
UNIT 22 ŚAIVISM AND VAIṢṆAVISM*

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22.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you are exposed to the medieval religious philosophies of *Śaivism* and Vaiṣṇavism. Slightly different in character from the classical orthodox systems which concentrated much on pure, abstract and speculative philosophical discussions, Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava religious traditions had a specific flavor of blending practical living with philosophical thinking. As a part of bhakti movements they emerged as much acclaimed popular philosophies. Students would be enjoying reading and learning these philosophical traditions that came to stay very strongly in the life of Indians for many centuries.

22.1 INTRODUCTION

Śaivism and Vaishnavism are the very popular forms of Hindu faith with large number of followers. Lord Śiva and Lord Viṣṇu are worshiped as Supreme Being respectively in these religious traditions. However, in popular Hinduism Śiva is one of the Trinity and carries on the function of Annihilation, while Brahma and Viṣṇu are said to be the Gods of creation and sustenance respectively. Both *Śaivism* and Vaiṣṇavism have diversified religious beliefs and practices. Various sects of them are found all over India. They are considered to be very ancient faiths in India. There are few direct and indirect references to these gods in the Vedas too. Nevertheless Vedic understanding of Śiva and Viṣṇu was not very much developed as to regard them as Supreme Being. As a result of medieval bhakti movements these religious traditions have witnessed a development both in religious sphere and in philosophical sphere. Let us enumerate various aspects of these developments both in Saivite and Vaishnavite religion and philosophy.

22.2 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF ŚAIVISM

Śaivism is said to be the oldest and pre-historic religion in India, perhaps in the

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world. *Śaivism* is commendable not because it is the oldest religion, but because it is still a living religion practiced by multitudes. It is a religion which holds Śiva as the supreme Lord. Scholars try to trace the origin of *Śaivism* to the pre-Vedic period. From the excavations in Mohenjadarō-Harappa sites, Sir John Marshall says: "Side by side with this Earth or Mother Goddess, there appears at Mohenjadarō a male god, who is recognizable at once as a prototype of the historic Śiva." He further goes on to state that *Śaivism* has a history going back to Chalcolithic Age and the most ancient living faith in the world. There is a difference of opinions among scholars whether *Śaivism* is Vedic or non-Vedic. Scholars like Sir John Marshall, G.U. Pope, G. Slater, Maraimalai Adigal are of the opinion that *Śaivism* is pre-Aryan and pre-Vedic. They try to trace its origin as the indigenous Dravidian tradition, as opposed to Vedic tradition. Scholars like K.A. Nilakanṭha Śāstri have a counter-opinion and they advocate the Vedic origin of *Śaivism*.

One of the minor deities of the Vedic period, Rudra is said to be associated with Śiva. The qualities of Rudra, as in *R̥gveda*, reveal that he was an atmospheric god, quite fierce, destructive and physically attractive. He is the lord of animal sacrifices and is associated with the destructive powers of nature such as the storms, lightning and forest fires. The evolution of Śiva is found in *Yajurveda* where one hundred names are attributed to him. Among these names, *paśupati* (God of animals), *Nilagrīva* (blue-necked), and *Sitikanṭha* (white-throated) are notable. The omnipotent and omniscient aspects of Śiva are also mentioned here. Further in *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, Śiva is referred to as Hara, Mahādeva, Īśa, Īśana, Maheśvara and Bhagavat. He is mentioned as 'dweller in the mountains,' 'Lord of the mountains,' 'the thousand-eyed' and 'one who stands alone, steadfast.' The Epic *Mahābhārata* refers to one thousand and eight names of Śiva and gives the mythical account of marriage of Śiva with Uma, the daughter of Himalayan mountain king, Himavān. In *Rāmāyana*, Śiva is associated with origin of Gangā. The celestial Ganga was made to descend from heaven by Bhagiratha and Śiva trapped her in His matted locks to control her turbulence and force, before allowing her to flow on the earth. Later in puranic literatures such as *Śiva, Liṅga and Padma Purāṇas*, Śiva is described as Ardhanārīśvara, mixture of male and female principles. Śiva is also presented as a teacher of truth and as a silent yogic who meditates in peace. In this position facing south, he is known as Dakṣiṇāmūrti. It has been claimed that the origin of such form could be from Proto-historic period, from Indus valley civilization. Śiva is also known by the names of mahāyogin, mahātapah, yati, taponitya and yogīśvara.

The epics and puranas contain a multitude of anecdotes pertaining to the annihilation of evil persons like asuras. Śiva is thus came to be understood as God of destruction or annihilation and is known as samharamurti. The puranic literature contains reference to several other epithets of Śiva. His description found in the *Mahābhārata* as a God clad in animal skin (deer or tiger), with matted hair and crescent on His head, bearing serpents, carrying a trident (*triśūla*) and having a bull for His ensign, becomes a distinguishing feature of Śiva. The third eye of Śiva on his fore-head symbolizes his wisdom. Śiva's arms hold the fire, the axe and the drum. The crematorium is said to be his dwelling place and his body is smeared with ash. Śiva as a Dancing Lord is an another powerful representation. Śiva has been referred to and described in great detail in Tamil literature. The reference to Śiva in ancient Sangam literature onwards

is a witness to his prowess and popularity in Tamil country. Śiva performed sixty four divine sports which are well described in Tamil devotional literature. Various epithets, forms, deeds, assets, weapons, ornamentation, episodes, metaphors describing His persona and qualities are very much seen in the devotional literature.

As noted above, Śiva was known even in the epoch of the Indus Valley civilization. A fusion came about when the Vedic Rudra became identified with the indigenous Śiva. By the time of Svetesvatara Upaniṣad Śiva was absorbed in the Vedic pantheon and was given a lofty position as mahadeva. The earliest specific mention of Śiva by a foreigner is traceable to Megasthenes. In the age of the Guptas the worship of Śiva assumed a considerable importance. But a bhakti movement of Śaivism is only traceable to south India and reached a great height.

22.3 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF VAIṢṆAVISM

Sources of origin of Vaiṣṇava religious tradition are varied. Some scholars trace it in the Vedic tradition itself. Diverse concept of Supreme Viṣṇu as found in various concepts of God in different Vaiṣṇava sects are relied upon in speaking of its origin. They are from the concept of Visnu (god with three strides) as found in the *Veda*; the concept of Nārāyaṇa (the cosmic and philosophic god); the concept of Vasudeva (the historical god); and the concept of krisna (the pastoral god). While some view that Vaiṣṇavism had its origin from Visnu as mentioned in Vedas, others consider that it appeared after bhagavatam arose. With regard to South Indian Vaiṣṇavism, some consider that Kriṣṇa cult in the south started with Yādavas in Madurai who were said to be a section of the Vṛṣṇi people that colonized the pandya country. Yet another view holds that Viṣṇu cult from the ancient Tamil period would have been from the mullai region whose god is said to be perumal. Vaiṣṇavism is also known by the name *bhāgavata*, meaning the cult of bhagavat, the lord. It draws inspiration for its beliefs from *Bhāgavata purāna*, *Gīta* and *Nārāyaṇīya* a section of *Mahābhārata*. *Pañcarātra* and *Vaikānasa āgamas* are certain religious literatures that are regarded as canonical in Vaiṣṇavism. *Pañcarātra* are texts of ritual worship, which deals with, the knowledge of God, the method of mental concentration, yoga, the construction of temples and the installation of images there in, *kriyā*, and the observance of daily rites and the celebration of festivals, *caryā*. In *Vaikānasa āgamas*, detailed instructions are given for construction of temples and moulding of images.

Viṣṇu resides in His abode is called vaikunṭha. There He sits enthroned beside his consort, the goddess lakṣmī or Śrī. She is considered as patroness of good fortune and temporal blessing. Five forms of Visnu are the transcendent (*para*), the grouped (*vīryha*), the incarnated (*vibhava*), the immanent (*antaryāmin*) and the idol (*arcā*). God as the transcendent possesses six attributes, namely knowledge, lordship, potency, strength, virility, and splendour. The grouped forms of god are four; they are vāsudeva, saṁkarṣana, pradyumna, aniruddha. There is a distinctive function assigned to each of those vyuhas in cosmic creation as well as in the act of redeeming souls.

The incarnated forms are *avatāras*. Out of His own concern for the world, He

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descends from time to time in the form of an incarnation, *avatāra*. According to Vaiṣṇavite tradition, there have been only nine such incarnations; there is one yet to come. God descended to earth when the world was in danger of chaos or of perishing by wickedness. The incarnations as fish, tortoise, boar, etc. are popular legends, yet have very little religious value at the present day. In these forms, God appeared in the form of an animal to save the world from floods. *Narasimha* (man-lion), and *Vāmana* (the dwarf) are the incarnations in which he saved the world from destruction by demons. *Paraśurāma* is His incarnation as a human hero to destroy the aggressive and arrogant warrior class and to establish the supremacy of the Brāhmanas. Rama and Kriṣṇa incarnations are more important ones as Viṣṇu is worshipped in these forms chiefly in North India. Two great Epics describe the legends in detail. The ninth form is added only in the middle ages, Buddha, which is a surprising one. Different notions are said about the purpose of this incarnation such as, to put an end to animal sacrifice, but later as to lead wicked men to deny the *Vedas* and thus to ensure their destruction. The final incarnation known as *kalki*, is yet to come. At the end of this Dark Age, Visnu is believed to descend once more to destroy the wicked and restore the age of gold, the *kṛta Yuga*.

The idol, *arcā* is the most concrete of God's forms. Vaiṣṇavism regards the image of Viṣṇu, *arcā*, as one of the real forms of the Lord. The belief is that God descends into the idol and makes it divinely alive, so that he may be easily accessible to his devotees. More stress is laid on service to the *arcā* as the primary duty of the devotee.

Check Your Progress I

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Briefly describe origin of *Śaivism*.

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2. Explain different forms of Viṣṇu.

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22.4 PHILOSOPHICAL SCHOOLS OF ŚAIVISM

General Concept of God: Śiva has a dark and grim side to his nature besides being beneficent. From the concept of Vedic Rudra, the nature of Śiva is often described as fierce, lurking in horrible places like cremation grounds,

as wearing a garland of skulls and dancing the rudra thandava with which he destroys the world at the end of the kalpa. Yet, Śiva is also thought of as the great ascetic, wrapped in continual meditation on the slopes of mount kailāsa in the Himalayas, his head covered with matted hair, in which the crescent moon is fixed and from which the sacred river Ganges flows. Evidently the characteristics of an agricultural and pastoral fertility god have been merged in the Śiva. He is often known as lord of beasts, paçupati, the patron of procreation in men and animals. He is commonly worshipped in his emblem, the linga. Some Śiva cults have developed some unpleasant features, such as animal sacrifice, psychopathic self mortification. Most of the sects consider Śiva as God of love and grace. The literature of Tamil Śaivism describes him in very exalted terms and with strong moral emphasis. In this Śaivism all harsh elements of the Śiva have practically disappeared. He is considered to be the compassionate father of all things living, who cares for them in his love and justice and defends them from evil. There are many forms of Saivite religious and philosophical traditions in Śaivism. Let us deal about them in brief.

THE PĀŚUPATAS OR KĀPĀLIKAS

The pāsupatas are the oldest Śaivaite tradition in the north. In them ascetic tendencies were much in evidence. Although their doctrines express closeness to doctrines of Sāṅkhya and yoga philosophy, they distinguish themselves from these schools and emphasize their Śaiva monotheism. For them, Śiva is absolutely independent and the instrumental cause of the world. Nature and souls are effects and are rooted in God's will. The liberated souls become eternally associated with Śiva. Their yogic practice consists of a constant meditative contact with Śiva in solitude. That is the reason they go frequently to burial places. Their ritual practices were often regarded as revolting. More extreme groups, called kapālikas, believed in an ostentatious indifference to anything worldly. They hold firmly that it is the best method of freeing oneself from saṃsāra. They carried human skulls, kapāla, and a bowl of liquor. Due to this factor they are worshipped as the skull bearer, kapālika or the frightful one, bhairava.

KĀSHMĪR ŚAIVISM

In the ninth century a monistic form of Śaivism developed in Kashmir. The sect is known as *trikaśāstra* or simply *trika Śaivism*. The basic texts of the Trika are *Siddhāntantra*, *Mālnitantra* and the *Vamakatantra*. These texts are revelatory in character, containing certain theological rather than philosophical thoughts. It was Vasugupta who first explained systematically trika philosophy in his *Śiva Sūtra*. Later, it was developed by Saivite thinkers like Somānanda, Utpaladeva, Bhāskarācārya, Abhinavagupta and Kṣemarāja and so on. *Kāśmīr Śaivism* treats the absolute under the three principles of God, soul and matter. Being influenced by advaita, Kashmiri Śaivism teaches that Śiva is the absolute reality from which all else has emanated. For Trika the Absolute is both Śiva and Sakti, from a theological, theistic perspective. The absolute is not only God but also Godhead. Although reality is single and one, it is understood from two perspectives. Synthesising the Śaiva and Śākta aspects of the Trika, Abinavagupta gave a philosophy that is both non-dualistic and theistic as well. Non-dual Absolute is the sole reality, transcendent and beyond mind, intellect and speech. Śiva is the Absolute as pure consciousness in the static aspect. Through dynamic

aspect Absolute manifests itself as the universe as Ś'akti. The manifest universe is not due to māyā or avidyā, as they are considered to be the result of Divine Energy, Śakti. The phenomenal manifestation is not illusion but is true as it is the Absolute that appears as the universe. Hence from Absolute point of view the world is non-different from Absolute. Absolute does not undergo any kind of change, transformation or division, while manifesting itself as the universe. The process of manifestation is by reflection of Absolute's self consciousness within it, like that of reflection in a mirror. God himself appears as a limited and finite universe and individual. Kashmiri Śaivism attempts to give important status to matter more than Advaita School of monism. It rejects outright the negative view of life in the world. Having deep roots in Tantrism, it does not believe in the renunciation of the world, but affirms the world. Bondage is that activity of God whereby He obscures His essential nature. Liberation is nothing by the revelation of essential nature of the Lord. It stresses the importance of knowledge for liberation. Liberation is the intellectual realization that the absolute and individual selves are one and the same. Goal of liberation can be attained through the enjoyment of life in the world. In Trika Śaivism various ways to salvation are prescribed keeping in view the temperament as well as the intellectual ability of the individual. There is also scope for bhakti in this Śaivism. It rejects the yogic view that one can by effort gain liberation. Self effort plays as much role in liberation as does divine grace, krpā, Anugraha, prasāda. The school believes that no form of self-effort will succeed unless grace is granted. Grace of Śiva is necessary and sufficient for realization of the self as identical with Absolute. Grace is a free gift of God and is not dependent upon or the result of one's good deeds. It is an unasked and motiveless gift flowing froth freely and spontaneously from God. The individual self surrender and Grace go together, one intensifying and fortifying the other.

VĪRA ŚAIVISM

Vīra Śaivism or Liṅgāyatism as a saivite religious movement gained momentum during the beginning of 12th century in the North-Western parts of Karnataka. The Liṅgāyat cult was also based on the twenty eight Śaiva Āgamas. Tradition believes that it is very old and was founded by five ascetics namely, Ekorama, Panditaradhya, Revana, Marula and Visvaradhya who were considered to be springing from the head of Śiva. However, Śri Basavesvara was considered to be the founder. He broke from traditional Hinduism and vehemently protested against meaningless rituals by refusing to undergo the sacred thread ceremony. His followers believe he was an incarnation of Nandī. This tradition regards Śiva as superme and people must worship only Him. The term 'Vīra-Śaiva' comes from being such stalwart Śaivas. The liṅgāyats are distinguished by a small liṅga enclosed in a metal box which they wear around the neck. They theoretically abandon all caste distinctions and grant women equal status with men. They are strict vegetarians, and they are opposed to all forms of magic and sorcery. The liṅga is not necessarily a phallic symbol for the liṅgāyats, rather it is regarded as a concentration of fire and light which purifies the body and mind of the individual. Fire is regarded as so pure that it is not to be used for creation purposes; consequently the liṅgāyats bury rather than burn their dead. The inner power of Śiva is in every person that enables one to view all as the manifestations of the divine.

Śaiva Siddhānta is a system of philosophy developed in Tamil Śaivites, based on the *Śaiva Āgamas*, *Upaniṣads*, 12 Tirumurais and 14 Meikanta Śāstras. Siddhānta literally means the established conclusion. *Śaiv Siddhānta* is claimed to be a conclusive philosophy of all those who worship Lord Śiva. This philosophical system has been very popular in South India. Śaiva Siddhānta is called Āgamanta, the conclusion of the āgamas. Though it is the outcome of Āgamic tradition, it never rejects the Vedic tradition. The Vedas are held to be the general source. The Āgamas form the special source for this system. Śaiva Siddhānta is a theistic philosophy, containing both philosophy and religion. As a pluralistic realism it accepts three eternal realities. As any other philosophical system, it sought to determine the relations of God, matter and the soul. It declared that matter and souls were, like God, eternal. The Absolute through its 'grace- form' is forever engaged in the rescue of souls from the bondage of matter and the three stains (malas) which defile their purity. God is not identical with soul or the universe. He is not their substance but dwells in them and they in Him. Advaita is not Oneness, but inseparability. Guru or the teacher let the light of enlightenment, although Śiva is the source of all enlightenment, sole embodiment of intelligence and grace.

NATURE OF GOD AND SOUL

According to Śaiva Siddhānta, God in his essential nature is static, immutable and immeasurable by the limits of time and space. He transcends all empirical knowledge. He has no name and form. The following eight divine qualities are said to be God's essential characters. These are Self-dependence, Immaculate Body, Natural understanding, Omniscience, Eternally free, Infinite grace, Infinite potency, Infinite bliss. God in his essential nature is called as *Para Śivam* and His inseparable energy is called *Parāśakti*. God transcends description as he is beyond the word and its content. Though God transcends everything, He pervades all of them and is immanent in all beings as their indweller and inner ruler. God assumes various forms and names for the benefit of the souls, out of His boundless compassion. Śiva and Śakti are inseparable like sun and its rays. The static state of the Absolute is Śiva and its dynamic state is Śakti . There is no Śiva without Śakti and no Śakti without Śiva. The Lord's grace is personified in theistic terms as His consort Śakti. The Lord discharges the cosmic functions, namely, creation, protection, destruction, obscuration and bestowal of grace through His Śakti. The purpose of these functions is to bestow on the souls all the earthly and celestial happiness and granting the everlasting bliss. Creation of the world is to enable the souls to engage in activities and to get experiences so that the root evil, Āṇava would be exhausted. Protection is exercised for making the souls experience the fruits of karma. Destruction takes place in order to give the souls rest after experiencing the fruits. Obscuration works through Āṇava to enchant the soul to earthly pursuits and enjoyment till its power is completely emptied. The purpose of obscuration is meant for the maturation of āṇava. God bestows grace on the souls observing the ripening of Āṇava and the spiritual progress. The Lord appears as a Guru purifying them and imparting wisdom.

God is termed as Pati, meaning the Lord. He is called as Paśupati, the lord of

the individual selves. The souls are infinite in number and from the beginning they are in contact with anòavamala. These souls came to existence by the grace of god. According to the intensity of the malas, the souls are divided into three groups; the vijñānakalas, pralayakalas and sakalas. Vijñānakalas are the souls which possess only ānavamala. The souls with all the three malas, the anòava, karma and Māyā are the sakalas. When the soul is in contact with the physical body the organs of knowledge and action, the objective world and objects of enjoyment, it experiences worldly knowledge, pleasure and pain. It also passes through five different conditions; *jāgrat* (waking), *svapna* (dream), *susupti* (dreamless), *turīya* (deep sleep) and *turiyātīta* (beyond deep sleep). Through various births and deaths, the soul exhausts its karmas and by god's grace, it attains Mokṣa, liberation. Soul is considered to be eminent, glorious and spiritual being, next only to God. Siddhānta believes in the capacity of the soul. It has certain qualities in common with God. It is intelligent being but not omniscient. It has will power and inner intuition. It only grasps the grace of God. Since it has divinity within, it can know God. Matter does not have this. Having the will power to eschew evil and pursue good, it can with the help of God, elevate itself from being mala-ridden to becoming a jīvanmukti. Several schools deny the existence of soul. Some schools locate different things as locus of soul. Siddhāntins (One who holds the thesis; Siddhāntin) refute all of them and establish the nature of soul. The value of promoting soul is the purpose of creation. In Śaiva Siddhānta, the soul is the agent and experiencer of the actions and their fruits.

BONDAGE AND LIBERATION

Paśu means literally as one that is bound. The bond is pāśa, the defects or impurities. They are āṇava, karma and māyā. Āṇava is basic defect in man. The spiritual darkness is the natural dirt attached to man. Māyā and karma, are used only to counteract the bad influence of spiritual darkness. Anòava hides the consciousness of the individual self even as the verdigris hides the bright lustre of a copper plate. Nature of āṇava is to prevent the soul from being active. There is a beginningless connection between āṇava and the soul. It is as old as the individual self itself. The second bondage is Māyā. It is the material cause of the elements. Māyā is the material cause of the universe, substratum of all, primordial cause, real and eternal. Nature of Māyā is subtle, imperceptible, formless and perceived. Māyā is 'ma' and 'ya', resolution and evolution. Māyā is in subtle form. Tattvas is the result of evolution of Māyā in manifested forms. By God's will they evolve for the purpose of saving the souls. It is by God's intervention. Karma is the third bondage. It is in the form of merits and demerits, dharma and adharma.

Śaiva Siddhānta emphasises that service and worship, the paths of cariyai and kriyai, are means to liberation. Service is stressed to be the powerful means to secure the grace of God. Yoga and jñāna are the other means. By the constant practice of the means (sādhanas), the soul attains a state of balanced outlook, where it is neither annoyed nor elated in adversity or prosperity. The soul in its engagement with the world through various activities exhausts its Āṇava and karma, when it reaches a state called as *malaparipagam*. In the journey of perfection, the Lord himself appears in the form of a Guru, preceptor and instructs the nature of reality. Anugraha Śakti, grace of God is bestowed on

to the soul. Thus illumined by God, the soul is released from the bondage and attains blissful nature, liberation or mukti.

Check Your Progress II

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Explain the main features of Śaiva Siddhānta?

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22.5 PHILOSOPHERS OF VAIṢṆAVISM

Driven by the bhakti movements of various saints and sages, Vaiṣṇavism flourished both in religious and philosophical spheres. We have a separate unit on these movements in our study. Here we shall enumerate salient features of some prominent Vaiṣṇava philosophers. Among them of course, on Rāmānuja and Madva we have separate lessons as well. We shall quickly brief on these two philosophers and go to deal with others.

The greatest among the Vaishna philosophers was Rāmānuja, a theistic philosopher. He proclaimed that the way of devotion, bhakti-mārga, leads to a state of bliss. It is only to be gained by intense devotion to God. The worshipper fully realizes in devotion that one is a fragment of God and wholly dependent on Him. Liberation is to be attained by completely abandoning oneself into the hands of God and humbly waiting for his Grace. Absolute has a personality. Creation is an expression of the personality of God, of His primeval need to love and be loved. The individual soul is made out of God's own essence. Yet it is never completely identical with Him. Even in the highest state of bliss the soul is permanently joined to God but is ever wholly one with Him. It retains certain degree of individual self-consciousness. If the soul loses its self-consciousness, it would cease to exist as an individual soul. It can never perish as it is a part of the divine essence and shares the eternity of the divine. Hence the liberated soul is one with Him, yet separate. Hence the philosophical system of Rāmānuja is known as qualified monism.

Madhva proclaimed the doctrine of dualism. According to him, God, souls and matter are eternally distinct. Liberation is not the union with God but being drawn closer to God and dwelling for ever with God in the contemplation of His glory. Liberation is granted entirely by God's grace. Deep devotion and strict morality on the part of soul are not that helpful. God's grace is bestowed on the righteous and on deserved.

In the twelfth century, after Rāmānuja came Nimbārka. He was likely to have preceded Madhva. Nimbārka was a devotee of Kṛṣṇa and he spent his time mostly in Mathura the birth place of Kṛṣṇa. For him, Brahman is Gopala-Kṛṣṇa accompanied by Radha. He wrote a brief commentary on *Brahma Sūtra*. The

doctrine expounded by him is known as Dvaitadvaita, duality in unity. He adapted the Bhedābheda doctrine of Bhāskara, difference-in-non-difference. As the *Upaniṣads* have many passages which speak of the Supreme Being as one without a second and without any attributes, there is a difficulty in interpreting the number of passages that describe Him as possessed of countless attributes. The Advaitins support the theory of attributeless non-duality by bringing in doctrine of Māyā and the theory of two tiers of Reality, the really real and the apparently real. Bhedābheda doctrine of Bhāskara presents a Brahman who has innumerable attributes but without any particular form. Brahman transforms Himself into the world of duality and change, without losing His entity as the Absolute. For Nimbārka, the three realities, Brahman, souls (cit) and matter (acit) are equally eternal. Brahman is the controller (niyantr), the soul is the experiencer (bhoktr) while the matter is the object experienced (bhogya). Brahman is independent being, whereas the soul and matter are dependent realities. The relation between them is as relation of natural difference and non difference (svābhāvika- Bhedābheda). The souls and matter are different from Brahman as they have dependent and distinct existence (*paratantrasattābhava*). They are non-different as they have no independent existence (*svatantrasattābhava*). The relation of identity-in-difference is understood from cause-effect relation and whole-part relation. As the pot is both different and non-different from clay, the souls and matter are related to Brahman. The souls do not lose their individuality in the state of liberation. In this state the soul only realises its essential similarity to God. Liberation is attained through work (karma), knowledge (jñāna), meditation (upāsana), self-surrender (prapatti) and devotion to preceptor (gurupasatti). Love of God is the means to liberation. Love of God is not based on just recognition of God's greatness (*ais'varyā-pradhāna-bhakti*) but on His infinite sweetness (*mādhuryā-pradhāna-bhakti*). According to Nimbārka the souls can attain liberation only at the end of life and not while living in the body. Vallabha (1479-1531), born at Banaras, was another saint and philosopher who made Vaiṣṇava bhakti movement very popular. He popularized the worship of Śrī Kriṣṇa and preached that salvation could be achieved by bhakti towards Kriṣṇa. Among his many religious works, two books, namely subhodini and siddanta rahasya become very popular. Kṛṣṇa-Gopāla is the supreme Brahman in his system. The relation between Brahman and the world is one of pure non-difference (Suddhādvaita). His system is qualified as pure non-dualism, śuddha-advaita, different from that of Śaṅkara's kevalādvaita. For him, Śaṅkara's system is impure as it has to depend on Māyā as the principle of illusion to explain the world. The highest reality is known as Brahman in the Upaniṣads and as paramĀtman in the *Gīta*. He is the Supreme Person, puruṣottama. He is sat-cit-ānanda-rasa. He possesses all qualities. He is eternal and unchanging, yet becomes all things through his māyās'akti. Hence, he is not different from the world and the souls as the former is created by him and the latter emanate from him. For Vallabha the Supreme Brahman appears as the antaryāmin and *Akṣara Brahman*. He dwells in the souls as antaryāmin, limiting its bliss. The jñānis meditate upon the *akṣara* to reach their goal. The soul is an aspect (amśa) of Brahman and is eternal. The souls emanate from the Akṣara Brahman as sparks from fire. The souls are cognizers, agents and experiencers. In them the sat and cit are manifest and ananda remains latent. There are three types of souls, pravaha (those who wallow in the stream of saṁsāra), maryada (those who follow the Vedic path), and puṣṭi (those that worship God

out of pure love with His Grace). The world is not unreal or illusory. It is non-different from the Brahman. The world is a transformation of Brahman where the element of sat is manifested, while the other elements of cit and ānanda are latent. Jīva's notion of 'I' and 'mine' is unreal which is to be destroyed by knowledge.

The most celebrated and popular Vaiṣṇava reformer of Bengal is Chaitanya who was a contemporary of Vallabha. He preached Kriṣṇa bhakti through kirtans or devotional songs. He popularized devotional songs extolling the love of Radha and Kriṣṇa. For Caitanya, Brahman as sat-cit-ananda is not a bare distinctionless identity. He has an infinite number of powers, śaktis. The main powers are svarūpaśakti, māyāśakti and jīva-śakti. The self-power, svarūpas'akti exists in him eternally and is responsible for all his sports, līlas. Māyāśakti is the Lord's power which is responsible for the material world. It is God's external power having two aspects, cosmic (guṇa-māyā) and individual (jīva-Māyā). By the cosmic power he creates the universe out of sattva, rajas and tamas. By individual power he makes the jīva forget its self-nature and taste the sweets and bitters of life. Jīvaśakti forms the essence of the finite souls and stands between the other two powers. God is rasa, (aesthetic sentiment) as well as rasika (enjoyer of sentiment). His ś'akti is Rādhā with whom he is united in love. They are two-in-one, inseparably bound together. The antaryāmin Brahman is the immanent aspect of God and is pervasive of the universe. The nirvis'ṣa Brahman is the lower aspect of the Supreme which is distinctionless being. For Caitanya, the path of bhakti is better than jñāna or yoga. The culmination of bhakti is a complete self-giving, as unconditional self-surrender to God. Kevala-bhakti is not merely a means, it is the final human end as well, the fifth puruṣārtha. It goes beyond even moksā. One who realizes it desires nothing but exclusive service of Kṛṣṇa. The relation between the soul and the world with that of the God is acintya-bhedābheda (incomprehensible difference and non-difference). It is the relation between cause and effect, whole and part, possessor of power and the power. This relation is one of simultaneous difference and non-difference and is inexplicable or incomprehensible.

Check Your Progress III

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Illustrate Nimbārka's Concept of God.

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2. Write a short note on *Vaiṣṇava Philosophy of Caitanya*.

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22.6 LET US SUM UP

Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism are popular religious and philosophical traditions that have become very strong in India since the middle ages. They have a blend of practical living with philosophical thinking. Each tradition has their God, Śiva and Viṣṇu as their Supreme Being. As spread over all regions of India, they have various sects of religious beliefs and practices with varied philosophical concepts of God, Soul and World. Yet in all of them a common thread of philosophy of devotion and love is found. Coming to the question of origin of these two religious traditions, one can say that they are very old and ancient. Śaivism is said to be the oldest living tradition, even as pre-Vedic and pre-Āryan. Some argue that the Vedic god Rudra was later developed into a Supreme Being, Śiva. Śaivism developed in the course of time, in ritual practices and in philosophical concept of God, Soul and World. Prominent sects of Śaivite religion are Pāśupatas, Kashmiri Śaivism, Vīra Śaivism and Śaiva Siddhānta.

Similarly, Vaiṣṇavite religious tradition too has very ancient, vague and diversified sources for its origin. Viṣṇu is considered to be the Supreme Being. There are five important forms of Viṣṇu by which he reveals himself to his devotees. There are various bhakti sects of Vaiṣṇavism. In fact, devotional practices are found with much anthropomorphic elements and emotionalism in Vaiṣṇavism. Philosophy of bhakti is well developed in many of Vaiṣṇava sects. There are many prominent Vaiṣṇava Saints and philosophers. Among them Rāmānuja, Madva, Vallabha, Nimbārka and Caitanya are worth noting. We have elaborated to some extent the recurring themes of these thinkers. In summing up our deliberation on these two traditions we could say that they are religious philosophies with concreteness for practical human existence.

22.7 KEY WORDS

Turiya : deep sleep

Prapatti : self-surrender

22.8 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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22.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Origin of Śaivism: Śaivism is the oldest pre-historic religion in India. For Vedic origin of Śaivism, there are traces of Śiva in the Vedic god, Rudra. From the primitive notion of Śiva in Vedas, the later development of concept of Śiva took place. There are also views that Śaivism had entirely depended on non-Vedic tradition. From the proto-Śiva of Indus Valley Civilisation the origin of such Śaivism is traced. A fusion came about when the Vedic Rudra became identified with the indigenous Śiva. The earliest specific mention

of Śiva by a foreigner is traceable to Megasthenes. In the age of the Guptas the worship of Śiva assumed a considerable importance. The development and inclusion of Śiva into Hindu pantheon as a powerful God is seen from the evidences available in Vedic literature, the Epic and Puranic literature and Tamil Sangam literature and devotional literature. In later development of Hinduism, Śiva is considered as one of the Trinity and carries on the function of annihilation alone.

2. Different Forms of Viṣṇu: Five forms of Visnu are the transcendent (para), the grouped (vūyha), the incarnated (vibhava), the immanent (antaryāmin) and the idol (arcā). God as the transcendent possesses six attributes, namely knowledge, lordship, potency, strength, virility, and splendour. The grouped forms of God are four; they are vāsudeva, saṁkarṣaṇa, pradyumna, aniruddha. There is a distinctive function assigned to each of those vyuhas in cosmic creation as well as in the act of redeeming souls. The incarnated forms are avataras. Out of His own concern for the world, God descends from time to time in the form of an incarnation, avatara. According to Vaishnavite tradition, there have been only nine such incarnations; there is one yet to come. As an indweller in the world and in the hearts of people, God is immanent always. The idol, arcā is the most concrete of God's forms. Vaiṣṇavism regards the image of Viṣṇu, arcā, as one of the real forms of the Lord. The belief is that God descends into the idol and makes it divinely alive, so that he may be easily accessible to his devotees. More stress is laid on service to the arcā as the primary duty of the devotee.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. Features of Śaiva Siddhānta: It assumes three eternal principles or fundamentals which are realities and have existed from all eternity, viz, god, which is described as independent existence, unqualified intelligence, and absolute bliss, the universe, and the souls. Souls and the world owe their existence to god, Śiva, who is both immanent and transcendent. The main purpose of its creation is the liberation of the beginningless souls, which are conceived as cattle, Paśū bound by the noose, pasa of impurity, mala or spiritual ignorance, which forces them to produce karman. This karman process, however is a benefit, for as soon as the soul has sufficiently ripened and along an elaborate path of salvation reached a state of purity enabling it to strive after the highest insight, and there are four paths, or means of attaining salvation along which this process can take place, viz. the well known, caryā, kriyā, yoga and jñāna. God is willing graciously to intervene. Then he appears in the shape of a fully qualified and liberated spiritual guide, who is Śiva's equal, through whose words god permits himself to be realized by the individual soul.

Answers to Check Your Progress III

1. Nimbārka's Concept of God: For Nimbārka, Brahman is Gopala-Kṛṣṇa accompanied by Radha. Brahman is the controller (niyanṭṛ), the soul is the experiencer (bhokṭṛ) while the matter is the object experienced (bhogya). Brahman is independent being, whereas the soul and matter are dependent realities. The relation between them is as relation of natural difference and non difference (svābhāvika-Bhedābheda). The souls and matter are

different from Brahman as they have dependent and distinct existence (paratantrasattabhava). They are non-different as they have no independent existence (svatantrasattabhava). As the pot is both different and non-different from clay, the souls and matter are related to Brahman. The souls do not lose their individuality in the state of liberation. In this state the soul only realises its essential similarity to God. Liberation is attained through work (karma), knowledge (jñāna), meditation (upāsana), self-surrender (prapatti) and devotion to preceptor (gurupasatti). Love of God is the means to liberation.

2. Philosophy of Caitanya: Philosophy of Caitanya is purely a religious and devotional philosophy. For him, God is sat-cit-ānanda. God is not only rasa, aesthetic sentiment, but also rasika, enjoyer of sentiment. His śakti is Rādhā with whom he is united in love. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are two-in-one, inseparably bound together. In his immanent aspect God is antaryamin and is pervasive of the universe. Divine Lord sports himself with his playmates, who are all parts of him. Better than jñāna or yoga is the path of bhakti. The culmination of bhakti is a complete self giving, as unconditional self surrender to god. Keveala or suddha bhakti is not merely a means; it is the final human end as well, the fifth puruṣārtha. It goes beyond even Mokṣa. One who realizes it desires nothing but exclusive service of kṛṣṇa. Philosophy of Caitanya is technically called *acintya-Bhedābheda* that explains the philosophical debate of finding the relationship between God and the soul. The relation between the souls and the world on the one hand, and god on the other is acintya Bhedābheda, incomprehensible difference and non difference. Their relation is one of simultaneous difference and non difference. This is of course, inexplicable or incomprehensible.