

**Nalanda University**  
**School of Buddhist Studies, Philosophy and Comparative Religions**  
**Curriculum and Courses 2019-21**

**Previous**

**Semester-I - Foundation Courses: 16 Credits**

- **Core Courses (3 Credits Each)**
  - I. Introduction to the Study of World's Religions (Audit) – A. Sharma
  - II. Introduction to the Study of Buddhism – AS
  - III. Fundamentals of Buddhist Philosophy – SN & SK
  - IV. History and Philosophy of Yoga - SS
  - V. Introduction to Indian Philosophical Systems-SN
- **Elective Course (3 Credits Each)**
  - I. Languages: Pāli/Tibetan/Sanskrit – BG/AW/BJ
  - II. Meditation: Theory and Practice- SK
- **Seminar 1 Credit)**

**Final**

**Semester-III - Advanced Courses: 16 Credits**

- **Core Courses (3 Credits Each)**
  - I. The Nalanda Tradition in Buddhism-AS
  - II. Hindu and Buddhist Tantra – SS & SK
- **Elective Course (3 Credits Each)**
  - I. Languages: Pāli Tibetan / Sanskrit- BG/AW/BJ
  - II. Understanding Yoga Texts - SS
  - III. Supervised Readings
  - IV. Philosophy of Religion-SN
  - V. Meditation: Theory and Practice-SK
  - VI. Buddhist Metaphysics - SK
  - VII. Courses from Other Schools
- **Seminar (1 Credit)**

**Semester-II - Bridge Courses: 16 Credits**

- **Core Courses (3 Credits Each)**
  - I. Buddhist Archaeology-AS
  - II. Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Tantra, Vedānta: Comparative Study-SS
  - III. Comparative Readings of Religious Texts-BJ
- **Elective Course (3 Credits Each)**
  - I. Languages: Pāli / Tibetan / Sanskrit- BG/AW/BJ
  - II. Understanding Buddhist Texts-BJ
  - III. Hindu Darśanas: A Comparative Study-SN
  - IV. Meditation: Theory and Practice-SK
  - V. Beginnings and Growth of the Buddhist Sects-AS
  - VI. Courses from Other Schools
- **Seminar (1 Credit)**

**Semester IV - Specialized Courses: 16 Credits**

- **Core Courses (3 Credits Each)**
  - I. Logic and Epistemology of Buddhism-SN
- **Elective Course (3 Credits Each)**
  - I. Languages: Pāli / Tibetan / Sanskrit- BG/AW/BJ
  - II. Literary Projections of Yoga-SS
  - III. Teachings of the Bhagavadgītā-SK
  - IV. Meditation: Theory and Practice-SK
  - V. Courses from Other Schools
- **Seminar (1 Credit)**
- **Dissertation (9 Credits)**

\* Each credit will be evaluated for 100 marks.

\* Discussion and Meeting with Faculty as per time fixed.

\*Professor Arvind Sharma, distinguished visiting Professor from McGill University, Canada, will offer compulsory Audit Course on “Introduction to the Study of World’s Religions”.

(A.Sharma : Prof. Arvind Sharma, SS: Prof. Sukhbir Singh, AS: Prof. Anand Singh, SN: Prof. Sreekala Nair,  
BJ: Dr. Bipin Kumar Jha, AW: Dr. Alexandra Wentz, VG: Dr. Veena Gaur, SK: Dr. Saroj Kanta Kar)

**School of Buddhist Studies, Philosophy, and Comparative Religion**  
**Course Curriculum 2019-20**

**Core Courses:**

- ❖ Introduction to Study of World's Religions (Audit)
- ❖ Introduction to the Study of Buddhism
- ❖ Fundamentals of the Buddhist Philosophy
- ❖ History and Philosophy of Yoga
- ❖ Introduction to Indian Philosophical Systems
- ❖ Buddhist Archaeology
- ❖ Sankhya, Yoga, Tantra, Vedanta: Comparative Study
- ❖ Comparative Readings of Religious Texts
- ❖ The Nālandā Tradition in Buddhism
- ❖ Hindu and Buddhist Tantra
- ❖ Logic and Epistemology of Buddhism

**Bouquet of Elective Courses (Cafeteria Model):**

- ❖ Languages: Pali/Tibetan/Sanskrit
- ❖ Meditation: Theory and Practice
- ❖ Beginnings and Growth of Indian Buddhist Sects
- ❖ Buddhist Metaphysics
- ❖ Literary Projections of Yoga
- ❖ Philosophy of Religion
- ❖ Hindu Darśanas: A Comparative Study
- ❖ Understanding Buddhist Texts
- ❖ Understanding Yoga Texts
- ❖ Teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā*
- ❖ Supervised Readings

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## **Course Descriptions:**

### **Introduction to Study of World's Religions (Audit)**

This course introduces the student to what is now known as the academic study of religion. Every religion has a long history of studying its own scriptures but the academic study of religion is of relatively recent origin. Its beginning is usually placed in the middle of the nineteenth century. It has since grown into a full-fledged and flourishing field of study. It is also known as the comparative study of religion. This course will cover the intended material in four stages or parts. The first part will consist of tracing the beginning and growth of the academic study of religion in the West, and as well as a history of the attempts to introduce it in India. We will discover that academic study of religion is characterized by three features: it is multi-traditional, it is poly-methodic, and it is multilingual. The second stage will consist of a survey of the origin, basic teachings, and history of at least the following seven religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. The third stage will involve an examination, in outline, of the various methods of studying religion such as the historical, the phenomenological, the sociological, the psychological, the philosophical, the dialogical, and so on. The multilingual nature of the academic study of religion will also be probed at this stage. The fourth and final phase will consist of discussing the various attitudes which have been adopted towards the variety and plurality of the religious traditions which characterize the world. It will also discuss how the various religions are facing new developments in our times such as feminism, terrorism, environmental issues, and so on. Finally, it will examine the relevance of the academic study of religion to India.

### **Introduction to the Study of Buddhism**

Beginning of Civilization in Indian subcontinent led to evolution of different religious, socio-cultural, and spiritual traditions. The mingling of Aryans and Indus people ushered in many new traditions in India. Because of that Sramanic movements developed. The paper explores such and other happenings. Starting with the life story of the Buddha, students learn about Buddhism in ancient India, the key texts, doctrines and practices. This course also outlines important teachings of the Buddha and beginning of the important sects. The key components of the course will be:

- Basic introduction of Indus and Vedic Culture.
- Origin of Buddhism: Causes and Factors.
- Early development of Buddhism in India.
- Important Teachings of the Buddha.
- Major Philosophical Schools and Sects.

### **Fundamentals of the Buddhist Philosophy**

This course is meant to acquaint students with Buddhist philosophy, textual traditions, and practices that have evolved over the centuries. The course would begin with the historical enlightenment that Buddha had received followed by the early teachings of Buddha, and the initiatives made by Buddha himself to

institutionalize his thoughts. Though the historical trajectory of Buddhism as a system of philosophy and religion would find a place in the course, the major emphasis would be to project the philosophical underpinnings of the Buddhist thought. Besides, the realistic and idealistic schools of Buddhism, their major metaphysical and epistemic positions, the evolution of the logical school of Buddhism, and decline of Buddhism in its birth place and the contributions of Buddhism to Indian philosophy, culture and civilization would form the core of this course. Furthermore, Buddhism's journey out of India, to countries like Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia and Central Asia would also be explored, highlighting the major doctrinal differences between Buddhism that was born in India and those who practiced in these countries.

### **History and Philosophy of Yoga**

The School of Buddhist Studies, Philosophy, and Comparative Religions at Nalanda University offers a comprehensive foundational course on "History and Philosophy of Yoga" with a view to acquainting the students with the theoretical and practical essentials of the various yoga systems from the pre-Vedic times to the present day. The course accounts in detail the shifting postulates and parameters of the Yoga philosophy as it traverses the vast terrain of many millennia. A comparative and critical approach informs the instructional methodology positing a collation of the conflicting and comparable ideologies within the various Yoga disciplines. The classroom presentations, discussions, and take-home assignments supplement the teaching for a more intimate and inspiring understanding of the subject.

### **Introduction to Indian Philosophical Systems**

This is a core course aimed at initiating the students to classical Indian philosophical systems, where discursive thinking, employing philosophical tools of reason, analysis, debate and interpretation have been used systematically and technically to arrive at knowledge. Quite different from the Vedic and Upanisadic stream of thinking, these systems undertake philosophical debate in the true sense of the term, presuming nothing as sacrosanct and beyond the test of reason. The course would introduce the major philosophical principles of the three heterodox systems and six orthodox systems in detail, covering the major epistemic, metaphysical, and axiological positions. Efforts will be made to juxtapose these classical Indian versions of Materialism, Realism, and Transcendentalism to their western counterparts, and thereby present them in a global philosophical context. The course intends to provide a first-hand exposure to ways of philosophizing in India during ancient and classical times, stretching up to contemporary times, and to create interest among students toward their research in these areas.

### **Buddhist Archaeology**

Beginning with an overview of the sources (textual, epigraphic, art and architectural, ethno -archaeological) for the study of Buddhism, the course leads to an introduction to Buddhist Archaeology and its early beginnings. It discusses how Buddhism has been looked at archaeologically in terms of the development and evolution of the subject over the time. It further includes problems and tensions between the text and archaeology based frameworks of analysis, contestation over dates for the birth and parinirvana, an overview of the sites associated directly with the life of the Buddha, early Buddhist pilgrimages, trade networks, issues of patronage and study of stupa and the relic cults etc. Some important components are:

1. Beginning of the archaeological discoveries of Buddhist sites.
2. Important tools of Buddhist Archaeology- Epigraphy, Numismatic, Art and Architecture.
3. Discoveries and Excavation of Lumbini-Kapilavastu complex.
4. Important sites-Bodhgaya, Sarnath, and Nalanda

## 5. Relics and stupa cult.

### **Sankhya, Yoga, Tantra, Vedanta: A Comparative Study**

The course offers a comprehensive study of the four great systems of Yoga and their Philosophy. Each system would be first discussed in detail focusing on their origin, major and minor constituents, growth over the period, mechanics of practice, and impact on the subsequent systems of Yoga. The discussion of each subject would include references to and illustrations from both the primary and secondary texts currently available in translations. Having discussed them in detail from all possible angles (within the constraints of time), a comparative study of the four systems would be taken up in such respects as origin, history, philosophy, practice techniques, aims, and objectives, etc. Finally, a chart will be drawn for clarity and easy comprehension of each system in comparison to the three others.

### **Comparative Readings of Religious Texts**

The course consists of an introductory part to understand the essence of different Indian Religions, i. e. Vedic religion, *Vaiṣṇava* religion, Śaiva religion, and the Buddhist religion. It also discusses the several aspects within religious traditions as well as within religious traditions. The course further makes an argument for textual reading as a form of living intellectual practice, which can work together with approaches to the study of religion. This course's hall is helpful in easy learning and understanding the basics of the core concepts of Indian Religions.

### **The Nālandā Tradition in Buddhism**

NālandāMahāvihāra was a unique institution which changed the monastic education of Buddhism into scholastic tradition of learning. Emergence and dominance of śramanic ideology in the Magadha region transformed the social ethical and educational paradigms of India for few thousand years. The area represented the world's major religious ideas and beliefs like Buddhism, Jainism, Ājivaka, and Brāhmanism. Their regular interactions and reciprocations started debates and discussions which grew into the great Nalanda culture. The multiplicity of religious beliefs and cultures augmented this region with notion of mingling ground of scholarship and prepared an inspiring and stimulating milieu for monks, nuns, and scholars to develop their own beliefs and values. Religious and ethical edification allowed them to explore India's other religions and views. Such activities gave wide range of literature, traditions of debates, and methodology. It enriched both Buddhist as well as Brāhmanical traditions. Some important points of discussion will be:

- Sacred Landscape of Nālandā: Evolution and Development.
- Emergence of 'Nālandā Culture' - Institution, Education, Scholars and Tradition.
- Patronage, Growth and Survival.
- Nālandā in Tibetan Tradition.
- Decline and Devolution of the Tradition.

## **Hindu and Buddhist Tantra**

Buddhism after the 10th century is predominantly Tantric Buddhism. This form of Buddhism spread to Central, Inner and Southeast Asia, attracting royals, monarchs who adopted this form of Buddhism in their respective countries. It is now widely accepted that Tantric Buddhism has directly emerged from the Śaiva Tantras. The course gives an overview of the history of tantric movement, its concepts, practices, most important masters and most influential texts.

## **Logic and Epistemology of Buddhism**

This advance course gives the students an exposure to the logical and epistemic foundations upon which the whole edifice of Buddhist philosophy and religion stand erected. The course is reserved for those who have done a detailed study on the superstructures of Buddhism, like Buddhist religion, metaphysics, and ethics. By undertaking this course, it is expected that the student will have a good grasp of the theories of knowledge and norms of reasoning as promoted by Buddhism. The course will underscore the significance of epistemological and logical studies in philosophy in general and the role of Buddhist logic and epistemology in Buddhist studies in particular. The whole exercise would be to draw Buddhist logic and epistemology in the global arena of the same and highlight the former as a significant chapter in the global book of philosophy.

## **Languages: Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan**

### **Pali**

The course consists of introductory part of Pali Grammar, and Translation and Spoken Pali. This course will enable the students to develop a historical perspective and critical thinking about sentence structure and prose writing. It talks about Introduction to Devanāgarī and Transliteration, Pronunciation of words, Examples of words and practice in writing and speaking, Verbal roots- Singular, Dual and Plural, Formation of simple sentences, Vocabulary, and Practice for writing in and reading of Pali. There are four modules. These modules shall be helpful in easy learning of Pali language, and understanding of the core values of Pali literature as well as of ethical values in Ancient India.

### **Sanskrit**

This course focuses on understanding grammar, composition, and the style of Sanskrit writing. Simultaneously it talks about the Cultural, Social, Philosophical, Economical, and Political aspects of Sanskrit language and literature. Here the origin, growth and importance of Sanskrit Grammar in Contemporary phenomenon will be discussed as a cultural subject. Thus the course will enable the students to develop a historical perspective and critical thinking about sentence structure and literary writings as well as spoken Sanskrit. It will also enable them to read, speak, and translate. The course is divided in four modules. The Sanskrit Language is a compulsory Elective course in all four semesters. In these semesters the course progressively consists of foundation, bridge, advanced and specialized levels of Sanskrit Language and literature. These modules shall also be helpful in easy learning and understanding of the core values of Indian Sanskrit literature as well as ethical values of Ancient India.

## **Tibetan**

The course will focus on the reading and translation of select primary sources. Relevant points of grammar encountered during the readings will be discussed, with emphasis on syntax and advanced vocabulary. Students will be expected to be able to analyze independently the grammatical structures of the text and translate them into English

### **Meditation: Theory and Practice**

The course guides the students through various theoretical perspectives on meditation beginning with Buddha's Vipassana, Jain's Samayika, Patanjali's Sabija and Nirbijasamadhis, Vysa's Yogic Dhyana, Tantrika's Chakradhyana, Mahesh Yogi's Transcendental Meditation, and Aurobindo's Integral Meditation, etc. The comprehensive survey dwells upon the various theories of these differing meditative methodologies and their respective underlying philosophies. A comparative view of the various types of meditation gives the students a clear idea about their similarities and differences and helps the practitioners to participate in a practical course with full esoteric and experiential knowledge. The combination of both theory and practice results into larger physical, mental, and moral benefits.

### **Beginnings and Growth of the Indian Buddhist Sects**

Buddhism has undergone a number of transformations resulting into the advent of different sects and traditions. With the passage of time, these sects have gone through varied doctrinal interpretations, metaphysics, vipassana, and philosophical virtues. The subsequent growth and geographical dispersal have brought about inevitable changes in their approaches of both teaching and practices. As the monastic community grew slowly, the samgha increased in complexity, the monks expanded and elaborated both doctrine and disciplinary codes, created new textual genres, developed new forms of disciplines, and eventually divided into a number of different schools. Geographical disparities, language differences, doctrinal disagreements, selective patronage, the influence of non-Buddhist schools, loyalties to the specific teachers, the absence of unifying organizational structure, and specialization by various monastic groups in different segments of Buddhist scriptures are the glaring examples of factors that contributed to sectarian fragmentation. The course content mainly includes:

- Genealogy of Origin of Buddhist Sects
- Sects of Theravada Buddhism, \
- Sects of Mahayana Buddhism,
- Literature of Buddhist Sects, etc.

### **Buddhist Metaphysics**

Buddhism developed into different shades of Metaphysics at different times. Accordingly, it offers different accounts of reality or truth. It deals with understanding of the reality in itself and its multifarious phenomena. It explains the existence, causality of things and beings. It also suggests how we should live and practice. In

this regard, Buddhist philosophers have great many contributions with spectacular metaphysical outlooks. These are developed in the course of their investigation of the reality and the truth regarding the objective world and for the subject itself. In different phases of the developments, the Buddhist scholars incorporated rational understanding, intuition and yogic experiences in their quest for Reality. As per the levels of enquiry, they gradually explored deeper layers of reality. Comprehension of such themes in the Buddhism paves the way for further philosophical, spiritual, religious and moral lives. Looking at all these, this course is designed to deal with specific metaphysical enquiries to the reality.

### **Literary Projections of Yoga**

Swami Vivekananda's lectures in the western countries took scholars, teachers, creative writers, and common people by storm. Yoga became a watchword and the yogic exercises a household phenomenon in the entire west. As a result, several eminent writers of the western world employed Yoga in their poetic, fictional, and other literary creations over the last two centuries to ridicule and re-examine the material outlook of the entire western society. A specialized analysis of their imaginative treatment of Yoga may open up newer possibilities of its understanding from a non-native viewpoint and a wider universal perspective, which possibly have remained thus far unknown and unrealized. The course includes a close examination of poetry, fiction, prose, and plays of about half a dozen canonical western writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **Philosophy of Religion**

The beginning of the modern era in Europe witnessed the great divide between Religion and Philosophy and the enlightenment project celebrating this, proclaimed that the virtues of modernity are by and large the products of this great divide. However, Religion as an institution continued to occupy a great role in human life and philosophers in their attempt to understand and evaluate this gave birth to a new sub discipline called Philosophy of Religion. The course would address issues like proofs for the existence of God, epistemic credentials of religious beliefs, the relation between God, world, and the soul, the problem of evil, challenges posed by plurality of religions, and viability of inter religious dialogues. It would also address issues related to the transaction between religion and philosophy in India. India in a way is a laboratory of religions, where all possible forms of religion were tested and practiced for centuries. The course would journey through these different modes of religions that showcase distinct approaches to reality and methods of attaining the ultimate goal specified by them.

### **Hindu Darsanas: A Comparative Study**

This course will provide an overview of the major schools of Indian philosophy. We will examine the development of major themes within the various schools of thought. Following the chronological development of philosophy, we will explore the relationships between and reactions to different ideas over time. An individual and comparative view of these key philosophic systems will generate an awareness of the intellectual substratum of various branches of Hinduism.

## **Understanding Buddhist Texts**

The course intends to familiarize students with textual analysis of Buddhist texts that belong to different Buddhist traditions interpreting these texts' contents against Buddhist ideas, theories and practices taught during the Introduction to Buddhism course. The course facilitates 'understanding' of Buddhist texts by positioning them at the intersection of leading dogmatic discourses of the time that afford a view of the points of dispute and controversy among the competing systems of Buddhist thought and practice and other religious traditions of India.

## **Understanding of the Yoga Texts**

The Course intends to offer detailed understanding of the crucial Yoga texts pertaining to Sankhya, Tantra, and Hatha Yoga. The study and understanding of the specified texts, i.e. Isvara Krishna's Shankhya Karika, Patanjali's Yogasutras, Ved Vyasa's Bhagavadgita (Chapter 2 on Sankhya Yoga) & Bhagvatam (Chapters 28-33: Kapila and Devahuti Dialogue on Sankhya Yoga), Puranananda's Sat-Chakra-Nirupana, and Svamimarama's Hathayogapradipika elaborate upon the basic theoretical and philosophical information of these Yoga systems in general and their psycho-physical, psycho-mental, and psycho-spiritual implications in particular.

## **Teachings of the Bhagavadgītā**

Śrimadbhagavadgītā is an important part of Mahābhārata. It carries the most salient features of the pan-Indian spiritual and philosophical outlook and ideas. These are reflected in it in course of the most valuable advices and deliberations of the God incarnated to his friend and devotee, at the time, when he faced great moral crisis. The crises are about discerning right and wrong, emotional troubles, lack of will to do with discrimination. All these crises are reportedly addressed in the Gītā. In the context, it also expounds salient features of psychology, metaphysics, and moral philosophy. Hence, it becomes important for the students of masters level.

## **Supervised Readings**

Readings tailored to individual student research interest as survey of literature in third semester for MA dissertation. The Readings of specific texts critically enable students to understand and analyze in an argumentative style. The critical approaches to the selected texts also train the students in laying out their arguments in a scholarly manner. Reading list of ten works of important secondary scholarship to be determined in consultation with each student. Two hours weekly classroom sessions and/or private meetings with instructor.