



## **SELF AND BODY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY**

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### **Abstract**

In almost all Indian Philosophical Schools, except the Cārvāka School, a distinction has been maintained between the body and the soul. With the exception of early Buddhism and Materialism all the systems of Indian thought believe in the reality of Self, Atman, or Soul as different from the body. According to this view each personality is a composite structure of body, mind and soul and they are working in co-operation with one another.

**Keywords:** *Self, Body, Brāhmaṇ, Consciousness, Skandha*

### **Introduction**

The existence of the self must be admitted by all. Everybody feels that he or she exist, and has this or that things belonging to him or her. The feeling of one's own existence is the most natural and indubitable experience that we all have. In fact, no one can consistently deny the existence of his soul or self or atman. We believed that man is composite structure of self, body and mind and they are working in cooperation with one another.

The Upanishadic sage firstly discovered the Atman or Self as an eternal, infinite, immortal, and permanent on the globe which was the biggest revolutionary phenomenon in the history of the human race. Actually, the term 'Atma' has derived from the Sanskrit word 'Atman' and that referred meaning is 'Antarika' (Internal). Self, soul these are all synonyms. All Indian Philosophical Schools accepted the existence of self or soul. But there are many disagreements about the nature of self (atman). In almost all systems of Indian thought, except the Cārvāka and Bauddha Schools, admitted that self is immortal, indestructible, eternal, infinite and different from the body.

### **Concept of Self and Body in Indian Philosophy**

The Indian Philosophical system can be broadly categorized into two groups: the heterodox and the orthodox schools. The heterodox systems also known as Nāstika are those that do not accept the validity and authority of Veda. The three major heterodox schools are: Cārvāka, Jainism and Buddhism. On the other hand, the orthodox systems referred to as āstika, acknowledge the validity of Veda. The six major orthodox schools are: Nyaya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta.

According to Cārvāka School, the real truth is that which internal and external perception is possible and perception is the only measurement of truth. On the basis of it, only the Bhuta (Matter) is the final reality

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because it can be experienced. The body composed of four visible material substances, earth, water, fire and air, in certain proportions and in a certain manner. There is no soul existing in him as distinct and apart from the body. The Cārvāka admit that the existence of consciousness is proved by perception. But they deny that consciousness is the quality of any unperceived non-material entity. As consciousness is perceived to exist in the perceptible living body composed of the material elements, it must be a quality of this body itself. Soul is nothing more than conscious living body. The non-material soul is never perceived. We have direct evidence of the identity of the self with the body in our daily experiences and judgments like, 'I am fat', 'I am blind'. If the 'I', the self, were different from the body, these would be meaningless. If the existence of a soul apart from the body is not proved, there is no possibility of proving its immortality. On the contrary, death of the body means the end of the individual. When the body is decomposed nothing like a soul functions or exists. So, all questions about previous life, after life, rebirth, therefore, become meaningless.

According to Buddhism the law of change is universal; neither man, nor any other being, animate or inanimate, is exempt from it. All things are subject to change and decay. It is commonly believed that in man there is an abiding substance called the self, which persists through changes that overcome the body, exist before birth and after death, and migrates from one body to another. Buddha denies the existence of such self. He says that, there is no permanent and immortal self. There is nothing like self present in an individual, apart from the five Skandhas (rupa-skandha, vedana-skandha, saṃjñā-skandha, saṃskāra, vijñāna-skandha). The self is collection of five skandhas- one rupa skandha (physical elements) and four nama skandhas (mental elements). So, self is the conflict of physical and mental states. Of course, there are some skandhas or groups which continue beyond the death of the bodily skandha (Rupa Skandha). There are some skandhas, such as Samskāra Skandha, which contain the impressions of the past experiences, not only of one life but of all past lives, which were left by past actions and which bring about results or effects in the future. Buddhism believes in the continuity of life after death, and in other worlds, heaven and hell, without believing in a permanent entity like mind or self.

So, according to Buddhism man is only a conventional name for a collection of different constituents, the material body, immaterial mind and the formless consciousness. The existence of man depends on this collection and dissolves each the collection breaks up. The self denotes nothing more than this collection.

According to Jainism, Mahavira says that “Cetana Lakshano Jivha” i.e. consciousness is the nature of Jiva. The Jiva is emphasized under the doctrine of substance and the Atman is introduced as a Jiva. But both are similar. It is a conscious substance. The consciousness is the essential property but not the accidental and Jivatman is not possible without consciousness. The Jiva is eternal, formless, but while Jiva comes in the contact of mind, sense, body and intellect then it attaches with matter as a result it becomes Baddha-Jiva.

It is the Jiva that knows things, performs activities, enjoys pleasures, suffers pain and illumines itself and other objects. The Jiva is eternal, but it also undergoes, change of states. It is different from the body and its existence is directly proved by its consciousness of itself.

The Jiva is not infinite but co-extensive with body, as it can immediately know objects only within the body. Consciousness is not present everywhere but only in the body. The body is made of particles of matter, and for the formation of a particular kind of body, particular kinds of matter-particles are to be arranged and organised in a particular way. In the formation of this body the guiding force is the soul's own passions. Owing to the inclinations generated by its past actions a Jiva comes to inhabit different bodies successively. Like a light it illuminates conscious the entire body in which it lives. Though it has no form, it acquires like a light the size and form of the body wherein it lives. It is in this sense that a jiva, though formless, is said to occupy space or possess extension.

The Nyaya, Vaiśeṣika adopt the realistic view of the self. According to them, the self is a unique substance, to which all cognitions, feelings and conations belong as its attributes. Desire, aversion and violation, pleasure, pain and cognition are all qualities of the soul. These cannot belong to the physical substances, since they are not physical qualities perceived by the external senses.

The Nyaya, Vaiśeṣika schools hold that the self is indestructible and eternal. It is infinite, since it is not limited by time and space. Consciousness is not essence of the soul; it is an accidental attribute of the soul. Soul is apart from the body. But the body cannot be the self because consciousness cannot be the attribute of the material body or the senses. The body is, by itself, unconscious and unintelligent. According to Nyaya consciousness is not an essential attribute of the soul. All cognitions or conscious states arise in the self when it is related to the manas, and the manas is related to the senses and senses come in contact with the external objects. Otherwise, there will be no consciousness in the self. Thus the attributes of cognition, feeling and conation – in a word consciousness is an accidental attribute of the soul, the accident being its relation to the body.

According to the Sāṃkhya, there are only two ultimate realities- Spirit and Matter (Puruṣa or Self or Soul and Prakṛti). The spirits are infinite in number and of two kinds, one in bondage and the other ever free or freed ones. They are also nitya, eternal, immortal and vibhū, not limited in space. It is different from the body and the senses, the manas and the intellect (buddhi). It is not anything of the world of objects. The self is not the brain, nor the nervous system, nor the aggregate of conscious states. The self is a conscious spirit which is always the subject of knowledge and can never become the object of any knowledge. It is not a substance with the attribute of consciousness, but it is pure consciousness as such. Consciousness is essence of the soul but not quality of it. According to Advaita Vedānta, the self is pure eternal consciousness which is also a blissful existence. But Sāṃkhya denies this concept. Sāṃkhya believes that soul is pure eternal consciousness but not blissful. Bliss and consciousness being different things cannot be the essence of the same reality. The self is the transcendent subject whose essence is pure consciousness. It is an uncaused, eternal and all pervading reality which is free from all attachment and unaffected by all objects. All change and activity, all pleasure and pain belong really to Prakṛti and its products like body, mind and intellect. It is sheer ignorance to think that the self is the body or the senses or the mind or intellect. But when, through such ignorance, the self confuses itself with any of these things, it seems to be caught up in the flow of changes and activities, and merged in the mire of sorrows and miseries.

The Yoga is closely allied to the Sāṃkhya system. It is the application of the theory of the Sāṃkhya in practical life. The Yoga philosophy accepted the Sāṃkhya epistemology, metaphysics, theory of soul etc. In the Yoga system, the individual self (jīva) is regarded as the free associated with the gross body and more closely related to a subtle body constituted by the senses, the manas, the ego and the intellect. The self is, in its own nature, pure consciousness, free from the limitations of the body and the fluctuations of the mind (Citta). But in its ignorance it confuses itself with citta. The citta is the first product of prakṛti, in which the elements of sattva or the power of manifestation naturally predominates over those of rajas and tamas. It is essentially unconscious; but being in the closest proximity to the self it reflects, through its manifesting power, the self consciousness so as to become apparently conscious and intelligent. When the citta is related to any object through manas, it assumes the form of that object. The self knows the objects of the world through the manifestation of citta, which correspond to the forms of the objects known.

The conception of soul in the Mīmāṃsā is more or less like that of other realistic and pluralistic schools such as the Nyaya- Vaiśeṣika. The soul is an eternal, infinite substance, which is related to a real body in a real world and it survives death to be able to reap the consequences of its action performed here. Consciousness is not the essence of the soul, but an adventitious/ accidental quality which arrives when some conditions are present. In dreamless sleep and in the state of liberation the soul has no

consciousness, because its conditions, such as relation of sense to object, are absent. The soul is subject to bondage and can also obtain liberation.

There are two different views in Mimāṃsā philosophy. One, the Prabhākara Mimāṃsākas think that self is an unconscious substance which may acquire the attribute of consciousness under certain conditions. On the other hand, the Bhatta Mimāṃsākas think that the self is a conscious entity which is partially hidden by ignorance, as appears from the imperfect and partial knowledge that men have of their own selves.

There are many schools in Vedānta philosophy. The schools are Samkara's Kevalādvaita-vāda, Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita-vāda, Nimbarka's – Dvaitādvaita -vāda, Madhva's Dvaita-vāda, Vallabha's Suddhādvaita- vāda. Here I discussed the concept of nature of soul from the standpoint of Samkara and Rāmānuja.

Samkara's conception of the soul is absolutely identical with the Brāhmaṇ. The concept of soul/self is nothing but Brāhmaṇ itself. Brāhmaṇ is only one and one reality. The term Brāhmaṇ derived as "Vrha" and "Man" meaning thereby the great. Accordingly, Brāhmaṇ is infinity, Eternal, Pure and Full Greatness.

According to Advaita Vedānta philosophy, Brāhmaṇ is Nirviśeṣa. Brāhmaṇ has no external difference or Sajatiya and Vijatiya bhedas at all. Another fundamental characteristic of Brāhmaṇ is that he is absolutely, "Nirguna" or without any attributes- powers.

The essence of Brāhmaṇ is "Sat-Cit-Ananda" (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss). "Sat" means "Eternal Existence", "Cit" means "Eternal Consciousness" and "Ananda" means "Eternal Bliss". According to Samkara, all the distinction between the subject and the object, the self (Jiva atman) and Brāhmaṇ are the illusory creation of Maya. Man is apparently composed of the body and the soul. But the body which we perceive is like every other material object, merely an illusory appearance. When this is realized, the reality that remains is the soul which is nothing other than Brāhmaṇ.

The individual soul appears as the limited, finite self because of its association with the body which is a product of ignorance. But from the transcendental standpoint, the Jiva is Brāhmaṇ and so not a Jātā, Kartā-Bhoktā-Anu-Bahu' but Nirguna-Niskriya-Bhümā- Eka and ultimate truth.

Rāmānuja's view is Viśiṣṭādvaita-vāda or non-dualism qualified by difference. The absolute is an organic unity; an identity is qualified by diversity. God or Brāhmaṇ is the absolute reality. God is the immanent inner controller, the Supreme real who holds together in unity the dependent matter and individual souls as His body. Ramanuja recognizes three things as ultimate and real. These are matter, souls, and God. Though all are equally real, the first two are absolutely dependent on God or Brāhmaṇ. According to this School Brāhmaṇ is "Saccidānanda". "Sat" in both its senses, viz., "Existence" and "Existent", meaning thereby that 'Existence' constitutes both the Svarūpa or essence and Guṇa or an essential quality of Brāhmaṇ. In the same manner, when we say that He is 'Cit', that means that He is, at the same time "Knowledge or Consciousness" and a "Knower or a Conscious Being". That is, knowledge or consciousness constitutes both the Svarūpa or essence and Guṇa or an essential attribute of Brāhmaṇ. In exactly the same manner, Brāhmaṇ is both 'Ananda' and "Ānandamaya", 'Bliss' and 'Blissful', i.e., bliss constitutes His svarūpa or essence, as well as His Guṇa or an essential attribute.

The individual soul is an attribute or mode of God and forms part of His body, yet it is also a spiritual substance in itself and is absolutely real. Though it is eternal, real, unique, uncreated and imperishable, yet it is finite and individual, being only a part or a mode of God. It is beyond creation and destruction, birth and death. In the state of creation, it is embodied according to its karmas, while in the state of dissolution and in the state of liberation, it remains in itself. The soul is different from its body, sense-

organs, and mind. In samsāra, it wrongly identifies itself with these due to ignorance and karma. But from the transcendental standpoint, it is imperceptible, eternal and changeless. Consciousness is essential and inseparable attribute. Consciousness always belongs to the self and persists even in deep sleep and liberation.

## **Conclusion**

It is very clear to see the above discussion that direct or indirect, all the school of Indian philosophy has considered the existence of self. Only Cārvāka School admitted that self is nothing more than conscious living body. But the Buddha's doctrine of self is highly realistic, on other hand literally the doctrine of self of the theistic schools of Indian philosophy like Vedānta is idealistic but the Nyaya's doctrine of self is more relevant and scientific.

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