

Stoicism

Alok Kumar Gupta

MAPSIR

Stoicism

- **Stoicism**
- **“Only the educated are free.” [Epictetus]**
- The best presentation of stoicism is by the Greek slave **Epictetus** (50—138AD), who wrote during the Roman era.

- Founded by Zeno in about 300 BC.
- Zeno is said to be a pupil of Crates.
- Subsequently developed by Cicero, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius.
- It followed from Cynicism or development of Cynicism.
- It influenced Roman jurisprudence and concept of Natural Law.
- This school influenced political philosophy for about 500 years i.e. from 300 BC to 200 AD.
- Zeno of Citium (333—262 BC) in Cyprus. According to some sources he was a student of Cynics, but was also influenced by Socrates. His philosophy was similar to Antisthenes, but tempered by reason.
- Crates was the leader of Cynic School.
- Marcus Aurelius (121—180AD) was a Roman Emperor who wrote a little book **Meditations**, about the idea of Stoicism.

- It starts with the fundamental ideas of Cynicism, but interprets them in a positive and constructive ways:
- Perfect self-control
- Independence of circumstances
- Complete self-contained life
- Life according to Nature
- Consequently, in place of the wholly negative and nihilistic doctrines of Cynicism we get in Stoicism positive and constructive ideas which persisted through centuries and moulded the political thought of Europe from Cicero down to the eighteenth century.

- Zeno believed in being virtuous, and that virtue was a matter of submitting to God's will.
- As usual for Greeks who postulated a single god, Zeno did not strongly differentiated God from Nature.
- So another way of putting it is to live according to nature (“Zen kata physin”)

Stoic Ideals:

- Universal natural law, universal citizenship, and the natural equality of man were Stoic ideals. However, the Greek Stoics did not make any attempt to apply them to political life. The task was left to the Roman Stoics.
- With the establishment of the Roman Empire universal law and universal citizenship became actual facts.

- The idea of the Law of Nature and the conviction that there are certain principles of justice common to all men were adopted and applied by the Roman jurists and judges whose opinion had the force of law throughout the civilized world.
- The concept of human brotherhood was taken over and expanded by Christianity and transmitted with profound results to the modern world.

Stoics Contribution to Political Philosophy:

- Idea of universal brotherhood based on natural law;
- Emphasis on reason;
- Law of Nature;
- Roman Empire adopted the concept of universal law and citizenship and they practiced the principle of justice.