

## **Syllabus: Give a brief definition and explanation of the nature and purpose of philosophy in terms of the search for meaning and values**

The word 'philosophy' comes from the 2 Greek words Philo meaning love and Sophia meaning knowledge/wisdom. To wonder is to philosophise. Everyone philosophises whether consciously or not. Human beings have always wondered about the nature of the universe. Before 5th/6th Century people had a mythical understanding of the reality. The universe, destiny, the physical world and natural disasters made people wonder. They answered the mysterious and complex questions of life through myths. During 5th/6th Century people began to develop a rational understanding of reality. Human beings gradually became aware of the big questions in life and they began to reflect on this awareness instead of accepting the status quo. A number of people began to form rational theories to answer the complex questions of reality. They would ask: Why does the world exist? Why do people behave the way they do? How should we behave? Each philosopher used rationalism and empiricism to develop their own responses to each question.

The natural philosophers also known as the pre-Socratic philosophers all claimed to have discovered the truth about the origin of things, however they all differed about the nature of this truth. They concerned themselves with natural world and the source of everything. Thales believed that everything originated from water. Anaximenes believed that everything originated from air and Heraclitus believed that everything originated from fire.

Philosophy strives to make clear through rational thought. The nature of the universe and the nature and meaning of existence. Reflective people and societies encourage critical and rational thinking about the meaning and purpose of life. Philosophy emerges from wonder

and uses reason and logic. Western philosophy emerged in Ancient Greece during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Centuries when the Sophists, a group of travelling teachers, began to focus on people and their place in the world. The Sophists did not accept the status quo and encouraged people to think outside the box. They were employed by the upper classes during a time when Greece was politically influential and the concept of democracy was dawning. They were well-paid for their services. Emerging democracy in Greece required educated men. Their new ideas appealed to the younger generations of Greek men who were politically ambitious. People wanted answers to complex questions about the nature of reality - answers that were not influenced by myth