

## **Indian School of Philosophy: A Synopsis** **Ramesh Gupta MD**

Indian school of philosophy (also, called the Vedic philosophy) sheds lights on some deep and unseen facts. The soul can attain the state of salvation after freeing itself from all the bonds by achieving true knowledge of God, soul and matter. It appears that the sole aim of teachings of all the Darshan Shaastras or the Indian School of Philosophy is to resolve all human physical, intellectual, mental and spiritual problems and lead us to the lasting peace and happiness (*Aanand*) which may result in *Moksha* or salvation. In fact there is no problem of life, which has not been addressed to and given solution of in Darshan Shaastras. Actually, teachings of this school of philosophy are connected to knowledge of proper code of conduct, religion (better term will be *dharma*), objectives in life, health sciences, and knowledge of the three entities as suggested above (**God, Soul and Matter**). Ample and deep thought has been given in Darshan Shaastras for total human development. Knowledge of God, Soul, different Devatas (which represent God's attributes and functions), mind, intellect, our duties in life, origin of universe including sun, earth, human creation, facts about this life and life after death, concept of heaven and hell, phenomenon of rebirth, matter or *Prakriti*, **the five elements: agni (fire), jala (water), vayu (air), prithvi (earth) and aakash (ether), five subtle elements: roopa (sight), rasa (taste), gandha (smell), sparsha (touch) and shabda (sound)**, life and death, time-space and consciousness, understanding of the happiness and sorrows in life with their causes and remedies, human psychology, different states of mind (awake, sleep, dream), etc. are some of the subjects explained in the **Indian School of Philosophy**.

This school of philosophy has its roots in the Vedas, followed by *Brahman* granths, Aranyaks, and then the *Upanishads*. There are six Vedic Darshans: *Nyaya*, *Vaisheshik*, *Saankhya*, *Yoga*, *Meemansa* and finally the *Vedaanta Darshan*. These darshans can be considered in 3 groups. **1. Saankhya and Yoga, 2. Nyaya and Vaisheshik, 3. Meemansa and Vedaanta**. Their brief description follows:

1. ***Nyaya Darshan***: This was written by *Maharshi Gautam*. It has 5 chapters. Main topic of consideration is the Science of Logic. Word *nyaya* literally means a source or means by the help of which one can reach to a definite principle or a decision. Goal of this darshan is to relieve suffering by dispelling of ignorance through the attainment of true knowledge. Two types of knowledge have been described. These are: *Pramaa* or the true knowledge and the *Apramaa* or false knowledge (illusion). *Praamaan* or proof is what is to be used to achieve the *Pramaa*.

To achieve this goal, 16 elements have been detailed in this Darshan. These are: *pramaan* (proof), *prameya* (those objects which have been proven by evidence or *pramaan* as above), *sanshaya* (doubts), *prayojan* (aim), *drashtanta* (example), *siddhanta* (principle), *avayav* (the sentences which are used to prove something through *anumman pramaan*). **The real goal of this darshan is to prove beyond doubt that there is God by looking at the creation since there is a perfect order and purpose in this universe. Eeshvar is the efficient cause and the Prakriti is the ordinary cause of this creation and the soul in the end user and efficient cause as well in a limited way.** *tarka* (argument), *nirnaya* (decision), *vada* (discussion), *jalpa* (dialogue or discussion where the sole aim is to win the discussion and not necessarily to gain proper knowledge), *vitandaa* (discussion in which one is just trying to negate the opponent's points), *hetvabhava* (even though it may not be real, it appears to be the reason), *chhala* (deception), *jaati* (improper meaning), and *nigraha-sthan* (acceptance of defeat). There are two traditions of this Darshan, the old and the new. Some details of these 16 elements are as follows.

***Praamaan***- *Pramaa* can be achieved by 4 ways. These are *pratyaksha* or which is obvious and visible either by our 5 senses or our mind. Certain statements such as death is certain, ice is cold, stone is hard or the grass is soft come under this category. Statements made by true yogis because of what they have perceived can also come under this category. Second type of *pramaan* is the *anumaan*. Example of this would be where there is smoke; there is fire and not vice versa. Also to judge that there may be a rain

coming when clouds are there or to ascertain that there has been a heavy rain when a swollen river is seen. There are many other examples of this such as by watching various positions of moon on different days one can ascertain that moon moves at all times. Third type is *upaman*. This is when we try to explain certain thing by comparing it with something else. The fourth type is the *shabd*. This is word of wisdom.

**Prameya-** To achieve salvation, *Maharshi Gautam* has considered 12 of these elements or objects. These are soul, body, senses through which an individual enjoys the pains and pleasures, intellect, mind, instinct, defects or *Doshas*, rebirth, result, sorrows and finally the total freedom from all the sorrows.

2. **Vaisheshik Darshan:** This was written by *Maharshi Kanaad*. **It consists of 10 chapters with total of 370 sukta.** This Darshan deals with what is special or *Vishesh*. This is the reason for its name. In this Darshan, there is emphasis on the science of indivisible particle called atom. Actually this may be the first scripture, which emphasizes the importance of atomic science. The question arose, that if all that exists is made from the same indestructible atom, why are the objects different from each other. Maharshi Kanaad's explanation of this mystery was that there are "*Vishesh*" elements inherent in the atomic particles. The examples of these are, that what becomes earth has vishesh earth elements and what becomes water has vishesh water elements etc. So the origin of a particular element can be only from the atomic particle, which have that particular or *vishesh* properties. According to Maharshi Kanaad, there are seven *padaarths* (all that can be named are *padaarths* or elements). These are *dravya* (thing), *guna* (quality), *karma* (action), *saamaanya* (ordinary), *vishesh* (special), *samavaaya* (*relationship between cause and action*) and *abhaava* (deficiency).

3. **Saankhya Darshan:** *Maharshi Kapil* wrote this Darshan. This Darshan emphasizes on knowledge. Actually the word Saankhya itself means true knowledge. According to this Darshan, the God, soul and matter are all eternal. **Total 25 elements** have been described. These are: **nature in its un-manifest form, 5 sensory organs (eyes, tongue, ears, nose and skin), 5 motor organs (hands, feet, organs for defecation, organs for urination and organs for procreation), 5 basic elements (fire, water, earth, air and ether), 5 tanmaatras (sight, taste, touch, smell and sound), mind, ego (ahankaar), mahatattva and the soul.** The five sensory and the five motor organs and the five basic elements are all derived from the primordial matter or Prakriti, which fundamentally has three modes: *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. There is a perfect order in this universe and all acts of God are purposeful. It is clearly stated that in order for something to be created, basic materials have to present in some form, either visible or non-visible. You cannot get anything starting from nothing. Creation is the combination of *Prakriti* and *Purush* or soul. Neither soul alone nor the nature alone can result in creation, since only the soul is the conscious being. Here is the sequence of events leading to creation. First *Mahattattva* develops followed by intellect (*buddhi*), *ahankaar* (sense of me or mine). It is because of *ahankaar* that the individual gets the desires to act, feels the ownership and really is the basis of all that an individual does in life. *Ahankaar* further leads to development of the senses and *tanmaatras* and the mind. The five basic elements described above develop from the *tanmaatras*. There is some disagreement in interpretation of the darshan as to whether it affirms the belief in God in addition to the Prakriti and soul or not. This does however clearly accept the role of God as the sustainer at least. In this darshan it is quite clear that everyone has full and equal right to seek Vedic knowledge and salvation.

4. **Yoga Darshan:** This was written by *Maharshi Patanjali*. The book has four parts called *Paad*. These are *Samaadhi-Paad*, *Saadhan-Paad*, *Vibhuti-Paad*, and *Kaivalya-Paad*. The *Saankhya* and *Yoga Darshan* are closely interlinked with each other. According to this *darshaan*, *Yoga* has eight limbs/steps. These are: *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Aasana*, *Pranayama*, *Pratyahaara*, *Dhaarana*, *Dhyaana*, and *Samaadhi*.

- I. *Yama* is the social code of conduct and consists of *Satya* (honesty), *Ahimsa* (nonviolence), *Asteya* (non-stealing), *Brahmacharya* (celibacy), and *Aparigraha* (avoidance of excessive materialism).
- II. *Niyama*, or the rules for yourself, that is the personal code of conduct. *Shaucha* (cleanliness of body and mind), *Santosha* (contentment), *Tapa* (hard work and non-deviation while facing

difficulties), *Swaadhyaya* (introspection and contemplation of scriptures), and *Eeshwar-Praanidhana* (surrender to God).

- III. *Aasana*: physical exercise including postures for relaxation and flexibility.
- IV. *Pranaayama*: breath control through various breathing exercises.
- V. *Pratyahara*: to disconnect your senses from the external objects and thoughts.
- VI. *Dhaarana*: to concentrate mind on a specific object or point, preferably inside body.
- VII. *Dhyaan*: a stage of deeper meditation just before *Samaadhi*. Here, there is concentration becomes stable, unwavering and free from other thoughts.
- VIII. *Samaadhi*: This is the deepest state of meditation where a Yogi can connect his/her *aatma* (soul) with *parmaatma* (God), reaching a state of bliss, or *Aananda*.

Five states of mind have been described. These are: *Kshipt* or very disturbed, *Moodha* where mind can not make wise decisions, *vikshipt* where one wavers between right and wrong decision, *aikagraa* where mental concentration can be achieved and finally the best state of mind which is *nirudha* which leads to a real peace. This is the best state of mind. The whole idea of practice of yoga to achieve this state of mind and of course a better physical, mental and spiritual well being and even *Moksha*.

This darshan also guides us as how to live happily in the society. It says that when you see someone unhappy, feel sorry and try to make efforts to remove their sorrows. Be happy when you see a good person. When you meet a wicked person be indifferent. 5 types of sorrows have been described. These are: *avidya* (mistaking body as the soul), *asmitaa* (considering body and soul as the same thing), *raga* (intense desire to seek happiness), *dvesh* (anger) and *abhinivish* (fear of death). Goal of Yoga is to eliminate these and achieve *aanand* or lasting happiness.

5. ***Meemansa Darshan***: This was written by *Maharshi Jaimini*. The book has 12 chapters with 2745 sutras. The word *meemansa* means to resolve any problem or mental confusion about an issue through proper logic. This Darshan deals with day-to-day code of conduct and rituals and is appropriately also called the *Karma-meemansa*. In this Darshan, there is a harmony between the knowledge, action, psychology, and the matter. The main conclusions of this *Darshan* are: 1. The soul exists after death and is eternal. *Jeevaatma* has to go through the fruits of action, good or bad. 2. Soul is governed by another supreme power, called *parmaatma*, or *eeshwar*, (i.e. God) that acts only as a *drashtaa*, and does not get involved into the fruits of action. 3. Vedas are authority by itself and doesn't depend on any extraneous authority. 4. The creation is a reality, and is not *mithya* (an illusion) as maybe believed by some. Besides the ways of proving described in the Nyaya Darshan, there is yet another type of *pramaan* called *arthaapatti* in which a conclusion is drawn in an indirect way. The example is-if a person is overweight without eating anything in daytime, one would conclude that he/she must have been eating at night.

6. ***Vedanta Darshan***: This was written by *Maharshi Baadarayan Vyasa*. The Sutras of this Darshan are called *Brahama-Sutra* too. Upanishads are called Vedanta as well. In fact, *Brahama-Sutra* has been created based on the principles of *Upanishads*. *Brahama-Sutra* is also called *Uttara-Meemansa*, *Shaareerik-Meemansa*, *Vedaanta-Sutra*, and *Shaareerik-Sutra*. This book has four chapters. Different *Aacharyaas* have interpreted this scripture in their own way, at times quite different from each other. For example, *Shankara-Achaarya* considered Soul as part of God and the principle has been called the *Advaitwad* (Non-Dualism). *Ramanujacharya* believed that Soul and even the matter are special qualities of the *Brahman*. This concept was called "*Vishishtadvait*". *Madhvaacharya* on the other hand considered the Soul and God as two different entities and his concept was called the *Dvaitwad* (Dualism). There was yet another concept by *Nimbaarkaacharya* who theorized that the Soul and God were same in certain ways and different in some other ways and his concept was called "*Dvaitadvait*" (Dualistic Non-Dualism).

***Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati*** (1824-'83), however firmly believed that there are three different eternal entities in this universe, the God, Soul and Matter. This concept is called "*Traitwad*" (Trinity). There are several mantras in the Vedas, Brahman Granthas and Upanishads, which clearly prove this theory of *Traitwad*. This view seems to be most logical of all.