UNIT 1- APPLIED PHILOSOPHY I

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1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

It is expected that after going through this unit, the learners will be able to

- understand the meaning and definition of consciousness as explained in the Vedas, Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita.
- explore different philosophical viewpoints on the nature of consciousness.
- analyse the relationship between the self (Atman) and consciousness.
- examine how the concept of consciousness applies to spiritual practices and everyday life.
- study, interpret, and derive insights from Sanskrit shlokas related to consciousness.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

The Consciousness, or चैतन्य, is an important idea in Indian philosophy. Unlike Western beliefs that see consciousness as something created by the brain, Indian philosophy considers it as eternal, unchanging, and beyond what

we can see or touch. The Vedas, Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita describe consciousness as the true essence of life, also called **ब्रह्मन्**(Brahman).

The Vedas explain that consciousness is not created or destroyed; it has always existed and will always exist. The NasadiyaSukta in the Rigveda suggests that everything in the universe comes from this eternal consciousness. The Upanishads teach that the आत्मन्(individual self) and ब्रह्मन्(universal reality) are one. This is expressed through teachings like:

- **अहं ब्रह्मास्मि**(Aham Brahmāsmi) – I am Brahman
- **तत् त्वम् असि** (Tat Tvam Asi) – You are That

These teachings mean that our true self is not just our body or mind, but something much greater and infinite.

Consciousness connects the physical world and the spiritual world. It helps us see, feel, and understand life. However, the things we experience through our senses are temporary, while pure consciousness is permanent. The Bhagavad Gita explains that being too attached to the body and personal identity causes suffering, but realizing the eternal nature of consciousness brings wisdom, peace, and freedom. When a person fully understands consciousness, they reach spiritual enlightenment. This brings freedom from suffering, inner peace, and the realization that we are one with the universe. Indian philosophy teaches that through knowledge, meditation, and devotion, we can rise above physical and mental limitations and reach moksha (liberation).

1.3 MEANING AND DEFINITION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

1.3.1 Meaning of Consciousness

The Sanskrit term for consciousness is**चैतन्य** (Chaitanya**)**, which means awareness,sentience, and the ability to perceive existence. In simple terms, consciousness is what allows us to experience life, think, feel emotions, and be aware of ourselves and the world around us.

In Indian philosophy**,** consciousness is not just a product of the brain. Instead, it is considered the very foundation of existence**.** It is not something created by the body or mind; rather, it is the core reality that underlies everything.

A unique feature of consciousness in Indian thought is that it is self-illuminating (व□ंकाश)**.**

This means that it does not need anything else to prove its existence—it exists on its own. Just as the sun does not need another light source to shine, consciousness is inherently aware and does not depend on external factors to exist.

Thus, consciousness (चैतन्य) is not just an aspect of human life but the fundamental essenceof all experiences, thoughts, and emotions**.** It is the unchanging reality behind all changing phenomena.

1.3.2 Definition of Consciousness in Scriptures

Vedas: The Rigveda (10.129), also known as the NasadiyaSukta, describes consciousness as the ultimate reality that existed even before creation. It explains that before the universe came into being, there was neither existence nor non-existence—only a formless, undifferentiated consciousness was present.

This means that before time, space, or matter existed, there was a subtle awareness, an eternal presence that later manifested as creation. The hymn suggests that consciousness is not a product of creation but rather the source from which everything originates.

This idea aligns with the Indian philosophical belief that consciousness is timeless, unchanging, and independent of the material world. It is not bound by physical reality but is the very essence that makes all existence possible.

कमावरीवःकुहक□शमभःकमासीहनंगभीरम्।नमृ□ुरासीदमृ

तंनतहनरा□ाअनआसीकेतः॥"

Kimaaphorivah Kuh Kasy

SharmannambhahKimaaseedghananGabheeram Na

Mrtyuraaseedamrtan Na Taarahi Na Raatri Ahn Asitapraketah.

(Rigveda 10.129.2)

Explanation: This verse from the Rigveda explains that before the universe came into existence, there was no life or death, no day or night. The only thing present was a single, formless consciousness. This emphasizes that consciousness is the fundamental essence that existed before creation and remains its underlying reality.

Upanishads: The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (2.3.6) states **"**ानं**",** which means "Consciousness is Brahman." This emphasizes that pure awareness is the highest truth and that the essence of reality is not physical but conscious and self-aware. Consciousness is not something created by the brain or limited to individuals; rather, it is infinite and is present everywhere.

Explanation

The Upanishads explain consciousness through the concepts of Brahman (the ultimate reality) and Atman (the individual self). They teach that understanding the oneness of Atman and Brahman leads toliberation (मोक्ष)**.**

The phrase"ानं"means that everything we experience is, at its core, an expression of an eternal, self-aware consciousness. This realization helps individuals understand that their true nature is not separate from the universal consciousness, but rather an inseparable part of it. Recognizing this unity removes ignorance and leads to ultimate freedom.

Bhagavad Gita: In Chapter 2, Verse 17, Krishna declares:

"अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि येन सर्वमिदं ततम् |
विनाशमव्ययस्यास्य न कश्चित्कर्तुमर्हति ||"

Avinashi tutadviddhi yen sarvamidamtatam

Vinashamavyayasyasyanakaschitkartumarhati.

(Bhagavad Gita 2.17)

Translation: That which exists everywhere and pervades all of creation can never be destroyed. No one can bring an end to this eternal and indestructible reality, which refers to the everlasting nature of consciousness.

Explanation:

In this verse from the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna highlights a fundamental truth about consciousness—it is eternal and unchanging. While the physical body undergoes birth, growth, decay, and ultimately death, consciousness remains unaffected by these changes. This means that beyond the temporary nature of the material world, there exists an unchanging reality that is beyond destruction.

Krishna's teaching encourages a shift in perspective. Most people identify themselves with their physical body and worldly possessions, which are temporary. However, by understanding the nature of consciousness, one realizes that the true self is not the perishable body but the eternal consciousness within. This realization brings inner peace and detachment from material concerns.

1.4 THE NATURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

1.4.1 Consciousness in the Vedas

The Vedas describe consciousness as the cosmic principle underlying creation. The पुरुषसूक्तम्

(Rigveda 10.90) explains how consciousness (पुरुष) manifests the universe. It transcends physicality and remains beyond birth and death.

"सहशीषापुषःसहाः सहपात्।

स भूमि वतोवृवाटितद्दशागुलम्॥"

Sahasrashirsha Purusha SahasraakshaSahasrapat
Sa Bhoomi VishvatoVritvatyatisthadDashangulam.
(Rigveda 10.90.1)

Translation: The Supreme Consciousness (Purusha) has a thousand heads, eyes, and feet, pervading the entire universe and beyond it.

The Vedas also emphasize that consciousness is eternal and omnipresent. It is the force that sustains all living beings and governs the natural order (ऋत).

1.4.2 Consciousness in the Upanishads

The Upanishads provide a more refined understanding of consciousness through the concept of आत्मन्. The Mandukya Upanishad describes four states of consciousness:

1. जाग्रत् **(Waking State)** : Awareness directed outward through the senses.
2. स्वप्न **(Dream State)** : Awareness directed inward in dreams.
3. सुषुप्ति **(Deep Sleep)** : A state of unconsciousness but with latent awareness.
4. तुरी□ **(Transcendental State)** : The purest state of consciousness beyond mind and matter.

"अ□म् आत्मा ब्रह्म । सोऽ□म् आत्मा चतुष्पात् ॥"

Ayam atma brahma sarvam tat satyamatmaChatushpat

(**Mandukya Upanishad 1.2)**

Translation: This Self (Atman) is Brahman and has four states of consciousness.

The Upanishads also introduce the concept of दृक्–दृश्य विवेक, which distinguishes between the observer (pure consciousness) and the observed (worldly experiences).

1.4.3 Consciousness in the Bhagavad Gita

Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita describes consciousness as the eternal, indestructible essence of the self. In Chapter 2, Verse 23, he says:

"**नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं □हि□ पावकः ।**
न चैनं क्ले□यन्त्यापो न शोषयि□ मारु□ः ॥"

NainamChhindantiShastraaniNainamDaahatiPavakahNainamchai
namkledayantyaponashoshayatimarutah.

(Bhagavad Gita 2.23)

Translation: Weapons cannot harm this consciousness, fire cannot burn it, water cannot soak it, and wind cannot dry it. It remains eternal and indestructible.

The Bhagavad Gita teaches that true self-awareness and detachment from worldly desires lead to ultimate liberation (moksha). Krishna explains that understanding the timeless and unchanging nature of consciousness allows one to transcend the illusions of birth and death. By realizing this eternal truth, one attains inner peace, wisdom, and freedom from suffering. This knowledge helps an individual detach from temporary material concerns and focus on spiritual growth, leading to ultimate fulfilment and self-realization.

1.5 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATMAN AND BRAHMAN

The Upanishads, especially the Chandogya Upanishad, emphasize the profound truth that the individual self (Ātman) is inseparable from the universal reality (Brahman). This idea is beautifully expressed in the powerful mahāvākya (great statement)**"**तत् त्वम् असि**"** (Tat Tvam Asi)

– You are That.

(Chandogya Upanishad 6.8.7)

Here, Sage Uddālaka teaches his son Śvetaketu that our true essence is divine and inseparable from the infinite consciousness that pervades everything.

Meaning of तत् त्वम् असि(Tat Tvam Asi)

This phrase consists of three key elements:

1. **Tat (**तत्**)** – Represents Brahman, the supreme, all-pervading reality.
2. **Tvam (**त्वम्**)** – Stands for the individual self (Ātman), which appears limited due to ignorance.
3. **Asi (**असि**)** – Means "are," emphasizing their essential unity.

This statement reveals that our true identity is not confined to the body or mind but is, in fact, the infinite Brahman itself.

Brahmajnāna: The Realization of Oneness

The realization that Atman and Brahman are one is known as Brahmajnāna (ब्रह्मज्ञान), the supreme form of knowledge. It is not merely an intellectual idea but a direct, experiential truth that one attains through profound contemplation and deep meditation.

IllustrationfromChandogyaUpanishad:
To explain this, Uddālaka gives an analogy of **salt dissolved in water** (6.13.3-4). When salt is mixed in water, it becomes invisible, yet it can be tasted everywhere. Similarly, Brahman exists everywhere and within us, though we may not perceive it directly.

Similar Teachings in Other Upanishads

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (1.4.10) declares:
"अहं ब्रह्मास्मि" (Aham Brahmāsmi) – I am Brahman, affirming the indivisible and non-dual nature of existence.

The Mandukya Upanishad further describes Brahman as अद्वैत(Advaita) **–** the absolute oneness that transcends all distinctions and dualities, emphasizing the ultimate unity of all existence.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is the Sanskrit term for consciousness?
2. What are the four states of consciousness in the Mandukya Upanishad?
3. What does "Tat Tvam Asi" mean
4. Which BhagavadGita verse describes consciousness as indestructible?

1.6 LET US SUM UP

- This unit explored the concept of consciousness as presented in the Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita. It is described as an eternal and unchanging essence that transcends birth and death, existing beyond physical limitations. Unlike the body and mind, which undergo change, consciousness remains constant and self-luminous.
- The Upanishads convey that the individual self, known as Ātman, is fundamentally one with Brahman, the ultimate reality. This realization leads to liberation by removing ignorance and revealing the true nature of existence. The Bhagavad Gita further emphasizes the indestructibility of

consciousness, explaining that it neither originates nor ceases to exist. It is beyond destruction and remains unaffected by external transformations.

- Understanding and internalizing these teachings can guide one toward spiritual evolution and self-awareness. Realizing the eternal nature of consciousness helps transcend material attachments, fostering inner peace, wisdom, and a deeper connection with one's true self.

1.7 FURTHER READINGS

- Radhakrishnan, S. (1953). *The principal Upanishads*. George Allen & Unwin.
- Sivananda, S. (2007). *Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*. The Divine Life Society.
- Vivekananda, S. (1896). *Jnana yoga*. Advaita Ashrama.

1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Q1: Chaitanya

Answers to Q2: Jagrat (Waking), Swapna (Dreaming), Sushupti (Deep Sleep), Turiya

(The Transcendental State)

Answers to Q3: Thou art that, signifying the unity of the individual self (Ātman) with the ultimate reality (Brahman).

Answers to Q4: Chapter 2, Verse 23 (Bhagavad Gita 2.2)

1.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Short Questions

Q1: Briefly explain the concept of Advaita (non-duality) in relation to consciousness.

Q2: Describe the role of consciousness in Yoga and spiritual practices.

Q3: Summarize the importance of Brahmajnāna in achieving liberation (moksha).

Q4: How do the Vedas and Upanishads define consciousness?

Q5: Name the four states of consciousness mentioned in the Mandukya Upanishad.

Q6: How is the connection between Atman and Brahman explained in the Upanishads?

Q7: Which verse in the Bhagavad Gita describes consciousness as eternal and indestructible?

Essay Questions

Q1: Discuss in detail the concept of consciousness as described in the Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita.

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