

METHODOLOGY OF HUMANITIES

BA ENGLISH

I Semester (2011 Admission)

III Semester (2012 Admission)

CORE COURSE



UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

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STUDY MATERIAL
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Layout & Settings
Computer Section, SDE

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MODULE I

Objectives:

This module seeks to define:

1. Humanities as a discipline
2. Difference between the natural, social and human sciences.
3. Interpretation of facts and its importance in social sciences and humanities.
4. Whether history a social science or a subject of humanities.

Introduction

Humanities subjects have been at the heart of liberal arts education since the ancient Greeks first used them to educate their citizens. Their aim was to provide a basis for a broad education for the Greek citizens. The term ‘humanities’ probably appeared first during the Italian Renaissance in relation to the education of Christians for their moral and spiritual development. In the 15th century a major shift occurred in Renaissance humanism when humanities came to be regarded as subjects to be studied rather than practiced, with a corresponding shift away from the traditional fields into areas such as literature and history. In the 20th century this view was in turn challenged by the post modernist movement which sought to redefine the humanities in more equal terms suitable for a democratic society. Today, the term refers to those disciplines of knowledge which are broadly concerned with human thoughts, creative expressions and culture and are classified as non-science academic disciplines. Humanities focus on understanding and meaning, purpose and goals and further, the appreciation of singular historical and social phenomena - uncovering the truth of the natural world. Broadly speaking, it includes the various branches of knowledge which explore the process of creative intervention which humans make in imaginatively interpreting and expressing the meaning of their experiences. The humanities explore the process of how human beings construct a world of meanings and interpretations around their lives.

Natural, Social and the Human Sciences:

What is **Science**? Science, broadly speaking, is the systematic study of all things, natural and social. It is the act of arriving at the truth, analyzing it, determining the relationships between facts and the formulation of casual explanations. These explanations are continuously verified, validated and testable hypotheses are arrived at. The hallmark of a scientific exercise is supposed to be ‘empirical proof’ or ‘objective truth’ which is verifiable through sense perception. The goal

of science, therefore, is to arrive at the absolute truth by criticism and the natural world is the most appropriate object of study in such a context.

Natural Sciences is the study of the external, natural world. The natural sciences acquire knowledge through direct observation of phenomena. By involving in a series of experiments scientists create axioms which can be correctly applied to the natural world. Axioms are conclusions drawn from experiments in the natural sciences and considered to be true till they are contradicted. The disciplines that are categorized as natural sciences are astronomy, earth sciences, physics, chemistry, and biology. The growth of modern science since the late 17th century has led to it being considered as the most reliable form of knowledge and the methods it uses, as the best way to arrive at the 'truth' of a phenomena. The physical sciences tend to examine the world and its phenomena objectively without reference to or consideration of human meaning or purpose which is a key aspect of the humanities. There are two kinds of phenomena, natural and social. While natural phenomena exist without the intervention of people, social phenomena exist only as a result of human interaction. When social behavior of human beings is explained and predicted with the help of scientific methods, the body of knowledge thus created is called **Social sciences**. Sociology, anthropology, political science, psychology and economics fall under this category. Social Science tried to emulate the methods of natural sciences in arriving at the 'truth' but since Social Science deals with the social environment, the same Scientific method could not be applied to explain and predict the human behavior. Natural Science gives us an insight into what things 'are', 'were' and 'would be' whereas Social Sciences are involved closely with problems of 'what is' and 'what should be'. It is involved with the betterment of humankind. The Natural Sciences deal with quantifiable data but Social Sciences deal with data that are not measurable or controllable, that is, data like values, beliefs subjectivity and morals. Moreover, since human experience is open to interpretation in a thousand ways, both rational and irrational, it is difficult to apply the scientific method in social sciences.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica (2006) defines the Humanities as "Branches of knowledge that investigate human beings, their culture and their self-expression". These branches include philosophy, literature, languages, the arts, religion and history. Disciplines that study human conditions in totality are referred to as **Humanities or Human Sciences**. We could define humanities as the study of how humans have expressed themselves through the arts, throughout history. Expressing oneself through the arts is one of the earliest and most basic of human activities. Unlike other sciences, the Humanities employ methods that are creative and speculative by nature. Analysis and exchange of ideas are emphasized. Hence Humanities provide us with stories, the ideas and the words that help us make sense of our lives and the world. It helps us to decide what is important in our own lives and how we can improve our existing conditions. It also helps us in identifying what is right and wrong by connecting us with others and also in understanding our heritage and history better. The meaning, purpose and aim of the human condition is emphasized here. There is no search for objective truth in humanities. Humanities often employ narrative imagination as an important tool in understanding and reproducing the

meanings of culture, literature and history. The Humanities seek to describe how experiences shape our understanding of the world. What distinguishes the humanities from the natural Sciences is the mode of approach to any question. Humanities focus on understanding the meaning, purpose and goals and further the appreciation of singular, historical & social phenomena. It neither seeks objective truth nor tries to explain the causality of events. The Humanities examine the human condition by studying the elements of culture that describe what is or was valued and considered important at a particular point in time. Humanities are essentially self reflexive in character and explain human relationship & answers the fundamental question what it means to be human.

Humanities and Social Sciences have several overlaps. Philosophy, a synthesis of all forms of knowledge and historically the source of all the Sciences is a Humanities discipline. Philosophy does not use experiments but a critical systematic approach to seek knowledge about human existence. History, on the other hand, was earlier a Humanities discipline but in modern times enjoys an ambiguous status. History is designated as a social science more often now since it started using the methodology of Social Sciences.

The Scientific Method:

The scientific community has slowly realized that the overemphasis on empirical proof (objective 'truth') limits the scope of scientific method. Such a method can be applied only to logic & mathematics. The scientific method, they feel, should focus only on a 'probable certainty' rather than the absolute truth. The nature of the exactness of scientific knowledge has been subjected to controversy for a long time. Human knowledge is systematically moving away from speculative (not based on direct experience) understanding, and hence certain areas of social and cultural life are being subjected to scientific enquiry. For eg. caste or gender related prejudices which influence our behavior towards fellow human beings are subjects of systematic study by sociologists to reveal the truth behind them. There are different ways to know the world, natural or social. There is no single method of knowing. Every method should take into account the nature of the subject it tries to know. For example, the study of the various physical forms of water is definitely different from a study of the movements of the planets. Different tools & techniques are to be employed. The feelings of a particular group of people towards a political party & how this is reflected in their voting pattern require an entirely different method of study. The study of nature & society are different. Human experience can be interpreted in many different ways. The physical & natural world can be known with the senses but society cannot be studied in the same manner. That is why social sciences/humanities is different from the natural sciences.

A major area of humanities/social science deals with human values and motivations. Here, subjective interpretation of 'facts' by human being plays a greater role in research than in natural sciences. E.H.Carr in his book *What is History?* argues that facts cannot be conceived without an existing framework of interpretation & value judgment. Fact is equivalent to truth or 'reality'. Derived from the Latin word 'Factum', fact means something that can be shown to be true, to exist or to have happened. Facts are the truth of the actual existence of something; therefore facts

have an objective & finite existence. At the same time, it is important to understand that 'facts' are always selected, collected, analysed and interpreted within a framework which is always based on certain assumptions or value judgments. Therefore the idea of a completely value-neutral science based on facts and independent of subjective interpretation is questionable.

History as Fiction

The broad idea that history studies the past days does not provide us with a useful definition of history. The study of the past involves a certain approach or understanding of *everything* that happened in the past. A historian may give an account or a narrative of 'what happened' according to the sequence of events. But it is not certain whether the narrative is governed exclusively by the collected 'facts' or whether it is being shaped by his imagination. Today however history is regarded as an independent discipline that deals in 'facts' not fancies. Prior to the French revolution historiography or the art of constructing history was regarded as a literary art. Until late 19th century historians regarded themselves as men of letters who told stories as clearly and poetically as any novelist. It was only towards the end of the 19th century that the discipline of history was professionalized and academicized. E.H. Carr, the British Marxist historian, in *What is History?*, says that the happenings in the society in which a historian is placed have a huge role to play in the writing of history. A historian writes history with an imaginative understanding of the people whom he/she is writing about. According to Carr, history is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his/her facts. It is like a continuous dialogue between the past and the present. A historian is also a product of his/her age and his/her present engagement with the reality has a bearing on his /her writing. A historian selects a part of the past and corrects it with what happened before it and what followed it.

Study of the Natural World as Compared to the Subjective:

The study of the natural/social world is bound by the search for causality of events and finding the truth of the natural/social world. Humanities, on the other hand, looks for value laden meanings. Thus in both subject matter and the methodology both differ. H.G.Gadamer and Wilhelm Dilthey tried to enrich humanities and re-examined its differences with natural sciences. Contemporary scholars of humanities examined the possibility of placing their disciplines closer to the social sciences. But much of the social scientific texts are written in wider systems of social belief & structures of social interest. Literature may not be shaped so much by value-judgments, though it is valued writing. The question of value and literature in relation to knowledge of the world has been a concern from the time of Plato. Plato illustrated from classical Greek texts to establish that literary texts basically substantiated an entire value system, a particular view of the world. He considered the artistic representation of the real world as they *appear* to the authors as only an imitation of the real. Plato wanted fiction to be truthful. This attempt was shelved by his disciple Aristotle. He regarded literature as a sphere separate from politics and ethics, having its own standards and justifications. He stressed on the aesthetic value of literary texts. Subsequently during the Romantic period of late 18th and early 19th century, the literary work was considered fundamentally as an expression of the author's aesthetic sense of the world around him/her. David Hume, the British philosopher was of the opinion that the value of a literary work lies in its capacity to give pleasure. Since this is essentially subjective there is no objective definition of its

nature and it is not a measurable value. The problem of value is so intricate in literature that 20th century literary criticism attempted to keep away from discussions on value. The quest for objectivity in the subjective world of humanities and the social sciences has been going on for a long time.

Quest for Objectivity in the Subjective World:

August Comte, considered the founding father of sociology, suggested a shift from social philosophy to social science. He emphasized a study of society based on the observation of an immediate experience. He advocated positivism. He wanted to liberate knowledge about social phenomena from the clutches of theology. He wanted to use natural science methods in studying social sciences. The Comtean notion that social phenomena are natural facts, subject to natural laws, later lost its grip in social science thinking. The orthodox view of treating social science simply as an extension of natural sciences came under doubt. Can we explain the human society as we explain the world around us? Human beings are endowed with values and motivations according to which they orient themselves towards each other and to the world. Is it therefore advisable to be objective in social sciences?

Max Weber's Contribution to Social Sciences:

Max Weber, a German Sociologist, made the most powerful contribution to resolve the issue of whether or not to be objective in social sciences. According to him society is a result of a number of human interactions. Every action of every human being is infused with values and meanings. He/She is like an actor. Human beings orient themselves towards each other based on these actions. Values, motivations and interests govern such interactions. Social science, unlike natural science, has as its object of study a social subject which has consciousness. Since human beings are cultural beings, social sciences are cultural sciences. There should not be laws here like natural laws. There should only be such social laws which explain what the tendency of a phenomenon is rather than what the phenomenon itself is. Value-freedom is Max Weber's contribution to the social sciences. Social sciences ought to study and explain values without being judgmental about them. The obligation of social sciences is to keep the causal explanations free from value-based preferences of the researcher. Social scientists have to keep the two separate, that is, science should be set aside from values because facts and values are totally different. The social science researcher should try to be free from subjective biases which would distort the accuracy of the research.

Study of Tastes, Values and Belief Systems

Taste as a concept which involves cultural choices of human beings can be scientifically studied. It means distinguishing between life styles, manners, consumables and art. The social sciences look at taste as a social phenomenon. It refers to the learned behavior of human beings to consider something as aesthetically desirable, good or proper. Different economic groups have different tastes. The tastes of a dominant economic group will be accepted more than others. Such tastes become dominant tastes. Tastes are linked to values. Values are the sum total of beliefs about objects, ideas, or actions considered preferable to others. Values are internalized through social conditioning. Values are shared by members of a group or society. People set their priorities in life based on the values they hold. Usually the way a society bestows rewards and praise on its members tells us what values are upheld. In India white collar jobs are preferred to jobs requiring

physical labour. This value is linked to the varna hierarchy of Hindu society. Norms are specific ways of preferred and practised behavior in social situations and mores are set of beliefs from which the moral ideas followed by the members of a society are derived. Guidance about good and bad is received from these. Such belief systems come from various sources but largely from religious systems. They decide how we organize our lives.

Ideology

Ideology, in social sciences, refers to a set of ideas, which provide a theoretical and operational framework for thought or action by the people who follow it. The question of ideology also poses a problem for the pursuit of objectivity as ideology imposes certain value judgments which will hinder it. It was the 18th century French philosopher Destutt de Tracy who coined the term ideology. It meant the science of ideas. In Marxian terms, however, it means the dominant ideas prevailing in society, that is, the ideas of the ruling class which is a sort of distorted reality or false consciousness. Louis Althusser in his essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (1969) pointed out that ideology is relatively autonomous. It is not a distortion of reality whereby the dominant class exploits the subjected class. Ideology plays an active role in social formation by affecting the material conditions themselves. Frederic Jameson in his *The Political Unconscious* connected literary genres or forms with social formations. Thus literary texts are to be analysed in terms of the relationship between their aesthetic value and the ideological function they performed. Marxist literary critic Terry Eagleton in his *Ideology: An Introduction* proposes a more inclusive definition of ideology where he says that ideology does not serve to sustain and legitimate the power of the dominant group relations which is too simplistic a definition. According to him one has to take into account the intersection between belief system and political power. Such a neutral position would not be judgmental about whether ideology and political power is legitimizing or contradicting the existing social order. For him ideology is more than just a belief system.

Points to Remember

1. Humanities today refer to those disciplines of knowledge which are broadly concerned with human thoughts, expressions and culture.
2. Humanities are non-science academic disciplines.
3. Difference between Natural and Social Sciences.
4. History as an independent discipline.
5. The scientific method.
6. Max Weber’s contribution to Social Sciences.
7. The concept of taste in social sciences.
8. The question of ideology.

Model Questions: Some Examples:

I. Multiple Choice Questions:

1. Psychology is a part of:

- a. Social Science
- b. Humanities
- c. Natural Sciences

Ans: a

2. Positivism was advocated by:

- a. Max Weber
- b. August Comte
- c. Emile Durkheim

Ans: b

II. Answer in a sentence or two:

1. What is Max Weber's contribution to social sciences?

Ans: Max Weber championed the cause of value-freedom. In social sciences one has to concentrate on 'what is probable' than 'what it should be'.

2. What is ideology?

Ans: It means the science of ideas. The Marxist theory however used the term to imply something that hides reality of the actual material condition of society.

III. Answer in a paragraph:

1. The Scientific Method

[Hints: Scientific Method must look for probable certainty-human knowledge gives importance to direct experience-social and cultural life subjected to scientific enquiry-caste or gender related prejudices-different subject matter need different interpretation-'how we know' is more important]

2. How are humanities disciplines different from natural sciences?

[Hints: Mode of approach- Natural sciences depend on objective truth-humanities emphasize analysis and change-deals with human values-subjective interpretation-self-reflexive]

Essay

1. What do you understand by objectivity in scientific enquiry?

[Hints: Emphasis on objective truth limits the scope of scientific method-should aim at 'probable certainty-areas of social and cultural life are subject to scientific enquiry-eg:caste,gender and prejudice-objective truth is the hall mark of scientific method-appropriate object of study of natural phenomena-difficult to apply it in social sciences-natural world is directly perceivable,measurable and controllable-objective method can be easily applied]

2 . Is history a social science or a subject of the humanities?

Ans: [Hints: Study of the past-regarded as an independent discipline-deals in 'facts'-previously regarded as a literary art-society plays a huge role in the writing of history- a continuous interaction between the historian and facts-dialogue between past and present-similarities between the historian's task and that of the novelist-both historians and novelists tell stories-historians also have views and assumptions of the world they live in.]

MODULE II

Objectives

By the end of this module you should

- Become conscious of the ways in which the discipline of Humanities looks at *reality* as a construct which has to be interpreted contextually.
- Be able to understand the complex relationship between language and culture.
- Be aware of the complexity of *identity* and *subjectivity* as a process.
- Be acquainted with the terms *discourse*, *agency* and *power* and the ways in which subjectivity is constructed within this network.
- Have learnt the processes involved in the social construction of reality
- Know the politics of how language powerfully constructs identities in relation to class, caste, race, gender, history and colonialism.
- Have an idea of *essentialist* and *anti-essentialist* (constructivist) theories of reality and language

Introduction

The methodology of Humanities seeks to understand how culture constructs reality through language. The importance of language in the production of knowledge and identities is of prime importance in humanities. Human culture has rejected the idea of *essentialism* as a method of understanding reality. Reality is considered as fluid and ever changing in relation to changes in culture. Essentialism is the belief that people and/or phenomenon have an underlying *and* unchanging 'essence'; that human beings possess an innate, natural unchanging identity. This outlook seeks to close off the possibility of changeable human behaviour. Reality is also considered as one Reality, like one Truth. Essentialist theories consider that there are unchangeable truths about the social world. These theories are usually counterposed to those that stress the changeable quality of social phenomena. Such theories are called constructivist theories which understand reality as constructed within culture through language.

Language and Culture

In the twentieth century, "culture" emerged as a concept central to anthropology including all human phenomena that are not purely results of human genetics. Specifically, the term "culture" has two meanings:

(1) the evolved human capacity to classify and represent experiences with symbols, and to act imaginatively and creatively.

(2) the distinct ways in which people living in different parts of the world classified and represented their experiences, and acted creatively.

An integral part of any culture is its language. Language not only develops in conjunction with society's historical, political and economic evolution but also decides that society's attitude and thinking. Language not only expresses concepts and ideas it also shapes thought. Language and culture are inseparable. At the most basic level, language is a method of expressing ideas. That is, language is communication. It is usually verbal, visual (via signs and symbols), or semiotics (via hand or body gestures). Culture, on the other hand, is a specific set of ideas, practices, customs and beliefs which make up a functioning society as different from others.

Language is specific to a culture. It is a culture that creates a language as a medium of communication within a specific social group with distinct ethnic and cultural traits passed down as heritage from generation to generation. However any change in the language brings a change in the culture. Language is the verbal expression of culture. Culture is the ideas, customs and beliefs of a community with a distinct language - everything speakers can think about and every way they have of thinking about things as medium of communication. For example, the Latin language has no word for the female friend of a man (the feminine form of *amicus* is *amica*, which means mistress, not friend) because the Roman culture could not imagine a male and a female being equals, which they considered necessary for friendship. Similarly there is no masculine gender for 'virgin' since culture does not dictate such sexual purity for men. It is thus clear that a culture constructs its language according to social needs and demands. Language is used to maintain and convey culture and cultural ties. Language provides us with many of the categories we use for expression of our thoughts. Thus our thinking is influenced by the language which we use. The values and customs in the country we grow up in shape the way in which we think to a certain extent. It is apparent that culture, as the totality of human's way of living and as an imbued set of behaviors and modes of perception, becomes highly important in language. A language is part of a culture and a culture is part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that we cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture.

Language is a part of culture, yet it is more than that. It is central to culture since it is the means through which most of culture is learned and communicated. Infants learn the language and simultaneously acquire the culture of the society into which they are born. Only humans have the biological capacity for language, which allows them to communicate cultural ideas and symbolic meanings from one generation to the next and to constantly create new cultural ideas. The capacity for language separates humans from other primates. In any language, an infinite number of possible sentences can be constructed and used to convey an infinite number of cultural ideas. Because of this, human language is significantly different from any other system of animal communication.

A culture uses language as a distinct medium of communication to convey its defining ideas, customs and beliefs from one member of the culture to another member. Cultures can develop multiple languages, or "borrow" languages from other cultures to use; not all such

languages are co-equal in the culture. Culture is often defined by the predominant language used by its members. Languages, on the other hand, can be developed (or evolved) apart from its originating culture. Certain languages have scope for cross-cultural adaptations and communication, and may not actually be part of any culture. Additionally, many languages are used by different cultures (that is, the same language can be used in several cultures).

As cultures come up with new ideas, they develop language components to express those ideas. For example studies are being conducted on the influence of computers and the internet on language. The reverse is also true - that is, the limits of a language can prevent certain concepts from being part of a culture. Finally, languages are not solely defined by their developing culture(s) - that is, most languages borrow words and phrases ("loan words") from other existing languages to describe new ideas and concepts. Indian loan words that have come into English in recent times include 'guru', 'mantra', 'curry' and so on. In fact, in the modern very-connected world, once one language manufactures a new word to describe something, there is a very strong tendency for other languages to "steal" that word directly, rather than manufacture a unique one itself.

Language provides us with many of the categories we use for expression of our thoughts. Thus our thinking is influenced by the language which we use. The values and customs in the country we grow up in shape the way in which we think to a certain extent. Various studies have been carried out, among them, a well known hypothesis is the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis made by two American linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis describes the relationship between language, culture and thought. The core idea is that man's language moulds his perception of reality. We see the world in the way that our language describes it, so that the world we live in is a linguistic construct. Depending on the language we speak we see the world differently. His best example was the comparison between the idea of snow of an English person and an Eskimo person. The Eskimo has many words to describe snow, while the English only have one. An Eskimo has specific words to describe wet snow, snow currently falling and so on. Therefore an Eskimo perceives the snow in a different way from an English person. Therefore, a 'snow world' in an Eskimo's eye and an English speaker's eye would be different. This example shows that people's perceptions of their surroundings are modified by the conceptual categories their languages happen to provide. Another example is the Dani people, a farming group from New Guinea. They only have two words to describe the two basic colors: dark and bright. Hence a Dani person cannot differentiate colors as well as an English person is able to. This hypothesis dictates that language and culture influence one another. In a group of people whose language has no word for "yellow", they may as a culture consider yellow and orange objects to be the same color (whereas in English there are different words for these colors so that the objects are seen as having completely different colors). For a society that uses a language in which the word for "beautiful" is the same as the word for "clean", it may be difficult or impossible for the people in that society to accept that something dirty could be beautiful and they may equate cleanliness with beauty. Similarly, a society's culture will influence their language. If a group lives in a cold area

with heavy, constant snowfall, they may have many different, specific words for snow, whereas a group living in a warm climate may only have one word for snow. Similarly an interesting example is the concept of time in different cultures. In English a watch ‘runs’ (as in time is running out), in Spanish it ‘walks’, in French it ‘marches’, in German it ‘functions’. Here it becomes clear how different cultures value time. In the Anglo value system time flies, the watch runs and time is money.

There is plenty of other linguistic evidence of culture differences. The relationship issue for example is often used to explain the cultural difference between Chinese people and English speakers. In Chinese, there are more precise terms for describing relationships than in English. Chinese people distinguish relatives on mother’s side from those on father’s side. They have the word ‘biao’ to call the brothers and sisters on mother’s side and the word ‘tang’ for the father’s side. Also, the uncles and aunts are addressed differently on each side. On the contrary, in English, there are limited words to describe relationships. This difference indicates that relationships play an important role in Chinese culture. Relationships among people are generally considered important for Chinese people. The precise terms for describing family and other relationships reflect the Chinese culture, and the language may in turn influence the Chinese way of thinking. Talking about relationships, in English, we have the phrase ‘-in law’ to address a certain kind of relatives, this may indicate that compared to relationships, law plays a more important role in the western culture. Another example can be found between English and French. English borrows a lot of words from French, and a large part of them are the names of food. Pork, veal, mutton are all French words. Even the word ‘cuisine’ is from French. Judging from the language, we can tell that French cuisine must be more famous than English food and the catering culture is more important in France than in English speaking countries.

It should be pointed out that although different languages reflect and influence different cultures, there are many concepts that are universal. Even though there are no separate words for maternal and paternal uncles and aunts in English, the concept is known to them. People from different cultures can understand each other although they speak different languages and have different worldviews, because many of the basic concepts are universal.

The Structure of Language

Culture is a system of signs. A study of this cultural system of signs is called semiotics. It involves decoding the verbal and visual languages, movements, gestures, food, clothes etc. Language is also a system of signs and its study is termed linguistics. The idea of language as a system of signs was introduced by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. This is the modern understanding of language. Saussure argued that our knowledge of the world is shaped and conditioned by the language that represents it. This is the constructivist approach to language. This has already been discussed above (eg. Eskimos etc.) Language is situated within socio-cultural contexts and so language makes meaning within this context.

Three concepts of Saussure have to be made clear here:

- 1) In every culture language has a shared system of structures and conventions and rules called *langue* which governs verbal behavior. *Parole* is the specific utterance that

arises out of *langue* to enable communication and production of meaning. A particular remark in Hindi (*parole*) will communicate meaning to you only if you are aware of the set of rules or *langue* of Hindi. The individual remark can be understood only in relation to the wider structure within which it operates. In literature, structuralists see the individual work (eg. *Pride and Prejudice*) as an example of literary *parole* which can be understood only as part of the *langue* of literary genres and its rules.

- 2) Language is a system of **signs**. The linguistic sign is an arbitrary link between a **signifier** and **signified**. A language selects a number of sound symbols which in different combinations make words. These words are used in utterances to construct reality. The words thus constructed have no natural connection to the objects (referents) in the world outside. They acquire meaning only through the rules of that culture. For example, the combination of the three sounds p-e-n stands for an instrument used for writing. The sign 'pen' is a combination of the signifier (the three sounds p-e-n) and the signified (the thin long object for writing). Why should it not be n-e-p or e-p-n? There is nothing pen-like about the three sounds that represent it except that it has now become a convention or a practice that cannot be changed. In Hindi it is represented by a different word, 'kalam'. This is what is meant by **arbitrariness** of language and meaning. Meanings are attributed to words by culture. Hence words are just symbols. Meaning of words is rooted in the way a culture has interpreted the words for some time. Meaning is thus shared through regular repeated use. Repeated use is central to language and identity. Meanings, therefore, are not rooted in words but in a) the relation between words b) in the cultural context of their use c) in the repeated use of the words. Thus language is a sign system that does not reflect the world but constructs it.
- 3) Language acquires meaning through **difference**. It has an oppositional structure. All meaning is relational. This means that meaning of each word is dependent upon meaning of other words. Language acquires meaning not as a result of some natural connection between words and things but only through difference. Sounds play a crucial part in endowing signs with meaning on the basis of differences. For eg. 'pen' becomes what it is because it is not 'hen' or 'ten' or 'den'. Meaning is the product of a sign's difference from and relation to other signs. In arguing that signs take meaning only in the context of other signs, Saussure compares language to a game of chess. The pieces on the board have no meaning outside the rules of the game. They construct a reality for us. Traffic lights can be classified as universal symbols. They are cultural conventions which are the same the world over but again constructs. The culturally given relationship between the signifier and signified bestows it with meaning.

As users of language we learn to use the differences that generate meaning. Repeated use helps us do this. Words denote certain meanings in a culture. For e.g., a book **denotes** a set of pages bound together. On the other hand, a book could also **connote** different meanings from person to person and different social contexts. It could suggest pleasure, sleep, information and so on. Such variations leave room for different interpretations.

Language, Culture and Identity

Your language can reveal many things about your identity. Language gives you labels according to your status. It can disclose your nationality, culture, religion, age, gender, level of education, socio-economic class or your profession. These are forms of identity you assume in culture.

Nationality - can be shown in various ways. It can be shown through your English accent (Indian, American, British, Australian etc.) It can also be shown through the words you use. For example, Americans say sidewalk, British people say pavement and Australians say footpath for the same thing. Americans say fall and British people say autumn.

Culture - Whether you speak with a French, Italian, Greek, Indian, Chinese or Jamaican accent the fact that you speak English reveals maybe that English is your second language. Your grammar may be a little different and people will think that you are speaking "bad English" but it is just a result of grammar from another language being adopted into the person's speech when they speak English and as a result they speak an ethnolect. Hinglish (English as used by native Hindi speakers) is an example of an ethnolect.

Age – The use of your language can reveal your age. The words that teenagers use are very distinct from what the older generations might use. Examples – “That’s cool”, “chill”, “that’s gross”, “dude” etc. Teen-speak is a very good marker of identity for teenagers. Similarly, adults and elderly people use words that teenagers wouldn't usually use, so they would be markers of identity for adults.

Caste – In India people have caste names which fix them into that culture.

Religion – Christians, Muslims, Hindus etc are some of the religious identities that language confers on people.

Gender – The use of Sri/Srimathi, actor/actress etc are labels specifying gender.

Class – Your class is communicated through the differences in the way the different economic classes use language. The working classes use a different variant of the same language from the upper classes.

These identities are not fixed. For e.g, a person belonging to the working class can scale up the social ladder to take on an upper-class identity and vice versa. Apart from personal identities there are group identities formed as homogeneous groups sharing certain commonalities which may also shift with changes in attitudes. Identities are established through difference. A woman's identity is constructed in opposition to a man's. The terms, 'man' and 'woman' which are gender identities are said to be in binary opposition and in a powerful patriarchal (male-dominated) society the man is given more importance and power (the term 'privilege' is used for this). The same privilege is given to the first term in the binary oppositions upper-class/ working-class, upper-caste/lower caste etc. It is clear that identities are products of power and powerlessness. Thus all identities are constructs of culture and hence pave the way for identity politics.

Difference between Identity and Subjectivity

The distinction between *identity* and *subjectivity* is not very clear since both are used interchangeably and the concepts are also used interchangeably. The distinction between the concepts is a distinction of different schools of thought.

Identity concept has its root in a **modernist** discourse where the core of an individual was seen as stable and unified. Identity is the state or fact of remaining the same under varying aspects or conditions. Here the idea of identity is as a private possession and the individual as unique and autonomous. For e.g, the identity of the fingerprints on the gun, when it matched with those in the file provided evidence that he was the killer. *Identity* originally stressed the need for continuity and unity, but it is, in the current discourse, often used in the plural, due to the advent of the subjectivities concept and its focus on multiple cores.

Subjectivity, on the other hand, is founded on a **postmodern** and **poststructuralist** discourse and focuses on the making of the subject, which is an ongoing process. Repetition and fluidity mark the formation of the postmodern subject. So the distinction between identity and subjectivity seems to be not only a historical one, but also a difference in perspective; one focusing on an inner stable core, and the other stressing the *making of* identity; one focusing on modernist discourse, and the other focusing on post modern discourse. Subjectivity refers to that aspect of an individual's psyche by means of which the person identifies himself/herself and his/her place in the world. It includes the subject's outlook, emotions, values and beliefs and perceptions. The subject is situated within a network of power relations and is *subject* (controlled by) to these. The subject *inserts* herself/himself into a particular *subject position* within a chosen *discourse*. In the discourse of Marxism, the subjects are rooted in the *class* relations of the capitalistic economic structure. Subject positions available within this discourse include exploiters and the exploited. But these power relations can be changed with a revolution which could bring about a shift in subject positions. Subjectivity is therefore liable to change and to change radically in the event of, a new discourse becoming available, changes in power relations between rival discourses, or by different subject positions becoming available within one and the same discourse. Subjectivity can be understood by examining the ways in which people and events are emplotted or inscribed in the narratives of culture. The category of 'woman', in this context, is not a universal, never-changing entity with a stable essence (essentialist position) but a subject-in process, always changing, that is, constructed in discourse by the repeated acts it performs and hence to be spoken of in the plural since there are various subject positions available within this category. A woman can be a professional at work, a mother, a daughter, a friend, member of a certain class etc. In each of these subject positions, she is identified with a label by language and constituted through power within discourses. The subject is constructed within culture through language.

The subject is constructed in opposition to someone .A woman is a woman in relation to the opposite gender, man. A sane person is so in relation to mad persons. A subject can simultaneously take up any number of subject positions within any number of discourses. You could be an Indian, female, daughter, a science student, a friend, member of a student organization

and so on. Here each one of your subject positions operate within the rules of that particular discourse (e.g., the discourses of citizenship, of gender, of the institution of family etc). Subjectivity is thus not an essence of the individual, it is an effect of culture. It is not constant but always shifting.

Discourse

You have just been introduced to the term *discourse*. What is *discourse*? Michel Foucault used this term to refer to the structures through which *subjects* are fashioned, as both mind and bodies. A discourse is a set of recurring statements that speak of a cultural object. It is the social, economic and cultural context in which reality is represented and communicates meaning. The different versions of reality are encoded in different discourses. Discourses are a way of representing experience and operate according to its own conventions formulated in relation to particular sites of language use. Power is involved in the fashioning of a discourse. The force of Hitler's discourse of racism against the Jews led to the large-scale massacre of Jews. The discourse of medicine puts forward subject positions like doctor, nurse, patient etc. The discourse of law identifies subject positions such as criminal, defendant, plaintiff, accused, innocent and so on. In every discourse power is inscribed in the way the values of the dominant party controls representation and communication. Power is exercised within discourses in the ways in which they constitute and govern individual subjects. Discursive fields, such as the law or the family, contain a number of competing and contradictory discourses with varying degrees of power to give meaning to and organize social institutions and processes. They also 'offer' a range of modes of subjectivity. The discourse of law is a rational discourse which does not allow superstitious beliefs into its field of operation. A community cannot kill a person in their own group because that person is considered as a witch and harmful to the interests of that community.

Discourse can be defined in terms of what it excludes as much as by the assumptions it includes. It simultaneously determines who is excluded from the group, who or what is marginalized because of their failure to subscribe to the language of the group. The discourse of a political party identifies the individual member with the group, at the same time defining that member as different from those who do not belong to it. The sense of belonging can only be purchased at the cost of exclusion of others. The discourse of femininity has excluded women from the public sphere for a long time and confined them to domestic spaces because women are weaker, gentler, requires protection and are the natural caretakers of home and children. Language even has a saying to reinforce the natural status of woman as mother and glorify it: "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world"! Discourses are thus structures of power that determine what is written or said, that is, represented. Some discourses have shaped and created meaning systems that have gained the status of 'truth', and dominate how we define and organize both ourselves and our social world, whilst other alternative discourses are marginalized and subjugated, yet potentially are sites for resistance to the dominant discourses. Take for example the discourses of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity presents itself as normal and true, thus marginalizing femininity. A woman's subject position, being part of the discourse of femininity assimilates the conventions passing off as 'natural', which are put into place by the dominant discourse of masculinity. She, thus, is naturally a home maker or a caretaker of children. This is an essentialist position. On the other hand, the constructivist or anti-essentialist position says she 'becomes' a

woman. The male and the female child are gendered early into their respective subject positions. Culture has set aside certain roles for them. Girls are given dolls to play with and boys, guns and cars. They are thus shaped into roles culture expects of them. At the same time the discourse of femininity is challenged and interrogated and resisted. Feminism has been contesting such definitions of the cultural feminine for long.

Agency

Expressed simply, an agent is one who acts. The power granted or effected through that action is the quality of *agency*. *Agency* refers to the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices. Therefore it is about power. One's agency is one's independent capability or ability to act on one's will. This ability is affected by the cognitive belief structure which one has formed through one's experiences within discourses. Disagreement on the extent of one's agency often causes conflict between parties. Agency is all about empowerment. One cannot act where one has no power to act in a particular way. Again taking the example of women, the codes of behavior and dress imposed on women can be resisted only if they are empowered. Empowerment could be through education or consciousness-raising by feminist organizations. Thus meaning is never fixed. Meaning shifts with new acts of empowerment and agency. The Communist revolutions that took place in several parts of the world in the early half of the previous century are examples of agency and constant negotiation and change within culture. Agency has been considered as a tool for conceptualizing the modern subject who is marginalized. In a democracy, democratic principles endow the subject with potential agency which may or may not lead to resistance. The subject may seek the help of law or make an organized effort to bring about change. Since agency acts within a field of power relations, it is relational and dependent on a number of factors. The recent mobilization of mass support with the help of citizens, media and social networking for the cause of the implementation of the Lok Pal Bill by team Anna Hazare is an instance of how agency works in the present democratic cultural context.

The Social Construction of Reality

Berger's and Luckmann's *Social Construction of Reality* introduced the term *social construction* into the social sciences. For them, the problem really is — how do subjective meanings become objective 'things'? How do human actors so construct the world that their products come to appear as things? Why does the social world seem real to people? Through out the work we find arguments that emphasise this dual nature of social life, the way in which social structures and individual consciousnesses are not separate but intertwined in the construction of reality.

Habitualisation

The central concept of *The Social Construction of Reality* is that persons and groups interacting in a social system form, over time, concepts or mental representations of each other's actions. These concepts eventually become habituated into reciprocal roles played by the actors in relation to each other. In other words, as we live our lives, we tend to develop repetitive patterns of behavior. These *habits*, as they are called, are useful to us because they allow us to handle recurring situations automatically. Habits through repeated use develop a code of conduct. They

then become 'objective reality' as a pattern of behavior established for future generations. The process whereby such every day repeated practices slowly become the norm is called habituation. The example of students meeting regularly in a canteen and slowly developing an unspoken set of rules for conduct is an instance. These unspoken rules are automatically followed by future students also.

Our habits are also useful to other people. In face-to-face communication the participants observe and respond to each other's habits, and in this way all of us come to anticipate and depend upon the habits of others. This is called reciprocity of roles. Social everyday reality (in contrast to other realities, such as dreams, religious or mystic beliefs, artistic and imaginary worlds, etc) is characterized by intersubjectivity.

Institutionalisation

As time goes by, some habits, through a process of *sedimentation* (selection) become shared among all of the members of the society. When these roles are made available to other members of society to enter into and play out, the reciprocal interactions are said to be *institutionalised*. An *institution* is a collection of shared expectations about such long term public *habits*. Institutions encourage the development of *roles*, or collections of habitual behaviors that are associated with and expected of individuals who are acting in an institutional capacity. *Division of labor* is another consequence of institutionalization. Institutions assign "roles" to be performed by various actors (through typifications of performances, such as "father-role", "teacher-role", "cook", etc.). Specialization on specific roles/task leads to expertise (through repeated interaction, which implies that the specialist focuses repeatedly on the same process, and understands its logic better- "becomes better at it"). In other words, specialization deepens knowledge. When a person assumes a role, he or she adopts these habitual behaviors, and we interact with him or her as part of the institution rather than as a unique individual. As an example of this, consider our society's collection of habits that have to do with right and wrong - that we should not injure other people, that we should not steal, that we should stop at red lights, and so on. This group of publicly shared habits makes up the institution that we call the Law. As an institution, the Law incorporates many roles including, for example, police officer, judge, lawyer, victim, prisoner, guard, and so on. When we interact with people in any of these institutional roles, we treat them according to our shared expectations of the contextual role. Thus, if a police officer pulls you over on the highway, you behave towards each other as your two roles require. If instead you had met "unofficially" at a party or while shopping at the mall, your relationship would be very different. Because they establish behavioral rules, institutions provide societal control. In the process of this *institutionalisation*, meaning is embedded in society.

Legitimation

Institutionalization of social processes, as explained above, grows out of habituation and customs (gained through mutual observation and subsequent mutual agreement on the "way of doing things"). This reduces uncertainty and danger (important for survival) and allows our limited

attention span to focus on more things at the same time (while institutionalized routines can be expected to continue “as previously agreed”). However, if this control is to persist over time, then each new generation of children must be trained to participate in the institutions of their parents. Thus, institutions are *legitimized* (validated, i.e. considered to be the truth) and maintained by means of tradition and education.

Symbolic universes are *created* to provide *legitimation* to the created *institutional* structure. Symbolic universes are a set of beliefs “everybody knows” that aim at making the institutionalized structure plausible (believable) for the individual (who might not understand/agree with the underlying logic of the institution). The symbolic universe “puts everything in its right place”. It provides explanations for why we do things the way we do. Proverbs, moral maxims, wise sayings, mythology, religions and other theological thought, metaphysical traditions and other value systems are part of the symbolic universe. Remember the saying mentioned earlier - “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world”? This saying serves to *legitimize* mothering through glorification of the ideal of motherhood. They are all (more or less sophisticated) ways to legitimize established institutions. The symbolic universe also orders history. It locates all collective events in a cohesive unity that includes past, present and future.

Reification

Eventually, some institutions become *reified* - that is, the members of the society forget that the institutions are human constructions, and they begin to relate to them as if they are natural objects. In this way, we create social structures that seem as real to us as the reality of the "natural" world. Knowledge and people's conception (and belief) of what reality is becomes embedded in the institutional fabric of society. Reality is therefore said to be socially constructed. Social (institutional) objective worlds are one consequence of institutionalizations, and are created when institutions are passed on to a new generation. This creates an objective reality. While the underlying reasoning is fully transparent to the creators of an institution (they can reconstruct the circumstances under which they made agreements), the second generation inherits it as something “given”, “unalterable”, “self-evident” and “natural” and they might not understand the underlying logic. To clarify this idea, Berger and Luckmann ask us to imagine being stranded on a desert island for a very long period. At first we would preserve our existing way of life, but eventually we might decide to change things - maybe live in polygamous marriages, or let kids be raised by their uncles. We would be able to remember when and how we decided to change things, but for the generation of kids born on the island, those arrangements would soon come to appear as 'natural', 'fixed', 'traditional' etc. Reification is thus a process by which subjective every-day reality, through a process of intersubjective communication, socialization, internalization, institutionalization and legitimation, that is, through a slow dialectical process of change, becomes objective reality.

Language in Social Construction of Reality

Language plays an important role in the analysis of integration of everyday reality. It is through language that commonsense knowledge (constructed through intersubjective communication)

becomes, over time, reified knowledge (objective reality). Language is capable of becoming the objective repository of vast accumulations of meaning and experience, which it can then preserve in time and transmit to following generations. Language also typifies experiences. *Conversation/communication* aims at reality-maintenance of the subjective reality. What seems to be a useless and unnecessary communication of superficial trivialities is actually a constant mutual reconfirmation of each other's internal thoughts (to maintain subjective reality).

To sum up, human beings make sense of their life in society by building up patterns of action, organising perceptions into coherent patterns, and organising their own actions on patterned lines too. In other words, we fall into habitual ways of acting. When we relate to others we relate to them as typical, as ideal types. Interaction takes place on the basis of a mutual '*typification*' process. *Sedimentation* occurs when we selectively perceive, and store information according to its relevance to us, for e.g. we soon learn what is relevant for interaction, with some people and we learn to forget the rest of the characteristics, of that person. Humans create 'recipes' for living in their social world. They are standardised ways of carrying on social life. These recipes can become embodied in institutions, which consist of interlocking recipes — such institutions might be families, educational institutions, etc. 'Language' (meaning symbolic utterances of all kinds, even non-verbal ones) plays a key part in these processes, enabling subjective actions to be named, conceptualised and objectified, and also offering its own limits to personal meanings. These processes occur out of an underlying need for coherence, order and pattern, as a means of avoiding chaos. Having created structure, we then internalise it — it becomes part of our consciousness, it becomes invested with personal meaning, it affects the availability and the legitimacy of meanings. This internalisation is accomplished through socialisation in various stages. *Primary socialization* takes place as a child. It is highly charged emotionally and is not questioned. *Secondary socialization* includes the acquisition of role-specific knowledge (taking one's place in the social division of labor). It is learned through training and specific rituals, and is not emotionally charged (eg. "it is necessary to love one's mother, but not one's teacher"). The mechanisms of socialisation are through intersubjective communication. Individuals interact with socialisers from the beginning, and, especially in industrial societies, individuals are likely to meet a range of significant others who disagree with each other. This is what accounts for 'individuality' - not some pure, non-social 'personality'. Individuals can also go mad, i.e. find themselves with thoughts/beliefs/identities which are not socially supported by any group. At the opposite end of this possibility we have perfect socialisation, where individuals conform completely to the ideas, beliefs and values of others with no reservations or inconsistencies, so they can act anywhere in society in a totally 'taken-for-granted' way. Everyone in society has to continually act to make the patterns of behavior developed through social interaction work. *Identity* of an individual is subject to a struggle of affiliation to (sometimes conflicting) realities. For example, the reality from primary socialization (mother tells child not to steal) can be in contrast with second socialization (gang members teach teenager that stealing is cool). Our final social location in the institutional structure of society will ultimately also influence our body and organism. We finally construct our reality through the processes mentioned above.

Language and History

Language and history can be considered in two ways:

- 1) The history of language and
- 2) The language of history.

The history of language includes the origins of human language and the origins of individual languages. There are about 5000 languages spoken in the world today (a third of them in Africa), but scholars group them together into relatively few families - probably less than twenty. Languages are linked to each other by shared words or sounds or grammatical constructions. The theory is that the members of each linguistic group have descended from one language, a common ancestor. In many cases that original language is judged by the experts to have been spoken in surprisingly recent times - as little as a few thousand years ago. The ongoing struggle between languages is a process very similar to evolution. A word, like a gene, will travel and prevail according to its usefulness. A word's fitness to survive may derive from being attached to a desirable new invention or substance, or simply from being an amusing or useful concept. 'Aspirin', coined in 1899 by its German inventor from the opening letters of *Acetylrirte Spirsäure* (acetylated spiraeic acid), immediately became an international word. In a less serious context 'snob', first given its present meaning in English in the mid-19th century, is now naturalized in a great many languages. The word culture in the mid-fifteenth century meant, "the tilling of land"; later, "a cultivating, agriculture"; still later it took on the figurative meaning "care, culture, an honoring". The figurative sense of "cultivation through education" is first attested c.1500. The meaning "the intellectual side of civilization" is from 1805; that of "collective customs and achievements of a people" is from 1867. This shows how a word evolves through history.

The most widespread group of languages today is the Indo-European, spoken by half the world's population. This entire group, ranging from Hindi and Persian to Norwegian and English, is believed to descend from the language of a tribe of nomads roaming the plains of eastern Europe and western Asia (in modern terms centering on the Ukraine) as recently as about 3000 BC. From about 2000 BC people speaking Indo-European languages begin to spread through Europe, eventually reaching the Atlantic coast and the northern shores of the Mediterranean. They also penetrated far into Asia - occupying the Iranian plateau and much of India. Another linguistic group of significance in the early history of west Asia and still of great importance today, is the Semitic family of languages. These also are believed to derive from the language of just one tribal group, possibly nomads in southern Arabia. By about 3000 BC Semitic languages were spoken over a large tract of desert territory from southern Arabia to the north of Syria.

The language of history has a powerful influence on the present. Historical facts can only be revealed through language. A nation's past is communicated to contemporary citizens through language. The nation is a group of people having a common origin and common institutions, including language and desire for common association. The nation-state represents the union of the individual with the national community. National identity is established through language –

through the national symbols internalized by its citizens so that they may act as one psychological group when there is a threat to these symbols of national identity. Our tricolor national flag and all that it symbolizes is sacred to us. We strengthen ourselves as a nation through the lyrics of our national anthem and the words of our pledge. The tendency to develop collective identities is typically human. A language expresses the collective experiences of the group of its speakers. The language of the history of our freedom struggle bonds us together as a nation.

What makes it possible for smaller nations to maintain and reinforce their identities - or indeed for new national identities to come into existence? One of the answers to explain the persistence of the national idea is language. Language, which far back in early antiquity began to be coupled with a sense of collective identity, has been mobilized as a major vehicle for a successful implementation of national identity among often rather heterogeneous sorts of populations. There are many factors which can go to constitute a nation, territory, language, culture, religion, history or race, but language and shared descent are by far the most important. To understand how important language has been, is, and no doubt will be in the future in the construction of national identities one need only look at the relation between languages, nations and states in the past and in the present when many new states are seeking to create a sense of nationhood. The new India after the British was faced with a massive problem in creating a sense of national identity, creating a nation, in the face of the myriad languages, ethnic groups, religions, cultural patterns within its borders. Recent political debate in India has been largely concerned with this issue. The Hindu party, the BJP, is committed to the concept of one nation, one people and one culture which they founded on an imaginary construction of India as a Hindu nation.

Language in Relation to Class, Caste, Race and Gender

Language as explained earlier is linked to our identity. Language names us, classifies us, gives us specific roles, and thus establishes identities for us. Language, through our everyday intersubjective interactions, inscribes us into specific discourses. The young use language differently from the older generations and this serves as a marker of difference (look up earlier part). Language is thus intimately connected to our material realities.

Language and Class

The language of the working classes is different from that of the upper classes. The experience of hard work in rough conditions shapes working class language. They use a lot of swear words, slang, and crude expressions. The lack of formal education is one of the reasons for such language use. In fact they generally use language minimally since they are used to action rather than speech. Apart from this, their language captures their cultural ethos. D. H Lawrence has used the dialect of the working class to effectively present the ambience and convey the reality of his working class characters. The upper educated class use language in a more refined manner as is their culture. Such differences serve to make the two classes mutually exclusive.

Language and Caste

Caste specific terms and names which language bestows on people are markers of identity. It fixes the identity of a person. Language use varies according to caste and the culture which is

peculiar to it. Caste names are used as expressions of abuse. Social injustice is thus inscribed in language. Caste names were linked to the work undertaken by particular communities. Even though in modern times people may not be engaged in their caste professions, the stigma associated with it still is the cause of the insulting treatment given to them. Ambedkar and in recent times Kanha Ilaiah have argued for English as a more neutral language where traditional caste names are irrelevant. Forms of address in English do not use caste terms and so becomes a leveler of social differences.

Language and Gender

Gender is a key element of social relationships often loosely linked to perceived differences between the sexes. Gender relations are encoded in linguistic and symbolic representations, normative concepts, social practices, institutions and social identities. Second, gender is a primary arena for articulating power, intersecting in complex ways with other axes of inequality, like class, race, and sexuality. Gender is understood as multi-faceted, always changing, and often contested.

The topic of language and gender is concerned with:

- The different ways in which men and women use language and
- How the structure of language reflects and/or promotes gender division within a society.

In considering the first area, interesting questions include: Does one's gender tend to employ more polite expressions? Use different patterns of intonation when speaking? Tend to speak louder? Interrupt more? Employ a greater pitch range? Use different body language and facial expressions?

Regarding the second area, consider the following examples:

- Anyone who has studied a second language recognizes that *his* language is intimately connected to his sense of self...

As opposed to:

- All of us who have studied a second language recognize that *our* language is intimately connected to our sense of self...

"What's the difference?" you might ask. "Why should one pronoun be so important?" The use of the masculine pronoun in the generic sense is one of the ways in which the superiority of the masculine gender over the feminine gender is established. Language renders women invisible by the generic usage of the masculine pronouns 'he', 'him' and 'his' to refer to both men and women. 'Man-power', 'mankind', 'man-made' are also generic expressions signifying human beings in general, which show male domination. In 1975 Robin Lakoff identified a "women's register," which she argued served to maintain women's (inferior) role in society. She affirms that women tend to use linguistic forms that reflect and reinforce a subordinate role. These include tag questions and question intonation. It is said that men and women differ in their use of questions in conversations. For men, a question is usually a genuine request for information whereas with women it can often be a rhetorical means of engaging the other's conversational contribution or of

acquiring attention from others. Similarly, female linguistic behaviour characteristically shows a desire to take turns in conversation with others, which is opposed to men's tendency towards centering on their own point or remaining silent when presented with such implicit offers of conversational turn-taking as are provided by hedges such as "you know" and "isn't it". Again, men tend to be more verbally aggressive in conversing, frequently using threats, profanities, yelling and name-calling.

Language and Race

Language, in the context of race, is used to exclude the so-called inferior races by the superior races. This is done with the help of racist language. The word 'chinky' to refer to the Chinese race, 'nigger' and 'blackie' for the African races and recently in Britain, the use of the word 'Paki' for Pakistanis are examples of such a use of language. Such racial identifiers were used to selectively support beliefs in white supremacy. The word 'denigrate' which means 'to insult' evolved from the perception of the values a 'nigger' stands for. Although nigger has been used to refer to any person of known African ancestry, it is usually directed against blacks who supposedly have certain negative characteristics. They are portrayed as lazy, ignorant, and obsessively self-indulgent. They are also depicted as angry, physically strong, animalistic, and prone to wanton violence. These are also traits historically represented by the word nigger. This depiction is also implied in the word 'nigger'. Nigger also stands for intellectually childlike, physically unattractive, and neglectful of their biological families. These later traits have been associated with blacks, generally, and are implied in the word 'nigger'. The word 'nigger' carries with it much of the hatred and repulsion directed toward Africans and African Americans. Historically, nigger defined, limited, and mocked African Americans. It was a term of exclusion, a verbal justification for discrimination. Whether used as a noun, verb, or adjective, it reinforced the stereotype of the lazy, stupid, dirty, worthless parasite. Americans created a racial hierarchy with whites at the top and blacks at the bottom. The hierarchy was strengthened by an ideology which justified the use of deceit, manipulation, and coercion to keep blacks 'in their place'. Every major societal institution offered legitimacy to the racial hierarchy. Ministers preached that God had condemned blacks to be servants. White teachers, teaching only white students, taught that blacks were less evolved cognitively, psychologically, and socially. The entertainment media portrayed blacks as docile servants, happy-go-lucky idiots, and dangerous thugs. The criminal justice system sanctioned a double standard of justice, including its tacit approval of mob violence against blacks. That is why people continue to anguish over using identifiers.

Language and Colonialism

The civilizing mission of the British during colonization led to the imposition of the English language in the courts of law, administration, commerce, education and development. Before this Orientalists learnt the local languages and translated traditional texts into English. Orientalists like William Jones discovered that Sanskrit was probably related to the European languages after which it came to be considered as a sister language rather than a subaltern language. It spurred inquiry into the genetic relationships of the daughter languages of Sanskrit by scholars and missionary-grammarians of all sorts. It encouraged efforts to standardize and modernize Indian vernaculars for use in the administration of the East India Company (and post-Mutiny, of British India), and it legitimized the status and aspirations of certain languages and discouraged the hopes of others, as linguists were forced to make decisions of various sorts about what were 'real' languages and what were mere dialects. Though Jones and other Orientalists

praised Sanskrit for its wonderful structure, more perfect than Greek and Latin, these sentiments were not shared by the Anglicists who came later.

Missionary activity on behalf of other Indian languages led to interest in the vernacular languages since it is impossible to save souls and otherwise evangelize a population if their language is not known (especially in the protestant approach.) Thus began the tradition of the missionary-grammarian, the English-educated divine whose classical education (in Greek, Latin, and often Hebrew) had prepared them to absorb new languages. The list is too long to even begin to mention, but for each literary language, and for many non-literary ones as well, the nineteenth century led to the publication of grammar books, dictionaries and guide books.

The Macaulay Minute and the Imposition of English

Simultaneous with this activity we have the development of another point of view, which eventually led to the momentous decision to place English education above education in Sanskrit Arabic or Persian - the famous (or infamous) "Minute on Education" of 1835, formulated by Thomas Babington Macaulay, according to which government funds would be used to support education in English in India, and the curriculum would be based on that prevalent in schools in England. Macaulay saw the need to train a host of loyal government servants able to conduct the routine clerical work of the East India Company. He felt that since the dialects spoken in India among the natives contain neither literary nor scientific information nor are, moreover, so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them. It was agreed that the intellectual improvement of those classes of the people who have the means of pursuing higher studies can be effected only by means of some language not vernacular among them. Such was the justification for the introduction of English Studies. This paved the way for the permeation of English culture into the minds of the Indians. For this they received the support of reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

After decolonization the first preoccupation of all decolonized countries is to revert to nativistic culture. In Africa, the Kenyan novelist Ngugi Wa'Thiong'O advised a complete break with the coloniser's language and the abolition of all English Departments. The Algerian freedom fighter Frantz Fanon also demanded the end to the violence on the native languages. The Indian novelist Raja Rao had lamented the difficulty of capturing the emotions and feelings of the heart in a language not one's own, that is, English. Recent writers like Salman Rushdie used a hybrid variety of English, mixing English with Hindi and Bollywood and Indian myths, thus effecting what he calls a **chutnification** process. Chutnification means a way of nativising English, making it indigenous. A discipline of criticism named **nativism** resists colonial culture through the promotion of native culture including language. Others like Derek Walcott subscribe to bilingualism in the poem "A Far Cry from Africa", which is now an acceptable feature of postcolonial cultures. Native languages learn and adapt from English while English also gets nativised.

Points to Remember

- 1 Language constructs reality for us
- 2 Language is a social system based on difference
- 3 Subjectivity refers to the condition of being an individual with own beliefs, tastes etc.
- 4 Culture, acting through language, constructs our subjectivity for us.

- 5 Discourses are structures of power in the context of which a culture's communication, meaning-production and interpretation occur.
- 6 Reality comes to us not just through scientific and theoretical discourses but through social interaction also.
- 7 Language is a social phenomenon and has political effects. It has been used to exclude and discriminate against people.
- 8 Language has been used as weapon of domination during the colonial period.

Model Questions: Some Examples:

I. Multiple Choice Questions:

1. In Saussurean terminology the rules of the language are called

- a) parole b) arbitrary c) langue d) discourse

Ans d

2. A brand of criticism that resists English as a colonial weapon of oppression.

- a) feminism b) postcolonialism c) Marxism d) nativism

Ans d

3 The belief that people and phenomena have unchanging essence is termed -----.

Ans essentialism

4 A study of the cultural system of signs is called -----.

Ans semiotics

II. Answer in a sentence or two:

1. Define culture.
2. What is agency?
3. What does Berger and Luckman mean by habituation?
4. What is nativism?
5. What is the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis?

III. Write short essays (paragraph)

1. Saussurean notion of language

[Hints: sign system - parole – langue – arbitrariness – difference as meaning]

2. Language and cultural identity

[Hints: nationality – age – class – gender – religion – race etc.]

3. Essentialist and constructivist theories of culture

[Hints: identity as stable essence – identity as constructed through discourses of power – identity and subjectivity]

4. Language and history

[Hints: language of history – history of language – language and colonialism]

IV. Essay

- 1 Berger and Luckman's views on social construction of reality.
- 2 Discuss language in relation to caste, class, race, and gender.

MODULE III

NARRATION AND REPRESENTATION

Objectives:

This module aims at,

1. exploring how reality gets represented through language
2. describing narrative modes of thinking,
3. elaborating narration in Literature, history, philosophy, etc.
- 4: elucidating three components of narration - author, text and reader

Introduction

Human beings, especially after the development of verbal faculty have constantly told stories, presented events and squeezed aspects of the world into narrative form. *Narrative* is a part of the general process of representation which takes place in human discourse. Narrative is the act of representation of words, sounds, visuals and gestures using signs in particular sequence. We construct and interpret the world around us using words, sounds, figures and relations. Narrative is about language because sounds, words, gestures are all signs. Narrative is somebody telling somebody else on some occasion and for some purpose that something happened. It is the representation of events, characters and what happens to them in a sequential manner, where the sequence might be of cause and effect chronology. Narrative is the manner of speaking. It is an act of communication whereby the events or character and what happens to them is communicated by somebody to somebody else in language. Narrative theory and *narratology* deal with how such an act of communication takes place. The study of narratives is known as narratology. The modes of writing, expressions, and articulations were examined in various disciplines such as literature, philosophy, history, anthropology by the 1960s. Literary texts (novels, short stories, etc), historical texts, anthropological reports and philosophical treatises were analyzed and manner of speaking was analysed. Style, rhetoric, description hypothesis, proof, arguments, counter arguments within these forms of texts are analysed and their narratives are traced.

Reality and/as Representation

Human beings construct reality based on certain common and shared set of actual narratives. Human beings organise their memories and experience in the form of narratives and thus certain realities are constructed. Narratives are a version of reality where acceptability has been established by social, critical, communal and common practices of interpretations. Reality comes to us in acts of communication and narratives of memory, history, autobiography, biographical stories, literature, advertisements, propaganda, and speeches and so on.

There are two ways of representing the reality of what we see, hear or feel.

1. *Mimesis*.

2. *Diegesis*

Mimesis is imitation. This idea was suggested by Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle. Plato regarded mimesis as mere representation, not expression which is creative. Plato argued that the poet who describes a chair in his poem is not true to the original. Plato believed in the existence of an Absolute or Ultimate reality. Absolute reality consists of ideas of things, of which individual objects in the world are but reflections or imitations. The painter or poet who imitates these individual objects is imitating an imitation and so producing something which is still further removed from Ultimate reality.

For e.g, a chair exists firstly as idea, secondarily as an object of craftsmanship and thirdly as object of representation in art. Thus mimesis is thrice removed from reality.

Aristotle modified Plato's argument to suggest that the poet is not to simply imitate the original but to improve it by re-creating the original to make a perfect model. He argued that mimesis has a very useful purpose. The poet recreates reality for pleasure and to make order out of chaos. Mimesis is an act of imagination and recreation, according to Aristotle. A tragic play presents humans on stage. Many truths regarding human life is presented before us. Mimesis makes us believe that the life represented on stage is as true as the real human condition and thus a sympathetic identification with the tragic hero occurs. This leads to the purification of the negative emotions of pity and fear generated through living in society or to put it differently, brings about *catharsis*. Tragedy, thus, has a therapeutic effect, to Aristotle. Thus catharsis is the effect of creative imitation (mimesis), according to Aristotle. Mimesis is the direct representation of reality. It reveals various facets of human life and human nature.

Diegesis is the opposite of mimesis. In a novel or story, mimesis is the direct narration of the events happening and showing us what the character is feeling or thinking. Sometimes the events are narrated indirectly. The narrator of the story might tell the story and leave us to discover the characters' feelings and thoughts. The narrator only points to the events and leaves us the task of finding the truth. Diegesis is indirect representation or re-presentation of reality.

Most narratives combine mimetic (showing) and diegetic (telling). In a novel the descriptions of settings, characters, background, actions and events might be described directly and this may be mimetic. But the personality of a character may not be described directly. The narrator describes the character through a telling of the actions of the character. Then the reader has to discover the character indirectly by following the events of the actors and interpreting them. The characters, actions, and events in a novel acquire meaning through the process of representation. In

representation, objects and events are constructed in a medium. This medium can be language, video, song, music, gestures, print, writing etc. Representation describes two aspects: a) the process through a medium and b) the product at the end.

Our understanding of reality is based on *codes of perception*. These perceptions are developed through language and interpretations. A physical object (e.g., a tree) is constructed in different media (manuscript, print, film, words, etc). The identity of the tree in 'reality' itself is made available to us through the words, painting or descriptions. In short, we experience the real, not transparently, but through codes and conventions of our own societies. These are representations that deliver the reality of the tree to us. Codes of perception mean the representations, language, and signs that we accumulate over the years and this becomes the outline with which we interpret and read reality. Sometimes we are not even conscious of using these constructed codes, so deeply ingrained are they in our culture's fabric. Their status as constructed codes is effaced, that is, they are 'naturalised'. Thus representations mediate the reality for us. Representation bestows identity and this identity is taken as true. True reality is simply the truth value we associate with a representation of that reality. Reality is interpreted when it gets represented. Meaning is attributed to an object, a person, a group or an event through the process of representation.

In 1970 novels tried different new ways of representing reality. Realistic novels in the earlier periods described the world of its characters with great clarity. Realistic novels made us believe that the novelistic world is real. It did not show that it was only a fictional world. Realism encouraged us to believe that representations reflect the world. Later, the post 1970 novels, on the one hand, give us the world of characters (the novel) but on the other, they also reveal the act of writing this novel to show us that it's mere fiction. Many modern novelists create a world of the novel as though it is real and make it clear that the world of that novel is still a fiction. The postmodern novel represents a real world, but also asks us to pay attention to the very act of representation; asks us to interrogate this world. This is self-reflexivity. Italo Calvino's novel '*If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*' is about how to write a novel and how to read a novel. The novelist reveals the technique of novel writing and reading before the audience. Thus the practice of producing literature is presented in the novel which is known as self-reflexivity. Post modern novels mix both fictional and historic realities. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children* is an example of this kind of novel – realistic and imaginative worlds are mixed together. They cannot be separated. This nature of all representations and narrations become more complex.

Narrative Modes of Thinking

Jerome Bruner, the cultural psychologist, proposes that there are two modes of thinking.

1. Logico-scientific
2. Narrative

In the logico-scientific mode, there is a cause and effect sequence. For example, the king died, and the queen died of sorrow as a result. This is the logico-scientific paradigm where 'the queen died because the king died'. This establishes a clear cause-effect sequence. In the narrative mode of thinking, we can put it this way. The king died, and then the queen died. Whether the queen died

as a result of the king's death is left open to the readers' imagination. The casual connection between the king and queen is left to the readers. There are certain key factors of narrative modes of thinking. They are:

1. Narrative thinking does not seek to establish truths instead it seeks possibilities and similarities.
2. It does not work only with reason and rationality but works with association.
3. It deals with particular conditions and experiences and not universal truths.
4. Whereas the logico-scientific pattern does not tolerate contradiction, the narrative mode accepts contradictions.
5. Narrative thinking is rooted in a context, because it understands that meaning emerges within specific contexts of communication and representations.

The truth value of a statement in narrative thinking is dependent upon the context in which it is spoken. The context-specific meaning of acts of speech or writing is very important in narrative thinking. In narrative modes of thinking, we detect patterns (plots) within the chain of events. When we have to narrate the events of our past we impose a cause effect or sequential logic on them and finally an order is imposed on these events. Thus through narrative thinking we:

1. Impose a pattern on the past
2. Seek a logic through which the random events could be linked,
3. Attain a sense of self that is complete rather than fragmented, ordered rather than random.

The narrative mode of thinking makes the reader fill in gaps to imagine connections to develop patterns as she/he thinks. This mode might offer facts but also invites the reader to speculate on the facts offered. It asks the reader to develop patterns, to discover connections and to imagine.

Narration in Literature, Philosophy and History

The literary text presents imaginary events whereas history represents things that have actually happened in the past. Philosophical texts are meditations on abstract and concrete things.

Narration in Literature: It consists of plot, the story and the sequence of events unfolding as action. Narration is technically called diegesis (telling of the story). Narrative theory focuses on three elements – author, text and reader.

Author: There is a real author who is an empirical entity in narrative - human being or human beings in an organization – responsible for the production of narrative. We merge the *real author* with the historical figure as the person who has actually composed the book. The readers construct the image of the author from the components of the book. This is the *implied author*. This concept was first formulated by Wayne C. Booth in his *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1951). There is also a person who is telling the story within the novel. This teller of the story within the novel is the *narrator*. The narrator could be a character or 'voice' that stands in for the real novelist.

There are four kinds of narrators in a narrative theory.

Heterodiegetic narrator: The narrator is outside the story and tells the story. This kind of narrative is commonly known as third person or omniscient narrative. Here the events happen below the narrator. He/she is like god, knows everything what is happening but never interferes.

Heterodiegetic – intradiegetic: In this mode of narration, the narrator stands inside the story. He narrates the story about other characters from the inside of the story. He is a spectator to the events that happen around him.

Homodiegetic narrator: The story is narrated by a person who is also character in the story he is narrating. This makes the narrator a homodiegetic one. This is also known as first person narrative.

Autodiegetic narrator: If the homodiegetic narrator is telling his/her own story, then he/she is an autodiegetic narrator. This narrative is clearly seen in autobiographical writings.

Literary Narratives:

Russian Formalists in the 20th century attempted to uncover the structure of literary narratives. Formalists divided literary narrative into two – *fabula* and *sjuzet*. *Fabula* is the order in which the events occurred in reality. Actually, these are the events that make up the raw materials of a story.

The king died, the queen died, the kingdom collapsed.

This is the story.

Sjuzet is the order in which the events are put together to make sense. To produce the cause-effect sequence, a logical order in the narrative the chronological raw materials of a story are organized to present a certain meaning. This is the plot.

The king died, the queen was sorrowed and so she died and because both died the kingdom has no leader and just collapsed.

A story (*fabula*) only presents events or actions in the order in which they occurred. The plot (*Sjuzet*) offers a cause-effect sequence. The story is the raw material for the artistic work. Plot is the artistic presentation of these events.

Vladimir Propp analyses the folk tale to formulate the principles of narrative theory. Propp argued that every character in a folk tale's plot had a specific function. Further all fairy tales can be reduced to a set of seven characters who generate the entire plot through their various relationships and actions. These characters are: hero, false hero, villain, helper, princess, her father and dispatcher. These characters are involved in 31 basic functions including struggle, victory, return, rescue, violations, trickery, departure of the hero, recognition, punishment and wedding. All plots are made up of these characters and actions, in varying combinations and proportions.

A J Greimas evolved another formula to analyse literary narrative. He analysed a set of six actants, a set of 'semes' or opposites that provide the rules for all narratives. These pairs are present in all narratives:

1. Subject/Object
2. Sender/Receiver
3. Helper/Opponent

According to Greimas, these actants perform specific functions in all narratives.

Roland Barthes, the French critic, argued that literary narratives consist of signs that are influenced by five codes. The signs are words that produce characters and events. He argued that these codes are the framework into which all literary narratives fit. These codes are:

1. Proairetic code: It is the sequence in which the events unfold. 'This happened and *then* this happened' is the sequence in this code.
2. Hermeneutic code: This is the code that informs our interpretation. It gives answers to questions such as what happened. How? Why? By whom?
3. Cultural codes: These represent the common knowledge that we share as a community – our common history, culture and geography
4. Semic code: It is the code that draws upon a common set of stereotypes. Eg: a man wearing white clothes and Gandhi cap is a code that represents a common stereotype, where no explanation is required to understand he is a politician
5. Symbolic code: It goes beyond the common stereotypes to refer to something else. Some of the common symbolic codes we can see in literature are the association of night with evil and fear and sunlight with knowledge and happiness.

Gerard Genette proposed that there three levels of narration in all literary narrative.

1. *Histoire* or story – a set of real actions or events that happened and need to be told, the content of all narrative.
2. *Recit* or narrative – The story telling either in oral or written form. The story comes to us through the teller who speaks or writes it. This is known as text.
3. *Narrating* – It is the process of recounting the narrative. Producing the text, either by the speaker or narrative, is known as narration.

The story of Marry Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* consists of the quest of a scientist for a secret life, construction of a monster and monster's revenge on the creator. The recite or text tells the story. Narration is what the monster and the scientist – the narrators -- do inside the novel.

Narration in Philosophy:

In order to explore the sense of self, identity formation, community and politics, the philosophical texts always use narrative. They are interested in how the stories and selves are connected and how identities are made within the narrative. Its studies of moral values, identity, and self-hood are the studies of narrative modes through which one constructs one's identity. The links of philosophy and narratives can be studied at two levels:

1. Philosophy's dependence on narrative(philosophical narrative)
2. Its explications of narrative in a bid to understand human existence, life and truth.

Philosophical Narrative

Philosophy is about rhetoric, the act of persuasive speech. It uses narratives and analyses narratives to explain its arguments. In order to demonstrate the problem of knowledge Plato offers a mythic narrative while explaining the myth of the cave. Francis Bacon promotes the philosophy of learning through the image of a new country (new Atlantis) in the 16th century in England. He argues that knowledge is an empire that has to be expanded using images of travel, frontiers and discovery. Political text and political philosophers have also used narratives. Using narrative of sickness and medicine, James I of England argued that king – a position which is ordained by god - was the head of the state. He metaphorically co-relates kingdom and king as body and its physicians. Later, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke used the image of the city and a large organism to describe the monarchy and the country. An organism survives only when all parts of it obeys the head. Likewise, the king must be absolute in power, they argued.

Religious texts and scriptures are no exception in using narrative modes. They use it to convey their ideas on truth, human life, morals and values of living. Through stories and other narratives, various ideals are given to us. Job's story in Christianity, which offers us a model of faith, is an example. In Mahabharata, the ethics and values of life is delivered through the story of Rama, Krishna, Ravana, Arjuna and Karna. Human rights philosophy in the 20th Century uses narrative forms quite regularly like Michael Ignatieff's (a human rights philosopher) famous argument that the victims of atrocity and oppression tell their story through testimonies (in courts) and autobiographies (2001). Such narratives evoke ethical response. Hearing the stories of atrocity evokes emotions such as sympathy among the readers who react to it in different ways. We, therefore, extend help to the victim. The narratives of horrific atrocities are inevitable in a human rights movement. Ignatieff underlines the importance of narrative for all philosophies of human rights

The Philosophical Analysis of Narrative:

Paul Ricouer suggests that human action can be understood only within an imaginative reconstruction of it. According to him, the events and actions of the human constitute the first level of mimesis. Just as the plot orders the events of a story, Ricouer says that the diverse events of a situation are configured into some kind of order. Imaginative reconstruction configures events, agents and objects so that the individual elements became part of a large whole. The questions why, how, who, where, when can be answered and there is no internal logic to the plot. Human

existence makes sense when human actions are located in this logical plot. This is the second level of mimesis. Finally, at the third level, imaginative order is combined with the real life in the fiction. French philosopher Derrida, the founder of deconstruction, analyses speech and writing in order to formulate a theory of western philosophy as a whole. He argues that speech in western thinking implies a physical presence. For a person to speak he or she has to be physically present with an audience. On the other hand, writing can be done in the absence of the author. Thus importance given to the spoken world, according to Derrida, is the importance given to the presence rather than absence. Here, speech and writing – two mediums of communication – are linked to a larger philosophical problem – physical presence and identity.

Narration in History

Real events of the past or present are presented in the form of a story. Certain events may have ‘really’ happened. But for these events to make sense to us, to know their cause and effect, to understand their significance in the subsequent years, we need a form that explains and interprets the events to us. We cannot get back to the actual historical events – the reality. In order to understand what happened in history, we need to reconstruct it. These attempts to gain knowledge are possible only through books, material objects, evidence of building, etc. A series of historical events are assumed to be connected by giving events, people, things, actions in history an order through cause and effect paradigm, according to imagination. History reconstruction is similar to a novel. In both cases, cause-effect sequence gains importance. Thus, the historical events are placed in a frame interpretation. The historical narrative shows the linkage between the events. When the events are arranged in a particular order, they attain a meaning. Events do not write history, but historians do, and therefore narratives construct the past. An example of history giving different narratives through different interpretations is the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. The British saw it as revealing the meaning of rebellion. The Indians commentators saw it as a war of independence. History, as mentioned earlier is fiction or differing narratives imposed on the events of the past. Effective narrative methods are necessary for history to be effective in communicating the past to the present and future. Hayden White (2004, originally 1981) analysed three modes of communicating from the past.

1. Annals mode
2. Chronicle mode
3. Historical narrative

Annals Mode: History can be narrated simply as a form of listing important events which happened in particular years - e.g., 1857 – Sepoy mutiny, 1947 – Indian Independence, etc. The form of narrating history which simply offered the list of events in chronological order, with no central theme or coherence is annals. The annals mode of narrative does not tell us which events are more important or how one event influenced the life of a person, group, etc.

Chronicle mode: In the chronicle mode the narrative has a central theme or subject and the representing events are more ordered. In the chronicle mode, the historical events are arranged in a

chronological order. The historical events are arranged and these events are linked together. Eg: Sepoy war occurred in 1857 and India got independence in 1947. When these two events are linked together meaning can be detected since the theme is Indian Independence. The 1857 Sepoy war is thus understood as the first struggle for Independence.

Historical Narrative: In the historical narrative the events are conveyed to us in such a way that we wish to know more about them. In this type of narrative there is a closure of narrative. The historical events narrated conclude logically and offer us a sense of completion. The significant events are highlighted through not simply a recital of dates and events, but also an interpretation of events in the past. Historical narrations give us meanings. In the historical mode of narrating events from the past, history is made available to us for interpretation. Here history is not for mere information. The past comes to us in the form of story with the characters, events, chronology, descriptions, interpretation, cause-effect sequence, etc. These three modes of historical narratives are based on the European method of producing and documenting history. Ancient Asian methods of recording history are different from European historical narrative modes. Reality comes to us in the form of narratives. Different cultures have different modes of composing these narratives.

Textuality and Reading

There are three components of narratives: 1. Author, 2. Text, 3. Reader. Narratives are representations of reality through a medium (language, sound, sign, symbol, visuals, etc). In the process of narration, there is an author (one who writes), the text (the written work, the language, the story) and the reader (who engages with the language and get meaning out of the narrative). The role of a reader and the nature of texts is explained here.

Textuality

The text is a self-contained entity. The New critics argued that the meaning rests with the text and there is no need to step outside it to discover its meaning. The text is treated as a coherent, fixed entity where the meaning is always within it. The New critics like Wimsatt and Beardsley and Robert Penn Warren supported this idea of text. By 1970 critics began to argue that literary works can no longer be regarded as a stable structure. Roland Barthes was one of the famous critics who supported this idea of the scattered identity of a text. The post 1970 critics argue that literary narratives are not coherent or fixed identities.

Roland Barthes, in his criticism, gave more importance to the reader than the authors. He argued that the meaning of a text rested with the reader. Barthes rejected the idea of the author having any 'author-ity' over the texts' meaning in his essay, *The Death of the Author*. Every text is open. A text has no centre or boundaries. It can refer to or borrow from other texts. The text's meaning is endless and it depends upon the reader. Work and text, according to Barthes are different. A work is the printed book and the narrative inside the work is the text. The reader has to engage with the narration in the text in order for the text to attain its meaning. A work becomes a text only when the reader starts dealing with the language and the narrative. Thus a work is dead and the text is alive. The work is closed and stays on the shelf; the text is open and engages the reader. Reading occurs between the narrative and the reader. Sometimes literary narratives are made up of several other narratives. Literary narratives cannot be completely original. Many adaptations from many other narratives frequently occur. We cannot treat a novel as finished

because the story extends beyond this text to another. A text is therefore unlimited. Its boundaries cannot be drawn. This view treats the text as an entity without closure, limitless and made up of other texts.

The relationship of one text to another is known as intertextuality. Sometimes themes, events and even characters of one novel appear in another novel. E.g., Henry Fielding's *Shamela* was a direct response to Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, both novels of 18th century. Richardson's *Pamela* even appears at the end of Fielding's tale. Another example is T S Eliot's *Wasteland*. The poems include Sanskrit phrases, Greek mythology, urban London speech, anthropology, myth, history and a variety of texts. Where does Eliot's *Wasteland* end and other literary and non-literary texts begin? Hence, one poem echoes many other poets and poems. This is purely intertextuality.

According to Gerard Genette, there are various kinds of texts:

1. *Paratexts*: are epigraphs, prefaces, forwards, epilogues, addresses to the reader, epigraphs, acknowledgments, drafts, footnotes, illustrations, etc. They are somehow directly connected to the main narrative.
2. *Intertextuality*: It refers to the references, echoes, quotes and citations and even plagiarized section of a work. Here every text seems to recall, double, echo, or steal from other texts so that it becomes difficult to establish as original texts.
3. *Architextuality*: It is the relationship of a text to other texts in the same genre/type. For example, the connection between a 20th century satirical poem by W H Auden has an architextual connection with the satires of Alexander Pope.
4. *Metatextuality*: is the relationship between a text and the critical commentaries, biographical commentaries and other references on the main text.
5. *Hypertextuality*: It resembles metatextuality in that it refers to texts that come later or after the original text. The original text is the hypotext and the later one is the hypertext. In the 20th century Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* was a hypertext to the Victorian novel, *Jane Eyre*, and J M Coetzee's *Foe* was a later retelling of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

Reader

The reader is one of the important components of narrative along with the author and the text. The novel is written by the real *author* (the flesh-and-blood person). The story inside the novel is narrated by the *narrator* – a speaker or the story teller. The text contains narrative. The narrator narrates the story of the novel to the narrator who could be a character. Narrator is constructed by the text; *narratee* is an addressee to whom the story is told. He is the direct recipient of the story. *Implied reader* is an anthropomorphisation; this reader is constructed by the text and is implied in the work. Historical readers are the real readers (the flesh and blood reader holding the book and reading) who browse through the novel. Thus the implied reader need not be the same as the real reader.

Textuality, Authorship and Reading in the Digital Age:

In the present digital age, technologies change the way in which the new forms of textualities emerge. The reader experiences a text in a new way. Today texts and digital literature enable us to read a novel online. This is characterized by several features.

1. **Interactive:** Unlike a printed novel, the reader can read from anywhere on the website. The sequence through a text is the sequence the reader follows, and not one that is decided by the author. In texts written exclusively for the World Wide Web (e.g., Michael Joyce's *Afternoon* or Shirley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*), the reader chooses the path through the narrative so that there is little authorial control over how the text is being read.
2. **Multimodal:** If you go to the Wilfred Owen Multimedia Archive (WOMDA) you can read the printed text of Owen's poetry, see the original handwriting in which he wrote, photographs from the war and hear the voice recordings of the poems. Thus, one poem can be read in the form of several different texts (audio, video, print) at the same time. This is the multimodal text.
3. **Intertextual:** You can access multiple texts at the same time on the same screen, thus showing the intertextual nature of all texts. Further, an annotated edition of, say, Shakespeare offers you commentary, historical references, literary references all on the same page, thereby showing all the sources for Shakespearean study.
4. **Fluid texts:** Texts on screen can be altered in their appearance, unlike in the case of printed materials. This destabilizes the text for the reader. There is a greater sense of play and discovery in this kind of textuality.

Digital narratives are new forms of narratives which evolved during the present age.

Points to Remember

1. Narrative is the act of sequential representation using signs and language.
2. Representation is the process by which objects, people, and ideas are constructed in a medium such as song, writing, gestures etc.
3. Meaning is constructed through codes of perception.
4. Mimesis and diegesis are the two modes of narration.
5. Narrative theory focuses on author, text and reader.
6. The Formalists have divided literary narratives into *fibula* and *sjuzet* .
7. History and philosophy also use narratives to present or explain events and arguments respectively.
8. The concept of textuality says that texts appropriate stories and plots from earlier works.
9. The digital age has given rise to new experiences of textuality.

Model Questions: Some Examples:

I. Multiple Choice Questions:

1. Narrative is an act of ---
Ans: Communication
2. Wimsatt and Robert Penn Warren belong to a group called ---
Ans: New critics
3. *Death of the Author* is written by ---
Ans: Roland Barthes
4. Who wrote *Shamela*?
Ans: Henry Fielding
5. J M Coetzee's *Foe* is a retelling of ...
Ans: Robinson Crusoe
6. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is about the quest of a ---
Ans: Scientist
7. Who wrote *Wide Sargasso Sea*?
Ans: Jean Rhys
8. The narrative strategies of Hadith are associated with which religion?
Ans: Islam
9. The study of narrative is known as ...
Ans: Narratology

II Answer in a sentence or two

1. Define fabula and sjuzet?
2. Who is an implied author?
3. Define heterodigetetic narrator
4. Explain annals mode of historical narrations
5. Define metatextuality
6. What is mimesis?

III. Write short essays (paragraph)

1. What is textuality?

[New Critics- Wimsatt and Beardsley, Robert Penn Warren argued - the meaning rests with the text -there is no need to step outside it to discover its meaning- Roland Barthes- supported this idea of scattered identity of a text- a work is dead and the text is alive-a text is unlimited]

2. Comment on different narrative modes of thinking.

[logico-scientific-narrative- The truth value of a statement in narrative thinking is dependent upon the context in which it is spoken- Narrative thinking is rooted in a context- Narration in literature- philosophy –history]

3. What is Mimesis ?

[Imitation- Greek philosophers -Plato and Aristotle- Plato regards mimesis mere representation-not expression- emphasis on ultimate reality- Aristotle modified - poet is not to simply imitate the original - to improve - by re-creating the original.]

III Essay

1. Literary narratives.
2. The concept of textuality.

MODULE IV

INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Objectives:

This module seeks to

1. Inculcate awareness in the student about the origin and development of Indian philosophical systems.
2. Enable the student to understand the concepts of knowledge in the Indian tradition
3. Pinpoint the methodologies of the Indian knowledge systems.
4. Elaborate on the Indian theories of knowledge.

PART I

SCHOOLS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Introduction:

The origin of Indian philosophy can be traced back to the Vedas which are the earliest available Indian literature on record. But it is difficult to know the chronological sequence of the development of the various schools of philosophy. This is so because, historical records and biographical materials have not been properly preserved through the ages. The reason for this is that for the ancient Indians, philosophy was more important than the philosopher and the doctrines of the masters were passed on through oral instruction. The lack of written records, however, does not prevent our understanding of the various schools because, unlike many European systems of thought, the Indian Schools of philosophy developed simultaneously and one did not emerge from the defects of an earlier system or try to replace the earlier system. The different schools of Indian thought emerged from around 600 BC to 200 BC and coexisted and developed until the 17th century AD.

Periods of Development:

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has outlined the four important periods of Indian Philosophy. They are:

I. The Vedic or Pre-upanishadic period (1500 BC – 600 BC):

This was the period of the early settlement and expansion of the Aryans along the Indus valley. Though the different schools had not yet emerged this period saw the beginnings of sublime idealism. But superstition and thought were still in conflict at this time.

II. The Epic period: (600 BC -200. AD).

This was the age between the early Upanishads and the various schools. It explored the relation between God and Man. The seeds of Buddhism, Jainism, Saivism and Vaishnavism were sown in this age which also saw the democratization of upanishadic ideas through Buddhism and the Bhagavad Gita.

III. The Sutra Period (200 AD onwards).

There was rapid growth in the literature of the various schools of philosophy in this period. Brief sutras were written to record their ideas and there were many commentaries on them. This period critically analysed the ability of the human mind to address philosophical problems.

IV. The Scholastic period (from 200 AD)

This period is not very distinct from the sutra period. But it is noted for the work of renowned scholars like Kumarila, Shankara, Ramanuja, Bhaskara, Raghavendra and others. This period also generated many controversies and shallow debates in which philosophical thought was replaced by subtle “logic-chopping”

The Schools of Indian Philosophy:

The nine schools of philosophy have been classified into two broad divisions: The heterodox (Nastika) schools which do not accept the authority of the Vedas as infallible, and the orthodox (astika) schools which accept the authority of the Vedas. The schools of Buddhism, Jainism and Materialism belong to the heterodox group. The remaining six schools are orthodox. Of these, Mimamsa deals with the ritualistic aspects of the Vedas while Vedanta is concerned with the philosophic and speculative issues. The other orthodox schools, Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya and Vaisesika accept the authority of the Vedas but do not depend directly on them. The main characteristics of the nine schools are:

I. Materialism:

This school, also called the Carvaka System is named after its chief exponent Carvaka. It is also called Lokayata which means philosophy of the people. This school believes matter to be the only reality. It holds that all created things are formed out of the four eternal elements- Earth, Water, Fire and Air. Even the mind and consciousness are properties produced in the body through the combination of these elements. They admit only perception as the source of valid knowledge. They do not entertain the ideas of God, soul or Akasa (space) as these cannot be perceived through the senses. They think of this world as the only reality and advocate the maximum indulgence of the senses. No original work of this system has survived and information can be gathered about it from cross references in books of other schools.

II Jainism:

This school can be described as relativistic, pluralistic, atheistic and realistic. They accept perception inference and testimony as the means of valid knowledge. They used such theories as Syadavada or the theory of relativity of knowledge. According to this theory reality has several aspects and human knowledge being limited, we cannot comprehend them all. Therefore our judgement will always be relative. Another theory they used was that of Anekanantavada or the theory of manyness of reality. This theory says that reality is permanent with respect to the substance but qualities are ever changing and perishable. The Jaina school divides all substances into Souls (Jiva) and non-souls (Ajiva) and both are separately real . Ajiva is further divided into Kala (Time), Akasa (Space), Dharma (Motion), Adharma (Rest) and Pudgala (Matter). They believe that all living things have a soul which is in bondage due to ignorance. Karma binds the soul to the body with matter. Right faith, knowledge and conduct will lead to liberation through the separation of the soul from matter. They have a five-fold system of discipline or five vows ie., non-violence, truth, non-stealing, abstinence and renunciation. Jainism does not believe in God but it is highly ethical.

III. Buddhism:

Although Buddha preached orally his three central doctrines have been well preserved. The first of these concerns the four noble truths which are, that there is misery in the world, that there is a cause of misery, that thereits liberation from misery and that there is a path leading to liberation from misery. The second doctrine is that of dependent origination which says that everything in this world arises depending on a cause and is therefore not permanent. Thus suffering results from ignorance which leads to the endless cycle of birth and death. Only knowledge can break this cycle and lead to liberation. The third doctrine is called the eight-fold noble path to liberation. The eight steps prescribed by this doctrine are right views, right determination, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right endeavour , right mindfulness and right concentration. Buddhism believes in perception and inference as the source of valid knowledge. This school split into many categories. Hinayana and Mahayana are the most important among them. Buddha recommended avoiding extremes and following the middle path to knowledge, enlightenment and nirvana or liberation.

IV. Nyaya School:

This was founded by Gotama and is allied to the Vaisesika School differing only in a few features. While Vaisesika deals with metaphysics the Nyaya school deals with epistemological and logical aspects. The Nyaya school believes in atomistic pluralism and logical realism. They hold that the soul is in bondage due to ignorance and liberation is attained through knowledge. The four ways of acquiring knowledge are perception, inference, comparison and testimony. The whole

universe is real and is reduced to 16 categories. This school believed in the existence of God as the efficient cause of the universe.

V. Vaisesika School :

This was founded by Kanada and it shares many of its ideas with Nyaya school. They also believe that right knowledge of reality will liberate the soul. They classified the universe into seven categories ie., substance, quality, action, generality, particularity, inherence and non-existence. They consider the mind as atomic but the soul as eternal. They accept perception and inference as the source of valid knowledge.

VI. Sankhya:

This school of dualistic realism was founded by Kapila. It believes in the existence of two mutually independent ultimate realities ie., Prakriti and Purusa . Of these Purusa is the essentially conscious, intelligent eternal self which is a witness to the changes of Prakriti but not subject to change. Prakriti on the other hand is unconscious eternal and everchanging. It consists of the three gunas of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas which are held in perfect balance at the beginning of creation. This equilibrium in Prakriti is disturbed by the nearness of Purusa and the three gunas combine with each other in different proportions giving rise to the created world. Sankhyas believe in the validity of perception, inference and testimony as the means of knowledge. This school is orthodox but probably atheistic. They think of earthly life as painful. Knowledge of the distinction between the self and the non-self leads one to the path of liberation which is achieved through the spiritual training gained by the practice of Yoga.

VII. Yoga.

This school was founded by Patanjali and is closely allied to Sankhya. While Sankhya school is theoretical Yoga is practical. The yoga school advocates discriminative knowledge or viveka jnana which is necessary for liberation and can be attained through the practice of yoga. Its aim is Citta-vriti-nirodha or the cessation of all mental functions through which the soul can be liberated from bondage. There are eight steps prescribed for the practice of yoga which will lead to internal and external cleansing, self-discipline and meditation. These steps are Yama or restraint, Niyama or discipline, Asana or postures, Pranayama or breathing exercises, Pratyahara or withdrawal of the senses , Dharana or attention, Dhyana or meditation and Samadhi or concentration. The discipline of yama indicates the ethical nature of this school which accepted the existence of God.

VIII. Mimamsa:

The main aim of this school founded by Jaimini was to provide reasons in defence of the rituals prescribed by the Vedas. They claimed that Vedas are self-existing, eternal and infallible. According to them when the rituals prescribed in the vedas are performed in a disinterested way, the person's karmas are destroyed and this leads to liberation. This school accepts the reality of the physical world and of the souls which are immortal. While the prabhakara school of memamsa accepts the validity of perception, inference, comparison, testimony and postulation as means of

knowledge, the Kumarila school adds non-cognition also to this list. There is no place for God in this school which holds that liberation is the cessation of suffering.

IX. Vedanta:

Philosophically this school is a continuation of the Vedas and begins “where the Vedas end”. ie., from the Upanishads. The other important sources for Vedanta are the Bhagavadgita and the Brahmasutra which had captured the essence of the Upanishads. Its sutras do not yield any clear philosophical position so that many philosophers have interpreted it in their own way. Sankara’s interpretation of Advaita Vedanta is considered the most important. Vedanta believes in monism, the essential oneness of all things. They do not consider the physical world to be ultimately real. They accept six means of valid knowledge ie., perception, inference, comparison, testimony, presumption and non-cognition.

All the schools of Indian philosophy developed simultaneously and were interrelated to each other. Each had to defend itself and challenge the others. The Indian word for philosophy is Darsana or vision because it helps a person “to see” the ultimate reality which helps him to achieve liberation.

What is Knowledge:

JNANA AND PRAMA:

There are different varieties of knowledge. For example one may say “I know that person”, “I know how to cook”, “I know that some cats are black” etc. In the first case it means that the speaker is acquainted with a person in the second case the speaker is referring to a skill that he has developed. In the third case the speaker is referring to his knowledge of a fact. Epistemology or the theory of knowledge is primarily concerned with knowledge of facts or propositional knowledge. According to Western epistemology knowledge is a set of beliefs which are true and can be justified .

In the Indian tradition the word Jnana stands for all sorts of cognition whether true or false. Of these, true cognition (Yadhartha Jnana) is known as Prama. This is the equivalent of the western idea of knowledge. But the western concept says that knowledge is a certain set of beliefs but prama is a set of cognition. Thus the western philosophy does not consider non-valid knowledge at all. But in the Indian philosophy Jnana has been classified into valid knowledge or prama and non-valid / invalid knowledge or aprama.

It is difficult to give a single definition to any of these concepts because each school of philosophy defines these concepts in its own way. Everyone agrees that truth is one of the essential characteristics of valid knowledge or prama. But there are atleast four different views about the truth of knowledge.

(a) The Buddhists and some other schools of philosophers believe that the truth of knowledge is contained in its practical value, its utility. This theory is similar to the pragmatic theory of western philosophy.

(b) The Nyaya school and other realists claim that truth consists in the loyalty or faithfulness with which knowledge reveals its objects. This realist view finds its parallel in the correspondence theory of western philosophy.

(c) Some of the philosophers hold that truth consists in the harmony of experience. This theory resembles the coherence theory of truth in western philosophy.

(d) The Advaita school of Vedanta understands truth as non-contradictedness. They hold that the truth of knowledge ensures that the knowledge would not be disputed by any subsequent knowledge.

Though truth is an essential condition for the validity of knowledge it cannot be the only one. If truth is the only criterion, for example, Smriti or memory which could be true would have to be considered as valid knowledge. But since it cannot be included in prama, most of the schools feel that apart from being true, the content of knowledge should be new or previously unknown.

Opinion differs as to whether knowledge is an activity where the mind reaches out to the object it reveals, or relation between the mind, the object and its content, or a quality.

Classification of Jnana

All cognition or Jnana has been divided on the basis of whether it has been presented to the senses and immediate experience (Anubhava) , or it is an impression of past experience ie. Memory (Smriti). Immediate experience is further divided into valid knowledge (prama) and non-valid knowledge (aprama). Valid knowledge can be of six types – perception (Pratyaksa), inference (anumana), comparison (upamana), testimony (sabda), presumption (arthapatti), and non-cognition (anupalabdhi). The cases of non-valid knowledge are doubt (samsaya), error (viparyaya), and hypothetical argument (tarka). The six means of valid knowledge as interpreted by the different schools are discussed in the next section (refer Part II Indian theories of knowledge). The cases of non-valid knowledge are :

(i) Memory (smriti) : Memory is not, strictly speaking, a case of non-valid knowledge but it cannot be considered as valid knowledge either. Memory is a case in which the object remembered is part of our past experience and is absent at the time. Therefore there can be true memory as well as false memory.

(ii) Doubt (samsaya) : Doubt is neither the absence of cognition nor the denial of knowledge. It occurs when more than one notion regarding the same object are available simultaneously. The mind alternates between conflicting notions about the same object.

(iii) Error (viparyaya): Error is invalid knowledge and the opposite of prama. In error we cognize the object as what it really is not. For example when we cognize a rope as a snake, the characteristic of the snake is wrongly attributed to the rope. This is a negation of the real characteristics of the rope.

(iv) Hypothetical Argument (tarka) : When there are two equally possible yet contradictory alternatives available on a particular issue and one cannot decide between them, one may take a hypothetical argument and support one of the alternatives trying to find logical reasons in support of it. Tarka is not considered as an independent source of valid knowledge, But it is considered as an aid to other sources of knowledge.

Key concepts of knowledge

To understand the theories of knowledge in the Indian tradition we must know certain key concepts related to knowledge. The concept of jnana or cognition is the backdrop for all knowledge-related concepts. Jnana is the awareness that takes place in a subject with reference to an object.

Relational Knowledge: Four factors are involved in all cases of relational knowledge: The knower or **Pramata** who is the subject , the object known or **prameya** , the process in which the knowledge has been acquired or **pramana** and the resultant knowledge or **prama**. The subject or the self who knows is the seat of intelligence and consciousness. The object known may cover an entire range from things to emotions, acts to qualities, and from the existent to the non-existent. The characteristic of valid knowledge is to present and not to represent, so that memory is excluded from it.

Opinion has been divided about the jurisdiction of pramanas or sources of knowledge. Some schools like Buddhism hold the view that the jurisdiction of the various pramanas are mutually exclusive. This view is called **Pramanayavastha**. Other schools like Nyaya and Vaisesika believe that the jurisdiction of different pramanas overlap ie. the same information for example maybe gathered from perception as well as from inference. This view is called **pramanasamplava**.

It is generally known that knowledge reveals the objects to the subject. But how is knowledge known? Some of the schools of philosophy believe that when a person knows an object, he also knows that he knows about the object. This theory is known as **svatah-prakasa-vada** or the theory of intrinsic manifestedness of knowledge. Some other schools believe that one's knowledge about an object does not go along with one's knowledge about the knowledge. This view is known as **paratah-prakasa-vada** or the theory of extrinsic manifestedness of knowledge. The former view is held by sankhya and prabhakara-mimamsa schools. The latter view is held by nyaya and bhattacharya-mimamsa schools.

Similarly there are two theories about the validity of knowledge. The view that the validity of knowledge is intrinsic is called **svatah-pramanyavada**. This view is held by sankhya, yoga, Vedanta and mimamsa schools. The theory that the validity of knowledge is extrinsic is known as **paratah-prananya-vada**. This view is advocated by nyaya and vaiseshika school.

The Concept of Illusion.

The concept of illusion is very important in the Indian tradition and the various schools of philosophy have given their own interpretation as to what it is and how it occurs. Illusion or **Khyati** is a special case of error of perception. It is also known as *adhyasa*. Illusion is different from memory, dream, hallucination or recognition. Here one object is mistakenly related to or perceived as another. Seeing the brightness of a shell, for instance, a person may feel that there is silver on it. Thus in illusion there is usually a mix-up between two cognitions. A non-existent or totally false object like a hare's horn cannot be cognized as an illusion. Therefore the two cognitions involved cannot be totally false. Some of the major interpretations given to this concept by the various schools are as follows:

1. The *Asat-khyati-vada* : This view of illusion is held by the *Madhyamaka* school of Buddhism. Being nihilists, they believe that in illusion there is the apprehension of the non-existent (*asat*) as existent. In the shell-silver illusion the silver is apprehended as real even though it does not exist. However, they also hold that even the shell is as unreal as the silver. This view has been criticized by the other schools because if the shell and the silver are both unreal then why should the one contradict the other?

2. The *Atma-khyati-vada*: This is the view of the *Yogacara* school of Buddhism. Being idealist, they deny the existence of external objects and accept only the internal ideas. As a form of inner cognition the silver is as real as the shell. This view has been criticized on the ground that if the shell and silver are both forms of inner cognition, there can be no distinction between valid perception and illusion.

3. The *Anyatha-khyati-vada*: This view belongs to the *nyaya* school which is realistic in nature and believes in the reality of all things. They hold that in illusion, something is perceived as other than what it really is. The shell and the silver are both separately real. The shell is present at the time and the silver exists somewhere else. This view has been questioned on the ground that to be considered as real, the silver should be present "here and now" and not elsewhere.

4. The *Sadasat-khyati-vada*: This view is held by the *sankhya* school. According to them, under different conditions the same thing can be regarded as both real and unreal. Therefore in illusion there is apprehension of a real and an unreal object. The silver is unreal as a part of the shell but real in a silversmith's shop. This view is unacceptable to the other school as it assumes that something unreal can be perceived.

5. The *akhyati-vada*: According to the *prabhakara mimamsa* school illusion is not due to wrong apprehension of one thing as another, but only due to lack of apprehension of the distinction between the two. Seeing the brightness of the shell revives the memory of silver and illusion arises when we fail to see the difference between actual perception and memory. This view is not accepted by other schools because in illusion, the error is not a passive act of omission but an active case of commission.

6. The Viparita-khyati-vada: This is the view held by the bhatta mimamsa school. In their view, illusion is not due to mere omission or the lack of discrimination between two cognitions, but due to the commission of a wrong synthesis of two unrelated cognitions as one. The individual characteristics of the shell and the silver are overlooked on account of the common quality of brightness. The problem with this view is that it accepts error as an act committed by the subject.

7. The Anirvacaniya-khyati-vada : This view is held by advaita Vedanta school. According to them even in illusion, since the cognition is immediate and direct, the silver should be considered as real but it cannot be real because it disappears as soon as the mistake is realized. Thus the silver in this case is neither real nor unreal. It is indefinable. This view has been rejected by realist schools who find everything real, knowable and nameable.

These are the different ways in which the different schools of Indian philosophy have tried to explain the concept of illusion.

Methodologies used in Indian Knowledge System

1. System building : Since the various schools of philosophy and their respective knowledge systems developed simultaneously, an important methodology they used was that of system building. Each school tried to carry forward its knowledge as well as the tradition of passing the knowledge from teacher to pupil. As the different schools and their theories of knowledge co-existed, each of them needed to defend their ideas against other schools and also to challenge the other schools. In order to defend themselves the members of a school of philosophy would use their combined effort to build a strong system in which the central doctrines of that philosophy would be secure. The Vedas and the Upanishads directly or indirectly gave rise to philosophical speculation in most schools. Then the exponent of each school wrote his own understanding of this philosophy in the form of **sutras** which were the first systemic literary expressions of their ideas. The next line of followers wrote their own commentaries on these sutras called the **bhasyas**. Further down the line, these bhasyas were commented upon and the resulting literature was called the **Vartikas**. The line of commentators continued to produce more commentaries and interpretations to the vartikas and so the system building continued through the ages and the central theory was preserved by each school.

2. Purvapaksha: A very common methodology employed by most schools was that of purvapaksha. That is, in giving a full expression of its philosophy a school would present its own criticism pretending that it came from the opponent schools and then destroy the opponents position in what was called the Uttar-paksha.

3. The science of reasoning: Reasoning was an important methodology initially adopted and promoted by the nyaya school. This school was also known as tarkashastra or the science of reasoning. It also used the concept of fallacy or **hetvabhasha** . The concept of reason soon became popular with some other schools as well. The methodology of reason is challenged by the dialectic method which examines the pros and cons of a question.

4. Prasanga: A methodology applied by the madhyamaka Buddhists is the dialectic method or the prasanga method propounded by Nagarjuna. This provides two basic alternatives to any question i.e., its affirmation or its negation. Based on this they give four possibilities in which a thought can take shape: (a) There is a positive thesis. (b) It is opposed by a negative counter thesis. (c) These two are jointly affirmed in a third alternative of both “is” and “is not”. (d) These two are denied in a fourth alternative of neither “is” nor “is not”.

5. Syadavada: The Jaina doctrine of syadavada or the theory of relativity of judgement is a methodology that is in direct opposition to the dialectic of Nagarjuna. According to the Jainas, reality has infinite aspects and in our ignorance, we cannot perceive them all. All our judgements are conditional and made from a particular point of view. So we should qualify our judgements by using the word **Syat**, which means “relatively speaking”. Based on this relativity the Jainas formulate seven forms of judgements and Jainism accepts all of these as relatively possible.

Points to remember

1. Origin of Indian philosophy and simultaneous development of different schools.
2. The periods of development: Vedic, Epic, Sutra and scholastic periods.
3. The nine schools of philosophy – orthodox and heterodox
 - (a) Materialism, Buddhism and Jainism as Nastika schools
 - (b) Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta as Astika schools.
4. Cognition or Jnana – classifications of valid and invalid knowledge (prama and aprama) and smriti.
5. Key concepts in the Indian tradition of knowledge
 - (a) Relational knowledge
 - (b) Concept of illusion
6. Methodologies used by knowledge systems:
 - (a) System building
 - (b) Purvapaksha
 - (c) Science of reasoning
 - (d) Prasanga
 - (e) Syadavada.

Model Questions: Some Examples:

I. Multiple Choice Questions:

1. Which among the following is a heterodox school of Indian philosophy ?
(a) Nyaya (b) Vaisheshika (c) Buddhism
Ans: (c) Buddhism.
2. Which one of the following is a means of valid knowledge?
(a) Anumana (b) Smriti (c) Tarka
Ans: (a) Anuman
3. Which of the following pramanas is not accepted by the sankhyas ?
(a) perception, (b) comparison (c) inference
Ans: (b) comparison.
4. The schools which accepted the authority of the Vedas are called.....
Ans: Orthodox (astika) schools
5. The Yoga school was founded by.....
Ans: Patanjali
6. Which of the pramanas is considered valid by all the schools of Indian Philosophy?
Ans: perception or pratyaksha
7. Which school of philosophy propounded the doctrine of syadavada?
Ans: Jainism.
8. Who outlined the four periods in the development of Indian philosophy?
Ans: Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

II. Answer in a sentence or two:

1. Why do the materialists not accept Akasa as one of the eternal elements?
Ans: Materialists considered sense perception as the only source of valid knowledge. They did not accept Akasa as an eternal element as it cannot be perceived through the senses.
2. How were the Upanishadic ideas democratized in the epic period ?
Ans: Upanishadic ideas were democratized in the epic period through Buddhism and the Bhagavad gita.

III. Write short essays (paragraph)

1. The Vedic period

Hints: (origin of philosophy from the veda – four periods – vedic period of Aryan settlement – sublime idealism – thought and superstition in conflict).

2. Discuss the different kinds of invalid knowledge?

Hints: (prama and aprama as part of Jnana – apramas --memory – doubt – error – hypothecatal arguments)

IV. Essay

1. Comment on the Heterodox schools of Indian philosophy.

Hints: (Nine schools – simultaneous development – schools that reject vedic authority – the carvaka school – Buddhism - Jainism)

2. How do the different schools interpret the concept of illusion?

Hints: illusion or Khyati – special type of error – mix-up of cognitions – interpreted by different schools – the 7 classifications)