

Orthodox Schools of Indian Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The Indian Philosophy is regarded as the most mature philosophy in the world. Its approach towards the quest regarding creation, the Almighty and Salvation, makes it unique among others. All the six darśanas namely, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta, provide a different and exclusive angle to the answers of the philosophical quest. The deep insights into these concepts by various sages and scholars, gave birth to various sub-schools, showcasing the divine intellectual prowess of Sanātana Dharma. The present paper communicates in a bird eye of all the 6 darśanas for an aspirant to choose the most suitable one for his salvation. Through this paper, we can come to a conclusion that the last darśana, that is Vedānta provides an amicable solution to current day aspirants. It gives a practical and more easy path of salvation through devotion.

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INTRODUCTION

From times immemorial, the human civilization has been wondering about the various mysteries of the existence. Looking around, huge waves of questions drench us as- “Who are we? From where did we come? What happens to us after the death? From did this universe come? And just as the waves, these will be unending”. This quoted text is written in Sanskrit as कोऽहं कथमिदं जातं को वै कर्ताऽस्य विद्यते | उपादानं किमस्तीह विचारः सोऽयमीदृशः॥

The above Sanskrit text is read as

ko'haṃ kathamidaṃ jātaṃ ko vai kartā'sya vidyate |

upādānaṃ kimastīha vicāraḥ so'yamīdṛśaḥ ||¹

The same above convention is followed throughout the paper.

The desperate effort to find answers for all these questions gave birth to Philosophy. The simple meaning of philosophy as per Oxford is- The study of the fundamental nature of the knowledge, reality and existence, especially when considered as an academic discipline. Also – Philosophy is a theory or attitude that acts as a guiding principle for behaviour.

Though both are considered to be philosophy, there is great difference between Western Philosophy and Bhāratīya Darśana. Western Philosophy is an effort to quench the curiosity of knowing new and mysterious things that make you wonder. According to Plato-‘Wonder is the feeling of the philosopher and philosophy begins in wonder’. Whereas, the Bhāratīya Darśana is based on finding a path for elimination of three fold miseries. Unlike the Western Philosophy, every darśana has its own path and destination. Thus, it is more practical and beneficial. Thus, there are two broad classifications of Darśanas based on their acceptance of Vedas as authority. The Āstika Darśana (Theistic or Orthodox School of Philosophy) firmly believes in Vedas, where as Nāstika Darśana (Atheistic or Heterodox School of Philosophy) doesn't consider Vedas as an authority. The six Āstika Darśanas are Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. There are many Nāstika Darśanas as well. The six Āstika Darśanas are -

Nyāya:

The definition of Nyāya as per Vātsyāyana is ascertaining the correct knowledge of an object through various means. प्रमाणैरर्थपरीक्षणम् न्यायः, pramāṇairarthaparīkṣaṇam nyāyah.² It is almost impossible to interpret contradicting Śruti Vākyas without the help of Tarka. According to Maṇu, the essence of Vedas, without any contradiction, can be understood by Tarka only.

आर्षं धर्मोपदेशं च वेदशास्त्राऽविरोधिना । यस्तर्केणानुसंधत्ते स धर्मं वेद नेतरः ॥

ārṣaṃ dharmopadeśaṃ ca vedaśāstrā'virodhiṇā ।

yastarkeṇānusandhatte sa dharmam veda netarah ॥³

Nyāya is propounded by Gautama in his Nyāya Sūtra, wherein he discusses in detail the sixteen categories in Nyāya.

The Sixteen Categories⁴: - According to Gautama the true knowledge of the sixteen categories by Pravṛtti, Uddeśya & Parīkṣā can lead to Nisreyas (Supreme felicity).⁵ They are (1) Pramāṇa (Means of right knowledge) (2) Prameya (object of right knowledge) (3) Saṃśaya (doubt) (4) Prayojana (purpose) (5) Dṛṣṭānta (example) (6) Siddhānta (established tenets) (7) Avyaya (members of syllogism) (8) Tarka (Confutation) (9) Nirṇaya (ascertainment) (10) Vāda (discussion) (11) Jalpa (wrangling) (12) Vitanḍa (cavil) (13) Hetvābhāsa (fallacy) (14) Chala (quibble) (15) Jāti (futility) and (16) Nigrahsthāna (occasion for rebuke).

Pramāṇa: - The definition of Pramāṇa is प्रमा करणं प्रमाणम्, pramā karaṇam pramāṇam.⁶ Pramā means true knowledge. Thus, the means of acquiring the true knowledge (Pramā) is called Pramāṇa. The Nyāya darśana is so called as it is a detailed study of Pramāṇas. Knowledge is of two types viz; Smṛti (Memory) and Aṅubhava (Experience). There are four types of Pramāṇas accepted by Nyāya.

Pratyakṣa - Pratyakṣa Pramāṇa is the one through which one gains Pratyakṣa jñāna or Pramā. According to Gautama, Pratyakṣa (perception) is that knowledge which arises from the contact of a sense organ with its object and which is determinate, unnameable and non-erratic, इन्द्रियार्थसन्निकर्षोत्पन्नं ज्ञानमव्यपदेश्यमव्यभिचारि व्यवसायात्मकं प्रत्यक्षम्,

indriyārthasannikarṣotpannam jñānamavyapadeśyamavyabhicāri vyavasāyātmakam pratyakṣam.⁷

The means of perceiving such is knowledge is Pratyakṣa Pramāṇa.

Añumāna - Parāmarśa (Subsumptive reflection) of the liṅga (reason) is called Añumāna (inference). The derivative meaning of Añumāna is that through which something is inferred. लिङ्गपरामर्शोऽनुमानम् । येन ह्यनुमीयते तदनुमानम् ॥

liṅgaparāmarśo'numānam | yena hyanumīyate tadanumānam ॥⁸

For e.g.: - By seeing smoke on mountain, one can infer that the mountain is on fire. In this example, we have to infer whether the mountain is on fire.

Upamāna- Knowing an object based on the experience of seeing a similar object in past is called Upamāna. For e.g.:- when someone is told that “The animal Nīla Gāya (Blue Bull) is similar to cow.” That person, on seeing Nīla Gāya in forest, identifies it because he has seen cow earlier.

Śabda- Śabda is the last pramāṇa. In Nyāya Sūtra (1/1/6) it is defined as- आप्तोपदेशः शब्दः, āptopadeśaḥ śabdaḥ. It means believing the words of Vedas and the people who have true knowledge and are good advisers.

Prameya: - There are 12 types of Prameya according to Nyāya sūtra,

आत्मशरीरेन्द्रियार्थबुद्धिमनःप्रवृत्तिदोषप्रेत्यभावफलदुःखापवर्गास्तु प्रमेयम्,

ātmaśarīrendriyārthabuddhimanahpravṛttidoṣapretyabhāvaphaladuḥkhāpavargāstu prameyam.⁹ They are - Soul (Ātmā), Body (Śarīra), Organs (Indriya), Object (Artha), Intellect (Buddhi), Mind (Mana), Action (Pravṛtti), Blemish (Doṣa), Re- birth (Pretyābhāva), Result (Phala), Misery (Dukha), Salvation (Apavarga).

Īśvara: - Unlike Sāṃkhya, the Nyāya School strongly believes in the entity of Almighty. According to Nyāya, he is the creator, protector & destroyer of the universe. He is the Supreme Power. He is only the instrumental cause of the universe, the material cause being atoms.

Mukti: - Mukti (Salvation) according to Nyāya is the complete freedom from misery, तदत्यन्तविमोक्षोऽपवर्गः, tadatyantavimokṣo'pavargaḥ.¹⁰ It is possible only with the end of re-birth cycle. Because, even though miseries end in this birth completely, it cannot be called complete, as it is a misery to take another birth. Thus, Mokṣa or Mukti is total freedom from the cycle of birth and re-birth.

The way to attain Mukti (Mukti mārga): - According to Gautama the only way to attain Mukti is through true knowledge (Tattva Jñāna).

दुःखजन्मप्रवृत्तिदोषमिथ्याज्ञानानामुत्तरोत्तरापाये तदनन्तरापायादपवर्गः,

duḥkhajānmapravṛttidoṣamithyājñānānamuttarōttarāpāye tadanantarāpāyādapavargah.¹¹

False perception (Mithyā Jñāna) leads to attachment and hatred because of which a person gets inclined towards good and bad deeds, due to which he gets birth. Thus, destruction of the false perception by true knowledge leads to Mukti.

The detailed analysis of Pramāṇa in the Nyāya is of great help to other darśanas as well, though with some modifications.

Vaiśeṣika:

The Vaiśeṣika darśana has been propounded by sage Kaṇāda. Kaṇāda wrote the book Vaiśeṣika Sūtra with 370 sūtras. The name of the system Vaiśeṣika is derived from the term viśeṣa, meaning particularity, as it recognises this as a category. None of the other schools recognise viśeṣa as a category.¹² Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika is considered as a pair because they share the same concepts on padārtha and means of salvation. According to Vaiśeṣika, the salvation can be attained through the true knowledge or tattva jñāna of the padārthas. Thus, metaphysics of Vaiśeṣika darśana is classification and definition of the padārtha.

Padārtha: - The etymological meaning of Padārtha is पदस्य अर्थः, padasya arthah, translated as ‘the meaning of a word,’ or more appropriately, ‘that which is indicated by the meaning of a word.’ By implication, a padārtha is any object which can be named. All things of experience, whether they are material or spiritual, if they are nameable, they are padārtha. Kaṇāda has mentioned six padārthas. Though he has accepted the concept of abhāva or non-existence, he did not consider it as a padārtha. But later on, abhāva was also added to the list of padārtha, taking it to be seven. Broadly, padārthas can be divided into two- bhāvātmak (existent) and abhāvātmak (non-existent). The bhāvātmak padārthas are six in number. They are dravya (substance), guṇa (quality), karma (activity), sāmānya (generality), viśeṣa (particularity) and samavāya (inherence).

The abhāvātmak padārthas are four- prāgabhāva (prior non-existence), pradhvaṃsābhāva (posterior non-existence), anyonyābhāva (mutual non-existence) and atyantābhāva (absolute non-existence).

Asatkāryavāda- the theory of evolution: - Contrary to the satkāryavāda of Sāṃkhya, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika School believes in asatkāryavāda, which is also called as ārambhavāda or paramāṇukāraṇavāda (atomic causal theory). Unlike the Sāṃkhyas, they don't accept the subtle presence of the effect in the cause. According to them, the effect is a new creation altogether. All the material substances are organic and destructible but they are made by the conjunction of atoms which are permanent and indestructible and destroyed by disjunction of atoms.

The atoms or paramāṇu are the material substances which are inorganic, indivisible, permanent and unperceivable by sense organs. These paramāṇus are four in number- earthy, watery, luminous and airy. These atoms are inactive in nature. The action in them is triggered by the Īśvara. This is the basic difference between Greek atomic theory and Vaiśeṣika atomic theory, which raises the latter to a level above. According to Greeks, the atoms are active by nature and they don't require the power of Almighty for their conjunction. According to them, even soul is atomic. Thus, we can say that the Greek theory is materialistic while the Vaiśeṣika theory is spiritual.

Īśvara: - Kaṇāda in his sūtras has not specifically mentioned the term 'Īśvara'. But it definitely says- the Vedas are pramāṇa because they are His words. तद्वचनादाम्नायस्य प्रामाण्यम्, tadvacanādāmnāyasya prāmāṇyam¹³.

Here a question arises, his means whose? The God or the sages? As per Prahastapāda and other commentators, it is the God. Thus, we can say that Vaiśeṣika darśana is not anīśvaravādi (non believer of God). Īśvara is permanent, omniscient and absolute. He is the composer of Vedas. He is the instrumental cause of this world and the paramāṇu are the material cause. According to Vaiśeṣika, God has no role in providing fruits of the karma to an individual.

Mokṣa: - According to Vaiśeṣika, on acquiring tattva jñāna (the true knowledge), the ātmā can destroy its karma. That is, it stops acquiring fruits for the new karmas. But till it has to bear the fruits of past karma, it has to acquire a body. On the completion of that, the ātmā once for all leaves the body, the organs and the mind and stays in its purest form, which is mokṣa. Thus, mokṣa is permanent and absolute relief from misery called as atyantika dukha nivṛtti.

Sāṃkhya:

Etymology of the word Sāṃkhya is traced to two origins. Firstly, Sāṃkhya comes from Saṃkhyā meaning number. In Sāṃkhya Darśana, the study of 25 tattvas (elements) is given prominence. As it lays emphasis on the number, it got the name Sāṃkhya. Secondly, the word Sāṃkhya is made

by 'sam' prefixed to the root 'khyāna' and 'Ana' suffix added, the meaning being, proper or true knowledge. The founder of this Darśana is Maharṣi Kapil.

The Creation of Sṛṣṭi: - According to Sāṃkhya, sṛṣṭi comes into existence by the confluence Prakṛti and Puruṣa. Prakṛti is the primal nature which is incapable of creating the sṛṣṭi on its own. When Prakṛti and Puruṣa, the eternal conscience, come together then, mahat (intellect) comes into existence. From mahat, ahaṃkāra (ego), from ahaṃkāra the complete existence, i.e., ekādaśa indriyas (eleven organs) from sattva guṇa, and pañca tanmātrā (subtle elements) as well as pañca mahābhūta (gross elements) from tamo guṇa. Sāṃkhya takes this theory of manifestation from Vedas.

अजामेकामालोहितशुक्लकृष्णां बह्वीःप्रजाःसृजमानां सरूपाः।

अजोह्येकोजुषमाणोऽनुशेते जहात्येनां भुक्तभोगामजोऽन्यः॥Sweta.Upa.(4.9) , Taitt.Upa. (10.10)

ajāmekāmāmlōhitaśuklakṛṣṇāṃ bahvīḥ prajāḥ sṛjamānām sarūpāḥ।

ajohyekojuṣamāṇo'nuśete jahātyenām bhuktabhogāmajo'nyaḥ॥

Puruṣa: -Puruṣa here is the eternal conscience, which longs for kaivalya. All the 24 tattvas are for him but he is not one of them. He is the enjoyer or experiencer of all the 24 tattvas including Prakṛti. He is devoid of the three guṇas-Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Puruṣa is many in number as each individual is a Puruṣa having a separate entity.

The 25 tattvas: - The Primal Nature called as Mūla Prakṛti or Pradhāna or Avyakt is only one. There are seven tattvas known as Prakṛti and Vikṛti. They are mahat, ahaṃkāra and pañca tanmātrā. There are 16 Vikṛti also called Vikāra. They are ekādaśa indriya and pañca mahābhūta. Puruṣa is a tattva which is neither Prakṛti nor Vikṛti.

These 25 tattvas are mentioned in Sāṃkhya kārīkā -

मूलप्रकृतिर्विकृतिःमहदाद्याप्रकृतिविकृतयःसप्त।

षोडकस्तुविकारो न प्रकृतिर्न विकृतिःपुरुषः॥

mūlaprakṛtirvikṛtiḥ mahadādyāprakṛtīvikṛtayaḥ sapta।

ṣoḍakastuvikāro na prakṛtirna vikṛtiḥ puruṣaḥ॥¹⁴

Prakṛti: - The non-apprehension of the Primal Nature called Prakṛti is due to its minuteness and not due to its absence. The presence of Prakṛti can be confirmed as - for every effect there is a cause. Thus, there should be a cause of the mahat etc. seven elements which again produce the

eleven organs and five gross elements. How can you say that Prakṛti only is the cause for it? It is because they are similar and dissimilar to the Prakṛti, just like a son to his father. Another theory in support of this is the ‘Satkāryavāda’ propounded by Sāṃkhya.

Satkāryavāda¹⁵:- To prove this, they propose five important facts visible in the nature.

1. There being no production of that which does not exist.
2. There is an upādāna kāraṇa or material cause for every effect.
3. Everything cannot be produced from everything or everywhere. It can be produced from its material cause only since it pre-exists in it.
4. A competent thing produces that which it is competent to produce.
5. The effect is of the nature of the cause. On account of these five reasons, the mergent mahat and the rest, exists in the nature. Hence, it is proved that the existent is produced and not the non-existent.

Kaivalya: - According to Sāṃkhya, Kaivalya or Salvation is nothing but certain and final relief from the three fold miseries known as Ādibhautika, Ādhyātmika and Ādidaivika Dukha (external, internal and divine miseries). It can be attained through true knowledge. By knowing the difference between Prakṛti and Puruṣa, one can get liberated from the bondages. Thus, this true knowledge itself is Salvation.

Yoga :

Yoga accepts all the 25 elements of Sāṃkhya and adds an additional element of God to it, thus taking the number of elements to 26. The Sāṃkhya Darśana propounded by Sage Kapila is called as Nirīśvara (doesn't believe in existence of God) Sāṃkhya whereas Yoga is Seśvara Sāṃkhya. This itself is the prime difference between both the Darśanas. Yoga Darśana accepts the entity of Almighty God.

The prevalent meaning of Yoga is to associate, thus Yoga means association of the soul with the Supreme Being. The word Yoga comes from the root ‘Yuj’ in sanskrit, which means samādhi or meditation. So, etymological meaning of Yoga is samādhi. Even Patañjali directs towards this meaning saying “Yoga is the cessation of inner instincts.”योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः, yogaścittavṛttinirodhaḥ (Yoga Sūtra- 1/2)

Cita means the inner conscience which includes mind intellect and ego.

The Five Avasthā's¹⁶: - There are 5 stages or avasthā's of inner conscience, namely - Kṣipta (fickle mind, influence of rājas guṇa), Mūḍha (mind devoid of the knowledge, influence of tamo guṇa),

Vikṣipta (engaged in the means of happiness, influence of sattva guṇa), Ekāgra or Saṃprajñāta Samādhi (concentration on one particular object, increased influence of sattva guṇa), Niruddh or Asaṃprajñāta Samādhi (mind free from all instincts, sattva guṇa at its highest).

The last two stages are helpful in concentration i.e. samādhi.

The Five Vṛttis: - The cita has five vṛttis (mental modifications)

1. Pramāṇa = It accepts pratyakṣa, aṇumāna and śabda as pramāṇa.
2. Viparyaya = The false knowledge and misconception is called as viparyaya.
3. Vikalpa = Vikalpa is when an object is nonexistent but perceivable through words. You can call it as Verbal Delusion or imagination E.g.: Horns of a Horse
4. Nidrā = Literally meaning sleep, it is a condition when mind is neither awake nor in dreams.
5. Smṛti = Recollection of the experience is called Smṛti.

According to Patañjali, stopping of all the cita vṛttis means vṛttis along with their saṃskāras.

Types of Samādhi¹⁷:

When you focus on one object by eliminating all other vṛttis other than the focus itself then it is called saṃprajñāta samādhi .Whereas, a meditation when no object is required to focus is called as asaṃprajñāta samādhi. It is the purest form of meditation which leads to Kaivalya. It can only be achieved through continuous practice of saṃprajñāta samādhi.

Means of Salvation: - Yoga puts forward eight fold path called Aṣṭāṅga Yoga to attain Kaivalya. Practising these eight is called as Aṣṭāṅga Yoga – Yama (self control), Niyama (manual), Āsana (sitting poster), Prāṇāyāma (control over breathe), Pratyāhāra (withdrawal of all the sense organs from their pleasures and focus on mind), Dhāraṇā (Focusing one's mind on any one object), Dhyāna (undeviated focus), Samādhi (blissful and calm state of mind).

Īśvara: - God, according to Yoga, is eternal, omniscient, different from the souls and best among all. He is devoid of all the miseries and untouched by actions. He is free from all bondages. He is the ocean of knowledge and power. He is the foremost teacher and creator of Vedas. He is above all and nothing can be equal to him.

Kaivalya: - One obtains Salvation by mastering asaṃprajñāta samādhi. For this, one should cross the four stages of inner consciences and reach the fifth stage of Nirodha by curbing the five vṛttis and following the eight-fold path. Yoga, also gives an easy and remarkable way to attain the samādhi, and that is Īśvara-Praṇidhāna. In simple language, Īśvara-Praṇidhāna is devotional concentration of mind into the God and affectionately surrendering all positive and negative fruits

of our actions to Him. This is an easier way to attain samādhi than the difficult path of rigorous practice and renunciation.

Thus, Yoga gives a widespread view of all the important aspects of one's life, starting right from cleanliness till the ultimate samādhi. On one hand it instructs to have full control over your sense organs and practice restraint while on other it proposes a blissful path of Īśvara-Praṇidhāna.

Mīmāṃsā:

Mīmāṃsā means correct description of the form of an object. It is a Mīmāṃsā or enquiry into the principles, according to which the Vedic texts are to be interpreted. 'It ignores the mantras which are the first portion of Vedas and concentrates its analysis on the Brahmanas, which deal with rituals. As it suppresses the latter part known as Upaniśads as well, its name is Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, the prior enquiry'¹⁸.

Pūrva Mīmāṃsā lays emphasis on duty and action, that is, dharma and karma. It deals with Karma kāṇḍa (proceedings of yajña) part of Vedas. Jaimini, the codifier of Mīmāṃsā Sūtras, states the objective of his sūtras as quenching the inquisitiveness about dharma अथातो धर्मजिज्ञासा, athāto dharmajijñāsā.¹⁹ The most important commentary, bhāṣya, on Jaimini Sūtras is that of Śābara Svāmi. This bhāṣya was commuted upon in two different ways by two different scholars- Prabhākara and Kumārila Bhaṭṭa. Thus, we find that the Mīmāṃsā School had split into two main streams of thought commonly called by their proponent's names as the Prabhākara School or Guru Mata and Bhaṭṭa School of Mīmāṃsā.

The main purpose of Vedic sacrificial religion was to attain heaven or svarga where man was to enjoy all the physical and mental pleasures.

यज्ञेन यज्ञमयजन्त देवास्तानि धर्माणि प्रथमान्यासन्। तेहनाकं महिमानः सचन्त यत्र पूर्वे साध्याः सन्ति देवाः ॥

yajñena yajñamayajanta devāstāni dharmāṇi prathamānyāsan |

tehanākaṃ mahimānaḥ sacanta yatra pūrve sādhyāḥ santi devāḥ ॥²⁰

All rituals involved in such sacrifices had this as their goal. But in Mīmāṃsā, this aim was replaced by the ideal of mokṣa.

Prāmāṇyavāda or epistemology: - The definition of pramā, valid knowledge, in Mīmāṃsā is very specific. Pramā is the flawless valid knowledge of an unknown and true substance, that should not be opposed by any other knowledge. The means of such knowledge is pramāṇa. There are six

pramāṇas according to Bhaṭṭa Mata- pratyakṣa (perception), aṇumāna (inference), upamāna (comparison), śabda (word), arthāpatti (postulation), and aṇupalabdhi (non-cognition). The Prabhākara mata accepts only five pramāṇas, it doesn't accept aṇupalabdhi. But Jaimini accepts pratyakṣa, aṇumāna and śabda only as pramāṇas.

Tattva Samīksā or metaphysics: - The Mīmāṃsā School is one of realism like Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika School. Both believe in plurality of the real. They believe in the existence of permanent dravyās or substances which are the basic substrata of changing modes. The substance alone endured while its changing modes may take very many forms. Such substances are many.

Padārth: - Of the two schools of Mīmāṃsā, the Bhaṭṭa School is close to the Nyāya -Vaiśeṣika School as they also accept the nine substances accepted by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika School namely, earth, water, air, fire, ether (ākāśa), time, space (dik), self (ātmā) and mind (mana). They add to this list two more substances which are darkness (tamas) and sound (śabda).

The Prabhākaras accept eight categories of padārth- dravya, guṇa, karma, sāmānya (generality), samavāya (inherence), śakti (force), sādṛśya (similarity) and saṃkhyā (number). Śakti or force is altogether a new perspective presented by mīmāṃsākas. It says that, there is a potency or śakti in the cause which is responsible for the production of the effect. Mīmāṃsā School is strong profounder of karma kāṇḍa, the karma theory. Apūrva is said to be that Śakti which, at an appropriate time, provides fruit for the good or bad actions done. It is the bridge between karma and karma phala. It is to be noted that as mīmāṃsākas being nirīśvaravādi don't accept God's indulgence in providing karma phala. This duty is discharged by the so-called Apūrva.

Ātmā: - As already stated, the Mīmāṃsā School is realistic and believes in reality and plurality of souls. A self or ātmā, distinct from the body, the senses and the understanding is accepted as real.

Ācār mīmāṃsā (Ethical evaluation):- According to Mīmāṃsā, the primary intention of the Vedas is to establish the procedure of yajña. Thus, dharma here means performing yajña and other duties as described in Vedas. Vedas describe three types of karmas or actions-

1. Kāmya Karma- The actions that are done for a particular purpose or desire to be fulfilled.
2. Niṣiddha Karma- The actions that lead you to sin are niṣiddha karma. Hence these are the forbidden actions.

3. Nitya-Naimittika Karma- These karmas have to be performed without any desire or purpose, as a mandatory duty, either daily or occasionally as per the Vedic orders. Though these karmas do not yield any fruits, non performance of these, leads to sin.

Mokṣa: - According to Mīmāṃsā -प्रपञ्चसम्बन्धविलयो मोक्षः, prapañcasambandhavilayo mokṣaḥ, the destruction of the relation between ātmā and jagat or the world is called as mokṣa. Mokṣa is that condition of ātmā, where in there is no misery or happiness. One should avoid kāmya and niṣiddha karma and dutifully perform nitya naimittika karma to attain mokṣa. Though karma is primary means of mokṣa, the ātmājñāna is its coefficient.

Vedānta:

The most important system of philosophy which is a living force today is Vedānta. It is also known as 'Uttara Mīmāṃsā' which means latter enquiry. It is latter because the Upaniśads (also known as Vedānta) form the latter portions of the Vedas. Badrayana's Vedānta Sūtras or Brahma Sūtras are the source for Vedānta. Some of the chief purposes which the Brahma Sūtra tried to achieve were to refute the then-current theory that Upaniśads teach dualism as envisaged by the Sāṃkhya School, to refute the ritualism preached by the mīmāṃsākas and to synchronize and bring out a non contradictory view of Upaniśads.

These Brahma Sūtras are so sententious that it is possible to interpret them in various ways. Hence, sprang up various schools of Vedānta putting forth their own interpretation of these sūtras. Though there are many commentaries on Brahma Sūtra, there are five prominent schools.

NAME OF THE ĀCĀRYA	PERIOD	NAME OF COMMENTORY	SIDDHĀNTA
Śaṃkarācārya	788-820 A.D	Śārīrika Bhāṣya	Kevala Advaita
Rāmānujācārya	1140 A.D	Śrī Bhāṣya	Viśiṣṭādvaita
Madhvācārya	1238 A.D	Pūrṇa Prajña Bhāṣya	Dvait
Nimbārkācārya	1250 A.D	Vedānta Pārijāta	Dvaitādvaita
Vallabhācārya	1479-1544 A.D	Aṇu Bhāṣya	Śuddhādvaita

No other school of Indian philosophy has developed as many branches as Vedānta. It is thus, the most acclaimed school of Bhāratīya darśana.

Śaṃkarācārya's Nirviśeṣa or Kevala Advaita: - The chief exponent of the monistic idealism known as Advaita, non dualism, is Śaṃkarācārya. The essence of Kevala Advaita view is found in a

traditional verse saying- 'Brahma is the Truth, world is illusion and jīva (individual soul) is Brahma only, not different from it.' ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः, brahma satyaṃ jaganmityā jīvo brahmaiva nāparaḥ.²¹

Kevala Advaita does not recognize anything other than Brahma on the absolute level, but, on empirical level admits māyā or avidyā to explain the nature of the world and individual soul. The world is created by māyā but it has no existence apart from Brahma and hence is mithyā (illusory). There is absolute identity between jīva and Brahma.

The well-known prasthānatrayi, namely, the Upaniśada, Brahma Sūtra and the Bhagavad Gītā is the foundation of Vedānta thought. Śaṅkarācārya explains the essence of the teaching of prasthānatrayi by writing commentaries on it.

The Highest Reality, Brahma is attributeless (nirguṇa), formless (nirākāra) and beyond comprehension. It is the only true reality, true knowledge (jñāna swarūpa) and everything else, including the world, which appears to exist is illusory. On the other hand, Saguṇa Brahma under the influence of māyā, called as Īśvara, is manifested by the jīva for the sake of worship. Mokṣa is the experience of Brahma or the Ātmā, the true knowledge of the self and freedom from bondage caused by avidyā.

Rāmānujācārya's Viśiṣṭādvaita: - Rāmānuja's celebrated system of philosophy known as Viśiṣṭādvaita or qualified monism is non-dualism with a qualification or Viśeṣa. Rāmānuja contends that the prasthānatrayi are to be interpreted in a way that shows its unity in diversity, for any other way would violate their consistency.

Sri Rāmānuja's Brahma or Lord Nārāyaṇa subsists in a plurality of forms as souls (Cit) and matter (Acit), but He is One. Vedānta Deśika defines Viśiṣṭādvaita using the statement, अशेष चित् अचित् प्रकारं ब्रह्मैकमेव तत्त्वम्- aśeṣa cit acit prakāraṃ brahmaikameva tattvam, Brahma, as qualified by the sentient and insentient modes (or attributes), is the only reality. Whatever is, is Brahma; but, Brahma is not of a homogeneous nature. He is a Personal God with attributes of omnipotence, omniscience and infinite love, the all-powerful and all-wise Ruler of a real world permeated and animated by His spirit. There is thus no room for the distinction between Param Nirguṇa and Aparam Saguṇa Brahma, between Brahma and Īśvara. He, the Puruṣottama, is the Supreme Being, full of unlimited auspicious attributes. Thus He is Saguṇa. Nirguṇatva indicates that there is no base, or lower qualities such as sorrow, pain, mortality, change and old age in Him.

ब्रह्मशब्देन च स्वभावतो निरस्तनिखिलदोषोऽनवधिकातिशयासङ्ख्येयकल्याणगुणगणः पुरुषोत्तमोऽभिधीयते,

brahmaśabdena ca svabhāvato nirastanikhiladoṣo'navadhikātiśayāsāṅkhyeyakalyāṇaguṇagaṇah puruṣottamo'bhidhīyate.²²

Matter and soul depend on Him. These are related to Him as the body is related to the soul. They have no existence apart from Him. They are termed Viśeṣanas, attributes. God is the Viśeṣya or that which is qualified.

Mokṣa is not a negative separation from transmigration, or a series of rebirths, but rather the joy of the contemplation of Brahma. This joy is attained by a life of exclusive devotion (bhakti) to God. In return, God will offer his grace, which will assist the devotee in attaining mokṣa.

Madhvācārya's Dvaita: - Sri Madhvācārya advocated dualism and realism. He argued that Vedānta taught the fundamental difference between the individual self or ātmā and the ultimate reality, Brahma. 'According to Madhva there are two orders of reality:

1. Svatantra, independent reality, which consists of Brahma alone.
2. Paratantra, dependent reality, which consists of jīvas (souls) and jada (lifeless objects).

Although dependent reality would not exist apart from Brahma's will²³, according to him, the world is real, the individual souls are different from Brahma, and Viṣṇu is the highest entity in the Universe.

Brahma and Paramātmā are same and they are none other than Viṣṇu. Madhva's Brahma is also Saguṇa and Sākāra, endowed with unlimited auspicious qualities and the One who enjoys His own bliss. God is the Supreme Person called Īśvara. He is completely independent, perfect, absolute and pure consciousness.

God is the independent reality. Individual souls and the world are dependent realities. Brahma is only the instrumental cause of this universe, material cause being prakṛti. The world is Prakṛti and is not created by God (as inherent) and it has eternal existence.

Mukti, regaining one's blissful nature, can be got only through bhakti or devotion to God. For liberation, mere intellectual conceptualization of Brahma as creator is not enough, the individual soul must feel attraction, love, attachment and devotional surrender to Him, and only His grace leads to redemption and liberation, according to Madhva. The complete philosophy of Madhva can be summed up in one shloka-

श्रीमन्मध्वमते हरिः परतमः सत्यं जगत् तत्त्वतो, भेदो जीवगणा हरेरनुचरा नीचोच्चभावं गताः ।

मुक्तिर्नैजसुखानिभूतिरमला भक्तिश्च तत्साधनमक्षादित्रितयं प्रमाणमखिलाम्नायैकवेद्यो हरिः ॥

śrīmanmadhvamate hariḥ paratamaḥ satyaṃ jagat tattvato, bhedo jīvagaṇā hareranucarā
nīcoccabhāvaṃ gatāḥ |

muktirnajasukhānibhūtiramalā bhaktiśca tatsādhanamakṣāditritayaṃ

pramāṇamakhilāmnāyaikavedyo hariḥ ||

It means- According to Madhva, Lord Hari is Supreme, the world is true, the souls are high and low, salvation is the divine bliss and can be obtained by pure devotion. The God can be known by the Vedas and the three Pramāṇas.

Nimbārka's Dvaitādvaita: - Nimbārka's Bhedābheda or Dvaitādvait philosophy is duality and non-duality at the same time, or dualistic non-dualism. According to Nimbārka, there are three categories of existence, namely Īśvara (God, Divine Being); cita (jīva, the individual soul); and acita (lifeless matter). Cita and acita are different from Īśvara, in the sense that they have Guṇa (attributes) and Svabhāva (capacities), which are different from those of Īśvara. At the same time, cita and acita are not different from Īśvara, because they cannot exist independently of him. Īśvara is independent and exists by himself, while cita and acita exist in dependence upon him. Difference means a kind of existence which is separate but dependent, (paratantra sattā bhāva); while non-difference means impossibility of separate existence (svatantra sattā bhāv).

The Brahma is Saguṇa and Sākār. He is devoid of all prakṛt doṣas or blemishes and abode of all auspicious qualities. He is the material and the instrumental cause of the jagat. Nimbārka identifies the Supreme Brahma with Krishna who is endowed with all auspicious qualities and is free from ignorance, passion, attachment and egoism. The basic practice consists of the worship of Sri Rādhā Mādhava, with Sri Rādhā being personified as the inseparable part of Sri Krishna. One cannot get the devotion or cannot get attracted towards the Lord without his grace. Thus, God's grace is of paramount importance for mokṣa.

Vallabhācārya's Śuddhādvaita: - Vallabhācārya is the founder of the Śuddhādvaita School, that is, school of Pure Monism. He does not admit Māyā, like Śaṅkara, and believes that the whole world of matter and souls is real and is a subtle form of Brahma. Brahma can create the world without being dependant on māyā. Instead, māyā is dependent on Brahma as it is one of the śaktis of Brahma.

Brahma is the independent reality, and is personified as Krishna when he is endowed with the qualities of wisdom (jñāna) and action (kriyā). The essence of Brahma is Existence (sat), Knowledge (cita) and Bliss (ānanda). Souls and matter are real manifestations of Brahma, they are

his parts. Brahma is the abode of all good quality and even the seemingly contradictory qualities (विरुद्ध धर्माश्रय, viruddha dharmāśraya); He is the smallest and the greatest, the one and the many. Mokṣa, for Vallabha's followers, is not becoming one with the Brahma, but serving the God and enjoying his bliss while maintaining ones individuality. According to Vallabha, bhakti, a firm and all-surpassing affection (sneha) for God, with a full sense of His greatness, is the only means of salvation which can be achieved only through his grace.

CONCLUSION

By studying the schools of Indian Philosophy we can conclude that, all the darśanas, have attainment of mokṣa as their prime objective and believe that mokṣa is permanent relief from misery and sorrow. All the schools believe in some divine force which we may call it as Almighty. Some say it as only a conscience (Puruṣa), some call it formless and some consider it as True Knowledge, for others it is a Divine Form possessing divine attributes.

But, in all these, the question arises as to which path is most suitable for salvation. If we give a thorough study, we can see that all other darśanas have stressed upon the true knowledge or the right duty as the means of salvation. But Vedānta, specially the one propagated by the four vaiṣṇava ācāryas, namely Rāmānujācārya, Madhvācārya, Nimbārkācārya and Vallabhācārya, have claimed that as per Sanātana Dharma śāstras, a devotee can attain mokṣa through devotion. In today's modern and fast moving period, this seems to be most practical solution not only of salvation but also for our worldly miseries and sorrows.

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