INDIAN PHILOSOPHY – Postclassical Period

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Overview   Although less well-known, Indian philosophy is the foundation upon which Indian religion stands. Indeed, modern-day Hinduism is more or less a refinement of ideas found in just one of several schools of classical philosophy, and Buddhism similarly evolved in its various forms through intense philosophical debates. Like all philosophy, Indian thinking is concerned with investigating truth, and while it did not develop certain fields (such as ethics and aesthetics), it excelled in others (such as ontology, epistemology and logic). The complexity of these various schools can only be summarised here, but even this short essay should serve to dispel the idea that Indian thinking has been historically dominated by a belief in god. If we had to single out the primary strand of traditional Indian philosophy, it would not be theism but idealism. Atheism and materialism were also strong philosophical traditions.

Early Postclassical Period

Vedanta   The earlier Mimamsa school provided the foundation for the Vedanta schools, which returned to the absolute authority of the Vedas. However, Vedanta shifted emphasis from ritual activity to spiritual activity, meditation, self-discipline and introspection.   Three Vedanta sub-schools have dominated Indian thought and theology since the medieval period. The earliest and best-known is the non-dualist or monism position (*advaita*), articulated by Sankara in the 8th c. CE.   As its name suggests, this philosophy argues that reality is one and indivisible. In other words, while other thinkers had spoken of the soul/self (*atman*) and consciousness/reality (*brahman*), Sankara argued that they are in fact one and the same. Everything else, any perception of a separate deity or soul, was illusion or *maya*.

Vajrayana Buddhism   Vajrayana, the third great tradition of Buddhism, marked a shift away from the esoteric speculations of Mahayana and toward an enactment of enlightenment. The word *vajra* means 'thunderbolt' or 'diamond' and refers to the permanent core of a human being, in contrast to the illusory ideas and perceptions he or she may possess. Vajrayana is also often call *mantra*-yana, because of its emphasis on the role of mantras in meditation to concentrate the mind in its pursuit of truth. Vajrayana combined the idealism and scepticism of early schools, and added a highly symbolic language of meditation, in order to create the original experience of the Buddha's enlightenment.

Late Postclassical Period

Visishtadvaita   A second Vedanta position, expounded by Nathamuni (11th c. CE) and Ramanuja (12th c. CE), is called 'qualified non-dualism (*visishtadvaita*) because it claims that the personal soul/self is not wholly submerged in *brahman*. In other words, it rejects the argument of the *advaita* (non-dualism) school that the individual soul and the underlying consciousness (*brahman)* are one and the same. Instead, this school argues that the soul must maintain some distance from *brahman* in order for a worshipper to apprehend a deity, who itself contains physical attributes.

Dvaita   The third and last Vedanta position is dualism (*dvaita*), as propounded by Madhvacharya (13th-14th c. CE). This school set out to refute the earlier *advaita* (non-dualist) school's claim of uncompromising monism. Instead, Madhvacharya and other thinkers argued that the soul and god do exist independently, and this independence is what allows us to worship god outside ourselves. Although *dvaita* thinkers accept that there is illusion and transience in the world, they argue that this does not mean that all things are illusory or *maya*.

New Nyaya   This Hindu school of thought developed in the 11th or 12th century CE as a merger of the earlier schools of Nyaya and Vaiseshika. Thus it was called Navya Nyaya or 'New Nyaya.' Despite its name, Navya Nyāya incorporated classical Vaiseshika metaphysics and classical Nyāya epistemology. The Navya Nyāya authors also developed a precise technical language through which many traditional philosophical problems could be

clarified and resolved. This linguistic precision proved to be so versatile that they were employed, not just in philosophy, but in poetics, linguistics, legal theory, and other domains of medieval Indian thought. The foundational text of this school was Gaṅgeśa's brilliant and innovative *Jewel of Reflection on the Truth* (*Tattvacintāmaṇi*) in the 13th century CE.

Reading

Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Epistemology, Logic and Grammar in Indian   Philosophical Analysis*(Oxford, 2005)
Jonardon Ganeri, *Philosophy in Classical India: The Proper Work of Reason (*Routledge, 2001)
Jonardon Ganeri, *The Lost Age of Reason: Philosophy in Early Modern India 1450-1700*, Oxford University Press, 2011
J. N. Mohanty, *Classical Indian Philosophy* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2002)
S. Radhakrishnan, *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy* (Princeton, 1967)
Piotr Balcerowicz, *Early Asceticism in India: Ājīvikism and Jainism*   (Routledge, 2015)