

# Indian Philosophy, Religion and Its Background

Ishwar Yadav<sup>1\*</sup> Dr. Mukesh Kumar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Department of English, Singhania University, Pachari Bari, Rajasthan

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor of English, Govt. College M. Garh, Haryana

**Abstract – What is philosophy? To define philosophy is very difficult as to define love. In literary sense, the word 'philosophy' is made up by two Greek words- 'Philo' means love and 'Sophia' means knowledge. So, philosophy means love for wisdom. We can say philosophy is the study of knowledge, existence, values, reasons, mind, God, language etc. Man tries to know about himself about world and creation. It is the philosophy that satisfies him. It seeks to have a synoptic view of whole reality, it tries to have vision of all. The term philosophy is probably coined by Pythagoras (C.570-495BCE).**

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## INTRODUCTION

"Know then themselves" shows the aim of philosophy. There are five major branches of philosophy.

- 1). **METAPHYSICS:** Metaphysics is systematic attempt to answer the question: what is reality, such as existence, time, objects, events, causation. Due to Greek philosophers interest, they gave number of theories to answer it. Metaphysics also contains cosmology, the study of world and antology, the study of being materialists took reality as essential material in nature and idealists thought that reality was essentially spiritual or mental. And metaphysics also gives rise to the question of the nature of reality is the God's existence. Is there a God, i.e. the most powerful being, all knowing, omnipresent.
- 2). **EPISTEMOLOGY:** Epistemology is a systematic study to attempt the answers of questions such as: what is knowledge? Do we really have any? How is it acquired? It is the study about source of knowledge including intuition, a priority reasons, memory testimony, self-knowledge. Skeptics have doubted about the claim of knowledge. Some have claimed about having knowledge that is acquired by empirical experience of the world. But rationalists have rejected this source. They believed in knowledge as we have maths and logic which comes through reasons.

Ethics: Ethics is the branch of study in which we study; what is good or bad, right and wrong, good and evil. It includes that how to live a good life with morality. The three branch of ethics are normative ethics, meta-ethics and applied ethics.

Political philosophy: Political philosophy is connected with ethics. It includes the question; what is nature and source of authority? What are the limits of human authority and human rights?

Logic: It is the study of reasoning and arguments. It includes the questions; what is correct reasoning? Aristotle said, "A perquisite to doing any philosophy which involves reasoning."

Aesthetics: Aesthetics is critical study on culture, art and nature. It includes the nature of art, appreciation of beauty, taste, enjoyment, emotional values etc. It is also defined as study of sensing emotional values. Its main divisions are art theory, literacy theory, film theory and music theory.

There are also other branches such as philosophy of law, philosophy of education, feminist philosophy, philosophy of sports etc.

Now the scholar shall study about the origin of philosophy in which corner of world it takes birth of philosophy in Western world is considered pre-Socrates thinkers who were active in ancient Greece in 16th century BCE like Thales (C624-546 BCE) and Pythagoras (C570-495BCE) who practised 'love of wisdom'. Socrates considered himself as pursuer of wisdom. The ancient era was dominated by three Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato and his pupil Aristotle with their philosophical schools. Plato was a great thinker who founded platonic academy. His book 'Republic' is very famous. His pupil Aristotle was also superb thinker and founded paeripaetic school. They covered metaphysics, cosmology, the well lived life nature, nature of reasons. There were also great Latin thinker like Cicero, Seneca.

Medieval philosophy (5th-16th) century is period of Roman empire. Christianity dominated here. Problems such as nature of God, existence, nature of faith, reason, metaphysics, evil were topic of discussion. Thinkers were St. Augustine, Thomas Aquaine, Roger Bacon, Anselm etc. These thinkers took philosophy as an aid to the ology, There was the development of scholasticism in medieval universities. Classic-Greco-Roman thought and rebust Humanism was shown in the renaissance. Early modern philosophers were Thomas Hobbes, Rene Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley. It was developed in modern philosophy and turned away from church. Enlightenment movement influenced 19th century philosophy. The figures of movement washegal a key figure of German idealism. Karlmarx who gave theory of communism. Kiekegard developed existentialism. There was philosophical trend such as pragmatism, linguistic as well as between continental and analytic philosophy. The philosophical schools developed political, ethical, metaphysical, theories. These theories also influenced Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese philosophy. Buddhism also made a effect in philosophy of China. Kyoto school established by Kitaro professor. African philosophy produced by African people that presented African worldviews, ideas, themes. 17th century thinkers were ZeraYacob, Anton Wilhela (C1703-1759). Modern African-Amerian literature, critical theory, Marscism, Post Colonialism and feminism. American philosophy is the philosophy produced by American indigenious people. Some native Americans believed in metaphysics, spiritual power etc. Culture of Greece is the oldest and most fertile than any other country of the world even India. When the Western philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle gave their theories in Greece. Indian philosophers told about mathematics, logic, astronomy, medicine etc. If we talk about the particular history of Indian philosophy, then it is a unfortunate for us that nobody is able to write or tell about this. Because Indian philosophy is represented by the texts, Vedas about which the dates and authors are unknown historians are always confused about the origin of Aryans as well as the time period of Vedic civilization originated in India. Some Western scholars considered that Aryans came from North- Central India Asia around 1500 B.C. But some scholars believed that Aryans were natives of India. For long when Vedic civilization originated about 4000-8000 years ago. The philosophy took a long time for developing. So, it is very difficult to finalize the period of any particular philosophy but Radhakrishnan made an outline as follows:

- 1). The Vedic period (1500B.C.-600B.C.)
- 2). The epic period (600BC-200AD)
- 3). The Sutra period (200AD-1700AD)
- 4). The scholastic period (from Sutra period to 17th century)

3) **THE VEDIC PERIOD:** Vedic period can be considered as the emerging period of civilization in the world. In this period man changed from Prakrit to Sanskrit man. It conversed the emerging development of whole culture as well as civilization of Aryans. Vedic literature is regarded as the ancient culture of the world. It consistsfour Vedas, namely, Rgveda, Yjurveda, Samveda, Athrwaveda. Each divided in four parts: The Samhitas(the mantras), the Brahmins, the Aranyakas and the Upnishads. Vivekananda considered that Vedas are not the utterance of any person. Vedas are eternal. Their date has never fixed. Vedas are themselves the authority. They are never created nor destroyed. There is no beginning and no end. He believed that Vedas means knowledge. Sages are the discoverers of these spiritual Vedas. Vedas are divided into two parts: Karmayoga and Janana Yoga. Karma Yoga is related to one's duty while Janana spiritual path of Moksha. The Vedas, the puranas, Upnishads are the sources of Moksha by Vivekananda

4) **THE EPIC PERIOD:** Epic period witnessed the early upnishads and darshana. Darshana made a way for philosophy. Dharamashastras, ehicaltreatize, social philosophy, nonsyatematic and non-technical literature appeared in this period. It produced two great epics; the Ramayana, the Mahabhartta. Shaivism, Vaishanism, Vainism, Buddhism are the gifts of this period.

It helped in preserving the rich philosophical heritage. Bdarajaha (Ved Vyas), the great scholar wrote Brahamsutra, known as Vedanta Sutra. It paved a way for different Indian philosophies. The six orthodox schools based on Sutras were Sankhya, Yoga, Mimasa, Nyaya, Vaisheshika Vedanta.

5) **THE SCHOLASTIC PERIOD:** With the span of time, it became very inconceivable to understand the ancient literature. The Vedas, the Sutras became challenges for learned scholars. So, they started to write commentaries on the ancient literature in general and specially on Sutra. Various scholars gave different types of interpretation due to their individuality. Three schools were opened; Rmanujacharya's Vaishishtavita Vedanta, Shamkaracharya's Advaita Vedanta, Madhavacharya's Dvaita Vedanta. The aim of Indian philosophy was moksha, nirwana by different spiritual practices. They were different in their path for ultimate liberation. Due to different ideas and idealogy, the philosophical schools were classified as

either orthodox and heterodox depending whether they believe in Vedas authority or they believe in Atman- Brahman theory. The orthodox schools are Sankhya, Yoga, Vedanta, Mimamsa, Nyaya and Vaishishika. They accepted Vedas authority. The heterodox schools are Jainism, Buddhism and Lokayata. The heterodox schools rejected the Vedic thought.

- 1) **Sankhya:** Kapila' is the father of Sankhya philosophy. His teachings are the base of all philosophy of India. In its soul and nature are two different aspects. Soul is only omnipresent. It has no limitations. Soul is away from space, time, causation. If the soul had formed then it would be identified by Nature but it is formless, and that which is formless can't be said to exist here there and anywhere. We feel pain because of body. Vivekananda accepted Samkhya Yoga. He praised Kapila as well as his philosophy. He called Kapila Muni 'the greatest psychologist of world has ever known'.
- 2) **Yoga:** Yoga was also another orthodox philosophical school. The Yoga darshana were founded in 2nd century B.C. by Patanjali. The Yoa school accepted the Sankhya metaphysics, psychology but added God. God was considered as perfect omnipresent, eternal being and highest object of meditation. Practice of Yoga was more significant combination to Sankhya philosophy. By the practice of Yoga, one can realize the relation between God and soul. The correct practice of Yoga included eight things.
  - a) Yama: to keep away from violence, theft, lying.
  - b) Niyama: making good habits like Vedic study, contentment, meditation etc.
  - c) Asana: good position
  - d) Pranayama: control on breath
  - e) Dharana: focused on single object
  - f) Dhyana: meditation
  - g) Samadhi: deep concentration where self-consciousness is lost.

Patanjali accepts the Sankhya philosophy.

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## Corresponding Author

**Ishwar Yadav\***

Research Scholar, Department of English, Singhania University, Pachheri Bari, Rajasthan

E-Mail – [yadavhr236@gmail.com](mailto:yadavhr236@gmail.com)