

A Few Facets of Political Philosophy in Classical Indian Philosophy

Summary

This article aims to discuss some aspects of classical Indian political philosophy. It is rare for scholars to study Indian political philosophy since the focus tends more to be on ontology and epistemology than on political issues. However, by reflecting on selected excerpts from Classical Indian writings, it is possible to discover topics relevant to the discourse of political philosophy. More specifically, the article focuses on the core issues of political philosophy and their context with the three major Indian traditions (except Indian Islam): Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains. The Hindu political philosophy outlines four classes, among which the kṣatriya class should play the most significant role in politics. In Hindu texts on politics, it is common to discuss issues such as the forms of state governance,

the duties of the ruler, and their responsibility to society. Buddhists rejected the validity of class divisions and emphasized the equality of all people. Furthermore, they developed the idea that rulers have a responsibility to all sentient beings, not just to humans. According to Jain philosophy, the principle of non-violence (ahimsa) takes precedence over any other principle. Jain thinkers have developed this principle in great detail throughout their works, noting that rulers should take decisions to minimize the violence of human beings against all sentient beings. Even though the Jains did not have many opportunities historically to implement the idea of non-violence in politics, it played a very significant role in Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent resistance to achieve Indian independence.

Keywords: Political philosophy, Indian Philosophy, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism.