**Question: Discuss the classification of the various schools of Indian philosophy./ How are the various schools of Indian philosophy classified?**

**Answer:** There are nine chief systems or schools of Indian philosophy. These nine systems present a variety of fundamentally different philosophical views. According to a traditional principle of classification, which was most likely adopted by orthodox Hindu thinkers, these schools of Indian philosophy are divided into two broad classes, namely, orthodox (astika) and heterodox (nastika). In common usage, these terms signify “one who believes in God, i.e. theist” and “one who does not believe in God, i.e. atheist” respectively. However, in the Sanskrit philosophical commentaries, ‘astika’ means “the one that accepts the authority of the Vedas” and ‘nastika’ means “the one that denies the authority of the Vedas”. To the first group belong the six chief philosophical systems (popularly known as shad-darshana), namely, Mimamsa, Vedanta, Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya and Vaisheṣhika. These are regarded as orthodox (astika), not because they believe in God, but because they accept the authority of the Vedas. The Mimamsa and the Samkhya do not believe in God as the creator of the world, yet they are called orthodox (astika), because they believe in the authoritativeness of the Vedas. It is customary to couple the six astika schools in pairs: Samkhya-Yoga, Vaisheshika-Nyaya, and Vedanta-Mimamsa; the former in each pair is viewed as providing a theoretical framework and the latter primarily a method of physical and spiritual training.

Under the class of heterodox systems, there are schools of the Bauddhas and the Jainas, and the materialist school of the Charvakas. They are called heterodox (nāstika) because they do not believe in the authority of the Vedas.

To understand this classification more clearly, we should know something regarding the place of the Vedas in the evolution of Indian thought. The Vedas are the earliest available records of Indian literature, and later Indian thought, especially philosophical speculation, is greatly influenced by the Vedas, either positively or negatively. Some of the philosophical systems accepted Vedic authority, while others opposed it. The Mimamsa and the Vedanta may be regarded as the direct continuation of the Vedic culture. The Vedic tradition had two sides, ritualistic and speculative (karma and jnana). The Mimamsa emphasised the ritualistic aspect and evolved a philosophy to justify and help the continuation of the Vedic rites and rituals. The Vedanta emphasised the speculative aspect of the Vedas and developed an elaborate philosophy out of Vedic speculations. The remaining orthodox systems i.e. Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya and Vaisheṣhika based their theories on ordinary human experience and reasoning, but they did not challenge the authority of the Vedas. Rather they tried to show that the testimony of the Vedas was quite in harmony with their rationally established theories. The heterodox schools i.e. Charvaka, Bauddha and Jaina schools arose mainly by opposition to the Vedic culture and, therefore, they rejected the authority of the Vedas. These facts may be summed up in a tabular form as follows:

