

## Six Systems of Indian Philosophy

Nearly two years ago I picked up a book titled Seven Systems of Indian Philosophy by Pandit Rajmani Tigunait, spiritual head of the Himalayan Institute and disciple of Swami Rama. Till then I had always associated Vedanta with Indian philosophy and was pleasantly surprised to know that in India we had other schools of thought too. I found the book super and a good basis for further study. It explains difficult concepts in a simple and easy to understand language. The content is verbatim from the book. In order to make it comprehensive I have taken excerpts from the book in a way that you get an understanding of the subject. Courtesy and Copyright Himalayan Publishers.

The Sanskrit word for philosophy is **darsana**, which means direct vision. The words symbolize the difference between modern Western philosophy, which mainly relies on intellectual pursuit and Indian philosophy that relies on direct vision of truths and pure Buddhi (reasoning). Darsana is divided into two categories namely Astika (believer in the Vedas) and Nastika (non-believer in the Vedas). Astika are Nyaya, Vaisheshik, Sakhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta. Nastika are Carvaka, Jainism and Buddhism. Others are a mixture of the ideas of these systems.

Although each school of philosophy is unique, all of them have certain common characteristics. These are direct experience, acceptance of authority, harmony amongst schools, parallel growth and coexistence of a number of schools, open mindedness, support of logic and reasoning, belief of eternity, law of karma, moral and ethical teachings, acknowledgement of suffering, thoroughness and practicality.

Friends after I finished this piece, asked myself a simple question. Why is it that Indians of those times were so creative? I mean nine schools of philosophy followed by many gurus thereafter. Each Guru analyzed scriptures in a unique way, in a manner that there was something new to learn.

Let me attempt an answer. One of the ways to foster creativity is open mindedness and sharing. We were always open to new ideas and thoughts, believed there was always a better way of thinking – doing things. When we believe that direct experience is the key to realization, we do not accept anything till we have understood it. In such cases we are compelled to use

our intellect. The emphasis then was on gaining knowledge to remove ignorance and sharing thereafter. Exams were more in the nature of question and answer sessions, not for getting a job. There was extensive interaction between the Guru and pupil as well as amongst pupils. All this promoted creativity and helped human thought blossom.

My first boss Dicky S said ‘the day you believe you know all is when your career graph starts moving southwards. Life is a continuing learning process’. Sounds like a modern management mantra. It is something the Vedic Rishis imbibed and practiced thousands of years ago.

Today we have classrooms packed with anywhere between 35 to 50 children. It is a one-way street where the teacher comes and vomits out what she has to say for the day. Interaction, cross-questioning is rare. Children are encouraged to follow the beaten track -agree to what is being taught – not encouraged to think, let their imaginations run wild - no rebels wanted is the motto. Teaching is standardized something like mass production. The object of studying is doing well in the exams, acquisition of material objects, period. To some this style might inculcate a sense of discipline but for others it amounts to stifling creativity.

If India is to enhance its impact in the Knowledge World we have to encourage children to ask questions, arouse their curiosity, allow them to experiment, come closer to nature and think wildly. Never say this is not possible to a child but let him understand / possibly discover why it is so. Therefore, this piece is dedicated to the Children of India in whose hands the future of Bharat lies.

Before we get into an in-depth reading of each system here is a brief introduction.

**Chapter 1. Nyaya** - The Nyaya school was founded by sage Gautama. Sixteen major topics were discussed in this system, the most important of which is pramana, the source of valid knowledge. Actually, Nyaya is a school of logic, and all other schools of Indian philosophy use the Nyaya system of logic, in whole or in part, as a foundation for philosophical reasoning and debate. Navya-Nyaya or Neologic, a further development of this school, occurred in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Bengal and Mithila.

**Chapter 2. Vaisesika** - Kanada is the founder of this school, which is associated with the Nyaya system. This school discusses seven major topics: substance, quality, action, generality, uniqueness, inherence and non-existence. This school is called Vaisesika because it considers, uniqueness, as an aspect of reality and studies it as a separate category. Under the topic of substance, it deals with the physics and chemistry of the body and the universe. The theory of atomic structure was established by this school. Its practical teaching emphasizes dharma, the code of conduct that leads man to worldly welfare and to the highest goal of life.

**Chapter 3. Samkhya** - Kapila is traditionally cited as the founder of this school, although his Samkhya Sutras have been lost. The Samkhya-karika of Isvarakrsna, the oldest text on this philosophy, cites the name of Kapila, Asuri and Pancasikha as previous teachers of this school. It is considered to be the oldest of the philosophical systems.

Samkhya is a dualistic philosophy that believes in the coexistent and interdependent realities, conscious Purusha and unconscious Prakrti. Purusha is ever pure, wise and free but it becomes a subject of pain and pleasure when it identifies itself with Prakrti. Prakrti is the material cause of the universe and is composed of three gunas – sattva, rajas and tamas that correspond to light, activity and inertia respectively. The state in which the gunas are in equilibrium is called Prakrti but when disturbed the state is called Vikrti. Disturbance of the equilibrium of Prakrti produces the material world, including the mind, which is supposed to be the finest form of material energy.

Samkhya philosophy explains the dynamics of the body and nature of mind. It is the mother of mathematics as well as Ayurveda and is indeed the very basis of Eastern philosophy.

**Chapter 4. Yoga** - Yoga and Samkhya are allied systems. Although Yoga philosophy was known even in the Vedic and pre-Vedic periods, it was not formally systematized until it was codified by Patanjali in about 200 BC. The Yoga Sutras contain 196 aphorisms, which are divided into four sections. Yoga studies all aspects of human personality and teaches one how to control the modifications of the mind through practice of meditation and detachment and surrender to higher consciousness. It prescribes a holistic system of practice beginning with the yamas and niyamas (ethical and behavioral codes) and proceeding through the asanas (physical postures),

pranayama (breathing exercises), pratyahara (control of senses), dharana (concentration), dhyana (meditation) and culminating in samadhi. In this system the individual self is the seeker and pure consciousness is the ultimate reality that he finds within. Practicality is the main feature of this system.

**Chapter 5. Mimamsa** - Jamini was the founder of this system that accepts the Veda as the final authority on all questions. It provides a comprehensive method for interpreting and understanding the underlying meaning of the Veda. It lays great emphasis on rituals, worship and ethical conduct and provides a systematic lifestyle and direction. Mimamsa offers guidelines for practical application of Vedantic theory. This school is foremost in the analysis of sound and mantra.

Eventually this school was divided into two groups: the school founded by Prabhakara and the one founded by Kumarila Bhatta. According to the former there are five sources of valid knowledge: perception, inference, comparison, testimony and postulation. According to the latter there is only one source of knowledge – noncognition.

**Chapters 6 & 7. Vedanta** - was taught and practiced by the sages of the Vedas and Upanishads and was handed over through a long line of sages. But Veda Vyasa, who codified these teachings in the Brahma Sutras, is considered its founder. Until the time of Sankara, Vedanta was mainly transmitted through oral tradition but sometime between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries a.d. Sankara reorganized the system of this monistic school of thought. After him numerous teachers wrote commentaries on the Brahma Sutras, interpreting it in various ways and thus establishing various schools within the single system of Vedanta.

The major schools of Vedanta are Advaita (nondualistic), Dvaita (dualistic), Dvaitadvaita (both dualistic and non dualistic), Visistadvaita (qualifies nondualism) and Visuddhadvaita (pure non-dualism). Of these schools Sankara's Advaita and Ramanuja's Visistadvaita are the most important. Sankara's Advaita Vedanta covers all the other systems. The main teachings of Vedanta is that self-realization is the actual goal of life, that the essence of the self is the ever existent consciousness and bliss, the Self is free from all qualifications and limitations, that the self is essentially Brahman, supreme consciousness and this Brahman is the absolute, transcendent, attributeless

reality but it eternally embodies itself within itself the capacity or power called maya, which is the basis of mind and matter.

## **Nyaya – Valid knowledge through Logical Criticism Chapter 1**

The short form for Nyaya is N. The founder of the N system was Gotama. It is also known as N Vidya or Tarka Sastra – ‘the science of logic and reasoning’. Because N analyses the nature and source of knowledge, its validity and invalidity, it is also known as Anviksiki which means ‘the science of critical study’.

**N asserts that obtaining valid knowledge of the external world and its relationship with the mind and self is the only way to attain liberation.** If one masters the logical techniques of reasoning and dutifully applies these to daily life, he will rid himself of all suffering. The ultimate aim of N philosophy like other systems of Indian philosophy is liberation – the complete cessation of pain and suffering. Although concerned with the study of logic and epistemology N is a philosophy of life.

The common aims of all the six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy are to describe the nature of the external world and its relationship to the individual, to discuss the metaphysical aspects of the ultimate Reality, and to state the goal of life and means for attaining this goal. In this attempt, all Indian systems divide their course of study into two categories, the study of the unmanifested reality and manifest reality. In N, both these aspects are **studied under 16 major divisions** called Padarthas.

The sixteen divisions are pramana – the source of knowledge, prameya – object of knowledge, samsaya – doubt, prayojana - the aim, drstana – example, siddhanta – doctrine, avayava – the constituents of inference, tarka – hypothetical argument, nirnaya – conclusion, badha – discussion, jalpa – wrangling, vitanda – irrational argument, hetvabhasa – specious reasoning, chala – unfair reply, jati – generality based on a false analogy and nigrahasthana – the grounds for defeat. The subjects discussed under pramana, the source of knowledge are the most important and are discussed last.

### **1. Prameya - The Object of Knowledge**

**Prameya** or P for short may be translated as ‘that which is knowable’ or ‘the object of true knowledge’. The word P is derived from the Sanskrit word prama meaning ‘buddhi’ or cognition. That which is the object of cognition is prameya and whatever is comprehended or cognized by buddhi is categorized into twelve objects of cognition known as the Prameyas. These 12 divisions are –

1. Atman the Self, 2. Sarira the body that experiences pleasure and pain, the seat of all organic activities, 3. Indriyas the five senses i.e. smell, taste, sight, touch and hearing that contact external objects and transmit the experience to the mind, 4. Artha the objects of the senses, 5. Buddhi cognition, 6. Manas or the mind that is concerned with the perception of pleasure and pain and according to N limits cognition to time and space. The mind is compared to an atom because it is minute, everlasting, individual and all pervading. 7. Pravrti is activity – vocal, mental and physical, 8. Dosa – mental defects that include attachment (raga), hatred (dvesa), and delusion (moha), 9. Pretyabhava – rebirth or life after death, 10. Phala – the fruits or results of action experienced as pleasure and pain, 11. Dukha – suffering, and 12. Apavarga – liberation or complete cessation of all suffering without the possibility of its reappearance.

According to N philosophy, the goal of life is to understand these 12 aspects of reality as they actually are. Bondage is born of the misunderstanding of these 12 knowable objects and one obtains freedom when he attains the correct knowledge of these 12 aspects of reality.

**2. Samsaya or Doubt** - It is a state of mind where the mind wavers between conflicting views regarding a single object, is a product of a confused state of mind that is not able to perceive with clarity.

**3. Prayojana or Aim** - Without an aim or target no one can perform any action. One acts to achieve desirable objects or to get rid of undesirable ones, these objects that motivate one’s activities are known as prayojana.

**4. Drstanta or Example** - is the use of an example to illustrate a common fact and establish an argument. This is a very important aspect of reasoning for frequently an example can be accepted by both parties to resolve a difference of opinion.

**5. Siddhanta or Doctrine** - It is a postulate that is accepted as the undisputed truth and that serves as the foundation for the entire theory of a particular system of philosophy. This accepted truth might be derived from direct experience or from reasoning and logic. For e.g. it is the doctrine of N philosophy that there is a God who is the efficient cause of the universe and who organizes / regulates the atoms.

**6. Avayava or Constituents of Inference** - the term literally means constituents or parts and in this context it refers to the constituents of inference. This is an important part in N philosophy because N strongly emphasizes describing the minute complexities of the pramanas, the sources or methods of receiving correct knowledge. Among these methods inference is the most important source of correct knowledge and N provides a technical method to test the validity of the inference. If an inference contains the following five constituents, then it can give correct knowledge. These are pratijna (statements), hetu (reason), udaharana (example), upanaya (universal proposition) and nigamana (conclusion). Discussed in more detail later.

**7. Hypothetical Argument or Tarka** - All the systems of Indian philosophy agree that it is the mind's jabbering that creates confusion within and without. Thus it is important to clear the confusions of the mind before trying to understand something through the mind. For this purpose N philosophy discussed the possible problems of the mind and clarifies its confusions, using such processes as tarka. It is the process of questioning and cross-questioning that leads to a particular conclusion. Tarka can become a great instrument for analyzing a common statement and discriminating between valid and invalid knowledge.

**8. Conclusion or Nirnaya** - Is certain knowledge that is attained by using legitimate means. If the mind has doubts then tarka can be used to resolve those doubts. But it is not always necessary to pass through a doubtful state. Nirnaya is the ascertainment of assured truth about something that is attained by means of recognized and legitimate sources of knowledge.

**9. Discussion or Badha** - is a kind of debate between two parties each one trying to convince the other of his point of view. This is an effective and efficient way to reach valid knowledge provided both parties are honest and free from prejudices.

**10. Wrangling or Jalpa** - is the process by both parties try to attain victory without making an honest attempt to come to the truth, there is an involvement of ego instead of a search for knowledge. It is a type of discussion where each party has a prejudice for his own view and thus tries to gather all possible arguments in his favor.

**11. Irrational reasoning or Vitanda** - specifically it is argumentation that is aimed at refuting or destroying an antagonist's position and that is not at all concerned with establishing or defending one's position. Where as in wrangling both sides seek to establish their own position, in Vitanda either or both sides tries to refute the other's position instead of establishing one's own.

**12. Specious reasoning or Hetabhasa** - means irrational argument. This specious reasoning is a fallacy of inference and it is discussed later in this chapter section on inferences.

**13. Unfair reply or Chala** - here it is used to designate a statement that is meant to cheat or fool someone. Here one takes a word or phrase that has been used in a particular sense, pretends to understand it in a sense other than that which was intended, and then denies the truth of this deliberate misinterpretation of the original speaker's words.

**14. Generality based on a false analogy or Jati** - as is used here it is a technical term used to describe a debate in which an unfair reply or conclusion is based on a false analogy.

**15. Grounds for defeat or Nigrahasthana** - may be translated as the grounds on which a person is defeated in his argument. When a proponent misunderstands his own or his opponent's premises and their implications, then he becomes helpless and must eventually admit his defeat in the debate.

## **16. PRAMANA or The Sources of Valid Knowledge**

Pramana or PR for short is that through or by which the prama – valid knowledge is received. There are four distinct fountains of correct knowledge. These are perception (pratyaksa), inference (anumana), comparison (upamana) and testimony (sabda). Before discussing these sources of knowledge, we must first examine the definition of knowledge and the method of distinguishing correct from false knowledge.



In N philosophy, knowledge is divided into two categories namely anubhava or experiential knowledge and smriti or memory. The former is received from the four PR's referred to above and the latter which is based on memory is derived from the storehouse of one's mind which in turn is also based on anubhava only as you cannot remember something that you have not experienced. These two categories can be divided into valid and invalid knowledge. In the language of N philosophy, valid experiential knowledge is called prama and nonvalid is called aprama. **Prama** can be received through perception, inference, comparison and testimony. **Aprama** is divided into doubt (samsaya), faulty cognition (bhrama) and hypothetical argument (tarka).

According to N philosophy, true knowledge is that which corresponds to the nature of its object, otherwise the knowledge is false. **To perceive a thing in its true nature is true knowledge.** N philosophy says that validity or invalidity of knowledge depends on its correspondence or noncorrespondence to the facts. Example if one wants to have correct knowledge of sugar one tastes it. True knowledge leads a person to successful practical activity, while false knowledge makes one helpless and leads to failure / disappointment.

**1. Perception** - is knowledge produced by the contacts of senses with the objects of the world. N philosophy has several different systems of classification of perception. There are two kinds of perceptions: **laukika (ordinary) and aalukika (extraordinary)**. If it is the former then perception is derived from direct contact with a sense object and the latter when the object is conveyed to the senses through unusual modes – not directly present to the senses. Modes of perception are either external or internal. The former are faculties of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell are involved in bringing the object to the mind. The latter is the Mind that perceives the quality of the soul like desire, pleasure and pain.

In N philosophy ordinary perception is divided into indeterminate (nirvikalpa) or determinate (savikalpa). The former is the primary cognition of a thing before a judgment is used to specify different characteristics. Example when one sees a table; one perceives the mere existence of the table without comprehending its color or shape. Only upon further inspection does one recognize that it is round etc. Determinate perception

always precedes indeterminate perception and is always valid knowledge because it is explicit and definite.

There are **three kinds of extraordinary (alaukika) perceptions**: perception of classes (samanya laksana), perception based on association (jnana laksana) and intuitive perception (yogaja). The realization that all people are mortal is an instance of the external perception of classes. A different type of extraordinary perception – association – is involved when one says something looks delicious or that stone looks hard. These assertions imply that the taste of food or hardness of stone can be perceived by the eyes. N says that the past appearance of touch and taste are so closely associated with the visual appearance of the causative agents that whenever the eyes see food the past appearance of taste and touch come alive. This present perception of taste and touch due to the revival of past knowledge of the color of the food is perception based on association. The third kind of extraordinary perception is called yogaja, the knowledge born of yoga practices. Intuitive knowledge comes after the mind is cleansed through yogic practices. Those who have achieved spiritual perfection and perceive intuitive knowledge instantly are called Yukta yogins. Those who are on the path of the spiritual journey, need concentration to attain intuitive knowledge are called Yunjan yogins.

**2. Inference** - is the process of knowing something through the medium of a sign or linga that is invariably related to it. Inference involves the process of analyzing memories, correlations and uncontaminated arguments. There is a systematic method of testing the validity of inferential knowledge, for there are always some inseparable constituents to an inference, and if any of these parts are missing or if there is any defect in the parts, then the knowledge inferred is invalid.

The Sanskrit word for inference is Anumana that may be defined as ‘the cognition or knowledge that follows from some other knowledge’. An e.g. is ‘The hill is on fire because there is smoke on the hill, and where there is smoke there is fire’. In this case we perceive smoke on the hill and arrive at the knowledge of the existence of fire on the hill on the basis of our previous knowledge of the universal relationship between smoke and fire. Thus, it is apparent that inference is a process of reasoning in which one passes through certain necessary stages to reach a conclusion, which is called inferential knowledge. In the process of inference, one reaches a conclusion regarding a particular fact through the knowledge of a sign and of the sign’s universal

relationship to the conclusion. In this case the smoke is *linga* or sign, the relationship between smoke and fire is known as *vyapti*. As a result of this relationship, knowledge of the fire on the hill arises that is known as *Nirnaya* or conclusion.

**Three parts of inference:** Thus, an inference contains three parts, the minor term (*paksa*), the major term (*sadhya*) and the middle term (*hetu* or *linga*). In the process of inference, the first step is the apprehension of smoke (*hetu*) on the hill, the second step is the recollection of the universal relationship between smoke and fire, and the third step is the cognition of fire (*sadhya*). When used as a formal statement or verbal expression designed to convince others, however the structure of inference is changed. The first step will be the predication of the major term in relation to the minor term. There is fire on the hill. The second step will be the formation of the middle term in relation to the minor term. There is visible smoke on the hill. The third step will be the formation of the middle term in its universal or invariable relationship with the major term. Where there is smoke, there is fire.

Thus inference may be said to be a syllogism consisting of at least three categorical premises. But when one is analyzing the whole process of an inference, it is necessary to state the inference in a systematic and comprehensive chain of arguments. One must then state a syllogism in the form of five premises (*avayavas*) that constitute a valid inference – are *pratijna* (fact), *hetu* (reason), *udaharana* (example), *upanaya* (application) and *nigamana* (conclusion).

To gain a proper understanding of the workings of logic, it is necessary to examine more closely how a systematic syllogism functions.

**The Fallacies of Inference** - are called *Hetvabhasa*. This term means ‘a reason (*hetu*) that appears to be valid but is not really so’. There are five kinds of fallacies namely *sabyabhicara*, *viruddha*, *satpratipaksa*, *asiddha* and *badhita*. The first means ‘irregular middle’. In a correct inference, the middle term is uniformly related to the major term. An irregular middle term can lead to a wrong conclusion. Eg All Himalayan beings are saints, tigers are Himalayan beings, and thus tigers are saints. Here there is no relation between the middle term Himalayan beings and the major term saints, thus the inference is incorrect.

Viruddha, the second kind of fallacy means contradictory middle. A contradictory middle is one that dismissed the very proposition it is meant to prove. The third term satpratipaksa means 'inferentially contradictory middle'. This type of fallacy arises when the middle term of an inference is contradicted by the middle term of another inference that proves a completely opposite fact about the major term. The fourth type of fallacy is asiddha, an unproved middle. In this type of fallacy, the middle term is not an established fact but is an unproved assumption. The fifth is badhita, a noninferentially contradicted middle. Here the middle is contradicted by some other source of knowledge.

**3. Comparison** - According to N, comparison is the third valid source of experiential knowledge. This kind of knowledge comes when one perceives the similarity between the description of an unfamiliar object and its actual appearance before one's senses. For example, suppose that a trustworthy person has told you that there is such a thing as a crabapple that looks like a regular red apple but is smaller and has a longer stem. One day in the woods you come across upon a tree bearing fruit that you have never seen before but reminds you of apples. You remember your friend's description of crabapple tree, and you come to the conclusion that this must be a crabapple tree.

This source of knowledge, upamana, is not recognized as valid in many other systems of philosophy. The Carvaka system of philosophy, for instance does not accept this as a source of knowledge, because this system maintains that perception is the sole source of valid knowledge. The Buddhist system of philosophy recognizes Upamana as a valid source of knowledge but regards it as a mere compound of perception and testimony. The Vaisesika and Samkhya systems explain upamana as simply a form of inference, and the Jaina system maintains that it merely a kind of recognition. The Mimamsa and Vedanta systems agree with N in considering upamana as an independent source of knowledge, but they explain it in a different way, which will be discussed later.

**4. Testimony** - or Sabda means 'words', it is the knowledge of objects derived from words and sentences, and according to N, the fourth and final source of valid experiential knowledge. Not all-verbal knowledge is valid. In N philosophy, sabda is defined as the statement of an Apta, a person who speaks and acts the way he thinks. Such a person's mind, action and speech are in perfect harmony, and he is therefore accepted as an authority. Thus his

verbal or written statement is considered to be a valid source of knowledge. The Veda is considered to be the expression of certain venerable aptas, great sages who realized the truth within and who transmitted their experiences into words.

The validity of verbal knowledge depends upon two conditions, one the meaning of the statement must be clearly understood and two the statement must be the expression of a trustworthy person i.e. an apta.

The N system gives a detailed description of the nature of sabda because testimony is considered to be a valid source of knowledge and should thus be analyzed thoroughly. In a testimony words and sentences are used – but what is a sentence, what is a word, what is the nature of their construction. A sentence is a group of words arranged in a certain manner and word as a group of letters arranged in a specific order. The essential nature of any word lies in its meaning, and there must be specific rules governing the arrangement of words in the formation of sentences. Without rules the words of a trustworthy person could be misconstrued.

**The Potency of Words** - The N system states that all words are significant symbols and that all words have the capacity to designate their respective objects. This capacity of words is called sakti or potency and in the N system, potency is said to be the will of God. The ordering of words in a sentence is very important. Further N maintains that there are four factors that are essential in the proper functioning of sentences and without which they cannot express the intended meaning. These are Akamksa (expectancy), yogyata (fitness), sannidhi (proximity) and tatparya (intention).

Akamksa means expectancy, is the quality by which all the words in a sentence imply or expect one another, it is the need that each word has for the other words in a sentence. Expectancy is the interdependence of the words in a sentence for expressing a complete meaning.

Yogyata means fitness, refers to the appropriateness of words in a sentence, to the absence of contradiction in its terms. Although sentences may be grammatically correct, they do not express valid knowledge.

Sannidhi means proximity is very important words to be used within the limits of an appropriate time and space.

Tatparya means intention and it refers to the meaning one intends a sentence to convey. A word may have various meanings depending on its context, so one has to be careful to determine the real intention of the person who uses the word. Because of the unique nature of Sanskrit language and its symbolic usages, the Veda and related ancient religio-philosophical scriptures are full of this kind of complexity and in determinability of intention. In order to clarify this and understand the Vedic testimony properly, N recommends that one study Mimamsa philosophy because it provides systematized rules and interpretations for understanding the real meaning of the Veda.

### **The Concept of an Individual Soul**

There are different concepts of the soul among the various schools of Indian philosophy. The Carvaka system states that the soul consists of the living physical body and its attributes. According to the Buddhists, there is no soul. Buddhism teaches that the stream of ever changing thoughts and feelings is the ultimate reality. This may be termed as soul, but it is not considered to be a permanent entity, as is maintained by other philosophies.

According to the concept of soul held by N and Vvaivesika systems, the soul is a unique substance, of which all desires, aversions, pleasures, pains and cognitions are qualities. The soul is indestructible and its attribute is consciousness. Because it is not limited by time and space, the soul is also seen as infinite or pervading. There are many souls, because one person's experience does not overlap those of another person, one's experience is completely distinct from any others.

**N gave various arguments to prove the existence of the soul.** It first argues that the body is not soul because immaterial consciousness cannot be said to be an attribute of the material body, which in itself is unconscious and unintelligent. Neither can the functioning of the senses explain the process of imagination, memory and ideation. The mind cannot be the soul because the mind is considered to be an imperceptible substance. Nor can the soul, as the Buddhists maintain, be identified as the ever-changing series of cognitions. In sum, the soul is not consciousness, but is a substance having consciousness as its attribute.

The soul experiences the external world through the mind and senses. All the cognitions and conscious states arise in the soul, when the soul is related to the mind, the mind to the senses, and the senses to the external objects. It is because of this sequential contact that the whole process actuates. How can one know whether there is such a thing as an individual soul? The N system answers that the soul is not known by sensory perception but rather by inference or testimony. The existence of the soul is inferred from the functions of desire, aversion and volition, from the sensations of pain and pleasure, and from memories of these. These memories cannot be explained unless one admits a permanent soul that has experienced pain and pleasure in relation to certain objects in the past. One's own soul can be known through mental perception, but someone's soul in another body can only be inferred.

### **The Concept of Liberation**

Like other systems of Indian philosophy, the N system maintains that the ultimate goal of human life is to attain liberation which means 'absolute freedom from all pain and misery'. This means a state where the soul is completely released from all bondage and from its connection with the body.

To attain the state of liberation, one has to acquire true knowledge of the soul and of all the objects of experience. This knowledge is called 'tattvajnana', that means to 'know reality as completely distinct from unreality'. N systems prescribe a three-fold path for reaching the goal of liberating knowledge. One is sravana, the study of scriptures. Besides studying the scriptures one has to listen to authoritative persons and saints. Following this, one must use his own reasoning powers to ponder over what he has learnt. This process of rumination is called Manana. Finally, one must contemplate on the soul, confirm his knowledge and practice that truth in life. This is called Nididhyasana. Through this a person realizes that the true nature of the soul is totally different from the body, mind, senses and all other objects of the world. The truth realized within dispels the darkness of self-identification and misunderstanding considering 'I-ness and Thy-ness'.

When this happens a person begins to perform his duties selflessly without having any desire to reap the fruits of action. The fire of knowledge roasts one's past karmas like seeds, thereby making them unable to germinate. Thus, true knowledge leads a person to the state where there is no cycle of birth and death. This state is called liberation.

## **The Concept of God**

According to N, God is considered to be the efficient cause of creation, maintenance and destruction of the universe. God does not create the world out of nothing or out of himself but rather out of eternal atoms of space, time, mind and soul. The creation of the universe refers to the ordering of these central entities, which are in coexistence with God, into a mortal world. Thus, God as the first efficient cause of the universal forces is the creator of the world. And God is also the preserver, as he causes the atoms to hold together and continue their existence in a particular order that maintains the physical universe. God is also called the destroyer, because he lets loose the forces of destruction when the energies of the mortal world require it. God is one, infinite and eternal, and the universe of space, time, of mind and soul, does not limit him. God is said to possess six perfections, infinite glory, absolute sovereignty, unqualified virtue, supreme beauty, perfect knowledge and complete detachment.

**N provides a few arguments to establish the theory of God.** The first is the causal argument. According to this line of reasoning, the entire universe is formed by the combination of atoms. Mountains, fields, rivers etc must have a cause, for they are made up of parts, have limited dimensions and are not intelligent. This being so, they cannot be the cause themselves and require the guidance of an intelligent cause. That cause must have direct knowledge of all matter and of the atoms that underline all matter. He must be omnipresent and omniscient. This entity cannot be the soul because it does not have the knowledge of other souls. Therefore, there must be an ultimate intelligent entity, which is termed as God.

The second argument is based on Adrsta, that means 'the unseen or the unknown' and may be translated as providence of fate. N system inquires as to why some people are happy while others unhappy. It is the law of karma, which governs the life of every individual soul, requires that every human being must reap the fruits of his own actions. There is often a long interval of time between an actions and its effect, however, and many pleasures cannot be traced to any action performed in this life. Likewise many actions performed in this life do not produce fruits immediately. The sum total of all the punya (good deeds) and paap (bad deeds) are collected in the soul is called Adrsta or fate and this produces present pain and pleasure. Adrsta is not an intelligent principle and must be guided by some intelligent agent to



the proper consequences. That intelligent agent, who guides, directs adrsta through proper channels to produce proper consequences is called God.

A third argument for God is based on scriptural testimony. According to this reasoning, the Veda – Upanishads and all other authoraritive scriptures state the existence of God. These scriptures were written by great sages who had experienced the truth within. Thus, the authority of testimony depends on direct experience, which is the only source of knowledge about any and all facts. The Veda is the expressions of such direct experiences of God. Therefore, God exists.

## **Vaisesika - Analysis of the Aspects of Reality Chapter 2**

Vaisesika or VA for short. The founder of VA philosophy is sage Kanada, who was also known as Uluka, so this system is sometimes called Aulukya. Kanada wrote the first systematic work of this philosophy, VA Sutra. This work is divided into ten cantos, each containing two sections. Prasastapada wrote a great commentary on this Sutra entitled Svartha Dharma Samgraha that is so profound and famous that it is called Bhasya, which simply means 'commentary'. Two well-known explications of Prasastapada's work are Udayana's Kiranavali and Sridhara's Nyayakandali. The most remarkable concept of this system is the introduction of a special category of reality known as Uniqueness (visesa). Thus this system is also known VA.

VA is allied to the Nyaya system of philosophy. Both systems accept the liberation of the individual self as the end goal, both view ignorance as the root cause of all pain and misery, and both believe that liberation is attained only through right knowledge of reality. There are however, two differences between VA and the Nyaya system. First, Nyaya philosophy accepts four independent sources of knowledge – perception, inference, comparison and testimony but VA accepts only two – perception and inference. Second Nyaya maintains that all of reality is comprehended by 16 categories (padarthas) whereas VA recognizes only seven categories.

**Seven categories of Reality** are dravya (substance), guna (quality), karma (action), samanya (generality), visesa (uniqueness), samavaya (inherence) and abhava (non existence). The term padartha means 'the object denoted by the word and according to VA philosophy all objects denoted by the word can be broadly classified into two main classes – that which exists and that

which does not exist. Six of the seven padarthas are in the first class, that which exists. In the second class, that which does not exist, there is only one padartha, abhava, which stands for all negative facts such as the nonexistence of things. The first two categories of reality – substance and quality are treated in greater detail than the remaining five.

## **1. The Category of Substance - Nine Dravyas**

Dravyas, substance, is that in which a quality or an action can exist but which in itself is different from both quality and action. Without substance, there cannot be quality or an action because substance is the substratum of quality and action, and it is also the material cause of the composite things produced from it. A cloth for example, is formed by the combination of a number of threads of certain colors. The threads are the material or constitutive causes of the cloth because it is made of the threads that subsist in the cloth.

There are nine kinds of substances, earth, water, fire, air, ether, time, direction, soul and mind. The first five of these are called physical elements because each of them possesses a specific quality that can be perceived by the external sense faculty. Each of the senses is composed of these elements, whose distinguishing qualities are registered by specific sensory receptors. For example, smell is the particular property of the earth and is apprehended by the nostrils or Taste is the particular property of water, which is perceived by the tongue.

**Paramanu** – the smallest particle of earth, water, fire and air - In VA, the smallest part is called paramanu or atom. This is not to be confused with the modern scientific word atom because an atom as described in nuclear physics is itself composed in many parts. The VA usage refers to the most indivisible state of matter. The atoms of water, earth, fire and air are eternal because an atom is partless and cannot be produced or destroyed. The common elements of air, water, fire and air are noneternal because they are produced by a combination of atoms and therefore can disintegrate and change. The existence of atoms is proved by inference not by perception. All composite parts of the world can be broken into smaller parts. But when one comes to the part which cannot be broken further that minutest part in VA is called atom. Atoms can neither be produced nor destroyed they are eternal.

**Akasa** – ether - There are types of atoms ie atoms of water, fire, air and earth each having their own peculiar qualities. Akasa, the fifth substance, is the substratum of the quality of sound, is not made up of atoms. Sound can be perceived, but akasa cannot be perceived because it lacks two conditions for the perception of an object i.e. perceptible dimension and manifest color. Therefore, Akasa cannot be perceived but can be inferred from the perception of the quality of the sound that it contains. Akasa is the one and eternal because it is not made up of parts and does not depend on any other substance for its existence. It is all pervading in the sense that it has an unlimited dimension and that its quality (sound) is perceived everywhere.

**Direction and Time** - are also imperceptible substances and they are likewise single, eternal, and all pervading. Direction is inferred on the basis of such concepts such as here, there and so on. Time is inferred from the concepts now, today, tomorrow and so forth. Although all pervading space, direction and time are spoken of as many due to certain limiting conditions known as Upadhis. E.g. when the indivisible space is limited by a jar, that space is known as the space of the jar. In the same way time is referred to as one hour, two hours and direction as east, west, north etc.

**Soul** - or Atman is also considered to be eternal and all pervading. According to VA philosophy there are two kinds of souls, individual and supreme. The former is known as jivatman and the latter as **Iswara**. The Supreme Soul is inferred to be the creator of the world in the same manner as has been explained in Nyaya. Conversely the individual soul is perceived to possess mental qualities like I am happy.

**Mind** - The mind is considered to be the ninth kind of substance. It is the eternal sense faculty of the individual soul. Like the soul, the mind is indivisible. Its existence is not perceived from inferred from the following propositions. First, like an external sense facility is required to perceive the outer world, an internal sense facility is required to perceive the inner objects like soul, pleasure and pain. Second it is apparent that the five external senses may all be in contact with their respective objects simultaneously but not all perceptions are received at the same time. Attention is focused on one object, which means that there is a coordination of the mind with the senses. We must thus admit the existence of the mind as an internal sense facility.

## 2. The Category of Quality - Twenty-four Gunas

Guna, quality the second of the seven categories of reality cannot exist by itself but exists only in a substance. It cannot, thus, be the constituent or material cause of anything's existence. It differs from substance and action in the sense that it is an unmoving property.

The 24 gunas are rupa - color, rasa – taste, gandha – smell, sparasa – touch, sabda – sound, samkhya – number, parimana – magnitude, prthaktva – distinctiveness, samyoga – conjunction or nearness, buddhi – cognition, saukha – pleasure, dukha – pain, iccha – desire, dvesa – aversion, prayatna – effort, gurutva – heaviness, dravatva – fluidity, sneha – viscosity, samskara – tendency, dharma – merit or virtue, and adharma – demerit or nonvirtue. A brief description follows –

According to VA there are six colors – white, black, red, blue, yellow and green and there are also six tastes – sweet, sour, bitter, pungent, astringent and salty. Smell is divided into 2 categories – good and bad and touch is divided into three – hot, cold and neither hot or cold. There are two kinds of sound, dhvani (unarticulated) and varna (articulated). Number is that quality by which virtue of a thing can be counted. Magnitude is the quality by which things are distinguished as big or small.

Distinctness is the quality by which one knows that one thing is different from another. Conjunction is the quality by which one knows the existence of one or more things at one place or in one time. Disjunction is that quality by which a substance is perceived as being either remote or near in time or space.

Buddhi means knowledge and should not be confused with buddhi of Samskhya philosophy explained as intellect. Pleasure is a favorable experience of mind and pain is the opposite. Effort is the quality by virtue of which a substance is capable of changing its position. There are three kinds of effort – striving towards something – against something and vital functioning. Heaviness is that quality by virtue of which a substance is capable of falling, while fluidity is the quality by virtue of which it flows. Viscosity is the quality – belonging exclusively to the element of water.

Samskaras are innate tendencies; they can be of anything, not just the mind. There are three kinds of samskaras in a substance, activity – which keeps a

thing in motion, elasticity – which makes a thing tend towards equilibrium when it is disturbed and mental impressions which enables one to remember and recognize a thing. Dharma and Adharma means that which is accordance with the conscience and its opposite. The remaining five categories are –

**3. The Category of Action – Karma** - Karma, action is viewed in the VA school as being physical movement, but the term physical here refers to no more than just bodily movements because in VA mind is also considered to be a kind of substance. There are five types of action – upward, downward, inward, outward and linear. The action of perceptible substances like earth, water, fire and air can be perceived by the five senses, but not all the actions of tangible substances can be perceived. The movement of the Earth, for example, cannot be perceived, it can only be inferred.

**4. The Category of Generality – Samanya** - Generality relates to abstract characteristics that is singular and eternal and yet pervades many. Like leadership is a single characteristic, but it resides in many individuals. Leadership is also eternal because it was already in existence before the first leader emerged and will continue to exist even if there are no more leaders. Samanya is the essence of the common characteristics that unites different entities into one class.

VA recognizes three levels of generality or universality – highest, lowest and intermediate. The highest kind of generality is existence itself – satta. The lowest kind has the most limited referents such as American-ness, Indian-ness that are generalities present in all Americans, Indians. Concepts such as substantiality represent the intermediate level of generality because they do not include many categories of reality like action, quality and so on.

**5. The Category of Uniqueness – Visesa** - Uniqueness is that characteristic of a thing by virtue of which it is distinguished from all other things. Like space, time, soul it is eternal. Everything in the world regardless of whether it is existent or nonexistent is accompanied by uniqueness. Generality and uniqueness are opposite concepts.

**6. The Category of Inherence – Samavaya** - There are two kinds of relationships between things: nearness – samyoga and inherence – samavaya. Nearness is one of the 24 gunas of VA but inherence is one of the seven categories of reality described in this system. Nearness is temporary,

allows two more things to exist together without being affected by each other. This nearness is an external relationship existing as an accidental quality of the substances related to it. Inherence, on the other hand, is a permanent relation between two entities, one of whom inheres in the other. Here one of the entities depends for its existence on the other. Further terms within an inherent relationship cannot be reversed as those that are related by nearness.

**7. The Category of Nonexistence – Abhava** - Abhava is different from the first six categories in the sense that it is negative. Nonexistence is not found in any of the six positive categories, and yet according to VA philosophy nonexistence exists, just as, for instance, space and direction do. E.g., how does not one know that there is no chair in the room? Answer by looking at the room. Thus nonexistence also exists as such.

There are three types of nonexistence: the absence of something in something else and mutual nonexistence. The former is of three kinds: antecedent nonexistence, the nonexistence of a thing after its destruction and absolute nonexistence. Kind one refers to the nonexistence of a thing prior to its creation for e.g. in the sentence 'A book will be written using this paper' the book is nonexistent in the paper. But when a book is written its previous nonexistence comes to an end. Kind two assumes that there is something in existence, which shall cease to exist after its destruction for e.g. when a jar is broken into pieces, and then there is nonexistence of that jar. Kind three is the type of nonexistence that does not belong to time and space is called absolute nonexistence.

Mutual nonexistence is the difference of one thing from another. When one thing is different from another, they mutually exclude each other, and there is the nonexistence of either as the other. For e.g., a pen is different from a book, so there is nonexistence of the book in the pen and of the pen in the book.

### **The Concept of the Creation and Annihilation of the World**

VA holds on to the atomic theory of existence, according to which the entire universe is composed of eternal atoms. But at the same time, VA does not ignore the moral and spiritual laws that govern the process of union and separation of atoms. In this way the atomic theory of VA is different from

the atomic theory of modern science. Modern science's theory proposes a materialistic philosophy; it explains the law of universe as mechanical, as being the result of the motions of atoms in infinite time, space and direction. According to this view, mechanical laws govern the operation but according to VA the functioning of atoms is guided by the creative or destructive will of the Supreme Being. **This will of the Supreme Being directs the operation of atoms according to the past Samskaras of individual beings.**

VA states that the universe has two aspects, one eternal and one noneternal. The eternal constituents of the universe are four kinds of atoms – earth, water, fire, and air and the five substances – space, time, direction, mind and self. These are not subject to change and cannot be created or destroyed. Another part of the universe is noneternal, that is, subject to creation and destruction in a particular time and space. In the beginning of creation two atoms are united into a dyad, which is noneternal because it can be divided again into two. The dyads and atoms cannot be perceived but are known through inference. The combination of three dyads is called a triad that is the smallest perceptible object. It is from these triads that other larger compounds develop. Thus the common elements comprised of two eternal atoms are noneternal because they can be broken down into smaller units.

Thus, according to VA philosophy, the world is a moral stage on which the life and destiny of all beings is governed, not only by the physical laws of time and space but also by the moral law of karma. **In the performance of present karma, an individual is free and is thus the creator of his own destiny, but the starting and ending point of the universe depends on the creative or destructive will of the Supreme Being. The universal law (adrsta) of the process of creation and annihilation influences the individual selves to function or to be active in the direction of the creative will.** Directed by this unknown force of adrsta, the soul makes contact with an atom of air, thus the primeval motion comes into being. That primeval activity in air atoms creates dyads, triads and all the rest of the gross physical manifestations of air elements (mahabhutas). In a similar manner, there arises motion in the atoms of fire, water and earth, which then compose the gross elements of fire, water and earth. In this way the vast physical world comes into existence.

The Supreme Lord is endowed with perfect wisdom, detachment and excellence. He releases the adrsta related to individual human beings, which

guides the individuals in their flow through the currents of life. At the end of life, the process of dissolution and annihilation also depends on the will of God. He inspires the adrsta corresponding to the individuals or the universe, and then a destructive motion in the atoms of the body and senses or in the cosmos starts vibrating. On account of this destructive motion, then arises the process of disjunction and disintegration of the body and senses or of the universe. Compound things break down into simpler and simpler components, finally devolving into the state of triads and dyads and ultimately into atoms. In this manner the physical elements of earth, water, fire and air and the related sense organs are disintegrated. After the dissolution of the manifest universe, there remain the four kinds of atoms of earth, water, fire and air as well as the eternal substances of space, time, direction, mind and soul with their attendant meritorious and nonmeritorious samskaras.

Thus, according to the VA system of philosophy, there is no creation or annihilation but rather than orderly and morally systematized composition and decomposition of compounds. An individual self or soul is involved in the universe because of Adrsta. The karma of each soul is its own earnings, deposited in the safe of the Supreme Being, which back to the self with interest. The VA concepts of God, liberation of soul, and of the path to liberation are all basically the same as the Nyaya concepts that have been discussed in the earlier chapter.

### **Samkhya - A Dualistic Theory Chapter 3**

Samkhya is SA for short. SA philosophy, considered to be the most ancient of all the philosophical schools, was systematized by the great sage Kapila. All of Indian literature has been influenced by this philosophy. The first work of SA, the Samskhya Sutra, is traditionally attributed to Kapila, but in its present form is not his original work. So the Samkhya-karika of Isvarakrsna is actually the earliest available SA text. Among its more well known commentaries are Gaudapada's Bhasya, Vacaspati Misra's Tattvakaumudi, Vijnanabhiksu's Samskhya Pravacanbhasya and Mathara's Matharavrtti. Topics traditionally emphasized by Kapila, Isvarakrsna and others are the theory of causation, the concept of Prakrti (the unconscious principle) and Purusa (the conscious principle), the evolution of the world, the concept of liberation and the theory of knowledge.



The uniqueness of this system lies in its summing up of all the categories of reality as described in Nyaya and Vaisesika into two categories – Purusa and Prakruti – and thereby introducing a dualistic philosophy.

### **The Theory of Cause and Effect**

All the Indian philosophies base their explanation of the evolution or manifestation of the universe on two fundamental theories of cause and effect: satkaryavada and asatkaryavada. According to the former, the effect exists in the cause prior to its production or manifestation but the latter maintains that the effect does not exist in its cause prior to its manifestation – called the theory of the origin of the effect. SA accepts the former theory of causation, but there actually two schools of thought concerning this theory. One, vivartavada, is the view accepted by Advaita Vedantins. It holds that the change of a cause into an effect is merely apparent. SA holds the view of parinamavada according to which there is real transformation of the cause into effect, as in wood being transformed into a chair or milk into yoghurt.

SA philosophy developed elaborate explanations to establish the parinamavada theory of satkaryavada that maintains that cause changes into effect. This explanation was established because all other **SA concepts are based on the premise that the effect exists in its material cause even before the effect is produced.** SA provided five proofs of this premise.

The first proof is, asadakaranat, states that the effect exists in its material cause before its production because no one can produce an effect from a material cause in which that effect does not exist. For e.g. no one can produce milk from a chair because chair does not exist in milk. The second proof, upasanagrahanat, states because there is an invariable relationship between cause and effect, material cause can produce only that effect after which it is causally related. Only milk can produce curd because milk alone is materially related to yoghurt. The third proof, sarvasambhavabhat, states that there is a fixed rule for production or manifestation of things. A certain thing can be produced only by another thing and none else. The fourth proof is saktasaya-sakya-karanat, states that an effect exists in its cause in an unmanifested form before it is produced. This is a cause because only a potent cause can produce a desired effect. The fifth proof, karanabhat, states that if the effect does not exist in the cause, then that which was non-existent would come into existence out of nothing.

By means of these arguments, SA philosophers established the theory of parinamavada or manifestation, according to which an effect is already existent in unmanifested form in its cause. The process of producing an effect from the cause or the process of manifestation and annihilation can be clarified with the analogy of the tortoise, which extends its limb from the shell. The tortoise does not create its limbs; it merely brings that which was hidden into view. SA philosophers hold that, similarly, no one can convert existence into nonexistence, nor can that which exists be entirely destroyed. The Theory of Manifestation is essential to SA philosophy and indeed serves as the basic foundation upon which all its other theories are constructed.

### **Prakrti (PR) - The Unconscious Principle**

The SA system holds that the entire world – including the body, mind and senses – is dependant upon, limited by and produced by the combination of certain effects. Various other schools like Carvaka, Buddhism and Jainism, Nyaya and Vaisesika – maintain that the atoms of earth, ether, fire and air are the material causes of the world, but according to SA system material atoms cannot produce the subtler objects such as mind, intellect and ego. Thus, one has to seek elsewhere from for that cause from which the gross objects and their subtler aspects are derived. The ultimate cause of the world must be a latent principle of potential, and it must be uncaused, eternal and all pervading. It must be more subtle than the mind and the intellect, and at the same time it must contain all the characteristics of the external objectives as well as of the senses, mind and intellect.

In SA philosophy **this ultimate cause is called Prakrti**. To prove its existence SA offers the following five arguments. One it is an accepted fact that all the objects of the world are limited and dependant on something else, so there must be an unlimited and independent cause for their existence. That cause is PR. Two all the objects of the world possess a common characteristic i.e. are capable of producing pleasure, pain and indifference. Thus, something must exist as the cause of the universe that possesses the characteristics of pleasure, pain and indifference. That is PR. Three all the objects of the world have the potential to produce something else or to convert themselves into something. Thus, their cause must also have the same potential, which implicitly contains the entire universe. That is PR. Four in the process of evolution an effect arises from a certain cause, and in

dissolution it is reabsorbed or dissolved into origin. The particular objects of experience must have arisen from a certain cause and so on until one reaches the primal cause of the creative process itself. A similar process takes place in involution. Here, physical elements are broken down into atoms, atoms are dissolved into gross energies, and gross energies into finer ones until all of these dissolve into the unmanifested one. That unmanifested one is called PR. Five, if one attempts to go further and imagine the causes of this ultimate cause, and he will land himself in the fallacy of infinite regression. Ultimately one has to stop somewhere and identify a cause as the first cause of the Universe. In SA that cause is PR.

## **The Gunas**

PR is neither atomic substance nor consciousness, but it possesses the three gunas of sattva, rajas and tamas (pleasure, pain and indifference). They are not the qualities but the intrinsic nature of PR. The balanced nature of sattva, rajas and tamas is PR and thus they cannot be PR attributes or qualities. They are called gunas i.e. ropes because they are intertwined like three strands of a rope that bind the soul to the world. According to SA philosophy, sattva, rajas and tamas are the root causes from which the universe is derived. These gunas cannot be perceived but can only be inferred.

SA philosophy says that the whole universe is evolved from the gunas. The state in which they are in their natural equilibrium is called PR and when their balance is disturbed they are said to be in Vikrti, the heterogeneous state. These three gunas are said to be the ultimate cause of all creation. Sattva is weightlessness and light, rajas is motion or activity and tamas is heaviness, darkness, inertia. In a state of equilibrium the gunas have completely given up their specific characteristics. In imbalance, rajas is said to be in the center of sattva and tamas, and this results in creation because manifestation in itself is action. In the state of manifestation, one guna dominates the other two, but they are never completely apart from each other or completely absent because they are continually reacting with one another.

Sattva and tamas have the appearance of being in opposition to each other because one is light and weightless and the other is dark and heavy. But these pairs actually cooperate in the process of manifestation and dissolution

as things move from the subtle to the gross and from gross to subtle. The expansion of power stores up energy in some relatively subtle form, from which it manifests to form a new equilibrium. These points of relative equilibrium constitute certain stages in the evolutionary process. It might at first seem that there is constant conflict between the gunas, but that is not the case. They are in perfect cooperation during the process of manifestation because it is through their constant interaction that the flow of cosmic and individual life comes. They are essentially different from but interrelated with one another. The gunas play the same role in one's body and mind as they do in the universe as a whole. An individual's physical appearance is simply a manifestation of the gunas that has been brought about by consciousness. This intention of consciousness to cause PR to manifest itself disturbs the state of equilibrium in PR, thus causing the gunas to interact and manifest the universe.

In individual life, rajas can be used to convert tamas into sattva or it can be used to convert sattva into tamas. Rajas can also be thought of as a destructive force because it creates over activity and leads the body to restlessness and mind fluctuations that take it away from peace. But on the other hand, the diminution of rajas can also adversely weaken the functions of sattva and tamas or create imbalance among them. Rajas is very powerful and would ideally be present in each person in the proper balance to provide the required life force but if one has altered one's life unnaturally through drugs etc, then rajas becomes unbalanced. To bring rajas into balance, SA recommends sattvic thoughts and actions.

The most intrinsic quality of the gunas is their constant interchangeability, they are always changing or transforming into one another. This occurs in two ways, virupaparinama 'change into heterogeneous state' or avirupaparinama 'change into a heterogeneous state'. The former takes place when one of the gunas dominates the other two and begins the process of manifestation of a particular object. This type of manifestation is responsible for the manifestation of the world. The latter refers to the state where the gunas change internally without disturbing each other. This type of change occurs in the balanced state of PR. In this state PR cannot be perceived by one's ordinary perception, it can only be inferred. SA philosophers describe this state as uncaused, unmanifested, eternal, all-pervading, devoid of effect producing actions, without a second, independent and partless.

## **Purusa (PU) - Consciousness (CS)**

As was stated earlier SA is a dualistic philosophy that acknowledges two aspects of reality: the unconscious principle (PR) and the CS (Purusa or Self). Each body contains a Self, but the Self is different from the body, senses, mind and intellect. It is a conscious spirit, at once both the subject of knowledge and object of knowledge. It is not merely a substance with the attribute of consciousness, but it is rather pure consciousness itself – a self-illuminated, unchanging, uncaused, all pervading, eternal reality. Whatever is produced or is subject to change, death, decay is PR not the Self.

SA offers five **arguments to prove the existence of PU**. One, all the objects of the world are meant to be utilized by and for someone other than themselves. Thus, there must be something quite different and distinct from other objects. Objects cannot enjoy their own existence, nor can one material object be utilized and enjoyed by another material object, thus there must be some other enjoyer of objects which is called PU.

Two, it cannot be said that all objects are meant for PR because PR is unconscious and is the material cause of all objects. It is the balance of the gunas, of which all the objects of the world are composed. PR is thus the essence of all plain, pleasure and neutral states and cannot be the enjoyer of itself. The proprietor or utilizer of the all worldly objects must consequently be a conscious being who does not possess the three gunas and who is completely different from them in both their balanced and heterogeneous states. That transcendent Reality is Purusa.

Third, all the objects of the external world are in themselves unconscious. They cannot function without guidance from some intelligent principle and must be controlled and directed by it in order to achieve anything or realize any end. That conscious Self who guides the operation of PR and its manifestations is PU.

Four, nonintelligent PR and all its evolutes have no meaning if they are not experienced by some intelligent force. That experiencer is PU.

Five, every human being wants to attain liberation and be free from pain and misery, but whatever is derived from PR brings pain and misery. If there is nothing different from PR and its evolutes than how is liberation attainable?

There has to be some conscious principle that strives for liberation. That principle is PU.

### **Proof of the Existence of many Selves**

According to SA there are many selves or conscious principles – one in each living being. If there were only one self related to all bodies, then one individual died, all individuals would simultaneously die, but this is not the case. Two, human beings are different from God and from animal / vegetable life as well. But the distinction could be true if God, animals, plants, human beings all possessed the same self. Thus there must be a plurality of selves that are eternal and intelligent. PR, the one all pervading material cause of the universe, and PU the many pure conscious intelligent entities who are not subject to change. It is from the interaction of these two principles that evolution occurs.

### **The Process of the Evolution of the Universe**

According to SA, the entire world evolves from the interaction of PR with PU. It is not in the nature of contact of two finite substances like male and female material substances. It is a rather sort of effective relationship through which PR is influenced by the mere presence of PU. Evolution cannot occur by Self – PU alone because the Self is inactive, nor can it be initiated only by PR because PR is not conscious. The activity of PR needs to be guided by the intelligence of PU for the evolution of the universe.

Given this two questions arise – how can two such different and opposing principles cooperate, and what is the interest them to interact with one another? PR requires the presence of PU in order to be known or appreciated and PU requires the help of PR in order to distinguish itself from PR and thereby realize liberation. Thus according to SA, the goal of the manifestation of the universe is to attain liberation.

Through the interaction of PU and PR, a great disturbance arises in the equilibrium in which the gunas are held prior to manifestation. In this rajas, the active force begins to get irritated and through this the other two gunas begin to vibrate. This vibration releases a tremendous amount of energy within PR, thus manifesting the universe in various grades and degrees. **The**

**process of manifestation originates from the unmanifested unity and completes its cycle in twenty-four stages.**

The process of manifestation begins with the infusion of PU into PR. It is said that PR is the mother principle and PU is the father principle. The mother is fertilized by the father, PR is the soil in which consciousness can take root.

**Mahat or Buddhi** - The first evolute of PR is Mahat (great one) or Buddhi the intellect. Mahat is the state in which PR receives light from PU, the fountain of light, and sees itself, and this process of seeing is the beginning of the manifestation of the universe. The individual counterpart of this cosmic state is buddhi, the finest aspect of a human being that has the capacity to know the entire personality in its full purity. Buddhi is the immediate effect of PR resulting from the guidance of PU, therefore buddhi is the evolute closest to PU.

Buddhi is manifested from the sattvic aspect of PR because of the nature of sattva – weightlessness, clarity and light – is affected sooner by the active force of manifestation than would be the heavy and unclear nature of tamas. Because of the sattvic quality of buddhi, the light of the Self reflects in the intellect similarly to the way an external object reflects in the clear surface of the mirror. The Self, seeing its reflection in the mirror of buddhi, identifies itself with the reflected image and forgets its true nature. Thus the feeling of I-ness is transmitted to buddhi. In this way the unconscious buddhi starts functioning as a conscious principle.

According to SA system, **buddhi possesses the following eight qualities:** virtue (dharma), knowledge (jnana), detachment (vairagya), excellence (aisvarya), nonvirtue (adharm), ignorance (ajana), attachment (avairagya) and imperfection or incompetence (anaisvarya). The first four are the sattvic forms of buddhi while the last four are overpowered by inertia (tamas). The pure Self falsely identifies with buddhi and thereby thinks it is experiencing what buddhi is experiencing. But through the use of buddhi's eight attributes, knowledge, it reflects pure and well-filtered knowledge onto PU from its mirror, and PU comes to realize its false identification with buddhi's objects and to recognize its transcendent nature in all its purity. Thus, buddhi the decision making function, stands nearest to the Self enabling it to discriminate between itself and PR and thereby achieve realization of its liberated nature.

**Ahankara: The Sense of I** - Ahankara or AH for short is a derivative of mahat or buddhi, it is the property of individualization that generates a boundary of 'I-ness'. It is often translated as ego or egoistic –a western concept that refer to an exaggerated sense of self-importance but AH is a much broader concept. It refers to the sense of 'I' that separates one's own self from all others and creates an individual entity. There are three categories of AH, sattvika, rajasa and tamasa determined by which of the three gunas is predominant in the AH.

Eleven senses arise from sattvika AH, the five senses perception – hearing, touching, seeing, tasting and smelling, the five senses of action – verbalization, apprehension, locomotion, excretion and procreation, and the mind – manas. The five tanmatras or subtle elements are sound, touch; color, taste and smell are derived from the tamansa AH. The function of the rajasa AH is to motivate the other two gunas, and thus it is the cause of both aspects of creation, the eleven senses and the five tanmatras.

This explanation of the manifestation of AH is based on the Samkhya-karika, the major text of SA philosophy. The commentators of this text hold various views. Some state that the mind is only derived from the sattvika AH, to others the mind, intellect, and ego are called the internal sense, yet for others the mind is the master of all external senses.

According to SA philosophy, the mind is neither atomic or eternal but is rather a product of PR and is therefore subject to origin and dissolution. The cognitive senses contact their objects and supply their experiences to the mind, which then interprets the data into determinate perceptions. AH then claims the objects of the world, identifying itself with the desirable ones while misidentifying with the undesirable ones, and finally the intellect decides whether to pursue or avoid those external objects.

The five tanmatras of sound, touch, color, taste, and smell are the subtle counterparts to the gross elements; they can be inferred but not perceived. They evolve after ten senses come into being and they are the cause of the five gross elements, which are derived in a gradual step-by-step process. First to evolve is the tanmatra that is the essence of sound –sabda, from which in turn the ether – akasa, the space element is derived. The air element is derivation of the essence of touch – sparsa tanmatra that combines with that of sound. The fire element is derived from the essence of color (rupa



tanmatra). T combines the qualities of sound, touch, color and its special property is sight, which is sensed by the eyes. The water element is derived from the essence of taste (rasa tanmatra). All three preceding qualities – sound, touch, color are found in it, as well as its special quality, taste, which is sensed by the tongue. The essence of smell (gandha tanmatra) produced the earth element, whose special property is odor, which is sensed by the nostrils.

Thus the course of evolution takes place in twenty-four stages. It starts from the root cause, PR and ends with the earth element, the grossest manifestation. This process is broken down into two major categories: the development of PR as buddhi, ahankara and the eleven senses and the evolution of the five subtle/gross elements.

### **The Sources of Valid Knowledge**

SA philosophy accepts only three independent sources of valid knowledge: perception, inference and testimony. According to SA there are three factors present in all valid knowledge: pramata the subject, prameya the object and pramana the medium. Pramata is the conscious principle that receives and recognizes knowledge, is none other than the Self. Prameya is the object of knowledge that is presented to the Self. Pramana is the modification of the intellect by which the Self comes to know an object, thus it is the source or medium of knowledge.

Valid Knowledge is thus the reflection of the Self, in the intellect, which is modified into the form of an object.

**Perception** - The SA concept of perception as a source of valid knowledge is different from those posited by other systems of Indian philosophy. In SA, valid knowledge means a definite and unerring cognition that is made known or illuminated by the Self through its reflected light in buddhi. The mind, intellect and senses are unconscious material entities and therefore cannot perceive or experience any object. For perception or experience, consciousness is needed and that belongs only to the Self. But the Self cannot directly apprehend the objects of the world because the Self is niskriya meaning motionless. The Self knows objects only through the mind, intellect and senses. **True knowledge of an external object is attained when the impression of the object is perceived through the senses and**

**recorded in the intellect, which then reflects the light of consciousness onto those objects.**

Two major proponents of the SA theory of reflectionism – Vijnanabhiksu and Vacaspati Misra – hold differing views. According to the former, the knowledge of an object takes place when there is a reciprocal reflection of the Self in the intellect and of the intellect in the Self. This theory is also accepted by Vyasa in his commentary on the Yoga Sutras. According to the latter, perception is a process of one-sided reflection. There is a reflection of the Self in the intellect, but there is no reflection of the intellect back into the Self.

Both these views are possible because the Self's experience of external objects or pain and pleasure, depends on the intensity of its identification with the intellect. SA recognizes two kinds of perceptions: determinate and indeterminate. The first is called 'alocana' which means merely seeing the object while the second vivecana means interpretation of the object.

**Inference** - Knowledge determined through the universal or invariable relationship between two things is called Anumana – inference. The SA concept of inference is slightly different from that held by Nyaya philosophy. In SA it is of two kinds: vita and avita. Vita is based on a universal affirmative proposition and avita is based on a universal negative proposition. Vita in turn is of two types, purvavat and samanyatodrsta. The former is based on previously observed uniform concomitance between two things e.g. smoke is always accompanied by fire. The latter is not based on any previously observed concomitance between the middle and major terms. For example, how do we know that we have senses? One cannot perceive senses but their existence can be inferred in the following way, for all action, some kind of instrument is needed, seeing – hearing – touching are actions that must have their corresponding instruments, the senses are these instruments.

Negative inference, avita, is explained in the Nyaya system as sesavat, in which inference results by the elimination of all other possible alternatives.

**Testimony** - SA holds the same view as Nyaya.

**The Concept of Liberation**

According to SA philosophy, the universe is full of pain and misery and even what is thought of as pleasure is mingled with sorrow because all pleasures eventually end in disappointment, which is the basis of misery. SA states that living beings can get rid of misery only through the correct discriminative knowledge of reality.

The entire external world and all internal phenomena belong to the PR, but pure consciousness, PU, is free from the limitations of space, time and causation. All activity, change, thought, feeling, pleasure and pain belong to the body/mind, not to the Self. The Self is pure ever-illuminated consciousness that transcends the entire phenomenal world, including the mind/body complex. However, all the experiences of the phenomenal world are received by PU because of its false identification with the mind, intellect and ego. The intellect is responsible for this, even though PU is actually always and forever beyond the evolutes of PR.

The manifestation of the universe into the 23 evolutes of PR is not meant to create bondage for PU but rather to help PU realize that it is free and distinct from PR. Although it may seem so but mind, ego and intellect do not function for themselves but they exist to provide experiences to PR. Problems arise because PU falsely identifies with rajas and tamas and forgets its capacity to see through its false identification. Thus PU fails to use PR's sattvic manifestations to distinguish the Self from the non-Self.

Both PR and PU are infinite and eternal, and when PR is in her unmanifested state, she is so intermingled with PU that he becomes anxious to realize his own true nature. PU's anxiety allows him to come even closer to PR, and it is this move or intention towards her that inspires the latent forces in PR to function. But when through ignorance PU forgets his purpose in coming closer to PR, then instead of discriminating himself from the unconscious principle, he entangles himself with it. The moment PU remembers his main purpose and discriminates himself from this manifest world and from its causes, he realizes his true nature and recognizes his freedom.

The purpose of the manifestation of PR is to show herself to PU so he can realize that he is distinct from her. The moment PU realizes that he is not the external object, and then the entire manifestation is withdrawn.

In actuality, pure consciousness, PU is subject to neither bondage nor to liberation, because he is never really in bondage. PR binds herself with the rope of her own manifestation, and when PU recognizes her as distinct from him, she liberates herself. As has been said earlier there are eight attributes of mahant or buddhi, which is the prime evolute of PR. Of these the first seven are attachment and detachment, ignorance and knowledge, nonmeritorious and meritorious, vice and virtue. PR binds herself with the first seven and liberates herself with the eighth i.e. the light of knowledge.

**Thus bondage and liberation are both concepts of the intellect.** Through the practice of the Yoga of discrimination – that is repeated nonidentification with the body, mind and senses – one polishes one's intellect and become more conscious of one's true nature. After the Self realizes its true nature, all anxieties are dissolved.

In SA philosophy there are two kinds of liberation: **jivana mukti and videha mukti.** The former is liberation in one's lifetime while the latter is liberation after death. In the former a person continues to live as a liberated being. He continues in this worldly life as a fan continues to revolve, due to its previously generated speed for a short while before being switched off. When all the samskaras – the impressions of past actions – are finished, then he casts off his body and is said to enter into videha mukti, which is liberation after death.

### **The Concept of God**

There is a great controversy among SA philosophers w.r.t. the concept of God. The earliest possible text Samskhya Karika does not discuss the existence of God. The absence of such a discussion led scholars to believe that early SA did not accept the existence of God. They argued that since the entire universe is a system of cause and effect, it could not be caused by God because by definition God is eternal and immutable. That which is unchanging cannot be the cause of anything, so the ultimate cause of the universe is eternal but ever changing. That cause is PR, the eternal and ever-changing conscious principle. Next, one could argue that PR is not intelligent and must thus be controlled by some intelligent principles to produce the world. But because there are so many PU's they cannot guide and lead the infinite PR, so one could thus conclude that there is a God. If God controls PR, then what is it that inspires God to make this world full of pain and misery. Moreover, one cannot say that God has desires implying imperfection, which is a quality that God cannot have. Therefore, there is no

God. PU is sufficient to inspire PR to manifest herself in the form of the universe.

Later developments in SA however, indicate acceptance of the existence of God. These philosophers point out that in metaphysical discussions it is very difficult to explain the nature of the universe and of oneself without accepting a Supreme Being. There must be one Supreme Being who could guide PR independently.

The Bhagavad Gita states that the unmanifested PR issues forth the entire universe as guided and directed by God. But early SA scriptures did not talk about God because they wanted to teach human beings to be independent and courageous so that they could explore all potentials hidden within. It does not mean that they denied the existence of God. The practical aspect of SA is the Yoga system, which recognizes the existence of God.

### **The Practical Teachings of SA**

From earliest times, the SA philosophy understood the basic problem of human life: that the mind turn's one's bliss into misery by its projections, preoccupations and identifications with noneternal things. As has been discussed, SA recognizes three functions of the mind: the lower mind, ego and intellect.

Whatever are sensed by the sense organs is received by the mind and transmitted to the ego and intellect, which in turn presents this to the Self. However, the Self or PU which falsely identifies itself with the intellect, enjoys or suffers that experience as the intellect does, even though actual enjoyment or suffering does not belong to the Self. What follows is a natural infiltration process. Senses receive experiences; the mind transmits those that are desirable to the ego. The ego filters and transmits to the intellect only those experiences that are related to the ego. Next the intellect only forwards those experiences that are necessary and beneficial to the Self.

This is a natural process, but because of the presence of rajas and tamas in the personality and because of attachment to worldly objects, the mind – ego – intellect loses their capacity of infiltration. Because of this they accumulate avoidable mental garbage, lose their strength and block the path for going inward. Thus, one remains at the lower stage of the mind, whose very nature is to doubt, suspect and vacillate. This leads to confusion and

frustration. For this reason SA philosophy emphasizes polishing the mind so it can filter experience and provide valid knowledge with full understanding.

SA philosophy discourages rituals because most of people do not understand their significance. SA emphasizes right knowledge of the external world and Self. **It does not want a student to renounce the world but rather teaches one how to live in the world yet remain above.** An adept of the SA system is called a **sthitaprajna translated as** ‘one who is established in wisdom, who has cut down desires mentally and who is self-satisfied within’. Such a person is not distressed by unpleasant events and is not overpowered by pleasure.

SA philosophy gives a **complete method of training for this state.** One, one should control and purify his thinking process because thinking about a sense object produces attachment to it, then desire. If the object is not attained there arises anger towards the impediment, and this anger destroys one’s patience and produces delusion. Delusion gives birth to confusion or loss of memory and then one’s intellect becomes disorganized. Next one becomes lost in the jungle of pain and sorrow.

The SA system reminds one to examine one’s thinking process to purify it so that he can develop proper attitudes towards the objects of the senses. If one is aware of the first flicker of an arising desire, it is easier for his intellect to discriminate and to make proper decisions. A strong, positive thought led by discrimination does not permit the senses to wander blindly towards external objects. Enjoyment of external objects with full awareness and discrimination does not disturb one’s internal state but rather it provides peace and happiness. This is the basis of the steadiness of intellect that reveals the true nature of the world and helps PU attain realization.

**SA philosophy advises a person not to run away from the world but to have perfect mental control so that he will not be agitated by the tides of the ocean of worldly objects.** As the Bhagavad Gita –Ch 2v70 states ‘ He attains peace into whom all sensual experiences enter, just as so many rivers flow into the ocean, which, though being ever filled, remain unaffected. But he who is desirous of enjoyments, never attains peace’.

**YOGA - Practical Disciplines for Knowing the Self Chapter 4**

The word Yoga (Y in short) is derived from the Sanskrit root yuj, which means 'to unite'. Y system provides a methodology for expanding one's individual consciousness to universal Consciousness. There are various schools of Yoga – example Bhakti Y, Jnana Y, Karma Y and Kundalini Y. But in this chapter only Patanjala Y will be reviewed because it is the most comprehensive school of Y. Patanjali was the first sage to systematize the philosophy and practice of Y. His work is known as Patanjala Yoga Sutra. There are profound commentaries on this text, Vyasa's being the most ancient and profound.

The Y system is highly practical, it discusses the nature of mind, its modifications, impediments to growth, afflictions and the method for attaining the highest goal of life – kaivalya (absoluteness). Since this method is described in eight steps it is also called Astanga Yoga, the eightfold path.

### **The Yogic View of Mind**

According to Patanjali, Y is the control of the modifications of the mind. The mind leads a person to bondage or liberation, is the link between the consciousness and the physical body. For this reason Patanjali places great emphasis on the study of the mind and provides for all possible means to control its modifications and unfold its power for higher attainment.

Theoretically, the Y system is based on the same tenets as Samkhya philosophy and it also assimilates the teachings of Vedanta. In the Samkhya philosophy, the mind is categorized into three functions or parts, lower mind, ego and intellect. In Vedanta the mind is divided into four parts lower mind, ego, intellect and citta or the storehouse of memories. In Y, however, the mind is studied holistically and the term citta is used to denote all the fluctuating and changing phenomena of the mind. According to Y, the mind is like a vast lake, on the surface of which arise many different kinds of waves. Deep within the mind is always calm but one's own thought patterns stir it into activity and prevent it from realizing its true nature. The more one is able to calm one's thought patterns, the more the inner state of the mind is unveiled. It is not very difficult to calm down the thought patterns on the surface of the lake of mind, but it is very difficult to calm those thought patterns that arise from the bottom. Memories are like time bombs buried in the lakebed that might explode and disturb the entire lake.

There are two main sources for the arising waves of thoughts, sense perceptions and memories. When the lake is clear one can see the bottom of the lake, likewise when ones thought patterns are quieted, one can see the innermost potentials hidden deep within the mind. Because the mind is an evolute of Prakriti (see the previous chapter on Samkhya philosophy) it is composed of the elements of sattva, rajas and tamas. The relative proportion of these three qualities determines the states of citta, the mind.

**Five Stages of Mind** - The mind is described in five stages, disturbed – ksipta, stupefied – mudha, restless – viksipta, one-pointed – ekagra and well-controlled – niruddha. The predominance of rajas and tamas causes the mind to be disturbed. Rajas makes it hyperactive while tamas makes it loose the quality of discrimination. In the second stage, the mind is dominated by tamas, which means by inertia, sleep, ignorance, sleep and lethargy. Here the mind loses its ability to think properly and becomes negative / dull. In the restless stage there is a predominance of rajas, the mind runs from one object to another but never stays anywhere consistently.

These three stages are negative and act as constraints in the path of growth. At this level one experiences pain and misery but the next two stages are more calm and peaceful. In the one pointed state there is a predominance of sattva, the lighter aspect of Prakriti. This is a tranquil state near to complete stillness in which the real nature of things are revealed. This is conducive to concentration and the aim of the Y system is to develop or maintain this state of mind for as long and as consistently as possible. In the well-controlled state of mind there is a pure manifestation of sattvic energy. When all the modifications cease and the state of stillness is acquired, then Purusa (Consciousness) sees its real nature reflecting from the screen of the mind.

**The Modifications of the Mind** - The Y system categorizes the modifications of the mind into five classes: valid cognition, invalid cognition, verbal cognition, sleep and memory. All thoughts, emotions and mental behaviors fall into any one of these five categories which are further sub-divided into two major types, those that cause afflictions – klista and those which do not cause afflictions – aklista. False cognition and sleep always cause afflictions. Valid cognition and memories (depending on their nature) are not considered to be the causes of affliction.



The sources of valid cognition are perception, inference and authoritative testimony which have been described in the earlier chapter on Samkhya philosophy. False cognition is ignorance or avidya. Ignorance is mistaking the impure for the pure, misery for happiness etc. Ignorance has four offshoots i.e. asmita which is generally defined as I-am-ness, raga or attachment, dvesa or hatred and abhinivesa or fear of death which is the urge of self-preservation.

Verbal cognition is the attempt to grasp something that does not exist but is one's own projection for eg the fantasy of marrying a winged fairy and together flying off to a paradise.

**Overcoming the Modifications** - The modifications of the mind are caused by nine conditions namely sickness, incompetence, doubt, delusion, sloth, nonabstention, confusion, nonattainment of the desired state and instability in an attained state. These disturb the mind and produce sorrow, dejection, restlessness and a unrhythmic breathing pattern. Yoga provides a method for overcoming these problems. Patanjali says that the mind and its modifications can be controlled through practice – abhyasa and detachment – vairagya. The former means a particular type of effort through which the mind maintains stillness. Methods of practice would be discussed in conjunction with the eight limbs of yoga. The latter or vairagya does not mean to detach the world, rather it means to eliminate identification with the evolutes of nature and to understand oneself as pure Self, as a self-illuminating conscious being.

Patanjali also describes another method, called **Kriya Y** to help students attain a higher consciousness while dealing with the restless mind. Kriya yoga, which means the yoga of purification, is a three-fold discipline composed of the practice of austerity, study of scriptures and surrender to God. Austerity does not mean torturing the body or suppressing thought patterns, rather it means practicing choice or control in selecting actions that will be helpful in attaining liberation. **The greatest austerity is to perform one's duties skillfully without any intention of enjoying the fruits of action.** Study of Scriptures helps one discover ways he can deal with effectively with himself and explore all his potentials within and without. It also includes self-study and japa (repetition of a mantra). When one can perceive all activities as part of a grand ritual that is being performed on the altar of life in the worship of Divinity, the actual practice of surrender to

God begins. There remains only love for all creatures which radiates its light of bliss and knowledge in every mental and physical action.

## **The Eightfold Path of Yoga**

Different paths like Karma Y, Bhakti Y, Jnana Y, Kundalini Y, Mantra Y, Hatha Y and so on are not mutually exclusive but merely emphasize different aspects and are interconnected like spokes of a wheel. Patanjala yoga, a highly scientific path, combines many different practices in a systematic way through which one can develop voluntary control over one's desires, emotions, thoughts, body and subtle impressions that lie dormant in the unconsciousness mind.

### **The eight limbs of Patanjala Yoga**

1. Yamas (five restraints)
  - Ahimsa or nonhurting.
  - Satya or nonlying.
  - Asteya or nonstealing.
  - Brahmacharya or sensory control.
  - Aparigraha or nonpossessiveness.
  
2. Niyamas (five observances)
  - Sauca or purity.
  - Santosa or contentment.
  - Tapas or zeal
  - Svadyaya or Study part of Kriya Yoga
  - Isvara pranidhana or Surrender part of Kriya Yoga
  
3. Asana (posture)
  - Cultural poses.
  - Meditative poses.
  
4. Pranayama (control of vital force)
  - Prana, apana, samana, udana, vyana.

Paths 1 to 4 are part of HATHA YOGA.

5. Pratyahara (withdrawal of senses).

6. Dharana (concentration). part of Samyana
7. Dhyana (meditation). part of Samyana
8. Samadhi (spiritual absorption). part of Samyana

According to my email Guru, a learned exponent of Vedanta, the Ten Commandments in the Bible are nothing but the yamas and niyamas. According to Patanjala yoga, attachment to worldly objects is the archenemy of the individual who wants to understand the inner self.

1. **Yamas (restraints)** - to fulfill the above conditions, Patanjala Yoga begins by prescribing an ethical code designed to calm one's relationship with oneself and others. The five yamas replace imperfections with virtues and together make up a code of social and moral laws that regulate one's relationship with others.

**Ahimsa** - literally means non-injury or non-violence. Generally one thinks of non-violence as merely restraining from physical act of violence, but in Yoga scriptures nonviolence is to be practiced through thought, speech and action. Actually, the real practice of nonviolence necessitates expressing a spontaneous flow of all-encompassing love. Thus, the core teaching of ahimsa reveals the light of unity in all creation and teaches one how to expand his personality.

**Satya** - truthfulness is the most important morality and social law. According to Patanjala yoga, one should be truthful to oneself and to others in thought, speech and action. The field of truthfulness is very vast and encompasses every aspect of life. The Yoga student is taught to speak what he thinks and to do what he says. By Satya he gains inner strength through which he casts away the insecurity in his life.

**Asteya** - nonstealing provides a great opportunity for the practice of nonattachment and nonpossession. Such a person whatever he has as sufficient and does not allow himself to disturb social peace and harmony in order to attain desired objects by illegitimate means. The Yoga system advises that nonstealing be practiced mentally, verbally and physically. An honest writer writes original thoughts, and if some material is borrowed from others, the author honestly and respectfully gives references.

**Brahmacarya** - literally means to walk in Brahman. One who dwells in Brahman is called a brahmachari. The word brahmachari is commonly translated as sexual abstinence but celibacy is only a partial explanation of this word. Sexual continence in itself is not the goal; the goal is to control the senses in order to achieve deeper levels of awareness. Patanjala **Yoga takes brahmacharya in a wider sense to mean selectively performing only those activities that are helpful in achieving the highest goal of life.** Such a state of consciousness is only possible if the mind is free from all sensuous desires, including the sexual urge, which is the most powerful and can be destructive if not directed or channeled properly. Sensual activity in excess also leads to loss of vital energy that could be utilized for the attainment of higher consciousness. For achieving this goal Y advises one to organize all the sensuous forces and to utilize them in a beneficial way.

**Aparigraha** - nonpossessiveness is misunderstood to mean denying oneself all material possessions, but the word actually indicates an inward attitude rather than an outward behavior. The feeling of possessiveness is an expression of dissatisfaction, insecurity, attachment and greed. One who desires for more continuously can never be satisfied. **Non-possessiveness does not mean that one must not plan for the future or that one should give away all one's money,** it simply means that one must not be attached to what he has.

2. **Niyamas (five observances)** - regulate one's habits and organize the personality, allows a person to be strong physically, mentally and spiritually.

**Sauca** - refers to both physical and mental purity. The former protects the body from diseases while the latter prevents mental energy from being dissipated. Mental purity depends on positive thinking, mindfulness and discrimination. The Y system plays emphasizes on mental purity because concentration and inward exploration are impossible without it.

**Santosa** - contentment is a mental state in which even a beggar can live like a king. Santosa does not mean one should be passive or inactive, for the practice of contentment must be coordinated with selfless action,

**Tapas** - austerity means generation of heat which is a symbol of strength, purity, light, knowledge and those actions that generate heat, strengthen will power and enlighten the heart are known as tapas. The Bhagavad Gita states

that Y is not for one who indulges neither the flesh nor one who tortures it. In practicing tapas, one is advised to inspire oneself with spiritual warmth, to burn with zeal for enlightenment. A simple life free from sensuous indulgences, a regulated diet and the performance of all one's actions in the service of humanity are a part of the practice of asceticism.

**Svadyaya** - includes studying the scriptures, listening to saints and sages and observing lessons from one's own experiences. One must select only the gems of the teachings from available sources and then assimilate them into his own philosophy of life. If one were not selective in the study of scriptures it would mean reading lots of books thereby leading to mental conflict. The skillful study of reliable scriptures enhances one's understanding and gradually leads to the unfoldment of his potentials.

**Isvara pranidhana** - surrender to the Ultimate Reality is the highest method for protecting oneself from the enemies of attachment, false identification and the idea of doership. Surrender is possible, however, only with infinite faith and dedication. Ego is the greatest barrier resisting such complete surrender, but when one begins to feel and realize the ever-flowing knowledge and peace from the Ultimate Reality, he starts to surrender his ego and eventually become free from all passions.

The Y system does not suggest forcing oneself to master these restraints and observances but encourage one to be gentle in practicing them as sincerely as one can. They can help calm one's mind, prevent the mind from being distracted and help the body regain its physical strength. Y places importance on them while advising the practice of other practical yogic disciplines as well.

**3. Asanas or Posture** - ensure physical health and mental harmony. They are used in conjunction with the yamas and niyamas and other limbs of Patanjala Y, for without the other elements of the system, mere physical exercise cannot provide the desired benefits. Nowadays, a number of students do not understand this, thus, yogic postures have largely degenerated into a system of physical culture. The aim of Y is however, attainment of spiritual goals, to attain the highest state of samadhi. That is why Y places great importance on the meditative postures, which enables one to sit comfortably and steadily for a long time with the head, neck and trunk properly aligned.

The postures are broadly divided into two categories, one for physical well-being and two postures for meditation. There are eighty-four classical postures, but only four of these are suggested for practice & meditation. These are sukhasana – the easy pose, svastikasana – the auspicious pose, padmasana – the lotus pose and siddhasana – the accomplished pose. In all meditative postures, the emphasis is on keeping the head, neck and trunk straight. The physical postures are designed to enhance physical well-being, suppleness and control. They activate specific muscles, organs, glands and nerves, and provide specific therapeutic effects. In the Y system complete physical harmony is considered to be an essential prerequisite for achieving one-pointedness of mind. Thus asanas are preparatory training for the higher rungs of Y.

**4. Pranyama - Control of the Vital Force** - After practicing physical exercises the student becomes aware of a deeper level of personality – prana, the life force functioning in the body. The word prana is derived from the Sanskrit root ana and the prefix pra. Ana means to animate or vibrate and pra means ‘first unit’. **Thus prana means ‘the first unit of energy’.**

This vital force animates all the energies involved in the physical and mental processes, and thus it is prana that sustains and activates the body and mind. Later writings of Y explain a highly advanced science of prana, which yogis claim establishes the link between body and mind and vitalizes both. Because the breath is the grossest manifestation of this vital function, the science of prana is also called the science of breath. Continuous regulation of the breath strengthens the nervous system and harmonizes all mental activities.

Yoga texts say that prana is the creator of all substances and the basis of all functions. The Brhadaranyaka Upanishad says that the thread of prana (vayu) runs through and holds together the whole universe. This thread is the cause of the creation, sustenance and destruction of all substances in the world. As long as prana is in normal condition, the cells and tissues remain healthy and perform their functions properly, but the moment its vitality starts decreasing, the cell begins to decay. The intrinsic nature of prana is to be active and to move, and this is the very quality that distinguishes the organic world from the inorganic. Life begets life from the life force prana, it is because of this life force that cells live and multiply, transmitting the same vitality to new cells and tissues. Prana is the link between individual

and cosmic beings. The breath is the thread through which prana travels from the cosmos to the individual and vice versa.

Depending on its function in different organs, prana is divided into ten types. They are prana, apana, samana, udana, vyana, naga, kurma, krkala, devadatta and dhananjaya. Of the ten, the first five are most important.

**Prana** - here is used to designate a specific type of prana, the vital force of inspiration. In this context the word prana means ‘ that which draws or takes in’. The life force that receives fresh cosmic vitality from the atmosphere, activating the diaphragm, lungs and nostrils is called prana. The head, mouth, nostrils, chest (heart and lungs), navel and big toes are said to be the centers of prana. This important vital force resides in the brain and governs the functions of the senses and the process of thinking. Primitive instincts, emotions, intelligence, self-control, memory, concentration and the power of judgment are manifestations of prana. As long as the prana is in normal state, all the organs function properly. Bodily toxins, intoxicants, malnutrition, fatigue and mental shocks disturb the vital force. When the vitality of the mind starts to decay due to such conditions, then higher abilities such as intelligence, memory, concentration and patience begin to diminish and the lower instincts or emotions become predominant.

In the cosmos and in the body there is a continuous flow of solar and lunar energy, also referred to in Y texts as positive and negative energy, as pitta and kapha, fire and water, light and darkness. When prana is predominated by solar energy, it is active and the right nostril is open. But when lunar energy predominates, it is passive and left nostril is open. The flow of prana through the right or left nostril provides specific conditions and changes in mood and behavior.

**Apana** - is the excretory vital force. Expulsive movements occurring in the bowels, bladder, uterus during defecation, urination, menstruation and all other kinds of excretions are due to the function of apana. The penis, anus, thighs, ribs, root of the navel and the abdomen are said to be the abode of apana. When the excretory vital force which functions through the thoracic and abdominal muscles, is disturbed, then symptoms such as sneezing, asthma etc are observed.

**Samana** - is the digestive and assimilating force that makes food suitable for absorption and then assimilates it. This vital force is seen in the entire body.

Because of samana's presence in the skin, vitamin D can be absorbed from the ultraviolet rays of the sun. The region between the heart and the navel center is predominantly involved in the digestion of food, and this part of the body is considered to be the main center of this vital force. Absence of this assimilating force results in nervous diarrhea or retention of urine, constipation etc.

**Udana** - means 'energy that uplifts'. It is the force that causes contraction in the thoracic muscles, thereby pushing air out of the vocal cords. It is thus the main cause of the production of sound. All physical activities that require effort and strength depend on this vital force. It is said to be situated in the larynx, the upper parts of the pelvis, all the joints and the feet / hands.

**Vyana** - is the contractile vital force. It pervades the whole body and governs the process of relaxing and contracting the voluntary and involuntary muscles. It is involved in the opening and closing of the eyes and glottis. The ears, neck, eyes, anjles, nose and throat are said to be the vital force in the body.

Food and breath are the main vehicles through which prana enters the body. One can live a few days without food but not without breath. This is why the Y system places so much stress on the science of breath. The regulation of the movement of the lungs purifies and strengthens the nervous system, which coordinates all the other systems of the body. Yogis have developed a most intricate and deep science related to the nervous and regulatory systems. The science of breath is related to subtle energy channels called **Nadis**.

According to the yogis, the body is essentially a field of energy of which a large part is dormant. With the help of pranayama a student can unveil that energy field, expand it and channel it to explore higher levels of consciousness. Yogic texts say 'One who knows prana knows Veda's highest knowledge'. The science of prana and breath are thus of central importance in the Yoga system.

According to Patanjali, pranayama means to regulate and refine the flow of inhalation and exhalation. He does not advise the practice of pranayama until one has achieved a still and comfortable posture. Posture that removes physical tension and provides stillness are therefore prerequisites to pranayama. **He lists four kinds of pranayama** - external – bahya vritti in



which the flow of prana is controlled during the exhalation, internal – abhyantara vritti in which the flow of prana is controlled during inhalation, and intermediate – bahya-bhy-antara-visayaksepi in which the other two pranayamas are refined and the fourth – caturtha in which pranayana is transcended. The first three pranayamas must be regulated within space and time, but the fourth is highly advanced and transcends these limitations.

When the internal and external pranayama become very subtle, then, because of intense concentration in a relaxed state, one loses awareness of time and space, and thus the fourth pranayama happens automatically. In this state the breath is so fine that an ordinary breathing movement cannot be observed. The first four stages of Y discussed so far, yama, niyama, asana and pranayama are collectively known as Hatha Yoga.

**5. Pratyahara – Withdrawal of the Senses** - is a technique through which a student acquires the ability to voluntarily draw his attention inward and keep his mind from distractions (external objects). Patanjali describes Pratyahara as the withdrawal of the senses from their objects and their establishment in the mind. The senses are constantly wandering from one object to another, and the mind also wanders with them, although the mind is subtler than the senses. The senses are the vehicles of the mind as it travels but the mind is the master of the senses because without it, the senses could not contact or experience any objects. Withdrawal of senses actually means withdrawal of the mind.

Relaxation is actually the practice of pratyahara. When one wants to relax a limb of his body, he simply disconnects the communication of the mind and the senses to that particular limb. This is called releasing of tension. When one has mastered relaxation in this way, he attains perfect control over the senses and mind, there is no scattering of forces of the senses & mind and one enters a state of concentration.

**6. Dharana – Concentration** - having withdrawn the senses and the mind from external objects, the mind must then carry a single thought pattern in a desired direction. Concentration, is the process through which one withdraws the mind from all directions and focuses its powers for further journey inward. To facilitate this process, one selects a suitable object for concentration, such as a mantra – form – center in the body to name a few. In daily life one unconsciously concentrates in many ways. In extreme happiness or sorrow, the mind becomes concentrated on a single thought

pattern. But such concentration is motivated by emotion, instinct or impulse and is therefore not considered to be yogic concentration.

**There are four factors that are helpful in bringing the mind to a state of concentration.** One is developing interest in the object on which one wants to concentrate. With interest attention can be developed. Two is Practice. Regular repetition of definite techniques and processes that help the mind to flow spontaneously without a break helps form the habit of concentration. Three using the same straight, steady and comfortable seated posture every time one practices and using a smooth, deep and regular diaphragmatic breathing pattern helps one keep the mind and body calm yet alert. Four a calm mind is necessary because an emotionally disturbed mind cannot concentrate. An attitude of detachment from external objects and of witnessing one's own physical and mental activity calms the mind and develops emotional maturity.

When a student practices concentration, he is advised not to exert undue effort because effort leads to tension and tension disturbs the nervous system and senses / mind.

There are various kinds of concentration, gross and subtle, outer and inner, subjective and objective. According to Vyasa's commentary on the Yoga Sutras, one can concentrate internally on some point within the body such as the cardiac center, the base of the bridge between the nostrils or the tip of the tongue or any selected object. Using a mantra or the breath for the object of concentration is considered to be the best method of learning to focus the mind one-pointedly in preparation for attaining a meditative state.

In the words of Swami Rama "Without concentration energy of the mind is dissipated in vague thoughts, worries and fantasies. A disciplined man expresses himself more clearly through concentration; a man of ordinary intellect with highly developed concentration is more creative than a highly intellectual man of poor concentration. Through concentration a direct link with the cosmic mind is established so that the mind can attend to several things simultaneously. Concentration is no substitute for labor or action, but it does assist the individual in gaining unique experiences and truths hidden in the deeper recesses of the mind.

Patanjali gave elaborate treatment to the science of concentration, for he realized its utility in calming an agitated mind. Modern scientists now

concur with his view and are convinced that only through concentration can one gather together scattered forces and emotions and resolve conflicts. With steady practice the nervous system and the mind are relaxed, and the mind becomes steady, one-pointed and free from the shackles of desire. The aspirant is thus led, through concentration, to the superconscious state where he experiences the bliss divine”.

**7. Dhyana - Meditation** - is an advanced state of concentration in which one single object of concentration flows without interruption. In this state, the mind becomes fully one-pointed, and this one-pointedness starts expanding into a superconscious state. Ultimately there comes a state of samadhi – complete spiritual absorption. This is a spontaneous expression of the unbroken flow of Supreme Consciousness.

The process of withdrawal of senses, concentration and meditation can be compared to a river that originates when many small streams gather and merge into one large flow of water. The river then flows through the hills and valleys without being stopped by bushes and rocks, and it then finds the plains, where it flows smoothly, passing through forests and villages until it reaches its final destination and merges with the sea. So is the process of meditation. At the initial stage, the senses and mind are withdrawn and made one-pointed. Then that one-pointed mind flows constantly towards one object without being distracted by petty emotions, thoughts, memories and anxieties. Then it enters into the smooth, uninterrupted flow of the meditative state in which siddhis (supernatural powers) are experienced. These are analogous to the villages through which the river flows undistractedly. At last the mind ultimately enters Samadhi and merges with the ocean of Supreme Consciousness.

**8. Samadhi – Spiritual Absorption** - The word samadhi is closely related to the word samahitam which means ‘the state in which all questions are answered’ or ‘ the state in which one is established in one’s true nature’. Out of curiosity regarding the basic questions that the mind wants to solve, the mind flirts from one thought to another and becomes restless. But the moment the mind finds its answers, it has no reason to wander and thus it naturally establishes itself in its true nature. Then the mind is in a state beyond the concept of language in which it is accustomed to think and produce modifications.

Samadhi is a state beyond thinking and feeling in which individual consciousness expands and becomes one with the Supreme Consciousness. In this state, the individual soul merges into the Supreme Soul, casts away all limitations and causations and enjoys eternal bliss and happiness. It is not a state of dissolution of individuality but rather of the expansion of individuality. When individual consciousness expands to its fullest, that is called Samadhi.

In different Y traditions, this state is called soundless sound, the state of sound, or the highest state of peace and happiness. There are two states of Samadhi - sabija and nirbija. The former means samadhi 'with seeds'. In this state, the sense of individuality is retained and the seeds of desire and attachment still remain in latent form. Here the Yogi realizes the Truth while a sense of 'I' as different from that realized Truth is maintained. In the latter the individual consciousness is completely united with the Supreme Consciousness. Here the yogi expands the sense of 'I' and becomes one with the realized Truth within. This state of Samadhi with the state of dreamless sleep or death. In dreamless sleep there is a predominance of inertia (tamas) but samadhi is state beyond the concept of all the three gunas.

**Samyama** - Patanjali used this term to describe the combined state of concentration, meditation and samadhi. According to Patanjali, one can achieve whatever wants to though the practice of samyama because it expands human potentials and allows one to explore higher and higher states of consciousness. Through the practice of samyama it is said that one can develop supernatural powers or perfections called Siddhis, which are described in the third chapter of the Yoga Sutras.

Because the body is a miniature presentation of the cosmos, whatever exists in the cosmos is present in the body. Microcosm and macrocosm being one, an individual can thus have access to the powers of the universe. The practice of samyama upon any object brings perfection regarding that object. By practicing samyama on latent mental impressions (samskaras), for eg, one can realize their content and achieve knowledge of previous births. By the practice of samyama on the throat center, one can eliminate hunger and thirst or by its practice on the naval center, one can understand one entire's physiology. By the practice of samyama on the distinction between Purusha and Prakrti, one can attain knowledge of Purusa, the Supreme Consciousness.

Many other kinds of supernatural powers, such as super powers of sight, sound; smell, lightness, greatness and lordship are also mentioned. One who attains these partial perfections still has to go beyond their charms and temptations to establish himself in the state of perfect bliss and happiness beyond these siddhis. Constant awareness and the grace of the guru and God, who are one and the same in Yoga, help one to cross these stages.

As Swami Rama says “ The transition from the one-pointedness of the conscious mind to expansion into the superconscious is possible, however, only through the grace of the guru, and without such grace the aspirant who, through concentration, stills the conscious mind, becomes aware only of the murky depths of unconsciousness. This is a maze of diverse impressions, and one can lose himself in it so that he cannot transcend the unconscious to attain the superconscious state. Occult sciences, black magic, and so on, are based on this experience of the dark shadows of the unconscious – a state which represents a fall from the conscious to the unconscious rather than an ascent from the conscious into the purity of the superconscious”.

### **The Concept of God**

Patanjali accepts the existence of God. According to him God is a perfect supreme being who is eternal, all pervading, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. God is a particular Purusa who is unaffected by the afflictions the ignorance, egoism, desire, aversion, and fear of death. He is free from all karmas (actions), from the results of actions and from all latent impressions.

The concept of God can give hope to human beings, for when one overcomes all afflictions and does not allow himself to identify with his karmas or to reap their consequences, and when one becomes free from all samskaras, then he becomes a liberated soul and merges into God-consciousness.

Patanjali views the individual in essence as God, but because of the limitations produced by afflictions and karmas, one separates oneself from God consciousness and becomes a victim of the material world. **There is only one God.** It is ignorance that creates duality from the one single reality called God. When ignorance is dissolved into the light of knowledge, all dualities are dissolved and full union achieved. That perfect single Being always remains perfect and one. There is no change in the ocean no matter,

how many rivers flow into it, and unchangeability is the basic condition of perfection.

## **Mimamsa - Freedom through the Performance of Duty Chapter 5**

Mimamsa or MI for short means to analyze and understand thoroughly. The philosophical systems of MI and Vedanta are closely related to each other and are in some ways inter-dependant and complementary. The teachings of Vedanta may be said to have their roots in the fertile soil of MI. MI emphasis the teachings of Veda in the light of rituals, while Vedanta emphasis the teachings of the Veda in the light of knowledge. Traditionally MI is called Purva-mimamsa meaning the initial teachings of the Veda and Vedanta is called Uttara-mimamsa meaning the later of higher teachings of the Veda. MI is meant for householders while the exclusive practice of Vedanta should take place after one has realized the facts of worldly life meaning it is meant for retired life. Now retired is not to mean life after quitting a job, rather it refers to retirement from worldly charms and temptations, in which one receives a pension of perfect detachment and contentment.

**MI teaches the yoga of action while Vedanta teaches the yoga of knowledge.** One should develop a lifestyle designed within the framework of the yoga of action while simultaneously internalizing and spiritualizing one's actions to realize the Vedantic truths. Generally these two aspects combined are referred to as the yoga of action – Karma Yoga. MI provides a philosophical justification for rituals and explains the meanings behind them. In the Veda, numerous gods and goddesses are invoked. The MI system deems it necessary to provide a clear explanation of their nature and purpose. The MI system also discusses the science of sound and mantra but the major concern is to emphasize the use of meditation with rituals.

The first systematic work on this school is the MI Sutra of Jamini that is divided into twelve chapters. Sabara Swami wrote a major commentary on the Sutra. Kumarila Bhatta and Prabhakara, the pioneers of this system, founded two branches of MI, although the major teachings of both the branches are the same. Most modern scholars focus on the MI theories of knowledge, metaphysics, ethics and theology but this review will focus on the concept of duty and ritual.

Many think that rituals given in the Veda are mere dogma and religious ceremonies, not true. Rituals are the beginning tools for going inward. Through them one learns how to organize his life and prepare a lifelong plan so that he can utilize his time properly and become creative. Another misunderstanding of the MI system concerns the concepts of dharma –virtue and adharma – nonvirtue. According to MI activities that do not thwart the activities of others are dharma and vice versa. To be specific all actions and rituals prescribed by the Veda are virtuous and vice versa. However, when we say Veda it does not mean a manual that is rigid. Veda means knowledge and that which is realized, understood or performed in the light of knowledge is dharma. The Veda says ‘One should follow only that advice of mine which is good and beneficial, and leave that which is not’. Thus the Veda does not ask you to follow any advice blindly but it advises you to keep an open mind and use your intellect whether an act is virtuous or not.

Before discussing the major teachings of MI, the following terms should be understood –

**1. The Concept of Duty** - Many people are concerned with rights but not duty. Demanding rights without accepting duty leads to many problems. Duty is that for which one is responsible, that without which one cannot lead a happy and peaceful life. It is the law of duty that unites family; society, nation and because of which the entire universe continue to exist. When one relates to family etc only because he is tied by fear or attachment he is not following the law of duty. But when he acts with full knowledge and understanding, when all his actions are performed for the sake of peace and harmony and are centered towards inner exploration, then he is following the law of duty.

Following one’s own dharma to attain the highest duty of Self-Realization is the way of practice prescribed in MI, but to do this we must understand what dharma is. According to MI, dharma is the intrinsic nature of Rta, the breath of cosmic life. All those activities that are helpful in coordinating individual life with cosmic life constitute one’s duty of dharma.

The concept of duty is so vast that it is very hard to specify one’s duty in every case. Duty is part and parcel of life but how does not prioritize one’s duty. For this one to develop a discrimination to understand what is appropriate duty that is to be performed at a particular time and place. Knowing one’s role in life can help him realize his primary duty. For e.g. it

is the duty of a teacher to teach his student. But an action is not dutiful if it performed under pressure or with the intention of earning a reward.

MI proclaims that the Vedic rituals are highest duties one has to perform, but it also explains and demonstrates that one Vedic command may be comparatively more important than others in one context, other commands may be more important in other contexts.

**2. The Concept of Rituals** - Many people regard the trappings of rituals i.e. reciting mantras as the ritual themselves but these acts are only the external appearances of the actual ritual. When one understands the inner meaning of these externals, he can start enjoying the divine grace that flows through the practice of rituals. Rituals provide a context in which one receives full opportunity to understand the value of action. The true role of rituals is to spiritualize all actions for higher attainments. In short, a ritual is a mental attitude. If one analyses the inner nature of rituals as explained in the Brahmana literature, one will realize that those rituals and sacrifices provide training for daily living.

In regard of this claim, two of the yagas – rituals mentioned in the beginning of the Satapathabrahmana – darsa and purnamasa – can be studied. One who intends to perform these rituals starts mental preparation a day in advance, taking a light meal the previous night and sleeping in a devotional / positive mood. Then one rises early morning, perform's chores and prepares a meal. In performing these activities as part of a ritual, one develops the attitude of living in God-consciousness so that every moment and action in life can be experienced in God-consciousness. The participants transcend the physical plane and interpret ordinary physical activity in a subtle and divine light. Though it may seem that the person is performing these actions, it is God who is allowing the person to do so.

Rituals are performed not to worship any deity but rather simply because the Veda commands one to perform them. They are practiced for the sake of duty. Ultimately the food is cooked and served, and through the use of mantras, the Divinity is invited to partake. One mentally feels the presence of the Divinity. Then one bids the Divinity farewell and enjoys the food as well as the blessings the Divinity has bestowed. This entire process is an unbroken meditation in action in which one's body and mind are perfectly harmonized. In the scriptures, all processes – physical, spiritual and mental are considered to be essential aspects of the ritual.



Actions that are performed selflessly for the sake of duty and as part of a grand lifelong ritual in the service of Divinity are like beautiful trees that produce fruits of love and joy. Thus actions performed for duty's sake are rituals, but actions performed without proper understanding are mere actions. The MI system believes that one can cut one's own poisonous plant of past karma with the powerful axe of present karma and performing rituals helps in this process.

**3. The Divergent Teachings of the Veda** - To live according to Vedic teachings a man must understand its teachings for which he must first resolve conflicts arising out of diverse teachings in the Vedas. The teachings of the Veda were compiled when society was first formed, when culture and civilization were first being established. It was very important for the Vedic sages of those times to introduce their teachings with strong emphasis so that individuals and society as a whole world would welcome them. The method they applied is called 'stutivada' which means 'to state with strong emphasis and admiration'.

Just as in English there are various types of sentences so too the Veda is composed of various types of sentences. These include vidhi (imperative), Nisedha (negative) and stuti (admirational) sentences. MI studies the Veda according to the nature of its sentences, analyses them and then states imperative statements are more valid than admirational sentences. The former can be accepted but the teachings of admirational sentences must be further analyzed to determine their implied core meanings.

Thus the MI system provides a technique for studying the Veda, understanding its real meaning, and selecting the gems of knowledge hidden in its depths. There is no real conflict in the divergent sentences of the Veda; it is merely defective analysis that fails to discern their true knowledge.

The methods for knowing the actual meaning of the Veda is provided in the MI texts such as Mimamsa-anujramanika of Mandana Mishra. These shall be discussed elsewhere.

**4. The Science of Mantra** - The generic term for all Vedic verses and sentences is mantra. The Veda is the embodiment of knowledge expressed in the form of sound and symbolically represented in the script. MI posits the theory that sound is eternal, and it provides the most ancient as well as the

deepest study of sound. MI places greater emphasis on mantras than it does on gods and goddesses because it believes in the validity of the science of sound on which the science of mantra is based. MI does not view the performance of rituals as a means for imploring favors from a deity rather it states that Vedic rites are grounded in verifiable truth and not blind faith.

MI explores the subtle levels of sound by delving into its origin and realizing its various vibrational patterns. **Sound is called ‘vak’ in Sanskrit, but this words means more than sound or speech.** Vak refers to thought and expression, while speech is the communication of thoughts and feelings through words. Vak sakti, the power of speech, is the law of communication that conveys thoughts and concepts. It is the force flowing from the higher levels of consciousness through the articulated level of speech, which is its gross expression. Following analysis **MI categorizes vak sakti on four levels:** para (transcendent), pasyanti (concentrated thought pattern), madhyama (formulated thought pattern ready for expression) and vaikhari (expression with the help of words).

According to MI there are two universally intertwined factors in manifestation: sabda, the sound and artha, the object denoted by that sound. One signifies the name, and the other the form. They are inseparably associated, there can be no sabda without artha and vice versa.

The finest state of sound called para vak is perfect. The ultimate sound or Supreme Consciousness manifests itself in various grades and degrees that are distinguished from each other by the differing rates of vibration. Any vibration that can be perceived by physical instruments, such as the ears, is only a gross manifestation. The subtlest state of sound vibration is known ‘pasyanti vak’ in MI. Between para vak and pasyanti the difference is that in the latter the Supreme Consciousness sees the entire universe as its primeval desire, thus this state is called pasyanti – ‘one who sees’. In this state the power of desire is dormant but it is nevertheless the direct cause of the universe, which will be manifested as both idea and speech. The third state of vak is called madhyama meaning that which is intermediate. The fourth state is vaikhari is completely manifest and audible. At this stage, a sound that belongs to a specific language can be perceived through the sense of hearing.

The origin of speech is transcendent and eternal and the flow of pasyanti, madhyama and vaikhari from the state of para is the flow of the forceful

stream of energy from vak sakti. Speech emerges from its hidden source in the state of silence (para), flows downward into more and more manifested stages and when at last dissolves into infinity, its origin. This is the process of the enfoldment of vak sakti.

Divinity or truthfulness is veiled in everyday speech, but this is not the case with mantras. **Mantras are not mere words but are specific sound vibrations that have been experienced by sages in the deepest states of meditation.** They are said to be sound-bodies of certain aspects of the cosmic forces. A mantra is thus referred to as a 'setu', a bridge. That a student can use to cross over the mire of delusion to reach the other shore of Consciousness

The mantra lies in a dormant state till it is awakened. **The secret of awakening and utilizing mantras lies in the rhythmic vibrations in which the mantra is meant to be pronounced and repeated.** The proper use of mantras, with their prescribed rituals, is designed to lead one to experience the bliss and happiness contained within the mantra itself. The great potential of mantras is hidden and defuse. We need to learn how to awaken, concentrate and utilize their potential.

**5. The Concept of Gods and Goddesses (very enlightening)** - Modern scientists have developed mathematical equations and scientific laws to describe the order and lawfulness of the universe. Likewise, Vedic sages developed immense powers of introspection and discovered form equations that express the underlying order, lawfulness, structure and dynamics of the phenomenal world. The form of expressions and sound patterns are known as deities and mantras. These forms contain a profound symbolic meaning that must be understood to comprehend the concept of deity.

The critics of MI philosophy state that the MI system believes in many gods and goddesses. But when one analyzes this further, he finds that within this apparent diversity, there is an underlying unity. The all-pervading consciousness manifests itself in different stages, each of which has a different form (deity) and sound vibration (mantra). The process of manifestation begins with the emergence of the subtlest forms, from which the grosser or more delineated forms are manifested. In the Vedic tradition, prototypic forms have been conceptualized as deities – gods or goddesses – each characterized by a set of divine qualities. The Vedic deities provide a metaphorical representation of the progressive stages of manifestation.

The **Vedic deities** radiate from the source of energy that generates all forms and names. They **are thought forms that represent the cosmic powers and are thus the central points that control all the manifestations and are the main cause of the universe.** Deities are capable of transforming and directing one's pranic and psychic energies to reveal the inner avenues of human potential that make one blissful, radiant and perfect. The forms of a deity contain unimaginable powers that are behind and involved in manifestation, but a deity is not limited to any specific anthropomorphic form. If it were, it would not be possible for a single deity to be present at different rituals at the same time.

Deities are not imagined by the human mind, but rather are known through intuition by great sages in the deepest state of meditation. The deities emerge as primal forms and sound-bodies (mantras) with perfect bliss and happiness. Some think that a deity and mantra are different but they are one and the same. A deity is a gross physical form of a mantra, and a mantra is a subtle of a deity. When a sequence of vibration of a mantra is materialized into a particular form or shape it is a deity and vice versa.

There are certain rules by which a mantra converts into a deity and a deity into a mantra. Both operate on a principle similar to the conversion of energy into matter and matter into energy in physics. **When a particular ritual is performed with the proper utilization of mantras, the deity related to those mantras is present because when the vibration is concentrated, the materialized form of the deity appears.** According to MI, vision of a deity is manifest whenever the mantra related to it is pronounced in a prescribed manner, and it has to yield the desired objects that are believed to be provided by it. Adepts of MI philosophy and practices have full confidence that their individual and cosmic powers can be utilized at will, and they know how to use rituals as the methods for controlling such powers.

Friends in a recent English movie titled ' Lord of the Rings' the heroine uses a mantra to make a huge gush of water flow across the river so that ghosts on the other side of the river do not cross it and catch her.

**The concept of ritual is misunderstood in modern society.** MI identifies two purposes. One is to attain and expand one's inner potential and unite it with the cosmic force. Two is to pay respect and show gratitude to the

cosmic forces that are constantly supplying light and life to all living beings. The Bhagavad Gita, which synthesizes all systems of Indian philosophy, says that human beings should honor those cosmic forces that provide for humanity. 'Ritual' is meant in a broader sense here. Pouring butter in the ceremonial fire and reciting mantras verbally is not the only ritual. Giving up one's own desires and attachments, renouncing the fruits of one's actions in the service of humanity and carrying out one's own responsibility are the real meaning of the word ritual.

**6. The Concept of Divinity within Physical Objects** - The human mind is so engrossed in its own sensory experiences that it rarely allows one to feel the presence of divinity in every walk of life. MI however, applies the theory of all pervading presence of divinity by providing specific practices designed to remind the student of this truth.

For e.g. there is a prescribed way for gathering and using of common objects like water, fruit, grass during a ceremony. For instance before a blade of grass is uprooted, one is to recite a specific mantra and glorify the divinity within the grass and ask permission to use the grass and use it in the ceremony. When the grass is uprooted one recites another mantra, explaining the process in the following sense: 'I am uprooting negativities symbolized by the grass. Even within these there is divinity. I am uprooting it for use in the ritual, in which the real nature of divinity is going to be unveiled'.

This is not the worship of grass and stones but the worship of divinity within them. By realizing the concept of divinity within living and non-living things enables the human mind to expand its individual consciousness to universal consciousness. It prevents the mind from being overcome by hatred, jealousy and anger. This practice helps us to understand the great Vedantic truths 'The whole universe is Brahman' and 'Thou art That'.

**7. The Sources of Valid Knowledge** - The six sources of valid knowledge are perception, inference, comparison, testimony, postulation and nonperception. MI emphasis testimony because it believes exclusively in the authority of the Veda. The MI theory of perception and inference are similar to Nyaya, but the MI theory of comparison is quite different from that of Nyaya, although both ultimately base their theories on the similarity of two things, of which one is already known.

Postulation is the necessary supposition of an unperceived fact to explain some apparently conflicting phenomena. For e.g. a person who does not eat during the day but constantly grows fat can be suspected of eating at night. Knowledge of the person eating at night cannot come under the category of perception or inference nor can it be reduced to testimony or comparison. Nonperception is the source of one's immediate cognition of nonexisting things.

**8. The Concept of Soul** - MI does not entangle itself in the discussion of metaphysics but instead emphasizes the practical approach of Karma Yoga, the Yoga of Action. Rituals or actions have three components: the performer, the object of the action and the process of performing it. The main doctrine of Karma Yoga is 'As you sow, so shall you reap'. Accordingly, one is the master of his own destiny. MI considers the soul to be eternal, infinite substance with the capacity for consciousness.

### **Major Teachings of the Mimamsa System**

**1. Selfless Action** - In a historical debate with Sankara, Mandana Misra, a great pioneer of MI, verified that knowledge alone liberates. This liberating knowledge can be achieved only through the yoga of action. Knowledge allows the person to understand the nature of action and to pave the way for a life of skillful action. Running away from the duties of the world does not solve the problems of life. Face up to challenges must be the motto.

One is bound in the rope of one's karma from time immemorial. Knowledge, spiritual strength and skillful action done selflessly form the entrance to the kingdom of spiritual life. Inner strength comes from selfless service expressed through mind, action and speech. Inaction leads to inertia and selfish action serves as a rope of bondage.

When the human mind understands the purpose of life and expands one's personality while realizing the presence of divinity within and without, one moves to higher dimensions of awareness expanding one's love for all creatures of the world. Through the expansion of the center of love and performance of selfless actions, a person becomes free from all residue of the past (samskaras).

**Selfless action in the service of humanity is the real implication of Vedic rituals.**

2. **Nonattachment** - When one learns to love others, not just human beings but all creatures of the universe – one is learning to love. There is only one force called life. By loving all, one loves the life force itself. One should learn to express love through mind, action and speech. Of these action is most important. Selfless action done skillfully is the highest of all expressions of love. Universal love means nonattachment which does not mean not to strive to be successful in whatever one is attempting to do, nor does it imply that one should be lackadaisical in his actions. On the contrary true nonattachment frees one to be fully enthusiastic, which inspires his will power to grow.

For the purpose of nonattachment, one has to develop a proper philosophical attitude. He must consider himself as a traveler in this cosmic city of life and must view this present life as a brief stopping place in his journey. Nothing that we possess is our own, everything is temporary. Thus one must not grieve over loss or be overjoyed with gain. One must not forget that sooner or later all these objects of pleasure would be left behind. Thus the principle of nonattachment provides a constant awareness of truth.

Normally one is a slave to one's duties and actions, but when those duties and actions are performed with perfect detachment, one becomes their master and is no longer bound to receive their fruits. Rather one is free to receive or reject what he chooses from them. An action in itself never binds one; it is the fruit of that action that binds.

**Nonattachment should not be confused with either complacency or indifference.** The former does not allow a person to improve further, whereas nonattachment inspires a person actively to seek higher attainments. Indifference is usually indulged in as a mere escape, when one finds himself unable to cope with a situation. This is the quality of a weak and forlorn person while nonattachment is the positive quality of a strong and inspired soul.

The concept of nonattachment can be best understood through the e.g. of the manner in which an oblation is offered in the ritualistic fire. The performer of the ritual takes the oblation (clarified butter, sesame seeds, rice pudding) in his hand, recites the mantra while holding it and then says 'This oblation

is offered to the deity, it does not belong to me anymore'. In this way he expresses his resignation of ownership over the object. Offering obligation in the sacrificial fire symbolizes mental training for renouncing attachment to worldly objects and sharing one's possessions with all, just as the fragrant smoke of the burned oblation is enjoyed by all.

**3. Self-control & Self-discipline** - Although it is true that one is the master of his life, most of time one allows himself to live as a slave of his environment. This slavery manifests in all aspects of the personality – on the physical, mental and energy levels. When the body, breath and mind are out of control, however, they create great problems and do not allow one to concentrate within to explore his inner potentials. No one can impose the kind of discipline that is needed to control the body, mind and senses. It has to come from within from a commitment to improve oneself and a belief in one's ability to do so.

**4. Daily Schedule of Psychophysical Well-being** - As a training for self-discipline, MI emphasizes the importance of having a well-organized daily schedule. This schedule must be designed in such a way that it does not conflict with one's internal or external life. This schedule should be able to spiritualize all the actions that must be performed in daily life. Life is all about attitude.

MI provides techniques for improving one's attitudes. With respect to eating and breathing, MI advises saying grace before meals to soothe the mind and make the flow more regular – both of which are essential for the proper enjoyment and digestion of a meal. When one does so, one withdraws the senses and mind from all outward directions and concentrate within. When one remembers the presence of divinity during grace, this harmonious state of mind reflects onto the body. It stimulates the secretion of saliva and gastric juices and thus inspires a good appetite. As a result, one enjoys his food and digests it properly.

Once faith in God is established in a person's unconscious mind, it cannot be easily removed. MI understands this inner inclination of the human mind and formulates all its beneficial teachings within the framework of religion and in the name of God. An idle man is a devil's workshop. MI provides a schedule for one's whole life and divinizes all activities through ritualistic philosophy. Thus the mind does not have time to brood but is trained to occupy itself with the performance of the present ritualized action.



MI advises one to consider all activities as part of the cosmic soul. The entire world is an altar, and each individual life is a miniature representation of that cosmic altar, which should shine and radiate the light of the force of life for the benefit of all humanity. This altar should be full of the fragrance of positivity, love, compassion and happiness. One should know how to enjoy the blessings of divinity in all the circumstances of life.

**5. Social Awareness** - when one becomes self-controlled and self-disciplined he gradually expands his awareness and eventually finds himself in resonance with society. He yearns to be a citizen of a well-civilized society and dissolves all conflicts between his individual personality and social life. He becomes a dynamo that radiates love and compassion and follows an inner discipline as a spiritual seeker.

**6. Sense of Equality** - In order to experience this growth, one has to learn to dissolve the inferiority and superiority complexes in which he is entangled and because of which he suffers. These complexes serve as barriers that check the overflowing current of love through the human heart. To remove these barriers, one needs to establish and nurture a feeling of equality with others.

Through its ritualistic approach MI removes inferiority and superiority and establishes a theory of equality. In some of the holy rituals people from all caste, animals/plants are necessary participants. The absence of a representative from any one of these groups vitiates the efficacy of the ceremony.

**7. Unity within Diversity** - To see the basic unity that underlines the apparent diversity of this existence is a very important factor in being able to resolve conflicts and contradictions everyone experiences in life. These inner and outer problems must be resolved to be able to realize his potentials. An average human being is so engrossed in the external objects of the material world that he loses his capacity to see the one single Reality that manifests in various forms.

It is very difficult for the untrained mind to experience this essential oneness of the universe. To assist one MI teaches that the ultimate Reality, called Indra, manifests himself in the form of moon, sun, fire, wind and all cosmic powers, which are personified as individual deities.

Partially informed scholars think that MI is polytheistic, but that is not exactly true. **Polytheism is an initial stage of the MI philosophy that is applied to reach the state of monism.** The MI system states that all the things of the world have an essential potential, called **Sakti**, which is the power by virtue of which everything comes into existence, remains for a period of time and returns again into its origin.

This all pervading potential is one and the same in all the divergent objects of the universe, it only appears to be diverse with many names and forms, just as water appears to be different colors depending on the colors of the vessels in which it is contained. When viewing the objects of the external world, one should be aware of the divinity of all things, and one should learn how to tie all these experiences together with the thread of divine unity.

8. **Selectiveness** - Novices are confused by MI's varied teachings, spiritual practices, rituals and concepts of gods and goddesses. MI thus advises one to be selective and conscious of his own interests, inclinations, attitudes, capacities and circumstances when deciding which particular spiritual practice/lifestyle to adopt. This process of discrimination, self-examination and introspection consists of listening to various teachers and studying diverse scriptures, but selecting only those that are helpful and beneficial for personal growth. Unless one goes through this process you could end up wasting your time.

Every teaching is not meant for every individual. One should incorporate into his schedule only that which suits his personality and that which does not create internal or external conflict. But to do so means you have to be broadminded. One who is spiritually inclined must open his mind/heart to all and listen to others so that he can choose the gems of knowledge from all over, integrate them properly within the framework of his personal philosophy of life.

9. **Seeing Eternity in the Noneternal** - Often one may not understand the deeper meaning of rituals or become disgusted with the religious beliefs associated with these rituals. Many people think that establishing a relationship between divinity and symbol is a primitive way of thinking. Actually these people do not understand the inner meaning of such beliefs. Because of their egos a number of people do not understand the presence of divinity in other living and non-living things. To gain a proper

understanding and appreciation of any kind of worship, ritual etc, one must first understand and appreciate the importance of love.

Love and reference cannot be separated from each other; love without reference is lifeless and empty. When one learns to love another human being, he also learns to love the life force itself. Love is the Lord of life. Thus, it should be revered in all its forms. One should be aware of extending his love not only to human society, but to all creatures of the world as well. This makes an aspirant aware of that universal consciousness that manifests itself in the form of love and unites all.

This divine love is the inner light of the inner heart and is omnipresent and omnipotent. This realization of the omnipresence of divinity is possible only when one withdraws his narrowness and expands his God-consciousness within and without. **Gratitude is the best way of expressing one's love and sincerity.**

The sun provides light. If one does not express his gratitude for this, he is surely blocking the flow of love. A plant gives fruit, a river gives water. **The expression of gratefulness is not worship of plants and animals, it is the worship of that all-pervading consciousness that is in oneself and in all other beings and objects.**

## **Vedanta or the Philosophy of Monism Chapter 6**

Vedanta or VE for short. The philosophical systems of Mimamsa and VE are closely related to each other and are in some ways inter-dependant and complementary. The teachings of VE may be said to have their roots in the fertile soil of Mimamsa. Mimamsa emphasis the teachings of Veda in the light of rituals, while VE emphasis the teachings of the Veda in the light of knowledge. Traditionally Mimamsa called Purva-mimamsa meaning the initial teachings of the Veda and VE is called Uttara-mimamsa meaning the later of higher teachings of the Veda.

VE means 'the end of the Vedas'. In ancient times an Indian student's education was not complete until he or she received instruction in the Upanishads. A mere study of the Veda is not sufficient to reach his goal. Rather, a student needs to realize its teachings experientially.

The methodology used to describe the subject matter of the Upanishads (UPA for short) is unique. Most of the UPA is written in symbolic language. One should not depend entirely on grammatical and linguistic language to comprehend the real meaning of the UPA, for it is not possible to unravel their terse metaphorical teachings without the guidance of an accomplished master. The **meaning of UPA** is “**a scripture that can only be studied and properly understood while sitting close to the teacher**”.

The subject matter of the UPA is not clearly organized in the texts but Veda Vyasa systematized the Upanisadic concepts in the Brahma Sutras. Vyasa was the first scholar to attempt to clarify and reconcile the apparent contradictions in the teachings of the UPA. These Sutras are divided into four chapters: Samanvaya which deals with the coherence of the Upanisadic teachings, Avirodha which deals with noncontradiction in relation to established theories and logical rules, Sadhana which describes the means of realization and Phala which deals with the goals of VE philosophy.

The Sutras are very terse and because elaborate explanations are not provided their meaning is difficult to understand. Therefore, various commentaries have been written with as many interpretations. This way over the centuries various schools have developed the more famous among them being Sankaram Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha and Nimbarka.

### **Views Common to All Schools of Vedanta**

All the schools of VE try to resolve the following questions. What is the ultimate Reality? From where so did all the physical and mental phenomena originate? What is the nature of the state in which all phenomena dissolve? What is that reality through which everything is known? What is that which makes an unknown known? What is the means for attaining immortality? What is the nature of the Self? What happens after death? What is the importance of body, mind and senses? All the UPA share a common understanding on these questions.

The UPA maintain the existence of an all-pervading Reality called Brahman or Atman. They also analyze the Self as distinguished from the body, breath, mind and intellect, which covers the Self like veils or sheaths. Pain and pleasure are considered to be born out of ignorance and not ultimately real. The Self is considered to be eternal and to have the essential nature of bliss and knowledge. This help is to be realized with the help of a sharp and

penetrating intellect. This Self-Realization is the highest goal of life. To achieve this goal, the UPA do not encourage external rituals but instead emphasize the internalization of awareness. The UPA uniformly deny the ultimate existence of the multiplicity of objects, holding that all diverse names and forms are unreal and that only the underlying unchanging eternal Reality can truly be said to exist.

Notwithstanding the various commentaries on the UPA, the one by Sankara is outstanding. None of the schools of VE agree with Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya, Yoga and Buddhism regarding the theory of the manifestation of the universe. All the VE schools hold that without the guidance of the conscious principle, unconscious matter could not produce this world, which adhered to certain rules and laws. Such order and regulation they argue cannot be the attributes of an unconscious principle. The schools of VE unanimously agree on the existence of God. They view Reality as Supreme Consciousness which is simultaneously involved in the phenomenal world and transcendent.

To avoid confusion Vedantins used the word Brahman to denote the transcendent aspect and the word Isvara to denote that aspect of the ultimate reality that oversees the phenomenal world. They believe that God's existence can be realized through direct experience alone or by testimony.

### **Monism – the School of Sankara**

According to tradition, the school of pure, unqualified monism is the most ancient in the Upanisadic thought. The founder of this school is said to be Vyasa. The teacher student lineage of this school progresses from Vyasa to Sukadeva to Gaudapada to Govindapada to Sankara. This progression is confusing in the light of historical. Friends it is something that I shall avoid getting into because it is knowledge that we seeking not historical dates na.

Sankara was ordained a monk by the sage Govindapada whose teacher was Gaudapada. The former instructed Sankara in the teachings of the Brahma Sutras as explained by Vyasa. The latter wrote a few books, the most famous one being Mandukya-karika. Sankara was the first philosopher to establish a formal school of Advaita (monistic) VE. He based his theory on the three great landmarks of Indian philosophy the UPA, the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad-Gita. Together these three are called the **Prasthanatrayi**. S wrote profound commentaries on these scriptures.

Sankara accomplished two main missions through his nondualistic theory of VE. One he reformed the society of that time, which was polluted by unworthy religious preceptors and two he provided a concrete philosophy and spiritual practice for those who were prepared to explore the inner most values of life. His teachings can be divided into two parts: social, ethical and moral teachings and metaphysical and spiritual guides. The concepts of Self (Atman), the Supreme Consciousness (Brahman), cosmic illusion (Maya), the universe, God, human life and liberation are the major topics discussed in Sankara's writings.

### **1. The Concept of Atman, the Self**

The concept of Self in Advaita (monistic) philosophy is quite different from that in Nyaya, Samkhya and Buddhist philosophies. According to Sankara, Self is all pervading, self-illuminated Consciousness. It is the highest truth beyond time, space and causation, and it cannot be experienced by the senses or the mind. Beyond the realms of time and space, there is an absolute Unconditional Reality that has no beginning and no end. That is called Atman, the Self.

The Self is within the body, it is also outside it, and at the same time is separate from it. The body is composed of matter, and it therefore deteriorates and decomposes, but the pure Self is beyond any such death and decay. The Self is the fountainhead of the life force, which animates and motivates the entire body/mind complex. It is the eternal source of wisdom and intelligence and is untouched by any external changes and mutations. The Self is always the same, unchangeable and immortal. This sameness does not belong to matter or energy both of which are constantly changing. This sameness is the transcendent absolute Reality.

Atman, the pure Self, ever witnesses all the changing phenomena within and without. One after another there arises an ever-changing flow of thoughts and emotions, but underlying this, there exists a permanent and unchanging Reality that remains constant and is witness to all these mental phenomena. Thoughts, emotions, moods arise and give away, to be replaced by others, which also pass away. But the one who is witness to all these changes, is beyond the reach of mind, ego and intellect is the Self. It provides vitality and energy for the function of the mind, body and intellect. Scientific observation depends entirely upon sense perception and is not capable of

providing a method of understanding or experiencing the Reality that is witness. The power of witnessing dwells in the innermost chamber of everyone's heart.

When brain and mind are at rest during sleep, there remains a self-illumination that experiences the resting state of mind. In deep sleep the self is established in its pure nature, which is beyond the grasp of mind and senses, but when a person wakes up he is able to remember that he slept deeply. It is the Self, shining and permanent, that experiences its own state of dreamless sleep and remembers it during the waking state. **But no scientific research would be able to study the Atman because by its very nature it is beyond the constructs of time, space and causation.**

VE philosophers offer the following analogy to describe the nature of the Atman. Atman is like an ocean of bliss and consciousness and the physical appearance of an individual is like a wave in the ocean of bliss. When the wind of samskaras and desires blows, the waves appear and disappear. Those who think that the waves are different from the ocean are ignorant. The rising and falling of waves in the ocean does not effect the existence of ocean. Such is the case with birth and death, which cannot create any difference in the essential nature of the Atman. Death does not affect Atman, since it is nothing but returning to the origin from which one has come and from which one will emerge again. Life is a continuous existence from eternity to eternity in the beginless and endless journey of the Self. It is the physical body alone that is circumscribed by life and death. Indestructibility is essential nature of the Self.

## **2. The Concept of Brahman, the Supreme Consciousness**

According to Sankara, Brahman is the ultimate truth within and without. Whatever exists is Brahman and whatever does not exist in the manifest world is also Brahman. Brahman is all pervading and self-illuminated Consciousness. Sankara says that there is only one Reality and that is Brahman, nothing exists separate from Brahman. If one perceives something as different from the Real (Brahman), it is due to ignorance, but this does not mean that ignorance exists separately from Brahman. **In its cosmic sense, ignorance is known as Maya, the cosmic illusion.** The concept of Maya, makes Sankara's theory unique.

Brahman and Atman are identical, just as forest and trees are identical. The latter represents individual souls (vyasti) while the former represents the conglomerate nature (samasti) of souls i.e. Brahman. The concept of names and forms does not belong to Brahman because Brahman is the all-pervading infinite absolute Reality, while names and forms denote finite things that are limited by time, space and causation. Brahman is the state of reality that destroys even the concept of death. Brahman is the very source of existence, from which springs the entire universe qualified by name and form. It is the only the imagination that gives color, touch, smell and sound to worldly sensations. The real nature of the Brahman is hidden from the ignorant, but those who see things as they really are, as reflections of Brahman, live in Brahman-consciousness. The absolute Brahman is like the self-indulgent sun, from which radiates the light of knowledge, bliss and consciousness.

The entire universe emanates from Brahman, exists in Brahman and at the time of dissolution returns into Brahman. Thus, nothing exists separately from Brahman. Brahman is the only existence, and all other relative realities exist because of Brahman. The concept of duality or the relationship between the manifold universe and the singular Brahman is a projection of the cosmic power of illusion. VE does not recognize the concept of bondage or liberation because the Soul (Atman) and Supreme Consciousness (Brahman) are one and the same remains always unaffected by changeability and partiality. When clouds conceal the sun, the learned knows that in reality the clouds do not disturb the sun but clouds merely obstruct the sun's light. So also, the absolute Self remains embedded with its perfect effulgence and glory in the innermost chamber of the heart. Nothing exists except Brahman, who is ever free.

### **3. The Concept of Maya**

If as Vedanta posits, Brahman alone exists as the absolute self-shining Consciousness, then what is this universe? If there is only single Reality called Brahman, then why do human beings perceive and behave according to the dictates of the environment. Advaita philosophers explain the existence of the universe with the help of the concept of Maya, which is found in the UPA. The Rig Veda states that Indra (a term used for absolute Reality) assumes various forms through Maya.

The UPA state that the face of truth is veiled with the golden disc of Maya, which must be removed for one to realize the ultimate Truth. The concepts



of time and space that veil the face of Truth are evolutes of Maya. Beyond Maya there is no time and space, and there is no universal cause because only Brahman - the absolute Reality remains. Because Maya veils the truth, the individual self misconstrues both the world and itself as being different from Brahman. **In the cosmic sense, ignorance is called Maya, but with reference to individual misconceptions it is called Avidya.**

### **Description of Maya (characteristics)**

1. Like Prakrti, Maya is unconscious and is opposed to the conscious principle Brahman, but it neither real nor independent.
2. Maya is an inherent power of Brahman, through which the Brahman veils itself. It is inseparable and undifferentiated from Brahman. Maya is neither identical with Brahman, nor different from Brahman, nor both.
3. Maya is beginningless.
4. Maya is both positive and negative, though it is not real. It is positive because it projects the world of plurality (produces the world qualified by names and forms), and it is negative because it conceals the real Brahman that is perfect knowledge and bliss. These two aspects of Maya are called avarana-sakti, the power of concealment and viksepa-sakti, the power of projection.
5. Maya is relative. The one absolute Brahman appears in many forms and its power of becoming finite is called Maya.
6. Faulty cognition or mistaking one thing for something else is a form of Maya.
7. Maya is removable. By right knowledge or proper understanding, it can be removed.
8. Maya is indescribable because it is neither real or unreal, nor both real and unreal. It is not real because it does not have any independent existence apart from Brahman. It is not unreal because it is the actual power by which Brahman manifests itself as this apparent universe. It is also not both real and unreal because the

conception of real and unreal in the context of one thing at one time is self-contradictory. From the standpoint view of the world, Maya is comprehended as real, but from the standpoint of the absolute Reality it is unreal. Thus it is neither real nor unreal, nor both real and unreal. Because of its complex nature it is indescribable.

### **Maya and Brahman**

In summary Maya is tangibly existent, but it cannot be described either as being or as nonbeing. The existence of the universe cannot be called unreal. Maya's power of concealment hides the absolute state of Brahman. However by its power of the projection of Maya the entire universe is created. Maya's powers to conceal and project function simultaneously. The state in which Brahman is consciously associated with Maya to create the universe is called **Isvara, God**. This combined state of Maya and Brahman appears as the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. In the same manner Atman appears as the individual self. From the cosmic point of view Maya is one but from the individual point of view it is many.

Maya can therefore be studied in two different ways" cosmically and individually. The Brahman associated with cosmic Maya is called Isvara and the individual self-associated with Maya (avidya) is called Jivatman. Both these levels of Maya hide the true nature of Brahman and the Self. The limitations imposed by Maya is unreal and is called 'upadhi' meaning condition but false conditions cannot make a difference to the Reality, just as a mirage of water cannot convert a sandy desert into a lake. The entire universe is expanded from Brahman with the help of Maya, just as a magical illusion is projected by the magician. In reality the Absolute is not touched at all just as a magician is not tricked by the illusions of his own magic.

### **4. The Concept of the Universe**

According to Sankara there is only one Reality, and that is Brahman. He does not deny the existence of the world but emphasizes the ultimate Reality for a particular purpose. The world is only an appearance; it is not the ultimate Reality. As long as one is in the world, however, he cannot take it to be entirely unreal. Even Sankara accepts that some degree of illusion and

error exists. The objects of dreams last as long as one is dreaming. As long as one is engrossed in the ignorance of relative consciousness, this world is indeed quite real. But when true knowledge dawns, one becomes aware that the world is sublated, that the world does not exist independently from the cause, Brahman. Sankara states that once the self is entangled in the creation of Maya, it has to receive help from Maya to overcome Maya.

Opponents of Sankara's theory inquire, 'If the world is completely unreal, how is it possible to feel the existence of the world as real? How is it possible to be affected by worldly objects? If no snake exists in a rope, one cannot die from a rope bite. By the same token if the world is completely unreal and imaginary, then there cannot continue practical behavior in the world'. Sankara replied by stating that the imagination creates the presence of a snake in a rope, and that imagination is so strong that a person can die from an imaginary snakebite. Thus, wrongly perceived situations may result in physical or psychological reactions.

It is not the existence of Sankara to refute the existence of the universe. In actuality, Sankara holds two different views of reality, apparent and absolute. All external and internal phenomena belong to the apparent reality, and the Brahman alone is the absolute Reality. As long as one is entangled in the miscomprehension of physical and mental phenomena, apparent reality seems to be real. From the heights of absolute Reality, one clearly sees and realizes both sets of **reality – apparent and absolute**. For him, the apparent reality seems to be completely illusory. In general, Sankara presents his monistic philosophy from the standpoint of absolute Reality. That is why apparent reality is posited to be illusory and unreal throughout this system.

## 5. The Theory of Causation

Sankara accepts the above theory but his version differs somewhat from the version accepted by the Samkhya philosophers. Sankara's theory known as vivartavada, states that an effect is merely an illusory appearance of the reality that is the cause. When the world is experienced as having qualities of multiplicity and changeability, these qualities are mere appearances of the Ultimate Truth, which is always and ever nondual and immutable.

The aspect of reality that remains unchanged and that cannot be annihilated is known as the Self. In actuality the entire universe is the illusory

manifestation of the Self, but as long as one is in the world, he cannot totally disregard the objects of the world as being unreal. These objects have a great impact on human personality and behavior. Thus, they cannot be a simple illusion. For practical applications, Sankara provides a specific method of sadhana and a worldview to deal with this relatively real or unreal physical and mental world. This method consists mainly of meditation and contemplation and is described later.

The universe is described by VE as being composed of many gradations and stages of descending and ascending forces of Brahman associated with Maya. Even in the field of illusion, there are various gradations with some illusions seeming to be more real than others. This relativity is also Maya. In the material world some objects last longer than others – a stone lasts longer than paper. But that which truly exists cannot be destroyed. The entire universe of apparent existence will be destroyed when the cosmic illusion is eventually withdrawn to the ultimate Reality in the final dissolution of the cosmos. However, in this state of complete dissolution, Maya will remain as an essential potential of the ultimate Reality called Brahman. That is why VE claims that Maya is inseparable from Brahman.

## 6. Prana, The Life Force

Another Vedantic view holds that all animate and inanimate objects of the world are results of the vibration of prana, the life force, which is not different from Maya. **Prana** is the cosmic life principle; it is the breath of the ultimate Reality. Because of this life force, living beings animate and produce vibrations. Likewise, all gross elements are the materialized forms of vibrating patterns of prana. Thus the entire universe is a pattern of vibrations and movements. With this vibrating energy, the smallest atoms & the biggest planets are held together in a state of continuous vibration. Intellectual facilities are also the result of vibrations and the very force of vibration is also prana.

In VE the entire universe is considered to be a derivative of Brahman associated with Maya, which is termed **Isvara**. Therefore, being a living organism, there is no such thing as dead matter in the universe. The Veda says that cosmic life force; prana existed before the beginning of evolution. Before the manifestation of the universe, the eternal Supreme being was breathing without breath and was one with the cosmic energy. From that

mighty source – Brahman and Maya – the entire universe came into existence.

Prana, the potential of consciousness is the eternal, infinite source of individual and cosmic life. Although this universe of appearances of noneternal Reality is eternal. One who grieves over the loss of an external object does not fully realize the truth. When one perceives the gross world without understanding the universal life force by which the entire universe is governed, he sees this world as ever changing and subject to death and decay. But the moment he comes to know the force of prana, he is liberated from the laws of the world that are responsible for his misunderstanding.

In truth, nothing is ever lost and gained. What is seen as creation or destruction is merely the appearance of something changing form. When a form passes through an unknown and unseen period of time, that state is **called Death**. When this process is scientifically analyzed, it is found that life and death are only different vibrational states of prana. When one understands the secret of these cosmic vibrations of life, he mourns no death nor loss, for he comprehends the falseness of these concepts.

## 7. The Process of Manifestation

VE explains manifestation as being a systematic process. It maintains that the physical universe is composed of **five gross elements**: earth, water, fire, air and space. In each element all other elements are contained, so no element is pure. An element is differentiated from the others by the predominance of a particular element in it. VE states that the five elements are produced in a quintuplicated manner referred to as Pancikarana.

VE borrows much from the Samkhya explanation of the nature of the universe. In Samkhya, there are three inner instruments (intellect, ego, mind) but according to VE there are four inner instruments for cognition (intellect, mind, ego and citta – memory bank). The ten senses, five subtle and gross elements are the same in VE and Samkhya. VE also describes prana, the life force as having ten varieties: prana, apana, samana, udana, vyana, naga, kurma, krkala, devadutta and dananjaya. Among these, the first five are most important.

## 8. The Concept of God

The concept of God in VE is unique and complex. If Brahman alone is real, it is very difficult to convince the intellectual mind of the reality of the existence of the universe. To understand the concept of God a student of VE must be very clear whether he is taking the standpoint of apparent or absolute Reality. According to Sankara, if the universe is real, then the concept of God is also real because God is that state of consciousness that is united with Maya, its essential form. From a worldly point of view, God is real, but from the standpoint of absolute Reality, God is as unreal as the universe.

Devotion to God is very important to become liberated from the mire of illusion. But for those who have already risen from the mire of multiplicity and have stepped onto the marble platform of nondual knowledge, there is no need of pursuing a god who is involved in spreading Maya's net of illusion. VE provides a means of establishing oneness between jiva (the individual self plus ignorance) and Isvara (Brahman+Maya) and ultimately reaching a state beyond turiya, the Supreme Consciousness.

## **9. The Self and Human Life**

A human being is a combined state of Self, mind, prana and body. The body is the dwelling place of the Self. It can be compared to the innermost palace of the city of life, in which dwells the Lord of life called the Self. The Srimad Bhagavatam explains this concept beautifully, friends here is it briefly.

It states that there was once a prince of eternity who searched for a suitable kingdom with the necessary wealth, luxury and subjects for him to enjoy his sovereignty. He found such a city, was welcomed, saw a princess there and married her thereafter. Had children etc but in the process of raising his family and kingdom, the prince completely forgot his physical, mental and spiritual health.

The prince of the story is the individual self (Atman) born of the cosmic Self, the supreme Brahman. Because of ignorance the prince has separated from the emperor Brahman. In order to fulfill his dreams, desires and attractions for the princesses the Self marries the intellect in order to enjoy the objects of the senses. But the Self becomes so involved with the world that he loses his peace and forgets his essential infinite nature and his magical powers. He becomes deluded by his own illusory creation, and

instead of enjoying sensory objects as master; he becomes their victim and performs his actions solely to satisfy his sense cravings. The charms and enjoyments start sapping his vitality, and he becomes weak and overwhelmed with self-generated problems.

One day an old spinster, the daughter of Death, whose name was Old Age, entered the city. She has been wandering throughout the universe to find an appropriate mate. Whenever she began to court anyone, he would faint in her embrace and unable to maintain his physical existence, would fall into the mouth of Death, her father. Old Age began to seduce the prince, who could not resist her embrace. The prince started getting sapped of his strength and thus fell prey to weakness, frustration, dejection, loneliness and disappointment. Seeing these opponents such as disease, sorrow attacked the city of life under the leadership of Death. The prince called his ministers and army to defend him. Due to fear none of them would respond to his commands. Ultimately the prince surrendered himself to Death without ever understanding his true invincible nature and power. As he surrendered he looked pitifully at his wife and was shocked to see her unconcernedly waving good-bye.

Then he realized that the intellect is unconscious and that it is not her nature to think when she is deprived of the presence of her Lord of life. Now he knew that it had always been his power of consciousness that had made her appear to be conscious, and that he had been a fool to waste his life chasing after unreal sense pleasures. Such is the case with a human being. Too late, he realizes his faults and his misunderstandings regarding his relationships with his intellect and his other facilities.

## **VEDANTA (part 2) Chapter 7**

### **The Five Sheaths of Kosas**

The Self is hidden in the innermost chamber of the heart, and five sheaths veil it. Human life is composite of these **five sheaths and the Self**. The five sheaths are the physical, energy, mental, wisdom and bliss. The physical includes skin, blood, flesh, bone marrow and ligaments, is composed of the five gross elements. It is also called the food sheath. This is the grossest and outermost veil of the soul. The next prana or energy sheath is more subtle. The gross manifestation of the energy sheath in us is breath. Then are ten levels of prana on which human biochemical functioning depends. The

mental sheath consists of lower mind (manas), ego (ahankara), intellect (buddhi), and mind stuff (citta). Beyond this is the sheath of wisdom through which knowledge from eternity transmits into the intellect. The last sheath is that of bliss. This sheath must not be confused with Brahman, whose essential nature is pure bliss. Compared with that bliss, this sheath is merely pseudo-bliss predominated by ignorance. The Self at this level is very close to realization of its essential nature but is not yet free to see its glory and perfection.

The Self has a body but the body is not the Self. The Self becomes a slave of the senses and their objects because of its identification with the body, senses, mind and other sheaths. The moment the Self remembers its real nature and understands that the five sheaths are provided for its enjoyment, it detaches itself from them and is no longer affected by the charms and temptations of the world.

These five sheaths are also studied in terms of three types of bodies: gross (sthula sarira), subtle (suksmasarira) and causal (karana sarira). The gross body is the same as the food sheath. Consciousness engrossed in this body corresponds to objects in the waking state. The subtle body is a combined state of the energy, mental and wisdom sheaths. Consciousness engrossed in this body corresponds to the world of ideas and dreams. The causal body is the same as the bliss sheath, which corresponds to the state of deep sleep. In the Upanishads, Consciousness enveloped in these three types of bodies is termed as vaisvanara, taijasa and prajna respectively.

### **Four Aspects of Being for Practical Study**

For practical application, the human being can be studied in four major parts: body, prana, mind and Self.

**The Body** - The body, composed of the five gross elements, is the grossest instrument for progressing towards the goal of life. If not healthy it could be a barrier in the way of one's growth. Its physical health depends on a subtle force by which it is governed, regulated and nourished. That finer force that sustains the body is called Prana.

**Prana** - The sustenance of all the levels of personality depends on the proper functioning of prana. It is the link between body and mind and its grossest manifestations is the breath. Both body and mind and their functioning's are



vitalized by prana, the very source of life. When the breath ceases, then all physiological and mental functions cease. If there is a harmonious flow of prana, then there will be harmony in body and mind too. Breath is then considered to be the key for unlocking the secrets of the body and mind and for opening the final gate to go beyond all the mental states.

**Mind** - The Vedantic concept of mind is quite different from other systems of Indian philosophy. According to VE, the mind serves as an inner instrument for receiving external experiences and transmitting them to the Self. Yoga provides only one term – citta while Samkhya studies the mind in three parts: intellect, ego and lower mind. **But in VE the mind is divided into four parts: lower mind, ego, mind-stuff and intellect.** The lower mind (manas) is the importer and exporter of feelings and sensation from the external world through the intellect to the Self. Ego (ahankara) is the faculty that is responsible for the feeling of I-ness. It identifies with the objects of the external world by developing attachment or aversion for them. Mind (citta) is that faculty in which all memories-whatever passes through the lower mind, ego, and intellect are stored and are occasionally recalled to the surface of the lower mind. Intellect (buddhi) is the decision-making facility. It is that aspect of the mind nearest to the Self, and is predominated by sattva, the quality of brightness and lightness.

In daily life, first there is a contact between a sense and the sense object. That experience is carried by the sense to the lower mind, which in turn determines and analyses that experience in order to transmit it to the ego. Then the ego either clings or rejects it. If the worldly experience is pleasant, the ego identifies itself with the object and transmits the experience to the intellect after coloring it with acceptance and attachment. If the experience is unpleasant, the coloring is with rejection and repulsion. The intellect analyses the transmission from the ego and makes the final decision to accept or reject.

Every step of the transmission of experiences from the senses to the intellect is imprinted on the vast screen of the unconscious mind, called citta. Also when the conscious mind is relaxed and the senses are not in contact with external objects, many impressions of past physical and mental actions arise from the memory bed called citta. It is said that information regarding the entire universe is stored there, thus the Vedantic saying “That’s which is outside is also inside, the microcosm and the macrocosm are one and the

same". The VE system gives equal importance to controlling the flood of improperly analyzed feelings and sensations from the outside and the inside.

**The Self** - All these facilities become conscious because of the association of consciousness, the Self with them. Without consciousness they are inert and lifeless. Intellect gets its intelligence from this source, prana too and the body grows and becomes active by virtue of this source. The realization of one's unity with this source is the very goal of life.

### **Liberation and the Means of Attaining It**

In actuality, there is no place for bondage or liberation in the VE system. There is only existence – the Self. There is nothing outside the Self that can tie it up with the rope of bondage. The Self is all pervading and eternal, and it is a misunderstanding or false apprehension to perceive multiplicity and transitoriness. This misunderstanding does not make any difference to the Self, which is pure and unaffected by the laws, rules and regulations of the world. But it causes one to lose one's awareness of perpetual happiness and bliss. In VE, liberation means to cast away the veils of ignorance and realize one's own essential nature, which is bliss, knowledge and consciousness. Liberation is simply a realization of the Truth that already abides within and a transformation of inner attitudes.

Sankara and his guru Gaupada believed that there is no such thing as bondage and liberation. This is the Absolute Truth, for all these words and their concepts imply duality, which itself is invalid. The very concept of duality is itself bondage, and the state beyond dualism is the absolute Truth, the goal of human quest.

In life many people do not budge from their positions, even though they experience life as a series of pains and miseries, because they ignorantly think they cannot move away from where they are. In actuality all of us are ever free, but our imaginations often create bondage for us and prevent us from releasing our self-tied bonds. Spiritual practices take us way from the place of assumed bondage.

VE provides for a systematic method of spiritual practice (sadhana), which helps one to gain release from the self-created imaginary rope of bondage.

**The means described are sravana, manana and nididhyasana.** Sravana

entails studying the scriptures and listening to the learned teachers so that one can understand the validity of external objects and the essential nature of the Self and thereby discriminate the real from the unreal. In this way one can lead from darkness to light and from mortality to immortality. Manana is contemplation – repeatedly analyzing particular concepts. This is a process of pondering the truths received directly from teachers and through the study of scriptures. Nididhuasana is the process of applying those truths in daily life.

VE is the path of knowledge, requires great concentration and good balance. These qualities are acquired through study, mental resolve and withdrawal of the mind / senses from all their objects. To do so purification of heart and mind and balance between intellectual and emotional activities are essential.

People misunderstand that VE is the path of renunciation but actually it is the path of conquest. He conquers the negatives related to external objects and for him nothing bad remains, everything is good and auspicious. According to VE, birth and death are the two gates of the kingdom of eternity. For a realized soul, death is not a source of fear but rather it is a necessary vehicle for the journey of eternity.

### **Four Stages of Self-Realization**

The VE system is based totally on the Upanishads. These works contain several great statements called Mahakavyas that serve as strong pillars to support the entire Vedantic philosophy. Four of them are –

1. Brahman alone is real and the universe is unreal.
2. There is only one Brahman without a second.
3. This Self is Brahman or I am Brahman.
4. This entire universe is Brahman.

Some scholars find these sentences contradictory but Sanskara's statements resolve the apparent conflicts they contain. The four mahakavyas explain the states of realization that an aspirant of Vedanta experiences in the inward journey. The problem of contradiction arises because the mind by its very nature is extremely limited and can in no way grasp the transcendent, multifarious truth of reality and so it perceives the contradictions among the necessarily incomplete verbal expressions of the various states of realization.

An analysis of Sankara's interpretations will help unravel the inner meaning and reveal their essential harmony.

**1. Brahman alone is real and the universe is unreal** - The student's first step is to accept the existence of one single Reality called Brahman. All worldly thoughts and desires lead to transitory results because the entire universe and everything in it is ephemeral. Worldly objects pull one down unless the faculty of discrimination properly analyzes them. VE thus advises to realize the unreality of the external world so he can control his worldly desires. Discrimination is the only means one has to cast away the net of duality and multiplicity and discrimination cannot be strengthened without full determination and dedication. For this reason, the VE system first of all emphasizes learning how to discriminate between worldly transitory objects from the permanent reality. It then advises one to determine fully to dedicate his whole life to the search for knowledge for which renunciation and detachment are the most effective tools. With resolve one can practice visualizing and feeling the presence of divinity in every aspect of life instead of pursuing transitory objects.

According to VE knowledge that does not free us from bondage is only information that burdens one's life. However, knowledge that comes from the depths of the consciousness helps one to discriminate the real from the unreal. Unless one purifies one's mind one cannot hear the voice of conscious and intuition that is constantly speaking from the depths of his consciousness.

A wise person turns his mind away from all the worldly charms and directs it towards Self-Realization. If one allows himself to waste time on petty things, he will have the time to explore the inner avenues of life. Thus, this first great statement of the Upanishads is meant to increase one's inner strength by emphasizing the reality of the divinity within and denying the reality of the external world. This is not escaping from the world but rather turning inward, dissolving external objects into a state of oneness.

**2. There is only one Brahman without second** - In the second stage the consciousness expands, and he does not allow his mind to waste energy in denying the existence of the world. In the first stage there are two processes: accepting the existence of Brahman and negating

the existence of the universe. But in the second state, there remains only the positive aspect 'There is only one Brahman without a second'. This stage helps the aspirant realize the presence of divinity in external objects.

**3. I am Brahman** - Realization of the oneness of the truth outside is not sufficient for a spiritual seeker. Even though the first two stages establish peace and harmony in relation to the outside world, there still remains a subtle difference between the two. Thru the continuous practice of contemplation, a student of VE starts thinking, 'If there is only one Brahman without a second, who am I? Through deep contemplation, he dissolves the duality between inside and outside and realizes that the Self that shines within him is the same as the all-pervading Brahman. I am Brahman is the third stage of realization.

**4. All is Brahman** - in this stage the student transcends the feelings and attitudes of I, mine, thy and no longer sees any difference in these concepts. His little ego expands into a higher ego, the limited I expands into a higher I. In this state one fully understands that an individual I is the appearance of that highest I.

At this state one fully overcomes all passions, desires, emotions such as attachment, hatred. One's heart starts beating with compassion to help those who are suffering. For such a person the entire universe becomes Brahman, and he finds himself in the universe and the universe in himself. He lives in Brahman-consciousness.

In this state divine love is expressed for all. One's whole being becomes a center of universal love that radiates life and light of knowledge and peace. In this state all words become mantras and all actions are performed selflessly in the service of humanity. Such a person lives beyond the concepts of life and death.

## **Contemplation & Meditation**

VE is generally referred to as Jnana Yoga, the path of knowledge. It is practiced through contemplation and meditation. In the classical texts of VE sravana, (study) manana (pondering) and nididhyasana (application) are mentioned as methods for attaining the goal of life. The proper method of

practicing these is not clearly described in the texts but is taught directly by a teacher to the student. The mahakavyas are guidelines for contemplation, through their understanding and incorporating the techniques of meditation a student can attain success in his quest.

Contemplation and meditation are complimentary practices. The former helps a person comprehend reality intellectually and the latter helps experience the Reality within. Through the former one comes to know through the latter one comes to realize. The former is a pre requisite for the latter.

The Vedantic method of contemplation is completely different from the Christian method of contemplation. In the former, a student reflects on the transitoriness and hence ultimate invalidity of the experiences of external objects and looks to search for something that is real. In his contemplation, awareness of the highest goal of life, Self-realization is always maintained. Questioning and analysis are the chief modes of Vedantic contemplation. The student uses rigorous logic and close reasoning to realize the truth of his subject of contemplation. Faith and dedication are then employed to accept the truth, and strong determination is brought to bear to bring that truth into practice in daily life. Reliance on religious and theological concepts of God and on the practice of rituals is discouraged in VE. Religious contemplation is viewed by VE as a kind of daydreaming because such contemplation utilizes a set pattern of thinking based on mere belief.

Vedantic contemplation focuses on discriminating the real from the unreal in order to know the absolute Reality. The eternal sound OM, is used as a primary object of contemplation in VE. On this point, Patanjala Yoga and VE are similar to each other. Raja yoga also states that Om is the name of the Supreme Reality. Both systems teach how to use the eternal sound OM as an object of mediation while coordinating its mental repletion with the flow of breath.

The sound Om, has three simple phonemes, A-U-M and a fourth state silence. The fourth state is called Turiya, the superconscious state, the absolute Brahman. The three sounds denote the states of walking, dreaming and deep sleep and the aspects of divinity that are involved in the processes of manifestation, preservation and annihilation. The Upanishads say that the Om is the bow, the individual is the arrow, and the Supreme Consciousness,

Brahman, is the target. One should shoot carefully, like a skilled archer, while being completely absorbed in the goal – Brahman-consciousness.

Unless the student understands the meaning of OM as described in the various Upanishads, various repetition in meditation becomes mechanical and boring. If its meaning has been properly contemplated and if the student is attuned to the sound, then during meditation this sound leads him to the realization of higher dimensions of life. Success on this path is not easy. Constant awareness, guidance from a competent teacher and faith in and total surrender to the absolute Reality lead the aspirant to the highest goal of life.

Friends after typing 67 word pages am truly tired. It is the spirit of bhakti within that motivated me to carry on. At times I felt like giving up but always I remembered Swami Chinmayananda's words in the Holy Gita 'the importance of fortitude'. That's what kept me going.

Hope you found this as useful as I did.

Love and Om, Long Live Sanathan Dharam  
June 2002