

# **SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT OF VEDANTA AND BUDDHISM- A CASE STUDY**

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## **Abstract**

The Vedas are the oldest existing literary monument of the Āryan mind. We traced Indian philosophy from the Vedas. Indian philosophy, as an autonomous system, has developed practically unaffected by external influences. Unfortunately our knowledge of the Vedic period is, even to this day, not enough and imperfect. Due to the absence of chronological data, the complete indifferences of the ancient Indian towards personal histories, the archaic character of the Vedic Sanskrit, the break in tradition, and the biased orthodox colouring of interpretation, which instead of help often proves a hindrance, are some of the main reasons due to which our knowledge about this period remains mostly shrouded in mystery and vagueness.

The term 'Veda' (knowledge) stands for the Mantras and the Brāhmaṇas (mantra- brāhmaṇay or veda-nāmadheyam). Mantras mean a hymn addressed to some God or Goddess. The collection of mantras is called 'Samhita'. There are four Samhitas- Rk, Sāma, Yajuh, and Atharva. These are said to compiled for the smooth performance of the Vedic scarifies. A Vedic scarifies needs four main priests- Hotā, who address hymns in praise of the Gods to pray to their presence and participation in the scarifies; Udgāta who signs the hymns in the sweet melodious tones to entertain and please to Gods; Adhvaryu, who performs the scarifies according to the strict ritualistic code and gives offering to the Gods; and Brahmā who is the general supervisor well-versed in all the Vedas. The four Samhitās are said to be compiled to fulfil the needs of four

main priests – Rk for the Hotā, Sāma for the Udgātā, Yajuh for the Adhvaryu and Atharva for the Brahmā.

## INTRODUCTION

Vedas are referred to only as ‘Trayi’, omitting the Atharva. Moreover we find ‘the literal meaning of Vedanta is end of Veda or the Upaniṣads, the last portion of Vedic literature. Vedanta therefore meant above all the philosophy of the Upaniṣadas. All the Vedantists claim to have expounded the fundamental teachings of the Upaniṣadas but the Upaniṣadas are not systematic treaties and the philosophical or proto-philosophical views discussed in these texts and not form a unity.

## OPINION OF VEDĀNTIST REGARDING VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY

It is found that the later ‘Vedāntists accepted this Brahma-sutra as the basic work of the Vedānta philosophy. But the Sutras themselves are too mysterious to give any clear philosophical view and thus left scope for a wide range of possible interpretations. In course of time a significant number of philosophical views were actually sought to be justified on the basis of different interpretations of the Brahma- sutra. As such, all these claimed the tile of Vedanta philosophy.

It is well said in the source that the ‘Upaniṣadas are the concluding portion as well as the cream of the Veda and are therefore rightly called ‘Vedanta’. The word ‘Upaniṣada’ is derived from the root ‘sad’ which means to sit down, or destroy or to loosen. ‘Upa means ‘nearby’ and ‘ni’ means ‘devotedly’. The word therefore means the sitting down of the disciple near his teacher in a devoted manner to receive instruction about the highest reality which loosen all doubts and destroy all ignorance of the disciples. Gradually the word came to signify any secret teaching about reality and it is used by the Upanisada in this sense (rahasya or guhya vidyā). The **Muktikokpanisad** gives the number of the Upaniṣads as 108. But ten or eleven Upaniṣada are regarded as important and authentic, on which Shankarachārya has commented. These

are: **Isha, Kena, Katha, Prashna Mundaka, Māndukaya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chhāndogya and Brhadāranyaka**. The teachings being the highest, was imparted at private sittings only to the qualified disciples. Heraclitus has also said that if men care for gold, they must dig for it or be content with straw. If one wants pearls, one has to dive deep into the ocean or be content with pebbles on the shore’.

### **UPANISADAS, THE SOURCE OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY**

The ‘Upaniṣadas are rightly regarded as the fountain- head of all Indian philosophy. Bllomiield remarks: there is no important form of Hindu thought, Heterodox Buddhism included, which is not rooted in Upanṣadas’. Dr.S. Radhakrishana says: ‘Later systems of philosophy display an almost pathetic anxiety to accommodate their doctrines to the views of Upaniṣadas, even if they cannot father them all on them’. Prof. R.D. Ranade says: ‘The Upaniṣadas constitute that loft eminence of philosophy, which from its various side give birth tom rivulets of thought, which as they progress onwards towards the sea of life, gather strength by inflow of innumerable tributaries of speculation which intermittently join these rivulets, so as to make a huge expense of waters at the place where they meet the ocean of life’.

The Brahmsutra claims to be an aphoristic summary of the Upaniṣadas. The Gītā is the milk milked out of the Upaniṣada- cow and is particularly influenced by the Katha and the Isha. The various Āchāryas of Vedant -- **Shankara, Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, ,adhva and Vallabh-** have always regarded as Upaniṣadas as the sacred texts and have interpreted them so as to make them suit their theories. The Heterodox Jainism has taken its idealism and its doctrine of Karma from the Upaniṣadas. The Heterodox Buddhism derives its idealism, monism and Absolutism, the theory of temporariness of all worldly things, the theory of Karma, the distinction between the empirical and the absolute standpoints, and the theory that the ignorance is the root cause of this cycle of birth and Death and that Nirvana can be attained by the right knowledge alone,

from the Upaniṣadas. Sankhya derives from them the doctrine of Prakṛti (from Shvetāshvatara), the theory of the three Gunas (from the three colours in the Chhāndogya), the doctrine of Purusa, the relation of mind, Intellect and soul (from Katha), the doctrine of Lingha-sharira (from Prashna). Yoga is rooted in Shvetāshvatara. Katha speaks in Dhāraṇa and Mundaka speaks of the soul as a mere onlooker. Isha preaches the combination of Karma and Jñāna; Mimāṃsā take up Karma; Vedānt takes up Jñāna; and some scholar take up the combination itself.

### ĀTMAN IN VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY

The word ‘Ātman’ originally meant life- breath and then gradually acquired the meaning of feeling, mind soul and spirit. Shankarācharya quotes an old verse giving the different connotation of the word ‘Ātman’. The verse says that ‘Ātman’ means that which pervades all; which is the subject and which knows experiences and illuminates the object; and which remains immortal and always the same.

The true self has been the main topic of investigation in the Upaniṣads. Socrates of ancient Greece has also persistently advocated the supreme necessity of ‘Know Thyself’.

### BHAGVADAGĪTĀ

BHAGVADAGĪTĀ literally means ‘The Lord’s Song’, the philosophical discourses of the Lord Krishna to convince the unwilling Arjuna to fight. It is the most popular and sacred book of the Hindus and contained in the **Bhīsmā-Parva of the Mahābhārata** the greatest Sanskrit epic.

‘Various are the praise’s showered on this work both by Indian and European Scholars. **Lokmānya Tilk** calls it ‘a most luminous and priceless gem which give peace to afflicted soul and make us masters of spiritual wisdom. **Mahāmanā Malaviyaji** sees a unique synthesis is of the highest knowledge, the purest love and the most luminous action in it. **Mahatma Gandhi** calls it ‘the universal mother whose door is wide open to anyone who knock’, and further

says that ‘a true votary of Gītā does not know what is disappointment is. He ever dwell in permanent joy and peace that passeth (far) understanding’. The Gītā deals with metaphysics religion and ethics, and has been rightly called the ‘Gospel of Humanity’.

### **BEING IN GĪTĀ**

The fundamental metaphysics teaching of the Gītā is that of the unreal there is no being, and of the real there is no non- being. The soul is indestructible (Avinashi), eternal (nitya), unborn (aja), undiminishing (avyaya), all pervasive (sarva- gata), immovable (achala), ancient (sanātna), unmanifest (avyakta) unthinkable (achintya) and immutable (avikārya). Only bodies are destroyed, not the soul. It is neither born nor does it die. It is immortal and everlasting. Not being subject to birth and death, it cannot perish along with body. Just as person casts off worn- out garments and puts on the new ones, so does the soul cast off worn- out bodies and enters into others that are new. The infinite underlies and animates all finite existences, and the soul being essentially one with it, is not effected by birth and death, by growth and decay, by finitude or change, ‘even though our body be “dust returning into dust”’. He, who sees the Ultimate reality seated equally in all beings and unperishing within the perishing, sees truly.

### **CONCEPT OF YOGA IN GĪTĀ**

The Gītā represents a unique synthesis of Action, Devotion and Knowledge. Man is complex of Intellect, will and emotion; he is a being who thinks wills and feels. Intellect has given rise to the philosophy of Knowledge; will to the philosophy of Action; and emotion to the philosophy of Devotion. Modern Psychology teaches us that these three aspects of mind are distinguishable only in thought and divisible in reality. There is no watertight division separating one from the rest. The teaching of the Gita is in keeping with this view. To Quote **Dr. Radhakrishnan**: “the Absolute reveals itself to those seeking for knowledge as the eternal light, clear and radiant as the sun at

noon- day; to those struggling for virtue as the eternal Righteousness, steadfast and impartial; and to those emotionally inclined as eternal Love and Beauty of Holiness.’

Different people attain the same goal of salvation by these three different paths of knowledge, action and devotion.

All these three ultimately stand synthesised. This synthesis is called ‘Yoga’ and the literal meaning of this word is union, i.e. of the Individual with the Absolute. The yogi is the ideal ascetic who curbs his passion and maintains calmness in cold and heat, in joy and sorrow, in honour and dishonour. ‘As a lamp flickers not in a windless place, that is the simile of Yogi who curbs his thought and yield himself entirely to absorption.

## **JÑANA**

This Yogi is essential is essentially and predominantly the path of knowledge. The Yogi’s ideal is self- realization which cannot be attained without knowledge. Even the devotees are granted knowledge by the Lord so that they may realize the goal. Yoga, Bereft of Knowledge, is impossibility. We may weaken the power of the senses by fasting and abstaining from necessities, but unless we rise above the relish and the desire, the psychological attachment to the sense- objects, we are not true Yogis. And this relish can go away only with rise of true knowledge. How high the Gita places knowledge can be seen from the following: ‘Even the most sinful man can cross over the ocean of Samsāra by means of the boat of Knowledge reduce all actions to ashes. The culmination of action is in knowledge, one soon embraces peace. There is nothing purer than knowledge’. The Knower is identified by the Lord with his own self.

## **KARMA IN GĪTĀ**

The universe itself depends on actions’. Inactivity is not liberty, but death. Works keeps up the cycle of the universe and it is the duty of every individual to help it. He who does not do so and find pleasure in the sense is sinful and

lives in vain.” The ideal of Gītā is not Negativism, asceticism or escapism. It is not negation of action but performance of actions in a detached spirit. The Gītā teachings stand not for renunciation of action, but for renunciation in action. Further it says the perfect man has to work for the benefits of humanity (Loka-saṅgraha) in the spirit of perfect detachment, disinterest, selfishness, with no desire to reap the fruits.

### **LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF GAUTAM BUDDHA**

The history of Buddhism dates back to the sixth century BCE. Goutam Buddha popularly known as Sākya Muni or Tathagata and founder of this new way of life that was prevail in Asia. The Buddha’s (the Enlightened or Awakened one) message of love, compassion, Peace, Non- Violence, Equality and high Moral to the entire mankind. The Buddha’s new way of life left a deep impact on the mind of spiritual unrests and intellectual confusion. Siddhartha Gautama was born in about 563 BCE. Siddhartha Gautama was born in ancient India near Lumbini which is situated in Nepal. Siddhartha meticulous belongs to Sakya- Kshatriya having family lineage ‘Gautama’. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, various Rishis and Munins were practicing the wrong interpretation of the Dharma. During this period of time, Buddha came in the form of a saviour of Humanity when the cruelty, degeneration and unrighteousness spreading everywhere like a fire. He became a great social reformer by renouncing his household life and has gone to search for Truth (Truth of Suffering and its Remedy). He came to be called "the Buddha," which means "Awakened One. In the remaining years of his life, the Buddha travelled and delivers different discourses to diverse people of the entire world. However, he believed that man is the creator of his own sorrow or Happiness. The Buddha showed the Path to the whole world that how the individual can attain enlightenment for themselves. In this way Buddhism spread throughout Asia to become one of the dominant religions of the continent.

## **ĀTMAN (SOUL) THEORY IN BUDDHISM**

Venerable K. SRI. Dharmanada Maha Thera described in Buddhism there is no reason to believe that there is an eternal soul that comes from heaven or that is created by itself and that will transmigrate or proceed straight away either to heaven or hell after death.

Buddhist believes that anything either in this world or any other world that is eternal or unchangeable. We only cling to ourselves and hope to find something immortal. We are like children who wish to clasp a rainbow. To children, a rainbow is something vivid and real; but the grown-ups and knows that it is merely an illusion caused by certain rays of light and drops of water. The light is only a series of waves or undulation that have no more reality than the rainbow itself.

Man has done well without discovering the soul. He shows no signs of fatigue or degeneration for not having encountered any soul. No man has produced anything to promote mankind by postulating a soul and its imaginary working. It is said that searching for a soul in a man is like searching for something in a dark empty room. But the poor man will never realize that what he is searching for is not in room. It is difficult to make such person understand the futility of his search.

Those who believe in the existence of a soul are not in a position to explain what and where it is. That Buddha's advice is not to waste our time over this unnecessary speculation and devote our time to strive for our salvation. When we have to attained perfection then we will be able to realize whether there is soul or not.

A wandering ascetic named Vacchagotta asked the Buddha whether there was Atman (self) or not. The story is as follows:

Vacchagotta comes to Buddha and ask:

‘Venerable Goutam, is there an Atman?’

The Buddha is silent.



Venerable Goutam is there no Atman.

Again the Buddha is silent.

Vacchagotta gets up and goes away after the acetic left, Ananda asks the Buddha why he did not answer the Vacchagotta's question. The Buddha explains his position:

‘Ananda when asked by the Vacchagotta, the wanderer: ‘is there a self? If I had answered: there is self’. Then, Ananda that would be siding with those recluses and brahmanas who hold the eternalist theory (sassata-vada).

‘And Ananda, when asked by the wanderer: ‘is there no self? If I had answered: there is no self’, then that would be siding with those recluses and brahmanas who hold the annihilationist theory (uccedavada).

‘Again, Ananda, when asked by Vacchagotta: ‘Is there a Self? If I had answered: there is a Self’, would that be in accordance with my knowledge that all dhammas are without Self?

‘Surely not, sir.’

‘And Again, Ananda, when asked by the Wanderer: ‘Is there no soul? If I had answered: there is no Self’, then that would have created a greater confusion in the already confused Vacchagotta. For he would have thought: Indeed I had Atman (Self), but Now I haven't got one. (Samyutta Nikaya).

The Buddha regarded soul- speculation as useless and illusory. He once said, ‘Only through ignorance and delusion do men indulge in dream that their souls are separate and self existing entities. Their heart still clings to self. They are anxious about heaven and they seek the pleasure of self in heaven. Thus they cannot see the bliss of righteousness and the immorality of truth. Selfish ideas appear in man's mind due to his conception of self and craving existence.

### **KARMA IN BUDDHISM**

“A volitional action which is either wholesome or unwholesome, and in consequences either rewarded are punished”.

In Buddhism karma is not simple. There are many stream of cause and effect (niamas). Ken Jones in “the social Face of Buddhism” writes ‘ all however, are also expression of a Universal Consciousness, Aalyavijnana. The ‘law’ of kamma and the law of cause and effect are thus not synonymous in Buddhism. Kammaic ‘law is simply one kind of cause and effects relationship’. Buddhism rejects a fatalistic view of kamma and believes that individual can attain anything which he wants to obtain by changing their behaviour, improving their outlook, avoiding bad deeds, and engaged in ethical behaviour. Kamma is not just about action: a lot of it about eternal mind, internal desire and internal psychology.

“Buddhist believes that we are tied to the cycle of death and birth through desire and can be born again in many different forms. But they believe they can find a way to escape this cycle, to be finally released from reincarnation to reach Nirvana.”

“Karma was a pivotal concept in Indian thinking, around which turned the whole question of why life is as it is? It can acts as an explanation of why misfortune happens when it is not recognisably the result of particular actions. The importance of karma is that it demonstrates the practicality of Buddhist teachings. Ethical considerations become paramount, because liberating oneself from the diseases of Samsaric existence is a karmic matter.”

Bad karma resulting from previous bad decisions, in this life or in former lives, can cause suffering in the current incarnation. The Buddha said:

“Evil in the future is the fruit of bodily offence. Evil is the fruit of offence by word, by thought, in the future life. If I do something wrong through mind, body and speech then after death we will reborn in the waste. The way of Woe, the downfall, the Purgatory (a place or state of suffering inhabited by the souls of sinners who are expiating their sins before going to heaven.”

## **HUMAN BEING IN BUDDHISM**

We find the term human being in Sanskrit is **Manusya** and in Pali **Manussa** are the subject of an extensive commentarial literature that examines the nature and qualities of a human life from the point of view of human ability to achieve enlightenment. In Buddhism human are just one type of sentient being with mind stream. In Sanskrit Manushya means Animals with mind. In Sanskrit word Manusmriti associated with Manushya was used to describe knowledge through memory. The word Munn or Maan mean mind. Mind is the collection of past experiences with an ability of memory or smriti. Mind is considered as a animal with a disease that departs a soul from its universal enlightenment insignificant behaviour to the finite miserable fearful behaviour that fluctuates between the state of heaven and hell before it is extinguish back its infinitesimal behaviour.’

In Buddhism, human have a very special status: only a human can attain enlightenment as as got by Siddhartha Buddha. Enlightenment as an Arhat can be attained from the realms of the Suddhāvāsa deities. A Bodhisattva can appear in many different types of lives, for instance as an animal or as a deva. Buddhas however, are always human.

### **Conclusion**

In the essence we can observe that Upaniṣadas are the fountainhead of all Indian philosophy. Buddha did not preach anything absolutely new. He was revolted against the orthodox Vedic ritual, with the sacrifices in which animals were butchered, with the rigidity of caste system and with the supremacy of the Brāhmandom. Buddha himself speaks in a very high and respectable term about a true Brāhmaṇa whom he regards an ideal saint who do not physically mentally and vocally harms any living being and keep himself away from all sins and ignorance and which destruct the path of Nirvana i.e. Eternal bliss.

Buddha stopped the animal sacrifices on the name of God. “Once he said to the king that if the sacrifices of lamb help you to go to heaven, sacrificing a man

will help you better; so sacrificing me”. The king was astonished. The Buddha eradicate this blind faith which was prevailing in the society, still it is prevailing but If we think deeply that can the sacrifices of an animal can reduce our bad kamma ? We will find the answer of this question is no. On the basis of our action we get the result and this is the universal law. These are the unique features of Buddhism which make it differ from other philosophies. In the end I would like to conclude that we all are studying and following different philosophy having same objective to attain Mukti or Nirvana but before that we have to generate the feeling of brotherhood and consider we all are same, we all are members of same family as it is well said in the phrase ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (mentioned in Maha Upanisada Chapter 6 of the text). It consists of several words: “vasudhā” the earth, “eve” indeed; and “Kutumbkam”, family. The literal meaning of this phrase is that we all are members of same family or son of same mother and same father.

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