

CRITICAL VIEWS ON THE SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS

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Abstract

The dynamic nature of the world has changed the physical aspects of human life according to science and development, but the spiritual aspects of life are still under debate from ancient times to the present without any solid conclusions. The interpretation of the oldest religious document, the Vedas, informs us that the main goal of mankind is to obtain the four purusharthas, namely artha, Kama, dharma, and moksha. But the interpretation of the Vedas by different Indian schools of thought leads to incoherent views on spiritual aspects of human life. This research paper analyses the Indian orthodox systems of philosophy such as Mimamsa, Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisesika, and Vedanta, as well as the heterodox systems of philosophy such as Charvaka, Jainism, and Buddhism, regarding the salient features of jiva, Brahman, moksha, and the ways to get moksha in depth. This research paper analyses and finds out the nature of the future universal religion and its universal religious philosophy, reflecting all the important features of Indian orthodox and heterodox philosophical systems, to satisfy all the needs of different sections of people around the globe, irrespective of gender, caste, language, and region, to lead a happy and prosperous life on earth.

Keywords: Indian Philosophy, Religion, Brahman, Jiva, Liberation.

INTRODUCTION

We are living in an internet-supported world. Our present life is fully bound by modern science and technological tools. Recently, vehicles, credit cards, smart phones, and laptops have become essential components of our lives. It is impossible to imagine life without these components. The developments in science and technology have considerably changed our lives with regard to the material aspects of the world. But on the spiritual side of human life, no major changes have been noticed for the last eight to nine centuries. Our spiritual knowledge and its contradictory nature continued as before. Each Indian philosophy has flourished out some distinguished features with other philosophies and unveiled unbeatable philosophical knowledge about the soul, the supreme, liberation, and ways to attain liberation. Till now, we have not come across solid truths about absolute truth. Even though the Vedas were composed around 1500 BCE to 600 BCE, they discovered the universal and fundamental purposes of life as artha, Kama, dharma, and moksha. Even today, nobody has a disagreement with this fundamental purpose of life. Most of the modern scientific tools and instruments, like the microscope, electric current, and computer, came into existence after the 17th century. But before these inventions, the Indian philosophers were pioneers in the fields of cosmology, properties of matter, atomic physics, epistemology, logic, ethics, and research methodology. They had been unveiling absolute truth from different directions since 600 BCE.

The most ancient religious scriptures available in India are the Vedas. The Vedas are grouped into four major collections: the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, and Atharva Veda [1]. Each collection has four parts: Samhitas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads. Samhitas deal with the worship of Gods. Brahmanas deal with the rules and regulations of Vedic rituals. Aranyakas deal with the nature of Gods. The Upanishads deal with the interpretation of philosophical thoughts. During the Vedic period (c. 1500-600 BCE), people personalized various cosmic forces as human beings and worshipped them with different rituals and mantras. They called the sun, the moon, and the sky as Devas. Deva refers to the person who gives to man. God is Deva because God gives the whole world [1]. In later periods, due to the dynamic nature of human beings and the development of critical and analytical thinking, people came up with different philosophical and ideological views on the nature of the world, the self, God, moksha, and the real purpose of life.

Views of Charvaka

Charvaka is one of the oldest Indian philosophies, founded by Brihaspati around 600 BCE. It preaches the doctrine of 'eat, drink, and be merry'. This school of philosophy accepts only direct perception as a valid source of knowledge. According to Charvaka, only the perceivable things are reality. It is the view of all the common man, and so it is called lokayatika [2]. According to Charvaka, the material world is ultimately composed of four mahabhutas (elements), namely earth, water, air, and fire. They reject ether because it is not perceivable. According to Charvaka, the soul is nothing but the living body with the quality of consciousness. Consciousness is the by-product of these four elements. Betel leaf is green, nut is brown, and lime is white. We do not see any trace of red in these objects. But when they combine, they give off a red by-product. In the same way, consciousness is the by-product of earth, water, air, and fire. So, Charvaka did not accept the existence of the soul apart from the body. In the same way, Charvaka believes the world comes into existence by the spontaneous combination of earth, water, fire, and air. For them, God was not necessary for the creation of the world. Further, God is not perceived. Therefore, they conclude that accepting the existence of God is ignorance. The Vedas suggest that the purpose of humans is to seek dharma, artha, kama, and moksha. But Charvaka believes that dharma and moksha are maya, and it suggests that the purpose of humans is to seek artha and kama only. Therefore, according to Charvaka, the main goal of men is to attain maximum pleasure in their lives. As long as one is alive, one should live happily. Charvaka believes that men cannot escape from death. Once the body is burned, one cannot come again [3].

Views of Jainism

Jainism is one of the oldest religions in India, and the followers of this religion are called Jains. In Jainism, there were 24 Tirthankaras. All of these Tirthankaras were human beings, but by their own efforts, they crossed the ocean of samsara and achieved liberation. The first Tirthankara is Rishabhanatha. He is the real founder of Jainism; the last Tirthankara is Lord Mahavira, who lived around 500 BCE. He practiced intense meditation for 12 years and achieved nirvana at the age of 72. The teachings of the Tirthankaras become the scriptures of Jainism. The teachings of Jainism insist on a way of life based on ahimsa, compassion, and a

simple life. The question of clothes was crucial among the Jains. According to the Jains, as long as a man thinks and knows that he is naked, he cannot obtain moksha. He must forget his nakedness to obtain nirvana [4]. As Adam and Eve were naked and pure, they enjoyed perfect happiness in the Garden of Eden. The devil made them eat the fruits of knowledge. They gained knowledge of good and evil. Once they felt their nakedness, they were expelled from heaven. Jains hold a similar belief. Due to the practical difficulties in following the above principle, Jains divide themselves into two groups: digambara and svetambara. According to Jainism, this world is ultimately composed of six fundamental substances, namely jiva (soul), pudgal (matter), dharma (medium of motion), adharma (medium of rest), akasha (space), and kala (time). A jiva is a living thing, and all others are ajivas (non-living things). All the jivas, such as animals, birds, insects, and plants, including humans, possess souls. The souls in their pure form possess infinite knowledge, infinite perception, infinite energy, and infinite power. However, when the souls are attached to karma particles, they possess limited knowledge, limited perception, limited energy, and limited power.

Jains do not believe in the existence of God. The concept of God as a creator, protector, and destroyer of the universe does not exist in the philosophy of the Jains. Jains believe the Tirthankaras are human Gods. The Tirthankaras, by their own efforts, attained enlightenment by overcoming their weaknesses, such as anger, ego, deceit, and greed. They had achieved infinite knowledge, infinite vision, perfect conviction, perfect conduct, and unlimited energy. They were perfect human beings, and they had shown us the path to liberation, which brings an end to the cycle of birth and suffering. According to Jain cosmology, the universe was not created by a supreme god, however, it is self-sustaining and eternal. There is no beginning or end to the universe with respect to time. The universe has three parts, namely, heaven, middle world, and hell. According to Jainism, karmas are the blueprint of one's past deeds, on which the present can be constructed and the future can be charted. According to one's papa (evil) and punya (good) activities of the soul, he will get punishment or reward in hell or heaven. However, Jainism believes karmas are not so powerful and they can be altered by the ratna traya (three jewels of Jainism), namely samyak darsana (right faith), samyak jnana (right knowledge), and samyak charitra (right conduct) [4]. The right conduct can be achieved by taking five great vows, namely, the vow of ahimsa (non-violence), the vow of satya (truthfulness), the vow of asatya (non-stealing), the vow of brahmacharya (celibacy), and the vow of aparigraha (non-attachment to sense organs) [2]. Further, Jains believe in two types of karma, namely, ghati karma and aghati karma. Ghati karma makes the soul possess limited knowledge, limited vision, and limited happiness. If one destroys the ghati karma, he becomes kevali (omniscient), and this type of liberation is called bhava-moksha. Aghati karma determines the family in which one has to take the birth, one's life span on the world, one's characters, sickness, accidents, etc. If one destroys the aghati karma, he will attain nirvana or moksha. The digambara sect of Jains is more rigid and strict in their approach to Jains philosophy and believes that the practice of nakedness is an absolute path to the attainment of salvation. As it is impractical for women, they believe that women must be reborn as men for the attainment of salvation. But the svetambara sect of Jainism believes that complete

nakedness is not essential to attain salvation. Even in present days, in digambara temples, the idols were naked, and in svetambara temples, the idols were clothed [4].

Views of Buddhism

Buddhism is also one of the oldest philosophies founded by Gautama Buddha in the 6th century BCE. After seeing the old person, the diseased person, and death, Gautama Buddha was shocked and led the ascetic life. He found out four noble truths in ascetic life and attained nirvana. His four noble truths are dukkha (the life is full of suffering), dukkha-samudaya (there is a cause for suffering), dukkha-nirodha (it is possible to stop the sufferings), and dukkha-nirodha-marga (there is a way to stop the sufferings and attain nirvana) [2]. According to Buddhism there is no soul, because, soul is an unbroken stream of consciousness. In the rebirth, the stream of consciousness takes a break, so memory of the present birth is not possible in the next birth. The human body is an unstable collection of body, mind, and consciousness. The unstable states may be referred to as pancha skandhas. The pancha skandhas are rupa (the material body and physical senses), vadana (pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral feelings), samjana (the perception tendency), samkara (thoughts, ideas, and decision tendency), and vijnana (the stream of consciousness) [2].

Buddhism does not believe in any Gods or Deities but believes in some supernatural figures that can help people on the path towards enlightenment. The followers of Buddha formed four councils in different periods and spread the teachings of Buddha. In these councils, they suggested some modifications to the teachings of Buddha. Due to different opinions among the followers, they split into two groups: Hinayana and Mahayana. Hinayana is also referred to as Theravada Buddhism. The followers of this tradition follow the exact teachings of Buddha as written in the Pali Canon and strive to be arhats. Arhat means a perfect person who has gained insight into the true nature of existence and has achieved nirvana. The followers of Mahayana Buddhism modified the teachings of Buddha in accordance with culture, age, the economic condition of the country, and the natural condition of the people. They accepted Buddha as God and encouraged idol worship. According to Mahayana philosophy, Buddha is identified with transcendental reality, and he could take incarnation to help those in need. So the Buddhists place the Buddha as dharmakaya, a metaphysical body that possesses all the good qualities. Buddhism believes in nirvana, which is a state of release from all suffering in samsara and the cycle of birth and death. But it is not the state of happiness, blissful union with God, or an absolute. Buddha emphasizes the eightfold path to nirvana. The eightfold paths are: Samyak drishti (right vision), Samyak sankalpa (right determination), Samyak vak (right speech), Samyak karmanta (right conduct), Samyak ajiva (right livelihood), Samyak vyayama (right efforts), Samyak smruti (right mindfulness), Samyak samadhi (right concentration).

Views of Mimamsa

A well-known atheist philosophy, Mimamsa philosophy, arose in India around 400 BCE by Sage Jamini based on the Mimamsa sutra. Major commentaries were written by Sabarasvamin, Kumarila Bhatta, and Prabhakara around 700 CE. Mimamsa is also called purva mimamsa or karma mimamsa. It mainly deals with the interpretation of rituals, rules, and sacrifices that are

found in the Vedas. The earlier part of the Vedas is known as karma kanda, and the later part of the Vedas is known as jnana kanda. The philosophy that deals with philosophical aspects of the Vedas is called uttara mimamsa or Vedanta. Mimamsa philosophy helps to remove the various contradictions in the rituals and sacrifices among them and harmonize them with one another. Finally, it helps to arrive at the philosophical justification underlying all the rituals in the Vedas. Kumarila Bhatta confirms that 11 fundamental substances constitute the entire universe. He listed them as earth, water, light, air, ether, time, manas, space, self, darkness, and sound. Prabhakara didn't accept darkness and sound as substances because darkness is the absence of light and sound is the quality of ether. But both of them accept other nine fundamental substances as the basic constituent of the universe. Among them, self is also a substance. According to Mimamsa, self is an eternal substance, infinitive and subjunctive, and a real body, until it survives. The Mimamsa School holds that the self has the capacity to hold consciousness, but it concludes that consciousness is not an essential thing for the soul because, in the state of liberation and dreamless sleep, the soul has no consciousness.

Mimamsa does not believe in the creator of the world as God. According to Mimamsa, all creations are based on karma. But it believes in the existence of an unseen force, apurva, and in the energy of the unseen principle of sakti, which governs all the world to maintain the ecological balance [2]. All the rituals and sacrifices bear the fruits of karma. The primary aim of performing rituals and sacrifices is not the worship of gods or deities or the purification of souls but rather the karma effects. According to the effects of karma, doing good will be rewarded under favorable conditions in favorable situations. Education does not bear fruit immediately, but it will yield favorable status in society in favorable times and under favorable conditions. According to Mimamsa, different types of sakti under different names of deities are required for worshipping to get different types of worldly benefits such as enough rainfall, pleasant weather, a healthy body, etc. Mimamsa accepts all the Vedic deities as eternal, immortal, and self-manifesting concepts because they are revealed in the Vedas. Jamini believes perception, inference, and verbal testimony are the means of valid knowledge. The Vedas come under verbal testimony. Mimamsa believes that during liberation the soul dissociates from the body, and therefore all the internal organs, including the manas, cannot have any consciousness. Liberation is an unconscious state free from all pleasures and pain. According to Mimamsa, knowledge of oneself and absolute truth are not sufficient to get moksha. Rituals are the correct path to attain moksha, and moksha is the end of all the rituals.

Views of Sankhya

Sankhya is one of the most prominent and oldest Indian philosophical schools that accepted the Vedas as the source of knowledge. It was founded by the great sage Kabila. The doctrines of Sankhya are found in the Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, Mahabharata, Jainism, Nyaya, and Vedanta, showing their earliest nature. Sankhya explains the nature of metaphysical substances like matter and spirit in detail. Sankhya explains that everything in the universe is composed of two realities, namely unconscious prakriti and conscious purusha. Prakriti is constituted by 24 realities such as primordial matters, buddhi, ego, mind, the five sensations (light, smell, sound, taste, and heat), the five sense organs (eyes, nose, ear, tongue, and skin), the five action

organs (speaking, grasping, locomotion, excretion, and reproduction), and the five panchabhutas (earth, water, fire, air, and ether) [3]. All these realities are non-conscious, active, changing, and characterized by sattva, rajas, and tamas gunas. The nature of sattva guna is pleasure, brightness, and purity. It may be in various forms, such as joy, happiness, or bliss produced by the mind. The nature of rajas guna is activity and motion. The nature of tamas guna is the principle of passivity and negativity. It always opposes the sattva and the rajas. Purusha is an eternal substance, many numbers, pure consciousness, the basis of all knowledge, unborn, unchanging, inactive, devoid of gunas, and formless [5]. Like males and females producing their children, the unconscious and unintelligent principles of prakriti combined with the pure consciousness and intelligent principle of purusha produce various living and non-living things in this universe, including humans.

Sankhya reveals prakriti is an active reality, but it is blind and unintelligent. Purusha is intelligent but inactive. Since prakriti lacks intelligence, some intelligent principle must govern and direct it. Individual selves are limited in knowledge, so they cannot control the subtle material body of the world. So there must be an infinitely wise being who controls, directs, and guides the prakriti. This infinitely intelligent being is God [2]. This view of Sankhya philosophy is supported by the Puranas. Matsya purana says Brahma was evolved from the combination of purusha and rajas guna of prakriti, Vishnu was evolved from the combination of purusha and Sattva guna of prakriti, and Maheswara was evolved from the combination of purusha and tamas guna of prakriti [5]. It is also clear that Siva (Maheswara) is nothing but purusha, and Goddess Sakti is nothing but prakriti. According to Sankhya, the union of purusha with a subtle body is the cause of samsara. There are three kinds of pain and suffering in worldly affairs, namely, adhyatmika (pain due to one's self, such as headaches and fevers), adhibhautika (pain due to the outer world, such as murder and snake bites), and adhidaivika (pain due to supernatural influences, such as planets, ghosts, and demons). Modern science and technology can give temporary liberation from this pain and suffering, but not permanent liberation. So the absolute cessation of the threefold pain is the absolute aim of the soul [6]. This absolute cessation of pain or liberation can be attained by breaking the intimate contact between the purusha and prakriti by acquiring knowledge of the distinction between the purusha and prakriti [5]. If the soul attains liberation, no changes take place in the self. When purusha is with prakriti, it cannot remember that it is different from prakriti. This is due to the bandhan between purusha and prakriti [3]. According to Sankhya, there are two types of liberations: jivanmukti and videhamukti. If the self attains liberation while living on earth, it is called jivanmukti. If one attains liberation after death, it is called videhamukti [2].

Views of Yoga

Yoga is also one of the oldest Indian philosophical schools that accepted the Vedas. It was founded by Maharishi Patanjali and developed by Sages Hiranyagarbha and Yajnavalkya. Yoga philosophy deals with both the theoretical and practical aspects of individuals and ultimate truth and gives more importance to spiritual efforts to attain perfection through the control of sense organs, the gross body, the subtle mind, intellect, and the ego. As with Sankhya, Yoga also accepts the same perception, inference, and verbal testimony (the Vedas)

as means of valid knowledge and 25 metaphysical principles as realities. Patanjali recognizes prakriti as an unconscious and unintelligent principle and purusha as a pure conscious and intelligent principle. Yoga philosophy uses a new term, citta, to describe the total consciousness of body and mind. Citta is constituted by mind, intellect, and ego (mana, buddhi, and ahamkara) among the 25 realities [2]. It is the first product of prakriti and can be dominated by sattva, rajas, and tamas gunas. Further, citta serves as a warehouse for all memories, images, thoughts, emotions, feelings, and desires. Citta undergoes various modifications according to the prominence of gunas. When citta relates to an object, it takes the form of the object. This form is called vritti (modification). In fact, citta is an unconscious subtle force, but due to its closeness to purusha (self), it reflects the nature of purusha and appears as conscious and intelligent. Self does not undergo any changes or modifications, but it appears to be changed when citta undergoes different modifications during different states of mind and stages of life, as in the case of formless fire, which appears as a spherical ball in a red-hot iron ball. The self believes that it is subject to birth, growth, and death at different periods of time and performs functions like sleeping, walking, dreaming, eating, etc. However, it is the citta that does all the work.

According to Patanjali, the world is very big and human knowledge is limited, so humans could not create or control the whole world. There must be a person who possesses unlimited knowledge and unlimited power to control all world affairs. That supreme person is God [2]. Prakriti and purusha are two different things with different characters, and they can't come close to the evolution of different substances without the intervention of an efficient cause. That efficient cause is called God. It is nothing but Ishvara. According to Patanjali, the means of valid knowledge are perception, inference, and verbal testimony. Therefore, the existence of the Vedas and Upanishads is valid proof of the existence of God because all these scriptures describe God as an ultimate source of knowledge and energy. The absence of discriminative knowledge in the self (purusha) to identify itself, its ignorance, egoism, desire, aversions, and fear of death make the self, feel pain and sorrow in the worldly life. Therefore, to attain liberation from all these sufferings and to remove ignorance, one must restrain the activities of the body, senses, and mind, and finally suppress all the modifications of citta. This can be achieved by practicing the eightfold path of yoga (ashtanga yoga) in a continuous manner under prescribed conditions. The eightfold paths of yoga are yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi [3]. There are two main kinds of samadhi practiced in yoga namely samprajnata (conscious) samadhi and asamprajnata (supra-conscious) samadhi. In samprajnata samadhi during meditation, the mind is focused on the object. In asamprajnata samadhi during meditation, the mind is focused without an object. When yogis attain liberation, they get extraordinary powers. Some of these powers are: the ability to become larger in size; the ability to reduce their weight and fly; the ability to know the present, past, and future; the ability to conquer all living things; the ability to master all physical objects; and the ability to fulfil all their desires [2]. The ultimate goal of yoga is not to obtain this extraordinary power but to obtain ultimate knowledge and liberation.

Views of Nyaya

Nyaya philosophy is one of the traditional analytical Indian philosophies based on the Nyaya sutra. It was founded by Gautama, who lived around 550 BCE. Nyaya means correct thinking. It insists on the correct way of thinking in a prospective way. Nyaya philosophy is also known as tarkashastra (the science of reasoning), pramanashastra (the science of logic and epistemology), vadavidya (the science of debate), anviksiki (the science of critical study), and hetuvidya (the science of reasoning). Nyaya philosophy deals with knowledge based on philosophical, metaphysical, epistemological, psychological, and logical perspectives. Nyaya philosophy was further elaborated by Vatsyayana as Nyaya Bhasya and Uddyotakara as Nyaya Vartika. Naiyayikas believe pratyaksa (perception), anumana (inference), upamana (comparison), and sabda (verbal testimony) are valid means of knowledge. They recognize that knowledge of 16 categories (padarthas) is necessary for the real understanding of any truth. The 16 padarthas are pramana (means of right cognition), prameya (object of right cognition), samsaya (doubt), prayojana (purpose), drstanta (example), sidhdhanta (established tenet), avayava (members), nirnaya (ascertainment), vada (discussion), jalpa (wrangling), tarka (confutation), vitanda (cavil), hetvabhasa (fallacy), chala (quibble), jati (futility), and nigrahasthana (occasion for rebuke) [7]. According to Nyaya, the body is the vehicle of actions, senses, organs, and objects. The soul is eternal, all-pervading, unique in each individual, and infinite in number. It has no beginning, no ending, and no limited size. Consciousness is the quality of the soul, along with qualities such as desires, aversions, feelings of pleasure and pain, and cognition. Consciousness cannot exist apart from the self, just as the brightness of a flame cannot exist apart from the flame. Naiyayikas prove their own existence by means of inference. According to Uddyotakara, the object of the notion of 'I' is the soul. Further, he supports the soul by saying that recognition of the different cognitions as 'mine' proves the continuity of the soul.

Nyaya believes the physical world is constituted by both physical substances and eternal substances called dravya. Physical substances are prithvi (earth), jal (water), tej (fire), and vayu (air). The eternal elements are kala (time), disha (space), akasha (ether), mana (mind), and atma (souls) [3]. Humans possess only limited knowledge, so humans could not be the creators of the vast universe by using physical and eternal substances. According to later Naiyayikas, there are two kinds of souls: supreme and human. The supreme soul is God. It is an eternal, omnipotent, and omniscient being beyond the human senses, mind, space, and time. Good actions of one's self produce merit (punya); bad actions of one's self produce demerits (papa). The stocks of merits and demerits accruing from one's good and bad actions are called adrsta. Adrsta is an unintelligent principle, so it must be guided by an intelligent principle to produce a proper effect on individuals. It is the God who controls all our adrsta and dispenses all the joys and sorrows in our lives in a strict manner. Finally, Nyaya holds that God is the first efficient cause of the universal forces. The atoms of the earth, water, fire, and air are the material causes of the universe. The sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers, seas, plains, etc. are the effects of God. According to Nyaya, liberation is a state of negation, an absolute freedom from all suffering and pain. The soul is free from all the bonds between the senses and body. To attain liberation, one must have knowledge about oneself and other objects. One must

understand that the self is different from the body, mind, and sense organs. Through meditation, one can realize the true nature of oneself and attain liberation. However, Naiyayikas later added some more ways to get liberation. That is the grace of God. One cannot attain liberation without the grace of God [2].

Views of Vaisesika

Vaisesika is one of the other traditional analytical Indian philosophies based on the Vaisesika sutra. It was founded by Sage Kanada. He lived around 800 years before Buddha. Vaisesika philosophy is primarily a system of physics; later, it became metaphysics. It explains the evolution of the universe, the evolution of God, the evolution of different materials, the evolution of man and animals, the evolution of atoms, and the properties of atoms before the invention of the microscope and telescope. Vaisesika distinguishes entire things in the universe as bhava (existing) and abhava (non-existing). Bhava consists of 6 padarthas. Later Vaisesika philosophers Sivaditya and Udayana added abhava as a padartha. Now, in total, seven padarthas were considered to be the constituents of the entire universe. The padarthas are dravya (substances), guna (qualities), karma (action), samanya (generality), vishesa (particularity), samavaya (inherence), and abhava (non-existence) [8]. There are nine substances, five of them are non-eternals and four of them are eternal. The non-eternal substances are earth, water, fire, air, and ether. The eternal substances are kala (time), dic (space), the atman (self), and manas (mind). Vaisesika declares non-eternal substances are sensible to human senses and eternal substances are not sensible to human senses. The eternal substance of the soul, which possesses unique individuality (vishesa), belongs to a particular individual. The soul has an inseparable relationship with a body like the smell of a rose. The smell of a rose cannot be separated from the rose. The inference of the word 'I' proves the existence of the soul, just as the existence of ether is proved by sound [9].

God is not the creator of the world. Atoms and souls were already present in the universe. These atoms and souls were held together by the unseen power of Adrsa. This unseen power is called God. It is an intelligent, omnipotent, and omniscient power. Atoms and souls cannot move and act by themselves. They are directed to move by the wish of God according to the law of karma [2]. God simply gives the first motion and sets the ball rolling. This motion extends as a dyad, a triad, and finally continues as a chain reaction. The Vaisesika Sutra says there are two types of bodies existing in the universe: sexual bodies and asexual bodies. Man and animals have sexual bodies. Aditya, vayu, varuna, God, etc. have asexual bodies. Sexual bodies can produce their own kind, and they are dependent on semen and blood. But asexual bodies are not dependent on semen and blood. The first creation of the sexual bodies is called Brahma, the God of creation, and He had no parents [9]. Like Nyaya, Vaisesika has the same views on the liberation of the souls. According to Vaisesika, ignorance is the root cause of all the pain and suffering. One can attain liberation from worldly suffering with the right knowledge of reality.

Views of Vedanta

Vedanta is one of the ancient Indian philosophies that evolved from the later parts of the Vedas. It is also called uttara mimamsa. It discusses the material and spiritual needs of people, such as

the ultimate reality and the theories of karma, dharma, artha, kama, and moksha. The three main schools of thought under Vedanta are Advaita, Visistadvaita, and Dvaita. The Advaita school of thought was founded by Sankaracharya, a Vedic scholar from Kerala, in the eighth century. At this time, a large number of people followed Buddhism in India. Buddha, disappointed with Vedic rituals, rejected the authority of the Vedas and laid emphasis on dharma rather than devotion to God. But Sankaracharya interpreted the essence of the Vedas and the dharma of Buddha and got new knowledge from the Vedas called Advaita. Sri Sankaracharya introduces a new concept, 'Maya', and says Brahman and Atman are not different things, but both are the same. He views Brahman alone as real and others as unreal. According to Sankara, maya is the power of God, through which God can produce ignorance, ajnana, and avidya in the minds of humans. Under the effect of maya, people see many things in the universe and consider themselves separate beings from Brahman. According to Sankara, Brahman is real and infinite. The infinite cannot have parts, so the totality of the finite cannot make an infinite. Sankara describes Brahman as Nirguna Brahman, since he has no attributes or qualities. Sankara's Brahman is a Parabrahman since Brahman is beyond our cognition, thoughts, and imaginations. Sankara accepted the empirical view of Brahman as Ishvara. For ordinary people, under ordinary perception, Ishvara is the real creator, sustainer, and destroyer; he is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, and he controls the universe within. The reality of a Brahman as Ishvara is more important than the absolute Brahman, since we can easily reach Ishvara through love and devotion and easily receive his grace. In a drama, the actors are real; the characters in the dramas are unreal, but the actors represent real characters. In the same way Ishvara represents the real characters of Brahman [10]. In addition to this, Sankara says that one can attain liberation through the realization of Brahman through jnana marga. Since jiva is no other than Brahman, one can renounce worldly affairs, follow moral and spiritual disciplines, and concentrate on meditation to get liberation.

Sri Ramanuja, a Vedic scholar from Tamil Nadu, founded a qualified monism school of thought called Visistadvaita in the eleventh century. During this post-Advaita period, people viewed the entire world as an illusion (maya), and whatever they saw was unreal. Therefore, people find it difficult to enjoy any pleasure in the affairs of the world. The devotions of true devotees didn't satisfy the needs of the devotees. For this reason, Advaita philosophy became fruitless and didn't offer any consolation to humanity [11]. Therefore, Ramanuja came out with a new monism philosophy, Visistadvaita. Ramanuja didn't believe the Sankara's philosophy of maya. Ramanuja considered that the world consists of finite cit (spirits), acit (materials), and Ishvara. Also, according to him, everything in the world is real, and God is real. Jiva and Brahman are separate eternal identities. Jiva is a part, Brahman is a whole, Jiva is a river, and Brahman is an ocean. When the river reached the ocean, we could not identify the river's water. Further, Ramanuja describes God is like a spider and the universe is like a spider's web. God makes the world, He designs the world, and He lives in the world. The world is His body, and He rules the world from within. Ramanuja's Brahman is Saguna since Brahman has infinite forms and qualities not limited by space, time, or materials. Ramanuja's Brahman is also a Nirguna Brahman. It does not mean it is devoid of qualities. It means devoid of all imperfections and inauspicious qualities. Ramanuja identifies the absolute truth with a single god named Vishnu.

The other names of Vishnu are Purusha, Narayana, Brahman, and Vasudeva. Brahma and Siva are individual souls like Indra, Agni, Varuna, Soma, etc. The incarnation of God coming down in material form on earth is called an avatar in the Puranas and Vibhava in the Agamas [11]. According to Ramanuja, one cannot attain liberation by studying the Vedas alone. He will get liberation only when God is pleased to choose him for liberation. Therefore, God must be pleased by love and devotion to attain liberation [2]. Ramanuja believes bhakti marga is the only marga to achieve liberation other than jnana (knowledge) marga and karma (action) marga. Ramanuja believes that after liberation, the soul becomes similar to god in some respects but not in all respects.

Sri Madhava, a Vedic scholar from Karnataka, founded a pure dualistic school of thought called Dvaita in the 12th century. The school of Madhava appeared after the establishment of the schools of Sankara and Ramanuja, and hence it removed all the ideological dissatisfaction of previous schools. According to Madhava, the realities in the universe are spirits, matter, and Brahman, as viewed by Ramanuja. He classifies all the realities as svatantra (independent realities) and paratantra (dependent realities). Brahman is the only independent reality, and the rest are dependent realities. Therefore, according to Madhava, purusha, prakriti, kala, karma, etc. are not independent realities but depend on Brahman [12]. Madhava confirms that Brahman and jiva are not the same; they are different entities. Brahman is only one, and jivas are plenty. Jiva is self-luminous and bound by ignorance of the nature of his own, the nature of Brahman, the nature of the world, and the nature of the relation between jiva and Brahman. The Brahman of Madhava is a svatantra Brahman. He is above the purusha and the prakriti. His cosmic roles on the jiva are creation, preservation, dissolution, control, enlightenment, prevention of bondage, and release from bondage. Madhava says bhakti marga is the best way to achieve liberation; other marga do not guarantee real liberation. Further, Madhava believes the grace of God is necessary to raise the last veil of bondage and uncover the true nature of oneself and the nature of Brahman, and hence liberation is impossible without the grace of God. According to Madhava, moksha is an end, not a means to an end. Mukti ends with self-expression, self-manifestation, and self-realization. In other words, mukti is the complete unfolding of the self in all its promise and potency. Therefore, moksha is the state of being blessed with divine favor and free from all imperfections and bad passions. The wisdom and enjoyment of bliss became the nature of muktas. Further, according to Madhava, jivas are many and moksha is different for each person, based on one's knowledge and spiritual perfections. But there is no conflict arising among the liberated souls. The presence of gradation in the svarupa and svarupananda of jiva in moksha would not disturb the peace and harmony of the liberated souls. Since muktas are free from all evils, they will mutually come close together. The higher-status souls in the moksha will be extending their help and friendship to other lower-status souls in the moksha [12].

Views of Contradiction

The earliest atheist Charvaka philosophy rejected the Vedas and realized that there is no God and no soul. According to them, believing in God is an act of ignorance. The purpose of human life is to seek artha and Kama alone. Another atheist philosophy, Jainism, which appeared

around 500 BCE, also rejected the existence of God but believed in the existence of the soul and the karma theory. They suggested valuable ways for the people to attain moksha. The next atheist Buddhist philosophy that appeared around 500 BCE was disappointed with the Vedic Gods and rituals, but it believed in some supernatural figures in the place of God and insisted on an eight-fold path to release from samsara and the cycle of birth.

Sage Jamini, through Mimamsa philosophy, interpreted earlier parts of Vedic rituals, rejected god as a creator of the world, but recognized the unseen powers of apurva and sakti that govern the whole world. He believed in the effects of karma on the life of jiva and accepted rituals as the correct paths to attain liberation. Sage Kabila revealed through Sankhya philosophy that Brahman and jiva evolved from the combination of purusha (conscious matter) and prakriti (unconscious matter). According to Kabila, liberation can be attained by breaking the relation between the purusha and prakriti. Maharishi Patanjali recognized that the efficient cause that brings purusha and prakriti close to each other is called Ishvara. He further guided people to follow the eight-fold path of yoga to suppress all the modifications of citta and get liberation.

The traditional analytical Indian philosopher Sage Gautama, through the window of Nyaya philosophy, disclosed God as the efficient cause of the universe by inferential knowledge. He showed the path of meditation to get liberation, absolute freedom from all suffering and pain. Another traditional Indian philosopher, Sage Kanada revealed through Vaisesika philosophy that atoms and souls were held together by an unseen power called Adrsa, or God. Further, he declared that one can attain liberation by getting the right knowledge of reality. Sri Sankaracharya, the founder of the Advaita Vedanta School, came up with the new concept of maya, according to which everything in the universe comes under maya except Brahman. He viewed Brahman and Atman as not two different things; both are the same thing, and one can attain liberation by realization of Brahman through jnana marga. Sri Ramanuja, the founder of the Visistadvaita School, burst out with a divergent view, according to which everything in the universe is real and Brahman and Atman are two separate eternal identities. He believed one could attain liberation through bhakti marga with the grace of God. Sri Madhava, the founder of the Dvaita School, removed all the ideological dissatisfaction of the Sankara and Ramanuja schools. He declared Brahman alone as an independent eternal being, and all others like purusha, prakriti, kala, karma, etc. are dependent on Brahman. He believed the same bhakti marga is the best way to please God and achieve liberation.

Generalized View of Spiritual Substances

World: Valid knowledge about anything cannot be gained by direct perception alone. It can also be done by other means of valid knowledge, like inference, comparison, and verbal testimony. By using all the means of valid knowledge, we can find that the entire universe is composed of the physical reality of prakriti and eternal realities. Prakriti are composed of different substances like earth, water, air, fire, and space. All these substances are constituted by different elements, and each element is constituted by a different number of particles like electrons, protons, and neutrons. The eternal substances are composed of non-atomic substances like time, space, ether, mind, and purusha. All these substances are characterized by sattva, rajas, and tamas gunas.

Brahman: Nobody has created the world. All the physical and eternal realities already existed in the universe as atoms and souls. Prakriti is an unconscious, unintelligent physical substance, and purusha is the conscious, intelligent, eternal substance. All these substances are independent of each other. These substances were held together by some unseen power called Brahman, sometimes called adrsa or apurva. All these realities are not independent; they all depend on Brahman. Brahman alone is independent. When purusha comes closer to prakriti and reflects the rajas guna of prakriti, it appears as Lord Brahma. When purusha comes closer to prakriti and reflects the sattva guna of prakriti, it appears as Lord Vishnu. When purusha comes closer to prakriti and reflects the tamas guna of prakriti, it appears as Lord Shiva. Brahman has infinite forms and infinite qualities that are not limited by space or time, so he is called Saguna Brahman. He is also a Nirguna Brahman. It does not mean it is devoid of qualities. It means devoid of all imperfection and auspicious qualities. The incarnation of God coming down in material form is called an avatar. People worship different types of sakti, or apurva, or adrsa under different names of Deities to get different types of worldly benefits.

Soul: The soul is an eternal substance; it exists in all human beings, animals, plants, birds, and insects. It is unique to each individual, infinite in number, with no beginning, no ending, and no limited size. In its pure form, it possesses infinite knowledge, infinite energy, and infinite power. When they are attached to a karma particle or physical body, it continues to acquire new karma from the universe through the actions of the body, mind, speech, wrong knowledge, anger, greed, lust, etc. Then they possess limited knowledge, limited perception, and limited power. They are dominated by sattva, rajas, and tamas gunas and subjected to the cycle of birth and death according to karma. Karma is the blueprint of one's past deeds, on which the present can be constructed and the future can be charted. Karma particles carry one's papa and punya information from one birth cycle to another. But karmas are not powerful, therefore they can be altered by right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct. The right contact can be achieved by taking five great vows, namely, the vow of non-violence, the vow of truthfulness, the vow of non-stealing, the vow of brahmacharya, and the vow of non-attachment to sense organs.

Self: The self is an internal organ of the body constituted by the mind, intellect, and ego. It can perform all the functions like sleeping, walking, dreaming, birth, and death. It can feel pain and pleasure and is bound to worldly affairs. It serves as a warehouse for all the memories, images, thoughts, emotions, feelings, and desires. In fact, self is an unconscious subtle force, but due to its closeness to purusha, it appears to be conscious and performs all the functions of the body. When the body dies, self disappears.

Liberation: Life is a mixture of pleasures and sorrows. Suffering is a part of life. We feel suffering due to our attachment to worldly affairs and desire to enjoy life, wealth, and sex. It is possible to escape from the sufferings, and there is a way to stop the suffering and achieve moksha. There are various ways to attain moksha, such as jnana marga, karma marga, bhakti marga, and raja yoga. Whatever the marga one follows, that does not guarantee real liberation. Only the grace of God can raise the last veil of maya. God is pleased by love and devotion alone.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis of various Indian philosophies, this research study has arrived at the conclusion that from the Vedic period to the current internet world, the spiritual aspect of life on earth has divergent views. Actually, Indian philosophers felt that truth was multi-sided, and they unveiled some sides of truth according to their limitations and their time period. As everyone knows, human senses are limited, so human knowledge about eternal substances is inadequate, and it is partial and subjective and depends on space and time. Like blind men finding the shape of the elephant, each philosopher, according to their experiences, their knowledge, and their environment, unveils the nature of eternal substances. We could not say those views are erroneous since their views are absolutely correct according to their experiences during their time period. To get a generalized view on the nature of spiritual substances, we must interpret all the views and arrive at an overall view of all the spiritual substances. These views may have more consistency with absolute knowledge of spiritual substances than particular philosophical views, and they shall give rise to a universal religion, a universal God, and a universal faith in the future.

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