



drishti

Schools of Indian Philosophy

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- Philosophy arose in India as an enquiry into the mystery of life and existence.
- Indian Philosophy refers to several traditions of philosophical thought that originated in the Indian subcontinent.
- Over centuries, India's intellectual exploration of truth has come to be represented by six systems of philosophy. These are known as Vaishesika, Nyaya, Samkhya, Yoga, Purva Mimansa and Vedanta or Uttara Mimansa.

These six systems of philosophy are said to have been founded by sages Konada, Gotama, Kapila, Patanjali, Jaimini and Vyasa, respectively. These philosophies still guide scholarly discourse in the country.

- The six systems of philosophy were developed over many generations with contributions made by individual thinkers. However, today, we find an underlying harmony in their understanding of truth, although they seem distinct from each other.

Orthodox Schools of Indian Philosophy

Orthodox (astika) schools, originally called sanatana dharma, are collectively referred to as Hinduism in modern times. The ancient Vedas are their source and scriptural authority. Hinduism consists of six systems of philosophy & theology.

- **Samkhya (Kapila):** Samkhya is the oldest of the orthodox philosophical systems, and it postulates that everything in reality stems from purusha (self, soul or mind) and prakriti (matter, creative agency, energy).
Purush cannot be modified or changed while prakriti brings change in all objects.

- **Yoga (Patanjali):** Yoga literally means the union of two principal entities. Yogic techniques control body, mind & sense organs, thus considered as a means of achieving freedom or mukti.
 - This freedom could be attained by practising self-control (**yama**), observation of rules (**niyama**), fixed postures (**asana**), breath control (**pranayama**), choosing an object (**pratyahara**) and fixing the mind (**dharna**), concentrating on the chosen object (**dhyana**) and complete dissolution of self, merging the mind and the object (**Samadhi**).
 - Yoga admits the existence of God as a teacher and guide.
- **Nyaya (Gautama Muni):** Nyaya Philosophy states that nothing is acceptable unless it is in accordance with reason and experience (scientific approach). Nyaya is considered as **a technique of logical thinking**.

Nyaya Sutras say that there are four means of attaining valid knowledge: perception, inference, comparison, and verbal testimony.
- **Vaisheshika (Kanada):** The basis of the school's philosophy is that all objects in the physical universe are reducible to a finite number of atoms and Brahman is regarded as the fundamental force that causes consciousness in these atoms.
 - Vaisheshika system is considered as the realistic and objective philosophy of universe.
 - The reality according to this philosophy has many bases or categories which are substance, attribute, action, genus, distinct quality and inherence.
 - Vaisheshika thinkers believe that all objects of the universe are composed of five elements—earth, water, air, fire and ether.
 - They believe that God is the guiding principle. The living beings were rewarded or punished according to the law of karma, based on actions of merit and demerit.
 - **The Vaisheshika and Nyaya schools eventually merged** because of their closely related metaphysical theories (Vaisheshika only accepted perception and inference as sources of valid knowledge).
- **Purva Mimamsa (Jaimini):** This philosophy encompasses the Nyaya-vaisheshika systems and emphasises the concept of valid knowledge. According to Purva Mimamsa, Vedas are eternal and possess all knowledge.
 - According to Mimamsa philosophy Vedas are eternal and possess all knowledge, and religion means the fulfilment of duties prescribed by the Vedas.
 - It says that the essence of the Vedas is dharma. By the execution of dharma one earns merit which leads one to heaven after death.

- **Vedanta:** The Vedanta, or Uttara Mimamsa, school concentrates on the philosophical teachings of the Upanishads (mystic or spiritual contemplations within the Vedas), rather than the Brahmanas (instructions for ritual and sacrifice). The school separated into six sub-schools, each interpreting the texts in its own way and producing its own series of sub-commentaries:
 - **Advaita (Adi Shankara):** It states that both the individual self (Atman) and Brahman are the same, and knowing this difference causes liberation.
 - **Visishtadvaita (Ramanuja):** It believes that all diversity is subsumed to a unified whole.
 - **Dvaita (Madhvacharya):** It considers Brahman and Atman as two different entities, and Bhakti as the route to eternal salvation.
 - **Dvaitadvaita (Nimbarka):** It states that the Brahman is the highest reality, the controller of all.
 - **Shuddhadvaita (Vallabhacharya):** It states that both God and the individual self are the same, and not different.
 - **Achintya Bheda Abheda (Chaitanya Mahaprabhu):** It emphasizes that the individual self (Jivatman) is both different and not different from Brahman.

Unorthodox Schools of Indian Philosophy

Schools that do not accept the authority of Vedas are by definition unorthodox (nastika) systems. The following schools belong to heterodox schools of Indian Philosophy.

- **Charvaka (Brihaspati):** Charvaka is a materialistic, sceptical and atheistic school of thought.
 - According to Charvaka there is no other world. Hence, death is the end of humans & pleasure is the ultimate object in life.
 - It is also known as the Lokayata Philosophy-the philosophy of masses.
- **Buddhist philosophy (Siddhartha Gautama):** Buddhism is a non-theistic philosophy whose tenets are not especially concerned with the existence or nonexistence of God. Buddha considered the world as full of misery and considered a man's duty to seek liberation from this painful world. He strongly criticized blind faith in the traditional scriptures like the Vedas
- **Jain philosophy (Mahavira):** A basic principle is anekantavada, the idea that reality is perceived differently from different points of view, and that no single point of view is completely true.

According to Jainism, only the Kevalins, those who have infinite knowledge, can know the true answer, and that all others would only know a part of the answer.