

## Chapter – 2

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**Concept of Liberation****2.i The concept of liberation according to Indian philosophy**

The conception of liberation is the greatest original contribution of Indian sages to the world thought. Indian philosophy in general is taken for propagating the ideas of liberation (*mokṣa*), *karma* and rebirth. It might be remarked here that these three concepts have always been so interpreted as to give impression of Indian philosophy preaching the doctrine of ‘world and life negation’. But this view has been propagated by a section of thinkers and this does not reflect the view of the majority of Indian thinkers. It is to be emphasised that the view of world negation is not correct. For the doctrine is well-balanced and here lies the difference between Indian and Western thought. Indian philosophy, as such, does not advocate merely world negation, nor it is a pessimistic philosophy, rather it upholds an optimistic view. If it were not so then it would not mention ‘*kāma*’ (pleasure) as one of the end of human action.

A corollary of the principle of internal harmony is also evident from the principle of ‘*Cāturāśrama*’ or the institution of ‘four stages’. The four-

fold value has got to be realised and the best means of realising it would be through objective institutions. The *Vedas* have therefore proclaimed the necessity of the four '*āśrama*'s in the chronological order are (i) '*brahmacarya*', (ii) '*gārhasthya*', (iii) '*vāṇaprastha*' and (iv) '*sannyāsa*'. It is to be noted that the preceding '*āśramas*' is generally preparatory to the succeeding one. The order is meant for the large majority of the aspirants to blessedness. It must not be thought that every man is morally bound to pass through all the successive stages. In exceptional cases one may pass from the first to the last one or from the second to the fourth one. It may be noted that the stage of '*brahmacārya*' embodies pure '*dharma*', that of '*gārhasthya*' embodies '*artha-kāma*' under the control of '*dharma*', the stages of '*vāṇaprastha*' and '*sannyāsa*' represent '*dharma-mokṣa*'. A life graduated through the four stages is the normal picture of the realisation of '*Cāturvarga*' of the fourfold value.

*Sannyāsa* is generally held by *hindus* to be the last of the four ideal 'stages of life (*āśrama*) and is preceded by studentship (*brahmacārya*), householder ship (*gārhasthya*) and forest dwelling (*vāṇaprastha*) and most of the *hindus* view *sannyāsa* as an advanced spiritual state.

Although renunciation has an important value to an Indian, '*gārhasthya*' (the phase of the house holder) has not been also looked upon as a less important period of life than the later ones. In fact, it is considered to be

‘the main stay of the four *āśramas*, for it gives unity and cohesion to the entire social structure and the other *āśramas* depend on it for their sustenance. Several scriptural passages refute the view widely held in the West – that the *hindu* ideal is inactivity. In the *Bhagavadgītā*, for instance, we find the following passage :

“Do you perform prescribed action for action is better than Inaction, and the body too cannot be supported without action.”<sup>1</sup>

As it has been pointed out by Radhakrishnan, one does not enter the life of ascetism until he has fulfilled his obligations to his fellow man as a student and as a householder.

The *hindu* ideal of *mokṣa* / *mukti* / *nirvāṇa* (liberation or freedom), which refers to a state of completeness of fullness of being, free from bondage of (*karma*) action and, thus from rebirth – something which requires a loosening of familial and social associations, a gradual retreat from moral life. This is the third stage of *āśrama* of *vāṇaprasthya*, which is spontaneously and inevitably followed by *sannyāsa*, which is the ideal individual’s period of life as a hermit of monk.

*Advaita Vedānta* accepts ‘the practical side of ethics’ as presented in *varṇāśrama dharma* without attempting to justify such ‘practical ethics’

beyond viewing such behaviour as instrumental to the attainment of the *mokṣa* or freedom.

Liberation means freedom and the term 'freedom' has two components i.e., 'freedom from' and 'freedom to' and we are here concerned with the first one, viz., 'freedom from'. It is freedom from the misery, the physiological and psychological tension. It is freedom from ignorance, which could be the real nature of man. This is definitely an ideal state of affair for an individual. This is the ultimate goal as envisaged by the Indian thinkers. Liberation is the summum bonum. *paramapuruṣārtha* of human life. The summum bonum of life can be attained when all impurities are removed and the pure nature of the soul is thoroughly and permanently apprehended and all other extraneous connections with it are absolutely dissociated. It is to be emphasised here that the word 'Indian' here mean six *āstika darśanas* viz., *nyāya-vaiśeṣika*, *sāṃkhya-yoga*, *mīmāṃsā* and *vedānta*. Liberation is freedom of the individual soul, from bondage. All the six systems admit that the soul is pure and eternal. It is different from the physical body, senses and intellect. When the soul assumes connections with the body and the senses. it is regarded as born and when it loses these connections it is declared as dead. Birth and death belong to the material body and not to the soul. During life the soul has particular name and form, which no longer exist after death. When

the soul wrongly identifies itself with them the whole trouble starts. According to the *karma* doctrine, good deeds yield good results and bad ones give rise to the evil effects. The soul has to experience the fruits of action. It cannot escape from it. Hence there is rebirth. All systems agree that actions in one life lead to new life. The soul, thus goes from one body to another accumulating merit or demerit through good or bad deeds. The meritorious deeds give rise to happiness, which is generally mixed with pain and is definitely temporary. Nobody finds pleasure unmingled with pain. Every one has to suffer at least the inevitable miseries of old age, death and sorrow. The life therefore has been regarded as all suffering and bondage. Freedom from this cycle of birth and death is called liberation. And in order to escape from all these inevitable miseries the aim of a man should be the attainment of this freedom.

Indian philosophy maintains that all individuals without any exception are entitled to and capable of achieving this aim. Everybody, even the most sinful person in this material world, has the right to spiritual progress. Whoever earnestly longs and strives hard for it can obtain it. Moreover, complete realisation of the divine nature of the soul as different from physical body leads to the freedom from bondage even in this life, this realisation and freedom is possible in this life also. 'This stage is called *jīvanmukti*'.

A 'jīvanmukta' man lives this life but he remains totally detached. He does not feel disturbed in misery; he does not feel any desire for happiness or pleasure; he does not feel any attachment, any fear and aversion or anger – towards anything of this world.

It might be mentioned here that liberation consists of two factors – removal of bondage viz., 'saṁsāra' and attainment of the *Brahman*. Among these two the first one viz., removal of bondage is of the nature of the destruction of actions. This action, because it is rooted in ignorance (*avidyā*), is denoted by the word *avidyā* in the *Upaniṣad*. The second factor viz., the attainment of the *Brahman* means nothing but the realisation of it. The *Brahman*, which though already present there, yet is covered by *avidyā*, can be achieved by the removal of *avidyā*.

It is to be emphasised here that removing of *avidyā* or *mithyājñāna* is possible only if *tattvajñāna* or knowledge of truth can be attained and as long as we enjoy our merits and demerits, that is to say, the results of our previous actions. We are not able to get rid of the *mithyājñāna* or false knowledge. Now it seems to be very difficult for us to live a life without doing any action as an action always leads to some results good or bad. Hence a question arises : is it not paradoxical to say that an embodied being can get rid of his false knowledge without abstaining from the

works to be done by him ? For, as long as a person remains alive, he gets involved into one or another action and as a consequence he bears the results of that action.

The solution of this paradox, however, lies in the notion of *niṣkāma karma* preached in the *Bhagavadgīta* by Lord *kṛṣṇa*. Lord *kṛṣṇa* there advised *Arjuna* to practice desire-less action or *niṣkāma karma*, which would only enable a man to become free from the results of the actions, performed by him in this life. And by doing so his false knowledge or *avidyā* will disappear and he will be able to realise *Brahman*.

*Niṣkāma-karma* is nothing but selfless, disinterested actions dedicated to God. Its emphasis on the disinterested performance of worldly duties provides human beings with a new path of emancipation and freedom. No human being can live without performing some kind of action and the *Gītā* seeks to show how, by means of *niṣkāma-karma*, this constant output of energy may be utilised by human beings to attain to perfection and release from transmigration. *Niṣkāma-karma* is the special art of performing one's duties is the art of keeping oneself absolutely disinterested in and non-attached to worldly pleasures and pains.

For *niṣkāma-karma*, the deed should be done without any thought of desiring its fruits. In other words, *karma* should be '*niṣkāma*'. *Karma-yoga* thus, is the path of disinterested service. Work should be done

without attachment of result. If the desire achieving anything from the work done is absent then the work will not be a shackle. The *Gītā* gives the formula of *niṣkāma-karma* thus : “You are entitled to work alone, and not to its fruits. So never work for the fruit not yet desist from work”.<sup>2</sup> The ideal of *Gītā* is not negativism, asceticism or escapism. It is not negation of actions but performance of actions in a detached spirit. It is not ‘*naiṣkarma*’, but ‘*niṣkāma-karma*’.

When a man performs any action without having any desire for its fruits but performs it only as a service to the Supreme Lord, his action ceases to have any corresponding reaction; and it is, therefore, as good as not doing any action and is termed – ‘*akarma*’ (inaction). To such a person, though in the midst of activity, there would be virtually no difference between an action (*karma*) and inaction (*akarma*).

For spiritual progress and eventual liberation (*mokṣa*), therefore, one must perform ‘*akarma*’. *Akarma* in this sense has also been referred to as ‘*niṣkāma-karma*’ or action that is performed without any desire for the fruit thereof. Performance of actions done in a detached way would enable a man to get rid of the cycle of rebirth and transmigration.

Philanthropic acts enhance one’s social status but keep a man enslaved to the material world. To perform *niṣkāma-karma* one has to graduate from

formal good to genuine good. Genuine good is unpremeditated and is performed for its own sake, not for reward. It affects one's inner self, one's consciousness and elevates one from the modes of ignorance (*tamo-guṇa*) and passion (*rajo-guṇa*) to the modes of goodness (*sattva-guṇa*) from where spiritual progress would become quicker.

*Niṣkāma karma* is possible but it is not a very easy path to the common people. When all the desires of a person are resigned to God and duties are performed by him with a disinterested spirit he turns to be a *yogīn*, better to say, '*karma-yogīn*'. From what we have stated so far, it appears that a *karma-yogīn* works without a purpose in view.

One might ask : 'Duty for duty's sake' is undoubtedly a beautiful ideal but how far it is possible to do such action ? It might be objected that disinterested activity or motiveless activity seems to be inconceivable, as we cannot work without some one or other motive. To this it might be replied that the Lord *Kṛṣṇa* in the *Gītā* does not deny all motives. He only denies selfish motives. Our actions have two aims, which are to be kept in mind. These are viz., (i) *ātmaśuddhi*, which means purifying the self or cleansing the heart, (ii) sub serving the purpose of God.

So, *karma-yoga* does not mean the performance of action without any motive whatsoever. Only instead of having different motives for different

actions the *karma-yogīn* have one and the same motive for all actions; viz., the worship of God with a purified heart. The Lord in the *Gītā* declares “whatsoever thou offerest, whatsoever thou givest away and whatsoever thou givest away and whatsoever austerities thou practise – do that as an offering to me”.<sup>3</sup> Work is also to be regarded as an worship. This implies a sublimation of baser instincts and appetites, passions and desires. The deeds that are performed must yield their results. There is no escape. But the *yogīn* does not regard them as ends; but only as consequences. He does his work without attachment to fruits and for the purification of the soul and he offers his actions and their results as offerings to the Lord. Thus the goal of moral action is the attainment of communication (*yoga*) with god.

*Sanchita-karma*, the aggregate of all actions performed in one’s previous lives, creates impressions on our consciousness that produce a tendency or predisposition (*saṁskāra*) to repeat similar actions in future lives. *Saṁskāras* form a person’s behavioural pattern or what is commonly called character. *Saṁskāras* affect not only our outer lives but our inner thoughts and emotions as well. Thinking and acting with discrimination (*viveka*), we can refine our *saṁskāras*. Good *saṁskāras* persuade us to perform pious deeds, which again take up from *tamo-guṇa* and *rajo-guṇa* to *sattva-guṇa*. It takes many many lives to refine one’s *saṁskāras* to that

extent where one can truly be situated in *sattva-guṇa*, a pre-requisite to the progress in the pursuit of *mokṣa*, our spiritual goal.

Since all our thoughts and actions are activated under the control of the *guṇas*, liberation can be achieved only if one can rise above all the three *guṇas*, viz., *sattva*, *raja* and *tamo-guṇa* including *sattva-guṇa*. Lord *kṛṣṇa* says in the *Bhagavadgītā*, “When the embodied being is able to transcend the three modes of material nature associated with the material body, he can become free from birth, death, old age and their distress and can enjoy nectar even in this life”. And, to transcend the *guṇas* He advises. “One who engages in full devotional service, unfailing in all circumstances, transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of *Brahman*”.

As our past *karma* is fructifying, fresh *karma* is being added by our present actions and since our lives have continued from eternity, our *sanchita-karma* remains forever inexhaustible. Escape from *samsāra*, thus, seems to be impossible. But, at the highest spiritual level, divine dispensation through God’s grace (*kṛpā*) can cancel out any or all of one’s past *karma*. God’s *kṛpā* is obtained through unconditional devotional service to God and dedicating the results of one’s action to Him.

Through *karma* we create our own material destiny. But in order to attain *mokṣa* we must practice *niṣkāma-karma* i.e., an action that does not generate reaction.

It is to be mentioned here that the *Bhagavadgītā* does not enjoin the performance of ritualistic acts, which are not the way to liberation. *Mokṣa*, however, is a state of the soul, which transcends the *guṇas*. It cannot be attained by *Vedic* rituals. Because, these *Vedic* rituals are prudential duties and prudential duties are intended for the fulfilment of egoistic desires. According to *Gītā*, *mokṣa* is total destruction of egoism through *niṣkāma-karma*, it is state of non-action. A liberated person neither acts nor causes others to act. He may work for the good of humanity without moral obligation. It is transformation of human life into divine life. It is indissoluble with God.

The liberation of man, according to the Indian way of thinking, is as realisable a possibility as his bondage is. As a matter of fact, it is the dominant feature and indeed the keynote of his empirical life. In this context, two diametrically opposed views can be distinguished in the field of Indian philosophy. These are, viz., (a) which is based on an extremely individualistic and isolationist theory of the soul and consists in holding that the empirical life of a soul undermines its intrinsic individuality and isolation and thereby reduces it to a state of degradation and suffering

which constitutes its bondage; (b) The other view is, on the contrary, based upon the non-individualistic conception of the soul and amounts to holding that the life's admission into empirical life is its fall from its intrinsic non-individuality and its consequent individuation which is synonymous with its bondage and is the ultimate source of its suffering.

Now the view (a) has been advocated by orthodox schools like the *nyāya-vaiśeṣikas*, the *sāṃkhya-yoga* and the *mīmāṃsā* and by heterodox school like Jainism. The view (b) has been held by the *advaita vedānta* of Śaṅkara on the one hand and *Buddhism* on the other. A discussion in details will be made in the third chapter.

## 2.ii. *Tattvajñāna* leads to liberation

It has been held by all the Indian thinkers excepting *Cārvāka* that each man gains virtue and vice by actions, vocal, mental and physical and as a consequence rebirth is essential for each being only in order to enjoy the good and bad results of such actions. Now, the opponents of this theory might ask : If that be the case then it would be impossible to think of the liberation of a soul as no one can live a life in this world by abstaining from each type of action. In other words, nobody can stay without doing any action. And one cannot make oneself free from the chain of rebirth.

This objection, however, might be answered by pointing out that *tattvajñāna* destroys attachment and detachment which are the effects of false knowledge (*mithyājñāna*). It is evident that *tattvajñāna* and *mithyājñāna* (false knowledge) cannot stay together. And since the man who possesses *tattvajñāna* is devoid of *rāga*, *dveṣa* and *moha* cannot be reborn to enjoy the results of good and bad actions.

The opponents might ask : If a person who is said to possess *tattvajñāna* is postulated to get rid of the cycle of rebirth then we have to assume the futility of all his previous actions the results of which are not yet enjoyed. For a person having *tattvajñāna* cannot enjoy the results of his good and bad actions.

To this objection it might be remarked that *tattvajñāna* does not lead to the denial of enjoying the fruits of previous actions.

A question : How such enjoyment is possible for a *tattvajñānī* as he cannot be born again ?

The advocates of liberation theory, however, do not see such difficulty. According to them, the *tattvajñānī* enjoys the fruits of all the actions done by him in his past lives in this present life; and as long as such enjoyment remains incomplete the *tattvajñānī* has to stay alive. He is able to give up this present body only after completing the enjoyment in question.

Further, one cannot admit the liberation of a *tattavajñānī* immediately after his realisation of the *tattva* or truth. For, if it were the case that the soul would become liberated just after the said realisation then it were not possible for a *tattvajñānī* to give advice to his disciples by being alive. We, however, know many *tattvajñānī* saints advising people many things about the ultimate truth. This proves that final liberation of soul does not follow immediately after the realisation of ultimate truth.

It might be asked : Should we then accept the *tattvajñāna* as the cause of liberation since liberation does not come immediately after the *tattvajñāna* ?

This problem can be solved by pointing out that there are two types of liberation, namely, viz., ‘*para*’ and ‘*apara*’. Between these two the ‘*para*’ liberation has been regarded as final liberation, the ‘*summum bonum*’ of life. It does not occur immediately after realisation of truth. It comes rather gradually after the extinction of false knowledge (*mithyājñāna*). But ‘*apara*’ liberation of the soul happens immediately after the ultimate realisation of truth. This is another name of *jīvanmukti* or being liberated in life. In other words, the ultimate realisation of truth itself does not directly cause the final liberation. But it becomes its cause through the

destruction of false knowledge. As a matter of fact, there is no other means but *tattvajñāna* for the destruction of false knowledge.

As it has been mentioned earlier that the philosophical teachings in India consists essentially in making a man what he was not before. One, who acquires *tattvajñāna*, attains full freedom from the shattering influences of the various impurities.

To attain liberation one must acquire a true knowledge of the soul and all other objects of experience (*tattvajñāna*). He must know the soul as distinct from the body, the mind, the senses etc. For this he should first listen to the scriptural instructions about the soul (*śravaṇa*). Then he should firmly establish the knowledge of the soul by means of reasoning (*manana*). Finally, he must meditate on the soul in conformity with the principles of *yoga* (*nididhyāsana*). These help him to realise the true nature of the soul as distinct from the body and all other objects. With this realisation, the false knowledge (*mithyājñāna*) like 'I am the body' is destroyed, and one ceases to be moved to action (*pravṛtti*) by passions and impulses (*doṣa*). When a man becomes thus free from desires and impulses, he ceases to be affected by the effects of his present actions, done with no desire for fruits. His past karmas or deeds being exhausted by producing their effects, the individual has to undergo no more birth in this world (*janma*). The cessation of birth means the end of his

connection with the body, and consequently, of all pain and suffering (*duḥkha*); and that is liberation.

### **2.iii. Liberation and Salvation**

One might ask : Is the Indian notion of liberation is same as the notion of salvation accepted in Christianity ? It might be replied here that the Indian concept of liberation or *mokṣa* is something different from the Christian concept of salvation as found in the teachings of the Bible. Before taking the task of comparing the Indian concept of liberation with the Christian concept, it is to be kept in mind that there is a fundamental difference between the Indian theory of 'souls' and that of the Christians. According to the Indian thinkers, the soul is beginningless and eternal whereas according to the Semitic view, God created the souls and sent them to this world.

Salvation is as much a key Biblical concept as the concepts of God's glory and kingdom. The notion of God who saves his people is a recurrent theme in the Old Testament. This salvation is often a liberation from temporal afflictions, but it also constitutes an eschatological promise.

Salvation obtains an even more important place in the New Testament. The Gospels regard salvation as the purpose of Christ's life. He has come

to earth to save that which was lost, to save the world and not to condemn it. The evangelists Matthew and Luke underline Jesus's role as saviour from his very infancy. The child conceived by Mary shall be called Jesus, because "he will save his people from their sins".

The letters of the apostles preach salvation as the meaning of Christ's life. God desires the salvation of all men. For this reason he has sent his son as saviour of the world and has made the Gospel an instrument for the salvation of every believer. In preaching it, an apostle has no other purpose but the salvation of men. Salvation is also the meaning of the Christian life. The Gospel confronts men with a choice between salvation and doom, life and death. In the fear of the Lord they must work out their salvation, which is the object of the Christian hope. Salvation is the final event at the end of time. God guards those who are chosen "for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time". The manifestation of the Lord and saviour will bring about "the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ".

Man's salvation is likewise described under many other concepts and metaphors, such as consolation and reward, the peace and justice of God, liberation, divine ship, vision of God and above all as eternal life. According to Christ, whoever believes in him may have eternal life. Salvation appears as the human side of the glorification of God and of the

presence of his kingdom among men. People who give God his glory men who belong to his kingdom are the ones who are saved. Those on the other hand who refuse to glorify God and reject the invitation into his kingdom call down perdition upon themselves.

The Biblical teaching however, does not give the impression that man's final salvation is only a secondary motive in the endeavour to live a life faithful to God's will and that it would be a distortion of the right order to aim at salvation directly as a principal goal. It is hard to find in the holy books a definite subordination of man's salvation to any other purpose or goal. The innate desire of the human heart for happiness cannot simply be qualified as the expression of an imperfect personality. The unrest of the soul, which longs for rest in God is implanted in the human heart by the Creator Himself. True, the striving of human beings after happiness always stands under the suspicion of an egoistic self-interest. Indeed men often pursue the goal of happiness in selfish way. But the striving after the salvation of the soul in the Christian sense is something altogether different from a merely self-centred type of happiness. Salvation is a condition, which – unlike pleasure – does not comprise only the fulfilment of some particular inclinations in man: it concerns the good of the whole person and beyond it of the whole people of God. Salvation is community with Christ, who is Himself both saviour and salvation; it is

union with God. Since salvation signifies a condition in which everything is right and whole, and a state, which is by its nature centred in God. Holy Scripture does not find objection in placing salvation and eternal life before men as the ultimate reward for a faithful life and the final goal to be aimed at by them. But if man is justified in striving after salvation as the final aim of his life and if on the other hand God's glory and kingdom are to be the ultimate end of man and all creation, is man then not confronted with two ultimate goals ? But only one goal can really be the ultimate one. In fact, both man's salvation on the one hand and God's glory and kingdom on the other are two aspects of the same identical reality. Man's final salvation consists only and solely in the reign of God, and wherever the kingdom of God is, there is necessarily salvation. Both goals are always realised together. The ultimate purpose of God's demand is with regard to God, his glory and with regard to man, salvation. The close unity between the kingdom of God and the salvation of man should make it plain that salvation has also a temporal, terrestrial dimension, just as the kingdom of God also has a temporal dimension and includes a commitment to the development of the world. Salvation therefore may not be too narrowly understood as reward and happiness in the other world to the neglect of man's concern for the conditions of this world and of his calling to improve them. Such a tendency would indeed

be liable to the criticism of Marx and others that religion betrays the cause of the poor in the world.

It must also never be forgotten that liberation includes as one of its most urgent tasks the struggle against the bonds of selfishness and sinfulness in man's own heart. The best structures remain ineffective and soon become inhuman if those who live in them do not undergo a conversion of heart and free themselves from the serfdom of sin. "As the kernel and centre of his Good News, Christ proclaims salvation, this great gift of God which is liberation from everything that oppresses man but which is above all liberation from sin and the Evil One, in the joy of knowing God and being known by him of seeing him and of being given over to him".<sup>4</sup>

"Christ is the power of God". The Gospel is 'God's saving power'. Salvation consists in the effects wrought by God's power in the lives of those who submit themselves trustfully to Christ meeting 'point by point' the ultimate and universal needs of man. Christian faith is belief in the willingness and power of God to deal thus effectively with man's whole case, as he stands in the midst of the world, to the uttermost of his need, to the utmost of his capacity.

Salvation, therefore, means freedom from the slavery of a life-long fear of death. It means too, a change in the very nature of death, so that it

becomes comparable to the sleep, which precedes the resurrection to life and action. It means, even more, a transfiguration in the experience of dying, which is no longer a fate, but an opportunity and condition of realising what the power of God in Christ can do to a mortal man. The defeat of death lies in the moral sphere, and is already absolute. The physical counterpart of that victory belongs to the consummation of salvation. when the period ushered in by the resurrection shall be crowned by the return of the Lord. Then in a transition, which, in the nature of the case, is, unimaginable death shall be swallowed up in victory. But this anticipation is not a hope thrown into the unknown; it is the sure and certain issue of a salvation, which is a present experience.

It is a Christian doctrine that every human being has a soul, but unless we are familiar with other religious orientations we may be unaware of the further Christian doctrine that 'only' human beings have souls. In the religions of India and many other parts of Asia, animals and insects, even plants also have souls. In Christian belief, every soul lives only once on earth and is thereafter immortal. In *hinduism* a soul returns many times, and it is not only 'will' live forever but 'has' lived forever.

To people familiar with the Christian tradition, 'salvation' means an after life in Heaven. Salvation may be temporary or permanent, partial or complete. Praying for rain is a form of salvation – seeking God in

Heaven. The various goals are not all mutually exclusive. An individual might strive for worldly prosperity or good health or long life by supernatural means and also be interested in attaining a temporary supernatural state of bliss or communion with God. In some sense, however, religious persons are always seeking salvation here and now. Salvation is the saving of the soul; deliverance from sin and its consequences and admission to heaven brought about by Christ.

Many Indian systems ascribe our ultimate troubles to ignorance (*avidyā*). By contrast there is the Christian doctrine of original sin in which the human race is implicated through the primordial acts of Adam and Eve. Additionally, there are varying conceptions of how human life works : for instance, in Christianity, life stretches essentially from birth or conception to death and then the question arises about the status of post mortem existence, if any. But in South Asian framework, the condition of living beings is *saṃsāra*, which implies a potentially endless round of rebirth from which one escapes only through ultimate liberation or *mokṣa*. In Western monotheism the question is often whether there is an afterlife whereas in the Indian tradition the after life is something given accepted fact and the question is whether one can get rid of it.

The conception of salvation relates most clearly to the idea of some ultimate value of being *nirvāṇa*, God, *Brahman* and so on. It may be

thought of as an identity with such an ultimate state or being, or more frequently as a kind of communion with a personal Lord in a heavenly place. That is, the place of God. Various means may be used to gain liberation or final communion. Where God is a personal object of worship typically salvation has to be effected by the deity and this is where doctrines of grace and their analogues come in. Even here it is assumed in some way that the human being cooperates even if only by calling on the divine name for help. Where there is no such personal God, the individual must prepare himself, often through rigorous methods, in order to be in a position to gain eternal freedom. In a number of Indian systems there is the ideal of the *jīvanmukti*, that is gaining liberation (*mukti*) while still living (*jīvan*). It is typical of “self-help” systems to postulate this kind of liberation, but in “other help” systems there is a prefiguring of final salvation, as indicated typically by the question asked by some Christians, are you saved ? (Not, will you be saved ?).

The etymology of the word salvation suggests “making whole” and there are indications of the close connection between physical and spiritual health in the New Testament (e.g.. the emphasis on Jesus healing miracles). The early Christian view of Sacrament of baptism implied that the neophyte, on entering the Christian community, dies like Christ and is, resurrected with Christ. Provided there are no problems in the rest of

the person's life, he is assured of ultimate salvation because of the ritual or sacramental union with Christ as victor over sin and death. This is repeated and reinforced by the eucharistic sacrament wherein Christ's eternal life is imparted to the faithful person in the bread and wine.

In Christianity, especially in the less sacramentally oriented forms of Protestantism, there is emphasis upon conversion – experiences, being “born again” and attaining an inner illumination concerning one's own salvation. In the Indian tradition there is much emphasis here also. In *jñāna* or knowledge, one experiences an encounter with the ultimate, whether this be the discrimination (*viveka*) of the eternal from the non-eternal in *sāṃkhya-yoga*, the attainment of the higher *dhyānas* in *Buddhism*, or the realisation of the identity of *ātman* and *Brahman* in *advaita*. While the doctrine of a personal God will suggest the spontaneity of such a being “born again.” However, the more contemplative forms of Indian and East Asian religion, from ch'an and neo-Confucianism to *theravāda* (*hīnayāna*) *Buddhism* and *Hindu yoga*, stress the greater importance of technique (methods of meditation, breathing exercises etc.).

If any single conception can be taken to distinguish Indian philosophy from the Western, it is the conception of *mokṣa* which is usually translated into English as liberation, salvation or release, though none of

these words reveal the full meaning of the original. The conception of salvation or release in western theology implies that the soul has fallen in the dearth of the world (*samsāra*) at some particular time due to certain sin and we have to release the soul from it. But Indian conception of *mokṣa* implies that the soul is eternally free, but it has wrongly identified itself with certain extraneous elements. And we have to release its true nature.

In this lies its '*mokṣa*,' a special feature of Indian thought which distinguishes it from the Western value. According to Indian sages, the realisation of moral values was never regarded as our ultimate goal whereas the moral values are the ultimate aim of Western thought. Zimmer writes, "Humanity (The phenomenon of human being, the ideal of its perfection and the ideal of the perfected human society) was the paramount concern of Greek idealism, as it is today of Western christianity in its modern form : however, for the Indian sages and ascetics, *mahatmās* and enlightened saviours, 'humanity' was no more than the shell to be pierced, shattered and dismissed."<sup>5</sup>

Thus the Western thinkers have confined themselves only to humanity and morality. But Indian sages did not stop here. They went a step forward and said that humanity and morality are not the ends. According to them, our ideal is super-moralism, where there is not the struggle of

'Is' and 'Ought' which is at the very root of morality. In that state, moral activities become spontaneous activities as the instinctive activities. This is the stage of liberation. The conception of liberation is the greatest original contribution of Indian sages to the world thought.

Corresponding to the consciousness of sin in the Semitic religion, especially in Christianity, we have in the Indian religions the consciousness of suffering, pain. There is no religious problems for man unless, in his reflective mood, he reviews his position and is conscious of his peril. No religious problem is involved in efforts to overcome the hardship imposed by adverse nature or in making adjustments with fellow men. Both of these could be solved without recourse to any total or transcendental effort. The religious situation emerges only when man reviews his existence as a whole. It is an awareness of the deeper aspects of life, of the root problem of it and extends over his entire existence. The religious solution aims at a final and total solution of all problems. It is man's ultimate concern (*paramapuruṣārtha*). This statement of the religious problem would be acceptable to *Buddhism* and *Jainism* and some forms of *Hinduism*, which do not find a place for a personal God and, therefore, cannot consider the aim of religious endeavour as the establishment of an intimate relationship with God.

The Semitic religions, which assert the creation of finite souls by a personal God, not only feel the need for the doctrine of rebirth, but are even opposed to it. However, they cannot satisfactorily explain the transmission of original sin committed by Adam to individual souls born here and now. Absolute dependence on God, even for the existence of the soul, determines that the highest and perhaps the only form of spirituality is the loving personal relationship of trust and surrender to God. The love of God takes the form of incarnation as man, as in Christianity, and his sacrifice on the cross to redeem humanity. The present writer, however, thinks that the acceptance of the law of *karma* and rebirth means a more universal perspective. Unlike the Semitic religions, Indian religions are not necessarily committed to theism and to a personal deity. In Indian religious thought, there is no dependence on such dramatic event or intervention by God. Although, the grace of God is accepted by most Indian religions for revelation of the real, and it is admitted that self-surrender and devotion of God (*bhakti*) may help very intimately in attaining freedom, it is through knowledge or Insight that we could dispel ignorance and thus achieve freedom. The problem is principally cognitive.

## REFERENCE

1. “*Niyataṁ kuru karma tvaṁ karma jyāyo akarmaṇaḥ |  
Śarīrayātrāpi ca te na prsidhyeda karmaṇaḥ*” ||  
*Bhagavadgīta* : 3rd Chapter : Verse – 8.
2. *Bhagavadgīta* : 2nd Chapter : Verse – 17.
3. Ibid : Chapter - IV, V. 27.
4. Christian Ethics : by Karl H. Peschke, published by S.V.D.,  
page no. 53.
5. *Philosophies of India* : by Zimmer,  
Princeton University Press, New York, 1969, page 232.