

ANCIENT INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

ORIGIN OF RAJPUTS

Various views have been put forward by the scholars about the origin of Rajputs. These opinions can be divided into two categories i.e. the theory of foreign origin and the theory of indigenous origin.

The theory of foreign origin

- (a) Campbell and Jackson were the first to put forward this theory.
- (b) Scholars like Col. Tod, William Crook, Bhandarkar, Tripathi and V.A.Smith are also associated with this theory.
- (c) Tod - the Rajputs emerged out of Sathians.
- (d) William Crook - the purification of foreign tribe gave birth to the Rajputs.
- (e) V.A.Smith - the Rajputs emerged out of Sakas, Kushanas and Hunas
- (f) Bhandarkar - the Rajputs emerged out of Sakas, Yavanas, Kushanas and Hunas

The theory of indigenous origin:

Scholars like Gauri Shankar, Hirachandra Ojha and C.V. Vaid supports the theory of indigenous origin of Rajputs.

According to Prithviraj Raso of Chandarbardi four Rajputs clans (The Chauhan/Chahamanas of Ajmer, Pratiharas of Bhinmal, Solankis of Anhilwara and the Parmars of Malwa) emerged out of fire altar during a sacrifice performed by Vashishta at Mount Abu.

According to Aprajitaprichcha mostly small feudal lords were part of Rajputs.

The Matsya Purana mentions **Brahmakshatra** tradition according to which some Brahmanas left their original professions and took to the profession of Kshatriyas. According to Ghatiyal inscription the founder of Gurjara Pratihara was a Brahmana originally. According to Bijoliya inscription Chauhan ruler Samantaraj originally belonged to a Brahmana clan of "Vipshri Vatsa" gotra. In Pingalsutravritti Parmar Munja and in Ballalcharit the Sena rulers have termed as Brahmakshatra.

EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OF ANCIENT AGE

NALANDA UNIVERSITY

Nalanda is about 56 miles (90 km) southeast of Pataliputra. One version of the source of the place name is that *nalanda* means lotus and *da* means to give. Since the lotus in India symbolizes knowledge, Nalanda means Giver of Knowledge.

The great university at Nalanda began as a Buddhist monastery. Early Buddhist and Jain education was based on their monasteries, rather than on a particular teacher. Some of these monasteries gained a reputation as centers of learning, in addition to training novices for their orders. Aspiring students of any faith could attempt to pass the oral entrance exams. If successful, a student could acquire a free education in many subjects. The university at Nalanda was the first international residential school in the world and attracted students from all over India, as well as from China, Korea, Ceylon and Indonesia. In addition to the study of Buddhist scriptures and the Vedas, the curriculum included philosophy, theology, logic, grammar, linguistics, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and crafts. Ancient texts state that there were as many as 10,000 students housed at Nalanda at one time, but the size of the establishment, based on the archaeological remains, casts doubt on this claim.

The university was founded around 427 by Kumaragupta I (415-455), son of Chandragupta II. Skandagupta (455-467) continued his father's royal patronage of the university by enlarging the physical facilities. During his reign the kingdom was attacked by the Hunas whose leader Mihirakula hated Buddhism so much that he took special pains to destroy any buildings associated with the religion. The university at Nalanda is thought to have been destroyed for the first time during this period. Skandagupta's brother Puragupta, and Puragupta's son Narasimhagupta (467-473) undertook the restoration of the school at Nalanda, adding even larger and grander buildings in the process, and set up long term endowments. Kumaragupta II (473-476) continued his forebears' patronage of the university, adding still more structures to the complex. Harshavardhana (606-648) was a Hindu but was known for his religious tolerance. This extended so far as to rebuild the Buddhist sponsored university at Nalanda which had again suffered destruction, this time by the Gaudas in the early seventh century. Harshavardhana also added a magnificent brass plated building to the complex.

The Chinese scholar, Hiun-Tsiang, who visited India in 630 and stayed for a time at Nalanda, has this to tell us about the university:

“The richly adorned towers, and the fairy-like turrets, like pointed hill-tops, are congregated together. The observatories seem to be lost in the vapours of the morning, and the upper rooms tower above the clouds. From the windows one may see how the winds and the clouds produce new forms, and above the soaring eaves the conjunctions of the sun and moon may be observed. And then we may add how the deep translucent ponds, bear on their surface the blue lotus, intermingled with the Kie-ni (Kanaka) flower, of deep red colour, and at intervals the Amra groves spread over all, their shade. All the outside courts, in which are the priests' chambers, are of four stages. The stages have dragon projections and coloured eaves, the pearl-red pillars, carved and ornamented, the richly adorned balustrades, and the roofs covered with tiles that reflect the light in a thousand shades, these things add to the beauty of the scene.

The king of the country respects and honours the priests, and has remitted the revenues of about 100 villages for the endowment of the convent. Two hundred householders in these villages, day by day, contribute several piculs of ordinary rice, several hundred catties in weight of butter and milk. Hence the students here, being so abundantly supplied, do not require to ask for the four requisites (clothing, food, bedding and medicine). This is the source of the perfection of their studies, to which they have arrived.”

Another Chinese traveler, the Buddhist pilgrim I-Tsing who arrived in India in 672, described the monastery at Nalanda as having eight halls and three hundred apartments. He said there was only one gate by which to enter the compound, which was in the south wall and attended by a gatekeeper. Strangers who came to the university were screened with questions by this keeper in order to determine the extent of their previous education before they were allowed to enter. I-Tsing reported that only two or three visitors out of every ten managed to pass this difficult test.

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Nalanda's importance as a monastic university continued until around 1197, when invading Muslims sacked the grounds. The great educational center was never rebuilt. Today, a visitor to Nalanda may explore the archaeological sites of eleven of the monasteries and several red brick temples. There is a museum near the ruins which houses a collection of Hindu and Buddhist bronzes, copper plates, stone inscriptions, coins, pottery, and undamaged statues of the Buddha which have been excavated from the site.

VIKRAMASHILA UNIVERSITY

A number of monasteries grew up during the Pāla period in ancient Bengal and Magadha. According to Tibetan sources, five great Mahaviharas stood out: Vikramaśīla, the premier university of the era; Nalanda, past its prime but still illustrious, Somapura, Odantapurā, and Jaggadala. The five monasteries formed a network; "all of them were under state supervision" and there existed "a system of co-ordination among them . . . it seems from the evidence that the different seats of Buddhist learning that functioned in eastern India under the Pāla were regarded together as forming a network, an interlinked group of institutions," and it was common for great scholars to move easily from position to position among them.

Vikramashila was founded by Pāla king Dharmapala in the late 8th or early 9th century. It prospered for about four centuries before it was destroyed by Bakhtiyar Khilji during fighting with the Sena dynasty along with the other major centres of Buddhism in India around 1200.

Vikramashila is known to us mainly through Tibetan sources, especially the writings of Tāranātha, the Tibetan monk historian of the 16th-17th centuries.

Vikramashila was one of the largest Buddhist universities, with more than one hundred teachers and about one thousand students. It produced eminent scholars who were often invited by foreign countries to spread Buddhist learning, culture and religion. The most distinguished and eminent among all was Atiśa Dipankara, a founder of the Sarma traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. Subjects like philosophy, grammar, metaphysics, Indian logic etc. were taught here, but the most important branch of learning was tantrism.

VALLABHI UNIVERSITY

Vallabhi University achieved as much fame as Nalanda. The Maitraka kings who ruled Western India constructed a monastery at Vallabhi. Vallabhi University was established in Saurashtra of modern Gujarat at around 6th century and it flourished for 600 years till 12th century. Chinese traveler Itsing who visited this university during the 7th century describes it as a great center of learning. Gunamati and Sthiramati, the two famous Buddhist scholars are said to have graduated from this University. This University was popular for its training in secular subjects and students from all over the country came to study in this University. Because of its high quality of education, graduates of this University were given higher executive posts.

While Nalanda was the centre for Mahayana Buddhism, Vallabhi achieved fame as the centre for Hinayana Buddhism. The Maitraka kings spent lavishly to maintain their university. They gave every encouragement and assistance to Buddhist studies at this institution. In the 7th century Vallabhi was as prosperous and famous as Nalanda. Hiuen Tsang visited Vallabhi, and reported in his "Ta-Tang-Si-Yu-Ki" as follows:

- "The population of Vallabhi is very large. The country is rich and prosperous. There are over a hundred millionaire families there. Imported luxury goods are seen in this city. There are about 100 monasteries with about 6,000 Buddhist monks. Most of them belong to the Sammitiya Sect. There are also many Hindu temples and a large Hindu population in this part of the country. The Buddha had visited this land during his ministry. There are stupas erected by King Asoka to mark the spots hallowed by the Buddha's visit."

There are about 100 shrines and about 6,000 resident monks studying at Vallabhi. They do not believe that Abhidharma was the teaching of the Buddha. They believed in the Antarabhava doctrine and were exponents of Puggalavada a tradition that disregards Abhidharma teachings that are inconsistent with the Sutra-Teachings.

I-Tsing records that foreign students were found at Vallabhi. They come from many lands far and near from these facts we know that like Nalanda-Vallabhi was internationally recognised. There was a large library. This was

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maintained by a fund established by the King. An inscription put up by King Guhasena confirms this. Precedence was given to Sammitiya doctrines at this University. The course of studies included Comparative Religion. The Six systems of Hindu Philosophy and various other schools of Buddhism, Politics, Law, Agriculture, Economics also formed a part of the curriculum.

I-Tsing records that the graduates of Vallabhi, displayed their skill in the presence of the royalty, nobbles, and other eminent people. The Elders Gunamoti and Sthiramatic were Nalanda's alumni and were teaching there for a time. They are said to be the founders of Vallabhi. As the founders came from Nalanda, Vallabhi followed the Nalanda pattern in most of its activities. It flourished from 475 to 1200 A.C. It met the same fate as other Universities at the hands of the Muslim invaders.



MAJOR PHILOSOPHICAL THINKERS AND SCHOOLS

THE SYSTEMS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

The Vedas are the oldest scriptures in the world. The Indian philosophical systems are classified according as they accept the authority of the Vedas or not. The systems of Indian philosophy are classified into two groups:

(1) The Orthodox Systems

(2) The Unorthodox Systems

The orthodox systems are: Vaisheshika, Nyaya, Samkhya, Yoga, Purva-Mimamsa, and Uttar-Mimamsa.

The unorthodox systems are: Charvakism, Jainism and Buddhism.

Very often, Purva-Mimamsa is referred to as "Mimamsa" only and Uttar-Mimamsa as "Vedanta".

The orthodox systems uphold the supremacy of the Vedas. The unorthodox systems reject the authority of the Vedas. Truly speaking Vaisheshika, Nyaya, Samkhya and Yoga are neither orthodox nor unorthodox. These four systems, while originating, neither accepted nor rejected the Vedas.

The orthodox systems form pairs as follows:

Nyaya-Vaisheshika, Yoga-Samkhya, Mimamsa-Vedanta. In each of the pairs, the first system is concerned with the practice and the second system focuses on the theoretical aspects.

It becomes difficult, sometimes, to name a single founder or a promoter of a system. However, the following are widely acknowledged as proponents of the above systems: Gautama for Nyaya, Kanada for Vaisheshika, Patanjali for Yoga, Kapila for Samkhya, Jaimini for Purva-Mimamsa and Shamkara for Uttar-Mimamsa.

Charvakism is believed to have been promoted by Charvaka. Vardhamana Mahavira is acknowledged as the founder of Jainism and Gautama Buddha as the founder of Buddhism.

The common characteristics in Indian Philosophies:

The systems of Indian philosophies, with a singular exception of Charvakism, have certain common characteristics. Charvakism remarkably differs from other systems as it promotes materialism.

The following characteristics are common to all other systems:

- All the schools emphasize that the philosophy must have a positive impact on life of man. The schools have a general agreement on the importance of the Purushartha. All the schools agree that the philosophy should help man in realizing the main ends of human life: the purusharthas, i.e. artha, kama, dharma and moksha.
- All the systems reflect that the philosophy should lead a man from darkness and ignorance to light and knowledge.
- There is a general agreement among the systems that the truth and reality should be verifiable. They should be substantiated with reasoning and experience. An experience may be sensory, conceptual or intuitional.
- It is accepted by all the schools that man's suffering results from his ignorance. Man can conquer ignorance and attain total freedom (moksha) in this bodily existence.
- There is a general agreement on man's essential spirituality.

SAMKHYA SYSTEM

Samkhya is the oldest of the orthodox philosophical systems in Hinduism. It espouses dualism between consciousness and matter by postulating two "irreducible, innate and independent realities 1) consciousness itself or Purusha (self, atma or soul) 2) primordial materiality or Prakriti (creative agency or energy)". The unconscious primordial materiality, Prakriti consists of varying levels of three dispositions or categories of qualities (gunas)— activity (rajas), inactivity (tamas) and harmony (sattva). An imbalance in the intertwined relationship of these three dispositions causes the world to evolve from Prakriti. This evolution from Prakriti causes the creation of 23 constituents, including intellect (buddhi, mahat), ego (ahamkara) and mind (manas).

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Samkhya theorises the existence of are many living souls (Jeevatmas) who possess consciousness, but denies the existence of Ishvara(God).

Samkhya holds that Puruṣa, the eternal pure consciousness, due to ignorance, identifies itself with products of Prakriti such as intellect (buddhi) and ego (ahamkara). This results in endless transmigration and suffering. However, once the realisation arises that Puruṣa is distinct from Prakriti, the Self is no longer subject to transmigration and absolute freedom (kaivalya) arises.

Western dualism deals with the distinction between the mind and the body, whereas in Samkhya it is between the soul and matter. The concept of the atma (soul) is different from the concept of the mind and mind itself thought to an evolute of matter, rather than the soul. Soul is absolute reality that is all-pervasive, eternal, indivisible, attributeless, pure consciousness. It is non-matter and is beyond intellect. Originally, Samkhya was not theistic, but in confluence with Yoga it developed a theistic variant.

YOGA

In Indian philosophy, Yoga is the name of one of the six orthodox philosophical schools. The Yoga philosophical system is closely allied with the Samkhya school. The Yoga school as expounded by Patanjali accepts the Samkhya psychology and metaphysics, but is more theistic than the Samkhya, as evidenced by the addition of a divine entity to the Samkhya's twenty-five elements of reality. The parallels between Yoga and Samkhya were so close that Max Müller says that "the two philosophies were in popular parlance distinguished from each other as Samkhya with and Samkhya without a Lord..." The intimate relationship between Samkhya and Yoga is explained by Heinrich Zimmer:

"These two are regarded in India as twins, the two aspects of a single discipline. Sāmkhya provides a basic theoretical exposition of human nature, enumerating and defining its elements, analyzing their manner of co-operation in a state of bondage (bandha), and describing their state of disentanglement or separation in release (mokṣa), while Yoga treats specifically of the dynamics of the process for the disentanglement, and outlines practical techniques for the gaining of release, or 'isolation-integration' (kaivalya)."

The foundational text of the Yoga school is the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, who is regarded as the founder of the formal Yoga philosophy. The Sutras of the Yoga philosophy are ascribed to Patanjali, who may have been, as Max Müller explains, "the author or representative of the Yoga-philosophy without being necessarily the author of the Sutras." Hindu philosophy distinguishes seven major branches of Yoga:

- Rāja Yoga (also referred to as Classical Yoga), a system of yoga codified by Patañjali and classified as one of the six āstika ("orthodox") schools of Hindu philosophy.
- Jnana yoga, (also called buddhi-yoga) centred on the faculty of discernment and 'virtually identical with the spiritual path of Vedānta'.
- Karma-yoga, in which the world of everyday work becomes the tool by which self is transcended.
- Bhakti-Yoga the path of devoted service to God.
- Tantra-yoga focused on the techniques and psycho-physical teachings contained within a body of texts called tantras.
- Mantra-yoga, one of the most ancient forms of yoga in which the psycho-acoustical properties of the spoken word are used to concentrate the mind.
- Hatha yoga, a system of physical purification designed to reintegrate and re-balance the mind and body in preparation for Raja-yoga (first described by Yogi Swatmarama).

NYAYA

The Nyaya school is based on the Nyaya Sutras. They were written by Aksapada Gautama, probably in the sixth century BCE. The most important contribution made by this school is its methodology. This methodology is based on a system of logic that has subsequently been adopted by the majority of the Indian schools. This is comparable to the relationship between Western science and philosophy, which was derived largely from Aristotelian logic.

Nevertheless, Nyaya was seen by its followers as more than logical in its own right. They believed that obtaining valid knowledge was the only way to gain release from suffering, and they took great pains to identify valid

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sources of knowledge and distinguish these from mere false opinions. According to Nyaya, there are exactly four sources of knowledge: perception, inference, comparison, and testimony. Knowledge obtained through each of these is either valid or invalid. Nyaya developed several criteria of validity. In this sense, Nyaya is probably the closest Indian equivalent to analytic philosophy. The later Naiyanikas gave logical proofs for the existence and uniqueness of Ishvara in response to Buddhism, which, at that time, was fundamentally non-theistic. An important later development in Nyaya was the system of Navya-Nyāya.

VAISHESHIKA

The Vaisheshika School postulates an atomic pluralism in which all objects in the physical universe are reducible to certain types of atoms, and Brahman is regarded as the fundamental force that causes consciousness in these atoms. The school was founded by the sage Kaṇāda (or Kana-bhuk, literally, atom-eater) around the 2nd century BC. Major ideas contained in the Vaisheshika Sutra are:

- There are nine classes of realities: four classes of atoms (earth, water, light and air), space (akasha), time (kāla), direction (dik), infinity of souls (Atman), mind (manas).
- Individual souls are eternal and pervade material body for a time.
- There are seven categories (padārtha) of experience – substance, quality, activity, generality, particularity, inherence and non-existence.

Although the Vaisheshika school developed independently from the Nyaya, the two eventually merged because of their closely related metaphysical theories. In its classical form, however, the Vaisheshika school differed from the Nyaya in one crucial respect: where Nyaya accepted four sources of valid knowledge, the Vaisheshika accepted only two—perception and inference.

PURVA MIMAMSA

The main objective of the Purva Mimamsa school was to establish the authority of the Vedas. Consequently, this school's most valuable contribution to Hinduism was its formulation of the rules of Vedic interpretation. Its adherents propounded unquestionable faith in the Vedas and regular performance of the yajñas, or fire-sacrifices. They believed in the power of the mantras and yajñas to sustain all the activity of the universe. In keeping with this belief, they placed great emphasis on dharma, which consisted of the performance of Vedic rituals.

The Mimamsa philosophers accepted the logical and philosophical teachings of the other schools, but felt they did not sufficiently emphasise attention to right action. They believed that the other schools of thought that aimed for release (moksha) were not allowed for complete freedom from desire and selfishness, because the very striving for liberation stemmed from a simple desire to be free. According to Mimamsa thought, only by acting in accordance with the prescriptions of the Vedas may one attain salvation.

The Mimamsa school later shifted its views and began to teach the doctrines of Brahman and freedom. Its adherents then advocated the release or escape of the soul from its constraints through enlightened activity. Although Mimamsa does not receive much scholarly attention, its influence can be felt in the life of the practising Hindu, because all Hindu ritual, ceremony, and law is influenced by this school.

VEDANTA

The Vedanta, or later Mimamsa school, concentrates on the philosophical teachings of the Upanishads rather than the ritualistic injunctions of the Brahmanas. Etymologically, Vedanta means, the last segment of knowledge in the Vedas. It is also known as the 'Jnan' (knowledge) 'Kanda' (section). While, the earlier segments of the Vedas are called 'Karma Kanda'. Parts of Vedas that focus on spiritual practices such as worship, devotion and meditation are called 'Upasana Kanda'.

While the traditional Vedic rituals continued to be practised as meditative and propitiatory rites, a more knowledge-centered understanding began to emerge. These were mystical aspects of Vedic religion that focused on meditation, self-discipline, and spiritual connectivity, more than traditional ritualism.

The more abstruse Vedanta is the essence of the Vedas, as encapsulated in the Upanishads. Vedantic thought drew on Vedic cosmology, hymns and philosophy. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is believed to have appeared as

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HISTORY

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far back as 3,000 years ago. While thirteen or so Upanishads are accepted as principal, over a hundred exist. The most significant contribution of Vedantic thought is the idea that self-consciousness is continuous with and indistinguishable from consciousness of Brahman.

The aphorisms of the Vedanta sutras are presented in a cryptic, poetic style, which allows for a variety of interpretations. Consequently, the Vedanta separated into six sub-schools, each interpreting the texts in its own way and producing its own series of sub-commentaries.



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