

4.

Explain the concept of flux of Heraclitus.

The concept of flux occupies the central position in the philosophy of Heraclitus. The concept of flux is identical with two other concepts — the concept of becoming and the concept of change. Through his concept of flux Heraclitus wanted to emphasise the point that reality is not a static entity. Rather reality is to be understood as ceaseless activity. It is to be understood as a process.

Heraclitus wrote in a difficult style. Moreover we do not now have any extended text by Heraclitus. At present we only have fragments of his writings. Out of these fragments we have to re-construct the Heraclitean concept of flux.

Heraclitus, in his philosophy,

advocated the doctrine of universal flux. Heraclitus wrote that one cannot step into the same river twice. The river into which we entered a moment ago is no longer present. New water has flown in and old water has gone out. As a result a new river has come into being. This imagery of river under-going change is employed by Heraclitus to express the idea of universal flux. Heraclitus wanted to emphasise the point that reality was ever dynamic.

According to Heraclitus in the universe we find conflicts of opposites. Because of the presence of this conflict there is no fixity in the universe. Heraclitus compared the conflict of opposites to war and he stated that war is the father of all and the king of all. This conception of the conflict of opposites forms a very important part of the concept of flux of Heraclitus.

Moreover Heraclitus brought in the idea of universal fire to explain his concept of flux. Fire is the most mobile object that Heraclitus knew of. He stated that everything is on fire and thereby he meant that everything is mobile.

But the conception of flux always implies some fixity. It is something fixed that undergoes change. Heraclitus did not accept this implication. But at the same time he looked for some abiding stationary principle in the universe and found it in the logos or reason. In accepting this principle Heraclitus perhaps himself went beyond his concept of flux.