**MPYE 005: World Religions**

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**1. Discuss the eightfold path that Buddhism suggests as a way of overcoming suffering.**

The essence of the Buddha’s teaching can be summed up in two principles: the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. The **Four Noble Truths** comprise the essence of Buddha's teachings. They are the truth of suffering (Dukhha), the truth of the cause of suffering (Dukkha Sammudaya), the truth of the end of suffering (Dukkha Nirodha), and the truth of the path that leads to the end of suffering (Dukkha Nirodha Marg).

The practical application of the four noble truths is **the eightfold path**. They are also connected to the fourth noble truth as a means to destroy suffering. To follow the Noble Eightfold Path is a matter of practice rather than just intellectual knowledge, They should be taken as eight aspects of life, and are to be integrated in everyday life.

The eight parts of the path to liberation are grouped into three essential elements of Buddhist practice—moral conduct, mental discipline, and wisdom. Following are components of the eightfold path.

**Right View (Samyak-dristi)**: The grasp and acceptance of the four noble truths, rejection of the fault doctrines, and avoidance of immorality resulting from covetousness, lying, violence, etc. These views then condition action. Right view provides the perspective for practice, right intention the sense of direction.

**Right Aspirations (Samyka-sankalpa)**: or Right Intention. It implies thought on renunciation, thought on friendship and good will, and thoughts on non-harming. The way of the world is the way of desire, and the unenlightened who follow this way flow with the current of desire, seeking happiness by pursuing the objects in which they imagine they will find fulfilment. Desire is to be abandoned not because it is morally evil but because it is a root of suffering.

**Right Speech (Samyak-vac)**: It inspires one to speak truth primarily, and to speak gentle and soothing words for the benefit and wellbeing of others, and to avoid falsehood, slander, harsh words and gossip. Speech can break lives, create enemies, and start wars, or it can give wisdom, heal divisions, and create peace. Wisdom consists in the realization of truth, and truth (**sacca**) is not just a verbal proposition but the nature of things as they are.

**Right Conduct (Samyak-karma)**: The right conduct the practice of five moral vows namely, non-violence (ahimsa), truthfulness (satya), non-stealing (asteya). The force of effort involved contributes, the unwholesome kamma being proportional to the force and the strength of the defilements.

**Right Livelihood (Samyag ajiva)**: Avoidance of a luxurious life and the acceptance of occupations which do not involve cruelty and injury to other living beings. It is ensuring that one earns one’s living in a righteous way. One should acquire earnings only by legal means, peacefully, honestly, and in ways which do not entail harm and suffering for others.

**Right Effort (Samyak vyayama)**: The effort to avoid the rise of evil and false ideas in the mind, the effort to overcome evil and evil tendencies, the effort to acquire positive values like attention, energy, tranquility, equanimity, and concentration, and the effort to maintain the right conditions for a meritorious life. Energy (viriya), the mental factor behind right effort, can appear in either wholesome or unwholesome forms.

**Right Awareness (Samyak Smrti)**: Awareness of the body (breathing positions, movements, impurities of the body, etc.), awareness of sensations (attentive to the feelings of oneself and of the other), awareness of thought and the awareness of the internal functions of the mind. What brings the field of experience into focus and makes it accessible to insight is a mental faculty called in Pali sati, usually translated as “mindfulness.” All consciousness involves awareness in the sense of a knowing or experiencing of an object.

**Right Concentration (Samyak Samadhi)**: The practice of one pointed contemplation to go beyond all sensations of pain and pleasure, and finally to full enlightenment. This factor, one-pointedness of mind (citt’ekaggata), has the function of unifying the other mental factors in the task of cognition. It happens in four levels. In the first level, through intense meditation the seeker concentrates the mind on truth and thereby enjoys great bliss. In the second level the seeker enters into supreme internal peace and tranquillity. In the third level, the seeker becomes detached even from the inner bliss and tranquillity. In the fourth level, the seeker is liberated even from this sensation of bliss and tranquillity.

**2. Write a detailed essay on the Hindu ethics.**

The set of principles that define what is right and wrong being called ‘morality’ or ‘ethics’. Ethics, which concerns itself with the study of conduct, is derived, in Hinduism, from certain spiritual concepts; it forms the foundation of the spiritual life.

The Asrama Dharma stands for individual development in society, and economic aspect of society. Asrama means a stage, a way in the journey of life. When this order of society is intertwined with the four orders of life or the ashramas, i.e. **Brahmacharya** or the student life, **Grihastha** or the householder’s life, **Vanaprastha** or the retired life and **Sanyasa** or the devotional life, it gives rise to the ashrama dharma. It is the guna karma, i.e. quality work rather than body based restricted scope of work to each of the four groups, i.e. varna karma. This order is created on the basis of quality work- Chaturvarnayam mayasrushtam gunakarma vibhagasaka. An individual is born into a higher or lower caste as a result of actions performed by him in his previous life, and each person, therefore, is himself responsible for his position.

**Brahmacarya** is a life of willing abstention, based on self control and austerity or tapas. Brahmachari is the word for the one lives his life as per the instructions of Brahma, or the inner self. In the ashram sect, it is the student life. The first stage of a this life with the Upanayana ceremony, which is around the age of five, and then the boy is entrusted to the care of his teacher, or the Guru, with whom he lives, and his student life continues with the teacher.

The abode of the Guru is the Gurukula, or the Ashram. It has two distinct purposes: 1. To transmit the heritage to the next generation, and 2. To train the individual to lead a life of discipline. A life of chastity and purity is lived, and followed in the Gurukul. Hence, the word Brahmachari, becomes synonymous with Celibate.

**Grihasta** is the second stage of life, the married life of a householder, where a person strives towards the first three purusarthas: dharma, artha, and kama. It is considered the most materialistic stage as the focus is on providing for family and safety. A grihastha has many responsibilities and the wife is considered to be the assistant and she also shares all the benefits of what the husband does. Women were to be honoured and loved by their fathers, brothers, husbands, and brothers- in-law. The general virtues of a householder are hospitality, industry, truth, honesty, liberality, charity, and purity of food and life. He may enjoy wealth and luxury, provided he gives alms. Any householder must duly offer five great sacrifices daily.

**Vanaprastha**: Vanaprastha is a Sanskrit term derived from vana, meaning "forest," and prastha, meaning "going to." It is a voluntary withdrawal, or voluntary retirement. The householder at this stage of life quits the household life by way of overcoming the bodily needs and emotional attachments to the members of his family, and goes to the vana, the forest, to lead a sattvic, godward life in solitude. This is the stage of detaching oneself from the responsibilities of family life, and handing them over to the next generation.

**Sannyasa** or complete renunciation: The achievement of the fourth purusartha i.e. moksa, is attained at this stage. It is characterized by renunciation and service. One was supposed to give up everything and strive solely for liberation through intense sadhana. The aim was to reach the final goal of human life, moksha or liberation from samsara-or God-realization. He must rejoice in the Supreme Self, sitting indifferent, and refraining from sensual delights.

3. Answer any two of the following questions in about 250 words each:

**a) Give brief descriptions of the animate and inanimate substances discussed in Jainism.**

Jainism believes in dualism and makes a distinction between Jivas, which are animate substances, and Ajivas, which are inanimate substances, each possessing an infinite number of characteristics of its own.

**Jiva** or soul is termed as a **conscious** or animate substance. Souls may be theoretically arranged in a continuous series, according to the degrees of consciousness. Souls begin their journey in a primordial state, and exist in a state of consciousness continuum that is constantly evolving through Saṃsāra. Some evolve to a higher state, some regress which is a movement that is driven by the karma.

Though it has no form (murti) it acquires the size and form of the body wherein it lives. It is in this sense that a jiva is said to occupy space or possess extension.

The soul is naturally bright, all-knowing, and blissful. There are an infinite number of souls in the universe; all fundamentally equal, but differing owing to the adherence of matter in a fine atomic form. A liberated soul in Jainism is one who has gone beyond Saṃsāra, is at the apex, is omniscient, remains there eternally, and is known as a Siddha.

The physical world in which souls live is constituted by the material bodies that the souls occupy and the other material objects that form their environment. This is **Inanimate** object or **Ajiva**. Ajiva can be divided into two kinds, with form and without form. In addition to these material substances, there are space, time, and the conditions of motion and rest, without which the world and its events cannot be fully explained.

**Matter** or **Pudgala**: Material substances can combine together to form larger and larger wholes and can also break up into smaller and smaller parts. Smallest parts are atoms(anu), which join together to form compounds(sanghata or skandha). Bodies and objects of nature are compounds. Mind(manas), speech and breath are also matter.

**Space** or **Akasa**: The infinity of space, called ākāśa in Sanskrit, Soul, matter, dharma, and adharma, all exist in space. Space is a formless entity where other categories can exist and function. Space has loka and aloka. Loka is the material universe which has three levels: the underworld or hell (adholoka) where the wicked souls live, the terrestrial level in the middle (urdhvaloka), and aloka or the empty non-world which demarcates the end of the universe.

**Time** or **Kala**: Time is eternal and formless. It is first of all conceived as the sequence of events in the past, present, and future. Kala (time) is infinite, but there are cycles (kalachakras) in it. Six of them are the ascending part of the cycle or wheel (utsarpini), and six are the descending part of the same (avasarpum). Time is the necessary condition of duration, change, motion, newness, and oldness.

**Dharma and Adharma**: Dharma isn't referring to religion, but it refers to the medium of motion. Dharma is motion and adharma is rest, or dharma is action and adharma is inaction. Dharma and adharma, though they are opposed, are also similar insofar as both are eternal, formless, non moving, and both pervade the entire world-space (lokakasa).

**b) Make a detailed exposition of the doctrine of dependent origination.**

Everything in this world has a cause, and every cause has its effect. The principle is applied in the twelve links of dependent origination doctrine in Buddhism, which describes the chain of causes which result in **rebirth** and **dukkha**(suffering). There is a cycle of twelve such causes and corresponding effects which governs the entire life of human beings. The Pali word for this is **Pratitya Samutpada**.

The term could be translated to various titles as dependent origination, dependent arising, interdependent co-arising, conditioned arising, and conditioned genesis.

Pratitya samutpada is a middle path between sasvatvada (the principle of eternity) and uchedvada (the principle of annihilation). According to sasvatvada, some things are eternal, uncaused, and independent. According to uchedvada, nothing remains after the destruction of things.

The twelve links are:

**Ignorance** (**Avidya**): Ignorance is caused by desire. It is the substratum of action and the basis of ego (jivahood). It leads to action, or constructing activities.

**Predisposition** (**Samskara**): means a disposition preceding to or preparing to certain activity, and is caused by ignorance. It can be understood as the attitude and aptitude of the past Karma. Any action, whether meritorious or harmful, and whether of body, speech or mind, creates karmic imprint on a being.

**Consciousness** (**Vijnana**): There are six types of consciousness, namely, eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and intellect. It is caused by dispositions. Consciousness and the organ cannot function without each other.

**Name** and **Form** (**Namarupa**): It is the psycho-physical body in the womb of the mother caused by consciousness. Feeling, perception, intention, contact, and attention. This is called name (i.e. mentality or mind).

**Sense Organs** (**Sadayatana**): The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind are the six sense media.

**Contact** (**Sparsa**): The coming together of the object, the sense medium and the consciousness of that sense medium is called contact.

**Feeling or Sensation** (**Vedana**): Feeling or sensation is caused by contact with the objects of enjoyment.

**Craving** (**Trsna**): The craving or thirst for enjoyment is caused by the actual experience or sensation of enjoyment.

**Attachment** or **Clinging** (**Upadana**): The clinging to sensory enjoyment is caused by the craving for such enjoyment.

**Becoming** (**Bhava**): It is the will to be born caused by clinging or attachment.

**Birth** (**Jati**): The jiva is caught up in the wheel of the world and remains in it till it attains nirvana.

**Old Age** and **Death** (**Jaramarana**): Rebirth causes the whole chain of the worldly sufferings.

When there’s ignorance in the mind, feeling conditions desire, and becomes a chain of conditioning. Striking it with the force of wisdom and awareness, the chain gets weaker and weaker until it breaks Penetrating into the truth of the Law of Dependent Origination, frees our minds from it.

4. Answer any four of the following in about 150 words each:

**a) What are the basic principles of Jewish faith?**

Judaism believes that God is one, unique, and concerned for us and our actions. God is identified throughout Jewish tradition by ineffable name YHWH (Yahweh). Judaism teaches that all people are made in the image of God and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. It says that God exists forever, that He is in every place, and that He knows all things. He is above nature (“supernatural”) but he is in the world and he hears people who pray to Him and can answer them. God is the main power in the universe.

Jews believe that God has given them a special job to repair the world. Their job is to make the world a better place with more good in it.

God reveals himself through three ways. 1) Through the media of some techniques, which are through dreams, omens, and astrology. Priests consulted God through these instruments. 2) Through prophetic revelation: through visions by listening to the word of God. 3) Apocalyptic revelation: revelation through mysteries.

**b) What is the concept of liberation (Moksa) in Jainism?**

The goal of right conduct is salvation (moksa). If the bondage of the soul is its association with matter, liberation must mean the complete disassociation of the soul from matter. In its epistemological and psychological senses, moksha refers to freedom from ignorance: self-realization and self-knowledge.

All the miseries a soul experiences in the world are due to its desire for sensual pleasures. Desires lead to actions, called karmas, and its effects are borne by the doer. The inherent powers of the soul are crippled by its association with Karmic matter and that is why we find every person in an imperfect state. The real and everlasting happiness will be obtained by a person only when the Karmas are completely removed from the soul.

Knowledge alone can remove ignorance. Right knowledge can be obtained only by carefully studying the teachings of the omniscient tirthankaras or teachers who have already attained liberation. Right knowledge is that which reveals the nature of things neither insufficiently, nor with exaggeration nor falsely, but exactly as it is and that too with certainty.

We must have a general acquaintance with the essentials of their teachings and faith in those teachers. On attaining right belief it is considered desirable to strive after right knowledge.

The practice of Right knowledge is Right Conduct (Samyak Caritra). In right conduct, a man has to control his passions, his senses, his thought, speech, and action, in the light of right knowledge.

Right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct have therefore come to be known in Jaina ethics as the three gems (triranta).

**c) What was the Vedic concept of God?**

The Aryans believed in many gods, and almost every phenomenon in nature which impressed their imagination was regarded as a deity. Thus, Indra was the god of storm, thunder, and rain. The brilliant sun above and fire below were worshipped as the gods Surya and Agni. These gods were at first worshipped in a simple way. A fire was kindled, to which ordinary articles of food and drink like milk, ghee, rice, etc. were offered as oblations. This was accompanied by beautiful hymns addressed to the gods.

There are 33 devas which manifest the glory of God, 8 Vasus, 11 Rudras, 12 Adityas, Indra and Prajapati, 33 on the whole. The eight Vasus (I) Heated consmic bodies, (2) Planets (3) Atmospheres (4) Supertcrrestrial space (5) Suns (6) Rays of ethcral space (7) Satellites (8) Stars.

Brahman is the Creator and Lord of the universal. Brahman the single Reality, appears to us in Its phenomenal aspects as God, universe, and the living beings while remaining all the times as the impersonal Reality, their essence and substratum.

**d) Briefly describe the concept of God in Sikhism.**

Sikh is interpreted as the elect, chosen by God, or God’s own. Guru Nanak had liberal views on God, religion and Social life. He said, “O God! Thou who art the Lord of us all, didst Thou not feel pain when there was so much slaughter and lamentation?”

The Adi Granth or Guru Granth Sahib is the most important scripture in the Sikh religion. The Adi Granth is soteriological in character and the basic concern is the essential unity between God and the human soul. Right living is the key to a proper relationship with God.

The Sikh Gurus were against miracles because they believed that by performing miracle they are denying the grace of God. They believe in formless god, which could be translated to Nirguna form.

Self-reliance in sikh belief is the greatest obstacle to God realization which is manifested in lust, anger, greed, materialism, and pride. Guru Nanak remarked, “Sweetness and humility are the essence of all virtues”

**5. Write short notes on any five of the following in about 100 words each:**

a) **Aranyakas** : Aryanaka (forest book), meaning ‘a book pertaining to forests’. They are forest treatises dealing with meditation or upasana, and were composed around 700BCE. Out of the 1180 Aryanakas only six (6) are available now. Aranyakas paved the way for the Upanisads ,which has become the source of all Vedic and Vedantic philosophy.

The serve as a bridge between the materialistic world and the psychic world, by creating a meaning between the two. They help in knowing the hidden meaning and significance of the rituals and sacrifice. How to sit for prayer, which side to face, during what part of the day to offer the prayer, what mantra to be chanted, which ritual to be performed before and after prayer, and so on, are clearly explained here. The subtle energies are moved by the rituals and mantras, thus purifying the inner bodies, and further purifying the soul. Samhitas; and the rituals and sacrifices explained in the Brahmanas give the logical reasoning for following them. Samhitas; and the rituals and sacrifices explained in the Brahmanas give the logical reasoning for following them.

**b) Rita**

Rta could be translated as ‘Cosmic Truth or Cosmic Order.’ It is not a fixed physical or mathematical law, but as a ‘sacrificial order’. It is the expression of the primordial dynamism that is inherent in everything and also possesses its own internal coherence, a unifying force that could be said to be the very soul of sacrifice. Vedic religion features the belief that rita was guarded by Varuna, the god-sovereign, who was assisted by Mitra, the god of honour, and that the proper performance of sacrifices to the gods was necessary to guarantee its continuance. The concept of rita led to the doctrines of dharma (duty) and karma (accumulated effects of good and bad actions). It is the physical order of the universe, the order of the sacrifice, and the moral law of the world.

**c) Kabbalah**

The mystical tradition in Judaism or Kabbalah, contains further elaborations about God. It forms the foundations of mystical religious interpretation. It believes in a triple soul, of which the lowest level (nefesh or animal life) dissolves into the elements, the middle layer (ruach or intellect) goes to Gan Eden (Paradise) while the highest level (neshamah or spirit) seeks union with God.

The nature of the divine prompted kabbalists to envision two aspects to God: (a) God in essence, absolutely transcendent, unknowable, limitless Divine simplicity, and (b) God in manifestation, the revealed persona of God through which he creates and sustains and relates to mankind. Kabbalists speak of the first as Ein/Ayn Sof "the infinite/endless", literally "that which has no limits").

**d) Khalsa**

The word Khalsa translates to "pure". A Sikh male at being initiated into the Khalsa is titled Singh meaning "Lion" and a female is entitled Kaur meaning "Princess".

Mughal king Aurangzeb imposed special tax on the hill tribes and kings of the hill regions of U. P and Punjab. They revolted and fought against the emperor, but got divided amongst themselves on the basis of caste and race. The Sikh groups, under the leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, decided to form an army that was free from caste considerations. Gobind Singh wrote in a letter to Aurangzeb, “When affairs have gone beyond all means, it is virtuous to take a sword in hand. I have been forced to come to arms and to enter a battlefield.” They are led by five men who are symbolic to the five brave men who were ready to sacrifice their life for the community, and truth.

**e) Nididhyasanam**

Nididhyasana is profound and repeated meditation[1] on the mahavakyas, great Upanishadic statements such as "That art Thou", to realize the identity of Atman and Brahman.

In the journey of liberation through meditation, or bhakti marga, or the path of Yoga, the seeker realises that it is the end of journey for him and he is destined to attain Moksha. Here, he claim liberation as my nature, and can imagine moksha as a future destination to be reached. This is Nididhyansana which is not the continuation of the journey, as there is no question of journey. Nididhyasana is internalizing and enjoying the end of the journey. The seeker here could not be sent to Karma yoga again. So what we do is give it a new name taking care of the deficient.