**Question: Discuss the common characteristics of Indian philosophical systems.**

**Answer:** The various Indian philosophical schools contain such a diversity of views, theories, and systems that it is not easy to single out characteristics that are common to all of them. In spite of this, one can see in them the common stamp of an Indian culture. This unity may be described as the unity of moral and spiritual outlook. To understand this, let us illustrate the main points of agreement among the different schools.

**Philosophies of life:** All philosophical schools agree that philosophy should not be a mere intellectual exercise but should have practical application in enabling man to live an enlightened life . A philosophy which makes no difference to the quality and style of our life is no philosophy, but an empty intellectual construction. To put it differently , philosophy should have the power to transform man's life from one of ignorance, darkness, and bondage to one of knowledge, wisdom, and freedom.

**Belief In An Eternal Moral Law:** All schools believe in an eternal law that governs not only the life and destiny of all individual beings, but even the order and arrangement of the physical world. This is commonly known as the law of karma. The law of karma means that all actions, good or bad, produce their proper consequences in the life of the individual who acts, provided they are performed with a desire for the fruits of the acts. The law of karma, is accepted in one or the other form by almost all the systems of Indian philosophy, including the two heterodox systems, Jaina and Buddha.

**Initial Pessimism:** Almost all Indian philosophical schools start on a note of pessimism. A sense of dissatisfaction at the existing state of affairs can be noted in almost all the systems of Indian philosophy. Buddha’s philosophy is the best example of this feature. It is to be noted, however, that the pessimistic note is only the initial note in Indian philosophy which generally concludes on an optimistic note. All the systems, in their own ways, have shown that we can get over the sufferings of life. Thus pessimism in the Indian systems is only initial and not final.

**Ignorance is the root cause of all misery:** Another common view, held by all Indian thinkers, is that ignorance of reality is the cause of our bondage and sufferings, and liberation from these cannot be achieved without the knowledge of reality, i.e. the real nature of the world, and the self. Ignorance about the true nature of things gives rise to attachment to the worldly objects as they can gratify the senses. This leads to bondage which means the process of birth and rebirth and the consequent miseries to which an individual is subject. Liberation means, therefore, the stoppage of this process.

**Liberation as the highest end of life:** Lastly, all Indian systems, except the Charvaka, accept the idea of liberation as the highest end of life. The concept of liberation however differs in its meaning from system to system. All systems negatively agree that the state of liberation is a total destruction of sufferings which life in this world brings about. Some systems go a little beyond to the positive view that liberation is not simply negation of pain, but is a state of positive bliss.

**Emphasis on Yogic practice:** All schools stress on the necessity of some form of concentration and self-control in order to achieve the knowledge of reality, which is evident in the adoption of one or another form of Yogic practice by these schools. Without prolonged meditation and self-control, wrong beliefs and habits former cannot be removed and right beliefs and habits cannot be steadied and established in life.