

CHAPTER

3 Philosophical Systems

LEARNING OUTCOMES



After finishing this chapter, you will be able to:

- ▶ Understand the broad classification of Indian philosophical systems
- ▶ Understand salient features of the philosophical systems belonging to the Vedic school
- ▶ Understand salient features of the philosophical systems belonging to the non-Vedic school



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This is an idol of Pārśvanātha, the 23rd Tirthankara of Jainism found in Madhya Pradesh. According to the Jain sources Pārśvanātha lived during 872 BCE-77 BCE. He was born to King Áśvasena and Queen Vāmadevi of Vārānasi and belonged to the Ikṣvāku dynasty. He lived as a prince until the age of 30 after which he renounced the world to become an ascetic. According to the Śvētāmbara texts, Pārśvanātha four restraints were non-violence (ahimsa), no possession (aparigraha), non-stealing (asteya) and truth (satya).

IKS IN ACTION 3.1

Father-Son Conversation in Taittirīya-upaniṣad

Upanisads mainly confine the discussions to questions that are existential in nature and constantly coaxes an individual to deeply introspect about his 'true identity'. In this process, they provide several alternative means to inquire into various questions that are philosophical in nature. Origin of the Universe, the human beings and other living organisms, goals of life, the variant and invariant aspects of the reality, the planes of existence of an individual, the notion of Brahman and means of knowing the Brahman are some of the themes discussed.

Due to the peculiar nature of the subject matter, Upanisads employ several methods of imparting knowledge. Teaching in the Upanisads is often done in a conversational mode between the teacher and the student. In this format, the student is constantly persuaded to develop deep understanding through self-inquiry, rather than giving a ready answer to the question that he is facing. The conversation between the father-son duo in Taittirīya-upaniṣad is an example.

Bhrigu desirous of knowing Brahman approaches his father Varuna and asks him to share with him the knowledge of Brahman. The father curtly replies, "that from which all the beings are born, that which supports their life, that into which they enter and dissolve in the end is Brahman". Further, he tells his son that it can only be known through deep introspection with a single pointed focus (tapas).

Bhrigu starts the tapas and realises that beings are born out of food (here food does not have the literal meaning, it points to the larger system of entities manifesting in this earth, sustaining life forms), they live with the support of food, and when

they die they become one with the food, therefore food must be Brahman.

However, after some more introspection, he was unsatisfied and approached his father again. The father merely repeated, "it can only be known through deep introspection with a single-pointed focus (tapas)." Bhrigu was therefore sent back to do more tapas to know Brahman.

This process continued and Bhrigu developed a deep understanding of the layers of the consciousness such as vital force (prāna), mind (manas), and knowledge (vijñāna) as Brahman respectively, only to refute it later by self-reflection. He finally realised that bliss (ānanda) is Brahman and since he did not have any more confusions and conflicts in his mind he concluded that bliss is Brahman.

This episode highlights how the Vedic seers continuously strived to know the truth with repeated questioning of their understanding and experiences. The episode also brings out the fact that philosophical questions such as understanding 'the reality' is to be deeply contemplated and experienced by the self through whatever effort it requires, and a knowledgeable person can at best be only a guide to him.

This episode brings another interesting aspect of acquiring knowledge. An elderly, wise and knowledgeable individual has an opinion about the deep philosophical issue. However, by merely accepting it one does not get the knowledge. Rather it needs efforts on the part of the seeker to self-reflect to gain the knowledge.

This importance given to one's own experience of truth has been the hallmark of Indian philosophical systems.

Let us consider a simple question, "Why should one not commit theft?" A religious preacher would point to the injunctions that prohibit such actions. On the other hand, a modern-day rationalistic professional would say, "because it is against the law of the land and would introduce costs and complexities in life". The important point is why should the God or the sovereign issue commands? If there is something fundamental to an individual that can resolve such questions that one faces in life, then it provides a sound footing to handle dilemmas and confusions in life. At a fundamental level, the goal of every individual is to be happy and

progress or evolve in life. Nobody is known to have been longing for 'sadness and grief' in their life. Despite this simple truth, the notion of happiness is not yet well understood despite being the most fundamental instinct of living beings.

All the endeavours of living beings are towards avoiding what is unpleasant and attaining what is pleasant. In the search for answers to several questions in life, we inquire into certain fundamental questions about life; Who am 'I' and what is my source and destination? What is the nature of the Universe and that of God? Are there any universal laws for an individual to remain happy forever? A study of such questions of existential nature belongs to the domain of philosophy. Philosophical thinking flourished in different parts of the world. In this chapter, we shall see some details of the Indian philosophical systems.

In the process of finding answers to the questions that we raised, people have developed their holistic understanding of the world and shown the way to attain the final goal of life. The holistic view of the world is called Darśana. The word Darśana is derived from the Sanskrit root, *drś*, 'to see', suggesting that these philosophical systems provide a true worldview and a vision for life and help us resolve the issues that we face in our life. These different traditions of Darśanas or 'Schools of Philosophy' have enriched Indian thinking and had their influence on all aspects of life, including worship, rituals, art, literature, and medicine.

3.1 INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS – DEVELOPMENT AND UNIQUE FEATURES

Phrases such as 'happiness' require 'individuals' as the unit of analysis. Further, as one inquires deep into this question, the focus shifts to the Universe, which provides the context for the individual to make his inferences and choices in life. Inevitably, the notion of an all-pervading Universal force (known as the Divinity or God) also becomes another important dimension in this analysis. Therefore, the study of these aspects invariably happens in a context consisting of three aspects: an individual (*jīva*), the Universe (*Jagat*), and the God (*īśvara*).

The beginning of the philosophical inquiry in India can be traced to the Vedic literature.

- ◆ The philosophical systems provide a true worldview and a vision for life and help us resolve the issues that we face in our life.
 - ◆ The teachings of the Upaniṣads suggest that attainment of the knowledge of Brahman is the highest goal of human life.
- Rgvedic seers enquired about the forces causing natural phenomena such as rain, day and night, growth of life and recognised these forces as devatās (gods). Hence, we see several mantras in praise of these Devatās, describing their nature and deeds. The Rgvedic hymns delved into a rigorous inquiry trying to realise the root force behind the functioning of these Devatās. They realised the concept of 'Puruṣa', all-encompassing supreme being, and proclaimed, 'all this is nothing but the Puruṣa' (पुरुष एवेद सर्वं – Puruṣa evedam sarvam). According to them, knowing the Puruṣa is the path to overcome death, and of Rgveda. The sūkta is inquisitive about the origin of the Universe in the famous Nāsadiya-sūkta world was created? It begins with the speculation that there was neither existence (Sat) nor non-existence (Asat) and then proceeds to ask several questions: What was it covered with? Was it covered with water? The darkness? Who knows and who can articulate where this creation came into existence? The one who created this, does he know this or does he not? Upaniṣads are full of such philosophical inquiries and thoughts. What was described as 'Puruṣa'

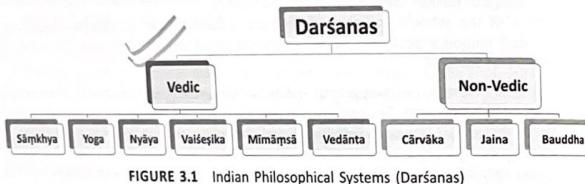
in the Rgveda is referred to as 'Brahman' in the Upaniṣads. Brahman and Ātman are the concepts that are discussed widely in the Upaniṣads. The teachings of the Upaniṣads suggest that attainment of the knowledge of Brahman is the highest goal of human life. Brahman is said to be beyond words, cannot be expressed completely by anyone, hence Upaniṣads have adopted various ways to describe Brahman. It is said to be the ultimate reality to be known, for after having known it nothing else is to be known. The Upaniṣads further clarify that this truth cannot be known using the sensory organs as we would in the case of any worldly entity, it called for preparing oneself to 'experience' the truth from within. The ultimate goal of the Upaniṣads is to prepare an individual for this eventual 'personal experience'. There are multiple passages and anecdotes to drive the goal of one's life, the path of liberation, and the means of achieving it.

The philosophical inquiry continued in India further giving rise to several schools, each one developing its own understanding of the world. Each of these schools presents its view with rigorous intellectual exercise and uncompromised importance on the self-experience. The ideas were codified in the basic texts of their Darśana, in the form of sūtras in most cases, and commentaries and sub-commentaries through the guru-siṣya tradition spread the thoughts further. Before we study the specific characteristics of the schools and their differences it is important to know certain broad parameters and unique aspects of the Indian philosophical thought and their relevance to various schools of thought.

- ◆ Unlike the Western counterpart, the Indian philosophical thought is closely intertwined with religious thought.
- ◆ The ultimate goal of the human life is clearly spelt out and the path for attaining the same is also articulated in all the darśanas.
- ◆ Unlike the Western counterpart, the Indian philosophical thought is closely intertwined with religious thought. The philosophical systems provide a broad basis for addressing larger existential issues of individuals and the religious schools draw from these to suitably configuring socio-cultural practices, norms of behavior, ethical standards, and values that shape one's life. The religious dimension provides the operating principles for the mundane life based on these specific configurations.
- ◆ Two generic classes of philosophical systems could be thought about; Vedic schools of philosophy (which has six schools of thought as we will see shortly), and Non-vedic schools (Jaina philosophy, Buddhist philosophy, and the Cārvāka philosophy).
- ◆ Despite the classification based on the religious dimension, all the religious-oriented philosophical systems agree on certain common parameters. This includes the notion of accumulation of fruits of action (Karma), birth-death cycle (Samsāra), and the notion of free will. On account of this, they all talk about the common goal of liberation (Mukti). These aspects distinguish the Indian philosophical systems from the Western.
- ◆ The ultimate goal of the human life is clearly spelt out and the path for attaining the same is also articulated in all the darśanas. However, the darśanas have divergent opinions on the specifics of these.
- ◆ Since darśana is all about knowledge, the term knowledge (Jñāna) and other related terminologies are well defined. Furthermore, all the Indian schools of philosophy also employ epistemological tools (Pramāṇa) for the establishment of valid knowledge. However, each school differs from the other in the set of epistemological tools considered for analysis.

- Despite divergent views on some of the philosophical concepts and foundational premises between these schools, there is a healthy culture of respectful and peaceful coexistence of these schools of thought. There was no effort to demean, dismiss or downgrade one school by the other using any emotional, dogmatic, irrational or unscientific methods. Instead, there was a healthy tradition of the followers of the schools to engage in dialogues and debates. These demanded a highly advanced intellectual exercise, be it writing a book refuting the argument of the opposing point of view or engaging in the dialogue following strict rules of debate.
- One of the Vedic schools, Nyāya provided a de facto framework for all other schools to engage in such intellectual debates. In fact, the ontologies of Sāṃkhya and Vaiśeṣika schools have been adopted by most other schools with little modifications to suit their theories.
- There are historical accounts of several such debates that took place throughout the country for several centuries, which continue even today. Thus, several schools of philosophy have flourished in India, interacted extensively with each other, and have organically co-existed for millennia.

Figure 3.1 provides a schematic of the classification of the Indian philosophical systems into Vedic and non-Vedic systems.



3.2 VEDIC SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY

Figure 3.2 summarises some of the salient features of vedic schools. All the schools have a common goal, i.e. to answer questions such as, "Who am I?" and "What is the process for final liberation? To know oneself and escape from the cycle of birth-death and get liberated, correct knowledge needs to be obtained. The schools differ in presenting how to obtain the right knowledge and use it as the means for the ultimate liberation of the 'self'. The context for the philosophical discussion is the three inter-related concepts of God – Universe – Individual". All schools have employed several constructs involving these three entities in discussing the path for self-evolution and liberation. The six schools differ in the approach taken to reach the goal. In the case of Sāṃkhya and Yoga systems, there is the centrality of the role of the 'matter' in this journey. A good understanding of the evolution of nature leading to the context paves the way for liberation. On the other hand, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems have prominently focused on the importance of obtaining the 'right knowledge' in the journey of liberation. Therefore, these systems elaborately focused on getting the right knowledge of oneself and the other entities. On the other hand, Mimāṃsā and Vedānta proposed that the Vedic repository provides guidance

for an individual in his journey of liberation. While Mimāṃsā stressed on the importance of the ritualistic part of the Vedic corpus (Karma-kāṇḍa), Vedānta emphasised on the knowledge leading to self-experience (Jñāna-kāṇḍa).

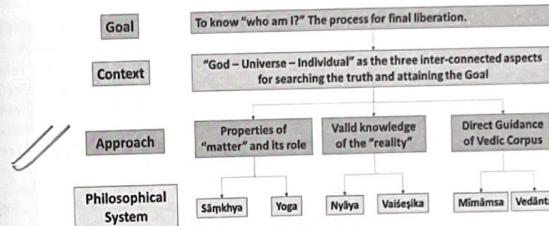


FIGURE 3.2 The Six Vedic Schools – Some Salient Aspects

3.3 SĀṂKHYA AND YOGA SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY

The Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophical system begins with the basic premise that Prakṛti, the source of the physical Universe and the 'self' are sub-ordinate to a larger force called Puruṣa and the liberation of the 'self' involves getting to know the right knowledge of the Puruṣa and Prakṛti and their relative role. According to these schools of thought, Prakṛti is the first cause of the Universe (of everything except the spirit) and entirely accounts for whatever is physical, both matter and force. Prakṛti is conceived as constituted of the tri-guṇas. The evolution of Prakṛti causes the Universe, bringing the multi-various forms and entities. The preponderance of the three Guṇas and their role in establishing the link between Puruṣa and Prakṛti is another common ground for both the philosophical systems. Finally, both the schools agree that the process of final liberation involves the realisation of the true nature of Prakṛti and Puruṣa.

Sāṃkhya school does not acknowledge the existence of an ultimate God (Iśvara). On the other hand, Yoga acknowledges the existence of a supreme being. Yoga has an emphasis on a more structured, practical methodology for cessation of all activities of the mind. To facilitate this process, the Yoga system of philosophy provides a practical step-by-step approach for this journey. On the other hand, Sāṃkhya school emphasises more of contemplation and analysis leading to experiential knowledge.

3.3.1 Sāṃkhya-darśana

Although sage Kapila is supposed to be the author of the Sāṃkhya system, there is no available evidence or material to substantiate this. The earliest authoritative material available on Sāṃkhya is the Sāṃkhya-kārikā by Iśvarakṛṣṇa. This is a work in seventy verses and has a lucid exposition of the Sāṃkhya system. Sāṃkhya argues that the root cause of all pains and

sufferings is the lack of the correct knowledge (Samkhya). By a proper understanding of the ontology of Samkhya-darśana, the causes of pain and the way to end it can be explained.

Puruṣa and Prakṛti

According to the Samkhya system, two basic elements constitute everything in this world—matter (Prakṛti) and spirit (Puruṣa).

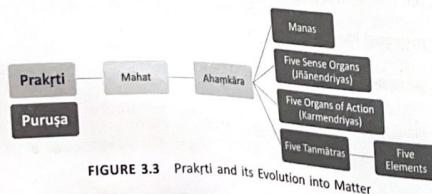
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- ◆ Prakṛti is made of the three basic constituents namely sattva, rajas, and tamas.

pleasure. Rajas is the one that causes movement and is the cause of pain. Tamas is heavy, causes ignorance, and causes indifference. Before the manifestation of the Prakṛti its constituents, sattva, rajas, and tamas are in equilibrium.

The evolution of the Prakṛti results in creating the following elements:

- ◆ 'Mahat', which is also called 'Buddhi'
- ◆ Ego or Self-consciousness (Ahamkara), which introduces the sense of 'I' and 'mine'
- ◆ Mind (Manas), the master of the organs and the conduit between the internal and external instruments
- ◆ Five sense organs (Jñanendriyas): ears, skin, eyes, tongue, and nose
- ◆ Five organs of action (Karmendriyas): the mouth (speech), hands, feet, sex organs, and anus
- ◆ Five generic classes attributable to objects perceived through sense organs (Tanmātras): sound, touch, form or colour, taste, and smell
- ◆ Five gross elements (Bhūtas): ether, air, fire, water, and earth.

Figure 3.3 illustrates the evolution of Prakṛti described above. When the Puruṣa is conditioned by the twenty-three elements, it perpetuates this process wherein Puruṣa goes from one body to another. This is the cause of all mundane existence, and this continues so long as it does not discriminate the difference between Puruṣa and Prakṛti². Once the conscious self comes out of this ignorance, through the actual knowledge, he realises that he is separate from the Prakṛti and its manifestations, he does not feel pleasure, etc. anymore. This is called liberation (kaivalya, i.e. mokṣa) in the Samkhya doctrine.



3.3.2 Yoga-darśana

Yoga as a school of philosophy is said to have been founded by Patañjali through his yoga-sūtras. Some Indologists assign a date of 5th century CE for this work, while many others associate this work with Patañjali, who wrote the Mahābhāṣya for Pāṇini's grammar. In that case, it will be dated to the 2nd century BCE. Yoga serves as a methodology to the realisation of the difference of Prakṛti and Puruṣa. It elaborately establishes the necessary practices an individual needs to go through to have the realisation of this separation. The unique thing that establishes Yoga as distinct among the other darśanas is that its emphasis on understanding the mind, its various states, its cognitive activities, and methods to control it. The other schools have a difference of opinion on the matters of epistemology, and the concept of mokṣa with Yoga. However, they accept methods prescribed in yoga to gain control over the mind.

The Yoga philosophy rests on the basic premise that if a person wants to understand his true nature, and experience bliss eventually, he must focus on the physical, psychological, and moral states of his being and make simultaneous progress on all the three. To achieve this, the basic prescription is to develop the capacity for single-pointed concentration of the mind. Therefore, Yoga-sūtras begin with the definition that 'Yoga is the cessation of mental modifications'³. Unless a person arrives at this stage, it will not be possible for him to understand the notion of 'existence' and the secrets of nature may not get revealed. Therefore, the operational part of Yoga provides a practical set of 'actionable' steps that an aspirant can go through sequentially to reach this state. Further Yoga system observes that a journey of constant practice with dispassion makes a person perfect⁴ and he will feel within himself the universal truth with no sense of separateness. While Samkhya prescribes a method of analysis and contemplation, yoga argues for mind control through sustained practices as prescribed. Yoga system provides an eight-step process to gradually attain complete cessation of the activities of mind. Figure 3.4 presents the eight steps in a pictorial fashion. The details of the eight steps follows:

- ◆ **Yama:** The ultimate journey to complete cessation of the activities of the mind starts with the first step which is forbearance or control over mind, body, and speech. Five activities are prescribed for practice in this stage: abstaining from harming (Ahimsā), speaking the truth (Satya), not stealing others' belongings (Asteya), keeping away from lust (Brahmacarya), and resisting from accumulating wealth (Aparigraha). According to Patañjali these are to be followed irrespective of time, place, and status by a sādhaka and this is called mahārata (greatest of all austerities).
- ◆ **Niyama:** The five kinds of forbearances, specified in the previous step relate to abstaining from negative injunctions. On the other hand, in the second stage, five kinds of observances, which are positive commands are prescribed. The five niyamas include cleanliness of body and mind (Śauca), being happy with what one possesses (Santoṣa), tolerating heat, cold and other physical difficulties and purifying the senses and the body (Tapas), the study of Vedas and other scriptures (Svādhyāya) and the meditation of Īśvara (Īśvara-pranidhāna). These two stages are to be practiced by an individual (sādhaka) at all times.

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The evolution of the Prakṛti results in creating the following elements:

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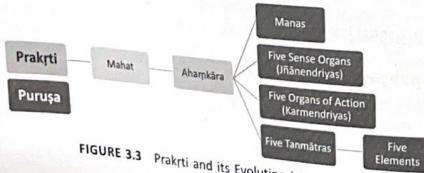


FIGURE 3.3 Prakṛti and its Evolution into Matter

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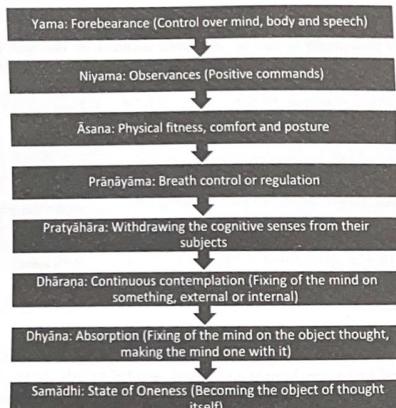


FIGURE 3.4 Aṣṭāṅga-yoga – Eight Step Process

- ◆ **Āsana:** A meditative posture where one can sit comfortably for a long time. Various modes of keeping the body in position at the time of performing Yoga are prescribed in this stage. As per Yoga-sūtra, the sitting posture must be firm and comfortable for the sādhaka⁵.
- Henceforth, all the aspects are of the meditation process.
- ◆ **Prāṇāyāma:** This stage focuses on controlling the breath. Breath is directly connected to the mind, hence having it in control is the key to controlling the activities of the mind. Patañjali prescribes four types of prāṇāyāma practices meant for controlling the mind.
- ◆ **Pratyāhāra:** The next stage of practice is withdrawing the cognitive senses from their objects, bringing them to a state as if they were not in contact with their objects.
- The first five stages are external in terms of effort (bahiraṅga-prayoga) and help the practitioner purify the thoughts and regulate or moderate the inner self by avoiding various distractions. Once this stage is reached, it will be possible to focus on internal efforts (antaraṅga-prayoga). The last three stages of the 8-step process provide details on this.
- ◆ **Dhāraṇā:** Focusing the mind on an object, not letting it perceive other objects by constant practice is the next stage of this process.
- ◆ **Dhyāna:** Meditating continuously on an object without break is called dhyāna. It is achieved by fixing the mind on something, external (such as a picture, OM sign, a deity)

or internal (using the tip of the nose, and the space between the two eyebrows as a reference to focus inside or visualising OM in the mind).

- ◆ **Samādhi:** The final step in this process is being completely absorbed into the object of meditation, known as samādhi. Once a person reaches here the activities of his mind completely cease, leading to the realisation that he, the conscious 'self' is separate from Prakṛti and thus becomes liberated, free from all pains.

Cessation of all mental activities of the mind, the final goal of Yoga has a very useful bye product. On account of the journey in the path of mind control, Yoga can help an individual address the vexing problem of stress-induced lifestyle leading to health and wellness challenges that modern society is facing. We have briefly touched upon this aspect in the chapter on health, wellness, and psychology. The current popularity of Yoga globally stems from this aspect of Yoga practices. However, it must be understood that Yoga is a way of life, with a grand purpose of realising the true nature of oneself and liberate one from the limitations of the mundane world arising out of the duality of pain and pleasure. We should never lose sight of this ultimate objective of Yoga as a darśana.

3.4 NYĀYA AND VAIŚEṢIKA SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school begins the analysis with the world that an individual experiences. By experience, it means all varieties of valid knowledge, whether perceptual or non-perceptual. Therefore, it starts with the assumption that whatever is obtained by uncontradicted experience must necessarily be real. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school proceeds with an analysis of the experience to understand reality, also known as *knowable*. Both Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika set out in their journey of the 'knowable' and define various categories to describe the same. In this process, two possibilities emerge to conduct the study in greater detail. The first is about the 'ways of knowing the reality' and the second is about the 'objects in the reality that is knowable'. The Vaiśeṣika school provided a greater emphasis on the latter, mainly studying the reality itself in its various aspects. On the other hand, the Nyāya school proposed a methodology for schools place a greater emphasis on obtaining the 'right' knowledge for liberation.

3.4.1 Nyāya-darśana

The original theory of Nyāya school is found in the Nyāya-sūtra, a set of aphorisms developed by Gautama. The aphorisms are organised into five chapters, each having two sections. It was followed by many other seminal works. By the end of the 11th century CE, Gaṅgeśopādhyāya took different positions on some of the theories of the school and established a new school called Navya-nyāya, meaning the new Nyāya School. The navya-nyāya school has contributed extensively to discussing details of inference and verbal cognition. These discussions and the set of technical terminologies developed by the navya-nyāya school have influenced the other schools so much that in the later times all other schools laid significant emphasis on these topics and adopted the language to discuss the issues in their respective schools as well.

- ◆ Yoga provides a structured and practical eight-step process to gradually reach a stage of complete cessation of the activities of Citt
- ◆ Yoga can help an individual address the vexing problem of stress-induced lifestyle leading to health and wellness challenges that modern society is facing.

The Nyāya philosophy starts with the proposition that one attains liberation only when he acquires the knowledge of the truth. The knowledge of the truth drives away miseries and an individual escapes the cycle of birth-death leading to final liberation. The Nyāya system, therefore, placed enormous emphasis on the means of obtaining 'right knowledge'. Therefore, the unique contribution of Nyāya school is its detailed inquiry of knowledge (Pramāṇa) and valid cognition and its means (Pramāṇa). The elucidation of the correct way of thinking and arriving at the right conclusions, the art of debating, well laid out rules for a debate to arrive at the most reasonable conclusion are the main contributions of the Nyāya school. On account of this Nyāya is commonly understood as 'argumentation'. Nyāya concepts and the art of debating to establish true knowledge became a useful tool for all philosophical systems. It has over time assumed the de facto methodology to establish valid knowledge. The details of these have been explained in Chapter 7 (see Section 7.4 for details).

The goal of a self is not to gain pleasure but to be liberated from all kinds of pains once for all. This is liberation according to the Nyāya school. Īśvara or the God is the creator of this universe. An individual self must try to gain the correct knowledge of the self, i.e., he is not the body, or the mind or the senses, which often people mistake 'the self' out of delusion. Then he ceases to have attachment for the fruits of his actions, as all actions an individual does are aimed at gaining worldly pleasure. When he gives up the desire for the results of his actions, he no more accumulates the effects of his actions, good or bad, which are the cause of the birth and death cycle. When an individual has finished experiencing the effects of his past actions there is no reason for his birth and he will be free from the birth-death cycle. Ultimately, he will be free from pain.

3.4.2 Vaiśeṣika-darśana

Vaiśeṣika was propounded by Kanāda and his work was organised into aphorisms in ten chapters, each consisting of two sections. The exact date of the work is hard to establish; however, it is believed that it is earlier than Nyāya-sūtras.

- ◆ Nyāya deals with 'ways of knowing the reality' and Vaiśeṣika with 'objects in the reality that is knowable'.
- ◆ Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools place a greater emphasis on obtaining the 'right' knowledge for liberation.

Universe. Although the multitude of forms and shapes exist they can be reduced to certain types. It is by virtue of this that 'knowables' are divisible into three classes of dravya, guna and karma, but also into sub-classes such as cows, redness, or moving. While there is some sense of 'alikeness' in the manner described above, it must be remembered that if there are two things that resemble each other in every aspect, there must be something distinctive since there are 'two' of them. This is the basic concept of Viśeṣa. The Vaiśeṣika school proceeds along this line to systematically present the 'knowables' that form all the 'real' entities in the universe using certain categories.

Sāmānya is a very important aspect in the scheme of classification. When we classify many things into one category, consider the similarities. For example, we designate a particular set of animals 'cow' because they bear some common features in them. That common quality, which

we shall say 'cowness', is the reason for all such animals being referred to as a cow. It is an inherent property that all these animals carry by their nature. This is called sāmānya or jāti. Because of this sāmānya, we can group, categorise or generalise things.

Viśeṣa essentially becomes important as Vaiśeṣika school considers all entities to be different from each other. In this approach, the difference is sought by an examination of the constituents of an object of knowledge. Proceeding in this manner, differentiating by examining the constituents finely, the Vaiśeṣika school eventually proposes smallest particles, ultimate atomic material (Paramāṇus), which have no more constituents and are therefore not further divisible. Hence Vaiśeṣika school accepts a property called 'viśeṣa' in Paramāṇus. Using this elemental matter, the difference of the constituted bodies can be explained.

According to Kanāda, six sub-categories constitute existence, and knowledge of them is considered the essence of the supreme good⁴. The final liberation or salvation comes as a result of real knowledge produced by proper understanding of the six categories listed out in the sūtra. The desire to end the misery of the birth-death cycle leads one to acquire the knowledge of the categories from a master. This knowledge removes ignorance once and for all and the individual is free from love, hate, etc. As he does not accumulate further any merit or demerit on account of this clarified knowledge of the reality, in a certain finite cycle of birth-death, he would have exhausted all the existing merits and demerits, leading to final liberation.

- ◆ The word Vaiśeṣika is derived from the word 'Viśeṣa', meaning difference or unique attributes in a thing.
- ◆ The Vaiśeṣika school presents the 'knowable' that form all the 'real' entities in the Universe using certain categories.

3.5 PŪRVAMIMĀṂSĀ AND VEDĀNTA SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY

In Chapter 2, we discussed the details about the Vedic corpus, where we remarked that the Brāhmaṇas, the portion of the Vedic corpus has details on the ritualistic aspects. This portion is typically referred to as karma-kāṇḍa of the Vedic corpus. On the other hand, the Upaniṣads lay greater emphasis on the knowledge of the Brahman. This portion is known as Jñāna-kāṇḍa. The Pūrvamimāṁsā school has established its tenets based on the karma-kāṇḍa and the Vedānta school has established its tenets based on the Jñāna-kāṇḍa. The Vedānta school is also known as Uttara-mimāṁsā on account of its reliance on the latter portion of the Vedic corpus.

Both the schools share common beliefs in several of the philosophical principles. This includes the notion of ātman, the existence of karma, rebirth, and long and seemingly endless cycles of birth-death. Therefore, the common goal of these two systems is to liberate the ātman from the clutches of birth-death. However, the major difference lies in the path to liberation. In the case of the Pūrvamimāṁsā school, it is believed that ultimate liberation is obtained only by engaging in various rituals that purify the karma and extinguishing them eventually. In the case of the Vedānta school, it is argued that total detachment from worldly activities is the only way to exhaust all the karma. With a purified mind one will then experience the ultimate knowledge 'within' to liberate.

3.5.1 PŪRVAMIMĀṂSĀ-DARŚANA

The word 'Mimāṁsā' conveys different meanings: reflection, consideration, profound thought, investigation, examination, and discussion. In the context of the Pūrvamimāṁsā school of

philosophy, Mimāṃsā means 'reflection' or 'critical investigation' and is primarily based on a tradition of deep contemplation on the meanings of Vedic texts which it relies on as the authority for its principles. Between the Samhitā and Brāhmaṇas, the Pūrva-mimāṃsā school places greater emphasis on the Brāhmaṇas and draws from it substantially as it is the part of Vedic corpus that has elaborate procedural details on the Vedic rituals.

- The Pūrva-Mimāṃsā school has established its tenets based on the karma-kānda and the Vedānta school has established its tenets based on the Jhāna-kānda.
- The Pūrva-Mimāṃsā text provides rules for the interpretation of the Vedas and provides philosophical justifications for the observance of Vedic rituals.

Vedic rituals, by offering meaning and significance of Vedic rituals to attain Mokṣa. Over the centuries many commentaries were written on this text, most important being the Śābara-bhāṣya written by Śābara-svāmin, the only extant commentary on all the 12 chapters of the Mimāṃsā-sūtras. The major commentaries were written on the text as well as the Śābara-bhāṣya by Kumārila Bhaṭṭa and Prabhākara Miśra. These texts have collectively put together robust rules of language analysis which enables one to not only examine injunctive propositions in any scripture but also examine the alternate related or reverse propositions for better understanding.

The main aim of the school is to ascertain the meanings of the Samhitā and Brāhmaṇa portions of Veda which lay importance on the karma, performing rituals, and thereby attaining dharma, a quality that is acquired by an ātman which prompts him to the respective results such as svarga (heaven). Eventually, with purified actions, such a person attains liberation (mokṣa). If one does not resort to dharmic actions, then he is likely to continue in the cycle of birth and death (Figure 3.5). Hence it is also called 'dharma-mimāṃsā'. Along with ascertaining the intended meaning of the Vedic texts in this context, the school provides a philosophical explanation as to how a ritual performed results in the desired outcome. Thus, it holds the status of a darsana or school of philosophy.

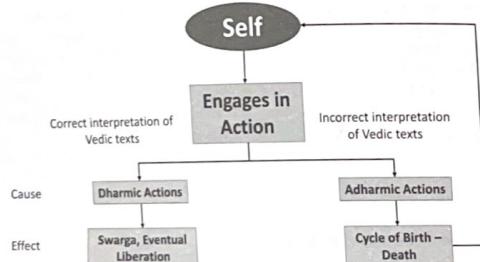


FIGURE 3.5 Pūrva-Mimāṃsā – The Path to Liberation

The ultimate goal of human beings is to seek joy and happiness in this life and the next. The Pūrva-mimāṃsā school of philosophy argued that this is possible only when one engages in actions that are considered as dharmic. Such actions are prescribed by the Vedic texts, and it is important to properly interpret and understand the Vedic sentences, words, and meaning. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Pūrva-mimāṃsā school was centrally concerned with the philosophy of language and correct interpretation. On account of a special emphasis on the correct interpretation of the Vedic text concerning various injunctions and prohibitions, Pūrva-mimāṃsā developed into a good source for hermeneutics. The laws of interpretation formulated by Jaimini and his successors are quite general and applicable to literary works outside the Vedas too. Pūrva-mimāṃsā principles are widely utilised for arriving at a right interpretation of all old texts, particularly legal treatises, and the legal fraternity could greatly benefit from the knowledge of Pūrva-mimāṃsā.

3.5.2 Vedānta (Uttara-mimāṃsā-darśana)

All Vedānta schools of philosophy derive a considerable part of their material from the Upaniṣads. The Vedānta schools of philosophy rely on three major texts, known as 'Prasthāna-traya', for establishing their tenets. This includes the Brahma-sūtras, a collection of about 550 aphorisms written by Bādarāyaṇa (Vyāsa), the Bhagavadgītā, and the Upaniṣads. The proponents of the Vedānta schools have written detailed commentaries on the three major texts and through that have established the unique position that they have taken in articulating their version of Vedānta philosophy. In general, the Vedānta schools look upon Brahman as the absolute and are predominantly philosophical in their approach. In this section, we shall briefly see the salient aspects of Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Dvaita schools of Vedānta.

- Pūrva-mimāṃsā texts have put together robust rules of language analysis which enables one to examine injunctive propositions in any scripture.
- Pūrva-mimāṃsā principles are widely utilised for arriving at a right interpretation of all old texts, particularly legal treatises.
- Liberation in Advaita vedānta is not reaching something new but recognising what is one's inherent nature.

Advaita-vedānta

Śāṅkara (688–720 CE) propounded a monistic philosophy, known as Advaita, with the conception of the attribute-less God (Nirguṇa-brahman) as the ultimate reality. The Upaniṣads describe Brahman as one without form, name, and attributes, known as Nirguṇa-brahman. Śāṅkara built further on Gauḍapāda's foundational work through his kārikā (set of verses) for Māṇḍukya-upaniṣad and gave more strength and structure and formalised the Advaita-vedānta. The other main aspects of his philosophy include the doctrine of Māyā, the identity of the Jīva with the Brahman and the conception of mokṣa as the merger of Jīva in Brahman. Śāṅkara's commentary on the Brahma-sūtra is remarkable for its charming style and highly logical and consistent arguments. Śāṅkara has made immense contributions to Indian philosophical thought through numerous commentaries and independent works which run to several thousand pages. He also made robust institutional arrangements in different parts of India to preserve and promote Advaita-vedānta. The conceptualisation of Nirguna-brahman of Śāṅkara at the outset will resemble closely the śūnya-vāda (emptiness or nothingness) of Buddhists. However, through elaborate commentaries on the three major texts, Śāṅkara has established the uniqueness of his proposition.

Advaita-vedānta postulates oneness of Jīva and Iśvara and in its scheme of things, the Iśvara and the Jīva deploy similar mechanisms to create the world. Iśvara represents the macrocosm with Māyā as the mechanism to create the physical universe. In the same manner, the Jīva uses avidyā (ignorance) as the mechanism to create its own world constituting a parallel microcosm. Viewed in this manner, the Māyā is the cosmic illusion for the Iśvara to create the world out of himself and avidya the source of illusion for the Jīva. The rejection of the world as something illusory by the Advaita school does not advocate cessation of all worldly activities that we undertake under the garb of it being 'unreal'. Instead, it brings out different stages of knowledge an individual experiences. So long as the identity of oneself with the Brahman is not realised in the empirical world, the activities, and the knowledge about these are true. This is similar to the conditional knowledge of the dream until one wakes up. Therefore, in the Advaita school two types of knowledge are proposed corresponding to two realms of reality that we have. One is a transactional reality of the changing world and the associated empirical knowledge that we have which helps us to engage in day-to-day chores of life. On the other hand, once the identity with the Brahman is realised, the reality is one of changeless, oneness of everything which is eternal, and this produces a changeless knowledge of oneself that results in bliss. This is considered to be the 'true or ultimate' knowledge.

Śāṅkara proposed a two-stage approach to realise 'true' knowledge. By merely engaging in the world of activities, one does not obtain the 'true' knowledge. In the first stage, we need to engage with the world and perform the required activities to purify the mind. This is the karma yoga that Bhagavadgītā advocates. Once the mind is purified, the second stage is to engage in deep contemplation and self-reflection on one's real nature which will reveal the 'true' knowledge⁷. Liberation in Advaita-vedānta is not reaching something new but recognising what is one's inherent nature. The two-stage approach indeed leads an individual towards this goal.

Viśiṣṭādvaita-vedānta
Rāmānuja (1017–1137 CE) proposed the philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita. Viśiṣṭādvaita combines the bhakti (devotion) to a personal God, who has name, form, and shape and who saves his devotees from all miseries of the world and the impersonal God as espoused in the Upaniṣads into a single school of thought. Brahman or the ultimate reality is also referred to as Viṣṇu etymologically meaning that which pervades everything. The attribute-less Brahman held by the Advaita school is rejected as metaphysical abstraction and Brahman is conceived, by Viśiṣṭādvaitins as God with attributes like possessing a bodily form, with infinite good qualities and glories.

The ultimate is one, according to Viśiṣṭādvaita, but is not the attributeless. Matter, Jīva and Iśvara are three entities recognised in the Viśiṣṭādvaita school. The matter and the Jīva are considered as the body of Iśvara and are sustained by Him and existing entirely for Him. In other words, the three are inseparable unity, the first two being subjected to the restraint of the third in all its forms. This is the core of the conceptualisation in Viśiṣṭādvaita. An example of a blue lotus illustrates this concept. The blueness (a quality) is quite distinct from the lotus (substance). However, blueness depends on the substance for its very being and is not considered external to the lotus. According to Rāmānuja, all things are eventually forms of Iśvara and all names are his only. Every word is a symbol of Iśvara and points to Him only.

According to Viśiṣṭādvaita school, the cycle of birth and death and the associated sorrows are due to the forgetfulness of an individual of the relation between them and Nārāyaṇa. One

attains freedom by gaining knowledge of the nature of self and attaining the feet of the Lord in his abode, Vaikunṭha. However, in order to gain this knowledge, each Jīva has to put forth the effort to attain liberation. The nature of the effort to be invested requires a continuous and unwavering meditation with love on the Supreme Being. This is referred to as Bhakti in the Viśiṣṭādvaita school. Bhakti is generated with total observance of religious duties as prescribed in the scriptures. The concept of total surrender to the Lord (Prapatti) is also considered as the direct means to liberation. In fact, according to Viśiṣṭādvaita, both bhakti and prapatti are two sides of the same coin and hence they function as the direct means to attain the feet of the Lord.

- Viśiṣṭādvaita combines the bhakti to the personal God, and the impersonal God as espoused in the Upaniṣads into a single school of thought.
- The quintessential aspects of Dvaita Vedānta are that Viṣṇu is the supreme God, the world is real and there is a difference between God and the jīvas.

Dvaita-vedānta

Madhvācārya (1238–1317 CE) is the founder of the Dvaita-vedānta school. Madhvācārya established Udupi as the center of the Dvaita-vedānta. Like the other schools of Vedānta, Madhva derives his philosophical tenets from prasthānatraya, the purāṇas and Mahābhārata. The quintessential aspects of Dvaita-vedānta are that Viṣṇu (Hari) is the supreme God, the world is real and there is a difference between God and the jīvas. All jīvas are dependent upon Viṣṇu, and liberation consists in the enjoyment of bliss that is inherent in oneself. Finally, pure devotion is the means of attaining it.

The Dvaita school clearly admits two independent and mutually irreducible substances that make up the Universe: the Jīva and the Iśvara. However, of the two, Iśvara is independent whereas the jīvas are dependent on Iśvara. The matter making up the physical universe was considered real, unlike illusory as in the case of Advaita. The Dvaita school also refuted the idea of Viśiṣṭādvaita that the matter and the jīvas are different yet form a part of Iśvara. For Dvaita, there are clear differences among them, despite being dependent on Iśvara. Difference (Bhedā) is the very essence of Dvaita philosophy. Madhva advocated five-fold differences: between Jīva and Iśvara, among jīvas, Jīva and matter, Iśvara and matter and one material thing and another.

Madhva acknowledged the reality of human misery and bondage. According to Dvaita-vedānta, it is the Iśvara who causes the individual to be unaware of the relationship of the ātman with God. Hence, he alone eventually brings liberation through his grace. In this process, a self-effort on the part of the Jīva is an essential component. According to Dvaita school, the jīvas have an innate nature (svarūpa) that never changes. This svarūpa should not be confused with the habits of a person at a superficial level. This acts at a deep level and thus differentiates one jīva from another. The purpose of the creation is to allow this and provide a conducive environment to the jīva to manifest to fullest of his nature. Depending on the composition of sattva, rajas and tamas gunas in the svarūpa, the jīvas perform karmas accordingly and attain mokṣa, or niraya (hell), or be bound in the birth-death cycle for ever. The doctrine of jīvas that are liberated and those eternally damned has a parallel in Jaina's religious thought also.

In Dvaita-vedānta, liberation is achieved through the knowledge of the greatness of Iśvara. Similar to Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy, Iśvara in Dvaita-vedānta is a personal God with attributes of name and form, who can be reached through devotion (bhakti). Through bhakti combined with meditation, one can dispose oneself to the experience and grace of Iśvara. The Jīva, on his part, must prove himself worthy of it by good works (karma), acquisition of right knowledge (jñāna-yoga), and single-minded devotion (bhakti-yoga).

Table 3.1 provides a comparative picture of the three schools of Vedānta, summarising the salient aspects of the schools on several elements of philosophical thinking.

TABLE 3.1 A Comparison of the Salient Features of the Three Schools of Vedānta

| No. | Criterion | Advaita | Vishistadvaita | Dvaita |
|-----|---|--|---|---|
| 1 | Basic reference for establishing the tenets | Upanisads, Bhagavadgītā, Brahmasūtra | Upanisads, Bhagavadgītā, Brahmasūtra | Upanisads, Bhagavadgītā, Brahmasūtra |
| 2 | Concept of Iṣvara | One, attribute-less (Nirguna-brahman) | One, personal God (Saguna-brahman) – Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa, Independent, Ultimate | One, personal God (Saguna-brahman) – Viṣṇu or Hari, Independent, Ultimate |
| 3 | Concept of Universe (Jagat) | Not real, mere illusory experience, made of Prakṛti and Guṇas | Real, made of Prakṛti and Guṇas | Real, made of Prakṛti and Guṇas |
| 4 | Jīva-Jagat-Iṣvara relation | All are one and the same – Brahman | All are part and parcel of Iṣvara, Jīva and Jagat depend on Iṣvara | All are uniquely different; Jīva and Jagat depend on Iṣvara |
| 5 | Valid means of knowledge (Pramāṇas) | Perception, inference, comparison, verbal testimony, presumption, non-apprehension | Perception, inference, verbal testimony | Perception, inference, verbal testimony |
| 6 | Liberation | Experience oneness with Brahman | Attaining the feet of the Lord | Knowledge of the greatness of Iṣvara |
| 7 | Path to liberation | Jñāna-yoga, Karma-yoga as a pre-requisite | Bhakti and Prapatti, Bhakti-yoga, Karma-yoga and Jñāna-yoga as pre-requisites | Bhakti-yoga, Grace of Iṣvara |

3.6 NON-VEDIC PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS

There are other philosophical systems that lie outside of the realm of the Vedic corpus. These philosophical systems did not consider the Vedas as an authoritative text and are called Non-Vedic philosophical systems. These schools do not also accept the entity Iṣvara. Jaina, Buddhist, and Cārvāka schools are prominent among them.

3.6.1 Jaina School of Philosophy

The word 'Jaina' is derived from the Sanskrit root 'ji', to conquer, essentially indicating someone who has successfully subdued his passions and obtained mastery. The Jaina school considers twenty-four Tirthankaras, starting from Vṛṣabhadeva to Mahāvīra as prophets and masters of the philosophy. Tirthankaras appear periodically in the world to educate and lead people to cross over the ocean of rebirth. This is similar to the notion of avatāra-puruṣas, who by their conduct and teaching help the human beings cross the ocean of samsāra (endless birth-death

cycle). Although in contemporary terms Mahāvīra is well-known among the twenty-four, he is regarded as the last of the twenty-four Tirthankaras. According to the Jain tradition, Mahāvīra lived during the 6th century BCE. There is a vast literature in which the doctrines of the school are recorded. The details of the Jaina school of philosophy can be found in the canonical texts of Jainism, which are largely based on the teachings of the Tirthankaras. Jain philosophy refuses to acknowledge the authority of the Vedas and the notion of a supreme God, however, several concepts in the Jaina school is in line with the Vedic schools of philosophy.

During the early part of the common era (during 4–5th century CE), two sects of Jains, Śvetāmbaras (white-clad ascetics) and Digambaras (sky-clad ascetics) emerged. There are some differences between the two sects in certain aspects such as rituals, ascetic practices, and monastic organisation. Despite this, on matters of philosophical principles and concepts, they remain similar. Both the sects accept the authority of the Tattvārthaśūtra, composed by Umāsvāti during 2nd–3rd century CE. The Tattvārthaśūtra has been commented upon by both Śvetāmbara and Digambara scholars over the centuries and is, therefore, an important Jain text.

According to Jain ontology, the fundamental categories of being are a soul (Jīva), a matter of which the substances in the world are formed (Pudgala), space (Ākāśa), time (Kāla), the principle of motion (Dharma), and the principle of rest (Adharma). Jīvas are infinite and so are the material particles. These particles also possess innumerable qualities and jīvas with their limited ability cannot describe them completely. Hence our knowledge of any substance is not absolute but relative. Jaina school proposes a methodology to address this issue and argues that capturing reality perfectly with the language is not possible.

This is analogous to six blind men trying to describe how an elephant looks like. Each one of them will describe an elephant in a manner that is both right and not right. It is right in a limited sense and not right if we take it as the ultimate description of the elephant. However, the description of the reality can be sufficiently enhanced through appropriate qualification of the claim made. This approach is known as 'syād-vāda', meaning conditional predication. 'Syāt' in Sanskrit essentially means, 'maybe'. In this context, it would mean, 'in a certain sense of the term' or 'from a certain point of view'. Using this concept, the Jaina school lists seven possibilities for the truth values. With syādvāda, Jain philosophers are able to analyse claims made by various systems of thought and show them to be relative assertions of the truth as understood by the Jain tradition.

In the Jaina school, the cycle of birth-death is attributed to tiny particles of matter (Pudgala) that have embedded themselves into the Jīva. This is called karma and in the Jain philosophy, spiritual growth is to overcome this karma. An analogy of a wet cloth explains how karma affects the Jīva. Just as a wet cloth becomes sticky when worn, the kārmic matter gets attached to the Jīva. The passions that we get attracted to are compared to the water in a wet cloth. A wet cloth attracts dust, in the same manner, the Jīva attracts karma. According to the Jain philosophy, the passions are evoked by experiences, which arise due to the kārmic particles that have previously bonded with the Jīva. Just as the seeds ripen eventually and bear fruit, the karma is supposed to have an impact on the Jīva in terms of some experiences. These experiences could be pleasant, painful, or neutral, and evoke corresponding passions of attraction, aversion, or indifference. The passions, in turn, attract more kārmic particles or seeds, and the entire process repeats itself.

- ◆ The concept of rebirth and other world is completely dismissed in Cārvāka philosophy.
- ◆ The details of the Jain School of Philosophy can be found in the canonical texts of Jainism, which are largely based on the teachings of the Tirthankaras.

The Jīva is stuck in bondage with the matter because of his karma and passions. Hence freeing the self from the matter is the way to liberation. The association of the matter with Jīva is due to the ignorance about himself and the world. The real knowledge which can destroy the ignorance is not easily obtained by the Jīva, for that he has to listen to the teachings of the great masters, the Tirthāṅkaras, who are liberated from the bondage. From a practical point of view, the goal is to purify the Jīva of kārmic matter, in a way by cleaning the karma so that the Jīva can radiate in its inherent blissful nature. To achieve this goal, Jain philosophy considers ascetic practices as essential. Since karma is considered as a physical substance that has bonded with the Jīva, Jain philosophy puts special emphasis on ascetic practices in terms of what one must and must not do, as a means to 'clean up' the karma. Three gems are prescribed: right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct⁶. Right faith is given utmost importance as any activity undertaken with false convictions loses much of its value. Right knowledge pertains to a good understanding of the Jain philosophy. Right conduct is also placed huge importance in the Jain philosophy. The individual must control the passion with the right conducts, of which ahimsa is the most important one.

Once a person begins to diligently practice the ethical restraints and prescribed ascetic disciplines, the karmas slowly drop away and the pure knowledge, which is the inherent nature of the Jīva begins to radiate. By these practices, the passions can be calmed and through a two-way process of cleaning existing kārmic matter and preventing further accumulation of karma, the Jīva can attain the final goal.

3.6.2 Buddha School of Philosophy

The Buddha (or Buddhist) school of philosophy is largely based on the teachings of Gautama Buddha. Buddha was born as Siddhārtha during the 4th–5th Century BCE. Although Buddhism originated in ancient India, it later spread to several parts of Asia. There are two forms of Buddhism: the northern form and the southern form. The form of Buddhism prevailing in Nepal, Tibet, China, Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan, Singapore, and Japan is called northern Buddhism (also synonymous with Mahāyāna) while the form prevailing in Sri Lanka and other parts of Southeast Asia including Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand is called Southern Buddhism (also known as Theravāda). The earliest form is the northern version, and it includes several sub-traditions such as Zen, Nichiren, and Shingon. Kaniśka is supposed to have convened a great council of the Northern Buddhists in the 1st century CE. Lalitavistara is an important work composed by the Northern Buddhists sometime during the 2nd–4th century CE. Tibetan Buddhism drifted away from the primitive Buddhism in India and is supposed to have adopted forms and ceremonies, which were unknown to Gautama and his followers.

According to early texts, Gautama was moved by the suffering of life and death. Further, on account of rebirth, this suffering is experienced in an endless cycle of birth-death. His enlightenment showed him the path for liberation from this suffering forever, by reaching a state of Nirvāṇa. Gautama's teachings were initially oral and in the later period, they developed into a complete philosophical system with several treatises written by the followers of the school.

Buddha's philosophy focuses on the means of ending the suffering of the individuals. It is based on four noble truths (catvāri-ārya-satyāni). Figure 3.6 graphically illustrates this. These are elaborated as follows:

1. *There is suffering:* According to Gautama, "Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering. The presence of objects we hate is suffering, not able

to obtain what we desire is suffering." The Buddhist philosophy argues that the human being is a compound of five aggregates and clinging to them leads to suffering. The five aggregates include the following:

- (a) The form made of four elements (earth, water, fire, and air), five sense organs, five attributes of matter (smell, form, sound, taste, and touch), two distinctions of sex (male, female), three essential conditions (thought, vitality, and space) and two means of communication (gesture and speech)
- (b) Consciousness
- (c) Feeling: Sensations of pleasure and pain
- (d) Formation
- (e) Perception and Potentialities which lead to good or bad results

These five aggregates include all physical and mental elements and powers of man and are impermanent in nature. Consciousness arises from other aggregates and mental factors from the contact of consciousness and other aggregates.

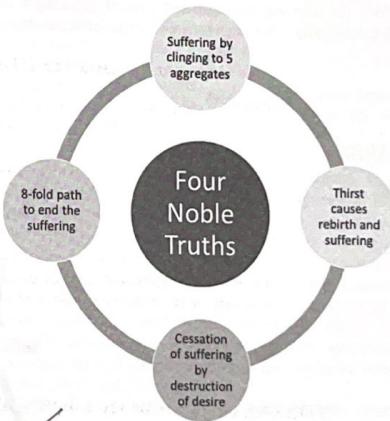


FIGURE 3.6 The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism

2. *There is the cause of suffering:* In Gautama's words, "Thirst leads to rebirth accompanied by pleasure and lust, thirst for pleasure, thirst for existence, thirst for prosperity".
3. *The cessation of suffering:* The cessation of suffering will be possible with the complete cessation of thirst, which amounts to the absence of passion and complete destruction of desire.

4. There is a path to end the suffering: Buddhist philosophy prescribes a holy eight-fold path that enables one to lead a holy moral life and that will lead one to the final goal of liberation. The eightfold path includes right views, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

The ultimate goal in Buddhist philosophy is to reach Nirvāna. Nirvāna is not a state reached after death, but something that is attainable in this very life. It is the sinless calm state of mind attained due to freedom from desires and passions, a state of perfect peace, goodness, and wisdom. Once a person reaches Nirvāna, the cycle of birth and death ends, which is the final goal leading to liberation.

As we have seen above, the central issue in Buddhist philosophy is to strive for the cessation of suffering. The Buddhist philosophy systematically argues how sufferings happen using a cause–effect cycle. Figure 3.7 illustrates this cycle leading to suffering. As seen in the figure, the root cause of the suffering is ignorance. Due to ignorance, the impressions of the previous birth lead to initial consciousness. The body and the mind and the sense organs of the previous birth lead to initial consciousness. The body and the mind and the sense organs evolve out of this consciousness. Once the sense organs are in contact with the senses and gather the experiences of life, the thirst for enjoyment drives the process leading to rebirth and suffering. Therefore, the only way to break this cycle of suffering is to remove ignorance and suffering. Therefore, the only way to break this cycle of suffering is to remove ignorance and suffering. Therefore, the only way to break this cycle of suffering is to remove ignorance and suffering.

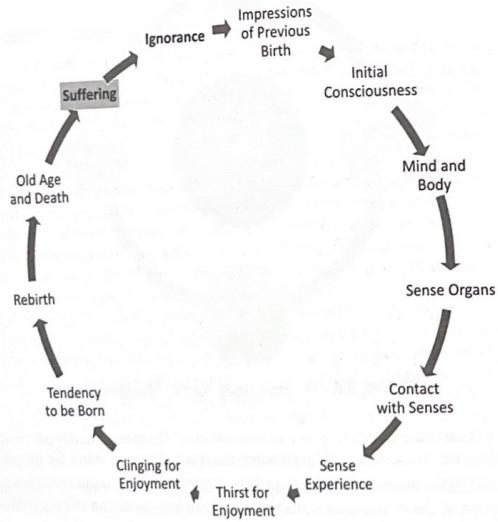


FIGURE 3.7 The Cycle of Suffering

3.6.3 Cārvāka School

Cārvāka school of thought closely maps to the trait of materialism, which emphasises a life of enjoyment based on certain principles and assumptions about life. The word Cārvāka literally means 'sweet-tongued' (cāru-vāka), in a way signifying that the ideas appear attractive at the outset. This is because the system only advocates two of the four puruṣārthas, pleasure and wealth as objectives of living. This school is also called Lokāyata. The Cārvāka school considers matter as the ultimate reality and rejects the idea that there is a divine or a transcendental power behind the matter, called Prakṛti conceptualised by the Sāṃkhya-Yoga school.

Philosophical systems in India had systematic methods for the presentation of the key concepts in the system. This began with a book (of aphorisms), followed by a growing literature of a few commentaries and sub-commentaries. In the case of the Cārvāka system, we do not seem to have such extensive literature on the school. No text of the Cārvāka school is available to us today which discusses its tenets in totality. The absence of canonical texts and a lineage of followers who were able to establish the tenets of the system by constantly engaging in intellectual debates to establish their tenets were perhaps responsible for its decay. Current discussions on this school of thought are based on the scanty fragments available for some analysis⁹. The available material is from texts such as Sarva-darśana-saṅgraha where, during the discussion of these schools, some verses are quoted. Mostly we get to know about this system through refutations from its opponents.

One of the major differences of the Cārvāka school with that of the Vedic schools of philosophy pertains to what is the accepted means of valid knowledge. Unlike all other schools, Cārvāka school considers only direct perception through senses as pramāṇa¹⁰. Essentially this implies that whatever is directly perceptible can only be accepted as valid means of knowledge. This has significant implications for metaphysics. On account of this, Cārvāka school considers matter as the only reality using which the world is made of. Furthermore, the world is constituted of only four basic categories, namely, earth, water, fire, and air, which are all physical and directly perceptible. Ether or space is not accepted as the fifth element because it is not perceptible. Other entities such as the sky, ātman, mind, iśvara, dharma, reincarnation, svarga, and mokṣa that the other schools have accepted are rejected in the Cārvāka system. In essence, all transcendental entities are dismissed using the argument that only direct perception provides valid knowledge.

There is nothing called ātman other than the body. Cārvāka considers the four basic elements of the world as the basic constituents of the body too. When the individual constituents exist in a disjointed state, they are bereft of life and consciousness. However, when these come together the body is formed, and by a peculiar combination of these constituents, the life-breath and consciousness appear in the body. The concept of rebirth and other world is completely dismissed in this system. The arguments primarily stem from the limitation of using only direct perception as the means of valid knowledge. There are no means available for determining the existence of the 'other world'. Moreover,

- ◆ No text of the Cārvāka school is available to us today which discusses its tenets in totality.
- ◆ According to Cārvāka school whatever is directly perceptible can only be accepted as valid means of knowledge.

there is no 'other world' because of the absence of any 'otherworldly' being. Since the existence of consciousness in the other world cannot be substantially established through direct perception, which is the only means available for valid knowledge, these ideas are dismissed.

Once a person dies, there is no afterlife. Pleasure and pain are felt in no other place than the body, hence there is no need to accept something called the *ātman* which is not confirmed by the *pramāṇa*. Since there is no *ātman* and there is no rebirth the highest goal of human life is to have pleasure in one's lifetime. Once the body is confined to the flames and burnt to ashes, how can it ever return, therefore enjoyment 'here and now' is the goal of living in this school of thought¹¹.

The salient features of the Cārvāka school of philosophy are summarised in Figure 3.8.

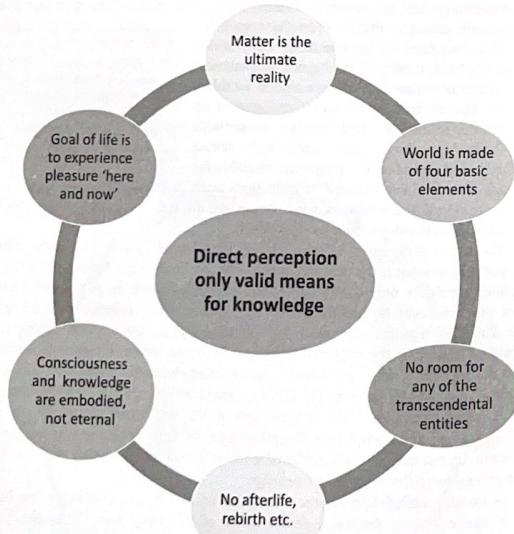


FIGURE 3.8 Salient Features of the Cārvāka School

SUMMARY

- ▶ The word *darsana* is derived from the Sanskrit root, *drś*, 'to see', suggesting that these philosophical systems provide a true worldview and a vision for life and help us resolve the issues that we face in our life.
- ▶ The philosophical inquiry in India gave rise to several schools, each developing its own understanding of the world. Each of these schools presents its view with rigorous intellectual exercise and uncompromised importance on the self-experience.
- ▶ While the Hindu schools of philosophy rely on the Vedic text as the ultimate authority and means for valid knowledge, the Jaina philosophy relies on their canonical texts.
- ▶ The schools differ in presenting how to get the right knowledge and use it as the means for the ultimate liberation of the soul. The context for the philosophical discussion is the three inter-related concepts of God–Universe–Individual.
- ▶ According to the Sāṃkhya system, two basic elements constitute everything in this world, matter (*Prakṛti*) and spirit (*Purusa*). *Purusa* is the pure consciousness, sentient, changeless, eternal, and passive. *Prakṛti* on the other hand is the root cause of all activities including the entire creation.
- ▶ The unique thing that establishes Yoga as distinct among the other darsanas is that its emphasis on understanding the mind, its various states, its cognitive activities, and methods to control it. Yoga provides a structured and practical eight-step process to gradually reach a stage of complete cessation of the activities of *Citta*.
- ▶ Both Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika set out in their journey of the 'knowable' and define various categories to describe the same. The first is about the 'ways of knowing the reality' and the second is about the 'objects in the reality that is knowable'.
- ▶ The Nyāya system, placed enormous emphasis on the means of obtaining 'right knowledge'. Therefore, the unique contribution of Nyāya
- school is its detailed inquiry of knowledge (*Pramāṇa*) and valid cognition and its means (*Pramāṇa*).
- ▶ The main aim of Pūrva-mīmāṃsā school is to ascertain the meanings of the Samhitā and Brāhmaṇa portions of Veda which lay importance on the karma, performing rituals, and thereby attaining dharma as a means for liberation.
- ▶ The Vedānta schools of philosophy rely on three major texts: Brahma-Sūtras, Bhagavadgītā, and the Upaniṣads, known as prasthānatraya, for establishing their tenets.
- ▶ Śaṅkara propounded a monistic philosophy, known as Advaita, with the conception of the attribute-less God (Nirguṇa-brahman) as the ultimate reality.
- ▶ Matter, Jīva and Iṣvara are three entities recognised in the Viśiṣṭādvaita school. Though all the three are ultimate, the first two have an absolute dependent relationship with Iṣvara.
- ▶ The Dvaita school clearly admits two independent and mutually irreducible substances that make up the Universe: the Jīva and the Iṣvara.
- ▶ Several concepts of the Jain school of thought is in line with the Vedic schools of philosophy. With syād-vāda, Jain philosophers are able to analyze claims made by various systems of thought and show them to be relative assertions of the truth as understood by the Jain tradition.
- ▶ Buddha's philosophy focuses on the means of ending the suffering of the individuals. It is based on four noble truths. The ultimate goal in Buddhist philosophy is to reach Nirvāṇa. Nirvāṇa is not a state reached after death, but something that is attainable in this very life.
- ▶ Cārvāka school of thought closely maps to the trait of materialism, which emphasises a life of enjoyment based on certain principles and assumptions about life. The concept of rebirth and other world is completely dismissed in this system.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Outline the salient features of Indian philosophical systems.
2. What do you understand by the terms 'Vedic and Non-Vedic' schools of philosophy?
3. What are some of the common features of the Vedic schools of philosophy? What are their main differences?
4. Prepare a one-page note each, enumerating the commonalities and differences between the following schools of philosophy:
 - (a) Sāṃkhya and Yoga
 - (b) Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika
 - (c) Pūrva-mimāṃsā and Vedānta
5. Briefly describes the salient aspects of the following schools of philosophy:
 - (a) Sāṃkhya
 - (b) Yoga
 - (c) Nyāya
 - (d) Vaiśeṣika
 - (e) Pūrva-mimāṃsā
6. What do you understand by the term 'Puruṣa and Prakṛti'?
7. Explain the term 'Aśtāṅga-yoga'.
8. What are the key differences and commonalities among the three schools of Vedānta?
9. What is the role of karma-yoga, bhakti-yoga, and jñāna-yoga according to the three Vedānta schools?
10. Comment on the statement, "Cārvāka school of philosophy has taken a different approach compared to other philosophical systems".
11. Prepare a one-page note outlining the salient features of the Jaina school of philosophy.
12. Compare and contrast the Jaina school of philosophy with that of the Buddhist school.
13. What are the key recommendations of the Buddhist school of philosophy to attain liberation?

DISCOVER IKS

1. All Indian schools of philosophy share certain common features. They also differ on certain aspects and these features primarily drive the basic tenets of a particular school of thought. The video in the link below is a talk by Swami Tadatmananda on the relative differences between Buddhism and the Advaita-vedānta school of philosophy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wq2euKYRoA>. After watching the video, prepare a two-page note to answer the following questions:
 - (a) What are some of the common ideas between Advaita and Buddhism?
 - (b) What are the key differences between the two schools?
2. One of the distinguishing aspects of Jainism is their special attention to ahimsā. It is their core belief that we need to make several lifestyle changes to truthfully practice ahimsā. There are other such principles such as non-possession (aparigraha). These practices are to be diligently followed by the followers of Jain irrespective of whether the person is a householder or a monk. The video traces the life of Jain monks and provides some clues as to how they practice these virtues in their daily life <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqExyhLTFaA>. After watching the video, develop a three-page note to answer the following questions:
 - (a) What do you understand by the 'low consumption' principle? What are its implications for modern living, both to an individual and the society?

- (b) Does the ascetic life of a Jain monk promote environment-friendly practices? How?
 (c) How do the Jain monks contribute to the wellbeing of the members of the society?

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ENDNOTES

1. For some more details on this, see, Dasgupta, S. (1975). *A History of Indian Philosophy – Volume I*, Motilal Banarsi das, Delhi, pp. 71–75.
2. This idea is brought out concisely in the Gītā in Chapter 13, verse 21: पुरुषः प्रकृतिस्यो हि सूक्ष्मे प्रकृतिज्ञानान् | कारणं गुणसहीयम् सदनयानिजमनु || ३-२ || puruṣah prakṛitisho hi sūkṣme prakṛtijñānān | kāraṇam gunasaḥ sya sadasadyonijanmanu || 13-21 || See for details, Swami Chinmayananda (2002). "The Holy Gītā", Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Mumbai, pp. 880–882.
3. For details see, Arjunwadkar, K.S. (2006). "Yogasūtras of Patañjali", Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, p. ४. योगस्त्वपूर्वजिनोराधः ॥ yogasūttavrttirodhah ॥ Yoga Sūtra 1.2.