



Knowledge

TRADITIONS & PRACTICES OF INDIA

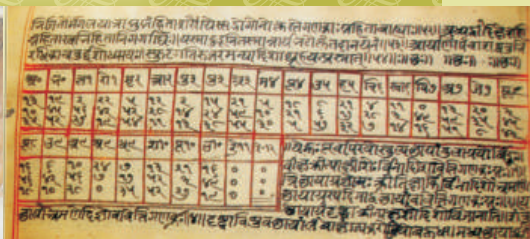
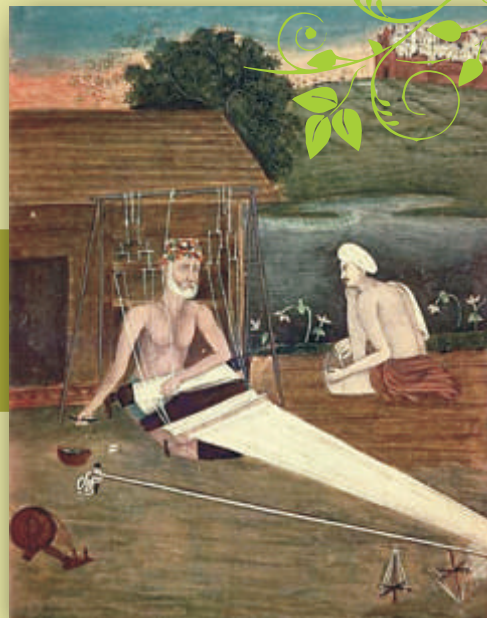
Textbook for Class XI



Statue of Kannagi, Chennai

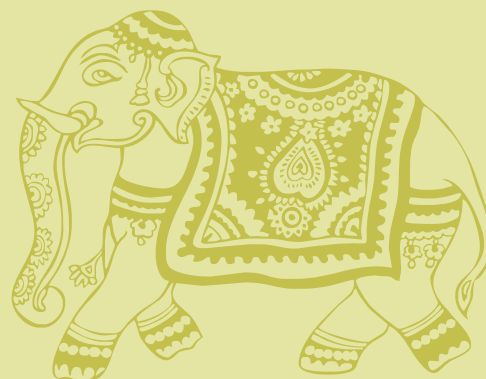
Module 4

Indian Philosophical Systems



CENTRAL BOARD OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

Shiksha Kendra, 2, Community Centre, Preet Vihar,
Delhi-110 092 India



नया आगाज़

आज समय की माँग पर
आगाज़ नया इक होगा
निरंतर योग्यता के निर्णय से
परिणाम आकलन होगा।

परिवर्तन नियम जीवन का
नियम अब नया बनेगा
अब परिणामों के भय से
नहीं बालक कोई डरेगा
निरंतर योग्यता के निर्णय से
परिणाम आकलन होगा।

बदले शिक्षा का स्वरूप
नई खिले आशा की धूप
अब किसी कोमल-से मन पर
कोई बोझ न होगा

निरंतर योग्यता के निर्णय से
परिणाम आकलन होगा।
नई राह पर चलकर मंज़िल को हमें पाना है
इस नए प्रयास को हमने सफल बनाना है
बेहतर शिक्षा से बदले देश, ऐसे इसे अपनाए
शिक्षक, शिक्षा और शिक्षित
बस आगे बढ़ते जाएँ
बस आगे बढ़ते जाएँ
बस आगे बढ़ते जाएँ.....





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Textbook for Class XI

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Preface

India has a rich tradition of intellectual inquiry and a textual heritage that goes back to several hundreds of years. India was magnificently advanced in knowledge traditions and practices during the ancient and medieval times. The intellectual achievements of Indian thought are found across several fields of study in ancient Indian texts ranging from the Vedas and the Upanishads to a whole range of scriptural, philosophical, scientific, technical and artistic sources.

As knowledge of India's traditions and practices has become restricted to a few erudite scholars who have worked in isolation, CBSE seeks to introduce a course in which an effort is made to make it common knowledge once again. Moreover, during its academic interactions and debates at key meetings with scholars and experts, it was decided that CBSE may introduce a course titled 'Knowledge Traditions and Practices of India' as a new Elective for classes XI - XII from the year 2012-13. It has been felt that there are many advantages of introducing such a course in our education system. As such in India, there is a wide variety and multiplicity of thoughts, languages, lifestyles and scientific, artistic and philosophical perceptions. The rich classical and regional languages of India, which are repositories of much of the ancient wisdom, emerge from the large stock of the shared wealth of a collective folklore imagination. A few advantages given below are self explanatory.

- India is a land of knowledge and traditions and through this course the students will become aware of our ancient land and culture.
- Learning about any culture particularly one's own culture - whatever it may be - builds immense pride and self-esteem. That builds a community and communities build harmony.
- The students will be learning from the rich knowledge and culture and will get an objective insight into the traditions and practices of India. They will delve deeply to ascertain how these teachings may inform and benefit them in future.
- The textbook has extracts and translations that will develop better appreciation and understanding of not only the knowledge, traditions and practices of India but also contemporary questions and issues that are a part of every discipline and field in some form or another.

This course once adopted in schools across India can become central to student learning; each student brings a unique culture, tradition and practice to the classroom. The content is devised in a way that the educator becomes knowledgeable about his/her students' distinctive cultural

background. This can be translated into effective instruction and can enrich the curriculum thereby benefitting one and all. This insight has close approximation with the pedagogy of CCE.

The course is designed in a way that it embodies various disciplines and fields of study ranging from Language and Grammar, Literature, Fine Arts, Agriculture, Trade and Commerce, Philosophy and Yoga to Mathematics, Astronomy, Chemistry, Metallurgy, Medicine and Surgery, Life Sciences, Environment and Cosmology. This can serve as a good foundation for excellence in any discipline pursued by the student in her/his academic, personal and professional life.

This book aims at providing a broad overview of Indian thought in a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary mode. It does not seek to impart masses of data, but highlights concepts and major achievements while engaging the student with a sense of exploration and discovery. There is an introduction of topics so that students who take this are prepared for a related field in higher studies in the universities.

The examination reforms brought in by CBSE have strengthened the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation System. It has to be ascertained that the teaching and learning methodology of CCE is adopted by the affiliated schools when they adopt this course. The contents have to cultivate critical appreciation of the thought and provide insights relevant for promoting cognitive ability, health and well-being, good governance, aesthetic appreciation, value education and appropriate worldview.

This document has been prepared by a special committee of convenors and material developers under the direction of Dr. Sadhana Parashar, Director (Academic & Training) and co-ordinated by Mrs. Neelima Sharma, Consultant, CBSE.

The Board owes a wealth of gratitude to Professor Jagbir Singh, Professor Kapil Kapoor, Professor Michel Danino, and all those who contributed to the extensive work of conceptualizing and developing the contents. I sincerely hope that our affiliated schools will adopt this new initiative of the Board and assist us in our endeavour to nurture our intellectual heritage.

Vineet Joshi
Chairman



Convenor's Note by Professor Jagbir Singh

In 2012, CBSE decided to introduce an Elective Course 'Knowledge Traditions and Practices of India' for classes XI and XII and an Advisory Committee was constituted to reflect on the themes and possible content of the proposed course. Subsequently Module-Preparation Committees were constituted to prepare ten modules for the first year of the programme to include the following Astronomy, Ayurveda (Medicine and Surgery), Chemistry, Drama, Environment, Literature, Mathematics, Metallurgy, Music and Philosophy.

Each module has;

- I. A Survey article
- ii. Extracts from primary texts
- iii. Suitably interspersed activities to enable interactive study and class work
- iv. Appropriate visuals to engender reading interest, and
- v. Further e- and hard copy readings.

Each module in the course has kept in mind what would be a viable amount of reading and workload, given all that the class IX students have to do in the given amount of time, and controlled the word-length and also provided, where needed, choices in the reading materials.

Each Module consists of:

- I. A Survey Essay (about 1500-2000 words) that introduces and shows the growth of ideas, texts and thinkers and gives examples of actual practice and production.
- ii. A survey-related selection of extracts (in all about 2000 words) from primary sources (in English translation, though for first hand recognition, in some cases, where feasible, the extracts are also reproduced in the original language and script).
- iii. Three kinds of interactive work are incorporated, both in the survey article and the extracts - comprehension questions, individual and collective activities and projects (that connect the reading material and the student to the actual practice and the environment).
- iv. Visuals of thinkers, texts, concepts (as in Mathematics), practices.
- v. Internet audiovisual resources in the form of URLs.
- vi. List of further questions, and readings.

The objective of each module, as of the whole course, is to re-connect the young minds with the large body of intellectual activity that has always happened in India and, more importantly, to

enable them (i) to relate the knowledge available to the contemporary life, theories and practices, (ii) to develop, wherever feasible, a comparative view on a level ground of the contemporary Western ideas and the Indian theories and practices, and (iii) to extend their horizons beyond what is presented or is available and contemplate on possible new meanings, extensions and uses of the ideas - in other words to make them think.

We have taken care to be objective and factual and have carefully eschewed any needless claims or comparisons with western thought. Such things are best left to the readers' judgement.

This pedagogical approach clearly approximates CBSE's now established activity-oriented interactive work inviting the students' critical responses.

It is proposed to upload the first year's modular programme to be downloaded and used by schools, teachers and students.

As a first exercise, we are aware that the content selection, a major difficult task, can be critically reviewed from several standpoints. We do not claim perfection and invite suggestions and concrete proposals to develop the content. We are eagerly looking forward to receiving the feedback from both teachers and students. That would help us refining the content choice, the length and the activities. We will also thankfully acknowledge any inadvertent errors that are pointed out by readers.

The finalisation of this course is thus envisaged as a collective exercise and only over a period of time, the Course will mature. We know that perfection belongs only to God.

If our students enjoy reading these materials, that would be our true reward.

Prof. Jagbir Singh
Convenor



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Content of Module 4



Indian Philosophical Systems

1





Indian Philosophical Systems: A Survey

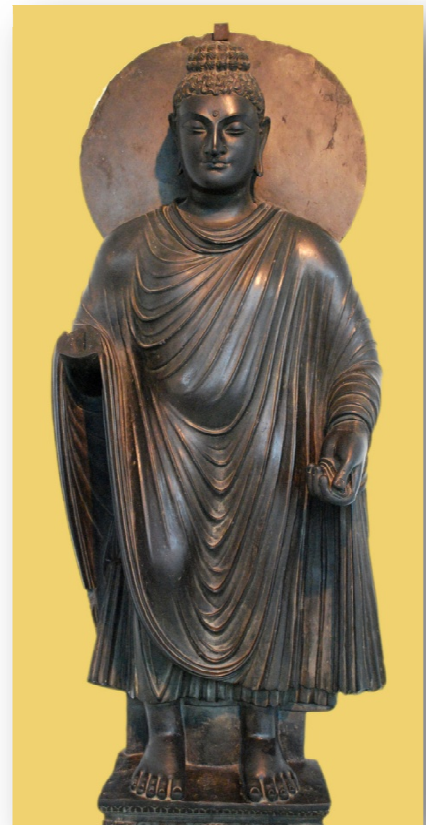
Introduction

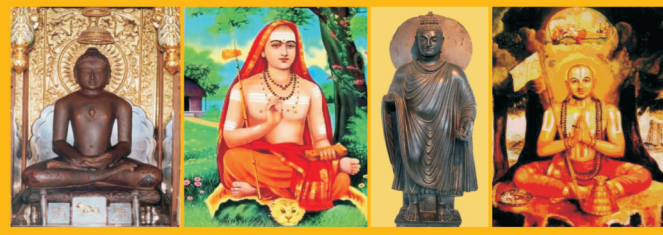
It is a common belief that 'philosophy' deals with abstract, otherworldly matters that are important only for philosophers and have no direct relationship with ordinary daily life.

This is not true, at least in the Indian context. Some 2,500 years ago, Siddhārtha Gautama, better known as Mahātmā Buddha, taught that human life is full of *duḥkha*, suffering, and to overcome this suffering we do not need to ponder over big questions such as 'Does God exist?' or 'Does the soul exist?' Instead we need to follow certain basic rules of living such as 'Do not think only about yourself, think about others as well', 'To be happy in life, we must make others happy', 'We should avoid extremes and take the middle path', 'Do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you', and so on. This is typical Indian philosophy.

It is often said that this is ethics (science of values) and not philosophy, which means that philosophy and ethics are separate.

This may be true of some schools of Western thought but it is not true of India. In India, all knowledge has an ethical goal, the welfare or happiness of all animate beings:





one well-known Upaniṣadic invocation goes *sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ*, ‘May all creatures be happy.’ Knowledge is an instrument of liberation of the self from the narrow bounds of body and mind. As such it leads to man’s freedom, *mokṣa*, from unhappiness. God is not a factor in the acquisition or attainment of knowledge — man is free to choose any of the three paths, the path of knowledge, of action and of devotion. He is not forced to choose, or believe in, One Given Truth, as we believe that there are many ‘truths’, a plurality of truths. We know that there must always be *one* truth but we are doubtful about the possibility of knowing it. We say that there are many paths to truth and we are free to discover the truth for ourselves — we are not forced to accept or conform to what others believe. The individual is not subjected to the community — if he shares a view, it is of his own choice.

Thus after explaining all the issues involved in the need to fight the Mahābhārata war, Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna – ‘I have said to you all that I had to say. You are free to take your own decision.’ (*Bhagavadgīta*, 18.63)

Faced with the immense variety and multiplicity of India’s geographic and social reality, the Indian philosophical mind has concluded that the highest form of knowledge is the knowledge of Oneness of all, of non-difference, of transcending the opposition between the Self and the Other(s). The goal therefore is not promotion of our material comfort but the enhancement of mental and physical well-being of all. This what Mahātmā Buddha meant when he said that we must seek *nirvāṇa* (release or liberation) of all the suffering humanity rather than one’s own individual *nirvāṇa*. Knowledge thus has always been laced with ethics, with the dominant value of *dharma* (righteousness).

Consider now the other belief that philosophy is for philosophers and is restricted to them. This again does not apply to India because, contrary to the popular impression, knowledge in India is not limited to the few. Two institutions have made knowledge a

property of the masses — the institution of learned interpretation, *ṭīkā paramparā*, and the institution of popular lectures on, or explanations of, learned texts, the *kathā pravacana paramparā* which still exists; even today all over India, people sit and directly listen or on TV to the discourses of the learned persons. This widespread institution of popular lectures brings the ideas from the philosophical texts to the ordinary people.

Thus, Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, among the world's renowned philosophers, besides composing numerous intellectual texts, was also a *pravacanakāra*, a popular expounder, who travelled through the length and breadth of India addressing village congregations and explaining and sharing with them his understanding of the philosophy of Vedānta. Indeed, he is a household name in India. The basic belief of the Indian mind that what we see is not the reality, and therefore we must examine what we see and go beyond it, owes itself to one of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's cardinal arguments. He propounded Advaita philosophy (non-dualism), and it is often said that every Indian is an *advaitin* in that every Indian believes that this world / universe is permeated by the Supreme Being and therefore is not different from the Supreme Being.



Most of India's brilliant minds have thus been exegetes, interpreters and popular expounders all at once: Kumārila Bhaṭṭa (6th century CE), (7th century), Śrī Rāmānujācārya (11-12th century), Mādhāvācārya (13th century), Jñāneśvara (14th century), coming right down to the 'Great Moderns', Swāmi Vivekānanda, Śrī Aurobindo, Rāmaṇa Mahārṣi, Mahātmā Gāndhi, Rādhākṛṣṇan, Vinobā Bhāve. Similarly, Śrī Rāmānujācārya expounded for twelve years in the village of Melkote near Mysore, his philosophy in Tamil, the



Śrī Rāmānujācārya

people's language. In the same way, Hemacandrācārya (12th century) of Patan in Gujarat gave discourses in Prākṛt, the spoken language of the people.

In India, therefore, philosophy is neither a privileged discourse nor a discourse of the privileged. In fact the learned words of Indian thought are a part of the ordinary language of the people — words such as *cetanā*, *jīva*, *ātmā*, *saṃsāra*, *dhyāna*, *kṣamā*, *citta*, *buddhi*. It is not just a question of words being present — it is a matter of ideas being still alive. It is an example of what may be called the true democratization of thought in India. This democratization makes knowledge a civilizational value in India.

Comprehension

1. What was Gautama's solution to the problem of suffering?
2. What is the central concern of Indian philosophy?
3. What is *mokṣa*?
4. In what sense are we as individuals truly free?
5. How have the ideas of Indian philosophy become a part of the ordinary Indian's mind?
6. What is *ṭikā paramparā*?
7. What makes Indian philosophy essentially democratic?

Concepts and schools of Indian philosophy

Our word for philosophy is *darśana*, 'seeing' or 'what we see'. The word 'philosophy' means 'love of wisdom', but can also mean 'love of argument', arguing about the nature of reality. *Darśana*, on the other hand, means 'observation of things the way they are'. As such, philosophy in India is a very concrete inquiry into human life and this world.

Scholars have talked of sixteen schools of philosophy. They are classified as *āstika* (theistic) and *nāstika* (atheistic). In India, 'theism' and 'atheism' are decided not on the basis of belief or absence of belief in the existence of God but on the basis of acceptance of the Vedas as valid means of knowledge. Thus the Cārvāka, the Buddhist and the Jain systems are considered atheistic because they do not accept Vedas as *pramāṇa* (reliable means of knowledge).



Mahāvīra
(Courtesy: Wikipedia)

There are nine prominent philosophical schools. Each of them has many *sampradāya* (sub-schools), and for every system there are authoritative texts and thinkers:

	Philosopher	System	Text
1	Br̥haspati	Cārvakadarśana	Br̥haspatyasūtra
2	Mahāvīra	Jainadarśana	Āgama sāhitya
3	Siddhārtha Gautama	Bauddhadarśana	Buddha Tripiṭaka
4	Kapila	Sāṃkhyadarśana	Sāṃkhya-sūtra
5	Pātaṅjali	Yogadarśana	Yoga-sūtra
6	Kaṇāda	Vaiśeṣikadarśana	Vaiśeṣika-sūtra
7	Gautama	Nyāyadarśana	Nyāya-sūtra
8	Jaiminī	Mimāṃsādarśana	Mimāṃsā-sūtra
9	Bādarāyaṇa	Vedāntadarśana	Vedānta-sūtra



We do not know when these texts were composed but it is safe to assume that they were composed in that age of empire building from 800 BCE onwards which was a period of great vigour and intellectual activity in India. It is in the period that Pāṇini composed his celebrated grammar of Sanskrit, the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, and in this age Buddha propounded his philosophy of useful action and good reason.

Every system has a *sūtra* (a text consisting of aphoristic statements) and a *bhāṣya* (commentary). A *sūtra* text states its truths in an extremely terse form so that the small text can be held in the mind, memorized easily. For this reason, it needs to be explained. The commentaries, apart from explaining the text with examples, often extend and enrich the original text and are studied as extensions of the original text. Thus, for example:

<i>Sūtra</i> text	<i>Bhāṣya</i> text
<i>Sāṃkhya</i>	<i>Sūtra Sāṃkhyapравacanabhāṣya</i> of Vijñānābhīṣu
<i>Yoga</i>	<i>Sūtra Vyāsabhāṣya</i> of Vyāsa
<i>Vaiśeṣika</i>	<i>Sūtra Praśastapādabhāṣya</i> of Praśastapāda
<i>Nyāya</i>	<i>Sūtra Nyāyabhāṣya</i> of Vātsyāyana
<i>Mīmāṃsā</i>	<i>Sūtra Śabarabhāṣya</i> of Śabarāsvāmī
<i>Vedānta</i>	<i>Sūtra bhāṣya</i> of Śaṅkarācārya

The central concern of Indian philosophical schools is to help in the achievement of *mokṣa*, liberation from the suffering here and now. *Mokṣa* is not an otherworldly goal and it does not make Indian philosophy otherworldly as is generally said in criticism. *Mokṣa* is freedom from suffering here and now in this world. Achievement of this agenda is the shared agenda of all Indian systems, both atheistic and theistic. They all seek to find an answer to the problem of suffering in this life.



This makes Indian philosophy ‘practical’ philosophy. If the inquiry sets up some categories such as ‘self’ (*ātman*), ‘the great self’ (*paramātmā*), etc., it is argued that these are not abstract but real and are experienced by us in this life. The basic question that is addressed is the question of *duḥkha*, suffering. As is declared by the *Sāṃkhya-sūtra*, the goal (*puruṣārtha*) of human life is to seek liberation (*nivṛtti*) from the three kinds of suffering — accidental, bodily, spiritual. We can do nothing about accidental suffering: an earthquake, for example, may cause injuries or even death. For bodily suffering, the ailments of the body, *Caraka Samhitā*, a fundamental text of Āyurveda (see module **Historical evolution of medical tradition in ancient India**), says we need *cikitsā*, medical treatment; but for spiritual or mental suffering, Caraka says we need to study *darśana* (philosophy).

So the philosophical systems differ from each other in providing different answers to the question, how to overcome suffering? All systems argue that right knowledge is the supreme means of liberation — they differ on the nature of this ‘right knowledge’. But they all agree that this right knowledge has to be a right understanding of the truths of life and reality. It is this awareness of the true nature of human life that protects man from suffering, from the causes of human suffering. Even when suffering is perceived to be unavoidable, it is possible to attain the wisdom to accept suffering and reduce its potential to damage our self. Indian philosophy is thus deeply grounded in the truth of human life, and the major Indian Schools restrict their statement of ontology (what exists; the object of knowledge) to the observable. The hard reality of the given world is never negated or denied.

It is in its fundamental concern with how to overcome suffering, in this fundamental question, that Indian philosophy is perennially relevant and of direct value to day-to-day life.



Philosophy, therefore, is the *siddhi sopāna*, the ladder for freedom from suffering. All the Indian philosophical systems thus address the problem of *duḥkha* in its totality — the real nature of suffering, the real cause(s) of suffering, the state of complete absence of suffering and the means or method of achieving complete absence of suffering.

Each philosophical system gives a considered answer to these questions. All systems agree, we have said above, that right knowledge is the supreme means of liberation, but they differ on the nature of this ‘right knowledge’:

- *Mīmāṃsā* believes that it consists in the proper performance of enjoined acts of duty.
- In *Vedānta*, this knowledge consists in the awareness that all the visible, diverse, multiple forms and objects, both with and without ‘life’, are reflections of the same one being (*sat*) that permeates the entire universe.
- *Sāṃkhya* says that effort must be directed at achieving a discriminating intellect (*vivekajñāna*) which enables us to grasp the true nature of reality as an interface of matter (*prakṛti*) and energy (*puruṣa*).
- Yoga says this knowledge consists in the ability to discipline and restrain the mind’s potential to attach itself to objects of cognition. It teaches, instead, union (*yoga*) with the higher self; this may be achieved through knowledge of the self (*jñāna*), devotion to a chosen deity (*bhakti*), or works free from egotism (*karma*), among other methods.
- *Nyāya* says that a proper knowledge of the true nature of reality (*tattvārtha*) enables one to decide what is to be acquired and grasped and what is to be rejected and renounced.

- The *Vaiśeṣika* system says that exact knowledge of the material reality (*tattvajñāna*) frees one of the bonds of suffering.
- The Jaina system talks of *samyakadarśana*, holistic and balanced knowledge that leads to cessation of action, *karma*.
- The Buddhists attribute all sorrow to *avidyā*, ignorance, and say that the knowledge of what is right action/conduct, *ācāra*, leads to freedom, *nirvāṇa*.

We conclude with Caraka. Caraka was a thinker of medical science but what he says about illness or an ailing person applies to all human beings and all life — after all we all suffer unhappiness or sorrow at one time or the other and therefore we are all ‘ailing’ even if we are ‘fit’ medically. For all, Caraka says:

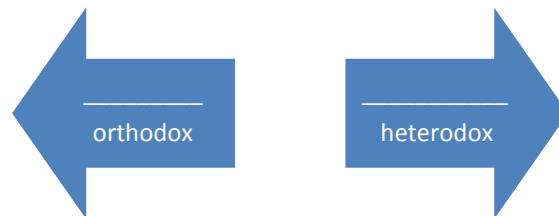
In all ailments, the responsibility is of a physician, but in the mental ailment, it is the patients’ own responsibility. A wise man keeping in mind his own welfare, acts with great care in respect of *dharma*, righteousness, *artha*, material acquisitions, and *kāma*, desires. It is these three that are the cause of internal *sukha* or *duḥkha*. ... Such a patient should discipline himself ... and recognize the truth about himself, the *maryādā* or limits of his family honour and conduct, the nature of time and place and social and economic strength.

Indian philosophy thus is put to use not to promote man’s physical comfort or material success but to ensure his mental health, the well-being of his spirit (self), to help him realize his full intellectual potential and, finally, to enable him to free one’s self of the binds of time, space and his physical body. This is the ‘practical’ dimension of Indian philosophy.



Comprehension

1. Discuss what is meant by the following words:
 - a. *Darśana*
 - b. Philosophy
 - c. *Puruṣārtha*
 - d. *Mokṣa*.
2. a) Elaborate: Indian philosophical systems have been classified as
Āstika — accepting *śrutis* (the Vedas)
Nāstika
b) Fill in the blanks in the following diagram:

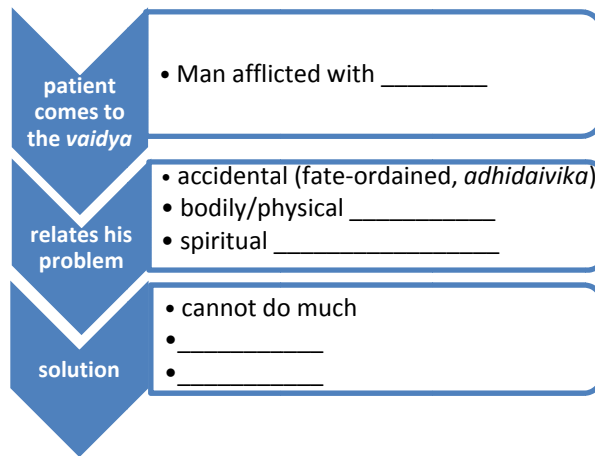


3. You have read how achievement of *mokṣa*, i.e., liberation from suffering, is central to the study of philosophy. What is meant by suffering? Create visuals (sketches / paintings / PowerPoint presentations) to illustrate the three types of suffering.

accidental

bodily

spiritual
4. What do you learn about liberation from the three kinds of suffering? Fill in the blanks:



5. a) Differentiate between *sūtra* and *bhāṣya*.
 b) Of the 16 Indian philosophical systems you will be reading about nine major systems. Fill in the table given below with the correct information about the nine systems.

	Name of philosopher	<i>Sūtra</i>	<i>Darśana</i>
1	Bṛhaspati		
2	Mahāvīra		
3	Gautama Buddha		<i>Bauddhadarśana</i>
4	Kapila		
5	Patanjali		
6	Kaṇāda		<i>Vaiśeṣikadarśana</i>
7	Gautama		
8	Jaiminī		
9	Bādarāyaṇa	<i>Vedānta-sūtra</i>	

Activity 1

- Sit in groups of four.



- One of you is a philosopher of ancient times.
- Each of you is suffering from a distinct *duḥkha*.
- Take turns to visit the philosopher and relate your problem.
- As a philosopher / thinker, advise and provide the cure or remedy. Counsel your patient.

Activity 2

- Complete the visual given below with the correct information.



- Organize a panel discussion on 'Right Knowledge: Key to the Human Dilemma'. Each spokesperson must justify his / her interpretation of 'Right Knowledge'. Form a panel of the following:

three organizers (chairperson, moderator and time-keeper);

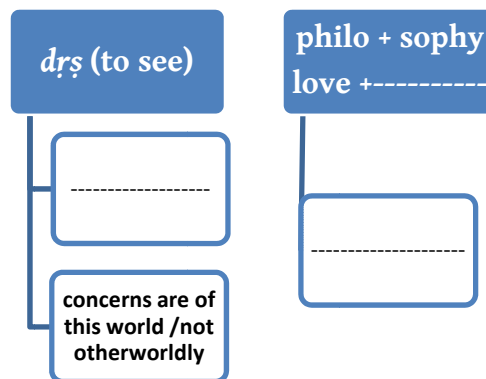


nine participants (one representative as a spokesperson for each of the nine philosophical systems);

the chairperson may find it useful to conclude the panel discussion with idea given in the last paragraph of the survey article.

Extended activity

- Explore and research the major differences between Indian and Western philosophy. After discussing with your partner, fill in the flow chart below.



Prepare a presentation supporting any other differences you have identified.

- Creative writing: compose literary pieces (articles / stories / dialogues / poems) to convey the message of different schools of thought.

Further Reading

1. *Philosophies of India*, Heinrich Zimmer, with Joseph Campbell (ed.), Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1990
2. *The Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. III, *The Philosophies*, Haridas Bhattacharyya, (ed.), The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, 2001
3. *Indian Philosophy*, S. Radhakrishnan, 2 vols, Oxford University Press (many editions)



A few videos on Indian philosophers (all URLs accessed in July 2012)

- The Buddha, a documentary by David Grubin:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDNT3EOWJm8
- The Life of the Buddha, a BBC documentary:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFbjDcz_CbU
- Life of Mahāvīra (in Hindi):
www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6AcSF3WX00 ,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=GpmmeqoAqVI,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=VF4qNxKafq4, etc.
- Ādi Śaṅkarācārya: www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZUxmcCT4YI
- Rāmānujācārya: www.youtube.com/watch?v=EB3VBaQxnxc
- Mādhavācārya: www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKVH0VQJC1E



Indian Philosophical Systems: A Selection from Primary Texts

Preliminary: the central question of Indian philosophy

Indian philosophy, we have noted, addresses the question of *duḥkha* (suffering) in this world. *Duḥkha*, suffering, has four aspects:

1. *heya*: the real nature of *duḥkha*.
2. *heyahetu*: the real cause of suffering.
3. *hana*: what is the complete absence of suffering; what is that condition?
4. *hanopāya*: philosophical texts — what is the means / method of achieving the complete absence of suffering.

A. Vedic Thought

This *parā*: *akṣara*, the transcendental indestructible, takes location in the *ātman* of each '[knowing] self, in the self of the one who sees (*draṣṭa*), touches (*spraṣṭa*), hears (*śrotā*), smells (*ghrātā*), tastes (*rasayitā*), thinks (*mantā*), judges (*bodhā*), does (*kartā*)'. (*Praśnopaniṣad*, 4.9)

When such unitary consciousness pervades the three states of consciousness, wakeful (*jāgrata*), dream state (*svapnasthāna*) and the deeper, inner state (*ābhyaantara*, *suṣupti*), the knower is no longer prone to instability, indeterminacy, pride and egoism (*Praśnopaniṣad*, 5.6).



In *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, *akṣara* is an attribute of *brahman* and is also the symbol of *brahman*. *Akṣarabrahman* is defined thus: ‘That which is the effulgence of the effulgent, more atomic than atom, that which holds in itself all the worlds and its inhabitants, that is *Akṣarabrahman* and that is *prāṇa* [life-force], that is *vāk* [speech, intelligence], that is *mana* [mind, cognition].’ (*Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, 2.2.2)

In a brilliant extended simile in the next *śloka*, *Akṣarabrahman* is equated with *brahman*:

Kāra is the bow (*dhanuṣa*), *ātmā* is the arrow* (*bāṇa*) and *brahman* is the target (*lakṣya*) that should be targeted with great attention and like the arrow one should be totally absorbed (*tanmaya*) in that. (*Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, 2.2.4)

B. From Philosophical Schools

1. *Cārvāka Darśana*

All this has been said by Bṛhaspati:

1. There is no heaven, no final liberation, nor any soul in another world.
2. While life remains let a man live happily, let him feed on *ghee* even though he runs in debt.
3. When once the body becomes ashes, how can it ever return again?
4. While life is yours, live joyously. None can escape Death’s searching eye. When once this frame of ours they burn, how shall it e’er again return?

(*Bṛhaspatisūtra* by Bṛhaspati, as described in
Sarvadarśanasamgraha of Mādhavācārya)

* This arrow is sharpened, it is pointed out, by *upāsana*, reverential devotion (*Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, 2.2.3).

2. Jaina Darśana

The Jaina system is described as follows in the *Tattvārtha sūtra*:

1. Right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct together constitute the path to liberation.
2. Belief in realities ascertained as they are is right faith.
3. The right faith is attained by intuition or by acquisition of knowledge.
4. The living and the non-living substances, influx, bondage, stoppage, dissociation and liberation from *karmas* are the seven types of reality.
5. The realities, right faith, etc., are installed by name, representation, substance and current state.
6. Knowledge of the realities, right faith, etc., is attained by means of *pramāṇa* [reliable means of knowledge] and *naya* [reason or wisdom].
7. Knowledge is also attained by description, ownership, and means, resting place, duration and division.
8. Existence, number, present abode, extent of space, time, interval of time, thought- activity, and reciprocal comparison also help in the attainment of knowledge.
9. Knowledge is of five kinds: sensory knowledge, scriptural knowledge, clairvoyance, telepathy and omniscience.

(*Tattvārtha sūtra*, 1.1-9)



3. Bauddha Darśana

A few sutras from *Dhammavagga*:



I will teach you a Dhamma [= *dharma*],
not hearsay but to be directly seen.
Whoever discovers it and knows it,
and lives by it with mindfulness,
will transcend craving for the world.

Prosperity in life is plain,
decline in life is also plain:
one who loves the Dhamma prospers,
one who hates the Dhamma declines.

Thoroughly understanding the Dhamma
and freed from longing through insight,
the wise one rid of all desire
is calm as a pool unstirred by wind.

Those to whom the Dhamma is clear
are not led into other doctrines;
perfectly enlightened with perfect knowledge,
they walk evenly over the uneven.

Not by water is one made pure
though many people may here bathe [in sacred rivers],
but one in whom there is truth and Dhamma,
he is pure, he is a brahmin.

The path is called “straight”,
“without fear” is the destination;
the carriage is called “silent”
and its wheels are right effort.



Conscience is the rails and
mindfulness the upholstery,
Dhamma is the driver and
right view runs ahead of it.
And whether it be a woman,
or whether it be a man,
whoever travels by this carriage
shall draw close to Nibbana [= *nirvāṇa*].
Of all the medicines in the world,
manifold and various,
there is none like the medicine of Dhamma:
therefore, O monks, drink of this.
Having drunk this Dhamma medicine,
you will be ageless and beyond death;
having developed and seen the truth,
you will be quenched, free from craving.

(Translated by Ven. S. Dhammika)



4. *Sāṃkhya Darśana*

The Sāṃkhya system as described in *Sāṃkhyakārikā* (1-4):

1. From the torment caused by the three kinds of pain, proceeds a desire for inquiry into the means of terminating them; if it be said that the inquiry is superfluous since visible means exist, we reply, not so; because in the visible



means there is the absence of certainty in the case of means and permanency of pain.

2. The scriptural means is like the obvious means since it is linked with impurity, decay and excess. The means contrary to both and proceeding from the discriminative knowledge of the Manifest, the Unmanifest and the Spirit, is superior.
3. The Primal Nature is non-evolute. The group of seven begins with the Great Principle (*Buddhi*) and the rest are both evolvents and evolutes. But the sixteen [five organs of sense, five of action, the mind and the five gross elements] are only evolutes. The Spirit is neither the evolvent nor the evolute.
4. Perception, Inference and Valid Testimony are the means; all other means of right cognition too are established [as they are included in the above three]; proof is intended to be of three kinds. It is through the proofs that the provables are established.



5. *Yoga Darśana*

The Yoga system as described in *Yogasūtra* (1.1-7, 12, 23):

1. Now, the discipline of yoga is to be explained.
2. Yoga is the *nirodha* [suppression] of *vṛttis* [activity] of the *citta* [mind].
3. Then the seer gets situated in his *svaṛūpa* [essential nature].
4. At other times, the seer identifies with the *vrittis*.
5. *Vrittis* are of five kinds and are *kliṣṭa* [related to pain] or *akliṣṭa* [unrelated to pain].

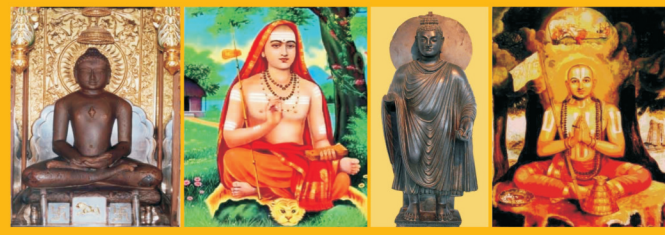
6. They are *pramāṇa* [right perception], *viparyaya* [wrong perception], *vikalpa* [fancy], *nidrā* [sleep] and *smṛti* [memory].
7. There are three *pramāṇas*: *pratyakṣa* [direct perception], *anumāna* [inference] and *āgama* [testimony].
8. Their *nirodha* [suppression] is possible through *abhyāsa* [persistent practice] and *vairāgya* [detachment].
9. Or *nirodha* is attained by concentration on Īśvara.



6. Nyāya Darśana

The Nyāya system as described in *Nyāyaśūtra* (1.1-9):

1. Supreme felicity is attained by the knowledge about the true nature of the sixteen categories, viz., means of right knowledge, object of right knowledge, doubt, purpose, familiar instance, established tenet, members of a syllogism, confutation, ascertainment, discussion, wrangling, cavil, fallacy, quibble, futility, and occasion for rebuke.
2. Pain, birth, activity, faults and misapprehension. On the successive annihilation of these in the reverse order, there follows release.
3. Perception, inference, comparison, and verbal testimony — these are the means of right knowledge.
4. Perception is that knowledge which arises from the contact of a sense with its object, and which is determinate, unnamable, and non-erratic.
5. Inference is knowledge which is preceded by perception, and is of three kinds, viz., a priori, a posteriori and commonly seen.



6. Comparison (analogy) is the knowledge of a thing, through its similarity to another thing previously well known.
7. Verbal testimony is the instructive assertion of a reliable person.
8. Self, body, senses, objects of sense, intellect, mind activity, fault, rebirth, fruit, pain, and release are the objects of right cognition.
9. Desire, aversion, volition, pleasure, pain, and intelligence are the marks of the self.



7. *Vaiśeṣika Darśana*

The *Vaiśeṣika* system as described in *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* (1.4-14):

1. The Supreme Good results from the knowledge, produced by a particular dharma, of the essence of the predicables, substance, attribute, action, genus, species, and combination, by means of their resemblances and differences.
2. Earth, water, fire, air, ether, time, space, self, and mind are the only substances.
3. Attributes are colour, taste, smell, and touch, numbers, measures, separateness, conjunction and disjunction, priority and posteriority, understandings, pleasure and pain, desire and aversion, and volitions.
4. Throwing upwards, throwing downwards, contraction, expansion, and motion are actions.
5. The resemblance of substance, attribute, and action lies in this that they are existent and non-eternal, have substance as their combinative cause, are effect as well as cause, and are both genus and species.

6. The resemblance of substance and attribute is the characteristic of being the originators of their congeners.
7. Substance originates from another substance, and attributes from another attribute.
8. Action, producible by action, is not known.
9. Substance is not annihilated either by effect or by cause.
10. Attributes are destroyed in both ways.
11. Action is opposed by its effect.



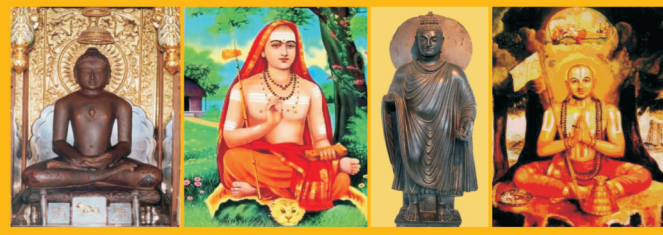
8. *Mīmāṃsā Darśana*

The *Mīmāṃsā* system as described in *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* (1.1-4) and *Mīmāṃsāparibhāṣā*:

1. Now is the enquiry into the nature of duty (*dharma*).
2. The duty is an object distinguished by a command.
3. The examination of its cause.
4. The perception is the knowledge which one has by the senses coming in contact with the soul. It is not the cause of duty by reason of acquiring knowledge of the thing existing.

In *Mīmāṃsāparibhāṣā*, it is noted:

1. Here, in the *Mīmāṃsā* consisting of twelve chapters, the great seer, Jaiminī, has discussed only righteous and unrighteous action as being capable of



performance. Of these, righteous action is that which is described by the Vedas as bringing on what is desirable.

2. Regarding both, the Vedas, the *Smṛtis* [texts on tradition], and approved usage are the authority. Of these, the Vedas are independently authoritative, while the other two are based on the Vedas.
3. Thus, rites are to be performed according to the order of direct assertion, purpose, reading, position, principal rite and procedure. Performance in any other manner will lead to defects.



9. *Vedānta Darśana*

The Vedanta system as described in *Brahmasūtra* (1.1-5) and *Vedāntaparibhāṣā*:

1. Now, therefore, the enquiry into *brahman* [i.e., desire for the knowledge of *brahman* or enquiry into the real nature of *brahman*].
2. *Brahman* is that from which the origin etc. [i.e., the origin, sustenance and dissolution] of this world proceed.
3. The Vedic text being the source or the means [of the right knowledge].
4. But that *brahman* is to be known only from the Vedic text and not independently by any other means is established. Because it is the main purpose of all Vedantic texts.

In *Vedāntaparibhāṣā*:

1. Among the four kinds of human ends in this world, called *dharma* [righteousness], *artha* [wealth], *kāma* [objects of desire] and *mokṣa* [liberation], it

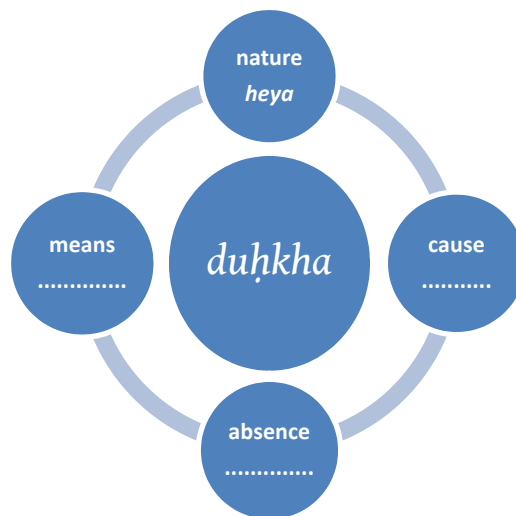


is liberation that is the supreme human end, for that alone is known to be eternal. While the other three are known to be transitory by perception. And that liberation comes through the knowledge of *brahman*. Hence *brahman*, the knowledge of it, and the means of that knowledge, are being described in detail.

2. The attainment of *brahman*, which is Bliss, as also the cessation of grief, is liberation. So this kind of realization of *brahman* leads to liberation. Thus the aim of Vedānta has been established.

Comprehension

1. You have studied about *duḥkha* being central to Indian philosophy. List the four terms related to the concept of *duḥkha*.
2. Look at the visual given below. Fill in the blanks using the correct word.



3. What is the message to people according to *Cārvāka darśana*? Does it connect with society and people today? Discuss and express views.
4. What according to the *Jaina darśana* are the three paths to human liberation?



5. Explain the path to emancipation as suggested by *Bauddha darśana*.
6. Define Yoga. What is the role of *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya* in Yoga?

Project ideas

- Find out more *Vaiśeṣika darśana* and its correlation with the theory of atomism.
- You will be working in groups. Each group will be allotted one philosophical system. Find out more about the philosophical system allotted to you. Prepare a presentation highlighting the chief characteristics and features of your philosophical system. Your presentation should be comprehensive, lucid and persuasive.

Key aspects of your presentation:

Name of your philosophical system.

Key *sūtras*.

Views on *duḥkha*.

Path suggested by your system.

Think of a set of real-life situations that people have to grapple with.

Next, advise and present the solution based on the principles of your allotted philosophical system.

Make your presentation lively, realistic and convincing. Now that you have read about some of the major Indian philosophical systems, gather more information about them.

➤ Theatrical Presentation

Prepare a theatrical presentation on Indian schools of philosophy:



Create an ashram-like ambience on stage.

Students act as various masters of Indian *darśanas*.

Portray the dissemination of knowledge through the *guru-śiṣya paramparā*.

You may use music, dance, poetry and props to highlight your presentation.

Extended activity

- Plan a visit with your friends to some Jain shrines / monasteries / Yogapīthas / Veda Vidyālayas and collect information about the various philosophies they follow. Write an article and share it with the class.
- Read the following extracts from the *Dhammapada*, a classical Buddhist text:

Like an archer an arrow,

the wise man steadies his trembling mind,
a fickle and restless weapon.

Flapping like a fish thrown on dry ground,

it trembles all day, struggling
to escape from the snares of Māra the temptress.

The mind is restless. To control it is good.

A disciplined mind is the road to Nirvana.

Look to your mind, wise man;

look to it well — it is subtle, invisible, treacherous.

A disciplined mind is the road to Nirvana.

Swift, single, nebulous,

it sits in the cave of the heart.

Who conquers it, frees himself from the slavery of death.



No point calling him wise
whose mind is unsteady,
who is not serene,
who does not know the Dhamma [= *dharma*].

Call him wise whose mind is calm,
whose senses are controlled,
who is unaffected by good and evil,
who is wakeful.

He knows the body for what it is,
a frail jar;
he makes his mind firm
like a fortress.

He attacks Māra with
the weapon of wisdom,
he guards what he conquers
jealously.

It is not long before the body,
bereft of breath and feeling,
lies on the ground, poor thing,
like a burnt-out faggot.

No hate can hurt, no foe can harm,
as hurts and harms a mind ill disciplined.

Neither father, mother, nor relative can help
as helps a mind that is well disciplined.

(Translated by P. Pal)

Now conduct a panel discussion (see Activity 2 above) and discuss the following points:

- ❖ What are the metaphors used by the text to describe the condition of the mind and the body?
- ❖ Is the reader left with any lasting impressions?
- ❖ What benefits does one derive from controlling the mind?
- ❖ What are the methods given or suggested in the text for such a control? Are they practicable?
- ❖ Have you come across, or can you conceive of, other methods to achieve a similar result?



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