**Course Name:  An Introduction to Indian Darśana**

**Credits- 1**

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सर्वेषांस्वस्तिर्भवतु। May there be happiness in all

सर्वेषांशान्तिर्भवतु। May there be peace in all

सर्वेषांपूर्नंभवतु। May there be completeness in all

सर्वेषांमड्गलंभवतु॥ May there be success in all

सर्वेभवन्तुसुखिनः। May all be prosperous and happy

सर्वेसन्तुनिरामयाः। May all be free from illness

सर्वेभद्राणिपश्यन्तु। May all see what is spiritually uplifting

माकश्चित्दुःखभाग्भवेत्॥ May no one suffer

ॐशान्तिःशान्तिःशान्तिः॥ Om peace, peace, peace

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**COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIAN DARŚANA**

**INDIAN DARŚANA (PHILOSOPHY)**

Philosophy in India is called as *darśana*. It comes from the Sanskrit root word ‘*drś*’ that means ‘to see’, ‘to look’ or ‘to view’. The lexical meaning can be roughly understood as vision or intuition. Seeing or vision presupposes a seer and the seer is the inner self/soul. Different from Western tradition, Indian *darśana* seek after the direct vision of reality in its philosophical discourse. Therefore, it is concerned with **‘the revelation of the nature of Reality' or ‘the vision of Ultimate Truth and Reality’.** At the same time, it is not mere blind intuitive apprehension. *Darśana* is also an expression of human’s inherent capacity for intellectual discrimination. It makes it accessible to the kernel of the reality itself through a meditative thought process along with logical pedagogy. Different from western style, Indian *darśana* is not restricted to the intellectual pursuit and not confined to mere intuitive experiences, as the western critics observe. Therefore**, Dr. S Radhakrishnan** holds the view that *darśana* is **a thought system acquired by the intuitive experience and sustained by the logical argument.**

**CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIAN DARŚANA**

Despite of the diversity in style and presentation, Indian *darśana* is characterized by common philosophical notions. Following are the common characteristics of Indian *darśana* systems:

**1. Spiritual Orientation:**

Indian *darśana* conceives human to be spiritual in nature. Right from the very beginning Indian *darśana* has defended the reality of the soul/spirit (*Atman*). The realization of the soul has been the common goal of all Indian Systems It is said that in India, saints are philosophers and philosophers are saints.

**2. Philosophy as Practical necessity and Closeness to life**

Indian *darśana* considers philosophy in order to understand how life can be best lived with foresight, far sight and insight. It seeks truth to learn the truth which makes them free from bondages. It tackles the practical problems of life such as sufferings, old age and death. Hence, its closeness to life stands beyond the intellectual pursuits.

**3. Spiritual dissatisfaction**

Indian philosophers were not content with mere­ly mundane pursuits or material gain. As a matter of fact, Indian *darśana* owes its origin to the discontent of the spirit with temporal life. It aims at a divine transformation of life.

**4. Ignorance is the root cause of bondage**

Cycle of birth and rebirth, misery, and sufferings are due to bondage (*samsāra*) of the soul. Ignorance is the root cause of all bondage. For Indian *darśana*, Ignorance is not only intellectual, but it is also spiritual and psychological.

**5. Liberation is the ultimate end**

Knowledge is the means of liberation. Knowledge in Indian *darśana* means divine transformation of life and emancipation from worldly miseries. Barring *Cārvaka*, *Āstika* and *Nāstika* Indian philosophies, though differing in details as to their conception of liberation, unanimously hold that liberation enables a man to free himself from the shackles of ignorance and from the bondage of worldly misery. This is a spiritual stage, which transcends ethics and religion.

**6. Meditative methodology for Self-realization**

All Indian philosophers set forth certain pedagogy of meditation to get freedom from bondage and ignorance. This pedagogy demands physical, mental and spiritual discipline. This intuitive approach is the prerequisite for self-realization. Thus it is characterized by introspective attitude and approach to reality.

**7. Synthesis of religion and philosophy**

The most striking common feature of all Indian philosophical systems lies in the fact that problems of religion and those of philosophy have not been divided into water-tight compartments. One cannot find any exact demarcation between philosophy and religion in Indian tradition. In fact, the transformation of life and emancipation from worldly misery constitute the common goal of both philosophy and religion.

**8. Faith in Karma**

This moral system is manifested through the theory of Karma in the life of an individual. It is the concept of ‘*as we sow, so we reap*’ i.e. as we do so we get in return as a fruit of our deeds. Almost all the Indian philosophers believe in the theory of Karma. According to it, the results of actions (*Karmaphala*) are always with us in the form of impressions (*samskāra*) and they direct the course to our life. Thus the world is a stage, where everybody is preordained to perform his part according to his Karma. Liberation is nothing but emancipation from the bondage of Karma.

**9. Faith in Rebirth**

The theory of Karma and that of rebirth go hand-in-hand. Due to the bondage of Karma, the human soul has to be reborn in different bodies. Liberation frees a person from rebirth also.

*Cārvāka School does not believe in these theories. So the common characteristics of Indian darśana, mentioned here, do not apply to it. All the other schools of Indian darśana, however, share these features in varying degrees.*

**CHARGES AGAINST INDIAN DARŚANA**

**1. Pessimism:**

**Criticism -** Some Western scholars find Indian *darśana* is pessimistic in its approach. Pessimism denotes a peculiar mental outlook which claims the world is nothing but a place full of misery.

**Answer -** Indian *darśana* is, of course, pessimistic in the sense that it originates in dissatisfaction with the present conditions of the materialistic world. Indian philosophers analyze this wretched plight of the world. As a matter of fact, this sort of pessimism is indispen­sable for progress in life. Indian *darśana*, on the other hand, is wholly optimistic about the ultimate goal of human life. All Indian philosophical systems aim at liberation.. It enables human to save her/him from the dire agonies and delusions of the world and to lead a life of everlasting bliss after realizing her/his true self. Hence, pessimism in Indian *darśana* is initial not final.

**2. Dogmatism:**

**Criticism -** Scripture is generally regarded as an authoritative source of knowledge. True philosophy, it is argued, cannot subsist with the acceptance of dogma. This has led many western scholars to lay the charge of dogmatism at their doors.

**Answer -** Faith in the Vedas must not be misconstrued as dogmatism. They are enshrined the intuitive experiences of the Seers, which can be shared by each and every person, if one scales those spiritual altitudes. Therefore, it is not mere a subjugation to dogmas. Indian philosophers have sought the help of intellect and hence, India has celebrated logicians like Sankara, Rāmanuja, Mādhva, Nimbārka, etc.

**3. Negation of Ethics and indifference to life**

**Criticism -** Ethics has not been allotted the paramount state of existence (liberation) in Indian *darśana*. Spirituality is considered superior to ethics and religion. The liberated person transcends the ethical barriers. Liberation is beyond the frontiers of the good and the bad. So it is evident that the aim of Indian *darśana* was higher than that of ethics.

**Answer -** In Indian *darśana*, a person who has attained perfection in the spiritual field rises above the moral conflict because he/she cultivates a temperament which absolutely precludes the possibility of sin and error. At the same time, it has not overlooked or bypassed ethics. Indian philosophical systems unanimously have reiterated the importance of ethical and spiritual disciplines in the attainment of liberation.

**4. Stationary and an endless process of threshing old straw**

**Criticism -** It is said that Indian *darśana* is bogged down in old ruts. All Indian philosophers have based their thoughts upon the source texts. It exposes to the charge of stagnation.

**Answer -** Taking a panoramic view of the stream of Indian *darśana*, one finds it on the whole dynamic and moving. The multifarious dimensions and interpretations unveil the richness of Indian *darśana* which wipe out the myth of overriding authority. Hence, it is not a cluster of traditional founding doctrines but a horizon of possible interpretation.

Contemporary world have been inspired by the Indian philosophical concepts and methods. The advent of new age movements founded on Indian concepts (Yoga, Advaita and Buddha) is clear evidence of the dynamic influential aspects of Indian philosophical systems.

**5. Non-rational, Mystical and Spiritual**

**Criticism -** Indian *darśana* is mystical and spiritual and therefore, it is not really philosophy at all.

**Answer -** The vast critical analytic writing procured from *darśana* covers the nature of knowledge, word and referent, causation, and theories of truth etc. and so many other philosophical issues. Historical development of Indian system exposes the cognizance of its philosophical discourse.

**SOURCES OF INDIAN DARŚANA**

Śruti in Sanskrit means "that which is heard." Śruti includes the Vedas (Rig, Yajur, Sāma and Atharva). Vedas are the eternal truths that the Vedic seers, called riṣis, are said to have heard during their deep meditations. The Vedas are not considered the works of the human mind, but an expression of what has been realized through intuitive perception by Vedic riṣis, who had powers to see beyond the physical phenomena. As such, Vedas are considered of divine origin.

Smriti means "that which is remembered." Smriti scriptures are derived from the Vedas and are considered to be of human origin and not of divine origin. They were written to explain and elaborate the Vedas, making them understandable and more meaningful to the general people. All authoritative writings outside the Vedas are collectively referred to as Smriti. Smriti includes the Dharma Śāstras, Nibhandās, Purāṇas, Āgamas or Tantras, and Vedangas (UpaVedās).

**OUTLINE OF INDIAN DARŚANA**

Historical development of Indian *darśana* has been broadly divided into five periods:

**The Śruti Period** (2500 BCE– 600 BCE) - The expansion and development of the Aryan culture and civilization took place during this period. The literature of this period, though it was not captured in writing until centuries later, consists of the four Vedas (Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, and Atharva Veda). Thus, this period is generally known as Vedic period. Modern scholars divide it into four periods; the age of Samhitas or Mantras, Brahmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads. The Mantras (hymns), especially those of the Rig Veda, constitute the beginnings of Indian *darśana*. Generally, Mantras and Brahmanas include spiritualistic and ritualistic aspect and Āraṇyakas and [Upaniṣads](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Upanishads) contain discussions of philosophical problems.

**The Smriti period** (600 BCE–200 CE) –The second period begins with the birth o Buddha. This period is characterized by the informal presentation of philosophical doctrines through literature and narratives, such as the great epics, the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata.* The rise of Buddhism and Jainism as well as the concurrent beginnings of the orthodox schools of Hinduism was remarkable at this time. *Sāmkhya* philosophy is the first philosophical system in Indian *darśana*. During this period, many of the *Dharma Śāstras,* treatises on ethical and social philosophy, were also compiled.

**The Sūtra Period** (after 100 CE) - During this period, the systematic treatises of each of the various schools were written. The doctrines were presented in the form of aphorisms or *sūtras*. An aphorism is the brief and concise statement of philosophical principles or constructs. A *sūtra* work consists of a collection of aphorisms which define, enumerate and examine philosophical constructs. They were simple aids to memorize and intended to evoke the substance of much more elaborate philosophical discussions with which were already familiar through [oral tradition](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Oral_tradition). The Sūtra Period marks the definite beginning of systematic philosophical thinking.  Eg. [*Brahma-sūtra*](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Brahma_Sutras&action=edit&redlink=1) of Bādarāyaṇa, *Mīmāṁsasūtras* of Jaimini, *Nyāyasūtras* of Gotama, [*Yoga*](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Yoga)*sūtras* of [Patānjali](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Patanjali).

**The Scholastic Period** (from the Sūtra Period to the 17th CE) – It is known as the medieval period in the development of Indian *darśana*. Because the *sūtra* form is by nature brief, their meanings were not always clear. The Scholastic Period initiates interpretive commentaries *(bhāṣyas)*, which play a major role in philosophical literature. In some cases, different authors wrote major commentaries on the same *sūtra*-work, but with very different interpretations reflecting their own philosophical positions, and resulting in complete and elaborate philosophical systems of their own. During Scholastic Period, there was a development of intellectual philosophies such as those of Acaryas, Samkara, Kumārila, Sridhara, [Rāmanuja](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Ramanuja), [Mādhva](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Madhva), Vacaspati, Udayāna, Bhāskara, Jayanta, Vijnanabhiksu, and Raghunatha.

**Contemporary Indian Darśana (**1700 CE**)** - Indian *darśana* lost its dynamic spirit in the sixteenth century on account of [Muslims](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Islam), [British](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/British_Raj) and other invasions. The revival of education by the British, however, eventually gave rise to a revival of interest in Indian religion and philosophy. Nationalism - the devoted aspiration for re-establishment of [India](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/India) as an independent state- and education brought about a renewed appreciation of the greatness of Indian philosophical heritage. During the twentieth century, on the one side Indian philosophers were influenced by Western thought, and on the other side Indian *darśana* had a significant impact on the West. Raj Rammohun Roy, M.K Gandhi, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Bhattacarya, Iqbal, Tagore, and S. Radhakrishnan are few among them.

**INDIAN DARŚANA SYSTEMS: CLASSIFICATION BASED ON THE AUTHORITY OF VEDA**

The Vedas occupy a very important place in the Indian *darśana*. The roots of most of the Indian *darśana* systems can be traced to the Vedas. Thus, on the basis of acceptance for the authority of the Vedas, Indian *darśana* have been divided into two viz., Āstik and Nāstik.

**The Āstik   Class:**

Āstikas are those systems of Indian *darśana* which accept the testimony and authority of the Vedas. This class includes six systems of Indian *darśana* which are collectively known as *ṣad darśana* (six systems). These are Mīmāṁsa, Vedānta, Sāmkhya, Yoga, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika. Of these systems, Mīmāṁsa does not believe in God.

Āstik classifies in two (1) those which are directly based upon the Vedic scriptures. These include Mīmāṁsa and Vedanta. Of these, the first emphasizes the ritualistic aspect (Karma-kanda) of the Vedas (Samhitās and Brāhmanas) and the second the knowledge aspect (Jñāna -kanda) of the Vedas (Āranyaka and Upaniṣad). As they are directly based upon the Vedas, both these types are sometimes called Mīmāṁsa. To make a distinction, Mīmāṁsa is known as Pūrva Mīmāṁsa or Karma Mīmāṁsa and Vedānta is known as Uttara Mīmāṁsa or Jñāna Mīmāṁsa. Both these systems have their own value in Indian *darśana*. (2) Those which are not directly based on the Vedic scriptures but have an independent basis. These, however, accept the testimony of the Vedas and try to show the harmony of their own thought with that of the Vedas. These include Sāmkhya, Yoga, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika.

**The N**ā**stik Class:**

The Nāstik class of Indian philosophical systems includes the Cārvākas, the Jaina and the Buddha systems. These types reject the testimony and authority of the Vedas. As a matter of fact, they owe their origin to the reaction against Vedic traditions. Among them, Cārvaka philosophers have openly abused the Vedas. Jaina and Buddha systems are known as ethical systems. These two systems are also known as *Śramaṇa* (mendicants) one who practices austerity and asceticism. None of the three systems believe in the existence of God.

**VEDA: THE SOURCE OF INDIAN DARŚANA**

The Vedas may be assigned latest to 2500 BCE. (?). There are four Vedas. Ṛig Veda, Sāma Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva veda and they are the basic sources of Hindu religion and philosophy. It is codified and classified by the Veda Vyāsa variant as Krisna Dvaipayana. The word Veda comes from the Sanskrit root ‘*vid’* which means ‘to know’. Thus, Vedas means the repository of knowledge. The term ‘***Veda***’ (Knowledge) stands for the *Mantras* and the *Brahmaṇas*: ‘***Mantra–Brahmaṇayor Veda–Namadheyam***’. Thus, Veda is the collection of *Mantra* and *Brahmaṇas*.

**MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF VEDA**

***Anādi***- Eternal; without beginning

***Apouruṣeya***- no human authorship

***Ādikāraṇa***- Root of all creation

**FOUR VEDAS**

The *Rṣis* of the *Vedas* are not the authors, but only the ‘Seers’ of *Mantras* ‘***r****ṣ****ayo mantra draṣtara*.** ‘***Mantra***’ means a hymn addressed to some God or Goddess. The authoritative transmission is done by oral tradition (*sampradāya*) from teacher to student. Only the ancient sages, being endowed with great mental and physical ability, had the capacity to grasp all of it. With the passage of time these divine yogic powers diminished. Need arose to make the Vedas more compact to facilitate the study of the future generations. This task was taken up by Badarayana, who was also known as Krishna Dvaipayana. (Krishna Dvaipayana came to be known as Veda Vyāsa or codifier of the Vedas). Sources say that he was learned in all the 1180 Veda Sakhās. He divided the Sakhās into four major groupings each with a number of Sakhās. These four major groups are now known as the four Vedas. The Vedas are four in number, Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva. Of them all the Rig Veda is the chief. The first three agree not only in their name, form, and language, but in their contents also. Hence, sometimes *Atharva* is omitted and the *Veda* is called as ‘*Trāyi’* (Three).

o   ***Ṛig Veda*** is the oldest and most important or the chief. ***Ṛg*** means verses and *veda* means wisdom. Hence it means wisdom expressed in verse. It contains hymns in praise of all *devatās*. Here, all natural powers got personified in the form of gods.

o   ***Sāma Veda*** is a purely liturgical collection.  *Sāman* means tunes or melody. Much of it is found in the *Rig Veda*, and even those hymns peculiar to it have no distinctive lessons of its own. They are all arranged for being sung at sacrifices. The mantras of *Ṛg Veda* are set to music in melodious hymns in *Sāma Veda*.

o   ***Yajur Veda*** also serves a liturgical purpose. It means worship. The chief purpose of *Yajur Veda* is to render practical shape for *Ṛg Vedic* mantras in the form of worship. This collection was made to meet the demands of a ceremonial religion.

o   ***Atharva Veda*** for a long time was without the prestige of a Veda. Atharva represents priests who offer and compose prayers. It is a historical collection of independent contents. A different spirit pervades this Veda, which is the production of a later era of thought.

**DIVISION IN FOUR VEDAS**

**Each Veda has divided into four: Saṁhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, and Upaniṣads.**

**Saṁhitās** means that which has been collected and arranged. It brings out the purport of a Veda in the shape of mantras, or hymns, systematically arranged. *Mantras* or Hymnology addressed to the various gods and goddesses like, Agni, Varuna, Indra and so on. Hymns are prayers either in the form of laudation, where the lord is glorified for his heroic deeds, or in the form of propitiation, where the god is appeased of wrath.

A Vedic sacrifice needs four main priests and the four Samhitas are compiled to fulfill the needs of these four main priests – *Hota*: *Rig, Udgata*: *Sama, Adhvaryu*: *Yajur and Brahma; Atharva*.

***Hota*** – Addresses hymns in praise of the gods to invoke their presence and participation in the sacrifices.

***Udgata*** – Sings the hymns in sweet musical tones to entertain and please the gods.

***Adhvaryu*** – Performs the sacrifices according to the strict ritualistic code and gives offerings to the gods.

***Brahma*** – The general supervisor, who is well–versed in all the *Veda*.

**Brāhmaṇas** are written in prose. They are the elaboration of the complicated ritualism of the *Vedas*. The Brāhmaṇas are the commentaries of the Vedas. They were arranged by the sages in prose form. Though the Brāhmaṇas are not so philosophically sound, they have a great historical value. It represents an age ritualism and supremacy of priests. The rules and regulations laid down for the performance of the rites and the sacrifices are dealt in the Brāhmaṇas.

**Āraṇyakas** are named as that because they were composed in the calmness of the forests. Āraṇyakas literally means the literature of the hermits and for the hermits. These are, generally, the concluding portions of the Brāhmaṇas. This part of the Vedic literature marks the shifting of the emphasis from the ritualistic to the philosophical thought. It has a mystic interpretation of the Vedic sacrifices.

**Upaniṣads** are the concluding portions of the *vedās*. These are intensely philosophical and spiritual. The word ‘Upaniṣads is derived from the root ‘*upa’* which means ‘near’, ‘*ṣad’* which means ‘to sit’ and ‘*ni’* means ‘devotedly or down’. The word, therefore, means that ‘sitting down of the discipline near his teacher in a devoted manner to receive instruction about the highest Reality which loosens all doubts and destroys all ignorance of the disciple.’ There are 108 Upanishads but ten are available and important on which Sankarācarya has written commentaries: Isa, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Mundaka, Māndukya, Taittiriya,Aitareya, Chāndogya and Brihadāranyaka. ***Upaniṣads are also known as ‘Vedānta’ or ‘the end of the Veda’ because (i) they are literally the concluding portion, the end, of the Vedas, (ii) they are the essence, the cream, and the height, of the Vedic philosophy.***

* The *Mantras* and the *Brahmanas* are called the ***Karma*–*Kanda*** or the portion dealing with the sacrificial actions and the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads* are called as ***Jnana*–*Kanda*** or the portion dealing with knowledge.
* Four stages of life (Ashramas) are related to the study and practice of these four parts of Veda. Brahmacarya-Samhita, Grahastha-Brahmana, Vanaprastha-Aranyaka, and Sannyasa-Upanishad.

***The Evolution of Vedic Religion***

***Vedic religion during Samhita Period***

*This period is marked by a trend of polytheistic religion. The striking phenomena of nature had been deified or rather presiding deity was assigned to each of them and the gods were classified according to their regions over which they had their influence. Hence, there are three planes; svarloka or gods of heaven the chief of whom were Deva, Mitra, Varuna and Surya, bhuvar or gods of atmosphere the notable among them Vata, Indra, Rudra, and Marutha and bhur or gods of earth headed by Agni, Soma and Yama. Among them Indra and Agni were accorded greater supremacy. It was classified as the* ***polytheistic phase of religion****- belief in multiple gods.*

***Vedic Religion during the Brāhmaṇa period***

*A certain dissatisfaction with polytheism and a quest for a higher concept of divinity ended up in the next stage of vedic religion. Sacrifice and performer became the pivotal point of concern. The sacrifices during this period are thought of as an effective means of achieving the desired ends independently of the will of the gods. The gods, consequently, were relegated to a relatively unimportant position and sacrifice was now exalted to occupy their position. Though in each sacrifice certain gods were invoked, they were regarded merely as instruments in bringing about the desired goods. This tendency is marked as* ***henotheism-****a belief in single gods, each in turn standing out as the highest.*

***Vedic religion during the ĀraṇyakaPeriod***

*In the Aranyaka one encounters an allegorical and symbolic performance of the sacrifice, which enables the hermit to perform mentally his sacrificial duties. This period had traits of* ***monotheism-*** *a belief in one god. Prajapati is the god of monotheist.*

***Vedic religion during the Upani****ṣ****adic Period***

*It will be discussed next semester. It is calibrated as* ***monistic phase of religion****-belief reality is One.*

**MAJOR CONCEPTS IN VEDA**

***Ṛta***

The term ‘*Ṛta*’ literally means ‘the course of things’. At first, it indicated **the physical regularity** of the sun, the moon, the alterations of the day and night. Eventually, the meaning of the *Ṛta* assumed a change. The cosmic order became **the moral order** which even the gods could not transgress. Thus sometimes ‘*Ṛta*’ and ‘***Satya’*** are treated as one. ‘*Ṛta*’ is viewed in the Rg Veda as the most potent force or as a system that has already been in place. It was not created by gods. In that sense ‘*Ṛta*’ is deemed unborn, eternal or natural. Looking at it in another manner, *Ṛta* reduces chaos, secures order and integration to matter. It also ensures symmetry and harmony in the environment; and a sense of balance in human life. Hence the conception of *Ṛta* has an aesthetic attribute too; it implies not merely order but also beauty in nature and in life. Varuna of pure will along with Mitra is described as *Ṛ****tvan,*** the governor and the promoter of ‘*Ṛta*’***.***  Varuna safeguards *Ṛta*’ and separates ‘*Ṛta*’ from ***an-***‘*Ṛta*’***;*** the true from the false. ‘*Ṛta*’ thus symbolically represents triumph of good over evil.

***Ṛṇa***

‘*Ṛṇa* means indebtedness. Man owes indebtedness to Gods, seers, forefathers and so on. According to the Vedas there are three kinds of indebtedness (*Ṛṇatraya*)—indebtedness towards the Gods (*DevaṚṇa*), indebtedness towards the seers (*ṚisiṚṇa*), and indebtedness towards the forefathers (*PitriṚṇa*). Gods give us many things and their indebtedness is fulfilled by offering and oblations through sacrifice. The seers have left behind them rich heritage and culture and their indebtedness has to be fulfilled by studying this tradition and handing over to the next generation. Indebtedness to our forefathers has to be fulfilled by becoming a householder and begetting progeny. There are other *Ṛṇa* also which are related to tri-*Ṛṇa* as directly such as *Bhuth Ṛṇa, Athithi Ṛṇa and Manushya Ṛṇa*.

These *Ṛṇas* are performed through five kinds of ***Yajñas*** (sacrifices) namely, (a) Deva Yajñas, (b) PitriYajñas, (c) Rishi Yajñas, (d) BhutaYajñas and (e) Nari Yajñas. The term *Yajña* sis sometimes misunderstood to mean simply the performance of certain rites in which ablations of various kinds are offered to fire. But performance of this ritual is only a symbolic gesture signifying the duty of every individual to offer a portion of his possessions towards the whole i.e. the Universe. In true sense of the term,

**Deva Yajñas** consists in showing our gratitude towards natural phenomena by contributing towards its preservation, maintenance and growth and by abstaining from its unnecessary, excessive exploitation.

**Pitri Yajñas** is performed by procreation and by contributing towards the maintenance and well being of the family. We can express our gratitude towards our ancestors only by parenting and affectionately nurturing the family lineage passed on to us by them.

**Ṛiṣi Yajñas** is performed by imparting knowledge we have acquired from our teachers to the younger generation and by paying our share in the growth and development of our heritage and cultural tradition.

**Bhuta Yajñas** consists in caring for the various species of creatures (visible or invisible) surrounding us in this universe and in having friendly relations with them.

**Manuṣya Yajñas** consists in sharing our possessions with fellow human beings and one of its most popular forms is Atithi-Satkara, hospitality even to a stranger.

**PuruṢārthas**

The notion of the three *Ṛṇa* and five **Yajñas** is integrally woven into the scheme of **four-fold puruṣārthas** - the four basic goals / ends of all human endeavors. The purusharthas recognized by Hindu tradition are :- (1) **Artha** — the material well being of man obtained through the attainment of wealth and worldly prosperity. (2) **K**ā**ma** — the attainment of pleasures related to the emotional and sensuous aspect of man's being. (3) **Dharma** — realization of the system of moral norms grounded in the essence of human nature. (4) **Mokṣa** attainment of the transcendental state of spiritual liberation. It is redemption not only from all sufferings but also from the limitations of space and time**.**

***The awareness of Ṛta leads to the realization of Ṛṇa, which in turn motivates a person to pursue dharma, the global ethic or the righteous way of life. Dharma leads one to Mokṣa*.**

**PuruṢasūkta**

The *Puruṣa Sūkta* is a most commonly used Vedic Sanskrit hymn. It is recited in almost all Vedic rituals and ceremonies. In this *Sūkta*, one finds that the gods are the agents of creation, while the material out of which the world is made, is the body of great *Puruṣa.*  From His face (or the mouth) came the *brāhmaṇās*. From His two arms came the *rajanya* (the *kṣatriyās*). From His two thighs came the *vaiṣyās*. From His two feet came the *shūdrās*.

**Prajāpati**

The word Prajāpati denotes "Lord of Offspring" or "Lord of Creatures”. Within the *Rg-Veda* many Hindu deities are identified as are the origins of their creations. Among these deities, there is mention of a supreme creator god known as Prajāpati. Prajāpati is identified as the first god, and creator of all other gods and beings. Prajāpati is introduced in the tenth book of the *Rg-Veda* and is said to have been produced in the form of ‘a golden egg’ or ‘cosmic germ’. Other tales say that his first words created the worlds and the seasons. It is said that Prajāpati sacrificed himself to *tapas,* the cosmic result of which was *brahman*, transcendent reality, and then the gods, humans, animals and so on. To perform his sacrifice, Prajapati constructed a great fireplace. He then sacrificed himself to the *tapas*, fervor of ascetic and erotic heat, and was dismembered. It must be noted that this account of sacrifice is known as the first sacrifice in Hinduism. In post Vedic scripts, there is an association of Prajāpati with Brahma.

**Agni-The Mystic Fire**

The largest number of hymns are addressed and related to *Agni*, the mystic fire. *Agni* has many meanings; fire, aspiration, force of consciousness, and urge. Physical fire is only an outer manifestation. *Agni* as the priest, it enkindles the fire of aspiration and initiates human spiritual voyage which is in search of self-realization. It stands much more for the psychological principle of Will-Force. In a macrocosmic perspective, the whole world is vibrant with a secret Will-Force. Thus, *Agni* symbolizes the inner soul. *Agni*, according to vedic knowledge, is also the force of evolution. It breaks the veiling layers of inconscience (*tamas*) and matter (*annam*), and delivers the pulsating Life-Force. It is the principle of growth, power, consciousness and supramental transmutation. *Agni* has a intermediary function between three worlds (*swar*, *bhoovar*, and *bhoor*). At its highest *Agni* is an aspect of the Supreme God-head itself.

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