

- Both religions believe in faith and Karma.
- Both of them are non-theistic religions.
- They both had a common background associated with the Aryan Culture.
- Both religions are founded by the Kshatriyas of Northern India.
- Both the religions were against Vedas and the Vedic culture as well as against Brahmanism.
- Both opposed the sacrifice of animals.

- Both the leaders in their religion preached Satya, Ahimsa, Brahmacharya, and detachment from the materialistic world.

Jainism History

The origins of the religion Jainism are uncertain. The Jains claim that their religion is eternal, and they consider Rishabhanatha as the founder in the present time cycle, he who lived for 8,400,000 Purva years. Rishabhanatha is the first Tirthankara among the other 24 Tirthankaras who are considered mythical figures by historians.

Three Principles of Jainism

Jainism is a religion that believes in self-help. In this religion, there are no gods or any spiritual beings who will help human beings.

The three guiding principles followed by Jainism are called the 'three jewels', which are –

- Right Belief
- Right Knowledge
- Right Conduct

Also, the supreme principle of the Jain religion is following non-violence or ahimsa.

Mahavira and Buddha

Mahavira is often regarded as the founder of Jainism, but the Jains believe that the 23 previous Tirthankaras also embraced the religion. Parshvanatha was born 273 years before Mahavira was born. Parshvanatha is a Tirthankara whom the modern Western historians considered to be a historical figure, who lived in about the 8th century BCE.

Buddhism religion's founder is Gautam Buddha. The word Buddha means the “enlightened one”. He believed that the path to enlightenment is attained by utilizing morality, meditation, and gaining wisdom. Buddha's most important teachings are known as The Four Noble Truths, which are essential to understand this religion.

Teachings of Mahavira

1. One should always speak the truth.
2. Control over self is very important.
3. There is no logic in accumulating a lot of wealth that cannot be spent.
4. Be honest with everybody.
5. Following the path of non-violence.

6. Be compassionate towards all living beings.
7. Belief in the Soul and Karma
8. Non-Belief in the one God
9. Rejection of the Rituals

Six System Indian Philosophy

- Over centuries, India's intellectual exploration of truth has come to be represented by six systems of philosophy. These are known as Vaishesika, Nyaya, Samkhya, Yoga, Purva Mimansa and Vedanta or Uttara Mimansa.
 - These six systems of philosophy are said to have been founded by sages Konada, Gotama, Kapila, Patanjali, Jaimini and Vyasa, respectively. These philosophies still guide scholarly discourse in the country.
- The six systems of philosophy were developed over many generations with contributions made by individual thinkers. However, today, we find an underlying harmony in their understanding of truth, although they seem distinct from each other.

Orthodox Schools of Indian Philosophy

Orthodox (astika) schools, originally called sanatana dharma, are collectively referred to as Hinduism in modern times. The ancient Vedas are their source and scriptural authority. Hinduism consists of six systems of philosophy & theology.

- **Samkhya (Kapila):** Samkhya is the oldest of the orthodox philosophical systems, and it postulates that everything in reality stems from purusha (self, soul or mind) and prakriti (matter, creative agency, energy).
 - Purush cannot be modified or changed while prakriti brings change in all objects.
- **Yoga (Patanjali):** Yoga literally means the union of two principal entities. Yogic techniques control body, mind & sense organs, thus considered as a means of achieving freedom or mukti.
 - 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**).

- Yoga admits the existence of God as a teacher and guide.
- **Nyaya (Gautama Muni):** Nyaya Philosophy states that nothing is acceptable unless it is in accordance with reason and experience (scientific approach). Nyaya is considered as a **technique of logical thinking**.
 - Nyaya Sutras say that there are four means of attaining valid knowledge: perception, inference, comparison, and verbal testimony.
- **Vaisheshika (Kanada):** The basis of the school's philosophy is that all objects in the physical universe are reducible to a finite number of atoms and Brahman is regarded as the fundamental force that causes consciousness in these atoms.
 - Vaisheshika system is considered as the realistic and objective philosophy of universe.
 - The reality according to this philosophy has many bases or categories which are substance, attribute, action, genus, distinct quality and inherence.
 - Vaisheshika thinkers believe that all objects of the universe are composed of five elements—earth, water, air, fire and ether.
 - 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.
 - **The Vaisheshika and Nyaya schools eventually merged** because of their closely related metaphysical theories (Vaisheshika only accepted perception and inference as sources of valid knowledge).
- **Purva Mimamsa (Jaimini):** This philosophy encompasses the Nyaya-vaisheshika systems and emphasises the concept of valid knowledge. According to Purva Mimamsa, Vedas are eternal and possess all knowledge.

- According to Mimamsa philosophy Vedas are eternal and possess all knowledge, and religion means the fulfilment of duties prescribed by the Vedas.
- It says that the essence of the Vedas is dharma. By the execution of dharma one earns merit which leads one to heaven after death.
- **Vedanta:** The Vedanta, or Uttara Mimamsa, school concentrates on the philosophical teachings of the Upanishads (mystic or spiritual contemplations within the Vedas), rather than the Brahmanas (instructions for ritual and sacrifice). The school separated into six sub-schools, each interpreting the texts in its own way and producing its own series of sub-commentaries:
 - **Advaita (Adi Shankara):** It states that both the individual self (Atman) and Brahman are the same, and knowing this difference causes liberation.
 - **Visishtadvaita (Ramanuja):** It believes that all diversity is subsumed to a unified whole.
 - **Dvaita (Madhvacharya):** It considers Brahman and Atman as two different entities, and Bhakti as the route to eternal salvation.
 - **Dvaitadvaita (Nimbarka):** It states that the Brahman is the highest reality, the controller of all.
 - **Shuddhadvaita (Vallabhacharya):** It states that both God and the individual self are the same, and not different.
 - **Achintya Bheda Abheda (Chaitanya Mahaprabhu):** It emphasizes that the individual self (Jīvatman) is both different and not different from Brahman.

Who Was Shankaracharya?

Shankaracharya (born **Adi Shankara**) was an Indian philosopher who lived from about 788-820 CE. He is considered one of the most influential figures in the history of Indian philosophy. He is best known for his philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, which teaches that there is a single reality, which is the underlying basis of all appearances.

Shankara is also credited with unifying the various schools of Hindu thought and helping to revive Hinduism after the Islamic invasions.

Some Of His Famous Quotes?

Shankaracharya was a well-known philosopher who is credited with defining Hinduism. He authored numerous texts on the subject and is considered one of the most influential thinkers.

“The ignorant man mistakes the true knowledge for ignorance.”

“The Self is not born, does not die; It is unborn, eternal, ever-existing.”

“There is only one way to get rid of the error: to know the truth.”

Philosophical Doctrines

A philosophical branch is a broad division of the overall subject. A philosophical doctrine is a particular theory, principle, position, system, code of beliefs or body of teachings. These are the famous “-isms” of Philosophy.

Within each branch, there are any number of related, similar or opposing doctrines covering different aspects of the whole, although many doctrines overlap with, and may have repercussions in, more than one branch of Philosophy.

The distinction between philosophical doctrines or theories, and the various movements or schools of philosophy is sometimes blurred.

Philosophy as a whole is traditionally split into four or more main branches. The main four are:

Metaphysics (the study of existence and the nature of reality)	Epistemology (the study of knowledge , and how and what we know)	Ethics (the study of how people should act , and what is good and valuable)	Aesthetics (the study of basic philosophical questions about art and beauty)
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Other Heterodox Sects

The five most studied *Nāstika* schools of Indian philosophies, sometimes referred to as heterodox schools, are Buddhism, Jainism, Chārvāka, Ājīvika,

and Ajñāna.^{[14][15]} However, this orthodox-heterodox terminology is a construct of Western languages, and lacks scholarly roots in Sanskrit. Recent scholarly studies state that there have been various heresiological translations of Āstika and Nāstika in 20th century literature on Indian philosophies, but many are unsophisticated and flawed.^[5]

Bhakti Movement

The Bhakti movement started in the 7th Century-8th Century in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Later it spread to Karnataka, Maharashtra, and it reached North India in the 15th Century. The Bhakti movement reached its peak in the 15th Century and 17th Century. The following people were pioneers of the Bhakti movement in their respective states.

Founders of the Bhakti Movement

Below table gives a list of famous proponents of Bhakti Movement

Tamil Nadu & Kerala	Alvaras (devotees of Vishnu) and Nayanars (devotees of Shiva)
Karnataka	Basavanna, Akkamahadevi, Allama Prabhu
Maharashtra	Jnanadev, Namdev, and Tukaram
Northern India	Ramananda, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Guru Nanak, Kabir Das, Ravi Das, Nanak, Meerabai

Bhakti Movement started from South India, by Alvaras and Nayanars. Alvaras are the devotees of Lord Vishnu and Nayanars are devotees of Lord Shiva. These devotees travelled to various places singing hymns in praise of their Gods. Many temples were built that became sacred places of pilgrimage. Some of the causes of the rise in the Bhakti movement are given below.

1. Evil practices in Hinduism
2. Fear of spread of Islam

3. Caste systems
4. Complicated ritualism
5. Need for fulfilling method of worship and salvation.

What was the main principle of Bhakti Movement?

Some of the main principles of Bhakti Movement are given below

1. God is one
2. All men are equal
3. Give up caste practices
4. Devotion is more important than rituals.

What are the effects of the Bhakti Movement?

1. Introduced Social giving like Seva
2. Introduced dana (charity)
3. Community kitchens with free food.
4. Believed in Non-violence (Ahimsa)
5. Helping poor farmers and feeding poor people.
6. Providing free hostels for poor people
7. Promoting folk culture.

Sufi movement

Islam entered India in the 7th century CE in the form of merchants from Saudi Arabia who traded with the western coastal regions of India. After that in the north, the religion entered Multan and Sind when the regions were captured by Muhammad Bin Qasim in the 8th century CE. Sufism, however, gained prominence in the 10th and 11th centuries during the reign of the Delhi Sultanate.

In India, Sufism adopted many native Indian concepts such as yogic postures, music and dance. Sufism found adherents among both Muslims and Hindus.

There were two broad Sufi orders:

1. Bashara – Those who obeyed Islamic laws.
2. Beshara – Those who were more liberal.

The Beshara was also called 'mast kalandar'. They comprised wandering monks who were also called Baba. They did not leave any written accounts.

- Sufism was a liberal reform movement within Islam. It had its origin in Persia and spread into India in the 11th century. Most of the Sufis (mystics) were persons of deep devotion who disliked the display of wealth and degeneration of morals following the establishment of the Islamic empire. They laid great emphasis on love as the bond between God and the individual soul. Love of God meant love of humanity and therefore, Sufis believed service to humanity was tantamount to service to God. In Sufism, self-discipline was considered an essential condition to gain knowledge of God by a sense of perception. While the orthodox Muslims emphasise external conduct, the Sufis lay stress on inner purity. The orthodox Muslims believe in the blind observance of rituals, the Sufis consider love and devotion as the only means of attaining salvation. Sufism also laid stress on meditation, good actions, repentance for sins, prayers, pilgrimage, fasting, charity and controlling of passion by ascetic practices.
- By the 12th century, the Sufis were organised in 12 orders or Silsilas. A Silsila was generally led by a prominent mystic who lived in a Khanqah or hospice along with his disciples. The link between the teacher or pir or murshid and his disciples or murids was a vital part of the Sufi system. Every pir nominated a successor or wali to carry on his work. Gradually, the Khanqahs emerged as important centres of learning and preaching. Many Sufis enjoyed the sama or musical congregation in their Khanqahs. In fact, qawwali developed during this period.
- The four most popular Silsilas were the Chistis, Suhrawardis, Qadririyas and Naqshbandis.

Socio religious reform movement of 19th century

India in the 19th century witnessed a series of reform movements undertaken in various parts of the country. These movements were oriented toward a restructuring of the Indian society along modern lines.

- The Indian society in the first half of the 19th century was caste-ridden, decadent and rigid.
- The conquest of India by the British during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, exposed some serious weaknesses and drawbacks of Indian social institutions.

- When the British came to India, they introduced the English language as well as certain modern ideas. These ideas were those of liberty, social and economic equality, fraternity, democracy and justice which had a tremendous impact on Indian society.
- As a consequence, several individuals and movements sought to bring about changes in social and religious practices with a view to reforming and revitalizing society.
- These efforts, collectively known as the Renaissance, were complex social phenomena. It is important to note that this phenomenon occurred when India was under the colonial domination of the British.
- There were some enlightened Indians like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chand Vidyasagar, Dayanand Saraswati and many others who were willing to fight and bring reforms to society so that it could face the challenges of the West.

Types of Reform Movements

Basically, there were two kinds of reform movements in the 19th century in India. Given below are the details about the same, important from the civil services exam preparation:

1. Reformist

These movements responded with the time and scientific temper of the modern era.

2. Revivalist

These movements started reviving ancient Indian traditions and thoughts and believed that western thinking ruined Indian culture and ethos.

Reformist Movements

Some of the reformist movements of the 18th and 19th centuries are discussed below:

Brahmo Samaj



Founded in 1828 in Calcutta by pioneer social reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772 – 1833), the movement fought against idol worship, polytheism, caste oppression, unnecessary rituals and other social evils like Sati, polygamy, purdah system, child marriage, etc. Society also strove for women's rights like widow remarriage and education of women. It also fought, attacked prevailing superstitions among Hindus.

Aligarh Movement



Sayyid Ahmed Khan founded Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh in 1875. Later, it became Aligarh Muslim University. It offered modern education to Muslims.

Prarthana Samaj

- In 1863, Keshub Chandra Sen helped found the Prarthana Samaj in Bombay.
- The Prarthana Samaj preached monotheism and denounced priestly domination and caste distinctions.
- Its activities also spread to South India, through the efforts of the Telugu reformer, Veeresalingam.

- Chandavarkar, basically a philosopher, was a great leader of the Prarthana Samaj.

Revivalist Movements

Some of the revivalist movements are discussed below:

Arya Samaj



- The social and religious reform in North India was spearheaded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883) who founded the Arya Samaj in 1875.
- This society strove against idolatry, polytheism, rituals, priesthood, animal sacrifice, child marriage and the caste system. It also encourages the dissemination of western scientific knowledge.
- They worked for the improvement in the condition of women, advocated social equality and denounced untouchability and caste rigidities.

Read more about Swami Dayananda Saraswati, from the linked article.

Deoband Movement

It was a revivalist movement. In 1866, Muhammad Qasim Wanotavi and Rashid Ahamad Gangohi founded a school in Deoband (Uttar Pradesh, Saharanpur District). Deoband movement focused on uplifting the Muslim community through religious education.

Religious Beliefs and Practices In India

Religion is an important part of Indian culture. It helps to bind people together and gives them a sense of identity. Religion also provides Indians with a moral code to live by and helps to instil values such as honesty, compassion, and respect.

There are many religions practised in India, the most prevalent being Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, and Buddhism. Although India is a secular country, religion still plays a significant role in the lives of most Indians.

- Hinduism

Hinduism is the dominant religion of India, with around 80% of the population identifying as Hindu. Hindus believe in a pantheon of gods and goddesses, as well as numerous other spiritual beings. They practice various rituals and ceremonies, which are often tied to specific occasions or phases in an individual's life.

- Islam:

Islam is the second-largest religion in India, with around 14% of the population identifying as Muslim. Muslims believe in one God, and follow the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. They practice various rituals and ceremonies, which are often tied to specific occasions or phases in an individual's life.

- Christianity:

Christianity is a minority religion in India, with around two per cent of the population identifying as Christian. Christians believe in one God, and follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. They practice various rituals and ceremonies, which are often tied to specific occasions or phases in an individual's life.

- Sikhism:

Sikhism is a minority religion in India, with around two per cent of the population identifying as Sikh. Sikhs believe in one God, and follow the teachings of the Gurus. They practice various rituals and ceremonies, which are often tied to specific occasions or phases in an individual's life.

- Buddhism:

Buddhism is a minority religion in India, with around two per cent of the population identifying as Buddhist. Buddhists believe in the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. They practice various rituals and ceremonies, which are often tied to specific occasions or phases in an individual's life.

- Jainism:

Jainism is a minority religion in India, with around two per cent of the population identifying as Jain. Jains believe in ahimsa or non-violence, and follow the teachings of the Tirthankaras. They practise various rituals and ceremonies, which are often tied to specific occasions or phases in an individual's life.

There are many other religions practised in India, including Animism and Zoroastrianism. Each religion has its own unique beliefs and practices.