

## Metaphysics and Indian Philosophy

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### ABSTRACT

Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that explores the fundamental nature of reality, existence, and being. It addresses core questions about what exists, what it means to be, and the relationships between objects, events, and their properties. Key topics include existence, time, space, causation, and the mind-body problem, often delving into concepts that are not easily discoverable through empirical science. Indian philosophy, or Darshana, is a diverse tradition focused on achieving self-realization through intuitive vision rather than purely intellectual pursuit. It is broadly divided into two main categories: Orthodox (Astika), which accepts the authority of the Vedas, and Heterodox (Nastika), which does not. Key concepts include samsara (the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth), karma (the principle of cause and effect), and the goal of moksha (liberation).

**Keywords:** metaphysics, philosophy, India, relationships, intellectual, karma

### INTRODUCTION

#### Core concepts

**Being and existence:** What does it mean for something to exist? Wikipedia asks questions about the essence of things and what constitutes reality.

**Fundamental principles:** Metaphysics seeks to understand the most general features of reality, such as properties, possibility, necessity, and causality. **Beyond the physical:** Historically, it has been concerned with questions that lie beyond the scope of physical science, such as the existence of God or the immortality of the soul.

**Ontology:** This is the study of being and what kinds of things exist. It's the part of metaphysics that deals with the categories of being.

**Cosmology:** Some branches of metaphysics also study the origin and structure of the universe. [1,2,3]

#### How it works

**Different from empirical science:** Unlike empirical sciences that rely on observation and experimentation, metaphysics uses logic and philosophical reasoning to explore questions that may be beyond direct experience.

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Derivation of the term: The term "metaphysics" comes from the Greek meta ta physika ("the works after the Physics"), which refers to Aristotle's writings on fundamental concepts that were placed after his works on nature.

Broad and complex: Metaphysics is a vast field that includes a wide range of topics, from personal identity and free will to time and the nature of properties.

### **Orthodox (Astika) Schools**

These schools are rooted in the authority of the ancient Vedas and aim for liberation and a balanced life.

The six orthodox systems are:

**Nyaya:** A school of logic, reasoning, and epistemology, focused on gaining knowledge and solving the universe's mysteries through deductive reasoning, as described by Drishti IAS and Medium.

**Vaisheshika:** Focuses on atomistic realism and a theory of reality composed of different categories or qualities.

**Samkhya:** A dualistic system that posits a world of both spirit (Purusha) and matter (Prakriti).

**Yoga:** A practical system for achieving spiritual realization through disciplined practice, concentration, and meditation, as described by Drishti IAS.

**Purva Mimamsa:** Focuses on the correct interpretation of Vedic rituals and their importance for achieving righteousness.

**Vedanta (Uttara Mimamsa):** Interprets the philosophical teachings of the Upanishads, with several sub-schools including Advaita (non-dualism) and Dvaita (dualism).

**Heterodox (Nastika) Schools[4,5,6]**

These schools do not accept the authority of the Vedas.

Prominent examples include schools of thought developed by figures like the Buddha and Mahavira.

**Buddhism:** Originates with the Four Noble Truths, which describe the nature of suffering (dukkha) as being rooted in craving and ignorance, and the Eightfold Path as the way to end it.

**Jainism:** A system emphasizing non-violence (ahimsa), non-attachment, and a path of self-control to achieve liberation.

**Charvaka (Lokayata):** An atheistic school that emphasized materialism and rejected religious dogma, with a focus on direct experience as the only source of knowledge.

### **Core Concepts**

**Darshana:** The Sanskrit term for philosophy, which literally means "vision" or "insight," emphasizing

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the goal of achieving a direct, intuitive vision of truth. Samsara: The endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, which is seen as a continuous process of creation, destruction, and recreation on a cosmic scale, as described on Medium.

Karma: The law of cause and effect, where actions have consequences that determine one's future within the cycle of samsara.

\*\*Dharma, Artha, and Kama

## DISCUSSION

Indian philosophy consists of philosophical traditions of the Indian

subcontinent. The philosophies are often called darśana, meaning "to see" or "looking at." [2][3] Ānvīkṣikī means "critical inquiry" or "investigation." Unlike darśana, ānvīkṣikī was used to refer to Indian philosophies by classical Indian philosophers, such as Chanakya in the Arthaśāstra. [3][4]

A traditional Hindu classification divides āstika and nāstika schools of philosophy, depending on one of three alternate criteria: whether it believes the Vedas as a valid source of knowledge; whether the school believes in the premises of Brahman and Atman; and whether the school believes in afterlife and Devas. [5][6][7] (though there are exceptions to the latter two: Mimamsa and Samkhya respectively).

There are six major (āstika) schools of Vedic philosophy—Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta—and five major non-Vedic or heterodox (nāstika or sramanic) schools—Jain, Buddhist, Ajivika, Ajñāna, and Charvaka. The āstika group embraces the Vedas as an essential source of its foundations, while the nāstika group does not. However, there are other methods of classification; Vidyanaya for instance identifies sixteen schools of Indian philosophy by including those that belong to the Śaiva and Raseśvara traditions. [8][9]

The main schools of Indian philosophy were formalised and recognised chiefly between 500 BCE and the late centuries of the Common Era. [citation needed] Some schools like Jainism, Buddhism, Yoga, Śaiva and Vedānta survived, but others, like Ajñāna, Charvaka and Ājīvika did not. [7,8,9]

Ancient and medieval era texts of Indian philosophies include extensive discussions on ontology (metaphysics, Brahman-Atman, Sunyata-Anatta), reliable means of knowledge (epistemology, Pramanas), value system (axiology) and other topics.

### Common themes

Indian philosophies share many concepts such as dharma, karma, samsara, dukkha, renunciation, meditation, with almost all of them focusing on the ultimate goal of liberation of the individual from dukkha and samsara through diverse range of spiritual practices (moksha, nirvana). [14] While many sutra texts explicitly mention that the work leads to moksha, Indian philosophy is not exclusively concerned with moksha. [15]

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They differ in their assumptions about the nature of existence as well as the specifics of the path to the ultimate liberation, resulting in numerous schools that disagreed with each other. Their ancient doctrines span the diverse range of philosophies found in other ancient cultures.[16]

One of the most common list of Hindu orthodox schools is the "six philosophies" (ṣaḍ-darśana), which are:[30]

Sāṃkhya (school of "Enumeration"), a philosophical tradition which regards the universe as consisting of two independent realities: puruṣa (the perceiving consciousness) and prakṛti (perceived reality, including mind, perception, kleshas, and matter) and which describes a soteriology based on this duality, in which puruṣa is discerned and disentangled from the impurities of prakṛti. It has included atheistic authors as well as some theistic thinkers, and forms the basis of much of subsequent Indian philosophy.

Yoga, a school similar to Sāṃkhya (or perhaps even a branch of it) which accepts a personal god and focuses on yogic practice.

Nyāya (the "Logic" school), a philosophy which focuses on logic and epistemology. It accepts four kinds of Pramā (valid presentation): (1) perception, (2) inference, (3) comparison or analogy, (4) word or testimony.[31] Nyāya defends a form of direct realism and a theory of substances (dravya).

Vaiśeṣika (the school of "Characteristics"), closely related to the Nyāya school, this tradition focused on the metaphysics of substance, and on defending a theory of atoms. Unlike Nyāya, they only accept two pramanas: perception and inference.

Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā (the school of "Prior Investigation"[of the Vedas]), a school which focuses on exegesis of the Vedas, philology and the interpretation of Vedic ritual. [10,11,12]

Vedānta ("the end of the Vedas", also called Uttara Mīmāṃsā), focuses on interpreting the philosophy of the Upanishads, particularly the soteriological and metaphysical ideas relating to Atman and Brahman.

Sometimes these six are coupled into three groups for both historical and conceptual reasons: Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya-Yoga, and Mīmāṃsā-Vedānta. Each tradition also included different currents and sub-schools. For example, Vedānta was divided among the sub-schools of Advaita (non-dualism), Viśiṣṭadvaita (qualified non-dualism), Dvaita (dualism), Dvaitadvaita (dualistic non-dualism), Suddhadvaita (pure non-dualism), and Achintya Bheda Abheda (inconceivable oneness and difference).

The doctrines of the Vedas and Upanishads were interpreted differently by these six schools, with varying degrees of overlap. They represent a "collection of philosophical views that share a textual connection", according to Chadha 2015.[32] They also reflect a tolerance for a diversity of philosophical interpretations within Hinduism while sharing the same foundation.[33]

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Hindu philosophers of the orthodox schools developed systems of epistemology (pramana) and investigated topics such as metaphysics, ethics, psychology (guna), hermeneutics, and soteriology within the framework of the Vedic knowledge, while presenting a diverse collection of interpretations. The commonly named six orthodox schools were the competing philosophical traditions of what has been called the "Hindu synthesis" of classical Hinduism.

All these systems are not the only "orthodox" systems of philosophy, as numerous sub-schools developed throughout the history of Hindu thought. They are however the most well known Hindu philosophical traditions.

## RESULTS

Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that examines the basic structure of reality. It is traditionally seen as the study of mind-independent features of the world, but some theorists view it as an inquiry into the conceptual framework of human understanding. Some philosophers, including Aristotle, designate metaphysics as first philosophy to suggest that it is more fundamental than other forms of philosophical inquiry.

Metaphysics encompasses a wide range of general and abstract topics. It investigates the nature of existence, the features all entities have in common, and their division into categories of being. An influential division is between particulars and universals. Particulars are individual unique entities, like a specific apple. Universals are general features that different particulars have in common, like the color red. Modal metaphysics examines what it means for something to be possible or necessary. Metaphysicians also explore the concepts of space, time, and change, and their connection to causality and the laws of nature. Other topics include how mind and matter are related, whether everything in the world is predetermined, and whether there is free will.

Metaphysicians use various methods to conduct their inquiry. Traditionally, they rely on rational intuitions and abstract reasoning but have recently included empirical approaches associated with scientific theories. Due to the abstract nature of its topic, metaphysics has received criticisms questioning the reliability of its methods and the meaningfulness of its theories.

Metaphysics is relevant to many fields of inquiry that often implicitly rely on metaphysical concepts and assumptions.[13,14,15]

The roots of metaphysics lie in antiquity with speculations about the nature and origin of the universe, like those found in the Upanishads in ancient India, Taoism in ancient China, and pre-Socratic philosophy in ancient Greece.

During the subsequent medieval period in the West, discussions about the nature of universals were influenced by the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. The modern period saw the emergence of various comprehensive systems of metaphysics, many of which embraced idealism. In the 20th century, traditional metaphysics in general and idealism in particular faced various criticisms, which prompted new approaches to metaphysical inquiry.

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Metaphysics is the study of the most elementary features of reality, including existence, objects and their properties, possibility and necessity, space and time, change, causation, and the relation between matter and mind. It is one of the oldest branches of philosophy.[1][a]

The precise nature of metaphysics is disputed and its characterization has changed in the course of history. Some approaches see metaphysics as a unified field and give a wide-sweeping definition by understanding it as the study of "fundamental questions about the nature of reality" or as an inquiry into the essences of things. Another approach doubts that the different areas of metaphysics share a set of underlying features and provides instead a fine-grained characterization by listing all the main topics investigated by metaphysicians.[4] Some definitions are descriptive by providing an account of what metaphysicians do while others are normative and prescribe what metaphysicians ought to do.[5]

Two historically influential definitions in ancient and medieval philosophy understand metaphysics as the science of the first causes and as the study of being qua being, that is, the topic of what all beings have in common and to what fundamental categories they belong. In the modern period, the scope of metaphysics expanded to include topics such as the distinction between mind and body and free will.[6] Some philosophers follow Aristotle in describing metaphysics as "first philosophy", suggesting that it is the most basic inquiry upon which all other branches of philosophy depend in some way.

Metaphysics is traditionally understood as a study of mind-independent features of reality. Starting with Immanuel Kant's critical philosophy, an alternative conception gained prominence that focuses on conceptual schemes rather than external reality. Kant distinguishes transcendent metaphysics, which aims to describe the objective features of reality beyond sense experience, from the critical perspective on metaphysics, which outlines the aspects and principles underlying all human thought and experience.[9] Philosopher P. F. Strawson further explored the role of conceptual schemes, contrasting descriptive metaphysics, which articulates conceptual schemes commonly used to understand the world, with revisionary metaphysics, which aims to produce better conceptual schemes.[16,17,18]

Metaphysics differs from the individual sciences by studying the most general and abstract aspects of reality. The individual sciences, by contrast, examine more specific and concrete features and restrict themselves to certain classes of entities, such as the focus on physical things in physics, living entities in biology, and cultures in anthropology.[11] It is disputed to what extent this contrast is a strict dichotomy rather than a gradual continuum.

## CONCLUSION

The nature of metaphysics can also be characterized in relation to its main branches. An influential division from early modern philosophy distinguishes between general and special or specific metaphysics.[15] General metaphysics, also called ontology,[c] takes the widest perspective and studies the most fundamental aspects of being. It investigates the features that all entities share and how entities can be divided into different categories. Categories are the most general kinds, such as

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substance, property, relation, and fact.[17] Ontologists research which categories there are, how they depend on one another, and how they form a system of categories that provides a comprehensive classification of all entities.[19]

Special metaphysics considers being from more narrow perspectives and is divided into subdisciplines based on the perspective they take. Metaphysical cosmology examines changeable things and investigates how they are connected to form a world as a totality extending through space and time.[19] Rational psychology focuses on metaphysical foundations and problems concerning the mind, such as its relation to matter and the freedom of the will. Natural theology studies the divine and its role as the first cause.[19] The scope of special metaphysics overlaps with other philosophical disciplines, making it unclear whether a topic belongs to it or to areas like philosophy of mind and theology.[20]

Starting in the second half of the 20th century, applied metaphysics was conceived as the area of applied philosophy examining the implications and uses of metaphysics, both within philosophy and other fields of inquiry. In areas like ethics and philosophy of religion, it addresses topics like the ontological foundations of moral claims and religious doctrines.[17] Beyond philosophy, its applications include the use of ontologies in artificial intelligence, economics, and sociology to classify entities.[19] In psychiatry and medicine, it examines the metaphysical status of diseases.[20]

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