
UNIT 2 PHILOSOPHY OF HINDUISM

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

An ancient saying depicts a person, unaware of the golden treasure lying underground, walking up and down the floor several times, and brooding over his wretched state of living. Being Indians, much more as students of philosophy, we are to be aware of this treasure of our land. The present unit on the philosophy of Hinduism initiates the students to the precious nature of this treasure, and motivates them to unearth the hidden riches of the religious, spiritual, and philosophical heritage of Hinduism.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

India is the birth place of many religions and religious sects. The word 'Hindu' is not of Hindu origin. It is not found in any standard Sanskrit dictionary. The Persians used to refer to the people who lived on the other side of the Indus (Sindu) river, as Hindu. Hinduism is more of an umbrella, sheltering many different religious traditions which originated in very ancient times and in various parts of the subcontinent. Some Hindu thinkers suggest that the Vedas provide the bond that holds the Hindus together.

2.2 SOURCES OF HINDU PHILOSOPHY

Scriptures are the codified expressions of religious, mystical experiences of great souls. Scriptures 'make the unknown known.' The Hindu Scriptures are divided into two distinct categories *Surti* and *Smrti* (Revealed Texts - *Surti* – *what is heard*, and Remembered Texts *Smrti*– *what is remembered*). The four Vedas and 108 Upanisads come under the *Surti* category. The *Bhagavat Gita*, 18 *Puranas*, *Manu Smrti*, *Dharma sastras*, *artha sastra*, *kama sutra*, *tantras*, and many others, come under the *Smrti* Category. The distinction between *Surti* and *Smrti* is important for the two following reasons: 1. In case of conflicting

views, *Surti*'s views will hold good. 2. Without requiring any change in the *Surti*, the *Smrtis* preserve the authority admitting changes in it.

2.3 VEDIC HINDU METAPHYSICS

Vedic Hindu Concept of God

The Vedas are pantheistic. The names '*isvara*' and '*isa*' are not found in the Rg veda, although the verb form is frequently used to express the power of the gods. Though the noun form, '*isvara*' is found in the Atharvana Veda, it certainly does not have the connotations of later times. Certain Upanisads begin to put the concept of the Lord in the foreground and the *Svetasvatara* Upanisad gives it still greater prominence. The Personal Lord is finally and fully disclosed in the Gita. In the Vedas, the concept of the Lord is not fully expressed in generic terms such as *pati*, *prabhu*, *adhipathi*, etc. The term 'lord' does not refer to one particular God, but each time refers to the different Vedic gods, Indra, Varuna, Agni, Soma, etc.

Concept of Atman-Brahman

Behind all the temporal flux of the world of experience of the senses is a subtle, pervasive, timeless, and unchanging reality. It is identical to the essence of the human being as well. The early Vedic Upanisads call this unified and imperishable world-soul as Brahman or Atman, the former as Godhead and the latter as the 'self' residing at the deepest level of one's person. The theistic Upanisads teach that this Brahman is a single deity, *Isvara* or *isa* – lord. This could be identified with that of Siva or Vishnu of sectarian communities. The ultimate reality is unmanifested yet vital. Brahman is described as life-giving breath, pure consciousness, bliss, and eternal. It is the infinite subject by whom all objects are known, the 'inner guide' of all that is. There are difficulties in comprehending this hidden reality that either transcends or simply cannot be known through the structures of time, space, and causation. The Upanisads hold that through disciplined practices of meditation and the cultivation of extraordinary knowledge, it can in fact be discerned. Such discernment releases one from the apparent cycles of life and death caused by one's ignorance of the fact that the essential self does not die.

Nirguna and Saguna Brahman

The ultimate reality is acknowledged in the Upanisads as both immanent and transcendent in nature. Brahman is both cosmic (*saguna* – 'with characteristics') and acosmic (*nirguna* – 'without characteristics'). *Saguna* Brahman is understood to be the finest essence of all things in the world. Brahman is the substance of the universe. This does not mean that Brahman is the material stuff of the world which can be perceived sensually. Rather it is that hidden and subtle reality which allows all things to exist in the first place. *Nirguna* Brahman cannot be described through definitive or positive statements, since Brahman transcends the limitations of language. It is not subject to categorization, and therefore, can neither be perceived nor conceived. Thus, one seeking knowledge of *saguna* Brahman was to comprehend the unity of all things in the world constructed on the essence of Brahman. And the one seeking for an understanding of *nirguna* Brahman was to 'deconstruct' the phenomenal world as it were, in order to comprehend the imperishable self that lies behind the world of life and death. The process of knowing this aspect of Brahman is negative theology, via negative,

‘*neti-neti*’ ‘not this’ ‘not this’. Brahman can be best described only as ‘this is not Brahman,’ ‘that is not Brahman.’ A positive description of Brahman would not fully comprehend the ultimate reality.

***Mahavakya* – Great pronouncements**

The essential oneness of the individual self and the absolute self is called *jiva-isvara aikyam*. The scriptures say that *jiva*, the consciousness in the microcosm, and *isvara*, the consciousness in the macrocosm, are one and the same. The differences we perceive belong to the reflecting medium. There is no difference in the essential consciousness at all. In the scriptures there are many statements which reveal this oneness and these statements are called *Mahavakya s*. *Mahavakya* is a Vedic statement which reveals the essential oneness of *jiva* and *isvara*. There are many *Mahavakya s* occurring in the Vedas, but generally one *Mahavakya* is chosen from each Veda as a sample: 1. *Prajnanam brahma* – Aitareya Upanisad. 2. *Aham Brahmasmi* – Bhadaranyaka Upanisad. 3. *Tat tvam asi* – Chandogya Upanisad. 4. *Ayam Atma brahma* – Mandukya Upanisad.

2.4 HINDU RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES

Transmigration of soul:

The doctrine of *Karma* and transmigration of soul are closely bound together. The soul is not born with a body, nor does it perish therewith. It is unformed, constant, eternal, and primeval. What happens at death is only the decay of the body. The soul migrates from life to life, being conditioned by the cause of ignorance. ‘Verily one becomes good by good works and evil by evil works.’ At death, the soul shuffles off its present body and enters a new one, like a caterpillar which having come and reached the end of a blade of grass draws itself together and takes a leap to another blade. The process is comparable to a goldsmith who makes new and more beautiful forms like that of *Brahman*. The kind of form the soul takes depends on its previous *karma*. ‘As is his resolve, such is the action he performs. What action he performs that he procures for himself’ (*Brha. Upan 3 :4*). Transmigration of the soul into a sub-human species is also held possible. When one dies he may even go to another region before he takes another birth in this world. After the death of the body the life of the individual is continued in another body and so on in indefinite series. According to this theory, the soul though pure and blessed in itself, gets entangled in the *Samsara* (cycle of birth and rebirth). It is because of the *karma* that it passes through innumerable births (transmigration) before it regains its original state. The purpose and mechanism of rebirth is elaborated in the *Chandogya Upanishad*. According to the *Chandogya Upanishad*, a man after his death reaches the moon with the merit he has acquired during his life. He remains there as long as there is a residue of his good works. Then he returns again to space, and from space he goes to mist and cloud, etc. After having become cloud, he rains down. Then he is born as rice, trees, beans, etc. If someone eats him as food, he develops further and finally those who are of pleasant conduct enter either the womb of a *Brahmin*, or a *Kshatriya*, or a *Vaisya* and those who are of stinking conduct, enter either the womb of a dog or of swine, or of an outcaste (*Chandala*).

The seers of the Vedic period possessed a peculiar awareness of sin and guilt. There are three basic insights, like three seeds, which later may be developed into complete theories. Firstly, there is a series of words indicating an external cause for all sorts of violence, harming, hurting, and afflicting. Here the cause of evil comes from the outside; it encroaches upon us and hinders the happy and smooth development of our being. The evil is transcendent. Secondly, another set of words seem to denote an internal source; these words speak of anxiety, narrowness, lack of expansion, and a feeling of imprisonment within oneself. Here the cause is within and seems to be inherent in our own nature. We cannot blame others but only ourselves. We would like to be different and yet we are not. Evil here is immanent. Thirdly, a set of words, most of them compounds, seems to suggest that evil springs from maladjustment and malfunctioning of a system that otherwise is far from being bad. These words postulate a kind of factual ambivalence in almost any human value, which can turn out to be either negative and mischievous, or positive and beneficial. Evil here depends on the direction that events and values take, and on the use we or others make of the data. The Vedas employ a term for grace, which implies pure and simple forgiveness. The gods are requested to forgive man's real sins and also his constitutional shortcomings. Man is never worthy of grace from the divine. *Mrdika*, though occurring only nine times in the Rg veda, denotes the grace that elevates man and wipes away all his stains. We have here a forgiveness that comes, unpredictably and undeservedly, from the divine.

2.5 VEDIC HINDU ETHICS

Stages of Life (*Asrama Dharma*) *Asrama dharma* stands for individual development in society, and economic aspect of society. The term '*Asrama*' means '*a*' – all around or intensive and '*srama*' – means to exert oneself. It stands for labour. *Asrama* thus means an all-round training and development of the individual. It also means a stage, a way in the journey of life. According to Vedic thought, life is divided into four stages or *Ashramas*. The four stages are *brahmacharya*: studenthood, *grahastha* – householder, *vanaprastha* – stage of detachment, and *sannyasa* – stage of renunciation.

Brahmacharya is a life of willing abstention, based on self control and austerity or *tapas*. *Brahmachari* means student. The first stage of a student begins with the *Upanayana* ceremony, and then the boy is entrusted to the care of his teacher with whom he lives, and his student life continues with the teacher. The life of the student afterwards becomes simple and hardy. This simple and hardy life is intended to make him strong and healthy, and independent of all soft and luxurious living. His life is based on self-control, self-restraint, and austerity. During this stage the individual develops a deep insight into the realities of life. His abode is with that of the teacher in *asrams* or *gurukulas*. A *gurukula* is an institution of education. 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. Great stress is laid on chastity and purity during youth, in order to have vigour, strength of manhood, freedom from disease, healthy children, and a long life. Thus the very name of the student, the *Brahmachari*, becomes synonymous with one who is under a vow of celibacy. After completing the days in study and strict chastity during the student period, the student has to present his teacher with a gift, according to his ability. Then he returns home to enter the household life.

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*. In this stage he has to take a wife and carry out the responsibilities of a man. After marriage, great temperance in sexual relations is enjoined. Marital relation is only permissible on any one of ten nights in a month. Women were to be honored and loved by their fathers, brothers, husbands, and brothers-in-law. When the husband and wife are content with each other, their happiness is certain. As all creatures live supported by air, so too the other stages of life exist supported by the householder. Hence the householder is the best of the orders. 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: 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. It is a stage of detaching oneself from the responsibilities of family life, and handing them over to the next generation. It is a voluntary withdrawal, or voluntary retirement. The generation gap between father and son is solved by this stage. This stage solves the problem of unemployment and also the problem of social disorganization. A man who has entered this stage, instead of living for his family, should live for the betterment of society and must undertake the work of educating the people of the neighbourhood. The rule of his life is to do sacrifice, study and practice austerity, and show kindness to all. Here he engages in *Veda* study and remains always a giver and not a receiver, and he becomes compassionate to all beings. This simple ascetic life leads a forest-dweller to the last stage ? *Sannyasa*

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. Every narrow relationship is renounced. The person has no *Varna*, and he changes his name and residence. He is called *vairagi*, a man with no colour and no denominations. A *sanyasin* serves humanity as a whole. The *sannyasi* is the one who renounces everything. He gives away all his property and he no longer offers sacrifices. He lives alone, with a tree for shelter, and spends his life in deep contemplation and meditation. The life of the *sannyasi* who freed himself from all human ties, and stripped himself of all that ministers to physical comfort and well-being, has always seemed to be the highest. A true *sannyasi* should not wish for life or death. He must rejoice in the Supreme Self, sitting indifferent, and refraining from sensual delights. He must wander the earth, aiming at liberation. He must meditate constantly on transmigration and suffering, and on the Supreme Self, in order to trace the *Jivatma* through its many births and to rest in *Brahman* alone. Thus by doing this he reaches *Brahman*.

In these modern days these four *ashramas* cannot be completely revived in their letter, but they can be revived in their spirit, to the great improvement of modern life. Today the *brahmachari* life or period is passed or spent in school or college, instead of the *ashrama* of the *guru*. The *grihasta* ideal is commenced at marriage. It is very largely followed in its sense of duty and responsibility, in its discharge of religious obligations, in its balanced ordering of life, and in its recognition of all claims and debts. Today the third *ashrama* cannot be lived in the forest by many, and the fourth *ashrama* is beyond the reach of most.

Yet, the idea of gradual withdrawal from worldly life, the idea of meditation, study and worship, and the main duties of life can be carried out well.

Finally, a life, which is well ordered from the beginning to the end, is very much implied in the phrase ‘the four *ashramas*’.

2.6 SUPREME GOALS OF LIFE (*PURUSARTHAS*)

The ancient seers laid down four supreme ends of life or *Purusarthas*, which give meaning to human life. *Purusartha* means ‘what is sought by human beings.’ They are *dharma* (righteousness/ religious, moral merit), *artha* (pursuit of wealth), *kama* (pursuit of pleasure), and *moksa* (liberation)

Dharma (justice, righteousness): The term ‘*dharma*’ gathered more and more meaning down the ages, and became a term of complex and varied meanings. For *dharma*, the dictionary suggests terms like virtue, righteousness, duty, right, morality, justice, the good, the characteristics, tradition, ordinance, law, etc. But *dharma* is essentially a human value, operating in the universe of human ideals. The *Brahadaranyaka Upanishad* identifies ‘*dharma*’ with truth. That which is justice is truth. And justice and truth are the same (1.4.14). Sankara in his own way interrelates the three concepts *rta*, *satya*, and *dharma*. He says ‘*rta*’ is the mental perception of truth, *Satya* is the expression of truth in words as perceived by the mind, and *dharma* is the observance of truth in the conduct of life. And thus, *dharma* is the way of life embodying the truth perceived. This is the supreme end in this world. It brings material property (*artha*) and fulfillment of desires (*kama*), and liberation (*moksa*). The essence of *dharma* is that one should do to others what one would like others to do to oneself. *Dharma* controls instincts, impulses, desires, and emotions with the help of reason. *Dharma* is usually distinguished into *sadharana dharma* and *varnashrama dharma*. *Sadharana dharma* refers to the duties of universal scope and validity. There are ten cardinal virtues known as *sadharana dharma* according to Manu: endurance, patience, self-control, integrity, purity, restraint of senses, wisdom, learning, truth, and absence of anger or non-violence. The *varnashrama dharma* refers to the duties of persons according to the castes and the stages of life. Thus ‘*dharma*’ is considered to be a means for attaining personality integration in the spiritual level or liberation.

Artha (Wealth): The term ‘*artha*’ generally indicates the attainment of riches and worldly prosperity, advantage, profit, and wealth. It means the whole range of tangible objects that can be possessed, enjoyed, or lost and which we require in our daily life for the upkeep of a household, raising of a family, and discharge of religious duties. It helps in the satisfaction of material, biological, and economic desires, for according to the sages, lack of wealth weakens the person and leads him to adopting illegal and immoral ways to obtain satisfaction. By the term ‘*artha*’, Kautilya in his book *Artha Sastra* IV 9 means both the economic and political aspects of man’s life in the society. The materialistic aspects of life have great significance, because the absence of the economic well-being of man is a great hindrance to the pursuit of personality integration and a good life. Absence of economic well-being may also lead a man to adopt or to do immoral deeds to satisfy himself. The *Mahabharata* stresses the great importance of wealth, saying that poverty is a state of sinfulness. All kinds of meritorious acts flow from the possession of great wealth. From wealth springs all religious acts, pleasures, and heaven itself. From wealth one’s merit increases, but the

man who has no wealth has neither this world nor the next. The man who has no wealth does not succeed in performing religious acts. Kautilya in the *Artha Sastra* recommends that the state should punish those who renounce the world without having first satisfied the claims of society and family. Kautilya would not even allow ascetics to enter into the villages of the kingdom, for fear that they may cause disturbance in the economic activities of the villagers. They say virtues themselves are impractical without wealth. Without wealth neither virtue nor desire can be won.

Kama (Satisfaction of desires): *Kama* is a comprehensive term, which includes all desires: desires ranging from the cravings of the flesh and the yearnings of the spirit. Every man has got certain physical and emotional desires and their fulfillment gives happiness. Man should only gradually overcome the insistent cravings of the flesh. In the process of fulfilling the desires, *dharma* has to be maintained and there should be proper means for the satisfaction of the desires. There is always a clear emphasis on the enjoyment of secular pleasures along with the emphasis on the realization of spiritual values. Vatsyayana in his book *Kama Sutra*, gives a great treatise on erotic enjoyment. It deals with the various aspects of sex life and the natural strivings of the human heart. However, Vatsyayana suggests that the satisfactions of sexual desires are to be followed with moderation and caution. The uniqueness of the concept of *kama* and enjoyment is that all of them were to be related to the spiritual goal of human existence, and so the Indian ethics insisted on a regulated enjoyment.

Moksha (Liberation): In every school of philosophy in India the first three *purusharthas* are treated as the instrumental values, which directly or indirectly promote the *parama purushartha* ? the highest values of human life, namely, *moksha*. *Moksha* is also known by other names such as *mukti*, *apavarya*, *kaivalya*, and *nirvana*. The concept *moksha* has a negative as well as a positive side. In its negative aspect it signifies complete freedom from sorrow and in its positive aspect it stands for plenary happiness or bliss. In the *Vedic* age the idea of *mukti* was not in evidence. What the *Vedic* man sought was length of days on earth, and life in heaven in the company of the gods. But it was in the *Upanishads* for the first time, that we find the full-fledged doctrine of *mukti* or liberation. This liberation is intimately bound with the *karma samsara*, the doctrine of transmigration. Almost all Indian schools of thought accepted the theory of *karma* and rebirth, and the ideal of *moksha* is conceived as liberation from the cycle of births and deaths.

As an ideal, *moksha* is pursued by an individual as a personal value. It is a spiritual perfection understood by the intellect, loved by the will, and actualized in daily life. It is understood as *jivanmukti* in the *Advaita Vedanta*. The man who has attained liberation in this life is called *jivanmukta*. Different schools propose different ways to attain *moksha*. The *Advaita Vedanta* of Sankara holds that knowledge or *jnana* is the means of attaining *moksha*. Here *moksha* refers not to a new state to be attained, but is the realization of what has always been, namely, the realization of the Universal Self (*Brahman*), in one's own self (*Atman*). For this, no morality is needed. The dualistic and pluralistic systems insist that the bondage of the individual can be removed by the *bhakthi marga* or path of devotion to God. There is another way promoted by the *Gita* to attain the ultimate realization in life and liberation from the cycle of births and deaths, which is known as *Karma Yoga* (Path of activity). The *Gita* has described this way as the method of disinterested action (*nishkama karma*).

To attain *moksha* one has to be freed from the bondage of one's own actions. So the *Gita* suggests the golden rule that actions should be done with the spirit of non-attachment to their fruits.

2.7 SOCIAL STRATIFICATION (VARNASHRAMA DHARMA)

The Vedic scheme of life is known as *varnasrama vyavasha*. *Varna-dharma* stands for social stratification. It is meant for the maintenance of social order, social progress, and social harmony, along with personal harmony and personal progress. The Rg Veda uses the term '*varna*' to mean skin colour. Here the division of human beings is made into Aryans and *Dasas*. Those who are fair in colour are Aryans and those dark skinned are *dasas*. The term *Varna* is derived from the root *vr* which means to choose or select. *Varna* indicates a particular group or class in a society, classified as *brahmana*, *ksatriya*, *vaisya*, and *sudra*. In *purusa-sukta* (Rg X.90) the term *vana* is used to indicate the four functions in human society, in general. In *purusa-sukta* we come across the terms *brahmin*, *rajanya*, *vaisya*, and *sudra*. But these terms are used only to indicate the four functions of society in general and not as the four *varnas*. According to *purusa-sukta*, the whole universe is the manifestation of the universal self called *purusa*. The *brahmin* is the mouth; the *rajanya* is made of the arms; the *vaisya* is the thighs; and the *sudra* is the feet. The mouth being the seat of speech stands for learning; arms for strength; thighs for productive work; feet for other works of labour. So the four terms stand for the four functions rather than the four *varnas*.

Caturvarnyam is mentioned in the *Gita* (*catvarah varnah caturvarnyam*). The classification is made from three standpoints, namely, birth, character, and profession.

Category	Brahmanas	Ksatriyas	Vaisyas	Sudras
By Birth	Born of <i>brahmanas</i>	Born of <i>ksatriyas</i>	Born of <i>vaisyas</i>	Born of <i>sudras</i>
By character	Contemplative	Selflessly active	Selfishly active	Idle, dull
By occupation	Scriptural education and priesthood	Administration and defence	Commerce and agriculture	Unskilled labour

Varna based on *jati* or birth has become oppressive and exploitative today as the caste system. *Varna* is based on one's character, *svabhava* or *guna* as Vedic psychology is at the root of Vedic sociology. According to Vedic psychology the human mind has three qualities, or propensities, or temperaments. They indicate the innate nature of the individual. They are: *sattva* ? non-active, quality of purity, goodness, wisdom, and knowledge; *rajas* ? active; *tamas* ? inactive. So *varna* is the process of selection by the individual for the development of his mind. It stands for the psychological frame, bent, and direction of the human mind. The four *varnas* are the four basic natures of the human being. It refers to the four orders of the society. It is an all embracing classification of the human beings on the basis of propensities (*pravrittis* ?

enjoyment for life). It does not stand for the professions of life (*vruttis*). One can change one's profession but not one's innate nature. When *varna* is interpreted as a profession and not as a propensity, the *jati* or caste system comes in. Vedic sociology speaks of a *varna* system and not a *jati* system. Social stratification by ability or talent is *varna*. No *varna* is superior or inferior as it depends on one's qualities. Hence it stands for the spirit of egalitarianism.

The duties of each *varna* are as follows: *Brahmins* – teaching and studying the Vedas, sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, and giving and accepting alms; *ksatriyas* – to protect the people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, and to study the Vedas but not to teach; *vaisyas* – to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to engage in different professions, to trade, to lend money, to cultivate land, and to study the Vedas; *sudras* – to serve the above three *varnas*. The first three *varnas* are ordained to study the Vedas. So they have *upanayana*, i.e. the rite to study the Vedas. They are called *dvijas* or twice born, who are trained in Vedic learning. Since they are not mentally equipped, the *sudras* are prohibited from studying the Vedas. Therefore they are denied *upanayana*. Yet they are not deprived of the fruits of Vedic knowledge. A *sudra* is eligible for Vedic knowledge through secondary sources like the *Puranas* and the *itihasas*. Though the first three *varnas* can study the Vedas, only *brahmins* are ordained to teach the Vedas. The other two may study, but cannot teach the Vedas. A *sudra's* son in whom the propensities of a *brahmin* are found is a *brahmin* and not a *sudra*. A *brahmin's* son in whom the propensities of a *sudra* are found is a *sudra* and not a *brahmin*. That is, anyone can attain *brahminhood*. Some examples are: *Valmiki*, *Vyasa*, *Vasistha*, and *Narada*. All were children of *sudras*. Similarly, *Visvamitra*, though born a prince, became a *brahmin rishi*.

2.8 CONCEPT OF RTA

Rta is generally translated as 'Cosmic Order.' This cosmic order is to be understood not as a fixed physical or mathematical law, but as a 'sacrificial order. Cosmic order is maintained by sacrificial order. It is through *Rta* that Varuna governs the universe. *Rta* is the ultimate foundation of everything; it is the 'supreme'. *Rta* is the 'law' or universal order embodied in sacrifice. 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. *Rta* is the actual functioning, or rather, the proper rhythm of the sacrifice. By sacrifice, gods and humans collaborate, not only among themselves but also for the maintenance and very existence of the universe. Reality subsists, thanks to sacrifice.

2.9 DOCTRINE OF KARMA

The doctrine of *karma* may be stated as whatever a man suffers or enjoys is the fruit of his own deed, a harvest sprung from his own actions, or good or bad committed in his previous life. Every deed leads to double result (*phala*) – pain or pleasure, according to the nature of one's deed. Moral progress therefore depends on how we direct and regulate our tendencies to actions. Everything that happens in the moral realm is pre-ordained. It gives the idea of Moral Retribution. 'Whatever we knowingly do, will sooner or later bring us the result we merit. There is no escape, 'what we sow, we must reap.'

The events of life are determined by an antecedent cause. The Law of *Karma* is not mechanical, but is essentially ethical. Moral education is to choose the order, order of *karma*. The Mahabharata says, consequences of what a man does will seek him, later, surely as a calf does its mother in a herd of cows. *Karma* is of four categories: 1) *Sanchita Karma* or the accumulated past actions 2) *Prarabdha Karma* which is a part of *Sanchita Karma*, and this results in the present birth itself. This is also called pre-destination 3) *Kriyamana Karma* or present willful actions or free will 4) *Agami Karma* or the immediate results caused by our present actions. The theory of transmigration is a necessary corollary of *karma*.

2.10 WAYS TO LIBERATIVE KNOWLEDGE

Vedic scriptural study can give us the direct knowledge involving oneself in three stages: *sravanam*, *mananam*, and *nididhyasanam*.

***Sravanam*:** It means enquiry into the scriptures with the help of a guru. *Sravanam* is not passive hearing. It requires the full participation of the student and he has to travel along with the teacher. The teacher is trying to communicate something which is not an object, but which is one's own true nature. In other words, consistent and systematic study of the scriptures for a length of time under the guidance of a competent guru is *sravanam*. In other words, looking into the scriptural mirror which the teacher shows me is *sravanam*. Initially when I start doing *sravanam* I have lots of doubts but I should never ask questions. I will have to be patient. Whatever question comes up should be kept in mind or written in a book with the hope that all the questions will be answered as I understand more and more; as the teaching opens up new vistas; as the unfolding starts revealing new information. The student should have faith in the scriptures and the teacher for this. Therefore, no questions are allowed. Just receive the whole vision comprehensively. Let all the questions be there. Then having done comprehensive listening for a length of time and having got all the aspects of the teaching, look back at your questions. A painter cannot paint the whole picture in one stroke. The painting unfolds gradually. Until the painting is over, don't disturb the painter. Similarly *sravanam* should be done for a length of time, setting aside all our doubts. Thereafter the teacher say, 'now come on, see if you accept the teaching; see if you are convinced'

***Mananam*:** After *sravanam*, the student can come out with any number of questions. All the doubts are let loose and all of them are attacked. This is called *mananam*. This continues until I am convinced. There should not be any doubt or question. Once I have done *sravanam* and *mananam* satisfactorily, I feel convinced that I can be independent. But as I have been addicted to dependence for so long, I find it difficult to be independent. I have to try to give up all dependencies just as a person addicted to smoking tries to give it up. I can help him by telling him that he can live without smoking. Similarly, we have to learn to come out of all dependences.

***Nididhyasanam*:** The person addicted to smoking is slightly nervous about quitting it, as he has been addicted to it for years. Hence, there is a doubt if he can live without it. There are withdrawal symptoms and he has to train himself to handle them. This is the discovery of true independence. This third stage is called *nididhyasanam* and through it the person learns to drop dependences and be independent. Initially there is fear, and there are also

withdrawal symptoms. But later he finds that he can be happy without people around. He discovers he can live alone too. In short, *nididhyasanam* helps in converting knowledge into emotional strength. Thus through *sravanam*, *mananam*, and *nididhyasanam*, a person becomes *jivanmuktah*, a liberated person.

2.11 LET US SUM UP

This unit has largely focused its attention on the general religious philosophy of Hinduism from the Vedic perspective. Since we have other units dealing with the philosophy of various traditions in India, we do not intend to repeat them here. The metaphysical thinking of Vedic Hinduism is centered around the concept of the self as individual and supreme. The ethical concepts are derived from the scriptures, primary and secondary texts. For liberation, knowledge is said to be important.

2.12 KEY WORDS

<i>Purusarthas</i>	: Supreme goals of human life such as wealth, pleasure, virtue, and liberation
<i>Rta</i>	: Concept of order and regulation in the cosmos.
<i>Sravanam</i>	: Knowledge obtained by listening to the teachings.
<i>Nididhyasanam</i>	: Contemplative knowledge.

2.13 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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