

Ancient Indian Philosophy and Thought

Chapter 7: India's Cultural Roots · Topic 1

Key Concept

The Upanishads, philosophical texts from the late Vedic period, explore deep questions about the soul (atman), the universe (Brahman), and the nature of reality.

Ancient India also gave rise to other philosophical schools, like Buddhism (founded by Gautama Buddha) and Jainism (associated with Mahavira), each offering different paths to spiritual understanding.

These philosophies often emphasised ideas like non-violence (ahimsa), the cycle of birth and rebirth (samsara), and the pursuit of liberation (moksha or nirvana).

Ancient Indian philosophy has had a lasting impact, influencing not just religion but also ethics, meditation practices, and philosophical thought worldwide.

Quick Revision Notes

- The Upanishads are philosophical texts from the late Vedic period.
- They explore ideas about atman (soul) and Brahman (universe).
- Buddhism was founded by Gautama Buddha.
- Jainism is associated with Mahavira.
- Ahimsa (non-violence) is a key philosophical idea.
- Samsara refers to the cycle of birth and rebirth.
- Moksha and nirvana refer to liberation.
- Ancient Indian philosophy influenced ethics and thought worldwide.

Practice Questions

- 1 Research one idea from the Upanishads.
- 2 Compare Buddhism and Jainism briefly.
- 3 Discuss the meaning of ahimsa (non-violence).
- 4 Research Gautama Buddha's life briefly.
- 5 Discuss why philosophical ideas from ancient India still matter today.
- 6 Explain the concept of samsara in your own words.