



## ANALYSIS OF INDIAN CONCEPT OF MOKṢA: A PHILOSOPHICAL STUDY

Nitai Saha

Guest Lecturer

Department of Philosophy, Raiganj University

### Abstract:

There is no end of human desire. Before the end of one desire many other desires awake within the mind. Every person wants happiness and prosperity, success, fame, immortality in life. An object of human pursuit is called purusārtha, in traditional Indian philosophy. The word “purusārtha” includes two Sanskrit words- “purush” and “artha”. “Purush” means human being and “artha” means “object of desire”. So, the meaning of the term “purusārtha” is “purpose of human being” or “goal of man”. Thus, purusārtha is an important concept of traditional Indian Philosophy. Vedic Sages divided all the desires of human life into four categories that are necessary and sufficient to lead a happy life. The four purusārtha are – Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa. Mokṣa is regarded as highest purusārtha in traditional Indian philosophy. According to Buddhism Mokṣa or mukti is the eternal release from all types of sadness. For Jainas liberation means disassociation from matter that means liberation is that state when one becomes able to stop the influx of new matter into the soul. In Buddhism liberation is cessation of suffering. On the other hand, according to Sāṅkhya liberation means cessation from all types of miseries. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika believes in Apavarga. According to them by the right knowledge (tattvajñāna) we can attain liberation. Mimāṃsā’s concept of liberation is known as apavarga. According to Advaita-Vedānta, liberation is the realization of the identity between the self and Brahman. Rāmānuja thinks that the liberated soul has pure consciousness.

**Keywords:** Dharma, Artha, Kāma, Mokṣa, jīvanmukti, videhamukti.

### Introduction

The English synonym of “darśan” is Philosophy. The word ‘philosophy’ comes from the two Greek words – ‘philo’ and ‘sophia’. The term ‘philo’ means ‘love’ and ‘sophia’ means ‘wisdom’. So, the derivative meaning of the term ‘philosophy’ is ‘love of wisdom’. From this point of view, he is called ‘philosopher’ who has a natural interest in knowledge. In other words, it can be said that the worshiper of knowledge is a philosopher. We can say that, this is the western meaning of the term ‘philosophy’. But in the traditional Indian philosophy, the word ‘darsan’ has been interpreted differently. The word ‘darśan’ was originated from the Sanskrit word “dṛṣ” which means “to see”. But to Indian philosophers, the term “philosophy” has a special significance. Here “darśan” means “vision” and also the “instrument of vision”. So ‘darśan’ means “tattva darśan” or “direct realization of truth or reality”.

Here it is necessary to understand that there is a difference between the study of Indian philosophy and the study of western philosophy. “Love of wisdom” is the keynote of all the western philosophers; but “see the self” is the keynote of all schools of Indian philosophy, except the Cārvākas. That means, western philosophy gives emphasis only theoretical side of the philosophy. But Indian philosophers have emphasized on the application of philosophy. This is the reason why most of the founders of various schools of Indian philosophy were also saints. So, according to the Indian view point, philosophy is not just a theory of discussion. The main purpose of philosophy is to know how to gain the absolute self in this life with the help of vision and insight. We can say that for the fulfillment of the ultimate purpose of human life, philosophy of India was emerged. So, from both theoretical and practical aspects, Indian philosophy is different from western philosophy.

Purusārtha is an important concept of traditional Indian Philosophy. There are four purusārtha in Indian Philosophy, such as Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa. The word dharma was originated from the Sanskrit root “dhṛ” which means to support. Early Vedas define dharma as the cosmic law, which maintains the ordered universe. But in the later age, dharma was applied to other contexts; it includes human behaviors and ways of living through which we may prevent the society, family and nature from descending into chaos. All beings should follow their dharma to prevent order and harmony in the world.

The second goal of human being is Artha. It signifies the means of life, activities and resources that enables one to achieve that state of life which he wants to achieve. Artha incorporates wealth, career, activity which leads to financial security and economic prosperity. The proper pursuit of Artha is considered as an important aim of human life in Hinduism.

The third one is kāma. It signifies desire, passion, emotions, and pleasure of the senses. Mainly kāma means sensual pleasure or love. Kāma means fulfilling one’s desires. Desires may come in various forms– desire for wealth, power, sex etc. In this regard, it is said in Bhagavad-Gītā that kāma or sensuous desire should be pursued only in such a way that they do not transgress dharma or morality or ethics.



The fourth puruṣārtha is Mokṣa. Mokṣa means liberation, emancipation or final release. It is the concept of ultimate freedom. The term “mokṣa” comes from the Sanskrit root “muc” that means “free”. It means release from the life-death cycle and in this stage absolute freedom may be attained. All Indian schools of philosophy except the Carvaka have accepted the Mokṣa as Param-Puruṣārtha. According to them, Mokṣa or Liberation is the ultimate goal of life. So, the Indian philosophy is sometime described as the Mokṣa scripture. Various terms have been used in Indian philosophy to describe liberation which are Apavarga, Kaivalya, Mokṣa etc.

But the question may arise: why Mokṣa is called Param- puruṣārtha? This question can be solved in this way. Dharma, Artha, Kāma- do not have any intrinsic value, they have only instrumental values. Dharma, Artha and kāma are values only in the sense that they are means to an end. But only Mokṣa has an intrinsic value and it is an end in itself. There is another difference among them. Dharma, artha, kāma – all are favorite things that means “preya”. But Mokṣa is only “syeya” which means mukti and self-realization is the means of mukti. Dharma, ArthaKāma- is non-eternal but Mokṣa is eternal. Dharma, artha, kāma – are not able to produce happiness forever, after a period of time they produce suffer or sorrow. But Mokṣa or liberation means final release. Thus, we can say that the first three values must be pursued in such way that they subserve the purpose of leading us to Mokṣa which is regarded as the ultimate or supreme value.

If one wants to describe liberation, then he should also discuss about bondage. In Buddhism it is said that we are suffering in the cycle of birth and death due to bondage. Here the Buddhists have used the term “bhavachakra”. So “bhavachakra” means “rotation in the cycle of birth and death”. The cycle of birth and death of human being (Jīva) has been rotating from time immemorial. This is called “bhavachakra” or “saṃsārchakra”. It has no origin. There is no first birth. The life has an end and it is possible to achieve the end. By practice, the jīva can overcome the cycle of birth and death. If one is able to revoke himself from the saṃsārchakra, then he may achieve liberation. A liberated person does not take rebirth and does not suffer by sorrow. Mokṣa or mukti is the eternal release from all types of sadness.

The philosophers agree with Mokṣa but they do not agree with the nature of Mokṣa. According to Jaina, after attaining Mokṣa, the eternal knowledge of the soul remains in the form of eternal strength and eternal joy. Naturally soul is eternal wealth. Pudgala is attracted to the soul in the spirit of the desire power and the soul holds a special type of body. This type of incarnation is the bondage of the soul. In the bonding state, the nature of the soul is covered. So, the expulsion of the matter from the soul is liberation. Jainas used two terms as producers of liberation which are “saṃvara” and “nirjarā”. There are two processes by which we obtain liberation. Bondage means association with matter. Thus, liberation means disassociation from matter. Saṃvara is that state when one becomes able to stop the influx of new matter into the soul. And “nirjarā” is called separation of karma pudgala from the soul. Pudgala attachments are due to unconscious (ajñāna) desire. The pudgala is discontinued when knowledge is realized. When the accumulated pudgals are destroyed, the soul remains in his nature. This situation is called the state of liberation. The Jainas believe in jīvanmukti. Liberation is possible in the life stage. Who were obtained liberation in their life, are called “Tirthankar” or “Kevaljñāni” in Jainism.

Mokṣa or liberation is called nirvāna in Buddhist philosophy. The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism is - suffering, cause of suffering, cessation of suffering and way of cessation of suffering. In the third Noble Truth of Buddhism, we find the concept of nirvāna. According to Buddha, avidyā is the main or root cause of suffering. So, the cause of our bondage is ignorance or avidyā. We are bound in the “saṃsārchakra” or “bhavachakra”. If we can able to stop the movement of the “bhavachakra”, then we can obtain nirvāna. According to Buddhism, it is possible in this life to obtain liberation. In the Buddhist terminology the person who is liberated is called 'Arhat'. According to Buddhism, no desire remains in the soul after liberation and as a result there remains no suffering.

Sāṅkhya and Yoga schools explained liberation in another way. According to them, the soul is always free. So, there is no bondage or Mukti of the soul. The bondage of the soul and the idea of liberation of it is a kind of appearance. According to Sāṅkhya, the main reason for the bondage is unconsciousness (ajñāna). Due to the vicinity of intellect the jīva becomes jñātā, kartā and bhoktā. As a result, the jīva is plagued by three types of miseries - ādhyātmikadukha, ādhibhautikadukha and ādhidaivikadukha. The first is ādhyātmikadukha which is due to intraorganic causes like bodily diseases and mental affections etc. Fever and headache, the pangs of fear, anger, greed etc are both bodily and mental sufferings. The second is ādhibhautikadukha which is due to extra organic natural causes like brutes, thorns, animals, men etc. This kind of dukha is found in cases of killing, bite of snake, prick of thorns etc. Through vivekajñāna, the jīva gets rid of these sufferings or pains. According to Sāṅkhya, the differential knowledge between puruṣa (self) and prakṛiti (not self) is vivekajñāna. Vivekajñāna means absolute and complete cessation of all pain. Liberation is possible in this life. There are two types of mukti - jīvanmukti and videhamukti. The person who has obtained videhamukti will not be born again. Therefore,



videhamukti is actual liberation. According to Sāṅkhya “**liberation means complete cessation of all sufferings which is the summum bonum, the highest end of life**”<sup>1</sup>

In the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy, Mokṣa is known as Apavarga. According to Nyāya, soul is naturally nirgun and inactive. The consciousness is neither eternal attribute nor natural attribute of the soul. The consciousness is non-eternal and accidental attribute of the self. When the self is related with the manas, manas is related with the senses and senses are related with the external objects, then consciousness originates in the self. The self feels itself identical with body, mind and sense for the reason of Avidyā. And as a result, we feel various types of suffering. Avidyā or Ajñāna is the fundamental cause of suffering. By the right knowledge of the sixteen categories (tattvajñāna) we can attain liberation. Naiyāyikas told twelve kinds of prameya. Prameya means an object of true knowledge or reality. The prameyas are - Ātmaā, Śarīra, Indriya, Artha, Buddhi, Manas, Pravṛtri, Dosa, Pretyabhāva, Phala, Duhkha and Apavarga. This list is not a complete list of all realities; this list indicates only those knowledges of which is important for liberation. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika does not believe in Jīvanmukti. According to them, Jīvanmukti is not possible, because consciousness is not abolished in the living life. But in Videhamukti, there is no consciousness in the self and self remains in his nature. This is the state of liberation. Some later Naiyāyikas, however, hold that “**liberation is the soul’s final deliverance from pain and attainment of eternal bliss**”.<sup>2</sup>

The early Mīmāṃsakas do not accept four Puruṣārthas. They have accepted three Puruṣārtha - Dharma, Artha and Kāma. According to Mīmāṃsā, heaven is Param puruṣārtha or highest good or ideal. They realize that by the performance of Vedic action or rituals (Dharma) we may obtain heaven. But the later Mīmāṃsakas believe in Mokṣa. Their concept of liberation is called apavarga. Prabhakara and Kumarila both believed in liberation and said that the goal of human life is liberation. They thought that liberation is an unconscious state which is free from pleasure and pain. So, liberation is desirable, not as a status of bliss, but as the completely cessation of painful experience. It is a state where the soul remains in its own intrinsic nature.

According to Advaita-Vedānta, jīva is Brahman and jīvatmā is paramātmā. Liberation is the realization of the identity between the self and Brahman. The nature of Brahman is “sat-cit-ānanda”. Because of ignorance the soul erroneously associates itself with the body which is called bondage. Actually, there is no bondage and liberation of the soul. Liberation and bondage are only appearance. Self is always eternal and liberated. The absence of true knowledge is the cause of bondage. Mukti is available for the destruction of Avidyā. Until the Ajñāna or Avidyā is removed, the birth, death, regeneration etc exist continuously. After the emergence of valid knowledge, liberation can be attained. Then a person does not reborn again. When jīva is associated with Paramātmā or Brahman and realizes the truth in the form 'I am Brahman', then he may attain liberation. Saṅkara mentioned two types of freedom, such as jīvanmukti and videhamukti. In the jīvanmukti, jīva is bound to enjoy the result of prarāddha karma. After death, the jīva attains the disembodied state of liberation which is called videhamukti. Then there remains no karma (sancita karma).

Rāmānuja’s concept of liberation is different from Saṅkara’s concept of liberation. We know that Saṅkara’s philosophy is known as absolute monism or Advaita Vedānta, but Rāmānuja’s philosophy is called the qualified monism or Viśistadvaita Vedānta. According to Rāmānuja, the object of worship is God. God is the goal of our religious aspiration. Rāmānuja has rejected the identity between God and man as taught by the Upanishads. Liberation does not mean that soul is identical with God. The liberated soul has pure consciousness. When the soul realizes God, who is free from the body forever, this realization destroys all types of ignorance and can attain liberation. So, it is not right to say that liberation means that soul is identical with God. The liberated soul is like God, not identical with God. Rāmānuja does not accept the liberation in life, because liberation is not possible until the body is destroyed.

## Conclusion

The opinion of different philosophical systems about the nature of liberation is explained in the above. But the question is: what will be the way of liberation? The various philosophical schools have presented different ways to achieve the liberation. According to Jaina, the path of liberation is - samyakdarśana, samyakjñāna and samyakcaritra. These are called in a word Triratna which means the three gems. The joint effect of these three leads to liberation. “Samyak-darsana” means “perfect faith”. And perfect faith is the result of perfect knowledge. “Samyak-jñāna” means “right knowledge”. Right knowledge consists in the detailed knowledge of all truths. So right knowledge means the cognition of the real nature of the ego and non-ego, and it is free from doubt, error and uncertainty. “Samyak-caritra” means right conduct or good conduct. The five great vows form the basis of right conduct which is called “panca-mahāvṛata”. The panca-mahāvṛatas are - Ahimsā, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya and Aparigraha. Ahimsā is the vow of non-injury to life or abstinence from all injury of life. Satya is the abstinence from falsehood. Truthfulness is not speaking what is only true, but speaking what is true as well as good and pleasant. Asteya is the vow of non-stealing which is based on the idea of the sanctity of property. Brahmacharya is the abstaining from all forms of self-indulgence. Lastly the vow of Aparigraha consists in

<sup>1</sup>Chandradhar Sharma, A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy, p-163

<sup>2</sup>Chatterjee, Satischandra & Datta, Dhirendramohan. An introduction to Indian philosophy, p-207



abstaining from all attachments to sense objects. Thus, in Jaina Philosophy both knowledge and Karma are necessary for realization of Moksa. That is why, Jains are called “jñānakarmasamuccyavādi”.

If we look at the Buddhism, then we find that they have admitted the astāngikamārga as a means of Nirvāna. According to Buddha, if we adhere to this path, then we can achieve Nirvāna. The astāngikamārga consists of eight steps: samyak-dṛṣṭi, samyak-saṅkalpa, samyak-vāk, samyak-karmānta, samyak-ājīva, samyak-vyāyāma, samyak-smṛiti and samyak-samādhi. “Samyak-dṛṣṭi” means “right view”. Here right view means the correct knowledge about the Four Noble Truths. “Samyak-saṅkalpa” means “right resolve”. It is regarded as firm determination to reform life in the light of truth. “Samyak-vāk” means “right speech” or “control of speech”. It includes abstention from lying, slander, unkind words and frivolous talk. The fourth one is “samyak-karmānta” which means “right conduct”. It is regarded as abstention from wrong action. The next one is samyak-ājīva or livelihood which is the vow of maintaining life by honest means. Next is samyak-vyāyāma or right effort which maintains the constant endeavour to moral progress by banishing evil thoughts and entertaining good ones. “Samyak-smṛiti” means “right mindfulness”. It is constant remembrance of the perishable nature of things. Lastly “samyak-samādhi” means “right concentration”. It is the last step in the path that leads to the goal - Nirvāna. So, we can say that Gautama Buddha followed both Jñānamārga and karmamārga.

According to Sāṅkhya Philosophy, Vivekjñāna or Tattvajñāna is the way to achieve liberation. On the other hand, Yoga Philosophy says that “asta-yogāṅga” is the way by which we can attain liberation. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers believed only Jñānamārga. According to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Tattvajñāna is the means of highest knowledge. According to Advaita Vedānta, Brahman-jñāna leads to liberation. But Rāmānuja said that Bhakti is the only way to achieve liberation.

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