

Philosophy and Critical Thinking
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Lecture 32: Indian Philosophy

Welcome in lecture 32. We are discussing Indian philosophy. Today we are going to talk about the basic features of the Indian philosophy. So, this Indian philosophy is not a one philosophy and there are many schools of thought in this Indian philosophy. However, today what we will do, we will try to understand the basic feature of this all the philosophies. As per the traditional principle of classification, Indian philosophy is divided into two broad classes. First, is orthodox school of Indian philosophy is called Astik. Now this idea of Astik is not based on the acceptance of God and rejection of God. This is based on the acceptance of the authority of Veda. Now we have discussed the Ved and its philosophy, Upanishads and its philosophy. Now, there are schools in the Indian philosophical system who accepted the authority of Veda. Now, accepting authority of Veda and says that whatever is written in this Vedic system, Vedic literature, Upanishads, they are accepting that and they are accepting those philosophies as a source material. This is what we call accepting the authority of Veda. Now there are another school of thought or let us say a group of school who rejected the authority of Veda. Now it is argued that this set of school, what they are not accepting the authority of Veda is called Nastik. Now this Astik and Nastik idea, it is not depended on the acceptance of God or rejection of the existence of God. It is about the acceptance of the authority of Ved and rejecting the authority of Ved. Now this division is, as I said is a traditional principle of classification or well-accepted division. However, there is another argument by the many philosophers that this division is sometimes is not correct because many of the school of thought from the Heterodox school of thought also believe that has talked to, taken many things from the Ved or Vedic system. However, for since this class is on a very basic level, so we will be taking this division, this traditional division and for us and for this class we have the two school or let us say two group, the Orthodox and the Heterodox. I will give you an example so that it will be easy to understand that why this Astik and I will give you an example so it will be easy to understand. From the Orthodox school of thought, there are two schools for the Mimansa and Sankhya and they do not believe in a God as a creator of the world, and therefore, but still, they are in the part of Orthodox because they believe and they accept the authority of Ved. So, it is clear that this division or this word Astik and Nastik is not we have used because of their acceptance of existence of God and rejection of existence of God. Now let us say how many are Orthodox school, this is called Sad-darsana. First one is Nyaya, this is by Gautam. Second is Vaisasika, this is by Kanada, Sankhya philosophy is Kapila, Yoga is Patanjali, Mimansa is Jaimini and Vedanta. Now, these are the school of thought which belongs to the Orthodox school of thought, Orthodox school

of thought which we have as have discussed accept the authority of Ved. Now in this school of thought, we will be discussing some of the school, not all the school because we do not have that time. One school will be discussing in one week and it will be difficult to cover all the school of thought in a week or in a four weeks or six weeks, and therefore, what we have done in, I have only talked about, only have mentioned in the syllabus, few school of thought from the Orthodox school of thought. Now in this course, we will be discussing the Sankhya philosophy and Vedanta philosophy. Nyaya philosophy, Vaisheshika philosophy, Yoga philosophy and Mimansa philosophy, these are also very significant as very important. But because of we do not have much time and therefore, I have not included all the philosopher. At the same time, this course is meant for those students who is not aware of this Indian school of thought or Western school of thought. So just want to give an idea of what is Western philosophy and what are the Indian philosophies. I have taken two schools from the Orthodox school side and two schools from the Heterodox school of thought. Now in Vedanta, we also have many different schools of thought. So, this Vedanta again is not on a one and single philosophy. In Vedanta, we have many. So, in this course, we will be discussing two, I have been saying that Shankaracharya and Ramanujacharya. In Heterodox school of thought, it includes Charvaka. I have been discussing Charvaka when we were discussing about the Hedonism. The Buddhist philosophy is an important philosophy and which also is a part of our course and the Jaina philosophy again is a part of our course. So, this course is in a plan in such a way that you will have an idea of the Orthodoxian school of thought and as well the Heterodoxian school of thought. But all the school of thought, we will be discussing in a very basic level. However, in next class, we will be discussing all the school of thought and I will give you some idea about all the school of thought.

Now, let us understand what are the philosophical problem of this Indian school of thought. I have been discussing and in the first few classes, we have talked about the main goal of the philosophy, where we are going to answer many questions which is not answered by the science as when we started this philosophy, Indian philosophy and we discussed that how Ved is a very important source of knowledge, knowledge of ultimate reality. The reason is that there are many things which we cannot understand and we cannot know through the other source of knowledge. So, we have discussed that in this class that what are the sources of the knowledge like for example, perception, inference and so on and these sources are valid, some of the schools of thought in Indian system are arguing and therefore, whatever we are getting through these sources is not correct and it is invalid, it is not correct, it is not a valid source. So valid source, valid knowledge, invalid source, invalid knowledge. Now there are some knowledge which is not possible through these sources. Therefore, the Ved is the source or which we can know about the ultimate reality. All the basic features of the Indian philosophy is that all of them has talked about the very basic problem, philosophical problem for example, who am I? For example, what is God? What is the nature of God? The idea of God? Is there any birth before this life? Is there any

birth or life after this life? So is there any life before this life? Is there any life after this life and so on? So, what are the problems and if there is a problem in this world, then what is the solution of this problem? So, these are the things almost all the school of thought has discussed well in detail and then I talked about the solution of the problem. However, there are many problems as I said for example, what is the ultimate cause of the world? Does God exist? What is the nature of God? So, these are the questions which cannot be answered by observation or other means of knowledge. So, it is difficult to do that and therefore one way is we are taking in a help of scripture or scripture is the method to answer these questions. So, we are reading scriptures and getting these answers now. You may also argue that we are not using the reasoning and all that but that is not true. The Indian philosophy is full of reasoning, and you may say that reasoning is an important tool to find out the answer consistent with the truth established by experience. So, there are two things here in Indian philosophical system. If you are going to talk about the truth, so first is we can talk about religion based on the reasoning or which is done by our simple experiences and second one is in a scripture. So, many schools of thought they believed and again they have used this reasoning. So, they are arguing for the ultimate reality or they have answered this question starting with their simple experience applying reasoning. For example, there are schools which I have discussed as an orthodox and a heterodox school of thought, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Charvaka, Buddhist, Jain believed that philosophy should be based on ordinary experiences. So they are experiencing, apply reasoning and then agree. So, they have used and therefore it is not right to say that all the school of thought is only based on the scripture. They are not using the reasoning. So, they are using the reasoning starting from simple or ordinary experiences. While discussing this philosophy, Sankhya philosophy, Buddhist philosophy and Jaina philosophy, we will be taking in examples where they have argued based on their ordinary experiences. On other hand, Mimamsa and Vedanta believed that philosophy should be based on the scripture. So, this philosophy is based on the scripture and what they have done, they have given a detailed interpretation of the scriptures. So that is why we have taken one school of thought from this side who believes that philosophy should be based on the scripture, let us say Vedanta and we also have taken from this group for Sankhya, Buddhism, Jainism and so on. However, as I said, there is an argument that the Indian schools of philosophy are dogmatic, rather critical. So, this is one that are charged against the Indian philosophy that, okay so this Indian philosophy is basically based on some scripture and they are not very critical. But let me tell you that Indian philosophies are very critical and they have used a very sharp argument. So, if you read a Nyaya philosophy, if you read a Vaisheshika philosophy, Sankhya philosophy, even Charvaka Buddhism and Jainism, all of them, all the school of thought has used a very strong argument in favor of their claim or against of any claim. If you read the Vedanta Mimamsa, Vedanta philosophy which is very much part of this course, will be discussing their argument and their argument is so sharp that sometimes it is difficult to understand. So, we take time to understand their argument. So, therefore, this

charge, I believe is not right. So even a second point I have mentioned is that they believe that, but it does not they believe that the philosophy is based on scripture, and they are explaining and giving a proper argument for their claim. But it does not mean that they have not used this reasoning. They have not used an argument. They have used set of argument to prove any claim and they are starting with an argument. We will be discussing when we will start this all the Indian philosophy school of thought next week onwards. So, this charge is not right and Indian philosophy is full of argument. You take any of the argument, even there is Charvaka philosophy, let us say that materialist philosophy of this Indian philosophy. I believe that they have even have used this argument. But if you read the other school of thought, for example, Buddhism and Jaina, Buddhism and Nyaya, they are very critical to each other and if you talk about the development of this, all this school of thought, they happen like critically examining others argument. Let us not only the other school, let us take only Vedanta philosophy. Even in Vedanta philosophy, they have used an argument. Like for example, Shankaracharya, he talked about many different concepts in Advait Vedanta, and Ramanujacharya, when he is going to talk about a different set of concepts in Vishistadvait, he is also going to refute the Sankaran argument of many things. For example, Maya. So Sankaracharya talked about the idea of Maya, the concept of Maya in his philosophy. Ramanujacharya, he rejected the idea of Maya. But rejection does not mean just saying that I do not believe in Maya. Rejection means Ramanujacharya has used a very, very sharp argument. He has shown a proper, through argument has shown that how this concept of Maya is not possible. Now, what is Maya? We will be discussing, what is the concept of Maya? We will be discussing in the class. So just to take that there is a concept of Maya, and how the Shankaracharya established that. I mean, Shankaracharya talked about that and Shankaracharya used this concept of Maya to explain many things. Now Ramanujacharya, who gave a different set of philosophy or let us say a different interpretation of Sutras, he rejected the idea of Sankarian Maya. Sankaran Maya means the concept of Maya, which is mentioned in the Sankara philosophy. This rejection is not simple rejection saying that okay this is not correct. Rejection means this is based on many arguments, not only one argument and then even after Shankaracharya or let us say the school of Sankara philosophy, again they rejected or defended the Sankarian idea of Maya. So, this is an example which we will be taking even in this course that how they have argued and see their argument. They have presented a very brilliant argument and it is in a very difficult to find anywhere this level of the argument. So, argument is in a very much the part of this philosophy and Indian philosophy is not only talking about the ultimate truth but they are also giving a proper argument for that. Let us talk about even Nyaya philosophy and Buddhist philosophy. They are still there arguing, presenting an argument against each other, and their argument is so sharp, as I have said, it is difficult to sometimes understand. You have to understand when it is to read well. You need training to understand their concept, their argument. So even they have developed the philosophy and rejecting each other's ideas, rejecting each other's argument. So, this is my argument is, my claim is

and I believe that with charge which is in the saying that the Indian philosophy is dogmatic, it is not right. It is not critical, it is not right. Indian philosophy is very critical. So even if you take any philosophy, like even the Buddhist philosophy we have the different school of thought in Buddhism, early Buddhism, later Buddhism or let us say Theravādin, Mahayana and so on. So we will be discussing this part. Now if you see as I have said the development of the school of thought, Vedas and Upanishads are directly and indirectly accountable for the Indian philosophy of the school of thought. So almost all the school of thought has talked about the concept which is mentioned in the Vedic Upanishads. So, their philosophy is very significant and I have been arguing that how the Upanishads of philosophy, Upanishads are important for the Indian school of thought. Now the sutra literature, sutra also means Thread. Sutra literature also played a very significant role in the development of Indian philosophy school of thought. Now you need to understand one thing that there is an, like for example sutra and this is a very precise or it is not very well which well explained. And sometimes, let us say that it is difficult to understand for us. So, there is a commentary on this sutra. It is called Bhasya. Now, the Bhasya is example of the, for example there is a text called Brahmasutra. It is by Badarayan and this Brahmasutra, if you take the Brahmasutra, it will be difficult to understand. So, there are many commentaries on this text by Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Madhvācharya, Vallabhacharya, Nimbarkacharya, Baladevacharya and so on. So, the idea is, I mean just I mention here just to tell you that when we are talking about this Bhasya. Bhasya means the commentary. Now this is I believe the beauty of the Indian philosophy. So, for example, there is one text; we can take any, for example, the Brahmasutra, and there are many interpretations of this text. So, one is by Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Madhvācharya, Vallabhacharya, Nimbarkacharya and so on. I believe this is their interpretation is not just an explanation, they have not given a proper argument for that. So, there is one sutra and then many different interpretations. I believe this is a very strong example, finest example of argument, finest example of the belief. This is the beauty of Indian philosophy. It does not mean that you are going to stop here. Still, we are working on Shankaracharya philosophy, Ramanujacharya philosophy, Madhvācharya philosophy and so on. So, it is all about an argument and if we are going to talk about why they have a different interpretation, why they have a different set of argument based on the same argument. So, for example we are going to talk about why they have a different school of thought because they have presented a different set of argument and they found a different school of thought and that is the reason that I argued that Indian philosophy is, if you read the Indian philosophy, it is full of argument. Now Indian philosophy is not only about all about the ethics and the liberation but he also talks about many things. For example, the epistemology, there are a lot of his philosophical concepts, which we will be discussing while discussing Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Buddhism and Jainism, and Sankhya philosophy, but they also have talked about many branches of philosophy. However, the main goal of this philosophy is to talk about the liberation, liberation in the sense that the

solution of the problem and therefore, the explaining the epistemological concept, ethical concept, just a stepping stone for the final goal. Again, there is an argument that the Indian philosophy is pessimistic. What does it mean? If there is a life and we are looking at the dark side of this life, it is also called the pessimism. So, this all since, as I said that all Indian philosophy going to talk about this, so therefore, there is an argument that, this is pessimistic. But this is again is not correct because the Indian philosophy has talked about how to achieve the liberation, how to achieve the happiness. So, the goal is to tell you, argue that there is a problem. This is life while explaining this world, by explaining the nature of the God or the cycle of birth, rebirth. They also talked about the problem, why we are in this problem. But then again, they had talked about the solution of this problem. They have talked, argued that how to solve this set of problem, how to live your life well as we have discussed in the last class about the Bhagavad Gita, how this text had talked about the action, how to perform a right action with right intention. So, if you are going to perform an action with this thought, you are not going to face any problem. So, there is a way to see the Indian philosophy and I see the Indian philosophy is a kind of argument which is going to talk about the problem as well as the solution of this problem. So, initially you when you start reading, when you are going to talk about the cycle of birth but you may feel that this is how they are saying but ultimately, they are going to talk how to remove this problem, how to solve these issues. For example, Yoga philosophy, going to talk about how to, you can think of your mental health and physical health and that is a very important part. So, if even you want to perform good action or if you want to live happily, you have to go with your healthy body and healthy mind and for that we have this concept, Yoga has talked about in very detail. Buddhism, Jainism. So, they have argued that how you can live this life with lot of good health and physical health and mental health and also they have argued that what are the things you should aim. So in your life you should aim in the highest goal. This is my belief that putting this highest goal is very, very important and this can solve many social issues, and the application of this idea, you can apply this idea even in the social area. As I have discussed in previous first few classes that how the social and political philosophy talks about the society and then political. Now if you put this in Indian philosophy, idea of the highest goal or ultimate goal of life, you can change many things. You can bring this social in proper order. So, the Indian philosophy is not only about the liberation and the war, but it is also going to talk about many things. Many things I mean that your health, mental health, physical health, society and so on. So, application is in all aspects. Now one thing is the Charvaka philosophy. There is a concept of ignorance or let us say Avidya. Since this is a very basic level course, so therefore we will be taking as ignorance. However, I believe that Avidya, we should use always this Avidya word, not this English translation. But since this is in a basic level course, let us take this word ignorance. However, all the English law of thought have talked about this ignorance as of reality is the cause of bondage and suffering. So, we are suffering because of this ignorance. Because we do not have an idea of the reality. Now what is reality and

why this ignorance is leading to the suffering, that we will be discussing when you start the school. So how they have argued that this bondage and suffering is caused by ignorance. And again, they have argued that liberation or nirvana, we will be discussing that what is difference, defined as the stoppage of the cycle of birth and death, as I have discussed in previous classes that how this life is a cycle of birth and rebirth. So, suppose this is birth and this is death. So, one is like coming in this world and going and then again taking a new birth. So, this is a cycle of birth, but if you take the karma theory, karma theory again says that which we have performed a set of action or our last set of action which we have performed, we have to face the impression of the last good action or a bad action. So, accordingly we will be getting the good fruit or bad fruit or good impression or bad impression of our last karmas. Now if you are going to exhaust all the impression of the last karma, that is not possible because while facing this impression of last karma, we also perform a set of action and impression of this action is accumulating where, and now again we have to face and therefore there is a birth of, this cycle of birth and rebirth. If you are going to stop this, then you will be able to achieve the liberation. As we have discussed in the last class while discussing Bhagavad Gita, then how Bhagavad Gita has talked about the three different paths to stop this of the cycle of birth and rebirth. All the school of thought except few, I mean the Charvaka philosophy, they have talked about the purification of mind that how we can purify the mind. So even in the Bhagavad Gita they have said that how, the way to purify your mind. Purify your mind means you are going towards the liberation. And in Buddhism as well has talked about well in detail about the purification of mind in order to achieve nirvana. One thing is important and it will be getting in all the school of thought more or less is this Yama. Yama is what kind of action we should not do. So do not is Yama, and what kind of action we should do is called Niyama. So, this Yama-Niyama, you will more or less you will get in all the school of thought. Like for example, ahimsa, this is a non-violence, we should not hurt anyone. Even take an example of your action, your verbal action, physical action, or mental action. Satya, the truthness that you have to always go for that. Asteya, non-stealing, giving an importance to all the same. So non-stealing is we know that without permission of the owner, we are going to even going to use that object, it is called stealing. So again, this is non-stealing, we are not supposed to do that. We are different from this action. Brahmacharya, always thinking of God, Brahma and charya. Aparigraha, no greed. So, whatever you have, you are happy with that. Now here, aprigraha, is again this is aprigraha, you are not allowed to store many things. We will be discussing that in detail. So again, you have to cleanliness, Santosh, that is you have to be happy, content. Yes, you are helping others. Talking about that, how you can, using your, for example, you are, okay. Santosh, this again content, you are with what you have. Tapas, swadhayay, we are reading and studying yourself. Swadhayay means about yourself. It is not, swadhayaya is about reading about that novel and other thing. Swadhayaya is all about when you are reading and trying to understand yourself. This is what Pranidhana, again in the meditation. So, in the both

sides, you will be getting this kind of an ethics, more or less you will be getting this Yama and Niyama. These are very important for the Indian system. And all the school of thought has talked about the final goal, I mean liberation. The problem and then solution. Now so this talk was based on these two book, this Outline of Indian Philosophy and especially an Introduction to the Indian philosophy by Chatterjee and Dutta. So this was the basic features and of the Indian School of Thought. So, we will be discussing in next class, the Indian School of Thought. Thank you so much for your kind attention. Thank you.