PG PH S3 01
(DSC)

# TWO YEAR MASTER'S DEGREE COURSE

## (CBCS in Accordance with NEP 2020)

**SEMESTER-III**

# INDIAN MORAL PHILOSOPHY

# PHILOSOPHY

Surya Kumar Bhuyan School of Social Sciences
KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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## COURSE INTRODUCTION

This course on Indian Moral Philosophy provides a comprehensive understanding of ethical principles rooted in Indian traditions. It begins with the exploration of the Purusarthas—Dharma (duty), Artha (wealth), Kama (desire), and Moksa (liberation)—as the four fundamental aims of human life. The course delves into the moral implications of 'Karma and Bondage' in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, examining how actions lead to consequences and spiritual entanglement. It further investigates paths of spiritual discipline, or Sadhana, including Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, and Bhakti Yoga, as means to attain liberation. Special emphasis is given to ethical ideals like the Buddhist Paramitas and Jaina Triratnas, which reflect profound moral insights. By studying these diverse yet interconnected systems, students gain a deep appreciation of how Indian philosophy integrates ethical living with spiritual realization, offering timeless guidance for personal growth and social harmony.

This course consists of fifteen units. The first unit starts with "**Purusarthas: Meaning and Definitions**". It includes the concepts like meaning and definitions of Purisarthas and the brief explanation of four purusarthas namely, artha, kama, dhrama and moksa.

The second unit is ''**The Role of Artha in Indian Ethics**". The concepts included in this unit are description of the term 'Artha', views of Arthasastra, views of **Carvaka, Jaina and Buddha** school of Indian Philosophy on Artha, view of Artha in Different Vedic Schools of Indian Philosophy

The third unit is ''**Kama as one of the Purusarthas**". It deals with the issues description of the term 'Kâma', views of the Non – Vedic school of Indian Philosophy on Kama, views of the Vedic school of Indian Philosophy on Kama, upanishadic view, critical Appraisal etc.

The fourth unit is "**Dharma: An Ethical Idea of Indian Moral Philosophy**". It basically discusses the concepts like What is Dharma, Pursuit of Dharma, Conclusion

The fifth unit is **"Moksa: The Ultimate end of Life**". The concepts included in this unit are-Meaning of Moksa, Moksa as conceived by different Systems of Indian Philosophy, Moksa as Sarvamukti, Rejection of Moksa by Carvaka School

The sixth unit is "**The Concept of Karma and Bondage in Indian Moral Philosophy**". The concepts included in this unit are The concept of Karma in Indian Moral Philosophy, The concept of Bondage in Indian Moral Philosophy, Definition of Karma, Karmaphal, Causes of Bondage etc.

The seventh unit is **"Jaina Concept of Karma and Bondage"**. The topics discuss in this unit are- Jaina Philosophy, The Concept of Karma, Bondage, Five Vows, Cause of Bondage

The name of the eighth unit is '**The Concept of Karma and Bondage in Buddhism**'. It deals with the issues like What is Karma, Karma and Vipaka, The Four Noble Truths and Karma, Ignorance: The Root Cause of Karma

The name of the ninth unit is '**Advaita Vedantin Analysis of Karma and Bondage**'. It discusses the units like Principal of the action of Advaita Vedanta, Cause of Bondage, Conclusion

The tenth unit is "**What is Sadhana**". This unit discusses the Meaning of Sadhana, Definitions of Sadhana, Its place in Philosophy, Distinctive Features, Different Stages, Different Forms, Conclusion

The eleventhsunit is "**Karma Yoga of Indian Philosophy**". This unit will focus on the concepts like Understanding Indian Philosophy: A Brief Overview, The Concept of Karma in Indian Thought, Karma and Dharma, What Is Karma Yoga?, The Goal of Karma Yoga, Karma Yoga in Indian Tradition, Sankhya-Yoga System. Karma Yoga in the Bhagavad Gita and Indian Philosophy, Context of the Gita

The twelfth unit is "**Jnana Yoga: A medium of Sadhana**". After reading this unit, one will understand the concepts like, Jnâna Yogâ in the Bhagavad Gitâ, Jnâna Yogâ in the Upanisads and Vedântic Philosophy, Understanding Jnâna Yogâ as a Medium of Sâdhanâ, The Four Pillars of Knowledge, Three Core Practices of Jòâna Yogâ Sâdhanâ, Mahâ-Vâkyas, Integrating Jnâna Yogâ with Karma Yogâ and Bhakti Yogâ.

The thirteenth unit is "**Bhakti Yoga: A Marge of Sadhana**". This unit deals with the issues such as Stages and Origin of Bhakti (Devotion), Path of Devotion, Nature of devotion, Determinants of Devotion etc.

The fourteenth unit is "**Buddhist Paramitas**". This unit discusses topics like Dana Paramita, Sila Paramita, Kshanti Paramita, Virya Paramita, Dhyana Paramita, Prajna Paramita etc.

The fifteenth unit is "**Jaina Triratna**". The issues included in this unit are: Definitions of Triratnas, Right Perception, Right Knowledge, Right Conduct, Relationships Among Triratnas, The Goal: Liberation (Moksa)

While going through this course you will come across some boxes which are put on the left side or right side of the text. These boxes will give us the meanings of some words and concepts within the text. Apart from this, there will be some broad and short questions included under Activity and Check Your Progress in every unit. Activities will increase our thinking capacity because questions put in Activity are not directly derived from the text. But answers to the short questions are put in the section Answers to Check Your Progress. Besides, there are some text-related questions which are put in Model Questions. These questions will help you in selecting and mastering probable topics for the examination so that you can prepare for the examination with confidence.

# UNIT 1 : PURUṢĀRTHA: MEANING AND DEFINITION

## UNIT STRUCTURE


1.1 Learning Objectives

1.2 Introduction

1.3 Artha

1.4 Kama

1.5 Dharma

1.6 Mokṣa

1.7 Four Basic Sciences

1.8 Let Us Sum Up

1.9 Further Readings

1.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.11 Model Questions


## 1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- clarify the meaning of Puruṣārtha,
- describe the nature of the different goals of life as viewed in Indian tradition,
- explain the Institutional structure of economic values,
- describe the philosophical perspective of sensuous pleasure,
- elaborate the goal of dharma as commitment to religious and social duties,
- explain the nature of Mokṣa as the ultimate goal,
- describe the four fold division of basic sciences in Indian tradition.

## 1.2 INTRODUCTION

Puruṣārtha are the four goals of human life recognized by Indian tradition. They are artha or wealth, kāma or sensuous pleasure, dharma or

righteousness and moksa or the spiritual liberation from the bondage of the word, embodiedness and karma-rebirth structure. These are ideals that human beings strive to achieve. They give meaning or purpose to human life. Literally 'puruṣa' means 'self' and 'artha' means 'meaning' or 'purpose'.

## 1.3 ARTHA



***Kautilya :*** Also known as Canakya and Visnugupta (around 322 BC) is the author of the artha-sastra, one of the earliest treatises on political economy.

In ***Kautilya***'s arthasāstra two district meaning of wealth is suggested. These are (a) wealth or property and (b) land. Taking artha as land suggests that acquisition of land, empire–building or expansion of a dominion was considered to be one of the goals of human life. From ancient times to the modern age territorial integration is regarded to be indispensable for social well – being or nation building in the form of strong prosperous flourishing nation.

Kautilya gives prominence to artha over dharma and Kāma. It is artha that promotes virtue and enjoyment. So it leads to sarvatha–siddhi or success in all. So, artha is taken both as means and end. But Kautilya does not offer a clear elucidation of artha as means and as end. An alternative interpretation suggests that as 'means' artha represents wealth and as end any object that brings happiness. Yet it should be remembered that when Kautilya assigns the highest place to artha he is not prescribing unrestricted greed for wealth but is imposing the condition that wealth must be based on virtue and then only it will result in enduring happiness. Such wealth is the key to all success. So wealth as such is not a good in itself. Sometimes it may have negative value as the evil of another. Wealth which causes fear from one's own people or from other people is regarded by Kautiya as provocative wealth or a form anartha.



***J. N. Mohanty :*** Is a philosopher of our time. He offers illuminating insights into some of the concepts of Indian philosophical tradition.

Prominent contemporary philosopher ***J. N. Mohanty*** brings about some illuminating interpretation of the concept of artha. He states that 'artha' means various things including work, advantage, profit, utility, the useful, reward, gain, property, wealth, money, also thing object, matter, case and more significantly in philosophical context, meaning and purpose. Mohanty finds some new explanation of artha in Kautilya's arthasāstra. Here artha is defined to be the livelihood of humans (manusyanam

vrttirarthah). It also means (as mentioned above) manusyavati bhumi, i.e, land which possesses humans. According to Chānakya sutra 3 the kingdom (state, society, territory) is the foundation artha (arthasya mulum – rajyam). Again at Chānakyasutra 12 it is mentioned that karya or action is the root of artha (arthamulam karyam). Now question arises as to how and when to do the actions. The answer states that the agent of action should know time (kalavit karyam sadhayet). One must be guided by experience and insight in this regard. So, Mohanty observes that 'if one keeps all of them in mind, the good of artha, or artha as a purusartha, would comprehend a whole complex of possible goals amongst whom there will be a progression, as also a common link'.

Thus, a complex array of ends and means constitutes artha. So, Mohanty aptly observes that artha 'is not as is commonly held, merely a question of making money, accumulating wealth, deeper than that lies a certain understanding of the nature of the self – or rather a certain self – understanding. The self who pursues the goal of artha is, first of all, rooted on the land is a subject in a kingdom, belongs to a society, participates, along with his follow subjects, in commercial and financial institutions such as buying and selling, money, exchange and value, works to earn his livelihood, in so working is guided by retention of the past and pretention of the future, i.e., is guided by the intrinsic temporality of his situation, i.e., of his being in the world and being-with others. He further adds that this self is a person who is in interaction with other persons and is grounded on the earth in his earthly existence. His most basic intentionality is desire (iccha) which finally leads him to such actions the fruits of which he enjoys or suffers.

The interactions in the pursuit of wealth involves the inter subjectivity – the self– consciousness of a subject whose ***intentionality*** is desire for another self–consciousness agent in the form of owner and a worker or a landlord and his tenant etc. In this context artha as work precedes artha as trade or commerce, money or exchange. Work is the basis of all artha and fundamental interrelation at work is clearly that of end and means. The end is satisfaction and the means are work, production of wealth, trade, commerce and accumulation of value. The fundamental temporality



***Intentionality :*** The consciousness of some object.

of desire is prospective, future-oriented which also is looking back to the past.

The desire which underlies artha need not be narrowly selfish or based on personal greed. The desire may be altruistic, benevolent and for public good. The general tendency of Indian philosophical tradition favours such a standpoint. However Cārvāka School propagates selfish satisfaction of sensuous desires to be the only aim of human life.

**ACTIVITY 1.1**



1. Is artha alone final goal in human life? What do you think? Discuss.

.....

.....

.....



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.1.** What are the two distinct meanings of artha as suggested by Kautilya?

.....

**Q.2.** Does artha mean only the accumulation of wealth?

.....

**Q.3.** Choose which of the following is not required in the pursuit of artha :

a) Commercial and financial institutions b) Land

c) Pretention of the future

d) worship of a deity

**Q.4.** Do the Cārvākas accept artha as an end of human life?

.....

**Q.5.** Does Kautilya give prominence to artha over dharma? (Answer in about 30 words)

.....

.....

## 1.4 KĀMA

The word kāma means desire, love, intention, pleasure, enjoyment, benefit etc. It is also used as adverb to mean 'voluntarily' or 'intentionally'. As one of the supreme ends of life it is not the pursuit of gross sensuous desires but has wider and superior dimension. Kāma represents a higher form of self-consciousness than artha because the desire in kāma has another desire as its object and not a thing. In artha object of desire is a thing like land, produce, wealth etc. and these are desired as means for something else. In kāma the desire is an end in itself. Desire here becomes love. Neither the person who loves nor the person who is loved is a pure self. Both of them are embodied. Here the object of love is embodied subjectivity and so is the case with the subject. So, the pursuit of kama self-consciousness manifest itself as intersubjectivity correlated to intercorporeality.



**LET US KNOW**

**Intersubjectivity :** The state of being intersubjective. An intersubjective property is one in which opinions of different subjects co-incide. Here in the pursuit of kama as love it refers to reciprocal interation of flling as to love and wanting to be loved by another subject.

**Intercorporeality :** It refers to the consciousness of physical attraction and interaction.

Kāma begins with desires in the form of search for pleasure. But it gets refined or it moves higher to become love when the desire is transformed into self – surrender, and becomes apprehension of a rasa as in aesthetic experience. So, art and poetry are its manifestations. Thus, kāma begins as desire and develops itself into desireless desire and ends as love. Kama as love place the highest value on the unique other, the beloved, and finds complete satisfaction in the experience of rasa. This is the search of universality in the particular. But in the pursuit of kama even

in the form of rasa remains a duality of the self and the other. It does not reach the identity of the one with the other. Further, J.N. Mohanty observes that the pursuit of santa rasa is not achieved in Kāma. Kāma in the form of satisfaction of the sensuous desires is regarded to be the only puruṣārtha by the Carvaka School. But a distinction between sensuous pleasure and rational pleasure is made by Vātsyāyana, the author of kāma-sutra. He rejects the gross egoistic hedonism of the some of the Cārvāka thinkers and regards happiness (kāma) wealth (artha) and virtue (dharma) as the supreme ends of life. For him wealth and happiness should be pursued in harmony with virtue. These should not be achieved at the sacrifice of one another. The harmonious cultivation of the three is the highest good. Vātsyāyana also mentioned the sixty four fine arts the cultivation of which is recommended for the sake of refined pleasure.

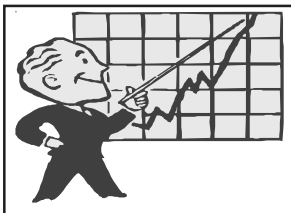


**LET US KNOW**

**Rasa :** It is the essence of aesthetic experience. It is in the form of feelings.

**Vātsyāyana :** (About 400AD) The author of the kāma-sutra, was a different person from the Vātsyāyana belonging to Nyāya school.

Thus, kāma is not the mere satisfaction of erotic desires nor the exclusion of the other aims of human life. It is inconformity with other values and finds it's higher expressing in aesthetic experiences.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.6.** Which one of the values is considered as Puruṣārtha by the Cārvāka School?

.....

**Q.7.** How does Vātsyāyana react to the Cārvāka concept of Puruṣārtha? (Answer in about 60 words)

.....

.....

.....

**Q.8.** Does the appreciation of santa rasa achieved in the pursuit of Kāma?

.....

**Q.9.** How many fine arts are mentioned by Vātsyāyana?

.....

**Q.10.** Is the identity of the one with the other achieved in the pursuit of kāma?

.....

## 1.5 DHARMA

The term dharma carries a host of significations with it generally it is used in the sense of law, duty, righteousness etc. In the Mīmāṁsā system the term is used in the sense of merit, virtue, right action and the potency that produces pleasure and happiness. Dharma is the principle of motion in Jainism. In Buddhism it is the doctrine of Buddha, nature, category, quality and ultimate reality. Dharma as a puruṣārtha signifies the moral value which is fundamental and foundational. It allows interpretation but no justification.

As one moves from the pursuit of artha and kāma to that of dharma, one's self-consciousness deepens further. The agent who strives for dharma is an embodied self who has an individuality as well as social existence. He is also a desiring ego who may perform Vedic injunctions for some benefits, e.g. one perform a yajna with the desire to go to heaven (svargakamo yajeta). But he ultimately becomes the desireless ego in the pursuit of dharma.

As an individual living in the society one has to participate in the moral and social life of the age and this is also one of the aims of life. Thus, in the pursuit of dharma one accepts moral norm of the community as one's own, abides by the rules imposed by it, plays his role in relation to the family, society and the state, including his role in relation to himself and to the deities. Thus, dharma basically consists in role playing. It consists in following rules of the community of that time in matters of moral life. In the pursuit of dharma one puts some restraints on desires and passions.

Here desires are considered to be capable of being kept in control by performing social responsibilities, performing religious and self directing obligation such as suci and cultivating desirelessness (niskāmata) and the sense of equanimity (samatva).

In the pursuit of dharma, the conventional morality in the form of does and don't prepares the ground by propagating personal and inner directed virtues such as purity (suci), charity (dana) and austerity; higher virtues such as equanimity (samatva) and compassion (karuna). Unlike kama here is not love for the beloved but compassion for all beings as the ruling passion.

Some philosophers recommend the triple ends of artha, Kama and Dharma. These three are known as 'trivarga'. The philosophers who enjoin the cultivation of the three are known as trivargika. Kautiya and Vatsyayana are the advocates of the triple ends. Kautilya gives highest place to artha but enjoins that artha should be based on virtue so that it may bring in happiness. Vātsyāyana observes that one who pursues the triple ends enjoys supreme happiness on earth and in heaven after death. For him wealth is superior to happiness. Happiness is superior to virtue (dharma). When there is a conflict among them, the former should be pursued at the sacrifice of the other, but the latter should not be pursued at the sacrifice of the former, since the former are superior to the latter. The best way is the harmonious cultivation of the three. If there is no incompatibility among the three ends, all should be perused and this is the best choice. Sometimes the three ends are not compatible. According to Vātsyāyana, in such cases any two should be pursued. In case when even any two cannot be persued because of their incompatibility, only one of them should be sought – Excessive involvement in any one to the exclusion of others is not recommended by him. Excessive charity is not conducive to dharma; but it exhausts wealth, and thwarts happiness. Excessive penance sacrifices happiness, undermines health and also destroys the capacity for earning wealth. Similarly excessive hankering after wealth sacrifices happiness and dharma. Excessive indulgence in sensual pleasure sacrifices wealth and dharma. So, excess should be avoided. Again when an action is

conducive to me and repulsive to others, its comparative merits and demerits should be weighed.

Dharma prepares the individual for the ultimate goal of mokṣa. But dharma has no ground or foundation. It is self–grounded and self–justified. That is why the essence of Dharma is said to be lying hidden (dharmasya ttattvam nihitam guhayam).



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.11.** What is the meaning of dharma?

.....

**Q.12.** Who are the advocates of Triple ends or trivarga?

.....

**Q.13.** What is the viewpoint of Vātsyāyana regarding the concept of happiness? (Answer in about 30 words)

.....

.....

**Q.14.** Does dharma recommend restrain on passion and emotions?

.....

**Q.15.** Mention some of the virtues the cultivation of which facilitates the pursuit of dharma?

.....

**Q.16.** Who according to Vātsyāyana enjoys supreme happiness in this world and in heaven?

.....

**Q.17.** Why is the essence of dharma regarded to be lying hidden?

.....

## 1.6 MOKṢA OR LIBERATION

Mokṣa is the ultimate end of human life. The term mokṣa has its equivalent in English emancipation, liberation, release, salvation. Most of the philosophical systems of India regard mokṣa as the ultimate end of

human life. The Cārvāka School is the exception. Further as mentioned above there are philosophers known as trivargikas who advocates the ends of artha, kāma and dharma to the exclusion to mokṣa. There are different terms to signify the ultimate end of liberation such as nirvana, kaivalya, apavarga etc. About the nature of the state of mokṣa and the means for it the systems differ from each other.

Buddha did not speak much about the nature of nirvāna but his teachings and the way he lived his life suggests that nirvāna is the state when no pain or suffering is there; it is a state that can be attained in this life and right knowledge and effort leads one to this state. The Vaibhaśika School of Buddhism considers nirvāna as a series of cognitive mental states devoid of affliction while the Sautrantikas regard mokṣa or nirvāna as a series of cognitions devoid of objects. These two philosophical schools belong to Hinayana religious order of Buddhism and Hīnayāna's ideal of Nirvāna is considered to be negative, individual and selfish. But many of Buddha's teachings imply that nirvāna is the positive state of bliss. For the Buddhist idealist nirvāna is the state where true nature of the self as momentary consciousness is realised. False notion of the permanent self is destroyed. For the Sunyavādin the distinction between bondage and liberation is from the phenomenal viewpoint. From the ultimate view point nirvana and samsara is the same sunyatā or ultimate reality though it appears to be different from different view points.

For the Jainas the soul remains in bondage due to the influx of karma into it. By possession and practice of right faith, knowledge and conduct, the influx of fresh karma to the soul is stopped. This state is called samvara or stoppage. Then the already existing karma in the self should be exhausted. This state is called Nirjara or wearing out. When the last particle of karma has been exhausted, the soul becomes completely free from karma and shines in its intrinsic nature of infinite faith, knowledge, bliss and power. This is the state of mokṣa and here one attains omniscience.

The Vaiseśika regards mokṣa to be the absolute negation of pain. It involves the destruction of all specific qualities of the soul. Thus mokṣa is the state in which the soul is in its natural condition and devoid of empirical

content. The destruction of merits and demerits is the necessary precondition for mokṣa. Nyāya view of liberation is same as that of Vaiśeṣika.

In the Mīmāmsā system of Kumārila liberation is regarded to be negative state. It is a state of absolute negation of all experience of cognition, pleasure, pain, desire, aversion, impression, merit and demerit. It is the natural transcendental condition of the self free from empirical contents. It is not the enjoyment of happiness in heaven. It is higher than that and also an eternal state from which one never returns to the world of birth and rebirth. Prabhākara also agrees with Kumārila in describing mokṣa as a negative state of absolute extinction of pain.

For the Sāṅkkya philosophers bondage is due to the false identification of the self which is pure consciousness with the products of prakṛti called the ego or ahamkara which is material in nature. With right knowledge the self realize its state of pure consciousness as distinct from prakṛti and becomes disinterested in material nature. This brings liberation and cessation of all pain and sufferings.

For Advaita Vedanta mokṣha is the realisation of the true nature of the self which is one and identical with Brahman. So, long one is in ignorance, one falsely identify oneself as different from the ultimate reality and views the multiplicity of the world to be real. In the state of ignorance one suffers birth and rebirth and attendant pain or sufferings of the world. As the true knowledge dawns, the world of multiplicity disappears and oneness with Brahman is realised. Another important school of Vedānta known as Visiṣṭādvaita regards the state of liberation to be a state in which the self realizes its state of communion with Brahman where it maintains its distinct existence as the part of Brahman.

In his interpretation of the ultimate ends of human life J.N. Mohanty observes that there are two routes to mokṣa. One of them is through dharma and other is through kāma. There is one poetic path of love. It is the appreciation of rasa which ultimately culminates in sānta rasa as depicted by Abhinavaguptā. This leads the aspirant to egolessness. The other path is through purification of soul (cittasuddhi), through dharma and then through the meditation on the truth of the self on to egolessness.

Moṣka is egolessness – a life of transcendental subjectivity as constituting the source of all worldly reality. Striking example of the former kind is the poetic personality of Tagore and the latter is the ascetic existence of Gandhi's personality, his 'beautiful soul' becoming a work of art.



**LET US KNOW**

**Abhinavaguptā :** A great aesthetic of kasmir who flourished around 980 AD. He belonged to the Pratyabhijñā School of Saivism and wrote the tantraloka among other treatises.



**ACTIVITY 1.2**

1. What do you mean by the nature of Moksha? Discuss.

.....

.....

.....



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.18.** What are the different names of the term 'Mokṣa' given by different systems of Indian Philosophy?

.....

**Q.19.** Write the name of the school, which views that Nirvana can be attained in this life.

.....

**Q.20.** State the three prescribed paths of Jaina School for the attainment of Nirvāna.

.....

**Q.21.** Who uses the term 'Sānta rasa' for the first time.

.....

**Q.22.** Do the traivargikas and Cārvāka accept mokṣa as a goal?

.....

**Q.23.** Did Buddha speak explicitly about the nature of nirvāna?

.....

**Q.24.** Does Hīnayāna agree with Mahāyana in its vision of nirvāna?

.....

**Q.25.** According to J. N. Mohanty, how many routes to mokṣa are there?

.....

## 1.7 THE FOUR BASIC SCIENCES

In the Indian tradition there are four basic sciences which have these four Purusarthas as their themes.

These are:

1. Arthasastra : The sciences of political economy.
2. Kamasutra : The aphorisms on erotic pleasure.
3. Dharmasastra : The sciences of ethics.
4. Moksa-sastra : The sciences of spiritual freedom.

The pursuit of the four goals is a matter of active endeavor to achieve something. For this not only conceptual knowledge of the goals but the knowledge of the means and practice to achieve them is also required. This is the reason behind the development of the four fold sciences.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.26.** What is the science of political economy in Indian tradition?

.....

**Q.27.** What is the science of ethics known as?

.....

**Q.28.** Do the four basic sciences include the theoretical knowledge only?

.....



## 1.8 LET US SUM UP

- Artha is the wealth or economic values. Pursuit of artha presupposes social, economic and commercial institutions. The desire which underlie artha need not be narrowly selfish or based on personal greed. The desire may be altruistic, benevolent and for public good.
- The pursuit of Kāma presuppose corporeality, sexuality and sensitivity to pleasure and pain. The pursuit of Kāma may transcend the bodily level and move to a higher form of self-consciousness. It becomes the desire for another person not as a means but as end in itself. The desire becomes love. The persons who love and the persons who are loved are embodied selves. So, there is inter-subjectivity and also inter-corporeality. Kāma sometimes becomes the desire for the apprehension of rasa as an aesthetic experience. So Kāma can find its expression in art and poetry. The solitary materialist school of Indian Philosophy considers Kāma to be the only puruṣārtha and artha to be pursued only as a means to it.
- Dharma consists in playing one's role in relation to family, society and the state including one's role in relation to oneself and to God. One has to play social roles, perform religious rites and self directed obligation, cultivate desirelessness and sense of equality. This brings desires and passion under subjugation. This pursuit of dharma requires bodily and social existence like Kāma and artha. The pursuit of dharma also prepares the aspirant for the ultimate ideal of mokṣa.
- It is the spiritual liberation from the bondage of the world, embodiedness and karma-rebirth structure. Mokṣa is the ultimate ideal that a person aspires. This makes one free from sufferings. This presupposes the bodily and social existence of the individual who strives for mokṣa. Different philosophical system views mokṣa in different ways. For Saṅkara, it is the highest state of the self's identity with the Brahman while for Ramanuja, it is self's communion

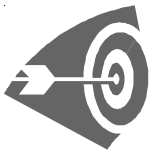
with God. The discriminatory knowledge of one's true self and the non-self, detached mode of action, devotion to God etc. are regarded to be means for mokṣa by different philosophers

- The four puruṣārthas give meaning to human life. They are complementary to each other and require the harmonious cultivation of all the four. They are comprehensive to in corporate material well-being keeping the complete vision and dimensions of human capabilities and also potentials of spiritual uplift. This traditional way of guiding our life is compatible with and conducive to our modern life.



## 1.9 FURTHER READINGS


1. Bilimoria, Purusottam, Prabhu, J. & Sharma, R. (ed).(2007). *Indian Ethics.* New Delhi. OUP.
2. Gopalan, S. (1979). *Hindu Social Philosophy*. New Delhi. Wiley Eastern Ltd.
3. Mohanty, J. N. (2001). *Explorations in Philosophy.* Oxford publication.
4. Mohanty, J.N. (2002). *Classical Indian Philosophy*. Oxford Publication.
5. Sharma, I. C. (1970). *Ethical Philosophies of India*. Harper Torch books.

## 1.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** Wealth and Land

**Ans. to Q. No. 2 :** No

**Ans. to Q. No. 3 :** d) Worshipping a deity

**Ans. to Q. No. 4 :** No

**Ans. to Q. No. 5 :** Yes, according to Kautilya, it is artha that promotes virtue and happiness. So, it leads to sarvatha siddhi or success in all.

**Ans. to Q. No. 6 :** Kāma or sensuous desire

**Ans. to Q. No. 7 :** Vātsyāyana, the author of Kāmasūtra, rejects the gross egoistic hedonism of the Cārvāka thinkers and holds that happiness, wealth and virtue are the supreme ends of human life. He views that wealth and happiness should be pursued in harmony with virtue. And the concept of highest good emerges when three of them mingle or combine.

**Ans. to Q. No. 8 :** No

**Ans. to Q. No. 9 :** Sixty four

**Ans. to Q. No. 10 :** No

**Ans. to Q. No. 11 :** It means the moral value which is fundamental and foundational.

**Ans. to Q. No. 12 :** Kautilyua and Vātsyāyana

**Ans. to Q. No. 13 :** Vātsyāyana, as an advocate of Trivargya, holds that when artha, kāma and dharma are pursued together then one enjoys happiness on earth and in heaven after death.

**Ans. to Q. No. 14 :** Yes

**Ans. to Q. No. 15 :** Purity, charity, equanimity, compassion etc.

**Ans. to Q. No. 16 :** A person who pursue harmonious cultivation of artha, Kama and dharma

**Ans. to Q. No. 17 :** Dharma has no ground or foundation. It is self-grounded and self-justified.

**Ans. to Q. No. 18 :** Nirvāna, Kaivalya, apavarga etc.

**Ans. to Q. No. 19 :** Buddha

**Ans. to Q. No. 20 :** Right faith, right knowledge and right conduct

**Ans. to Q. No. 21 :** Abhinavaguptā

**Ans. to Q. No. 22 :** No

**Ans. to Q. No. 23 :** No

**Ans. to Q. No. 24 :** No

**Ans. to Q. No. 25 :** Two

**Ans. to Q. No. 26 :** Artha-sāstra

**Ans. to Q. No. 27 :** Dharma-sāstra

**Ans. to Q. No. 28 :** No, they emphasize on practice



## 1.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

**A) Very short questions**

**Q.1.** What are the two distinct meanings of wealth, according to Kautilya?

**Q.2.** What are the four basic values mentioned in Indian Philosophy.

**Q.3.** State the four basic sciences found in Indian tradition.

**Q.4.** What do you mean by mokṣa?

**Q.5.** Who is the author of Kāmasūtra?

**Q.6.** State the meaning of dharma as a puruṣārtha.

**Q.7.** State the three ends of human life included in 'trivarga'.

**B) Short questions (Answer in about 150-200 words)**

**Q.1.** Writes short notes on :

a) Artha

b) Kāma

c) Dharma

d) Mokṣa or liberation

**Q.2.** How does J. N. Mohanti bring out the concept of Artha? Explain briefly

**Q.3.** Can Kāma transcend to love? What do you think? Explain briefly.

**Q.4.** Briefly explain the concept of mokṣa.

**Q.5.** Briefly comment on artha as one of the puruṣārthas of Indian tradition.

**Q.6.** Do you find any distinction between Mohantiy's concept of artha and Kautilya's concept of artha? Explain briefly.

**Q.7.** Does dharma prepare a man for the ultimate goal? Explain in brief.

**C) Long questions (Answer in about 300-500 words)**

**Q.1.** What is artha? Explain after Kautilya.

**Q.2.** How does J.N. Mohanty explain and interpret the goal of artha?

**Q.3.** Explain the goal of desire or Kāma as a purusārtha.

**Q.4.** Is Dharma a moral ideal? Explain its nature.

**Q.5.** Discuss the views of different philosophical schools regarding the nature of mokṣha or liberation.

* * * * * * * * * * *

# UNIT 2 : ARTHA AS ONE OF THE PURUṢĀRTHA

## UNIT STRUCTURE


2.1 Learning Objective

2.2 Introduction

2.3 Meaning of the four Puruṣārtha

2.4 Description of the term 'Artha'

2.5 View of Arthasastra

2.6 Views of Carvaka, Jaina and Buddha school of Indian Philosophy on Artha

2.7 View of Artha in Different Vedic Schools of Indian Philosophy

2.8 Critical Appraisal

2.9 Conclusion

2.10 Let's sum up

2.11 Further Reading

2.12 Answer to check your progress

2.13 Model questions


## 2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Explain what is the actual meaning of Puruṣārtha in Indian context.
- Explain the Four Puruṣārthas, namely, Dharma, Artha, kāma and Moksa
- Describe the nature of Artha as the final goal of human life
- Evaluate the materialistic perspective of Artha.

## 2.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you with Kâma as one of the four Puruṣārtha in Indial Philosophy. Puruṣārtha is a foundational concept in Indian philosophy. The word Puruṣārtha literally means 'purpose of human being' or 'object of human pursuit'. The word *purusa* means human being or soul and the word *Artha* means not only wealth or value, but also purpose or objective. So,

the word Purusartha etymologically denotes the aim or purpose of human being or object of human pursuit. It refers to the four goals of human life. It provides a framework for understanding the purpose of our existence in this world and offers ethical guidance for living a meaningful life. So, the four goals or aims of human life according to Hinduism are known as Puruṣ ārtha. Puruṣārthas in simple language means the purpose for which a person strives for. There are four Puruṣārtha recognised in Indian Philosophy. They are:

1. Dharma (Righteousness or Duty)
2. Artha (Wealth or Prosperity)
3. Kâma (Desire or Pleasure)
4. Mokṣa (Liberation or Salvation)

## 2.3 MEANING OF THE FOUR PURUṢĀRTHAS

In the concept of Puruṣārtha, there are two classifications - Trivarga and Caturvarga. Trivarga includes the first three goals - Dharma, Artha, and Kama. When Moksha is added to these three, it becomes Caturvarga. The concept of Moksha first appears in the Upanishads, whereas the earlier texts like the Samhitas, Brahmanas, and Aranyakas primarily focus on Kâma, Artha, and Dharma, collectively referred to as the Trivarga or 'three categories' of human pursuits. The Dharmaúâstras and the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, are the earliest known sources to comprehensively present the idea that a balanced life involves pursuing four goals or ends. The distinction between Trivarga and Caturvarga highlights the contrast between the social sphere (Trivarga) and the spiritual sphere (Moksha).

### 2.3.1 Dharma

Dharma means righteousness, it refers to moral values. The word Dharma comes from the Sanskrit root *'dhri'*, meaning 'to hold together' or 'to preserve'. Dharma incorporates religious duties, moral rights, individual responsibilities, virtuous behaviour, and actions that support social order and right conduct. In ancient India, Dharmashastras guided people on the path of Dharma. It includes

all actions aligned with divine teachings and an individual's sense of morality and justice. Dharma is considered essential because it protects and sustains the society.

### 2.3.2 Artha

Artha means prosperity and refers to economic values. It signifies the economic and material aspects of human life. Hinduism acknowledges the importance of material wealth for an individual's happiness and well-being. As one of the four Purucârthas, Artha includes career, skills, health, wealth, prosperity, and the means to live a fulfilling life. For a householder, wealth is essential to perform duties, uphold Dharma and support the needs of their family and society. However, wealth should not be pursued for its own sake but as a means to uphold Dharma and help others achieve their goals.

### 2.3.3 Kâma

Kâma means pleasure, it refers all sensual pleasure as the ultimate goal of human life. Kâma involves the pursuit of love, desire, pleasure, and aesthetic enjoyment. It promotes emotional, sensory and also intellectual satisfaction. It emphasizes the value of personal happiness in life. When pursued within the framework of Dharma, Kâma ensures that desires remain ethical and do not result in harm or excess.

### 2.3.4 Mokṣa

Mokṣa means self-realization which is a state of the complete cessation of all sufferings. It is the ultimate goal of human life, representing spiritual liberation and freedom from the cycle of birth and death (samsara). All the school of Indian Philosophy except Cârvâka, accept liberation as the ultimate aim of human life. Liberation refers to self-realization, inner peace, and union with the ultimate reality (Brahman). It means transcending all material and sensory pursuits, leading to eternal bliss. Mokṣa is seen as the culmination

of life's journey and is achieved through self-discipline, detachment, and spiritual knowledge. Different schools of Indian philosophy offer various paths to attain liberation. Moksha means self-realization which is the state of the complete cessation of all sufferings.

Thus, the aim of life of an individual is determined by the doctrine of Purusartha, it also decides the course of life of man and lays down norms and values for the behavioural pattern. It acknowledges the diverse dimensions of human existence - ethical, material, emotional, and spiritual. Dharma provides the ethical foundation, Artha supports material and social needs, Kâma fulfils emotional and sensory desires and Mokṣa offers spiritual liberation, transcending the other three.

## 2.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE TERM ARTHA

In Hinduism, Artha is the second noble goal of life, alongside Dharma (righteousness), Kama (desires), and Moksha (liberation) - collectively known as the Purusharthas, which represent the fundamental values of life. Artha refers to the pursuit of wealth and material prosperity in life. The word Artha literally means 'meaning, sense, goal, purpose or essence' depending on the context. But generally, Artha, as a goal of human being refers to the economic and material aspects of life. Artha includes earning a living, financial stability and overall well-being. It is not just about accumulating wealth but about having the necessary resources to live a fulfilling life. Ancient texts like the Manusmriti and Arthashastra emphasize its importance, stating that wealth supports both moral duties (Dharma) and desires (Kama).

Artha, as the pursuit of material success, has dual meaning in Indian philosophy. On one hand, it encourages individuals to seek prosperity and financial stability, while on the other, it emphasises that wealth must be earned ethically and used responsibly. Ancient Indian thought recognized material success as an integral part of life but stressed the importance of maintaining a balance between financial growth and moral values. Kautilya's Arthashastra emphasize the importance of wealth and power for personal and societal well-being. However, wealth should not be pursued merely for

personal gain but should be earned and used ethically to uphold righteousness and assist others in achieving their goals. Therefore, every individual should be equipped with the knowledge and skills to acquire wealth responsibly, ensuring both personal well-being and societal harmony.

Artha has deep philosophical significance in Hindu scriptures such as the Vedas, Upanisads, Râmâyaga, Mahâbhârata, Manusm[ti, Arthaúâstra, and Kâmasûtra. As one of the Puruṣārthas (four life goals), Artha represents economic value and serves as a resource to fulfil the needs of individuals and society. According to Manusmiti, one should earn wealth only to meet personal needs, following the duties of their varga (social class) and âúrama (life stage). The Mahâbhârata also highlights Artha as a human quality, emphasizing its social and political importance, viewing wealth as a form of trust (Dhana). In the Arthaúâstra, Kautilya warns against excessive wealth accumulation, while Chānakya teaches that Dharma is the foundation of all prosperity and enjoyment, deeply connected to Artha. Chānakya was the first scholar to provide a comprehensive analysis of economic management, focusing on rapid growth with stability. His guiding principle of the king's rule, was that his satisfaction should lies in the happiness of the subjects and in their welfare.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q.1:** Choose the correct option:

i) Which of the following texts discusses Artha as a Puruṣārtha?

a) Bhagavad Gîtâ

b) Kâmasûtra

c) Arthasāstra

d) Both b and c

ii) According to Manusmati, how should wealth (Artha) be earned?

a) Through any means necessary

b) Only to fulfill personal needs while following one's varga and asrama duties

c) By accumulating as much as possible

d) By renouncing material wealth

iii) What was Chānakya's key principle regarding a ruler's duty?

a) To focus only on military strength

b) To prioritize his own wealth over the kingdom's economy

c) To ensure his satisfaction lies in the happiness and welfare of his subjects

d) To avoid taxation completely

iv) What is the primary warning given by Kautilya in the Arthasāstra?

a) To avoid warfare at all costs

b) To not accumulate excessive wealth

c) To eliminate trade and commerce

d) To prioritize Dharma over Artha

**Q.2:** Short Answer Questions:

i) How does the Mahâbhârata describe the social and political role of Artha?

.....

.....

ii) What is Chānakya's contribution to economic management?

.....

.....



**ACTIVITY: 2.1**

Which of the four Dharma, Artha, kâma and Moksha as per your view can be the ultimate aim of Human life?

.....

.....

## 2.5 VIEW OF ARTHAÚÂSTRA

The Arthaúâstra defines wealth (Artha) as the foundation of human livelihood (Vitti) and emphasizes its importance in governance and economic stability. Arthaúâstra is considered the science of wealth, covering aspects from individual prosperity to state administration. Artha finds its highest expression in kingship, as rulers are responsible for acquiring and protecting productive territories. The Arthaúâstra presents a king-centered perspective

on wealth and power, highlighting the economic advantage of a monarchy over a republic. A strong economy allows for better capital accumulation, which is crucial for governance. Kautilya also emphasised that the success of a ruler depends on a strong economy, achieved through state-run enterprises, regulations, fines and most importantly, taxation. However, he advocated for fair and balanced taxation, ensuring that taxes were reasonable and not excessive. He proposed that taxation should serve both economic and social welfare. The superintendent of the storehouse (Kosâgâra) was responsible for managing various sources of revenue and ensuring proper record-keeping. Such as Agricultural Produce (Sita) and Crops collected from crown lands, State Taxes (Ayakar) as Taxes collected from different regions, Trade Revenue (Vyapara Kara) – Income from commercial activities, Barter System (Parivartana) – Exchange of goods without money, Grain Contributions (Prîmityaka) – Voluntary donations of grain, Loaned Grain (Upamityaka) – Grain borrowed with an agreement to repay, Food Processing Revenue (Samskarana) – Income from processing products like rice and oil, Incidental Revenue (Anyajâta) – Unexpected or miscellaneous income, Expense Verification (Vyayapratyaya) – Auditing and monitoring expenditure, Debt Recovery (Upasthânam) – Collection of overdue payments etc. The superintendent of agriculture oversaw the collection of all crown land produce, classified as *sita*. Half of the collected store was to be kept in reserve for emergencies, while the other half could be used. Old stock had to be replaced with fresh supplies to maintain quality. The superintendent of the storehouse was responsible for personally overseeing any changes in the quantity of grains due to processing methods such as pounding, grinding, frying or drying, ensuring that losses were minimized and resources were efficiently managed.

It is mentioned in 'The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana' that, Dharma (righteousness) should be learned from the Œruti (holy scriptures) and from those well-versed in it. Artha (wealth) refers to the acquisition, protection, and growth of resources such as land, gold, cattle, wealth, and friendships. It should be learned from royal officials and experienced merchants familiar with commerce. Kâma (pleasure) is the enjoyment of sensory experiences - hearing, touch, sight, taste, and smell - combined with the mind and soul.

It arises from the interaction between the senses and their objects and should be learned from the Kâma Sûtra and social customs. When Dharma, Artha and Kâma come together, Dharma is the highest, followed by Artha, and then Kâma. However, a king should prioritize Artha, as it ensures the livelihood of his people.

## 2.6 VIEWS OF CÂRVÂKA, JAINA AND BUDDHA

View of Cârvâka: Cârvâka system is a non-Vedic Materialist school of Indian philosophy founded by Brhaspati. It is also known as Lokâyata. Cârvâka system followed extreme hedonism, believing that sensory pleasure (Kama) is the ultimate goal of life. They emphasized living in the present, rejecting concerns about the past or future. For them, 'As long as one lives, let them live happily; even if one must borrow money, let them enjoy ghee, for once the body is burnt after death, it doesn't return.' This reflects their rejection of life after death and their focus on living in the present. Their sole aim was to enjoy Kâma (pleasure) to the fullest. Wealth (Artha) is considered necessary, but only as a means to fulfil desires (Kâma). Unlike other Indian philosophies that emphasize ethical earning, Cârvâka focuses on pragmatic acquisition of wealth, even if it means borrowing money to enjoy life. Artha is regarded as the means to realize that end, while Dharma and Moksa are altogether rejected. Cârvâkas reject Dharma calling it a mere social construct used by the elite to control people. Mokṣa is dismissed as fiction, since they do not believe in rebirth or an afterlife. The pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain in the here and now is considered the only rational goal. Pleasure is regarded as mixed up with pain, but that is no reason why it should not be acquired. *Their view on pleasure is illustrated by the famous analogy that 'Nobody discards grains because of the husk.'* This means that just as husk is an unavoidable part of grains, pain is a natural part of pleasure, but that does not mean one should give up pleasure. However, Cârvâkas extreme emphasis on sensual enjoyment and denial of moral and spiritual values makes it an outlier in Indian philosophy, often criticized for promoting short-sighted self-indulgence.

View of Jaina: The Jaina believe that, excess wealth should be utilized for the greater good, as Jaina believe that attachment to possessions

obstructs spiritual liberation. Jaina system of Indian Philosophy is also a non-Vedic school. Jainas uphold Aparigraha (non-attachment) as a fundamental virtue alongside Satya (truth), Ahimsa (non-violence), Asteya (non-stealing), and Brahmacharya (celibacy). Aparigraha encourages self-restraint in desires, acquisitions and possessions including land, wealth, and resources. Excess wealth should be used for the greater good, as Jains believe that material attachment obstructs spiritual liberation. They advocate a simple minimalist lifestyle, emphasising that greater material wealth leads to increased suffering and moral decline.

View of Buddhism: Being one among the non -Vedic school of Indian Philosophy, Buddhism hold that Artha should be used to serve humanity. Humans are driven by desires. Wherever there are pleasures, the longing for wealth, recognition and status takes root. Everything in this world is temporary and the desire for Kâma (pleasure) and Artha (material gain) leads to the cycle of rebirth. Buddhism believes in the Eightfold Path consists of eight practices: right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. Buddha emphasized that right action leads to right living, and a person's livelihood should be ethical, fair, and honest. A righteous livelihood not only ensures personal integrity but also promotes social harmony and well-being. Engaging in dishonest means of earning, such as black-marketing, hoarding, or exploiting others for profit, leads to suffering and disrupts societal balance. Therefore, one should avoid any occupation that harms others and instead seek a livelihood that upholds morality, fairness and compassion.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q.3:** State True or False -

a) Cârvâka philosophy rejects Dharma and Mokca, considering them unnecessary for human life. (True/False)

.....

b) Jainism believes that accumulating excessive wealth leads to spiritual liberation. (True/False)

.....

c) Buddhism advocates unethical means of earning wealth as long as it benefits an individual. (True/False)

.....

**Q.4:** Short Questions:

a) How does Cârvâka view the role of Artha in life?

.....

.....

b) What is the significance of Aparigraha in Jainism?

.....

.....



**ACTIVITY: 2.2**

Do you think 'Wealth is Necessary for a Meaningful Life in today's context? Add your comment.

.....

.....

## 2.7 VIEW OF ARTHA IN DIFFERENT VEDIC SCHOOLS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Nyâya-Vaiœesika schools primarily focus on logic and reality but recognize Artha as necessary for a stable society. Sâmikhya school teaches that spiritual growth is more important than material pursuits. Artha is acknowledged as a temporary necessity, but the ultimate goal is to transcend material attachments. Patañjali's Yoga Sûtras promote balance in life. The Yoga school advises that Artha should be pursued, but one should remain detached from material wealth. Excessive attachment to Artha leads to suffering (dukha), as wealth is impermanent. The Yamas (ethical restraints) and Niyamas (disciplinary observances) emphasize on self-control, ensuring that wealth does not become an obstacle to spiritual progress. The Mîmâmsâ school, which focuses on Vedic rituals and dharma and considers Artha essential for performing sacrifices (yajñas) and religious duties. For them, accumulating wealth is justified if it supports religious and moral responsibilities. Wealth is seen as a means to fulfil one's duties rather than

an end in itself. The Vedânta school, particularly Advaita Vedânta (Œamkara), prioritizes Mokṣa (liberation) as the ultimate goal. However, it acknowledges that Artha is necessary for maintaining worldly responsibilities (vyavahâra). While wealth is needed to sustain life, one must recognize its temporary nature and avoid attachment. This is supported by the Bhagavad Gîtâ, which advises that wealth should be pursued ethically (dharma) and without attachment.

## 2.8 CRITICAL APPRAISAL

Hindu ethics demand that wealth be earned righteously (Dharmic Artha), avoiding unfair means. Even the great epic Mahâbhârata warns that the blind pursuit of wealth leads to conflict and suffering, for example, the Kurukshetra war was partly caused by greed. Vedânta and SâCkhya philosophy also caution that excessive focus on Artha leads to attachment (Moha), distracting individuals from spiritual progress. Similarly, the Buddha criticized the pursuit of wealth as a source of suffering and advocated the Middle Path (Madhyama Mârga) to maintain a balance between material and spiritual life. The Jain concept of Aparigraha (non-attachment) further illustrates that excessive possessions can lead to moral decay emphasizing the importance of limiting material desires for spiritual growth. The Upanicads and Bhagavad Gîtâ emphasize detachment, teaching that ultimate fulfilment lies in Mokca, not material success.

## 2.9 CONCLUSION

In the Vedic tradition, Artha is considered essential but secondary to Dharma. It must be earned ethically, used responsibly, and should not become an obsession. The ultimate goal of life is not wealth but spiritual liberation (Mokca), and Artha should serve as a tool to support righteous living and overall well-being. Across Vedic schools, Artha is recognized as an important aspect of life, but its purpose and pursuit are guided by different philosophical perspectives. While Nyâya-Vaiúecika and MîmâCsâ see wealth as essential for societal and religious functions, SâCkhya, Yoga, and Vedânta emphasize detachment from material possessions. The Bhagavad Gîtâ

synthesizes these views, promoting ethical wealth acquisition without attachment, ensuring both material well-being and spiritual progress. Thus, in Indian thought Accumulating Artha is justified if it supports one's religious and moral duties. Most of the schools of Indian philosophy accept Mokca as the ultimate goal but acknowledges that Artha is necessary to maintain worldly responsibilities and advise to pursue wealth ethically and without attachment to material possessions.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q.5:** State True or False:

a) The Nyâya-Vaiúesika schools prioritize material wealth (Artha) over logic and reality. (True /False)

b) The Yoga school teaches that excessive attachment to Artha leads to suffering (dukha). (True /False)

c) According to Advaita Vedânta, Artha is the ultimate goal of life. (True /False)

**Q.6:** Short Questions

ə) Why does the Sânkhya school consider spiritual growth more important than Artha?

.....

.....

b) How does the Mîmâmsâ school justify the accumulation of wealth?

.....

.....

c) What is the Bhagavad Gîtâ's view on the pursuit of Artha?

.....

.....



## 2.10 LET US SUM UP

- It is one of the four Purucârthas (goals of life) along with Dharma (duty), Kâma (pleasure), and Mokca (liberation).

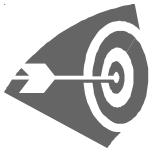
- Artha refers to material prosperity, wealth, and economic stability.
- Artha is necessary for sustaining life, fulfilling responsibilities, and ensuring social stability.
- It should be acquired ethically and used for the welfare of society.
- Cârvâka views Artha as a means to maximize pleasure (Kâma). Ethical concerns are secondary.
- Jaina advocates Aparigraha (non-attachment) and minimal possession, warning against excessive material wealth.
- Buddhism encourages the Middle Path—wealth should be earned ethically and used for good causes.
- Nyâya-Vaiúesika recognizes Artha as essential for stability but emphasizes ethical acquisition.
- Sânkhya views Artha as temporary and secondary to spiritual progress.
- Yoga advocates balance, warning that excessive attachment to wealth leads to suffering (dukha).
- Mîmâmsâ justifies Artha for performing religious duties and yajñas (sacrifices).
- Vedânta recognizes Artha's necessity for worldly life but emphasizes detachment from it.
- Bhagavad Gîtâ advises acquiring wealth ethically and without attachment.
- Artha is essential for a balanced life, but attachment to wealth can lead to suffering.
- The ideal approach is to earn wealth ethically, use it responsibly and not let it hinder spiritual growth.



## 2.11 FURTHER READINGS

1. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan: *Indian Philosophy* (Volumes 1 & 2)
2. Surendranath Dasgupta :*A History of Indian Philosophy* (Volume 1)
3. Jadunath Sinha: Outlines of Indian Philosophy,

4. Kedar Nath Tiwari :Classical Indian Ethical Thought, A Philosophical Study of Hindu, Jaina and Bauddha Morals
5. P. Nagaraja Rao: The Four Values in Indian Philosophy and Culture (A study of the Purusarthas)



## 2.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** i) d) Both b and c

ii) Only to fulfil personal needs while following one's varga and âúrama duties

iii) To ensure his satisfaction lies in the happiness and welfare of his subjects

iv) To not accumulate excessive wealth

**Ans. to Q. No. 2 :** i) Answer- The Mahâbhârata highlights Artha as a key human attribute, emphasizing its role in governance and society. It views wealth as a form of trust (Dhana) that should be used responsibly for social and political stability.

ii) Answer: Sânkhya was the first scholar to provide a comprehensive analysis of economic management, advocating for rapid growth with stability. He emphasized ethical wealth accumulation, fair taxation, and the ruler's duty to ensure the well-being of his people.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** a) True

b) False

c) False

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** a) Cârvâka considers Artha (wealth) as a means to fulfill desires (Kâma). Unlike other Indian philosophies that emphasize ethical earning, Cârvâka focuses on pragmatic acquisition of wealth, even if it means borrowing money to enjoy life.

b) Aparigraha (non-attachment) is a fundamental virtue in Jainism that encourages self-restraint in desires and possessions. It teaches that excessive material wealth leads to suffering and hinders spiritual progress.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** a) False

b) True

C) False

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** a) Sânkhya teaches that material wealth is temporary and that true fulfillment comes from transcending material attachments.

b) The Mîmâmsâ school sees Artha as essential for performing Vedic rituals and fulfilling religious and moral duties.

c) The Bhagavad Gîtâ advises pursuing wealth ethically (with dharma) and without attachment to material possessions.



## 2.13 MODEL QUESTIONS

**A) Very short questions**

**Q.1.** What is the meaning of Artha in Indian philosophy?

**Q.2.** Name the four Puruṣārthas in Hindu tradition.

**Q.3.** Which Indian philosophy emphasizes extreme hedonism and views Artha as a means to fulfil Kâma?

**Q.4.** What is the Jaina principle that promotes non-attachment to wealth?

**Q.5.** Which Hindu scripture advises acquiring wealth ethically and without attachment?

**Q.6.** According to Buddhism, which path ensures a balanced approach toward wealth?

**(B) Short questions (Write in about 150- 200 words)**

**Q.1.** Explain the significance of Artha as one of the Puruṣārthas.

**Q.2.** What is the view of Cârvâka regarding Artha?

**Q.3.** How do Jainism and Buddhism view the pursuit of Artha?

**(C) Long questions (Write in about 300-500 words)**

**Q.1.** Explain the role of Artha in Kautilya's Arthaúâstra

**Q.2.** Explain the role of Artha in different Hindu philosophical schools?

**Q.3.** How does the Bhagavad Gîtâ guide the ethical pursuit of Artha? Explain.

* * * * * * * * * *

# UNIT 3 : KÂMA AS ONE OF THE PURUSÂRTHA

## UNIT STRUCTURE


3.1 Learning Objective

3.2 Introduction

3.3 Meaning of the four Purusârtha:

3.4 Description of the term 'Kâma'

3.5 Views of the Non – Vedic school of Indian Philosophy on Kama

3.6 Views of the Vedic school of Indian Philosophy on Kama

3.7 Upanishadic view

3.8 Critical Appraisal

3.9 Conclusion

3.10 Let's sum up

3.11 Further Reading

3.12 Answer to check your progress

3.13 Model questions


## 3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Explain what is the actual meaning of Puruṣārtha in Indian context.
- Explain the Four Puruṣārthas – Dharma, Artha, Kâma and Moksa
- Describe the nature of Kama as the final goal of human life
- Evaluate the materialistic perspective of Kama.

## 3.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you with Kâma as one of the four Puruṣārtha in Indial Philosophy. Purucârtha is a foundational concept in Indian philosophy. The word Puruṣārtha literally means 'purpose of human being' or 'object of human pursuit'. The word *purusa* means human being or soul and the word *Artha* means not only wealth or value, but also purpose or objective. So, the word Purusartha etymologically denotes the aim or purpose of human being or object of human pursuit. It refers to the four goals of human life. It provides a framework for understanding the purpose of our existence in

this world and offers ethical guidance for living a meaningful life. So, the four goals or aims of human life according to Hinduism are known as Purucârthas. Puruṣārthas in simple language means the purpose for which a person strives for. There are four Puruṣārthas recognized in Indian Philosophy. They are:

1. Dharma (Righteousness or Duty)
2. Artha (Wealth or Prosperity)
3. Kâma (Desire or Pleasure)
4. Mokṣa (Liberation or Salvation)

## 3.3 MEANING OF THE FOUR PURUSÂRTHA

In the concept of Puruṣārtha, there are two classifications - Trivarga and Caturvarga. Trivarga includes the first three goals - Dharma, Artha, and Kama. When Moksha is added to these three, it becomes Caturvarga. The concept of Moksha first appears in the Upanishads, whereas the earlier texts like the Samhitas, Brahmanas, and Aranyakas primarily focus on Kâma, Artha, and Dharma, collectively referred to as the Trivarga or 'three categories' of human pursuits. The Dharmaúâstras and the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, are the earliest known sources to comprehensively present the idea that a balanced life involves pursuing four goals or ends. The distinction between Trivarga and Caturvarga highlights the contrast between the social sphere (Trivarga) and the spiritual sphere (Moksha).

### 3.3.1 Dharma

Dharma means righteousness, it refers to moral values. The word Dharma comes from the Sanskrit root *'dhri'*, meaning 'to hold together' or 'to preserve'. Dharma incorporates religious duties, moral rights, individual responsibilities, virtuous behaviour, and actions that support social order and right conduct. In ancient India, Dharmashastras guided people on the path of Dharma. It includes all actions aligned with divine teachings and an individual's sense of morality and justice. Dharma is considered essential because it protects and sustains the society.

### 3.3.2 Artha

Artha means prosperity and refers to economic values. It signifies the economic and material aspects of human life. Hinduism acknowledges the importance of material wealth for an individual's happiness and well-being. As one of the four Puruṣārthas, Artha includes career, skills, health, wealth, prosperity, and the means to live a fulfilling life. For a householder, wealth is essential to perform duties, uphold Dharma and support the needs of their family and society. However, wealth should not be pursued for its own sake but as a means to uphold Dharma and help others achieve their goals.

### 3.3.3 Kâma

Kâma means pleasure, it refers all sensual pleasure as the ultimate goal of human life. Kâma involves the pursuit of love, desire, pleasure, and aesthetic enjoyment. It promotes emotional, sensory and also intellectual satisfaction. It emphasizes the value of personal happiness in life. When pursued within the framework of Dharma, Kâma ensures that desires remain ethical and do not result in harm or excess.

### 3.3.4 Mokṣa

Mokṣa means self-realisation which is a state of the complete cessation of all sufferings. It is the ultimate goal of human life, representing spiritual liberation and freedom from the cycle of birth and death (samsara). All the school of Indian Philosophy except Cârvâka, accept liberation as the ultimate aim of human life. Liberation refers to self-realization, inner peace, and union with the ultimate reality (Brahman). It means transcending all material and sensory pursuits, leading to eternal bliss. Mokṣa is seen as the culmination of life's journey and is achieved through self-discipline, detachment, and spiritual knowledge. Different schools of Indian philosophy offer various paths to attain liberation. Moksha means self-realization which is the state of the complete cessation of all sufferings.

Thus, the aim of life of an individual is determined by the doctrine of Purusartha, it also decides the course of life of man and lays down norms and values for the behavioural pattern. It acknowledges the diverse dimensions of human existence - ethical, material, emotional, and spiritual. Dharma provides the ethical foundation, Artha supports material and social needs, Kâma fulfils emotional and sensory desires and Mokṣa offers spiritual liberation, transcending the other three.

## 3.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE TERM 'KÂMA'

*Kâma* as one of the Puruṣārthas refers to the pursuit of pleasure, love and enjoyment in life. It includes sensual desires, emotional satisfaction and aesthetic appreciation. It is derived from the Sanskrit root *Kâm*, meaning 'desire' or 'wish' it represents the legitimate fulfilment of human desires and aspirations. It highlights the importance of embracing pleasure, love and joy as a natural aspect of human life. It encourages individuals to seek fulfilment in sensory experiences while ensuring that such pursuits align with moral and ethical boundaries (Dharma).

Kâma in its narrow context connotes sexual desire and longing, but the concept more broadly refers to any desire, wish, passion, longing, pleasure of the senses, aesthetic enjoyment of life, affection or love, with or without sexual connotations. Kâma refers to the art of enjoying pleasures. After acquiring wealth, the next step is to use the wealth for comforts, enjoyment and fulfilling one's duties and responsibilities. Kâma often implies the short form of the word kâmana (desire, appetition or appetite). Kâma is an experience that includes the discovery of an object, learning about the object, emotional connection, the process of enjoyment and the resulting feeling of well-being before, during, and after the experience. Vâtsyâyana, the author of the famous Kâmasûtra, defines Kâma as the pleasure an individual experiences through the senses - hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling, and feeling - when aligned with the mind and soul. In its discussion of Kâma, the Kâmasûtra explores various forms of art, dance, music, and sex as avenues for pleasure and enjoyment. Vatsyayana asserts that Kâma is not in conflict with Dharma or Artha, but rather coexists with them, as Kama naturally arises

from the pursuit of these other two goals. Vâtsyâyana, distinguishes between higher and lower pleasures, as well as rational and sensual pleasures. He viewed that the three supreme ends of life - *kâma* (pleasure or happiness), *artha* (wealth or material well-being), and *dharma* (virtue or moral order) are interconnected and essential for a fulfilled life. According to him, these goals should be pursued in harmony, without one being sacrificed for the sake of another. Wealth and pleasure must align with virtue to ensure balance and avoid excess. This harmonious integration of *kâma*, *artha*, and *dharma* represents the highest good and the ideal way to live.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.1:** StateTrue or False.

a) **Trivarga** includes the first three goals - **Dharma, Artha**, and **Kama**.

(True/ False)

b) Moksha is not included in Purucârthas(True/ False)

c) the Sanskrit root *Kam*, means 'desire'.(True/False)

**Q.2:** Define Purucârtha.

.....

.....



**ACTIVITY: 2.I**

Which of the four Dharma, Artha, kâma and Moksha as per your view can be the ultimate aim of Human life?

.....

.....

## 3.5 VIEWS OF THE NON - VEDIC SCHOOL OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY ON KAMA

So far as the non-vedic school of Indian Philosophy is concerned, different schools have given their own interpretation regarding the concept of Kama.

### 3.5.1 Cârvâka View on Kama

Cârvâka Philosophy is a non-Vedic Indian philosophical system that is materialistic and atheistic in nature. It is also known as Lokâyata, Cârvâka promotes a hedonistic approach to life, where the goal is to maximise pleasure and minimise pain. Since life is short and there is no life after death, it emphasizes enjoying material and sensory pleasures. The Cârvâka philosophy views sensual pleasure as the ultimate goal or *summum bonum* of life. It advocates the principle of 'Eat, drink, and be merry', asserting that once the body is reduced to ashes, there is no return to this world. According to this view, there is no afterlife, no survival of soul and religion is merely a means for priests to earn a livelihood. All values, the Cârvâka argues, are illusions created by a troubled mind. the Cârvâka represents a form of individual hedonism, where sensory pleasure in this life, particularly that of the individual, is considered the only aim. Out of the four Puruṣārthas - Dharma, Artha, Kâma, and Mokca - only Kâma (sensual pleasure) is accepted as the ultimate goal, and Artha (wealth) is regarded as the means to achieve it, while Dharma (righteousness) and Moksha (liberation) are outright rejected. Although pleasure is acknowledged to be mixed with pain, the Cârvâka argues that this does not make it unworthy of pursuit. They reason that just as one does not discard grains because of their husks; one should not reject pleasure because it comes with pain. Similarly, they ask, should one stop cooking because beggars might come, or refrain from sowing seeds because animals may eat them? The philosophy encourages embracing pleasure despite its inherent challenges. Thus, Cârvâka advocates that the ultimate goal of life is to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Kâma, as the fulfilment of desires and indulgence in sensory pleasures, is considered a primary and valid pursuit in life. According to Cârvâka, life is confined to the material body, and there is no existence beyond it. Thus, satisfying physical and emotional desires becomes the focus, as there is no spiritual or eternal purpose. While Cârvâka promotes the pursuit of pleasure, it does not advocate reckless indulgence. The

philosophy implicitly recognizes that excessive indulgence can lead to pain or harm, so a balanced and practical approach is implied. In essence, kâma in Cârvâka philosophy underscores its commitment to a life rooted in the here and now, prioritizing tangible, earthly experiences over abstract spiritual ideals. For the Cârvâkas the present is certain, the past is gone, the future is uncertain. So, enjoy pleasures of the present moment disregarding the past and the future. Enjoy the maximum of bodily pleasure with the minimum of pain disregarding the next world. Thus, the Cârvâkas advocate gross egoistic hedonism.

But in Jainism and Buddhism, though kâma (sensual desire) is acknowledged as a significant force in human life, but it is generally viewed as something to be restrained or transcended due to its potential to cause attachment, suffering, and hinder spiritual progress. Despite their differences, both philosophies share a common emphasis on self-control, ethical living and liberation from worldly attachments. The path to liberation involves transcending kâma through ethical conduct, meditation and wisdom. By doing so, one can overcome the cycle of craving, attachment and rebirth, progressing toward the ultimate goal of nirvâna.

## 3.6 VIEWS OF THE VEDIC SCHOOL OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY ON KÂMA

Nyâya-Vaiœesika view on Kâma: In Nyâya philosophy, kâma (desire or pleasure) is recognised as one of the driving forces behind human actions. They acknowledge kâma as a natural inclination or desire that motivates human actions. It is considered one of the inner states (mental phenomena) that arise from previous experiences, memories, and impressions (saCskâras). Kâma, as one of the Puruṣārthas (goals of life), is seen as a legitimate pursuit, but it is subordinate to dharma (righteousness), artha (material wealth), and ultimately Mokṣa (liberation). While Nyâya recognizes the human pursuit of pleasure, it insists that it should be aligned with dharma and reason. While Nyâya accepts that kâma is a part of human nature, it emphasizes self-restraint and rational control over desires. Unchecked kâma can lead to unethical actions, disrupting personal and societal

harmony. So, it must be pursued in harmony with dharma and ultimately transcended in the quest for liberation.

The Vaiceesika philosophy also regarded Kâma as a natural part of human experience arising from material and sensory interactions that focused on categorizing reality and understanding the nature of the world. It emphasizes that while desires are inherent, their fulfilment should be balanced and line up with the ultimate goal of Moksha (liberation). Excessive attachment to materialistic desires is viewed as an obstruction to spiritual progress.

### 3.6.1 Sâmkhya-Yoga view on Kâma

In Sâmkhya philosophy, kâma (desire or sensual pleasure) is understood as an integral part of human experience, but it is seen as a product of prakrti (material nature) and an obstacle to spiritual liberation. Sâmkhya, as one of the oldest Indian philosophical systems, focuses on the dualistic distinction between purusa (pure consciousness) and prakrti (matter), and kâma is analysed in this framework. In Sâmkhya philosophy, kâma is a natural outcome of prakriti's influence, specifically the rajas guna. While it plays a role in the worldly experience, it binds the puruca to prakrti and hinders spiritual liberation. The path to freedom involves overcoming kâma through self-knowledge, detachment, and the realisation of purusa's true nature as pure consciousness, distinct from the desires and attachments of prakrti. In Yoga, Kâma is considered Vritti or mental modification that arises in the mind due to sensory impressions. Vritti refers to the activities or fluctuations of the mind. Derived from the Sanskrit root *vrit*, meaning 'to turn, revolve or fluctuate', vrittis are the patterns or movement of thoughts that arise in the mind. It is regarded as one of the obstacles that disrupt mental clarity and obstruct the path to Samâdhi (spiritual absorption).

The Mimâmsa school views Kâma (desire) as a natural and valid goal of life, alongside Dharma and Artha. It emphasizes fulfilling desires through Vedic rituals while adhering to moral principles (Dharma). Desires are not seen as negative but should be pursued ethically and in harmony with Vedic teachings. The pursuit of Kâma

is meaningful only when aligned with Dharma, ensuring ethical conduct and social harmony. Vedânta does not reject Kâma outright but places it within the larger framework of the Puruṣārtha. Kâma should be pursued in alignment with Dharma and as a stepping stone toward higher spiritual goals.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.3:** State True or False.

a) kâma stands for social value. (True/ False)

b) According to Cârvâka there is no life after death. (True/ False)

c) In Samkhya philosophy kâma is associated with Raja guna (True/ False)

d) kâma binds purusa with Prakriti. (True/ False)

**Q.4:** What is vritti?

**Q.5:** What is the *summum bonum* of life according to Cârvâka

.....

.....



**ACTIVITY: 2.2**

Do you think the Cārvāka view on pleasure is practically acceptable in today's context

.....

.....

## 3.7 UPANISADIC VIEW ON KÂMA

The Kathaupanishad mentioned two paths that attract individuals one is the path of good (Shreyas) and the other is the path of pleasant (Preyas). The word shreyas, derived from the root *shri*, therefore, means that which diffuses light, brings happiness and bliss, and is good. The word preyas is derived from the root *prii* which means to please, gladden, comfort, love etc. in short it is that pleasure which is born from the contact of the senses with the objects. It is said that those who choose the path of good achieve their true purpose, while those who choose the path of pleasant

lose sight of their ultimate goal. The path of Preyas includes Puruṣārthas like Artha (wealth) and Kâma (pleasure or material comforts). It focuses on material and emotional or psychological values that brings immediate happiness. On the other hand, the path of Shreyas incorporates Dharma (moral values) and intellectual virtues, guiding individuals toward long-term well-being and ethical living. There is a controversy about Moksha (liberation), that is, on which path it belongs on Shreyas or on Preyas as the ultimate goal of human life. However, Mokṣa is generally regarded as transcending both, as it signifies a state beyond worldly desires and values, representing the highest spiritual contentment.

Kâma stands for psychological value. Kâma as sex, desires, wills, aesthetic gratification is dealt within the Vedas. It is related to desire, action, determination. Kâma signifies the creative urge, aesthetic sense, gratification of desire, pleasure etc. It is related to all those things, which make life creative and beautiful. Artha & Kâma must be guided by dharma. Artha and Kâma are considered as natural needs. They are essential to the overall development of an individual.

## 3.8 CRITICAL APPRAISAL

While Kâma, the pursuit of pleasure, desire and sensual enjoyment, holds an important place in Indian philosophy, it has also been subject to criticism, particularly when interpreted or practiced in ways that conflict with broader ethical, spiritual or societal values. One common criticism of Kâma is that it encourages excessive indulgence in sensory pleasures. In this view, focusing too much on material and sensual enjoyment can lead to a hedonistic life. Critics argue that a life devoted to the pursuit of sensual gratification, without balance, could result in failure to find meaning beyond immediate pleasures. Critics also argue that the pleasures derived from external or material sources, such as wealth, physical attractiveness, relationships etc. are temporary and do not sustain long-term happiness so cann't provide a profound meaning in life. Relying on such fleeting experiences for contentment can lead to a cycle of dissatisfaction. True and everlasting happiness comes from deeper and meaningful connections, like self-realisation, which is beyond the transient nature of physical or

material pleasures. Additionally, kâma is often seen as a 'lower' goal compared to Dharma (righteousness) and Moksha (liberation), which guide individuals towards moral conduct and spiritual evolution.

## 3.9 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is observed that Kâma as a Puruṣārthas highlights the essential role of desires, pleasure and personal fulfilment in human life. It acknowledges that the pursuit of sensual and emotional satisfaction is an integral part of existence, but it must be pursued in alignment with Dharma to ensure ethical and balanced living. While Kâma addresses the material and psychological needs of individuals, it is not an end in itself but part of a holistic framework that includes Artha (prosperity) and ultimately guides one toward Moksa (liberation). Therefore, Kâma, when pursued dutifully, contributes to the overall well-being of individuals and society, leading to a harmonious and meaningful life.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.6:** State one important difference between Shreyas and preyash ?

**Q.7:** State True or False.

a) kâma is given equal status like Artha and Moksa. (True/ False)

b) kâma is the path of Preyash. (True/ False)



## 3.10 LET US SUM UP

- In this unit we have come to know about kâma as one of the Puruṣārtha
- Puruṣārtha is a foundational concept in Indian philosophy, meaning "purpose of human being" or "object of human pursuit."
- Puruṣārtha refers to the four goals of human life and provides ethical guidance for living a meaningful life - Dharma (Righteousness or Duty), Artha (Wealth or Prosperity), Kâma (Desire or Pleasure), Mokṣa (Liberation or Salvation)

- Dharma refers moral values, religious duties, virtuous behavior, and social order. It is guided by Dharmashastras, supports society and ensures justice.
- Artha refers to material and economic values essential for fulfilling responsibilities, supporting family, and upholding Dharma.
- Kâma refers to sensual, emotional, and intellectual satisfaction, includes love, desire, and aesthetic enjoyment.
- Mokca represents spiritual liberation and freedom from the cycle of birth and death (*samsara*).
- In its broader sense kâma encompasses sensual desires, emotional satisfaction, and aesthetic appreciation. It represents legitimate fulfilment of human desires within ethical boundaries (*Dharma*).
- Vatsyayana defines Kâma as Pleasure experienced through senses (hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling, feeling) aligned with the mind and soul.
- Cârvâka Philosophy emphasizes the principle of maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain.
- For the Cârvâka Sensual pleasure (*Kâma*) is the ultimate goal, *Artha* (wealth) is a means to achieve it. Rejects *Dharma* (righteousness) and *Moksha* (liberation).
- Advocates enjoying life with a practical and balanced approach, avoiding excessive indulgence.
- Upanishad talk about two paths, *Shreyas* (Path of Good) - Long-term well-being, ethical living, incorporates Dharma (moral values) and *Preyas* (Path of Pleasant): Immediate happiness, material and emotional comforts, includes Artha (wealth) and Kama (pleasure).
- Kâma represents psychological values like desires, aesthetic gratification and creativity. Related to the creative and beautiful aspects of life.
- Critics said that excessive indulgence in sensory pleasures, leading to a hedonistic lifestyle.
- Pleasures from material or external sources (wealth, beauty, relationships) are fleeting and cannot sustain long-term happiness.

- Kâma is seen as a 'lower' goal compared to Dharma (righteousness) and Moksha (liberation), which emphasize moral and spiritual growth.



## 3.11 FURTHER READINGS

1. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan: *Indian Philosophy* (Volumes 1 & 2)
2. Surendranath Dasgupta: A *History of Indian Philosophy* (Volume 1)
3. Jadunath Sinha: Outlines of Indian Philosophy,
4. Kedar Nath Tiwari: Classical Indian Ethical Thought, A Philosophical Study of Hindu, Jaina and Bauddha Morals
5. P. Nagaraja Rao: The Four Values in Indian Philosophy and Culture (A study of the Purusarthas)



## 3.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** A) True
b) False
c) True

**Ans. to Q. No. 2 :** The aim or purpose of human being or object of human pursuit is called Puruṣārtha.

**Ans. to Q. No. 3 :** a) False
b) True
c) True
d) True

**Ans. to Q. No. 4 :** Vritti means mantal modification that arises in the mind due to sensory impressions.

**Ans. to Q. No. 5 :** According to Cârvâka maximum amount of pleasure and minimum amount of pain is the summum bonum of life.

**Ans. to Q. No. 6 :** Shreyas represents the path of long-term well-being, ethical living that leads to spiritual growth. On the other hand, Preyas represents the path of immediate pleasure, material comfort and sensory gratification.

**Ans. to Q. No. 7 :** False

**Ans. to Q. No. 8 :** True



## 3.13 MODEL QUESTIONS

**A) Very short questions**

**Q.1.** **What does Kâma signify?**

**Q.2.** Which Sanskrit root is *Kâma* derived from, and what does it mean?

**Q.3.** Which philosophical system of Indian philosophy accepts Kama as the ultimate aim of Human life?

**Q.4.** Kâma is fulfilled through which kind of experiences?

**Q.5.** Is Kama considered inferior to the Puruṣārtha Dharma?

**(B) Short questions (Write in about 150- 200 words)**

**Q.1.** Briefly explain Upanishadic view on kâma.

**Q.2.** Briefly explain the Cârvâka view on kâma.

**Q.3.** How does Kâma relate to the other Puruṣārthas, such as Dharma and Artha?

**(C) Long questions (Write in about 300-500 words)**

**Q.1.** What is the significance of Kâma as one of the Puruṣārthas in Indian philosophy?

**Q.2.** Explain and examine Cârvâka view ob kâma.

**Q.3.** Discuss the role of *Kâma* in the pursuit of a balanced life.

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# UNIT 4 : DHARMA: AN ETHICAL IDEA OF INDIAN MORAL PHILOSOPHY

## UNIT STRUCTURE


4.1 Learning objectives

4.2 Introduction

4.3 What is Dharma?

4.4 Dharma in Different Schools of Indian Philosophy

4.5 Pursuit of Dharma

4.6 Dharma as a Puruṣārthas

4.7 Trials Faced While Following Dharma

4.8 Let us sum up

4.9 Further readings

4.10 Answers to check your progress

4.11 Model questions


## 4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Analyse the meaning and origin of the concept of Dharma in Indian philosophy.
- Explain the various dimensions of Dharma, including universal, social, personal, situational, and common dharma.
- Explore how different Indian philosophical traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism interpret and apply the idea of Dharma.
- Analyse the role of Dharma as both a cosmic principle and a guide for ethical human behaviour.
- Examine how Dharma integrates duty (svadharma) and virtue (guna) into a unified moral framework.
- Know the relevance of Dharma in daily life, family, profession, and society as a whole.
- Evaluate the contextual and intention-based nature of dharmic action, emphasizing bhâva (intent) and upâdhi (context).

- Discuss Dharma as one of the four Puruṣārthas, and its role in regulating the pursuits of Artha, Kâma, and leading to Moks. a.
- Know the contemporary relevance of Dharma as a dynamic, adaptable principle for ethical decision-making in a complex world.

## 4.2 INTRODUCTION

Dharma represents one of the most profound and enduring pillars of Indian moral philosophy. It is not confined to mere rules or duties; rather, it embodies a vast and all-encompassing principle that governs the moral, social, and cosmic order. Dharma serves as both a descriptive concept, explaining the essential nature and purpose of beings and a prescriptive one, outlining the path that individuals and societies ought to follow in their pursuit of righteousness and harmony. Rooted in the ancient Vedic worldview, the notion of dharma has been continually reinterpreted and refined across centuries through a variety of philosophical and religious traditions, including Vedânta, Buddhism, Jainism, the epics like the Mahâbhârata and Râmâyana, and the rich corpus of dharmaúâstra literature.

Across these traditions, dharma has taken on multiple meanings ranging from cosmic order (Rta) and social responsibility, to moral virtue and one's personal duty in alignment with their innate nature (svabhâva). It functions as a guiding force for ethical decision-making, influencing both individual conduct and societal roles within the varna-âúrama dharma framework. Rather than dictating rigid commandments, dharma encourages thoughtful discernment (viveka) and ethical reflection, urging individuals to act with honesty, compassion, discipline, and a sense of moral duty towards others and the world. This unit explores the diverse interpretations of dharma across Indian philosophical traditions, examining its role in personal and social ethics. It also highlights dharma's metaphysical basis and ongoing relevance in addressing modern moral and spiritual challenges.

## 4.3 WHAT IS DHARMA?

The term dharma originates from the Sanskrit root ”dhr“, meaning “to hold,” “to support,” or “to sustain.” In its earliest Vedic usage, dharma was closely linked to Rta—the cosmic order that governs the universe and ensures harmony in both nature and human conduct. As the concept evolved, dharma came to represent not only this universal order but also the ethical and moral duties that uphold individual and social life.

In the Rg Veda, Rta is depicted as the force guiding celestial movements, natural rhythms, and righteous human behaviour. Building on this, dharma emerged as the sustaining principle of both cosmic and social order. Later, the Upanisad deepened this understanding by equating dharma with truth (satya) and righteousness. The Brhadâranyaka Upanicad declares, “Nothing is higher than dharma… Truly, that dharma is the Truth; therefore, when one speaks the Truth, they say, ‘He speaks the Dharma.”

Dharma is a complex and layered concept encompassing various dimensions of ethical and social responsibility:

- Universal Dharma (Sanâtana Dharma) refers to the eternal, unchanging moral and cosmic principles that sustain the universe.
- Social Dharma (Varnâúrama Dharma) outlines one’s duties based on social class (varna) and stage of life (âúrama), guiding harmonious living within society.
- Personal Dharma (Svadharma) reflects an individual’s unique responsibilities shaped by their nature, circumstances, and capabilities.
- Situational Dharma (Âpad Dharma) addresses moral actions required during emergencies or times of crisis, when usual norms may be set aside.
- Common Dharma (Sâdhârana Dharma) encompasses universal ethical values—such as non-violence, truth, compassion, and self-restraint—applicable to all, regardless of status or role.

Dharma in Indian philosophy unites the ideas of duty and virtue, viewing them as inseparable. Fulfilling one's duty (svadharma) is itself an expression of moral virtue, while cultivating virtues is essential for performing one's duties rightly.

- Duty (Svadharma) refers to the specific responsibilities an individual must uphold, shaped by their social role, life stage, and personal circumstances.
- Virtue includes essential moral qualities such as honesty, compassion, non-violence (ahiAsâ), humility, and self-discipline.

Dharma extends beyond human life; it is the universal law that sustains cosmic order. When individuals and societies live in alignment with dharma, balance and well-being follow. When dharma is ignored, disorder and suffering arise. This cosmic and integrative view sets Indian moral philosophy apart from many Western ethical systems, which often focus solely on human behaviour without accounting for a broader metaphysical context.

## 4.4 DHARMA IN DIFFERENT SCHOOLS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Dharma lies at the heart of Indian ethical philosophy, serving as a unifying principle that weaves together cosmic order, social responsibility, and personal virtue. Unlike rigid legal codes, dharma is fluid and context-sensitive, grounded in the lived realities of individuals and communities. It provides a dynamic moral framework that enables one to approach ethical challenges with balance, integrity, and a sense of purpose. One of dharma's most distinctive features is its capacity to harmonize universal moral values, such as truth, compassion, and non-violence with the specific duties that arise from an individual's unique role, relationships, and circumstances. This integration allows dharma to remain both inclusive and adaptable, offering ethical guidance that is at once deeply rooted in principle and attuned to the complexities of everyday life.

In Hinduism, dharma forms the bedrock of both personal conduct and social order. It is seen as the moral duty that sustains life and upholds cosmic balance. The Bhagavad gîtâ portrays dharma as the central guiding force for action, emphasizing the importance of performing one's duty selflessly, without attachment to outcomes. Hindu epics such as the Mahâbhârata and the Râmâyana are rich with narratives that explore complex moral dilemmas, highlighting the contextual and often nuanced nature of dharma. These stories reflect how dharma cannot always be reduced to fixed rules, but requires discernment and inner wisdom.

In Buddhism, dhamma (the Pali equivalent of dharma) refers primarily to the teachings of the Buddha, which offer a path toward ethical living and spiritual awakening. Central to this path are the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, which guide individuals in overcoming suffering and attaining enlightenment. Buddhist dharma emphasizes inner transformation through practices such as mindfulness, compassion, right conduct, and mental discipline. It functions both as the universal law of existence and the practical way to liberation from the cycle of rebirth (samsâra). In Jainism, dharma is intimately connected to the principles of non-violence (ahimsâ), truthfulness, and rigorous self-discipline. For Jains, the pursuit of dharma involves strict ethical conduct, ascetic practices, and the renunciation of worldly attachments. These practices are intended to purify the soul and ultimately lead to liberation (Mokṣa) from the cycle of birth and death. Jain dharma, therefore, is not only a moral code but a spiritual path grounded in absolute commitment to non-violence and self-restraint.

## 4.5 PURSUIT OF DHARMA

Dharma as a Guiding Principle of Life is not a passive adherence to prescribed rules, but an active, conscious effort to understand and fulfil one's moral and social responsibilities. It involves aligning one's actions with the highest ethical values, requiring continuous reflection, discernment, and self-awareness. Dharma, in this sense, is a lifelong journey of ethical living rather than a fixed set of commands. Dharma is not limited to

philosophical speculation or religious ritual; it is woven into the fabric of everyday life. It finds expression in various domains of human experience. Within the family, it means fulfilling one's duties as a parent, child, spouse, or sibling with care and responsibility. In society, it calls for just and compassionate behaviour, contributing to the well-being of others. In one's profession, dharma involves working with integrity, honesty, and dedication. On the personal level, it entails cultivating virtues like self-discipline, truthfulness, and spiritual awareness.

Indian moral philosophy emphasizes that the moral worth of an action depends not merely on external conformity to rules, but also on the intention behind it and the context in which it occurs. The epics—particularly the Mahâbhârata and Râmâyana—illustrate this complexity through narratives where characters face conflicting duties and must make difficult moral choices. Two key elements guide dharmic action in such situations: 1) Intention (Bhâva): Actions carried out with selfless motives and pure intent are considered more in line with dharma than those driven by selfishness or ego. 2) Context (Upâdhi): Dharma is not absolute; what may be appropriate in one circumstance may not be in another. Moral discernment, or viveka, is essential in navigating such situations. Thus, the pursuit of dharma involves a delicate balance of principle, intention, and adaptability, making it a dynamic and deeply personal moral path.

In Indian philosophy, the good life is one that aligns with dharma—a life of moral integrity, inner fulfilment, and social responsibility. Living in accordance with dharma brings harmony within oneself, with others, and with the universe. It nurtures personal well-being, fosters justice within the community, and sustains the broader cosmic order. Even in the modern world, marked by rapid technological change, ethical uncertainty, and global crises, the relevance of dharma remains profound. It provides a timeless framework for navigating complex moral choices, encouraging the cultivation of inner virtues such as honesty, compassion, and self-discipline. Dharma also calls for social responsibility through fairness, justice, and service, and promotes environmental awareness by affirming the

interconnectedness of all life. Though deeply rooted in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions, dharma transcends religious boundaries. It reflects a universal moral vision, offering guidance to all who seek meaning, ethical clarity, and a life of purpose, regardless of faith. Dharma is not merely a religious concept or abstract philosophy; it is a living principle, both the path and the goal. To live by dharma is to commit to truth, uphold justice, and strive for harmony in all aspects of life. As ancient wisdom declares, "The entire world rests upon dharma." Upholding it is among the highest human callings, leading not only to personal transformation but also to the flourishing of society and the realisation of spiritual fulfilment.

## 4.6 DHARMA AS A PURUSÂRTHAS

In Indian philosophy, dharma is one of the four Puruṣārthas—the fundamental aims of human life. These include:

1. Dharma – righteousness and moral values,
2. Artha – the pursuit of material prosperity,
3. Kâma – the fulfillment of desires and pleasures,
4. Mokṣa.– spiritual liberation or ultimate freedom.

Among these, dharma is considered the foundation. The pursuits of artha (wealth) and kâma (pleasure) are not rejected; rather, they are to be guided and regulated by the principles of dharma. It is only through a life of righteousness and ethical conduct that one becomes eligible for the highest goal— Mokṣa, or liberation from the cycle of birth and death. The rich narrative traditions of India offer numerous examples of individuals who embodied the principles of dharma in diverse and challenging circumstances. Râma, the central figure of the Râmâyana, is portrayed as the ideal king who sacrifices his personal happiness and comfort for the sake of duty and justice an exemplar of raja-dharma. Yudhishthira, from the Mahâbhârata, is renowned for his unwavering commitment to truth and righteousness, even when faced with painful moral dilemmas and loss. In the spiritual domain, the Buddha renounced worldly pleasures to follow the path of dharma, leading others through compassion and wisdom toward

liberation. Similarly, Mahâvîra, the great Jain teacher, practiced extreme non-violence and truthfulness, demonstrating the discipline and ethical rigor required to live a life in accordance with dharma.

While dharma often intersects with law (Nyâya), the two are not identical. Law consists of socially sanctioned rules and codes, whereas dharma represents a higher, timeless moral order rooted in truth and justice. At times, societal laws may diverge from this higher ethical ideal, and it is then that individuals are called to follow dharma—even at the cost of social approval or personal sacrifice. In this way, dharma transcends legalism and appeals to the inner conscience, emphasizing moral integrity over external compliance.

## 4.7 TRIALS FACED WHILE FOLLOWING DHARMA

The path of dharma is not without its trials. Individuals often encounter complex challenges that test their moral clarity and inner strength. One of the most significant difficulties lies in navigating moral dilemmas, where conflicting duties and responsibilities demand careful judgment and, at times, personal sacrifice. Social pressures also pose a challenge, as prevailing norms and expectations may conflict with higher ethical values, making it difficult to remain true to one's sense of righteousness. Additionally, personal desires such as attachment to wealth, status, ego, or comfort can easily lead one away from the path of dharma. There is also the challenge of uncertainty; in many situations, the right course of action is not immediately clear. Upholding dharma, therefore, requires continual self-reflection, sensitivity to the nuances of right and wrong, and a sincere commitment to ethical living.

Dharma is not a fixed or unchanging set of rules. It is a living, adaptable principle that evolves with time, circumstances, and societal needs. What may be considered dharma in one era or context might not apply in another. Indian philosophy acknowledges this inherent fluidity and emphasises the importance of responding to each situation with insight and thoughtful judgment, rather than rigidly following tradition or dogma.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q.1:** The Sanskrit root of the word Dharma is:

a) Bhâva

b) Âtman

c) Dhr

d) Karma

.....

**Q.2:** Which Upanishad declares that "Nothing is higher than Dharma"?

a) Chandogya Upanisad

b) Brhadâranyaka Upanisad

c) Taittirîya Upanisad

d) Îúa Upanisad

.....

**Q.3:** Svadharma refers to:

a) Universal law

b) Duty during emergencies

c) One's own personal duty based on nature and context

d) The law of the state

.....

**Q.4:** In Buddhism, Dhamma primarily means:

a) Rituals and sacrifices

b) Duties assigned by caste

c) Teachings of the Buddha

d) Divine commandments

.....

**Q.5.**: Which of the following is not one of the four Puruṣārthas?

a) Artha

b) Kâma

c) Bhakti

d) Mokṣa

.....

**Q.6:** The guiding factors for dharmic action include:

a) Karma and Jñâna

b) Bhâva (intention) and Upâdhi (context)

c) Veda and Smriti

d) Yoga and Bhakti

.....

**Q.7:** In Jain philosophy, Dharma is closely linked with:

a) Worship of gods

b) Performance of yajñas

c) Non-violence and self-discipline

d) Pursuit of worldly success

.....

**Q.8:** The term Âpad Dharma refers to:

a) Dharma in old age

b) Dharma during ritual ceremonies

c) Duties during times of crisis or emergency

d) Dharma as prescribed in law books



## 4.8 LET US SUM UP

- Dharma is a central concept in Indian moral philosophy, rooted in the Sanskrit root dhri, meaning to sustain or uphold.
- It refers not only to religious or legal duty but also to a cosmic moral principle guiding human and universal order.
- Dharma has multiple dimensions—universal (sanâtana), social (varnâúrama), personal (svadharma), situational (âpad), and common (sâdhârana)—which together shape ethical life.
- Different schools of Indian philosophy (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism) interpret dharma differently but share a focus on moral conduct, inner transformation, and spiritual liberation.
- Dharma is not a rigid code but a flexible, context-sensitive principle that requires discernment (viveka), intention (bhâva), and ethical reflection.

- It acts as a guiding principle in all aspects of life—family, society, profession, and personal development—by aligning actions with moral values.
- As one of the four Puruṣārthas, dharma provides a foundation for balancing material and spiritual goals through righteous living.
- Upholding dharma often involves trials such as moral dilemmas, social pressure, personal desires, and uncertainty, which require strength and self-awareness.
- Despite its ancient roots, dharma remains highly relevant in the modern world as a timeless framework for moral clarity, justice, compassion, and social harmony.



## 4.9 FURTHER READINGS

1. Hiriyanna, M. (1993). *Essentials of Indian philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
2. Radhakrishnan, S. (2009). *Indian philosophy: Volume 1 & 2*. Oxford University Press.
3. Sharma, C. (2000). *A critical survey of Indian philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
4. Bhattacharyya, N. N. (2006). *History of Indian ethics: A survey*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.
5. Dasgupta, S. N. (1997). *A history of Indian philosophy* (Vols. 1–5). Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.



## 4.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** c) Dhri

**Ans. to Q. No. 2 :** b) Brhadâranyaka Upanisad

**Ans. to Q. No. 3 :** c) One's own personal duty based on nature and context

**Ans. to Q. No. 4 :** c) Teachings of the Buddha

**Ans. to Q. No. 5 :** c) Bhakti

**Ans. to Q. No. 6 :** b) Bhâva (intention) and Upâdhi (context)

**Ans. to Q. No. 7 :** c) Non-violence and self-discipline

**Ans. to Q. No. 8 :** c) Duties during times of crisis or emergency



## 4.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

**A) Very short questions**

**Q.1.** What is the root meaning of the word Dharma?

**Q.2.** Name one Upanishad that highlights the supremacy of Dharma.

**Q.3.** What is Svadharma?

**Q.4.** Mention one virtue associated with Dharma.

**Q.5.** What is Âpad Dharma?

**Q.6.** Name the four Puruṣārthas in Indian philosophy.

**Q.7.** Which Indian epic explores complex moral dilemmas related to Dharma?

**Q.8.** In which religion is Dharma strongly associated with Ahimsa (non-violence)?

**B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)**

**Q.1.** What is the meaning and significance of Dharma in Indian moral philosophy?

**Q.2.** How does the concept of Dharma evolve from Rta in the Vedic tradition?

**Q.3.** Explain the different types of Dharma such as Sanâtana Dharma, Svadharma, and Âpad Dharma.

**Q.4.** How is Dharma viewed and practiced in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism?

**Q.5.** Discuss the idea of Dharma as both duty and virtue.

**Q.6.** In what ways does Dharma serve as a guiding principle in everyday life?

**Q.7.** How does the concept of Dharma relate to the four Puruṣārthas?

**Q.8.** What are the major challenges individuals face while following Dharma in real life?

**Q.9.** Why is Dharma considered a flexible and context-sensitive moral framework?

**C) Write short notes on** (Answer in about 150 words)

**Q.1.** Dharma and its relevance in Indian philosophy

**Q.2.** The role of Svadharma in ethical decision-making

**Q.3.** Dharma as a unifying concept across Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism

**Q.4.** The relationship between Dharma and the four Purusharthas

**Q.5.** The importance of Bhâva (intention) and Upâdhi (context) in dharmic action

**Q.6.** Moral dilemmas and challenges in practicing Dharma in daily life

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

**Q.1.** Explain the concept of Dharma as both a cosmic order and a moral principle. How does it shape individual and social conduct in Indian philosophy?

**Q.1.** Discuss the different forms of Dharma—such as Sanâtana Dharma, Varnâsrama Dharma, Svadharma, Âpad Dharma, and Sadharana Dharma—with suitable examples.

**Q.2.** How do Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism interpret and apply the concept of Dharma in their ethical teachings?

**Q.3.** In what ways does Dharma act as a guiding principle of life? Discuss its application in family, society, profession, and personal life.

**Q.4.** What is the role of Dharma as one of the Puruṣārthas? How does it regulate the pursuit of Artha, Kama, and lead to Moksha?

What challenges do individuals face in following Dharma? How does Indian philosophy address moral dilemmas, uncertainty, and social pressures in ethical decision-making?

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# UNIT 5 : MOKṢA: THE ULTIMATE END OF LIFE

## UNIT STRUCTURE


5.1 Learning Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 Mokṣa and the Brahmanical Tradition

5.4 The Idea of Liberation in the Upanishads

5.5 Mokṣa in Bhagavadgita

5.5.1 Gita's Threefold Path

5.6 Mokṣa in various schools

5.6.1 Nontheistic or Pluralist/Isolationist Conceptions

5.6.2 Transtheistic Nondualist Conception (Advaita Vedanta)

5.6.3 Theistic Conceptions (Primarily Vaishnava)

5.7 Saiva and Sakta Traditions

5.8 Mokṣa: The Ultimate Goal in Hindu Philosophy

5.8.1 Liberation from Rebirth

5.8.2 End of Suffering

5.8.3 Union with the Divine

5.8.4 Multiple Paths to Attain Mokṣa

5.8.5 Mokṣa in This Life

5.8.6 The Ultimate Purpose of Human Life

5.9 Conclusion

5.10 Let Us Sum Up

5.11 Further Readings

5.12 Answer to Check Your Progress

5.13 Model Questions


## 5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Know about the Mokṣa properly.
- Mokṣa defined in Upanishad, Bhagavadgita etc.
- How different Indian schools describe Mokṣa.
- How it helps in end the cycle of human life and gives liberation.

## 5.2 INTRODUCTION

In Hinduism, the highest goal of religious pursuit—and indeed of human life—is most often referred to as Mokṣa, which means “freedom” or “liberation.” Although this concept doesn’t align perfectly with similar ideas in other faiths, it holds a comparable role to notions like salvation, redemption, or spiritual perfection found in other religious traditions.

Mokṣa is the most widely recognized term for the ultimate spiritual aim in Hinduism, but it is not the only one. Other terms used include apavarga (cessation), nirvana (extinction), duhkhanta (end of suffering), kaivalya (isolation), and siddhi (perfection).

Derived from the Sanskrit root muc- meaning “to release” or “to set free,” both Mokṣa and its feminine counterpart mukti express liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth (punarbhava) in the worldly realm (samsara), and from the suffering (duhkha) that comes with it. A person who has achieved this liberation is called a mukta, or “one who is freed.” While all Hindus accept this basic definition of mokca as a form of release, there is significant variation—throughout history and across different schools of Hindu thought—regarding what Mokṣa positively entails. Much of this discussion will focus on these differing interpretations as found in traditional scriptures and theological writings.

Although most philosophical schools in Hinduism view Mokṣa as the shared destiny of all souls, some argue that not everyone is destined or eligible for it. Moreover, while Mokṣa is generally considered to be a permanent and eternal state, at least one Hindu thinker—19th-century reformer Dayananda Sarasvati—saw it as a temporary condition, with the soul eventually returning to earthly existence.

## 5.3 MOKṢA AND THE BRAHMANICAL TRADITION

The concept of Mokṣa, understood as liberation from the cycle of ordinary existence, first emerged in the Upanishads, during what is known as the late Vedic period. It did not appear in the earlier Vedic texts (the Vedas), which generally had a more life-affirming perspective. In early Vedic

Brahmanism, the highest values—later formalized in the idea of the purusharthas (human goals)—focused on ritual, duties to family and society, and the pursuit of worldly prosperity. After death, the ideal was not Mokṣa but svarga (heaven), a continuation of earthly pleasures without its hardships.

The idea of Mokṣa, representing a complete transcendence of worldly life, partly arose from concerns within Vedic thought itself—particularly fears about "re-death" (punarmrtyu) after time spent in the ancestral realm. It was also likely shaped by non-Brahmanical ascetic and shamanic movements, especially the Œramana traditions (meaning "strivers"), which later evolved into Jainism, Buddhism, and Yoga. Alongside Mokṣa, the doctrines of karma and samsara also developed—based on a pessimistic view of human life as inherently marked by duhkha (suffering)—and together they became foundational concepts across Indic religions. These ideas found their earliest expression in the Upanishads (e.g., Brihadaranyaka, Katha, Svetasvatara, and Maitri Upanishads).

Over time, Mokṣa gained broader recognition in Hinduism, though it never completely displaced other religious goals. It often competed with dharma—the duty to uphold rituals and social order—as the central aim of life. While texts like the Dharmashastras and Arthashastra acknowledged mokca as an ultimate goal, they officially limited the human objectives (purusharthas) to the trivarga: dharma, artha (material success), and kama (pleasure). Similarly, the Ramayana and Mahabharata primarily focus on the trivarga, though the Mahabharata contains significant teachings—like the Moksadharma section—that promote Mokṣa and critique worldly pursuits.

The inclusion of Mokṣa into the set of purusharthas, forming the classical caturvarga (fourfold goals), came later. In Mimamsa philosophy, which emphasized ritual and the goal of reaching svarga, mokca was not fully accepted until the 7th century CE, during the time of Kumarila Bhatta and Prabhakara. However, by then, the Mokṣa ideal had become more influential within Brahmanical culture, particularly in Vedanta, where thinkers like Shankara (7th–8th century CE) described it as the parama-purushartha, or highest aim of human life.

## 5.4 THE IDEA OF LIBERATION IN THE UPANISHADS

In the early and middle Upanishads, we begin to encounter forms of the verb muc- as well as related nouns like vimokca and, less commonly, the feminine noun mukti. These terms hint at early ideas that later become formalized in the concept of Mokṣa (liberation). By the time of the later Upanishads, Mokṣa is explicitly used as a technical term, such as in the Úvetâúvatara Upanisad, which states, “He is the cause of samsâra and Mokṣa”. here he imples Brahman.

Additionally, the Upanishads use a variety of metaphors to express liberation from the cycle of rebirth (samsâra), such as not returning conquering repeated death, going beyond sorrow, sin, and death, untying the knots of the heart, being freed from both good and evil, or reaching the “other shore”. On the more positive side, liberation is described as attaining brahman, entering into the supreme light achieving immortality, or reaching brahmaloka, the realm of Brahma.

These various descriptions show a general consensus among the Upanishadic sages that liberation is a blissful state of freedom from worldly constraints. However, they differ in their specific portrayals. Some texts describe it as eternal individual existence, the spontaneous fulfilment of desires or total freedom from all desires. Others depict it as becoming like the supreme, enjoying a heavenly paradise, merging into brahman, attaining unity with the divine being, or even achieving complete detachment from pleasure and pain. Some texts imply that the soul retains a distinct identity or spiritual form, while others suggest a total dissolution of individuality.

## 5.5 MOKṢA IN BHAGAVADGITA

The Bhagavad Gita teaches that just as a person discards old clothes and puts on new ones, the soul leaves behind a worn-out body and enters a new one. This cycle of birth, death, and rebirth continues until the soul achieves Mokṣa—liberation from this eternal cycle by uniting with the Divine.

In Hinduism, the soul is considered eternal and indestructible. It is neither born nor does it die; instead, it moves from one body to another, a process known as transmigration. The soul cannot be harmed or destroyed—it simply changes form. Liberation (Mokṣa) is closely tied to this concept, representing the soul's release from the endless cycle of reincarnation.

The Gita identifies Mokṣa as the highest goal of human life. It is described as returning to the soul's pure, original state, free from suffering, and beyond good and evil. It is a state of supreme bliss and perfection, where the soul is free from all worldly attachments, desires, and obligations.

In this liberated state, the soul experiences joy, self-realization, and fulfilment. The Gita emphasizes that a liberated person does not act out of personal desire or obligation but may still serve humanity selflessly. Liberation involves detachment from kama (desire) and a union with the self, allowing one to perceive the world from a divine perspective—seeing the self in all beings and all beings in the self.

### 5.5.1 Gita's Threefold Path

To attain mokca, the Gita outlines a threefold path:

Karma Yoga – the path of selfless action, where one performs duties without attachment to the results.

Jnana Yoga – the path of knowledge, achieved through spiritual study, control of the senses, and detachment.

Bhakti Yoga – the path of devotion, involving wholehearted love and surrender to God.

Each path is a form of discipline:

a) Nishkama Karma Yoga: Acting without selfish desires, offering the fruits of actions to God, which leads to inner peace.

b) Nishkama Jnana Yoga: Detaching from the material world and focusing entirely on spiritual knowledge and realization.

c) Nishkama Bhakti Yoga: Devoting oneself to God with pure love and without seeking rewards.

The Gita also introduces the idea of Brahmanirvana—attaining unity with Brahman (the Supreme Reality). This union signifies true liberation, where one lives, experiences, and sees divinity in all aspects of existence. As philosopher Radhakrishnan notes, this state represents the highest form of spiritual life, or jnana in its most complete sense.

## 5.6 MOKṢA IN VARIOUS SCHOOLS

As Hindu religious texts developed during the classical period, diverse understandings of Mokṣa (liberation) emerged across different theological and philosophical traditions. Each tradition offered its own interpretation are often ambiguous, scriptural references to liberation. Broadly, these interpretations can be grouped into three categories:

(a) Nontheistic or pluralist/isolationist,

(b) Transtheistic nondualist, and

(c) Theistic.

### 5.6.1 Nontheistic or Pluralist/Isolationist Conceptions

These views are found in several philosophical schools (darshanas) such as Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Mimamsa, and Samkhya-Yoga. All of them posit a multiplicity of individual souls (atman, purusha, or jiva), and mokca is understood as the soul's release from suffering and its return to its essential, isolated nature (kaivalya). These systems do not see liberation as involving union with a higher divine reality.

Even where a concept of God appears—such as in later Nyaya or Patañjali's Yoga—it is minimal, and liberation remains a state of perfect detachment, not divine communion. The ultimate goal here is the cessation of suffering, not the attainment of bliss. Notably, Samkhya-Yoga affirms that consciousness (cit) remains in liberation, while Nyaya, Vaisheshika, and Mimamsa claim even consciousness is absent in mokca, viewing it as a temporary trait.

### 5.6.2 Transtheistic Nondualist Conception (Advaita Vedanta)

In contrast, the Advaita Vedanta tradition (esp. as taught by Shankara) derives its view from the Upanishads and affirms a reality beyond the individual self. Liberation is not just freedom from suffering but a positive realization of supreme bliss (paramananda).

Mokṣa, in this view, is the realization that the individual self (atman) is already identical with the attributeless Absolute (nirguna Brahman). There is no merging or transformation—just the recognition of a truth that always existed. However, this realization comes at the cost of individuality: in the liberated state after death (videha-mukti), the individual self is completely dissolved.

### 5.6.3 Theistic Conceptions (Primarily Vaishnava)

Theistic schools of Vedanta—including the teachings of Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha, and Rupa and Jiva Gosvamin—emphasize devotion to a personal deity (especially Vishnu/Krishna). They accept a plurality of eternal souls and describe mokca as a state of eternal, blissful communion (but not identity) with God, typically in a divine realm such as Vaikuntha or Goloka.

In these views, the liberated soul possesses a spiritual body (siddhadeha) and may enjoy varying degrees of closeness to the deity—such as sharing God's realm (salokya), proximity (samipya), likeness (sarupya), or limited union (sayujya). Madhva, in particular, taught a hierarchy among souls, where not all are equally capable of attaining liberation. Some are eternally bound, and others are destined for hell—views echoed in more moderate form in the traditions of Nimbarka and Vallabha.

In some Krishna traditions, especially those based on the Bhagavata Purana, mokca is even seen as secondary to bhakti (devotion), which is treated as the ultimate goal of life (pañcama purushartha).

## 5.7 SAIVA AND SAKTA TRADITIONS

The Saiva and Sakta schools often share theological ground. In Saiva Siddhanta, liberation involves a blissful union with Siva (sivatva) while preserving individuality. Like the Vaishnavas, they recognize various types of liberation (e.g., salokya, sayujya), but they valorize union with God more strongly.

In Kashmir Saivism, a theistic nondualism, the individual consciousness fully identifies with Siva—a realization expressed in the phrase sivo'ham ("I am Siva"). The Sakta traditions (devoted to the Goddess) present a similar vision. Liberation here is not escape from the world but a transformation of consciousness that perceives the world itself as divine.

Both Saiva and Sakta schools emphasize jivanmukti—liberation while still living—where bodily death is secondary. As with Vaishnava bhakti, these paths often downplay mokca in favor of siddhi, a perfected state of awareness where the divine is realized within worldly existence. The siddha, or perfected being, may retain personal identity and is even believed to live on in a spiritual body (divyadeha, jnanadeha), capable of continuing influence after physical death. Such ideas are especially common in guru-centered traditions throughout Hinduism.

## 5.8 MOKṢA: THE ULTIMATE GOAL IN HINDU PHILOSOPHY

In Hindu thought, Mokca, or liberation, is revered as the highest and final aim of human life. It signifies freedom from samsara, the continuous cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, which is driven by one's actions (karma) and desires. Unlike the worldly goals of duty (Dharma), wealth (Artha), and pleasure (Kama), Mokṣa is a transcendental pursuit—the release from all worldly bondage and the realization of the soul's true nature.

This liberation is not just the end of physical existence, but a profound spiritual awakening—an ascent into eternal peace, joy, and oneness with the divine. It is the state where the individual self (Atman) recognizes its identity with the ultimate reality, often referred to as Brahman.

### 5.8.1 Liberation from Rebirth

At the core of Mokṣa is the idea of freedom from reincarnation. Hinduism teaches that every being is caught in a cycle of birth and death known as samsara. This cycle is propelled by karma—the moral law of cause and effect. Actions performed in one life influence the conditions of the next, resulting in a seemingly endless loop of experiences, joys, and sufferings.

Mokṣa breaks this cycle. When a soul attains liberation, it no longer returns to physical existence. It transcends time, space, and the limitations of the material world. This liberation is not considered annihilation, but rather the return of the soul to its original, unchanging, blissful state.

### 5.8.2 End of Suffering

Mokṣa is also described as the complete cessation of suffering. Human life, while offering moments of happiness, is also marked by pain, anxiety, loss, and the fear of death. These experiences are deeply tied to attachment, desire, and ignorance of the true Self.

By attaining Mokṣa, one goes beyond all forms of dukkha (suffering) and attains lasting peace and bliss (ananda). It is the end of all craving and aversion, the dissolution of the ego, and the quieting of the mind. In this state, one is untouched by worldly sorrows and is immersed in the pure, unchanging joy of self-realization.

### 5.8.3 Union with the Divine

In many Hindu traditions, Mokṣa is described as merging with Brahman, the formless, infinite, and eternal source of all existence. This concept is central in Advaita Vedanta, where Mokṣa is the realization that Atman (the individual soul) is not separate from Brahman. The illusion of separateness (maya) dissolves, and the soul awakens to its divine essence.

In other schools, such as Dvaita (dualism) and Vishishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism), Mokca involves entering into an eternal relationship with a personal deity (like Vishnu or Shiva) rather than absolute merger. Even here, Mokṣa is seen as a state of intimate communion with the divine, free from ego, delusion, and material constraints.

### 5.8.4 Multiple Paths to Attain Mokṣa

Hinduism recognizes that individuals have different temperaments and capacities, so it offers various spiritual paths (Yogas) to reach Mokṣa:

Jnana Yoga (Path of Knowledge): Involves deep inquiry into the nature of the self and reality, often through scriptural study, contemplation, and meditation. It is suited for seekers with a philosophical and analytical mind.

Bhakti Yoga (Path of Devotion): Focuses on loving devotion and surrender to a personal deity. Through prayer, singing, rituals, and heartfelt devotion, one transcends ego and attains divine grace.

Karma Yoga (Path of Selfless Action): Emphasizes performing one's duties without attachment to results. By acting with detachment and offering the fruits of action to God, the seeker purifies the mind and reduces karmic bondage.

Raja Yoga (Path of Meditation): Centers on mental discipline, ethical living, and meditative practices to gain direct experience of the Self.

Each of these paths, when pursued sincerely, leads to spiritual purification and ultimate liberation.

### 5.8.5 Mokṣa in This Life

Though often associated with the soul's release after death, many traditions hold that Mokṣa can be experienced while living (jivanmukti). Ajivanmukta is one who has achieved liberation while

still in the body. Such a person lives without ego, fear, or desire, seeing the divine in all beings and remaining untouched by worldly fluctuations.

This view emphasizes inner transformation over external rituals. Through profound self-inquiry and detachment, a person can transcend the illusions of the world and rest in the truth of pure being, even amid daily life.

### 5.8.6 The Ultimate Purpose of Human Life

In the Hindu worldview, Mokca is not merely an abstract idea—it is the culmination of life's spiritual journey. It represents the final resolution of the soul's longing for meaning, freedom, and eternal joy. While Dharma, Artha, and Kama guide one's moral, material, and emotional pursuits, they are considered incomplete without Mokṣa, the ultimate release from bondage.

Thus, Mokṣa is more than an end—it is the fulfilment of human existence, the awakening to our divine nature, and the realization that true happiness lies not in the external world but in the eternal Self.

## 5.9 CONCLUSION

The concept of Mokṣa stands as one of the most profound and central tenets of Hindu philosophy. It represents the ultimate purpose of human existence and forms the culmination of the spiritual quest in the Hindu worldview. The discussion of Mokca often begins with a fundamental and existential question: What is Mokṣa?

In English, Mokṣa is commonly translated as "Liberation," Release," or "Salvation." However, these translations only partially capture the intricate and deeply layered meaning of the term in its original Sanskrit context. In Hinduism, Mokṣa refers to the complete liberation of the soul (Atman) from Samsara—the continuous and cyclical process of birth, death, and rebirth. Samsara is driven by karma, which is the law of cause and

effect governing every action and its consequences. The soul, though eternal and divine by nature, becomes entangled in this cycle due to avidya (ignorance), attachment, and desire.

Hindu philosophy views the Atman, the true Self and it is as inherently pure, infinite, and identical to Brahman, the Supreme Reality or universal consciousness. However, this identity is obscured by ignorance, leading the soul to misidentify with the body, mind, and worldly experiences. As a result, the soul becomes subject to suffering, rebirth, and the illusions of the material world. Mokṣa, therefore, is not merely an escape but a profound realization of one's true nature, a return to one's original, divine essence. It is characterised by Sat-Chit-Ananda—eternal existence (Sat), pure consciousness (Chit), and unbounded bliss (Ananda).

Achieving Mokṣa is considered the highest of the four Purusharthas or aims of human life, the others being Dharma (righteous duty), Artha (material prosperity), and Kama (desire or pleasure). While Dharma, Artha, and Kama are oriented toward life in the world, Mokṣa transcends the worldly plane and marks the soul's final liberation from all bondage.

The path to Mokṣa is not straightforward or instantaneous. It is the culmination of lifetimes of spiritual effort, ethical living, self-discipline, inner reflection, and sincere devotion. Hinduism outlines multiple paths to liberation, recognizing the diversity of human temperaments and inclinations. These include: Jnana Yoga (the path of knowledge and self-inquiry), Bhakti Yoga (the path of devotion to a personal deity), Karma Yoga (the path of selfless action) and Raja Yoga (the path of meditation and mental discipline). Through these disciplines, the individual gradually overcomes ignorance, purifies the mind and heart, and comes to realize the unity of Atman and Brahman. Importantly, the accumulation of good karma, virtuous, selfless actions performed without attachment to their outcomes and it plays a crucial role in purifying the soul and moving it closer to liberation.

While Mokṣa is a distinctly Hindu concept, echoes of similar ideas can be found across the world's spiritual traditions. Many religions uphold

the belief in an eternal soul, a spiritual journey across lifetimes, and the possibility of union with a transcendent reality. Whether it is the Christian notion of salvation, the Buddhist concept of Nirvana, or the Sufi vision of annihilation of the self in divine love, these paths reflect a shared human longing for ultimate freedom, truth, and divine union.

In conclusion, Mokṣa is not merely a theological doctrine or religious aspiration—it is a timeless and universal spiritual ideal. It symbolizes the fulfilment of the soul's highest potential, the end of suffering and ignorance, and the realization of the divine truth that resides within each being. Mokṣa invites every seeker to look beyond the fleeting and the finite, to transcend the limitations of worldly life, and to awaken to the eternal, unchanging reality of the Self.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q.1:** What is the etymological meaning of Mokṣa?

.....

**Q.2:** What is the literal meaning of the word Mokṣa?

.....

**Q.3:** What are the Trivarga?

.....

**Q.4:** Name any two Upanishads where the concepts of Mokṣa are found?

.....

**Q.5:** How Bhagavadgita define Mokṣa as?

.....

**Q.6:** What is the Gita's threefold path to attain Mokṣa?

.....

**Q.7:** How the threefold path to Mokṣa can be described as forms of disciplines?

.....

**Q.8:** What do you mean by Brahmanirvana?

.....

**Q.9:** What is Jivanamukti and videhamukti?

.....

**Q.10:** Why Mokṣa is called the ultimate goal in Hindu philosophy?

.....



## 5.10 LET US SUM UP

- In Hindu philosophy, Mokṣa is regarded as the highest aim of human life.
- It signifies liberation from *samsara*, the endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth and the inherent suffering (*duhkha*) that accompanies worldly existence.
- Derived from the Sanskrit root *muc-*, meaning “to release” or “to free,” Mokṣa is the soul’s (*atman*) emancipation from ignorance, desire, and attachment, culminating in the realisation of its true, eternal nature and this true nature is often equated with Brahman, the supreme, formless reality.
- The concept of Mokṣa first emerged in the Upanishads, ancient philosophical texts that shifted Hindu focus away from ritualistic rewards, like reaching *svarga* (heaven) and it towards spiritual knowledge and inner liberation.
- Over time, Mokṣa was included as one of the four purusharthas (goals of life), alongside dharma (moral duty), artha (material prosperity), and kama (pleasure or desire).
- While the other three pertain to life in the world, Mokṣa transcends it, representing ultimate freedom and self-realization.
- The Bhagavad Gita, one of Hinduism’s most influential scriptures, highlights Mokṣa as the soul’s release from bondage through self-realization, inner detachment, and spiritual discipline.
- It outlines three main paths (yogas) to achieve this liberation: Karma Yoga – the path of selfless action, performed without attachment to outcomes. Jnana Yoga – the path of knowledge and inner inquiry, aimed at understanding the nature of the self and reality. Bhakti

Yoga – the path of devotion, in which the seeker surrenders fully to God with love and faith.

- Each path is suited to different temperaments but ultimately leads to purification of the mind and detachment from the ego and worldly ties.
- Across Hindu traditions, varied interpretations of Mokṣa exist: Nontheistic schools (such as Samkhya, Nyaya, Mimamsa) understand Mokṣa as a state of complete isolation or detachment (*kaivalya*), where the soul is freed from suffering but does not necessarily unite with a supreme being.
- Advaita Vedanta, a no dualistic school taught by Shankara, teaches that Mokṣa is the realization that the individual self (*atman*) is identical with Brahman.
- Liberation, in this view, is not a process but a shift in awareness—a recognition of one's true, timeless identity, beyond the illusion (*maya*) of individuality.
- Theistic traditions like Vaishnavism and Shaivism describe Mokṣa as eternal, blissful communion with a personal God, such as Vishnu, Krishna, or Shiva.
- Here, the soul retains its distinct identity but dwells in a divine realm, immersed in loving union and service.
- In addition to post-death liberation, many schools affirm jivanmukta, liberation while still living.
- A *jivanmukta* is someone who, though physically alive, is spiritually free, unattached to worldly gains or losses, and sees divinity in all beings and things.
- This state is marked by deep peace, compassion, and unwavering joy (*ananda*).
- Ultimately, Mokṣa represents freedom, not only from the physical cycle of reincarnation but from the mental and emotional bondage caused by ego, desire, ignorance, and fear.
- It is the realization of Sat-Chit-Ananda, being (existence), consciousness, and bliss. Mokṣa fulfils the soul's deepest longing for truth, meaning, and unity with the eternal.

- In this way, Mokṣa is not just a theological idea but a universal spiritual goal, paralleling concepts like nirvana in Buddhism or salvation in Christianity.
- It encourages each individual to transcend the temporary and awaken to their eternal self, recognising that true freedom and joy lie not in external achievements, but in inner realisation and union with the divine.



## 5.11 FURTHER READINGS

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## 5.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** The etymological meaning of Mokṣa is, it is derived from Sanskrit root muc- meaning “to release” or “to set free”.

**Ans. to Q. No. 2 :** The literal meaning of the word liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth (punarbhava) in the worldly realm (samsara), and from the suffering (duhkha) that comes with it.

**Ans. to Q. No. 3 :** The trivargazs are: Dharma, Artha (material success), and Kama (pleasure).

**Ans. to Q. No. 4 :** Name of two Upanishads where the concepts of Mokṣa is found are Brihadaranyaka and Katha Upanishad.

**Ans. to Q. No. 5 :** The Bhagavadgita identifies mokca as the highest goal of human life.

**Ans. to Q. No. 6 :** To attain Mokṣa, the Gita outlines a threefold path. They are: (i) Karma Yoga – the path of selfless action, where one performs duties without attachment to the results. (ii) Jnana Yoga – the path of knowledge, achieved through spiritual study, control of the senses, and detachment and, (iii) Bhakti Yoga – the path of devotion, involving wholehearted love and surrender to God.

**Ans. to Q. No. 7 :** the threefold path to Mokṣa can be described as forms of disciplines azs follows:

a) Nishkama Karma Yoga: Acting without selfish desires, offering the fruits of actions to God, which leads to inner peace.

b) Nishkama Jnana Yoga: Detaching from the material world and focusing entirely on spiritual knowledge and realization.

c) Nishkama Bhakti Yoga: Devoting oneself to God with pure love and without seeking rewards.

**Ans. to Q. No. 8 :** The Gita introduces the idea of Brahmanirvana. It means attaining unity with Brahman (the Supreme Reality). This union signifies true liberation, where one lives, experiences, and sees divinity in all aspects of existence. This state represents the highest form of spiritual life, or jnana in its most complete sense.

**Ans. to Q. No. 9 :** Jivanmukti and Videha mukti are forms of mukti. The term Jivanamukti means liberation while still living. Examples included the great Gautama Buddha. He was liberated while living. On the otherhand, Videha Mukti implies Mukti or liberation after death. Or in other words, bodily death of a person.

**Ans. to Q. No. 10 :** Across Hindu traditions, varied interpretations of Mokṣa exist: Nontheistic schools (such as Samkhya, Nyaya, Mimamsa) understand mokca as a state of complete isolation or detachment (*kaivalya*), where the soul is freed from suffering but does not necessarily unite with a supreme being. Advaita Vedanta, a non-dualistic school taught by Shankara, teaches that mokca is the realization that the individual self (*atman*) is identical with Brahman. Liberation, in this view, is not a process but a shift in awareness—a recognition of one's true, timeless identity, beyond the illusion (*maya*) of individuality. Theistic traditions like Vaishnavism and Shaivism describe mokca as eternal, blissful communion with a personal God, such as Vishnu, Krishna, or Shiva. Here, the soul retains its distinct identity but dwells in a divine realm, immersed in loving union and service. In addition to post-death liberation, many schools affirm jivanmukti—liberation while still living. A *jivanmukta* is someone who, though physically alive, is spiritually free, unattached to worldly gains or losses, and sees divinity in all beings and things. This state is marked by deep peace, compassion, and unwavering joy (*ananda*). Ultimately, mokca represents freedom—not only from the physical cycle of reincarnation but from the mental and emotional bondage caused by ego, desire, ignorance, and fear. It is the realization of Sat-Chit-Ananda—being (existence), consciousness, and bliss. Mokṣa fulfils the soul's deepest longing for truth, meaning, and unity with the eternal.



## 5.13 MODEL QUESTIONS

**A) Very short questions**

**Q.1.** What is the etymological meaning of Mokṣa?

**Q.2.** What is the literal meaning of the word Kama?

**Q.3.** How many Purusarthas are there?

**Q.4.** Where the word Brahmanirvana is found?

**Q.5.** What is jivanamukti?

**Q.6.** What is Videhamukti?

**Q.7.** What do you mean by Niskama Karmayoga?

**Q.8.** What is Vaishnavite meaning of Mokṣa?

**Q.9.** "He is the cause of saCsâra and mokca"- who is 'he' here?

**Q.10.** In which book (epic) 'Moksadharma' section is found?

**B. Short Questions:** (Answer in about 150 words)

**Q.1.** Define Trivargaa and its relation to Mokṣa.

**Q.2.** How one can achieve Mokṣa through Karma, Jnana and Bhakti Yoga?

**Q.3.** Differentiate between Jivanamukti and Videhamukti.

**Q.4.** Describe Gita's threefold path to Mokṣa.

**Q.5.** Explain Saiva and Sakta concept of Mokṣa.

**C. Write Short Notes On:** (Answer in about 150 words)

**Q.1.** Liberation from Rebirth.

**Q.2.** End of Suffering.

**Q.3.** Union with the Divine.

**Q.4.** Mokca in Bhagavadgita.

**Q.5.** Various path to Mokṣa

**D. Long Questions:** (Answer in about 300 words)

**Q.1.** What is Mokṣa? Analyze its different meaning, prospects and how it helps one to end one's life in samsara?

**Q.2.** What is the Gita's threefold path to attain Mokṣa? How the threefold path to Mokṣa can be described as forms of disciplines?

**Q.3.** Analyze Mokṣa in various schools.

**Q.4.** Write a brief note on Vaishnava concept of Mokṣa.
Define Mokṣa as the Ultimate goal of life.

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# UNIT 6 : THE CONCEPT OF KARMA AND BONDAGE IN INDIAN MORAL PHILOSOPHY

## UNIT STRUCTURE


6.1 Learning Objectives

6.2 Introduction

6.2.1 The concept of Karma in Indian Moral Philosophy

6.2.2 The concept of Bondage in Indian Moral Philosophy.

6.3 Definition of Karma

6.4 Karmaphal

6.5 Causes of Bondage

6.6 Let us sum up

6.7 Further Reading

6.8 Answers to Check your Progress

6.9 Model Questions


## 6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Explain the concept of Karma in Indian Moral Philosophy.
- Discuss the Karma in Indian Moral Philosophy.
- Explain the concept of Bondage in Indian Moral Philosophy.
- Explain the different definition of Karma
- Describe the Karmaphal in Indian Moral Philosophy
- Explain the cause of Bondage in Indian Moral Philosophy.

## 6.2 INTRODUCTION

A common feature of Indian philosophy is that every sect, except the *Cârvâka,* believes in Karma and the transmigration of the soul. By reincarnation, it refers to the doctrine that living beings are reborn after death. According to reincarnation, the soul never dies. After death, the soul is reborn and takes on a new body. In the *Bhagavad Gîtâ*, (Ch.2, Verse.22)

Krishna tells *Arjunâ* that the soul is immortal, just as a man puts off his old garment and puts on a new one, so the soul puts off its old body and puts on a new one. This is the essence of reincarnation. Closely related to Karma is reincarnation. According to Karma, man must enjoy the fruits of his actions. This law of Karma is thoughtful and inviolable.

There is a causal relationship between action and its result. If a person cannot enjoy the fruits of his deeds in this life, he has to take another birth to enjoy those deeds. Therefore, the results of actions are not destroyed even if they are not immediately obtained. In such cases, the fruits of action are stored as unfortunate forces. This is why the law of action is called "The law of the conservation of Moral Values" in Indian ethics. The soul has to be born again and again to enjoy this accumulated fruit. If the fruits of Karma are not finished in one birth, the living entity must take another birth. This is how birth and death continue. In Buddhist Philosophy, it is called the '*bhavachakra*'; in other philosophies, it is known as '*bhavabandhana'*, '*Karmabandhana'*, '*Sansaradasha',* etc. Therefore, it is seen that the living entity must be born repeatedly to enjoy the fruits of Karma.

There is an unavoidable connection between Karma and reincarnation for enjoying the fruits of Karma. To get rid of this law of reincarnation, Indian Philosophers speak of *Nishkam* or Gatir Karma, *Samyak Jñâna*, ect. In other words, according to Indian Philosophers, one can get rid of reincarnation through altruistic deeds by eliminating unawareness through indistinguishable understanding.

The philosophy of Karma is a distinguishing and inherent part of the Indian philosophical system. It is a universally known and widely acknowledged Indian philosophical concept. It comprises of two basic factors, namely, Karma (action) and *Karmaphal* (the result of an action), according to which everyone reaps the fruit of their actions. Consequently, it can be defined as the principle of actions performed and their results that have been/shall be/are being obtained. Karma is identified to be an eternal law pervading the entire universe. It is also associated with rebirth. It must be noted; no action can be.

The Sanskrit term used to mean philosophical or moral thought in Indian is ka:ram. In *Pâli* it is used to *kâmma*. It refers to an action, work, or deed and its effect or consequences. In Indian Moral Philosophy, the term particularly refers to a principle of cause and effect, often descriptively called the principle of Karma, wherein individual intent and action (cause) influence their future (effect). Good intent and good deeds contribute to good karma and happier rebirths, while bad intent and bad deeds contribute to bad karma and worse rebirths. In some scriptures, however, there is no connection between rebirth and karma. Karma is often misunderstood as fate, destiny, or predetermination. Its impact is often accepted by individuals in various forms, in both personal and professional lives. Karma has a cosmic as well as psychological aspect. All action must generate its natural effect in the world; at the same time, it leaves an impression on or forms a tendency in the mind of man. It is this tendency or sa sk ra or v sana that inclines us to repeat the deed we have once done, so all deeds have fruits in the world and effects on the mind. So far as the former are concerned, we cannot escape them, however much we may try. However, concerning mental tendencies, we may control them.

### 6.2.1 The concept of Karma in Indian Moral Philosophy

The concept of Karma is closely related to the idea of rebirth in many schools of Indian religions particularly in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism as well as Taoism. In these Schools, Karman the present affects one's future in the current life as well as the nature and quality of future lives-one's samsara. This concept has also been adopted in Western popular culture, in which the events that happen after a person's actions may be considered natural consequences of those actions.

Most of the Indian philosophical schools believe in the doctrine of Karma. The application of the law of causation in the field of morality is the *karmavada* of Indian philosophy. Human life process is determined and guided by this doctrine of Karma. Good results come out of good karma. This is called virtue or Dharma, or merit.

On the other hand, demerit or vice is produced from evil deeds. Human beings enjoy happiness, prosperity etc. because of virtues. In contrast to it, human suffers from aches, miseries, etc. because of vices. Happiness, pains, etc. of human life are the results of man's karmas. Accordingly, the present situation of life is the result of past activities done in the past life. The fruits of past activities are also called Adrista or fortune, because they remain unseen for us. This is the doctrine of Karma, or eternal moral order. This moral order is called *Rma* in the Rgveda. The whole universe, even the Devas, cannot violate this *Rma.* This rule of the doctrine of Karma is applicable only in attached or *Sakâma Karmas*. The actions which are done with the hope of fruits are called attached or *Sakâma* actions. But the actions done without any hope of fruits are called *Niskâma* or detached actions. Such actions do not bear any fruit. A man can perform *Niskâma Karma* when he has acquired true knowledge. This is the doctrine of Karma. This *karmavâda* is an important common characteristic of Indian philosophy. Karma is a universal law that means everything we do comes back to us. The endless knot signifies the eternal nature of karma and symbolizes the karmic causes and effects that feed into each other throughout the transmigrations of souls.

Karma is the principle of cause and effect, where our actions, good and bad-shape our experiences and influence our future. Karma is four categories: - Firstly, *Sanchitâ Karma*, which means the accumulated past actions. Secondly, *Prârabdha* Karma, which means the part of *Sanchitâ* Karma, results in the present birth itself. This is also called pre-destination. Thirdly, *Kriyâana* Karma, which means present, will full actions or free will. Fourthly, *Âgâmi* Karma that means the immediate results caused by our present actions. There is another version of the meaning of Karma. This word, karma, simply means actions. In addition, this karma must remind us that what is called the consequence of an action is not a separate thing, but it is a part of the action, and it cannot be divided from it. The

consequence is the part of the action, which belongs to the future but yet the part is done in the present. For instance, when a person is wounded, at the time of accident, he will not feel any pain, but after sometime, when he is quiet, he will feel the pain. Pain is a part of the action 'falling' and 'wounding', but it is felt later, through done in the present. When a man sins, he feels no suffering at the time of sinning, but later he feels the suffering. Thus, we can conclude the theory of Karma, a human will receive the reward according to his or her actions.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.1:** Good deeds contribute to good Karmâ and happier rebirths. True/False

**Q.2:** Bad deeds contribute to bad Karmâ and worse rebirths. True/False

**Q.3:** What is Sakâma Karmâs?

.....

**Q.4:** What is Niskâma Karmâs?

.....

**Q.5:** How many Categories of Karmâ?

.....

### 6.2.2 The concept of Bondage in Indian Moral Philosophy

When the soul has to be reborn to exhaust the Karmaphals, it is limited by space and time. This state of soul is called bondage. During this state, the souls, forgets its true nature and considers it as a doer, enjoyment of actions. This is called ignorance. Ignorance is the cause of bondage. When the soul undergoes bondage, it has to be born. Misery is the offspring of birth. In this way, the soul is deprived of knowledge of its own nature due to the bondage of the body. Bondage is due to ignorance. This is the Indian philosophical concept of bondage. Bondage means the chain of birth and death and the consequent miseries or sorrows. The self attains *NirvâGa*,

or liberation from all miseries or sorrows of this material world and from the chain of birth and death. The literal meaning of *Nirvâna* is 'blowing out.' In Indian philosophy, *Nirvâna* is synonymous with *Mokca.* In the Pâli texts, it is stated that there are two types of *Nirvâna*. One is called '*Upadhisesa Nirvâna,'* and another is called '*Niropadhisesa Nirvâna*.'

The concept of bondage is particularly interpreted by different systems of Indian philosophy. In Jainism, *jîvâ,* or self, is conscious. Infinite knowledge, infinite faith, infinite power, and infinite bliss are the four essential qualities of the *jîvâ,* or self. However, because of Karman, these four qualities are revealed in the *jîvâ* during its empirical existence. These four qualities are realized by the self only when all the obstacles that stand in the way are removed. Just as the sunshine illuminates the entire world as soon as the atmosphere is freed from cloud and fog, similarly the self attains omniscience as soon as all the obstacles of *karmâs* are removed. *Karmâs* are then the main cause of bondage of the self. According to the jainas, *karmâs* are material, which are of the form of intra-atomic particles.

Indian philosophy deals with various kinds of common ideas or thoughts. One of them is the idea of bondage and Mokṣa.. It is called *Paramapurusârtha* of human existence. All the systems of Indian philosophy accept the idea of liberation, or Mokṣa*,* as the highest aim of human life. Only the *Carvâka* materialist does not believe in liberation. They regard dependence as release. According to them, pleasure and wealth are the supreme aims of human life. Liberation, or Mokṣa, which is regarded as the highest value. In Indian thought, it is nothing but the realization of the self. When the *jîvâtma* releases itself from the bondage of the chain of birth and death, then he attains liberation, or Mokṣa. *Karman*, *bhakti*, and *Jñâna* are regarded as the three ways for the attainment of this ultimate aim of human life. The *jîvâtma* can attain liberation by following only one of these three ways.

The doctrine of Karman is accepted by all the philosophical systems of Indian thought except the *Carvâka*. The common meaning of the word 'Karman' is 'action'. The theory of *Karma*, or action, states that man is sure to get the fruits of his own acts. The *Jainas* also subscribe to the view that *Karma* is the cause of man's happiness, miseries, ect. In their view, good Karma produces good consequences, i.e., pleasures, happiness, etc., while bad *Karma* produces bad consequences, i.e., miseries, sorrows, etc. The *Jaina* further holds that *Karmâns* are the subtle particles of matter and, as such, are *dravyas,* or substances. They reject the *Vaisesikas* point of view about the nature of Karman. The Vaisesikas describe Karman as a *padârtha*. It is motion, which is of five kinds, viz; i. Upward, ii. Downward, iii. Contraction, iv. Expansion, and v. Going.

Upward means the contact of a body with a higher region, e.g., throwing a stone upward. Downward means the contact of a body with a lower region, e.g. throwing a stone from a tree to the ground. Contraction means the bringing of the parts of the body closer to one another. As the body expands, its components become more distant from one another. The term going denotes all other kinds of motion, Revdving, flaming up etc, are some other kinds of motion that are included in "going". These are the five kinds of Karman accepted by the *Vaisesikas*.

*Prabhacandra* has categorically refuted the view of the *Vaisesikas* regarding Karman as a separate category. The Vaisesikas Karman is nothing but motion or activity that is generated by means of conjunction to one place and disjunction from another place. This is nothing but the different movements of a substance from one place to another. *Utksepana,* etc; are included here. If, on the other hand, seeing different kinds of motion, Karman is regarded as a separate *Padârtha* and is of five kinds, then other types of motion, like revolving, flaming up, etc; should also be accepted as separate Karman. However, the *Vaisesikas* do not accept these as separate *Karman* but include them under the motion 'going.' Moreover,

it is a fact that Karman is never apprehended separately from substance; that which is not apprehended, even though capable of apprehension, is nonexistent. *Karmân* is capable of apprehension but is not apprehended separately. Hence, *Karmân* is not a separate category.

In Jainism, *Karmân* is not merely motion; it is material; it is an aggregate of material particles. Not only this, the Jain also maintains that *Karmân* is murta, i.e; it has some form, because it is a subtle particle of matter that has some form. The *karma pudgalas* are entered into the self through mental, bodily, and verbal actions and intermixed with its parts, as a result of which the self comes under bondage. These Karmaparticles form a fine body called Karmanasar, which adheres to the self and exists until it attains emancipation. Matter, or Karma-pudgala, mixes with the self, just as water mixes with the milk. So, the relation between the self and the Karmicmatter is called a relation of water and milk. According to Hemacandra, though the self is obscured by the veil of Karmicmatter, there is no harm to the nature of the self. The light of knowledge is not destroyed by any kind of veil, just as the light of the sun or moon is not destroyed by the veil of the clouds. The veil of the Karmicmatters is destroyed by the regular particles of bodily discipline and meditation. That means when the self realizes its pure nature by giving up also the passions with the help of mental and bodily discipline and meditation, then there would be no relation of the self with Karman; the self becomes pure and perfect, and there arises infinite knowledge. This pure self is called *arhat, Paramatman,* etc.

Bondage means, in Indian philosophy in general, the liability of the individual to birth and all consequent sufferings. This general conception of bondage is differently interpreted by the different systems in the light of their ideas of the individual and the world. Bondage of the soul is its association with matter. Owing to Karma, the soul is associated with matter, and thus its bondage occurs.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.6:** What is Bondage?

.....

**Q.7:** What is ignorance?

.....

**Q.8:** What is the literal meaning of Nirvana?

.....

**Q.9:** What is the synonymous word of Nirvana?

.....

**Q.10:** What are the two types of Nirvana?

.....

**Q.11:** What is the symbol of Karma?

.....

**Q.12:** What are the four essential qualities of the Jiva or Self?

.....

**Q.13:** The Vaisesikas described Karman as a Padartha. True/False.

**Q.14:** How many kinds of Karma according to Vaisesikas? Explain.

.....

.....

## 6.3 DEFINITION OF KARMA

The doctrine of karma is so deeply rooted in the Hindu social setup that it is considered the ethical background of Hindu social organization; references to the 'karma' theory are found in our Upanishads. Subsequently, this doctrine became so popular and so widely acceptable that it became an integral part of Hindu culture. The origin of the word 'karma' may be traced back to the Sanskrit root 'kru,' meaning activity. The term karma (Sanskrit 'karma' Pali 'kamma') refers to the executed 'deed,' work, action, act, and the object, intent. The belief in the theory of karma, it will be seen, is only an aspect of this doctrine. The present existence of an individual is, according to this doctrine, as according to that of karma, the effect of its past, and its future would be the effect of its present existence. This has been seen very clearly

already in connection with the explanation of the origin of suffering in the light of the theory of dependent origination. The law of karma is only a special form of the more general law of causation as conceived by Buddha.

Karma, in Indian religion and philosophy, is the universal causal law by which good or bad actions determine the future modes of an individual's existence. Karma represents the ethical dimension of the process of rebirth (samsara), belief in which is generally shared among the religious traditions of India. Indian soteriology (theories of salvation) posits that future births and life situations will be conditioned by actions performed during one's present life, which itself has been conditioned by the accumulated effects of actions performed in previous lives. The doctrine of karma thus directs adherents of Indian religions toward their common goal, release (moksha) from the cycle of birth and death. Karma thus serves two main functions within Indian moral philosophy: it provides the major motivation to live a moral life, and it serves as the primary explanation of the existence of evil.

Derived from the Sanskrit word Karman, meaning "act," the term "Karma" carried no ethical significance in its earliest specialized usage. In ancient texts (1000-700 BCE) of the Vedic religion, karma referred simply to ritual and sacrificial action. As the priestly theology of sacrifice was articulated by Brahman priests over the following centuries, however, ritual action came to be regarded as effective by itself, independent of the gods. Karma as ritual functioned autonomously and according to a cosmic ritual law.

The connection between the ritual and moral dimensions of karma is especially evident in the notion of karma as a causal law, popularly known as the law of Karma. Many religious traditions-notably the Abrahamic religions that emerged in the Middle East (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam)-place reward and punishment for human actions in the hands of a divine law given. In contrast, the classical traditions of Indian Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, much like the Vedic sacrificial theology that preceded them, view karma as operating according to an autonomous causal law. No divine will or external agent intervenes in the relationship of the moral act to its inevitable result. The law of karma thus represents a markedly nontheistic theodicy or explanation of why there is evil in the world.

The most important presupposition of morality on which the entire Indian ethical system is based is called the law of Karma. This law has its original source in the Vedic principle of Rta, which, amongst other things, envisages that an eternal moral order is involved in the very course of nature so that no action by anybody is lost in vain. He has to undergo the consequences of his action according to its merit or demerit.

The law of karma, which is a descendant of this basic moral principle, is the law of the conservation of the results or consequences of an action. In Hinduism, Karma is a very pragmatic portion of Hindus goals in life. Hindus ambition to accomplish desire in various methods, encompassing impartial actions and traditional interests, but it is essential to note that Kama is also derived from sexual desire. In the Buddhist tradition, Karma denotes to deed influenced by intention, which designates to forthcoming consequences. Those thoughts are considered to be the determining factor in the kind of rebirth in Samsara, the succession of rebirth. According to *Mimāmsā* the law of Karma means 'Apurva.' There is a difference between Nyâya-Vaisesika and *Mimāmsā*. *Nyâya* believes that being unconscious, karma cannot give its fruit without God. But *Mimāmsā* believes that karma's fruits are self-controlled, so they do not require any god for it. However, all Indian philosophers believe that the law of karma does not work equally for every karma. This law is limited only to those karmas that are full of attachment, jealousy, and worldly desires. In other words, the karmas performed with some worldly aim come under the limitation of the law of karma, whereas the karmas performed without desire (*Niskâma* Karma- *Gîtâ*) are not controlled by this law of karma.

## 6.4 KARMAPHAL

The cycle of rebirth is determined by karma, literally 'action.' Karmaphala (wherein phala means fruit, result) refers to the 'effect' or 'result' of karma. The similar term *Karmavipâka* (wherein *Vipâka* means ripening) refers to the 'maturation. In the Buddhist tradition, karma refers to actions driven by intention (*cetanâ*) and done deliberately through body, speech, or mind, which leads to future consequences.

Karma and *Karmaphala* are fundamental concepts in Buddhism, which explain how our intentional actions keep us tied to rebirth in *Samsâra* , whereas the Buddhist Path, as exemplified in the Noble Eightfold Path, shows us the way out of Samsara. Karmaphala is given to us by the supreme and divine. It is mentioned in the Gita that 'one has the authority to do his designated work, but not the authority to the results of that work.'

Karma, referring to intentional actions (*Karmâni*) and their consequences (*Phala*), forms a fundamental concept in Indian philosophy that shapes the ethical and moral framework of Hinduism. *Phala*, the result of these actions, can manifest immediately or in future lifetimes, reinforcing the cyclical nature of existence known as *Samsara*. The doctrine of Karma underscores the ethical dimension of human actions, asserting that good deeds (*Punya*) lead to positive outcomes (*Punyaphala*), while bad deeds (Papa) result in suffering (*duhkhâ*), thereby influencing the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

## 6.5 CAUSE OF BONDAGE

Bondage means the chain of birth and death and the consequent miseries or sorrows. The self attains liberation from all miseries or sorrows. The self attains liberation from all miseries or sorrows of this material world and from the chain of birth and death. The conception of bondage is differently interpreted by different systems of Indian philosophy. In Jainism, *jiva,* or self, is conscious. Infinite knowledge, infinite faith, infinite power, and infinite bliss are the four essential qualities of the *jîvâ,* or self. However, because of karman, these four qualities are revealed in the jiva during its empirical existence. These four qualities are realized by the self only when all the obstacles that stand in the way are removed. Just as the sunshine illuminates the entire world as soon as the atmosphere is freed from cloud and fog, similarly the self attains omniscience as soon as all the obstacles of *Karmâns* are removed. *Karmâs* are then the main cause of bondage of the self. According to the Jainas karmas are material that is of the form of infra-atomic particles. It has already been mentioned that punya, papa, asrava, bandha, samvara, nirjara, and *mokca* are the tattvas along with the jiva and ajiva. Among these, punya and papa are sometimes included in

asrava and bandha. The Jaina philosophers mention asrava, bandha, samvara, and nirjara as the ways for the association with and dissociation of the self from Karman. Among these four ways, asrava and bandha are the cause of samsara, while samvara and nirjara are the cause of liberation. Now, a brief account of these four states has been discussed one by one.

Asrava leads the self to bandha. Asrava and bandha are mutually related as cause and effect. As a result of asrava, karma particles enter into the self, and the self is affected by passions like love, anger, etc. and absorbs these karma-pudgalas into its innumerable parts. The absorption of the karma pudgalas by the self within itself is called bandha, or bondage. After the absorption of karma pudgala, the self, who is intrinsically pure and perfect, becomes impure and imperfect. The karma pudgalas also obstruct the self's four infinite qualities. Therefore, the self-forgets its real nature and undergoes the cycle of birth and death.

Bandha, or bondage, is of two types, viz; i. bhava-bandha or subjective bondage, and ii. Dravya-bandha, or objective bondage. Bhava-bandha means that conscious state by which the Karman is bound with the self, while the union of the pradesas of Karman and self is called dravya-bandha. That means, first, there is the influx of karmic-matters i.e; asrava which leads the self to bondage. The psychical states that are the cause of the contact of the self with the Karma-pudgalas are known as bhava-bandha; after that there is the union of the self with the Karman, which is known as dravya-bandha.

Dravya-bandha is of four kinds, according to its prakrti (nature), sthiti (duration), anubhava (intensity), and pradesa (number). Among these, the prakrti and pradesa bondage result from the activities of body, mind, and speech, while the sthiti and anubhava bondage result from the conditions of attachment and aversion. Prakrti means the natural qualities, such as bitterness or sweetness, found in the nimba plant or molasses. The natures of different kinds of karman determine the nature of bondage. Sthiti means the duration of Karman. The duration of Karman differs in different cases. Some Karman will remain a thousand years, some only a decade. There are again some karman that can be washed out in a day. Anubhava means the intensity of Karman. This may be sometimes mild, sometimes strong.

Pradesa means the amount of Karman. This is different in different cases. Some Karmans attract more pudgala, some less; so, it is divided according to its thickness and thinness. These four types of bondage are illustrated with an example of a lady (a kind of sweetmeat). Some women cure coughs and rheumatism by their nature. Some are good for a long time. Some, for a short time, contain melted butter in them, while others do not. Some are thick, some things, because of the amount of flour with which they have been made.

There must be some cause for an effect; without cause, an effect cannot be produced. So, there must be some cause for the self's bondage. Asrava is the main cause of bondage because it is the first Paryaya of bandha, or bondage. The Jainas enumerate five causes of bondage, viz;:

a. Mithyatva or avidya (nescience)

b. Avirati (non-restraint)

c. Pramada (delusion)

d. Kasaya (passion) and

e. Yoga activity of the self.

From mithyatva or avidya arises avirati; from avirati arises Pramada; from Pramada arises Kasaya; from Kasaya arises Yoga. Hence mithyatva is the root cause of all evils.

*a. Avidyâ*, or *Mithyâtvâ*, is also called *mithyâdarsana*, *mithyâdrsti*, *darsanamoha,* or moha. Because of *avidyâ*, the people accept adharma as dhrama, asubha as subha, *ajivâ* as *jivâ,* etc. All of these are the opposite nature of *samyagdarsana*. *Avidya* is the root cause of sufferings. For *avidyâ,* the jiva thinks that it is mine; I know all the things, etc. For these kinds of false knowledge, the self always comes under bondage in this Samsara.

Avidya has three factors, viz.; (i) *Mithyâ-darsana*, (ii) *Mithyâ-jnâna*, and (iii) *Mithyâ-caritrâ,* which are the opposites of right-vision, right-knowledge, and right-conduct. So, bondage is not only caused by *mithyâ-jnanâ* but also by *mithyâ-darsana* and *mithyâ-caritrâ*. That is the reason that after the attainment of right knowledge, the self is not freed from the bondage of karma-matter without right vision and right conduct.

*Avidyâ* or *Mithyâtva,* is of two kinds, viz.; (a) naisargika and (b) Paropadesa. Paropadesa mithyatva is of four kinds, viz.; (a) Kriyavadi, (b) akriyavadi, (c ) ajnani, and (d) vainayika. On the other hand, Pujyapada admits five kinds of *mithyâtva*, or avidy*â*. Viz.; (i) ekanta mithyadarsana, (ii)viparitamithyadarsana, (iii)samsayamithyadarsana, (iv) vainayikamithyadarsana, and (v) ajnanikamithyadarsana.

(b) The second cause of bondage is avirati. Avirati means non- restraint from the six sense- organs.

(c ) The third cause of bondage is *pramâda* or delusion. It is of eight kinds, i.e; five kinds of samiti and three kinds of gupti. These are (i) Irya, (ii) bhasa, (iii) esana, (iv) adana, (v) utsarga, (vi) kaya, (vii) vag, and ( viii) mana.

(d) The fourth cause of bondage is Kasaya. The Jainas hold that space is full of Karma-pudgalas, and the self absorbs these Karma-particles because of Kasaya. It is of four types, viz;.;(i) anger (krodha), (ii) pride (mana), (iii) deceit (maya), and (iv) greed ( lobha).

(e) The last cause of bondage is yoga. It is the activity of the self through the body; mind and speech. Passions are the internal cause of bondage, while the activities of body, mind and speech are the external causes of bondage.

All of these are the cause of bondage. For asrava and bandha, the self is always affected by the karma-pudgalas. It is seen in the foregoing discussions that asrava and bandha are the cause of bondage of the jiva. Because of these two, the self comes under the cycle of birth and death. The self does not attain the ultimate aim of life, i.e., liberation, because the self is affected by the Karma-matter. Attainment of liberation is not possible as long as the karma-particles exist in the self. When the influx of karma-matter stops, then the self attains liberation. So, for the attainment of liberation, it is necessary to stop the influx of Karma-matter into the self. Prabhacandra holds that for the attainment of liberation the influx of new karma-matter into the self must be stopped. The new karma-matter enters into the self through asrava, or influx. This stoppage of the influx of karma-matter is called Samvara.

Samvara is also of two kinds, viz., (i) bhavasamvara, or subjectives stoppage, and (ii) draveasamvara or objective stoppage. The checking of the modifications of consciousness of the self, which is the cause of the

influx of karma-matter, is known as bhavasamvara, while dravyasamvara means that state where the influx of Karma-matter is stopped. Thus, bhavasamvara is the cause of dravyasamvara.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q.15:** What is Karmaphal?

.....

**Q.16:** What are the different causes of bondage according to the Jaina? Explain.

.....

.....

**Q.17:** What is mithyatva or avidya? Explain.

.....

.....

**Q.18:** How many kinds of mithyatva?

.....

**Q.19:** How many kinds of Pramada?

.....

**Q.20:** How many kinds of Kasaya?

.....

**Q.21:** How many kinds of Samvara?

.....



## 6.6 LET US SUM UP

- In Indian moral philosophy, Karma specifically refers to a principle of cause and effect.
- The notion of Karma and Phala is profoundly embedded in the Hindu belief system where every deed is thought to have an analogous consequence (Phala).
- Two of the most common images are the interlocking knot and the lotus flower.
- There are four different categories of Karma. These are Prarabdha Karma, SanchitaKarma, Kriyamana Karma and Agami Karma.

- Hindu viewpoint categorizes Karma into three forms: Sancita Karma (composed previous actions that are yet to bear fruit), Prarabdha Karma (actions that have originated to bear fruit in the present life) and Agami Karma (future actions that will bear fruit in future lives).
- According to Vaisesikas there are five kinds of *Karman*, viz Upward, Downward, Contraction, Expansion and Going.
- The another word for 'Mokṣa*'* is *Nirvâna.*
- The Jainas enumerate five causes of bondage, viz;
- Mithyatva or avidya (nescience)
- Avirati (non-restraint)
- Pramada (delusion)
- Kasaya (passion) and
- Yoga activity of the self.



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## 6.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** True

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** True

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** *Sakâma Karmâ* is considered attachment to the result of personal actions in life with motives of self-interest.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** *Nishkâma Karmâ* centers on the actions a yogi takes within the world for the sake of others and not for self-benefit.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** There are four different categories of Karma. These are Prârabdha Karma, Sanchita Karma, *Kriyamâna Karma* and *Âgâmi* Karma.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** Bondage means the chain of birth and death and the consequent miseries or sorrows.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** Ignorance is the non-apprehension of reality and the misapprehension of what is unreal as real.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** The literal meaning of *Nirvâna* is 'blowing out'.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** The synonymous word of *Nirvâna* is 'Mokṣa'.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** The two types of *Nirvâna* are '*Upadhisesa Nirvâna'* and the another is called '*Niropadhisesa Nirvâna*'.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** The endless knot represents the eternal nature of karma and symbolizes the karmic causes and effects.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** The four essential qualities of the *jivâ* or self are infinite knowledge, infinite faith, infinite power, and infinite bliss.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** True.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** According to Vaisesikas *Karmân* as a *Padârtha*. It is motion, which is of five kinds, viz Upward, Downward, Contraction, Expansion and Going.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** Karma referring to intentional actions (*Karmâni*) and their consequences (*Phala*) forms a fundamental concept in Indian philosophy that shapes the ethical and moral context of Hinduism. The concept of Karmaphala, or the fruits of actions is central to Mimamsas ethical framework. Mimamsa posits that every action

inevitably leads to specific results. According to Buddhism Karma denotes to actions driven by intention (*cetanâ*) added done consciously through body, speech or mind, body, speech or mind, which leads to future consequences.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** According Jainas there are five causes of bondage, viz;

a. Mithyatva or avidya (nescience)

b. Avirati (non-restraint)

c. Pramada (delusion)

d. Kasaya (passion) and

e. Yoga activity of the self.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** According to *Jaina* Philosophy *Mithyatva* or *Avidya* means the incorrect belief. It is opposite of *Samyaktva* or correct belief or faith. Avidya or Mithyatva is also called mithyadarsana, mithyadrsti, darsanamoha or moha. Because of avidya, the people accept adharma as dhrama, asubha as subha, ajiva as jiva etc.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** Avidya or Mithyatva is of two kinds, viz; (a) naisargika and (b) Paropadesa.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** *Pramada* is of eight kinds; i.e. five kinds of *samiti* and three kinds of *gupti*. These are (i) Irya (ii) bhasa (iii) esana (iv) adana (v) utsarga (vi) kaya (vii) vag and ( viii) mana.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** Kasaya is of four types; viz; (i) anger (krodha); (ii) pride (mana) (iii) deceit and (iv) greed ( lobha).

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** Samvara is also of two kinds, viz; (i) bhavasamvara or subjectives stoppage and (ii) draveasamvara or objective stoppage.



## 6.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

**A) Very short questions**

**Q.1.** What is the literal meaning of the word ‘Karma’?

**Q.2.** What is the difference between Sakam and Nishkam Karma?

**Q.3.** What does ‘Karmaphala’ mean in Indian philosophy?

**Q.4.** Name any two types of Karma according to Indian philosophical tradition.

**Q.5.** What is the Jaina view on the nature of Karma?

**Q.6.** According to Jainism, what are the four essential qualities of the soul (jiva)?

**Q.7.** Which Indian philosophical school rejects the concept of liberation (moksha)?

**(B) Short Questions *(Each within 150 words)*:**

**Q.1.** Explain the four types of Karma: Sanchita, Prarabdha, Kriyamana, and Agami.

**Q.2.** Briefly describe the difference between Bhava-bandha and Dravya-bandha in Jainism.

**Q.3.** What is the role of Asrava and Bandha in the bondage of the soul according to Jainism?

**Q.4.** What are the five causes of bondage mentioned in Jainism?

**Q.5.** Describe how Karma functions as an autonomous causal law in Indian moral philosophy.

**Q.6.** How is the law of Karma rooted in the Vedic principle of Rta?

**(C) Long Questions *(Each within 400 words)*:**

**Q.1.** Discuss the concept of Karma as understood in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. How does it relate to the cycle of birth and rebirth (samsara)?

**Q.2.** Elaborate on the Jaina theory of bondage and liberation. What roles do Asrava, Bandha, Samvara, and Nirjara play in this process?

**Q.3.** Explain how Karma is viewed in Indian philosophy as a moral law of causation. How does this differ from the theistic explanation of suffering in Abrahamic religions?

**Q.4.** Analyse the distinctions between the views of Nyaya-Vaisesika and Jainism on the nature of Karma. What criticisms does Jainism offer against the Vaisesika idea of motion?

**Q.5.** What is the importance of ignorance (avidya or mithyatva) in causing bondage according to Jainism? How do different types of ignorance lead to the soul's entrapment in samsara?

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# UNIT 7 : JAINA CONCEPT OF KARMA AND BONDAGE

## UNIT STRUCTURE


7.1 Learning Objectives

7.2 Introduction

7.3 Jaina Philosophy

7.4 The Concept of Karma

7.5 Bondage

7.6 Five Vows

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7.8 Let Us Sum Up

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## 7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Explain the Concept of Karma in Jaina Philosophy.
- Describe the notion of Bondage and Its Implications for the Soul.
- Know how to identify and explain the Significance of the Five Vows in Jainism.
- Explain and understand the Causes of Bondage and how they can be overcome.

## 7.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces Jaina philosophy, focusing on the law of karma, bondage, causes of bondage, and the five vows. Jaina philosophy, one of the oldest Indian philosophical systems, emphasises non-violence (*ahimsâ*), self-discipline, and strict ethical vows. It provides a unique understanding of the soul, ethics, and spiritual liberation. Central to its teachings are karma

and bondage, explaining the soul's entanglement in *samsâra*, the cycle of birth and rebirth. In Jainism, karma is a subtle material substance binding to the soul through actions of body, speech, and mind. Unlike other traditions, Jainism views all karma as an obstacle to liberation. This karmic bondage prevents the soul from realizing its true nature—pure, infinite knowledge, bliss, and power. The ultimate goal is moksha, or liberation, where the soul is freed from karmic matter and *samsâra*. The five major vows (*vratas*)—non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy, and non-possession—are vital for reducing karmic bondage and purifying the soul. These principles guide practitioners on the path to spiritual liberation, embodying the essence of Jaina philosophy. The Five Major Vows in Jainism:

1. **Ahimsâ (Non-violence):** Avoiding harm to all living beings in thought, word, and deed; the foundation of Jaina ethics.
2. **Satya (Truthfulness):** Speaking truth and avoiding deceit to uphold integrity.
3. **Asteya (Non-stealing):** Refraining from taking anything not freely given, fostering honesty and respect.
4. **Brahmacharya (Chastity):** Maintaining purity—complete celibacy for monks, fidelity, and control for laypeople.
5. **Aparigraha (Non-possessiveness):** Reducing attachment to material possessions, promoting simplicity and detachment.

These vows are not merely ethical guidelines but are seen as crucial steps in preventing new karmic particles from binding to the soul. By observing these vows, Jaina practitioners aim to purify their souls and progress towards liberation. In Jaina philosophy, the causes of bondage are rooted in the soul's activities driven by passions (*kacâyas*) such as anger, pride, deceit, and greed. These passions lead to the influx (*âsrava*) of karmic particles, which attach to the soul and create bondage. The soul's ignorance (*avidyâ*) of its true, pure nature, combined with attachment to worldly pleasures, intensifies this bondage. The Jaina path to liberation involves rigorous self-restraint, ethical conduct, and spiritual discipline to weaken these passions and ultimately eliminate them. By doing so, the

inflow of karmic particles is stopped, and the existing karmic matter begins to dissipate, allowing the soul to move towards liberation. Thus, it can be said that Jaina philosophy offers a profound understanding of the soul's nature and its journey towards liberation. It emphasizes the importance of personal responsibility and self-effort in overcoming the bondage of karma. Through non-violence, adherence to the five vows, and understanding the causes of bondage, Jaina followers strive to purify their souls and attain the ultimate goal of liberation. The concepts of karma, bondage, ethical vows, and the causes of bondage form the core of Jaina teachings, guiding adherents towards a life of spiritual purity, ethical conduct, and eventual liberation from the cycle of *samsâra*. Now let us discuss the core teaching of Jaina Philosophy in this unit.

## 7.3 JAINA PHILOSOPHY

Jainism recognizes twenty-four Tîrthañkaras, revered teachers who passed down their faith. The first Tîrthañkaras was Rsabhadeva, and the last was Vardhamâna, known as Mahâvîra, who lived in the sixth century B.C. Parsvanatha preceded Mahâvîra in the ninth century B.C., while the other twenty-two Tîrthañkaras belong to pre-historic times. The title 'Jina' meaning conqueror is given to these teachers as they conquered passions like desire and hatred, achieving liberation. Instead of worshipping a God, Jainas honor the Tîrthañkaras as liberated souls who attained perfection through personal effort, serving as exemplars for others seeking spiritual liberation. Jainism split into two main sects: Úvetâmbaras and Digambaras. While both accept the teachings of the Jinas, they differ in practices. Digambaras advocate for complete renunciation, including clothing, and believe women must be reborn as men to attain liberation. Úvetâmbaras, however, permit ascetics to wear white robes and reject gender-based restrictions on liberation. Jain philosophy emphasizes non-violence (*ahimsâ*), reflecting a profound respect for all life, as every living being possesses a soul (*jîva*). This respect extends to differing viewpoints, grounded in the doctrine of anekântavâda, which holds that reality is multifaceted, and syâdvâda, asserting that all judgments are conditional. Jainism's literature,

initially in Prakrta, contains the teachings of Tîrthañkaras, particularly Mahâvîra, though much early literature has been lost. To defend against criticism, Jainism adopted Sanskrit for its later philosophical works. The philosophy embraces common-sense realism and pluralism, positing that the world consists of living and non-living realities. Jain ethics, rooted in non-violence and pluralism, guide adherents toward liberation by overcoming passions and karmic bondage. Now let us discuss the concept of Karma in detail.

## 7.4 THE CONCEPT OF KARMA

Jainism's framework for understanding the relationship between the soul, karma, and liberation is deeply intricate and philosophical. It lays out a systematic process of bondage (through karma) and liberation (through spiritual practices), which provides a comprehensive ethical and spiritual path for self-purification. In Jainism, the Law of Karma is central to the understanding of the soul's bondage and its eventual liberation. Unlike the abstract, moral interpretation of karma in other Indian philosophies, the Jain concept of karma is more concrete, referring to actual matter-particles (pudgala) that attach to the soul due to mental actions and passions. Let's further break down and elaborate on the key concepts:

### 7.4.1 Karma: The Binding Force

The Karma theory in Jainism describes how souls (*jîvas*) undergo cycles of birth, death, and rebirth. Karma is viewed as a tangible substance made of fine particles that attach to the soul due to actions driven by passions like anger, pride, greed, and deceit (*kacâyas*). These karmic particles obscure the soul's inherent qualities, such as infinite knowledge, perception, and bliss, binding it to physical existence. Karma determines the soul's embodiment, deciding whether it is born as a god, human, animal, or in hell, based on past actions. It influences an individual's body, lifespan, sensory abilities, knowledge, and experiences. For instance, *jnana*-avarniya

karma limits knowledge, while *ayu-karma* dictates lifespan. Accumulation occurs naturally when the soul engages in negative mental, verbal, or physical activities, with passions acting as glue for karmic matter. This leads to a karmic veil that binds the soul to *samsâra*, the cycle of birth and rebirth. Liberation (*moksha*) is achieved by purging karmic attachments through self-discipline, ethical living, and suppressing passions, halting the influx of new karma. Jainism's focus on personal responsibility and spiritual purification offers a path for the soul to break free and realize it's pure, liberated nature. Let's have a look at the various types of Karma.

### 7.4.2 Different Types of Karma

There are eight types of karmas in Jainism, which are divided into two main categories: ghatiya karmas (destructive karmas) and aghatiya karmas (non-destructive karmas). These karmas affect various aspects of the soul's abilities and experiences.

(i) Ghatiya Karmas (Destructive Karmas):

*Jñânâvaraòîya karma*: This karma obscures knowledge (*jnana*) of the soul. For example, it limits one's ability to understand or learn.

*Daroòanâvaraòiya karma*: It obstructs perception (*Darshana*), such as the ability to perceive the truth clearly, like when sleep clouds awareness.

*Mohanîya karma*: It distorts the soul's attitude toward faith and correct conduct. This karma creates delusions and attachments, obscuring right beliefs and behavior.

*Antarâya karma*: This creates obstacles that prevent the individual from performing good actions, even when there is a desire to do so.

(ii) Aghatiya Karmas (Non-destructive Karmas):

*Âyushya karma*: This determines the lifespan of the individual in a particular birth.

*Nâma karma*: This governs the body type and its general characteristics, including physical appearance and other faculties.

*Gotra karma*: It determines social standing, such as the family, caste, nationality, and overall social position into which one is born. *Vedanîya karma*: This karma creates the experiences of pleasure and pain.

### 7.4.3 *Âsrava*: The Flow of Karma

Âsrava refers to the process by which karmic particles flow towards the soul. This can be thought of as the "pathway" through which karma is attracted. Just as water flows towards a low point, karmic matter flows towards a soul burdened by passions and ignorance. *Âsrava* happens whenever there is an opening in the protective spiritual barrier that a soul creates through right faith, knowledge, and conduct. If the soul is exposed to passions like anger or greed, the inflow of karmic particles begins, strengthening the bondage between the soul and the material world. Âsrava has both psychological and physical aspects:

*Bhâv-âsrava*: The mental, verbal, and physical activities or passions (such as delusion, lack of self-control, negligence, and indulgence) that create the conditions for karma to enter the soul.

*Dravya-âsrava*: The actual physical influx of karmic particles into the soul. This influx of karma is often compared to water flowing through channels into a pond. Just as water enters the pond through channels, karma enters the soul through the five main channels: delusion (*mithyâtva*), lack of self-control (*avirati*), negligence (*pramâda*), bodily activities (*yoga*), and passions (*kacâya*).

### 7.4.4 *Bandha: The Bondage of the Soul*

Karma attaches to the soul through actions of the mind, speech, and body. Initially, karma exists in a subtle form (*bhâva karma*) and transforms into physical karma (*dravya karma*) when the soul is

influenced by passions (*kasaya*) like anger, pride, deceit, and greed. These passions trap karmic particles, binding them to the soul. Once attached, karma affects the soul in eight distinct ways, causing its bondage and suffering. The accumulation of karma impacts the soul's color and disposition, known as *lœyâ*, which can be positive (light colors) or negative (dark colors). The process of bondage (*bandha*) begins when karma unites with the soul, obscuring its true nature of pure consciousness, knowledge, and bliss. There are two forms of bondage (*bandha*):

1. *Bhâva-bandha*: Psychological bondage, where bad dispositions attract karma.
2. *Dravya-bandha*: Material bondage, the physical attachment of karmic particles to the soul.

Karmic matter influences the soul's experiences, tying it to the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. To attain liberation (*moksha*), Jainism teaches the elimination of both forms of bondage through:

Purification of the mind: Removing passions and defilements.

Detachment: Practicing self-discipline and avoiding worldly desires.

Austerity: Performing tapas to burn off karma.

Once both internal and material bondage are eliminated, the soul is freed from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, achieving moksha or liberation.

### 7.4.5 *Samvara: The Stoppage of Karma*

*Samvara* is the crucial step where the inflow of new karmic matter is *stopped*. Jainism emphasizes that one must actively work to halt the continuous flow of karma by overcoming ignorance and passion. This stoppage is achieved through ethical and spiritual discipline. There are two types of *samvara*:

*Bhâva-samvara*: Stopping the psychological disposition that attracts karma, such as eliminating anger, greed, or pride.

*Dravya-samvara*: Stopping the physical influx of karmic particles by taking control of one's actions, thoughts, and speech.

The practice of right faith (*samyag darœana*), right knowledge (*samyag jñâna*), and right conduct (*samyag câritra*) plays a pivotal role in this process. These three components are inseparable and must be cultivated together for effective *samvara*. When a person has faith in the truth of the teachings of the Tîrthañkaras, understands the nature of reality (right knowledge), and lives according to ethical principles (right conduct), they prevent further karma from attaching to the soul.

### 7.4.6 *Nirjarâ*: The Shedding of Karma

Even after the *inflow* of new karma is *stopped*, the soul remains bound by the karma accumulated from previous lifetimes. *Nirjarâ* is the process of shedding or wearing out the existing karma. It involves two levels:

*Bhâva-nirjarâ*: The psychological and spiritual effort to burn away karma through practices like meditation, fasting, and repentance.

*Dravya-nirjarâ*: The actual physical destruction of karmic particles. This can happen through the natural fruition of karma (experiencing the consequences of one's actions) or through austerities that destroy karma before it ripens.

Jain monks and laypeople engage in ascetic practices to accelerate *nirjarâ* and cleanse the soul of its karmic impurities. The ultimate aim of *nirjarâ* is to completely purify the soul and remove all karmic dross. *Nirjarâ* is the process of purging or destroying the karmic particles that are attached to the soul. There are two types of *Nirjarâ*:

1. *Bhâvanirjarâ*: The internal effort or transformation of the soul by which karma is destroyed. This is achieved through self-discipline, meditation, and following the path of right knowledge, right faith, and right conduct.

2. *Dravyanirjarâ*: The actual shedding or destruction of karmic particles, which can occur in two ways:

*Savipâka nirjarâ*: The karmas are destroyed after they have ripened and their effects have been experienced.

*Avipâka nirjarâ*: The karmas are destroyed through spiritual practices and penances before they fully ripen and bear their fruit.

The ultimate goal of *Nirjarâ* is to free the soul from all karmic particles. When all karmas are eradicated, the soul attains moksha (liberation) and is no longer subject to the cycle of rebirth.

### 7.4.7 Moksha: Liberation of the Soul

Once all karmic particles have been worn away, the soul attains *moksha* (liberation). At this stage, the soul achieves *kevala-jñâna* (omniscience), or infinite knowledge, faith, power, and bliss. The soul is free from the cycle of birth and death and is no longer subject to suffering or physical limitations. It exists in a state of pure consciousness and resides in *siddha-úilâ*, the highest point in the Jain cosmology, where it experiences eternal bliss. This liberated state is not only a release from physical suffering but also a realization of the soul's intrinsic nature. *Moksha* is the highest goal in Jainism, representing complete spiritual freedom and the ultimate purification of the soul. The ultimate goal in Jainism is to purge all karmic matter from the soul and prevent the influx of new karmas. This allows the soul to break free from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, leading to moksha. When all karmas are removed, the soul attains its natural state of infinite knowledge, infinite bliss, and infinite perception. In conclusion, the Karma Theory in Jainism describes a precise mechanism by which the soul's actions lead to bondage through the accumulation of karma matter, and how liberation is achieved by the systematic removal of this matter through ethical behavior, self-discipline, and meditation.

## 7.5 BONDAGE

In Jaina philosophy, the soul's bondage refers to its entanglement with material influences, which obstruct its innate purity and potential. The soul inherently possesses infinite knowledge, power, faith, and bliss, but these qualities are hidden due to the influence of karma and the material body. Bondage limits the soul's ability to express its true nature. Karma, the result of past actions (thoughts, speech, and deeds), creates attachments and desires that bind the soul to the material world. Karma is active and dynamic, shaping the soul's experiences and interactions, with each action attracting specific karmic matter, reinforcing its material entanglement and preventing the soul from manifesting its inherent perfection. Key to the concept of bondage are the passions—anger, pride, deceit, and greed (*krodha*, *mâna*, *mâyâ*, and *lobha* in Jaina terminology). These passions fuel the soul's attachment to material things, driving it to accumulate karma. Like sticky substances attracting dirt, these emotions pull karmic matter toward the soul, intensifying its bondage. The body an individual inherits is shaped by the soul's accumulated karma. The shape, size, sensory organs, and motor functions of the body reflect the soul's karmic history. For example, *gotra*-karma determines the family into which a soul is born, and *âyus-karma* dictates the lifespan of the soul in a particular body. Other karmas, like those that cloud knowledge (*jnânâ-varanya*) or create delusions (*mohanya*), further contribute to the soul's entanglement. Thus, the material form each soul takes is a direct consequence of its past actions and karmic accumulation. Jainism distinguishes between two kinds of bondage:

Internal bondage (*bhâva-bandha*), refers to the soul's mental and emotional entanglements, such as negative dispositions or passions that arise from past actions.

External bondage (*dravya-bandha*), describes the soul's actual identification with matter, the material body, and all of its limitations.

Both forms of bondage—internal (emotions, thoughts, desires) and external (karma and material form)—are interconnected. The soul's mental

state attracts karmic matter, which shapes the physical body, creating a cycle of bondage. Jaina philosophy asserts that the soul and matter are not separate but interpenetrate, like fire and iron in a red-hot ball. The soul's consciousness is present in every part of the body, and both influence each other. Liberation (*moksha*) in Jainism is achieved by overcoming these forms of bondage. The soul must purify itself by shedding karmic impurities through the right knowledge, faith, and conduct. Reducing the influence of passions and eliminating attachments to the material world help break free from bondage. When completely freed from karmic influence, the soul manifests its true, infinite qualities of knowledge, bliss, and freedom from suffering. This process emphasizes the importance of self-awareness, detachment from material desires, and spiritual discipline. By purifying the soul and eliminating entanglements, one can achieve liberation, returning to a state of perfection and eternal bliss. Thus, Jain philosophy highlights the soul's potential for infinite purity, which can be realized through disciplined spiritual practice.

## 7.6 FIVE VOWS

The Five Great Vows (*Panca-Mahâvrata*) are widely recognized as central to Jaina ethics and are valued by numerous philosophical traditions. These principles are also acknowledged in other faiths, including Upanishadic teachings and Buddhism (with its emphasis on the *Pañca-Sîla*). Additionally, the principles of these vows find parallels in the biblical commandments. However, Jainas are particularly rigorous in their practice of these vows, with a level of discipline rarely seen in other religious traditions. The Five Great Vows are as follows:

1. **Ahimsâ (Non-Violence):** The vow of *ahimsâ* in Jainism involves refraining from causing harm to all forms of life, including animals (*trasa*), plants (*sthavara*), and microorganisms. Jain monks practice this diligently, even covering their noses to avoid inhaling tiny organisms. Laypeople are encouraged to avoid harming beings with at least two senses. Rooted in the belief that all souls are equal,

*ahimsâ* extends beyond actions to thoughts and speech, prohibiting the intention or encouragement of taking life.

2. **Satya (Truthfulness):** The vow of *satya* in Jainism requires abstaining from falsehood and speaking the truth beneficially and pleasantly. Truth is seen as not just factual but also wholesome and constructive. Speaking truth without consideration can lead to harm, such as gossip or conflict. Thus, the vow emphasizes speaking beneficial truth, while also overcoming negative emotions like greed, fear, and anger, and avoiding frivolous speech.

3. **Asteya (Non-Stealing):** The vow of *asteya* involves refraining from taking anything not freely given, extending to respect for others' lives and possessions. In Jainism, property is sacred as it sustains life, and depriving someone of it harms their survival. This vow aligns with Ahimsa, both recognizing the sanctity of life and the importance of respecting others' rights.

4. **Brahmacharya (Celibacy and Abstinence from Self-Indulgence):** *Brahmacharya* in Jainism is not just celibacy but abstaining from all forms of self-indulgence, including desires in thought, speech, or action. The vow aims to eliminate attachment to sensual pleasures, including those related to spiritual aspirations. Complete adherence requires avoiding all forms of indulgence, both subtle and gross, material and spiritual.

5. **Aparigraha (Non-Attachment):** *Aparigraha* is the vow of detachment from worldly possessions and sensory pleasures. Jainism teaches that attachment binds the soul to the cycle of birth and rebirth. To achieve liberation, one must withdraw from material attachment and sensory experiences, enabling spiritual freedom.

In Jaina philosophy, knowledge, faith, and conduct are interdependent, with progress in one area fostering growth in others. By overcoming passions and karma, one can attain spiritual liberation. Freed from material bondage, the soul realizes it's true potential, achieving infinite knowledge, faith, power, and bliss. The five great vows are central to Jaina ethics, guiding

practitioners toward non-violence, truthfulness, self-restraint, and detachment, leading to liberation from the cycle of rebirth.

## 7.7 THE CAUSE OF BONDAGE: IGNORANCE AND PASSIONS

In Jainism, ignorance is a deep misunderstanding of the soul's true nature and its relationship with the material world. The soul is inherently pure, eternal, and free, but ignorance prevents recognition of this truth, causing the soul to become entangled with the material world. This leads to spiritual bondage. Ignorance gives rise to passions (*ka°âyas*) like anger, greed, pride, and deceit, which cloud judgment and foster attachments to fleeting pleasures and material possessions. These passions bind karmic matter to the soul, trapping it in the cycle of *samsâra* (birth, death, and rebirth). Karma in Jainism is not just a moral force but a physical substance that adheres to the soul based on actions, thoughts, and emotions. Negative passions accumulate harmful karma, preventing the soul from realizing liberation. The path to liberation involves spiritual awakening and purification through right knowledge (*samyag-jòâna*), right faith (*samyag darœana*), and right conduct (*samyag caritra*). By gaining a true understanding of the soul, karma, and the universe, individuals can shed ignorance, reduce passions, and purify the soul, ultimately freeing it from the material world and achieving liberation. Right knowledge (*samyag-jòâna*) in Jainism is the wisdom that leads to self-realization, helping the soul recognizes its inherent purity and eternal nature. It is the antidote to ignorance, which causes misconceptions about the self and material world. Right Faith (*samyag darœana*) involves belief in the teachings of the *tirthañkaras,* spiritual guides who have attained liberation and show the path to enlightenment. Right Conduct (*samyag caritra*) encompasses ethical behavior, including the five great vows: non-violence (*Ahimsâ*), truthfulness (*Satyam*), non-stealing (*Asteyam*), celibacy (*Brahmacaryam*), and non-attachment (*Aparigraha*). These practices reduce negative karma and purify the soul. The ultimate goal is liberation (*Moksha*), where the soul is freed from the

cycle of birth and rebirth. This is achieved when ignorance and passions are eradicated, and all accumulated karma is shed. Through persistent effort, the soul attains infinite knowledge, bliss, and power, realizing its true, untainted nature.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q.1:** What is the central teaching of Jaina philosophy?

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**Q. 2:** Explain the concept of karma in Jaina philosophy. How does it differ from other Indian philosophical traditions?

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**Q. 3:** What are the primary causes of bondage in Jaina philosophy?

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**Q. 4:** Describe the relationship between the soul and karmic particles in Jaina philosophy.

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**Q. 5:** What is the role of karma in Jainism in shaping the soul's experiences and its journey toward liberation?

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**Q. 6:** How does moksha signify the ultimate goal in Jainism, and what is the nature of the soul in this state?

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**Q. 7:** Define the concept of "bondage" in Jaina philosophy. How does it limit the soul's potential?

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**Q. 8:** How do the four primary passions (anger, pride, deceit, and greed) influence the soul's entanglement with karma?

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**Q. 9:** What is the relationship between the soul and the material body in Jainism?

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**Q. 10:** What are the Five Great Vows (*Pañca-Mahâvrata*) in Jainism? Provide an example of how each vow contributes to the ethical and spiritual development of an individual.

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**Q. 11:** What is the role of ignorance and passions (*ka°âyas*) in the process of spiritual bondage?

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**Q. 12:** What is the ultimate goal of Jainism, and what is the role of right knowledge, right faith, and right conduct in achieving this goal?

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**Q. 13:** In Jaina philosophy, how does the purification of the soul lead to liberation (*moksha*)?



## 7.8 LET US SUM UP

- Jaina philosophy emphasizes non-violence (*ahimsâ*), self-discipline, and ethical living as central to spiritual liberation.
- Karma is seen as a subtle form of matter binding to the soul, hindering its liberation, and all karma is considered an obstacle to achieving *moksha*.

- Bondage results from karmic particles adhering to the soul due to actions driven by passions such as anger, pride, deceit, and greed.
- Liberation involves shedding all karma and breaking free from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (*samsâra*), allowing the soul to realize its true nature of infinite knowledge, bliss, and power.
- The five vows— *ahimsâ* (non-violence), *Satya* (truthfulness), *asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (chastity), and *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness)—are central to reducing karmic bondage and purifying the soul.
- The 24 *Tîrthañkaras* are revered teachers who attained liberation through their efforts, providing a model for every soul to achieve perfection.
- Jainism split into two sects, the Úvetâmbaras and Digambaras, differing in practices like clothing and views on liberation but sharing core teachings.
- Philosophically, Jainism advocates common-sense realism and pluralism, with doctrines like anekântavâda (many-sided reality) and syâdvâda (conditional judgments), supporting respect for life and diverse opinions.

  Karma in Jainism is a tangible material substance that binds to the soul due to actions (mental, verbal, physical). It determines experiences, life forms, and the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.
- Passions like anger, pride, deceit, and greed (*kacâya*) attract karmic particles to the soul, obscuring its natural qualities (infinite knowledge, bliss, perception).
- There are two categories of karma: (i) *Ghatiya Karmas* (Destructive):

  *Jòânâvaranîya*: Obscures knowledge.

  *Dœhanâvaranîya*: Obstructs perception.

  *Mohanîya*: Distorts faith and conduct.

  *Antarâya*: Creates obstacles to good actions.

  (ii) *Aghatiya Karmas* (Non-Destructive):

  *Âyuska*: Determines lifespan.

*Nâma*: Governs body type and characteristics.

*Gotra*: Decides social standing.

*Vedanîya*: Causes pleasure or pain.

- *Âsrava* refers to the inflow of karmic particles toward the soul.
- Causes of *âsrava* include mental passions, lack of self-control, negligence, and bodily activities. Inflow occurs through five channels: delusion, lack of control, negligence, activities, and passions.
- *Bandha* refers to the bondage of the soul.
  Bhâva-bandha: Psychological attraction of karma.
  Dravya-bandha: Physical attachment of karmic particles.
- *Samvara* is the process of stopping the inflow of karmic matter.
  Bhâva-samvara: Stops psychological attraction of karma.
  Dravya-samvara: Prevents physical influx of karmic particles.
- Methods include right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct.
- *Nirjarâ* is the shedding of accumulated karmic particles.
  *Bhâva-nirjarâ*: Internal efforts like meditation and repentance.
  *Dravya-nirjarâ*: Physical destruction of karma through natural fruition or austerities.
- *Moksha* is achieved when all karmic particles are eradicated. The soul attains pure consciousness, infinite bliss, and freedom from rebirth.
- Jainism distinguishes between internal bondage (mental and emotional entanglements) and external bondage (identification with matter), both interconnected.
- Ignorance is the root cause of bondage, as the soul fails to recognize its true nature and becomes entangled with the material world.
- Passions arise from ignorance, creating attachments and accumulating karma, which binds the soul in the cycle of birth and rebirth.
- Spiritual awakening, achieved through the right knowledge, faith, and conduct, helps purify the soul and reduce the accumulation of karma.



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## 7.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** The central teaching of Jaina philosophy is the path to liberation (moksha) through right knowledge, right faith, and right conduct, emphasizing non-violence (*ahimsâ*), self-control, and the purification of the soul.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** The concept of karma in Jaina philosophy refers to the accumulation of karmic particles that bind the soul, affecting its experiences. Unlike other Indian traditions, Jainism holds that karma is a material substance, and liberation is attained by shedding these particles through ethical practices and self-discipline.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** The primary causes of bondage in Jaina philosophy are the influx of karma (*âsrava*), the attachment to passions

(*kacâya*), and the ignorance of the true nature of the soul, which prevents spiritual growth and liberation.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** In Jaina philosophy, the soul is eternally distinct from karmic particles, which attach to the soul due to passions like anger and greed. These karmic particles influence the soul's experiences and its journey through the cycle of birth and rebirth.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** Karma plays a crucial role in shaping the soul's experiences by determining its conditions in each life. The accumulation of karma leads to spiritual bondage, while it's shedding through virtuous actions helps in the soul's liberation.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** *Moksha* is the ultimate goal in Jainism, representing the soul's liberation from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. In moksha, the soul is free from karmic bondage and experiences eternal bliss and pure consciousness.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** "Bondage" in Jaina philosophy refers to the entanglement of the soul with karmic particles. This limits the soul's potential by clouding its inherent nature of purity and consciousness, binding it to the cycle of reincarnation.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** The four primary passions—anger, pride, deceit, and greed—intensify the soul's entanglement with karma, leading to the accumulation of karmic particles that obscure the soul's true nature and hinder its spiritual progress.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** The soul and the material body are distinct in Jainism. The soul is a non-material, eternal entity, while the body is a temporary physical vessel. The soul's liberation depends on transcending the material body and its attachments.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** The Five Great Vows (*Pañca-Mahâvrata*) in Jainism are non-violence (*ahimsâ*), truth (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), celibacy (*brahmacharya*), and non-possession (*aparigraha*). Each vow contributes to spiritual and ethical development by fostering self-control and compassion.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** Ignorance (*avidya*) and passions (*kacâya*) bind the soul to karma. These mental states prevent the soul from

realizing its true nature and lead to the accumulation of karma, thus hindering spiritual liberation.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** The ultimate goal of Jainism is liberation (*moksha*), achieved through the threefold path of right knowledge, right faith, and right conduct. This leads to the purification of the soul and its release from the cycle of birth and rebirth.

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** In Jaina philosophy, the purification of the soul involves shedding accumulated karma through ethical living, self-discipline, and meditation. As the soul becomes free from karmic influences, it achieves liberation (*moksha*), experiencing eternal bliss and consciousness.



## 7.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

**A) Very short questions**

**Q.1.** What is the concept of *karma* in Jaina philosophy?

**Q 2**: What is *samsâra*, and how is it related to karma in Jaina philosophy?

**Q 3**: What is the ultimate aim of Jaina practice?

**Q 4**: Mention the five major vows (*vratas*) in Jaina philosophy.

**Q 5**: Who are the Tîrthañkaras in Jaina philosophy?

**Q 6**: What is the meaning of the word 'Jina'?

**Q 7**: Why are the Tîrthañkaras called conquerors?

**Q 8**: Into which two main sects did Jainism split?

**Q 9**: What are the two kinds of reality in the Jaina worldview?

**Q 10**: What is the significance of *ahimsâ* in Jaina ethics?

**Q 11**: What are the four passions (*kacâya*) that attract karma to the soul?

**Q 12**: Name the two main categories of karma in Jainism.

**Q 13**: Define *âsrava* in the context of Jainism.

**Q 14**: What are the five channels through which karmic matter flows into the soul?

**Q 15**: What is *bandha* in Jainism, and how does it occur?

**Q 16**: What is *samvara*, and how does it help in stopping karma?

**Q 17**: What is *nirjarâ*, and how does it contribute to liberation?

**Q 18**: What are the three jewels (*ratnatraya*) essential for spiritual discipline in Jainism?

**Q 19**: What are the eight types of karma in Jainism?

**(B). Short Questions: (Answer in about 150 words)**

**Q 1:** What is the role of karma in shaping the soul's experiences and its journey toward liberation in Jainism?

**Q 2:** How does *moksha* signify the ultimate goal in Jainism, and what is the nature of the soul in this state?

**Q 3:** Write the difference between *ghatiya karmas* and *aghatiya karmas* in Jainism. What are their respective impacts on the soul?

**Q 4:** Write the relationship between the soul and karmic particles in Jaina philosophy. How does karma affect the soul's liberation?

**Q 5:** Mention the role of ignorance and passions (*kacâya*) in the process of spiritual bondage in Jainism.

**(C). Write Short Notes On: (Answer in about 150 words)**

**Q 1:** Different types of karma and their effects on the soul.

**Q 2:** The concept of *âsrava* in Jain philosophy and its causes and the channels through which the inflow of karmic particles occurs.

**Q 3:** The effect of passions such as anger, pride, deceit, and greed (*kacâya*) on the soul in Jainism.

**Q 4:** The significance of *samvara* in halting the flow of karma and its contribution to the soul's liberation.

**Q 5:** The notion of *nirjarâ* in Jain philosophy and the roles of *Bhâva-nirjarâ* and *Dravya-nirjarâ* in shedding accumulated karmic particles.

**(D). Long Questions: (Answer in about 300 words)**

**Q 1:** Critically explain the concept of karma in Jainism and discuss its impact on the soul's journey toward liberation.

**Q 2:** Explain the five major vows (*Pañca-Mahâvrata*) in Jainism. Discuss their role in the ethical and spiritual development of an individual and their contribution to the attainment of liberation.

**Q 3:** What is the significance of the *Tîrthañkaras* in Jainism? Discuss their role in guiding the soul toward *moksha* (liberation) and the importance of their teachings in the Jaina tradition.

**Q 4:** Discuss the concept of "bondage" (*Bandh*a) in Jaina philosophy. Explain the causes of bondage, the role of karma in it, and the two forms of bondage in Jainism.

**Q 5:** Explain the concept of *moksha* in Jainism. How is moksha attained, and what is the nature of the soul in its liberated state?

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# UNIT 8 : THE CONCEPT OF KARMA AND BONDAGE IN BUDDHISM

## UNIT STRUCTURE


8.1 Learning objectives

8.2 What is Karma

8.3 Karma and Vipaka

8.4 The Four Noble Truths and Karma

8.5 Ignorance: The Root Cause of Karma

8.6 Conclusion

8.7 Let us sum up

8.8 Further Readings

8.9 Answers to check your progress

8.10 Model Questions


## 8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- To understand the concept of karma in Buddhism.
- To explain the relationship between karma (intentional action) and vipaka (result or fruition)
- To examine the interconnection between the Four Noble Truths and the doctrine of karma, particularly the second and third noble truth.
- To explore ignorance (avijja) as the main cause of karmic formation and to understand its role in the cycle of dependent origination (paticcasamuppada) within Buddhist thought.

## 8.2 WHAT IS KARMA

The term karma in Sanskrit means action or deed. But in Buddhist philosophy, it goes much deeper, because it is not only about what we physically do, but also about our thoughts, intentions, and emotions. In Buddhism, every action we carry out, whether through our body, speech,

or mind; leaves a mark on our consciousness. It influences not only our present life, but also our future ones. So, Karma is not just an idea of cause-and-effect, but it is more like a moral force that influences the direction of our lives.

The understanding of karma in Buddhism is quite different from how karma is often understood in the West, where it is sometimes seen as a system of punishment or reward. In Buddhism, karma is more about the natural outcome of our actions. Each choice we make sets off a series of effects. Whether those effects turn out to be helpful or harmful depends on the motivation behind the action. Actions motivated by kindness, generosity, or wisdom build up positive karma. On the other hand, when our actions are driven by greed, hatred, or ignorance, they create negative karma.

One of the most unique aspects of karma in Buddhism is the strong focus on intention. Unlike many other traditions where the consequences of an action are based mainly on the action itself, Buddhism teaches that the motivation behind what we do is what truly influences its karmic outcome. The Buddha explained that even if an action does not seem successful on the surface, if it comes from a pure and sincere intention, it can still bring about powerful positive results. On the other hand, even a seemingly small or harmless act can create negative karma if it is driven by harmful or selfish intentions. For example, one is helping someone who is struggling. If his true intention is to ease their suffering and genuinely support them, that action creates positive karma, which can bring good results in this life or the next. But if he helps them mainly to get praise or recognition, then his motivation is self-centered, and the karma from that act will not be as pure or beneficial. That's why in Buddhism, so much emphasis is placed on having wholesome intentions, when one's actions come from a place of compassion, generosity, and wisdom, they tend to lead to positive outcomes. But when they're driven by ego, greed, or hatred, they often result in more suffering.

According to Buddhism, there are five natural laws or orders, called niyamas, that guide everything happening in the physical and mental realms. These are not commandments or rules made by someone, but natural processes that keep everything in balance.

1. ***Utu Niyama:*** This refers to the natural physical order of things in the non-living world. Think of it like the regular rhythms of nature: the way seasons change, how rain comes, winds blow, or how heat operates. These changes happen on their own in a predictable, orderly way.
2. ***Bija Niyama***: This is the law of seeds and genetics. It explains how life grows: how a rice plant comes from a rice seed, or how sugarcane always tastes sweet. Even the resemblance between twins or how our physical traits come from genes, these all fall under this natural biological law.
3. ***Karma Niyama:*** This is the moral order of cause and effect. Good actions naturally lead to good results, and harmful actions lead to suffering, not as a punishment or reward, but as a natural consequence, just like how water flows downward. Karma follows its own natural course, and needs only the right conditions to ripen.
4. ***Dhamma Niyama:*** This refers to the law of reality or the natural principles that govern the universe, such as gravity or other unseen forces that give structure to life. It also includes rare, profound events like what happens at the birth of a Bodhisattva. It represents the deep order behind why goodness and truth have power and meaning.
5. ***Citta Niyama:*** This is the mental or psychological order. It deals with how the mind works, how thoughts arise and fade, how consciousness operates, and the inner workings of mental life. It also covers unusual mental phenomena like telepathy, clairvoyance, and other psychic abilities that science still struggles to explain.

## 8.3 KARMA AND VIPAKA

*Karma* means action, and *Vipaka* is its natural consequence or reaction. Just like every object casts a shadow, every intentional action brings about its own effect. *Karma* can be understood as a seed full of potential, and *Vipaka* is the fruit that grows from that seed, the result. Along with the fruit, there are also leaves and flowers, these are like *Anisamsa* and *Adinaya*, which mean the outward consequences such as health, illness, wealth, or poverty. These outcomes naturally arise at the same time as the inner effects. *Karma* and *Vipaka,* both are connected to the mind. Just as actions (*Karma*) can be good or bad, the results (*Vipaka*) are experienced as pleasant or painful, like happiness or suffering; depending on the kind of seed we have planted with our thoughts and actions. Since *Karma* begins in the mind, its result, *Vipaka*, is also experienced in the mind.

*Anisamsa* refers to the fortunate, supportive conditions that come along with good *Karma*, like success, good health, or long life. On the other hand, *Adinaya* refers to the difficult, painful circumstances tied to negative *Karma*, for example, things like illness, poverty, or a short life. The core idea is very simple: *we reap what we sow.* Whatever we experience now, whether it is joy or hardship; is the result of something we did, either in this life or a past one.

The All-Merciful Buddha, free from any selfish intent, did not teach the *law of Karma* only to comfort the poor with hopes of a better afterlife or to protect the privileges of the rich. While it is true that we are born into situations influenced by our past actions, we are not stuck there forever. Through our own effort and determination, we have the ability to change our circumstances and create better environments for ourselves, right here and now. The power to change does not only apply to individuals; as a society, we also have the freedom to create new *Karma* that can lead us forward or drag us down, even within this lifetime. Buddhism does not see *Karma* as some unchangeable fate or mysterious force we have no control over. *Karma* is not destiny carved in stone, it is the result of our

own actions, coming back to affect us. Because of that, we do have the ability to redirect the path of our *Karma*, at least to some extent. How much we can change it depends on our own efforts and choices. Buddha said that if people were always forced to experience the full outcome of their present actions within this life alone, then there would be no space for spiritual growth or for ending suffering completely. But if our actions, both past and present influence our experiences across this and future lives, then there is room for a spiritual life and a chance to bring sorrow to an end.

The *Dhammapada* tells us that there is no place to hide from the consequences of our actions. But that doesn't mean we're stuck paying for every single past mistake. If we were, then enlightenment or liberation would be impossible, and we would be trapped in an endless cycle of suffering, which is not applicable to Buddhist philosophy.

## 8.4 THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS AND *KARMA*

In order to understand the role of *karma* in Buddhist philosophy, it will be helpful to look at it through the lens of the Four Noble Truths, which is considered as the heart of the Buddha's teachings. These truths explain what suffering (*dukkha*) is and how we can overcome it. Here, *Karma* plays a central role, especially when we look at the second and third Noble Truths.

The second noble truth tells us that suffering stems from attachment, desire, and ignorance. These mental habits push us to act in harmful ways, which generates negative *karma*. According to the Buddha, it is our craving for pleasure, control, approval that ties us to the endless cycle of rebirth, or *samsara*. *Karma* is the force that keeps this cycle going, reflecting the consequences of our actions. But if we work on purifying our thoughts, intentions, and actions, we can begin to reduce the negative *karma* that keeps us stuck in suffering.

The third noble truth brings a sense of hope that suffering can actually come to an end. Here, *karma* is not just something from our past; but it is

something about the present, too. When we live with mindfulness and follow an ethical path, we start generating positive *karma*, which helps us to move toward freedom from suffering. That is where the Noble Eightfold Path comes in (the fourth Noble truth). It offers a practical way for living wisely and compassionately. As we work to clear our minds and act with good intentions, we begin to break free from *samsara* and head toward *nirvana*, the state of true liberation.

In Buddhism, *karma* is not just a philosophical idea, it is something that deeply affects our everyday lives. The Buddha gave clear guidance on how to live ethically in a way that creates positive *karma*. That means embracing values like non-harming (*ahimsa*), honesty, generosity, patience, and mindfulness. When our actions are based on these principles, we plant the seeds for a more peaceful and awakened life, both present and in the future.

## 8.5 IGNORANCE: THE ROOT CAUSE OF *KARMA*

Ignorance or *avijja*, not seeing things as they truly are, is the main cause behind *Karma*. As the Buddha explains in the teaching of Dependent Origination or ***paticcasamuppada***, actions arise because of ignorance (*avijja paccaya samkhara*). Alongside ignorance is its close companion, craving (*tanha*), which also plays a central role in influencing *Karma*. These two, ignorance and craving are the root cause of unwholesome or harmful actions. Even when a person who has not yet reached enlightenment performs good deeds, which are fueled by the wholesome roots of generosity (*alobha*), goodwill (*adosa*), and knowledge (*amoha*), those actions are still considered *Karma*. This is because ignorance and craving, though not active in those moments, are still present within him in a latent or dormant form. The moral types of Supramundane Path Consciousness (*magga citta*) are not regarded as *Karma* because they tend to eradicate the two root causes.

Ignorance, in Buddhism, is not just a lack of knowledge but rather a misunderstanding or misperception of the nature of reality. It is being misled, misguided, deluded, or even asleep to the truth. Like a cataract that clouds

our external vision, ignorance veils our view of reality. We become convinced of things that simply are not true: that we are separate from others, that our own needs are more important than others, and that lasting happiness comes from chasing pleasure or avoiding discomfort. Basically, the very things we believe will bring happiness often end up causing more suffering. In this way, ignorance and suffering are deeply connected, they are one and the same.

Buddhist teachings aim to lift these veils, helping us to see through illusion and wake up to reality. This awakening is more than just understanding an idea; it is a real shift in perception, seeing clearly for the first time. This clarity is called *Wise View*. In this context, wisdom is a lived understanding of the four marks of existence:

1. Everything is impermanent, nothing stays the same.
2. Because of that, nothing impermanent can give us lasting happiness. In fact, clinging to them brings suffering.
3. Our perspective is not the only one, reality is more complex than our personal view.
4. When we keep these truths in mind, we start to discover a deeper, lasting peace.

Once we truly understand this, we stop making the same mistakes over and over, the ones that keep us stuck in *samsara*, the cycle of pain and dissatisfaction.

We can see examples of this ignorance all around us. Like the frustration one feels when his car breaks down, as if it were supposed to run perfectly forever. Or the energy we spend resisting aging, which is just a part of life. Even the pain we feel when someone disagrees with us, all of these are rooted in mistaken beliefs about how things "*should*" be, rather than how they really are.

## 8.6 CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that understanding *karma* in Buddhism goes beyond simply seeing it as a moral *cause-and-effect* system. It is about

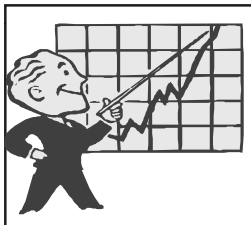
realizing that everything we do, from the tiniest actions to life-changing choices, shapes the course of our journey toward enlightenment. *Karma* is the connecting thread between what we do now and what unfolds in our future lives. It is also the key to freeing ourselves from suffering. When we pay attention to our intentions, live with integrity, and grow in wisdom, we start to change our *karma* in meaningful ways. Through mindfulness, meditation, and ethical living, we begin to bring our actions in line with our core values, creating a life and future, filled with peace and clarity. Therefore, in Buddhism, the doctrine of *Karma* is based on a few essential principles:

*Firstly*, it is based on the law of cause and effect, that every *Karma*, or action, leads to some consequences. When actions are done with intention (volitional *Karmas*), they are judged as good or bad, right or wrong, just or unjust, depending on the motivation behind them. What truly matters is the intent with which an act is done.

*Secondly*, *Karma* follows the law of personal responsibility, each person must face the consequences of their own actions. No one else can carry that burden for them; the responsibility cannot be transferred.

*Thirdly*, it operates as a law of retributive justice, one cannot escape the results of their actions. Whatever is done will come back to the doer, fairly and inevitably.

*Finally*, while *Karma* is considered to have no definite beginning, it is not endless. There is a way to bring it to an end, and that path is the Eightfold Path, as taught by the Master in his first sermon.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.1:** What is karma in Buddhism?

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**Q.2:** What is vipaka?

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**Q.3:** How are karma and vipaka related?

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**Q.4:** What role does intention (cetana) play in karma?

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**Q.5:** What is the first Noble Truth?

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**Q.6:** How is karma connected to the Four Noble Truths?

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**Q.7:** What is the root cause of karma in Buddhism?

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**Q.8:** What is avijja?

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**Q.9:** What breaks the cycle of karma and rebirth?

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**Q.10:** What is the purpose of understanding karma in Buddhism?

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## 8.7 LET US SUM UP

- In Buddhist philosophy, the concept of *karma* goes much deeper, because it is not only about what we physically do, but also about our thoughts, intentions, and emotions. In Buddhism, every action

we carry out, whether through our body, speech, or mind; leaves a mark on our consciousness.

- It influences not only our present life, but also our future ones. So, *Karma* is not just an idea of *cause-and-effect*, but it is more like a moral force that influences the direction of our lives.
- The understanding of *karma* in Buddhism is quite different from how *karma* is often understood in the West, where it is sometimes seen as a system of punishment or reward. In Buddhism, *karma* is more about the natural outcome of our actions.
- Buddhism teaches that the motivation behind what we do is what truly influences its karmic outcome. The Buddha explained that even if an action does not seem successful on the surface, if it comes from a pure and sincere intention, it can still bring about powerful positive results. On the other hand, even a seemingly small or harmless act can create negative *karma* if it is driven by harmful or selfish intentions.
- *Karma* means action, and *Vipaka* is its natural consequence or reaction. Just like every object casts a shadow, every intentional action brings about its own effect. *Karma* can be understood as a seed full of potential, and *Vipaka* is the fruit that grows from that seed, the result.
- Along with the fruit, there are also leaves and flowers, these are like *Anisamsa* and *Adinaya*, which mean the outward consequences such as health, illness, wealth, or poverty. These outcomes naturally arise at the same time as the inner effects.
- *Karma* and *Vipaka,* both are connected to the mind. Just as actions (*Karma*) can be good or bad, the results (*Vipaka*) are experienced as pleasant or painful, like happiness or suffering; depending on the kind of seed we have planted with our thoughts and actions. Since *Karma* begins in the mind, its result, *Vipaka*, is also experienced in the mind.

- In order to understand the role of *karma* in Buddhist philosophy, it will be helpful to look at it through the lens of the Four Noble Truths, which is considered as the heart of the Buddha's teachings.
- The second noble truth tells us that suffering stems from attachment, desire, and ignorance. These mental habits push us to act in harmful ways, which generates negative *karma*.
- According to the Buddha, it is our craving for pleasure, control, approval that ties us to the endless cycle of rebirth, or *samsara*. *Karma* is the force that keeps this cycle going, reflecting the consequences of our actions. But if we work on purifying our thoughts, intentions, and actions, we can begin to reduce the negative *karma* that keeps us stuck in suffering.
- The third noble truth brings a sense of hope that suffering can actually come to an end. Here, *karma* is not just something from our past; but it is something about the present, too. When we live with mindfulness and follow an ethical path, we start generating positive *karma*, which helps us to move toward freedom from suffering.
- Buddha explains in the teaching of Dependent Origination or *Pratityasamudpada*, actions arise because of ignorance (*avijja paccaya samkhara*). Alongside ignorance is its close companion, craving (*tanha*), which also plays a central role in influencing *Karma*. These two, ignorance and craving are the root cause of unwholesome or harmful actions.



## 8.8 FURTHER READINGS

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3. Harvey, P. (2013). *An introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, history and practices (2nd ed.)*. Cambridge University Press.

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## 8.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans. to Q. No. 1 :** *Karma* is the intentional action of the body, speech, or mind that brings future consequences.

**Ans. to Q. No. 2 :** *Vipaka* is the result or fruit of past karma.

**Ans. to Q. No. 3 :** *Karma* is the cause, and *vipaka* is its effect.

**Ans. to Q. No. 4 :** Intention determines whether an action is wholesome or unwholesome.

**Ans. to Q. No. 5 :** The truth of suffering (*dukkha*).

**Ans. to Q. No. 6 :** *Karma* causes suffering (*dukkha*) and its cessation is possible by ending karmic actions.

**Ans. to Q. No. 7 :** Ignorance (*avijja*).

**Ans. to Q. No. 8 :** *Avijja* is ignorance or lack of true understanding, especially of the Four Noble Truths.

**Ans. to Q. No. 9 :** Wisdom (*paññña*) and realization of the Four Noble Truths.

**Ans. to Q. No. 10 :** To live ethically and attain liberation from *samsara*.



## 8.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

**A) Very short questions**

**Q.1.** What does the term “karma” mean in Sanskrit?

**Q.2.** How does Buddhism define karma differently from Western interpretations?

**Q.3.** What role does intention play in Buddhist karma?

**Q.4.** Name the five niyamas or natural laws in Buddhism.

**Q.5.** What is the difference between karma and vipaka?

**Q.6.** What is Anisamsa in the context of karma?

**Q.7.** How is Adinaya related to negative karma?

**Q.8.** What is the root cause of karma according to Buddhism?

**Q.9.** What does avijja mean?

**Q.10.** Which Noble Truth provides hope for the end of suffering?

**B. Short Questions *(150–200 words)***

**Q.1.** Explain how karma influences both present and future lives in Buddhism.

**Q.2.** How does intention determine the karmic quality of an action?

**Q.3.** Describe the role of the five niyamas in Buddhist philosophy.

**Q.4.** What is the relationship between karma and vipaka? Use a metaphor to explain.

**Q.5.** In what way does the second Noble Truth connect with the concept of karma?

**Q.6.** How can one generate positive karma through the Eightfold Path?

**Q.7.** What is the importance of Anisamsa and Adinaya in understanding karma's consequences?

**Q.8.** Why is karma not considered fatalistic in Buddhism?

**Q.9.** How do ignorance (avijja) and craving (tanha) contribute to the creation of karma?

**Q.10.** What is the Buddhist view on escaping the karmic cycle, and how is it achievable?

**C. Long Questions *(400–500 words)***

**Q.1.** Critically examine the difference between the Buddhist concept of karma and the popular Western interpretation.

**Q.2.** Discuss the five niyamas and their role in understanding causality in Buddhism.

**Q.3.** Analyse the relationship between karma and the Four Noble Truths, especially the second and third truths.

**Q.4.** How does the law of karma reflect the principle of personal moral responsibility in Buddhism?

**Q.5.** Explain the role of ignorance (avijja) as the root cause of karma and its connection with suffering.

**Q.6.** Evaluate the significance of intention in Buddhist ethics using examples from daily life.

**Q.7.** Can karma be changed or neutralised? Discuss with reference to the Eightfold Path and Buddhist teachings on liberation.

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# UNIT 9: ADVAITA VEDÂNTIN ANALYSIS OF *KARMA* AND BONDAGE

## UNIT STRUCTURE


9.1 Learning objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 Basic understanding of Advaita Vedânta

9.4 Non-Duality (Advaita) -The core principle of Advaita Vedânta

9.5 The concept of *karma* and its general framework

9.6 Advaita Vedântin analysis of *karma* and bondage

9.6.1 *Karma*

9.6.2 Bondage , cause of bondage

9.7 Principal of the action of Advaita Vedânta

9.8 Let us sum up

9.9 Further readings

9.10 Answers to check your progress

9.11 Model questions


## 9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- Learn what Advaita Vedânta is
- Know the basic understanding on the core concepts of Advaita Vedânta.
- Understand the core principle of non-duality
- Learn what *karma* means: actions (thoughts, words, deeds) have consequences, and these affect our lives.
- Discover how Advaita Vedânta explains *karma* and bondage
- Learn about the three types of *karma*: *Sañcita, Prârabdha* and *Âgâmi*
- Advaita Vedântin analysis of *karma* and bondage
- See how true knowledge of the Self leads to liberation freeing oneself from *karma* and bondage

## 9.2 INTRODUCTION

Advaita Vedânta is one of the essential schools of Vedânta Philosophy. Vedânta is a school of Indian philosophy, which refers to any hermeneutic approach that seeks to offer a coherent understanding of the Upanicad's philosophy or, more precisely, Bâdarâyaòa's Brahma Sûtra, and the Upanicads' canonical summation. Although Advaita technically means "non-secondness," it is frequently interpreted as "non-dualism."

Advaita Vedânta, asserts the ultimate oneness of reality, where the individual soul (Âtman) is fundamentally identical to the supreme reality (Brahman). It posits that the perceived duality and multiplicity of the world are due to *mâyâ*, an illusion veiling the true, non-dual nature of existence. The goal of life is liberation (*moksa*) achieved through self-knowledge (*jñâna*) and realising the non-difference between Âtman and Brahman, primarily through the study of scriptures, reflection, and meditation. Advaita Vedânta, offers a profound analysis of *karma* (action) and bondage.

This unit explores the principles governing action in Advaita Vedânta, the causes of bondage, and the philosophical resolution leading to liberation. Advaita Vedânta, offers a profound analysis of *karma* (action) and bondage. Rooted in the teachings of the Upanisads and elaborated by Âdi Úankarâcârya (most influential systematiser of Advaita Vedânta), it explains the nature of action, its binding effects, and the ultimate means of liberation (*moksa*).

## 9.3 BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF ADVAITA VEDÂNTA

Before going to the discussion of the concept of *karma* it is important to understand the core concepts of Advaita Vedânta. The metaphysics of Advaita Vedânta centers on the relationship between Brahman (the Ultimate Reality) and Âtman (the individual self).

Advaita's metaphysical ideas are complex, which has led to the emergence of multiple schools within Advaita Vedânta, each offering nuanced interpretations. While followers of Úankara may differ on specific metaphysical details, they all uphold the core principle:

"*Brahma satya, jagat mithyâ, jîvo brahmaiva nâparah*"

("Brahman is real, the world is neither real nor unreal, and the individual self is none other than Brahman.")

The central idea of Advaita Vedânta is that Ultimate Reality is non-dual, meaning that the supreme reality (Brahman) and the particular self (Âtman) are essentially the same. All duality is ruled out by this philosophy, which maintains that ignorance (*avidyâ*), which conceals the actual nature of existence and maintains the illusion of multiplicity (*mâyâ*), is the cause of the seeming division between the self and the universe. According to this view, Brahman is the one, formless, all-pervading consciousness—*Sat–Cit–Ânanda* (Being–Consciousness–Bliss)—that, through the illusory power of *mâyâ*, appears as the universe. The âtman, when associated with the body–mind complex, reflects this same consciousness at the individual level. Liberation (*moksa*) is attained not through ritual or action, but through direct knowledge (*jñâna*) of this non-dual reality. This realisation dissolves the false identification with temporal existence and unveils the âtman's unity with Brahman. Essentially , it requires the dissolution of the ego and a deep awareness that Brahman consciousness alone underlies all phenomena—an insight that transcends mere intellectual understanding.

## 9.4 NON-DUALITY (ADVAITA) - THE CORE PRINCIPLE OF ADVAITA VEDÂNTA

One of the central principles of Advaita Vedânta is non-dualism (*Advaitavâda*). The Upanisads are the foundation of *Advaitavâda*, which was systematically developed by Œankara. *Advaitavâda* holds that Brahman is both transcendent and immanent, existing both inside and outside of the world. It is beyond conceptual thought (*nirvikalpa*), beyond speech (*anirvacanîya*), and indeterminate (*nirviœeca*). It cannot be comprehended or objectified by the mental faculties or senses. According to Œankara, the *jîvas* (individual selves) are not ultimately separate from Brahman. But because of ignorance (*avidyâ*), they experience themselves as distinct beings. It is only through proper knowledge (*jñâna*)—gained through scriptural study, reasoning, and deep contemplation—that one realizes the truth of non-duality. The world according to Œankara is not the absolute reality. This

realisation is not just intellectual. It is a transformative insight that dissolves the mistaken identity with the body-mind and reveals the self as Brahman.

Œankara, does not simply dismiss the world as false or illusory. Instead, he introduces a theory of "levels of reality", which helps explain our everyday experiences in relation to the Ultimate Truth:

1. *Pâramârthika satya* (Ultimate Reality):

This is the highest level of truth, where only Brahman exists—pure, non-dual, and beyond time, space, or individuality. At this level, there is no separation between the self (*âtman*) and the Absolute (Brahman).

2. *Vyâvahârika satya* (Empirical Reality):

This is the practical or everyday reality we live in, where distinctions between people, objects, actions, and experiences seem to exist. From this standpoint, the world appears real and functional. It is the realm in which we perform actions, follow ethics, and engage in spiritual practice.

3. *Prâtibhâsika satya* (Illusory Reality):

This refers to things that appear real but are later seen to be false—like dreams or mirages. This level is less emphasized but helps explain certain illusions we mistake for reality.

Once the *pâramârthika* truth is known, the empirical distinctions are seen for what they are, they might be useful but ultimately not real in the absolute sense. This means that it holds Brahman—the formless, changeless, infinite consciousness—as the one Ultimate Reality, which is both the source of all existence and beyond all distinctions.

## 9.5 THE CONCEPT OF *KARMA* AND ITS GENERAL FRAMEWORK

In general, the concept of *karma* would suggest performing a conscious deed with a driving force. Another way to think of it is as a volitional activity. All of these could be communicated by words, deeds, or thoughts. This further demonstrates that the mind is at the center, that the mind performs the duty of thinking, and that the speech (*vâk*) is formed by this thinking. When the term "*karma*" was first used in specialized usage, it had no ethical sense and was derived from the Sanskrit word "*karman*," which

means “act.” In Vedic writings from the ancient period, *karma* merely meant a sacrificial sacrifice and rite. But once Brahman priests developed the priestly theology of sacrifice over the ensuing years, ritual action began to be seen as having self-efficacy, separate from the gods. A cosmic ritual law governed the autonomous functioning of *karma* as a ritual. Therefore, in Indian philosophy, *karma* refers to the global causal rule that determines an individual’s future modes of existence based on their acts, whether they are good or bad. The ethical aspect of rebirth (*samsâra*) is symbolized by *karma*, a concept that is widely accepted in India’s religious traditions. Although the moral concept of *karma* states that “you reap what you sow,” it is not fatalistic. We still have the power to choose our current course of action and influence our future, even when our current circumstances are a result of prior choices.

The concept of *karma* is fundamental to Indian philosophy, although different schools have varied interpretations of it. In Advaita Vedânta, *karma* arises from ignorance (*avidyâ*), and liberation (*moksa*) is attained through the realization that the true Self (*âtman*) is none other than Brahman, untouched by action or its results. According to the Sânkhya and Yoga traditions, ignorance causes *karma* to bond the *puruca* (self) to the cycle of reincarnation; discriminative knowledge and disciplined practice are the means of achieving liberation. According to Nyâya and Vaiúesika, *karma* is a moral law that connects deeds to consequences and that real awareness and detachment are necessary for freedom. The Mîmâmsâ school places a strong emphasis on ritualistic behavior and holds that, independent of divine intervention, the act itself (*apûrva*) has the capacity to bring about the intended results. According to Buddhism, *karma* is deliberate action that feeds the cycle of rebirth; eliminating it requires moral behavior and mindfulness. Jainism emphasizes ascetic efforts to purify the soul and views *karma* as a delicate material entity that binds to it. On the other hand, the Cârvâka school emphasizes only the material and sensory experiences of the current life, denies reincarnation, and completely opposes *karma*. Despite these variations, the majority of schools maintain that moral behavior determines one’s experiences in the future and that breaking free from the cycle of *karmic* bondage is essential for liberation.

According to some Indian philosophies, individuals can change their lives by acting morally and learning the right things. We can still use our freedom to alter our future and work toward liberation, even though our birth may have been impacted by past *karma*. Úankara, in his commentary on the Brahma-sûtra, states that speech arises from the mind. The Upanisads also suggest that thought and speech are closely connected—what we think can be expressed in words, and our words reflect our thoughts. This means that harmful thinking can lead to negative *karma*. As the Buddha said, "You become what you think." Since speech originates in the mind, it follows that the root of *karma* lies in our thoughts.

## 9.6 ADVAITA VEDÂNTIN ANALYSIS OF *KARMA* AND BONDAGE

This unit examines the fundamental concept of *karma* and bondage (*bandha*) within Advaita Vedânta philosophy, exploring its manifestations, underlying causes, and the philosophical framework that explains human suffering and limitation.

### 9.6.1 *KARMA*

The idea of *karma*—the universal law that deeds (*karma*) result in consequences (*phala*)—is accepted by the Vedânta schools, including Advaita Vedânta. Advaita Vedânta claim, that *karma* is not a separate, self-governing entity. Rather, the fruits of *karma* are distributed by God (*Îúvara*). This implies that *Îúvara* makes sure that each individual gets the right outcomes in accordance with their actions. According to Vedânta, *Îúvara* is the wise principle that ensures justice and order in the universe by dispensing the results of karma. Since *karma* lacks sentience, it is unable to link deeds to their results on its own; only *Îúvara*, who is omniscient and impartial, is capable of this.

In Advaita Vedânta, *Îúvara* is ultimately not separate from Brahman, the Absolute Reality. However, *Îúvara* functions within the domain of *mâyâ*, the empirical or relative reality. From the highest standpoint (*pâramârthika*), Brahman is beyond action and *karma*,

but from the empirical standpoint (*vyâvahârika*), *Îúvara* plays a crucial role in ensuring the ethical and moral coherence of the world. According to Advaita Vedânta, the empirical or transactional world, or *mâyâ*, is where the law of *karma* functions. *Karma* is the idea that every action has repercussions, and that these repercussions influence an individual's experiences throughout their lives. An individual is bound to the cycle of birth and death (*samsâra*) by the consequences of their acts, whether they be good (*punya*) or bad (*pâpa*).

Advaita Vedânta classifies *karma* into three categories:

*1)* *Sañcita* (accumulated *karma* from previous lives). These *karmas* are like seeds in storage — they remain dormant until the conditions are right for them to manifest in future births. For instance an arrow still in the quiver — ready but not yet released.

*2)* *Prârabdha* means "begun" or "initiated." It is the portion of *sañcita karma* that has already started bearing fruit — it has shaped your current birth (body, life circumstances, etc.). For instance an arrow that has already been shot — it must hit its target.

3) *Âgâmi* (new *karma* created in this life). These *karmas* get added to the *sañcita* store if one remains unenlightened, or they may bear fruit in future lives. For instance an arrows being made now to be stored for future use.

One's present body and situation are shaped by *Prârabdha karma*, which creates the arena in which emancipation must be sought. As long as these *karmas* tie the self through the delusion of doership, bondage remains. But with self-knowledge, *Prârabdha* is the sole one that develops, *Âgâmi* stops, and *Sañcita* is annihilated. No new birth occurs at the end of *Prârabdha*, which results in *Videhamukti* (freedom after death), preceded by *Jîvanmukti* (liberation while living). Unaffected by false identity, a *Jñânî* goes through both. Thus, Advaita Vedânta sees *karma* as a strong law that governs the world of duality and individual experience. However, the liberating power of self-knowledge (*Brahmajñâna*), which exposes the true nature of the *Âtman* as non-dual Brahman, transcending all action and its consequences, finally transcends *karma*.

## 9.6.2 BONDAGE , CAUSE OF BONDAGE

Bondage (*bandha*) is one of the primary concerns that the Advaita Vedânta philosophy aims to address. This philosophical concept, while not primarily focused on physical suffering, recognizes bondage in various other forms—such as insecurity, mental anguish, anxiety, hatred, and jealousy. Vedântin bondage is essentially a spiritual experience rather than a material one. Bondage, according to Advaita Vedânta, is rooted in a profound sense of incompleteness and limitation rather than mere emotional turmoil. This internal deficiency gives rise to desires, which are not inherently detrimental but become enforceable when an individual's happiness relies on them being satisfied. Such bound urges are problematic because they are insatiable, tinged with sadness, and generate dependence on outside sources of happiness. Advaita Vedânta asserts that suffering comes not from events like failure or loss themselves, but from wrongly identifying with temporary experiences. Therefore, real liberation comes from changing how one views oneself rather than from changing the outside world.

Thus, bondage in Advaita Vedânta is primarily understood as an internal phenomenon rooted in ignorance (*avidyâ*) rather than mere physical constraints. In Advaita Vedânta, ignorance (*avidyâ*) is the root cause of bondage, not as mere lack of knowledge, but as a distorted perception that veils the true nature of reality. It causes the *jîva* to falsely identify with the body, mind, and ego—known as *adhyâsa*—leading to a sense of individuality and entrapment in *samsâra* (the cycle of birth and death). At the cosmic level, *mâyâ* is the force that creates the illusion of multiplicity, while *avidyâ* acts on the individual level, maintaining attachment to this illusion. Mâyâ has two powers: 1) *âvarana-úhakti* (veiling) that which obscures or conceals the unity of Brahman, hiding the true non-dual nature of reality. 2) *vikshepa-œhakti* (projection) that which projects or creates the appearance of a pluralistic world with apparent multiplicity and diversity. These two together obscure the unity of Brahman and

sustain the appearance of a pluralistic world. In Advaita Vedânta, the key to liberation (*moksa*) lies in true knowledge (jñâna)—not just intellectual comprehension, but a direct and transformative realisation of the non-duality of Âtman and Brahman. Liberation is achieved through the dissolution of false identification and the realization of one's true nature as Brahman. The knowledge of Absolute Brahman dissolves the illusion of *mâyâ*, revealing the self's true nature ( "*Aham Brahmâsmi*"- "I am Brahman."). Advaita Vedânta clearly states, "*Jñânât eva tu kaivalyam*"—liberation comes only through knowledge.

## 9.7 PRINCIPAL OF THE ACTION OF ADVAITA VEDÂNTA

Advaita Vedânta defines action (*karma*) as a part of the empirical world ruled by ignorance (*avidyâ*) rather than as inherent to the true Self (Âtman). As in Advaita Vedânta Âtman is non-different from Brahman. The Âtman is essentially actionless, a non-doer (*akartâ*) and non-enjoyer (*abhoktâ*), unaffected by the bodily and mental processes that only seem to act as a result of past *karmas*. Action contributes to mind purification and prepares the seeker for knowledge, but it cannot lead to liberation (*mokca*), which can only be attained through the direct realisation (*jñâna*) of non-duality. According to Advaita Vedânta, *mâyâ*, the cosmic illusion that conceals reality, is the source of even the sense of agency—the conviction that "I am the doer." Thus, it is recommended to practice *Niskâmakarma*, or acting without concern for the outcome, as a preparatory discipline which gradually dissolves ego and directs the seeker into self-knowledge. The liberated one (*jîvanmukta*) lives in the world acting impulsively, without ego or attachment, fully knowing that the Self is always free, unchanging, and beyond all action. In the end, with the dawn of self-realisation, all actions are understood to belong to the domain of illusion.

The relationship between action (*karma*) and bondage in Advaita Vedânta differs significantly from popular understandings of *karma* as mere cause and effect. In the Vedântin view, *karma* must be transcended to make way for knowledge, but what constitutes karma is not outward action but the feeling of doership. This distinction is fundamental because it shifts the

focus from external behavior to internal identification and attitude. Œankara makes it clear over and again that *karma* and self-knowledge are not integrated in Vedânta, claiming that they are as diametrically opposed as darkness and light. *Karma* in its binding sense is impossible when self-knowledge is present because one no longer regards oneself as the doer. Binding karma only works when self-knowledge is lacking, which is the state of ignorance. This realization makes it clear that, as opposed to the physical renunciation of action, the road of liberation entails the mental renunciation of the idea of doership.

According to Advaita Vedânta, as long as one retains a sense of doership and attachment to the fruits of action, *karma* functions as the law of cause and effect within the illusory realm of *mâyâ*, binding the individual self (*jîva)* to the cycle of rebirth. But in the end, *jñâna* (Self-knowledge), or the understanding of the Atman's non-dual unity with Brahman, triumphs against *karma*. For a freed being (*jîvanmukta*), an accumulation of past karma (*sañcita*) is "burnt," new *karma* (*âgâmi*) does not arise because doership is absent, and only the portion that is already producing fruit (*prârabdha*) endures till the end of the current life without creating internal binding. In the conclusion, it should be understood that for Advaita Vedânta bondage is not a real conflict in consciousness, but rather a kind of mistaken identity. Correcting this mistake and realizing one's actual nature as infinite, non-dual Brahman through *jñâna* is the path to liberation (*moksa*).



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q 1:** What is the core principle of Advaita Vedânta expressed in "*Brahma satya, jagat mithyâ, jîvo brahmaiva nâparah*"?

.....

**Q 2:** Explain the three categories of *karma* according to Advaita Vedânta.

.....

**Q 3:** According to Advaita Vedânta, who distributes the fruits of *karma* and why is this necessary?

a) *Karma* itself distributes its fruits

b) Îúvara (God) distributes the fruits because *karma* lacks sentience

c) Individual souls determine their own *karmic* results

d) The universe automatically balances *karmic* accounts

.....

**Q 4:** What are the three levels of reality (*satya*) described by Œankara in Advaita Vedânta?

.....

**Q 5:** True or False: According to Advaita Vedânta, bondage (*bandha*) is primarily a physical phenomenon rather than a mental or spiritual one.

.....

**Q 6:** What is the root cause of bondage according to Advaita Vedânta?

a) Past bad *karma*

b) Ignorance (*avidyâ*) leading to false identification

c) Physical suffering and illness

d) Attachment to material possessions

.....

**Q 7:** Explain the two powers of *mâyâ* mentioned in this unit.

.....

**Q 8:** According to Advaita Vedânta, what is the true nature of Âtman in relation to action?

a) Âtman is the ultimate doer of all actions

b) Âtman is actionless (*akartâ*) and non-enjoyer (*abhoktâ*)

c) Âtman performs only good actions

d) Âtman is bound by the consequences of actions

.....

**Q 9:** What happens to the three types of *karma* when self-knowledge (*jñâna*) is attained?

.....

**Q 10:** True or False: In Advaita Vedânta, *karma* and self-knowledge can work together simultaneously to achieve liberation.

.....



## 9.8 LET US SUM UP

- Advaita Vedânta is one of the essential schools of Vedânta Philosophy that asserts the ultimate oneness of reality, where the individual soul (Âtman) is fundamentally identical to the absolute reality (Brahman).
- The perceived duality and multiplicity of the world are due to *mâyâ*, an illusion veiling the true, non-dual nature of existence.
- The goal of life is liberation (*moksa*) achieved through self-knowledge (*jñâna*), realising the non-difference between Âtman and Brahman.
- Core principle: "*Brahma satya, jagat mithyâ, jîvo brahmaiva nâparah*" - Brahman is real, the world is neither real nor unreal, and the individual self is none other than Brahman.
- Three levels of reality: *Pâramârthika satya* (Ultimate Reality), *Vyâvahârika satya* (Empirical Reality), and *Prâtibhâsika satya* (Illusory Reality).
- *Karma* refers to conscious action with driving force, encompassing volitional activities through words, deeds, or thoughts.
- Three categories of *karma*: *Sañcita*, (accumulated karma from previous lives), *Prârabdha* (portion actively producing fruit in current life), and *Âgâmi* (new karma created in this life).
- *Îúvara* (God) distributes the fruits of *karma*, ensuring justice and order in the universe, as *karma* lacks sentience to link actions to results independently.
- Bondage (*bandha*) is primarily a psychic and spiritual experience manifesting as insecurity, mental distress, worry, hatred, and jealousy rather than physical suffering.
- Root cause of bondage is ignorance (*avidyâ*) leading to false identification with body-mind complex (*adhyâsa*).
- *Mâyâ* creates illusion of multiplicity through two powers: *Âvarana-úhakti* (veiling power) and *Vikshepa-œhakti* (projection power).
- Âtman is essentially actionless (*akartâ*) and non-enjoyer (*abhoktâ*), unaffected by bodily and mental processes.
- The sense of "I am the doer" arises from *mâyâ*, the cosmic illusion.

- *Niskâmakarma* (acting without attachment to results) serves as preparatory discipline for dissolving ego.
- *Karma* and self-knowledge are incompatible, like darkness and light.
- Liberation comes through *Jñâna* (Self-knowledge) - direct realisation of non-dual truth between Atman and Brahman.
- With self-knowledge: *Sañcita* is destroyed, *Âgâmi* ceases to arise, and only *Prârabdha* continues until death.
- Two states of liberation: *jîvanmukti* (liberation while living) and *videhamukti* (liberation after death).
- Liberation involves mental renunciation of doership rather than physical renunciation of action.
- The liberated being (*jîvanmukti*) acts spontaneously without ego or attachment, knowing the Self is always free and unchanging.
- Bondage is not a real defect in consciousness but mistaken identity that can be corrected through realising one's true nature as infinite, non-dual Brahman.



## 9.9 FURTHER READINGS

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## 9.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q. No. 1:** "Brahman is the Ultimate Reality, the world is neither true nor false, and the individual self is none other than Brahman." This fundamental teaching asserts that ultimate reality is non-dual, where Brahman (Ultimate Reality) and Âtman (individual soul) are essentially identical.

**Ans to Q. No. 2:**

- *Sañcita*: Accumulated *karma* from previous lives stored as potential consequences
- *Prârabdha* : The portion of Sanchita that is actively producing fruit in the current life, shaping one's present body and circumstances
- *Âgâmi*: New *karma* created through actions in this present life

**Ans to Q. No. 3:** b) *Îúvara* (God) distributes the fruits because *karma* lacks sentience. *Karma* is not a separate, self-governing entity. Since *karma* lacks sentience, it cannot link actions to their results independently. Only *Îúvara*, who is omniscient and impartial, ensures that each person receives appropriate outcomes according to their actions, maintaining justice and order in the universe.

**Ans to Q. No. 4:**

*1. Pâramârthika satya* (Ultimate Reality): The highest level where only Brahman exists—pure, non-dual, beyond time, space, or individuality.

*2. Vyâvahârika satya* (Empirical Reality): Practical everyday reality where distinctions between people, objects, and experiences appear to exist.

*3. Prâtibhâsika satya* (Illusory Reality): Things that appear real but are later seen to be false, like dreams or mirages.

**Ans to Q. No. 5:** False. Bondage in Advaita Vedânta is essentially a psychic and spiritual experience rather than a material one, manifesting as insecurity, mental distress, worry, hatred, and jealousy rather than physical suffering.

**Ans to Q. No. 6:** b) Ignorance (*avidyâ*) leading to false identification. Ignorance (*avidyâ*) is the root cause of bondage, causing the individual to falsely identify with the body-mind complex (*avidyâ*), leading to a sense of individuality and entrapment in *saCsâra*.

**Ans to Q. No. 7:**

- *Âvarana-úhakti* (Veiling Power): Obscures or conceals the unity of Brahman, hiding the true non-dual nature of reality
- *Viksepa-œhakti* (Projection Power): Projects or creates the appearance of a pluralistic world with apparent multiplicity and diversity

**Ans to Q. No. 8:** b) Âtman is actionless (*akartâ*) and non-enjoyer (*abhoktâ*). Âtman is essentially actionless and unaffected by bodily and mental processes. It is a non-doer and non-enjoyer, remaining unchanged despite apparent activities.

**Ans to Q. No. 9:** With self-knowledge *Sañcita karma* is destroyed or burnt, *Âgâmi karma* ceases to arise because there is no sense of doership, and only *Prârabdha karma* continues until the end of the current life without creating internal bondage. This leads to *jîvanmukti* (liberation while living) followed by *videhamukti* (liberation after death).

**Ans to Q. No. 10:** False. Œankara clearly states that *karma* and self-knowledge are not integrated in Vedânta and are as diametrically opposed as darkness and light. They cannot coexist—when self-knowledge is present, binding *karma* becomes impossible because one no longer regards oneself as the doer.



## 9.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

**(A) Very Short Questions:**

**Q. 1.** What does "*Brahma satya, jagat mithyâ, jîvo brahmaiva nâparah*" mean?

**Q. 2.** Name the three levels of reality according to Œankara.

**Q. 3.** What is the Sanskrit term for ignorance that causes bondage?

**Q. 4.** Who distributes the fruits of *karma* according to Advaita Vedânta?

**Q. 5.** What are the two powers of *mâyâ* mentioned in the text?

**Q. 6.** Define *Sañcita karma*.

**Q. 7.** What does "*akartâ*" mean in relation to Âtman?

**Q. 8.** What is the difference between *jîvanmukti* and *videhamukti*?

**Q. 9.** According to Advaita Vedânta, is bondage primarily physical or mental?

**Q. 10.** What is the meaning of "*adhyâsa*"?

**Q. 11.** Name the three categories of *karma* in Advaita Vedânta.

**Q. 12.** What does "*niskâmakarma* " refer to?

**Q. 13.** What is the root cause of the sense of doership according to Advaita?

**Q. 14.** Define *Prârabdha karma*.

**Q. 15.** What happens to *Âgâmi karma* when self-knowledge is attained?

**B) Short Questions** (Answer each question in about 150 words)

**Q. 1.** Explain the three levels of reality (*satya*) according to Œankara and provide examples of each level.

**Q. 2.** What is the role of *Îúvara* in distributing the fruits of karma according to Advaita Vedânta, and why is this necessary?

**Q. 3.** Describe the two powers of *mâyâ* (*âvarana-úhakti* and *viksepa-œhakti*) and explain how they create the illusion of multiplicity.

**Q. 4.** What is the difference between bondage as understood in Advaita Vedânta versus physical suffering, and what causes mental bondage?

**Q. 5.** Explain the concept of "*adhyâsa*" (false identification) and its role in creating the sense of individuality and bondage.

**Q. 6.** How does self-knowledge (*jñâna*) affect the three types of *karma* (*Sañcita, Prârabdha* and *Âgâmi*), and what are the stages of liberation that follow?

**C) Write short notes on** (Answer in about 150 words)

**a)** Advaita non dualism

**b)** Three levels of Reality

**c)** The three types of *karma*

**d)** *âvarana-úhakti* and *viksepa-œhakti*

**e)** Concept of *karma* in general

**f)** *jîvanmukti* and *videhamukti*

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

**Q. 1.** Discuss the three levels of reality (*Pâramârthika satya, Vyâvahârika satya,* and *Prâtibhâsika satya*) according to ŒaEkara's Advaita Vedânta. How do these levels help explain the relationship between Ultimate Truth and everyday experience?

**Q. 2.** Analyze the concept of *karma* in Advaita Vedânta, explaining the three categories (*Sañcita, Prârabdha* and *Âgâmi*) and their role in bondage. How does the attainment of self-knowledge affect each type of *karma*?

**Q. 3.** Examine the nature of bondage (*bandha*) in Advaita Vedânta philosophy. What distinguishes Vedântin bondage from physical suffering, and how does ignorance (*avidyâ*) create the illusion of limitation and separateness?

**Q. 4.** Critically evaluate Œankara's assertion that *karma* and self-knowledge are "as diametrically opposed as darkness and light." Discuss the principle of action in Advaita Vedânta and explain why liberation requires mental renunciation of doership rather than physical renunciation of action.

**Q. 5.** Explain the role of *mâyâ* and its two powers (*âvarana-úhakti* and *viksepa-œhakti*) in creating the illusion of multiplicity. How does this cosmic principle relate to individual ignorance (*avidyâ*) and the process of liberation in Advaita Vedânta?

**Q. 6.** Discuss the concept of "*adhyâsa*" (false identification) as the root cause of bondage in Advaita Vedânta. How does this misidentification with the body-mind complex lead to suffering, and what is the philosophical resolution that leads to liberation (*moksa*)?

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# UNIT 10: WHAT IS SADHANA

## UNIT STRUCTURE


10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2. Introduction

10.3. Its Meaning and Definitions

10.4. Its place in Philosophy

10.5. Distinctive Features

10.6. Different Stages

10.7. Different Forms

10.8. Let us sum up

10.9. Further Reading

10.10. Answer to check your progress

10.11. Model questions


## 10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- Define what is Sâdhanâ
- Understand the meaning of Sâdhanâ
- Determine the significance Kriyâyoga
- Know its place in Philosophy
- Understand its distinctive features
- Discuss different forms of Sâdhanâ
- Distinguish between negative and positive aspect of Sâdhanâ
- Explain the connections among different forms of Sâdhanâ

## 10.2 INTRODUCTION

Sâdhanâ is a spiritual practice which is a disciplined approach aimed at achieving spiritual goals and overcoming worldly attachments. In the *Purâna*, it is comprised of the techniques used to attain spiritual realisation or enlightenment. It is an ego-transcending spiritual practice in Indian religions. Sâdhanâ is practised for attaining detachment from worldly things

and it can be a goal of a Sâdhu or Sâdhaka. The person who practises sâdhanâ is called a Sâdhaka and what is aimed at by him is known as Sâdhya. Hence Sâdhanâ may be called journey and Sâdhya to be a destination. Constant efforts to achieve maximum level of perfection in all streams of life can be described as Sâdhanâ. Application of our mind, body and spirit in the pursuit of a spiritual goal is the most natural and efficient way to surrender the ego which will help us to find relief from suffering and attain liberation. Hence sâdhanâ refers to the practice with intention, awareness, and discipline for spiritual growth.

Sâdhanâ is that by which perfection (Siddhi) is attained and hence it is nothing but the instrument of perfection. Sâdhanâ includes all the religious practices and ceremonies that are helpful to the realisation of spiritual experience, and therefore may be regarded as the practical side of religion. It encourages the practitioner, Sâdhaka to use self-discipline in order to achieve power over the ego and maintain connection with universal oneness. The goal of Sâdhanâ is to achieve enlightenment, attain liberation from the cycle of birth and death, worship a deity, detach from worldly things, and achieve a higher vision of life. Karma-yoga, Bhakti-yoga and *Jñâna*-yoga are considered to be different forms of Sâdhanâ which will help one for attaining detachment from worldly things and thereby bondage becomes liberation.

## 10.3 ITS MEANING AND DEFINITION

The term Sâdhanâ comes from the Sanskrit root, *sâdh* which means 'to arrive at the goal', 'go straight to a goal' and thus it is a 'means to completion or perfection'. Sâdhanâ in the *Srimad-Bhagavadgitâ* refers to method or practice adopted to accomplish a specific goal. Without *Sâdhanâ* one cannot obtain the goal. *Sâdhanâ* corresponds to various goals: those who desire material enjoyment adopt the path of *karma* as their *sâdhanâ*, those who desire liberation adopt the path of *jñâna*, and those who aspire for the eternal loving service of Srikrishna adopt the path of *bhakti*, which involves the spiritual practices of hearing, chanting and so on. Thus, sâdhanâ may be said referring to practice or discipline, the method one adopts in order to obtain a specific goal (sâdhya).

Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* urged about the Kriyâyoga, an action-oriented type of yoga that needs to be undertaken for fixing or stilling of the changing states of mind which is the goal of yoga. Kriyâyoga is necessary for achieving that goal as a first step for the Sâdhaka. It has three aspects which are- Discipline (tapas), Study (svâdhyâya) and Dedication to God (Isvara-praGidhâna).

Sâdhanâ in Vedânta philosophy refers to 'effective means of attainment', 'religious or spiritual disciplines' such as *puja*, *yoga*, meditation, *japa*, fasting and austerity. It is sâdhanâ that refers to the 'means' of acquiring the knowledge of Brahman. Sankara seems to hold sadhana as a means or practice to achieve the end goal of Moksha. Râmânuja's ethics for attaining liberation refers to the 'seven-fold means to devotion' or the 'seven moral and spiritual disciplines' (*sâdhana-saptaka*) leading to devotion (*bhakti*) as means to liberation. The seven-fold moral and spiritual discipline (*sâdhana-saptaka*) are: discrimination (*viveka*), mental detachment (*vimoka*), practice (*abhyâsa*), action (*kriyâ*), virtues (*kalyâGa*), cheerfulness (*anavasâda*) and non-exultation (*anuddharca*).

Sâdhanâ in Hinduism, literally 'a means of accomplishing something', is an ego-transcending spiritual practice. It includes a variety of disciplines in Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Muslim traditions that are followed in order to achieve various spiritual or ritual objectives. *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali defines sâdhanâ in relation to abhyâsa and kriyâ, "Sâdhanâ is a discipline undertaken in the pursuit of a goal. Abhyâsa is repeated practice performed with observation and reflection. Kriyâ, or action, also implies perfect execution with study and investigation. Therefore, sâdhanâ, abhyâsa, and kriyâ all mean one and the same thing. A Sâdhaka, or practitioner, is one who skillfully applies...mind and intelligence in practice towards a spiritual goal."

A *sâdhan*â in Buddhism literally signifies to be a 'means of attainment' and is the way that tantric practitioners can become their chosen deities (Istadevata). *Sâdhanâs* provide step-by-step guidelines to imagine oneself as a *buddha*, inside and out, at both a visual and aesthetic level. Instructions are given in both prose and poetic form, and the poems are often attributed to highly realized authors and establish the ritual and

aesthetic mood through reiterating the goals of practice. Sâdhanâ in Jainism refers to the 'the practice of spiritual-exertion' which is also considered as one of the twelve Angas of Jainism.

emphasises on the priority of existence over essence. The main goal of existentialism is to establish the dignity of man as a conscious and active subject. However, the philosophical arguments offered by the existentialists asserting human dignity are varied and challenging. There are lot many differences within the trend itself. There is not a particular principle following which the exponents place their views. Rather, most of the existentialist philosophers deny the tag of existentialist. In a nutshell, the philosophers who talk about human predicament and individual authenticity are discussed under the umbrella of existentialism. Philosophers like Kierkegaard and Heidegger never accepted the tag of existentialist willingly. But their views made them get considered so. In brief, existentialism may be defined as a philosophical theory which enquires for categories of authenticity to understand human existence.

Clarifying the definition of existentialism Sartre says that there are two types of existentialism, theistic and atheistic. Theistic or the Christian existentialists include philosophers like Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Gabriel Marcel etc. The branch, to which Sartre and Martin Heidegger belong, is called atheistic existentialism that does not rely on the existence of God. Their common belief is that existence precedes essence or subjectivity must be the starting point. This is what they mean when they refer to the doctrine of existentialism.

## 10.4 ITS PLACE IN PHILOSOPHY

The term *Sâdhan*â literally means 'that by which something is performed' or more precisely 'means to an end'. In the sphere of religion, it is always used to indicate the essential preliminary discipline that leads to the attainment of the spiritual experience which is regarded as the *summum bonum*, the highest good or Siddhi, i.e., completion and perfection of existence. Sadhana is that by which 'Siddhi' or perfection is attained and hence it is nothing but the instrument of perfection. Sadhana includes all the religious

practices and ceremonies that are helpful to the realisation of spiritual experience, and therefore may be regarded as the practical side of religion. It is distinguished from the discussion of the theories of the relation of God to man and the universe constituting its theoretical aspect which belongs more or less to the province of philosophy. As has been said, all true philosophy culminates in the religious experience. Philosophy grows out of an experience which is more or less intuitive, and a philosophical system is an elaboration of the experience through reason. Reason can justify the experience, can at best show the experience to be consistent, but cannot yield the experience itself which transcends reason. Here we find the need for *sâdhan*â. It is sadhana which makes the realisation or the experience possible. The inadequacy of reason for such a task was perceived by Kantas in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, he uses the expression that 'this thought could not be realized'. Sâdhanâ yields us for the realisation of a thought. It appears that sadhana is something which makes realisation possible of what is merely apprehended by the theoretical reason as a regulative ideal.

Sâdhanâ aims at the attainment of a stage where the '*aham-idam'* division, the subject-object division disappears. The process is different in different schools of Indian philosophy- some emphasizing the subject factor whereas others insisting the object factor. But the ideal is the same- the transcendence of the dual bifurcation of Maya. Mere speculation cannot lead to this stage. The thinker and the thought, the subject and the object involved in all thinking, present a duality which is unbridgeable in the plane of reason. Reason can at best only reduce the distinction to some extent, but it fails to bridge over the gulf between the subject and object.

## 10.5 DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

The first important point of *sâdhan*â in Indian tradition is its all-comprehensiveness. All types of religious theories and all forms of religious practices have taken place in Hinduism. One cannot say easily whether Hinduism is polytheistic or monotheistic, pantheistic or theistic, superstitious and magical or thoroughly mystical and philosophical. It has no definite answer whether it is a religion of love or a religion of knowledge or a religion

of action. Because we find that the elements of all of them are within the compass of Hinduism. Attempting a systematic study of the general principles underlying the various forms of sâdhanâ seems to be a very difficult task since we find so much difference in the practices of the different religious sects and also in their basic theoretical principles.

The Hindu religion is based primarily and fundamentally on actual living experience, and its aim is realisation or *anubhuti* of the ultimate truth. Every other religion is also based on experience, but experience in Hinduism gets a special emphasis. A man's value in the sphere of religion is always judged by the quality and the intensity of his religious experience and the utility of the manifold practices always consists in helping the emergence of the spiritual experience. As soon as the experience is gained, man attains perfection and his mission in life becomes fulfilled.

The Hindu Scriptures emphasized the superiority and transcendence of the religious experience over the practices (*anusthânas*) including all acts of morality. The moral life is the indispensable preliminary discipline to thereligious person and this is the central teaching of all forms of Hindu Sadhana. *Yama* and *niyama* (control and regulation) including truthfulness, purity of mind and body, abstinence from actions causing the slightest pain toothers, chastity in thought and action, etc., have been prescribed as the very first disciplines that must be undergone by every Sâdhaka.

According to the Hindu, the course of sâdhanâ is only a history of the growth of the individual from the condition of little knowledge to omniscience, from a state of disharmony and discord to a state of harmony, balance and equilibrium, from a state of weakness and little energy to a stage of omnipotence, in short, from finiteness to infinitude. The aim of sâdhanâ is very well indicated by the prayer embodied in the mantra, "Lead me from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality." (*Asato mâ sad gamaya, tamaso mâ jyotirgamaya, mrityor mâmritam gamaya*.) The gradual unfolding of the latent capacities of man in the direction of knowledge, power and holiness is the function and purpose of Sadhana.

The religious consciousness not only formulates the conception of the Absolute Spirit, but also shows the affinity of the Absolute with the finite as spirit and prepares the way to their re-union. The element of matter which is still unreconciled in the finite human consciousness, and which makes him realize his finitude even in the presence of the idea of the Infinite, necessitates the course of discipline or sâdhanâ. It strengthens the finite consciousness step by step and gradually unfolds the infinitude that was unmanifested in the Sâdhaka. Sâdhanâ becomes completed when we find: (i) No foreign element, no matter remains as an unresolved contradiction or opposition. (ii) The spirit has established its sovereignty not by opposing itself to matter, but by resolving matter completely unto itself. Thus, sâdhanâ unfolds the infinity of the finite spirit and gives the finite spirit the possession of sovereignty and thereby makes it the *de facto* king which *de juro* it always is.

The ideal state of siddhi has been variously described from different points of view as perfect peace, balance, harmony, absolute fearlessness, freedom, liberation, etc. It is through sâdhanâ that we pass from disharmony to harmony, from multiplicity and variety to unity and oneness, and from a state of disturbance to a state of perfect peace. The whole course of sâdhanâ prescribed by the different religious sects of the Hindus is always an embodiment of the means and methods of attaining the stage of harmony and peace which is identical with freedom and liberation. The ideal of the Hindus is not total extinction or absorption or nothingness, but a stage of absolute peace, infinite bliss, perfect harmony, complete self-composure, self-control and absolute independence of the influence of everything forming the not-self.

Almost all the religious sects of the Hindus have emphasized the element of harmony. Pleasure may be said definitely connected with harmony, and the state of harmony is perhaps the best precondition of all revelation of truth. The *Bhagavadgitâ* tells us that 'Brahman is perfect harmony' and 'to acquire *yoga* is to acquire harmony'. There are different grades and degrees of harmony marking different stages in the growth of the individual Sâdhaka. The state of siddhi would indicate a stage of perfect harmony that comprises of bodily harmony, mental harmony and buddhic harmony.

The most striking feature of Hinduism is its elaborate discussion on the means and methods of spiritual realisation. Most other religions concern themselves with the nature of the spiritual experience and give only broad hints as to the way of its realisation. Spiritual realisation has been approached in a truly scientific spirit by the Hindus who consider sâdhanâ to be a science of spiritual discipline. They follow the method of experimental realisation and the utility of a practice has always been tested by its practical demonstration. In the *Chandogya Upanisad*, we find Svetaketu fasting for a fortnight in order to demonstrate the truth which was taught him by his father Uddalaka that the mind was constituted of solid food (anna). When he found that abstinence from solid food had made him unable to remember anything, he realized that the mind attained all its nutrition from solid food and hence it was constituted of the same. The Hindus have emphasized all of the aspects such as development of the physical, mental, intellectual, moral and intuitional sides of life i.e., all-round development which is necessary for genuine spiritual realisation.

We find that a direct experience of the Divine either in the aspect of Energy or of Love, or of Bliss, or of Pure Consciousness (cit), or of Pure Being (sat) is regarded as the goal of all spiritual discipline. Spiritual realisation is an affair between the individual and the Absolute, between whom nothing else intervenes. Plotinus rightly remarks that it is a 'flight of the Alone to the Alone'.

## 10.6 DIFFERENT STAGES

The marking of the stages in the course of sâdhanâ is tracing the history of the spiritual growth of man. Spiritual progress signifies the gradual unfolding of the element of divinity that is present to some extent in all human beings and the corresponding elimination or transformation of the animal side of their nature. The ideal of spiritual progress or siddhi refers to a state when the whole of one 'nature becomes completely divinized. It is clear that Liberation in Indian tradition is a definite stage of progress in the life of the individual. It is not acquired as an object different from himself, but is a state of the subject himself that is attained gradually through the development

of his whole nature. The element of divinity is to be acquired by the spirit through innumerable successive births until the attainment of siddhi.

The growth of divinity presupposes the elimination of animality and thus Purification forms the essential preliminary to all illumination. All religious systems have given great emphasis on this aspect of purification. Sadhana really begins with purificatory discipline. The awakening of the higher self-forms the initial step in the course of Sadhana. So long as the higher self is not recognized, the element of divinity not 'awakened', there can be no real desire and hankering for spiritual progress.

Purificatory discipline begins with regulated and methodical course of actions. The life of control (samyamana) begins with the life of regulation (niyamana). If the lower self is accustomed to submit the demands of every impulse and passion, it cannot be controlled and dominated by the higher self. The higher self merely imposes method and regularity on the usual actions of the lower self and does not at once control them. However, control is gradually acquired through regulation; the lower self-submits itself unconsciously to the direction of the higher self. The higher self-gains some amount of authority over the lower self when the life of control is established through regulated action. A higher stage is reached when the self feels its complete detachment from its lower nature as well as realizes that it does nothing and directs none to do anything. The self feels that the lower nature is not a part of itself and makes it different from that just as the owner is different from his residing house.

This isolation of the higher self and the corresponding elimination of the lower self leads to *samadarsana* or perception of the equality in all things. It is the lower nature that is responsible for all division and difference. The Pure Cit, the Pure Self which is all-luminous is all-pervading and the same everywhere. So long as the connection with the lower nature is not perceived to be illusory, and the Pure Cit or the Self is not recognized to be the truth, perception of inequalities and differences (visamadarsana) remains. The Absolute Self is Perfect Synthesis or Harmony that is absolutely changeless and the same everywhere. The perception and attainment of this Highest Harmony as well as the steadiness of this attainment lead one to an end of the course of Sadhana.

The course of this development has been viewed from various standpoints. It is a history to be considered as follows:(i) how the higher self or the element of divinity gradually takes possession of and subdues the lower self until it is eliminated altogether ; (ii) how the dependence of the subject on the object is gradually lessened until finally the object merges entirely in the subject ; (iii) how disharmony is lessened until it disappears altogether ; (iv) how contradictions are more and more resolved into higher and higher syntheses until all are resolved in the Highest ; (v) how differences are gradually merged in the One, unchanging, identical Absolute. It appears that sadhana involves a struggle through which siddhi is attained, and all struggle presupposes an alien element to be overcome. This resolving or overcoming of the alien element is common to all the conceptions.

From another standpoint, sâdhanâ may be regarded as the attempt at bridging over the gulf between our surface consciousness and the vast expansive region of consciousness which is lying behind the superficial states of consciousness. Isolation and division or specialization and distinction characterize surface-consciousness that yields us only partial views of things. Sadhana in Indian tradition has a spiritual experience in its goal which is not a partial and one-sided realisation of the intellect, feeling or will. It is the realisation by the entire individual through the whole dimension of his existence. A man can have such an experience if he can dive into the serene and transparent lake of Infinite Consciousness underlying the stream of surface-consciousness.

## 10.7 DIFFERENT FORMS OF SÂDHANÂ

Sâdhanâ begins with the consciousness of the existence of some Supreme Power and it is a conscious union with the Absolute which is essential to the realisation of the *summum bonum* of life. This Supreme Power has sometimes been regarded as the Higher Self of man himself and not any foreign power to him. Thus, sâdhanâ in Indian tradition means the conscious effort at unfolding the latent possibilities of the individual self. The conscious urge of the finite until it realizes its infinitude may be called desire for liberation (mumuksutva) which forms the unmistakable first step in the course of sâdhanâ.

### 10.7.1 Divisions of Sâdhanâ

Sâdhanâ may broadly be divided into two important phases: (1) negative and (2) positive. These two sides are clearly marked in every important line of sâdhanâ. The negative side is commonly referred to as vairâgya (desirelessness), while the positive is designated to be abhyâsa (repeated practice). The negative side represents the elimination of attachment to everything finite, while the positive aspect helps to bring out the element of infinitude in the vacuum created by the negative phase of sâdhanâ. The negative aspect is only preparatory and creates the proper field for the positive sâdhanâ. They are complementary aspects which together constitute the entire field of sâdhanâ. These two aspects are expressed in Vyasa's Commentary on the *Yoga Sutras* which runs as: 'The stream of consciousness flows both ways- towards goodness as well as towards evil'.

The negative side is illustrated in the Jñâna-mârga by such preparatory disciplines as discrimination of the permanent and the transitory, indifference to pleasure of every kind either in this world or in the next, constant perception of and reflection on the sorrows attending birth, death, disease and old age. This negative attitude may be expressed when the Bhagavadgitâ describes broadly as absence of pleasure in the company of worldly people (aratirjanasamsadi). Nothing worldly and finite can yield pleasure to one who is in search after the Infinite.

The positive aspect is limited to *sravana* (hearing the sacred texts and understanding their meaning or arthânusandhâna), *manana* (reflection and ratiocination or tattvânusandhâna) and *nididhyâsana* (constant meditation on the conclusions established by ratiocination). This is summed up in what the Bhagavadgitâ calls- constant living in things spiritual (adhyâtmajñânanityatvam). If the negative phase of removing all obstacles is completely attained, sravana alone is competent for the acquisition of truth. Great emphasis has been laid upon the negative aspect of sâdhanâ, not only by all the different sects of the Hindus, but by other religions of the world.

The Bhakti line of sâdhanâ does not give much emphasis on the negative phase and regards vairâgya or desirelessness not to be more helpful towards spiritual realisation. Preparatory disciplines are not only many and multifarious, but they are here more obligatory than in other forms of sâdhanâ. It may be stated that the division into the positive and the negative phases in the Bhakti line of sâdhanâ cannot strictly be maintained. The negative line of sâdhanâ does not necessarily precede the positive one. Love of God is the one thing that is essential, and indifference towards other things (vairâgya) is not to be sought separately. Trisnâtyâga (desirelessness) comes as a consequence of the love of God. According to the Bhakti-mârga, it is incorrect trying to drive out things from the mind. If we fill up the mind with God, automatically other things disappear. This is the direct method of getting rid of worldly things and objects and hence of realizing God.

The division into the positive and the negative aspect of sâdhanâ is evident in the Pâtanjala-Yoga. Pratyâhâra (withdrawing from things other than the object of meditation) forms the negative step, on the other hand, dhâranâ (concentration), dhyâna (meditation) and samâdhi (ecstasy) constitute the positive aspect. The negative aspect precedes the positive aspect and prepares the vacuum that is to be filled up by the positive one. We clearly find that there is a methodological difference of it with the Bhakti-mârga. The Bhakti school holds that the reciting of the name of God removes all obstacles whereas according to Patanjali, obstacles are to be removed first through yama, niyama, âsana, prânâyama as well as pratyâhâra, and preparation is to be achieved before the practice of dhâranâ and dhyâna.

### 10.7.2 Principles of divisions of sadhana

There may be another principle of division that is closely connected with the former one. Sadhana has an exoteric and an esoteric, a bahiranga and an antaranga aspect. The bahiranga aspect

is only preparatory and is rather remote from the spiritual experience while the antaranga sâdhanâ is very near to and closely intimate with anubhava or experience. The antaranga sâdhanâ of almost all schools is dhyâna. It is nididhyâsana with the Vedantist; it is dhruvasmriti or smarana (constant memory of God) with Ramanuja; it is dhyâna and samâdhi with Patanjali; it is loving communion and blessed relationship with God, according to Sri Caitanya. It appears that dhyâna or meditation on the Absolute or on the identity of the individual and the Absolute is regarded as the immediate means to the end. All other processes are merely helpful towards dhyana. In the Vedânta, the disciplines of desirelessness, and self-control also help to prepare the body and the mind for dhyana. In the Pâtanjala-Yoga, yama and niyama (self-control), âsana (bodily posture) prânâyama (regulation of breath), pratyâhâra and dhâranâ (withdrawal and concentration) are all remote processes leading up to dhyâna which directly yields samâdhi.

### 10.7.3 Tripartite Division

There may be a tripartite division from another standpoint. In the *Vedas*, we find the division into the *Karma-kânda*, the *Upâsana-kânda* and the *Jñânakânda*, corresponding respectively to the *Samhitâs*, the *Brâhmanas* and the *Upanisads*. The division of sâdhanâ into Karmamârga, Bhakti-mârga and Jñâna-mârga has been adopted generally. The Bhagavad Gita openly speaks of two divisions—Karma and Jñâna, instead of three. Sometimes the Vedas also are said to have two important branches only—Karma and Jñâna. But this bipartite division does notin any way conflict with the tripartite one. Bhakti or Upâsana comes under Karma and is not always given a separate place. The *Astângayoga* of Patanjali, all the Vaisnava schools, the *Tântrika* and *Pâsupata* forms of sâdhanâ, and the sacrificial forms of sâdhanâ as prescribed in the Vedas would all come under Karma. Under Jñâna, we have the Sâmkhya and theVedânta forms of sâdhanâ.

Three distinct stages among the various forms of Sadhana may be pointed out. The Vedic sacrifices form the first stage. The Gita speaks of these as dravya-yajna (sacrifice of material things and objects). Here God is conceived of as the Almighty Power who is propitiated with the sacrifice of animals and material objects. In the second stage, the stage of Upasana, mental sacrifice is added unto the material and we find that the sacrificial objects, the materials of worship, the flawlessness of the process itself, do not count so much as the feeling of reverence or worship. The bhava or the bhakti(devotion) becomes the most important element in worship. God is no longer the Almighty Power that merely governs, but He is now sought as the Holiest of the Holies and as Perfect Love who is infinitely compassionate towards His children and who resides in the bosom of their hearts. Now the offering is love that establishes relationship between the worshipper and the worshipped. This is bhajana or upâsana, the essence of Bhakti-yoga. This is the basis of sâdhanâ advocated and elaborated in the Purâna Literature.

In the last and the highest stage, we find *vicara* and *jñâna* occupying the most prominent place. This is spoken of as *jñâna-yajna* in the *Bhagavadgitâ*, and is said to be superior to all other forms of worship. Here the externality of God is replaced by internality and philosophy becomes the highest form of religion, and the constant meditation of the Absolute with a view to its realisation becomes the chief element in the course of spiritual discipline.

These three stages give us three different conceptions of God, viz. God as the Almighty Power, God as the Supreme Person with whom we can enter into relationship of love, and God as the Self. While primitive religions mostly belong to the first type, and the higher religions ofother countries belong mostly to the second, Hinduism has elements of all of these three.

The three great forms of sâdhanâ, Jñâna, Yoga and Bhakti are not arbitrary divisions but based on important principles. Sâdhanâ may proceed by emphasizing the subject or by emphasizing the

object. The object-factoris emphasized by the Bhakti schools, while the subject by the Jñâna (Upanishads) and Yoga schools. The Yoga system, again, gives primacy to will, and the development of the subject is sought to be attained through the education of the will.

One can understand the proper value of the different forms of sâdhanâ, if one considers the respective contributions of each towards the development of the Sâdhaka for the attainment of his goal. Karma, Bhakti and Jñâna are not to be regarded strictly as independent forms of sâdhanâ in the sense that only one of them is sufficient for the attainment of the goal. These three are intimately connected with one another, and the co-operation of all of them is necessary for the realisation of the ideal.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q 1:** What is the etymological meaning of Sâdhanâ?

.....

**Q 2:** What is Sadhana?

.....

**Q 3:** What are the three aspects of Kriyâyoga?

.....

**Q 4:** What do you mean by 'Sâdhana-Saptaka'?

.....

**Q 5:** Distinguish between Negative and Positive aspect of Sâdhanâ.

.....

**Q 6:** What are the distinctive features of Sâdhanâ?

.....

**Q 7:** What do you mean by Jñâna-Yajna in the Bhagavadgitâ?

.....

**Q 9:** What are the three great forms of Sâdhanâ?

.....

**Q 10:** Fill in the banks:

(a) The word 'sâdh' means ——.

(b) Yoga Sutra is a work of ——.

(c) The seven-fold moral and spiritual discipline is known as ——

(d) —— tells us that 'Brahman is perfect harmony'.

(e) Karma, Bhakti and Jñâna are not to be considered as —— forms of Sâdhanâ.

**Q 11:** Distinguish between Bahiranga and Antaranga aspect of Sâdhanâ.

.....



## 10.8 LET US SUM UP

- Sâdhanâ refers to the practice with intention, awareness, and discipline for spiritual growth which will help us to find relief from suffering and attain liberation.
- Karma-yoga, Bhakti-yoga and *Jñâna*-yoga are considered to be different forms of Sâdhanâ which will help one to attain spiritual realisation or enlightenment.
- Kriyâyoga is an action-oriented type of yoga having three aspects- Discipline (tapas), Study (svâdhyâya) and Dedication to God (Isvara-praGidhâna).
- Sâdhanâ strengthens the finite consciousness step by step and gradually unfolds the infinitude that was unmanifested in the Sâdhaka
- The distinctive features of Sâdhanâ are its all-comprehensiveness, harmony, spiritual realisation, unity and oneness, aiming at perfect peace or liberation etc.
- The marking of the stages in the course of Sâdhanâ is tracing the history of the spiritual growth of man. Spiritual progress signifies the gradual unfolding of the element of divinity.
- Sâdhanâ may be regarded as the attempt at bridging over the gulf between our surface consciousness and the vast expansive region of consciousness.
- The negative aspect of Sâdhanâ is commonly referred to as vairagya (desirelessness), while the positive aspect is designated to be abhyâsa (repeated practice).

- There is another division of Sâdhanâ that it has an exoteric and an esoteric, a bahiranga and an antaranga aspect.
- Karma, Bhakti and Jñâna are intimately connected with one another and the co-operation of all of them is necessary for the realisation of perfect peace.



## 10.9 FURTHER READINGS


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## 10.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q. No. 1:** The etymological meaning of sâdhanâ is a means to arrive at the goal or go straight to a goal.

**Ans to Q. No. 2:** Sâdhanâ is a spiritual practice which is a disciplined approach aimed at achieving spiritual goals and overcoming worldly attachments. It encompasses the techniques used to attain spiritual realisation or enlightenment and it is an ego-transcending spiritual practice.

**Ans to Q. No. 3:** The three aspects of Kriyâyoga are- Discipline (tapas), Study (svâdhyâya) and Dedication to God (Isvara-praGidhâna).

**Ans to Q. No. 4:** Sâdhana-saptaka means seven-fold ways to devotion which leads to liberation and these seven moral and spiritual

disciplines are: discrimination (viveka), mental detachment (vimoka), practice (abhyâsa), action (kriyâ), virtues (kalyâGa), cheerfulness (anavasâda) and non-exultation (anuddharca).

**Ans to Q. No. 5:** The negative aspect of sâdhanâ is commonly referred to as vairâgya (desirelessness), while the positive aspect is designated to be abhyâsa (repeated practice). The negative aspect represents the elimination of attachment to everything finite, while the positive aspect helps to bring out the element of infinitude in the vacuum created by the negative phase of sâdhanâ.

**Ans to Q. No. 6:** The distinctive features of sâdhanâ are its all-comprehensiveness, harmony, spiritual realisation, multiplicity and variety to unity and oneness, aiming at perfect peace or liberation from a state of disturbance, means and methods of attaining freedom and liberation.

**Ans to Q. No. 7:** Jñâna, Yoga and Bhakti are three great forms of sâdhanâ.

**Ans to Q. No. 8:** The level of critical examination and proper knowledge is the last and highest stage among the various forms of sâdhanâ. Here we find vicara and jnana occupying the most prominent place and this is said to be jñâna -yajna in the Bhagavadgitâ. It is said to be superior to all other forms of worship. Here the externality of God is replaced by internality and the constant meditation of the Absolute with a view to its realisation becomes the chief element in the course of spiritual discipline.

**Ans to Q. No. 9:** (a) 'To arrive at the goal'

(b) Patanjali

(c) Sâdhana-Saptaka

(d) Bhagavad-Gitâ

(e) Independent

**Ans to Q. No. 10:** Bahiranga is an exoteric aspect while antaranga is an esoteric aspect. The bahiranga aspect of sâdhanâ is only preparatory and is rather remote from the spiritual experience on the other hand, the antaranga aspect is very near to and closely intimate with anubhava or experience.



## 10.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

**(A) Very Short Questions:**

**Q. 1.** Who is known as a Sâdhaka?

**Q. 2.** What do you mean by Kriyâyoga?

**Q. 3.** What is spiritual realisation?

**Q. 4.** Define Esoteric Sâdhanâ.

**Q. 5.** What does the negative aspect of Sâdhanâ represent?

**B. Short Questions: (Write in about 100-150 words)**

**Q. 1.** How does Patanjali define Sâdhanâ?

**Q. 2.** When does Sâdhanâ become completed?

**Q. 3.** What is the role of Purificatory discipline in Sâdhanâ?

**Q. 4.** What is the tripartite division of Sâdhanâ?

**Q. 5.** What are the three distinct stages among the various forms of Sâdhanâ?

**C. Long Questions: (Write in about 300-500 words)**

**Q. 1.** Give a brief estimate on the meaning and definitions of Sâdhanâ.

**Q. 2.** How do you analyse the distinctive features of Sâdhanâ? Discuss.

**Q. 3.** Explain different stages of Sâdhanâ.

**Q. 4.** Give an account of various forms of Sâdhanâ.

**Q. 5.** Do you consider Karma, Bhakti and Jñâna as independent forms of Sâdhanâ? Discuss.

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# UNIT 11: KARMA YOGA OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

## UNIT STRUCTURE


11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Understanding Indian Philosophy: A Brief Overview

11.4 The Concept of Karma in Indian Thought

11.5 Karma and Dharma

11.6 What Is Karma Yoga?

11.7 The Goal of Karma Yoga

11.8 Karma Yoga in Indian Tradition

11.9 Sankhya-Yoga System

11.10 Karma Yoga in the Bhagavad Gita and Indian Philosophy

11.11 Context of the Gita

11.12 Key Verses on Karma Yoga

11.13 Nishkama Karma

11.14 Modern Interpretations of Karma Yoga

11.15 Karma Yoga in Contrast with Other Yogas

11.16 Relevance of Karmayoga in Contemporary Life

11.17 Conclusion

11.18 Let Us Sum Up

11.19 Further Readings

11.20 Answer to Check Your Progress

11.21 Model Questions


## 11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- Know the core concepts and classification of Indian philosophy, including the notions of karma, dharma, samsara, and moksha.
- Define karma and explain its three types, sanchita, prarabdha, and kriyamana as they relate to moral causation and rebirth.

- Know to comprehend the meaning of Karma Yoga and its emphasis on selfless action and detachment from results.
- Analyse the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita on Karma Yoga, especially the concept of nishkama karma as taught by Krishna to Arjuna.
- Know how to evaluate the ethical foundations of Karma Yoga based on duty, non-attachment, and universal responsibility.
- Know how to compare Karma Yoga with Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga in terms of their respective paths to liberation.
- Analyse the contemporary relevance of Karma Yoga in promoting mental well-being, ethical living, and spiritual growth in everyday life.

## 11.2 INTRODUCTION

Indian philosophy is a vast and intricate tradition that encompasses multiple schools of thought, each offering unique perspectives on life, existence, and the path to liberation. Central to many of these systems is the concept of karma, or action, which forms the foundation for various spiritual paths. Among these, Karma Yoga, the path of selfless action, holds a significant place, particularly within the Vedantic tradition and its profound articulation in the Bhagavad Gita.

Karma Yoga, as described in Indian philosophy, emphasises performing one's duties without attachment to the outcomes. It teaches that right action, when done without selfish desires or expectations, leads not to bondage but to spiritual freedom (*moksha*). This path is especially relevant for individuals engaged in worldly life, offering a way to integrate spiritual discipline with daily responsibilities.

The Bhagavad Gita, a foundational text in Indian spiritual literature, provides the most systematic exposition of Karma Yoga. In a dialogue between Lord Krishna and the warrior Arjuna, Krishna instructs Arjuna to act according to his dharma (duty) without being swayed by success or failure. This approach, known as nishkama karma (desireless action), fosters inner purity, mental equanimity, and ultimately, self-realisation.

Karma Yoga thus unites ethical conduct, spiritual awareness, and philosophical insight. It encourages individuals to act sincerely and responsibly, yet with detachment, recognizing that the fruits of action are not theirs to control. This path transforms everyday life into a spiritual journey, bridging the gap between material involvement and inner liberation.

In essence, Karma Yoga provides a practical and profound method for achieving spiritual growth through action. Rooted in Indian philosophical traditions and vividly brought to life in the Bhagavad Gita, it remains a timeless guide for living with purpose, balance, and transcendence.

## 11.3 UNDERSTANDING INDIAN PHILOSOPHY: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Indian philosophy, known as *Darshana* in Sanskrit—which translates to "vision" or "insight"—is one of the world's oldest and most profound philosophical traditions. It encompasses a wide spectrum of metaphysical, ethical, and spiritual ideas that have evolved over thousands of years. At its core, Indian philosophy seeks to understand the nature of reality, the self, the universe, and the means to attain ultimate liberation (*moksha*).

The Indian philosophical tradition is broadly classified into two main categories: Astika (orthodox) and Nastika (heterodox). The distinction lies in the acceptance of the Vedas, the ancient sacred texts of India. Astika systems regard the Vedas as authoritative and foundational, while Nastika systems reject their authority.

The six Astika (orthodox) systems of Indian philosophy are:

1. **Nyaya** – A system focused on logic and epistemology. It emphasizes valid means of knowledge (*pramanas*), such as perception, inference, comparison, and testimony.
2. **Vaisheshika** – A metaphysical school that explains the universe through categories like substance, quality, and motion. It proposes an atomic theory of matter.
3. **Sankhya** – A dualistic philosophy distinguishing between *Purusha* (consciousness) and *Prakriti* (matter). It posits that liberation is achieved by realizing the separation of the self from material nature.

4. **Yoga** – Closely aligned with Sankhya, Yoga, especially as codified by Patanjali, emphasizes mental discipline, ethical practices, and meditation as means to attain spiritual liberation.

5. **Purva Mimamsa** – This school is primarily concerned with the interpretation of Vedic rituals and duties. It emphasizes karma (ritual action) as essential to maintaining cosmic order.

6. **Vedanta –** Literally meaning "the end of the Vedas," Vedanta focuses on metaphysical inquiry into the nature of the self and Brahman (the Absolute). It builds on the Upanishads and is considered the philosophical culmination of Vedic thought.

The Nastika (heterodox) schools include Buddhism, Jainism, and Charvaka. These systems offer alternative views and critiques of Vedic authority and propose different metaphysical and ethical frameworks. For example, Buddhism emphasizes the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, while Jainism centres on non-violence (*ahimsa*) and self-discipline for the liberation of the soul.

Despite their diversity, nearly all Indian philosophical systems share a common conceptual framework built around key notions:

- **Karma** – the law of moral causation, where every action has consequences.
- **Samsara** – the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth governed by karma.
- **Moksha** – liberation from samsara, the ultimate goal of spiritual life.
- **Dharma** – righteous duty or moral order that sustains individual and cosmic harmony.

**Karma Yoga**, as a spiritual discipline, is deeply embedded in this shared worldview. It aligns with the ideas of karma and dharma and offers a practical approach to attaining moksha through selfless action. By performing one's duties without attachment to outcomes, an individual can purify the mind and transcend the cycle of samsara.

In this way, Karma Yoga stands as a bridge between philosophical theory and lived practice within the vast and profound tradition of Indian philosophy.

## 11.4 THE CONCEPT OF KARMA IN INDIAN THOUGHT

The term *karma* originates from the Sanskrit root *k[*, meaning "to do" or "to act." In its most basic sense, karma refers to any kind of action or deed, physical, verbal, or mental. However, in Indian philosophical discourse, karma carries a much deeper and more significant meaning. It is understood as the law of moral causation, signifying that every action has consequences. This principle is not merely limited to observable cause and effect in the physical realm but extends to moral and spiritual consequences that transcend a single lifetime.

Karma is intricately linked with the doctrines of rebirth (*punarjanma*) and liberation (*moksha*). According to Indian philosophical systems such as Vedanta, Sankhya, and Yoga, as well as Jainism and Buddhism, every sentient being undergoes a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth known as *samsara*. It is karma that propels the soul (*jiva*) from one life to another. Good actions produce merit (*punya*), while negative actions produce demerit (*papa*), both of which determine the conditions of future lives.

Karma is classified into three main categories:

1. **Sanchita Karma**: This is the accumulated karma from all previous lives. It is the vast storehouse of karmic imprints that have not yet borne fruit. These karmas remain dormant until they are activated.
2. **Prarabdha Karma**: This is the portion of sanchita karma that is currently bearing fruit in the present life. It is considered responsible for the circumstances one is born into, such as one's body, family, social status, and significant life experiences.
3. **Kriyamana Karma**: Also known as *agami karma*, these are the actions that one performs in the present life. Kriyamana karma actively contributes to future sanchita karma and can influence one's future incarnations.

Understanding karma is essential in Indian spiritual thought because it establishes moral responsibility and provides a rational explanation for the apparent inequalities and suffering in life. It also reinforces the idea that

through conscious action, individuals can shape their destiny and work toward liberation.

## 11.5 KARMA AND DHARMA

Karma must be understood in close conjunction with dharma, another foundational concept in Indian philosophy. Dharma can be translated as righteousness, duty, moral law, or ethical conduct. It signifies the principle that sustains cosmic and social order. While karma refers to action, dharma is the guiding principle behind rightful action.

For karma to serve as a path to spiritual growth and liberation, it must be in harmony with one's dharma. Actions performed according to dharma purify the mind and lead to spiritual elevation, whereas actions performed out of selfishness or ignorance create bondage. Dharma varies according to age, caste, gender, profession, and life circumstances, known as svadharma, or one's own duty.

Thus, karma aligned with dharma becomes karmic yoga, a spiritual discipline, while karma driven by desire, ego, or ignorance binds the individual to samsara.

## 11.6 WHAT IS KARMA YOGA?

Karma Yoga, or the "Yoga of Action," is one of the four classical paths to spiritual realisation in Indian philosophy. The other three are:

- **Jnana Yoga -** the path of knowledge, which involves deep inquiry and realisation of the Self through discrimination and contemplation.
- **Bhakti Yoga -** the path of devotion, which centres on love and surrender to a personal deity.
- **Raja Yoga -** the path of meditation and control of the mind, as outlined in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras.

Karma Yoga is distinct in that it does not require renunciation of worldly life but instead teaches spiritual liberation through active engagement with the world, provided that actions are performed with the right attitude. This right attitude is defined by two key principles:

1. **Selflessness -** Performing actions without selfish desires or personal gain.
2. **Detachment from the Results -** Not being emotionally entangled in the success or failure of one's actions.

The essence of Karma Yoga lies in transforming ordinary actions into acts of spiritual discipline by surrendering the results to the Divine or the Higher Self. This path encourages individuals to carry out their social and moral responsibilities diligently while maintaining inner equanimity. Karma Yoga is not a call to passive resignation, but to active participation without egotistical attachment.

## 11.7 THE GOAL OF KARMA YOGA

The ultimate goal of Karma Yoga is not material success or even moral perfection, but **spiritual liberation** (*moksha*). The practitioner seeks to transcend the limitations of the ego, which is the source of bondage, and realize the Atman (the true Self), which is eternal and identical with Brahman (the Supreme Reality).

Two key concepts in this pursuit are:

- **Phala-tyaga** – Renunciation of the fruits of action.
- **Nishkama Karma** – Desireless or non-attached action.

According to Karma Yoga, it is not the action itself that binds, but the attachment to its outcomes. When actions are performed with desire or expectation, they generate karmic consequences and reinforce the ego. But when actions are performed selflessly and offered to the Divine, they cease to bind and instead purify the mind (*chitta shuddhi*), preparing it for higher realisation.

Thus, Karma Yoga turns daily life into a sacred offering and a means of self-realisation. Through this path, individuals can maintain spiritual balance amidst worldly duties, leading ultimately to freedom from the cycle of birth and death.

In conclusion, Karma Yoga is a dynamic spiritual path that harmonizes action and detachment, duty and devotion, worldliness and transcendence. It offers a way to spiritual freedom not by renouncing life, but by sanctifying it.

## 11.8 KARMA YOGA IN INDIAN TRADITION

The origins of Karma Yoga can be traced back to the Vedic period, which marks the earliest phase of Indian religious and philosophical thought. During this era, the central focus was on ritualistic action-particularly the performance of yajnas (sacrifices). These yajnas were elaborate ceremonies conducted by priests (Brahmins) to invoke divine powers and ensure material prosperity, social order, and cosmic balance. The Rg Veda, the oldest of the Vedas, contains numerous hymns dedicated to gods such as Indra, Agni, and Varuna, emphasising offerings and invocations as a means to obtain blessings and rewards.

However, these actions were primarily external and aimed at fulfilling material desires-be it wealth, progeny, or victory in battles. The concept of karma during this phase was not yet moralized in the sense seen in later philosophical systems. Action was more of a ritual necessity rather than a tool for inner transformation or liberation.

As Indian thought progressed, particularly during the later Vedic period, a significant shift occurred with the emergence of the Upanishads-the philosophical culmination of Vedic literature. The Upanishads began to question the ultimate efficacy of external rituals. Thinkers and sages started exploring the deeper meaning of existence, the nature of the Self *(Atman)*, and the concept of the Absolute *(Brahman)*.

In this context, karma began to be reinterpreted as moral and intentional action, and the focus turned to inner transformation rather than outer rituals. The Brihadaranyaka and Chandogya Upanishads, for example, emphasize self-knowledge, ethical living, and spiritual discipline as means to liberation *(moksha)*, rather than mere ritual performance.

Thus, Karma Yoga, in its philosophical form, gradually evolved from ritual karma to ethical and spiritual karma. This transition laid the foundation for viewing action as a means of self-purification and spiritual growth, which would later be fully developed in texts like the Bhagavad Gita.

## 11.9 SANKHYA-YOGA SYSTEM

The Sankhya-Yoga school of Indian philosophy further refined and deepened the understanding of action, detachment, and liberation. While Sankhya is primarily a theoretical system, Yoga, especially as codified in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, provides the practical methodology for achieving liberation.

Sankhya philosophy is dualistic in nature. It posits two eternal realities: Purusha (pure consciousness) and Prakrit**i** (material nature). According to Sankhya, the entanglement of the self (Purusha) with the material world (Prakriti) results in bondage. Liberation is attained by discriminating knowledge that reveals their distinction.

Yoga, as a practical complement to Sankhya, emphasises discipline, self-control, and detachment (*vairagya*). Patanjali's Yoga Sutras outline an eightfold path (*Ashtanga Yoga*), which includes ethical observances (*yamas* and *niyamas*), postures (*asanas*), breath control (*pranayama*), sense withdrawal (*pratyahara*), concentration (*dharana*), meditation (*dhyana*), and ultimately, absorption (*samadhi*).

In the context of Karma Yoga, the Yoga system acknowledges that action can be either binding or liberating, depending on the attitude and awareness with which it is performed. Actions done with ego, desire, and attachment cause suffering and reinforce ignorance. In contrast, selfless actions performed with detachment and inner awareness lead to purification of the mind and eventual liberation.

The Yoga philosophy also emphasizes the importance of non-attachment to the results of action, which resonates directly with the principle of Nishkama Karma in the Bhagavad Gita. While Sankhya provides the metaphysical backdrop, Yoga offers the psychological and spiritual techniques for transcending the bondage of karma, thus closely aligning with the ideals of Karma Yoga.

## 11.10 KARMA YOGA IN THE BHAGAVAD GITA AND INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

The Bhagavad Gita, one of the most revered texts in Indian philosophy, presents the most comprehensive and influential exposition of Karma Yoga. Situated within the epic Mahabharata, the Gita is more than a philosophical discourse; it is a spiritual guide that synthesizes multiple Indian philosophical systems. The setting of the Gita is the battlefield of Kurukshetra, where Arjuna, a great warrior, is overcome with moral anguish and confusion about participating in the war against his own kin. His charioteer, Lord Krishna, delivers a profound discourse addressing the human condition, the nature of duty, the path to liberation, and the essence of self-realisation.

## 11.11 CONTEXT OF THE GITA

Arjuna, facing the prospect of killing his relatives and teachers, is struck with grief and moral dilemma. He lays down his bow and refuses to fight. In response, Krishna advises him to rise above his emotional attachments and perform his duty as a warrior. Krishna introduces Arjuna to various paths to liberation, such as Jnana Yoga (path of knowledge), Bhakti Yoga (path of devotion), and Karma Yoga (path of action). Among these, Karma Yoga is emphasized as the most immediate and practical approach suited to Arjuna's situation. Krishna explains that by performing his prescribed duty without attachment to results, Arjuna can attain spiritual liberation while remaining engaged in worldly responsibilities.

## 11.12 KEY VERSES ON KARMA YOGA

Several verses in the Gita encapsulate the philosophy of Karma Yoga. Notable among them are:

- **Chapter 2, Verse 47:** “Karmanye vadhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachana…” *“You have the right to perform your actions, but not to the fruits thereof.”*

This verse underlines the fundamental principle of Karma Yoga: one must act without attachment to the outcome. The focus should be on righteous performance, not on success or failure.

- **Chapter 3, Verse 19:** *"Therefore, always perform your duty efficiently and without attachment, for by doing so, one attains the Supreme."*
- **Chapter 3, Verse 30:** *"Dedicate all actions to Me, with your mind focused on the Self, freed from desire and ego."*

These verses encourage the practitioner to transform everyday duties into acts of spiritual discipline by offering them to the Divine and maintaining detachment from results.

## 11.13 NISHKAMA KARMA

One of the central teachings of the Gita is Nishkama Karma – performing actions without desire for personal gain. Krishna does not advocate renunciation of action (*karma sannyasa*), but rather renunciation of attachment to the results of action (*karma phala tyaga*). He advises Arjuna to perform his *svadharma* (own duty) with equanimity, regardless of success or failure. This equanimity in action, or yoga, is described as the "skill in action" (*karma-sukausalam*).

By cultivating a balanced mind and performing duty without selfish motives, the individual purifies their consciousness, transcends the ego, and moves closer to self-realisation. Karma Yoga, thus, becomes both a spiritual practice and a form of ethical engagement with the world.

### 11.13.1 The Ethics of Karma Yoga

Karma Yoga offers a robust ethical system grounded in the principles of duty, detachment, and universal responsibility. Its ethical framework can be understood in three broad dimensions:

- **Deontological (duty-based) Ethics:** Actions should be performed as a matter of obligation, in accordance with one's dharma, regardless of outcomes.

- **Detachment:** A stoic-like discipline is advocated where emotions such as greed, fear, anger, and pride are transcended. This promotes mental clarity and moral integrity.
- **Universal Responsibility:** Karma Yoga promotes an expanded sense of self that includes society and the cosmos. One's actions are seen as contributing to the greater good.

This ethical orientation fosters selflessness, integrity, and commitment to righteous living. It emphasizes the importance of intention behind action and encourages a life rooted in inner harmony and outer responsibility.

### 11.13.2 Karma Yoga and Self-Realisation

Karma Yoga is more than an ethical framework; it is a profound spiritual path leading to **self-realisation.** According to the Bhagavad Gita:

- **Action purifies the mind** (*chitta-shuddhi*): By performing selfless actions, the mind is cleansed of egoistic tendencies and desires.
- **Detachment leads to equanimity** (*samattvam*): Remaining balanced in success and failure allows the practitioner to transcend dualities and reach a higher state of consciousness.
- **Equanimity leads to knowledge of the Self**: This ultimately results in the realisation of the Atman, the eternal Self that is one with Brahman.

Thus, Karma Yoga becomes a transformative journey that bridges the external world of duties with the inner path of spiritual awakening. It allows one to live in the world without being entangled by it.

## 11.14 MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF KARMA YOGA

### 11.14.1 Swami Vivekananda's Perspective

Swami Vivekananda played a key role in bringing the message of Karma Yoga to the modern world. In his lectures, compiled under the title *Karma Yoga*, he presents it as a practical path suitable for modern individuals engaged in worldly responsibilities. For Vivekananda, Karma Yoga is the path of selfless service *(seva)* and social responsibility. He emphasizes character building, fearlessness, and devotion to work as sacred duties.

"Each work has to pass through these stages-ridicule, opposition, and then acceptance. Each man who thinks ahead of his time is sure to be misunderstood."

He sees Karma Yoga as a method for both personal and societal transformation. For Vivekananda, true spirituality lies in serving others, seeing God in all beings, and working without any selfish motives.

### 11.14.2 Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi was deeply influenced by the Bhagavad Gita and embodied the principles of Karma Yoga throughout his life. He adopted Nishkama Karma as a guiding principle, which manifested in his philosophy of nonviolent resistance (Ahimsa) and selfless service. Gandhi believed that action performed without attachment, and grounded in truth and nonviolence, could bring about profound political and moral change.

Gandhi's approach to Karma Yoga emphasized:

- **Truth (Satya)** as the ultimate reality.
- **Non-attachment** in both personal and public life.
- **Selfless service** as a spiritual discipline.

He regarded work as worship and viewed every act of service to others as an offering to the Divine. In Gandhi's life and thought, Karma Yoga became a living force for social justice and inner realisation.

## 11.15 KARMA YOGA IN CONTRAST WITH OTHER YOGAS

### 11.15.1 Karma Yoga vs. Jnana Yoga

- **Jnana Yoga** is the path of knowledge and self-inquiry. It emphasizes discrimination between the real and unreal and aims at the direct realisation of the Self through meditation and contemplation.
- **Karma Yoga** is the path of action. It seeks to attain the same goal of liberation but through selfless engagement with the world.

While Jnana Yoga may be more suited to renunciates or those inclined toward intellectual pursuits, Karma Yoga is practical for individuals engaged in daily life. It allows for spiritual growth within the framework of social duties.

### 11.15.2 Karma Yoga vs. Bhakti Yoga

- **Bhakti Yoga** is the path of devotion and emotional surrender to a personal God.
- **Karma Yoga** also involves surrender, but through action offered as a sacrifice to the Divine.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna integrates these two by proposing **Karma Bhakti Yoga,** where one performs action with devotion, offering the fruits to God. This synthesis acknowledges that love, devotion, and action are not mutually exclusive but can coexist and support one another on the path to liberation.

## 11.16 RELEVANCE OF KARMA YOGA IN CONTEMPORARY LIFE

In today's fast-paced and result-driven world, the teachings of Karma Yoga offer profound relevance and guidance:

- **Ethical living**: By focusing on duty rather than results, Karma Yoga encourages integrity and accountability in personal and professional life.
- **Mental well-being**: The principle of non-attachment helps reduce anxiety, stress, and burnout. It promotes mental equanimity and emotional balance.
- **Social responsibility**: Karma Yoga inspires individuals to engage in selfless service and contribute to the welfare of society.
- **Spiritual growth in daily life**: Karma Yoga shows that one does not need to renounce the world to attain spiritual realisation. Every action, if done in the right spirit, can become a step toward liberation.

By integrating action with mindfulness, duty with devotion, **and** engagement with detachment, Karma Yoga provides a holistic framework for living a balanced, purposeful, and spiritually enriched life.

## 11.17 CONCLUSION

Karma Yoga stands as one of the most profound contributions of Indian philosophy to the world. Rooted in the Vedic and Upanishadic traditions and fully developed in the Bhagavad Gita, Karma Yoga presents a vision of spiritual life that is both dynamic and accessible. Its central teaching, to act selflessly and without attachment to outcomes, offers timeless wisdom for addressing the challenges of human existence.

The Bhagavad Gita articulates Karma Yoga as a path that harmonizes action and renunciation, responsibility and liberation. It teaches that true freedom is not in escaping life, but in engaging with it fully, consciously, and ethically. Karma Yoga transforms work into worship and life into a sacred pilgrimage toward the Divine.

In a world increasingly torn by materialism, anxiety, and disconnection, the message of Karma Yoga serves as a powerful reminder that the way we act matters, and that through right action, we can discover our highest self and contribute to the well-being of all.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q 1:** What is Karma Yoga, and how is it defined in Indian philosophy?

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**Q 2.** How does Karma Yoga relate to the concept of *moksha*?

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**Q 3.** What is the significance of *nishkama karma* in the Bhagavad Gita?

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**Q 4.** What are the six orthodox (*âstika*) schools of Indian philosophy?

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**Q 5.** How do the *nâstika* schools differ from the *âstika* schools?

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**Q 6.** Define the three types of karma: *sanchita*, *prârabdha*, and *kriyamâna*.

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**Q 7.** What is the relationship between *karma* and *dharma* in Indian thought?

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**Q 8.** How does Karma Yoga differ from *Jnana Yoga* and *Bhakti Yoga*?

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**Q 9.** In what way does the Sankhya-Yoga system support the philosophy of Karma Yoga?

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**Q 10.** According to the Gita, what is the significance of Chapter 2, Verse 47?

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**Q 11.** What ethical principles does Karma Yoga promote?

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**Q 12.** How does Karma Yoga purify the mind and lead to self-realisation?

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**Q 13.** How did Swami Vivekananda interpret Karma Yoga in modern times?

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**Q 14.** What were Mahatma Gandhi's contributions to the understanding of Karma Yoga?

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**Q 15.** Why is Karma Yoga relevant in today's world?

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## 11.18 LET US SUM UP

- Karma Yoga, the Yoga of selfless action, is a major path in Indian philosophy that teaches liberation through duty performed without attachment to results.
- It draws from core Indian philosophical concepts like karma, dharma, moksha, and samsara, and is especially elaborated in Vedanta and the Bhagavad Gita.

- Indian philosophy includes six orthodox (Astika) systems like Nyaya, Sankhya, and Vedanta, and heterodox (Nastika) systems like Buddhism and Jainism, many of which explore karma and liberation.
- Karma is classified into three kinds-Sanchita (accumulated), Prarabdha (manifested in current life), and Kriyamana (new actions)-all influencing rebirth and liberation.
- Dharma must align with dharma (righteous duty) to become a spiritual path. Dharma varies by one's context (svadharma), and action in accordance with it purifies the mind.
- Karma Yoga is one of the four classical paths (with Jnana, Bhakti, and Raja Yoga), emphasising selfless action, duty, and detachment from the fruits of action.
- The ultimate aim is moksha-liberation from ego and the cycle of rebirth, achieved through nishkama karma (desireless action) and phala-tyaga (renouncing results).
- Karma Yoga evolved from Vedic ritualism to internalized spiritual action. The Upanishads shifted focus from external yajnas to inner transformation and self-realisation.
- The Sankhya-Yoga system supports Karma Yoga through its focus on detachment, discipline, and the distinction between Purusha (Self) and Prakriti (Nature).
- The Bhagavad Gita presents Karma Yoga as a response to Arjuna's moral crisis, guiding him to act according to his duty without attachment to outcomes.
- Key verses (e.g., 2.47, 3.19, 3.30) teach that individuals have the right to action, not to its fruits, and should offer all actions to the Divine
- Swami Vivekananda emphasized Karma Yoga as a path of selfless service and social responsibility, while Mahatma Gandhi adopted it as the foundation of ethical action and nonviolence.
- Karma Yoga is more practical for householders than Jnana Yoga (knowledge) and less emotional than Bhakti Yoga (devotion), but it integrates elements of both.

- Karma Yoga remains relevant today as a path for ethical living, mental peace, social service, and spiritual growth through mindful, detached action.



## 11.19 FURTHER READINGS

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## 11.20 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q. No. 1:** Karma Yoga is the "Yoga of Action" in Indian philosophy. It teaches performing duties selflessly, without attachment to the results, leading to spiritual liberation.

**Ans to Q. No. 2:** Karma Yoga leads to *moksha* by encouraging selfless action that purifies the mind, reduces ego, and helps one realize the Self (*Atman*), thus escaping the cycle of rebirth (*samsara*).

**Ans to Q. No. 3:** *Nishkama karma* means desireless action—performing one's duty without attachment to success or failure. It is the foundation of Karma Yoga in the Gita.

**Ans to Q. No. 4:** The six orthodox systems are: Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Yoga, Purva Mimamsa, and Vedanta.

**Ans to Q. No. 5:** *Nâstika* schools (e.g., Buddhism, Jainism, Charvaka) reject the authority of the Vedas, unlike the *âstika* schools which accept them.

**Ans to Q. No. 6:** • *Sanchita karma*: Accumulated karma from past lives.

• *Prârabdha karma*: The portion of past karma currently bearing fruit.

• *Kriyamâna karma*: Present actions creating future karma.

**Ans to Q. No. 7:** *Dharma* refers to rightful duty; when karma aligns with dharma, it becomes spiritually elevating. Action against dharma leads to bondage.

**Ans to Q. No. 8:** • *Jnana Yoga*: Path of knowledge and self-inquiry.

• *Bhakti Yoga*: Path of devotion and surrender to God.

• *Karma Yoga*: Path of selfless action without attachment to outcomes.

**Ans to Q. No. 9:** The Sankhya-Yoga system supports Karma Yoga by promoting detachment (*vairagya*) and mental discipline, showing how actions can be liberating if performed without ego.

**Ans to Q. No. 10:** Chapter 2, Verse 47 teaches that one has the right to act but not to the results—emphasising selfless action as the core of Karma Yoga.

**Ans to Q. No. 11:** Karma Yoga encourages deontological ethics (duty-based), detachment from results, and universal responsibility, fostering selflessness and moral clarity.

**Ans to Q. No. 12:** By performing actions without ego or desire, the mind is purified (*chitta-shuddhi*), leading to equanimity (*samattvam*) and realisation of the Self (*Atman*).

**Ans to Q. No. 13:** Swami Vivekananda viewed Karma Yoga as selfless service and character building. He believed in serving humanity as a path to God.

**Ans to Q. No. 14:** Gandhi practiced Karma Yoga through nonviolence (*ahimsa*), truth (*satya*), and selfless public service, inspired by *nishkama karma* from the Gita.

**Ans to Q. No. 15:** Karma Yoga remains relevant as it promotes ethical living, stress reduction, and spiritual growth through mindful, purposeful action in everyday life.



## 11.21 MODEL QUESTIONS

**(A) Very Short Questions:**

**Q. 1.** What is the literal meaning of the word *karma* in Sanskrit?

**Q. 2.** Name the six Astika (orthodox) schools of Indian philosophy.

**Q. 3.** Which scripture offers the most systematic exposition of Karma Yoga?

**Q. 4.** What is *Nishkama Karma* according to the Bhagavad Gita?

**Q. 5.** What are the three types of karma discussed in Indian philosophy?

**Q. 6.** Which modern thinker emphasized Karma Yoga as *seva* or selfless service?

**Q. 7.** In which text is the concept of "Karmanye vadhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachana" found?

**Q. 8.** Which philosophical system provides the practical aspects of the Sankhya theory?

**(B)Short Questions (Within 150 Words)**

**Q. 1.** What is Karma Yoga and how does it differ from renunciation?

**Q. 2.** How does the concept of *dharma* relate to *karma* in Indian philosophy?

**Q. 3.** Explain the significance of *Phala-tyaga* in the practice of Karma Yoga.

**Q. 4.** How does the Bhagavad Gita use the battlefield metaphor to explain Karma Yoga?

**Q. 5.** What ethical values are emphasized in Karma Yoga according to the Gita?

**Q. 6.** How do Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi interpret Karma Yoga in modern contexts?

**(C) Long Questions (Within 400 Words)**

**Q. 1.** Discuss the philosophical development of Karma Yoga from the Vedic period to the Bhagavad Gita.

**Q. 2.** Explain the principle of *Nishkama Karma* and how it leads to liberation according to the Bhagavad Gita.

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# UNIT 12: JÒÂNA YOGÂ: A MEDIUM OF SADHANA

## UNIT STRUCTURE


12.1 Learning Objectives

12.2 Introduction to Yogâ

12.3 Jòâna Yogâ in the Bhagavad Gitâ

12.4 Jòâna Yogâ in the Upanisads and Vedântic Philosophy

12.5 Understanding Jòâna Yogâ as a Medium of Sâdhanâ

12.5.1 The Four Pillars of Knowledge

12.5.2 Three Core Practices of Jòâna Yogâ Sâdhanâ

12.5.3 Mahâ-Vâkyas

12.6 Integrating Jòâna Yogâ with Karma Yogâ and Bhakti Yogâ

12.7 Conclusion

12.8 Let us sum up

12.9 Further Readings

12.10 Answer to Check Your Progress

12.11 Model Questions


## 12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- Know what Jòâna Yogâ means
- Explain the objectives of Jòâna Yogâ
- Know Jòâna Yogâ from the philosophical perspective of Gita, Upanisads and Vedânta
- Explain Jòâna Yogâ as a medium of Sâdhanâ
- Know the practices of Jòâna Yogâ Sâdhanâ
- Know how to integrate Jòâna Yogâ with Karma Yogâ and Bhakti Yogâ
- Know how to recognise the practical significance of Jòâna Yogâ in daily life.

## 12.2 INTRODUCTION

Jòâna Yogâ is one of the three major Paths of Yogâ along with Karma Yogâ and Bhakti Yogâ, approved by Indian Philosophy. Jòâna Yogâ refers to the “Path of Knowledge”, which is considered one of the primary paths to achieve liberation or Mokṣa by attaining deep self-realisation through intellectual inquiry and contemplation. In the Indian Philosophical tradition, Mokca is considered as the liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth (samsâra). Mokṣa is also defined as the realisation of one’s true nature as the eternal soul (Âtman). Mokṣa is the ultimate goal or ultimate Purucârtha of human existence that transcends all material desires and attachments. In Indian Moral Philosophy, Mokṣa is presented not merely as an escape from suffering but as a state of bliss, knowledge, and unity with the ultimate soul. Classical Indian Moral Philosophy, mostly the Upanicads, Bhagavad Gita, the Brahma Sutras and the Advaita Vedânta philosophy outlines three primary Paths or Mârgas to achieve Mokṣa. These three yogic paths are Karma Yogâ, Bhakti Yogâ and Jòâna Yogâ. Raja Yogâ sometimes added as the fourth Yogâ as the “Path of Meditation”. This is the classical Yogâ depicted in the Yogâ Sutras of Patanjali.

Karma Yogâ is the path of selfless action. It is the discipline of doing one’s duty without ego or attachment. Person engages in their duties without attachment to the fruits of their actions and thus purifying their hearts and minds. Bhakti Yogâ is the path of devotion. This refers to surrendering towards a divine being through love, worship, and devotion, fostering a deep emotional connection with the divine. Jòâna Yogâ is the path of knowledge. This Yogâ is the intellectual approach to spiritual evolution of men. It emphasizes to the realisation of a man’s own divinity and to realize the oneness of Âtman and Brahman (the Ultimate Reality) through knowledge. Râja Yogâ, also known as the “Royal Path of Yogâ” focuses on purifying and controlling the mind through the practices of âsanas, prânâyama, meditation and kriyâs.

The Upanicads, Bhagavad Gitâ, the Brahma Sutras and the Vedântins broadly discussed about Jòâna Yogâ as the path of wisdom, as one of the

three principal yogic paths leading to self-realisation. This path focuses on intellectual inquiry and wisdom as the means to attain liberation or Mokca. The *Jòâna* is a Sanskrit term that stands for "Knowledge or Wisdom" and Jòâna Yogâ is the path of self-knowledge or self-realisation through keen meditation, self-inquiry, and contemplation. This Yogâ is the "awareness of absolute consciousness," and is a comprehensive practice of self-study (Svadhyâya). In Jòâna Yogâ, the mind seeks to be acquainted with its own nature by transcending the mind's identification with its thoughts and ego. The fundamental goal of Jòâna Yogâ is to free the self from the illusive world of Mâyâ. Jòâna Yogâ helps the soul and the mind to be free from the self-limiting thoughts and perceptions and also help the inner Self (Âtman) with the oneness of the ultimate reality (Brahman). Thus, Jòâna Yogâ leads a person toward self-knowledge as well as supreme enlightenment.

## 12.3 JÒÂNA YOGÂ IN THE BHAGAVAD GITÂ

The Bhagavad Gitâ is the most widely known classical text on Yogâ. In the Chapter 4- Jòâna Yogâ, Lord Krishna reveals the ancient wisdom of the Gitâ to Arjuna, highlighting the eternal nature of this knowledge, passed down from time immemorial. Gita defines Yogâ as the union of the individual energy with the universal energy or Supreme Being. This union or oneness of the individual self with the Supreme Self or Supreme Being is completely spiritual. Gitâ offers three paths or Mârgas to understand the Supreme Divine Being. These are Karma Yogâ, Bhakti Yogâ and Jòâna Yogâ. Gitâ admits Jòâna Yogâ as the Yogâ of Wisdom. Jòâna Yogâ is the path of Knowledge, Introspection and Contemplation. All the impurities of an individual's mind and self are demolished in the flames of knowledge. Jòâna Yogâ in Gitâ is also referred as Buddhi Yogâ. Through Jòâna Yogâ, the individual mind tries to inquire into its own nature and strive to transcend the mind's identification with its thoughts and ego. Jòâna Yogâ helps to persuade the seeker that his sole identity is the pure self.

Jòâna Yogâ is not just intellectual knowledge but a sacred science that leads to self-realisation and liberation. Liberation or Mokṣa lies in

complete surrender to the Divine, transcending the limitations of formal religious practices. True knowledge is eternal and endures for generations without change. Yogis experience oneness with the Divine by pursuing knowledge and self-realisation, which acknowledges the unity of the self with all entities. Jòâna Yogâ helps to recognise that the true self- the Âtman, is immortal and unaffected by the death of the physical body. The knowledge of this truth helps one to overcome sorrow and attachment. By realizing the eternal nature of the self and emancipation from material attachments, one attains liberation from the cycle of rebirth. The yogi recognises that even while performing actions, the true self remains untouched and uninvolved, existing in a state of transcendental detachment.

## 12.4 JÒÂNA YOGÂ IN THE UPANISADS AND VEDÂNTIC PHILOSOPHY

Jòâna Yogâ, the path of knowledge or wisdom, is one of the key concepts in the philosophy of Upanisads. In the early Upanisads also, *Jòâna Yogâ* aims at the realisation of the oneness of the individual self (Âtman) and the ultimate Self (Brahman). The teachings within these Upanicads discuss “the way of knowledge of the Self”, a union, the realisation that the Self (Âtman) and the Brahman are logical. The Upanicads highlights the importance of knowing the self (Âtman) as distinct from the body, mind, and senses. Jòâna Yogâ in Upanicads emphasizes self-inquiry, philosophical reasoning, and the realisation of the unity of the individual self or Âtman with the Absolute Reality or Brahman. The Upanicads provide the foundation for this path of Jòâna Yogâ through dialogues, metaphysical discussions, and meditative insights.

According to the non-theistic monism, rituals are not necessary; rather a path of introspection and meditation is emphasised for the correct knowledge (*Jòâna*) of self. For the theistic dualism, it is the full and correct knowledge of a Vishnu avatar or Shiva or Shakti (Goddess) that is emphasised. In all its various interpretations, the paths are not necessarily mutually limited. A *Jòâna yogi* may well practice *Karma Yogâ* or *Bhakti*

*Yogâ* or both, and differing levels of emphasis. The Advaita philosopher Shankarâchârjya gave prime importance to jñâna Yogâ for the "knowledge of the absolute" (Brahman) while the Vishishtadvaitavâdin Râmânuja regarded knowledge only as a condition of devotion. Likewise, Classical Advaita Vedânta emphasizes the path of Jòâna Yogâ to attain liberation or Mokṣa.

## 12.5 UNDERSTANDING JÒÂNA YOGÂ AS A MEDIUM OF SÂDHANÂ

Jòâna Yogâ is a significant medium of Sâdhanâ (spiritual practice) that leads the seeker towards self-discovery and ultimate truth. Jòâna Yogâ as a Sâdhanâ entails systematic self-inquiry, rational discernment, and direct recognition of the self beyond illusion (Maya). It is a challenging path which requires an intelligent mind, deep inspection and detachment from worldly illusions. There are Four Pillars of Knowledge to be practiced in Jòâna Yogâ Sâdhanâ. These prescribed steps to practice for the attainment of liberation in Jòâna Yogâ are- Viveka, Vairâgya, Shatsampat and Mumukshutva. These practices are called as Sâdhanâ Chatushtaya- "the four means of salvation". These steps of practice build upon each other and thus, should be practiced in sequential order. Even if one has no desire for achieving liberation, practicing these techniques will cultivate spiritual insight and understanding. Moreover, it reduces one's suffering and dissatisfaction of life.

### 12.5.1 The Four Pillars of Knowledge (Sâdhanâ Chatushtaya)

1. Viveka (Discernment, Discrimination): Viveka is a deliberate, continuous intellectual effort to distinguish between the real and the unreal, the permanent and the temporary, and the Self and not Self.
2. Vairâgya (Dispassion, Detachment): Vairâgya is the renunciation of material attachments and worldly distractions.

3. Shatsampat (Six Virtues): There are six mental practices to steady the mind and emotions, and to further develop the ability to see beyond the illusions of Maya. These are the sixfold qualities of perfection.

   i) Shâma (Tranquility, Calmness) is the aptitude to remain the mind peaceful, through moderating its reaction to external stimulus.

   ii) Dâma (Self-restraint, Control) is the strengthening of the mind. It is to be able to resist the control of the senses, and the training of the senses to be used only as instruments of the mind.

   iii) Uparati (Withdrawal, Renunciation) is the discarding of all activities that are not one's Dharma (Duty).

   iv) Titiksha (Endurance, Persistence) is the tolerance of external non-conducive situations that are usually considered to produce suffering, especially in extreme opposite states such as success and failure, hot and cold, pleasure and pain etc.

   v) Shraddhâ (Faith, Trust) is a sense of certainty and belief in one's Guru (Teacher), the Scriptures and the Yogic paths.

   vi) Samâdhana (Focus, Concentration) is the single focus of the mind.

4. Mumukshutva (Longing, Yearning) is an intense and passionate desire for the liberation from suffering. It is an intense yearning to achieve self-realisation and freedom from the cycle of birth and death.

Jòâna Yogâ Sâdhanâ for Advaitins consists of three core practices- *Œravaga* (Hearing), *Manana* (Thinking) and *Nididhyâsana* (Meditation). This three-step methodology is rooted in the teachings of the *Brihadâranyaka Upanishad.*

### 12.5.2 Three Core Practices of Jòâna Yogâ Sâdhanâ

After one has studied and successfully practiced the four pillars, then he is fully ready to instigate the three core practices of Jòâna Yogâ. Œravaga, which means "hearing," manana, which means "reflection," and nididhyâsana, which means "meditation," are the three core practices of Jòâna Yogâ Sâdhanâ portrayed in the Upanicadic teachings. These result in immediate self-realisation, or in Atma-Sakshatkâra.

i) **Sravana (Listening to Sacred Knowledge)** is the hearing or experiencing the sacred knowledge in the ancient Vedic texts of the Upanisads. It emphasizes on learning from a qualified guru who can guide the seeker toward the ultimate truth. A teacher or a *Guru* will guide the *Yogi* through discussions on the philosophy of non-dualism. In this stage, the student or the aspirant should read and study the Upanisads in order to get to a thorough understanding of the non-dualist philosophy and the ideas of non-distinctiveness of Âtman and Brahman.

ii) **Manana (Reflection & Contemplation)** is the thinking and reflecting on these teachings of non-duality of the Âtman and Brahman. The aspirants dedicatedly keep on thinking and contemplating on the various ideas of *svadhyâya* and *Sravana*. *Manana* refers to deeply contemplating the teachings to remove doubts and engaging in self-inquiry (Âtma Vichara). As a *Sâdhanâ*, Jòâna Yogâ requires firm self-inquiry and contemplation. The primary method used in this practice is *Âtma Vichâra* (self-inquiry) where the aspirant repeatedly asks himself, *"Who am I?"*. The function of *Âtma Vichâra is* to go beyond the layers of body, mind, and ego and ultimately realizing their true nature as pure consciousness.

iii) **Nididhyâsana (Meditative Absorption)** is the constant and profound meditation on the inner Self. This refers to meditation on the truth realized through Sravana and Manana. It is the

realisation and consequent conviction of the truths internalizing the understanding that the self (Âtman) is non-different from the (Supreme Divine Self) Brahman. It also includes the reflection on the real meaning of the Mahâ-Vâkyas, the primary mantras or "Great Sayings" of the Upanisads.

These are the three practices of Wisdom through which a yogi or aspirant can obtain the union of thought and action, knowing and being. These practices, with the help of a *Guru* lead to correct knowledge which can destroy *avidyâ*, mental and perceptual errors related to Âtman and Brahman.

### 12.5.3 Mahâ-Vâkyas

The Sanskrit word "Mahâ" can be translated as great or grand and the word Vâkya translate as a sentence or saying. The Mahâ-Vâkyas are grand, profound saying that has great importance to a spiritual yogic practice. Usually these are very short and underline the main point or wisdom of spiritual texts or concepts. The Mahâ-Vâkyas are the most revered and powerful sayings or great pronunciation depicted in the ancient Indian scriptures of the Upanicads. The regular contemplation of the Mahâ-Vâkyas purifies minds, also promotes introspection and insight, and finally leads to transcendental states of awareness.

Though the Mahâ-Vâkyas are classified into four in number, but their contemplation leads one to the same realisation. They simply present different approaches on how to see the indivisible oneness of all things. These four Mahâ-Vâkyas also provide the answers to the classic query of Jòâna Yogâ- "Who am I? and "What is my purpose?", and "What is the nature of this reality?". These can all be answered by meditating on the Mahâ-Vâkyas or grand sayings of the scriptures. The Four Mahâ-Vâkyas are-

i. *Prajòânam Brahma:* This refers to the aphorism that "Prajòâna is Brahman", or "Brahman is Prajòâna". Brahman or the

Ultimate Reality is supreme consciousness (Prajòâna). Pra- the Highest, Jòânam- Knowledge, Brahm- the Absolute; hence, Prajòâna Brahma means the highest knowledge is the Absolute. (Aitareya Upanishad 3.3 of the Rig Veda).

ii. *Aham Brahmasmi*: This refers to the aphorism that "I am Brahman (the Supreme Self)", or "I am Divine". Aham- I, Brahm- the Absolute, Asmi- Am; that means I am the Absolute. (Brihadâranyaka Upanishad 1.4.10 of the Yajur Veda).

iii. *Tat Tvam Asi*: This aphorism is interpreted as "That Thou Art" (that you are), correctly translated as "That's how (thus) you are". Tat- that, Tvam- Thou, Asi- Art; means and *that thou art*. (Châ ndogya Upanishad 6.8.7 of the Sama Veda).

iv. *Ayam Atma Brahma*: This refers to the aphorism "Âtman (True Self) is Brahman (Ultimate Reality)". Ayam- this, Âtma- Soul, Brahm- the Absolute; means this soul is the absolute. (Mandukya Upanishad 1.2 of the Atharva Veda).

These Mahâ-Vâkyas express the fundamental teachings of the Upanicads specifically that the Reality is one and blissful, and the individual self (Âtman) is essentially identical with the Ultimate Reality (Brahman).

## 12.6 INTEGRATING JÒÂNA YOGÂ WITH KARMA YOGÂ AND BHAKTI YOGÂ

Karma Yogâ, Jòâna Yogâ, and Bhakti Yogâ are the three major spiritual paths in Indian Philosophy, particularly in the Bhagavad Gitâ, and they are deeply interconnected. Each of these Yogâs represents a different approach to self-realisation and liberation (Mokṣa), but they are not mutually exclusive, rather they complement one another. Karma Yogâ purifies the heart and detaches one from self-centered motives, making it easier to cultivate knowledge (Jòâna) and devotion (Bhakti). Jòâna Yogâ leads to ultimate realisation but often requires a pure and an ego-free mind, which Karma Yogâ and Bhakti Yogâ help to develop. Bhakti Yogâ conveys love

and surrender, making Karma more selfless and Jòâna more intuitive. A balanced spiritual life involves acting selflessly (Karma Yogâ), seeking knowledge (Jòâna Yogâ), and cultivating love and devotion (Bhakti Yogâ). Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gitâ is advised by Krishna to engage in action (Karma Yogâ), develop wisdom (Jòâna Yogâ), and surrender with love (Bhakti Yogâ). The true Yogi work selflessly (Karma Yogâ), while understanding the deeper truth of existence (Jòâna Yogâ), and surrendering everything to Brahman with love (Bhakti Yogâ). These paths are interconnected and should be practiced together rather than in isolation. Thus, rather than being separate paths, these Yogâs complement each other, leading to a balanced and holistic spiritual journey.

## 12.7 CONCLUSION

Jòâna Yogâ, in Indian Moral Philosophy, is the path of knowledge, discernment and self-inquiry. This is an intense Sâdhanâ that leads to self-realisation through wisdom and self-inquiry. This realisation dissolves the illusion of separateness (Mâyâ) and leads to eternal tranquility and bliss. Moreover, it involves a deep exploration of the nature of reality, the self (Âtman), and the Supreme Consciousness (Brahman). As a medium of Sâdhanâ, it provides seekers with the intellectual and pragmatic tools necessary to transcend ignorance (Avidyâ) and attain liberation (Mokṣa). It is best pursued with guidance and a pure heart, leading to liberation (Mokṣa) from the worldly attachments or cycle of birth and death.

Jòâna Yogâ, the path of knowledge and wisdom, remains highly relevant in everyone's life. Jòâna Yogâ promotes critical thinking, discernment (*viveka*), and self-reflection which help individuals in taking wise decisions. It promotes introspection and detachment (*vairâgya*), shifting focus from external validation to inner peace. If one feel lost in materialism, Jòâna Yogâ inspires self-inquiry into *"Who am I?"* and *"What is my true purpose?"*. This inquisition leads to more meaningful life choices aligned with deeper values rather than superficial goals. The path of Jòâna Yogâ integrates receiving knowledge, analysing it, understanding it, and detaching the ego from the Self to achieve self-knowledge. A person

becomes stronger and closer to purity by disconnecting his self from the ego. In the end, we can consider that Jòâna Yogâ can be practiced in our daily life by cultivating mindfulness and detachment from ego-based actions, seeing the divine unity in all beings and practicing silence and contemplation amidst daily activities.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q 1:** What is the ultimate goal (Purucârtha) in Indian Moral Philosophy?

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**Q. 2.** Which Yogâ is known as the Path of Meditation?

.....

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**Q. 3.** Which chapter of Bhagavad Gitâ discusses the Jòâna Yogâ?

.....

.....

**Q. 4.** Which Upanishad includes the three Core Practices of Jòâna Yogâ Sâdhanâ?

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.....

**Q. 5.** What do you mean by Mahâ-Vâkya?

.....

.....

**Q. 6. Fill in the Blanks:**

a) _____ is the author of Yogâ Sutra.

b) _____ Yogâ is called as the “Royal Path of Yogâ”.

c) Bhakti Yogâ is the path of _____.

d) There are _____ Pillars of Knowledge to be practiced in Jòâna Yogâ Sâdhanâ.

e) Through Jòâna Yogâ, the Yogi can realize that the Âtman and Brahman are _____.

**Q. 7.** What is the meaning of Svadhyâya in Jòâna Yogâ?

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**Q. 8.** How does Jòâna Yogâ function as a medium of Sâdhanâ?

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**Q. 9.** What are the three core practices of Jòâna Yogâ Sâdhanâ?

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**Q. 10.** Explain briefly how the three paths of Yogâ are interrelated philosophy?

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## 12.8 LET US SUM UP

- Jòâna Yogâ- the path of self-knowledge and wisdom is one of the primary paths of Yogâ depicted in Indian Moral Philosophy.
- This Yogâ is the intellectual approach to spiritual evolution of men. It emphasizes to the realisation of a man's own divinity and to realize the oneness of Âtman and Brahman through knowledge.
- Jòâna Yogâ is a practice of attaining knowledge through self-inquiry, contemplation, introspection and meditation.
- The prime objective of Jòâna Yogâ is to become liberated from the illusory world of Maya (self-limiting thoughts and perceptions).
- Jòâna Yogâ is a significant medium of Sâdhanâ (spiritual practice) that leads the seeker towards self-discovery and ultimate truth.
- There are Four Pillars of Knowledge, known as Sâdhanâ Chatushtaya- Viveka, Vairâgya, Shadsampat and Mumukshutva.
- Jòâna Yogâ Sâdhanâ consists of three core practices- *Œravaga* (Hearing), *Manana* (Thinking) and *Nididhyâsana* (Meditation).

- There are four Mahâ-Vâkyas which provide the answers to the classic query of Jòâna Yogâ- “Who am I?, and “What is my purpose?”, and “What is the nature of this reality?”.
- The true Yogi work selflessly (Karma Yogâ), while understanding the deeper truth of existence (Jòâna Yogâ), and surrendering everything to Brahman with love (Bhakti Yogâ). Thus, rather than being separate paths, these Yogâs complement each other, leading to a balanced and holistic spiritual journey.
- Jòâna Yogâ remains quite relevant in everyone’s life as it promotes critical thinking, discernment and self-reflection which help individuals in taking wise decisions. It also promotes introspection and detachment, shifting focus from external validation to inner peace.



## 12.9 FURTHER READINGS

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5. Ranade, R.D. (1926) *A Constructive Survey of Upanisadic Philosophy*. Oriental Book Agency.
6. Radhakrishnan, S. (1953). *The Principal Upanisads*. Allen & Unwin; Harper India.



## 12.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q. No. 1:** Mokṣa or Liberation of the individual self.

**Ans to Q. No. 2:** Raja Yogâ is known as the path of meditation.

**Ans to Q. No. 3:** The fourth chapter of Bhagavad Gita deals the Jòâna Yogâ Marga.

**Ans to Q. No. 4:** Brihadâranyaka Upanishad includes the three core practices of Jòâna Yogâ Sadhana.

**Ans to Q. No. 5:** Mahâ-Vâkya means grand, profound saying in very short which underline the main point or wisdom of spiritual texts or concepts basically of the Upanisads.

**Ans to Q. No. 6:** a) Patanjali is the author of Yogâ Sutra.

1. b) Râja Yogâ is called as the "Royal Path of Yogâ".
2. c) Bhakti Yogâ is the path of Devotion.
3. d) There are four Pillars of Knowledge to be practiced in Jòâna Yogâ Sâdhanâ.
4. e) Through Jòâna Yogâ, the Yogi can realize that the Âtman and Brahman are identical or one.

**Ans to Q. No. 7:** Svadhyâya, in Jòâna Yogâ Sâdhanâ means a comprehensive practice of self-study or self-reflection. In Jòâna Yogâ, the mind seeks to be acquainted with its own nature by transcending the mind's identification with its thoughts and ego. Svadhyâya helps the individual self or mind to understand its true nature and get in touch with the absolute self (Brahman).

**Ans to Q. No. 8:** Jòâna Yogâ is a significant medium of Sâdhanâ (spiritual practice) that leads the seeker towards self-discovery and ultimate truth. Jòâna Yogâ as a Sâdhanâ entails systematic self-inquiry, rational discernment, and direct recognition of the self beyond illusion (Maya). It is a challenging path which requires an intelligent mind, deep inspection and detachment from worldly illusions. There are Four Pillars of Knowledge to be practiced in Jòâna Yogâ Sâdhanâ. These prescribed steps to practice for the attainment of liberation in Jòâna Yogâ are- Viveka, Vairâgya, Shadsampat and Mumukshutva.

**Ans to Q. No. 9:** There are three core practices of Jòâna Yogâ Sâdhanâ to be practiced after one has studied and successfully practiced the Four Pillars of Knowledge. These are- *Sravana*, which means "hearing," *Manana*, which means "reflection," and *Nididhyâsana*,

which means "meditation," are the three core practices of Jòâna Yogâ Sâdhanâ portrayed in the Upanicadic teachings. These result in immediate self-realisation, or in Atma-Sakshatkara.

**Ans to Q. No. 10:** Karma Yogâ, Jòâna Yogâ, and Bhakti Yogâ are the three major spiritual paths in Indian Philosophy, and they are deeply interconnected. Each of these Yogâs represents a different approach to self-realisation and liberation (Mokṣa), but they are not mutually exclusive, rather they complement one another. Karma Yogâ purifies the heart and detaches one from self-centered motives, making it easier to cultivate knowledge (Jòâna) and devotion (Bhakti). Jòâna Yogâ leads to ultimate realisation but often requires a pure and an ego-free mind, which Karma Yogâ and Bhakti Yogâ help to develop. Bhakti Yogâ conveys love and surrender, making Karma more selfless and Jòâna more intuitive. A balanced spiritual life involves acting selflessly (Karma Yogâ), seeking knowledge (Jòâna Yogâ), and cultivating love and devotion (Bhakti Yogâ).



## 12.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

**(A) Very Short Questions:**

**Q. 1.** What is meaning of the term Jòâna Yogâ?

**Q. 2.** What is the other name of Jòâna Yogâ in Bhagavad Gitâ?

**Q. 3.** What is the meaning of *Nididhyâsana*?

**Q. 4.** How many Mahâ-Vâkyas are prescribed by the Upanicads?

**Q. 5.** What do you mean by Sâdhanâ Chatushtaya?

**B. Short Questions: (Write in about 100-150 words)**

**Q. 1.** What are the main objectives of Jòâna Yogâ Sâdhanâ?

**Q. 2.** Define Shadsampat in Sâdhanâ Chatushtaya.

**Q. 3.** What are the three core practices of Jòâna Yogâ?

**Q. 4.** What does the aphorism *Tat Tvam Asi* mean?

**Q. 5.** Do you think that Jòâna Yogâ is relevant for today's life?

**C. Long Questions: (Write in about 300-500 words)**

**Q. 1.** Explain Jòâna Yogâ as a path of self-knowledge and liberation.

**Q. 2.** What do you mean by Sâdhanâ? Discuss Jòâna Yogâ as a medium of Sâdhanâ or spiritual practice.

**Q. 3.** Broadly discuss Sâdhanâ Chatushtaya of Jòâna Yogâ?

**Q. 4.** Discuss the Mahâ-Vâkyas depicted in the Upanisads.

**Q. 5.** How Karma Yogâ, Bhakti Yogâ and Jòâna Yogâ are interrelated? Explain.

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# UNIT 13: BHAKTI YOGA: A MÂRGA OF SÂDHANÂ

## UNIT STRUCTURE


13.1 Learning Objectives

13.2 Introduction

13.3 Stages and Origin of Bhakti (Devotion)

13.4 Path of Devotion

13.5 Nature of devotion

13.6 Determinants of Devotion

13.7 Let us Sum Up

13.8 Further Readings

13.9 Answer to Check Your Progress

13.10 Model Questions


## 13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- Define Bhaktimârga
- Understand the meaning of Bhaktiyog
- Determine the significance devotion
- Know the path of devotion
- Understand its stages and kinds
- Discuss the nature of devotion
- Distinguish between Sâdhana-bhakti and Phala-bhakti
- Explain the connections among Bhakti, Jñâna and Karma

## 13.2 INTRODUCTION

Bhaktimârga is a spiritual path of devotion known as Bhaktiyoga. The name comes from the Sanskrit, ‘bhakti’ meaning ‘devotion’, ‘devotional service’ or ‘homage’ and ‘mârga’ which means ‘pathway’, ‘path’, ‘route’ or ‘passage’. Bhakti is one of the main spiritual paths in Hinduism, the others

being jñâna (path of knowledge) and karma (the path of action). As the path of love and devotion, bhakti does not focus on one specific deity, but the individual's personal God and oneness with the Supreme Being.

Bhaktiyoga is a spiritual path focused on achieving union with the divine force through loving devotion and service. The ultimate goal of Bhaktiyoga is to achieve union with the divine which is a state of oneness and spiritual liberation. Bhakti is intense devotion and supreme attachment to God. It is supreme love for God and is the spontaneous outpouring of love (prem) towards the Beloved. It is pure, unselfish, divine love (Suddha Prem). It is love for love's sake. There is not a bit of expectation of anything here. This higher feeling is indescribable in words. Bhakti is a sacred, higher emotion with sublime sentiments that unites the devotees with the Lord. A distinction may be drawn between Bhakti and Prem (love). Bhakti is spontaneous attachment to God. The devotee is entirely possessed by Him. It is the most concentrated love for God which is full of the most intense attachment and purifies the heart thoroughly. Love of God is the completion and perfection of devotion.

Bhakti means an act of service, devotion, attachment, loyalty and worship etc. *Sândilya-Bhakti-Sutra* defines Bhakti as 'infinite attachment to God' while the *Nârada-Bhakti-Sutra* describes it as 'of the nature highest love for that i.e. God'. Bhakti is defined as worship by Sankara who understands Bhakti to be a kind of experience. Ramanuja also views Bhakti as worship of God with complete disregard for other objects of the world. Meditation upon the true form of the Lord is Bhakti. For him, Bhakti is continuous loving meditation of God. Bhakti is a direct means of God-realization and he says that it is instrumental to the God's acceptance or selection of a person for granting him salvation. Thus, Bhakti is of the nature of direct perception or vision of God.

## 13.3 STAGES AND ORIGIN OF BHAKTI

Once devotion for the Lord is generated in the mind, the bound human self comes on the right road to his emancipation from Samsâra. Ramanuja seems to believe in different sources of the origination of Bhakti.

It may arise through performance of meritorious acts (punya) in so far as these acts are capable of destroying sins of the previous births. Duties performed in a selfless spirit or done as a form of worship to God liberates humans from the cycle of the law of karma and they realize their essential nature which consists in being dependent upon God. Realisation of dependence on God makes humans devoted to Him. Further, Bhakti may arise due to the grace of God. The Lord perpetuated with one's actions is pleased and He impels the origination of devotion for Him in the heart of humans with whom He is pleased. Ramanuja considers surrender (*prapatti*) to God as a very good cause for devotion to open up in the life of a person. For him, invoking the grace of God by taking refuge in Him is a good means for the origination of Bhakti to God. He suggested a path leading to the origination of Bhakti through enabling the aspirant for liberation to practise worship (upâsanâ) of God. This path is known as sevenfold discipline (Sâdhana-Saptaka) which is meant as a preparatory path. These seven steps are: Viveka (discrimination), Vimoka (control of passions), Abhyâsa (practice), Kriyâ (performance of duties), Kalyâna (development of virtues), Anavasâda (freedom from weakness) and Anuddharsha (freedom from excessive goodness).

Equipped with the sevenfold means, the aspirant for liberation enters on the life of meditation to cultivate love of God. This life of meditation and love of God continue till the end of present birth, the attainment of direct vision of God. Thus, a life dedicated to the realisation of God through practising Bhakti as the means for that is a life of Bhaktiyoga. Bhaktiyoga is preceded by Karmayoga and succeeded by Jñânayoga. But the knowledge produced through Bhakti is highest knowledge (para jñâna) which is itself of the nature of Bhakti. It appears that Ramanuja conceived Bhaktiyoga to be a means of the realization of highest devotion, Parama-bhakti. Thus, Bhaktiyoga may be designated as the lower devotion or Sâdhana-bhakti. Bhaktiyoga comprises karma (action) and jñâna (knowledge). It consists in active performance of all duties enjoyed upon the spiritual aspirant by way of his obligations in the society. Ramanuja thinks that the highest state reached through practice of Bhaktiyoga has been described to be the state

of *Brahmabhuta*. It is essentially similar to that of the *Sthitaprajñâ* and Yogi described as ideal achievements through Jñânayoga and Karmayoga.

According to Ramanuja, there are three stages of Bhakti which are para-bhakti that means performance of duties as a service to God, para-jñâna that refers to cognising one's true nature and parama-bhakti that is the highest spiritual realisation. These stages may be considered to be successive realisations in the path of Bhakti. We find that there is also a twofold classification of Bhakti that comprises of Sâdhana-bhakti (devotion as means) and Sâdhya-bhakti (devotion as an end). Phala-bhakti is devotion as an end in itself that is granted by God to persons with whom He is pleased and whom He has selected for the purpose. Bhakti consisting of Karmayoga and Jñânayoga is to be practised before one is qualified to be elected by God. Thus Sâdhana-bhakti i.e. Para-bhakti and Para-jñâna, is a means of Phala-bhakti or Parama-bhakti.

Ramanuja's concept of Bhakti is based on the presupposition that Jñâna and Karma are not alien to Bhakti. There is a close connection between Bhakti and Jñâna. Jñâna associated with love becomes Bhakti while Karma associated with Jñâna becomes a form of worship to God which is a form of Bhakti. Thus, Karma and Jñâna both are perfected in Bhakti. Karmayoga and Jñânayoga taken separately are not perfect means of God-realisation: Karma leads to Jñâna and Jñâna turns into Bhakti before the aspirant becomes blessed one. Therefore, Jñâna and Karma are not antagonistic to Bhakti. It can be rightly said that Bhakti arises out of disinterested performance of Karma and is nourished and sustained by self-knowledge and God-knowledge. Bhakti is essentially Karmayoga and Jñânayoga. The devotee has realized the supremacy of God over Cit (individual) and Acit (nature or matter) and has cognised the essential dependence of sentient and insentient beings on Him. He does everything as service to God and knows God to be his innermost self.

Sri Swami Sivananda suggests the following six means of cultivating Bhakti: Service of Bhagavatas, Sâdhus and Sannyâsins; repetition of God's name; Satsanga; Hari Kirtan; study of the Gitâ and stay in the place of Pilgrimage. For him, the following six kinds of Bhakti are:

a) Apara (lower) and Para (higher) Bhakti.

b) Râgatmika and Vaidhi-bhakti.

c) Sakâmya and Nishkâmya Bhakti.

d) Vyabhichârini and Avyabhichârini Bhakti.

e) Mukhya (primary) and Gauna (secondary) Bhakti.

f) Sâttvic, Râjasic and Tâmasic Bhakti.

Para-bhakti refers to the higher, transcendental form of devotion that is associated with universal love and a direct experience of the Divine. Apara-bhakti refers to the lower form of devotion which involves rituals, ceremonies or images in the worship of God. A devotee of Para-bhakti is all-embracing and all-inclusive. He has cosmic love or Visva Prem.

Râgatmika Bhakti is known as primary (mukhya) Bhakti. Para-bhakti is also primary devotion. Sakâmya Bhakti is Gauna or secondary devotion. Nishkâmya Bhakti, Avyabhichârini Bhakti or Para-bhakti is otherwise known as Ananya Bhakti.

In Râgatmika Bhakti, there are no fetters, shackles or barriers of customs or rules of society. There is no binding of any sort and is an absolutely free flow of divine Prem. The devotee is intoxicated with divine Prem whereas in Vaidhi-bhakti, the devotee observes rules and ceremonies and has certain restrictions.

Showing devotion to God for getting riches or son or removal of sufferings from diseases is Sakâmya Bhakti which will eventually terminate in Nishkâmya Bhakti. To love God for sometimes and then wife, children and property for sometimes is Vyabhichârini Bhakti. To love God and God alone forever and ever is Avyabhichâarini Bhakti.

In Sâttvic Bhakti, the quality of Sattva predominates in the Bhakta. He worships God to please Him and to destroy Vâsanâs. In Râjasic Bhakti, the quality of Rajas predominates in the devotee. He worships God to get estates, wealth, name and fame. In Tâmasic Bhakti, the quality of Tamas predominates in the devotee. He is actuated by wrath, arrogance, jealousy and malice in showing devotion to God. Tâmasic Bhakti is to worship God for destroying one's enemy and for getting success in an enterprise through

unlawful means. The thief prays to God: 'O God Ganesha! Let me get something tonight. I will offer You 100 coconuts.' This is Tâmasic Bhakti. All these three types of Bhakti are secondary devotion only.

Narada also classifies Bhakti into two kinds, primary and secondary. Secondary devotion is three kinds as of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas in the devotee: the devotees are the distressed (Klesayukta), the seeker after knowledge (Jijñâsu) and the selfish (Arthârthi). Para-bhakti, Ananya Bhakti, Avyabhichârini Bhakti are one and the same which is primary devotion.

According to the Gitâ, there are four kinds of Bhaktas who are the distressed, the seeker for knowledge, the selfish and the wise. Except the devotion of the wise, the rests are after all secondary as they have selfish motives in view. But the devotion of the wise is pure and absolutely unselfish. It is Para-bhakti. He has undivided love and whole-hearted devotion to the Lord. God is the dearest to him and he is the dearest to God.

## 13.4 PATH OF DEVOTION

The aim of Sâdhanâ in Jñânamârga is to remove ignorance (ajñâna) and to rise above the veil of Mâyâ and thus to acquire tattva-jñâna, direct realisation of the Ultimate Reality. The followers of the Bhaktimârga also have for their end the realisation of the Absolute. The different mârgas or paths state different ways of reaching the same end or goal. The Absolute and the individual are eternally related, religion only seeks to re-establish or to raise the bonding into self-consciousness.

According to the Bhakti Schools, the Absolute cannot be reached by knowledge and they regard devotion (bhakti) as the essential and the most effective means to the realisation of God. Ramanuja thinks that the mere listening to the scriptural texts (sravana), mere ratiocination (manana) and mere meditation (nididhyâsana) have no competence for reaching the (Absolute) Self. He who is dearest is selected and that those who are joyfully devoted to God are dear to Him. There is a difference of opinion as to whether supreme devotion is by nature unmixed with knowledge (jñâna-sunya) or is attended by knowledge (jñânamisra). According to Ramanuja, devotion in

its highest stage even includes knowledge within it, and he expressly states that the direct realisation of Brahman (aparoksa jñâna) is nothing but knowledge that assumes the form or nature of devotion (bhaktirupâpannam jñânam). Although devotion is regarded as the most essential and effective means of God-realisation, still this devotion does not exclude knowledge. He emphasises that knowledge alone (kevala jñâna) without devotion is not sufficient for salvation, but he does not think that knowledge is not useful or very different in nature from devotion.

Vallabha also thinks that though devotion must be given the supreme place, still knowledge has its uses. Nimbarka holds that Bhakti involves knowledge of God and of the relation of God to the individual soul and thus includes knowledge as one of its constituent factors. The realisation of Brahman brings devotion with it. Madhva believes in the usefulness of rituals and the added efficacy of them when they are performed with knowledge. Thus we find that devotion attended by knowledge (jñânamisra bhakti) has been recommended.

But the Caitanya School of Vaisnavas holds that the best form of devotion (Uttama-bhakti) stands by itself and it does not necessitate the need of knowledge and karma. It is by nature not mixed with them (svarupasiddha). Supreme devotion is characterised by them as attributeless (nirguna), self-subsistent (kevala), pure (suddha) and primary (mukhya). The purity of devotion is retained when it is not mixed with anything else, viz., karma, knowledge and the processes of yoga. As distinguished from this Supreme Devotion, there are two other forms of devotion known as Âropasiddhâ and Sangasiddhâ. Âropasiddhâ is that which attains the form of devotion by virtue of its being supposed to be productive of the fruits accompanying devotion whereas Sangasiddhâ is that which attains the form of devotion by virtue of its being associated with the constituent elements of devotion. Jiva Gosvamin holds that knowledge (jñâna) is only subsidiary to or the by-product of devotion (bhakti) and has no independent function in the realisation of the Absolute.

In the sense of realisation (anubhava), Jñâna and Bhakti mean the same thing and the terms have been used synonymously in the spiritual

texts. Thus, prema or love has been described as 'a kind of realisation or jñâna, synonymous with bhakti, being the essence of all knowledge mixed up with the essence of all bliss'. The highest spiritual experience is bound to be the consummation of all intellectual, emotional, and active consciousness. Narada also describes prema as of the nature of subtler, deeper and more intimate anubhava (experience) than ordinary experience. Baladeva Vidyabhusana also says that Jñâna is of two kinds and that Bkakti is a kind of Jñâna. Jñâna is *nirnimesa iksana* or winkless gaze and uninterrupted realisation while Bhakti has a nimesa (closing) and an unmesa (opening) that signify the stages of severance (viraha) and union (milana).

The Bhaktimârga lays special stress on the personality of God and regards the Personal God as the Absolute or the Highest Reality. Like all theistic religions, it emphasises the duality involved in the relationship. Religion is a relation between two persons, viz., the finite person (devotee) and the Absolute, the Lord of the universe (Bhagavan). While the individual soul is liable to pain, God is never so liable. The individual soul is controlled (niyamya) while God is the Controller (niyantri). According to Ramanuja, the individual soul is a part (amsa) of Brahman, though by this part is not meant a segment cut out of the whole since Brahman is absolutely divisionless. The individual soul is a part in the sense of the effect which has no reality apart from Brahman just as the light coming from the fire is a part of it. The individual soul may be regarded also as an attribute (visesana) of Brahman. But although the attribute is related to the substance as a part is to the whole, still they are seen to differ in essential character. Even in the state of release, the individual soul does not become identified with the Absolute (Brahman) but only attains the nature of Brahman. The individuality of the soul is not lost, only the sense of separateness disappears in the state of release.

According to Nimbarka, the individual soul is both distinct and not-distinct from the Absolute. The soul possesses attributes different from those of Brahman and hence is different from Brahman. From another standpoint, again, the individual soul cannot exist apart from Brahman and hence is not different from Brahman. The individual soul is only a ray of

Brahman. It is absolute submission to God (prapatti) that is the means to liberation. According to Vallabha, though the individual soul is in essence identical with the Absolute, still it is related to the Absolute as the part is to the whole, just as the spark is related to the fire out of which it arises.

According to Madhva, the individual soul is different in nature from Brahman. The individual soul is atomic in size, while Brahman is infinite and all pervading. The individual soul is dependent on the Lord and is of limited power. In the state of release, the individual soul becomes established in its real nature and attains fellowship with God. According to Madhva and the Caitanya school of Vaisnavas, the state of release which is the state of perfect consciousness never obliterates the distinction between the individual and the Absolute.

The distinction between finite personality and the Absolute seems to be essential to the conception of Bhakti. In this respect, it differs considerably from the other two paths, viz., the Jñâna-marga and the Astânga-Yoga-Mârga of Patanjali. The Advaita-Vedanta of Sankara does not recognise any distinction in essence between the individual (jiva) and the Absolute (Brahman) and does not regard the personal God to be the highest reality. The Astânga-Yoga-Mârga of Patanjali also does not lay any great emphasis on the distinction between the finite and the Infinite. In the Nirvikalpa Samadhi stage, the atmân alone shines in its full glory and the jivâtmân (finite self) becomes perfectly identified with Paramâtmân (the Absolute self).

All the Bhakti schools have attempted to refute Sankara's doctrine of the identity of the Absolute with the individual and to justify thereby their emphasis on devotion and the distinction between two persons viz., the Absolute and the individual. Although there are differences among different schools, they agree in holding that the Absolute and the individual are not identical. Ramanuja holds that the absolutely distinctionless and divisionless Brahman which Sankara seeks to establish cannot be proved to be real. Perception cannot give us knowledge of featureless Brahman as well as inference also cannot establish such Brahman. Hence according to Ramanuja, the absolutely attributeless Brahman is without any proof.

Ramanuja concludes that as the three main doctrines of absolute monism (advaitavâda), viz., the existence of a distinctionless (nirvisesa) real, the unreality of the world and the identity of the individual and the Absolute cannot be supported, there must be some other means to the realisation of God than mere knowledge and devotion (bhakti) is also necessary for the realisation of God.

Jiva Gosvamin, a prominent Vaisnava has attempted a thorough philosophical justification for the path of devotion. In his *Bhagavatsandarbhat,* he says that the very same non-dual Reality appears to the Vedantic seers as Brahman and to the Bhagavatas as God (Bhagavan) possessing Infinite Power and Energy (Sakti). The Vedântins either are incapable of experiencing the infinite variety of the inherent Energy (svarupasakti) of that Reality, or do not discriminate between Energy (Sakti) and the possessor of that Energy (Saktimân) and hence describe that Reality as distinctionless Brahman. The *Bhagavatas* on the other hand, distinguish between Energy and the possessor of Energy, and hence describe the Reality as God (Bhagavan) who possesses Infinite Energy and Power. According to the Vedântins, the distinction between Energy and the possessor of Energy cannot be maintained, because the ultimate Reality is described to be non-dual (advaita), and non-duality excludes all sorts of division including the inherent division of Sakti and Saktimân. The Absolute is of the nature of Knowledge (Jñâna) and is neither the subject of knowledge nor the instrument of knowledge, and hence cannot be supposed to be the possessor of Energy.

## 13.5 NATURE OF DEVOTION

Bhakti is attraction towards the Absolute. Sandilya defines Bhakti as supreme attachment to the Lord of the universe. This attachment to Isvara or the Absolute marks the genuine characteristic of Bhakti. When an individual does not attach to the ordinary finite things of the universe and begins to feel an attraction towards the everlasting and the permanent then it may be found in him the germs of Bhakti. True devotion is supreme attachment (para-anurakti) towards the Absolute.

The *Nârada-Pancarâtra* may be said to summarize different definitions of Bhakti when it says, "Bhakti or devotion, according to Bhisma, Prahlada, Uddhava and Narada, is attachment, mixed with love, towards Visnu i.e. Lord of the universe, and is the absence of attachment towards everything else." Here the essence of Bhakti is stated clearly. This aspect of Bhakti is emphasised in the *Bhâgavata Purâna* and *Bhâgavad-Gitâ*. The essence of Bhakti is *ananyasaranatva* or rather *ananyatva*. It demands exclusive attention paid to its object. The essential point of Bhakti consists in *ekasaranatva* which means placing one-self entirely under the disposal of the One Supreme Lord of the universe.

The highest form of Bhakti requires that there should be *arpana* (real dedication) to God of everything. The devotee should have no separate pleasure from that of the Lord, just as the true lover does not feel pleasure in anything but the joy of his beloved only. He always occupies himself with the Lord and if there is forgetting even for a moment then the devotee feels the great uneasiness and extreme misery for want of Him. These are really the true marks of devotion. Royce has beautifully expressed this aspect of Bhakti by the term 'Loyalty'. He describes 'Loyalty' as "the willing and thorough-going devotion of a self to a Cause." This absolute surrender or complete resignation to God is known as *prapatti*. The finite individual can never reach God unless he resigns himself entirely to the mercy of God. It is the Grace (*prasâda*) of God that alone is competent to award salvation. All the other disciplines only prepare the devotee to offer himself completely to God.

The essence of Bhakti is love and it is this love that individuates the object of devotion. When the attachment towards the Absolute rises to such an intensity that the Absolute is felt to be an object of exclusive interest then only this attachment may be described as Bhakti. It is love and love alone that can supply the principle of individuation which is emphasized by Josiah Royce who writes, "The child individuates the toy (only when he loves the toy) with an exclusive love that permits no other. He indeed knows not why he feels thus." This 'permitting no other' and 'knowing no why' are the characteristics of true love and Bhakti which may be referred to by the terms *ananyatva* and *ahetuki*.

When an object is thus loved exclusively then automatically attachment for other objects disappears. Attachment for one and one alone necessarily implies non attachment for every other object and this indifference towards other objects increases with the intensity of attachment for the one. Thus, it is held that *vairâgya* or detachment of the bhakta (devotee) comes as a consequence of love towards the Infinite. This *vairâgya* is thus natural and spontaneous. The Bhaktimârga here recognises an important truth which is so greatly emphasised by modern psychology. It is impossible to uproot or even to suppress altogether our desires and impulses, and every attempt to suppress them forcibly results in great injury to the mind. The only safe and successful method for attaining the purpose is to divert our desires in another direction which is beneficial to us. The Bhaktimârga rightly emphasises that Krsna-nisthâ or devotion and love towards the Lord must always precede *trisnâ-tyâga* which refers to indifference to and renunciation of worldly pleasures.

True Jñâna, which is direct realisation of truth and true *vairâgya* (spirit of renunciation) should come as a natural accompaniment of devotion and they can never be supposed to be absent from genuine devotion. The *Bhâgavata Purâna* rightly emphasises the connection of Bhakti with Jñâna and Vairâgya, and regards these three as bound up in indissoluble connection when it says, “The Yogins (i.e. those who want to realise God following some method) reach my feet undaunted for their greatest good, through Bhakti mixed up with Jñâna and Vairâgya.”

The realisation of the Absolute is the goal of all religions. But the realization may come by two different ways- (i) by emphasizing the object-factor in consciousness or (ii) by emphasizing the subject-factor. The Bhaktimârga takes the first method, and the Yoga and Jñâna-marga take the second. The Bhaktimârga wants to realize the Infinite as an object of consciousness and thus the duality between the sevya (the Lord) and the sevaka (the devotee). There is no self-consciousness but there is object-consciousness alone. This is the highest stage of Bhakti where nothing but God shines in consciousness. The key theme of Sâdhanâ in

Bhaktimârga may be stated as: "Follow the object, concentrate your attention on the object, love it with all your heart, seek nothing else, think of nothing else, make it your own, dedicate your whole self to it and you will realize it."

The Yogamârga of Patanjali, on the other hand, holds that the Absolute is to be realized within as the subject and not outside as the object. The Absolute is the Higher Self, the Paramâtmân and as such we have to intensify the powers of the subject in order to realize it. The Infinite is expressed in and through the subject as well as the object. By intensifying the object, we may realize the Infinite and also by intensifying the subject, we may attain the same goal. In the Yoga-mârga, the Absolute is realized as the subject, the subject realizes the subject, and thus all duality seems to disappear.

The Yogamârga seeks to intensity the subject by withdrawing it from all objects. The Yoga-mârga thus may be described as a process of withdrawal and hence also as a negative process. The Bhaktimârga, on the other hand, seeks to intensify the subject through the object. It rather withdraws from and denies the subject in order to realize the Infinite as the object. It wants to merge the finite subject in the object which appears to be much more developed and expanded than the subject. It may be described as a process of expansion and thus also as a positive process of Sâdhanâ.

The Jñânamârga also does not realize the Absolute as the object and thus far agrees with Yoga-marga. But there is a difference between the two. If the Yoga-mârga is entirely subjective and the Bhaktimârga is entirely objective, the Jñâna-mârga may be described as both subjective and objective. It is the synthesis and reconciliation of the seemingly opposed partial theories. The Absolute, according to the Jñânamârga, is the self and is to be realized as such; but this self is not the antithesis of any object but is the highest reality where the subject and the object merge themselves in the Absolute. The double aspects of the withdrawal and the expansion characterize the transcendence implied in Jñânamârga, and distinguish it clearly from Yogamârga and Bhaktimârga.

Discipline or Sâdhanâ in Bhaktimârga seems to be comparatively easier to most persons than Sâdhanâ in other paths. It is easy because it follows the objective path and deals with concrete things. The object rouses the attention of the child and attracts and interests him long before he has any idea of the subject. Man's attention is naturally and primarily directed towards the object. The Bhaktimârga places before the devotee an object that attracts and interests. This attraction is spontaneous and it seems to guide the bhakti in his journey without any great difficulty.

The Jñâna-mârga is a difficult course of discipline because it wants to realize the Absolute as it is in itself, pure and entire, unenveloped by any upâdhi (adjunct) or avârana (veil) and therefore, until the goal is realized, the whole process of discipline (Sâdhanâ) seems to many to stand upon no concretely realized experience, but upon mere bhavana or meditation. It is because of this that the Jñâna-mârga can suit only those who live in the high intellectual plane and have definitely and decidedly transcended the sense-region.

In the Bhaktimârga, on the other hand, the devotee begins with the concrete manifestation of the Absolute. From the very beginning it gives the devotee something real, some concrete manifestation of the Lord, although not pure, although partial but still something that genuinely reveals God. Therefore, although the same goal is reached by both Bhakti and Jñâna, but Bhakti easily and gradually leads the bhakta step by step from lower to higher manifestations of the Absolute and the Jñânamârga leads the sâdhaka direct to the Absolute.

## 13.6 DETERMINANTS OF DEVOTION

The essence of Bhakti consists in spontaneous and unrestricted attachment to the Supreme Person who is the Lord of the Universe. The highest stage of Bhakti is described in the *Bhagavata Purana* as Nirguna-bhakti. The aspects of natural spontaneity and easy continuity of the flow of attachment are especially emphasized in the highest stage. Such supreme devotion can have no cause but is really eternal and uncaused. It is beyond the chain of causes and effects. Caitanya School of Vaisnavas holds that krisna-

prema (devotion to the Lord) eternally is (nitya-siddha) and never comes into being (sâdhya). This view resembles with that of Sankara. For Sankara, the radical non-dualist, moksa or liberation is an eternal fact and never comes into being. The Bhaktivâdins who are opposed to Sankara's Absolute Monism, also hold that Bhakti, in its highest conception, can never come to exist as the result of processes.

The Sâdhanas or determinants and auxiliaries of Bhakti merely serve to purify the mind (citta) so that it may become a suitable mirror for the reflection of Bhakti which is eternal and unconditioned. They help merely to prepare the ground for the emergence of the experience, but cannot and do not condition the same. The highest experience (nirguna bhakti) is beyond the chain of causes and effects, and should not be regarded as an effect that necessarily follows from any condition. The *Mundâka Upanishad* holds that the realisation of God cannot be claimed as a matter of right nor does it necessarily follow as a consequence of good deeds or of sacrifices or of profound learning; but it is exclusively the award of Divine Mercy.

The doctrine of Grace seems to emphasise the unconditionality of the spiritual experience. The doctrine of Grace serves to bridge over the supposed gulf between the finite Jiva and the Infinite Lord but it is not a necessity for the Vedanta in as much as it denies any real difference between the ultimate nature of Jiva and Brahman. However, although Grace is not supposed to be indispensably necessary for salvation by the Vedântins, they do not think that Divine Grace is not useful. The Divine Grace may be the cause of illumination which directly leads to salvation.

The Sâdhanas or disciplinary practices have been broadly divided into two important groups:(1) those belonging to the outer circle, or exoteric; and (2) those belonging to the inner circle, or esoteric. They are described in the *Bhakti Sâstras* as Vahiranga and Antaranga Sâdhanâ. The first group represents the remote conditions while the second group includes the more intimate and immediate steps to the goal. The first set of auxiliaries is to be taken recourse to so long as no spontaneous attraction is felt towards God and the things Divine. The second group becomes helpful only to the advanced Sâdhakas who feel a genuine love for God and to whom everything relating to God becomes a source of infinite pleasure.

The principal and the only practice (Sâdhanâ) become confined to meditation (smarana) of God and His attributes and sportive actions (lilâ). Loving meditation (dhruvâsmrti) and spontaneous self-surrender (âtma-nivedana) constitute the prominent marks of this stage. The first course of discipline prepares the Sâdhaka for the second. One who is born with a natural and spontaneous attraction towards God need not go through the rigid preparatory disciplines, but is competent (adhikârin) for the second stage. The only end of the disciplinary practices is to help the growth of spontaneous attraction to God.

The Vaisnava School has laid great emphasis on the second form of Sâdhanâ, viz. the loving worship and service of God. Here God is no longer the omnipotent Power whose commands are obeyed under compulsion and for fear of His displeasure. Now, the devotee enters into loving relationship with God who not only constantly looks after his welfare, but is as dear to him as one's brother and friend or as one's own child or as the beloved. God no longer compels attention through His omnipotence (aisvarya) but becomes the object of constant meditation of the devotee through His loving affection and charming features (mâdhurya).

The Bhakti Schools of Sâdhanâ realise that one-pointedness or real devotion can be gained through the sublimation of our natural and instinctive impulses and tendencies. We naturally love our children, friends and our beloved. If we can love God as we do love our friends and children then only our love towards God is firm and fixed, spontaneous and natural. So, the Bhaktivâdins advise people to take recourse to upâsana in raga-marga. One is instructed to get hold of one or other of these natural relationships and attempt for a sublimation of the natural feeling through constant contemplation of and constant occupation with the Divine object of love. True Nirguna-bhakti is perfect spontaneity of love reaching such an intensity. The complete absorption of the self marks the intensity of love and it reaches the level of the Nirguna stage.

In the Vedas we find the sacrificial forms of worship constituting the Karmakânda whereas the Upanisada or intellectual form of Sâdhanâ constituting the Jñâna-kânda. The Bhakti form of worship does not attain

any distinct place in the Vedas. Visnu or Krsna, the Supreme Lord of the Bhaktivâdins does not hold any supreme position in the Vedas and worship of God in any personal form is not prescribed there. The *Bhâgavad-Gitâ* not only deals with the Bhakti-form of worship definitely and exhaustively but attempts to justify its claims as an independent form of Sâdhanâ.

Sadhya-bhakti and Sâdhana-bhakti are devotion as the realised goal and devotion in the form of the auxiliaries which lead to and help the realisation itself. The Sâdhanas are generally regarded as nine in number and sometimes the following five are selected as the most prominent, viz., hearing and reciting the sacred texts, repeating incessantly the name of the Lord, companionship of holy people, residing in the holy abodes of the Lord Sri Krsna, and loving worship as well as service of the Lord. Compassion for all creatures, attachment towards the name of the Lord and service of the Vaisnavas- these three also are sometimes separately pointed out as being of special importance. Any one of these alone is competent to generate bhakti and there are various sorts of devotees practising either single or many items. Companionship with holy people is given the foremost importance in the Vaisnava tradition in as much as it is responsible for the distinct turning point in the life of the Sâdhaka.

Bhakti may be regarded as one among the three different stages in the course of discipline or Sâdhanâ. It appears that every Sâdhaka has the Karma, Bhakti and Jñâna stage in his course of Sâdhanâ. Here Bhakti means a learning or an attraction and Jñâna means realisation or anubhava in general. If one wants to attain God-realisation, one needs to cultivate Bhakti which is Divine Love. Bhakti is another dimension of life which may be considered as a personal religion because it is a personal loving relationship with God. It means that one is ready to dissolve into the Whole and invite the Whole to come into one's heart. Thus, the path devotion means awakening the inner Heart. One cannot ignore the role of Bhakti-marga to the liberation of mind, enrichment of knowledge, as well as self-realization and hence we may consider the idea of Bhakti as a force that binds human being with his/her karma to achieve the ultimate state of moksha or happiness.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q 1:** What is the etymological meaning of Bhaktimârga?

.....

**Q 2:** What does Bhaktiyoga mean?

.....

**Q 3:** What are the three stages of Bhakti after Ramanuja?

.....

**Q 4:** What does 'Sâdhana-Saptaka' mean?

.....

**Q 5:** Distinguish between Sâdhana-bhakti and Sâdhya-bhakti.

.....

**Q 6:** What is the essence of Bhakti?

.....

**Q 7:** What do you mean by Nirguna Bhakti in the *Bhâgavata Purâna*?

.....

**Q 8:** What are the two groups following disciplinary practices?

.....

**Q 9:** Fill in the banks:

(a) The word 'bhakti' comes from ——.

(b) The path of sevenfold discipline for the origination of bhakti is known as ——.

(c) —— is a devotion as an end in itself.

(d) —— means performance of duties as a service to God.

(e) The highest stage of bhakti is described in the *Bhâgavata Purâna* as ——.

**Q 10:** Give a brief estimate on the nature of Bhakti as a means to the spiritual realization.

.....

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.....



## 13.7 LET US SUM UP

- Bhakti yoga is a path of devotion which consists of supreme love and an infinite attachment to God.
- For Ramanuja, bhakti is continuous loving meditation of God. Bhakti is a direct means of God-realization and it is of the nature of direct perception or vision of God.
- The life of Bhaktiyoga means a life dedicated to the realisation of God through practising bhakti as the means for that.
- All the Bhaktivâdins think that the Absolute cannot be reached by knowledge. They regard devotion (bhakti) as the essential and the most effective means to the realisation of God.
- The Bhaktimârga gives special attention to the personality of God and regards the Personal God as the Absolute or the Highest Reality.
- Swami Sivananda prescribes six means for the cultivation of Bhakti: Service of Bhagavatas, Sâdhus and Sannyâsins; repetition of God's name; Satsanga; Hari Kirtan; study of the Gitâ and stay in the place of pilgrimage.
- According to Ramanuja, salvation is possible not through jnana and karma, but through bhakti and prasâda (grace).
- All the Bhakti schools have attempted to justify the emphasis on devotion and the distinction between the Absolute and the individual.
- The determinants of Bhakti serve to purify the mind (citta) so that it may become a suitable mirror for reflecting one's Bhakti which is eternal and unconditioned.
- The unconditionality of the spiritual experience is emphasized by the doctrine of Grace which serves to bridge over the gulf between the finite Jiva and the Infinite Lord.
- The path devotion means awakening the inner Heart. We cannot ignore the role of bhaktimârga for the liberation of mind, enrichment of knowledge, as well as self-realization.



## 13.8 FURTHER READINGS


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## 13.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q. No. 1:** Bhakti means 'devotional service' or 'homage' and Mârga means 'pathway' or 'passage'. Hence the etymological meaning of Bhaktimârga is a spiritual path as devotional service to the realization of God.

**Ans to Q. No. 2:** Bhaktiyoga is a spiritual path focused on achieving union with the divine force through loving devotion and service. Bhaktimârga is a spiritual path of devotion known as Bhaktiyoga. The ultimate goal of Bhaktiyoga is to achieve union with the divine which is a state of oneness and spiritual liberation. Bhakti is supreme love for God and is the spontaneous outpouring of love (Prem) towards the Beloved.

**Ans to Q. No. 3:** According to Ramanuja, there are three stages of Bhakti and they are: (a) Para-bhakti which means performance of duties as a service to God. (b) Para-jñâna which means cognising one's true nature. (c) Parama-bhakti which means highest spiritual realisation.

**Ans to Q. No. 4:** Sâdhana-saptaka is a path leading to the origination of bhakti through enabling the aspirant for liberation to practise worship (upâsana) of God. It means seven-fold ways to devotion which leads to liberation and these seven moral and spiritual disciplines are: Viveka (discrimination), Vimoka (control of passions), Abhyâsa (practice), Kriyâ (performance of duties), Kalyana (development of virtues), Anavasâda (freedom from weakness) and anuddharca (freedom from excessive goodness).

**Ans to Q. No. 5:** Sâdhana-bhakti is nothing but the devotion as a path whereas Sâdhya-bhakti means devotion as an end. Phala-bhakti is devotion as an end in itself that is granted by God to persons with whom He is pleased and whom He has selected for the purpose. Bhakti consisting of karmayoga and jñânayoga is to be practised before one is qualified to be elected by God. Thus Sâdhana-bhakti i.e. Para-bhakti and Para-jñâna, is a means of Phala-bhakti or Parama-bhakti which is also known as Sâdhya-bhakti.

**Ans to Q. No. 6:** The essence of Bhakti is love and it is this love that individuates the object of devotion. It consists in spontaneous and unrestricted attachment to the Supreme Person, who is the Lord of the Universe. The essence of bhakti has been recorded in the *Nârada-Pancarâtra* as "Bhakti or devotion, according to Bhisma, Prahlada, Uddhava and Narada, is attachment, mixed with love, towards Visnu i.e. Lord of the universe, and is the absence of attachment towards everything else." This aspect of Bhakti has been emphasised in the *Bhâgavata Purâna* and the *Bhagavad-Gitâ*. The essence of Bhakti is *ananyasaranatva* or rather *ananyatva*. It demands exclusive attention paid to its object. The essential point of Bhakti consists in *ekasaranatva* which means placing one-self entirely under the disposal of the One Supreme Lord of the universe.

**Ans to Q. No. 7:** The highest stage of Bhakti is described in the *Bhâgavata Purâna* as Nirguna-bhakti which refers to devotion to the formless and attributeless aspect of the Divine. It is a devotion that lacks any desire for personal gain and is not motivated by any of the three gunas- sattva (purity, harmony, goodness), rajas (passion, activity, energy) and tamas (darkness, ignorance, attachment). Such supreme devotion can have no cause but is really eternal and uncaused. It is beyond the chain of causes and effects.

**Ans to Q. No. 8:** There are two groups following disciplinary practices and they are: (1) a group belonging to the outer circle or exoteric (2) another group belonging to the inner circle or esoteric. They are described in the Bhakti Sastras as vahiranga and antaranga sâdhanâ respectively. The first group represents the remote conditions while the second group includes the more intimate and immediate steps to the goal. The second group becomes helpful only to the advanced sâdhakas who feel a genuine love for God and to whom everything relating to God becomes a source of infinite pleasure. These two are distinguished as Sâdhanâ in vidhimârga and that in ragamârga.

**Ans to Q. No. 9:** (a) Sanskrit

(b) Sâdhana-Saptaka

(c) Sâdhya/Phala bhakti

(d) Para-bhakti

(e) Nirguna-bhakti

**Ans to Q. No. 10:** Bhakti is attraction towards the Absolute and it is supreme or sublime attachment to the Lord of the universe. This attachment to the Absolute marks the genuine characteristic of bhakti. Instead of being attached to the ordinary finite things of the universe, when a person begins to feel an attraction towards the everlasting and the permanent then it may be found in him the germs of bhakti or devotion. The true nature of bhakti is para anurakti or supreme attachment towards the Absolute.

Bhakti is taken by Ramanuja to mean constant and unfailing recollection and meditation of the supreme Lord. This constant meditation (dhruvâsmriti) when deepened to the extreme becomes equal to and takes the form of sâksâtkâra or direct perception. When we can devote ourselves wholeheartedly to the object of our adoration then only dhruvâsmriti or constant memory is possible and this dhruvâsmriti is bhakti or devotion proper.

The essence of bhakti may be said to present in the *Nârada-Pancarâtra* as "Bhakti or devotion, according to Bhisma, Prahlada, Uddhava and Narada, is attachment, mixed with love, towards Visnu i.e. Lord of the universe, and is the absence of attachment towards everything else." This aspect of bhakti is ananyasaranatva or rather ananyatva. The essential point of bhakti consists in ekasaranatva, which means placing one-self entirely under the disposal of the one Supreme Lord of the universe.

The essence of Bhakti is love and it is this love that individuates the object of devotion. When the attachment towards the Absolute rises to such an intensity that the Absolute is felt to be an object of exclusive interest then only this attachment may be described as Bhakti which is true love. It is love and love alone that can supply the principle of individuation.

The highest form of Bhakti requires that there should be arpana or real dedication to God of everything. The devotee should have no separate pleasure from that of the Lord, just as the true lover does not feel pleasure in anything but the joy of his beloved only. He always occupies himself with the Lord and if there is forgetting even for a moment then the devotee feels the great uneasiness and extreme misery for want of Him. These are really the true marks of devotion. Royce has beautifully expressed this aspect of Bhakti or devotion by the term 'Loyalty'. He describes 'Loyalty' as "the willing and thorough-going devotion of a self to a Cause." This absolute surrender or complete resignation to God is known as prapatti.



## 13.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

**(A) Very Short Questions:**

**Q. 1.** Who is known as a Bhakta?

**Q. 2.** What do you mean by Sâdhana-bhakti?

**Q. 3.** What is Âropasiddha Bhakti?

**Q. 4.** What does Nishkâmya Bhakti mean?

**Q. 5.** How does Narada define Bhakti?

**B. Short Questions: (Write in about 100-150 words)**

**Q. 1.** How does Ramanuja describe Bhakti?

**Q. 2.** Distinguish between individual self and the Absolute after the Bhaktivâdins.

**Q. 3.** Briefly state the connection between bhakti and jnana.

**Q. 4.** Distinguish between Âropasiddhâ bhakti and Sangasiddhâ bhakti.

**Q. 5.** State the true marks of devotion (bhakti).

**C. Long Questions: (Write in about 300-500 words)**

**Q. 1.** Give a brief estimate on the meaning and definitions of Bhaktiyoga.

**Q. 2.** Explain the stages and origins of bhakti (devotion).

**Q. 3.** Give an account of the relation between individual self and the Absolute.

**Q. 4.** Describe the method of Bhaktimârga for the realization of God.

**Q. 5.** Do you think that the determinants of bhakti serve to purify the mind (citta)? Discuss.

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# UNIT 14: BUDDHIST PARAMITAS

## UNIT STRUCTURE


14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 The First Paramita: Dana or Generosity

14.4 The Second Paramita: Sila or Morality

14.5 The Third Paramita: Kshanti or Patience

14.6 The Fourth Paramita: Virya or Diligence

14.7 The Fifth Paramita: Dhyana or Meditation

14.8 The Sixth Paramita: Prajna or Wisdom

14.9 Conclusion

14.10 Let Us Sum Up

14.11 Further Readings

14.12 Answer To Check Your Progress

14.13 Model Questions


## 14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- Know how to define Paramita
- Know about its kinds
- Explain each of the Paramita
- Explain how each paramita deals with our lives
- Know that by following it how can we lead a good life

## 14.2 INTRODUCTION

In Sanskrit, "Paramita" literally translates to "having reached the other shore," symbolizing transcendence or perfection. It signifies moving beyond the shore of suffering, leaving it behind, and achieving enlightenment. Transcendence, therefore, involves liberation from mental afflictions (the root causes of suffering) and from suffering itself. The true practice of the paramitas is to overcome self-attachment and self-centeredness.

From the Mahayana perspective, practicing the paramitas means aligning oneself with selflessness and non-attachment, benefiting both oneself and others. Practicing solely for one's own benefit does not constitute true paramita practice. Thus, whether one follows the Hinayana or Mahayana path, if the practice is not aimed at benefiting others, it is not authentic practice of the paramitas. Buddhism teaches that benefiting others is the first step toward liberation. The Six Paramitas, as outlined in Mahayana Buddhism, are the key means to this goal. These are: generosity (dana), morality (sila), patience (ksanti), diligence (virya), meditation (dhyana), and wisdom (prajna)

## 14.3 THE FIRST PARAMITA: DANA OR GENEROSITY

Generosity, or dana, is a fundamental practice in early Buddhist texts such as the nikayas and agamas, as well as in later works like the Prajnaparamita Sutras and the Mahaprajnaparamita Sastra, which further expand on this concept. Among all the paramitas, generosity is often the easiest to practice and yields immediate rewards. It can be expressed in two ways: with characteristics and without characteristics.

### 14.3.1 Generosity With Characteristics

Generosity with characteristics refers to giving with a specific motive. For instance, one might give as a way of repaying a debt, even if the recipient does not expect anything in return. This could include acts of charity or donations made in the name of someone else, where the giver feels they are fulfilling an obligation. Such acts are still generous and count as fulfilling the paramita, though they are motivated by a sense of indebtedness.

### 14.3.2 Generosity Without Characteristics

Generosity without characteristics involves giving freely, without any self-centered motive. This includes giving material wealth, the Dharma, and the gift of fearlessness.

Material wealth can be given without attachment to personal gain, but other forms of giving, such as offering one's time, knowledge, or even one's body, also exemplify this form of generosity. While giving money is a common example, offering time and wisdom can be just as valuable.

## 14.4 THE SECOND PARAMITA: SILA OR MORALITY

The second paramita, known as sila or morality, refers to living in alignment with Buddhist ethical guidelines. These guidelines vary depending on an individual's level of practice. At its simplest, the foundational principles consist of three key precepts: avoiding harmful actions, cultivating virtue, and working for the welfare of all sentient beings.

To support or expand upon these three basic precepts, one may adopt additional precepts based on their path. These might differ depending on whether someone is a layperson, novice, or ordained monastic. For example, one could follow the precepts of a shravaka-a practitioner focused on personal liberation-or those of a bodhisattva, whose vow is to liberate all beings. The shravaka precepts are usually taken for a single lifetime, while the bodhisattva precepts are taken for successive lifetimes.

### 14.4.1 The Buddhist Precepts

The five core Buddhist precepts, which complement the three basic guidelines, can be observed in part, meaning it's not necessary to adopt all five. These five precepts are: not to kill, not to steal, not to lie, not to engage in sexual misconduct, and not to take intoxicants. Why do the shravaka precepts only last for a single lifetime? The precept essence, cultivated by following these rules, is a subtle, non-material form of phenomena that arises from the body and speech. When physical life ends, this essence ceases as well. In contrast, the essence generated by the bodhisattva vows exists at the level of one's mind-stream, a mental continuum that has no beginning or end. This essence continues to mature until the

practitioner reaches buddhahood, as it is a mind-dharma, not a form-dharma.

While the bhikshu (monk) or bhikshuni (nun) precepts are taken once per lifetime, the bodhisattva precepts can be taken repeatedly. Bodhisattvas integrate these vows over multiple lifetimes, continually refining their conduct.

### 14.4.2 Differences Between Shravaka and Bodhisattva Precepts

One key difference between the precepts of a shravaka and those of a bodhisattva is their focus. The shravaka precepts emphasize renunciation-escaping suffering, overcoming desire, and transcending the three realms of samsara. While the bodhisattva vows also involve renunciation, they go beyond this, grounding the path in altruistic compassion (bodhi-mind) as the central aim.

Monastics, in taking their vows, renounce worldly pursuits like career, wealth, and social standing. Laypeople, who may still engage with material assets, are encouraged to recognize that these things are impermanent and ultimately empty. They should use their resources mindfully to benefit others, without clinging to ownership or the notion of "helping." In this way, the bodhisattva precepts integrate renunciation and the spirit of bodhi-mind as inseparable aspects of the path.

The essence of the bodhisattva vows is the commitment to benefit others. By helping others, we ultimately help ourselves. A bodhisattva's priority is the well-being of their immediate family and community, which extends outward to encompass friends, acquaintances, strangers, society, and the environment. This approach proves beneficial not just to others, but to oneself as well. Many people believe they must prioritize their own needs to avoid collapse, but the bodhisattva's approach is to care for oneself by using one's resources to assist others. The precepts provide the moral foundation for such an approach.

## 14.5 THE THIRD PARAMITA: KSHANTI OR PATIENCE

The third paramita is patience, or kshanti. According to the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra (Sutra of the Perfection of Wisdom), patience is described as "pacified patience," meaning that true patience brings a sense of calm to the mind. With this kind of patience, not only does the mind become more stable, but the body also experiences a greater sense of well-being. Patience in one area of life can extend to all others. Without it, we would struggle to endure the challenges and obstacles we face in life. Without a peaceful mind and body, internal agitation and turmoil can overwhelm us. A Chinese proverb notes, "When tigers fight, death or great injury will result." Similarly, human conflicts often arise from a clash between the external world and our inner mind. Patience teaches us not to become upset when immediate results are not forthcoming, as over time, our efforts will bear fruit.

### 14.5.1 Three Kinds of Patience

There are three main aspects of practicing patience: patience with those who harm us, patience with the environment, and patience in enduring the nature of dharmas.

**i. Patience With Those Who Wish to Harm Us**

If we choose not to respond harmfully when faced with those who wish to harm us, we prevent both ourselves and others from causing further damage. Although it may seem like surrender, this approach actually cultivates the courage and wisdom to protect ourselves and others in the long run. Think of it like avoiding chopping down a tree for firewood every time you need it, thus preserving the forest for future generations. However, practicing patience doesn't mean allowing yourself to be taken advantage of. Rather, you can respond with wisdom and compassion, which may transform difficult situations into opportunities for growth.

**ii. Patience With the Environment**

Patience with the environment involves enduring hardship caused by natural events like storms, extreme temperatures, or natural disasters. Buddhists also believe that our bodies, like the environment, are made of the four elements: earth, water, fire, and wind. When our body is unwell or out of balance, it reflects an imbalance of these elements. Thus, patience in this context also involves accepting and enduring the challenges of our own bodies.

**iii. Patience In Enduring Dharmas**

Patience in enduring all dharmas means seeing all phenomena, including our experiences of pleasure and pain, as empty of inherent self-nature. This perspective helps us embrace both favorable and unfavorable conditions and includes the previous two types of patience.

**iv. Contemplating Emptiness**

When we practice the three types of patience, we are also contemplating emptiness. These practices progress from enduring harm from others to enduring challenges in our body and environment, and ultimately to understanding the emptiness of all phenomena. In a sense, the third type of patience-contemplating emptiness-may be the easiest to practice, as it can be done at any time and place. By contemplating the impermanence of all experiences, whether positive, negative, or neutral, we begin to understand selflessness. This insight into selflessness deepens our understanding of emptiness and helps us engage with the Dharma more directly.

**v. Worldly and World-Transcending Patience**

Patience can be either worldly or world-transcending. Worldly patience involves enduring the challenges of the external world-such as pain, criticism, hunger, thirst, and physical fatigue. World-transcending patience goes beyond these experiences and is seen in the way we integrate the Dharma into our daily lives. It involves enduring the difficulties that come with spiritual practice and using our time in a wise and meaningful way.

Perfecting patience is a gradual process. As Shakyamuni Buddha said in one of the sutras, patience is the greatest wealth. Without it, he would not have attained buddhahood. The absence of wars among Buddhists or against Buddhists may also be attributed to the tolerance and patience at the core of the tradition.

## 14.6 THE FOURTH PARAMITA: VIRYA OR DILIGENCE

The paramita of diligence, or virya, fosters enthusiasm in one's practice. It is an eagerness to face difficult tasks without fear, serving as the antidote to laziness. According to Buddhist texts, both Shakyamuni and Maitreya awakened to the bodhi-mind at the same time, yet Shakyamuni, the Buddha of this era, reached enlightenment first. The scriptures also predict that 5.6 billion years after Shakyamuni, Maitreya will become the Buddha of the future. While Shakyamuni may have attained Buddhahood first due to his diligent practice, the more likely explanation is that their paths to enlightenment had different causes and conditions.

Vows and Aspirations

Without clear vows or aspirations, one is prone to laxity. You might think, "I should be more diligent," but as time passes, physical discomfort, headaches, or fatigue can easily lead to procrastination. Thoughts like, "I need rest, and I'll practice hard once I feel better," are signs of laziness. We often find excuses to avoid practice.

Making vows is crucial for a Buddhist practitioner. These vows can be small, long-term, or ultimate. A small vow might last a day; a larger one can span years. The highest vow is the ultimate vow, the commitment to attain Buddhahood for the sake of all beings. With diligence, such vows propel you to continue helping others, regardless of obstacles. When you make such vows, you cannot afford to slacken; you will keep reminding yourself to move forward.

Reflecting on our own physical limitations reveals the impermanence and finiteness of our energy and life. Yet, with diligence and vows, even limited resources can yield unlimited results. We reap according to our

efforts: great effort brings great results, while minimal effort results in only partial success. If no effort is made, no results will follow. The key is that we have the power to exert full effort and fulfill our vows. By dedicating ourselves to our tasks, we may be amazed at what we can achieve, even with our limited physical bodies. This is the power of diligence.

### 14.6.1 Diligence As Armor

Diligence can act like armor, imbuing practitioners with the courage to overcome any obstacles. With this diligence, there is no perceived enemy because no challenges seem like true obstructions. Diligence drives one forward, unhindered. Some people complain about tasks before they even start, seeing only difficulties, while others view every challenge as an opportunity for growth. The latter exemplify the paramita of diligence, using obstacles as stepping stones in their spiritual journey.

### 14.6.2 Virtuous Diligence

The second type of diligence involves cultivating all virtues. Virtue here refers to practices such as the Four Noble Truths, the Thirty-Seven Aids to Enlightenment, and the Six Paramitas. Those who practice this form of diligence view all experiences-whether physical, mental, or environmental-as opportunities to apply the Dharma. Their entire being is dedicated to the aspiration of practice at every moment. This is true diligence.

However, some practitioners engage in these teachings only sporadically, separating their practice from daily life and missing many chances to practice. It's like standing at the bus stop for the Mahayana vehicle, but then telling oneself, "Maybe I'll catch the next one," unaware of the uncertainty of when that next bus may come.

A truly diligent practitioner keeps their eyes wide open for any opportunity to practice, chasing down every chance without hesitation. If they miss one, they will relentlessly pursue it. Like a

bus pulling away, they will run to catch it, determined not to let any moment of practice slip by.

### 14.6.3 Compassionate Diligence

The third form of diligence benefits all sentient beings. This is the diligence practiced by great bodhisattvas, who are willing to go to any length-whether to hell, heaven, or any realm-to help beings attain liberation. Bodhisattvas are motivated by compassion, not self-interest, and seek only to help others feel secure and guide them toward freedom, without Imposing Anything Upon Them.

### 14.6.4 Practicing The Three Types of Diligence

In summary, a monastic's role is to embody all three types of diligence: the diligence that serves as armor, the diligence that accumulates virtues, and the diligence that benefits others. The first type creates vows that act as armor to protect against obstacles on the path to Buddhahood. The second type involves personal practice and the cultivation of virtues. The third is the dedication to helping others through sharing the benefits of one's practice. Monastics are given a rare opportunity to practice and cultivate wisdom in this life, and if they miss it, they may not have the chance in future lifetimes.

## 14.7 THE FIFTH PARAMITA: DHYANA OR MEDITATION

The fifth of the Six Paramitas is meditation (dhyana). In the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra, there's a phrase: "Don't abide in dharmas, abide in prajnaparamita." This means that one should not fixate on phenomena (dharmas), but instead, remain in a focused, non-distracted state of mind-one that is free from attachment, or "no taste." A non-distracted mind neither clings to samadhi (deep meditative concentration) nor seeks the bliss of samadhi. It's important to note that dhyana is not identical to samadhi, though samadhi is included within it. Master Tsungmi described five levels of dhyana, which span both Indian and Chinese traditions.

### 14.7.1 First Level of Dhyana

The first level of dhyana is practiced by non-Buddhist traditions, where the primary goal is to achieve samadhi. In this state, practitioners try to avoid disruptions within the body, mind, and environment, and immerse themselves in the bliss of samadhi. Their ultimate aspiration is often to reach a heavenly realm. Practices like Indian yoga or Chinese Daoist meditation belong to this category.

### 14.7.2 Second Level of Dhyana

The second level is practiced by those who have encountered the Buddhadharma and understand karma. Practitioners at this level value samadhi highly, believing it to be liberation. They may experience a sense of unity between body and mind, and with the environment, often describing it as becoming one with the universe. While they may reach the four dhyana heavens, which involve various states of form and formlessness, they do not fully understand emptiness. As a result, they may mistake these states for the realization of arhatship and liberation. When they leave samadhi, their worldly attachments-such as to family or wealth-can lead to new vexations, prompting them to seek the bliss of samadhi again.

### 14.7.3 Third Level of Dhyana

The third level is the dhyana of the Hinayana tradition, focused on liberation. Practitioners at this level follow the teachings of karma and emptiness, engaging in the four dhyanas and eight samadhis to attain arhatship. Through these stages, they eventually reach the ninth samadhi, the "dhyana of cessation," which leads to liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

### 14.7.4 Fourth Level qof Dhyana

The fourth level represents the Mahayana path, also known as the dhyana of the bodhisattva. The difference here lies in the

concept of liberation: Hinayana seeks escape from samsara, whereas Mahayana emphasizes transcending attachment to the cycle of birth and death. A bodhisattva does not fear birth and death but has the compassion to return to help others. In Mahayana, dhyana is not limited to seated meditation but can be practiced through various activities, including reading sutras, prostration, or even daily tasks, as long as the mind remains focused.

### 14.7.5 Fifth Level of Dhyana

The fifth level is the dhyana of the Supreme Vehicle, also called the dhyana of the Tathagata or Patriarch. This dhyana does not rely on the structured methods of the earlier levels and is often referred to as the method of "no method." It is the practice of sudden enlightenment, where wisdom arises when the mind is free of wandering thoughts. While Bodhidharma introduced this practice, it was further developed within the Chan school. The sixth patriarch, Huineng, emphasized that when one is free from attachment and self-centered thought, liberation or sudden enlightenment occurs. In his Platform Sutra, he states: "Prajna and dhyana are the same. Where there is prajna, there is dhyana; where there is dhyana, there is prajna." This illustrates the unity of wisdom (prajna) and meditation (dhyana). Unlike the gradual approach, where dhyana precedes wisdom, Huineng's view suggests that wisdom and meditation arise simultaneously. For the practitioner of this path, meditation is not confined to sitting still but is integrated into all aspects of life-eating, sleeping, working-making every moment an opportunity for dhyana.

## 14.8 THE SIXTH PARAMITA: PRAJNA OR WISDOM

The sixth and final paramita is wisdom, or prajna. The Sanskrit word prajna is translated into Chinese as zhihui, commonly rendered as wisdom in English. The second character, hui, signifies sharpness or clarity of mind, while the first character, zhi, refers to using this clear mind effectively in

various situations. Hui represents the essence, and zhi is its function. Another Chinese term for prajna means brightness-absolute transparency, unimpeded and at ease. Prajna also implies acute perception, flexibility, and insight. Prajna is central to Buddhist teachings, and Shakyamuni Buddha emphasized that without prajna, one cannot truly practice Buddhadharma, even if they follow all the other principles of enlightenment. For instance, without prajna, observing the precepts or practicing generosity only cultivates merit, which leads to favorable rebirth but does not eliminate suffering. Similarly, practicing samadhi without prajna might lead to temporary states of meditation, but once those states end, one will return to the world unchanged.

True wisdom arises through correct prajna. What is correct prajna? In the Agamas (early Buddhist scriptures), the Buddha taught that "this arises, therefore that arises; this perishes, therefore that perishes." This means that ignorance and afflictions lead to actions that bring retribution, and the cycle of suffering-birth, death, and suffering-continues. By eliminating ignorance, the entire chain of suffering, including birth, old age, sickness, and death, ceases.

### 14.8.1 Understanding Prajna

Prajna can be viewed in three ways. The first divides it into three dichotomies. The second classifies it into three functional categories, and the third divides it into five categories. While the details of these classifications may be complex, the essential idea will be clarified in the later discussion on practical applications of prajna.

### 14.8.2 General And Specific Prajna

The first dichotomy distinguishes between general and specific prajna. General prajna is taught to those with less sharp karmic roots, like shravakas (those who have heard the Dharma) and beginning bodhisattvas. The Buddha taught them methods for liberation, such as the Five Skandhas and the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination.

These teachings are especially suitable for ordinary beings. On the other hand, specific prajna is for those with sharper karmic roots and includes general prajna. A fitting analogy is a young person with a Ph.D. While they possess specialized knowledge, they also have the general education of an elementary, high school, and college student. General prajna focuses on the teaching that there is no self. The Five Skandhas (form, sensation, perception, volition, and consciousness) describe the material and mental aspects of existence. Through these teachings, we see that the interaction of these skandhas gives the illusion of a self, but since all skandhas are empty, no permanent self exists.

The Twelve Links of Dependent Origination describe the origin of suffering, starting with ignorance and leading to death. Understanding these links shows that there is no true self within the cycle of birth and death.

### 14.8.3 Suchness Prajna and Illumination Prajna

The second way to categorize prajna is by its function. Suchness prajna is inherent, present regardless of one's awareness. Illumination prajna is wisdom gained through practice and insight, where the wisdom "eye" opens, leading to a clear understanding of the world and the ability to act for the benefit of others and the environment. Illumination prajna is active, while suchness prajna is passive, existing whether one has attained wisdom or not.

### 14.8.4 Worldly and Non-Worldly Prajna

A Third Distinction Is Based on Prajna's Level. Worldly Prajna Applies To the Relative World, Where We Interact with People and Things. In This World, There Is A Distinction between subject (self) and objects (others and things). Non-worldly Prajna refers to wisdom that transcends these distinctions, perceiving the world without dividing it into subject and object. This is the wisdom of liberation,

where one does not treat others and the environment as objects. Worldly prajna is not inherently negative, as long as one applies it without becoming attached to the self-centered perspective.

### 14.8.5 Three Kinds of Prajna

Prajna can also be classified into three types: suchness prajna, illumination prajna, and expedient prajna. We've already covered the first two. Expedient prajna refers to the methods used to communicate and practice wisdom, such as through sutras or teachings. These tools help convey the path to illumination prajna.

### 14.8.6 Five Kinds of Prajna

A further classification divides prajna into five types: suchness prajna, illumination prajna, expedient prajna, phenomenal prajna, and auxiliary prajna. The first three have been discussed, and the latter two (phenomenal and auxiliary prajna) are related to attaining illumination prajna.

### 14.8.7 Practicing Prajna

To practice illumination prajna, we begin by recognizing the impermanence of the body, mind, and environment. The practice involves four kinds of contemplation: subjective, objective, direct, and absolute contemplation. Subjective and Objective Contemplation

We often think we are being objective, but in reality, true objectivity is impossible; what is called objective is often just a collective subjectivity. For example, when people offer food, they believe is good for me, they assume they are being objective, but in fact, they are acting based on their own preferences, not mine.

### 14.8.8 Direct Contemplation

In direct contemplation, we simply observe without judgment or interpretation. We refrain from labeling or comparing what we

encounter. However, this practice does not lead to wisdom itself but simply cultivates awareness of what is happening.

### 14.8.9 Absolute Contemplation

Absolute contemplation refers to realizing emptiness, the core of Madhyamika philosophy. It involves responding to situations with common sense, skill, and experience, without imposing personal preferences. This form of contemplation allows one to understand others' needs and act in the most beneficial way, without ego involvement. For instance, if someone is ill, I might refer them to a doctor rather than attempting to heal them myself.

## 14.9 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, prajna is wisdom, and wisdom means not being self-centered. The wisdom of no self is not a denial of existence, but a way of solving problems and benefiting others. By cultivating both the wisdom of prajna and the compassion that accompanies it, one gradually develops a pure and joyous self, ultimately growing into the perfect being-a Buddha.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q 1:** Give example of Dana with example.

.....

**Q 2:** Give example of Dana without example.

.....

**Q 3:** What are the three key Sila precepts?

.....

**Q 4:** What is the essence of Bodhisattva vows?

.....

**Q 5:** In which Sutra patience is described as "pacified patience"?

.....

**Q 6:** What is the three basic kinds of patience and what they dealt with?

.....

**Q 7:** Give two examples of worldly patience.

.....

**Q 8:** What do you understand by power of diligence?

.....

**Q 9:** What are the three types of diligence?

.....

**Q 10:** Where we found this phrase "Don't abide in dharmas, abide in prajnaparamita."?

.....

**Q 11:** Is Prajna and Dhyana Same? Explain.

.....

.....

**Q 12:** What do you mean by prajna?

.....

**Q 13:** Write about kinds of prajna.

.....



## 14.10 LET US SUM UP

- Generosity (dana) is a key Buddhist practice found in early and later texts. It can be expressed in two ways: Generosity with Characteristics i.e.
- Giving with a specific motive, like repaying a debt or fulfilling an obligation; and Generosity Without Characteristics i. e.
- Giving freely, without attachment, including material wealth, knowledge, time, or the Dharma (Buddhist teachings), and helping others overcome fears.
- The second paramita, sila (morality), aligns one's life with Buddhist ethical guidelines, focusing on three core principles: avoiding harm, cultivating virtue, and promoting the welfare of all beings.
- These are expanded through precepts that vary based on one's level of practice, such as those of a shravaka (personal liberation) or bodhisattva

(liberation of all beings). The five Buddhist precepts (not killing, stealing, lying, engaging in sexual misconduct, or taking intoxicants) complement these guidelines.

- Shravaka precepts are for a single lifetime, while bodhisattva precepts span multiple lifetimes.
- Bodhisattvas focus on altruistic compassion, integrating renunciation with the bodhi-mind. Monastics renounce worldly pursuits, while laypeople use resources mindfully.
- The essence of the bodhisattva vows is benefiting others, which also ultimately benefits oneself.
- The third paramita, patience (ksanti), brings calmness to the mind and body, helping us endure life's challenges.
- There are three types of patience: with those who harm us, with the environment, and in enduring the nature of dharmas.
- Patience with harm means responding with wisdom rather than retaliation.
- Patience with the environment involves enduring natural hardships and body imbalances.
- Patience with dharmas means understanding the emptiness of all phenomena, embracing both positive and negative experiences.
- Patience can be worldly (enduring external challenges) or world-transcending (integrating Dharma into daily life).
- Practicing patience, especially in spiritual growth, is gradual but essential for harmony and attaining Buddhahood.
- The paramita of diligence, or virya, fosters enthusiasm and overcomes laziness, driving practitioners to face challenges without fear.
- Clear vows and aspirations are essential to avoid procrastination and ensure sustained effort in practice. Diligence, when combined with vows, leads to great results despite physical limitations.
- It acts like armor, helping practitioners view obstacles as opportunities for growth. There are three forms of diligence: personal practice, accumulating virtues, and helping others.
- Monastics must embody all three types, dedicating themselves to their own cultivation and the well-being of others.

- The Fifth Paramita, meditation (dhyana), emphasizes maintaining a focused, non-distracted mind free from attachment.
- It encompasses five levels of practice, starting with non-Buddhist traditions aiming for blissful samadhi.
- The second level involves practitioners who mistake samadhi for liberation but lack understanding of emptiness.
- The third level focuses on liberation through emptiness, while the fourth, Mahayana approach, involves compassionate practice beyond personal liberation.
- The fifth level, unique to the Supreme Vehicle, emphasizes sudden enlightenment and integrating meditation into all aspects of life.
- The Sixth Paramita, wisdom (prajna), is crucial for true Buddhist practice.
- Prajna combines clarity (hui) and effective application (zhi), leading to sharp perception and insight. Without prajna, practices like generosity and samadhi only offer temporary benefits and fail to eliminate suffering.
- Prajna can be categorised into general and specific, such as ness and illumination, and worldly and non-worldly.
- It can also be divided into three types: suchness, illumination, and expedient prajna, with the goal of attaining wisdom for the benefit of others.
- To practice prajna, one contemplates impermanence and emptiness, responding with skill and compassion.
- Ultimately, prajna leads to a wisdom of no self, fostering liberation and compassion in all actions.



## 14.12 FURTHER READINGS

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## 14.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q. No. 1:** Repaying a debt, even if the recipient does not expect anything in return.

**Ans to Q. No. 2:** Giving one's time, knowledge to someone.

**Ans to Q. No. 3:** Three key precepts are accordingly: avoiding harmful actions, cultivating virtue, and working for the welfare of all sentient beings.

**Ans to Q. No. 4:** The essence of the bodhisattva vows is the commitment to benefit others. By helping others, we ultimately help ourselves. A bodhisattva's priority is the well-being of their immediate family and community, which extends outward to encompass friends, acquaintances, strangers, society, and the environment. This approach proves beneficial not just to others, but to oneself as well.

**Ans to Q. No. 5:** In the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra patience is described as "pacified patience".

**Ans to Q. No. 6:** There are three main aspects of practicing patience: patience with those who harm us, patience with the environment, and patience in enduring the nature of dharmas.

**Ans to Q. No. 7:** Two examples of worldly pleasure are: patient with hunger, physical pain etc.

**Ans to Q. No. 8:** Power of diligence implies eagerness to face difficult tasks without fear, serving as the antidote to laziness. By dedicating ourselves to our tasks, we may be amazed at what we can achieve, even with our limited physical bodies.

**Ans to Q. No. 9:** The first type of diligence is Diligence as Armor which means the courage to overcome any obstacles. Second is Virtuous

Diligence. This involves cultivating all virtues. Virtue here refers to practices such as the Four Noble Truths, the Thirty-Seven Aids to Enlightenment, and the Six Paramitas. The third form of diligence is Compassionate Diligence. This kind wants the benefits all sentient beings. This is the diligence practiced by great bodhisattvas, who are willing to liberate all sentient beings.

**Ans to Q. No. 10:** The phrase "Don't abide in dharmas, abide in prajnaparamita" is found in the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra.

**Ans to Q. No. 11:** In his Platform Sutra it is said that "Prajna and dhyana are the same. Where there is prajna, there is dhyana; where there is dhyana, there is prajna." This illustrates the unity of wisdom (prajna) and meditation (dhyana). Unlike the gradual approach, where dhyana precedes wisdom, Huineng's view suggests that wisdom and meditation arise simultaneously. For the practitioner of this path, meditation is not confined to sitting still but is integrated into all aspects of life-eating, sleeping, working-making every moment an opportunity for dhyana.

**Ans to Q. No. 12:** Prajna is the light. It is the acute perception, flexibility, and insight into one's own consciousness. Prajna is central to Buddhist teachings, and Shakyamuni Buddha emphasized that without prajna, one cannot truly practice Buddha dharma.

**Ans to Q. No. 13:** according to one kind Prajna can be classified into three types: suchness prajna, illumination prajna, and expedient prajna. A further classification divides prajna into five types: suchness prajna, illumination prajna, expedient prajna, phenomenal prajna, and auxiliary prajna.



## 14.14 MODEL QUESTIONS

**(A) Very Short Questions:**

**Q. 1.** What is the literal meaning of Paramita?

**Q. 1.** How many Paramitas are there according to Mahayana Buddhism?

**Q. 1.** Give one example of Dana Paramita.

**Q. 1.** What do you mean by Sila?

**Q. 1.** Give one example of patience with environment.

**Q. 1.** What is Compassionate Diligence?

**Q. 1.** What is the meaning of prajna?

**Q. 1.** What is the ultimate goal of human life?

**Q. 1.** Give an example of World-transcending patience.

**Q. 1.** In which sutra we find the phrase "Don't abide in dharmas, abide in prajnaparamita"?

**B. Short Questions: (Answer in about 150 words).**

**Q. 1.** According to Mahayana Buddhism how many Paramitas are there?

**Q. 1.** Discuss Dana without characteristics.

**Q. 1.** What do you mean by patience with those who harm us.

**Q. 1.** Write about Virtuous Diligence.

**Q. 1.** Is Prajna and Dhyana same?

**C. Write Short Notes On: (Answer in about 150 words)**

**Q. 1.** Sila Paramita

**Q. 1.** Ksanti Paramita.

**Q. 1.** Worldly and Non-worldly Prajna

**Q. 1.** Sravaka and Bodhisattva precepts

**Q. 1.** Compassionate Diligence.

**D. Long Questions: (Answer in about 300 words)**

**Q. 1.** Explain five levels of Dhyana.

**Q. 1.** Explain the six Paramitas.

**Q. 1.** Explain critically different kinds of Prajna.

**Q. 1.** What do you mean by power of diligence? Discuss different kinds of diligence.

**Q. 1.** Discuss different kinds of patience? How they help us in our day today life?

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# UNIT 15: JAINA TRIRATNA

## UNIT STRUCTURE


15.1 Learning Objectives
15.2 Introduction
15.3 Definitions of Triratnas
15.4 Right Perception
15.5 Right Knowledge
15.6 Right Conduct
15.7 Relationships Among Triratnas
15.8 The Goal: Liberation (Moksa)
15.9 Conclusion
15.10 Let Us Sum Up
15.11 Further Readings
15.12 Answer to Check your Progress
15.13 Model Questions


## 15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- Explain the concept of Triratna (Three Jewels) in Jain philosophy.
- Know to identify and distinguish the roles of Right Perception, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct in spiritual liberation.
- Describe the ethical practices of Jain ascetics and laypersons through Mahavratas and Anuvratas.
- Analyse the interdependent relationship among the Three Jewels in the journey to moksha.
- Know how to apply the principles of Jainism in daily life through ethical behaviour, non-violence, and spiritual discipline

## 15.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces the fundamental principles of the Jaina Triratna or Three Jewels, which form the core of Jain philosophy and spiritual

practice. Jainism, one of the ancient religions of India, advocates a life of non-violence (ahimsa), truth (satya), and renunciation (vairagya). Its ultimate aim is to liberate the soul (jiva) from the continuous cycle of birth and death (samsara) and help it attain moksha, the state of eternal peace and bliss.

To reach this goal, Jainism prescribes the path of the Triratna, a combination of Right Perception (Samyak Darshana), Right Knowledge (Samyak Jnana), and Right Conduct (Samyak Charitra). Right Perception refers to having faith in the true nature of reality and the teachings of the Tirthankaras. Right Knowledge is the correct understanding of that reality, free from doubt or error. Right Conduct is the practice of living according to that understanding, through moral discipline and spiritual efforts.

These three are interdependent and must be followed together. Without right perception, knowledge is incomplete; without knowledge, conduct is misguided; and without conduct, perception and knowledge remain theoretical. Therefore, all three must be cultivated in harmony to attain liberation.

## 15.3 DEFINITION OF TRIRATNAS

The Triratna or Three Jewels, namely, Right Perception (Samyak Darshana), Right Knowledge (Samyak Jnana), and Right Conduct (Samyak Charitra) form the foundational path of Jain spiritual practice. These three are not just individual virtues but a complete framework that guides the soul toward liberation (moksha). Jain scriptures compare them to a lamp that removes the darkness of ignorance, symbolizing their role in leading the soul from bondage to enlightenment.

In everyday terms, Right Perception allows a person to see the truth by developing faith in the teachings of the enlightened beings (Tirthankaras) and the reality of the soul and karma. Right Knowledge enables one to understand the truth, giving a correct and clear comprehension of the soul, the universe, and the law of karma. Right Conduct is the application of this understanding in daily life to live by the truth, through ethical behaviour, self-restraint, and spiritual discipline.

These three jewels are interdependent and must be followed together. Practicing only one or two is not sufficient. For instance, knowing what is right without acting upon it is futile. Likewise, moral behaviour without correct understanding may be misdirected. Hence, the harmonious integration of all three is essential for achieving true spiritual progress and liberation.

## 15.4 RIGHT PERCEPTION (SAMYAK DARSHANA)

In Jainism, the path to liberation begins with Right Perception (Samyak Darshana). It is the first of the Three Jewels (Triratna) and is considered the foundation of spiritual awakening. Without Right Perception, one cannot proceed toward Right Knowledge and Right Conduct. It marks the moment when a soul begins to see reality clearly, with faith in the truth and an open mind free from illusions and misunderstandings.

### 15.4.1 Meaning of Right Perception

Right Perception means having the correct view of reality based on faith and clarity. It is not mere belief or blind devotion; rather, it is a deep and rational trust in the truth as revealed by the Jinas-the conquerors of the inner passions, who have attained liberation through their own efforts. Right Perception is a spiritual insight that allows a person to recognize the value of Jain principles, the importance of liberation, and the nature of the soul and karma. It is the seed from which knowledge and conduct grow.

### 15.4.2 Characteristics of Right Perception

There are certain signs that show the presence of Right Perception in an individual. These include:

- **Belief in the truth of Jaina teachings:** The person begins to understand that Jain philosophy is based on logic, experience, and universal truths.
- **Devotion to the Tirthankaras:** A reverence develops toward those enlightened beings who have achieved liberation.

- **Respect for the scriptures:** The person shows a respectful and inquisitive attitude towards Jain texts and spiritual discourses.
- **Freedom from doubt and superstition:** Right Perception clears the mind of confusion and false beliefs. It helps in developing clarity and mental calmness.
- **An open and non-judgmental attitude:** The individual becomes curious, sincere, and open to truth without prejudice or ego.

### 15.4.3 Importance of Right Perception

Right Perception is vital because it opens the door to spiritual progress. Without it, the soul remains stuck in ignorance and cannot truly understand or apply the teachings of Jainism. It is often compared to the oil in a lamp-just as a lamp cannot burn without oil, the soul cannot shine with knowledge and conduct without Right Perception. It prepares the mind and heart to absorb true knowledge and inspires the desire to lead a righteous life.

Right Perception also protects an individual from falling into false paths or philosophies. It creates an inner clarity that guides the person in making wise decisions in life, both spiritually and ethically.

### 15.4.4 How to Develop Right Perception

Developing Right Perception is a gradual process that requires effort, reflection, and sincerity. Some effective ways to cultivate it include:

- **Satsang (Company of the Wise):** Spending time with spiritually advanced individuals helps in developing right faith and perspective.
- **Listening to Discourses:** Attending religious talks and sermons on Jain philosophy enriches one's understanding and faith.

- **Contemplation and Self-Inquiry:** Thinking deeply about the nature of the soul, karma, and the impermanent world encourages spiritual insight.
- **Study of Scriptures:** Reading Jain texts and reflecting upon them helps remove confusion and increases clarity.
- **Removal of Doubts:** By asking questions and clarifying confusions, one builds strong and unwavering faith.

From the above discussion, it can be mentioned that the Right Perception is the first spark that lights the flame of liberation. It is the essential starting point for anyone who wishes to walk the spiritual path in Jainism.

## 15.5 RIGHT KNOWLEDGE (SAMYAK JNANA)

In Jain philosophy, Right Knowledge (Samyak Jnana) is the second of the Three Jewels (Triratna) and plays a crucial role in the spiritual development of the soul. It refers to the correct and comprehensive understanding of reality, which includes the nature of the soul (jiva), the law of karma, the structure of the universe, and the path to liberation (moksha). It is only through Right Knowledge that a person can act in accordance with truth and move toward spiritual freedom.

### 15.5.1 Meaning of Right Knowledge

Right Knowledge does not merely mean learning from books or acquiring information. In Jainism, it means knowing things as they truly are, without distortion, confusion, or bias. This knowledge must be free from doubt, illusion, and contradiction. It is gained through both scriptural learning and personal experience. Importantly, it must be rooted in Right Perception (Samyak Darshana), that is, it should arise from faith in the truth. Without the proper perspective, knowledge may become misguided or harmful.

Sources of Knowledge in Jainism

Jain philosophy identifies five types of knowledge through which a person understands reality:

1. **Mati Jnana -** This is sensory knowledge, gained through perception, memory, inference, and reasoning. It is the knowledge we get from our daily experiences and thinking.
2. **Shruta Jnana -** This is scriptural knowledge, gained by listening to or reading the teachings of the Tirthankaras and Jain scriptures. It is the most common form of Right Knowledge for ordinary beings and includes learning from religious teachers.
3. **Avadhi Jnana -** This is clairvoyant knowledge, the ability to know things that are far away or subtle. It is not accessible to everyone and is often considered a form of special spiritual insight.
4. **Manahparyaya Jnana -** This is the knowledge of the thoughts of others. Only highly advanced spiritual beings can access this form of knowledge.
5. **Kevala Jnana -** This is perfect and infinite knowledge, possessed only by liberated souls (Kevalins). It is direct, complete, and free from any error or limitation.

For ordinary souls, the most accessible and reliable form of Right Knowledge comes from Shruta Jnana, supported by Mati Jnana, and guided by Right Perception. The ultimate goal, however, is to attain Kevala Jnana.

### 15.5.2 Conditions of Right Knowledge

For knowledge to be considered "Right" in Jainism, it must meet certain conditions:

- It should be true, in line with logic, and supported by personal experience and scriptures.
- It must be free from doubt, illusion, and false interpretation.
- It must be connected with Right Perception-that is, it should arise from a correct and respectful attitude toward reality.

Without these conditions, knowledge may become misleading or harmful. A person may read many scriptures but still misunderstand or misapply the teachings if the perception is not clear.

### 15.5.3 Importance of Right Knowledge

Right Knowledge is essential for guiding one's actions and decisions. Without it, even a well-meaning person may do harm or collect bad karma unknowingly. For example, someone may wish to practice non-violence but might still harm be living beings out of ignorance, such as by eating or working carelessly. Knowledge helps a person understand what is right and what is wrong, how actions bring karmic consequences, and how to avoid bondage to the cycle of birth and death.

Therefore, Right Knowledge is not only about understanding religious ideas but also about transforming one's thoughts, actions, and behaviour in everyday life. It is the light that shows the way, provided the person already has Right Perception. Combined with Right Conduct, it leads the soul step by step toward liberation and eternal bliss.

## 15.6 RIGHT CONDUCT (SAMYAK CHARITRA)

In Jain philosophy, Right Conduct (Samyak Charitra) is the third and most practical of the Three Jewels (Triratna). It represents the actual living of the truth that one has perceived and understood. While Right Perception helps one see the truth and Right Knowledge helps one understand it, Right Conduct means applying that knowledge in daily life. It involves ethical behaviour, self-discipline, and spiritual practices aimed at purifying the soul and progressing toward liberation (moksha).

### 15.6.1 Meaning of Right Conduct

Right Conduct is the moral and spiritual discipline that Jainism prescribes for individuals seeking liberation. It is the behaviour that

arises when one's thoughts, words, and actions are aligned with Jain principles. Right Conduct is not just about outward actions, but also about inner purity, including control over desires, emotions, and attachments. It reflects a deep commitment to live truthfully and harmlessly, according to the insights gained from Right Knowledge and Right Perception.

### 15.6.2 Five Great Vows (Mahavratas)

For monks and nuns, Right Conduct is practiced through strict adherence to five major vows, called the Mahavratas:

1. Ahimsa (Non-violence): The highest principle of Jainism. It means not causing harm to any living being, whether through thought, speech, or action.
2. Satya (Truthfulness): Always speaking the truth and avoiding lies, deceit, or exaggeration.
3. Asteya (Non-stealing): Not taking anything that is not willingly given.
4. Brahmacharya (Celibacy) - Complete control over all forms of sensual desire and total abstinence from sexual activity.
5. Aparigraha (Non-possessiveness): Renouncing attachment to material things, people, or status, and leading a life of simplicity and detachment.

These vows are meant to eliminate karmic bondage and lead the soul toward purity and liberation.

### 15.6.3 Right Conduct for Laypersons (Shravakas)

For lay followers, who live in society and have families and responsibilities, Jainism prescribes Anuvratas, which are less intense forms of the Mahavratas. These include:

- Practicing non-violence as much as possible in daily life (e.g., being vegetarian, avoiding harm to insects, showing kindness to all).

- Speaking truthfully and kindly, avoiding lies and harsh words.
- Being honest, and refraining from stealing or cheating.
- Maintaining self-control in relationships, especially sexual conduct within marriage.
- Reducing attachment to wealth, property, and possessions.

In addition to these, laypersons often take supplementary vows to enhance their conduct:

- Limiting travel to avoid harm to life forms.
- Fasting or practicing periodic renunciation of luxuries.
- Meditation and spiritual study to maintain focus on liberation.

### 15.6.4 Importance of Right Conduct

Right Conduct is essential because it transforms knowledge and belief into real spiritual progress. Without it, even the clearest understanding of Jain philosophy remains purely theoretical. It is through conduct that the soul actively works to shed karmic particles and purify itself. Right Conduct also nurtures qualities like:

- Forgiveness - letting go of anger and resentment.
- Compassion - caring for all living beings.
- Self-control - mastery over desires and emotions.
- Detachment - freedom from material and emotional attachment.
- Meditation - cultivating inner peace and awareness.

By consistently practicing Right Conduct, a person gradually becomes more disciplined, peaceful, and spiritually evolved, ultimately leading the soul to moksha, the final liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

## 15.7 RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE TRIRATNAS

In Jaina philosophy, the Three Jewels (Triratnas) namely the Right Perception (Samyak Darshana), the Right Knowledge (Samyak Jnana), and the Right Conduct (Samyak Charitra) are deeply interconnected and cannot be practiced in isolation. They are not three separate paths but rather

three aspects of the same spiritual journey. Each one supports and completes the others, forming a unified path toward the liberation of the soul.

First, Right Perception is the starting point. It involves having the correct attitude and faith in the teachings of the Tirthankaras. When one perceives reality with clarity and openness, it naturally leads to the pursuit of Right Knowledge, as the person becomes eager to understand the truths, they have come to believe in. Right Knowledge, in turn, provides the understanding and guidance needed for Right Conduct. It teaches what is right and wrong, what causes bondage and what leads to liberation.

But the process doesn't stop there. Right Conduct, living in accordance with the knowledge one has further reinforces and deepens Right Perception and Right Knowledge. By practicing discipline, non-violence, and self-restraint, the soul becomes purer and more capable of perceiving and understanding reality correctly.

This interdependence is often illustrated in Jain scriptures with the metaphor of a tripod. Just as a tripod needs all three legs to stand, the path to liberation (moksha) depends equally on all three jewels. If any one of the three is missing or weak, the entire spiritual structure collapses. Hence, Jainism emphasises the balanced development and harmonious practice of all three, which together lead to true spiritual growth and ultimate liberation.

## 15.8 THE GOAL: LIBERATION (MOKSHA)

In Jaina philosophy, the ultimate goal of human life is to attain liberation (moksha), a state of eternal freedom, peace, and bliss. This is achieved through the consistent practice of the Three Jewels (Triratna): Right Perception, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct. Together, these guide the soul on a path of self-purification and spiritual awakening.

Every soul is originally pure, possessing infinite knowledge, perception, bliss, and energy. However, due to the influence of karma, the soul becomes bound by passions, desires, and ignorance. These karmic particles attach to the soul through wrong thoughts, speech, and actions.

As a result, the soul enters the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (samsara), experiencing suffering, limitations, and bondage.

By following the Triratna, a person gradually purifies the soul. Right Perception clears delusions, Right Knowledge removes ignorance, and Right Conduct stops the inflow of new karma and helps eliminate the old. As these karmas are shed, the soul becomes lighter and regains its natural qualities.

When all karmic bonds are completely destroyed, the soul attains Kevala Jnana, or infinite knowledge. At this stage, the soul becomes fully enlightened and experiences its true nature. It is now free from the cycle of rebirth, from suffering, and from all forms of attachment and aversion.

This state is called moksha, the highest goal in Jainism. The liberated soul rises to the Siddha Loka, a realm beyond the physical world, where it exists forever in its purest form, full of bliss, perfect knowledge, infinite perception, and eternal peace. It no longer has a body or any material needs. This is the final destination of every soul that walks the path of the Three Jewels with sincerity and discipline.

## 15.9 CONCLUSION

The Triratna, namely the Right Perception (Samyak Darshana), the Right Knowledge (Samyak Jnana), and the Right Conduct (Samyak Charitra) form the core foundation of Jain philosophy and the spiritual path toward liberation. These three principles are not separate or optional; they are deeply interdependent and must be followed together. Right Perception provides the faith and insight into the truth, Right Knowledge offers the understanding of that truth, and Right Conduct allows one to live by it. When practiced in harmony, they lead the soul from the darkness of ignorance to the light of enlightenment.

In our daily lives, we can begin practicing the Triratna in simple yet meaningful ways:

- By developing respect and compassion for all living beings, we cultivate Right Perception. This helps us see the interconnectedness and value of all life.

- By learning about our responsibilities, the nature of karma, and the soul, we acquire Right Knowledge, which gives clarity and direction to our actions.
- By living with honesty, non-violence, self-control, and discipline, we practice Right Conduct, which purifies the soul and brings peace within and around us.

Jainism teaches that every soul has the innate potential to become pure, perfect, and liberated. The path of Triratna is the way to awaken that potential. It is a path of self-awareness, ethical living, and spiritual discipline.

By walking the path of the Three Jewels with sincerity, not only do we progress toward our own liberation, but we also contribute to creating a world that values truth, non-violence, harmony, and spiritual growth. The Triratna is not just a spiritual path; it is a universal guide to living a meaningful and purposeful life.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q 1:** What are the Three Jewels (Triratna) of Jainism?

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**Q 2:** What is the ultimate goal in Jainism?

.....

**Q 3:** What does Right Perception (Samyak Darshana) mean?

.....

**Q 4:** What is the function of Right Knowledge (Samyak Jnana)?

.....

**Q 5:** What is Right Conduct (Samyak Charitra)?

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**Q 6:** Which vow in Jainism emphasises non-violence?

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**Q 7:** What does Kevala Jnana mean?

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**Q 8:** What realm does a liberated soul go to in Jainism?

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**Q 9:** How are the Three Jewels described in Jain scriptures?

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**Q 10:** What does Jainism say every soul can achieve?

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## 15.10 LET US SUM UP

- The Triratna, the Right Perception, the Right Knowledge, and the Right Conduct, form the foundation of Jain philosophy and guide the soul toward liberation (moksha).
- Right Perception (Samyak Darshana) means having faith in the truth and developing a clear and unbiased view of reality based on Jain teachings.
- Right Knowledge (Samyak Jnana) is the correct understanding of the soul, karma, and the universe, free from doubt, confusion, or falsehood.
- Right Conduct (Samyak Charitra) is the actual practice of one's knowledge and beliefs through moral discipline, non-violence, and self-restraint.
- The Three Jewels are interdependent and must be followed together and the perception leads to knowledge, knowledge guides conduct, and conduct strengthens both.
- Right Perception can be developed through satsang, listening to discourses, study of scriptures, and self-inquiry.
- Jainism identifies five types of knowledge, with Shruta Jnana (scriptural knowledge) being the main source of Right Knowledge for laypeople.
- Right Conduct for monks involves the Five Great Vows, namely, Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, and Aparigraha, while laypersons follow simpler Anuvratas.
- Ethical practices like meditation, fasting, limiting desires, and practicing forgiveness and compassion are essential parts of Right Conduct.
- The relationship among the Three Jewels is like a tripod and if one is missing, the path to liberation collapses.

- By practicing the Triratna, the soul sheds karmic bonds, attains Kevala Jnana (infinite knowledge), and finally reaches moksha.
- The Triratna is not only a spiritual path but a universal guide for ethical and peaceful living, leading to both personal liberation and social harmony.



## 15.11 FURTHER READINGS

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## 15.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q. No. 1:** Right Perception, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct.

**Ans to Q. No. 2:** Liberation (moksha) from the cycle of birth and death.

**Ans to Q. No. 3:** Faith in the true nature of reality and Jain teachings.

**Ans to Q. No. 4:** To understand reality correctly, without doubt or error.

**Ans to Q. No. 5:** Practicing moral and disciplined living according to Jain principles.

**Ans to Q. No. 6:** Ahimsa.

**Ans to Q. No. 7:** Infinite or perfect knowledge.

**Ans to Q. No. 8:** Siddha Loka.

**Ans to Q. No. 9:** Like a tripod, each leg essential for balance.

**Ans to Q. No. 10:** Purity, perfection, and liberation.



## 15.13 MODEL QUESTIONS

**(A) Very Short Questions:**

**Q. 1.** What are the Three Jewels of Jainism?

**Q. 1.** What is the ultimate goal of Jainism?

**Q. 1.** Which is the first jewel of the Triratna?

**Q. 1.** What is the highest principle of Jaina conduct?

**Q. 1.** What is Kevala Jnana?

**Q. 1.** Where does a liberated soul reside?

**(B) Short Questions (answers within 150 words):**

**Q. 1.** Explain the meaning of Right Perception in Jainism.

**Q. 1.** What are the five types of knowledge in Jain philosophy?

**Q. 1.** How do laypersons practice Right Conduct in Jainism?

**Q. 1.** Why is the interrelationship among the Triratnas important?

**Q. 1.** How does Right Knowledge contribute to spiritual progress?

**(C) Long Questions (answers around 400 words):**

**Q. 1.** Discuss in detail the concept of Triratna and its significance in Jain spiritual practice.

**Q. 2.** Describe the characteristics, importance, and methods of developing Right Perception.

**Q. 3.** Elaborate on Right Knowledge, its sources, conditions, and relevance in daily life.

**Q. 4.** Explain the practice of Right Conduct by monks and laypersons, including the vows and their purpose.

**Q. 5.** How do the Three Jewels lead the soul to moksha? Explain the process of liberation in Jainism.

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