



Indian philosophy

Indian philosophy, a rich tapestry of diverse schools and traditions, has profoundly shaped the intellectual and spiritual landscape of India and beyond. Its focus on introspection, ethical living, and the pursuit of ultimate reality has resonated with seekers for millennia.

A Broad Overview:

Indian philosophy is broadly categorized into two main groups: **Āstika** (orthodox) and **Nāstika** (heterodox). **Āstika** schools accept the authority of the Vedas, while **Nāstika** schools do not.

1. **Āstika** Schools (Six Orthodox Schools):

sāṃkhya:

Considered one of the oldest philosophical systems, **Sāṃkhya** posits a dualistic reality consisting of **Puruṣa** (consciousness) and **Prakṛti** (nature).

Puruṣa is pure consciousness, passive and unchanging, while **Prakṛti** is the active, material principle, composed of three **guṇas** (qualities): **sattva** (goodness), **rajas** (passion), and **tamas** (inertia).

The interaction between **Puruṣa** and **Prakṛti** gives rise to the manifested world. Liberation (**mokṣa**) is achieved by discriminating between **Puruṣa** and **Prakṛti**, realizing their distinct nature.

Yoga:

Closely related to **Sāṃkhya**, Yoga focuses on practical methods for achieving liberation through the control of the mind and body.

Patañjali's Yoga **Sūtras** codify the eight limbs of Yoga, including ethical observances, physical postures, breath control, and meditation.

The ultimate goal of Yoga is **samādhi**, a state of complete absorption and union with the ultimate reality.

Nyāya:

Nyāya is a school of logic and epistemology that emphasizes the importance of valid knowledge for achieving liberation.

It identifies four sources of valid knowledge (**pramāṇas**): perception, inference, comparison, and testimony.

Nyāya developed a sophisticated system of logic and argumentation, providing a framework for analyzing and evaluating knowledge claims.

Vaiśeṣika:

Vaiśeṣika is a school of atomism that analyzes the nature of reality in terms of categories and atoms.

It posits that all material objects are composed of indivisible atoms, which combine to form complex substances.

Vaiśeṣika also identifies categories of reality, such as substance, quality, action, generality, particularity, and inherence.

Mīmāṃsā:

Mīmāṃsā focuses on the interpretation and application of the Vedic scriptures, particularly the ritualistic portions.

It emphasizes the importance of performing Vedic rituals correctly to maintain cosmic order and achieve desired results.

Mīmāṃsā developed a complex system of hermeneutics for interpreting the Vedas.

Vedānta:

Vedānta, meaning "the end of the Vedas," is a school of philosophy that draws its teachings from the Upaniṣads, the concluding texts of the Vedas.

It explores the nature of Brahman (the ultimate reality) and Ātman (the self), seeking to understand their relationship.

Several sub-schools of Vedānta have emerged, including:

Advaita Vedānta (Non-dualism): Founded by Adi Shankara, Advaita Vedānta asserts the ultimate oneness of Brahman and Ātman, declaring that the perceived world is an illusion (māyā).

Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta (Qualified Non-dualism): Advocated by Ramanuja, Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta posits that Brahman is the ultimate reality, but Ātman and the world are real, though dependent on Brahman.

Dvaita Vedānta (Dualism): Propounded by Madhvacharya, Dvaita Vedānta maintains a strict distinction between Brahman, Ātman, and the world.

2. Nāstika Schools (Heterodox Schools):

Buddhism:

Founded by Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha), Buddhism focuses on the elimination of suffering through the understanding of the Four Noble Truths and the practice of the Eightfold Path.

It rejects the authority of the Vedas and the concept of a permanent self (**ā**tman), emphasizing impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and non-self (anatta).

Buddhism has various schools, including Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana.

Jainism:

Jainism emphasizes non-violence (ahim**ṣ**ā), non-absolutism (anek**ā**ntav**ā**da), and non-possessiveness (aparigraha).

It believes in the existence of eternal souls (jī**ī**vas) and material substances (ajī**ī**vas).

Jainism aims to liberate the soul from the cycle of rebirth through the practice of strict asceticism and ethical conduct.

Cārvāka:

Cārvāka is a materialistic and hedonistic school of philosophy that rejects the authority of the Vedas, the concept of an afterlife, and the existence of a soul.

It emphasizes the importance of sense perception as the only valid source of knowledge and advocates for the pursuit of pleasure in this life.

Key Concepts in Indian Philosophy:

Sam̐sāra (Cycle of Rebirth): The cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, driven by karma.

Karma (Action and Consequence): The law of cause and effect, where actions determine future experiences.

Mokṣa (Liberation): The ultimate goal of Indian philosophy, liberation from the cycle of sam̐sāra and the attainment of ultimate freedom.

Ātman (Self): The individual soul or essence.

Brahman (Ultimate Reality): The ultimate, unchanging reality underlying all existence.

Dharma (Duty): The ethical and moral obligations of an individual.

Ahiṃsā (Non-violence): The principle of non-harming, central to Jainism and influential in other schools.

Influence of Indian Philosophy:

Indian philosophy has profoundly influenced the religions and cultures of India and neighboring regions.

Its concepts have spread to the West, influencing thinkers in various fields.

The practices of Yoga and meditation, derived from Indian philosophy, have gained widespread popularity globally.

Indian philosophy continues to provide insights into the nature of existence, the pursuit of happiness, and the meaning of life.

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