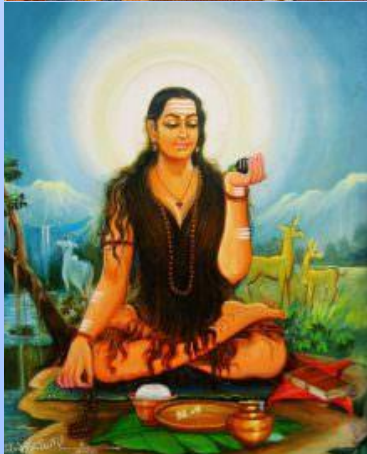
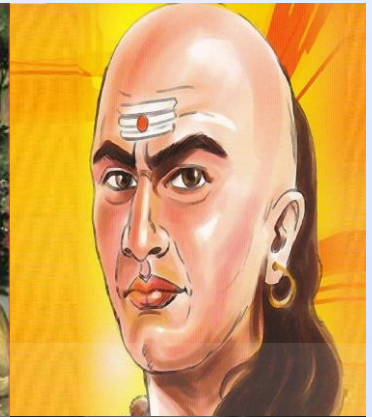
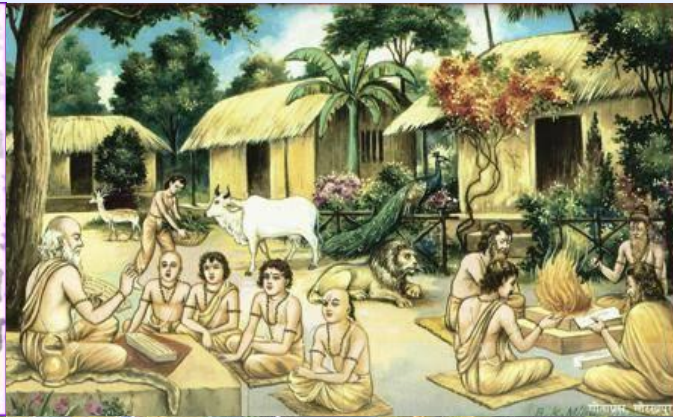


INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT – I



INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT –I

**CBCS CORE COURSE (B.A. HONOURS)
V SEMESTER**

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY**

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Unit 2	Sramanic	Dr Ruchi Tyagi, Kalindi College, University of Delhi
Unit 3	Islamic	Dr Ruchi Tyagi, Kalindi College, University of Delhi
Unit 4	Bhakti	Dr Ruchi Tyagi, Kalindi College, University of Delhi
BLOCK II	POLITICAL CONCERNS AND KEY IDEAS	
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Unit 6	Manu: Social Order and Laws	Dr Amitanshu Verma, Senior Researcher, Centre for Equity Studies, New Delhi
Unit 7	Kautilya: State and Duties of Kingship	Dr Raj Kumar Sharma, Maharishi Kanad Post Doc Fellow, Delhi School of Transnational Affairs, DU
Unit 8	Kautilya: Mandala Theory	Dr Raj Kumar Sharma, Post Doc Fellow, University of Delhi
Unit 9	Digha Nikaya: The Idea of Chakravartin	Dr Ruchi Tyagi, Kalindi College, University of Delhi
Unit 10	Zia –Ul –Barani: Royal Authority and Just Rule	Dr Swasti Rao, Associate Fellow, Europe and Eurasia Center, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses
Unit 11	Abul Fazal: Monarchical Authority and Popular Well being	Dr Swasti Rao, Associate Fellow, Europe and Eurasia Center,
Unit 12	Akka Mahadevi: Critique of Social Order	Dr Swasti Rao, Associate Fellow, Europe and Eurasia Center,
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Course Contents

Block I	Traditions of the Pre-Colonial Indian Political Thought	7
Unit 1	Brahmanic	9
Unit 2	Sramanic	26
Unit 3	Islamic	48
Unit 4	Bhakti	72
Block II	Political Concerns and Key Ideas	93
Unit 5	Ved Vyasa: Rajdharma (Shantiparva)	97
Unit 6	Manu: Social Order and Laws	107
Unit 7	Kautilya: State and Duties of Kingship	120
Unit 8	Kautilya: Mandala Theory	133
Unit 9	Digha Nikaya: The Idea of Chakravartin	146
Unit 10	Zia –Ul –Barani: Royal Authority and Just Rule	167
Unit 11	Abul Fazal: Monarchical Authority and Popular Well being	184
Unit 12	Akka Mahadevi: Critique of Social Order	202
Unit 13	Kabir: Religious Boundaries and the Quest for Social Harmony	218
	Suggested Readings	230

COURSE INTRODUCTION

This course introduces classical elements of Indian Political Thought that spans over two millennia. A number of Indian thinkers have articulated their views on politics and political institutions. The first section covers traditions of the pre-Colonial Indian political thought, *Brahmanic*, *Sramanic*, *Islamic* and *Bhakti*. The second section deals with individual thinkers whose ideas are however, framed by specific themes. The course provides a sense of the broad streams of Indian thought while encouraging a specific knowledge of individual thinkers and texts. The systematic study of ancient Indian Political thought began during India's national independence movement. It was argued by some sections that ancient India did not contribute anything substantial to political thought and Political Science. However, such criticism mainly reflects a *Eurocentric* understanding of Political Science which neglects contributions from non-Western societies and thinkers. This is evident from the fact that Kautilya is often called 'Indian Machiavelli' despite the fact that his book, *Arthashastra* was written some 1800 years prior to Machiavelli's works and remains much broader in scope. Compared to Machiavelli, Kautilya's conceptualisation of state power is systematic and comprehensive. Some of the sources of ancient Indian political thought include Vedic literature, Puranas, Epics, Dharmasutras, Smritis, Arthasastras, Jain and Buddhist literature and archaeological sources among others. One of the important characteristics of ancient Indian political thought was that the politics was influenced by ethics and caste based social structure. There was no clear distinction between society and state while Monarchy was the normal form of government. At the same time, the political life was conceived within the framework of *Dharma* and it became an important constituent of statecraft. The concept of duties was given precedence over rights during this period. Urmila Sharma and S K Sharma have argued that ancient Indian political thought represents the East and China, Iran and Southeast Asian countries had rudimentary political thought while India, much like ancient Greece, had a very developed political thought. While this fact is not widely recognised, there is need to better codify the ancient Indian political thought. This course covers some of the important traditions, themes and thinkers from ancient Indian political thought. It is divided in two blocks.

Block 1 has four units which covers traditions of the pre-colonial Indian Political Thought, namely, *Brahmanic*, *Sramanic*, *Islamic* and *Bhakti*.

Block 2 has nine units covering thinkers like Ved Vyasa, Manu, Kautilya, Zia-Ul-Barani, Abul Fazal, Akka Mahadevi and Kabir. Every unit has exercises to assess progress and the answers are given at the end of each unit. There is a list of readings in the end of the course that would help to broaden perspective and go deep into the study of ancient Indian Political Thought.

BLOCK I

Traditions of the Pre-Colonial Indian Political Thought

BLOCK I INTRODUCTION

This block covers traditions of the pre-colonial Indian Political Thought, namely, *Brahmanic*, *Sramanic*, *Islamic* and *Bhakti*. *Brahmanic* tradition is the central theme and belief of Vedic followers. Its thoughts and philosophical concepts were central to the rise of socio-religious beliefs, political conduct and polity in Indian political thought. Since most of the inference and perception were put forward by the *Rishis/Brahmans*, hence, it was named as *Brahmanic* tradition. The Jains and the Buddhists led two vigorous protestant movements against *Brahmanic* tradition from the fifth century B.C. onwards. The origin of *Sramanic* tradition is mainly associated with Kosala and Magadha, the main areas of Buddha and Mahavira. This tradition emerged as a reaction against and reform of the prevailing *Brahmanic* tradition, but could not escape the influence thereof. The political contact of India with Islam began sometimes in the 8th century A.D., when the Arabs established their control over the province of Sindh. Major trends of Indo-Islamic political thought displayed a rupture with and continuity of ancient Indian traditions. Muslim conquests brought alien tradition of political ideas and institutions developed in West Asia. With a noted absence of social and cultural hegemony, indigenous traditions reflected a tendency of adaptation of alien ideas & institutions to the Indian conditions. *Bhakti* is an age-old concept which prescribes *Gyana* (knowledge), *Karma* (action) and *Bhakti* (devotion) as the three essential features to shatter the bondage of material world and to serve the Almighty God. Thus, *Bhakti* is one of the three recognized means of achieving salvation. The Bhakti movement aimed at the purification of Hindu religion and liberation of the people from the monopoly and injustices of the priestly classes. The *Bhakti* saints came from different streams of society, particularly lower castes. *Bhakti* opposed the institutionalisation of religion, tried to decentralise it, and considered religion as a private matter. The *Bhakti* traditions gave respectability to the marginalised castes, posing a challenge to the upper caste hegemony. This tradition had an inclusive approach towards Muslims as well. The proponents of *Bhakti* tradition introduced syncretic tradition in India and sought to promote eclectic faiths and defuse religious orthodoxy among the followers of Hinduism and Islam.

UNIT 1 BRĀHMANIC*

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Methodological Problems
- 1.3 Basic Concepts
 - 1.3.1 *Vedas* as Source of Knowledge
 - 1.3.2 *Brahma*
 - 1.3.3 *Kshatra*
 - 1.3.4 Man (*Vyakti*)
 - 1.3.5 Four Pursuits of Life
 - 1.3.5.1 *Dharma*
 - 1.3.5.2 *Artha*
 - 1.3.5.3 *Kāma*
 - 1.3.5.4 *Moksha*
 - 1.3.6 *Varna*
 - 1.3.7 *Āshrama*
 - 1.3.8 Duties & Rights
 - 1.3.9 *Vārtā*
 - 1.3.10 *Danda*
- 1.4 Evolution of Political Ideas and Polity
 - 1.4.1 Political Ideas
 - 1.4.2 Origin of Kingship
 - 1.4.3 Evolution of State & Government
 - 1.4.4 Elements of State
 - 1.4.5 Objectives of State
 - 1.4.6 Law and Jurisprudence
 - 1.4.7 Administration
 - 1.4.8 Principles of Taxation

*Dr Ruchi Tyagi, Associate Professor, Kalindi College, University of Delhi

- 1.4.9 Inter-state Relations
- 1.5 Limitations of *Brāhmanic*
- 1.6 Reactions Towards *Brāhmanic*
- 1.7 Let us Sum Up
- 1.8 Some Useful References
- 1.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is to familiarise you with the ideas of Brāhmanic tradition. After studying this unit, you should be able to understand:

- Scope of Brāhmanic Tradition
- Basic Concepts of Brāhmanic
- Evolution of Political Ideas and Polity
- Limitations of Brāhmanic
- Reactions against Brāhmanic

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Brāhmanic tradition represents an ideology and a way of life, originating from the Vedas (*Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Sāmveda* and *Atharvaveda*) and the whole range of Vedic literature, which includes numerous *Brahmanic* Scriptures appended to all the four Vedas, *Āranyak* scriptures, *Śad-darshana*, *Purānas*, *Upanishads*. In addition, *Brahmanic* tradition also includes post-Vaidik diverse schools of thought such as *Dharmasutras*, *Epics*, *Vedanga* and *Up-vedas*, *Dharmashastras*, *Smriti* Scriptures (including *Manusmriti* and *Yājñavalkyasmriti*), *Arthaśāstras* (including Kautilya's), *Nitiśāstras* (including *Śukraniti* and *Kāmandakīya Nitisāra*) etc. These scriptures provide details concerning virtues, truth, rights, freedom, political life, etc.

Brāhmanic tradition is the central theme and belief of Vedic followers. Its thoughts and philosophical concepts were central to the rise to socio-religious beliefs, political conduct and polity in Indian political thought. Most of the inference and perception were put forward by the Rishis / Brahmins, hence was named as 'Brāhmanic'.

1.2 METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

During the long evolution of Brāhmanic tradition, it is difficult to reach a consensus for periodization and historicity of texts. *Vedas*, also known as *Shruti*, were *not* available as text for a very long period. Similarly, as per one belief, *Mahābhārata* was originally written as *Bharat*, then as *Jaibharata* and lastly, as *Mahābhārata*. There are many projections of *Ramayana* followed in various parts of the sub-continent, making it difficult for identification and reading of primary texts and classical secondary commentaries of political purport and relevance.

Issue of reading the texts in their appropriate historical and cultural contexts is another problem. As Indologists focus on internal reading of the texts, while historians examine the political, social and economic contexts; in the process, at times texts are devalued and denied autonomy from their contexts. Whereas students of political thought, grant autonomy to the texts and their authors by lending them a universal appeal and abiding relevance.

Issue of non-English vocabulary for political terms also has made indigenous Brāhmanic texts as non-inviting for researchers of political science. For example, Sanskrit terms like *Rājadharmā*, *Rājyaśāsan*, *Dandaniti*, *Nitiśāstra*, *Arthaśāstra*, have been used for issues concerning political science; *Loksanshraya* / *Yogakshema* / *Sarvodaya* include indigenous terms denoting welfare of all; *Vārtā* is reflective of means of livelihood and political economy.

Hence, dealing with various disciplines of knowledge as branches of same roots and an absence of specified single text dealing with polity and political science in a holistic manner (like Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Locke etc.), the tradition invariably was treated as a school of metaphysics and failed to invite attention of western and oriental scholars of political science, in spite of relevant content and milieu.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Explain the major methodological problems in the study of the *Brāhmanic* tradition.

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1.3 BASIC CONCEPTS

In the field of political philosophy, Indian thinkers, especially the Brāhmanic thinkers, did formulate and develop a number of significant political concepts. Here, it is interesting to note that some of the fundamental concepts and ideas in the realm of political thought were formulated not by political thinkers, but by metaphysicians and philosophers. Once the latter had given these concepts a broad and rich content, the former incorporated them in their own works. Such a process can also be detected in the history of Western political thought, especially with reference to the concepts like virtue, truth, justice, ideal life, rights and liberties.

1.3.1 *Vedas* as a Source of Knowledge

The Brāhmanic tradition has portrayed Vedas as the ultimate source of knowledge. Manu considered the codes of the *Vedas* as one of the four characteristics of Dharma, along with the *Smṛiti* scriptures, the *Sadāchār* (behavioural ethics) and the *Ātman* (the inner soul). Kautilya referred to the four foundations of a polity as *Trayee* (the three *vedas*); *Anvikshaki* (knowledge of *Sāṅkhya Yoga* and *Lokāyata*), *Vārtā* (the economy) and the *Dandaniti*. Considering as authoritative texts on Dharma, Vedas were treated as one of the four sources for setting a legal controversies. Other sources included *Vyavhār* or evidence, *Charit/Samsthā* or history and conduct of reputed persons, and *rājshāśana* or the royal edicts.

1.3.2 *Brahma*

The Vedic political philosophy provided us with the notions of *Brahma* and *Kshatra*, which were gradually debated as the problem of the relative superiority of spiritual and physical (regal) powers. According to *Martin Haug*, *Brahma* signifies prayer. *Rudolph Ruth* holds that originally *Brahma* meant the volitional energy directed towards the Gods and, later on, it acquired a religious meaning. *Brahma*, which is different from *Brāhman*, refers to what grows. This term originated from the Sanskrit word '*Brih*' which means to grow. To *Deussen*, the term *Brahma* denotes human will striving to attain the Absolute. Since the Vedic times, the *Brāhmanic* tradition regarded human nature as a remarkable combination of the body and the soul, where man's body signifies his physical powers, while the spirit or soul stands for his spiritual powers. Here, the preference has been given not to the materialistic and physical aspects of life, but to the meditative, absorptive and spiritual aspects. Accordingly, it was emphasized that man, being essentially divine, has the spark or ray of divinity which is shrouded by the blinding power of ignorance. Once this mask or veil of ignorance is lifted, the spirit in man shines in all its resplendence.

1.3.3 *Kshatra*

Kshatra, translated by *Keith* as sovereignty, has also been identified with absolute ruling power. In the general sense of dominion rule or power as exercised by gods and men; and also in the sense of 'rulers', occurs frequently in the *Rgveda* and later literature. In later *Samhitās*, it denotes the ruling class, as opposed to the priests, the subject people and the servile class. A *kshatrapati* is frequently mentioned as an equivalent of King. In some passages, *Kshatra* corresponds to *Rājanya* or the *Khatriya* caste. In the *Brāhmanas*, the Brahmins were identified with the *Brahma* power and the *Kshatriya* with *Kshatra* power. While the former could develop *Kshatra* power and the latter could attain spiritual worth. As Rāma and Krishna are credited with both the powers in the Epics. Kautilya conceived the acceleration of the *Kshatra* power by the *Brāhmin* group as leading to the conquest of the unconquerable.

1.3.4 Man (*Vyakti*)

Brāhmanic tradition highlights the sacred character of the individual human personality. The fundamental theme of Indian philosophical speculation is the spiritual nature of man. Man is regarded not only a social and political being, but, above all, essentially divine, the living being who has the spark of God. Almighty (*Parmātmā*) in the form of his soul (*Ātmā*), who is also conscious of this sacred faculty and is, therefore, able to act accordingly to improve the quality not only of his own life, but also of those who come into contact with him. And, since man is essentially divine (partaking of the characteristics and qualities of God Himself), he is also basically good and benevolent. The underlying idea is that the human spirit is fundamental and for its realisation all social and political allurements and fears are to be transcended. *Atmarthe Prithvim Tyajet* is a basic ingredient of this tradition.

1.3.5 Four Pursuits of Life included *Dharma* (righteous performance of one's duties), *Artha* (economic activities in pursuance of wealth and power), *Kāma* (worldly pleasures and sexual desires) and *Moksha* (final liberation). In *Katha Upanishad*, *Dharma* and *Moksha* are termed as *Śreya* (good), while *Artha* and *Kāma* are named as *Preya* (pleasant).

1.3.5.1 Dharma: *Dharma* is also one of the most comprehensive concepts in Brāhmanic Philosophy. Its English synonym 'religion' is derived from the Latin term '*religare*', which means "to bind". The inference is that religion is the bond, which unites not only man with God, but also man with man. Whereas *Dharma* stands for 'a way of life', derived from the root '*Dhri*', which means "to sustain" or "to uphold". Hence, it refers to the principle or the substance which can sustain an object. The *Mahābhārata*, accordingly, describes it as the principle which bears or maintains society by establishing a moral or spiritual order. *Dharma* included, in its compass, morality and virtue. In fact, *Niti*, *Āchār*, *Sadāchār* (code of noble conduct), along with *Dharma* were deemed to be mutually complimentary and interdependent. Manu had, accordingly, proclaimed, in unambiguous terms, that ethics is the real *dharma*, (*Āchārah Parmo Dharmah*). To him, the codes of the *Vedas*, the *Smritis*, the *Sadāchār* and the *Ātman* are the four characteristics of *Dharma*. In the *Mahābhārata*, *Dharma* indicated a network of duties, like the *Rājadharma* (duties of the ruler), the *Prajādharmā* (duties of the subjects) and the *Mitrādharmā* (duties of the friend). It involved virtue and righteousness and was, thus, an admixture of socio-ethico-religious ideas.

In the *Arthasāstra* of Kautilya, the term *dharma* has been described variously at various places. Therein, it signifies the sense of social duty towards oneself (*swadharma*) and one's society (*varnadharma* and *Āshramadharmā*). As the civil law and the moral law based on Truth, it was elevated to the status of the supreme principle of human life.

In the customary aspect of *Dharma*, the performance of rituals, appeasement of numerous gods and goddesses, offering of deities altogether find detailed illustrations in *Vedic* and *post-Vedic* literature. The term *Dharma*, according to B.A. Salitore, thus, covered the wide range of subjects, stretching from law to piety, practically all matters of public behaviour.

1.3.5.2 Artha: Preaching a philosophy of balance and harmonious integration, Kautilya has argued that the king may enjoy in an equal degree the three pursuits of life – charity, wealth and aesthetic desire, which are independent upon each other and indulgence in either of these three in extreme degree would be injurious.

In the context of all-Indian monarchical power, Kautilya accepted the notion of maximization of wealth and territory. *Artha* has also been defined as *Vritti* or means of livelihood of mankind. Kautilyan economic determinism advocates the casual role of the economic factor both in human motivation and in social and historical eventuation. The concept of *artha*, however, distinguishes between its two meanings. In the narrower sense, it is the equivalent of wealth and in its broader sense, it is the equivalent of all the means necessary for the acquisition and preservation of an all-India imperial system, and emphasizes harmony of the four *purushārthas*. Thus, reaching a level of a systematic, comprehensive and rational-analytical branch of knowledge, owing to his intensive treatment of all the related and kindred topics of kingship, economics, social relations, law and diplomacy.

1.3.5.3 Kāma: Realizing the necessity of worldly pleasures and aesthetic or sexual desires, considered as third aspirations of an individual, Kautilya offered the first systematic and balanced attempt to construct philosophy exalting *Artha* and territory. In *Upanishads*, the desire for wealth, progeny and fame have to be shunned by an aspirant after realization of ultimate truth. But Kautilya preached a philosophy of balance and harmonious integration. Not violating righteousness and economy, Kautilya expected the king to enjoy his desires, appreciate in an equal degree, the three pursuits of life, charity, wealth and desire, which are interdependent upon each other.

1.3.5.4 Moksha: Indian tradition looks at the individual as a living being who is an intrinsic part of the society and who, as such, is constantly striving to attain '*Moksha*', salvation or liberation from the cycle of rebirth by following the path of '*Dharma*', '*Artha*' and '*Kāma*', i.e. by involving himself in the day-to-day social and economic activities. He is striving to attain perfection for himself, to the extent it is attainable, in common with others. And, in this respect, he is looked upon as a person who is more conscious of his duties than the one who is simply clamouring for his rights. Behind this conception was the conviction that man is the maker of his 'destiny' and that, therefore, it is natural for him to dedicate himself wholly to the attainment of this objective.

The individual, thus, becomes a part and parcel of such a social fabric. And, it was in this overall context that the State was conceived as an agency based on force in order to provide protection to all living beings and the functions of the

State were confined to strike a synthesis among four *purushārthas*. The relationship between the king and his subjects was based, by and large, on the assumed reciprocity of duties.

1.3.6 Varna

The term '*Varna*' indicates the division of society into four major functional classes. It originated from the Sanskrit root '*Vri*' which means selection/adoption of activities/duties and their performance in accordance with one's virtues and capabilities. According to *G.H. Mees*, social, cultural, professional or occupational symbolic and occult, these five conceptions have been the basis of *Varna* system. One finds various references to the origin of this social system. The *varna* system was supposed to represent the principle of one in many. The *Brāhmanas* were concerned with knowledge; the *Kshatriyas* with courage and valour to provide protection to the weak; the *Vaishyas* with the satisfaction of necessities of life, viz. agriculture, crafts and trade; and the *Shudras* with service to the other classes. All the four *varnas* were compared in *Rgveda* to different parts of the *Purusha*. Indian thinkers, however, failed to devise a mechanism whereby they could identify people in terms of their potential and arrange for their transmigration from one class to another.

The *Brāhmanic* scriptures proclaimed the supremacy of the *Brahmans*, while giving importance to the performance of rituals and indicated the declining status of *vaishyas* and the inferior status of the *Shudras*, which resulted in the predominance of *Brāhmanas* and decline of *Rgveda*'s popular institutions of *Sabhā*, *Samiti* and *Vidath*. A struggle for the supremacy between two *varnas*, the *Brāhmanas* and the *Kshatriyas* was reflected in the *Upanishads*. Both *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārta* also accorded the same order of priority. While *Rāmāyana* acknowledged a cordial relationship amongst all the *Varnas*, the *Mahābhārata*, under *āpaddharma*, acknowledged the adoption of professions of others than one's own. *Dharma Sutras* indicated a clear, more or less rigid, division of society with predominance of the *Brāhmanas*, and inferior position of the *Shudras*, suspicion for *Varna Sankara* and punishments in accordance with the *varna*. Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*, expected the king to protect, preserve and conserve this societal *varna* system and provided for a system of law, *danda* and *bala* (armed forces) on the basis of *Varna*. The *Manusmriti* voiced the predominance of the *Brāhmanas* and issued strictures against the *Shudras*.

1.3.7 Āshrama

The word '*Āshrama*' is derived from the root '*Shrama*', which means to exert. It, therefore, implies: (a) a place where one may perform exertions and also (b) the action of performing such exertions. The *Āshramas* are four in number: (i) the *Brahmacharya* (of a student), (ii) the *Grihastha* (of a householder or married man), (iii) the *Vānaprastha* (of retired life after abandoning the household responsibilities and attachments) and (iv) *Sanyāsa* (complete renunciation). In the last two stages, man enlarges his area of action from the small family to the larger community and humanity.

1.3.8 Duties & Rights

The Indian concepts of duties and rights is different from its counterpart in the liberal tradition of the West. In the Western tradition, the classic case was started by *John Locke*, who thought that there are certain natural rights which are innate and therefore, no one can deprive us of those rights. Duties flow from the principle of mutuality. *Brāhamanic* tradition, too, recognized the tension between the claims of the individual and the society, as a whole. Firstly, connecting the individual to the concrete functions he performs in society, and secondly, by relating him to the cosmic process of which he is an integral part. *Brāhamanic* thought accords the place of primacy; to duties vis-a-vis the rights. As an individual is not only a member of the society and the State, but also of a number of voluntary associations. He has, therefore, to perform a variety of functions in relation to these associations of which he has chosen to be a member, expected to fulfil a confluence of duties, described as *Swadharma*, *Varnadharma*, *Āshramadharma*, *Jātidharma*, *Kuladharma*, *Deshadharma*, *Rājadharma*, *Prajādharmā*, *mitradharma*.

1.3.9 Vārtā

According to Kautilya, *Trayee* (the structure and knowledge constituted by the three Vedas: (*Rig*, *Yajur* and *Sāma*); *Anvikshiki* (the philosophical systems of dualistic *Samkhya* and *Yoga* and the materialistic philosophy of *Lokāyata*); *Vārtā* (with origins in root ‘*vritti*’, meaning livelihood or profession and comprehending agriculture, cattle-breeding and trade) and *Danda* (which is the mean to achieve *Yogakshema*, the welfare of all) are the four considered branches of knowledge. *Dandaniti* deals with the means of acquiring (*Alabdha Labhartha*), preservation (*Labdha Parirakshim*), accentuation (*Rakshit Vivardhani*) and righteous and due apportionment (*Vridhdhasya Tirtheshu Pratipadini*) of *Anvikshiki*, *Trayee* and *Vārtā*. *Rājadharma*, thus, expected the *dandadhara* to ensure the acquisition and preservation of dialectics; to aid the *Vedas* in so far as it prescribes ways and means as an integral part of the Vedic view of life and culture.

And, making a case for political economy, Kautilya’s *dandadhara* aids *Vārtā* because both treasury (related to *Vārtā*) and punishment (*Danda*) are necessary for the control of one's own kingdom and those of the enemies.

1.3.10 Danda

Danda of the king symbolizes the authority. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the king is called *Adandya*, symbolizing that he was beyond the reach of a staff (*Danda*). In *Manusmṛiti*, *danda* signifies the kingly power, implying penal sanctions as a guarantee of the maintenance of peace and order. In a broader sense, Kautilya used *danda* with the totality of means for the acquisition, preservation, growth and distribution of resources, reflecting the totality of social and political interactions and relationships. Thus, *danda* or force is not the essence of politics and is never to be intended for the support of interests of the stronger, but is a

necessary adjunct in the realization of co-operative and organic social existence guided by the monarch.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. What are the significant basic concepts of *Brāhmanic* tradition?

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1.4 EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL IDEAS AND POLITY

1.4.1 Political Ideas

- Vedic Literature is to be explored for early beginning of political ideas. Political Institutions in *Ṛigveda* included *Sabha*, *Samiti*, *Vidatha*. Examples of kingship are found in the Vedic literature. Origin of four-fold social order is referred to in *Purushsukta* of *Ṛigveda*.
- Details of *Rājadharmā*, kingship, administration, taxation have been elaborated in *Śāntiparva* of *Mahābhārata*.
- *Upanishads/Vedāntic* Literature reflects multiplicity reduced to the duality of *Brahma* (Pure idea or God) & *Ātman* (The self or Soul) and emphasized spiritual equality of all projecting human beings as children of immortality (*Viśve Amritasya Putrah*) Brahminical monarchical rites, such as *Ashvamedha* (Horse sacrifice) performed by king, symbolizing political conquest and hegemony, have been referred to in *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad*.
- Full-fledged Theory of State in Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* can be systematized in three broad topics: (1) the theory of kingship or the activities and functions of the sage king (*Rājarshivṛttam*) in first, sixth and eighth book; (2) theories of administration and law in second to fifth books; and (3) problems of war and diplomacy in the seventh, and ninth to fourteenth books.
- Details of kingship, legislation, *Dharma*, *Dandaniti*, are illustrated in *Manusmṛiti*.

1.4.2 Origin of Kingship

The entire ancient Indian Brāhmanic literature testifies to the quasi-divine and quasi-contractual origin of both the society and the state.

- The *Śāntiparva* of the *Mahābhārata*, under 'Manu tradition' illustrates a kind of social contract, where on peoples' request to save them from *Mātsyanyāya*, *Brahma* himself sent Manu to govern the State; under the 'Prithu tradition', Prithu, a lineage of *Virājas*, took over the lordship after making a commitment to protect the people.
- In *Arthaśāstra*, people have been shown requesting Manu, the Vaivasvat to be their king to rule out *Mātsyanyāya* and committed to spare a share as royal dues.

1.4.3 Evolution of State & Government

- Lineage or tribe based social & political formations were found in early and later Vedic periods
- Post-Vedic period denoted establishment of *Mahājanapadas* (territorial states)
- Licchavian Republic was a replica of *Ganasangha* (Oligarchic Republics)
- Monarchical-Bureaucratic State was exemplified by Mauryas & Guptas in Magadha and Harsha in Thanesar
- Early & Medieval periods recorded feudal monarchies

1.4.4 Elements of State

The essential elements of the State were explained as *Saptānga* (seven *prakritis*) of the State including *Swāmi* (the sovereign king), *Amātya* (the Ministers), *Janapad* (people & territory), *Durga* (Forts), *Kosha* (the treasury), *Bala* (the armed forces), and *Mitra* (the ally).

1.4.5 Objectives of State

The king was supposed to act as the trustee and the servant of his people. If the basic concept of objectives of the state was the realization of *Purushārthas* in all walks of life, then *Yogakshema* denoted *Yoga* (addition to or furtherance of, and not the depletion of, all resources) and *Kshema* (well utilization of resources) in all human pursuits. Kautilya's concept of welfare treated family as a basic unit and enjoined upon the family to look after its members in times of difficulty and crisis and also in accordance with one's *Varnāshrama*. Kautilya envisaged a policy of limited-state-welfare, while leaving the individual to maximum of self-help.

1.4.6 Law and Jurisprudence

- *Manusmriti* or The Law Book of Manu refers to a Legal Expert as a judicial advisor to the king; layered judicial structure; instead of leaving judicial administration to rationale of the king, defined the System of

Jury, Oath, evidence, punishment etc.

- Kautilya believed in four sources for setting a legal controversy: (1) *Dharma* (cannon law), (2) *Vyavahāra* (customary law), (3) *Samsthā* (usages) and (4) *Rājaśāsana* (logical principles). In case of disagreement between institutional law and practice and authoritative texts on *Dharma*, then the matter to be settled in accordance with *Dharma* or truth. Kautilya was of the considered view that in case of conflict of interpretation, the king should himself decide the dispute and his interpretation is to be upheld as final.
- Like the Dharmasutras, *Dharmashastras* and the Smritis, *Arthaśāstra* elaborated civil laws dealing with agreements, legal disputes, marriage, inheritance, debts, rules concerning slaves and labourers, cooperatives, purchase and sale, gifts, ownership, robbery, defamation, assault, gambling, betting, and other miscellaneous topics.

1.4.7 Administration

Brāhmanic political thinkers tried to protect the interests of the people by recommending and bringing about decentralized administrative machinery. Several types of states like republics, oligarchies, diarchies and monarchies were prevailing in India in ancient times, but eventually monarchy became the order of the day owing to various factors and causes. The classical theory of Indian kingship, however, illustrated the role of the king as an administrator and the promulgator of law. Since the king was not able to discharge the functions of the state single headedly, for the development and welfare of the state, he had to depend and rely on his competent ministers, the departmental heads, and also on decentralized machinery of the administration including the provincial, divisional and district administration along with town and village administration.

1.4.8 Principles of Taxation

Indian thinkers evolved excellent principles for taxation. The taxation was usually determined by the local customs and traditions. In the later times, however, when the *Samiti* disappeared from the scene, governments would often impose high and arbitrary taxes. The state was to gather the taxes like the bee, which sucks the honey without damaging the flower. The trade and industry were to be taxed not on gross earnings, but on *net profits*. An article was not to be taxed twice and the rise in taxation, when inevitable was to be gradual. The grounds on which remissions were sanctioned and exemptions granted were also, as a rule, sound.

The ancient Indian state was not merely a tax-gathering corporation, interested only in preserving law and order. It is surprising to find that the state in ancient India should have interested itself in a number of ministrant activities of the nation-building type, which are being undertaken by the modern governments only in relatively recent times. Private agencies, trade guilds and state departments worked side by side to promote national welfare without mutual jealousies.

The ideals of the ancient Indian state, thus, were all comprehensive. It sought to promote the moral, material, aesthetic and spiritual progress of the whole community. Human ideas about the progress in these different spheres go on changing from age to age and it is no wonder that we may not be able to agree with all that the state in ancient India did or countenanced in order to achieve progress in this fourfold field. Nevertheless, in their description of finance, financial administration, town planning and the organization of a vast bureaucracy to control the entire social, economic, educational and religious activities of the people, *Brāhmanic* scholars were in advance of their Greek and Roman contemporaries to a great extent.

1.4.9 Inter-state Relations

The foreign affairs or the system of developing and preserving contacts between states - was fairly advanced in *Brāhmanic* literature. The textual evidences provide very deep insight into foreign policy and diplomacy. Their views on the issues of war and peace, relevance of diplomacy, qualifications, duties, types and immunities of diplomats reflect a sound principle of realism. Besides qualifications of the envoys, Indian scholars gave a serious thought on decay, stabilization and progress of state, essence of collaboration, nature of coordination between major powers and minor powers, pacts made by minor powers, diplomatic manoeuvring, rule of war, strategy of peace, strategy of vulnerable states, acquisition of allies or resources' pact for colonization, pacts for construction and development, strategy for a rear enemy, restoration of lost balance of power, pacts with powerful enemies, pacts and breaches of pacts, buffer states, neutral states and confederation of states. Their realism had a great bearing on domestic policy, which formed a significant part in their scheme of statecraft. Some of the principles of inter-state relations, as then practiced, were excellent even by modern standards. Though we do not have much information about inter-state relations during the Vedic period, the later development in this sphere (in the sense of the management of inter-state relations by negotiations) was remarkable and evolved theories and principles that hold the field even today.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Analyse the evolution of political ideas and political system in the *Brāhmanic* tradition.

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1.5 LIMITATIONS OF BRĀHMANIC

Brāhmanic

Metaphysics being the central concept of the *Brāhmanic* tradition, identification and acknowledgment of political thought pose some serious weaknesses.

- Periodization and historicity of texts during long evolution of Brāhmanic tradition
- Identification of primary texts and classical secondary commentaries of political purport and relevance
- Issue of reading the texts in their appropriate historical and cultural contexts
- Issue of non-English vocabulary for political terms pose yet another limitation
- Belief in the validity of Vedas as original and ancient most source of knowledge,
- Belief in a creator or God and their incarnation,
- Expecting ethical merit from ablutions,
- Pride of birth oriented caste, stratification of society,
- Engaging in violence to be rid of sin (rituals concerning sacrificial violence)

1.6 REACTIONS TOWARDS BRĀHMANIC TRADITION

- **Upanishads:** Gradually, Brahmanism gave priority to the observance of a series of religious rites and performances. The complexities of religious observances made the priestly class or Brahmins the sole trustee of common man's religion. As a result, sages in later-Vedic period roused to protest against the prevalent Brāhmanic 'religion'. Hence, *Upanishads* emerged as a renaissance against Brāhmanic superiority and dominance.
- **Jainism and Buddhism:** Against the traditionalism and dogmatic ritualism of the Brāhmanic tradition, authority of *Vedas*, belief in Gods and their incarnation, superiority of the Brāhmanas and to elevate the relative position of the *Kshatriyas*, a spirit protest and criticism emerged in the form of Śramana tradition, which includes Jainism and Buddhism.
- **Islamic** scholars as well as invaders reacted against stratified caste system; said to have incited lowest strata of indigenous society to convert to Islamic fold. Taking advantage of administrative decline in feudal setups, established Islamic feudatories in some parts of the Subcontinent.
- During medieval period, birth oriented casteism and compartmentalization of society was countered by **Sufis and Saints** on one hand and **Sikhism** on the other.
- Brāhmanic chauvinism was countered by **reformers** like Rammohun Roy, Vivekananda, Dayananda Saraswati etc. in the nineteenth century

and also in twentieth century by **leaders of depressed classes** namely Jotirao Phule, Dr. Bhim Rao Amdebkar, etc.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Highlight the major limitation of the *Brāhmanic* tradition.

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2. Point out various reactions to the *Brāhmanic* tradition.

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1.7 LET US SUM UP

The *Brāhmanic* tradition covers variety of schools of thought. During long evolution, periodization and historicity of texts; identification and reading of primary texts and secondary commentaries; non-English vocabulary for political terms are some of the methodological concerns this tradition encounters. Its fundamental concepts and ideas, articulated by *Brāhmanic* '*Rishis*' and philosophers, included acknowledgment of *Vedas* as the primary source of knowledge, *Brahma*; *Kshatra*; nature of man; Four *Purushārthas* (Pursuits) of Life comprising *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma*, and *Moksha*; *Varna*; *Āshrama*; Duties & Rights; and *Danda*. If *Purushārthas* governed individuals' personal life; *Varnashrama* administered social and inter-personal relationships; *Vārtā* defined political economy; and *Danda* managed the whole gamut of polity.

Enriched political philosophy of *Brāhmanic* tradition encompassed the theories of kingship/ *Rājadharmā* and the activities and functions of the king; illustration of origin, objectives, elements of state; variety of governing principles (including tribal based political formations, territorial states, oligarchic republics,

monarchical-bureaucratic state, feudal monarchies); theories of administration, law, taxation; problems of inter-state relations, war and diplomacy; etc.

In general, metaphysics is believed to be a central concept to the *Brāhmanic* belief system, but insight into scriptures illustrate totality of social and political interactions and relationships, involving *inter alia*, the king, his ministers, the army, penal sanctions, acquisition, maintenance and conservation of resources. Quasi-divine and quasi-contractual theories of origin of kingship were subscribed. The *Brāhmanic* social legislation was another consequence of this system, which further provided for predominance of spiritual and regal authority and also for State interference in individual's personal and social life. Denominational-ecclesiastical aspect of *Dharma* remained under *Brāhmanic* control and supremacy of royal authority resulted in the separation of denominational religion from politics. The tug-of-war between the *Brāhmins* and the *Kshatriyas* for the order of supremacy can be noticed.

The tradition imbibed various inherent weaknesses resulting in compartmentalized stratification of society, ritualism and authoritarian monarchical dispensations, Brāhmanic superiority, dominance and dogmatism was responded upon by *Upanishads* during later *Vedic* period; by Jainism and Buddhism during post-*Vedic* period; Sufis, Saints and Sikhism during medieval period and reformers and leaders of depressed classes during 19th and 20th century. However, *Brahmanism* (as a tradition, not as a caste) continued with its command, confining other traditions to the margin of society.

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1.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Periodization and historicity of texts
 - Identification and reading of primary texts
 - Issue of reading the texts in their appropriate historical and cultural contexts
 - Issue of non-English vocabulary for political terms
 - Absence of complete text on political science

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - *Vedas* as Source of Knowledge; *Brahma*; *Kshatra*, Man, Four Pursuits of Life (*Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma*, *Moksha*); *Varna*, *Āshrama*, Duties & Rights, *Danda*
 - Understanding of all the above should reflect political; instead of sociological, religious, metaphysical or philosophical interpretation.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Major Political Ideas
 - Interpretations concerning origin of Kingship
 - Evolution of state and government
 - Elements of state
 - Objectives of state
 - Law and Jurisprudence
 - Administration
 - Principles of Taxation
 - Issues concerning inter-state relations

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Methodological problems
 - Validity of *Vedas*
 - Belief in God and incarnation
 - Pride of birth oriented caste, stratification of society
 - Dogmatic ritualism

2. Your answer should highlight reactions from the following

Brāhmanic

- *Upanishads*
- *Shramanic* Tradition
- Islam
- Sufi and Bhakti tradition



UNIT 2 ŚRAMANIC *

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Methodological Problems
- 2.3 Reactions against *Brāhmanic* Tradition
- 2.4 Basic Concepts
 - 2.4.1 Principles of Existence
 - 2.4.2 Theory of *Karma*
 - 2.4.3 Refuge in Three Jewels
 - 2.4.4 *Madhyam Mārg* (Middle Path)
 - 2.4.5 *Ashtāṅga Mārg* (Eight fold path)
 - 2.4.6 *Vinaya* / Śīla (Ethics)
 - 2.4.7 Creation of the Social Order
 - 2.4.8 *Nirvāṇa* (Enlightenment)
- 2.5 Political Thought in Śramanic Scriptures
 - 2.5.1 Political Ideas
 - 2.5.2 Monastic Governance as a ‘Deliberative Democracy’
 - 2.5.3 Republics in Buddhist Literature
 - 2.5.4 Confederation of Republics
 - 2.5.5 Legislative Administration
 - 2.5.6 Legislative Procedure
 - 2.5.7 Judicial Administration
 - 2.5.8 Ethics as the Basis of Politics
- 2.6 Limitations of Śramanic
- 2.7 Reactions towards Śramanic Tradition
- 2.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.9 References
- 2.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is to familiarise you with the ideas of Śramanic tradition. After studying this unit, you should be able to understand:

- Scope of Śramanic Tradition
- Śramanic reactions against Brāhmanic tradition
- Basic Concepts of Śramanic
- Evolution of Political Ideas and Polity
- Limitations of Śramanic
- Reactions towards Śramanic tradition

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Jains and the Buddhist led two vigorous protestant movements against Brāhmanic tradition from the *fifth century B.C.* onwards. If the centre of earlier Vedic or Brāhmanic tradition was the eastern Afghanistan to *Sapta-Sindhu* to the upper valley of the Ganga, the origin of Śramanic tradition is mainly associated with *Kośala* and *Magadha*, the main areas of *Buddha* and *Mahāvira*. *Steven Collins* has stated that the most likely time for the Buddha and early Buddhism was 5th – 4th centuries B.C. There are *three* notable features of this period: first, during this period, Brahmanism was more strongly established in the countryside than in rising urban centres, where competing plurality of ideologies were emerging; second, these urban centres, which arose from and encouraged a food surplus, were market, military and administrative centres of small-scale polities, not metropolitan capitals of large empires; third, these polities were ruled, in the earlier part of period, by oligarchies, and gradually turned to monarchy. The political discourse of *Diggha Nikāya*, according to *Collins*, apparently presupposed this picture.

Mahāvira, the acknowledged founder of Jainism, was the twenty-fourth *Tirthankar*, first being *Rishabha* and last, before Mahāvira was *Pārsvanāth*. A senior contemporary of Buddha, Mahāvira formed his own monastic community, subsequently divided into two major schools of *Śvetāmbaras* and *Digambaras*. The Jain political philosophy was later explained by *Jinasena* (*Ādipurāna*), *Hemachandra* (*Yogasāstra & Trishastīśalakā-purushacharita*), *Somadeva* (*Nitivākyāmrita*) and *Merutunga* (*Prabandha Chintāmani*) etc.

In the Buddhist tradition, there are three great traditions, *Therāvada*, *Mahāyāna* and *Vajrayāna*. **Thervada** or the school of the elder monks, includes ‘*Tripitaka*’ (Three Baskets) and *Jātaka* tales. It is mainly found in *Burma*, *Cambodia*, *Sri Lanka*, *Laos*, *Thailand* and *Chittagong* in Bangladesh. ‘*Tripitaka*’ comprises *Sutta Pitak*, *Vinaya Pitak* and *Abhidhamma Pitak*. *Sutta Pitak*, is a compilation of Buddha’s sermons, delivered in *Pāli* language. The dialogues of Buddha were collected during the *first* assembly just after his *death*; arranged according to their length; and translated into Sanskrit. There are five *Nikāyas* or collections of

Suttas, namely, (i) *Digha Nikāya* (There are 34 long Suttas), It is most important for political theory purposes. (ii) *Majjhim Nikāya*, (iii) *Samyutta Nikāya*, (iv) *Anguttara Nikāya* and (v) *Khuddaka Nikāya*. The *Vinaya Pitak* contains rules and regulations of monastic life that range from dress code and dietary rules to prohibitions of certain personal conducts; whereas the *Abhidhamma Pitak* mainly provides philosophical and psychological discourse and interpretation of Buddhist doctrine.

Second, *Mahāyāna* or the *Great Vehicle* tradition originated in India and later spread to China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam etc. It *coexisted* with Confucianism and Taoism. The third, closer to *Mahāyāna*, also known as the Tibetan tradition, was called *Vajrayāna* or *Tantric* Buddhism and believes in esoteric healing; deals with social activism and social transformation and is prevalent in *Bhutan*, *Mongolia*, *Nepal* and *Tibet*.

In addition to these works written in Pāli and in *mixed Sanskrit*, there are some Sanskrit works like *Ārya Śūra's Jātakmālā*, *Aśvaghōṣa's Saundarananda Kāvya* and *Buddhacharita* and other later works. Finally, there is a Tibetan work on the *Life of Buddha*, which is a *Vinaya* compilation.

2.2 METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

During the long evolution of *Śramanic* tradition, it is difficult to reach a consensus for periodization and historicity of texts. There is no agreement among the Buddhist scholars regarding the exact date of the *Tripitaka* work. A period ranging from fourth century B.C. to fourth century A.D. has been assigned to these works.

The *Jātaka Stories* have been related to the royal missionary *Mahinda's* (Mahendra) journey to Ceylon during Asoka's reign in the middle of the third century B.C. These *Jātaka Stories* were known to the world through the translation from Pāli into Singhalese in the fifth century A.D. making it difficult for identification and reading of primary texts and classical secondary commentaries of political purport and relevance.

Issue of *non-English* vocabulary for *political* terms also has made indigenous Śramanic texts as *non-inviting* for researchers of Political Science. For example, Pali terms like *ānā* (Command), *Khattiya* (Lord of Fields), *Adhipacca* (lordship); *Issariya* (imposing sovereignty), exercised through *Sattharatna* (seven elements) and 'two wheels' of *Dhammacakka* (wheel of law/ *Vinaya*) and *ānācakka* (wheel of command) require basic understanding of Pāli and Sanskrit term to appreciate their political connotations.

Hence, dealing with the various disciplines of knowledge as branches of same roots and an absence of specified single text dealing with polity and Political Science in a holistic manner (like Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Locke etc.), the tradition invariably was treated as a school of metaphysics and failed to invite

attention of western and oriental scholars of Political Science, in spite of relevant content and milieu.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Explain major methodological problems in the study of *Śramanic* tradition.

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2.3 REACTIONS AGAINST *BRĀHMANIC* TRADITION

Both Jainism and Buddhism were critical of the *Brāhmanic* tradition:

- The Buddha countered the popular belief in the validity of Vedas as original and ancient most source of knowledge. Confronted with the religious pluralism of the times, he acknowledged every form of rival religious beliefs as a possessor of some degree of truth.
- Both countered the belief in intra-cosmic Gods, the cycle of rebirth, idolatry and resulting superstitions. Jainism insisted for the potential of human soul for perfection. Individual souls were regarded as essentially separated and unconnected. It was argued that they get related only due to past actions. Buddhism denied the existence of a soul passing from life to life in fulfillment of its past actions. Personal identity was merely a result of the process of psychic life, which continued from birth to birth binding actions in terms of their moral consequences. Expecting ethical merit from ablutions, *Śramanic* texts argued that man's passions, consciousness, intellect, perception and impressions belong exclusively to the individual.
- *Śramanic* tradition challenged the hereditary basis of caste resulting in stratification of society. *Jayasurya* (p. 47) opines that the emergent social order reacted strongly against the rigidity and dominance, which denied individual autonomy, human freedoms and legitimated inequalities. The new urban mercantilism rejected this hierarchical ordering of society in terms of a divinely destined, sacrosanct social structure made up of four social classes – *Kshatriya*, *Brāhmins*, *Vaishya* and *Śudras* (including the outcastes).

- Their reaction against *Brāhmanic* dominance was so strong that the Jains declared that Tirthankars would never be born in a *Brāhman* family. V.R.Mehta (p.111) narrates a story that the foetus of Lord Mahavira had to be transferred from the womb of a *Brahman* lady. Buddha assigned the *first* place to *Kshatriyas* in the state.
- They exposed the practices of animal and human sacrifices and associated rituals concerning sacrificial violence. Both Jainism and Buddhism were like a revolt against the system of animal sacrifice. Jainism developed an epistemological theory of *Anekāntvāda* and explained it through the doctrine of non-violence. Following the story of the elephant and the six blind men, it was argued that in a dispute, it is very rarely that one side is completely right, while the other being completely wrong. Therefore, truth should be considered in totality, after understanding different viewpoints. While advocating for complete non-violence, Jainism denied even the unconscious killing of germs while walking or speaking.

Considering the Roman Catholic Church and *Brāhmanic* tradition as 'sacrificial systems' placing the essence of religion in sacrifices, Buddhism offered a process of *self-cleansing*. This led many researchers of early Buddhism to consider it as the 'Protestantism of the East' and a critic and complement to the reigning orthodox of *Brāhminism*.

2.4 BASIC CONCEPTS

Buddha declared metaphysical questions being irrelevant and emphasized the significance of simple moral life in accordance with the four noble truths:

- i. The world is full of suffering,
- ii. Suffering is caused by human desires,
- iii. The renunciation of desires is the path to salvation (*Nirvān*), and
- iv. Salvation is possible through eight principles.

Buddhism adopted a rational position by stating that human life is governed by *causal* principles, leaving *no* scope for *divine intervention*.

2.4.1 Principles of Existence

Buddhism is based on - *Anicca*, *Anatta* and *Dukkha* - *three* fundamental principles of all existence and the phenomenal world. *Anicca* (*anitya*) denoted that all things, including self, are impermanent, inconstant, unsteady and changing. *Anatta* (*anātma*) explains the concept of non-self, denying the immortality of soul, and unchanging/permanent nature of self. *Dukkha* (*Duhkha*) describes the pain, suffering, dissatisfaction, anguish, stress, anxiety or frustration emerging from physical/material thing, unpleasant experience or inadequate identity. All kinds of suffering in life, like, birth, old age, sickness, death, association with unpleasant persons or conditions, separation from beloved ones or pleasant situations, disappointment, grief are common sufferings, reflecting impermanence of happiness. Recognition of these three basic

characteristics of existence constitute the right knowledge or the *four* noble Truths, including

Śramanic

- (i) *Dukkha* (the existential fact/reality of suffering),
- (ii) *Samudāya* (it's cause, arising or origin),
- (iii) *Nirodha* (it's cessation) and
- (iv) *Magga* or *Mārga* (ultimately the path leading to its cessation/suppression).

2.4.2 Theory of *Karma*

Both Jainism and Buddhism believed that man could transcend *Karma* by his own efforts. Though they recognized functional Gods, yet emphasized that the universal process (*Samsār*) was a result of certain immutable laws of action (*Karma*), resulting in progress and decline. Jainism maintained that the world was composed of infinite souls, which were trying to purify themselves of action particles (*Karma*). These *Karma* bind the soul and accordingly embody it in different incarnations in a cycle of birth and rebirth. The present life is determined by our past *karma*. Accordingly, the ideal of liberation by one's own individual efforts is realized in the form of birth, death and rebirth. The *Śramanic* tradition preached the value of a moral life in terms of the theory of *Karma*. Both Jainism and Buddhism rejected the *Lokāyata* view of pleasure. Buddhists believed that the causal chain of body and soul could achieve right knowledge, which was *kaivalya jñāna* in Jainism and *Nirvāna* in Buddhism. materialistic doctrine.

2.4.3 Refuge in Three Jewels

Jainism recommends the path of *three* jewels (*Triratna*): (i) right reverence (*Shraddhā*); (ii) right knowledge (*Jñān*); and (iii) right conduct (*Sadāchār*), in order to enable the individual to attain *Nirvāna* (deliverance). It also underlines the virtues of *Ahimsā* (non-violence), *Aparigraha* (non-possession), understanding, equality, service, *Sanyam* (self-restraint), *Tapa* (penance) and oneness in all living things. It comprises a powerful force for co-existential outlook and reflects an attitude of universal love for all living beings, sympathy and compassion towards those in distress and tolerance towards those in opposition. Thus, the *Jain* prayer enjoins: "Lord, I commit myself to communion with the *Ātman*, abjuring the mental outlook, speech or deed that interferes with the oneness of all living beings."

Buddhism exhilarates the *three-fold* submission or seeking refuges to *Buddham* ('Buddha'), *Dhammam* (the 'doctrine') and *Samgham* (the 'Buddhist ecclesiastical fraternity'). In its moral aspect, it stood for *Śīla* (Modesty), *Samādhi* (concentration or meditation) and *Pragyā* (wisdom), the pursuit of which could ultimately lead one to *Nirvāna* (salvation).

2.4.4 *Madhyam Marg* (Middle Path)

If Jainism subscribed to the extreme path of self-denunciation, sacrifice and asceticism, Buddhism advocated for non-extremism or a path of moderation, avoiding the extremes of self-indulgence on one hand, and self-mortification on the other.

2.4.5 *Ashtānga Marg* (Eight fold path)

The three basic categories of human action encouraged 'eight-fold middle path'; where (i) **Pragyā** (wisdom) includes 'right view' (*Sammā ditthi/Drishti*) and 'right intention' (*Sammā Sankappa/Sankalpa*); (ii) **Śīla** (ethical conduct/modesty) comprises 'right speech' (*Sammā Vācā/Vācha*), 'right action' (*Sammā Kammanta*) and 'right livelihood' (*Sammā Ājīva*); and (iii) **Samādhi** (concentration/meditation) comprehends 'right effort' (*Sammā Vyāmma*), 'right mindfulness' (*Sammā Sati*), and 'right concentration' (*Sammā Samādhi*).

2.4.6 *Vinaya* / **Śīla** (Ethics)

Jainism emerged initially as a system of religious thought with a distinct philosophy of its own. In the process of its evolution, it was deeply influenced by the Hindu philosophical tradition. Jainism suggests five vows for the realization of absolute happiness or *Sukha*:

- (i) *Ahimsā*: non-violence in thought, word and deed;
- (ii) *Satya*: pursuit of truth and avoidance of falsehood;
- (iii) *Asteya*: satisfaction with whatever one possesses and avoidance of stealing;
- (iv) *Brahmacharya*: Celibacy and to be content with one's own wife; and
- (v) *Aparigraha*: to limit one's possessions.

These vows are prescribed not only for the ascetic, but also for the discipline of *Anuvrata*.

The five Precepts, mandatory for all Buddhists, defining the *Vinaya* code or the monastic code include (Collins, p.25-26):

- a. 'He cannot intentionally deprive a living thing of life' (*Ahimsā*)
- b. 'He cannot take what is not given, intending to steal' (*Asteya*)
- c. 'He cannot have sex' (*Brahmacharya*)
- d. 'He cannot tell a conscious lie' (*Satya*)
- e. 'He cannot enjoy (objects of) desire, making a store (*Aparigraha*)

Buddhist tradition stood for *Śīla* (modesty), *Samadhi* (meditation) and *Pragyā* (wisdom), the pursuit of which could ultimately lead one

to *Nirvāna* (salvation). It denoted moral purity of thought, word and action; including *Satya* (truthfulness), *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Asteya* (non-stealing), *Brahmcharya* (refrain from sensual misconduct), and *Madyavimukta* (refrain from intoxicants)

2.4.7 Creation of the Social Order

U.N. Ghoshal argues that *Aggana Sutta* challenges the Vedic ideas on divine creation of the social order, while suggesting that the division of people in society is based upon need and convenience rather than any hierarchical division. In other words, the division in the social order, with precedence to *Kshatriya* over *Brāhman*, is based upon functional performance of activities by the groups and not determined by *varna* model.

If *Brāhmanical* king ideally maintained the *varna* division in the social order; the Buddhist king's primary task was to maintain a social order in which the property and family of individuals are protected in accordance with *Dhamma*.

2.4.8 Nirvāna (Enlightenment)

Jainism believes that man is a slave to pleasure of senses, with no end to its accumulation. This leads to attachment of *Karmic* particles, which, in turn, lead to infinite cycles of life and death. The search for self-knowledge and self-realization is the only way to transcend this world and attain liberation.

For Buddha, *Nirvāna* or *Nibbāna* is *Magga* (the path) to the cessation of *Dukkha*. Buddha calls it *Majjhima Patipadā* (the middle path), as it seeks to avoid extremes of pleasure of senses and self-mortification, and leads to enlightenment or *Nirvāna*.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Explain the Śramanic reactions against the Brāhmanic tradition.

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2. What are the significant basic concepts of the *Śramanic* tradition?

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2.5 POLITICAL THOUGHT IN ŚRAMANIC SCRIPTURES

2.5.1 Political Ideas

Jain Idealism primarily implied plurality of souls; emphasized experience in material universe; Portrayed ideal king as puritanical character, reformist legislation, aiming at charity and welfare of people. *V.R.Mehta* is of the view that in the beginning, Jainism was a *non-political*, but *not anti-political* doctrine. It did not contain any political statement of individualism or human equality. Even democratic ideology was wholly absent from it. Since it regarded the world as a bondage, the whole emphasis was on man's efforts to gain salvation by practicing sacrifice and penance. Jain canonist like *Jinsena* supported the patriarchal origin of the state and asserted that the state is a cause of grief, a harmful drug, which has to be taken as a necessity. Mehta (p. 117) quoting Jinsena says that even the king should try to get rid of it as soon as possible. Politics may provide happiness in this world, but cannot assure happiness thereafter. But Jainism reconciled itself to the necessity of politics, resulting in two finest pieces on statecraft, *Hemchandra's Yogasastra* and *Somdeva's Nitivākyāmṛita*.

Buddhist Vision imbibed reformist stance towards ritualistic and aristocratic features of early *Vedic* period; the origin & evolutionary nature of state in *Digha Nikāya*; projection of king as *Mahāsammata*, *Khattiya*, *Rājan*; Asoka's *Dhamma* depicted the earliest all-inclusive ideology of state and civil society; references of *ānā*, *Gaṇa*, and republics in Buddhist literature denoted the republican trends.

Buddhism is primarily understood as a religious and philosophical concept, while it is equally concerned with the mundane and transcendental world. Scholars like *S.J. Tambiah* were convinced that king enjoyed significant status in Buddhist philosophy, whereas others like *Max Weber* considered it apolitical. There are scattered references to power and kingship in Pāli scriptures, but there is *no* direct theory supporting these references. *B.K. Gokhale* has outlined the evolution of Buddhist thinking on the origin and development of the state as outlined in *Aggana Sutta* (Details given in Unit-9).

2.5.2 Monastic Governance as a ‘Deliberative Democracy’

Śramanic

The monastic community or *Samgha* was governed and regulated by a well formulated code of conduct, called the *Vinaya*. It was an integral part of the Buddhist Compilation, enlisting rules and procedures governing the structure and functioning of the monastic community. Accordingly, the brotherhood of monks relied on the democratic foundations, where a code of law used to govern their conduct. The social status or the seniority of monks was decided on the basis of date of ordination. Their inter-personal relations were based on an equalitarian liberal culture, having no formal hierarchy or dynastic favouritism. In individual life, monk were expected to shed greed, hatred, delusion, folly, conceit, and ignorance. They were to live with communal property and bare minimum private possessions and in communal harmony. They were to be careful, compassionate and responsible towards the wider society of lay persons, who cater to community in meeting their daily chores. This monastic governance had many similarities with the features of statecraft existing in the self-governing confederacies and republics rather than the large monarchical kingdoms like Kośala and Magadh.

If the monarchical kingdoms were led by *Brāhmanic* notions of a divinely sanctioned superior class of rulers, the self-governing confederacies were guided by the humanistic Buddhist ethics and skilful democratic form of conflict resolution.

2.5.3 Republics in Buddhist Literature

In Buddha’s times, *two* forms of government existed in the Gangetic plains in Northern India, *Republican* and *monarchical* in competition with each other. The trend was to increase the size and power of monarchy at the cost of republics. Government by discussion was the keystone of a republican form of government.

According to *Mahabharata*, five republican people – the Andhakas, the Vrishnis, the Yādavas, the Kukuras and the Bhojas – formed themselves into a confederation and Krishna was made the confederate president. Each of the constituent states of the confederation appeared as an autonomous unit under its own chief called *Ishvara*, master or lord. *Panini* has referred to *Ayudhajivi* – living by arms – republics. *Bhandārkar* has placed Panini before Buddha. It seems that these republican states specialized in the military arts, they, according to *V.P. Varma*, were like the Spartas of ancient India.

The list of Republics recorded in Buddhist literature, according to *K.P.Jayaswal* (p. 42-3) includes:

- a. the Śākya (capital Kapilvastu, today's districts of Gorakhpur);
- b. the Koliyas of Rāmagrāma;

- c. the Lichchhavis (capital Vaishali, parts of today's districts of Muzaffarpur);
- d. the Videhas (capital Mithila, today's districts of Darbhanga); (last two were jointly called the Vṛjīs or Vajjis);
- e. the Mallas, from the districts of Gorakhpur to that of Champaran, divided into two units, with their capitals at Kusinārā and Pāvā;
- f. the Moriyas of Pippalivana;
- g. the Bulis of Allakappa, neighbours of the Mallas of Kuśnagara; and
- h. the Bhaggas (Bhargas), the neighbours of the kingdom of the Vatsas of Kauśāmbī.

Politically, the most important republics of this group were the Vṛjīs and the Mallas. The former were mentioned both by Pānini and Kautilya. The Bhargas find reference in *Mahābhārata* and the Pali records. Pānini mentions them as an independent *Janapada* or a political nation. Jayaswal has interpreted a *Sutra* of Panini reflecting the existence of the bicameral system in some of the republics.

M.P. Singh has stated that *Samghas* were an intermediate stage between the collectivism of popular tribal assemblies and fully developed monarchical state. *Aṅguttara Nikāya* mentions 16 *Mahājanapadas* (greater territorial communities) i.e. Kāśī, Kośala, Anga, Magadha, Vajji or Vṛji, Malla, Chedi, Vatsa, Kuru, Pañcāla, Matsya, Sūrasena, Aśmaka, Avanti, Gāndhāra, and Kambōja. *Dīgha Nikāya* mentions first 12 *Mahājanapadas* and omits last four. (Singh p. 2) Later, four kingdoms of Kośala, Magadha, Vatsa, and Avanti emerged, out of which Kośala (incorporated the territory of the Śākya clan, to which Buddha belonged) and Magadha became the main areas of Buddha and Mahavira. Both were contemporaries of Bimbasāra (of Haryanka dynasty), the king of Magadha, assassinated by his son Ajātaśatru around 494 BCE, about seven years before the death of Buddha. Monarchy flourished in three contexts of Individualism, urbanisation & density of population. From these early state formations, the first state with growing ideology of *Varna* and class inequalities emerged in Magadha under Mahāpadma Nanda. (R.S.Sharma)

Buddha's '*Bhikkhu Samgha*' or the 'Republic of *Bhikshus*' adopted the name and constitution of the political *Samghas*. To maintain their independence, strengthen their democratic form of governance and to ensure welfare of a community, 'seven conditions' were enlisted, which reflected notable commonality between the self-governing republics of the Vajjians and the governance of the monastic community or the '*Bhikkhu Samghas*' (Jayaswal p. 40-42 & Jayasuriya p.53):

- (i) Holding regular and frequent meeting of assemblies;
- (ii) Meeting together to carry out regular tasks of governance or business in harmony;
- (iii) Enacting or establishing nothing that has not already been prescribed, abrogate nothing that has already been enacted or established and act in accordance with the existing institutions of Vajjians or rules of *Samgha*;

- (iv) Honouring, listening and revering the Elders, the Fathers and the Leaders of Vajjis or the *Samgha*;
- (v) Women and girls not being abducted or brethren not falling under influence;
- (vi) Honouring, revering and supporting Vajjian monuments or delight in a life of solitude; and
- (vii) Following the established practice and systems or train their minds to prosper.

Jayasuriya has asserted that the self-governing confederacies primarily followed the normative code of conduct based on human freedom and equality of the ruler and the ruled. However, the issue of gender equality was raised at the ordination of women as nuns, where *Ananda*, the Buddha's trusted disciple, had to persuade him and the nuns had to agree to abide by certain additional rules, and finally the Buddha accepted women as 'spiritual equals'.

The history of the birth of Buddhist *Samghas* is a history of the birth of the Monastic Order in the world. The Buddha preferred a more open society prevailing in smaller tribal oligarchies (*Gana Samgha* or clan republics) than the larger monarchical kingdoms like Kośala and Magadha. The smaller tribal oligarchies or confederacies, particularly the *Vajjian* confederacy proved to be a fertile catchment for the Buddha. According to Ghoshal, the functional and utilitarian social practice of the *Vajjian* clan republics, in promoting happiness and prosperity, were filled with sense of public spirit; pragmatic form of governance; moral righteousness; respect for elders, women and holy persons; and receptive to the teachings of the Buddha.

Jayasuria finds similarities between Asoka's model of governance on the one hand and the Vajjian constitution, its legislative governance and judicial system of self-governing confederacies on the other.

2.5.4 Confederation of Republics

The *Videhas* and the *Lichchhavis* were united in a league called the *Samvajji* (or the Vajjians together). The two Vajji republics were *not* confined to their own federation. It is noted that the Lichchhavis formed a federation with their neighbours, the Mallas. This confederacy existed during the year Mahāvira died. The Federal Council was composed of eighteen members, including nine Lechchhakas and nine Mallakis. The members of the Federal Council were called *Gaṇa-Rājās*. These eighteen 'confederate kings' were placed in the Kāshi-Koshal area. The federal states had equal members, equal voice and equal votes reflecting equality in the federation. Even though the Mallas were not as powerful as Lichchhavis, yet both had equal number of members and equal voice in the Federal Council.

Supporting *Dr. Jacobi's* opinion, Jayaswal has stated that these 'eighteen confederate kings' were placed by the Jain Sutra in the Kaśi-Kośala area. At the

time of death of the Mahāvira, the empire of Kośala was called the Kāśī-Kośala. It seems that the Federal Council had some political alliance with the Kośala monarchy. The Kośala republics were certainly on bad terms with Magadha. The Vaiśālians lost battle with *Ajātsatru*, the Magadha Emperor. It seems that the leagues were naturally formed to oppose the great powers between whom they were situated.

2.5.5 Legislative Administration

K.P. Jayaswal is of the view that republics of seventh and sixth centuries B.C. had long passed the tribal stage of society and could be called “states, *Gaṇas* and *Samghas*”. Their administration and judicial business was managed in public assembly of both, young and old. Their house was called *Santhāgāra* (Mote Hall). They were under the suzerainty of the king of Kośala. Their council, according to Jayaswal, seemed to have 500 members. Even the death of Buddha was announced by Ānanda in the *Santhāgāra* of the Mallas. The senior most member used to be elected as the presiding officer and was given the title of *Rājā*, and has been compared by Jayaswal with the *Roman Consul* or the *Greek Archon*, yet, was not associated with kingly sovereignty.

The *Jātaka* has named the Lichchhavi rulers as *Gaṇa-rulers* or republican rulers. *Rhys Davids*, as quoted by Jayaswal, refers to the Lichchhavi constitution. He has mentioned *three* highest officers:

- (i) The President (*Rājā*),
- (ii) The Vice-President (*Upa- Rājā*)
- (iii) The Generalissimo (*Senāpati*).
- (iv) The fourth officer mentioned in *Jātaka* was the Chancellor of the Exchequer (*Bhandāgārika*).

These four highest officers composed the executive authority located in the city of Vaishali, with a system of ‘triple fortification’ for security purposes. The rule (*rajjam*) vested in the inhabitants (*Vasantānam*), who were 7707 in number, all of them were entitled to rule (*rājunam*, kings). From among them, the President (*Rājāno*), the Vice-President (*Upa- Rājāno*), Commander-in-Chief (*Senāpatino*) and the Chancellor of the Exchequer (*Bhandāgārika*) were to be selected. It seems that with formal approval from the assembly, the members of foundation families or the ruling class used to become the executive office holders. The total population was around 1,68,000 divided in outer and inner citizens (Vaiśālians). The consecration (*Abhisheka*) ceremony of rulers (*Gana-rājās*) was done in the presence of assembly members.

2.5.6 Legislative Procedure

There were *similarities* in the procedure of deliberation in political *Samghas* and the Buddhist *Samghas*. When the Vaiśālians entered their House of Law, the

signal (tocsin) used to be sounded. In the House, they discussed not only political and military, but agricultural and commercial issues as well.

Lichchhavi *Gaṇa* used to appoint a *Mahattaka* (a distinguished member) as their envoy (leader), who could deliver a message on behalf of the Lichchhavis of Vaishali. The *Gaṇa*, under the leadership of *Mahattaka*, used to transact business on behalf of the whole people. The rule of having respect for the high, the middle ones, the oldest or the elder was not observed. Every member was accorded equal right of speech and voting; and everyone could aspire to be the next president.

All the members used to be present in the assembly on assigned seats. For the purpose, a special officer named as *Āsana-paññāpaka* or *Āsana-Prjñāpaka* (Seat-regulator) to designate seats for all members.

The rule of quorum was usually observed. In smaller local societies, it could be twenty. If any business was transacted without the required number of members being present, the act was considered as invalid and inoperative. The duty of gathering the minimum number of members was done by one of the members named *Gaṇa-pūraka* or Whip.

Deliberations were initiated with a motion called *ñatti* or *Jñapti* (notice). It was followed by a resolution (*Prtijñā*) to be adopted by the *Samgha*. The procedure of moving the *ñatti* (*Jñapti*) once and the *Prtijñā* once was called *ñatti-dutīya* or the “Two- *ñatti* procedure”. In some cases the resolution was repeated thrice, then it was called *ñatti-chatuttha* (the four- *ñatti*-procedure). Putting the resolution or *Prtijñā* to the assembly was called *Kammavāchā* (*Karmavāch*). But, if the *ñatti* was moved and no *Prtijñā* was formally put or if the resolution was proclaimed and no *ñatti* had been moved, the act was to be treated as invalid. Similarly, as act requiring a *ñatti-chatuttha* could not be lawful, if the motion was not moved for the prescribed number of times. The order of the motion and resolution could not be altered.

All those who approved of the resolution were expected to remain silent, but those who opposed were required to speak. If a member did not control in discussion and showed contradiction and misbehaviour, the ‘Procedure of Censure’ could be applied. Lawful presence in discussion was further decided according to the principle of representation, where the members were expected to represent *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*.

To avoid ‘pointless speeches’, the right of deliberation was delegated to a specifically appointed committee of the House, which can partly be compared with today’s committee system of the legislative procedure. In the absence of decision by such a committee, the matter was to be decided as per the Procedure-of-Majority.

Chhanda (Vote) was an expression of free will and choice used by member. Voting was not required for unanimous resolutions, but if division of opinion was

required, then Procedure-of-Majority (*Bahutara*) was observed. The voting was carried on with the help of coloured voting tickets (*Śalākās*) or pins (wood) and the voting was called the pin-taking (*Śalākāgrahan*). A duly appointed impartial ‘teller’ (*Śalākāgrāhaka*) was to explain the significance of colours and take the votes either secretly and openly. Votes of absentees, who owing to some illness or disability could not attend, were meticulously collected. Its omission was treated as breach of proceedings. However, such votes were rejected if objected to by the members.

Clerks or Recorder of the House, from among the members, were appointed to record minutes of the deliberations and resolutions.

Finally, if the assembly remained silent, it was declared as approved and the affected party was formally informed about the resolution. Once the matter was settled, it could not be re-opened.

2.5.7 Judicial Administration

The President was also the highest judicial authority. There could be a Judicial Minister, who could be an outsider or a paid officer. To ensure liberty of the citizens, case was to be considered by *Senāpati*, the *Upa-Rājā* and the *Rājā* separately and without dissent. The decisions of the President, along with the particulars of crime and punishment, were recorded. The judicial administration included various layers, for example,

- (1) The President was also the highest judicial authority along with the *Rājā*, the *Upa-Rājā*, *Senāpati* and the judicial minister.
- (2) The Court of Final Appeal was called the *Ashta-Kulaka* (Court of the Eight).
- (3) The judges of the high Court were called *Sūtra-dharas* or Doctors of Law.
- (4) The Court of Appeal was presided over by *Vohātrikas* (Lawyer Judges).
- (5) Preliminary enquiry into the case was held in the court of justices (*Vinichchaya Mahāmāttas*). Evidently, these were the regular court for civil causes and ordinary offences.

This narrative of criminal procedure of *Attha-kathā* has reflection of the general procedure of republican system of justice found in Sanskrit literature. For example, in *Mahābhārata*, it is suggested that criminal justice in a republic should be administered by experts. *Bhṛiguśmṛiti* has mentioned *Kulika* and *Kula* as the deciding body. *Kātyāyana* has used *Kula* in the sense of jury. Similarly, the *Ashta-Kulaka* (Court of the Eight) of Buddhist literature, according to Jayaswal, may be considered as a judicial council of eight members, instead of ‘representatives of eight clans’, as has been suggested by Rhys Davids.

It seems that Buddha himself was well familiar with the working system of republics and adopted the same for the benefit of his own order, the *Dhamma-Samgha*, while adopting the republican constitution. The liberal culture of the *Gana Samghas* or tribal republics had notable parallel in the monastic community or the social organization. *Jayasuriya* opines that this 'deliberative democratic' form of governance was supportive to maintain plurality of discourse, and was similar to the Socratic method of dialogue than the prescriptive dialogue approach of the *Brāhmanic* code. Irreconcilable dissent recorded in some of the Councils of monastic fraternity (e.g. the Third Council during the reign of Asoka) led to cordial agreement to differ and formation of different sects.

2.5.8 Ethics as the Basis of Politics

As the state grew in size and structural and functional complexities with the rise of Nandas and Mauryas after Buddha, the concept of the Reason of the State was gradually theorised. The morality of state was differentiated from the morality of individual. *Chandragupta*, the founder of Maurya Dynasty is said to have embraced *Jainism*, and *Asoka*, his grandson, espoused *Buddhism* and adopted *Dhamma* as an instrument of state policy.

Referring to the relationship between moral and political values, *V.P. Varma* has mentioned four important Indian schools of thought during the ancient period. First, in *Rāmāyana* of Valmiki, the school of Rama advocated a synthesis of political and ethical values. Secondly, the school of Buddhism attributed supremacy to moral values. Thirdly, the school of the *Bhagvadgītā* inculcates the legitimacy of violence. Fourthly, the *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya advocated the subordination of means to ends. *V.R. Mehta* is of the view that while *Mahābhārata* assigned importance to connecting morals with experience in the establishment of order in the state; Buddhist texts emphasized the absolute value of non-violence and other moral principles in the governance of society. It did not recognise the autonomy of public or political morality. Accordingly, a king not following *Dhamma*, was declared unrighteous and its impact on nature was also to be followed in the forms of no rains or no crops etc. Game of deceit and treachery was treated as a contempt of politics. *M.P. Singh* has opined that Asoka's transformation and emphasis on *Dharmavijaya* introduced a new feature in Indian political tradition, where the unity of India came to inhere in culture rather than direct political domination. Even though Asoka's *Dhamma* was inspired by Buddha's *Dhamma*, but it was not exactly a mirror image of the former. Yet, *Romila Thapar* underlines the political implications of Asoka's policy with the Buddhist ideal of the *Cakkavatty* (*Chakravarty*) kingship, a just and virtuous universal emperor, whose dominions covered the whole of Jambudvīpa. The ideal kingship was familiar to the Jainas and had antecedents in epic heroes like Rama and Yudhishtira, who were referred to as *Digvijayi* and *Dharmarājā*. Asoka's centralized, bureaucratic and monarchical state went beyond the *Ṛgvedic Sabha* and *Samiti*; Janapadas of Mauryan state; and also the

Mahāsammata (the Great Elect) and *Mahājanapadas* of the Early Buddhist theory.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Analyze the evolution of political ideas and political system in the *Śramanic* tradition.

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2.6 LIMITATIONS OF ŚRAMANIC

- Metaphysics and ethics being the central concept of the *Śramanic* tradition, identification and acknowledgment of political thought pose some serious weaknesses.
- Both Jainism and Buddhism could not completely disassociate themselves from *Brāhmanic* tradition. While the *Brāhmanic* tradition accepted the value of divine grace, it did not disregard the force of *Karma*, whose consequences one had to face by one's own efforts. The Jain principle of many-sided knowledge was similar to the Vedic principle of '*Neti*' (this is not) or the Upanishadic principles of relativity. With the result, Jainism could not distinguish itself from other practices. Gradually, forms of worship, *mantra* and *tantra* found their way in Jainism. While Jainism appreciated individual effort, yet it did not completely disregard the intra-cosmic Gods. During the eighth to twelfth centuries, it developed *mantra*, *tantra* and cosmological views almost similar to the *Brahmanic* tradition. They laid the foundation for the vision of conflict between the life of a householder and that of a king and one consecrated to liberation.
- Some aspects of these doctrine were harsh and one sided, inviting critical assaults from Shankaracharya. Jainism revised its view, but Buddhism did not, with the result, it disappeared from the land of its birth.
- Buddhist tradition relied on *Dhamma* based *Vinaya* for establishment of order in society, but in the absence of constitutional checks and safeguards against the arbitrary exercise of power, *Dhamma* alone was insufficient safeguard against a wicked ruler.
- By mid-fifth century, after Buddha's death, republics collapsed partly due to aggression of the monarchies, and largely due to internal

disagreements amongst republican nobles and elders. Undisciplined individualism, moral indolence, individual pride and lack of discipline were the defining features of changing times.

Śramanic

2.7 REACTIONS TOWARDS ŚRAMANIC TRADITION

- Rejection of hereditary caste system by *Śramanic* tradition appealed to people across civilizational boundaries beyond subcontinent, making Buddhism a universal religion.
- It's assertion for equality appealed to large section of society and changed social equations. With Buddhism countering the caste system, *Brāhmanism* entered into a new phase by broadening cultic practices, devising public ceremonies and rituals. With initial spread of Buddhism, Brahmin hold over low castes got weakened and gradually, Hinduism began to be formulated as it is practiced today.
- Opposing Buddhism, Shankaracharya led the movement for revival, reform and unification. With various religious movements, from Jainism and animism to atheism, coming under the umbrella of Hinduism, Buddhism was wiped out from the land of its birth.
- The subsequent decline of the Mauryan state finally paved the way for beginning of the feudal state and Islamic state in the historiography of state in India.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Highlight major limitations of the *Śramanic* tradition.

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2. Point out various reactions towards the *Śramanic* tradition.

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2.8 LET US SUM UP

The origin of *Śramanic* tradition is mainly associated with Kośala and Magadha, the main areas of Mahāvira and Buddha. During long evolution, periodization and historicity of texts; identification and reading of primary texts and secondary commentaries; non-English vocabulary for political terms are some of the methodological concerns this tradition encounters. This tradition emerged as a reaction against and reform of the prevailing *Brāhmanic* tradition, but could not escape the influence thereof.

Its fundamental concepts and ideas, articulated by Mahāvira and Buddha and compiled by their disciples believed in *Anicca*, *Anatta* and *Dukkha* as three fundamental principles of all existence and the theory of *Karma*. If Jainism believed in *Triratna* of *Shraddhā*, *Jnān*; and *Sadāchār*; Buddhism subscribed to submission to *Buddham*, *Dhammam* and *Samgham*. While preaching for ‘eight-fold middle path’, it encouraged *Vinaya* / *Śīla* (Ethics) for attainment of *Nirvāna* or Enlightenment.

In Buddha’s contemporary times two forms of government existed in the Gangetic plains in Northern India, Republican and monarchical in competition with each other. The adopted constitutional procedures were based on ‘democratic’ non-authoritarian style of governance, communal deliberation, honouring fraternity, cooperation and equality, face to face negotiation, regular meetings, participatory and accommodating free and frank debate and discussion among equals, rational enquiry, encouragement to a dispassionate and critical attitude, majority opinions in decision making, accommodating differences of opinion and dissent without imposing majoritarian decisions. There reflected a consensus in collective decision-making arrived at in accord with Constitution of the Community, code of conduct rules, conventions and form of practice.

Buddhist texts emphasized the absolute value of non-violence and other moral principles in the governance of society. It did not recognise the autonomy of public or political morality.

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2.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Periodization and historicity of texts
 - Identification and reading of primary texts
 - Issue of non-English vocabulary for political terms
 - Absence of complete text on political science

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Belief in the validity of Vedas
 - belief in intra-cosmic Gods
 - hereditary basis of caste system
 - supremacy of Brahmins
 - practices of animal and human sacrifices and associated rituals
2. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Principles of Existence
 - Theory of *Karma*
 - Refuge in Three Jewels
 - *Madhyam Mārg* (Middle Path)
 - *Ashtānga Mārg* (Eight fold path)
 - *Vinaya* / *Śīla* (Ethics)
 - Creation of the Social Order
 - *Nirvāna* (Enlightenment)

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Monastic Governance as a 'Deliberative Democracy'
 - Republics in Buddhist Literature
 - Confederation of Republics
 - Legislative Administration
 - Legislative Procedure

- Judicial Administration
- Ethics as the Basis of Politics

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1. Your answer should highlight following points

- Identification and acknowledgment of political thought
- Could not completely disassociate themselves from *Brāhmanical* tradition
- Disappearance of Buddhism from the land of its birth
- *Vinaya* not an alternative for constitutional checks and safeguards
- Weakness of republics

2. Your answer should highlight following points

- Spread of Buddhism beyond Indian subcontinent
- Efforts for modification and reform of Hinduism
- Shankaracharya's efforts for revival and unification
- Decline of the Mauryan state and beginning of the feudal state and Islamic state

UNIT 3 ISLAMIC*

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Methodological Issues
- 3.3 Comparison with *Brahmanic* Tradition
- 3.4 Basic Concepts
- 3.5 Initial Period of Delhi Sultanate: Ziauddin Barani
 - Major Characteristics
 - 3.5.1 The Nature of Kingship
 - 3.5.2 Concept of Sovereignty
 - 3.5.3 Concerning Law
 - 3.5.4 Submission to Hierarchical Order
 - 3.5.5 Objective of Sultan to establish Islamic Rule among Non-Islamic Subjects
 - 3.5.6 Concern for Efficient Administration
 - 3.5.7 Recognition of Individual Rights
 - 3.5.8 Judicial Administration
 - 3.5.9 Commitment to Islam
- 3.6 The Mughal Period and Abul Fazal
 - Major Characteristics
 - 3.6.1 Divine Nature of Royal Power
 - 3.6.2 Well-Being of Subjects as the Objective of the State
 - 3.6.3 Religious Harmony
 - 3.6.4 Centralized Monarchical Government
 - 3.6.5 Theory of Kingship
 - 3.6.6 Administrative Reforms
 - 3.6.7 Fourfold Social Classification
- 3.7 The Colonial Period and Pan-Islamism of Mohammad Iqbal

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- 3.7.1 *Khuda, Insan-E-Kamil and Khudi*
- 3.7.2 Objective of Islam
- 3.7.3 Crystallization of Muslim fraternity
- 3.7.4 Concept of Nation
- 3.7.5 Concept of nationalism and Hindu-Muslim unity
- 3.7.6 Pan-Islamism or Islamic Universalism
- 3.7.7 Opposition to political ascendancy of the Hindus
- 3.7.8 Ideological Support to the Idea of Pakistan
- 3.8 Limitations of Islamic Tradition
 - 3.8.1 During the Initial Period of Delhi Sultanate
 - 3.8.2 During the Mughal Period
 - 3.8.3 During the Colonial Period and Pan-Islamism
- 3.9 Reactions towards Islamic Tradition
- 3.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.11 References
- 3.12 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is to familiarize you with the ideas of Islamic tradition. After studying this unit, you should be able to understand:

- Scope of Islamic Tradition
- Basic Concepts of Islamic Tradition
- Evolution of Political Ideas and Polity during the initial period of the Delhi Sultanate, Mughal and colonial periods.
- Limitations of Islamic Tradition
- Reactions against Islamic Tradition

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The political contact of India with Islam began sometimes in the 8th century A.D., when the Arabs established their control over the province of Sindh. Thereafter, for a few centuries, this contact remained by and large, dormant and had no significant expansion. In the 11th century, the Sultan of Ghazni committed a number of aggressions in the North-Western Frontier area. It was in the 12th century that the king of Gauri committed two aggressions and laid the foundations of Muslim rule in India. Thereafter, in 1206 an independent Sultanate was established in Delhi. The Islamic State continued to flourish from the 18th century until the advent of the British in India.

The Islamic tradition in India has primarily been the journey of political-Arabic Islam in India that had three main features: (a) In India, though Muslim monarchs were politically and religiously sovereign, yet were not dictated by the Arabic-Persian monarchs or the mullahs. Along with the local nobility, the Muslim elite of the foreign origin (Turks, Persians, Arabs, Uzbeks) constituted only 2-3 percent of the Muslim population; (b) they were contemptuous, but restrained in their attitude towards the local residents due to the fear of possible local revolts, who had enjoyed large degree of freedom in their time and space; and (c) the Indian dalits and the Other Backward Castes (the *Arjal* and the *Ajlaf*), who had converted to Islam, constituted the majority of the Muslim population (95% approx) and continued with their hereditary castes' role of performing professional social services in the villages and towns. (Roy)

Political ideas in Islam came partly from the Hebrew Prophets and partly from the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. The former inspired the concept of one God as ruler and law giver of the world. The Muslims realized their direct relationship with this one God through Muhammad. Repeated references to Aristotle by Barani reflects the influence of Greek philosophers. Muhammad's divine mission was fundamentally related to state building that, in turn, inspired Muslims with the notion of communal solidarity and political legitimacy. Consequently, the subsequent Islamic political thinking was governed by three basic principles: (i) the divine law, the *Shariat* based on Koran, (ii) the historical traditions of initial years, and (iii) the consensus and solidarity of the Islamic community. (V.R. Mehta)

The nature of the state and the form of government during the reign of the Muslims found eminently reflected in the writings of philosophers and historians like Ziauddin Barani and Abul Fazal. For instance, in the *Tarikh-i-Ferozeshahi* and the *Fatawa-e-Jahandari* of Ziauddin Barani is reflected not only the nature of the State during the reigns of Alauddin Khilji and Mohammad-bin-Tughlaq, but also the traditions of the Islamic State. These works also indicated the Muslim ruler's practical policy of carrying together the non-Muslim and the non-sunni sections of society with an intent for establishment and consolidation of the Islamic state in India.

The contemporary of Akbar, Abul Fazal depicted the rudiments of new liberal and humane approach in *Ain-I-Akbari*, while emphasizing the equality of all men in their brotherhood; a basic cultural unity in all religions; and not to allow religious difference to destroy the harmony of society.

A striking diverse prominence of Islamic fraternity was noticed during the colonial period, e.g. Iqbal, when followers were expected to consider themselves as a part of one Islamic community irrespective of their territorial abode in any state, thereby following the concept of Pan-Islamism.

Diverse methodologies may be applied to understand and interpret Indo-Islamic political tradition.

- **The Contextual Approach:** It is incumbent to understand the context of ideas and issues: accordingly, it is necessary to realize the initial establishment of Islamic polity among non-Islamic subjects in Barani; consolidation of Mughal Empire, political pluralism, religious toleration in Fazal and amalgamation of Pan-Islamic community in Iqbal.
- **The Historical Approach:** the historical context of Barani's or Fazal's works can better be understood with reference to their own interactions with the Sultanate or the Empire and the contacts of their own family members, specially their father and grandfathers. Evaluation of their ideas in the present-day context, without being first familiar with their respective historical contexts, would simply be unfair to them.
- **The Philosophical or Normative Approach** may be applied to understand the Koranic philosophic leanings of Indo-Islamic scholars.
- **The Analytical and Comparative Approach:** This approach offers yet another option to study Indo-Islamic tradition. To analyse, compare and contrast ancient, medieval and modern manifestations of Indian political thought and their compatibility with the Western counterparts presupposes an analytical and comparative penetration.
- **The Conceptual Approach:** To analyze the concepts and ideas contained in the works of Barani, Fazal or Iqbal, one should be fairly conversant with their respective philosophical, moral, political and social commitments, assumptions and perceptions.

In short, reliance on any one approach is to be avoided considering the complementarity of all approaches.

3.3 COMPARISON WITH *BRAHMANIC* TRADITION

- In contrast to the Vedantic philosophy, the Muslims consider Koran as the only and final authority. Before the coming of Islam, the political structure in India was *not* based on the philosophy and belief of a *single* text.
- Instead of one particular scripture, the *Brahmanic* tradition accepted the authority of multiple scriptures, which led to wider respect for diversity of political opinion and institution building in society. Whereas the Islamic thought believed in the finality of the *Shariat*, restricting the role of reason only to the interpretation of one book.
- Both the traditions believed in the necessity of an authority to control the evil propensities in man. But while the *Brahmanic* thought separated the political and cultural realms, the Muslim tradition could not develop any independent organization to promote divine objectives. Whereas the former assigned this

role to *Brahmans*, accepting them as an alternative center of power parallel to the state, in Islamic tradition, the state was considered not only a necessary organ to control man's aggressive nature, but also a supreme organization to regulate life.

- Islamic thought emphasized the obligation to and qualities of the just ruler resulting in the legitimization of the authority of the ruler; whereas the earlier thought realized the idea of contrast and the existence of critical factor. However, Barani took the position in common with Kautilya "a good king is better than a bad king, but a bad king is better than anarchy." (V.R. Mehta)
- Though the advent of Islam and Christianity led to diversities and antagonisms, efforts continued to be made to synthesize them with the original view and to strike a judicious balance between the two. From the point of view of the State and the principles on which it is based, the establishment of Islamic, especially the Sultanate and the Mughal systems of governance provided a new format to the system of governance. For instance, in the times of Ziauddin Barani, though there was a great divide between the Muslims and the non-Muslims, internally even between the Sunnis and the non-Sunni Muslims, it did not materially affect the basic commitment to hold and carry together the followers of various religions and sects.
- The fundamental conception of a well-governed State, the distinction-between virtue and vice, just and unjust, right and wrong and the administration of justice remained, by and large, in accordance with the ancient Indian traditions. Indo-Islamic political thought, thus, depicted adaptability to Indian conditions
- Due to the *varnashrama* system, *Brahmanic* tradition was deeply concerned with intra-community relations; whereas the Indo-Islamic texts were more focused on inter-community relations between the Muslims and Hindus.
- Both the traditions concentrated on the nature of authority and boundaries in which it was legitimized.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Explain major methodologies to be used to study the *Islamic* tradition.

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2. Highlight the major points of comparison with the *Brahmanic* tradition.

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3.4 BASIC CONCEPTS

In matters of governance, the Muslim elite were influenced by the political ideas of Islam. Based on two authoritative texts, written during the Muslim rule in India - *Fatwa-i-Jahandari* and *Ain-i-Akbari* - dealing with the nuances of governance - we can formulate our ideas about the dominant trend of the political thought of medieval India.

- The most remarkable feature of Indo-Islamic political thought is its adaptability to the Indian conditions. Muslim rulers in India, in both the Sultanates and Mughal periods did not pay even a formal obeisance to the Caliphs in Baghdad. (M.P.Singh, xx) The rulers of six dynasties of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal dynasty adopted a generous approach, with a few exceptions of the eccentric Muhammad bin Tughluq and Aurangzeb.
- Whereas Fakhe-i-Mudir, the author of *Shajara* postulated the 'God-Prophet-Sultan' triad, Abul Fazal, the author of *Ain-i-Akbari* at the court of Akbar was of the view that there is a direct communication by God to Kings without the intermediate assistance of any one inspiring loyalty and submission by people.
- Islamic political thought, during the medieval period, was based on the premise that sovereignty belongs to God, and the Islamic State was in fact a vicegerency, with no right to exercise authority except in subordination to God. Further, that the *Shariat* (i.e. the law of God enunciated in the Quran and the Sunnah, the authentic practice of the Prophet), was the supreme law and everyone from the lowest person to the head of state was governed by it.
- Religious and political powers in Islamic political thought centered on Prophet Muhammad. After his death, the succession issue resulted in tussle between Ali, (the son-in-law of the Prophet) and Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman, who were accepted by the community. The successful Sunni faction followed the theory of elected Caliphate rather than chief of the *Ulama*, the interpreter of Islamic revelation. Gradually, Umayyad (AD 661-750) and Abbasid Caliphs (AD 750-1258) turned to be hereditary and created the basis of authority that partly diverged from the *Shariat*. (Singh xx)
- The necessary harmony between religion and state, i.e., the close co-operation of the ruler (sultān) and the Islamic scholars ('ulamā'), was its

major concern during the early decades of the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526). A visible divide was reflected between Ziauddin Barani on one hand and Seikh Hamadani and Zakhirat ul-Muluk on the other. While the former believed that the Sultan had a duty to convert Hindus to Islam, the latter advocated that Hindus were *Zimmis* or people to be protected if they perform certain duties such as non-construction of temples, non-rebellion, respect and hospitality to Muslims, observance of dress and name codes etc. (M.P.Singh xxi) This approach was later extended as *Sulah-i-kul* and Abul Fazal's advocacy of liberal toleration and political pluralism.

- The emphasis on the establishment and consolidation of the Sultanate got changed into deeper roots, established linkages, alliances, patronage with Hindu rulers and subjects during the Mughal Empire. The Mughals retained their tribal and princely cultural baggage. The failure to conquer the whole subcontinent, particularly the south and the northeast and the fear of adverse effect of forced conversions also compelled them to be more compromising in India. 20th century Indo-Islamic thought inculcated belief in ultimate union of all Islamic followers, while accepting the racial divergences for purposes of political reference.
- As Muslim rule continued for a long period, Islamic political thinkers naturally pondered over topics like the ruler's share in the spoils of war, the nature of punishment for corrupt and dishonest officers and the legality of mutual relations with non-Muslims etc.

3.5 INITIAL PERIOD OF THE DELHI SULTANATE: ZIAUDDIN BARANI

Major characteristics

- During this period, Islam was finding its roots in India. It was the religion of the new rulers, while the population was hostile to it. The period also coincided with ongoing struggle for domination and reaction against various forms of local religions, especially Brahmanism. Barani was found deeply involved in these debates.
- There was a marked antipathy in Islam towards local religions. To sustain and counteract, philosophical support was necessitated. Providing a rational basis for a just government, Barani provided that support. In addition to Aristotle, references to various Arabic and Persian writers and statesmen substantiated his support.
- Islamic writers, particularly Barani, witnessed the founding of so many sultanates in which religious enthusiasm was combined with messianic zeal. (V.R. Mehta, 138)
- Exposure to three dynasties' rule (the Balbans, 1266-90; Khaljis, 1290 – 1320; and Tughlaqs, 1320-1416) entailed anxiety as each of these changes at Delhi led to the wholesale overthrow of older elements in the nobility. (Habib 22)
- Position of monarchy was associated with display of pomp and splendour, construction of high palaces, holding grand courts, making people offer

prostration, accumulating treasures, seizing properties and grants of previous kings, wearing jewels and silk, imposing punishments and gathering large harems. (Habib 22)

- Where endeavouring for establishment of an Islamic state in India, Islamic political thought sanctioned the pre-existing and increasingly un-Islamic political systems and fundamental moral structures of political life.
- During the initial phase, Islamic rule utilized the existing institutions of government in its foundation and lower structure, since they had nothing to substitute it. Association of the Hindus in civil and military departments of the state made the Muslim rulers realize the new technique of government that polity and government are one thing and the rules and decrees of cannon law another, which laid the foundation of the Indo-Islamic state.

3.5.1 The Nature of Kingship

At the head of state was the king, bearing the title of *Sultan*, indicating the highest civil and military powers combined in the person, receiving this title. Traditions of elective kingship since the earliest Khalifas now gave place to nomination by the dying king or by the nobles and generals. (H.N.Sinha, 313-4)

The king as the representative of God on earth was considered as the source of all powers and functions of the state. Barani was of the opinion that whatever means the king adopts to discharge his duties was justified so long as his aim was the service of religion.

As per the prevailing tradition, the real ruler of the Delhi *Sultanate* was the *Sultan* who was duly elected by the *Sunnis* and the *Millat*, and could nominate his successor before his death. Though, in principle, any Sunni Muslim could contest for and hold the office of the king, in practice it remained confined to the royal family.

The Muslim monarchs enjoyed absolute, secular, sovereign political power; it was indivisible, un-encroached. The mullahs had their own autonomous domain. The *Shariat* was applicable only on the Muslims who had accepted it. The fear of Hindu revolts and the absence of Muslim support haunted the Muslim monarchs. The absence of a homogenized Muslim block and the sectarian conflicts among the Muslims affected their situation.

In so far as the political system of the *Sultanate* was concerned, it was the unitary form of State in which the *Sultan* was regarded the real sovereign ruler, the head of the executive, the interpreter of laws, the supreme judge and the supreme commander of the armed forces of the State. In this way, the entire executive, legislative, judicial and military powers were concentrated in him and were exercised by him. There was, however, an advisory council to advise the king in day-to-day matters.

3.5.2 Concept of Sovereignty

Barani's notion of sovereignty was based on dual principles of (i) combination of Islamic idea of religion (while considering king as a representation of *Khuda*; and (ii) Iranian idea of kingship based on control over territory by power and force and legitimization of centralization. The secular (a-religious) concept of sovereignty developed in Kautilya was now replaced with theocratic concept of sovereignty identified solely with the king and his power. With no trace of contract or relationship of mutual obligation between ruler and subjects, force alone was the source of royalty and ruler's self-interest, custom and religion were accepted as constraints upon or guides to his action.

The functions of sovereign were primarily associated with (i) enforcement of the *Shariat*, (ii) check on immoral and sinful acts and (iii) dispensing of justice including appointments to various offices. While considering God as the creator of both good and bad things, the king (*Pādshah*) was also projected as one of the wonderful creations of God. Barani believed in royalty representing the vicegerency of God. (Irfan Habib, 21)

To address unending cycle of change and replacement of ruling groups by new lower class entrants, Barani proposed a strong dynastic principle, maintenance of monarchical splendour and religious pretensions. (Habib 29) Instead of command and obedience, Barani preferred affection and favours as principal instrument of control. (Alam, 55)

3.5.3 Concerning Law

Implementation of law and obedience to law being the primary concern of a king, Barani referred to four sources of law: a) the Koran, b) the Hadish (traditions of prophet), c) the Ijma (opinions and rulings of the majority of Muslim theologians, and d) Qiyas (speculative method of deduction). To this, he added *Zawabit* or state law as an important source of law in administering the state. With the changing complexion of society and the growing complexities of administration in addition to the accepted principles of traditional Islamic law, Barani advocated for *Zawabit* or the state laws whose foundation was non-religious. State laws could not be contradictory to the orders of the *Shariat* and its primary objective was to regulate the works of various governmental departments and to foster loyalty.

3.5.4 Submission to Hierarchical Order

Keeping the hierarchical order in place, Islamic kings were to ensure that power was to be confined to the men of high birth and not the lowly and the ignoble (Habib, 24-25). Objective was the suppression of the enemies of Islam, including Hindus and philosophers or rationalists (Habib 26-27). Alam (41) is of the view that Barani's emphasis on high birth, heredity and class reflects the secular and

non-religious features of his political theory. Political acumen, administrative skill and statesmanship are projected as genetic traits.

Islamic

3.5.5 Objective of Sultan to establish Islamic Rule among Non-Islamic Subjects

While ensuring coordination and balance of conflicting claims of diverse interest groups, the ruler was cautioned against faulty and perfunctory politics that leads to ruination of the country and its people. In Barani's opinion, the king should devote himself to governance of his state in such a way that helps him in reaching nearer to God. Welfare of the religion and the state should be the ideal of a good state. A king should be guided by wise men. According to Barani, a good ruler cannot be content with levying poll-tax (*jizya*) and land revenue (*kharaj*) on non-Muslims, rather he has to work hard for the supremacy of Islam. Barani permitted the appointment of non-Muslims in state service on grounds of necessity. In the case of non-Muslim subjects, his idea of justice changed into mercy and clemency, such as the suggestion to avoid collection of *jizya* when the crop failed and to distribute state funds to the non-Muslim needy. He also warned rulers of shedding blood of innocent Muslims and confiscating their property.

3.5.6 Concern for Efficient Administration

Bureaucracy was required to run the administration. There existed three classes of nobles including *Amirs*, *Maliks*, and *Khans* in the ascending order. Barani being an advocate of blue blood aristocracy, talked about the necessity of hierarchy in administration and pointed out the composition, classification, nature and relation of bureaucracy with the Sultan and the people of the state. He was emphatically against the promotion of low-born men. He wrote that the noble born men in the king's court would bring him honour, but if he would favour low born men, they would disgrace him in both the worlds. To him, kingship was based on two pillars of administration and conquest and it was on the army that both the pillars depend. He also emphasized the king's concern regarding internal security and foreign relations.

3.5.7 Recognition of Individual Rights

Barani also talked about the recognition of individual rights, i.e. the rights of wife, children, old servants, slaves, etc. and he considered the recognition of people's rights as the basis of the state.

3.5.8 Judicial Administration

Barani developed a theory of government for Muslims, while justice and moderation being his prime concern. To him, without justice, the Koranic laws were arbitrary decrees and anything against Koran was tyranny. It was a definite

departure from the general tendency in medieval Islamic thought of accepting autocracy.

Punishment was considered an essential means to maintain discipline in the state. Barani referred to various circumstances of the punishments, particularly the death punishment to be awarded by the king.

Considering that attainment of absolute justice was impossible, Barani followed Aristotle and suggested the policy of moderation, and allowed king to surpass *Shariat* (i) to enforce Islam on infidels, (ii) for protection of his state, and (iii) in order to give reward to his loyal supporters.

It shows in what ways the original Islamic theory of kingship went through changes over the years in the Indian context. Barani's vast experience in the working of the Delhi Sultanate and the prevailing social order got reflected in his political ideas.

3.5.9 Commitment to Islam

According to the *Quranic* laws, the foremost duty of the Muslim king was to ban idol-worship, engage in religious wars and to change the *Darul Herb* into the *Darul Islam*. It was also his duty to seek conversion of Hindus into Muslims and for this purpose he could use the machinery and money of the State as well.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. What are the significant basic concepts of *Islamic* tradition?

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2. Analyze the major characteristics of initial period of Delhi Sultanate.

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Major characteristics

- Mughals, the descendants of Timur, the central Asian ruler, were influenced by the Persian and the Mongol rulers. By this time, kings were established in their office, kingship was held sacred and the concept of royalty became a matter of hereditary succession.
- One of the most valuable text on statecraft explaining the dominant trend of political ideas during the Mughal rule in India is Abul Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari*. Abul Fazl was one of the most important thinkers of the sixteenth century India. Being a great scholar having sound knowledge of different fields of learning in the Muslim and the Hindu traditions, he had contributed in formulating many of Akbar's political ideas.
- Akbar, as Empire, was not contented with merely the power to implement a royal version of the *Shariat*. Hence, Abul Fazl intended to locate the basis of the State in a species of social contract and the divine-illuminated wisdom of the mystic tradition. Religious fanaticism was given up. The process of assimilation gathered momentum. The Hindus accepted some of the elements of the new faith. The first response was to incorporate some of the elements of Islam to enable Hinduism to withstand the pressure of Islam. The second response was in the form of an attempt to create a synthesis.
- Under the *Mughals*, there was no institution like the council of Minister or advisors and therefore, the King could not have the benefit of their collective advice. The king could appoint and remove ministers at will. They could give him advice but the king was not bound to accept or even consider it. He used to rely more on the advice of his personal friends, trust-worthy officials and the prominent *Ulemas*. All the trusted advisors of the king constituted an informal group which was called *Mazlis-e-Khalwat*.
- The king was considered the fountain of Justice and, as such, his obligation was to have the rules of the *Holy Quran* faithfully implemented. He was, as such, the *de facto* head of this Department while under him the nominal head was called the Chief *Kazi*. In the absence of the king, the *kazi* used to act as the Chief Justice.

3.6.1 Divine Nature of Royal Power

Though Abul Fazl believed in 'the divine light of royalty', he did not envisage any role for the intermediaries to communicate the divine order. Royalty was considered as *farr-i-izidi* (the divine light) or a light emanating from God and a ray from the sun. The *Ulemas* and the *Mujtahids*, like the Brahmins in Hinduism, acted as authority and interpreter of customary laws to king. But in Abul Fazl's formulation, the intermediaries were not required to interpret religious and holy law and the king himself was expected to judge and interpret holy law.

3.6.2 Well-Being of Subjects as the Objective of State

The governing principle of the state was the well-being of its people. A true king was not concerned much about himself and power, rather people's well-being was his prime concern. To him, an ideal sovereign was like a father, who rules for the common welfare and was guided by the law of God.

3.6.3 Religious Harmony

Fazal believed that quarrels between Hindus and Muslims were due to (i) their different interests and perceptions; (ii) diversity of language; (iii) misapprehension of each other's motives; (iv) distance between respective religious leaders and common man; (v) inflexible customs; (vi) lower trace of wisdom; (vii) arrogance and self-interest resulting in self-righteousness (V.R.Mehta 147)

The philosophy of co-existence was preferred to the notion of synthesis. While advocating for 'absolute peace' (*Sulh-i-kul*) and absolute love (*Muhabbat-i-kul*), acceptance was for the policy of religious tolerance by promoting religion of God (*Din-i-Ilahi*). In the process, the king was to be guided by the principles of universal good and to fulfill his royal duty, he could go beyond the holy law. This was a significant shift in matters of governance compared to earlier political thinking.

3.6.4 Centralized Monarchical Government

Along with strong centralized monarchical government, distribution of works among various departments was preferred for better governance. It was with the help of a highly centralized bureaucracy that the Mughal sovereign ruled over the empire.

3.6.5 Theory of Kingship

Habib also found an appeal to a theory of social contract to justify the necessity of political authority. As the worldly beings find distinct leader in the king, one finds duality of religious and secular spheres, which liberates sovereignty from any dictates of theological doctrine.

Considering royalty as the recipient of the spiritual divine light, the king (*Pādshāh*) was presented as 'perfect man', the possessor of illumined wisdom and reflector of the light received. He was expected to acquire his qualities to rule by prayer and devotion (Mehta); bound by the law of God, regarded as a spiritual guide to the people; and expected to protect property, life, honour and religion of world's people. The wages of protection was to be paid as taxes. (Mehta)

The principles of justice were based on indigenous customary law, while final interpretation being left to the emperor. The pattern of administration was of

division into many levels, each manned by officers of various kinds, including *mansabdars*, *nazims*, *subedars*, *parganas*, sub-divisional officers, *jagirdars*, *quazis* etc., while each of them permitted to approach the ruler directly.

3.6.6 Administrative Reforms

The reforms introduced by Akbar through the abolition of *jizya* collected from the non-Muslims or a ban on cow slaughter reflected the spirit of new political theory articulated in *Ain-i-Akbari*.

3.6.7 Fourfold Social Classification

Following Hindu thought on one hand and Plato's ideal state on the other, fourfold division of society, though with a change in serial order, was found in Fazal's writings. First place was assigned to warriors and rulers; second place was given to learned, scholars, astronomers and philosophers; third place was accorded to the artisan and merchants; and the last fourth place was allotted to husbandman and labourers.

3.7 THE COLONIAL PERIOD AND PAN-ISLAMISM OF MOHAMMAD IQBAL

The colonial period during the 20th century witnessed new upsurge in Indo-Islamic political thought.

Major characteristics

- Colonial India allowed an unrestricted and consistently legitimate space to the Muslims and non-Muslims to project their faith and culture.
- The cultural memory of Mughal rule was still fresh and a lot of Indian Muslims imagined themselves to be descended from a superior 'ruling race'.
- The colonial policy of 'divide and rule', communal electorate and communal weightage aroused aspirations among Indian Muslims.
- Section of Muslim scholars was not ready to continue under Hindu ascendancy in Hindu dominated society and polity.
- In search of a separate and greater Muslim identity amongst Indians, Indian Muslims intellectuals in general, and Iqbal in particular, supported the idea of Pan-Islamism. Rejecting the territorial concept of nationhood, they turned to the Muslim world in order to add weight to their demands.
- During pre-independent colonial period, they reinforced the consciousness of a distinct Muslim identity and also provided the theoretical basis of the two-nation theory on the basis of religion.

3.7.1 *Khuda, Insan-E-Kamil and Khudi*

Believing in an ultimate spiritual reality, God (*Khuda*) was regarded as the Supreme Ego, which is a creative infinite spirit and spontaneous intensive energy that denotes that the element of life is the “organizing principle of unity”, a synthesis which holds together and focalizes the dispensing dispositions of His living organism for a constructive purpose. It is omniscient, omnipotent, everlasting and is consistently manifesting its creative possibilities.

Muhammad was acknowledged as “*Insan-E-Kamil*” (Super Man), Vicegerent of God (*Niyabat-i-Illahi*), “the soul of universe”, “shadow of the greatest name” and an effective instrument for the execution of the will of God.

Human Ego or *Aham* was presented as “*Khudi*”, to be cultivated as *Marde-Momin* (Complete Man). Realizing the creative possibilities, the *Khudi* was expected to offer a bold fight instead of surrendering in front of divine forces.

3.7.2 Objective of Islam

Advocating for rational interpretation of texts, Iqbal stood for spiritual emancipation of man and the social evolution of humanity on spiritual lines. He asserted that the most important objective of Islam is to demolish all the artificial distinctions of caste, creed, colour and economic status. It implies equality, freedom and fraternity.

3.7.3 Crystallization of Muslim fraternity

Iqbal projected *Millat* as the crystallization of Muslim fraternity and said that the loyalty to the prophet unifies the *Millat*, which is to operate on the acceptance of the binding character of laws or the *Shariat-e-Islamia*.

3.7.4 Concept of Nation

To Iqbal, nation or *Kaum* was a community of people who have common language, region, industry and fraternity. He considered *Kaum* and *Kaumiat* in context of Muslim religion, yet, admitted the possibility of Muslims and Non-Muslims joining one nation. Realizing difference between *Kaum* and *Millat*, he insisted that *Kaum* is inclusive of groups of such men, women, believers, non-believers, who have common interests and common inheritance; while *Millat* includes religion (*Mazhab*) and way of life (*Shariyat*).

3.7.5 Concept of Nationalism and Hindu-Muslim unity

In 1904, Iqbal supported nationalism and Hindu-Muslim unity, through his widely acclaimed ‘*Tarana-e-Hind*’, pleaded for genuine heart-unity among the inhabitants, He wrote: *Sare jahan se achha Hindustan hamara..... Mazhab nahin sikhata apas mein bair rakhta, Hind hai ham, watan hai Hindostan hamara.*

(Better than the entire world, is our Hind,...Religion does not teach us to bear animosity among ourselves, We are of Hind, our homeland is Hindustan)

Islamic

3.7.6 Pan-Islamism or Islamic Universalism

Iqbal's philosophy soon transformed from a secular, Hindustan-first to a religion-first philosophy. In 1910, he wrote the '*Tarana-e-Milli*' (Song of the community). The poem, written in the same metric and rhyme scheme as '*Tarana-e-Hind*', opened with the lines: "*Cheen (Cīn)-o-Arab humara, Hindostan humara; Muslim hain hum, watan hai saara jahaan humara.*" (Central Asia and Arabia are ours, Hindustan is ours. We are Muslims, the whole world is our homeland). From the principle of *Tauhid* or unity of Godhead, he drew implication of a world-unity. This world-unity could be founded not on tribal loyalties, but on the recognition of the ultimate spiritual basis of all life. To him, Islam is neither nationalism nor imperialism, but a 'league of nations', which believes in ultimate union, while accepting the racial divergences for purposes of political reference. Here, instead of nationalism of Indians or Indian Muslims, Iqbal aspired for nationalism of all the Muslims of whole world.

On 19th September 1933, Iqbal categorically stated that pan-Islamism never dreamed of a unification of all Moslems into one political culture. He accepted it as a humanitarian ideal recognizing no racial and nationalistic barriers or geographical frontiers. A deep acceptance of love for God and loyalty to Mohammad as the last prophet of God were to provide the bonds of this pan-Islamic union.

3.7.7 Opposition to Political Ascendancy of the Hindus

Iqbal felt that the slogan of all-India nationalism would, if realized, mean the political ascendancy of the Hindus. As a staunch Moslem, he would never calmly accept the domination of the Moslems. Iqbal felt that the concept of nationalism would introduce separate patriotic feelings in different Moslem countries. It would loosen the bonds of Islamic fraternity.

3.7.8 Ideological Support to the Idea of Pakistan

V.P. Varma has observed that Iqbal felt that the destiny of the Moslems in India lay in the formation of a state for themselves. He regarded the Moslems as an 'All-India minority' and even called them a nation. He was opposed to a unitary Indian nation as the plan for domination by the majority.

In the early thirties, Iqbal became an advocate of the 'consolidated North-West Indian Moslem State'. This proposal had been put forward before the Nehru Committee in 1928, but was rejected on the grounds of the unwieldiness of the new state. Iqbal felt that in a United India there was no future for the Moslems. Thus, he became one of the most pronounced spokesmen of the civilization of the

Moslems of the North –West India in a specified territory. Thus, Iqbal became a spiritual and ideological protagonist of Pakistanist separatism.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Analyze the major features of Indo-Islamic traditions during the Mughal period.

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2. Analyze the major features of Indo-Islamic traditions during the colonial period.

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3.8 LIMITATIONS OF ISLAMIC TRADITION

Indo-Islamic political tradition, in fact, was a product of the prevailing circumstances and political compulsions.

3.8.1 During the Initial Period of Delhi Sultanate

- Barani's assertion for the appointment of persons of noble birth puts 'governing class theory' of indigenous Hindu caste system into the Muslim mould.
- Barani interpreted both religion and politics in terms of aristocratic privileges. He readily accepted the political reality of the *Sultanate* period in which Muslim Upper classes had a predominant influence over the administrative machine, despite the fact that Muslims as such were in a minority in India.
- Barani's objective was the establishment and strengthening of the Islamic State by whatever means necessary and to lay down the ideal code of conduct for the *Sultans*.

In the conditions prevailing in his times, commitment to the Islamic State and the rules of *Shariat* was his compulsion. In other words, Barani seems to be clearly committed to traditions of Islam. At the same time, he was also deeply committed to the notions of State's creation, stability, security, development and expansion. Like Kautilya, Barani too has highlighted the personal qualities of the king and the code of conduct based on such qualities is reflected as a 'model' in the entire Indian Political Tradition.

In conclusion, it may be observed that two things singularly go to the credit of Barani. First, he was singularly humane, as he "protested vehemently against torture". And, second, he was one of the very few Muslim thinkers, writers and historians, the principal objective of whose political thinking was the *Sultan* and not *Islam*.

3.8.2 During the Mughal Period

- Projection of king as not merely God's shadow (*Zill-i-Ilahi*), but as the possessor of divine-illuminated (*Farr-i-izidi*) and a 'perfect man' makes him infallible, beyond doubt and dispute, expecting loyalty from one and all.
- In spite of insistence for 'absolute peace' (*Sulh-i-kul*) and absolute love (*Muhabbat-i-kul*) and religion of God (*Din-i-Ilahi*) among diverse religious communities on one hand and *Zawabit* or the state laws on the other; support for Islam and commitment to *Shariat* remained the very basis of this Indo-Islamic state.
- In a limited constitutional monarchy like Britain, the seat is considered as the center of power, with ultimate control vested with democratic rule; whereas in Fazl's *Akbarnama*, the absolute monarch emerges as the power center with ultimate control over all political, administrative, social, economic and religious spheres.
- Despite submission to religious freedom and diversity of opinion, nature of Fazal's state can still be stated to be as a limited religious autocratic rule; as there was a complete absence of any means or institutions to delimit the ruler under checks and control.

3.8.3 During the Colonial Period and Pan-Islamism

- Advocacy for spiritual or divine democracy and support for Islamic theocracy, 20th century Indo-Islamic tradition, led by Iqbal, did not sanction political democracy and sovereignty of the people. Western democracies were condemned as imperialistic.
- The emphasis on *Koran* as the final authority and *Shariat* as the ultimate law introduced exaggerated degree of theological revivalism in Iqbal's thought. In the garb of the sanctity of *Shariat*, a call was made for 'Run away from democracy and be the slave of the Perfect Man' (V.P.Varma, 452).
- Realizing the necessity of the liberal interpretation and reconstruction of old thought, Iqbal failed to realize the enormous significance of the sovereignty

of the people and its ideal possibilities for shaping the political destiny of man.

- Iqbal was trying to ride two horses. As a Moslem, he wanted to accept the basic theological tenets of the *Koran*; and as philosopher, he submitted to an absolute organic idealism. The concept of individuality could not be clearly defined. As a Muslem theologian, supremacy of the *Millat* and the *Shariat* was accepted; and as a philosopher individuality of *Khudi* was acclaimed. As a result, neither the claims, rights and potentialities of the 'ego' the individual-self could be asserted; nor clear ontological status of the finite ego could be provided. This philosophical confusion entailed political confusion.
- However, in the speech at the Lahore session of the Muslim League in 1930, Iqbal emerged as the spiritual father of the Pakistan ideology.

3.9 REACTIONS TOWARDS ISLAMIC TRADITION

There were reactions from the people like Kabir, Tukaram, Narsi Mehta, Shankar Dev, Lal Dedh, from the Hindu tradition; while Nizamuddin Auliya, Moinuddin Chishti, Tajuddin Baba Auliya Ajan Pir, Nooruddin Noorani (also known as Nund Rishi) representing Sufi tradition and Satya Pir, Ramdev Baba Pir, reflecting a mixed lineage, where Bhakti and Sufi themselves are deeply intertwined.

Bhakti tradition: Saints of Bhakti tradition proved to be most formidable bridge between Hinduism and Islam by harmonizing the orthogenetic and heterogenetic elements of the distinct faith systems of the two religions. The saints like Kabir tried to ridicule the orthodoxies of both religions.

The Bhakti saints came from different streams of society, particularly low caste. Bhakti opposed the institutionalisation of religion, tried to decentralize it, and declared that religion is a private matter. The Bhakti traditions gave respectability to many low castes, posing a challenge to the upper caste hegemony; this tradition had an inclusive approach towards Muslims as well. Also, they talked of one God. In India, in particular, Hindu-Muslim unity has been a principal concern expressed by many of the saints from this tradition.

The Syncretic Tradition: The real syncretic tradition was introduced by the proponents of the Bhakti tradition, who sought to promote eclectic faiths and defuse religious orthodoxy among the followers of Hinduism and Islam. In the long run, the coming together of people of heterogeneous religious background to the fold of the Saints created a syncretic space where the exclusivity of a particular religion got immensely reduced.

Sikhism: Sant Guru Nanak did try a conscious mixing of the two major religions of India. He traveled up to Makkah to learn the wisdom of Islam and went to Kashi to unravel the spiritual moral aspects of Hinduism.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Islamic

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Highlight the major limitations of *Islamic* tradition.

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2. Highlights major reactions towards Islamic tradition.

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3.10 LET US SUM UP

The nature of State and the form of government during the reign of the Muslims found eminently reflected in the writings of philosophers and historians like Ziauddin Barani (during the initial period of establishment of Delhi Sultanate), Abul Fazal (Mughal Period) and Muhammad Iqbal (colonial period).

Diverse methodologies may be applied to understand and interpret Indo-Islamic political tradition. Reliance on any one approach is to be avoided considering the complementarity of all approaches.

Major trends of Indo-Islamic political thought displayed a rupture with and continuity of ancient Indian traditions. Muslim conquests brought alien tradition of political ideas and institutions developed in West Asia. With a noted absence of social and cultural hegemony, indigenous traditions reflected a tendency of adaptation of alien ideas & institutions to the Indian conditions.

There is general consensus in Islamic tradition concerning sovereignty belonging to God, concurrence for the head of state, harmony between religion and state, issues concerning spoils of war, the nature of punishment and relations with non-Muslims and co-operation between the ruler and Islamic scholars.

Initial period of Delhi sultanate reflected Islam as the religion of the new rulers, while the population was hostile to it. While endeavouring for establishment of an Islamic state in India, Islamic political thought sanctioned the pre-existing and increasingly un-Islamic political systems and fundamental moral structures of political life. The king as the representative of God on earth was considered as the source of all powers and functions of the state. Notion of sovereignty was based on dual principles of (i) combination of Islamic idea of religion (while considering king as a representation of *Khuda*); and (ii) Iranian idea of kingship based on control over territory by power and force and legitimation of centralization. Keeping the hierarchical order in place, Islamic kings were to ensure that power was to be confined to the men of high birth.

During the Mughal period, royalty was considered as the divine light. There was clear preference for centralized monarchical form of government. The principles of justice were based on indigenous customary law, while final interpretation being left to the emperor. The pattern of administration was of division into many levels. The governing principle of the state was the well-being of its people. Fourfold division of society, though with a change in serial order was admitted. Instead of synthesis, the preference was for the philosophy of co-existence of diverse communities.

Colonial India allowed an unrestricted and consistently legitimate space to the Muslims and non-Muslims to project their faith and culture. Section of Muslim scholars were not ready to continue under Hindu ascendancy in a Hindu dominated society and polity. In search of a separate and greater Muslim identity amongst Indians, Indian Muslim intellectuals in general, and Iqbal in particular, supported the idea of Pan-Islamism. Rejecting the territorial concept of nationhood, they turned to the Muslim world in order to add weight to their demands. During the pre-independent colonial period, they reinforced the consciousness of a distinct Muslim identity and also provided the theoretical basis of the two-nation theory on the basis of religion.

Each phase of Indo-Islamic thought had its own peculiar characteristics and limitations and was encountered with reactions from non-Islamic indigenous communities, at times subtle and otherwise blatant. Efforts were also made to defuse religious orthodoxy and create a syncretic space.

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3.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - The Contextual Approach
 - The Historical Approach
 - The Philosophical or Normative Approach
 - The Analytical and Comparative Approach
 - The Conceptual Approach
2. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Final authority of single text & authority of multiple scriptures
 - Restricted the role of reason & diversity of opinion
 - State as only regulator & separate the political and cultural realms
 - Loyalty towards just ruler & existence of critical factor
 - Islam provided a new format to the system of governance
 - Indo-Islamic political thought depicted adaptability to Indian conditions
 - Inter-community relations & intra-community relations
 - Concentrated on the nature of authority and boundaries

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Adaptability to Indian conditions
 - Relationship between God and King
 - Sovereignty of God and *Shariat*
 - From elected Caliphate to hereditary authority
 - Relationship between religion and state
 - Issues concerning war, punishment and the legality of mutual relations
2. Your answer should highlight following points

General characteristics

- The Nature of Kingship
- Concept of Sovereignty
- Submission to Hierarchical Order

- Objective of Sultan to establish Islamic Rule among Non-Islamic Subjects
- Concern for Efficient Administration
- Recognition of Individual Rights
- Judicial Administration
- Commitment to Islam

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1. Your answer should highlight following points

- Divine Nature of Royal Power
- Well-Being of Subjects as the Objective of State
- Religious Harmony
- Centralized Monarchical Government
- Theory of Kingship
- Administrative Reforms
- Fourfold Social Classification

2. Your answer should highlight following points

- *Khuda, Insan-E-Kamil* and *Khudi*
- Objective of Islam
- Crystallization of Muslim fraternity
- Concept of Nation
- Concept of nationalism and Hindu-Muslim unity
- Pan-Islamism or Islamic Universalism
- Opposition to political ascendancy of the Hindus
- Ideological Support to the Idea of Pakistan

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1. Your answer should highlight following points

- During Initial Period of Delhi Sultanate
- During Mughal Period
- During Colonial Period and Pan-Islamism

2. Your answer should highlight following points

- Bhakti tradition
- The Syncretic Tradition
- Sikhism

UNIT 4 BHAKTI*

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
 - 4.1.1 Reaction towards Evils in the Hindu Society
 - 4.1.2 Challenge from Other Religions
 - 4.1.3 Influence of Sufism
- 4.2 Enriched Diversity of Bhakti Tradition
 - 4.2.1 Bhakti Tradition in South
 - 4.2.1.1 Earliest *Advaita* (Monotheistic) Reformer Saint - *Adi Shankaracharya*
 - 4.2.1.2 Alvars – The *Vaishnavite* Saints
 - 4.2.1.3 Nayanars – The Saivite Saints
 - 4.2.2 *Bhakti* Movement in the North
 - 4.2.2.1 Nirgun Tradition
 - 4.2.2.2 *Sagun Bhakti*
 - 4.2.2.3 In Bengal
 - 4.2.2.4 In Maharashtra
 - 4.2.2.5 *Dvaita* (Dualist) Tradition
 - 4.2.2.6 Sikhism and Guru Nanak
- 4.3 Evolution of Socio- Political Ideas and Polity
 - 4.3.1 Reflection of Individualism
 - 4.3.2 Religious Reforms and Rejection of Rituals
 - 4.3.3 Reaction against Caste Structure
 - 4.3.4 Focus on Classes
 - 4.3.5 Critical of the Zamindari System
 - 4.3.6 Universal Humanism
 - 4.3.7 Absence of Critique of Patriarchy
 - 4.3.8 Liberal Religious Policies adopted

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- 4.3.9 Promotion of Regional Languages
- 4.4 Means of Reforms: Bhakti, Service, Critique and Resistance
 - 4.4.1 Bhakti as a Means of Reformation
 - 4.4.2 Mutual Social Service
 - 4.4.3 Resistance against Revenue Administration and Surplus Extraction
 - 4.4.4 Critique of Polity and Reflection of Civil Society
 - 4.4.5 Passive Resistance as Means of Socio-Religious Reforms
- 4.5 Limitations of *Bhakti* Tradition
- 4.6 Impact of *Bhakti* Tradition
- 4.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8 References
- 4.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is to familiarise you with the ideas of Bhakti tradition. After studying this unit, you should be able to understand:

- Scope of Bhakti Tradition
- Enriched Diversity of Bhakti Tradition
- Evolution of Socio- Political Ideas and Polity
- Means of Reforms
- Limitations of Bhakti Tradition
- Impact of *Bhakti* Tradition

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Bhakti is an age-old concept. Right from the time of the compilation of the Vedas, the word *Bhakti* has come into vogue. In *Rig Veda Samhita*, *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, *Chhandyoga Upanishad*, *Katha* and *Kausitaki Upanishad*, the word *Bhakti* has been referred to several times. The *Bhakti Yoga* of *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita* is more descriptive on this point. It prescribes *Gnana* (knowledge), *Karma* (action) and *Bhakti* (devotion) as the three essential features to shatter the bondage of material world and to serve the Almighty God. Thus, *Bhakti* is one of the three recognized means of achieving salvation

The movement started in the 9th century A.D. by *Shankaracharya* which continued up to 16th century A.D. by a number of Hindu devotees, preachers and religious reformers.

4.1.1 Reaction towards Evils in the Hindu Society

The genesis of the *Bhakti* movement lies in the social evils prevalent in the then Hindu society. During the time of Muslim rule in India, the Hindu society was

full of many social anomalies like rigidity of caste system, irrelevant rituals and religious practices, blind faiths and social dogmas. The society also suffered from polytheism, segregation, severe economic disparity due to casteism, untouchability etc.

The religion itself was monopolized by the Brahmins who at times led a degenerated and corrupt moral life. Common men in general had developed an aversive attitude towards these social evils and were in need of a liberal form of religion where they could identify themselves with simple religious practices. Therefore, popular dissatisfaction against the existing social religious evils was a major catalyst behind the spread of *Bhakti* movement all over India for a long period of time.

4.1.2 Challenge from Other Religions

The Muslims first arrived in India in the 8th century AD. Subsequently, by the beginning of the 13th century AD, they began to rule, Islam became the religion of the ruling community. This religion had its own individual characteristics like universal brotherhood, equality of all in the society, absence of any caste system or untouchability, opposition to idol worship and above all, practice of monotheism or oneness of God.

Among all these, absolute monotheism or equality of all men greatly appealed to the Hindus, especially the *Shudras* who were the worst sufferers and had no religious freedom. These Islamic ideas threw a powerful challenge to the existing corrupt aspects of Hinduism and the accompanying social evils.

After living together for generations and continuous interaction between the people of two communities, there grew a feeling of magnanimity and generosity among the Hindus and Muslims. Both consciously and unconsciously, the ideals of Islam produced a benevolent effect upon the minds of a section of Hindus and fostered the growth of a liberal attitude. There was an absolute need to change the existing system as well as bring radical changes in the fabric of Hindu beliefs. *Bhakti* Tradition tried purging off some of its evil practices, particularly, those related to *caste* and *idol worship*.

4.1.3 Influence of Sufism

The influence of Sufism cannot be set aside from the origin of *Bhakti* movement in India. Sufism is an old religious sect of Islam. It is a reform movement within the Islamic religion, which started in *Persia*. It came to India towards the beginning of the 13th century A.D. and with the rise of Muslim power, Sufism became more popular.

Prominent Sufists like *Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti*, *Hazrat Khwaja Nizamuddin Auliya* and *Naseeruddin Chirag* fostered a spirit of reconciliation among the Hindus and Muslims in medieval society. The Hindu saints of India were influenced by the liberal approach of Sufism.

The high philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads were very complicated for the common people. They wanted a simple way of worship, simple religious

practices and simple social customs. The paths of *Gnana* and *Karma* were difficult for them to practise in day to day life. So the next alternative was *Bhakti marga*—a simple way of devotion to get salvation from worldly life.

The *Bhakti* movement received its impetus from the presence of iconoclastic Muslim preachers, who emphasized the unity of God, vehemently criticized the Hindu religion and thought and attempted to convert Hindus to their religion. As a consequence *Bhakti* movement presented a Hindu response to the egalitarian message of Islam and its spread among the lower classes of Hindu society.

Also, they talked of one God. In India, in particular, Hindu-Muslim unity has been a principal concern expressed by many of the saints from this tradition. In fact, the bhakti movement gave to the people a simple religion, without complicated rituals.

4.2 ENRICHED DIVERSITY OF BHAKTI TRADITION

The Bhakti movement started in the *South* in response to the conquest of northern India by Muslim rulers. The earliest reformer-saint in South was *Adi Shankaracharya*. The movement was carried forward by *twelve* Southern Vaishnavite *Alwar* (*Azhwars*) saints and sixty three Saivite Nayanar saints of the South. In course of time the saints of Northern India got themselves involved in this *Bhakti* movement. The chief exponents of the movement were *Shankara*, *Ramanuja*, *Kabir*, *Nanak*, *Shri Chaitanya*, *Mirabai*, *Ramananda*, *Namdev*, *Nimbarka*, *Madhava*, *Eknath*, *Surdas*, *Tulsidas*, *Tukaram*, *Vallabhacharya* and *Chandidas*.

4.2.1 Bhakti Tradition in South

From 8th century A.D. to 15th century A.D. this movement gathered its momentum in the south. Both Vaishnavite and Saivite saints included 'untouchables' like the Pulaiyar and the Panars. They were sharply critical of the Buddhists and Jains and preached ardent love of Shiva or Vishnu as the path to salvation. They drew upon the ideals of love and heroism as found in the Sangam literature (the earliest example of Tamil literature, composed during the early centuries of the Common Era) and blended them with the values of bhakti.

4.2.1.1 Earliest *Advaita* (Monotheistic) Reformer Saint – *Adi Shankaracharya*

In the 9th century, on the solid foundation of Vedantic (*Upanishadic*) philosophy; ancient Indian cultural tradition; to check the growth of Buddhism and Jainism; and with the doctrine of *Advaita* (Monism) and *Nirgunabrahma* (God without attributes); Shankaracharya started a Hindu revivalist movement giving a new orientation to Hinduism.

Shankaracharya believed that ultimately the only reality was the *Sachidanand Brahman*, the impersonal world, soul of the Upanishads with which the

individual soul was identical. He was convinced that god and the created world was one and the evident difference is due to ignorance.

He recognised the ascetic order of sanyasis on the pattern of Buddhist sangha and launched a campaign for the popularisation of Hinduism. Highlighting the cultural unity of India, Shankaracharya founded the *mathas*, at four corners of the subcontinent, *Jaganathpuri* in the *east*, *Sringeri* in the *South*, *Dwarka* in the *west* and *Badrinath* in the *north*.

4.2.1.2 Alvars – The Vaishnavite Saints

The *Bhakti* tradition was carried forward by twelve *Alvar* (*Azhwars*) *vaishnavite* saints, cutting across all barriers of caste and class, represented all walks of life and all strata of society and included one woman in their ranks. The best known being *Periyalvar*, his daughter *Andal*, *Tondaradippodi Alvar* and *Nammalvar*. The Alvars composed approximately 4000 Tamil verses. Between the fifth and ninth century, in the Tamil-speaking region of South India, these saints revitalized the Indian religious milieu, sparking a renewal of devotional worship throughout the subcontinent.

In the 9th-10th centuries, the philosopher-saint *Nathamuni* recovered these verses from near oblivion, arranged them as the *Divya Prabandham* (Divine Collection), and set many of them to music, and rejuvenated the tradition of formally reciting them in temples.

4.2.1.3 Nayanars – The Saivite Saints

From seventh to ninth centuries, sixty three *Saivite* Nayanar saints made further advances in the *Bhakti* tradition in south India. It is important to note that these devotees came from very different background (caste, economic background, such as potters, “**untouchable**” workers, peasants, hunters, soldiers, Brahmanas and chiefs), stages of life (single, married or sanyasi) and included both male and female ones. Some were learned scholars, while others did not have any formal schooling. The unifying factor was their extreme devotion to Lord Shiva, through which the bliss of His grace. The best known among them were *Appar*, *Sambandar*, *Sundarar* and *Manikkavasagar*.

4.2.2 Bhakti Movement in the North

During the Sultanate period (13th- 15th century), there arose many popular socio-religious movements in North and East India, and Maharashtra. Emphasis on *bhakti* and religious equality were two common features of these movements. The *bhakti* movements of medieval India differed in many significant respects not only from the older South Indian *bhakti* tradition, but also among themselves.

The Turkish conquest paved the way for the growth of *nonconformist* movements, with anti-caste and anti- Brahmanical ideology. The non-conformist sect of the *Nathpanthis* was perhaps the first to gain from the declining power of the Rajput-Brahman alliance. Elements of revolutionary opposition to feudalism, without any advocacy for the overthrow of the ruling class, can be found in the poetry of the *bhakti* saints like Kabir, Nanak, Raidas etc. They used images of

daily life and always tried to identify themselves in one way or another with the sufferings of the common people.

4.2.2.1 Nirgun Tradition

Most of the monotheists belonged to the low castes and were aware that there existed a unity in their ideas. They were also aware of each other's teachings and influence and in their verses they mention each other and their predecessors in a manner suggesting ideological affinity among them. All of them were influenced by the Vaishnava concept of *Bhakti*, the *Nathpanthi* movement and Sufism, reflecting a synthesis of these three traditions and projecting a nirguna orientation. They refused any formal association with the organized dominant religions of the time (Hinduism and Islam) and criticized what they regarded to be the negative aspects of these religions.

Kabir was the earliest and undoubtedly the most powerful fibre of the Nirguna tradition or the monotheistic movements. He belonged to a family of weavers (Julaha who were indigenous converts to Islam, spent greater part of his life in Banaras (Kashi). He rejected the *varnashrama* and all conventions based on caste distinction and championed new values, helping the emergence of new groups and new unorthodox/protestant sects. His poems were included in the Sikh scripture, the *Adi Granth*. Among those who were influenced by Kabir were Raidas, who was a tanner by caste from Banaras, Guru Nanak who was a Khatri from Punjab and Dhanna who was a Jat peasant from Rajasthan.

4.2.2.2 Sagun Bhakti

In 12th century, *Ramanuja* coined *Vishishtadvaita* combining *Sankara's Advaitavada* with the *Vaishnava Pancharatna theology*, which claimed that Vishnu is the very foundation of the universe. The impact of Ramanuja's writings and his long service as priest of the famous Vishnu temple at *Srinangam* made his ideas widely known among the Vaishnavites and made him regarded as the founder of Srivaishnavism.

In the 14th and early 15th centuries Ramananda emerged as a link between the South Indian bhakti and North Indian Vaishnava bhakti traditions and considered Ram, not Vishnu, as the object of bhakti. Like the monotheist bhakti saints, he also rejected caste hierarchies and preached in the local languages in his attempt to popularize the cult.

In the early 16 century *Vallabacharya*, a popular bhakti saint popularized the Krishna bhakti. Among those who followed Vallabacharya's footsteps were Surdas and Mira Bai. Surdas popularized Krishna cult in north India. Mirabai was a great devotee of Krishna and she became popular in Rajasthan for her bhajans.

Tulsidas, a worshipper of Rama and composed the famous *Ramcharitmanas*, the Hindi version of Ramayana, upheld the caste system and the supremacy of the Brahmins. He preached religion of surrender and simple faith in a personal god and had a strong commitment to idol worship.

4.2.2.3 In Bengal

The Vaishnava bhakti movement in Bengal was very *different* from its counterparts in north India and the south and was influenced by the Vaishnava bhakti tradition of the *Bhagavatapurana* and the *Sahajiya Buddhist* and *Nathpanthi traditions*. These traditions focused on esoteric and emotional aspects of devotion.

In the 12th century, *Jayadeva* was an important bhakti saint in this tradition. He highlighted the mystical dimension of love with reference to Krishna and Radha. Chaitanya was another popular bhakti saint from the region; he was looked upon as an *Avatara* (incarnation) of Krishna. Though, he did not question the authority of the Brahmans and the scriptures. He also popularized the *Sankirtan* (group devotional songs accompanied with ecstatic dancing). With him the bhakti movement in Bengal began to develop into a reform movement with the notions of caste divisions that came to be questioned.

4.2.2.4 In Maharashtra

the bhakti movement drew its inspiration from the *Bhagavatapurana* and the *Siva Nathpanthis*. *Jnaneswar* was a pioneer bhakti saint of Maharashtra. His commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita* called *Jnanesvari* served as a foundation of the bhakti ideology in Maharashtra. Arguing against caste distinctions, he believed that the only way to attain God was through Bhakti. Vithoba was the God of this sect and its followers performed a pilgrimage to the temple twice a year. The Vithoba of Pandarpur became the mainstay of the movement in Maharashtra.

Namdev (1270–1350) was another important bhakti saint from Maharashtra. While he is remembered in the north Indian monotheistic tradition as a nirguna saint, in Maharashtra he is considered to be part of the *Varkari* tradition (the Vaishnava devotional tradition). Some of the other important bhakti saints of Maharashtra included *Choka*, *Sonara*, *Tukaram* and *Eknath*. Tukaram's teachings are in the form of the *Avangas* (dohas), which constitute the *Gatha*, while Eknath's teachings that were in Marathi attempted to shift the emphasis of Marathi literature from spiritual to narrative compositions.

4.2.2.5 Dvaita (Dualist) Tradition

The 13th century recorded the school of *Dvaita* (Dualism of *Jivatma* and *Paramatma*) led by *Madhava* (c. 1199–1278), who maintained that Vishnu is the supreme God, thus identifying the *Brahman*, or absolute reality, of the *Upanishads* with a personal god, as *Ramanuja* (c. 1050–1137) had done before him. In Madhva's system, there are three eternal, ontological orders of God, soul, and inanimate nature. God is the epitome of all perfections and possesses a non-material body; which consists of *saccidananda* (being, spirit, and bliss); who would not have created the world by splitting himself nor would have changed himself into an imperfect world. The countless dependent individual souls exist completely by the grace of God; in their actions they are totally subject to God. The individual souls are depicted as reflections, images or shadows of the divine,

but are never in any way identical with the divine. Moksha (liberation), therefore, is described as the realization that all finite reality is essentially dependent on the Supreme. Just as souls, the innumerable inanimate substances too go into the creative apparatus of the universe.

Thus, the soul (*Jiva*), who is at the centre in the triple categories of God-soul-inanimate world, becomes involved in the meshes of Samsara or bondage, if he leans towards one side; and if he leans towards another side, he becomes liberated. Mukti or liberation, instead of any cessation of the world itself, means release from the bondage of the world, with continuous existence of the world.

4.2.2.6 Sikhism and Guru Nanak

Founded in 15th century, Sikhism presented an outstanding example of religious synthesis. Their text *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* includes the names of a host of celebrities from various religions and incorporates the sayings of *Hari, Ram, Govind, Gopal, Prabhu, Parabrahma, Murari, Narayan, Damodar, Vithal, Madhusudan, Narasingh, Mohan, Goverdhandhari* and *Allah*, in addition to the devotional hymns from *Kabir, Namdev, Sheikh Farid, Jaydev, Surdas* and other saintly persons belonging to different religions and religious sects. As an upholder of secular philosophy, *Guru Nanak* is usually revered and acknowledged "by the Hindus as the teacher and by the Muslims as the saint". To him, *Mandir* or *Mosque, Puja* or *Namaz, Puran* or *Quran* had no difference. Subscribing to monotheism, he believed in an all-pervading spirit as Fearless, Timeless and Formless one God. He underlined the notions of God as *Sat* (Reality), *Chit* (knowledge) and *Anand* (Bliss), divine unity of God and man, and the divine equality of man and man.

His philosophy consists of three basic elements: a leading charismatic personality (the *Guru*), ideology (*Shabad*) and Organization (*Sangat*). He preached the importance of congregation called *Saad Sangat* (communion of good people) and advocated the virtue of love, devotion and humility. In place of the closed and restrictive system of *Varnas* and *Ashramas*, he subscribed the universal code of life and conduct as (i) *Kirt karo* (work), (ii) *Nam Japo* (worship), and (iii) *Vand Chako* (charity). He, thus, underlined the gospel of *Kar Seva*, i.e., the selfless voluntary service of the community and the world at large.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Illustrate the scope of Bhakti Tradition.

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2. Explain the enriched diversity of *Bhakti* tradition.

4.3 EVOLUTION OF SOCIO-POLITICAL IDEAS AND POLITY

The political ideas of saints needs to be placed in the hegemonic culture and ideology of elite, of its state structure, taxation, technology, caste, class religion, gender dominance and protest movements of the subaltern in different forms. It also coincided with rising trade that facilitated with opportunities for vertical-horizontal mobility of social groups and individuals. The elite, in general, reacted against this upward mobility of subaltern, who, infact, was critical of this feudal reaction and day-to-day discrimination.

4.3.1 Reflection of Individualism

The striking individualism in *Bhakti* tradition can be seen in the *refusal* of the collective authority of both the major traditions of the day, *Brahmanic* Hinduism and Islam. *Linda Hess* has appreciated these saints for their assertions in solitariness, vigour, fearlessness and iconoclasm. They challenged the elitist authorities and inspired common man to be self-reliant, strong, fearless and reactive against all varieties of exploitation, humiliation, differentiation and touch-me-notism.

4.3.2 Religious Reforms and Rejection of Rituals

The entire *Bhakti* tradition rejected rituals vociferously, harshly questioning and condemning the practices of both ‘Turks’ and ‘Hindus’. Pilgrimage, worshipping, chanting, fasting, holy dips – all were rejected while emphasising the vision of a full life within the world.

The *Nirgun* followers believed that the divine is found within the individual and *not* in any place. However, there are various versions of the internalized divine. With traditional *Brahmanism*, which favoured an advaitic philosophy, this meant an identification of the internal *Atman* with the universal *Brahman*; self and

universe are ultimately the same. With *Yogic* tradition, this meant the identification of the self with *Siva* in a way that sought *Jivan-Mukti*, immortality of body and magic powers. Saints like Kabir rejected *Advaitic* identification, insisting “if you can’t see what’s before your eyes, you’re as good as blind.” (Omvedt, 101)

4.3.3 Reaction against Caste Structure

Bhakti tradition meant rejection of social hierarchy. It was subversion against structural dominance, in cultural form, by an ordinary subject. Most of bhakti saints surpassed the caste system and focused on the classes. A critique of past cultural, religious and ritualistic legacies were fostered as ‘god created’ by the elite for dominance. Here, Bhakti was an alternative and a method of protest and escape against the existing social order. The consciousness and other worldliness were infact fused with each other. Anti-caste attitude came from being a subaltern, a man of people. The most vigorous denunciation was of hierarchy of caste and the pride of *Brahmans*.

4.3.4 Focus on Classes

The upcoming traders, shopkeepers and the mercantile classes were breaking the old cultural moorings and structure through their trade by linking towns and villages to each other, providing opportunities of social mobility and bringing new ideas and technology. The trade had the tendency to create a monetized economy and the potential to react against old caste based hierarchical order. It altogether acknowledged the alteration in the feudal/pre-capitalist order, enabling the emerging new social forces to create a new bourgeois social order. The monetized economy was initiated due to the collection of revenue in cash or due to production for market effecting society in different forms.

4.3.5 Critical of the Zamindari System

Most of Bhakti saints were critical of the Zamindari system, which upheld the traditional structure of pre-capitalist social formation. Both, Hindus and Muslims were part of the elite structure and nurtured this system. At the same time, both Hindus and Muslims were poor and comprised subalterneity despite their religious differences. Religious victimization by the elite did happen, but the economic position of the victims pulled them back to their class. Since majority of the population was rural and involved with agriculture and were the subject of surplus extraction. Hence, the subaltern voice, like Kabir, reflected on their social and political condition.

4.3.6 Universal Humanism

Bhakti movement promoted development of language and generated a new cultural movement reflecting universal humanism. The dominant class composed of big traders, shopkeepers, financiers, administrative personnel, priestly section etc. were mobile and created limited civil society with individual freedom. The imprint of the trade was visible in individual freedom within the framework of pre-capitalist social formation. It was reflective through refutation of economic

and cultural exploitation in the verses of saints like Kabir. Their reflection of consciousness and rebellious ideas were based on a universal society without any economic and primordial differentiation. Aiming at the betterment of the poor and discriminated, these *bhakts* represented these subaltern. It was a rationale and humane society, reflecting sovereignty of citizens and equality among them, which would translate into freedom of all.

The utopia was to be erected through *bhakti*, i.e. through collective participation of people in decision making and social construction, which necessitated a break off from the prevalent socio-economic divisions. It reflected the freedom of religious expression on equality without any religious divide and internal hierarchical order. It manifested into syncretism of ideas and secularisation of *Bhakt* personified by most of saints.

4.3.7 Absence of Critique of Patriarchy

In general, this tradition was *uncritical* of patriarchy, and there was a complete absence of gender equality. At best, there was a glorification of ideal wife within patriarchal values, while recognising the woman's labour within the households. It is noteworthy that *Basava* of 12th Century Karnataka, preached gender equality by arguing that since *Atman* is one in both man and woman, they are equal.

The 15th Century feudal-patriarchal society treated women's labour within private/public domain as inconsequential, least important and with no premium. However, the recognition of work of wife in the private domain was an anti-dote to the feudal-patriarchal values and by itself, revolutionary for the said period.

4.3.8 Liberal Religious Policies adopted

Bhakti Movement gave birth to different cultures, practices, philosophical and religious traditions and ideas; resulting in religious tolerance along with appreciation of the difference between thought and practices. Some of the rulers adopted liberal religious policies under the impact of the Bhakti movement.

4.3.9 Promotion of Regional Languages

In place of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, the Bhakti saints preached through the medium of *local* languages which could be understood very easily. For instance, the language of Kabir was a mixture of several languages of everyday use. Surdas used 'Brij' dialect. Goswami Tulsi Das composed his works in 'Awadhi'. Literary organizations, literary expressions and folk tales were part of public discourse. In general, these were not regulated by the state or elite. Their social composition was inclusive of persons from different religions and castes.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Write a critical appraisal of evolution of socio-political ideas in *Bhakti* tradition.

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4.4 MEANS OF REFORMS: BHAKTI, SERVICE, CRITIQUE AND RESISTANCE

Bhakti saints emphasized surrender to god. As rebels, many of them chose to defy the currents of their time through their writings. Hailing from both the high and low castes, they created a formidable body of literature that firmly established itself in the popular canon. Tukaram, a *Shudra* by caste, defying the injunctions of the *Brahmins*, chose to write on religious matters, and that too in Marathi, the language of the people.

4.4.1 Bhakti as a Means of Reformation

The impact of the Bhakti movement in India was similar to that of the *Protestant Reformation* of Christianity in Europe. It evoked shared religiosity, direct emotional and intellection of the divine, and the pursuit of spiritual ideas without the overhead of institutional superstructures. It initiated a movement of protest against the caste system and the dominance of Brahmanas or at least attempted to reform the system.

4.4.2 Mutual Social Service

While asserting for *Ahimsa* (non-violence) towards all living beings, social equality, harmony and social assimilation, Bhakti saints introduced new forms of voluntary social giving such as *seva* (service, for example, to a temple or *gurukul* or community construction), *daana* (charity), and community kitchens with free shared food. The vegetarian '*Guru ka langar*' introduced by Guru Nanak became a well-established institution of community kitchen. Bhakti temples and *Matha* (Hindu monasteries) of India adopted social functions such as relief to victims after natural disaster, helping the poor and marginal farmers, providing community labour, feeding houses for the poor, free hostels for poor children and promoting folk culture.

4.4.3 Resistance against Revenue Administration and Surplus Extraction

Cultural hegemony and dominance by coercive state apparatus were *two major* methods of extraction. Both were countered in different forms with different intensity. While the first method was acceptable with minimum resistance, the second method was resisted subtly. The latter, the resistance against taxation/rent collection was starkly visible in everyday existence in diverse ingenious forms devised by subjects. (Himanshu, 97)

The writers of this period were increasingly raising issues of efficient administration and better governance, criticizing rulers, nobility and officials for lacking imagination, initiative and willingness to improve the affairs of the state. It was a pluralistic cultural space where multiple and contrastive public intersected, emerged and collapsed on a regular basis. The subaltern gained in the long run, but it was not always homogenous and uniform. Many times, it was rapid, at times it was piecemeal. Yet, it always found methods of protest against the state and elite. Despite many attempts by the elite to regulate and influence their ideas, the subaltern maintained substantive degree of ideological autonomy.

This primary contradiction of classes is notably expressed by Kabir. His critical observation of society, functioning of state and its clergy, and its linkages with the elite, property relations and social divisions denote his critique of the revenue administration, cited as under:

गाऊँ कु ठाकुर खेत कुनापे, काइथ खरच न पोर ।
जोरि जेवरि खेति पसारे, सब मिलि मोकों मारे हो राम ।
खोटों महतो विकट बलाहि, सिरकस दम का पारे ।
बुरो दिवान दादी नहीं लागे, इकि बांधौ इक मारे हो राम ।

4.4.4 Critique of Polity and Reflection of Civil Society

Bhakti tradition offered a critique of the existing polity and reflected the existence of substantive degree of civil society in pre-capitalist India. Here, civil society may be considered as a sphere of social relations between the individual and the state, whose autonomy is guaranteed by law and the presence of corporate institutions. In medieval India, the common people did participate in political opinion. Festivals and prayers were public spheres, accessible to all, used by subaltern to resist the elite. It was also a space of individual freedom guaranteed within social relations. In many towns and cities, there were recognized places meant for public speeches. For example, *Holi satires* and the *Friday prayers* were used to propagate their views on specific issues to mobilize people against the elite. Three elements of 'normative discourse' – law (authority), rationality (common sense wisdom) and tradition (sanctity) – were used in support of their arguments. (Himanshu, 98)

The critique of revenue and judicial administration reflect the oppression of the poor by the state and its linkages with the elite. Invocation of God for protection reflects the situation of helplessness for them.

4.4.5 Passive Resistance as Means of Socio-Religious Reforms

The confidence of these saints freed them from the subjugation, in terms of ideas, and transcended them from religious caste identity. It was a transformation to be a rebel, to be a vanguard in different forms for the service of society.

It was a *paradigmatic* shift in social, ideological, constructive and reformatory positioning; interrogating social hierarchy and hegemonic order in every form. Critical of the state, elite, and clergy; effort was made to suggest political alternatives by way of an ideal village society without any sorrow, private property, taxes, monarchy, or social hierarchy. In the pre-capital social formation, these saints posed a radical challenge to the social and political order during their time and in the centuries that followed them.

Unlike open rebellion, it was a protest in usual form of everyday life. Though, *non-institutional* and *unorganised*, it managed to transcend regional, linguistic and caste boundaries through unscrupulous community like singers, musicians, listeners, *vairagis*, *sadhus* and householders, and underwent many changes in regional dialects.

During the national movement, Gandhi while supporting the path of self-sufferings, inspired his *Satyagrahis* to avoid violence and counter attack. Similar was the assertion of the saints of Bhakti tradition by inspiring self-sacrifice. In the words of Kabir:

कबीर खड़ा बाज़ार में, लिये लुकाठी हाथ,
जो घर फूँके अपना, चले हमारे साथ ।

Those prepared for self-suffering were invited to follow the path, considering his path being appropriate only for courageous and not for cowards. He said:

प्रेम ना खेती नपिजे, प्रेम न हाट बिकाय,
राजा परजा जिस रुचें, सिर दे, सो ले जाए।
भगती दुहेली राम की, नहिं कायर का काम,
सीस उतारे हाथी करि, सो लेसी हरि नाम।

It was a critique of an order of overlapping or fused religious, political and personal spheres. The assertion for freedom to be heretics; criticism of existing order; and search for social alternatives was frowned upon by the elite. If persisted, it was dealt with coercively. Denouncing dishonesty, delusion, surrender, or escapism; the message was for ultimatum, struggle, fearlessness and self-sacrifice, projecting these saints as precursor of means of “passive

resistance” followed during initial phase of the national movement, a few centuries later. As is exemplified from Kabir’s sayings, such as:

कबीर मरि मैदान में, करी इंद्रियां सूं झूझ;

or

सूरा झूझे गिर्द सूं, इस दिसि सूर न होई,

कबीर यों बिन सूरिमां, भला न कहिसि कोई।

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Discuss various means of reformation adopted by the *Bhakti* Tradition.

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4.5 LIMITATIONS OF *BHAKTI* TRADITION

- Metaphysics being the central concept of the *Bhakti* tradition, identification and acknowledgment of political thought pose some serious weaknesses.
- Absence of any systematic methodology poses challenges for readers and researchers.
- Identification of primary texts and classical secondary commentaries of political purport and relevance
- Issue of reading the texts in their appropriate historical and cultural contexts
- Issue of non-English vocabulary for political terms pose yet another limitation
- Expecting ethical merit from verbal ablutions had its own limitations.

4.6 IMPACT OF *BHAKTI* TRADITION

M.G. Ranade, in his book, *The Rise of Maratha Power*, sums up the deep impact of this spiritual awakening.

“The main results of Bhakti movement were the development of vernacular literature, modification of caste exclusiveness, sanctification of family life, elevation of status of women, preaching of humaneness and tolerance, partial reconciliation with Islam, subordination of rites and ceremonies, pilgrimages, fasts etc., learning and contemplation to worship God with love and faith, the limitation of excess of polytheism and the uplift of the nation to a higher level of capacity, both of thought and action.”

- The Bhakti exponents raised their powerful voice against different types of immoral acts like infanticide and sati and encouraged prohibition of wine, tobacco and toddy. Adultery and sodomy were also discouraged. They aimed to set up a good social order upholding high moral values.
- Another remarkable impact was bringing about a unity among the Hindu and Muslim communities. The movement tried to reduce the growing bitterness between the two and bridge the gap. The saints of Bhakti movement and the Sufi saints spread message of friendship, amity, tolerance, peace and equality among all.
- The method of worship and belief in God took a *new* turn during the movement. Henceforth, importance was given to devotion and love for God who is the God of all-God of both Hindus as well as Muslims. Bhakti or devotion for the Almighty was the central theme of this movement.
- The spirit of tolerance, harmony and mutual respect which was inaugurated by the Bhakti saints had another everlasting impact – the emergence of a new cult of worship by both Hindus and Muslims. It is known as the cult of *Satyapir*. It started under the initiative of King *Husain Shah* of *Jaunpur* which later paved the way for the spirit of liberalism adopted by Akbar.
- The Bhakti movement promoted the growth of vernacular language and literature in different parts of the country. Kabir, Nanak and Chaitanya preached in their respective vernacular tongues – Kabir in Hindi, Nanak in Gurmukhi and Chaitanya in Bengali. So subsequent Bhakti literatures were compiled in these languages and many Muslim writers also translated Sanskrit works into regional languages.
- In Orissa, a new trend was started in Oriya literature due to the Bhakti movement and medieval Vaishnavism of Shri Chaitanya. *Five* writers of repute – *Achyuta*, *Balaram*, *Jagannath*, *Yasobanta* and *Ananta* – heralded the age of *Panchasakha* literature, known for its socio-religious exposition of Bhakti.
- During medieval period, birth oriented casteism and compartmentalization of society was countered by **Sufis and Saints** on one hand and **Sikhism**, on the other.
- The reformatory and modification based assertions of Bhakti tradition were carried forward by **reformers** like Rammohun Roy, Vivekananda,

Dayananda Saraswati etc. in the nineteenth century and also in twentieth century by **leaders of depressed classes** namely Jotirao Phule, Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar, etc.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Highlights the major limitations of the *Bhakti* Tradition.

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2. Point out the impact of the *Bhakti* tradition.

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4.7 LET US SUM UP

The Bhakti movement aimed at the purification of Hindu religion and liberation of the people from the monopoly and injustices of the priestly classes. The *Bhakti* saints came from different streams of society, particularly low caste. *Bhakti* opposed the institutionalisation of religion, tried to decentralise it, and considered religion as a private matter. The *Bhakti* traditions gave respectability to low castes, posing a challenge to the upper caste hegemony. This tradition had an inclusive approach towards Muslims as well.

The Bhakti tradition opposed the rituals, hegemony of the elite of society. They adopted the languages more popular with the masses. Preaching in regional languages, the saints provided impetus for the development of regional languages such as Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Kannada, etc.

The proponents of Bhakti tradition introduced syncretic tradition in India and sought to promote eclectic faiths and defuse religious orthodoxy among the followers of Hinduism and Islam. They proved to be a most formidable bridge between Hinduism and Islam by harmonizing the orthogenetic and heterogenetic

elements of the distinct faith systems of the two religions. The saints like Kabir tried to ridicule the orthodoxies of both religions.

Bhakti tradition represented the organic, subaltern intellect of radical intent. Sovereignty of monarch was rejected. There was noteworthy refusal to accept the king as an incarnation of god. A constant endeavour was visible to subvert the authority of the elite and of his culture that prompted dominance. On their part, saints proclaimed universal categories and monotheistic praxis. They were assertive against exploitation, injustice, and hierarchy, challenging the ideological dominance of the elite. They exposed the property relations and its dominance.

For the oppressed, this tradition was inclusive in spirit representing the alternative political ideas of their age. They demonstrated indigenous modernity of their age that was rooted in subalternity. While breaking away from the traditions, defiance was witnessed. It challenged the established social political order and was anti-authority and subversive. It offered an alternative politics through the composite narratives that laid the ideological base for the future acts of resistance against dominance.

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4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Your answer should highlight following points

- Reaction towards Evils in the Hindu Society
- Challenge from Other Religions
- Influence of Sufism

2. Your answer should highlight following points

- Bhakti Tradition in South
 - ❖ Earliest *Advaita* (Monotheistic) Reformer Saint - Adi Shankaracharya
 - ❖ Alvars – The *Vaishnavite* Saints
 - ❖ Nayanars – The Saivite Saints
- *Bhakti* Movement in the North
 - ❖ Nirgun Tradition
 - ❖ Sagun Bhakti
 - ❖ In Bengal
 - ❖ In Maharashtra
- *Dvaita* (Dualist) Tradition
- Sikhism and Guru Nanak

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. Your answer should highlight following points

- Reflection of Individualism
- Religious Reforms and Rejection of Rituals
- Reaction against Caste Structure
- Focus on Classes
- Critical of the Zamindari System
- Universal Humanism
- Absence of Critique of Patriarchy
- Liberal Religious Policies adopted
- Promotion of Regional Languages

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1. Your answer should highlight following points

- Bhakti as a Means of Reformation
- Mutual Social Service
- Resistance against Revenue Administration and Surplus Extraction
- Critique of Polity and Reflection of Civil Society
- Passive Resistance as Means of Socio-Religious Reforms

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1. Your answer should highlight reactions from the following

- Metaphysics as central concept
- Methodological challenges
- Identification of primary texts
- appropriate historical and cultural contexts
- non-English vocabulary
- verbal ablutions

2. Your answer should highlight reactions from the following

Bhakti

- Development of vernacular literature,
- Modification of caste exclusiveness,
- Sanctification of family life,
- Preaching of humaneness and tolerance,
- Partial reconciliation with Islam,
- Subordination of rites and ceremonies, pilgrimages, fasts etc.,
- Learning and contemplation to worship god with love and faith,
- The limitation of excess of polytheism



