
UNIT 5 BRIEF HISTORY OF INDIAN METAPHYSICS

Contents

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Vedas
- 5.3 Upanishads
- 5.4 Bhagavad Gita
- 5.5 Classical Systems
- 5.6 Contemporary Indian Metaphysics
- 5.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.8 Key Words
- 5.9 Further Readings and References
- 5.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

5.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit outlines briefly the Indian metaphysical teachings beginning with the Vedas and the Upanishads. Your whole focus should be to know:

- How Indian metaphysics has its own basis and uniqueness
- Development of metaphysical thinking during different ages
- And its culmination in some of the contemporary thinkers

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The Indian metaphysics is expressed through a rich variety of thoughts and practices that have developed over more than three thousand years. There is no single Indian metaphysics, but rather a plurality of ways of understanding and relating to Being from a stock of widely held ideas reflected in the *Vedas*, and particularly in the classical systems of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Metaphysics becomes thematic at various levels and in different contexts, in debates concerning the status of certain concepts as the soul, God, substances, universals, time, change, permanence/impermanence, one and many, etc.

5.2 VEDAS

The term *Veda* comes from the root *Vid*, to know. Hence the word *Veda* means knowledge. When it is applied to scripture, it signifies a book of knowledge and truth. The *Vedas* are the eternal truths revealed by God to the great ancient *Rishis* of India. The *Rishi* did not create it out of his own mind; he was only the seer or discoverer of thought which already existed. The vedic seers did not stop with a personalist view of Reality. They did not rest content until they had a vision of the unlimited Being (*Tad Ekam*). The hymn where the unlimited Being appears is the *Nasadiya-sukta* which

has been praised as containing ‘the flower of Indian thought.’ This hymn is the quintessence of Indian metaphysics. All things are traced to one principle. Opposites like being and non-being, life and death, night and day, are shown to be the self-unfolding of ‘That One’. *Tad ekam* is the ground of the universe. Because it is devoid of differences and definiteness, it is referred to as ‘That One’ ‘which is in some way’. It is neither a particular being nor non-being (nothing) but ‘something’ which is beyond them while being their core and ground. In this way, the hymn traced the origin of the universe to a single Primordial ground which unfolds itself or the universe in all its diversity: “That One” (*Tad Ekam*). The hymn says, “In the beginning there was neither Being nor non-Being. That One breathed calmly, self-sustained”. But it had within it the latent power out of which the universe, including the gods, emerged. The point to be noted here is the conception of the ultimate entity as dynamic or self-evolving and as requiring no outside power to guide and shape it. It is a hymn of Being. It is an invocation to the Being that transcends all the other beings of knowledge. It provides an experiential insight into the making of that Being. It does not deal with the beginning of the cosmos or with its evolution. It is a profound union of the unconditioned condition of all other conditions, namely, Being. It expresses a luminous awareness that Being is beyond being (existent = *Sat = ens*) and non-being (non-existent = *asat = non-ens*). Being is beyond being and non-being while being in them, while being their only ground.

5.3 UPANISHADS

Though the Upanishads do not work out a logically coherent system of metaphysics, they give us a few fundamental doctrines which are truly metaphysical: *atman*, *Brahman* and *maya*

Atman

The term ‘*Atman*’ was used in the *Rgveda* to denote the unborn part or the immaterial soul of human. *Atman* is derived from ‘*an*’ to breathe, ‘*at*’ to move, and ‘*ma*’ to blow. So the oldest meaning of *Atman* is ‘breath.’ It can also be literally translated as ‘vital force.’ In the *Rgveda*, *Atman* is sometimes used to indicate the animating principle or the essence. The sun, for example, is called the *Atman* of all things moving and non-moving and Soma, a plant juice, which was an essential libation of vedic sacrifices and called the celestial dew, is called the *Atman* of sacrifice. It is also called the *Atman* of Indra (*ḍtma indrasya*). *Atman* is the essence or ultimate reality of anything. When we consider the whole universe, its reality or essence is ‘*Brahman*’ and therefore the term ‘*Atman*’ is applied to *Brahman* in the sense of cosmic self. As *Brahman* is the ultimate Reality of everything, He is called *Paramatman*, to distinguish him from other *Atmans* which are not ‘*para*,’ ultimate.

Brahman

The word ‘*Brahman*’ is derived from the root ‘*Brh*’ which means to grow, to evolve. In the beginning it meant sacrifice, then prayer and then it acquired its present meaning of ultimate reality. It is the ultimate cause of the universe which spontaneously bursts forth as nature and soul. In the *Chandogya Upanishad*, it is cryptically described as ‘*Tajjalan*.’ *Tajjalan* means that (*tat*) from which the world arises (*ja*), into which it returns (*la*), and by which it is supported and it lives (*an*). In the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, *Brahman* is described as that from which all beings are born, by which they live, and into which they are reabsorbed. From *Brahman* arises or evolves ether, from ether air, from air fire, from fire water and from water earth.

Maya

Maya is the divine art or power by which the divinity makes a likeness of the eternal prototypes or ideas inherent in his nature. It is the power of *Isvara* from which the world arises. It is that which measures out, moulds forms in the formless. God is not subject to *maya* as God has control of it. If God were subject to *maya*, he would not be free, infinite, supreme existence. *Isvara* has in him the power of manifestation and non-manifestation. While the world is created by the power of *maya* of *Isvara*, the individual soul is bound by *maya* of *avidya* or ignorance. *Avidya* is mentioned in the Upanishads, especially in the *Katha Upanishad* which speaks of people living in ignorance and thinking themselves wise, who move about wandering in search of reality like blind humans following the blind. While *maya* is more cosmic and objective in significance, *avidya* is more personal and subjective. We are subject to *avidya* when we consider the multiplicity of things as final and fundamental.

5.4 BHAGAVAD GITA

The *Gita* offers a synthesis of many existing teachings within an overall framework of a world-vision. Krishna declares that all action is true renunciation and that there is no point in withdrawing from the world in order to follow a spiritual vocation, but rather that one should act in a selfless way. In other words, one's *karma* depends on the way one acts, the 'way of action', *karmamarga*. This is followed by the 'way of knowledge' (*jnanamarga*), and finally the 'way of devotion' (*bhaktimarga*) to *Brahman* or God. Thus, the *Gita* is essentially theistic in its teaching. *Brahman* is personal; he is called both *Brahman* and God. The world, including *Atman*, is part of *Brahman*. However, *Brahman* is always transcendent. He is invisible as he is shrouded by *Maya*. He is also both unmanifest and manifest, one and many, undivided and divided. In other words, he is both transcendent and immanent, transient and intransient as *Atman*. There are two kinds of *Atman*: the transient and the intransient or the unmanifest. The transient is all the living creatures and the intransient is the onlooker, witness (*sakshi*). But the highest *Atman* (*purushothama*) is other than the two. The *Gita* also speaks of three powers of *Brahman*: *Mōyđ*, *parđ* (higher) and *apara* (lower) *prakritis*. *Maya* is the highest power of *Brahman* through which she rules and controls the world, through which she is many yet one. *Paraprakiti* consists of finite *Atman*. *Aparaprakiti* produces the objects of the material world through the three *gunas* (*Sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*), which give rise to *karma* divided into two kinds: *kamyakarma* and *nishkamakarma*. *Kamyakarma* is motivated by some personal benefit (desireful action) whereas *nishkamakarma* is action without any motive of personal benefit (desireless action). *Kamyakarma* is non-obligatory actions; whereas *nishkamakarma* is obligatory ones. Desirelessness means the absence of the desire to enjoy oneself the results aimed at. Otherwise, the action is an egoistic action. There is a distinction between right action, wrong action and non-action. Right action is lawful action. Wrong action is prohibited action. Non-action is action without egoity. Merit and demerit do not accrue to the agent of such an action. A wise person sees non-action in action and action in non-action, which implies renunciation. Renunciation is of three types: sacrifice, charity and penance. They are actions that purify the soul. They are to be performed without any attachment to their fruits. One who gives up actions through ignorance is under the influence of *tamas*. One who gives them up because of the trouble they involve is under the influence of *rajas*. But one who performs them without desire for their fruit is under the influence of *sattva*. The initiators of action are the knower, the known and knowledge. The three factors of actions are the agent, action and the instruments of action. The knowledge that sees

unity in multiplicity (one in many), the unmanifest in the manifest is determined by *sattva*. That which sees the differences as separate from each other is *rajas*. That which leads human to action without any thought is determined by *tamas*. One should maintain an equilibrium of *gunas*, that is one's *dharma* which covers all the duties of social ethics including surrender to God, the right way to salvation attained through action, (*karma*), devotion (*bhakti*) and knowledge (*jñāna*). Knowledge is higher than the practice of *yoga*; meditation is higher than knowledge; renunciation of the fruit of action is higher than meditation; peace is higher than renunciation. The ideal human is one who has realized this in one's own being. Such a one preserves one's equanimity under all conditions without any egoistic desires and looks upon all events without being disturbed.

Check Your Progress I
Note : a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.
1) What do you understand by *Tad Ekam*?
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2) Explain the reality of Brahman.
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5.5 CLASSICAL SYSTEMS

The period of classical Indian metaphysics is represented by the great metaphysical systems. But these systems are not entirely innovative as they have drawn their views from the earlier teachings. They are either *astika* (orthodox) if they accept the authority of the *Vedas*, or *nastika* (unorthodox) if they do not. The unorthodox schools include Buddhism, Jainism, and Carvaka. There are six orthodox schools: *Nyaya*, *Vaisesika*, *Sankhya*, *Yoga*, *Mimamsa*, *Vedanta*.

Nyaya

The *Nyaya* school, founded by Gautama, is primarily concerned with epistemology – it asks about how we know that something is the case. For example, it argues that there are four valid sources of knowledge: perception, inference, testimony and comparison. And, based on these sources of knowledge, it sets out to decide what one can know. *Samanya* is recognized as a category along with *visesha*. *Samanya*

Definition and Nature of Metaphysics

is a relation obtained between cause and effect, substance and qualities, whole and its parts, motion and object in motion, individual and universal, a relation of inseparability but not identity. It is different from a temporary conjunction terminated by disjunction. It is an internal relation which cannot be terminated without the destruction of one of the objects. The whole metaphysics of Gautama is given by him under the category of the knowable. Knowable means what ought to be known for the sake of knowing the truth about the world for the sake of salvation.

Vaisesika

The *Vaisesika* school is more concerned with metaphysics; it wants to know about the underlying structure and reality of our experience. It undertakes a process of analysis, starting with the basic substances of earth, water, fire, air, and their particular qualities of taste, colour, touch, and smell. It argues that everything is divisible into smaller and smaller parts, and ultimately one comes to that something which is theoretically indivisible, called *paramanu*, with which everything is composed of.

This philosophy takes experience as the starting point of knowledge; all that we can know comes through the senses. Whatever is experienced can be analyzed into *padartha* (category) which has existence, can be known and articulated. There are seven of these: substance, quality, action, class character; individual character; inseparability and non-existence. All of them are seen as 'real'. Thus, what is experienced has an underlying substance, beyond particular characteristics and relations with other things. But those characteristics and relations are as real as the substance of that which displays them. They are all part of the phenomena of the world as we experience it.

Sankhya

Sankhya is a dualism of spirit and matter, *Purusha* and *Prakrti*. Matter is the primeval stuff (prime matter) or material which constitutes everything from inorganic matter to mind, all of which constantly goes through change. Even our mind and reason are subject to change. The world of change or transformation is one, not many. By itself it is completely unconscious; whereas *pursha* is pure consciousness. *Purusha* comes in contact with *prakrti* and throws the reflection of its consciousness on *prakrti*. Although *prakrti* is one, *purushas* are infinite in number. Hence, there is an infinite number of reflections in the same *prakrti*. As soon as the reflections are encountered, *prakrti* begins to evolve the world. Since *prakrti* is the same, the objective world it evolves for all the *purushas* is the same. The communication among *purushas* is made possible through the identity of *prakrti*. All aspects of physical existence belong to *prakrti*. It is the first cause and all-pervading principle of the entire physical universe in all its concrete and abstract forms.

Yoga

Yoga offers a set of disciplines that lead to liberation. Its origins are ancient, but Patanjali wrote the *Yoga Sutras*, the oldest of the *Yoga* texts. Although *Yoga* follows the metaphysics of *Sankhya*, there is one significant difference from the *Sankhya* as it includes the idea of a personal God – *Isvara*, besides its stress on moments of transformation, and integration of reason and action.

Mimamsa

Mimamsa is concerned with an understanding of the *Vedas*, which includes the vedic hymns, the *Upanishads* and the *Brahmanas*. There are two traditions within *Mimamsa*: *Purva* (earlier) *Mimamsa* which is concerned with the *Dharma*, the principles of right action as they are set out in the *Vedas*, and is thus referred to as the *Dharma-Mimamsa*. *Uttara* (later) *Mimamsa* which examines the nature of Ultimate Being, and is sometimes called *Brahma-Mimamsa* or *Vedanta*. The *Purva Mimamsa* metaphysics is the metaphysics of ethical action. It is pluralistic and its central interest lies in showing the efficacy of ethical action. It substitutes ethical action for God himself. The efficacy of ethical action is a force that creates the forms of the world, but not its being. It is the controller and organizer of the world. Yet plurality is a real fact. The world is created by action and is meant for action. Human life is characterized by action. Even if human wants to get rid of action, one can do so only through action.

Vedanta

The term *Vedanta* itself means ‘end or purpose of the *Vedas*’, and it is primarily concerned with *Brahman*, the Absolute Being described in the *Upanishads*. It is also concerned to produce a consistent interpretation of the *Vedas*. The earliest existing work of this school is the *Vedantasutra* of Badarayana (C. 500-250 BC) who tried to systematize the different philosophical tendencies in the *Upanishads*. Later scholars like Samkara, Ramanuja and Madhva wrote commentaries on Badarayana’s *Sutras* giving different interpretation: *Advaita*, *Visishtadvaita* and *Dvaita*. The central issue treated by them is the relation between *Brahman*, the individual soul and the world. Although *Vedanta* attempted to create a single consistent metaphysical vision out of the material in the *Upanishads*, there are inevitably some differences of view. One problem concerns the extent to which *Brahman* can be said to be an agent. After all, if she transforms herself into the things of the world, then she takes a direct role in their coming into being. On the other hand, *Vedanta* (like other Indian metaphysical systems) includes the idea of *karma* – that everything is the result of good or bad actions already performed. Does that mean that some things are caused by *karma* and others by the direct transforming action of *Brahman*? These issues are discussed by various *Vedantic* thinkers. The most prominent among them are Samkara, Ramanuja, and Madhva.

Buddhism

Siddhartha Gautama (563-483 BCE), later to be called the ‘*Buddha*’ (meaning ‘the fully awakened one’), is described as having lived for a life of princely luxury and then given it up to follow the path of enlightenment. His quest was to find the cause of suffering and the means of overcoming it. Buddha taught ‘middle way’ between the extremes of hedonism and asceticism. His teaching is a-theistic, unorthodox and a reaction against excessive Vedic ritualism and sacrificialism. Buddha showed interest in improving human’s moral life and liberating people from their present sorrows and sufferings. He did not indulge in abstract metaphysical speculation. His teaching was more practical than theoretical. He propounded a theory of impermanence and momentariness. Reality is a continuous flux. The experience of permanence is an illusion. Only becoming is real.

Jainism

It is a heterodox system which rejects the authority of the *Vedas* and denies the existence of God. It divides reality into two fundamental, independent and exclusive

Definition and Nature of Metaphysics

categories of soul (*jiva*) and matter (*ajiva*). The Jaina metaphysics is a metaphysics of substance. Everything is a substance including motion, rest, space, and action. Substance is that which has characteristics. Characteristics are of two kinds: essential characteristics (*gunas*) and changing modes (*paryayas*). Substance is divided into the extended and the unextended. Only time is the unextended substance. Extended substance is divided into the animate and the inanimate. The animate is the soul or spirit (*jiva, atman*). The soul is of two kinds: the liberated and the bound. The bound is again of two kinds: the moving and the non-moving. The non-moving are plants which have only the sense of touch. The moving are of four kinds: five-sensed beings like human, four-sensed beings like bees, three-sensed beings like ants, and two-sensed beings like worms.

Saivism

Siva or Rudra as the Supreme Reality is central to Saivism. Saivism is divided into *Vira Saivism* and *Saiva Sidhanta*. *Vira Saivism* is also known as *Lingayata*. Saivism is also divided on the basis of region: the Southern Saivism (*Saiva Sidhanta*) and the Northern Saivism (Kashmir Saivism or *Pratyabhijna*). *Saivasidhanta* speaks of three eternal entities: *pati* (God), *pasu* (soul), and *pasa* (bond). Siva is the Supreme Reality (*pati*) who possesses the eight attributes: self-existence, essential purity, intuitive wisdom, infinite intelligence, freedom from all bonds, infinite grace or love, omnipotence, and infinite bliss. Siva is the first cause; his *sakti*, the instrumental cause; and *maya*, the material cause of this world. Siva also performs the five functions: creation, preservation, destruction, obscuration, and liberation of souls. The individual souls are called *pasu*. For like *pasu* or cattle they are bound by the rope of *avidya* to this world. The soul is really an all-pervading, eternal, conscious agent and enjoyer. The bound souls mistake themselves as limited in will, thought and action; their original nature is restored to them in liberation. The fetters which bind the souls are called *pasa*. They are threefold: *avidya*, *karma* and *maya*. *Avidya* is one and beginningless in all beings. It is also called *anavamala* or the impurity which consists in the false notion of the soul to regard itself finite in knowledge and power. It is *avidya* as it makes the soul ignorant of its inherent glory and greatness. It is *anava* as it makes the soul mistake itself as atomic and finite. It is the bondage (*pasutva*) of the beast (*pasu*). *Karma*, subtle and unseen, is produced by the deeds of the souls, and is the cause of the union of the conscious with the unconscious. *Maya* is the material cause of this impure world. In order to obtain liberation, the soul has to get rid of all impurities. God's grace is absolutely necessary for such a liberation. God's grace is always there without our asking for it; yet we have to avail ourselves for it. On attaining liberation from *pasa*, the soul becomes one with Siva. It becomes co-pervasive with Him and shares His glory and bliss unmindful of its individuality.

5.6 CONTEMPORARY INDIAN METAPHYSICS

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902)

Vivekananda is an idealist as he believes the ultimate reality to be spiritual. Reality is one absolute *Brahman*. Real is a 'whole' implies that there must be parts. But absolute is perfect unity, and therefore the distinction between parts and whole completely vanishes.

Mohammad Iqbal (1877-1938)

Thought has a deeper aspect as it can reach the immanent Infinite to whose unfolding movement all the finite concepts belong. It is not necessary to transcend thought to experience reality; instead of deriving thought and intellect from intuition, intuition can be derived from thought. The whole is a kind of “preserved Tablet” (in the words of Koran) which holds together all the undetermined possibility as a present reality, revealing in time all of them in serial succession. Reality is pure duration and consciousness reveals it to us in intuition which is the deeper aspect of thought.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

Tagore is a non-dualist, but not like Sankara. The absolute in its perfection, living away from all that happens in the world, is of no interest to human. It is the picture with all the richness of its colours, shades, and forms that interests us, but not the canvas on which it is painted. The author of the picture is a person. Hence, the absolute is a person, a creative person which acts and creates, whom we can love and be loved. Love is more important than knowledge. In knowledge, the distinctions are either kept separate or completely dissolved in a rare unity. But in love, the lover and the beloved are distinguished, yet united. Love retains both unity and difference. Love is the consummation of knowledge. True knowledge is a knowledge of things in their relation to the universe, a knowledge that retains the distinctions and yet grasps them in their unity. God is everything, but not everything is equally God. To realize God as the Supreme person is our destiny, our *dharma*. We fulfill it when we know our true nature, which is oneness with God. We do not really know our oneness with God because of our ignorance (*avidya*). We can overcome *maya*, *avidya* only through a genuine love of God.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948)

Gandhi's metaphysics is strictly theistic. He identifies reality with Truth which is God himself. God is described as Truth as God alone is real. The following are the central ideas of the metaphysics of Gandhi: (1) God is truth and truth is God. This is not a logical abstract truth, but the spiritual and metaphysical. Truth is the law that supports human and the universe; God is both the law and the law-giver. (2) God is love itself. For God is affectional and affective by nature. (3) Truth prevails one's falsity and falsehood in every conflict between two sides. (4) One should hold fast to truth. Then one will be supported by truth. Falsity leads to non-existence. (5) As truth, God, and love are the same, one should stick to love. (6) One should follow the path of non-violence. The opposite of love is violence (7) Human is finite, not God; one's power, knowledge and will are limited. One may be mistaken in one's own conviction. (8) In sticking to truth, one should not destroy another. (9) When truth wins, falsity will be destroyed. If two parties love each other, the destruction will be the destruction of false convictions. (10) God alone has the right to destroy. God knows what is true and what is false, in his infinite wisdom. When God destroys, he destroys in love, not in hatred. As finite beings, we not only cannot be certain of truth, but also cannot destroy in love. Hate is easy, but love is difficult. Our duty is to follow the path, of love. When we follow the path of love we shall be like God, the law, ground, support of our being.

Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya (1875-1949)

Absolute is completely indefinite as it is neither objective nor subjective. As it is indefinite it transcends both subjective and objective. Absolute can be conceived in a triple way: Absolute of knowing, absolute of willing and absolute of feeling. *Absolute of Knowing*: it is not a content of knowing since content is freed from any reference to knowing. It is completely unrelated to knowing; it cannot be known. *Absolute of Willing*: it is absolute freedom. It is the negation of being. Consciousness here has been freed from the content and in this sense absolute is content-less. When a will is satisfied, it is superseded and in that sense, thrown into the background – denied. We will an act in order to get rid of the being of the act, get rid of the self-complacent will to continue in this being. Thus in the absolute willing the content is completely got rid of. In this sense it is the negation of being. *Absolute of Feeling*: Reflection is aware of the demand for the unity of the content felt and its feeling, but does not understand it. Such a unity – free from the duality of content and consciousness – is the Absolute of feeling. It is content that is indefinitely other than consciousness or as consciousness that is indefinitely other than the content. The word ‘indefinitely’ is indicative of the fact that the Absolute of feeling is understood as that from which ‘known being is distinct’. That shows that the Absolute of Feeling is indifferent to both being and non-being. In this sense Absolute is transcendental.

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950)

Aurobindo is a non-dualist (advaitic), but different from that of Āṇḍakara. *Maya* is the real power of *Brahman*, part and parcel of consciousness. It is the creative power of *Brahman* who descends through it to the world of matter. There is nothing that is not permeated by *Brahman* and thus everything is real. The conscious is permeated by the unconscious and vice versa. Both the conscious and the unconscious are powers of *Brahman*. *Brahman* is pure existence and it is the very nature of the power of *Brahman* to manifest itself as the world of finite objects and selves. Universe is the power of *Brahman* manifesting itself. In the process of evolution, all beings constantly return to *Brahman*. This return to the primordial power of Being results in the evolution of the spirit into higher forms of consciousness. For Aurobindo, unlike Darwin, all beings are the evolutes of the spirit. Every being has something in common with every other being. The ordinary distinction between the lower (plant) and the higher (animal) is not an essential distinction but only one of degree. The lower is constantly struggling to evolve into the higher, and the higher is always reflected in the lower. The universe is a constant evolutionary play between the lower and the higher, and the summit of evolution is the attainment of *saccidananda*.

S. Radhakrishnan (1888-1975)

The metaphysics of Radhakrishnan is advaitic (non-dualistic) like that of Sankara. From the standpoint of our thought the world is distinct from *Brahman*. But from the standpoint of intuition the world and *Brahman* are identical. This identity is a dynamic identity as the phenomenal world of finite objects and selves is the dynamic manifestation of the power of *Brahman*. *Brahman* is eternally active, and selves and objects are its activity. The power (*maya*) by which *Brahman* manifests itself as the world is *Brahman* itself.

Brahman, the underlying unity of the entire manifested world, is not exhausted by any of its particular manifestations. This at once leads to the distinction between the lower and the higher self. The lower self is the self of human in one’s empirical-logical modes

of experience; whereas the higher self transcends all empirical-logical modes and can be experienced in non-conceptual religious or mystical intuition. Religious quest is the striving of human as lower self to the realization of that higher absolute self which is one's own inmost being. Such realization does not annihilate the self but transforms it from mundane to supermundane state of *saccidananda*. Thus true religion is a spiritual quest for the Absolute and not a collection of dogmas and doctrines.

Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986)

He is an anti-traditionist. He opposes all tradition, dogmas and creeds. Truth is a pathless land; every human should try the spiritual quest by oneself. Nothing can be an absolute guide. Schools and dogmas encourage exclusiveness and intensify our egoity based on illusion. In real truth there is no division between the I and the Thou. True knowledge lies in catching reality in its living process which is life itself, godself. It is we ourselves. It is ignorance to worship reality other than we. Reality is non-dual. When we are fully conscious of ourselves we realize our oneness with it. The separate I or ego is an illusion. It is called self-consciousness, but we do not have complete self-consciousness. It is a beginningless illusion. But can have an end. It ceases as soon as we realize our concern with eternal life. Evolution naturally leads human to the realization of one's oneness with eternal life. Evolution is towards the realization of self-consciousness which cannot be stopped with human's ego. The forces of evolution will bring about salvation. But it is not clear whether Krishnamurti believes in the automatic salvation of all of us through evolution whether we want it or not.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

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

1) Explain the meaning of Padartha in Vaiseshika System.

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2) What do you mean by ‘Absolute of Feeling’ in Bhattacharyya?

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5.7 LET US SUM UP

There is no single Indian metaphysics, but rather a variety of ways of understanding and explaining Being from a stock of widely held ideas reflected in the history of Indian metaphysics, beginning with the *Vedas*, and in particular from the classical systems of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. The *Vedas* are seen as the fertile ground of Indian metaphysics. The Rgvedic hymn where the unlimited Being appears is the *Nasadiya-sukta* which is a clear and profound expression of the ancient Indian metaphysical pursuit continued in the *Upanishads*' teaching that ultimate reality is everlasting, infinite, immeasurable and all-pervading unity. The *Gita* offers a synthesis of many existing teachings within an overall framework of the ultimate self or reality that is indestructible and eternal. This self is also the knowable. The whole metaphysics of Gautama is given by him under the category of the knowable. Knowable means what ought to be known for the sake of knowing the truth about Being through the exact measurement of epistemological instruments. However, Raghunatha (*Navya – Nyaya*) denies Being to all categories except to substance and activity. He treats all the rest as indivisible, imposed properties, i.e., conceptualizations due to the ways of our thinking. Similarly, *Vaiseshiika* argues that everything is divisible into smaller and smaller parts, and ultimately one comes to that something which is theoretically indivisible, called *paramnu*, with which everything is composed of. *Sankhya*, a dualism of spirit and matter, *purusha* and *prakrti*, considers matter as the primeval stuff (prime matter) or material which constitutes everything from inorganic matter to mind, all of which constantly goes through change. *Prakrti* is by itself completely unconscious; whereas *purusha* is pure consciousness. *Puruṣa* comes in contact with *prakrti* and throws the reflection of its consciousness on *Prakrti*. *Yoga* philosophy accepts the metaphysical views of the *Sankhya* despite the stress of the former on discipline, practice or action. The *Purva Mimamsa* metaphysics is also the metaphysics of action. It is pluralistic and its central interest lies in showing the efficacy of ethical action. It substitutes ethical action for God himself – a concern of the Vedantic thinkers too. Although Vedanta attempted to create a single consistent metaphysical vision out of the material in the *Upanishads*, there are inevitably some differences of view. One problem concerns the extent to which *Brahman* can be said to be an agent. After all, if he transforms himself into the things of the world, then he takes a direct role in their coming into being. On the other hand, Vedanta (like other Indian metaphysical systems) includes the idea of *karma* – that everything is the result of good or bad actions already performed. Does that mean that some things are caused by *karma* and others by the direct transforming action of *Brahman*? These issues are discussed by various Vedantic thinkers like Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva whose thinking is diametrically opposed to that of the Charvakas for whom consciousness is simply the result of the coming together of the elements that form the person, just as the property of intoxication is the result of the process of fermentation within a drink. The ultimate reality is physical. The cosmic processes are not guided by any supernatural agency. It is concomitant to the Buddhists' theory of impermanence and momentariness. Reality is a continuous flux. The experience of permanence is an illusion. Only becoming is real. Jainism divides the reality into independent and exclusive categories of soul (*jiva*) and matter (*ajiva*). In the same way, Saivasidhanta speaks of metaphysical entities: *pati* (God), *pasu* (soul), and *pasa* (bond). Siva is the Supreme Reality (*pati*) who possesses the eight attributes: self-existence, essential purity, intuitive wisdom, infinite intelligence, freedom from all bonds, infinite grace or love, omnipotence, and infinite bliss. Siva is the first cause; his *sakti*, the instrumental cause; and *maya*, the material cause of this world. Siva also performs the five functions: creation, preservation,

destruction, obscuration, and liberation of souls. In contemporary Indian metaphysics too, many of these issues concerning the absolute dominate. There is a persistent tendency to either accept, reject, or reinterpret the Vedantic conception of the Absolute.

5.8 KEY WORDS

- Absolute** : Absolute is the unconditioned reality which transcends limited, conditional, everyday existence.
- Intuition** : Intuition is the capacity to acquire knowledge immediately (without a medium), without inference or the use of reason.

5.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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5.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

- 1) *Tad ekam* is the ground of the universe. Because it is devoid of differences and definiteness, it is referred to as ‘That One’ ‘which is in some way’. It is neither a particular being nor non-being (nothing) but ‘something’ which is beyond them while being their core and ground. In this way, the hymn traced the origin of the universe to a single Primordial ground which unfolds itself or the universe in all its diversity: “That One” (*Tad Ekam*).
- 2) The word ‘*Brahman*’ is derived from the root ‘*Brh*’ which means to grow, to evolve. In the beginning it meant sacrifice, then prayer and then it acquired its present meaning of ultimate reality. It is the ultimate cause of the universe which spontaneously bursts forth as nature and soul. In the *Chandogya Upanishad*, it is cryptically described as ‘*Tajjalan*.’ *Tajjalan* means that (*tat*) from which the world arises (*ja*), into which it returns (*la*), and by which it is supported and it lives (*an*). In the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, *Brahman* is described as that from which all beings are born, by which they live, and into which they are reabsorbed.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

- 1) Whatever is experienced can be analyzed into *padartha* (category) which has existence, can be known and articulated. There are seven of these: substance, quality, action, class character; individual character; inseparability and non-existence. All of them are seen as 'real'. Thus, what is experienced has an underlying substance, beyond particular characteristics and relations with other things. But those characteristics and relations are as real as the substance of that which displays them. They are all part of the phenomena of the world as we experience it.
- 2) *Absolute of Feeling*: Reflection is aware of the demand for the unity of the content felt and its feeling, but does not understand it. Such a unity—free from the duality of content and consciousness—is the Absolute of feeling. It is content that is indefinitely other than consciousness or as consciousness that is indefinitely other than the content. The word 'indefinitely' is indicative of the fact that the Absolute of feeling is understood as that from which 'known being is distinct'. That shows that the Absolute of Feeling is indifferent to both being and non-being. In this sense Absolute is transcendental.