

1.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q.1: How many Vedas are there?

Q.2: What does Ṛta literally means?

Q.3: What do you mean by theism?

B) Short Questions (Answer in about 100-150 words)

Q.1: What are the different parts of the Vedas?

Q.2: What is agnosticism?

Q.3: What is autotheism?

Q.4: Which are the monotheistic religions?

C) Write distinction between (Answer in about 100-150 words)

Q.1: Monotheism and monism

Q.2: Pantheism and panentheism

D) Long Questions (Answer in about 300-500 words)

Q.1: Explain the concept of Ṛta.

Q.2: What are the different stages of theism?

Q.3: Briefly explain the concept of deism.

Q.4: Discuss the concept of polytheism.

- Henotheism involves believing that multiple Gods exist and focuses on worship of just one of those Gods. Henotheism is a step from polytheism to monotheism.
- Monotheism is the belief in the existence of a single God. Monotheism evolved from polytheism.
- Pantheism is the belief that the physical universe is equivalent to God, and that there is no division between a Creator and the substance of its creation.
- Atheism refers to belief that there is no divinity.



2.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No. 1: The orthodox schools of Indian Philosophy are the Nyāya, the Vaiśeṣika, the Sāṁkhya, the Yoga, the Mimāmsā and the Vedānta.

Ans to Q. No. 2: The heterodox schools of Indian Philosophy are the Cārvāka, the Buddhists and the Jaina.

Ans to Q. No. 3: The three divisions of the Vedas are the Samhitas, the Brahmanas, and the Aranyakas.

Ans to Q. No. 4: Ṛta literally means "the course of things". Ṛta is the physical order. It governs the uniformities of nature. It is the natural order. It is the law of truth, right and justice. It is the moral law. Varuṇa is the custodian of the moral law or Ṛta. Ṛta originally meant the "established route of the world, of the sun, moon and stars, morning and evening, day and night." Ṛta is called the father of all. The world of experience is a shadow or reflection of the Ṛta, the permanent reality which remains unchanged in all the welter of mutation.

Ans to Q. No. 5: (a) True (b) False (c)True

Ans to Q. No. 6: (a) Varuṇa (b) Aranyakas (c) Ṛta

Ans to Q. No. 7: Henotheism involves believing that multiple Gods exist and focuses on worship of just one of those Gods. However, henotheism allows that more than one God may be worthy of worship. It is the belief in 'one' God as distinguished from monotheism or belief

2.12 AUTOTHEISM

Autotheism is the viewpoint that, whether divinity is also external or not, it is inherently within 'oneself' and that one has the ability to achieve godhood. This can be in a selfless way, a way following the implications of statements attributed to ethical, philosophical, and religious leaders. Autotheism can also refer to the belief that one's self is a deity, within the context of subjectivism. This is a fairly extreme version of subjectivism, however.

The concept of theism is also involved in a number of terms which refer to disbelief or doubt in the existence of God. They are-

Nontheism: The absence of clearly identified belief in any deity. Nontheistic religions include Taoism and Zen Buddhism.

Antitheism: A direct opposition to theism, or else the view that theism is destructive.

Atheism: Atheism refers to belief that there is no divinity. This includes both strong atheism, the belief that no deity exists, and weak atheism, an absence of belief in the existence of deities.

Agnosticism: The belief that the existence of God or gods is unknown and/or inherently unknowable. This includes strong agnosticism, the view that the question of the existence of deities is inherently unknowable or meaningless, and weak agnosticism, which states that the question of the existence of deities is currently unknown, but not inherently unknowable.

It should be noted that these labels for types of theistic belief systems are often not as rigid as this classification scheme may suggest.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: What is henotheism?

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Q 8: What is deism?

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Pantheism is the belief that the physical universe is equivalent to God, and that there is no division between a Creator and the substance of its creation. The term pantheism is built upon the Greek roots pan, which means all, and theos, which means God; thus, pantheism is either the belief that the universe is God and worthy of worship, or that God is the sum total of all there is and that the combined substances, forces, and natural laws which we see around us are but manifestations of God. The central point of the pantheistic doctrine is to deny the difference between God and nature which as we have shown is the necessary implication of monotheism. God is conceived here not as transcending nature but as immanent in it. The world does not proceed from God, but is itself God. Although the object of this view is to postulate unity, it retains, somewhat inconsistently as it seems, both the notions of God and nature and so far fails to satisfy the mind in its search after true unity.

2.11 PANENTHEISM

Panentheism is described as monotheistic tendency in the Ṛg Veda.The term panentheism is Greek for "all-in-God," pan-en-theos. Panentheism like Pantheism is the belief that the physical universe is joined to a God or Gods. However, it also believes that a God or Gods are greater than the material universe. Examples include most forms of Vaishnavism. A panentheistic belief system is one which posits a God that interpenetrates every part of nature, but is nevertheless fully distinct from nature. So this God is part of nature, but still retains an independent identity.

The term panentheism appears to have been originally used by Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781-1832), although aspects of it can be traced all of the way back to Plato. There is an understandable tendency to confuse panentheism with pantheism or even to consider panentheism to be a type of pantheism. What is the difference between standard pantheism and panentheism?

It is true that both panentheists and pantheists share the view that the universe and every natural thing in it is pervaded by divinity. However, since panentheism postulates that the universe is contained within God

knowledge about God can be discerned through God's creation - thus, study of nature, the world, the universe, and humanity is akin to a study of God as well.

Deists were and are opposed to religious orthodoxy, dogma, and doctrine, all of which they have argued lead inevitably to corruption and intolerance. Deism acknowledges that most, if not all, religions contain within them a basic core of rational truth and understanding of God; nevertheless, all have also fallen away due to the corrupting influence of supernatural religious beliefs and superstitions. Insofar as a religious doctrine or practice does not harm anyone, however, deists argue that they should be tolerated as cultural practices and not treated as something blasphemous or heretical. However, deists also rejected the very pious and overly emotional forms of worship. In deism, religion is a matter of reason and rationality rather than highly emotional religious faith.

One very different form of deism has been labeled "Deistic Supernaturalism" and has been supported by philosophers like Soren Kierkegaard. According to this system, God is not only transcendent and external to nature (as with deism), but is also the "superhuman and supernatural revealer of values." Denying that God's nature can be found via human experience, Deistic Supernaturalists argue that God can be understood via direct revelations from God. Communion with God can thus be established via activities like prayer or meditation.

Although deism at one point came to be a dominant position among the intelligentsia of England, France, Germany, and even America, today it is not nearly as fashionable as it once was. For one thing, people who are inclined to reject belief in traditional Gods can become atheists and reject belief in Gods altogether - atheism does not suffer the same amount of social stigma which it once did. For another thing, when deism was popular, people regarded the universe as a finely tuned machine, like a watch. Today, however, that picture of the universe is not so common; instead, the universe is seen as more dynamic, chaotic, and more in continual development, a conception which does not lend itself to the development of deism.

Atman (the human soul), hence the usual theist dualism of human and God is precluded. Henotheism is a step from polytheism to monotheism.

2.7 POLYTHEISM

The concept of Ṛta harmonizes the Gods with one another, and paves the way for monotheism. The term monotheism comes from the Greek monos, which means one, and theos, which means God. Thus, monotheism is the belief in the existence of a single God. Because monotheism is founded upon the idea that there is only one God, it is common for believers to also think that this God created all of reality and is totally self-sufficient, without any dependency upon any other being. The largest monotheistic religion systems are Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism. Monotheism is typically contrasted with polytheism, which is a belief in many Gods, and atheism, which is an absence of belief in any Gods.

Two types of monotheism can be further elucidated: 1) Inclusive monotheism, the belief that there is only one deity, and that all other claimed deities are just different names, merely being aspects or incarnations of their one, supreme God, and 2) Exclusive monotheism, which refers to the belief that there is only one deity, and that all other claimed deities are false and distinct from it, either the product of invention, evil, or human error; they deny the existence of the Gods of any other religious faiths. The Hindu denomination of Smartism serves as an example of inclusive monotheism. Most Abrahamic Religions serve as examples of exclusive monotheism.

Most monotheistic systems tend to be exclusive in nature. As a consequence of this exclusivity, monotheistic religions have historically displayed less religious tolerance than polytheistic religions. The form of monotheism which is traditionally most common in the West (and which is too often confused with theism in general) is the belief in a personal God which emphasizes that this God is a conscious mind that is immanent in nature, humanity, and the values which it has created.

Islam and Christianity are the two extremes of monotheism. On the one extreme we have the uncompromising monotheism of Islam where

Other structural considerations of a pantheon include the separation of authority. In some polytheistic systems one God is dominant in power and authority over the other Gods, but not supreme in a way that warrants special worship from humans. In some polytheistic systems the Gods themselves may be subordinate to other forces of nature or fate - just because they are Gods doesn't mean that they are supernatural or transcendent. Thus, polytheism commonly posits a division of labor and responsibility within the divine realm similar to that which we find in the human world.

Although polytheistic systems postulate a coherent group, this does not mean that they do not acknowledge the existence of Gods outside the religion's pantheon. When faced with Gods from other cultures and religions, there are usually three different responses. First is to claim that some or all of the outside Gods are really the same as the Gods currently worshipped, just with different names. Any new aspects or powers are simply incorporated into the older Gods. Second response is taking some of the new Gods and adopts them as new members of the pantheon. In this manner the pantheon can gradually grow. A final response is to accept that the other Gods exist, but not worship them in any active manner. Because polytheistic systems are accepting the existence of Gods from other religions and cultures, polytheism has tended to offer more religious freedom than monotheism has.

There are two types of polytheism hard and soft. Hard polytheism views the Gods as being distinct and separate beings. An example of this would be certain schools of Hinduism as well as Hellenisms. Soft polytheism views the Gods as being subsumed into a greater whole. Some other forms of Hinduism such as Smartism/Advaita Vedanta serve as examples of soft polytheism.

Nevertheless, a modern scientific perspective will tend to reject polytheism because of its incompatibility with our understanding of nature.

If there really were different, independent Gods in charge of all the different aspects of reality, then we shouldn't necessarily have a set of natural laws which are common to all parts of reality. The laws of physics



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What are the orthodox schools of Indian Philosophy?

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Q 2: What are the heterodox schools of Indian Philosophy?

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Q 3: What are the three divisions of the Vedas?

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Q 4: What is Ṛitam?

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Q 5: Write true or false.

a) Ṛta paves the way for monotheism.

b) The Atharva Veda contains the hymns of the Ṛg Veda, which are to be chanted in sacrifice.

c) Theism is the belief in the existence of deities.

Q 6: Fill in the blanks.

a) a) _____is the custodian of the moral law or Ṛta.

b) The Upanisads are mostly part of_____.

c) _____is the physical order and the moral order.

2.4 THEISM AND ITS VARIOUS TYPES

Theism is the belief in the existence of deities. To put it simply, theism is a belief in the existence of at least one god of some sort. The term theism

the Jaina reject their authority. The Upanisads contain the germ of the orthodox schools of Indian Philosophy. They are parts of the Vedas. There are four Vedas, Ṛg Veda, Sāma Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda. The first three constitute the triad, which are the original Vedas, and which enjoy higher authority. The Atharva Veda is a later addition. Each Veda has three divisions, viz, the Samhitas, the Brahmanas, and the Aranyakas. The Samhita are mostly verses. The Brahmanas are commentary in prose. The Aranyakas are forest treatises. The Upanisads are mostly part of Aranyakas. The Samaveda contains the hymns of the Ṛg Veda, which are to be chanted in sacrifice. The Yajur Veda contains large portions of Ṛg Veda. The Atharva Veda contains many mantras of the Ṛg Veda, which is the earliest. The Vedas represent different phases of religious thought. There are manifest signs of polytheism, henotheism, monotheism and monism.

2.3 ṚTA

The law of which Varuṇa is the custodian is called the Ṛta. Ṛta literally means "the course of things". Ṛta is the physical order. It stands for law in general and the immanence of justice. This conception must have been originally suggested by the regularity of the movements of sun, moon and stars, the alternations of day and of night, and of the seasons. Ṛta denotes the order of the world. Everything that is ordered in the universe has Ṛta for its principle. It corresponds to the universals of Plato. The world of experience is a shadow or reflection of the Ṛta, the permanent reality which remains unchanged in all the welter of mutation. The universal is prior to the particular, and so the Vedic seer thinks that Ṛta exists before the manifestation of all phenomena. The shifting series of the world are the varying expressions of the constant Ṛta. So Ṛta is called the father of all. The Maruts come from afar from the seat of the Ṛta. Viṣṇu is the embryo of the Ṛta. Heaven and earth are what they are by reason of the Ṛta. The tendency towards the mystic conception of an unchanging reality shows its first signs here. The real is the unchanging law. The real is one without