Q 3) What do you mean by Shramanic tradition?Discuss the features of Shramanic tradition.

Ans: The Shramanic tradition is a reformist school within the Vedic tradition of Indian philosophy.It is primarily represented by both Jainism and Buddhism. The origin of Śramanic tradition is mainly associated with Kośala and Magadha, the main areas of Mahāvira and Buddha.It emerged in India as a critical reaction to the ritualistic trends and tendencies of the Brahmanical system.It is also against the hereditary basis of caste and animal sacrifices.After 6th century BCE, Jainism and Buddhism along with many other branches of Hinduism-Nath Panthi, Yoga, Sidhha, etc- rose as reformation and reaction to rigidity, ritualism, exclusiveness, and external pretentions( ‘Dhong’, ‘Adambar’) of Brahmanic Hinduism.Originating from Sanskrit word ‘Shram’ meaning labour, Shramanic traditions include heterodox(unorthodox) traditions such as Nath Panth, Yoga, Siddha, Tantric, Bhakti, Jainism, Buddhism, Ajawika, Lokayata or Charvaka etc.Except Jainism and Buddhism, remaining of Shramanic traditions are considered branches of Hinduism and were more and less absorbed into it.

Hence, Shramanic traditions basically denote Jainism and Buddhism. Shramanic traditions rejected the 4 pillars of Brahmanic tradition- caste system, superiority of Brahman in caste hierarchy and birth-based rights/entitlements, validity of Veda, and belief in God as primal person and world as his.It stressed ‘Karma’ and individual effort- self illumination for attaining salvation. Thus, Shramanic traditions was reformative, humanist, individualistic and inclusive. Hence, it attracted lower Hindu castes, out castes (Dalit, tribal, and foreigners), and women.

***Features of Shramanic tradition:***

1. **Supported monarchy**: The Shramanic tradition supported Monarchy as most acceptable form of rule, considered ‘Danda’ (art of governance, punishment) and ‘Dharma’ (righteousness, duty) as twin features of political life. It considered ‘Dharma’ as end and ‘Danda’, as merely the means to achieve the end of ‘Dharma’. Thus ‘Dharma’ is given higher position than ‘Danda’ or politics/governance. It supported limited sovereignty of Kingship, which was required to uphold the ‘Dharma’, both for himself (Rajadharma) and for the society ( Varna Ashram Dharma).
2. **Principles of Existence:**

Buddhism is based on - Anicca, Anatta and Dukkha - three fundamental

principles of all existence and the phenomenal world. Anicca (anitya) denoted

that all things, including self, are impermanent, inconstant, unsteady and

changing. Anatta (anātma) explains the concept of non-self, denying the

immortality of soul, and unchanging/permanent nature of self. Dukkha (Duhkha)

describes the pain, suffering, dissatisfaction, anguish, stress, anxiety or

frustration emerging from physical/material thing, unpleasant experience or

inadequate identity. All kinds of suffering in life, like, birth, old age, sickness,

death, association with unpleasant persons or conditions, separation from beloved

ones or pleasant situations, disappointment, grief are common sufferings,

reflecting impermanence of happiness. Recognition of these three basic

characteristics of existence constitute the right knowledge or the four noble Śramanic

Truths, including

(i) Dukkha (the existential fact/reality of suffering),

(ii) Samudāya (it’s cause, arising or origin),

(iii) Nirodha (it’s cessation) and

(iv) Magga or Mārga (ultimately the path leading to its

cessation/suppression).

1. **Theory of Karma:**

Both Jainism and Buddhism believed that man could transcend Karma by his

own efforts. Though they recognized functional Gods, yet emphasized that the

universal process (Samsār) was a result of certain immutable laws of action

(Karma), resulting in progress and decline. Jainism maintained that the world

was composed of infinite souls, which were trying to purify themselves of action

particles (Karma). These Karma bind the soul and accordingly embody it in

different incarnations in a cycle of birth and rebirth. The present life is

determined by our past karma.The Śramanic tradition preached the value of a moral life in terms of the theory of Karma.

1. **Refuge in Three Jewels:**

Jainism recommends the path of three jewels (Triratna): (i) right reverence (Shraddhā); (ii) right knowledge (Jnān); and (iii) right conduct (Sadāchār), in order to enable the individual to

attain Nirvāna (deliverance). It also underlines the virtues of Ahimsā (nonviolence), Aparigraha (non-possession), understanding, equality, service,Sanyam (self-restraint), Tapa (penance) and oneness in all living things.

Buddhism supports the three-fold submission or seeking refuges to Buddham

('Buddha'), Dhammam (the 'doctrine') and Samgham (the 'Buddhist ecclesiastical

fraternity'). In its moral aspect, it stood for Śīla (Modesty),

Samādhi (concentration or meditation) and Pragyā (wisdom), the pursuit of

which could ultimately lead one to Nirvāna (salvation).

1. **Ashtānga Marg (Eight fold path):**

The three basic categories of human action encouraged ‘eight-fold middle path’;

where (i) Pragyā (wisdom) includes ‘right view’(Sammā ditthi/Drishti) and

‘right intention’ (Sammā Sankappa/Sankalpa); (ii) Śīla (ethical conduct/modesty)

comprises ‘right speech’ (Sammā Vācā/Vācha), ‘right action’ (Sammā

Kammanta) and ‘right livelihood’(Sammā Ājīva); and (iii) Samādhi

(concentration/meditation) comprehends ‘right effort’(Sammā Vyāmma), ‘right

mindfulness’(Sammā Sati), and ‘right concentration’(Sammā Samādhi),

Vinaya / Śīla (Ethics).

Jainism was deeply influenced by the Hindu philosophical tradition. It suggests five vows for the realization of absolute happiness or Sukha:

(i) Ahimsā: non-violence in thought, word and deed;

(ii) Satya: pursuit of truth and avoidance of falsehood;

(iii) Asteya: satisfaction with whatever one possesses and avoidance of

stealing;

(iv) Brahmacharya: Celibacy and to be content with one's own

wife; and

(v) Aparigraha: to limit one's possessions.

The five Precepts, mandatory for all Buddhists, defining the Vinaya code or the

monastic code include : Ahimsā ,Asteya,Brahmcharya, Satya and Aparigraha.

1. **Redefined Brahman:**

They redefined the term ‘Brahman’ and asserted that Brahman is not name of caste but title or designation for those who have moral and spiritual qualities, and are detached and wise.Anyone, irrespective of his caste can become a ‘Brahman’.For Shramanic, different ‘Varna’ originating from different body parts of ‘Brahma’ is illogical, against law of nature, and plain lie. Thus, we can see that major departure point between the two traditions on socio-cultural point was rejection of the caste system by Shramanic traditions.

1. **Challenged the authority of the Vedas:**

They challenged and rejected the authority or validity of the Vedas.All the Shramanas sects denied the supremacy of philosophies of Vedic texts.Some of them like Buddha and Mahavira got enlightenment through meditation and after realising truth propagated the right way of life to their followers. The Vedic authority was handed down from tradition and the texts revealed to some only. They ridiculed the complicated rituals, and tried to show the absurdity of the Veda, as a canon of ultimate truths, by pointing out contradictions in it.

**8) Creation of the Social Order:**

U.N. Ghoshal argues that Aggana Sutta challenges the Vedic ideas on divine

creation of the social order, while suggesting that the division of people in

society is based upon need and convenience rather than any hierarchical division.

In other words, the division in the social order, with precedence to Kshatriya over

Brāhman, is based upon functional performance of activities by the groups and

not determined by varna model.

If Brāhmanical king ideally maintained the varna division in the social order; the

Buddhist king’s primary task was to maintain a social order in which the property

and family of individuals are protected in accordance with Dhamma.

9) **Nirvāna (Enlightenment):**

Jainism believes that man is a slave to pleasure of senses, with no end to its

accumulation. This leads to attachment of Karmic particles, which, in turn, lead

to infinite cycles of life and death. The search for self-knowledge and self-realization is the only way to transcend this world and attain liberation.

For Buddha, Nirvāna or Nibbāna is Magga (the path) to the cessation of Dukkha.

Buddha calls it Majjhima Patipadā (the middle path), as it seeks to avoid

extremes of pleasure of senses and self-mortification, and leads to enlightenment

or Nirvāna.

**10) Did not support Divine origin theory of state:**

Shramanic tradition does not believe in the divine origin and divinity of kingship.They considered kingship as social contract.People pay taxes as compensation for king’s services.Hence, the king is merely servant to the people.State/king is not supposed to maintain the caste system rather he is to ensure equality and social harmony.Separation of spirituality(Dharma) and politics(Dandaniti) is more pronounced in this tradition.

11) **A better position for women:**

The Shraman tradition provided women with a better life. They were permitted to take the ordination of Bhikkhuni Sasana (Nuns order). Under the Shraman tradition, they were able to give up the lifeof a householder. Women were considered servants of men in the Brahman tradition,

but in the Shraman, they were able to discover the truth or the path to liberation

The Shramanas were freedom seekers who by their own efforts tried to find out the truth of life. They had their own views which were radical. They practiced differently from what was prevailing at the time in 6th century BCE ,India. To achieve this aim they wandered hither and thither learning from various thinkers. They spend their time developing intellectual thinking, trying out ascetics’ practices, studying nature and teaching, and arguing with each other with a view to find which standpoint was true.