

Exercise Sheet 7.4.2c

The Teachings of Lord Chaitanya

Lord Chaitanya's teachings are based on traditional Vaishnava philosophy and include many of the main Hindu concepts, such as *atman*, *karma*, reincarnation, *moksha* and so on (see over page). They are most distinctive when considering the nature and identity of the Supreme, since Chaitanya favoured a personal Supreme identified with Krishna, and, to a lesser degree, with Vishnu. The following ten principles are called 'dasa mula'.

1. The Supreme authority is Vedic scripture, received through the authentic *parampara* (line of teachers). These holy books teach the following nine principles:
2. The Absolute Truth is a person, and Krishna is that Supreme Person.
3. Krishna possesses all good qualities and infinite power and opulence.
4. Krishna is the source of all love and loving exchange,
5. The individual souls are all eternally parts of Krishna.
6. The individual soul (atman) is now under the influence of matter (and the three gunas).
7. In the liberated state, the eternal self is free from the control of matter.
8. The atman is the same as the Lord (as eternal spirit) but also different (the atman is small and God is infinite). Matter is also the same as Krishna (it is spiritual because it comes from God but it has a different function).
9. Selfless and loving service (bhakti) is the natural state of the self.
10. The ultimate goal of human life is to develop love for Krishna (higher than even liberation).

Caitanya also taught that:

1. The hereditary caste system is wrong (based on the idea of spiritual equality)
2. The best worship is of Radha and Krishna
3. The chanting of the holy names is the means for spiritual success in this age (Kali Yuga)

21 Key Concepts

The following chart lists the 21 Avanti 'Faith Concepts', classified into six main sections. Those in **bold text** are more specific to Chaitanya's teachings or were favoured by him. The others are more widely accepted amongst Hindus.

Over-arching	Chaitanya's Philosophy	"Achintya-beda-beda-tattva" ¹ 'inconceivable simultaneous oneness and difference'
1	The Self (spirit)	1. Atman (the eternal self) and Brahman (spirit) 2. Reincarnation and Moksha 3. The Law of Karma
2	The World (matter)	4. The Three Gunas <i>and Prakriti</i> (matter) 5. Maya (the world as illusory) 6. Time and space
3	God (the Divine)	7. God in Three Places (<i>everywhere, within and without</i>) 8. God with and without form (also 'the many deities') 9. Rasa-theology (loving relationships)²
4	Dharma (moral duty)	10. Dharma 11. Varnashrama-dharma (worldly duties) 12. Sanatana-Dharma (spiritual duties) 13. Mind and Sense Control 14. Sources of authority (holy people, sacred texts and inner voice)
5	Spiritual Practices (Linking with the Divine)	<i>'One goal, many paths' – the paths of:</i> 15. Selfless Action 16. Knowledge and Wisdom 17. Yoga and Meditation 18. Devotional service (worship)³
6	Acting in this World	19. Yukta-vairagya (engaging all material things in divine service) ⁴ 20. Ahimsa and Vegetarianism 21. Sadhu-sanga (keeping good company, the association of saints)

¹ This is the name given to the specific Vedanta philosophy taught by Chaitanya Vaishnavism. It was formally consolidated by Baladeva (circa 1720 - 1768).

² As central to Chaitanya Vaishnavism; its theological articulation owes much to Rupa Goswami (1493-1564).

³ Chaitanya favoured Bhakti over other 'paths' or 'yogas'

⁴ This central concept attempts to resolve tensions between world-affirmation (adopted by karma-yogis) and world-rejection (favoured by jnana-yogis). It thus avoids the polarities of (a) thoughtless enjoyment and (b) dry or artificial renunciation.