

# Schools of Indian Philosophy

## Orthodox (*āstika*):

### All Schools in General:

- Affirms the existence of karma
- Affirms samsara
- Affirms freewill
- Affirms the existence of atman
- Affirms authority of the Vedas, Upanishads and other major Indian texts
- Affirms the existence of a creator God
- Epistemology: Vaisheshika (two) to Vedanta (six): Pratyakṣa (perception), Anumāṇa (inference), Upamāṇa (comparison and analogy), Arthāpatti (postulation, derivation), Anupalabdi (non-perception, negative/cognitive proof), Śabda (Reliable testimony)
- Soteriology: Moksha, Nirvana, Kaivalya, Advaita, Yoga, others: Jivanmukti, Dvaita, theistic: Videhamukti
- Metaphysics: Brahman

### Sāṃkhya (Dualist Rationalism)

- Theory of Evolution
- Kapila, who authored Samkhya Sutra
- Sāṃkhya system considers reality to be constituted by two principle: puruṣa (male) and prakṛti (female)
- puruṣa and prakṛti are supposed to be completely independent and absolute
- puruṣa: mere consciousness and cannot be changed or modified
- prakṛti has three attributes: thought, movement and change/transformation
- Sāṃkhya philosophy establishes relationship between puruṣa and prakṛti to explain creation of Universe

### Yoga

- This system was described in Yogasutra written by Patanjali around 2nd century BC.
- Yoga means the union of two principal entities.
- It works towards systematic release of Purusha from Prakriti by purifying and controlling changes in mental mechanism.
- The techniques of Yoga control mind, body and sense organs. Hence, it is considered a means to attain mukti/ freedom.
- Yoga admits existence of God as a guide and teacher.

- It says that freedom can be attained by practicing yama(self-control), niyama(observation of rules), asana(fixed postures), pranayama(breath control), pratyahara(choosin an object), dharna(fixing the mind), dhyana(concentration), Samadhi(complete dissolution of self by merging mind and object).

### **Nyaya (Logical realism)**

- Rules for valid inferences in logic and epistemology
- Described in Nyaya Sutras authored by Gautama.
- Nyaya system considers God as one who creates, sustains and destroys the universe

### **Vaisheshika (Naturalistic Atomism)**

- The founder of this system of philosophy was Kanada.
- A significant work on Vaisheshika is “Prashastapada”.
- It is a realistic and objective philosophy of universe.
- It considers the reality to have many bases or categories, which are attribute, action, substance, genus, distinct quality and inference.
- Vaisheshika believe that objects of universe are composed of 5 elements: earth, water, air, fire and ether.
- It considers God to be the guiding principle.
- It considers that living beings are rewarded or punished according to law of karma.
- Vaisheshika considers the creation and destruction of universe is a cyclic process and occurs according to the wishes of God.
- It explains the phenomenon of the universe by the atomic theory, where the combination of atoms and molecules into matter. It explains the mechanical process of formation of universe.

### **Mīmāṃsā, Pūrva- Mīmāṃsā (Ritual and Vedic Authority)**

- Sabar Swami and Kumarila Bhatta are associated with Mimamsa school.
- The main text of Mimamsa is Sutra of Jaimini, written around 3rd century BC.
- It is based on analysis of interpretation, application and use of the text of the Samhita and Brahmana portions of the Veda.
- It considers the philosophy of Vedas to be eternal and processes all knowledge, and religion means fulfillment of duties prescribed by the Vedas.
- Mimamsa encompasses the Nyaya-Vaisheshika system.
- It emphasizes the concept of valid knowledge.
- The essence of the system is Dharma, considered to be a dispenser of fruits of actions.
- Mimamsa lays stress on ritualistic parts of Vedas.

### **Vedanta, Uttara Mīmāṃsā (Authority of Upanishads, dual and non-dual versions)**

- It refers to the philosophy of the Upanishads (i.e. the concluding parts of the Vedas).
- The founder of Vedanta is Shankaracharya, who wrote commentaries on Upanishads, Brahma Sutras and Bhagavad Gita.
- His philosophical views are known as Advaita Vedanta. Advaita means non-dualism (belief in one reality).
- Ramanuja is considered another important Advaita Scholar.
- Shankaracharya said that ultimate reality is Brahman. And there is no distinction between self and Brahman.
- Brahman is considered to be existent and unchanging highest truth and knowledge. The knowledge of Brahman is the essence of all things and ultimate existence.
- Vedanta denies the existence of apparent ego, this makes Vedanta unique in all the philosophies in World.
- Vedanta philosophy believes that different religions lead to same goal.
- Its core message is that every action has to be governed by intellect. The mistakes are made by the mind but the intellect tells that action is in our interest or not.
- Vedanta allows practitioner to access the realm of spirit through the means of intellect.

## **Heterodox (*nāstika*) Śramaṇa: Disciplined Ascetic Renunciates**

### **Jainism**

- Affirms the existence of karma
- Affirms samsara
- Affirms freewill
- Affirms the existence of atman
- Denies the authority of the Vedas
- Affirms Jain Scriptures
- Affirm an atomic theory
- Denies existence of creator God
- Epistemology: Pratyakṣa (perception), Anumāṇa (intuition), and the Śabda (reliable testimony)
- Soteriology: Siddha, Nirvana
- Metaphysics: Anekāntavāda (Jain relativism; non-absolutism)

### **Buddhism**

- Affirms the existence of karma
- Affirms samsara
- Affirms freewill
- Denies the existence of atman
- Denies the authority of the Vedas

- Affirms Buddhist Sutras
- Denies existence of creator God
- Denies an atomic theory
- Epistemology: Pratyakṣa (perception), Anumāṇa (intuition), and the Śabda (reliable testimony)
- Soteriology: Nirvana, realization of Śūnyatā
- Metaphysics: Śūnyatā

#### **Carvaka (Materialism)**

- Deny the existence of karma
- Denies samsara
- Affirm freewill
- Affirm an atomic theory
- Denied the existence of atman
- Deny Vedas
- Deny existence of creator God
- Epistemology: only Pratyakṣa (perception)
- Denies soteriology
- Deny metaphysics

#### **Ajivika (Fatalism)**

- Deny the existence of karma
- Believes in samsara
- Release from samsara will happen when it has been predestined/fated to take place
- Deny freewill
- Affirms an atomic theory
- Affirm the existence of atman
- Deny Vedas
- Deny existence of creator God
- Epistemology: Pratyakṣa (perception), Anumāṇa (intuition), and the Śabda (reliable testimony)
- Soteriology: Samsdrasuddhi
- Metaphysic: absolute determinism

#### **Ajñāna**

- Radical skepticism

<b><i>āstika</i></b>									
Samkhya									
Yoga									
Nyaya									
Vaisheshika									
Mimamsa									
Vedanta									

<b><i>Nāstika</i></b>	Creator	Soul ātman	Atoms	Freewill	Karma	Samsara	Soteriology	Metaphysics
Jainism	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Siddha/Nirv.	Anekāntavāda
Ajivika	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Samsdrasuddhi	Absol. Determinism
Carvaka	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	None	Naturalism
Buddhism	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes/No	Cessation of desire/ Nirv.	Śūnyatā
Ajñāna	No	No	No	No	No	No	None	None