

Ancient Indian Political thought is part and parcel of the ancient Indian political philosophy. Indian philosophy means the philosophy which is originated in the Indian sub-continent. It includes Hindu philosophy, Buddhist philosophy and Jain philosophy. All the philosophies have common theme 'dharma' which means one's righteous duty, or any virtuous path. It is used in order to explain the "higher truth" or ultimate reality of the universe. The periods of Indian philosophy is given below.

pre-1500 BC - the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*

pre-500 BC - the Jaina, the Buddha, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Manu Smriti*

pre-300 BC - the rise of the orthodox Darshanas

200 AD - Nagarjuna and the rise of Mahayana Buddhism

600 AD - Shankaracharya and the rise of Vedanta

post-900 AD - rise of other Vedantic schools: Visishtadvaita, Dvaita, etc.

In the medieval period, these intellectual traditions were codified by the Brahminic-Sanskritic scholasticism into six orthodox ('asthika', which accept the authority of vedas, opposite of Nastika) schools (darshanas). They were as follows:

- Nyaya, the school of logic
- Vaisheshika, the atomist school
- Samkhya, the enumeration school
- Yoga, the school of Patanjali (which assumes the metaphysics of Samkhya)
- Purva Mimamsa (or simply Mimamsa), the tradition of Vedic exegesis, with emphasis on Vedic ritual, and
- Vedanta (also called Uttara Mimamsa), the Upanishadic tradition, with emphasis on Vedic philosophy.

The most important contribution made by the Nyaya School to modern Hindu thought is its methodology. This methodology is based on a system of logic. This is comparable to how Western science and philosophy can be said to be largely based on Aristotelian logic. Nyaya is more than Aristotelian logic. Its followers believed that obtaining valid knowledge was the only way to obtain release from suffering. Vaisesika postulates that all objects in the physical universe are reducible to a finite number of atoms. Its philosophy regards the universe as consisting of two eternal realities: Purusha (mind) and Prakriti (matter) (founded by Kapila) Yoga was outlined by Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras. Raja yoga is concerned principally with the cultivation of the mind using meditation (*dhyana*) to further one's acquaintance with reality and finally achieve liberation. Mimamsa darshana (school) enquired into the nature of dharma based on close Vedas. **Vedanta** is a spiritual tradition explained in the Upanishads that is concerned with the self-realisation by which one understands the ultimate nature of reality (Brahman).

**Political philosophy:** In ancient India, the antecedents of politics can be traced back to the *Rig-Veda*, (sacred collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns dedicated to the gods) *Samhitas*, (It refers to the basic mantra text of each of the *Vedas*) *Brahmanas*, (they are commentaries on the four Vedas, detailing the proper performance of rituals.) and Buddhist *Pali Canon*.

Chanakya's (c. 350-275 BC) *Arthashastra* is a treatise on political thought, economics and social order. He was a professor of political science at Takshashila University, and later the Prime Minister of Mauryan emperor Chandragupta Maurya. Chanakya is regarded as one of the earliest political thinkers. He is also known as the Indian Machiavelli. *Arthashastra*, can be considered a precursor to Machiavelli's *The Prince*.

### HINDU CONCEPT OF STATE, KINGSHIP, LAW & JUSTICE

The Hindu concept of law and justice, kingship and the concept of the state is contained in Chanakya's Arthashastra. The term 'arthashastra' can be roughly translated as "science of political economy". It deals with mode of autocracy, ethics of economics, and bureaucratic framework of administration, management of various economies and welfare of the people. The state is best ruled by an autocratic king. The king is supposed to possess certain qualities.

A **Rajarsi** has the following characteristics:-

- Has self-control.
- Cultivates the intellect by association with elders;
- Keeps his eyes open through spies;
- Promotes the security & welfare of the people;
- Ensures the observance (by the people) of their dharma by authority & example;
- Continue his learning in all branches of knowledge; and
- Endears himself to his people by enriching them & doing good to them.

Such a disciplined king should: -

- Not covet another's property;
- Practice ahimsa (non-violence towards all living things);
- Avoid day dreaming, capriciousness, falsehood & extravagance; and
- Avoid association with harmful persons and indulging in (harmful) activities.

Kautilya also proposes a detailed hourly schedule for the king, which starts with sunrise and ends 1 ½ hours after midnight. The king and future king shall have proper training.

The state economy should be well managed by the king. The quarrels within the people can be dealt by winning over the leaders or by removing the cause of quarrel. When people quarrel, it helps the king. But when the royal family quarrels, it brings distress to the people. Gambling, addiction to drinking and women are the worst vices.

A peaceful atmosphere is necessary for the economy. Therefore, just laws should be supported by fines and strict punishments. The science of government and law enforcement is called **Dandaniti**.

The forests and wild life should be protected by guards. Elephants are important for the army. There shall be separate forests for timber, rearing lion and tiger for skins. Protector of animals shall also protect citizens from predators.

- **ANVIKSHAKI**, the triple Védas (*Trayi*), *Várta* (agriculture, cattle-breeding and trade), and **Danda-Niti** (science of government) are what are called the four sciences.
- **AGRICULTURE**, cattle-breeding and trade constitute **Varta**. It is most useful in that it brings in grains, cattle, gold, forest produce (*kupya*), and free labour (*vishti*).
- Whoever is desirous of the progress of the world shall ever hold the scepter staff as a symbol of sovereignty) raised (**udyatadanda**). Never can there be a better instrument than the sceptre to bring people under control."
- Punishment (**danda**) when awarded with due consideration, makes the people devoted to righteousness
- (**Matsyanyaya mudbhavayati**); for in the absence of a magistrate (**danda-dhara-bhave**), the strong will swallow the weak; but under his protection, the weak resist the strong.
- **Danda**, punishment, which alone can procure safety and security of life is, in its turn, dependent on discipline (**vinaya**).
- Sovereignty (*rájatva*)

Previous Questions:Essays: Nil Short Essays: Nil

Short Answers:

Dandaniti. 2002,Hindu concept of Kngship, Hindu concept of state. 2005, Matsyanyaya. 2004.