

3. Indian Philosophy

Hello everyone,

Today in this session, we will discuss about Indian Philosophy and Significance of Sanskrit Language

Indian Philosophy

- Philosophy literally means the love of knowledge or more precisely, the love of wisdom.
- Like all other living beings, man struggles for existence. But while the lower beings struggle more or less blindly without any conscious plan and purpose, and work by instinct, man uses the superior gift of his intellect to understand the conditions and meaning of the struggle and to devise plans and instruments to ensure success.
- He wishes to lead his life in the light of his knowledge of himself and the world, taking into consideration not merely the immediate results of his actions, but even their far- reaching consequences.
- Desire for knowledge springs, therefore, from the rational nature of man. Philosophy is an attempt to satisfy this very reasonable desire. It is not, therefore, a mere luxury, but a necessity
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- As philosophy aims at the knowledge of truth, it is termed in Indian literature, 'the vision' Every Indian school holds, in its own way, that there can be a direct realization of truth (tattvadarsana).
- Ever since human beings have invented scripts, writing has reflected the culture, lifestyle, society and the polity of contemporary society.
- In the process, each culture evolved its own language and created a huge literary base.
- This literary base of a civilization tells us about the evolution of each of its languages and culture through the span of centuries.
- Sanskrit is the mother of many Indian languages. The Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas and Dharmasutras are all written in Sanskrit.
- There is also a variety of secular and regional literature. By reading about the languages and literature created in the past, we shall be able to understand our civilization better and appreciate the diversity and richness of our culture.

- All this was possible because of the language that developed during that time., Sanskrit which is the most ancient language of our country
- The ancient period of Indian philosophy is the period of the composition of Vedas and the Upanishads. The earliest Indian religious texts are the Vedas. The main philosophical themes that the Upanishads explore are the nature of the Absolute (Brahman) as the ground of being and the importance of knowledge of Brahman as the key to liberation.

Vedas and Upanishads

Now let's know about Vedas

- The Vedas are the earliest known literature in India. The Vedas were written in Sanskrit and were handed down orally from one generation to the other.
- The word 'Veda' literally means knowledge. In Hindu culture, Vedas are considered as eternal and divine revelations. They treat the whole world as one human family Vasudev Kutumbakam

There are four Vedas,

- Rig Veda,
- Yajur Veda,
- Sama Veda and
- Atharva Veda.

Each Veda consists of the Brahmanas, the Upanishads and the Aranyakas.

First let's have a brief understanding of four vedas.

Rig Veda

- The Rig Veda is the earliest of the Vedas. It is a collection of 1028 hymns in Vedic Sanskrit. Many of these are beautiful descriptions of nature.
- The prayers are largely for seeking worldly prosperity. It is believed that these recitations are the natural outpouring of Vedic rishis experiencing a mentally transcendental stage.
- Some of the well-known rishis are Vasistha, Gautama, Gritasamada, Vamadeva, Vishvamitra and Atri.
- The prominent gods of the Rig Veda are Indra, Agni, Varun, Rudra, Aditya, Vayu, Aditi and the Ashwini twins. Some of the prominent goddesses are Usha – the goddess of dawn, Vak - the goddess of speech and Prithvi - the goddess of earth.

Yajur Veda

- Yajur means sacrifice or worship. This Veda is concerned mostly with rites and mantras of different sacrifices.
- It gives directions for the performance of the yajnas.
- It has both poetic and prose renderings. Being a treatise on rituals, it is the most popular of the four Vedas.
- There are two major branches of Yajur Veda, namely Shukla and Krishna Yajur Veda i.e., Vajasaneyi Samhita and Taitriya Samhita.
- This text reflects on the social and religious condition of India at that time.

Sama Veda

- Sama means melody or songs. This Veda consists of 16,000 ragas and raginis or musical notes.
- Out of total 1875 verses only 75 are original and others are from the Rig Veda.
- The Sama Veda prescribes the tunes for the recitation of the hymns of the Rig Veda. It may be called the book of Chants (Saman).
- This book is an evidence of the development of Indian music during this period.

Atharva Veda

The Atharva Veda is also known as the Brahma Veda.

- It contains treatment for ninety-nine diseases. The source of this Veda is traced to two rishis called Atharvah and Angiras.
- The Atharva Veda is of immense value as it represents the religious ideas at an early period of civilization.
- This book gives detailed information about the family, social and political life of later Vedic period.

Brahmanas and Aranyakas

- After the four Vedas, a number of works called the Brahmanas were developed.
- These books gave a detailed explanation of Vedic rituals and instructions and deal with the science of sacrifice.
- The latter portions of the Brahmanas were called the Aranyakas while the final parts of the Aranyakas are philosophic books named Upanishads which belong to the later stage of the Brahmana literature.
- Each of the four Vedas have their own Brahmana books.

- The Aranyakas deal with soul, birth and death and life beyond it. These were studied and taught by men in Vanprastha i.e. Munis and the inhabitants living inside the forests. All these works were in Sanskrit. Initially they were handed down orally and were put to writing much later.

Upanishad

- The word Upanishad is derived from upa (nearby), and nishad (to sit-down), that is, “sitting down near”. Groups of pupils sit near the Guru to learn from him in the Guru shishya parampara or tradition.
- The Upanishads mark the culmination of Indian thought and are the final parts of the Vedas. As the Upanishads contain abstract and difficult discussions of ultimate philosophical problems, they were taught to the pupils at the end. That is why they are called the end of Vedas.

Thank you, learners. In this session, I hope you learnt an introduction to Indian Philosophy, significance of Sanskrit languages, brief understanding on 4 vedas and upanishads. Next session we will know about the great Epics of our country, Ramayana and Mahabaratha

Thank you