



ETHICS

For UPSC, PSCs & Other Competitive Exams

Volume - 2



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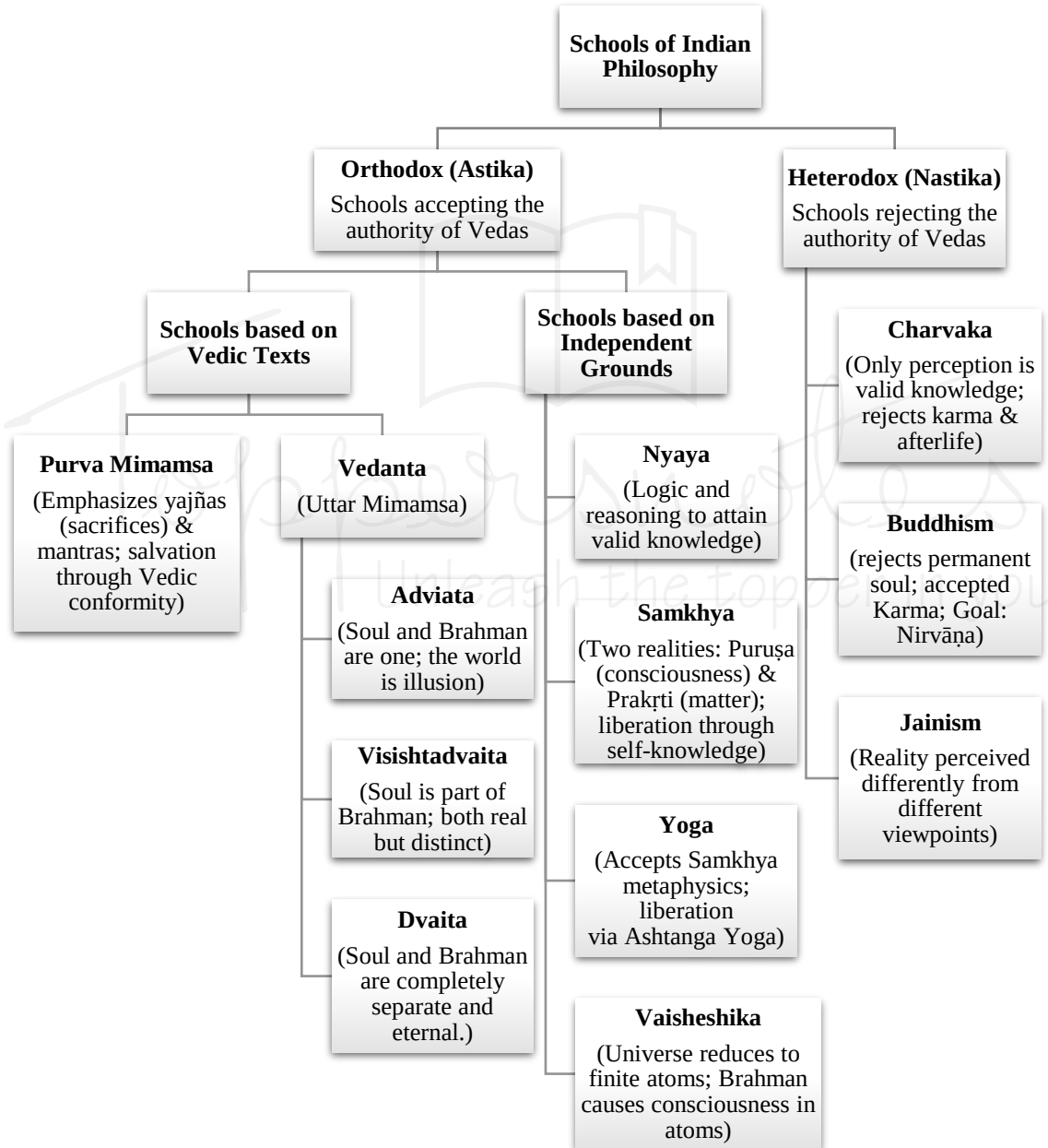
CHAPTER

Indian Thinkers and Philosophers

Syllabus Covered:

- Indian Thinkers and Philosophers

Schools of Indian Philosophy



Charvaka Philosophy:

- Charvaka, also known as Lokayata, is ancient Indian materialist and atheistic school of philosophy.
- It rejects Vedic authority, supernatural beliefs, rituals, karma, rebirth, and liberation.
- It emphasizes a rational, worldly, and experience-based approach to life.
- Charvaka philosophy focuses on sensory experience, material reality, and human happiness in this life rather than spiritual salvation.

Charvaka Views:

• Perception as the Only Source of Knowledge

- ❖ Charvaka accepts Pratyaksha (sensory perception) as the only valid source of knowledge.
- ❖ It rejects inference (Anumana) and scriptural testimony (Shabda) because they depend on assumptions and cannot always be verified.
- ❖ **Example:** Fire is accepted only when it is directly seen, not merely inferred from smoke.
- ❖ **Ethical Significance:**
 - Encourages rational thinking, skepticism, and scientific temperament.
 - Opposes blind faith and superstition.

• Materialistic View of the Universe

- ❖ Charvaka believes that the world is made of four material elements – earth, water, fire, and air.
- ❖ It rejects the existence of Akasha (space) because it cannot be perceived.
- ❖ **Example:** Human consciousness is treated as a biological phenomenon rather than a divine soul.
- ❖ However, it ignores metaphysical and spiritual dimensions of human experience.

• Rejection of Soul, Karma, and Afterlife

- ❖ Charvaka denied the existence of immortal soul (Atman), rebirth, heaven and hell, karma and moksha.
- ❖ According to Charvaka, death is the end of existence. It shifts focus from future births to improving present life.

Contemporary Relevance of Charvaka

• Foundation of Scientific Temper

- ❖ Charvaka's emphasis on evidence and observation resembles modern science and rational inquiry.
- ❖ **Example:** Adherence to scientific temper as a fundamental duty under the Constitution.

• Rational Anti-Dogmatism

- ❖ Its skeptical approach helps question blind faith, misinformation, and extremist ideologies.
- ❖ **Example:** Fact-checking misinformation spread through social media or communal propaganda.

• Secular Humanism

- ❖ Charvaka focused on reducing real human suffering instead of pursuing invisible spiritual rewards.
- ❖ **Example:** Welfare policies focusing on healthcare, nutrition, and employment generation.

Limitations of Charvaka Philosophy

- Overemphasis on materialism may weaken spiritual and ethical dimensions of life.
- Rejection of karma and afterlife may reduce moral restraint.
- Excessive focus on pleasure may encourage selfishness and consumerism.
- Complete rejection of inference is impractical because science itself depends partly on inference and reasoning.

Although criticized for excessive materialism and rejection of spiritual values, Charvaka remains highly relevant today for promoting scientific temper, rational inquiry, secular ethics, and critical thinking in society.

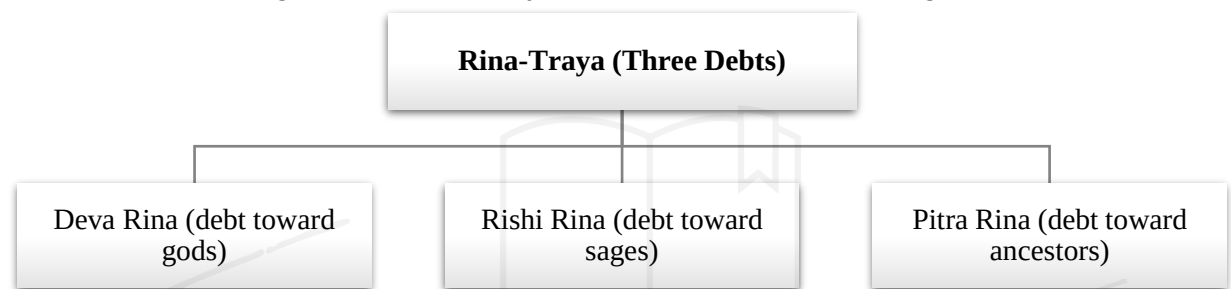
Astika Schools of Indian Philosophy

Philosophy	Core Idea	Key Concepts	Relevance	Example
Samkhya Philosophy	Samkhya means “enumeration.” It is based on Dvaita Vada (dualism), which accepts Prakriti (matter) and Purusha (soul) as distinct realities.	The soul migrates through temporal bodies and ultimately merges with universal energy.	Emphasises inner conscience as the guide for ethical conduct. Its dualism resonates with modern debates on body–mind separation.	In moral dilemmas, Samkhya stresses the supremacy of conscience (Purusha) over material temptations (Prakriti).
Yoga Philosophy	Yoga means “union” or “discipline.” It focuses on physical, mental, and spiritual development.	Ashtanga Yoga includes Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi.	Promotes self-awareness, discipline, emotional balance, and resilience. It is increasingly relevant in mental health and stress management.	International Yoga Day highlighted Yoga’s role in wellbeing during COVID-19. Yoga therapy is widely used for lifestyle diseases and stress management.
Nyaya Philosophy	Nyaya means “justice” or “rule.” It emphasises logic, reasoning, and epistemology.	Liberation (moksha) is attained through valid knowledge (pramana) gained by perception, inference, comparison, and testimony.	Encourages rational thinking, evidence-based reasoning, and scientific inquiry as the basis of truth.	Modern scientific methods and evidence-based policymaking reflect Nyaya principles.
Mimamsa Philosophy	Mimamsa means “reflection” or “interpretation.” It focuses on the ritualistic (Karma-Kanda) section of the Vedas.	Rituals, duties, and prescribed actions are considered pathways to liberation.	Provides a philosophical basis for ritualism, duty, and social order. It also explains how collective practices strengthen social cohesion.	Langar service by Sikh community.

Vedanta Philosophy	Vedanta means “end of the Vedas” or ultimate knowledge. It stresses Jnana (knowledge) over rituals as the path to moksha.	Atman (individual soul) is identical with Paramatman (Supreme Being).	Encourages holistic development by integrating intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth. It opposes excessive materialism.	Integral education models inspired by Vedantic ideals focus on character-building and ethical development.
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Concept of Rina

In the Rigveda, Riṇa (Rna) means debt or obligation. According to the Vedas, every human being is born with certain moral obligations toward society, nature, ancestors, and knowledge traditions.



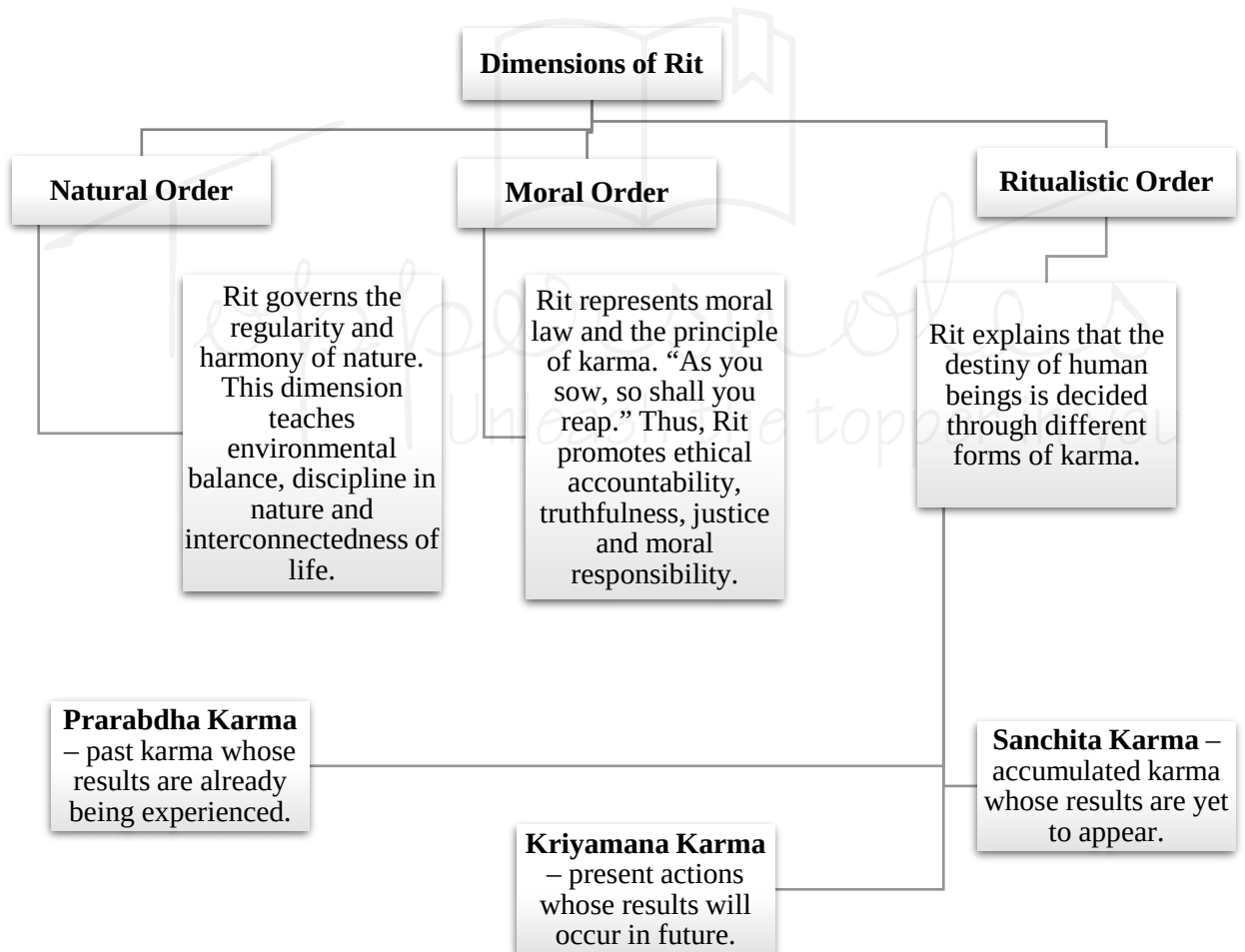
Type of Rina	Meaning	Ethical Values Promoted	Administrative Relevance
Deva Rina (Debt toward Gods)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debt owed to divine and natural forces such as nature, environment, rain, sunlight, air, and cosmic order that sustain life. It is repaid through worship, devotion, yajna, prayer, and protection of nature. 	Gratitude toward nature, environmental responsibility, and spiritual consciousness.	Protection of pilgrimage sites, management of religious gatherings, environmental conservation.
Rishi Rina (Debt toward Sages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debt owed to sages, teachers, and intellectual traditions from whom society receives knowledge, ethics, and culture. It is repaid through learning, ethical education, and transmission of knowledge. 	Respect for education, value-based learning, wisdom, intellectual growth, and ethical use of knowledge.	Implementation of educational policies, promotion of literacy and digital learning, ensuring quality education, and supporting students and teachers.

<p>Pitra Rina (Debt toward Ancestors)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debt owed to parents, elders, and ancestors from whom individuals inherit life, culture, traditions, and family values. It is repaid through respect, service, and continuation of family responsibilities. 	<p>Respect for elders, family ethics, compassion, and intergenerational responsibility.</p>	<p>Pension schemes, welfare programs for senior citizens, old-age homes, and laws protecting elderly people.</p>
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Concept of Rit

Rit in Rigveda, refers to the eternal, universal, natural, and moral order, that governs the universe.

- It represents the principle that maintains harmony, balance, justice, and discipline in both nature and human life.
- Rit is therefore related to cosmic order, law of karma, truth, morality, and justice.
- Varuna is considered the protector of Rit (*Ritasya Gopa*).



Relevance of Rit in Administration

- **Ethical Governance**
 - ❖ Administrators acting according to moral principles can establish justice, order, and public trust.
- **Rule of Law**
 - ❖ Just as Rit represents cosmic order, the Constitution represents moral and legal order in modern society.
- **Accountability**
 - ❖ The principle of karma encourages responsibility and accountability in administration.
- **Transparency and Integrity**
 - ❖ Rit promotes truthfulness, honesty, and ethical conduct in public life.
- **Social Harmony**
 - ❖ Ethical governance based on Rit helps maintain balance and harmony in society.
- **Ideal Leadership**
 - ❖ Rit encourages administrators to become disciplined, just, and morally upright leaders.

The Vedic concepts of Rina and Rit provide profound ethical foundations for both personal life and public administration. Together, these concepts promote ethical conduct, compassionate governance, accountability, and welfare-oriented society.

The philosophy of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata, two great Indian Mahakavyas, represent a profound synthesis of abstract philosophical truths (Darsana) with historic narratives and literature (Sahitya).

Both epics are teleological, i.e., they are oriented toward a final purpose—specifically the attainment of supreme spiritual bliss and a permanent release from suffering.

“**यतो धर्मः ततो जयः**
"where there is Dharma (righteousness),
there is victory".

”

The Philosophy of the Ramayana

Ramayana presents a rich, plural philosophical vision where dharma (duty/righteousness), ideal leadership, moral dilemmas, and human psychology are explored through narrative examples.

Moral Archetypes:

The epic uses characters to personify specific moral virtues:

- **Rama:** Represents the Maryada Puruṣottama, the character of the highest moral order.
- **Sita, Lakṣmaṇa, and Hanumana:** Serve as the archetypal ideal wife, ideal brother, and ideal devotee, respectively.
- **Dasaratha:** Epitomises ideal fatherly love.
- **Ravana:** The symbol of 10 emotions.

10 emotions of Ravana			
1.	Kama (lust)	2.	Krodha (anger)
3.	Moha (delusion)	4.	Lobha (greed)
5.	Mada (pride)	6.	Maatsarya (envy)
7.	Buddhi (intellect)	8.	Manas (mind)
9.	Chitta (will)	10.	Ahamkara (ego)

- **Philosophical themes**

- ❖ **Victory of Good over Evil** The central message of the Ramayana is that evil, however mighty, ultimately falls before truth and righteousness. Lord Rama's triumph over Ravana highlights the eternal principle that dharma prevails over adharma.

Truth is the highest dharma, and Truth controls this world.

- ❖ **Example-** Gandhi's principle of Satyagraha against colonial rule echoes this teaching - truth and non-violence ultimately defeated imperialism.

- **Duty Above Self-Interest**

- ❖ Rama abandoned personal happiness to fulfil his duty as a king. His decision to exile Sita, though personally painful, reflected the primacy of public trust in governance.

- ❖ **Example-** Civil servants are often expected to sacrifice personal preferences to uphold constitutional morality and public welfare.

- **Choosing Righteous Alliances**

- ❖ Vibhishana, despite being Ravana's brother, joined Rama, signifying that loyalty to truth must prevail over blind kinship.

- ❖ **Example-** Whistleblowers like Edward Snowden or Indian RTI activists embody this courage by siding with truth against powerful wrongdoers.

- **Humility in Power**

- ❖ Despite his unmatched strength, Hanuman surrendered to Rama's divinity, symbolising that real greatness lies in humility.

- ❖ **Example-** APJ Abdul Kalam, despite being President and a great scientist, remained humble, inspiring millions.

- **Equality and Compassion**

- ❖ Rama accepted Shabari's fruits without hesitation, showing that dignity transcends caste, class, or gender.

- ❖ **Example-** Gandhi's fight against untouchability or modern constitutional guarantees of equality resonate with this principle.

- **Influence of Company**

- ❖ Kaikeyi's change of heart under Manthara's influence shows the dangers of negative associations.

When a man's destruction comes, his own intellect gets corrupted.

- ❖ **Example-** Youth radicalisation through toxic online echo chambers demonstrates why surrounding oneself with positive influences is vital.

- **Sacrifice and self-discipline:** Persistent willingness to accept personal loss for higher duty (Rama, Dasharatha, Bharata).

- **Compassion and respect across hierarchies:** Rama's treatment of allies and foes (including non-human allies) underscores universal concern and respect beyond caste/status.

- **Truthfulness and integrity:** Honesty, keeping promises, and inner restraint.

The Philosophy of the Mahabharat

The ethical vision in Mahabharata emerges through dilemmas, debates, and the actions of characters who are often forced to choose between competing obligations. In this sense, the Mahabharata treats ethics not as certainty, but as a continuous process of moral discernment.

Major Ethical Themes

- **Dharma as Contextual and Complex**

- ❖ The central ethical concept in the Mahabharata is **Dharma**—righteous duty or moral order.
- ❖ A king, a warrior, a teacher, a son, and a friend may each have different obligations in the same situation.
- ❖ Ethical action therefore demands Viveka (discernment) to determine which duty deserves priority.
- ❖ Thus, ethics is portrayed as a matter of wise judgment rather than mechanical rule-following.

“
What is right is not always obvious.
”

- **Ethics of Action and Responsibility**

- ❖ Krishna advises Arjuna to perform his duty (*svadharma*) without attachment to personal gain, fear, or emotional weakness.
- ❖ Ethical action, therefore, is not passive withdrawal from life but active participation guided by selflessness and inner discipline.

Importance of Counsel and Deliberation

- Decisions are rarely taken in isolation; instead, they emerge through debate, consultation, and counsel.
- The advice of Krishna demonstrates that moral wisdom grows through reflection and discussion.

Ego, Desire, and Moral Collapse

- Pride (*ahamkara*), greed, jealousy, anger, and attachment repeatedly lead individuals and kingdoms toward destruction.
- Duryodhana's envy, Karna's wounded pride, and Dhritarashtra's attachment to his sons illustrate how uncontrolled emotions distort ethical judgment.

Major Ethical Dilemmas

Ethical Dilemma	Ethical Issue	Ethical Insight
War vs Non-Violence	Arjuna refuses to fight against his relatives, teachers, and friends, raising the question: Can violence ever be morally justified?	Krishna argues that avoiding one's duty in the face of injustice may itself become unethical.
Truth vs Strategic Deception	Killing of Dronacharya through partial truth and wartime strategies challenge the ideal of absolute truthfulness.	Whether questionable means can be justified for a larger ethical end.

Conflicting Loyalties and Duties	Characters such as Bhishma, Drona, and Karna struggle between loyalty to vows, family, benefactors, and justice.	Ethical life is tragic because duties often collide. Good people may become part of unjust systems due to misplaced loyalty.
Justice after Victory	Even after victory, the Pandavas experience grief, guilt, and moral exhaustion.	It questions whether victory guarantees moral legitimacy and examines how justice should be administered after violence.

Ethical Virtues Promoted in the Mahabharata

Ethical Virtue	Ethical Teaching
Duty with Integrity	Perform duty with responsibility, sincerity, and ethical intention.
Humility and Self-Control	Pride, anger, and ambition lead to downfall, while restraint reflects true strength.
Discernment and Practical Wisdom	Ethics requires contextual judgment, not rigid rule-following.
Balance between Means and Ends	Encourages reflection on whether noble ends can justify unethical means.

Contemporary Relevance of the Mahabharata

- **Leadership and Governance**
 - ❖ Teaches ethical leadership and responsible use of power.
 - ❖ Warns against arrogance, greed, and misuse of authority.
- **Public Administration**
 - ❖ Emphasises duty, accountability, and ethical decision-making.
 - ❖ Highlights the importance of counsel and consultation.
- **Conflict Resolution**
 - ❖ Demonstrates dangers of revenge, ego, and failed dialogue.
 - ❖ Encourages negotiation and restraint before conflict.
- **Ethical Decision-Making**
 - ❖ Promotes contextual judgment over rigid rule-following.
 - ❖ Encourages practical wisdom in difficult situations.
- **Justice and Power**
 - ❖ Questions whether victory alone ensures moral legitimacy.
 - ❖ Emphasises responsibility even after success.
- **Emotional Intelligence**
 - ❖ Warns against anger, jealousy, pride, and attachment.
 - ❖ Highlights the importance of self-control.
- **Gender Justice**
 - ❖ Exposes injustice against women.
 - ❖ Criticises silence in the face of wrongdoing.

- **Moral Education**

- ❖ Teaches ethics through stories, dilemmas, and consequences.
- ❖ Encourages development of ethical reasoning.

- **Duty over Self-Interest**

- ❖ Encourages prioritising collective welfare over personal gain.
- ❖ Promotes sacrifice and commitment to responsibility.

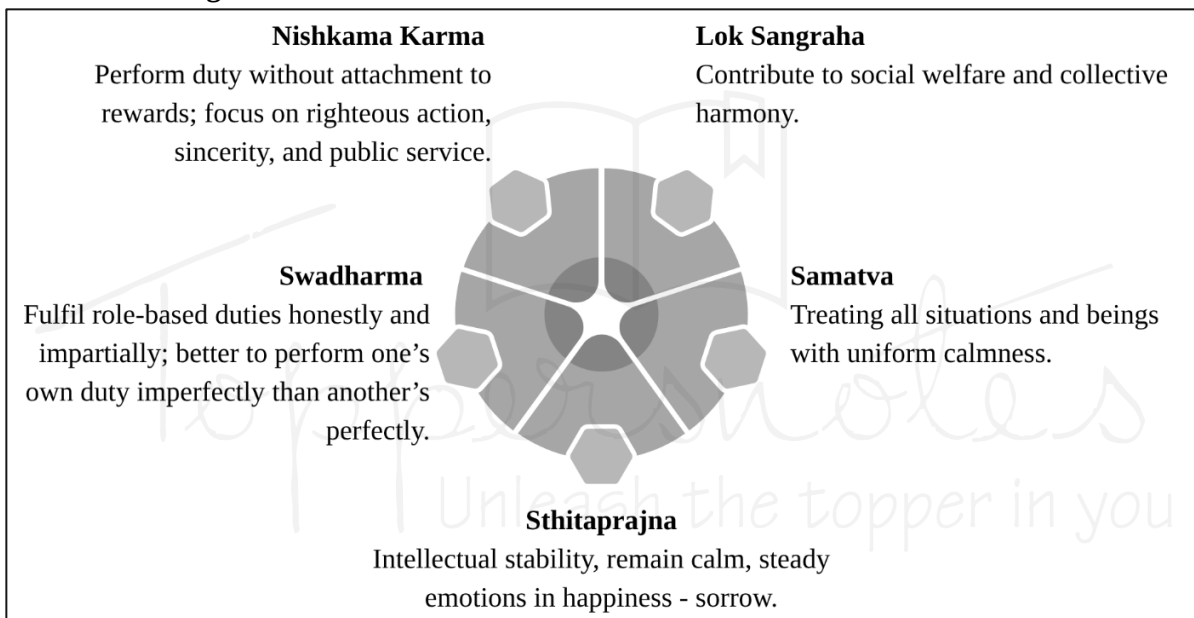
- **Means and Ends Debate**

- ❖ Questions whether noble goals justify unethical means.
- ❖ Encourages reflection on moral consequences.

Role of Bhagavad Gita in Ethics and Administration

Presented as a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, Bhagavad Gita addresses the problems of duty, morality, action, self-control, and spiritual liberation.

Ethics of the Bhagavad Gita



Nishkama Karma Yoga (Selfless Action)

The central teaching of the Gita is Nishkama Karma Yoga, which means performing one's duty without attachment to rewards or personal gain.

- The Gita advises individuals to focus on righteous action rather than worrying about success or failure.
- It teaches sincerity, dedication, responsibility, and freedom from selfish motives.
- This principle reduces greed, stress, corruption, and emotional disturbance.
- In administration, it inspires public servants to work for public welfare instead of personal recognition or political favour.

Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Verse: 47

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि॥

Meaning: You have the right to perform your duty (karma), but you are not entitled to the fruits (results) of your actions. Do not let the results of action be your motive, and do not develop attachment to inaction.

Lok Sangraha (Welfare of Society)

- The Gita emphasises that actions should contribute to social welfare and collective harmony rather than narrow self-interest.
- Individuals should work for the stability, protection, and progress of society.
- It promotes social responsibility, inclusive governance, and humanitarian values.
- In administration, Lok Sangraha encourages welfare-oriented policies for weaker and marginalized sections.

Swadharma (Duty According to One's Role)

- The Gita explains that every person has duties based on their role and responsibilities in society.
- Arjuna was advised to perform his duty as a warrior despite emotional attachment and fear.
- Escaping responsibility is considered unethical when justice and righteousness are at stake.
- The Gita teaches that performing one's own duty imperfectly is better than performing another's duty perfectly.
- For administrators, Swadharma means discharging constitutional and public responsibilities honestly and impartially.

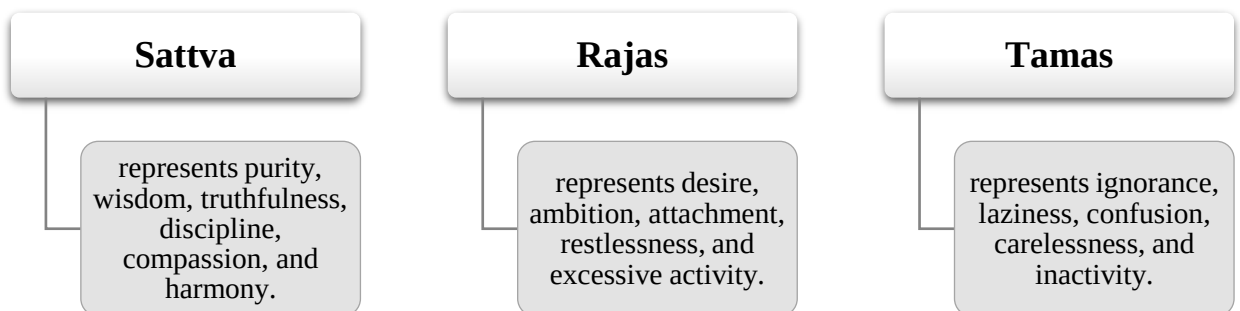
Samatva Yoga (Equanimity)

- The Gita advocates emotional balance and stability in every situation.
- A person should remain calm in success and failure, happiness and sorrow, profit and loss.
- Equanimity develops patience, emotional intelligence, rational thinking, and self-control.
- In public administration, this principle helps officers remain objective and unbiased during crises, criticism, or pressure situations.

Sthitaprajna (Steady Wisdom)

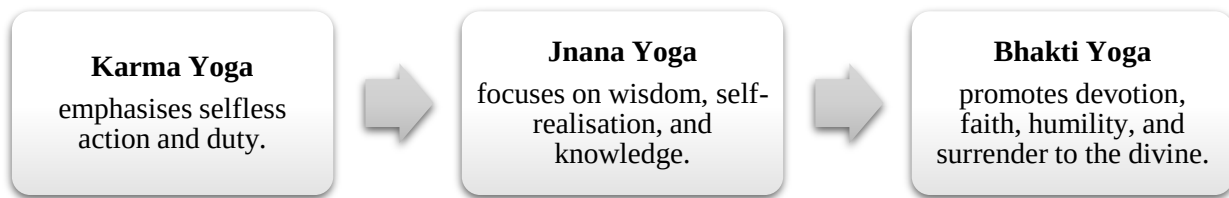
- The Gita describes the ideal person as Sthitaprajna, whose wisdom remains stable even in difficult circumstances.
- Such a person remains free from excessive desire, anger, greed, fear, and attachment.
- Sthitaprajna reflects emotional maturity, ethical discipline, calmness, and self-mastery.
- These qualities are essential for administrators and leaders dealing with stress, ethical dilemmas, and public responsibilities.

Three Gunas:



The Gita encourages individuals to cultivate Sattvic qualities because they promote ethical behaviour, balanced decision-making, and social welfare.

Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, and Bhakti Yoga



Concept of Anasakti (Detachment)

- Anasakti means performing duties without selfish attachment to outcomes.
- It does not encourage escape from responsibilities but promotes objectivity and inner freedom.
- Detachment reduces stress, fear, favouritism, and corruption.
- In administration, Anasakti helps officers take fair and impartial decisions without personal bias.

Contemporary Relevance of Bhagavad Gita

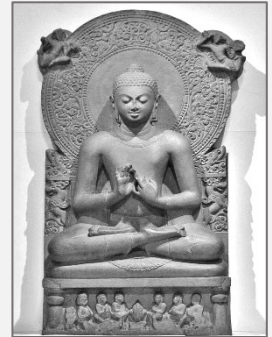
- **Detachment in Action**
 - ❖ The Gita emphasises Nishkama Karma—performing duty without attachment to results. It shifts focus from reward to responsibility.
 - ❖ **Example-** Civil servants must deliver impartial service rather than chase promotions or postings.
- **Emotional Balance**
 - ❖ Krishna advises freedom from anxiety about outcomes as a mark of wisdom. Emotional Intelligence is thus central to righteous conduct.
 - ❖ **Example-** Leaders handling disasters like COVID-19 required emotional stability to take difficult decisions under pressure.
- **Clarity of Purpose**
 - ❖ Distractions and lesser goals often divert individuals from higher duties. The Gita urges focus on the ultimate aim of life.
 - ❖ **Example-** Social media addiction derails students and professionals from long-term goals like education or nation-building.
- **Spirit of Selflessness**
 - ❖ True giving is without expectation of return or publicity. The Gita rejects ostentatious charity.
 - ❖ **Example-** Anonymous philanthropy or grassroots volunteers during natural disasters reflect real selflessness, unlike staged charity events.
- **Supremacy of Truth**
 - ❖ Krishna reiterates that truth alone endures. Attempts to mask reality eventually fail.
 - ❖ **Example-** The global rejection of racial superiority theories, once propagated by colonial rulers, highlights that truth cannot be suppressed forever.

The Bhagavad Gita is not merely a religious text but a practical guide for ethical living and responsible action. Its teachings on Nishkama Karma, Swadharma, equanimity, self-control, and social welfare provide strong foundations for personal morality, leadership, and administrative ethics. The Gita ultimately teaches that true success lies not in selfish achievement, but in righteous action performed with wisdom, balance, and dedication toward the welfare of society.

Buddha

About:

- Gautama Buddha (6th-5th century BCE) was an ascetic, teacher, and reformer whose insights gave birth to Buddhism as both a religion and a philosophy.
- Unlike laws created by rulers or customs shaped by society, Buddhist ethics are rooted in the unchanging laws of nature.
- For the Buddha, morality was not about blind obedience but about conscious choice guided by wisdom and compassion.



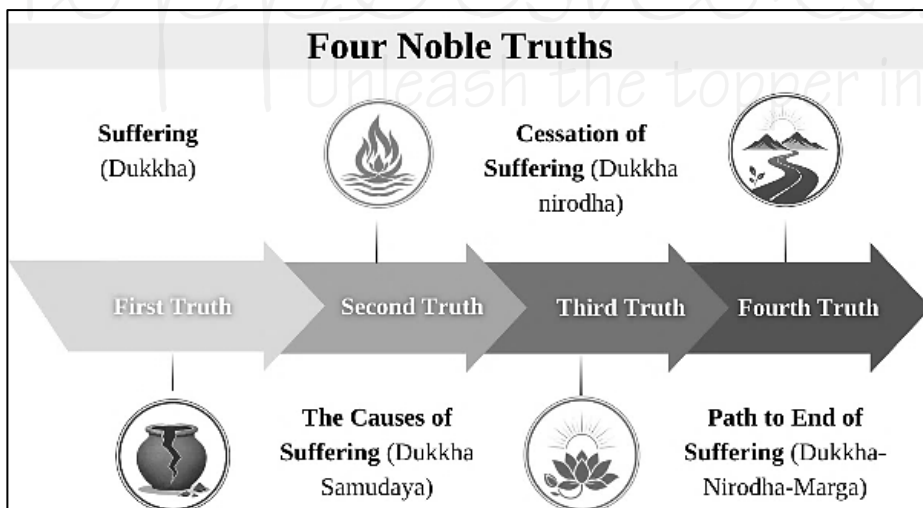
What is the meaning of Buddha?

The word “**Buddha**” means “**the awakened one**” or “**the enlightened one**”; it refers to a person who has fully awakened to the true nature of reality, overcome ignorance and suffering, and is liberated from the cycle of birth and death.

Key Teachings of Buddha

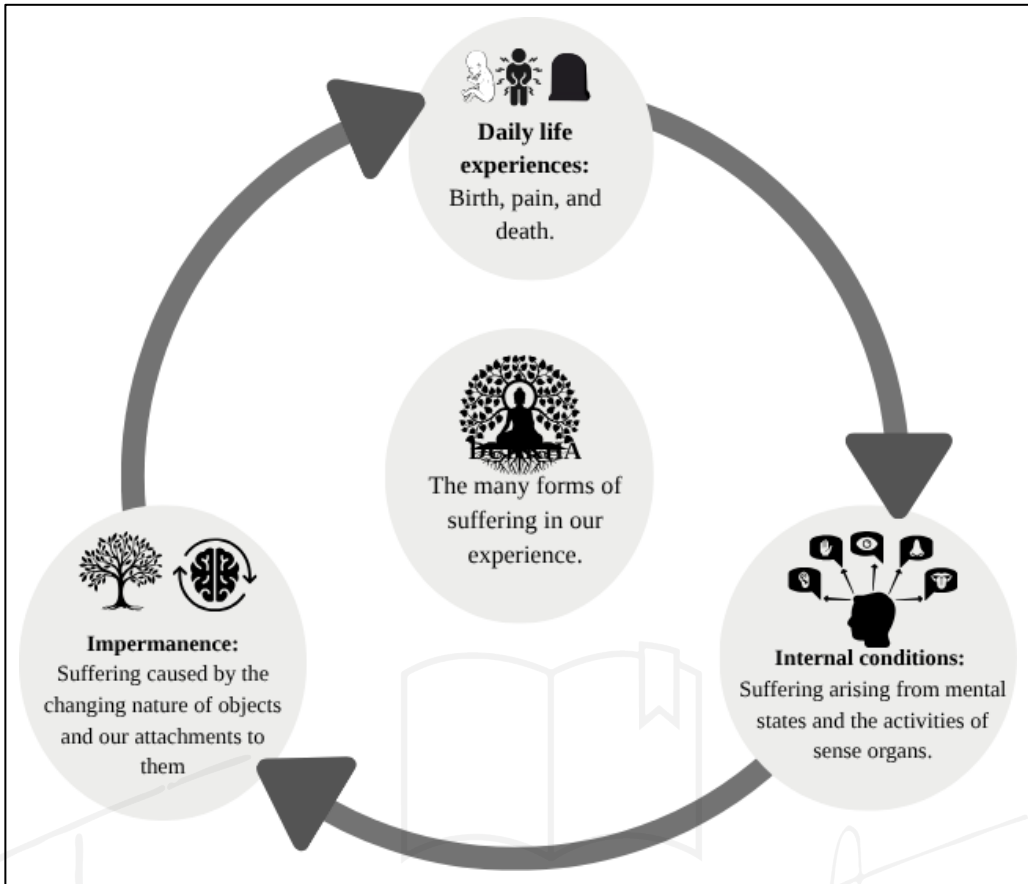
The Four Noble Truths: The Heart of Buddhism

The **Four Noble Truths** are the foundational principles of Buddhism, providing a framework for understanding the nature of reality and human existence.



1. Life is Full of Suffering (Dukkha):

- ❖ All forms of existence are subject to suffering. It is considered a universal truth that encompasses birth, sickness, old age, death, anxiety, and despair. Buddhism identifies suffering at three distinct levels:



2. Suffering has a Cause (Dukkha samudaya):

- ❖ Buddhism teaches that everything in the cosmos has a cause, including suffering.
- ❖ The root cause of all misery is identified as **desire**.
- ❖ This desire is all-pervasive, manifesting as a longing for possession, enjoyment, and the maintenance of a separate individual existence.

“The root of suffering is attachment.”



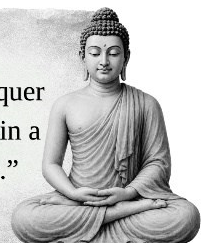
3. Cessation of Suffering (Dukkha nirodha):

- ❖ To end suffering, the seeker must destroy its cause by extinguishing desire.
- ❖ The state achieved when suffering ceases is known as **Nirvana**, which is described as a state of supreme happiness, bliss, and perfect peace of mind.

4. Ways to Destroy Suffering (Dukkha-nirodha-marga):

- ❖ This truth outlines the practical path to liberation, which involves following the **Eightfold Path**.
- ❖ This path serves as a **middle way**, encouraging practitioners to avoid extremes and cultivate eight specific virtues.

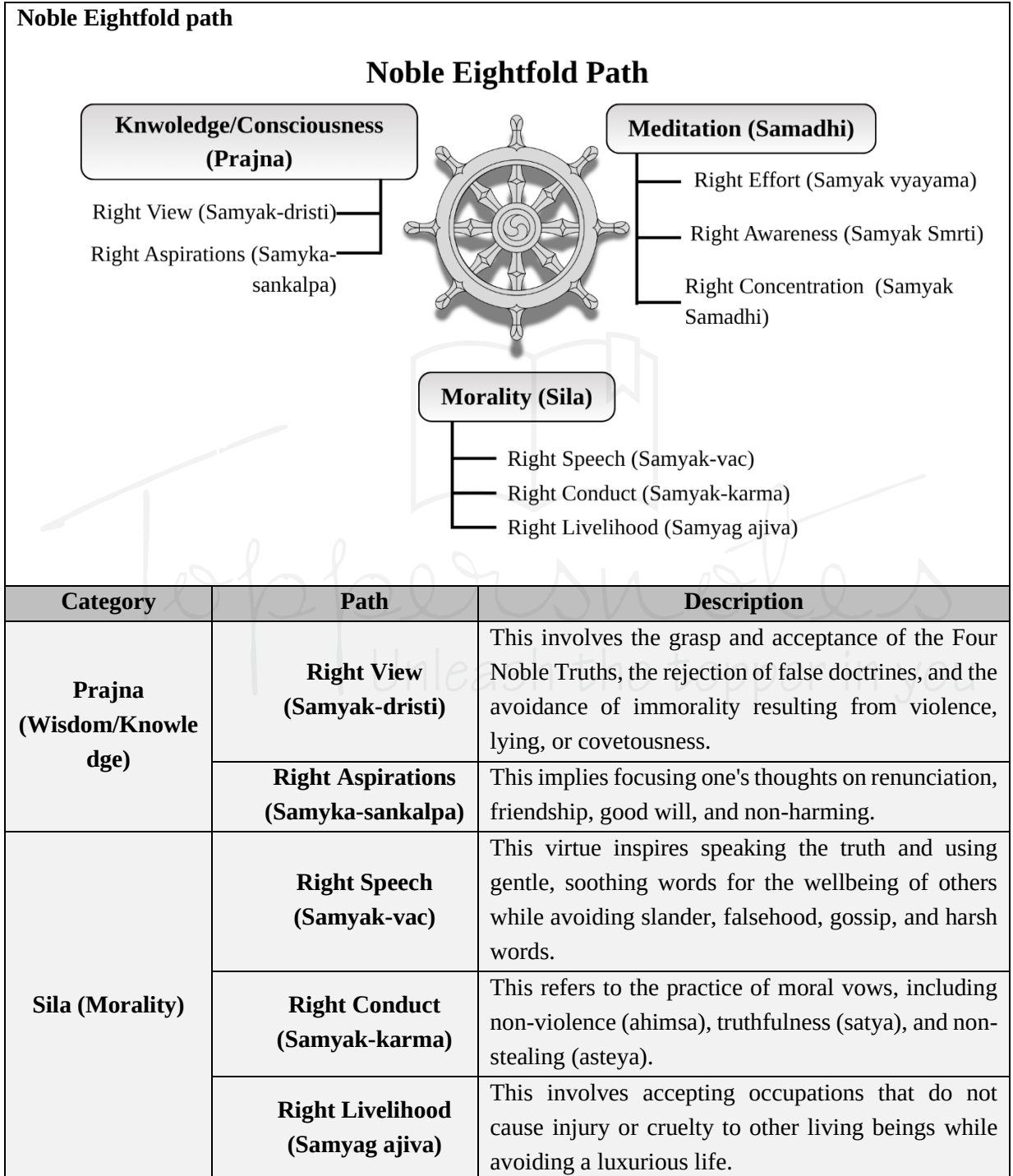
“It is better to conquer yourself than to win a thousand battles.”



Buddha's Eightfold Path:

Buddha's **Eightfold Path** serves as the practical application of the Four Noble Truths and is the designated way to destroy suffering. It is known as the **middle path** because it encourages practitioners to avoid extremes.

The eight components of the path are categorized into three groups:



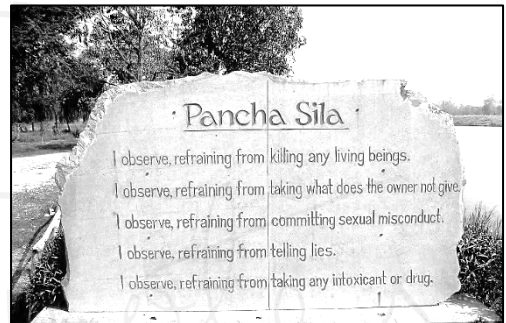
Samadhi (Meditation)	Right Effort (Samyak vyayama)	This includes the effort to prevent evil thoughts from rising, overcoming existing evil tendencies, and working to acquire positive values such as tranquility, energy, and equanimity.
	Right Awareness (Samyak Smrti)	This is the practice of being aware of the body (such as breathing and movements), sensations, thoughts, and the internal functions of the mind.
	Right Concentration (Samyak Samadhi)	This involves one-pointed contemplation that leads a seeker through four levels of meditation. It progresses from concentrating on the truth and enjoying bliss to a state of supreme peace, then to detachment from that bliss, and finally to full enlightenment.

The Five Precepts (Pancasila): The Ethical Compass

Buddha urged his followers to adopt five voluntary restraints to create a harmonious society:

- Abstain from killing.
- Abstain from stealing.
- Abstain from lying.
- Abstain from sexual misconduct.
- Abstain from intoxicants.

These principles foster **mutual trust, compassion, and respect**, making them as relevant in today's communities as they were 2,500 years ago.



Pratityasamutpada (Doctrine of Dependent Origination)

Also known as **Idam Pratyayata**, this doctrine holds that everything is relative, conditional, dependent, subject to birth and death and therefore impermanent.

If this exists, that comes to be.

If this ceases, that also ceases.

Example: "Poverty anywhere is a danger to prosperity everywhere". The world is mutually dependent and poverty is not an isolated condition. it creates conditions that affect prosperity across regions and communities. Therefore, everything is dependent and relative.

Present Relevance of Buddha's Teachings:

The teachings of the Buddha remain profoundly relevant even today, offering practical frameworks to address contemporary crises ranging from individual mental health to social and global challenges.