Chapter One

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF LIBERATION IN DIFFERENT PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

I. Definition

The word ‘liberate’ is derived from the Latin word ‘liberatas’ that means ‘to release’ or ‘to set free’ someone from the feelings or conditions that make his life unhappy or difficult. Liberation from the conditions that make one’s life unhappy or difficult is, therefore, the state of freedom or release from slavery, imprisonment, captivity, poverty, and several other forms of suffering; whereas liberation from the feelings that make one’s life unhappy is the state of freedom from internal conflicts or troubles in one’s own mind or thinking. The former is regarded as the state of freedom from material conditions or bad environments, whereas the latter is the state of liberation from mental or spiritual crisis, i.e., worries, fear, despair, and tension. Thus, liberation is the state of freedom from all forms of fetters and afflictions from material to mental conditions. In this sense liberation is often interchangeable with freedom, a state or quality of being freed from the control of some other person or some arbitrary power.

In the long and checkered history of human race, the idea of freedom along with those of equality and democracy were put forth and pressed much

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earlier by the great founders of religions such as Lord Buddha, Lord Mahāvīra and so forth in the sense that they revolted against ritualism, superstition, caste discrimination, animal sacrifices, and so on. The spirit of equality of the Buddha is well illustrated by the fact that He allowed entry of the members of all four castes in his order of monks and firstly allowed the womenfolk to become a Bhikkhunī (Buddhist nun) that seemed to be equal to a Bhikkhu (Buddhist monk). The ideas of freedom, equality and democracy much influenced the people through many generations in general, and those who lived during his time in particular. Freedom, equality and democracy are really of mutual relation that culminates in human dignity of the topmost category in the present era. Liberation and freedom are similar in the sense as both connote freedom from suffering, pain, lamentation, despair and so forth; but they are different in the sense as we use them. Liberation in religious context is more concerned with mental or spiritual matters than freedom of thought, freedom of speech, religious liberty etc. that pertain to social and political matters.

The state of liberation relates to the word ‘emancipation’ which generally means “the liberation of the individual from the yoke of the community and its institutions”. A. Dorner, there are two kinds of emancipation: (1) emancipation of thoughts and (2) emancipation in practical life. In the former, “thought becomes emancipated when it casts aside the traditional views and prejudices which have impeded its free movement in the past.” Emancipation of thoughts becomes the fundamental premises for

flowering of new thoughts and fading away of backward views and thus bringing about prominent advantages for the world. In society human life and social orders are improved; social injustices, all sorts of evils and other acts of corruption are removed by the emancipation of thoughts. The emancipation of thought helps scientists in investigating new facts and idea leading to inventions. Buddhism arose as a result of emancipation from the ascendancy and authority of the Brāhmaṇa priests⁴ and Sikhism, on the other hand, from the oppressive Hinduism and Islam; similarly Protestant Church, from the Catholic Christianity. Thus, according to A. Dorner “the prerogative of freedom in religious belief, in scientific inquiry, in the utterance of one's conviction, come to be regarded as inalienable, and the State is called upon to preserve it inviolate.”⁵ In case of the latter, it means that the emancipation not only bears upon thoughts but also upon the practical life; and thus the individual becomes more and more independent.

The state of liberation may also be known as the state of salvation used mostly in case of the theistic and monotheistic religions and others. According to the Webster’s English Dictionary, the word ‘salvation’ derived from the Latin salvatus, means (1) saving or being saved from danger, evil, difficulty, destruction, etc.; (2) deliverance from sin and the penalties of sin, redemption.⁶ The concept of salvation relates to the supreme God who is believed to be the creator of the universe and who is of omnipotence, omniscience and omni-

⁵ Ibid., p. 271.
⁶ Webster’s New World College Dictionary, p. 1267.
benevolence; and who can save his creations (people) from dangers and so forth, especially can free them from their sin as in Judaism, Christianity, etc. In the early history of humankind people had a common belief in Gods as their spiritual refuges, when they were frightened by unknown natural cyclones, wild animals or enemies. They hoped to be saved by their beloved gods from such dangers. Some religions have a common belief that the human sufferings in the present life are just the god’s punishment for their previous sins and they have to endure their fixed destiny. Salvation can be gained from them by obedience to God’s commandments and performing penitence. Y. Masih in his work entitled A Comparative Study of Religions, opines that “salvation means escape from the anger of God which leads to the eternal damnation of the sinner into hell,” while “liberation means escape from the endless cycle of births and deaths.” Liberation and salvation are hardly different as both mean escape from miseries. However, the means of obtaining them are amazingly different. According to Judaism salvation can be achieved by following the laws of Moses and culturing the moral life of compassion; for the Christianity it is a gift of God for those who believe in Him; for the Islam it is achieved by strict obedience to the commandments of Allah and performing five pillars of faith;
for Buddhism liberation or nibbāna can be attained by practicing the Noble Eightfold Path or the Middle Path (the Majjhimā Paṭipadā).\textsuperscript{11}

According to Assyro-Babylonian tradition, salvation from the pain of hell might have been conceived to be. The hell of the Babylonians was simply described as “a domain of ignominious existence, ‘where dust was their nourishment, and their food mud.’ And the path of salvation for them was performing litanies and prayers so that their sins might be carried away by the wind.”\textsuperscript{12} Salvation is a structural idea in Buddhism no less than in other religions. Suffering and the possibility of escape from suffering have been seen to be the ‘corner-stones of Buddhist doctrine’.\textsuperscript{13} For the Christians, “Knowledge of God, in fact, is one of the Biblical synonyms for salvation.”\textsuperscript{14} For Egyptian, salvation is considered as the blessed death or posthumous happiness in heaven.\textsuperscript{15} In Hinduism, salvation is related with the term mokṣa or mukti which means ‘release’ from the bondage to the world and its fetters.\textsuperscript{16} In Iranian tradition, salvation was simply “the delivery from evil, moral and physical in this life and the securing of eternal happiness after death”.\textsuperscript{17} For the Jewish salvation means “redemption from sins here, and deliverance from its

\textsuperscript{11} Alfonso Verdu, Early Buddhist Philosophy: In the Light of the Four Noble Truths, 1\textsuperscript{st} ed., 1985, reprinted in Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1995, pp. 146-47.


\textsuperscript{17} L.C. Casartelli, “Salvation,” Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, vol.21, p. 137.
consequences hereafter.”¹⁸ And for the Muslim salvation means escape from future punishment.¹⁹

According to John J. Tathamanil, the concept of liberation has been understood largely as ‘a matter of freedom from afflictions of the heart and ignorance of the mind.’²⁰ According to Buddhism, suffering arises from craving or clinging of the mind to the pleasures of the senses,²¹ but not from the phenomena themselves. According to the majority of the Indian religions, ignorance of the mind is the main cause of all afflictions and troubles in life. It is the ignorance that brings about craving, hatred and wrong views. Whenever ignorance is got rid of at the root, one can attain liberation. The Buddha said that “he... having got rid of ignorance, having made knowledge arise, is here-now an end-maker of anguish.”²² Besides, liberation has been described in most of the Indian religious and philosophical traditions as the state of freedom from the bondages of greed, anger, delusion and other defilements, in which, liberation from ignorance is the most important. The path leading to liberation is really the path of getting off such ignorance.

Some people believe that liberation can be gained after dying, while others, on the other hand, think that liberation can be achieved in this very life. Most people of the prophetic religions believe that liberation is the state of

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²¹ I.B. Horner, tr., The Collections of the Middle Length Sayings, vol.1, p. 60.
²² Ibid., p. 58f.
salvation by God’s blessing at the time of dying if they strongly believe in God, live the life of discipline and obedience. So, heavenly abode with joy and happiness forever after dying is the ultimate liberation for them. A major section of the people who belong to a School of Mahāyāna Buddhism also believe that after dying the devotees arise in the Pure Land Heaven as their liberation if they fulfill faith, moral conduct, and vows, especially reciting continuously the Amida Buddha’s name. Majority of the believers in Buddhism, Jainism and some others think that the state of liberation does not relate to living or dying; liberation can, however, be attained if all fetters, defilements, karma, and so on, are destroyed. For them, ignorance or delusion can be considered as the main cause of fetters, cravings, malice, hatred, and other defilements. It is said that just insight or wisdom is the effective means of eliminating the dark of ignorance, leading to ultimate liberation here and now in this very life.

In this context, another very important point is time span or periodicity of the attainment of liberation. In this respect, there happen to be two views. Some people believe that liberation happens gradually, while some others think that liberation takes place immediately instantly. All actions of body, speech, and thought make the different seeds of deeds that bring several fruits or effects in this life and the life after. According to Buddhism and some other religious orders, a living being has spent countless lives in the past with so many deeds accumulated; the path of liberation must be gradual by eliminating old deeds

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23 Y. Masih, A Comparative Study of Religions, p. 74.
and stopping new deeds. The Buddha is reported to have ever said that “deeds are one’s own, beings are heirs to deeds, deeds are matrix, deeds are kin, deeds are arbiters; deed divides beings by lowness and excellence.” On another occasion, the Buddha certified that it is possible to lay down a gradual training in his dhamma and discipline; that is the long process of practicing morality, concentration and wisdom. The concept of immediate liberation first appeared in some schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism especially in Zen or Ch’an schools with the idea that the immediate liberation can be attained at the moment one realizes the Buddha’s nature or Buddhahood in his own mind. This spirit is manifest clearly in the famous verse such as:

A special transmission outside the sutra,
Independent of word and writ,
Pointing directly to the mind of man,
Seeing one’s true nature and attaining Buddhahood.

The idea of liberation appeared early in ancient Greece which deeply influenced the western philosophy. It started perhaps with the famous philosopher Plato (428-348 B.C.) who shifted the locus of freedom from the political distinction between citizen and slave to the internal will that exercises influence on external events. There are four definitions of freedom raised by natural scientists. First of all, the political freedom or liberty is understood as

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25 Ibid., pp. 52-57.
independent from external coercion by governmental power. Secondly, natural freedom or freedom of the will is the ability of a rational mind to choose between alternatives and make decisions that lead to actions. Thirdly, moral freedom refers to what the disciples of Aristotle dubbed ‘virtue,’ the freedom gained when conforming one’s life to a higher truth or higher good that transcends the choosing self. Fourthly, future freedom is the release of human creativity through designing, engineering, organizing, and building in such a way as to influence future events. 27 The spirit of liberation has been bringing to human dignity, i.e., freedom, democracy, and human rights in present day world and so forth.

There have been many philosophers or prophets who sacrificed their lives for the sake of liberation not only for themselves, but also for the entire mankind. It is generally claimed that the key of liberation has been discovered and preserved in several religious and philosophical systems that we have to study and observe faithfully. Almost all the religious traditions not only accept liberation from the cycle of birth and death as the ultimate goal of life, but also prescribe a path which leads to the cessation of cycle of birth and death. In spite of this fact, the concept of liberation is one of the most debated themes of philosophies and religions, both in the Eastern and the Western countries.

II. The Concept of Liberation in the Prophetic Religions

In the history of western philosophies and religions, ‘liberation’ has been often understood as salvation or healing, a reunion with God as He exists in Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Most of them believe that the world has been created by God out of nothing and by His will alone. God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe, the only One who is omnipotent and omniscient.28

a. In Zoroastrianism

One of the most ancient religions in the world is the Zoroastrianism or Parsiism, the national religion of ancient Iran, and a strict monotheism, which arose in Iran about 2000 B.C. by Prophet Zarathushtra.29 The Zoroastrians believe in Ahura Mazda, the Wise God as their only God, father, brother and friend. Fire is said to be the symbol of light and purity.30 Zoroastrianism believes in the resurrection of death, the Heaven-Hell, restoration, the Day of Judgment, etc. In this way, it influenced much in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. According to Y. Masih, ‘Christianity came into the world as the reformation of Judaism, and, Islam has been regarded as a reformed movement of both Judaism and Christianity. But Judaism in its developing period owes much to the prophetic religion of Zoroastrianism.’31

28 Y. Masih, A Comparative Study of Religions, pp. 57-64, 93, 131.
29 The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, p. 988.
30 Masih, op. cit., p. 27.
31 Y. Masih, A Comparative Study of Religions, p. 18.
The concept of salvation, in the first acceptance, is very simple – the delivery from evil, moral, and physical in this life and the securing of eternal happiness in Heaven in a conscious individual life after death. By good thoughts (humata), good words (hukhta), and good deeds (hvarshta), a constantly repeated formula, one acquires merits during his lifetime here and thereby takes his share in the perennial warfare between the good and evil spirits. This doctrine shows that each man ‘works out his salvation’ under the guidance of divine revelation, especially powerful spiritual aids of God Ahura Mazda and his hierarchy of spirits. For A.J. Carnoy, a Zoroastrian will realize in this world and hereafter the wished-for kingdom, the kingdom of the best, the good reward with perfect happiness and immortality, that will follow the last ordeal and the renovation of the world (frasho-kereli).

b. In Judaism

Judaism is the Jewish religion, a very ancient monotheistic religion based on the laws and teachings of the Holy Scriptures and the Talmud (the collections of writings constituting the Jewish civil and religious laws), which teaches a strict obedience to the Laws, Statutes and Ordinances of God and justice, righteousness, holiness in the life and conduct of the people. Judaism was first introduced by Moses, their greatest prophet, and afterwards elucidated by Ezra. The Jews believe that their first ancestor was Abraham and regard

34 Webster’s New World College Dictionary, p. 774.
35 Y. Masih, A Comparative Study of Religions, p. 51.
themselves to be the chosen people on the earth. As the chosen people, the Jews are supposed to live the most strict life with a great responsibility. ‘A person who obeys God in everything and always does what is right, whose words are true and sincere, and does not slander others’ (Psalm 15). They also believe in this world created by God, the existence of angels and the devil, the immortality of the soul, Hell and Heaven, and the Day of Judgment. For them, man who is created by God is found to fall into sins; and there are five solutions or remedies to overcome his sins: (1) repentance, (2) good and righteous acts, (3) fear of Hell and hope for Heaven, (4) the Messiah will bring salvation, and (5) praying. The purpose of this creation is to establish a divine order and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Redemption from sin here and deliverance from its consequences hereafter is an idea which occupies a large place in Jewish theology. For the Jews, the contrite life and obedience suffice for salvation. In the Old Testament (OT) the word salvation occurs frequently. The Hebrew terms, yesha, yeshual, teshual have various meanings, (1) help for deliverance from distress or peril of some kinds, particularly from enemies; (2) rescue from death and from sin; (3) victory, etc. In Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphical writings, the eschatological significance becomes more pronounced, for instance, the repentant sinners are saved, delivered from punishment at the Last Judgment. Besides, in Talmudic literature deliverance or salvation is one of the boons associated with the

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37 Masih, A Comparative Study of Religions, p. 61.
Messianic order.\textsuperscript{38} Y. Masih wrote in his work, A Comparative Study of Religions, “...enjoying the blessed fellowship of God, singing his praise and sharing his life of holiness and bliss. They will live like angels as spirits, requiring no food and no earthly pleasures of sex and drink.”\textsuperscript{39}

c. In Christianity

Christianity, the ethical, historical, universal, monotheistic, redemptive religion, was founded by Jesus Christ who was born perhaps in 4 B.C. in a small town of Bethlehem in the reign of Augustus Caesar.\textsuperscript{40} Jesus Christ was a Jew bearing the spiritual aspiration of the Jews and was influenced by the Old Testament, especially the Psalms. It is believed that Jesus Christ was son of God who brought His message to all human beings. The Bible itself means a collection of books recording the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As an ethical religion, God is in Christianity conceived as being capable of bestowing the moral and religious blessing and redemption. According to Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, ‘Christianity emphasizes moral evil as the root of individual’s unhappiness, insists on loving fellowship with God as life’s highest good, and promises an immortality of glory and blessedness with God.’\textsuperscript{41} As a matter of fact, both Judaism and Christianity have the common beliefs in monotheism, the Day of Judgment, Heaven-Hell, Creatorship of God,

\textsuperscript{39} Y. Masih, A Comparative Study of Religions, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., p. 79.
and immortality of the soul. However, according to Philosophic Classics: From Plato to Nietzsche, “they differ on one key point: the identity of the Messiah,” for example, “whereas the Jews anticipated a spiritual-political figure to save them from the oppression of their enemies, Christians believed the Christ saved his people mainly from the spiritual oppressors of sin and death.”

According to Christianity, man is weak and commits sin; thus, salvation is gained not only by obeying the law, but by having faith (bhakti) in the redeeming and expiatory death of Jesus, the sinner is forgiven his sins and he gets united with God; and the service of God is the greatest freedom. Jesus promises paradise to the repentant thief who was hung by his side on the cross. “I promise you that today you will be in Paradise with me.” (Luke 23:43) Jesus said to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life whoever believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”

d. In Islam

Islam is a prophetic religion, issued out of both Judaism and Christianity, founded by Prophet Muhammad who was born in 570 A.D. and

42 Y. Masih, A Comparative Study of Religions, p. 114.
44 Masih, op. cit., p. 106.
died in 632 A.D. At the age of forty whilst meditating in a cave of Mountain Hira, the prophet received his first revelation through the angel Jibrail (Gabriel). Islam accepts twenty five prophets of the Old Testament and three of the New Testament, and believes that Muhammad is the final and the last prophet. There are a number of things in common among Judaism, Christianity and Islam with regard to monotheism, the transcendence of God, the revelation of God through prophets, the doctrine of heaven and hell, the Day of Judgment, and so on.

‘Islam’ means surrendering one’s will to the will of God, the complete obedience to the laws of God. The term ‘najah’ means escape from future punishment in hell while the word ‘khalas’ means deliverance in the same sense. Muslim theologians explain ‘the way of salvation’ as consisting in submission to the orders concerning the due performance of the five duties (five pillars) of Islam: (1) five prayers a day, (2) fasting (especially in the Ramadan month), (3) giving (5% income) to the needy, (4) pilgrimage to Mecca, and (5) recital of the creed. A Muslim must observe three things: (1) faith, (2) action, and (3) realization. Faith means belief in Allah who is One, Omnipotent, Omniscient, and the sole Creator of everything that exists. Man has been created with free will so that by his surrender of free will to the divine

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46 Y. Masih, A Comparative Study of Religions, p. 115.
47 Ibid., p. 115.
48 Ibid., pp. 145-46.
will he may become worthy of God’s fellowship (Sura 51.56). By expressing one’s faith and observing such five pillars, a Muslim realizes his final salvation on the Day of Judgment. According to Islam, prayers, five times a day, form the key to Heaven. Keeping of fast during Ramdan (ninth month) helps in purifying the mind, controlling one’s desires, and removing one’s sin. And pilgrimage to Mecca is also a sure means of salvation. Those who are judged as the faithful and obedient will be rewarded by Allah with a life in Heaven with an unending happiness; but those who are evil doer and disbelievers will be hurled into hell-fire. So, according to Edward Sell, Islamic concept of salvation leads a man to have power over sin to repress it, but a release in the next world from the punishment of the hell, in virtue of certain good acts done in this life. It is not becoming, but receiving.

III. The Concept of Liberation in Indian Traditions

In Indian philosophical and religious traditions, the concept of liberation is represented through some technical terms like mokṣa (also mukti), vimutti (Pāli, vimokkha) or nirvāṇa (Pāli, nibbāna). The term, mokṣa or mukti (Sanskrit), literally means “release,” is the state of liberation or deliverance from the cycle of birth and death or repetitive reincarnation (saṃsāra) and its concomitant sufferings. The concept of mokṣa was first developed in ancient India by the non-Aryan people whose spiritual ideas greatly influenced later

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51 Sura 2: 179-83.
Indian religious thoughts. The scholars have generally designated it as the ‘Samaṇa’ (Śramaṇa) stream of thought representing the Samaṇa Saṃskṛti. Buddhism and Jainism continued this tradition, and the early Upanishadic movement was influenced by it.\(^{53}\)

The word ‘vimutti’ or ‘vimokkha’ means liberation, deliverance, release, or freedom from all fetters of craving and grasping and all forms of suffering. And the word ‘nirvāṇa,’ (Pāli, nibbāṇa), literally “extinction” (nir + va, to cease blowing, to become extinguished) means freedom or liberation from desire or lust, malice and delusion; being free from the path of rebirth; and free from the stench of karmās (nir + vāna).\(^{54}\) Likewise the concepts of Saṃvara, Nirjarā, and Kevelya in Jainism too need a thought enquiry. Thus a full-length enquiry into the matter has become all the more desirable here. The concept of liberation needs to be further investigated through the first three main religions in India i.e. Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism and also with the Lastest one known as Sikhism. Thus finally the Buddhist concept of liberation will be presented in the chapters that follow one after the other.

**a. In Hinduism**

According to The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, “Hinduism is the group of religious and philosophical traditions of India that accept the authority of the Vedas and Upanishads, comprising the schools known as

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Initially, Hinduism has not been a single religion but really a federation of religions which has rooms for atheism, theism, yogic, spiritualism, all form of devotion, casteism, non-casteism with its roots in Indian origin of about 5000 years. It can be said that all those religions that accept the fourfold pillar in the form of of Karma - Saṃsāra - Jñāna - Mukti may be called Hinduism.

In Hinduism, the term ‘mokṣa’ signifies in the first instance ‘deliverance’ or release in general from pains and penalties of any kind. However, it has become ‘deliverance’ from bondage to the world and its fetters. The ‘mukta,’ therefore, is one who is liberated from all fettered conditions of early existence and has entered upon a state of endless freedom and felicity. The Hindu is one who practices one or more forms of Yoga - Bhakti, Karma, Jñāna, Raja - yoga knowing that God is unlimited and exists in many different forms, both personal and impersonal. All schools of Indian tradition belonging to Hinduism formally accept the doctrine that the individual Ātman (soul) infinitely transmigrates from body to body unless it attains enlightenment. The goal of philosophy, according to Hinduism, is typically taken to be not simply understanding, but enlightenment (mokṣa) which involves escape from the reincarnation, cycle of birth and death, and karma.

56 Y. Masih, A Comparative Study of Religions, pp. 149-50.
As per the Rg-vedic teachings in the beginning, the ultimate end was the attainment of heavenly abode (svarga). However, in the extant Hinduism, liberation (mukti) from the endless cycle or chain of births and deaths is the highest end.\textsuperscript{59} According to Shaṅkara, since bondage in worldly existence is due to ignorance (ajñāna), so liberation is possible only through knowledge (jñāna). There are two kinds of liberation, namely, (1) liberation in this very life (jīvanamukti) and (2) liberation after the fall of the body (videhamukti).\textsuperscript{60} For Rāmānuja, however, Bhakti (worship) is one of the most important means leading to the liberation. He recommends Jñāna-karma-bhakti-samuccaya for attaining liberation (mokṣa).\textsuperscript{61}

According to the Nyāya system, there are four separate sources of true knowledge, viz. perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāna), comparison (upamāna), and testimony (śabda). Liberation is the absolute cessation of all pains and sufferings brought about by the right knowledge of reality (tattvajñāna). In the Vaiśeṣika system, the whole world can be divided into seven categories, known as (1) substance (dravya), (2) quality (guṇa), (3) action (karma), (4) generality (sāmānya), (5) particularity (višeṣa), (6) the relation of inherence (samavāya), and (7) non-existence (abhāva). With regard to the problem of God and liberation of the individual soul, the Vaiśeṣika theory is substantially the same as that of the Nyāya system. According to the Sāṅkhya system, once we realize the distinction between the self and the not-self

\textsuperscript{59} Y. Masih, A Comparative Study of Religions, p. 178.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., pp. 179-82.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., p. 184.
including the body and the senses, the mind, the intellect and the ego, our self ceases to be affected by the joys and sorrows, the ups and downs of life. This is the state of liberation or freedom from suffering.\(^{62}\) The Yoga holds that God is the highest object of contemplation for concentration and self-realization.\(^{63}\) The state of liberation in the Early Mīmāṃsā can be reached as one of unalloyed bliss or heaven by observing obligatory duties. But the Later Mīmāṃsā conceives liberation only negatively as the cessation of the cycle of births and deaths.\(^{64}\) For the Vedanta, liberation is the complete dissociation of the soul from the body.\(^{65}\)

**b. In Jainism**

Jainism originated during the prehistoric times with twenty four liberated propagators designated as Tīrthaṅkara-s, wherein the last one was Vardhamāna Jnāṭṛputra, also known as Lord Mahāvīra (599-527 B.C.). Mahāvīra was the last and the most important Tīrthaṅkara titled as the Great Hero who lived in the sixth century B.C., a contemporary with the Buddha. He was born in a family of the warrior class (Khattiya) and belonged to the clan of Licchavi-s of Veshali.

He became a wandering ascetic at the age of thirty and achieved the stage of enlightenment at the age forty-two. In Jainism, the term ‘mokṣa’ means liberation, salvation or emancipation, the blissful state of the soul, completely

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\(^{62}\) S. Chatterjee and D. Datta, An Introduction to Indian Philosophy, Calcutta, 1984, p. 42.

\(^{63}\) Ibid., p. 44.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., pp. 46-47.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., p. 52.
free from the karmic bondage, free from the cycle of birth and death (sāṁsāra). For Jainism non-Vedic Yoga and austerities are regarded as important means for securing liberation.

The word ‘Jīna’, the common name applied to the twenty-four teachers (Tīrthaṅkara-s), etymologically means ‘conqueror’ who has conquered his passions and desires and has attained liberation. The Jaina-s always emphasize on the foundation of attaining liberation from all bondage and suffering by conquering all passions. They do not believe in the Creator God, but adorn the founders of their faith. According to Jain tradition, one, through his efforts, becomes liberated with perfect knowledge, power and happiness. According to Y. Masih, the process for achieving liberation must be performed through two important tasks: firstly, the fresh inflow of karma-s (āshrava-s) has to be stopped through the process known as saṁvara; and secondly, the past (old) karma-s have to be eradicated through the way known as nirjarā. This spirit is illustrated in the Majjhima Nikāya of the Pāli Tipitaka through the discourse entitled the Devadahasutta, when the Buddha said that some recluses (indicated Jains) held these views: “whatever this individual experiences, whether pleasant or painful or neither painful nor pleasant, all is due to what was previously done. Thus by burning up, by making an end of ancient deeds,

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67 Y. Masih, A Comparative Study of Religions, p. 236. 
69 Masih, op. cit., p. 244.
by the non-doing of new deeds, there is no overflowing into the future.”

Hence, Right faith, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct, which have been known as the Three Gems (triratna), pave the way for liberation (Samyag-darsana-Jñāna-caritrāṇi moksa-mārgaḥ).

Right Faith (Samyag Darśana): Right Faith can be defined as the attitude of respect towards the truth. The Jaina-s do not accept blindly even what the great teachers said. As Haribhadra is of the view that a Jaina is rationalistic, rather than dogmatic. Perfect faith always follows, therefore, right knowledge.

Right Knowledge (Samyag Jñāna): Right knowledge at the preparatory stage means the comprehension of six dravya-s (substances), five astikāya-s (eternal categories of being), seven tattva-s and nine padārtha-s (categories). According to the Dravya Saṅgraha, “Right Knowledge is the detailed cognition of the real nature of the ego and non-ego, and is free from doubt, error and uncertainty” (verse 42).

Right Conduct (Samyag Cārita): Right Conduct has been briefly described in the Dravya-Saṅgraha (verse 45) as refraining from what is harmful and doing what is beneficial. For the stoppage of the influx of new karma-s and eradication of the old ones one must perform five vows (pañca-
mahāvrata): (1) non-violence - ahiṃsā, (2) truth - satya, (3) not stealing - asteya, (4) abstention from self-indulgence - brahmacarya, and (5) renunciation - aparigraha.⁷⁵

An important matter that can remove the bondage is the practice of tapas or austerities. Tapas largely means ‘the mortification of the body’ both external and internal sides. Externally, it means observing fast, begging for food, standing under mid-day sun, etc. Internally, it means doing penances for all acts of commission and omission, respecting elders, saints and scriptures, etc. When a person practices these three gems in a harmonious way, he succeeds in overcoming the forces of all passions and karma-s, and his soul becomes free from bondage and attains liberation.

There are two sects of Jainism, namely, Svetāmbara and Digambara. Both of them accept the teachings of the Jina-s. While the recluse followers of the former are more accommodating with white clothes, while their counterparts in the latter one are more rigorous and puritanic without clothes.⁷⁶ The Digambara-s hold that a saint who has obtained perfect knowledge gives up all passions and possession, even clothes and food. According to the Digambara view a woman cannot obtain liberation. However, the Svetāmbara-s do not accept these views.⁷⁷

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⁷⁵ Chandradhar Sharma, A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy, p. 66.
⁷⁶ ‘Digambara’ means nude, and ‘Svetāmbara’ means white-robed.
⁷⁷ S. Chatterjee, An Introduction to Indian Philosophy, p. 74.
According to the Jainism, liberation is the expulsion of matter from the soul. It is ignorance that makes the soul mingled in the states of craving and defilement. Knowledge alone can remove such ignorance. The Jaina-s, therefore, believe that right knowledge can be obtained only by studying and practicing carefully the teachings of the Jina-s. Man is having essentially a pure spirit, but he comes in bondage due to his karma-s in countless past lives. Karma can cover his knowledge, perception, and ethical conduct. It is the karma which soils the soul, distorts his intellect and will and hurtles him down towards his destruction. As long as the āsrava-s accumulated due to past karma-s are not eradicated, the man continues to suffer. Hence, the effects of the karma-s have to be totally and completely destroyed.\(^78\)

c. Sikhism

According to Sikhism, the concept of mokṣa is essentially jīvan-mukti, the one attainable in one’s lifetime itself that brings him to the brink of the incorporeal emancipation (videha-mukti), the freedom from or the final cessation of the cycle of birth-death-birth (janam maraṇ). This ultimate mukti is a continuation of jīvan-mukti, going on after the shedding away of the corporeal frame to the final absorption into the One Absolute—the blending of the light with the Light (joti jot samana).\(^79\)

Sikhism was born and developed in Punjab as a very new reformist religion enunciating a creed towards equality, tolerance, simplicity of worship, and

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\(^{78}\) Y. Masih, A comparative Study of Religions, pp. 242-44.

higher and practical ethics and an application of democratic principles in
religion, founded by Guru Nānak (A.D. 1469-1539) during the 14th and the 15th
centuries A.D.\textsuperscript{80} Sikhism was not primarily a political movement, but
essentially a religious reformist movement following the saint poets of India
and crusading against idolatry, caste system, externalism, ritualism and other
forms of superstitions. However, Sikhism accepts the four-fold pillars of
karma-saṁsāra-jñāna-mukti as do Jainism and Buddhism. The word ‘Sikh’ is
related with the Pāli word sekha (Sanskrit: saikṣa) for derivation, which means
one under training, a disciple or a pupil. The term “guru”, in the beginning, was
being used for a master, teacher like sādhu, bhakta, etc., but, presently, it is
used for the first ten Guru-s and also for the Ādi Granth Sāhib as well.
According to Y. Masih, Sikhism is a religion of those who are willing to learn
the truth taught by the Guru-s and are willing to live down for the sake of their
faith.\textsuperscript{81} As a reformist religion, the Sikh faith preached monotheism, the unity
of God, and the equality of man before Him. In the Guru Granth Sahib, a few
lines of Saint Kabir have been included according to which there are four states
of liberated soul, namely, gaining of Heavenly abode, nearness with God,
similarity with God and fellowship with God.\textsuperscript{82} Y. Masih has listed fifteen
features of Sikhism which make it distinct from the rest of religious orders.
These features are as follows: (1) Accept the fourfold pillar (karma-saṁsāra-
jñāna-mukti), (2) Guru-centered religion, (3) Keep the vow of five K’s, i.e.
\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{80} Y. Masih, A Comparative Study of Religions, p. 255; cf. Amarjit Singh Sethi and Reinhard Pummer,
Comparative Religion, p. 147.
\textsuperscript{81} Y. Masih, A Comparative Study of Religion, pp. 255-56.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., pp. 273-74.
\end{footnotesize}
Kesh (long hair), Karhā (iron-bracelets), Kacchā (under drawer), Kanghā (comb) and Katār (sword), (4) Fight against social injustice and in defense of one’s faith, (5) Strict monotheism, (6) Do not admit the doctrine of incarnation (avatāravāda), (7) Admit only One God (Ek-Oṃkāra), (8) Rejection of caste, idolatry, ritualism and external observances, (9) Māyā is the creative manifestation of the God but is also a source of evils in man, (10) Constant muttering of God’s name (nāma-sumirana), (11) Bhakti or devotion for gaining release, (12) Live a life of house-holder, (13) Independent religion, (14) Respect other religions, (15) Favour local language and Gurmukhi is its script.  

According to Sikhism, man is endowed with free-will and reason, either to move in the direction of God-realization or to lose himself in the endless transmigration fraught with endless suffering. The path leading to liberation is just the pathways to God-realization by means of constant concentration (samādhi) or listening to the lesion of the Guru-s (suniyai) or pondering over the Truth given by the Guru-s (mania) or realization through deep meditation (dhyāna). Guru Nānak recommended the path of prayer, meditation, or bhakti leading to the grace of God; because it is easy and in accordance with human nature. Like the Buddhist theory of nibbāna Sikhism held that liberation is the final destiny of God-realization, the freedom from suffering due to the endless transmigration of the soul.

84 Ibid., p. 269.
85 Ibid., p. 270.