

Gist of report on Course on Pre-Buddhist Indian Philosophies–III January 21-23, 2020 at University of Hyderabad, Telangana

In the year 2015, His Holiness the Dalai Lama emphasized the importance of learning ancient Indian philosophies and urged Tibetan Buddhist students to study them directly from the tradition holders. To put this advice into practice, I took a humble initiative to provide an opportunity for the monastic students to have a deeper understanding of the subject directly from excelled teachers of Hindu Philosophy by organizing courses in collaboration with Indian Universities.

The first course on Pre-Buddhist Indian Philosophies was organized in December 2016 in collaboration with University of Hyderabad. The second was arranged in association with Osmania University, Hyderabad in February 2019. The third was held in January 2020 in collaboration with Dept. of Sanskrit Studies, School of Humanities, University of Hyderabad.



Buddhist Philosophy students, especially monastic students, do study Pre-Buddhist schools. In various Buddhist Philosophical texts, many of the non-Buddhist schools are presented as purva paksha (opponent). To mention few:

Bhavaviveka or Bhavya's Tarkajvala gives five names: Sāmkhya, Vaiśesika, Vedānta, Mīmāṃsā and Jain. Panchen Sonam Dragpa listed five schools: Vaiśesika, Sāmkhya, Jain, Vedānta and Cārvāka. Kunkhyen Jigmed Wangpo mentions six root schools: Vaiśesika, Nyāya, Sāmkhya, Mīmāṃsā, Jain and Cārvāka. He also mentions five tarka schools.

In the prevailing system of Indian philosophical presentation, the Jain, the Buddhism and the Cārvāka are clubbed together as nihilism category as they are not based on Veda. The most basic philosophical question that any Indian system of philosophy ask is: What is the Truth, and how do we arrive at rational conclusion on the question of Truth? In the pursuance of this long-standing dilemma, all these different philosophical systems emerged.

The recent course held at University of Hyderabad from January 21-23 focused on **Vedānta**. This subject is the most comprehensive of these systems. Bādarāyana Vyāsa, who codified the teachings in the

Brahma Sūtra, is considered to be its founder. Sometime between the sixth and eighth centuries A.D., Sankarā reorganized the system of this monistic school of thought. Sankarā's Advaita (non-dualism) and Rāmānujacārya's Viśistādvaita (specific non-dualism) are the most important sub-schools. The main teachings of Vedānta are that Self-realization is the goal of life; that the essence of the Self is unchanging truth, consciousness, and bliss; that the Self is free from all qualifications and limitation – it does not come from anywhere nor go anywhere.

As the main resource person, we invited **Swami Muktananda Yati** from South India. He is the Director of One-World School of Vedānta, Kerala. He studied Upanishads, Vedānta, Yoga, Eastern and Western mysticism, religion and psychology under the discipleship of Guru Nitya Chaitanaya Yati. He took traditional sannyasa from Himalayas. He has written ten books in Malyalam and English. He works for peace and religious integration among mankind.

Swami Ji's teaching was very much appreciated by the participants. He spoke systemically according to the tradition. His teaching was based on the three categories of Yogas: Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Gyana Yoga. His skill in teaching, simplicity and humility inspired all.

Prof. Geshe Yeshe Thabkhe from Loseling Monastery, South India was also invited as a resource person. He is one of the most senior and learnt Tibetan monk scholars. He presented the background of Pre-Buddhist theory of Veda from the Buddhist sources. **Venerable Jampel Choezin**, Abbot of Gongkar Choede Monastery in Uttarakhand; **Venerable Lobsang Tseten**, former Abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery and **Venerable Ngagchen Rinpoche** who represented the Abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, Venerable Zigyab Rinpoche in Bylakuppe were also invited as resource persons from Tibetan scholarship side. Their contribution to the knowledge was very well received by the participants. **Dr. Tsering Samdup** from Varanasi was the translator. He did a wonderful job in translating from English to Tibetan and vice versa just like he did in the last two courses. All together, we were about 30 persons in attendance coming from Drepung Loseling Monastery, Tashi Lhunpo Monastery and Jangchub Choeling Nunnery in South India plus listeners from the University and Hyderabad city. The approach in these courses have always been purely academic.

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