

Western Philosophy

Thales to Socrates

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Etyymology of the word ‘Philosophy’

- Greek Word
- Philos* = love
- Sophia* = Wisdom/Knowledge
- Philosophy= Love for Wisdom**
- Philosopher =one who loves wisdom**

Main divisions of the Western Philosophy

- Ancient Philosophy (624 BCE- 476 CE)
- Medieval Philosophy or Scholasticism (476 CE - 1453 CE)
- Modern Philosophy (1453 CE – 1860 CE)
- Contemporary Philosophy (from 1860 CE to present times)

Western Philosophy begins with Greek philosophy.....

- Greek philosophy – turning point in the history of Europe.
- Breaks away the earlier spell of magico-religious beliefs and moves towards scientific thought.

Greek philosophers are both **philosophers** and **scientists** as they explain the world with the help of natural elements.

- First generation- Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes
- Second generation- Parmenides, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Xenophanes

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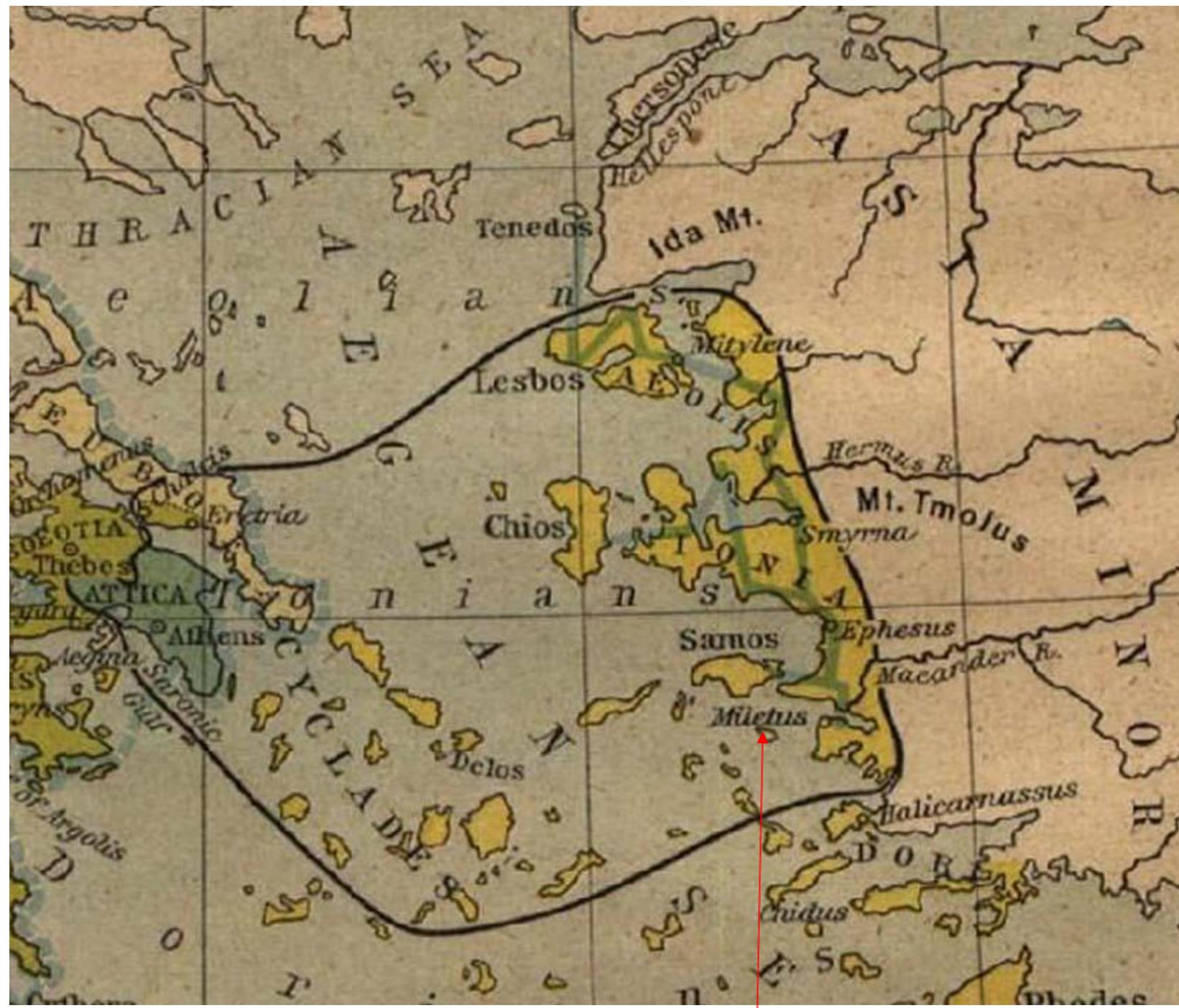
.The ancient Greeks inherited the astronomical knowledge of the Babylonians and Egyptians.

.The Greeks believed that the world around them was created by the gods and that natural phenomena were all signs and acts of the gods.

.By about 700 BCE the Greeks began to move away from this mythical view of the world and started to seek explanations of natural phenomena without gods. This was the beginning of what we now call science.

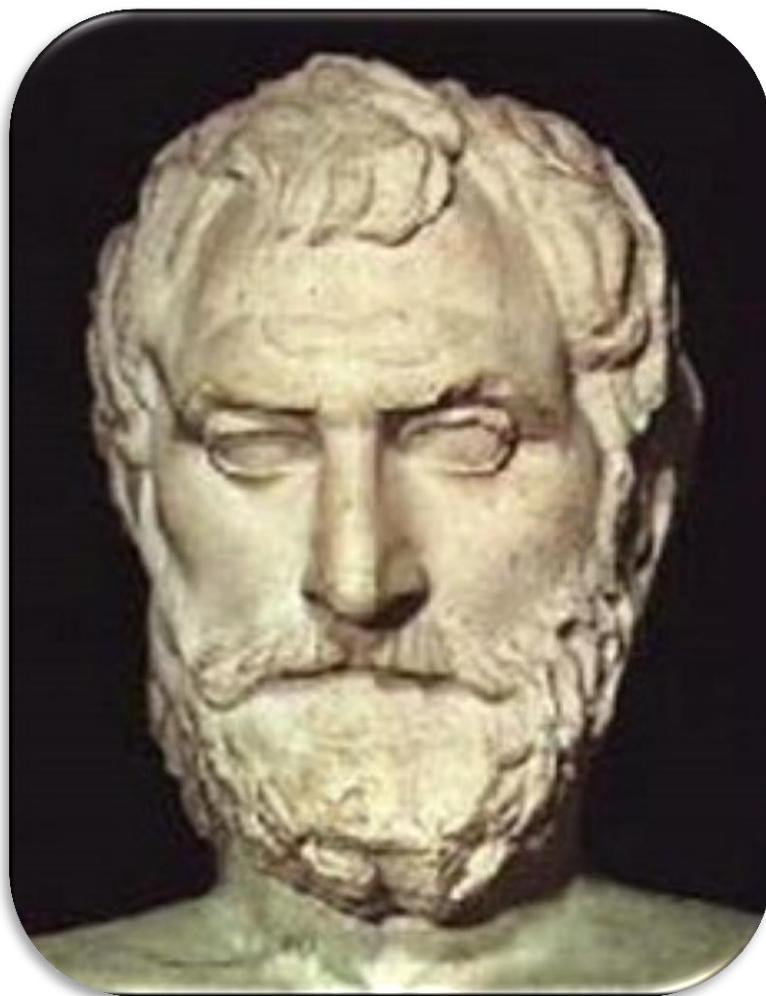
Ionian School / Miletian School

- **Miletian / Ionian school –**
Thales, Anaximander, Anaxemenis
- **Miletus city in Greece-**
 - ✓ Near sea-coast of Asia Minor
 - ✓ Natural calamities-frequent deaths
 - ✓ Prosperous and luxurious life
 - ✓ Started thinking about fluctuations of life
- **Whether change is the nature of the world? If so then what is permanent in this universe?**
Philosophy began with this question.



Miletus

THALES [624-585 BCE]



- First philosopher
- First Scientist

It is difficult to gauge the real life of Thales as none of his work has survived. It is unsure whether he ever actually wrote down any of his teachings.

First Scientist:

- .Thales was the first recorded person to try to explain what he saw in the world around him.
- . He thought that natural phenomena - including the heavens - could be discussed as processes governed by natural laws rather than relying on supernatural explanations.
- .One of the main astronomical claims to fame for Thales is the suggestion that he predicted the solar eclipse of 585 B.C.

First Natural Philosopher

In its early days philosophy included science – which became known as '**Natural philosophy**'.

Thales' thinking was scientific because it could provide evidence for its conclusions. And it was philosophy because it used **reason** to reach these conclusions."

Ionian / Miletian school

- .Thales was first of the Miletian along with his followers **Anaximander** and **Anaximenes**.
- .They all questioned the origin of the Universe, what was here in the beginning, and what things are made from.
- .They all believed that *material substance* (rather than some spiritual or supernatural substance) made up the universe.
- .What this substance was varied for each of them.

Problem of *Arche/ ursstoff*

- What is the fundamental **Substance** of the universe?
- The problem of substance became one of the main issues in Greek philosophy

Observation and analysis

- ❖ Observation of fluctuations of sea-water
- ❖ Various forms of dynamic ocean
- ❖ Quest for finding *urstoff* or *arche*

Different Forms of Water



The fundamental matter

According to Thales Water is
the fundamental principle of
this universe

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- Presence in so many things
- Different forms (ice, liquid, steam)

Central theme of Thale's philosophy

**From water everything originates
and to water everything returns**

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World-view of Thales



- Thales believed that the Earth was a large (flat) disk floating on an infinite ocean of water.
- Earthquakes resulted from disturbances in this ocean that shook and cracked the Earth.
- At that time the Greeks believed that when **Poseidon**, the god of the sea, was angry he produced earthquakes.

Key-points in Thale's Philosophy



Change exists in the universe



One fundamental substance behind whole universe



**Universe consists of three things:
Vapour, liquid and Solid**



Water is the basic principle

Interpretation of the Thale's proposition

.Unity in Diversity

He suggested the concept of “unity underlying diversity” – meaning that there were some fundamental principles tying together all the multitude of things we see on Earth. This was certainly an original style of thought for his time.

- ✓ Thales believed that in the beginning there was only water, that the world and all things were composed of water.
- ✓ “Water” in this context is to be understood as some **unifying principle**.
- ✓ That principle remains constant during change and that is the source of **unity in diversity**

Urstoff- water

- Beginning of life-associated with water.
- Water is necessary for life
- Universe can be categorized in three things.
 - Liquid ,solid and gaseous
- Water can assume all these three forms.

•**Law of conservation of energy :**
Water always exists in some or the other forms- not perishable

Always exists -eternal

Scientific as well as philosophical

Concluding that root of this diverse universe is in some permanent principle.

–Revolutionary and Philosophical

Knowledge is possible

- Water is comprehensible. Everything in this universe is comprehensible just as water is.
- The universe is knowable to human thoughts.
- No place for incomprehensibility, mysticism, gods or demons.

- Fundamental principle is not transcendental, but it has pervaded the whole world
- Starting point of intellectual conquest
- Journey of thought from mythos to logos
- Beginning of scientific as well as philosophical thought

According to Aristotle...

- Thales selected water as the ultimate stuff, for food is always wet and it nourishes the body.
- Even the generating seeds are wet.
- In short, Water is responsible for any production in nature.

Two States of Water

- I. Water in its usual fluid state
(undifferentiated *urstoff*)

- II. Water in its transformed state
(differentiated water)
Gaseous ,solid forms of water
e.g: ice, fish, earth, trees etc.

Theory of change / Eternal cycle

Composition of the universe and transformation of things is an eternal cycle



Eternal Cycle of this World

Salient Features of Thale's philosophy

- Primary cause of the universe is in some permanent, eternal principle
- Different finite, changeable things of the universe are the products of single principle
- Going beyond the apparent form of universe to the essence of the world

- Attempt to find the eternal principle which is beyond this universe of names and forms
- Keeping away the strong influence of supernatural and mythical spell
- Journey from sensory knowledge towards something abstract and conceptual knowledge
- Is the knowledge of all possible by knowing that **One basic principle** ?

Points to compare-

Nasadiya sukta – (Rgveda X.129)

नासदासीन्नो सदासीत्तदानीं नासीद्रजो नो व्योमा परो यत् ।
किमावरीवः कुह कस्य शर्मन्नम्भः किमासीद्गृहनं गभीरम् ॥

There was neither non-existent nor existent. There was only primordial water (deep unfathomable water). Something was there which has potential of becoming manifold.

Hiranyagarbha sukta

- Primordial water in the beginning of the universe
- Water holds the Cosmic golden egg
- Creation from golden egg

Kevaladvaita System of Vedanta

- The Nature of Universe-
ever changing, dynamic, momentary,
temporary

- One fundamental basic thing behind
this changing universe is immutable
Brahman

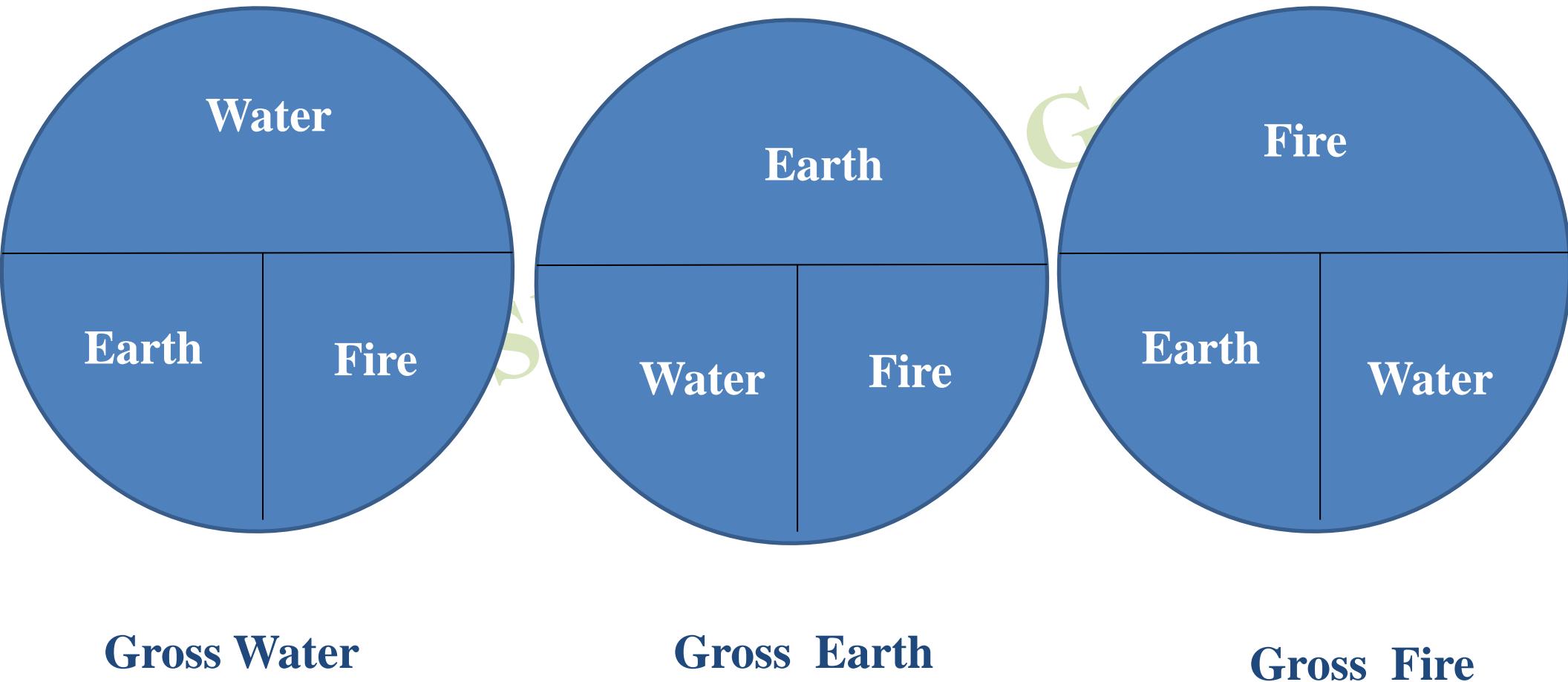
Upanishadic Philosophy

Unity in diversity

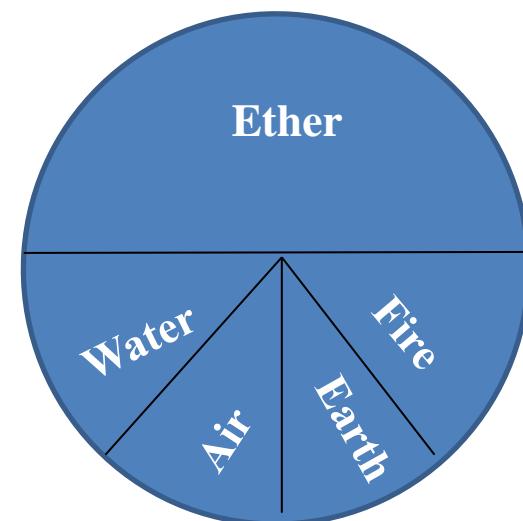
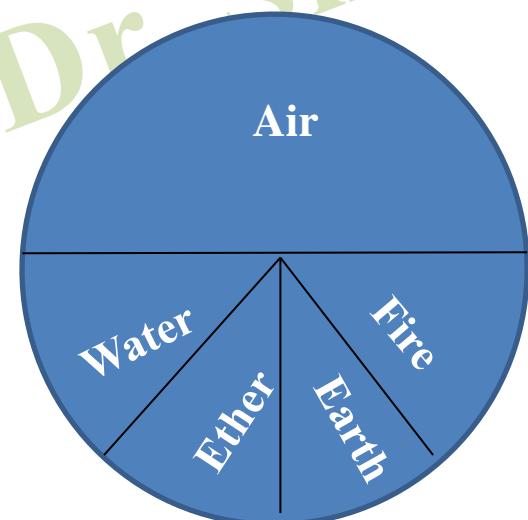
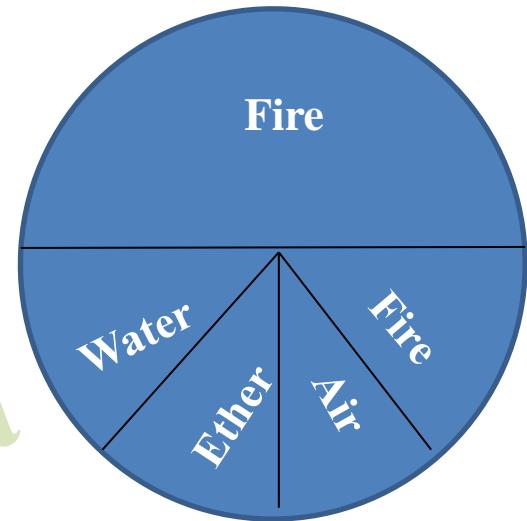
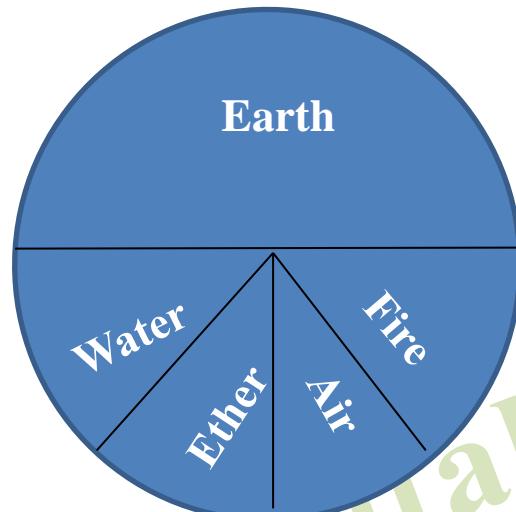
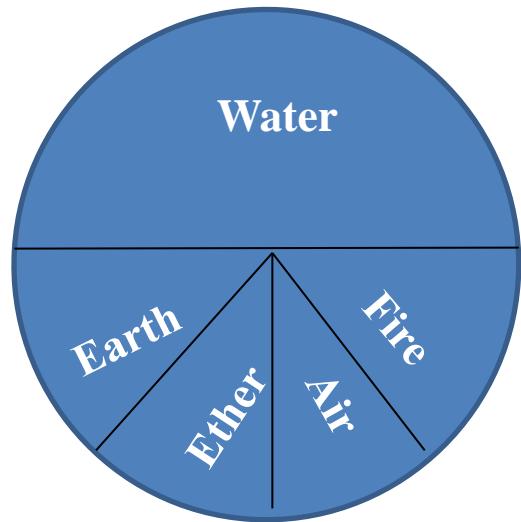
वाचारम्भणं विकारो नामधेयं मृत्तिकेत्येव
सत्यम् । *ChaUp I.4*

अग्निर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टे
रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव ।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा
रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च ॥ *KathaUp II.2.9*

Trivrutkaranam



Panchikaranam



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Extra-ordinary similarities

- Theory of borrowing
- Theory of common origin
- Independent parallelism

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Anaximander (611-547 BCE)

Primary matter :
Boundless or limitless something

Infinite boundless principle: God

World governed by opposites

Anaximenes 588-524 BCE

Air is the
basic
principle

Condensation
and Rarefaction

Scientific
Outlook

ende

Pythagoras (580-500 BCE)

- Whatever exists, exists in number
- Mathematics is nothing but proportion, order and Harmony
- World-composed of opposites
- Mathematics and music are the means of liberation

Xenophanes (570-480 BCE)

- Disciple of Anaximander
- All is one
- All the things are divine
- All are equal
- Religious unity

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Parmenides (514 BCE)

- World of things- becoming
- Multiplicity and changes are unreal
- One alone is real. One can know it only through thought.

Heraclitus (535-475 BCE)

- Water or air is not the primordial stuff.
- Fire is ever changing entity which constitute reality.
- Everything is in constant flux
- All is flow, becoming
- Existent thing- Harmony of opposites
- World is becoming in the unity of opposites

Empedocles (490 - 430 BCE)

- Fire, water, air and earth – four equal fundamental substances of the world.
- All different states of nature are brought about by the mixture and inter-mixture of the elements of four fundamental entities.

Sophists

- Sophist- wise man
- Pretension of being wise
- False account of knowledge, morality and politics.

Protagoras (480-410 BCE)

- *Homo Mensura*- Man is the measure of all things.
- What appears to me is true for me and what appears to you is true for you.
- Relativism of Knowledge
- Impossibility of Universal Knowledge (scepticism)

Socrates 469-399 BCE

- Dialectic Method
 - Midwifery method
- Started questioning to so called wisest men
- Conclusion: Who claim to know really do not know anything
 - I am wiser than others as I know my own ignorance.
 - Ignorance is the beginning of any knowledge

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