CHAPTER 5

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF SALVATION IN HINDUISM
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Hinduism is one of the ancient, living religions of the world. It has a long history, rich tradition and culture. Hinduism is known as sanātana dharma in the sense of eternal religion or eternal teaching. More than a religion it is considered to be a way of life. In Hinduism the concept of salvation is given emphasis in the form of mukti, liberation or mokṣa. Salvation is generally viewed in Hinduism as a sort of liberation from the bondage of ignorance - avidyā - and from the bondage of cycle of births and attaining mokṣa, the ultimate destiny of man. A.M. Esnoul says:

"The term mokṣa, a Sanskrit masculine substantive and its feminine synonym mukti are derived from the linguistic etymon muc, meaning 'release'. Both terms have always been employed in an exclusively religious sense, denoting release from the tedious and painful cycle of transmigration (samsāra)." ¹

The positive aspect of Hinduism is that it combines faith and reason. Swami Nikilanda observes, "Hinduism is not a set of abstract philosophical theories unrelated to life or a congeries of religious dogmas to be accepted with blind faith; it combines both philosophy and religion, reason and faith, and premise to its votaries a direct insight into reality and the grounds for the

acceptance of that insight". Indian Philosophy, as such is also concerned about mokṣa as liberation. T.M.P. Mahadevan says, "Indian Philosophy, it is well known is primarily a mokṣa-sāstra, teaching about liberation. Every school of Indian thought, be it orthodox or heterodox, except Cārvaka, considers liberation to be the ultimate goal of the philosophic quest". For Indian Philosophy and religion, salvation as mukti, liberation or moksa becomes the ultimate goal. Brahadāraṇyaka Upanishads, I, iii : 28 reads:

"asatō mā sad - gamaya
tamaso mā Jyotir - gamaya
mṛtyor mā mṛtam gamaya"

"From the unreal, lead me to the real
From darkness, lead me to light
From death, lead me to immortality"

Thus liberation from the bondage of unreality, ignorance and death forms the basis of Indian Philosophy and religion. How to get this salvation is very clearly explained in the scriptures and in the different systems of Indian thought. For our attempt here let us focus our attention on the treatment of the concept of salvation in the Vedas, Upanishads, Bagavat Gītā and the six Systems of Indian thought.

2 Swami, Nikhilanda, Hinduism, p.20.


4 As quoted by T.M.P.Mahadevan, Ibid, P.5.
5.1 SALVATION IN THE VEDAS

The truth about this life and the life beyond were heard by the inner ears and thus revealed to the rishis or sages. A true record of those things resulted in the Vedas. The Vedas mean eternal ‘wisdom’ or eternal ‘knowledge’ because they were ‘heard’ by rishis and so they are classified as śruti. The Vedas formed the true foundation and starting point of the later spiritual movements and Philosophies in India. Traditionally the Vedas are numbered as four - Rig, Sāma, Yajur and Atharva Vedas. The first three Vedas are directly connected with the sacrifices and the last one deals with mundane, personal matters. Of the four Vedas, Rig Veda is considered to be the oldest and it contains hymns of praise and invocation of gods. Sāma Veda is a collection of Rig Vedic hymns rearranged for singing or chanting by some priests during the Vedic sacrifices. This is otherwise known as song Veda or Veda of Chants. Yajur Veda is a collection of sacrificial formulae to be observed by the priest during the sacrifice. It is also known as Veda of sacrifice or sacrificial Veda. The last Veda, Atharva Veda, is quite different from the first three and it is believed that it would have come into existence later only. This Veda is not directly concerned with the rituals of sacrifice but concerned with personal matters like, to cure diseases, spells, to drive away demons and so on. Each Veda consists of four parts namely Samhitās or mantras which are hymns addressed to gods; Brāhmanas are commentaries on sacrifice or sacrificial texts; Āranyakas are the forest treatises which supplant the external rituals with symbolic meditation; Upanishads or Vedantā are end of Vedas "which are esoteric treatise which seek to interiorize the symbolism of the sacrificial ritual". The first three parts of each Veda are known as Karma kānda and the fourth part, Upanishads, is known as Jñāna kānda.

In the *Karma kānda* of Vedas there is hardly any reference to rebirth and salvation as *mukti* or *mokṣa* or liberation from the cycle of births. Dr. Radhakrishnan observes, "They had no special doctrines about life after death, though some vague conceptions about heaven and hell could not be avoided by reflective minds. Rebirth is still at a distance"⁶ In the early *Vedic* hymns, life after death is referred as heaven a place of enjoyment and hell a place of suffering. The reference to hell is not clear in the *Rig Veda* but it is clearly explained as a place of eternal darkness suffering and a contrast and to heaven in *Atharva Veda*.⁷ So in the Vedas heaven is considered to be the reward for the good and hell is the punishment for the vice. Man to avoid punishment and to get reward should not sin according to the Vedas. Sin is explained as an infringement of the cosmic law and truth *Ṛta* which includes moral law. Telling lies, false swearing, not correctly doing the ritual of sacrifice and such things which are against the moral law are considered as sins. So salvation here means purification from sins through the mercy of God and thus avoiding punishment and attaining eternal happiness. Liberation here means release from the bondage of such sins. *Rig Veda* I, 23:22 reads:

"Whatever sin is found in me, whatever evil I have done,
if, I have lied, or falsely sworn,
waters, remove the stain from me"⁸ and *Rig Veda*, I 24:15 reads:

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⁷ M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, pp.46-47.
⁸ Translation given by Raimundo Panikbar, In *The Vedic experience Mantramānjari*, p.486.
"Loosen the bonds, O, Varuna which bind us, which crush us, 
Cramping our every movement make us sinless in respect 
to you, Holy law, unbound for Boundlessness O son of Aditi.\(^9\)

In the Vedas, salvation includes a whole range of feeling like awareness of sin, guilt, anguish, fear, repentance, longing for forgiveness, hope of purification and finally getting the reward. Atharva Veda VI, 45:2 reads:

"Whatever wrong we have committed, O Agni, waking or sleeping, 
by the will or hatred cursing, remove it from us, 
whatever displeases you, thrust it afar\(^10\) 
and Atharva Veda VI.96:3 says:

"In whatever way we have sinned without eyes 
or our minds or words awake or asleep, 
may Soma by his own pure nature cleanse"\(^11\)

Appealing to all gods one and all for cleansing man from sin is explained in Atharva Veda, VI.115.

"Any sin we have committed, consciously a unconsciously 
deliver us from it O Gods one and all".\(^12\)

\(^9\) Ibid, p.486.  
\(^10\) Ibid, P.489.  
\(^12\) Ibid, p.503.
*Yajur Veda*, III, 48 seeks the help of gods to purify man's sins. It reads:

"With the help of the Gods may my sins against God be removed".  

*Vedic* hymns very clearly say that there is another life after death and that life is deathlessness. *Atharva Veda*, VIII, 1 says,

"Homage to Death, the end of life! Here rest your breath both inward and outward! May the life of this man be maintained in the realm of the Sun, in the world of deathlessness".

The life after death in the *Vedas* is associated with Hell and Heaven. The understanding one can get from the *Vedas* is that a man gains the status of hell or heaven based on his deeds in the world. If man sins but not repent for it and seek god's mercy to cleanse him and purify him or release him from sin he will get the punishment of *hell-naraka-the* bottomless darkness. *Rig Veda*, VII, 106:3 explains:

"Into the abyss, Indra and Soma, plunge the wicked! Into bottomless darkness fling them, so that not one of them may ever return! May your fierce power prevail and subdue them".

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For those who have done good work, moral deeds enter into heaven - *svarga* - a place of bliss, the world of light. *Rig Veda*. I 125:5 reads:

"He who gives liberally goes straight to the Gods;  
On the high ridge of heaven he stands exalted"\(^{16}\)

*Svargaloka* or paradise or heaven is described in *Atharva Veda* IV.34:5&6 as honey-filled and honey and milk freely flowing place. A person, based on his class, is able to enter this place. The 5th verse says:

"By means of rice offering, this wide spread obalation the best of all sacrifices, he enters heaven, where every kind of lotus abounds. May all this streams reach you in honey-filled heaven! May ponds full of lotus await you"\(^{17}\)

Thus from the *Vedic* hymns we understand that the ultimate destiny of man is to enjoy the bliss of heaven. To achieve this he must be saved or released from the bondage of sin through the grace of God. To gain the grace of God and forgiveness of sin he must offer sacrifices and oblations. But at the same time *Vedas* talk about happiness in this world also. As Swami Nikhilananda observes, "The Vedas are concerned not only with man's longing for supreme goal, which has been described as freedom, peace, bliss or immortality, but also with his more immediate impulse toward material pleasures here on earth and happiness in heaven."\(^{18}\)

\(^{16}\) *Ibid*, p.638.  
\(^{17}\) *Ibid*, p.637.  
Vedas talk about people doing ritual sacrifices and praying to God for good health, for children, a good harvest, happy and prosperous home, increase of wealth and so on. Atharva Veda is full of such references. For example Atharva Veda, VI.79:3 reads:

"O, generous God, Lord of thousand fold, Abundance in past to us now a share of Abundance; may we have a share in prosperity".  

So, in the Vedas, happiness both in the world and the world after is talked about. To achieve this man should pray to God; repent for his sin, offer ritual sacrifices, seek the grace of God and forgiveness of sin, follow the cosmic order and so on. But in the later Veda, namely the Atharva Veda a step further is explained. That is the Ātman should be identified with Brahman. R.C. Zaehner sights the example of Atharva Veda 10.8 as follows:

"In the lotus of nine doors (in the human body) enveloped in the three strands there dwells a supernatural being (yaksha) possessed of Ātman; thus do those who know Brahman know..."

Zaehner Comments, "Here in a nutshell we have the whole teaching of the Upanishad; it is the recognition within the human soul of an immortal something that participates in, is of the same nature as, or is actually identical

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19 Translation given by of Raimondo Panikkar, In Vedic Experience Mantramanjari, p.274.

20 As quoted by R.C. Zaehner, Hinduism, p.50.
with the immortal Brahman which sustains and ensouls the entire objective of cosmos".  

5.2 SALVATION IN THE UPANISHADS

*Upanishads* are the *Jñāna kānda* of the Vedas. They are the end of Vedas and so known as Vedānta. The etymological meaning of the term *Upanishad* is given by Max Muller as sitting down near a teacher and listening to him and Sankara defines *Upanishads* as that which destroys ignorance.  

No doubt *Upanishads* give us the higher knowledge which destroys ignorance. The traditional belief is that there were many *Upanishads* and some of them were preserved. Of the preserved *Upanishads* only ten or so are considered as principal Upanishads.

The *Karma kānda* of the Vedas have provided a solid base for the *Upanishads*. The rich thoughts implicit in the Vedas are developed further in the *Upanishads*. In the *Vedas* the objective idea of world is talked about but in the *Upanishads* the subjective idea of self, its relation to the objective world and the ultimate is talked about. *Vedic* sacrifices are interpreted in the *Upanishads* as renunciation of the world to attain spiritual liberation. The renunciation of the world does not mean neglect of the world or social duties. But this means that one should avoid the desire, too much attachment to the...


worldly pleasures. One should release oneself from selfish likes and dislikes so that liberation becomes possible.

The ultimate destiny of man is referred as mokṣa or liberation in the Upanishads. This is known as self-realisation. The true self is referred as Ātman in the Upanishads. Dr. Radhakrishnan says that the "etymology of this word is obscure. As per Rig-Veda, X.16:3, it means breath or the vital essence. Gradually it acquired the meaning of soul or self". Self is explained very clearly in the many dialogues between Prajapati and Indra recorded in the Upanishads. For example in Chāndogya Upanishad, VIII, 3-12 "we find a progressive development in the definition of self through the four stages of 1. bodily self, 2. the empirical self, 3. the transcendental self and 4. the absolute self". The true self is the subjective side of Brahman. But the individual self is not able to realise this because of avidyā or ignorance. To remove ignorance true knowledge becomes necessary.

Upanishads talk about higher knowledge which would remove ignorance from the individual self. Because of ignorance one is not able to see the truth. "The Chāndogya Upanishad, (VIII,3:1-3) tells us that a covering of untruth hides from us the ultimate truth even as the surface of the earth hides from us the golden treasure hidden under it". Avidyā is mentioned as the source of delusion in the Upanishads. While māyā is explained as more cosmic in

24 Dr.S.Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, Vol.1, P.151.
26 S.Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanishads, p.78.
significance, avidyā is explained as more as subjective. Man out of ignorance thinks that he is independent, learned and wise tries to search truth as a blind man. Katha Upanishad, I.2:5 reads :

"Those abiding in the midst of ignorance,
self-wise, thinking themselves learned,
Running hither and thither, go around deluded,
Like blind men led by one who himself blind".27

The world is an appearance and it has no reality of its own apart from Brahman. But man out of ignorance mistakes the world to be self-dependent and this delusive character of the world is also designated as māyā in the sense of avidyā. This avidya or ignorance of the self must be removed. Upanishads say that only through knowledge this ignorance can be removed. This knowledge is referred as higher knowledge or para vidyā. If our intelligence "has its being turned towards Universal Self it develops intuition or true knowledge, Wisdom".28 This intuitive wisdom is different from knowledge we derive through senses. The knowledge or wisdom is not acquired but it is discovered. Knowledge is concealed in ignorance and when ignorance is removed knowledge manifests itself. This higher knowledge or true knowledge or wisdom is possible only when he detaches himself from all evils. Moral or ethical preparation is insisted on to gain true knowledge as per the Mundaka Upanishad, 3.1:45 It says :

28 S.Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanishads, p.95.
"This soul (Atman) is obtainable by truth, by austerity (tapas),
By proper knowledge (jñāna) by the students life of charity
(brahmacharya) constantly (practised)
Within the body, consisting of light, pure is He
Whom the ascetics (Yati), with imperfection done away behold 29

Upanishads clearly point out that an individual must give up selfish
desire, attachment to material possessions, abstain from wrong doing and so
on to get the right knowledge. Methods are also suggested in the Upanishads
to gain higher knowledge or Jñāna. The habit of introversion or looking within
oneself is recommended in the Upanishads. "The Mundaka Upanishad, (111. 2:3) brings out the need for concentrated attention and undistracted effort. An
ordered, disciplined training of all our powers, a change of mind, heart and will
is demanded 30 To have such experience several forms of meditation are
advised in the Upanishads. Mandukya Upanishad suggests meditation on the
pranava. Meditation on symbols is also talked about in the Upanishads to
develop concentration. Through these methods the individual can gain Jñāna
or true knowledge. True knowledge is that he understands himself and this is
referred as self-realisation. Above all, True knowledge (Vidyā) is that he
understands that he is Brahman. Kaṭha Upanishad, 2.20 says, "When through
the grace of the creator he beholds the greatness of the soul". 31 The divine

30 S.Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upaniṣads, p.102.
grace is emphasised to have self-realization. When grace comes from Him, he attains immortality. *Mundaka Upanishad*, 3, 2:3 reads:

"This self cannot be attained by instruction nor by intellectual power nor even through much hearing. He is to be attained by the one Whom (the self) chooses to such a one the self reveals his own nature."32

The self realisation makes the self to know that it is *Brahman*. As long as this knowledge is not attained by the individual he continues to be in the cycle of birth. *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, 1.7 says, "Those who know *Brahman* within, realizing *Brahman* and absorbed in *Brahman* are released from birth".33 According to ones karma or action one takes different forms of birth till one gains true knowledge. Knowledge of reality is liberation or salvation. Liberation from the bondage of avidyā, liberation from the cycle of birth is explained as release or mukti or mokṣa in the *Upanishads*. It is the state of ananda, where the creature becomes one with the creator and thus realises its Reality. It is the state of freedom from death and life. It is the state of freedom from subjection to this law of karma and so this is known as release. The nature of liberation or mokṣa is explained in *Mundaka Upanishad*, 3, 2:9 as:

"He verily, who knows the Supreme *Brahman* becomes *Brahman* himself.

In his family, no one who does not know *Brahman*, will be born.

He crosses over sorrow. He crosses over sins.


Liberated from the knots of the secret place (of the heart) he becomes immortal.34

According to the Upanishads the liberated become immortal. This liberation or deliverance if it takes place during one's life here, it is known as *jivanmukti* and if it takes place after death, it is mentioned as *videhamukti*. If a person is free from all desires then he attains immortality on earth itself. The Upanishadic understanding is that both the types of *mukti* are possible and in both the types the self is released from conditioned existence. In the Upanishads we find a shift, from the Vedas, in the understanding of the ultimate destiny of man. In the Vedas it is heaven and one can achieve this by doing some moral actions and following certain external religious rituals. But in the Upanishads it is the knowledge of the self and it is achieved through internal spiritual exercise.

Thus in the Upanishads the self is explained to be in *avidyā* or ignorance. Because of ignorance the self is not able to understand that it is Brahman. The release of the self from the bondage of *avidyā* is known as salvation in the Upanishads. The removal of *avidyā* is recommended in the Upanishads through *Jñāna* (knowledge) and *Bhakti* (devotion) more than *Karma* (action). Though the grace of God due to the devotion of the individual, is accepted as a means of liberation in the Upanishads, knowledge (*Jñāna*) is mentioned as the supreme means of liberation. True knowledge (*vidyā*) is liberation according to the Upanishads. The true knowledge talked about in

the Upanishads is that "I am Brahman" Mahānārāyana Upanishad, 157 and 158 very clearly say "What I am, I am Brahman! Yes, I am Brahman, I am!".\textsuperscript{35} Thus the Upanishads tell man that "in his essential nature, however, he is pure being, pure consciousness and bliss, sat-chit-ananda, and such he is one with all".\textsuperscript{36} This realisation is referred as the ultimate goal of man. Whether this Ultimate destiny of man can be realised in this world or not is answered in the Upanishads in different ways. But any how according to thinkers like Radhakrishnan, liberation or mokṣa can be attained in this life itself and the liberated "Continue to live and act in the world, though with a different out look. The world also continues, though it is more alien to us. To live permanently in the new consciousness is to live in eternity".\textsuperscript{37} The higher knowledge explained in the Upanishads is given religious expression in the forms of bhakti and practical orientation, in the sense of doing one's duty in the Bhagavad Gītā.

5.3 SALVATION IN BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Bhagavad Gītā forms part of the great Indian Epic Mahābārata. The literal meaning of 'Bhagavad Gītā' is 'The Lord's song'. It is believed to be the song sung by the Lord Himself as advice to Arjuna. The Gītā can be considered as the extension of the Upanishadic thoughts in a practical religious sense. Dr.Radhakrishna says, "The metaphysical idealism of the Upanishads is

\textsuperscript{35} Raimando Panikkar, \textit{The Vedic Experience Mantramanjari}, p.744.

\textsuperscript{36} Swami Ranganathananda, \textit{Message of the Upanishads}, p.104.

\textsuperscript{37} S.Radhakrishnan, \textit{The Principal Upaniṣads}, p.127.
transformed in the *Gītā* into a theistic religion, providing room for love, faith, prayer and devotion". The higher order of explanations of the *Upanishads* are brought down to the ordinary man's understanding in the *Gītā*. The Absolute of the *Upanishads* is presented as a personal Lord in the *Gītā*. Dr.Chandradhar Sharma observes, "In the *Gītā* the absolutism of the *Upanishads* is tinged with theism. Lord Krishna is a personal God, He is the creator, eternal and imperishable; and yet He takes birth in the world to preserve *Dharma* when it is going down". Like other scriptures the *Gītā* also talks about the reality that the soul is entangled with *samsara* and the soul must be released from the evil of *samsara*. This is known as liberation or *mokṣa*.

The supreme reality is depicted in the *Gītā* as eternal Brahman, the universal spirit, *Paramātman, Parameshvaran* and also as *Purushottama*. This supreme as personal God has two prakritis or natures, as the *parā prakriti* (higher nature) and *aparā prakriti* (lower nature). The living souls which are deathless and eternal come under the higher nature and the material world or the material medium come under the lower nature. God is responsible for both, the ideal conceptual divine pattern and the actual cosmic potential matter. These two natures are defined from God, who is the beginning, the middle and the end, *Brahma, Vishnu and Siva*. God with his creative ideas is *Brahma*, with his love and patience is *Vishnu*, who is perpetually at work saving the world, when the conceptual becomes the cosmic, when heaven is

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39 Dr.Chandradhar Sharma, *A critical survey of Indian Philosophy*, p.37.
established or earth, God is represented by Siva. The Gita's main emphasis is
to liberate or redeem the world and so the aspect of Vishnu gains importance
and naturally Krishna represents Vishnu aspect of the Supreme.

The Jiva or atman which is the part or amsa of the Supreme is eternal.
But the atman gets itself identified with its outer structure body or kshetra
through ignorance and hence suffer the agencies of birth, disease, old age and
death and continues to be in the cycle of birth. So, the soul or atman has to be
liberated from its ignorance and its consequences.

The Gita tries to provide a method of liberation which synthesises and
integrates all the best ideas in the traditional teachings on liberation. The
traditional method of Jnana marg and Karma marg are integrated into a
Bhakti marg in the Gita.

"The programme that the Gita proposes is, on the one hand, that we
purify our minds and motives, purging them all egoistic attachment and
passions by the true knowledge that all actions are done by the body,
while the soul remains inactive and by the dedication of all the fruits
our actions to God in a spirit of devotion; and yet on the other hand,
that we continue to perform all the duties belonging to our particular
caste or state of life"40

Says Joseph.P. Spiritual life or religion is presented as the organic whole
which connects together Jnana, Karma and Bhakti in the Gita. The synthesis

40 Joseph Peringallor, Salvation through Gita and Gospel, p.56.
of the three is known as Yoga, which literally means union - the union of the individual with the Absolute. The message of the Ṛgveda is that man can attain his ultimate destiny by following the Yoga. Because the Ṛgveda talks about the Yoga, it is also known as Yoga sāstra. The Yoga of the Ṛgveda is the new way of liberation which is based on the belief that right performance of actions without the attachment of self and with dedication of the fruits to Lord Krishna leads an individual to his final liberation from the Karma-saṃsāric world. This Yoga is explained in the Ṛgveda, VI. 20-23 as follows:

"That in which thought is at rest, restrained by the practice of concentration
that in which he beholds the Self through the self and rejoices in the Self
That in which he finds this supreme delight, perceived by the intelligence
and beyond the reach of the senses, wherein established,
He no longer falls away from the truth
That on gaining which he thinks that there is no greater gain beyond it,
Where in established he is not shaken even by the heaviest sorrow;
Let that be known by the name of Yoga, the disconnection from union with pain
This Yoga should be practiced with determination with heart undismayed,\( ^{41} \)
Any how the three methods of liberation namely Jñāna,

\(^{41}\) S.Radhakrishnan, The Bagavadgīṭā, p.201.
Karma, and Bhakti are not individually exclusivistic but mutually interrelated and each method is helping an individual to attain the same goal of salvation only.

5.3.1 Jñāna Yoga

Jnana Yoga is the path of knowledge. For self-realisation an individual needs knowledge and the Lord grants this knowledge to the devotees. The Gītā, X : 10 says:

"To those who are constantly devoted and worship me with love
I grant the concentration of understanding by which they come to me"\textsuperscript{42}

The importance of knowledge or Jñāna is explained very clearly in the Fourth chapter of the Gītā. For example 10:36. reads:

"Even if thou shouldst be the most sinful of all sinners thou shalt cross over all evil by the boat of wisdom alone"\textsuperscript{43}

The 38th verse of the same chapter says:

"There is nothing on earth equal in purity to wisdom. He who becomes perfected by Yoga finds this of himself, in his self in course of time"\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, p.259
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, p.171.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, p.171.
The real knowledge talked about in the Gītā is helping a man to realise the truth that his self or Ātman is immortal and inactive and unchangeable. But the prakriti is responsible for all actions based on its active gunas namely sattva - goodness or purity, rajas - passion or activity, and tamas-darkness or dullness. The higher knowledge according to the Gita is that the self understands its nature is that of the para prakṛti - higher nature of the Supreme Reality. So the self understands to detach itself from the matter and the fruits of action and thus escapes the bondage of karma-samsāra. The Gita, 1 v.19 says,

"He whose understandings are all free from the will of desire,
Whose works are burned up in the fire of wisdom the wise call a man of learning"\textsuperscript{45}

Therefore Jñāna gives the understanding to an individual to do desireless action. This is further explained in the 4th chapter verse 22 of the Gītā as:

"He who is satisfied with whatever comes by chance,
who has passed beyond dualities (of pleasure and pain)
who is free from jealousy, who remains the same in success, failure, even when he acts, he is not bound"\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, p.164.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, p.165.
Thus according to the *Gītā* true knowledge is that which makes an individual to do action without selfish attitude. The true jnana explained in the *Gītā* enables an individual to do right type of action or *karma*.

### 5.3.2 Karma Yoga

*Karma Yoga* is the pattern of action which is not against the *Jñāna yoga* and in fact right action is based on right knowledge. The *Gītā*, right through, emphasises action or work. Chapter III, 5 says:

"For no one can remain for a moment without doing any work; every one is made to act helplessly by the impulses born of nature."\(^47\)

Man is compelled by his own nature (*prakṛti*) to do action or work. Action is not only the law of nature but is also considered to be divine law. The *Gītā* Chapter II, 47 reads:

"To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits; let not the fruits of action be thy motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction."\(^48\)

So inaction is discouraged and action is encouraged. Action talked about in the *Gītā* is a disciplined action. That is the motive of action should not be on the fruit or reward of the action. A non-attached action or renunciation in action is recommended in the *Gītā*. This makes Hiriyanna to comment, the

\(^{47}\) *Ibid*, p.133.

\(^{48}\) *Ibid*, p.119.
"Gītā teaching stands not for renunciation of action, but for renunciation in action."\textsuperscript{49} This type of \textit{Nishkāma karma} or non attached action is possible only when the individual has the right knowledge about himself. Man should understand that he is made to work by the constituent \textit{guṇas} born of his nature - \textit{prakṛti}. So, according to the \textit{Gītā} the \textit{puruṣha}, the soul, has got nothing to do with \textit{karma} or action, but it is the work of the \textit{prakṛti} or the matter. Without understanding this the soul feels that it is responsible for the action and the \textit{Gītā}, XVIII.16 says:

"such being the case, the man, of perverse mind who, on account of his true untrained understanding, looks upon himself as the sole agent he does not see (truly)"\textsuperscript{50}

In this way man gets \textit{ahamkāra} and that makes him to feel that he is the doer and thus attached to his actions. But \textit{Jñāna} makes him understand the truth and this helps him to be non attached to his action, to get out of the bondage of attachment to material body. So the non attached action is possible. The \textit{Gītā}, III.19 reads:

"Therefore, without attachment, perform always the work that has to be done, for man attains to the highest by doing work without attachment"\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{49} M.Hiriyanna, \textit{Outlines of Indian Philosophy}, p.121.

\textsuperscript{50} S.Radhakrishnan, \textit{The Bhagavad Gītā}, p.336.

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Ibid}, p.138.
It is very clear that with Jñāna or knowledge renunciation of desires and attachment is possible. Therefore a purusa who has realised his self is able to do nishkāma karma and thus get liberated from the cycle of birth. This is explained as the ultimate destiny or mokṣa for the individual. Such liberated person continues to do non-attached actions which would help the society very much. The Gītā, 5:10 says:

He who works, having given up attachment,
resigning his actions to God, is not touched by sin,
even as a lotus leaf (in untouched) by water.\(^{52}\)

In such a kind of action besides Jñāna and karma, bhakti is also recommended in the Gītā.

5.3.3 Bhakti Yoga

Bhakti Yoga is the path of devotion. The nishkāma karma, that is already discussed, is possible through devotion or bhakti since devotion demand action. The central message of the Gītā is to advise human beings to do their duty without minding the reward, a non-attached way of action. Bhakti or devotion to Lord Krishna, says the Gītā, will help the human beings to gain right knowledge and to do right action. The word bhakti is derived from the Sanskrit root ‘bhaj’ which means to share, to take part or to participate or to serve. In the Gītā, bhakti is used in the sense of service to god based on man’s extreme love for god and this amounts to man’s participation in God.

\(^{52}\) Ibid, p.178.
The beauty of bhakti in this Gītā is that "it is not only Arjuna's attitude of personal relationship to God-Krishna, but Sri Krishna too has a relationship towards Arjuna for He loves him, guides and protects him in the battle, and promises him final liberation and union with Him."⁵³ Thus bhakti is expressed in the Gītā as a mutual trust and intimate relation between god and man. The object of bhakti in the Gīta is not a philosophical reality but a personal God-Lord Krishna. The characteristic features of bhakti as presented in the Gītā are "humility, obedience, readiness to serve, compassion and gentle love, as the devotee longs to surrender himself, renounce self-will and experience passivity."⁵⁴ These features are considered to be more feminine and so the devotees are symbolised as female and the Lord Krishna as the male in the Gītā. The outcome of such total surrender or devotion is liberation and union with God. The Gītā says in Chapter ix,34:

"On me fix thy mind; to Me be devoted; worship Me; revere Me; thus having disciplined thyself, with Me as thy goal, to Me shalt thou come"⁵⁵

According to the Gītā the Lord Krishna Himself lifts up the devotees who have surrendered to Him, from the ocean of birth and death. The Gītā, XII:7 reads:

"These whose thoughts are set on Me, I straightaway deliver from the ocean of death-bound existence, O Partha (Arjuna)"⁵⁶

The bhakti or devotion that is explained in the Gītā is based on faith in God and complete employing of oneself. The Gītā, XVIII : 66 says:

"Abandoning all duties, come to me alone for shelter. Be not grieved, for I shall release thee from all evils"\(^{57}\)

This means that having faith in God, not relying on our own way of doing duties, not relying on the strength of our own self, if we go to god, He will deliver us from all evils. Thus bhakti is explained here as the undivided faith in God, an action which is not fainted by selfish motive and the best way to liberation. The bhakti talked about in the Gita leads to Jñāna, knowledge about God. The Gītā says this very clearly in Chapter XVIII : 55 as follows:

"Through devotion he comes to know Me, what My measure is and who I am in truth; then, having known Me in truth, he forthwith enters into Me"\(^{58}\)

Thus the union of the finite with supreme according to the Gītā is possible. The Gītā's view is that all can attain the highest goal through bhakti. The Gītā, IX:32 reads:

"For those who take refuge in me, O Partha (Arjuna), though they are lowly born, Woman, Vaisyas as well as Sudras, they also attain to the highest good."\(^{59}\)

The highest goal mentioned in the Gītā is mokṣa, eternal peace and infinite bliss. According to the Gītā, those who take refuge in God in a way of self-

\(^{57}\) Ibid, p.378.  
\(^{58}\) Ibid, p.371.  
\(^{59}\) Ibid, p.252.
surrender, as an expression of bhakti, "can cross the impossible ocean of maya composed of sattva, rajas and tamaz, realize their trans-empirical spiritual nature, and attain mokṣa through his grace."60

Thus in the Gītā a synthesis of jñāna, karma and bhakti is suggested as the way of liberation. Though the influence of the Upanishads is very much on the Gītā, unlike the Upanishads the Gītā explains, the concept of God, liberation and so on in a more simple way so that every one can understand them. The highly philosophical thoughts of the Upanishads which can be understood by people who have higher knowledge are simplified and presented in such a way that any ordinary human being can also understand. So the traditional view presents Lord Krishna as "a Cow-herd milking the celestial milk of Gītā from the Upanishads pictured as cows, Arjuna acting as a calf, for the sake of the wise"61 The Absolute Brahman is presented in a very understandable form of Lord Krishna, a personal God. Based on this, the concept of salvation or liberation is also given a very practical explanation in the Gītā. Liberation is explained in the Gītā as the release of the self from the bondage of desire caused by the guṇas. To come out of the bondage, the self should have the knowledge about it and relation to God. When such knowledge is gained, the individual reflects this in his action by doing desireless action, non attached action. To have such knowledge and to do such Nishkāmakarma the individual needs devotion to Lord Krishna. Out of His grace Lord Krishna

61 C.D.Sharma, A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy, p.37.
helps those individuals who surrender themselves to Him, to get out of the cycle of births.

This experience of liberation or mokṣa is explained in the Gītā sometimes as this worldly - within this life - and some other times as beyond this life. The state of the liberated self within this life (Jivanmukti) is explained in the Gītā as a transformed individual. Such an individual will continue to do non-attached action for the good of the society and for the liberation of others. The state of the liberated self beyond life is explained in two ways. One as the union with the God and the other as becoming God-like. Anyhow in the Gītā Jivanmukti or liberation within this life is explained more because the videkamukti, or liberation after this life, cannot be explained properly. Such explanation of liberation or salvation in the Gītā, was based on the need of the time and many other explanations came out based on the different systems of thinking in India.

5.4 DHARSHANAS AND SALVATION

The six orthodox systems or Dharshanas treat the concept of salvation according to their philosophical stands. A very brief sketch of the treatment of salvation in each of the orthodox systems is attempted here to throw some light on the development of the concept of salvation in Hinduism.

Nyāya system of thought explains soul as an eternal entity. The soul is connected to a body suitable to its desert from time to time and the connection is called birth and the separation is called death. With this
connection of the body each soul has its manas. But the soul is distinct from body, manas and the senses. Due to ignorance and karma this truth is not understood and thus the soul continues to be in bondage. When the ignorance is removed through valid knowledge we get through scripture, the destruction of karma is possible and thus the soul is liberated. Now the soul is freed from rebirth and attains release or mokṣa. This state is explained in Nyāya system as release from pain and referred as mokṣa—a perfect tranquility and freedom from defilement. Nyāya Bhāṣya, I:22, as quoted by Radhakrishnan, says "This condition of immortality, free from fear, imperishable, consisting in the attainment of bliss is called Brahma".

Vaisheṣika, like Nyāya, emphasises the point that the soul is distinct from body and mind. But due to ignorance the soul is not aware of this and it continues to perform actions, leading to merits and demerits or dharma and adharma or adṛṣṭa. Thus the ignorance of the soul and the accumulation of karma make the soul to be in bondage. The soul can get rid of the bondage through real knowledge. According to Vaisheṣika the Scriptures give us real knowledge and they are not mere speculations. Separation of the soul from the fetters of mind and body and from adṛṣṭa is mokṣa. This state of release, liberation or mokṣa is explained in this system as not only the cessation of pain, but also cessation of all action, all consciousness and all qualities.

In Sāṅkya, the discrimination between Puruṣa—the soul and Prakṛti—the nature is emphasised as the basis of liberation. Puruṣa is eternal and

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really above bondage and liberation. Due to the action of Prakṛti, Puruṣa mistakes its reflection in the intellect, the ego and the mind, and tries to identify itself with its reflection. So here it is explained that Puruṣa is not in bondage but the product of Prakṛti-ego is in bondage and casts its shadow on Puruṣa. This is happening due to ignorance and through right knowledge when the ignorance is removed, the bondage of ego is released and consequently the shadow on Puruṣa is removed and the pure Puruṣa is realised. So the knowledge of the difference between Puruṣa and Prakṛti leads to liberation. According to this system of thinking liberation can be both in this life itself and after this life. But anyhow the final and absolute liberation is possible after death only. This liberation-Mokṣa is explained here as a state of complete isolation, freedom from pain, a realisation of the Puruṣa in its pure nature of consciousness beyond pleasure or happiness or bliss.

Yoga system of thought, like Sāṅkya, emphasises the discrimination between Puruṣa and Prakṛti. The products of Prakṛti-intellect, ego and mind - are referred here as Chitta, Puruṣa is essentially pure consciousness, eternal, above all limitation and conditions. But when Chitta reflects Puruṣa, it wrongly identifies itself with its reflection in Chitta. This gives a wrong appearance that Puruṣa is undergoing change and modification. At the same time Chitta because it reflects Puruṣa it (Chitta) appears to be conscious. All these things appear to happen because of ignorance. This ignorance can be removed through discriminative knowledge or Vivekakhyati. Through this practical knowledge Puruṣa realises that it is isolated and ceases to identify itself with its own reflection in the Chitta. Because of this the Chitta loses its
appearance of being conscious and this process is referred here as liberation or mokṣa. This release or liberation is achieved through yogic meditation or tapas which includes devotion to God and action. To have complete concentration of mind and body Yoga system recommends Eight fold path of Discipline or Aṣṭāṇiga yoga. The state of liberation is explained here as the absolute independence, eternal and free life of the Puruṣa. Complete liberation according to this system is possible only after the body is forsaken.

Puruṣa-Mimamsa affirms self or soul as eternal and it is different from body, the mind, the senses and the understanding. According to Prabhakara the self is essentially unconscious and the consciousness of it is only an accident quality arising out of merit and demerit or dharma and adharma. But Kumarila holds the view that consciousness of the self is the model change in the self. Self cannot be viewed as totally unconscious, but can be explained as conscious-unconscious. That is self is conscious as modes and unconscious as original substance. But both Prabhakara and Kumarila believe that liberation is the cessation of all qualities and modes of self including consciousness and bliss. Thus in liberation the self remains as a pure substance. Liberation is possible through true knowledge and self-control. Liberation can be attained according to Puruva Mimamsa through knowledge combined with desired action. The state of liberation or mokṣa is explained by Prabhakara as the natural form of the soul and by Kumarila as the realisation of atman.

Vedānta system of thought gains more importance because the present form of Hinduism is heavily based on one form or the other of this system. Badarayana in his Vedānta sutra explains very clearly that Brahman is the
highest reality and He is the origin, support and end of the world. As the clay pot is not different from clay, the world is not different from Brahman. According to Badarayana, Brahman is in the individual soul, but the nature of Brahman is not affected by the character of the soul. The individual soul or the embodied self, because of its action and enjoyment acquires merit and demerit and is affected by pleasure and pain. Through the study of scripture, devotion and worship of God an individual can acquire absolute knowledge or Brahmajnana and this would bring him release, liberation or salvation. Liberation in this life or Jivanmukti is also possible according to Badarayana. Whereas Gaudapada in his Āgama-Śastra, explains that the reality is the Pure self which is Pure consciousness. The eternal world is not real because it does not exist always and the Pure Self above is the Reality. The Self out of ignorance is imagined to be individual subjects, mental states and external objects, like in darkness a rope is imagined to be a snake. But when the ignorance is removed the non-dual Atman is realised, like the imagined snake vanishes when the rope is known. Ignorance can be removed by understanding the essence of the Vedas and by being free from fear, anger and attachment; When this is achieved duality and plurality disappear and Brahman can be realised. This state is explained as Nirvāṇa, a state of bliss which transcends misery and happiness and become one with Pure consciousness. Anyhow these ideas are interpreted by thinkers like Shankara, Ramanuja and Madhva in different ways.
5.5 SHANKARA, RAMANUJA AND MADHVA ON SALVATION

Shankara who is known for his *Advaita Vedānta* feels that the soul is under the bondage of *Avidyā* and when this is removed salvation or liberation is achieved. *Avidyā* or ignorance conceals the essential nature of self as bliss. This *Avidyā* disappears at the dawn of right knowledge. The right knowledge is that *Brahman* is the only Reality and individual soul or self is not different from *Brahman*. Thus liberation means removal of *Avidyā* or ignorance through higher knowledge. This higher knowledge can be achieved according to Shankara, through the scriptures, the yogic concentration on the *Vedas*. The higher knowledge does not deal with the dissolution of the world but talks about the disappearance of the false outlook of the world; it does not deal with annihilation of the self but emphasizes the realization of self as bliss. Thus Shankara declares that the nature of liberation or salvation is a state of oneness with *Brahman* and this state of blessedness can be attained even here and now. Thus Shankara accepts Jivanmukti (liberation in this life) and explains that *Videkamukti* (liberation after the life) is the final release.

Ramanuja, who is known for his *Vishistādvaita*, says that the soul is bound by ignorance and karma. Because of these barriers the soul is not able to realise its essential nature, that it is a mode of God, and it continues to be in the *karmic saṃsāra*. The release from these barriers of ignorance and karma is known as salvation or *mokṣa*. The right knowledge helps an individual to get release from ignorance and karma. According to Ramanuja, the right knowledge can be obtained through highest *bhakti*, which involves total surrender to God and by the grace of God. The state of liberation is
explained here not as merging with *Brahman* or becoming one with *Brahman*, but only similar to *Brahman* or as a mode of *Brahman*. Thus, a released soul attains the nature of God and not total identity with Him. For Ramanuja the liberation of the soul or salvation is possible only after death. An individual can attain fellowship with God only when he exhausts all *karmas* and throws off his physical body. So it is not *Jivanmukti* but only *Videkamukti* as per Ramanuja.

**Madhva**, who is known for the *Dvaita* form of thinking, says that the natural form of soul is conscious and blissful. But owing to past *karmas* the souls get their connection with the material body, sense organs, mind and so on and thus undergo pains and imperfections. The release from such a condition is referred as liberation or salvation. *Bhakti* or devotion is considered by Madhva as the only means of liberation. Through *bhakti* if an individual meditates on the *Vedas*, by divine grace, he gets knowledge, which reveals the knower and the known as independently real. The state of liberation or salvation is explained by Madhva, not as the souls becoming one with *Brahman*, or enjoying the full bliss of God, but as the nearness to God, sharing of partial bliss of *Brahman*, enjoying the fellowship of God and so on. The point stressed here is even in its fullest form of liberation the soul is inferior to *Brahman*. Absolute liberation according to Madhva is possible only after this life.
5.6 LATER DEVELOPMENTS OF HINDUISM AND SALVATION

New thoughts were coming into Hindu understanding of salvation as later developments, during the time of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swamy Dayananda, Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

The Brahma Samaj of Raja Rammohan Roy stressed the social aspect of religion by highlighting the humanitarian morality. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was against child marriage, sati, enforced widowhood, untouchability in the name of religion and idol worship. For him liberation or salvation included freedom from the above mentioned socio-religious bondage also. One can say that Raja Ram Mohan Roy was more anxious about the social aspects of religion than its purely spiritual aspects.

The Arya Samaj of Swami Dayananda brought about a reformation in Hinduism with a strong base in the Vedas. Swami Dayananda stressed the physical, social and spiritual welfare of all the people with a strong tinge of nationalism. He also advocated liberation from caste system, untouchability, child marriage, idol worship, animal sacrifice and so on. Thus humanitarian causes were given importance in Hinduism at the time of Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj. This was further developed by Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

Shri Rama Krishna, who brought about a renaissance of Hinduism also caused a great awakening in the traditional Hinduism. He emphasised the significance of service to humanity as service to God. According to
Ramakrishna, when the impurity of ego is removed from the mind of an individual through Jñāna, bhakti and karma (Sādhana), then it would be possible for that individual to see God in everybody. This is referred as God-realisation and this further results in action, that is service to humanity. Thus service is explained by Shri Rama Krishna as a spiritual exercise.

Whereas Swami Vivekananda gives primary importance to service which leads to self-purification and God-realisation. Through his famous doctrine of daridra - nārāyanā seva, that is worshipping or serving Nārāyanā (God) in the poor, Swami Vivekananda presented his practical Vedāntā. He emphasised the importance of karma or action, in the form of service to humanity, as an essential means for the attainment of supreme spiritual ideal. Thus a very practical and humanistic understanding of salvation was given by Swami Vivekananda which gained more importance and further developed by other contemporary thinkers like Shri Aurobindo and Dr.S.Radhakrishnan.