

Philosophy and Critical Thinking
Prof. Gyan Prakash
Department of Humanities & Social Sciences
IIT ISM, Dhanbad
Week- 07
Lecture 29: Indian Philosophy

Welcome in lecture 29. Today, we are going to start Indian philosophy. We have been discussing Western philosophy from lecture 1 to lecture 28, where we have seen the history of Western philosophy or the development of an idea, where we have talked about many philosophers or many different ideas, including ethics, metaphysics and self. Today, we are going to talk about the Indian philosophy and in Indian philosophy, we are basically going to concentrate on Indian knowledge system. Indian knowledge system is an important part because if you want to know about the Indian philosophy, you should have some idea about Indian knowledge system. What exactly is the Indian knowledge system? We have Indian knowledge system, many texts, many vast knowledge of system. In Indian knowledge system, we have many texts and it is not possible even to talk about all the texts or give an overview of the text even in one class or maybe in one semester. So, if we are going to give an overview of all the text, sometime it may take a semester. However, today I am going to just give you an idea about the Indian knowledge system, which is very much significant for this course, philosophy and critical thinking. So, let us understand what exactly is Indian knowledge system and how we have got this Indian knowledge system. So, whatever we have in name of Indian knowledge system, it is we have got it from the oral transmission, many of them, the ancient text. So, all of you might be aware of the what is an oral transmission. Oral transmission is when someone is transmitting this knowledge through transmitting this knowledge orally to the next generation. So, there is one person, he knows many things or texts and what he is doing, he is transmitting this knowledge orally to the next generation. For example, there are teacher and there is a student, let us take in that way. So, teacher what he is doing is chanting some hymns or mantras as followed by another disciple following those mantras, hymns and learning these hymns by heart. So, basically the system is what is in a transmission of this knowledge from one generation to next generation. In many texts, if you read the Brahminical texts education system or Buddhist education system, where text argues that many times for example, there are teacher called Vasubandhu and other who used to recite their text. So, they were like they have this idea, they have learnt this text by heart, the sutras by heart, but the same time they also reciting time to time, making sure that they are not going to forget that. So, in Buddhism it is mentioned in many places where Vasubandhu used to recite all the sutras. So, however this oral transmission was very popular and everything that we have got, we have got from this oral transmission. Now, there is an obvious question you may ask, if suppose if anything is coming through this orally, then can we talk about the authenticity of the text? For example, Buddhist text, we have got a large

number of the Buddhist texts, a large number of the many other texts and it is giving an example. Now, we have got from this oral transmission, can we raise this question, can we talk about authenticity of this text? Answer is no, because the structure of this sutras is such that it is difficult to alter and therefore whatever we have in name of Vedic system, those are in original form. So, even we have this Indian knowledge system in our many sutras which has come from this oral transmission, but those everything sutras are, all the sutras are in original form, it is not altered and therefore it is an authentic text. Now, the Indian knowledge system is very vast. So, as I have said that even in a one class or one semester, it will be difficult to talk about all the text. So, again and this all the text is in a wide range of text, it only means that they address in a very different area. And for a person, it will be difficult to talk about sometime in about give you an overview of all of the text. In this course, what I have done in this lecture, I have just brought a few texts just to give you an idea and it also relevant for the Indian philosophical system. Now, the question that I just let why the discussion is required on the Indian knowledge system, because this Indian knowledge system and what we really have got and what we have in name of Indian knowledge system, it is very significant. And there is, you know, even in contemporary era, no one can deny the significance of the texts. Either you take this philosophical argument in the area of philosophy of mind or in the area of epistemology or ethics, you can apply, you can talk about this text, you can talk about the significance of talks in any area. And I believe that the texts are very significant and we should know and if you are like more interested, we should read this text. So, the texts are very important and my intention is to just give an idea of a few of them. Now, if you want to understand, it is one way to understand that there are two types of like text, let us say in ordinary language, one is Shruti which is eternal, self-evident, divinely revealed and the entire Vedic literature is Shruti. And the next category is Smriti. Smriti is recollections based on memory and Vedang, Darshan, Dharmayana, Mahabharata, including the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads and Dharmasastras represent the finest example of the Smriti tradition. Now, what is the Shruti tradition, let me explain you why this is called as an eternal and self-evident. First of all, I would like to explain what is Shruti. Shruti is by someone heard and it is divinely revealed. Now, what does it mean is divinely revealed. I will give you an example and it will be easy to understand. For example, you went for a conference or any training where you have got a room, double bed, and you and a friend staying with in the room and you are attending the conference or any training courses. Now, in a lunch break, you and friend had a very good lunch. They are providing very good lunch. So, you had lunch and your friend decided to take a nap. So, since we have time and so your friend told you that okay, I am going to sleep for a suppose half an hour and then you will go back to the conference. You decided, let us read some book, paper, or let us read e-mail. So, there is a room and where you are reading. Maybe checking your emails and next to you, there is a person, your friend who is sleeping. Now, after some time, this person started crying and started saying save me, save me, someone is going to kill me or he is going to kill me.

Now, for you, it is very clear that this person is dreaming and also crying. This person is dreaming. Now, the question is what to do? Is it possible for you to go in his dream and fight for him? Obviously not. So, how are you going to help this person? You are going to just wake up. Saying to wake up, this is not reality, something else and even suppose you woke up. Now, the dream was so strong that still he is afraid. Even in that case, you are the right person to say what is real and what is not real. So, what he is afraid of, you may say that that is not reality. Reality is something else. Now, the question is why you are saying so? Because you are in right position to do that. Because you know the reality. Similarly, a Shruti or Vedic literature with us are those persons who has seen the reality, who knows everything. Now, what does it mean, the reality? Reality is sense of ultimate reality. What is ultimately real? We will be discussing well start, we will start discussing the different school of thought. They have given a detailed explanation of the reality. Now, so that is why this is by someone who knows everything and that is only possible is God. So, that is why this is called divinely revealed and that is the reason that this is eternal. Eternal means that is significant. It was, it is and it will be right. Now, the Vedas are giving information about everything, everything in the sense that Para and Aparā. We will be discussing what it is. Now, next collection or the group is called Smṛiti. This is a recollection based on the memory. Vedāṅg, we will be discussing Darsana, which is we are discussing the Indian philosophy that is called the Bhārtiya Darsana or Indian philosophy. The Ramayana, Mahabharata including Bhagavad Gita, we will also be discussing the Bhagavad Gita in one class. The Upanishads we will be discussing in the next class, the philosophy of Upanishads and Dharmasastra. These are the examples of the Smṛiti tradition and that is the reason that I said I will be going to talk about, I will be talking about a few texts, which is very significant for even for our course, Philosophy and critical thinking. Now, if you see this Ved, timing of Ved, few scholars arguing that 3000 BC to 600 BC, business scholars give a different time. But for me, just mentioning this time was to give you an idea that how it was our Vedic system or Vedas is a very ancient, even in those times, 3000 BC and 4000 BC, or even we are going to accept the Western scholars' timing, even in that case, in that ancient texts talks about a very fine argument of this ultimate reality about this mind. And that is the reason that I believe these are very, very significant and we should read this text. As I said that Vedas contain the highest spiritual knowledge, Para Vidya, and as well as the knowledge of the world, as also I argued that the text of Vedas is preserved in its pure and original form without any alteration. All of you now aware of this, we have four Vedas, Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda. The term Ved is from root to Ved and it means to know. It is said that it indicates that by which is obtained the knowledge of the ways and means of achieving spiritual ends. It is argued that the end, which cannot be known by the evidence of direct perception, inference, and the like, can be known through Veda, and therefore, this determines the character of Ved. Now, basically here is an argument that about the ultimate reality which is beyond this change, it is difficult to talk about different sources. Sources means in Indian system, we talk about

different types of sources of knowledge, for example perception, inference, and many more. We will be discussing that, words, testimony, comparison, so on. So we will be discussing those. So, what they are saying that even we talk about the different sources of knowledge, through these sources it is not difficult to understand, difficult to know about the ultimate reality and therefore, this Ved is going to play a very significant role. Through this Ved, we will be able to understand the ultimate reality and that is the reason that Ved is very important. Now, if you want to understand this Ved, we may divide in the four different parts. First is called Samhita, this collection of mantras or hymns. Second one is Brahmanas, this prose commentary on Vedas with detailed observation on prayers and ceremonies, religious duties. The third one is Aranyak, text to be read by rishis in forest as they deal with the mystic meaning of Samhita text and the final one is Upanishads, the philosophical aspect which are to be taught by the acharyas to their trusted students. Now, Upanishads will be discussing which is very much part of this course and Upanishads is so significant in the Indian knowledge system or in Indian philosophy that many schools of thought is based on the Upanishads or they have taken this Upanishads as an authority. They have argued with the reference of Upanishads. So, Upanishads has a very important part and this is basically a philosophical part and we will be discussing about Upanishads and the philosophy of Upanishads.

Now, if you see this division, this also represents the four asramas of the Indian system. The four asramas is the brahmacharya where you are supposed to read, study, the collection of mantras and hymns. Second one is the Grihastha ashram, it talks about your family responsibilities and third is Vanapastra ashram where you are like detaching yourself and finally the Sanyasa ashram where we are seeking what liberation. We are trying to achieve the liberation. Now we have Upanishads. Upanishads deals with the fundamental questions about existence, life, creation and death. In the first few classes, we have discussed about the job of or main goal of philosophy to answer many unanswered questions and in Indian system, Upanishads are doing that. Vedas and Upanishads, what they are doing? They are answering the questions about the ultimate reality. Upanishads deals with the very fundamental questions about the problem of personhood. So, he will be answering all the questions. If you have creation, the idea of creation, what is that? What is this birth and rebirth and so on. So Upanishads deals with all these fundamental questions. Again, it is going to talk about Upanishads deal with nature of soul, universe, God and their relationship. The very system as I argued, namely Advaita, Vishistadvaitvada, Dvaita, refer to the Upanishads as their source material. So, these are the part of Vedanta philosophy and Advaita philosophy we will be discussing. Advaita also is a part of this course. So we will be discussing in detail.

Now there are another set of texts called Vedangas. Vedangas are the limbs of the Vedas. Now this is a complementary tool to recite, comprehend and apply knowledge of Ved. Now, these are the texts. First one is Siksha. It talks about phonetics, phonology and

pronunciation. So, you can take an example of Ashtadhyayi by Panini. Second is Vyakaran. Vyakaran, again, is important. If you want to read a text, if you want to understand the text, the grammar is an important part. So, the study of grammar is there in Vyakaran, and again, is an example is Ashtadhyayi by Panini. The third one is Nirukta, a discussion of the etymology of Vedic literature. For example, Yask was being in earlier, he was before the Panini. Chhand, again the study of rhythm and it ensured the form of mantra. So, Chhand is going to talk about the form because if you are going to read this or recite this mantra, this knowledge of Chhand is very important. Kalp is ceremonies associated with Vedic ritual practices and sometimes this is a very long explanation. So, Sutra method has been adopted and the final one is Jyotish. It is a part of this Vedic astrology and Jyotish is going to decide that what is the right time to perform the rituals. So these are the Vedangs and they are the complementary tools. So, if you want to read or understand the Vedangas, knowledge of this text Vedang is an important. So this is just for your idea. There is something called Chatrudasa-Vidyasthanas and it has 14 major divisions, four Vedas which we have discussed now six Vedangas and Puranas, another set of text which talks about the God and it is again an important part of the Indian philosophy. Dharmasastra talks about the right action, what sort of action we should perform and so on. Again it is a part of this Vidyasthana. Nyaya is a logic and an epistemology, again one of the schools of Indian philosophy, Bhartiya Darsan. So this Nyaya which is not a part of this course because the Nyaya is very significant but at the same time also you need a separate class to understand this Nyaya and its argument. But let me tell you that Nyaya presents a very finest argument and we will have a discussion a little bit about the Nyaya when we will be discussing about the Indian school of philosophy and the Mimansa. Again Mimansa is another important school of philosophy. Now we also have Upavedas. Upavedas are, first one is Gandharva Ved. Gandharva Ved is about the music or the drama, it is a Natyasastra. Dhanur Veda is all about the warfare, the art of warfare. Ayurveda all of you are aware of Indian medicine, Ayurveda, and then Artha sastra. Ayurveda it is not that simple which nowadays we understand, we are thinking. Ayurveda at that time or Indian medicine at that time has many different components which talks about the surgery, midwifery, the disease of eyes, ears, other parts of the head, treating the body elements with medicines, psychotherapy is called Bhut-Vidya. Treatment and reading of the children, antidotes, accelerates and regimens. Idea is Ayurveda has an a very wide range and it was not only for a human being, they also, texts talked about the trees, the animals for example, horses, how to treat elephants and so on. So they also had a very rich Ayurveda. So, you can treat the trees. So, Ayurveda was very strong at the same time, it is very wide. The Artha Sastras, it is again, it is a very famous text and the earliest available text on this subject is Arthasastram of Kautilya who is also known as Chanakya, divided into 15 sections written in mainly in prose and it deals with almost all aspect of administration, statecraft, military strategy, taxation, foreign policy, etc. So, this was the kind of overview of some of the text from the Indian knowledge system. And in this class, I just give you a kind of an idea about different

text, which is again, very important for this course. However, this is not a complete Indian knowledge system or in a text in Indian knowledge system. To understand the Indian knowledge system is you need a time. I mean, there are many texts for example, and need time in the sense that even for some time, if you are going to discuss in detail, then we need a proper course on Indian knowledge system. However, this lecture was prepared to basically talk about some text, which is significant for the later Indian school of thought, Vedanta philosophy. We will be discussing that what kind of Indian schools we have and then division of Indian schools of philosophy. This text, for example, the Ved, Vedanta and the Upavedas, these are just too given idea about our old system, our ancient time. And this text is not only giving the information, but they also have established things with fine argument. So, they are reading an argument as another important thing. And I will tell you that this Upanishads and Ved are very important in many senses, and their argument, it is so fine that sometimes it is difficult. So, you need a proper training to understand their argument. And in this course, while discussing this Sankara philosophy or Ramanujacharya philosophy, we will be discussing some of the argument, not all argument because this course is in a very basic level. So, however, we will try to understand some of the argument and see that how these arguments are very sharp. And this will help you to train your mind as I have been arguing that this course is only meant for your training purpose in the sense that you can train your mind, you can understand the argument and you can train your mind. Train your mind means how to think. So, through these arguments, what we are going to do is going to understand that, okay, this way also we can argue, we can present the argument. So, in conclusion, this is the, today we discussed few of the ancient texts, and however, we have not discussed well in detail about the Ved and four Vedas. We will not be discussing because we have many things to discuss and we are supposed to complete this discussion within a week. So, in this class, we will be discussing Upanishads, philosophy about Upanishads basically. However, for the references, these are the two texts for the Indian philosophy to texts was based on many different sources, which I read very long back and not for the one source. But however, if you want to understand the Indian system or philosophy of Vedic system, you may go through these books. So thank you so much for your kind attention. Thank you.