



FACULTY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES

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Lecture-29



Religious Traditions and Polity

Brahminism

Brahmanism is an ideology and a way of life, originating from the history of **the Vedas**, often called a **philosophy**, practised on the basis of specific inferred beliefs. The fundamental and principle belief of Brahmanism defines Brahman and its attributeless element that was first captured by the Rishis who compiled the **Vedas**. "That which existed before creation, that which constitutes the existent whole, and that into which all creation dissolves is the all-pervading Brahman, and the cycle of creation, sustenance, and destruction of the universe is endless." (Kena Upanishad)

Core Concepts of Brahmanism

The core concepts of Brahmanism are significantly aligned with metaphysics, questioning what is actually real, the validity of time, of being, of consciousness, and the origin and basis of all existence. Many scholars, such as archaeologists, geologists, Indologists, and philologists, have taken refuge in the writings of the Vedas, especially in the concept of Brahman since it is directly related to humans and their origin.

Brahman as the all-pervading, all-eternal, and the prime cause of 'all that moves and does not move', forms a major acceptance in Brahmanism. It rests on the belief that everything that ever existed, that exists now, and that is going to exist is a minuscule event in the all eternal universal reality, called Brahman. The Atman – the soul – forms the second most important concept in Brahmanism. The Atman is considered to be the source of all vitality among humans. The soul of a living being is considered to be self-same as Brahman itself, thus leading to the belief that a human who embodies the soul is no other than Brahman and has all the attributes of Brahman. The soul, thus identified to be identical with the Supreme Soul which pervades everything, forms a significant belief in Brahmanism. The Supreme Soul, which is never born yet is the reason for the birth of all, forms the underlying principle in Brahmanism, which expanded following the inference of Brahman.

One soul is considered as self-same with the Supreme Soul, which is nothing but Brahman. This belief shows the influence of Brahmanism on **Buddhism**, **Jainism**, and Hinduism. Hinduism today is regarded nothing less than the progeny or an offshoot of Brahmanism, since Hindus got their name from Indus river, on the banks of which, the Aryans practised the Vedas. Hence, Hindus following the Vedas and its Brahman belief were seen as the first propellers of Hinduism.

B The first is the veneration of the Buddha or other buddhas, bodhisattvas, or saints, which involves showing respect, meditating on the qualities of the Buddha, or giving gifts. Such gifts are often given to the relics of the Buddha, to images made to represent

him, and to other traces of his presence, such as places where his footprint can supposedly be seen. After the Buddha's death the first foci for this sort of veneration seem to have been his relics and the stupas that held them. By the beginning of the Common Era, anthropomorphic images of the Buddha were being produced, and they took their place alongside relics and stupas as focal points for venerating him. Still later, in the context of the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions, the veneration of other buddhas and bodhisattvas came to supplement or replace the veneration of the Buddha Gautama. In the course of Buddhist history, the forms have become diverse, but the practice of honouring and even worshiping the Buddha or Buddha figure has remained a central component in all Buddhist traditions.

The second basic practice is the exchange that takes place between monks and laypersons. Like the Buddha himself, the monks embody or represent the higher levels of spiritual achievement, which they make available in various ways to the laity. The laity improve their soteriological condition by giving the monks material gifts that function as sacrificial offerings. Although the exchange is structured differently in each Buddhist tradition, it has remained until recently a component in virtually all forms of Buddhist community life.

MCQ

1. The priestly class of Ancient Indian society were

- a. the Vaisyas.
- b. the Sudras.
- c. the Brahmins.
- d. the Kshatriyas.

2. Reincarnation is the Hindu

- a. belief that the individual soul is reborn in a different form.
- b. method of training that is supposed to lead to oneness with Brahman.
- c. must worship the leader as a god.
- d. of a woman is superior.

3. Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer are the three chief

- a. leaders of Ancient India.
- b. humanlike gods in Hinduism.
- c. Aryan warriors whose actions illustrate the importance of duty.
- d. characters in the Bhagavad Gita, India's great religious poem.

4. The lowest level of Ancient Indian society who were given tasks seen as menial and degrading, such as such as collecting trash and handling dead bodies, were the

- a. the Brahmins.
- b. the Vaisyas.
- c. the Untouchables.
- d. the Kshatriyas.

5. Since most Indians could not easily relate to the ideal of achieving oneness with the Brahman, they

- a. rejected the concept of reincarnation.

- b. did not accept Hinduism as their religion.
- c. developed four types of yoga to meet different needs.
- d. needed a belief in gods and goddesses as a more concrete way to express religious feeling.

