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***Darśana* (Philosophy) and *Dharma* (Religion): Relation between realized knowledge and practice of truth**

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Abstract:

In this paper, there is an attempt to examine the correlation between religion and philosophy in India. In fact, the concepts of *darśana* and *dharma* that are translated into English as religion and philosophy are very loaded concepts and cannot be reduced by to their English equivalents. The term '*darśana*' comes from root 'dṛś'- 'to see' or 'to realize'. The word '*dharma*' has its origin in '*dhr*'- 'to hold'. In that sense, that which has been realized, as truth is *darśana*; and the truth thus realized is to be held sacred in life - to hold on to the truth itself is *dharma*. Therefore, *darśana* is the source of *dharma*. In this paper, I have taken up two important advaita *darśanas* (non-dual philosophical systems), which are also the respective source for very well developed religious traditions that correspond to their philosophy. The paper attempts to reveal how the difference in philosophy makes a difference to the *dhārmic* that includes not only the religious but also an entire range of practices denoted by the word *dharma* in the life of Indians. These two philosophies are: Adī Śāṅkarācārya's advaita Vedānta and Kashmiri Trika *darśana*. Towards the end, we find that Trika *darśana* which attained culmination in the 11th century is exemplary in its exegetical exposition and fills the gaps in the logic that we come across in the advaita Vedānta of Ācārya Śāṅkara.

Keyword: *Dharma, Advaita Vedānta, Kashmiri Trika darśana, Adī Śāṅkarācārya, Pratyabhijñā*

Introduction

In ancient India, unlike in the West, religions have not been just some set of orthodox rules or commandments. They evolved out of insights gained from inner journeys or meditations of sages who were also the researchers and scholars. It is important to understand that experiential realization is the most important factor in Indian knowledge traditions.

Knowledge or *jñāna* becomes realization only when it has moved from intellect to the heart- only when it has been fully experienced and realized. Such a knowledge becomes a *darśana* and it has no parallel in the term 'philosophy' which purely denotes a thinking paradigm and is related only with the intellectual dimension of being. Jaideva Singh in his Introduction to 10th century Kashmiri Ācārya Kṣhemarāja's celebrated text, *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam* makes an apt remark on structural differences between philosophy and *darśana*. To quote:

"In India, there is no such thing as arm-chair philosophy. Philosophy is not only a way of thought, but also a way of life in this country. It is not born of idle curiosity, nor is it a mere intellectual game. Every philosophy here is a religion, and every religion has its philosophy. The philosopher here was not a tall and spectacled professor dictating his notes to the class or weaving cob-webs of theory in his study, but one who was moved by a deep inner urge to know the secrets of life, who lived laborious days of spiritual discipline and who saw the light by the transformation of his life. Moved by pity [compassion] for his fellow-men, he tried to interpret the truth he had experienced to the logical reason of man. Thus arose philosophy in this country."^[1]

In India, every religious tradition has its own metaphysics, which is often codified as religion for the laypeople. A disciple or an initiate could partake of the knowledge in the *guru- śiṣya* lineage tradition.

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¹ Ref. Jaideva Singh, 1963, 9th rpt. 2016, p -1.

The fact, that we have atheistic religions like Cārvāka, is evidence that the religions have been dynamic disciplines rather than fossilized commandments. The Cārvāka-s who are followers of sage Bṛhaspati have a *darśana* that physical body is the highest reality and that nothing remains after the body is burnt to ashes after death. Hence, 'one must make hay when the sun shines' is their *dharma* (i.e. their practice in life):

While life is yours, live joyously;
None can escape Death's searching eye:
When once this frame of ours they burn,
How shall it e'er again return? ^[2]

Another school of Indian thought, the mīmāṃsaka are orthodox not because of their belief in god but their belief in the Vedic ritual and in upholding of dharma. Vedic injunctions are the highest truth and ritual is the means to attain the fruit prescribed in the injunctions. The uttara-mīmāṃsaka-s, the successors of poorva-mīmāṃsaka-s turned the focus to the latter part (*uttara*) of the Vedas, i.e. the Upanishads that in turn emphasize on the contemplation of higher truth. Their philosophy developed as vedānta, (lit. 'the end of Vedas').

Ādiguru Śaṅkarācārya (788-820) is the chief Ācārya, who contributed a great deal in the development and propagation of the monistic *darśana* that became famous as *advaita vedānta*. The ninth century prodigious saint philosopher and theologian has left us an enormous range of texts, which include scriptural commentaries as well hymnal compositions. His philosophical ideas are enumerated in his *Prasthānatrayī*, his commentary on major Upanishad-s, Brahma Sūtra and the Bhagavad Gītā and also in his commentaries on other minor works (*prakaraṇa-granthas*) and his spiritual and religious ideas are better reflected in his hymnal compositions.

We shall now look into *advaita vedānta* philosophy expounded by the Acarya and how his devotional compositions appear to reflect a higher kind on non-dualism that is not covered in the philosophical expositions. Kashmir Trika *darśana* on the other hand offers a metaphysics that is in complete concordance with its spiritual and scriptural discipline and practice.

Śaṅkarācārya in his devotional composition *Nirvāṇāṣṭakam* announces that individual being 'I' is Supreme Being 'Śiva' (*Śivoham, Śivoham ...*), but in his philosophical system, *advaita vedānta* he says that this world is a false superimposition on the pure Supreme Reality (Absolute Brahman). According to him, the visible world is a make-believe (*anṛta*), and the individual soul is caught up in the world of senses created by illusion (*Māyā*). The *Māyā* in turn is created by the individual's own ignorance (*Avidyā*). Strangely, this conception defeats his celebrated idea of *Advaita* or non-dualism. His monism (non-dualism) clearly includes two - the *Brahman* and *Māyā* and therefore posits limitations for ordinary understanding. Further, in Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's philosophy the only possibility for liberation from the sufferings of the world is to live in such a way that one is completely detached from the world of senses and the pleasures ensuing from them. For instance, in his commentary on the first verse of *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* ^[3], he conforms to the

first line i.e. '*Īśāvāsyaṃ idaṃ sarvaṃ yatkiñca jagatyāṃ jagat*' ('Whatever is there in this world is pervaded by the eternal divine, *Īśa*.'). However, he interprets the second line from an absolutely ascetic perspective. In his commentary on the second line which is, '*Tena tyaktena bhujñithaḥ mā gridhaḥ kasyasviddhanam*' ('partake of this world in a detached way and don't covet other's wealth'), he emphasizes that the one who seeks liberation should be completely detached from the world of senses ^[4]. He says that a seeker of truth should not crave for sensual joys like 'a sandal wood garland, or sexual pleasures' etc. Thus, in Śaṅkarācārya's discipline this complete denial of the world appears to be appropriate for ascetic renunciants (*sanyāsins*) but it is a difficult proposition for an ordinary seeker or a householder (*grihastha*).

Kashmiri Trika Darśana: perfected form of Darśana (realized knowledge) and Dharma (truth)

In comparison to the above-mentioned philosophy of Śaṅkarācārya's monism, we have Trika philosophy, popularly known as Kashmir *Śaivism* is an absolute non-dualistic philosophy (*mahādvayavāda*) which is a philosophy of total inclusion. There is only one truth here whether one approaches the system from religious perspective or from philosophical perspective.

This philosophy has evolved from the non-dual ancient tantric traditions called as Bhairava Tantras. It developed mainly during the 9th, 10th and 11th centuries in the Kashmir. It teaches an unprejudiced acceptance of the world as it is. In fact, it divinizes everything in the existent reality not merely from a theological perspective but also with a very rationalistic standpoint. It proclaims that everything is Śiva (*Sarvaśivaṃ*); hence everything is of the form of everything else, (*Sarvaśsarvātmaṃ*) ^[5].

Trika is a religion as well as metaphysics. Therefore, it has equal appeal for the faithful and the intellectual; to the believing as well as the questioning mind. It is a religion because it explains the Supreme reality in terms of divinity or God and subscribes to a whole genealogy of gods and goddesses. The Supreme god here is Paramaśiva who with His own Power (*Śakti*) emanates the universe, sustains it, withdraws it, veils it and brings it forth again through grace. In other words, Supreme Śiva performs the five-fold act (*pañca-kṛtyas*) in the universe.

Theistically, Trika has strong affinity with the Upaniṣadic thought as reflected, for instance, in the *Śānti* mantra, '*Aum Pūrṇamadahaḥ Pūrṇamidaṃ Pūrṇāta Pūrṇamudacyate/ pūrṇasya pūrṇamādaya pūrṇameva avaśiṣyate*' (That is full, this is full. From the Full, full only comes out. If full is taken out of the Full, the full only remains). As mentioned above, Trika *Śaivism* names the Supreme reality as Paramaśiva, Maheśvara or Parabhairava, and concedes that the Supreme Being has Absolute Freedom (*Svātantrya*). Everything that Paramaśiva does is a result of His Absolute Freedom. As Ācārya Kṣhemarāja (10th century), distinguished disciple of the great Ācārya Abhinavagupta, states in his famous text *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam* (*The Heart of Recognition*), 'The absolute *Citi* [*Śakti*] of Its own Free Will is the cause of the *Siddhi* [manifestation] of the universe. By power of her own

² Ref. *Sarvadarśanasamgrah of Mādhavācārya*, 1882, p-2. Famous line, "Yāvajjīvet sukhaṃ jīvet, maṃ kṛtvā gṛtaṃ pibet" [live happily as long as you live even at the cost of taking a loan, drink ghee alone (i.e. eat the best food)] is reflective of the dhrama that the Cārvāka-s or Lokāyata-s practice.

³ Ref. *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad*. Verse I. [Trans. Mine].

⁴ *Īśādi Nau Upaniṣad*, 2012, P-25-28.

⁵ Ref. *Śivadrīṣṭi*, V.107. KSTS No.LIV. P. 194.

The author of *Śivadrīṣṭi*, Ācārya Somānanda is founder of the *Pratyabhijñā* school of Trika Śaivism and his disciple Utpaladeva is one of the first exegetes of this doctrine.

will, she unfolds the universe upon her own screen.’⁶ [6]. The idea is that the creation is a projection of the energy (*Śakti*) of Supreme Self (*Śiva*) on the screen of Consciousness by Its own Free Will.’

The main power of the Supreme is His Power of Absolute Freedom (*Svātantrya-Śakti*), all other powers of *Śiva* are different names of this *Svātantrya Śakti* itself. The names of *Śakti-s* in this system are given according to the functions that these *Śakti-s* perform. Paramaśiva’s Absolute Freedom manifests in five chief powers of *Cit* (Consciousness), *Ānanda* (Bliss), *Ichhā* (Will), *Jñāna* (Knowledge) and *Kriyā* (Action). Through these five main powers the entire universe is revealed, sustained and is absorbed back into Supreme I-Consciousness of Paramaśiva. In Trika, the universe is always there, hence there is no creation but an emanation of forms on the screen of Supreme Consciousness. The emanation from Supreme Consciousness keeps happening in simultaneity with absorption or withdrawal of forms back into the Supreme Consciousness. Paramaśiva, the Supreme Consciousness, out of His own Absolute Freedom, with His own power/powers (*Śakti-s*) begins to objectify Himself by veiling His own Fullness in various degrees. Thus, He takes on forms that are limited empirical beings i.e. the forms that are *meya* (‘that can be measured’). The power of Supreme *Śiva* that manifests this measured world or world of empirical beings is *Māyā-Śakti*. The word ‘*Māyā*’ comes from root, ‘*ma*’ which literally means ‘to measures’. So *Māyā*’s function is to measure and thereby to limit everything. *Māyā-Śakti* has five appendages called five-*kañcuka-s* (coverings). Together they make six-coverings and create an empirical being who is enclosed within the limitations caused by these layers.

However, this *Māyā* is conceived as a form of *Śakti* in Trika as different from *Māyā* conceived as ‘illusion’ in the Śāṅkara *Vedānta*. In Trika Śaivism, when this *Māyā-Śakti* becomes expansion-oriented (outward bound), it becomes the universe of manifest forms; and when this same *Māyā-Śakti* becomes inward oriented then it withdraws itself from objectivity and becomes one with Supreme *Śiva*. In other words, *Māyā Śakti* creates limitations on the Supreme Being to become individual beings with limitations, and same *Māyā-Śakti* lifts these limitations from the individual beings and turns all empirical existents back into Supreme Being. In this sense, every empirical being is *Śiva (Sarvaśivam)* and everything is of the form of everything else (*Sarvasarvātmaḥ*) i.e. *Śiva*.

In other words we can say that Trika Śaivism is a perfected theology cum metaphysics that gives logical exposition to the spiritual experience and routine existential reality. Besides, according to Trika masters, Trika philosophy includes all other philosophical systems within its fold. Ācārya Kṣemarāja declares in his *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam* that, “The positions of the various systems of philosophy are only various roles of that (consciousness or Self). ... Thus of the one Divine whose essence is consciousness, all these roles are displayed by his absolute will, (and) the differences in the roles are due to the various gradations in which that absolute will either chooses

to reveal or conceal itself. Therefore, there is one Ātman [*Śiva*] only pervading all these roles.”⁷ [7].

In conclusion, we can say that Trika *dharma* is to see all reality as one *-sarvaśivam* and this non-dual *darśana* provides an equivalent metaphysical discursive field to explain its non-dual *dharma*⁸ [8].

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⁶ *Citiḥ svatantra viśvasiddhihetuḥ.//1// Svecchaya svabhittau viśvamanūliyatī // 2//*.

[The absolute *Citi* [*Svātantrya Śakti* of Paramaśiva] of its own free will is the cause of the Siddhi [manifestation] of the universe. By the power the her own will (alone), she (*citi*) unfolds the universe upon her own screen (i.e. in herself as the basis of the universe).]

Ref. Kṣemarāja’s *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam*. Jaideva Singh, 1963, 9thrpt. 2016, p-46-51.

⁷ “*Tadbhūmikaḥ Sarvadarśanasthitayah*”. *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam*, Sutra 8. Jaideva Singh, 1963,p-65. Also see Ācārya Kṣemarāja’s own commentary to this sutra in which he talks about other philosophical schools including Naiyayika, Vaiyākaraṇa-s, Saugatas (Buddhists), Vijñāvēdins, Brahmavēdins, Pāñcarātras and Sāñkhya to explain that the essential doctrines of these systems match up to different levels of Trika perceivers (*pramatṛ-s*). This idea is explained by Swami Lakshman Joo also in his *Trikaśāstra Rahasya Prakriyā*, p-18-23.

⁸ Trika Ācārya -s have expounded this as doctrine of Recognition. Ācārya Utpaladeva’s *Īśvarapṛtyabhijñārikā* is the foundational text for *Pratyabhijñā* (or doctrine of recognition.)