
UNIT 5 SAIVISM AND VAISHNAVISM

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5.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you are exposed to the medieval religious philosophies of Saivism and Vaishnavism. Slightly different in character from the classical orthodox systems which concentrated much on pure, abstract and speculative philosophical discussions, Saiva and Vaishna religious traditions had a specific flavor of blending practical living with philosophical thinking. As a part of bhakti movements they emerged as much acclaimed popular philosophies. Students would be enjoying reading and learning these philosophical traditions that came to stay very strongly in the life of Indians for many centuries.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Saivism and Vaishnavism are the very popular forms of Hindu faith with large number of followers. Lord Siva and Lord Vishnu are worshiped as Supreme Being respectively in these religious traditions. However, in popular Hinduism Siva is one of the Trinity and carries on the function of Annihilation, while Brahma and Vishnu are said to be the Gods of creation and sustenance respectively. Both Saivism and Vaishnavism have diversified religious beliefs and practices. Various sects of them are found all over India. They are considered to be very ancient faiths in India. There are few direct and indirect references to these gods in the Vedas too. Nevertheless Vedic understanding of Siva and Vishnu was not very much developed as to regard them as Supreme Being. As a result of Medieval bhakti movements these religious traditions have witnessed a development both in religious sphere and in philosophical sphere. Let us enumerate various aspects of these developments both in Saivite and Vaishnavite religion and philosophy.

5.2 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF SAIVISM

Saivism is said to be the oldest and pre-historic religion in India, perhaps in the world. Saivism is commendable not because it is the oldest religion, but because it is still a living religion practiced by multitudes. It is a religion which holds Siva as the supreme Lord. Scholars try to trace the origin of Saivism to the pre-vedic period. From the excavations in Mohenjadar-Harappa sites, Sir John

Marshall says: “Side by side with this Earth or Mother Goddess, there appears at Mohenjadarō a male god, who is recognizable at once as a prototype of the historic Siva.” He further goes on to state that Saivism has a history going back to Chalcolithic Age and the most ancient living faith in the world. There is a difference of opinions among scholars whether Saivism is Vedic or non-Vedic. Scholars like Sir John Marshall, G.U. Pope, G. Slater, Maraimalai Adigal are of the opinion that Saivism is pre-Aryan and pre-Vedic. They try to trace its origin as the indigenous Dravidian tradition, as opposed to Vedic tradition. Scholars like K.A. Nilakanta Sastri have a counter-opinion and they advocate the Vedic origin of Saivism.’

One of the minor deities of the Vedic period, Rudra is said to be associated with Siva. The qualities of Rudra, as in Rg veda, reveal that he was an atmospheric god, quite fierce, destructive and physically attractive. He is the lord of animal sacrifices and is associated with the destructive powers of nature such as the storms, lightning and forest fires. The evolution of Siva is found in Yajurveda where one hundred names are attributed to him. Among these names, *paśupati* (God of animals), *Nilagriva* (blue-necked), and *Sitikantha* (white-throated) are notable. The omnipotent and omniscient aspects of Siva are also mentioned here. Further in Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad, Siva is referred to as *Hara*, *Mahadeva*, *Īā*, *Īāna*, *Maheśvara* and *Bhagavat*. He is mentioned as ‘dweller in the mountains,’ ‘Lord of the mountains,’ ‘the thousand-eyed’ and ‘one who stands alone, steadfast.’ The Epic Mahabharata refers to one thousand and eight names of Siva and gives the mythical account of marriage of Siva with Uma, the daughter of Himalayan mountain king, Himavan. In Ramayana, Siva is associated with origin of Ganga. The celestial Ganga was made to descend from heaven by Bhagiratha and Siva trapped her in His matted locks to control her turbulence and force, before allowing her to flow on the earth. Later in puranic literatures such as Siva, Linga and Padma Puranas, Siva is described as *Ardhanarisvara*, mixture of male and female principles. Siva is also presented as a teacher of truth and as a silent yogic who meditates in peace. In this position facing south, he is known as Daksinamurti. It has been claimed that the origin of such form could be from Proto-historic period, from Indus valley civilization. Siva is also known by the names of *mahayogin*, *mahatapah*, *yati*, *taponitya* and *yogisvara*.

The epics and puranas contain a multitude of anecdotes pertaining to the annihilation of evil persons like *asuras*. Siva is thus came to be understood as God of destruction or annihilation and is known as *samharamurti*. The puranic literature contains reference to several other epithets of Siva. His description found in the Mahabharata as a God clad in animal skin (deer or tiger), with matted hair and crescent on His head, bearing serpents, carrying a trident (*trisula*) and having a bull for His ensign, becomes a distinguishing feature of Siva. The third eye of Siva on his fore-head symbolizes his wisdom. Siva’s arms hold the fire, the axe and the drum. The crematorium is said to be his dwelling place and his body is smeared with ash. Siva as a Dancing Lord is an another powerful representation. Siva has been referred to and described in great detail in Tamil literature. The reference to Siva in ancient Sangam literature onwards is a witness to his prowess and popularity in Tamil country. Siva performed sixty four divine sports which are well described in Tamil devotional literature. Various epithets, forms, deeds, assets, weapons, ornamentation, episodes, metaphors describing His persona and qualities are very much seen in the devotional literature.

As noted above, Siva was known even in the epoch of the Indus Valley civilization. A fusion came about when the Vedic *Rudra* became identified with the indigenous Siva. By the time of *Svetesvatara upanisad* Siva was absorbed in the Vedic pantheon and was given a lofty position as *mahadeva*. The earliest specific mention of Siva by a foreigner is traceable to Megasthenes. In the age of the Guptas the worship of Siva assumed a considerable importance. But a bhakti movement of saivism is only traceable to south India and reached a great height.

5.3 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF VAISHNAVISM

Sources of origin of Vaishnava religious tradition are varied. Some scholars trace it in the Vedic tradition itself. Diverse concept of Supreme Vishnu as found in various concepts of God in different vaishnava sects are relied upon in speaking of its origin. They are from the concept of *Visnu* (god with three strides) as found in the veda; the concept of *Narayana* (the cosmic and philosophic god); the concept of *Vasudeva* (the historical god); and the concept of *krisna* (the pastoral god). While some view that Vaishnavism had its origin from Visnu as mentioned in Vedas, others consider that it appeared after *bhagavatam* arose. With regard to South Indian Vaishnavism, some consider that Krishna cult in the south started with *Yadavas* in Madurai who were said to be a section of the *Vrsni* people that colonized the *pandya* country. Yet another view holds that Vishnu cult from the ancient Tamil period would have been from the *mullai* region whose god is said to be *perumal*. Vaishnavism is also known by the name *bhâgavata*, meaning the cult of *bhagavat*, the lord. It draws inspiration for its beliefs from *bhâgavata purâna*, *gita* and *nârayaniya* a section of Mahabharata. *Pânçarâtra* and *Vaikânasa âgamas* are certain religious literatures that are regarded as canonical in Vaishnavism. *Pânçarâtra* are texts of ritual worship, which deals with, the knowledge of God, the method of mental concentration, yoga, the construction of temples and the installation of images there in, *kriya*, and the observance of daily rites and the celebration of festivals, *carya*. In *vaikânasa âgamas*, detailed instructions are given for construction of temples and moulding of images.

Vishnu resides in His abode is called *vaikuntha*. There He sits enthroned beside his consort, the goddess *laksmi* or *sri*. She is considered as patroness of good fortune and temporal blessing. Five forms of Visnu are the transcendent (*para*), the grouped (*vuyha*), the incarnated (*vibhava*), the immanent (*antaryâmin*) and the idol (*arcâ*). God as the transcendent posses six attributes, namely knowledge, lordship, potency, strength, virility, and splendour. The grouped forms of god are four; they are *vâsudeva*, *samkarsana*, *pradyumma*, *aniruddha*. There is a distinctive function assigned to each of those *vyuhas* in cosmic creation as well as in the act of redeeming souls.

The incarnated forms are *avatâras*. Out of His own concern for the world, He descends from time to time in the form of an incarnation, *avatâra*. According to Vaishnavite tradition, there have been only nine such incarnations; there is one yet to come. God descended to earth when the world was in danger of chaos or of perishing by wickedness. The incarnations as fish, tortoise, boar, etc. are popular legends, yet have very little religious value at the present day. In these forms, God appeared in the form of an animal to save the world from floods. *Narasimha* (man-lion), and *Vamana* (the dwarf) are the incarnations in which he saved the

world from destruction by demons. *Parasurama* is His incarnation as a human hero to destroy the aggressive and arrogant warrior class and to establish the supremacy of the *Brâhmanas*. Rama and Krishna incarnations are more important ones as Vishnu is worshipped in these forms chiefly in North India. Two great Epics describe the legends in detail. The ninth form is added only in the middle ages, Buddha, which is a surprising one. Different notions are said about the purpose of this incarnation such as, to put an end to animal sacrifice, but later as to lead wicked men to deny the Vedas and thus to ensure their destruction. The final incarnation known as *kalki*, is yet to come. At the end of this dark age, Visnu is believed to descend once more to destroy the wicked and restore the age of gold, the *krta yuga*.

The idol, *arcâ* is the most concrete of God’s forms. Vaishnavism regards the image of Vishnu, *arcâ*, as one of the real forms of the Lord. The belief is that God descends into the idol and makes it divinely alive, so that he may be easily accessible to his devotees. More stress is laid on service to the *arcâ* as the primary duty of the devotee.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) Briefly describe origin of Saivism.

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2) Could you explain different forms of Vishnu?

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5.4 PHILOSOPHICAL SCHOOLS OF SAIVISM

General Concept of God: Siva has a dark and grim side to his nature besides being beneficent. From the concept of Vedic Rudra, the nature of Siva is often described as fierce, lurking in horrible places like cremation grounds, as wearing a garland of skulls and dancing the *rudra thandava* with which he destroys the world at the end of the kalpa. Yet, Siva is also thought of as the great ascetic, wrapped in continual meditation on the slopes of mount *kailasa* in the Himalayas, his head covered with matted hair, in which the crescent moon is fixed and from which the sacred river *ganges* flows. Evidently the characteristics of an agricultural and pastoral fertility god have been merged in the Siva. He is often known as lord of beasts, *paupati*, the patron of procreation in men and animals. He is commonly worshipped in his emblem, the *linga*. Some Siva cults have developed some unpleasant features, such as animal sacrifice, psychopathic self mortification. Most of the sects consider Siva as God of love and grace. The literature of Tamil saivism describes him in very exalted terms and with strong moral emphasis. In this saivism all harsh elements of the Siva have practically disappeared. He is considered to be the compassionate father of all things living, who cares for them in his love and justice and defends them from evil. There are many forms of Saivite religious and philosophical traditions in Saivism. Let us deal about them in brief.

THE PASUPATAS OR KAPALIKAS

The *pasupatas* are the oldest saivaite tradition in the north. In them ascetic tendencies were much in evidence. Although their doctrines express closeness to doctrines of *samkhya* and *yoga* philosophy, they distinguish themselves from these schools and emphasize their Saiva monotheism. For them, Siva is absolutely independent and the instrumental cause of the world. Nature and souls are effects and are rooted in God's will. The liberated souls become eternally associated with Siva. Their yogic practice consists of a constant meditative contact with Siva in solitude. That is the reason they go frequently to burial places. Their ritual practices were often regarded as revolting. More extreme groups, called *kapâlikas*, believed in an ostentatious indifference to anything worldly. They hold firmly that it is the best method of freeing oneself from *samsara*. They carried human skulls, *kapâla*, and a bowl of liquor. Due to this factor they are worshipped as the skull bearer, *kapâlîka* or the frightful one, *bhairava*.

KASHMIRI SAIVISM

In the ninth century a monistic form of saivism developed in Kashmir. The sect is known as *trikasastra* or simply *trika Saivism*. The basic texts of the *Trika* are *Siddhatantra*, *Mâlnitantra* and the *Vamakatantra*. These texts are revelatory in character, containing certain theological rather than philosophical thoughts. It was Vasugupta who first explained systematically *trika* philosophy in his *Sivasutra*. Later, it was developed by Saivite thinkers like Somananda, Utpaladeva, Bhaskaracarya, Abhinavagupta and Ksemaraja and so on. Kashmir saivism treats the absolute under the three principles of God, soul and matter. Being influenced by advaita, kashmiri Saivism teaches that Siva is the absolute reality from which all else has emanated. For *Trika* the Absolute is both Siva and Sakti, from a theological, theistic perspective. The absolute is not only God but also Godhead. Although reality is single and one, it is understood from two

perspective. Synthesising the Saiva and Sakta aspects of the *Trika*, Abinavagupta gave a philosophy that is both non-dualistic and theistic as well. Non-dual Absolute is the sole reality, transcendent and beyond mind, intellect and speech. Siiva is the Absolute as pure consciousness in the static aspect. Through dynamic aspect Absolute manifests itself as the universe as Sakti. The manifest universe is not due to *mâyâ* or *avidyâ*, as they are considered to be the result of Divine Energy, *Sakti*. The phenomenal manifestation is not illusion but is true as it is the Absolute that appears as the universe. Hence from Absolute point of view the world is non-different from Absolute. Absolute does not undergo any kind of change, transformation or division, while manifesting itself as the universe. The process of manifestation is by reflection of Absolute's self consciousness within it, like that of reflection in a mirror. God himself appears as a limited and finite universe and individual. Kashmiri saivism attempts to give important status to matter more than advaita school of monism. It rejects outright the negative view of life in the world. Having deep roots in Tantrism, it does not believe in the renunciation of the world, but affirms the world. Bondage is that activity of God whereby He obscures His essential nature. Liberation is nothing by the revelation of essential nature of the Lord. It stresses the importance of knowledge for liberation. Liberation is the intellectual realization that the absolute and individual selves are one and the same. Goal of liberation can be attained through the enjoyment of life in the world. In *Trika* Saivism various ways to salvation are prescribed keeping in view the temperament as well as the intellectual ability of the individual. There is also scope for *bhakti* in this saivism. It rejects the yogic view that one can by effort gain liberation. Self effort plays as much role in liberation as does divine grace, *krpâ*, *Anugraha*, *prasâda*. The school believes that no form of self-effort will succeed unless grace is granted. Grace of Siiva is necessary and sufficient for realization of the self as identical with Absolute. Grace is a free gift of God and is not dependent upon or the result of one's good deeds. It is an unasked and motiveless gift flowing froth freely and spontaneously from God. The individual self surrender and Grace go together, one intensifying and fortifying the other.

VIRA SAIIVISM

Vira Saivism or *Lingayatism* as a saivite religious movement gained momentum during the beginning of 12th century in the North-Western parts of Karnataka. The Lingayat cult was also based on the twenty eight Saiva Agamas. Tradition believes that it is very old and was founded by five ascetics namely, *Ekorama*, *Panditaradhya*, *Revana*, *Marula* and *Visvaradhya* who were considered to be springing from the head of Siiva. However, Sri Basavesvara was considered to be the founder. He broke from traditional Hinduism and vehemently protested against meaningless rituals by refusing to undergo the sacred thread ceremony. His followers believe he was an incarnation of *Nandi*. This tradition regards Siiva as superme and people must worship only Him. The term '*Vira-Saiva*' comes from being such stalwart Saivas. The lingayats are distinguished by a small *linga* enclosed in a metal box which they wear around the neck. They theoretically abandon all caste distinctions and grant women equal status with men. They are strict vegetarians, and they are opposed to all forms of magic and sorcery. The *linga* is not necessarily a phallic symbol for the lingayats, rather it is regarded as a concentration of fire and light which purifies the body and mind of the individual. Fire is regarded as so pure that it is not to be used for creation purposes; consequently the lingayats bury rather than burn their dead. The inner

power of Siva is in every person that enables one to view all as the manifestations of the divine.

SAIVA SIDDHANTA

Saiva Siddhanta is a system of philosophy developed in Tamil Saivites, based on the Saiva agamas, upanisads, 12 Tirumurais and 14 Meikanta Sastras. Siddhanta literally means the established conclusion. Saiva Siddhanta is claimed to be a conclusive philosophy of all those who worship Lord Siva. This philosophical system has been very popular in South India. Saiva Siddhanta is called *Agamanta*, the conclusion of the agamas. Though it is the outcome of Agamic tradition, it never rejects the Vedic tradition. The Vedas are held to be the general source. The Agamas form the special source for this system. Saiva Siddhanta is a theistic philosophy, containing both philosophy and religion. As a pluralistic realism it accepts three eternal realities. As any other philosophical system, it sought to determine the relations of God, matter and the soul. It declared that matter and souls were, like God, eternal. The Absolute through its 'grace-form' is forever engaged in the rescue of souls from the bondage of matter and the three stains (*malas*) which defile their purity. God is not identical with soul or the universe. He is not their substance but dwells in them and they in Him. Advaita is not Oneness, but inseparability. Guru or the teacher let the light of enlightenment, although Siva is the source of all enlightenment, sole embodiment of intelligence and grace.

NATURE OF GOD AND SOUL

According to Saiva Siddhanta, God in his essential nature is static, immutable and immeasurable by the limits of time and space. He transcends all empirical knowledge. He has no name and form. The following eight divine qualities are said to be God's essential characters. These are Self-dependence, Immaculate Body, Natural understanding, Omniscience, Eternally free, Infinite grace, Infinite potency, Infinite bliss. God in his essential nature is called as *Parasivam* and His inseparable energy is called *Parasakti*. God transcends description as he is beyond the word and its content. Though God transcends everything, He pervades all of them and is immanent in all beings as their indweller and inner ruler. God assumes various forms and names for the benefit of the souls, out of His boundless compassion. Siva and Sakti are inseparable like sun and its rays. The static state of the Absolute is Siva and its dynamic state is Sakti. There is no Siva without Sakti and no Sakti without Siva. The Lord's grace is personified in theistic terms as His consort Sakti. The Lord discharges the cosmic functions, namely, creation, protection, destruction, obscuration and bestowal of grace. through His Sakti. The purpose of these functions is to bestow on the souls all the earthly and celestial happiness and granting the everlasting bliss. Creation of the world is to enable the souls to engage in activities and to get experiences so that the root evil, *A?nava* would be exhausted. Protection is exercised for making the souls experience the fruits of *karma*. Destruction takes place in order to give the souls rest after experiencing the fruits. Obscuration works through *Anava* to enchant the soul to earthly pursuits and enjoyment till its power is completely emptied. The purpose of obscuration is meant for the maturation of *anava*. God bestows grace on the souls observing the ripening of *A?nava* and the spiritual progress. The Lord appears as a Guru purifying them and imparting wisdom.

God is termed as *Pati*, meaning the Lord. He is called as *Pasiupati*, the lord of the individual selves. The souls are infinite in number and from the beginning they are in contact with *a?nòavamala*. These souls came to existence by the grace of god. According to the intensity of the *malas*, the souls are divided into three groups; the *vijn?anakalas*, *pralayakalas* and *sakalas*. *Vijnanakalas* are the souls which possess only *anòavamala*. The souls with all the three *malas*, the *anòava*, *karma* and *maya* are the *sakalas*. When the soul is in contact with the physical body the organs of knowledge and action, the objective world and objects of enjoyment, it experiences worldly knowledge, pleasure and pain. It also passes through five different conditions; *jagra*, waking, *svapna*, dream, *susupti*, dreamless, *turiya*, deep sleep and *turiyatita*, beyond deep sleep. Through various births and deaths, the soul exhausts its karmas and by god's grace, it attains *moksa*, liberation. Soul is considered to be eminent, glorious and spiritual being, next only to God. Siddhanta believes in the capacity of the soul. It has certain qualities in common with God. It is intelligent being but not omniscient. It has will power and inner intuition. It only grasps the grace of God. Since it has divinity within, it can know God. Matter does not have this. Having the will power to eschew evil and pursue good, it can with the help of God, elevate itself from being *mala*-ridden to becoming a *jivanmukti*. Several schools deny the existence of soul. Some schools locate different things as locus of soul. Siddhantins refute all of them and establish the nature of soul. The value of promoting soul is the purpose of creation. In *Saiva Siddhanta*, the soul is the agent and experiencer of the actions and their fruits.

BONDAGE AND LIBERATION

Pasiu means literally as one that is bound. The bond is *pasa*, the defects or impurities. They are *a?nòava*, *karma* and *maya*. *A?nòava* is basic defect in man. The spiritual darkness is the natural dirt attached to man. *Maya* and *karma*, are used only to counteract the bad influence of spiritual darkness. *Anòava* hides the consciousness of the individual self even as the verdigris hides the bright lustre of a copper plate. Nature of *A?nòava* is to prevent the soul from being active. There is a beginningless connection between *A?nòava* and the soul. It is as old as the individual self itself. The second bondage is *maya*. It is the material cause of the elements. *Maya* is the material cause of the universe, substratum of all, primordial cause, real and eternal. Nature of *maya* is subtle, imperceptible, formless and perceived. *Maya* is 'ma' and 'ya', resolution and evolution. *Maya* is in subtle form. *Tattvas* is the result of evolution of *maya* in manifested forms. By God's will they evolve for the purpose of saving the souls. It is by God's intervention. *Karma* is the third bondage. It is in the form of merits and demerits, *dharma* and *adharma*.

Saiva Siddhanta emphasises that service and worship, the paths of *cariyai* and *kriyai*, are means to liberation. Service is stressed to be the powerful means to secure the grace of God. Yoga and *jnana* are the other means. By the constant practice of the means, *sadhanas*, the soul attains a state of balanced outlook, *iruvinaiooppu*, where it is neither annoyed nor elated in adversity or prosperity. The soul in its engagement with the world through various activities exhausts its *A?nòava* and *karma*, when it reaches a state called as *malaparipagam*. In the journey of perfection, the Lord himself appears in the form of a Guru, preceptor and instructs the nature of reality. *Anugraha siakti*, grace of God is bestowed on to the soul. Thus illumined by God, the soul is released from the bondage and attains blissful nature, liberation or *mukti*.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) How do you understand different sects of Saivism?

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2) Explain the main features of Saiva Siddhanta?

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5.5 PHILOSOPHERS OF VAISHNAVISM

Driven by the bhakti movements of various saints and sages, Vaishnavism flourished both in religious and philosophical spheres. We have a separate unit on these movements in our study. Here we shall enumerate salient features of some prominent Vaishnava philosophers. Among them of course, on Ramanuja and Madva we have separate lessons as well. We shall quickly brief on these two philosophers and go to deal with others.

The greatest among the Vaishna philosophers was Ramanuja, a theistic philosopher. He proclaimed that the way of devotion, *bhakti-marga*, leads to a state of bliss. It is only to be gained by intense devotion to God. The worshipper fully realizes in devotion that one is a fragment of God and wholly dependent on Him. Liberation is to be attained by completely abandoning oneself into the hands of God and humbly waiting for his Grace. Absolute has a personality. Creation is an expression of the personality of God, of His primeval need to love and be loved. The individual soul is made out of God’s own essence. Yet it is never completely identical with Him. Even in the highest state of bliss the soul is permanently joined to God but is ever wholly one with Him. It retains certain degree of individual self-consciousness. If the soul loses its self-consciousness, it would cease to exist as an individual soul. It can never perish as it is a part of the divine essence and shares the eternity of the divine. Hence the liberated soul is one with Him, yet separate. Hence the philosophical system of Ramanuja is known as qualified monism.

Madhva proclaimed the doctrine of dualism. According to him, God, souls and matter are eternally distinct. Liberation is not the union with God but being drawn closer to God and dwelling for ever with God in the contemplation of His

glory. Liberation is granted entirely by God's grace. Deep devotion and strict morality on the part of soul are not that helpful. God's grace is bestowed on the righteous and on deserved.

In the twelfth century, after Ramanuja came Nimbarka. He was likely to have preceded Madhva. Nimbarka was a devotee of Krsna and he spent his time mostly in Mathura the birth place of Krsna. For him, Brahman is Gopala-Krsna accompanied by Radha. He wrote a brief commentary on *Brahmasutra*. The doctrine expounded by him is known as *Dvaitadvaita*, duality in unity. He adapted the *Bhedabheda* doctrine of Bhaskara, difference-in-non-difference. As the Upanisads have many passages which speak of the Supreme Being as one without a second and without any attributes, there is a difficulty in interpreting the number of passages that describe Him as possessed of countless attributes. The Advaitins support the theory of attributeless non-duality by bringing in doctrine of Maya and the theory of two tiers of Reality, the really real and the apparently real. *Bhedabheda* doctrine of Bhaskara presents a Brahman who has innumerable attributes but without any particular form. Brahman transforms Himself into the world of duality and change, without losing His entity as the Absolute. For Nimbarka, the three realities, Brahman, souls (*cit*) and matter (*acit*) are equally eternal. Brahman is the controller (*niyantr*), the soul is the experiencer (*bhoktr*) while the matter is the object experienced (*bhogy*). Brahman is independent being, whereas the soul and matter are dependent realities. The relation between them is as relation of natural difference and non difference (*svabhavika-bhedabheda*). The souls and matter are different from Brahman as they have dependent and distinct existence (*paratantrasattabhava*). They are non-different as they have no independent existence (*svatantrasattabhava*). The relation of identity-in-difference is understood from cause-effect relation and whole-part relation. As the pot is both different and non-different from clay, the souls and matter are related to Brahman. The souls do not lose their individuality in the state of liberation. In this state the soul only realises its essential similarity to God. Liberation is attained through work (*karma*), knowledge (*jnana*), meditation (*upasana*), self-surrender (*prapatti*) and devotion to preceptor (*gurupasatti*). Love of God is the means to liberation. Love of God is not based on just recognition of God's greatness (*aisivarya-pradha?na-bhakti*) but on His infinite sweetness (*madhurya-pradhana-bhakti*). According to Nimbarka the souls can attain liberation only at the end of life and not while living in the body. Vallabha (1479 -1531), born at Banaras, was another saint and philosopher who made Vaishnava bhakti movement very popular. He popularized the worship of Sri Krishna and preached that salvation could be achieved by *bhakti* towards Krishna. Among his many religious works, two books, namely *subhodini* and *siddhanta rahasya* become very popular. Krsna-Gopala is the supreme Brahman in his system. The relation between Brahman and the world is one of pure non-difference (*suddhadvaita*). His system is qualified as pure non-dualism, *suddha-advaita*, different from that of Sankara's *kevaladvaita*. For him, Sankara's system is impure as it has to depend on *maya* as the principle of illusion to explain the world. The highest reality is known as Brahman in the Upanishads and as *paramatman* in the Gita. He is the Supreme Person, *purusottama*. He is *sat-cit-ananda-rasa*. He possesses all qualities. He is eternal and unchanging, yet becomes all things through his *ma?ya?siakti*. Hence, he is not different from the world and the souls as the former is created by him and the latter emanate from him. For Vallabha the Suprme Brahman appears as the *antaryamin* and *aksara Brahman*. He dwells

in the souls as *antaryamin*, limiting its bliss. The *jn?anis* meditate upon the *aksàara* to reach their goal. The soul is an aspect (*am?sia*) of Brahman and is eternal. The souls emanate from the *aksàara Brahman* as sparks from fire. The souls are cognizers, agents and experiencers. In them the *sat* and *cit* are manifest and *ananda* remains latent. There are three types of souls, *pravaha* (those who wallow in the stream of *sam?sara*), *maryada* (those who follow the vedic path), and *pusòtòì* (those that worship God out of pure love with His Grace). The world is not unreal or illusory. It is non-different from the Brahman. The world is a transformation of Brahman where the element of *sat* is manifested, while the other elements of *cit* and *ananda* are latent. *Jiva*'s notion of 'I' and 'mine' is unreal which is to be destroyed by knowledge.

The most celebrated and popular vaishnava reformer of Bengal is Chaitanya who was a contemporary of Vallabha. He preached Krishna *bhakti* through *kirtans* or devotional songs. He popularized devotional songs extolling the love of Radha and Krishna. For Caitanya, Brahman as *sat-cit-ananda* is not a bare distinctionless identity. He has an infinite number of powers, *siaktis*. The main powers are *svaru?pasìakti*, *ma?yasiakti* and *ji?va-siakti*. The self-power, *svaru?pasìakti* exists in him eternally and is responsible for all his sports, *lilas*. *Ma?ya?siakti* is the Lord's power which is responsible for the material world. It is God's external power having two aspects, cosmic (*gunà-ma?ya?*) and individual (*jiva-maya*). By the cosmic power he creates the universe out of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. By individual power he makes the *jiva* forget its self-nature and taste the sweets and bitters of life. *Ji?vasiakti* forms the essence of the finite souls and stands between the other two powers. God is *rasa*, (aesthetic sentiment) as well as *rasika* (enjoyer of sentiment). His *siakti* is Radha with whom he is united in love. They are two-in-one, inseparably bound together. The *antaryamin Brahman* is the immanent aspect of God and is pervasive of the universe. The *nirvisièsà Brahman* is the lower aspect of the Supreme which is distinctionless being. For Caitanya, the path of *bhakti* is better than *jn?ana* or *yoga*. The culmination of *bhakti* is a complete self-giving, as unconditional self-surrender to God. *Kevala-bhakti* is not merely a means, it is the final human end as well, the fifth *purusà?rtha*. It goes beyond even *moksà*. One who realizes it desires nothing but exclusive service of Krsna. The relation between the soul and the world with that of the God is *acintya-bhedabeda* (incomprehensible difference and non-difference). It is the relation between cause and effect, whole and part, possessor of power and the power. This relation is one of simultaneous difference and non-difference and is inexplicable or incomprehensible.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

 b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) Illustrate *Nimbarka*'s Concept of God.

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2) Write a note on *Vaishnava* Philosophy of *Caitanya*

5.6 LET US SUM UP

Saivism and Vaishnavism are popular religious and philosophical traditions that have become very strong in India since the middle ages. They have a blend of practical living with philosophical thinking. Each tradition has their God, Siiva and Vishnu as their Supreme Being. As spread over all regions of India, they have various sects of religious beliefs and practices with varied philosophical concepts of God, Soul and World. Yet in all of them a common thread of philosophy of devotion and love is found. Coming to the question of origin of these two religious traditions, one can say that they are very old and ancient. Saivism is said to be the oldest living tradition, even as pre-Vedic and pre-Aryan. Some argue that the Vedic god Rudra was later developed into a Supreme Being, Siiva. Saivism developed in the course of time, in ritual practices and in philosophical concept of God, Soul and World. Prominent sects of Saivite religion are Pasupatas, Kashmiri Saivism, Vira Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta.

Similarly, Vaishnavite religious tradition too has very ancient, vague and diversified sources for its origin. Vishnu is considered to be the Supreme Being. There are five important forms of Vishnu by which he reveals himself to his devotees. There are various bhakti sects of Vaishnavism. In fact, devotional practices are found with much anthropomorphic elements and emotionalism in Vaishnavism. Philosophy of *bhakti* is well developed in many of Vaishnava sects. There are many prominent Vaishnava Saints and philosophers. Among them Ramanuja, Madva, Vallaba, Nimbarka and Caitanya are worth noting. We have elaborated to some extent the recurring themes of these thinkers. In summing up our deliberation on these two traditions we could say that they are religious philosophies with concreteness for practical human existence.

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5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) **Origin of Saivism:** Saivism is the oldest pre-historic religion in India. For Vedic origin of Saivism, there are traces of Siva in the Vedic god, Rudra. From the primitive notion of Siva in Vedas, the later development of concept of Siva took place. There are also views that Saivism had entirely depended on non-Vedic tradition. From the proto-Siva of Indus Valley Civilisation the origin of such Saivism is traced. A fusion came about when the Vedic *Rudra* became identified with the indigenous Siva. The earliest specific mention of Siva by a foreigner is traceable to Megasthenes. In the age of the Guptas the worship of Siva assumed a considerable importance. The development and inclusion of Siva into Hindu pantheon as a powerful God is seen from the evidences available in Vedic literature, the Epic and Puranic literature and Tamil Sangam literature and devotional literature. In later development of Hinduism, Siva is considered as one of the Trinity and carries on the function of annihilation alone.

- 2) **Different Forms of Vishnu:** Five forms of Visnu are the transcendent (*para*), the grouped (*vuyha*), the incarnated (*vibhava*), the immanent (*antaryamin*) and the idol (*arca*). God as the transcendent possesses six attributes, namely knowledge, lordship, potency, strength, virility, and splendour. The grouped forms of God are four; they are *vasudeva*, *sam?karsòandà*, *pradyumma*, *aniruddha*. There is a distinctive function assigned to each of those *vyuhas* in cosmic creation as well as in the act of redeeming souls. The incarnated forms are *avataras*. Out of His own concern for the world, God descends from time to time in the form of an incarnation, *avatara*. According to Vaishnavite tradition, there have been only nine such incarnations; there is one yet to come. As an indweller in the world and in the hearts of people, God is immanent always. The idol, *arca* is the most concrete of God's forms. Vaishnavism regards the image of Vishnu, *arca*, as one of the real forms of the Lord. The belief is that God descends into the idol and makes it divinely alive, so that he may be easily accessible to his devotees. More stress is laid on service to the *arca* as the primary duty of the devotee.

Check Your Progress II

1) Different Sects of Saivism:

The *pasupatas* are the oldest saivaite tradition in the north with rigorous ascetic practices. Siva is absolutely independent. The liberated souls become one with Him. Their yogic practice consists of constant meditation in solitude. Their ritual practices are very much above normal standard of living. They have ostentatious indifference to the world.

Kashmiri Saivism is known as *Trika*, well founded by Vasugupta. It treats the absolute under the three principles of God, soul and matter, and teaches that Siva is the absolute reality from which all else has emanated. *Trika* is both non-dualistic and theistic as well.. It does not believe in the renunciation of the world, but affirms the world. Bondage is that activity of God whereby He obscures His essential nature. It stresses the importance of knowledge for liberation. Liberation is the intellectual realization that the absolute and individual selves are one and the same. Grace of Siva is necessary and sufficient for realization of the self as identical with Absolute.

Vira Saivism or *Lingayatism* is a saivite religious movement based on Saiva Agamas. Sri Basavesvara was considered to be the founder. The term 'Vira-Saiva' comes from being such stalwart Saivas. The *lingayats* are distinguished by a small *linga* enclosed in a metal box which they wear around the neck. The *linga* is not necessarily a phallic symbol for the *lingayats*, rather it is regarded as a concentration of fire and light which purifies the body and mind of the individual. Inner power of Siva is in every person that enables one to view all as the manifestations of the divine.

Saivism of Tamil Nadu is known Sàiva Siddhanta. It is built on the spiritual experience of the 63 Saiva saints known as *nayanmars* and on the systematic writing of teachers known as *acaryas*. It accepts the authority of the Vedas and is based on the nucleus of twenty eight Agamas. In addition to Vedic and Agamic literatures each sect adds also its own literature in the language of the region. Sàiva Siddha?nta is a realistic and pluralistic system. It postulates God, self and the bondage, *pati*, *Pasiu* and *pasam*, are three eternal realities.

- 2) **Features of Siaiva Siddhanta:** It assumes three eternal principles or fundamentals which are realities and have existed from all eternity, viz, god, which is described as independent existence, unqualified intelligence, and absolute bliss, the universe, and the souls. Souls and the world owe their existence to god, siva, who is both immanent and transcendent. The main purpose of its creation is the liberation of the beginningless souls, which are conceived as cattle, Pasu bound by the noose, pasa of impurity, mala or spiritual ignorance, which forces them to produce karman. This karman process, however is a benefit, for as soon as the soul has sufficiently ripened and along an elaborate path of salvation reached a state of purity enabling it to strive after the highest insight, and there are four paths, or means of attaining salvation along which this process can take place, viz. the well known, carya, kriya, yoga and jnana. God is willing graciously to intervene. Then he appears in the shape of a fully qualified and liberated spiritual guide, who is siva's equal, through whose words god permits himself to be realized by the individual soul.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) **Nimbarka's Concept of God:** For Nimbarka, Brahman is Gopala-Krsna accompanied by Radha. Brahman is the controller (*niyantr*), the soul is the experiencer (*bhoktr*) while the matter is the object experienced (*bhogy*). Brahman is independent being, whereas the soul and matter are dependent realities. The relation between them is as relation of natural difference and non difference (*svabhavika-bhedabheda*). The souls and matter are different from Brahman as they have dependent and distinct existence (*paratantrasattabhava*). They are non-different as they have no independent existence (*svatantrasattabhava*). As the pot is both different and non-different from clay, the souls and matter are related to Brahman. The souls do not lose their individuality in the state of liberation. In this state the soul only realises its essential similarity to God. Liberation is attained through work (*karma*), knowledge (*jnana*), meditation (*upasana*), self-surrender (*prapatti*) and devotion to preceptor (*gurupasatti*). Love of God is the means to liberation.
- 2) **Philosophy of Caitanya:** Philosophy of Caitanya is purely a religious and devotional philosophy. For him, God is *sat-cit-ananda*. God is not only *rasa*, aesthetic sentiment, but also *rasika*, enjoyer of sentiment. His *sakti* is *Radha* with whom he is united in love. *Radha* and *Krsna* are two-in-one, inseparably bound together. In his immanent aspect God is *antaryamin* and is pervasive of the universe. Divine Lord sports himself with his playmates, who are all parts of him. Better than *jnana* or yoga is the path of *bhakti*. The culmination of *bhakti* is a complete self giving, as unconditional self surrender to god. Keveala or suddha *bhakti* is not merely a means; it is the final human end as well, the fifth purusartha. It goes beyond even moksa. One who realizes it desires nothing but exclusive service of krsna. Philosophy of Caitanya is technically called *acintya-bhedabheda*, that explains the philosophical debate of finding the relationship between God and the soul. The relation between the souls and the world on the one hand, and god on the other is *acintya bhedabheda*, incomprehensible difference and non difference. Their relation is one of simultaneous difference and non difference. This is of course, inexplicable or incomprehensible.