

The Practical Standpoint Of Indian Philosophy

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Abstract : *The main aim of this article is to discuss shortly about the practical standpoint of Indian philosophy. For the best realization of practical standpoint, the distinction between Indian and western philosophical standpoint has been discussed, at first. Then, to explain the practical side of Indian of philosophy, five points have been mentioned here. The first point is importance on morality and righteousness(dharma) of Indian philosophy. According to Indian philosophers(except Cārvāka), the aim of philosophy is the income of money(artha), service of desire(kāma), and the attainment of liberation(mokṣa), through the way of righteousness. The second point is the importance on political and social welfare. According to Indian philosophers, without political and social welfare, attainment of the knowledge of ultimate reality is not possible. The third point is the importance on reasoning of Indian philosophers. All schools of Indian philosophy are free from dogmatism, and all schools have established their views on the basis of reasoning, free thinking and judgement. The fourth point is the belief in the law of karma(karmavāda). All schools of Indian philosophy believe in the law of karma, which is a moral theory of causality. Law of karma of Indian philosophy is the infliction of law of causality of external world, in moral world. The fifth and the last point is the importance on attainment of liberation(mokṣa). The standpoint of Indian philosophy is practical, because the philosophical knowledge of Indian philosophy helps in the attainment of liberation of all lives from suffering. Finally, it has been concluded by saying that, although the main standpoint of Indian philosophy is practical, yet the theoretical standpoint of Indian philosophy can never be neglected.*

Keywords : Practical, Morality, Righteousness(dharma), *Puruṣārtha*, Welfare, Reasoning, *karmavāda*, Liberation(mokṣa).

Introduction : It is true that, all schools of Indian philosophy have given importance on theoretical and practical -- both standpoints, but all these schools have given most importance on the practical standpoint. To understand it clearly, we should know the difference between theoretical and practical aspects of discussion. There have clear difference between theoretical and practical viewpoints. The theoretical aspect does not think regarding achievement of any goal, by applying knowledge. This viewpoint only wants to attain theoretical knowledge. By practical aspect, it is meant to achieve motive by applying the acquired knowledge in practical life. That means, in practical viewpoint, the pragmatic side of knowledge is most important. In theoretical aspect, philosophy means only search of truth, but in practical aspect, philosophy means search of truth, and also establishment of that truth in our practical life.

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All schools of Indian philosophy accept about the practical aspect of them. Indian philosophy does not want only to attain knowledge about the world and life. Depending on our world and life, there arise various questions in our mind. Indian philosophy does not want only to search the answer of those questions. That means, the only aim of Indian philosophy is not only to attain theoretical knowledge. According to Indian philosophers, there have intimate relation between philosophy and our life. Our daily life can be controlled by philosophical knowledge, moreover our perfect lives can be managed by philosophical knowledge.

Distinction Between Indian And Western Philosophical Standpoint :To

understand clearly about the standpoint of Indian philosophy, we need a comparative discussion between Indian and western philosophical standpoint. There have difference between Indian and western philosophical standpoint. In western philosophy, the aim of philosopher is to attain knowledge. But, in Indian philosophy, the aim of philosopher is not only to attain knowledge, but also to apply this knowledge in our practical life. In western philosophy, a philosopher is a wise man, but in Indian philosophy, a philosopher is a spectator of all time and existence. Various Indian philosophers of various schools(*Bauddha, Jaina, Vedānta*) have managed and controlled their lives through the realization of their own true knowledge. Indian philosophers have given most importance in way of life. So, some western philosophers have accused that, the Indian philosophy is confined in narrow boundary of morality and virtue. But, this acquisition is baseless. If we enter in deep of Indian philosophy, then we can see that, every branch of philosophy(epistemology, metaphysics, logic, ethics etc.) have been discussed in it. Even in some cases, these discussions are so deep and accurate that, such discussions are not found in western philosophy as well. The standpoint of Indian philosophy is synthetic, but the standpoint of Indian philosophy is analytic. In western philosophy the metaphysics, epistemology, logic, ethics etc. have been discussed in various way. But, in Indian philosophy, all these branches of philosophy have been merged into one, because among these branches there have an intimate relation.² So, it can be said that, from this side, the Indian philosophy is an all-pervading scripture. In western philosophy, it is said that, seeing endless variety and unprecedented mystery of our world, we become wonder. From these wondering, question founded in our mind, and answers of these questions have created the philosophy. So, according to Plato, wonder is the creator of philosophy. But, the Indian philosophy has been engaged in discussion of our life, not in discussion of our world. Indian philosophers want to know the aim of life and the way of achievement of this aim of life.

Indian philosophers have tried to know about the nature of men's life. Searching human life, Indian philosophers realized that, maximum portion of human life is full of sorrow, grief, calamity etc. Indian philosophers have tried to free human being from their sorrow, grief or calamity. They have discovered the way to liberate human beings from their misery. So, in

² "Indian philosophy discusses the different problems of Metaphysics, Ethics, Logic, Psychology, and Epistemology, but generally does not discuss them separately. Every problem is discussed by the Indian philosopher from all possible approaches, metaphysical, ethical, logical, psychological, and epistemological." - Chatterjee, 1950, P. 3

Indian philosophy, there have very important place of religion and morality. Mainly, the Indian philosophers want to know about the ultimate goal of human being, and about the way of attainment of ultimate goal. Indian philosophy discusses regarding the virtue, demerit, nature of perfect behavior. It also discussed the result of evil work, and about the effect of this evil work's result in attainment of liberation from suffering. But, in western philosophy, the main aim of philosophical discussion is to attain the knowledge of ultimate reality. In western philosophy, the main duty of philosopher is to discuss the nature of life and world, and to judge the value of our life and world. According to Indian philosophers, the philosophy is not only a luxury of thinking, it has a practical aspect. The aim of Indian philosophy is to lead human life in a controlled and perfect way, by realizing the nature of world and life. So, it can be said that, the viewpoint of Indian philosophy is both-theoretical and practical, but the viewpoint of western philosophy is only theoretical.

There have many causes, for which we can demand that, the main standpoint of Indian philosophy is practical. Among those causes, some important causes are briefly follows :

1. Importance On Morality And Righteousness(Dharma) : Indian philosophers have given most importance on morality and righteousness. In Indian philosophy, there are four types of *puruṣārthas*, these are – righteousness(*dharma*), prosperity(*artha*), pleasure(*kāma*) and liberation(*mokṣa*). Righteousness and morality have been reflected by these four *purusarthas*. Indian philosophers want to know - what is admissible(*preyas*) in life? They also want to know -- what is credible(*śreya*)?, what is incredible?, what is dependable? etc. In these contexts, Indian philosophers have discussed about morality and righteousness.

Among four *puruṣārthas*, Indian philosophers have placed the righteousness(*dharma*) as the first *puruṣārthas*. The aim of Indian philosophy, is the income of money(*artha*), service of desire(*kāma*) and attainment of liberation(*mokṣa*) through the way of righteousness. So, it is true that, religious behavior is the ultimate aim of Indian philosophy.³ All schools of Indian philosophy, except *Cārvāka* have instructed regarding the possible way religious behavior. Veda tells us, what we should do and what we should not do. Metaphysical knowledge of Indian philosophy instructs us, which work is honest, which work we ought to do in religious behavior and in our daily life.

In Indian philosophy, morality and virtue are inseparable, because in Indian philosophy they are closely interrelated with each other. Morality and religion are equal in *Bauddha* and *Jaina* philosophy. In these schools, non-violence(*ahimsā*) has been accepted in sometimes as religion and in sometimes as morality. Non-Violence has been mentioned in sometimes as non-violent-morality and in sometimes as non-violent-religion. Morality and righteousness of *Bauddha* philosophy has been received in the world as the highest ethical religion. According to *Goutam Buddha*, religion is moral duty. If you do something for affected and helpless person, then that is the religion. In other schools of Indian philosophy, it is said that, life-service is the virtue. God is the adoration of religion and supreme goodness is the ideal of

³ “One who has not desisted from bad conduct, whose senses are not under control, whose mind is not free from anxiety, can not attain mokṣa through knowledge.” - Kaṭha Upaniṣad, 1,2.24.

ethics or morality. It has been imagined in Indian philosophy that, God is the embodied symbol of supreme goodness(*śivam*). Welfare of life(*morality*) and worship of God(*religion*) are closely interrelated with each other in Indian philosophy of life.

2. Importance On Political And Social welfare : According to some western philosophers, Indian philosophy is unworldly, and it is disinterested in political and social welfare, and Indian philosophers are interested only in discussion of liberation of lives. But, this accusation is baseless and wrong. Actually, for maximum schools of Indian philosophy, the liberation is possible only through the auspicious activity. If we analyze deeply, then we can realize that, Indian philosophers did not discuss only about liberation, neglecting political and social welfare. It has been mentioned in Indian philosophy that, through political and social welfare, attainment of knowledge of ultimate reality is possible.

According to Indian philosophers, for the attainment of ultimate reality, knowledge is most important, but action of public welfare is not less important. All philosophers of Indian philosophy have said to engage in auspicious activity and to abandon self-interest. Yoga philosophy has instructed to do work, which is beneficial to public, through the vow of non-violence(*ahimsā*). In 'three jewel'(tri-ratna) of Jaina philosophy, there have right-conduct(*samyak-caritra*), with right-insight(*samyak-darśana*) and right-knowledge(*samyak-jñāna*). Right-conduct means, engagement in honest or welfare work and desisting from dishonest work. Also, in the eightfold path(*aṣṭāṅgika-mārga*) of Bauddha philosophy, it has been mentioned regarding the social welfare. Through the right-livelihood(*samyak-ājīva*) of the eightfold path, Gautam Buddha has instructed regarding the work of social welfare. So, it is true that, in Indian philosophy it has been mentioned that, social and political welfare is needed as a way of attainment of self-knowledge or liberation(*mokṣa*).

According to Indian philosophers, for the easy fulfillment of aim, at first we need positive environment. Our environment, society or state, which are formed by person. Without the healthy mind and body of person, a healthy and peaceful society or state is not possible. So, for peaceful and well-placed society, there need healthy body and strong mind of man. For this, Indian philosophers have instructed to practice good thinking and restraint of organ, because through the restraint of organ, our body will be healthy, and through good thinking our mind will be strong.⁴ As a result welfare of our society and state will be established. Therefore, without the formation of right-conduct, establishment of healthy and peaceful society is impossible, and without living in healthy and peaceful society or state, accomplishment of knowledge of ultimate reality or liberation is not possible. Such view of Indian philosophy proves that, the standpoint of Indian philosophy is very much practical.

3. Importance On Reasoning : Another significant cause of being practical standpoint of Indian philosophy is that, all schools of Indian philosophy have given importance on reasoning. To understand this point, at first we have to know -- when a philosophical school or a philosopher will be dogmatic? Actually, a philosophical school or a philosopher will be dogmatic, if that school or philosopher starts philosophical discussion, without judging or

⁴ "A restrained and disciplined life by disciplining one's mind, one's speech, and one's body is the way of right conduct." - First Steps to Jainism, Sancheti Asoo Lal and Bhandari Manik Mal, P. 28

analyzing the nature, source, limitation, condition, validity of human being's knowledge, and depending on it accepts any fancied conclusion. So, we can say that, a philosophy or a philosopher is dogmatic or unreasonable, if that philosophy or philosopher gives importance on acceptation or explanation and establishment of truthfulness of received view without judgment, and don't give importance on reasoning, judgment and free thinking. But, all schools of Indian philosophy are free from dogmatism.

Heterodox and Orthodox -- all schools of Indian philosophy have given importance on reasoning and judgement. *Cārvāka*, *Bauddha* and *Jaina* -- none were accepted the *Veda* as means of valid knowledge(*pramāṇa*). According to them, principles of *Veda* are not infallible. All heterodox schools of Indian philosophy have established their views through reasoning and free thinking. According to *Cārvāka* school, perception(*pratyakṣa*) is only means of valid knowledge(*pramāṇa*). For them, only perceptible world is the matter of philosophical discussion. They don't accept the revelation of spectator as means of valid knowledge. *Bauddha* philosophy also has given importance on reasoning. *Gautama Buddha* did not say to his followers to accept his speech dogmatically. Supporters of *Gautam Buddha* did not accept the dicta of *Buddha*, as means of valid knowledge to explain the *Buddha* philosophy. They have tried to establish those dictums of *Buddha*, on reasoning and free thinking. The metaphysical discussion of *Jaina* philosophy does not depend on philosophical view of *Mahāvīra*(the originator of *Jaina* philosophy). The metaphysical discussion of *Jaina* philosophy also has been established on judgement, free thinking and reasoning.

Among six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy, *Sāṃkhya*, *Yoga*, *Nyāya* and *Vaiśeṣika* -- these four schools have given importance on the *Veda*, but these schools are not established directly on *Veda*. These schools have established their own philosophical views depending on reasoning, judgement and free thinking. Their views are distinct from the *Veda*. On the other hand, among six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy, *Mīmāṃsā* and *Vedānta* are directly established on *Veda*, and these schools have accepted the *Veda* as authoritative and as means of valid knowledge(*pramāṇa*). But, for these, it cannot be said that, these two schools are dogmatic, because they have established their own philosophical views, depending on free thinking and reasoning.

4. Belief In The Law Of Karma(*Karmavāda*) : Another practical side of Indian philosophy is belief in the law of *karma*. In Indian philosophy, law of *karma* is a moral theory of causality. Law of *karma* of Indian philosophy is the infliction of law of causality of external world, in moral world. Here, the main tenets of the law of *karma* is that, if someone do any work(*karma*), then depending on that work he/she has to get the result of that work. If someone does good work, then he/she has to enjoy good result, or if someone does bad work, then he/she has to suffer bad result. That means, enjoyment or suffering from pleasure or sorrow is due to our *karma*. *Karma* is the cause, and enjoyment of that *karma*, is the effect.⁵

In our practical life, we see that, someone is happy or unhappy, someone is wise or foolish, someone is healthy or unhealthy, someone is wealthy or poor, also someone is pretty or ugly.

⁵ “abashymeva bhagatavyam kṛtam karman subhāsubham / yenaiba yaddā purbam kṛtam karman subhāsubham / sa eva tatrāya bhaktinityam vihitā mātmana //” - Itihas Samussaya, 2,24.

All these dissimilarities of our life have been explained by the law of *karma* of Indian philosophy. We also see that, in our society, some religious persons are suffering, but some dishonest persons are enjoying pleasure. According to Indian philosophers, these dissimilarities are due to our *karma* of previous life. Actually, the theory of causality of external world, and the theory of causality of moral world(*karmavāda*) are not equal, there have some dissimilation. In external world, effects occur immediately after cause, there have no temporal interval between cause and effect. But, in *karmavāda* of Indian philosophy, there have temporal separation between cause and effect. According to *karmavāda*, some works produce results immediately, but there have such maximum works which produce result after maximum period. According to Indian philosophers, in some times we enjoy or suffer such a result of a *karma*, which had been organized in previous life, or in some times we shall enjoy or suffer in future life such a result of a *karma*, which has been organized at present life. Actually, we take birth, or we shall take birth in this life or future life, only due to enjoy or suffer the result of our *karma* of previous life or present life. Infringement of this law of *karma*(*karmavāda*) is impossible, because if at present life someone is unable to enjoy or suffer the result of his/her work, then he/she has to take birth in next life to enjoy or suffer that result. We never can deny this law of *karma*.

But, the law of *karma* of Indian philosophy is applicable only to *sakām karma*, not to *niṣkām karma*. *Sakām karma* is that, which produce result, but *niṣkām karma* does not produce any result. So, it cannot be said that, the fatalism is the outcome of the law of *karma* of Indian philosophy. This law of *karma*(*karmavāda*) gives importance on the free will and individuality of man. According to the law of *karma*, men can overcome their fate or luck through *niṣkām karma*, by giving up the prospect of result of *karma*.

5. Importance On Attainment Of Liberation(Mokṣa) : Indian philosophy has given most importance on attainment of liberation of life. All schools of Indian philosophy, except *Cārvāka*, have accepted the liberation as the ultimate *puruṣārthas*, as the ultimate ideal of life. Regarding the nature of liberation, views of all schools are not equal, but it has been accepted by all schools that, the liberation is the imagination from all types of affliction. Also, in some schools, the liberation has been explained as state of utmost peace. In Indian philosophy, the word ‘liberation’ is familiar as different names in different schools, such as - *mokṣa*, *mukti*, *nirvāṇa*, *apavarga*, *niḥśreyasa*, *kaivalya* etc.

The standpoint of Indian philosophy is practical, because the philosophical knowledge of Indian philosophy helps in the attainment of liberation of lives from sorrow. Indian philosophers can know the main cause of suffering with life, with the help of philosophical knowledge. Knowing the cause of suffering, Indian philosophers try to search the way of liberation from suffering. Indian philosophers do not want to attain knowledge, only for knowledge. Search of the way of attainment of liberation is the main aim of Indian philosophers.⁶ For the fulfillment of this aim, knowledge of ultimate reality is necessary, because without the ultimate knowledge, attainment of liberation is not possible.

⁶ “The main contribution of Indian tradition is the explication of the inwardness of man, the freedom of his spirit.” - Introduction to Comparative Philosophy, Raju, P.T., Delhi, Motilal Banarasidass, P. 11

Among Indian schools of philosophy, there have difference regarding the nature of liberation, but according to most schools, the liberation means freedom from suffering. According to Indian philosophers, without theoretical knowledge, freedom from suffering is impossible. So, according to Indian philosophers, attainment of knowledge of ultimate reality, is not only for knowledge. The knowledge of ultimate reality is needed for the attainment of liberation, or for the imagination from suffering. So, we cannot say that, the standpoint of Indian philosophy is not practical.

Conclusion : So, from the above mentioned points, we can conclude that, for all schools of Indian philosophy, there have practical need of philosophy of life. A profound relation of philosophy with life has been accepted by all Indian schools. All schools have been consented that, for perfect passing of life, the practice of philosophy is very necessary. The importance on practical necessity of philosophy, have been specially imposed in all schools of Indian philosophy. For Indian philosophers, the aim of philosophy is the perfect passing of life through the far-sight and insight or intuition. The aim Indian philosophy is not merely the theoretical discussion. The discussion of moral values or righteousness, political and social welfare, reasoning, law of karma(*karmavāda*), liberation(*mokṣa*) etc. also have been included in Indian philosophy, except the theoretical discussion. It is true that, the Indian philosophy has given importance on practical discussion, but neglecting the theoretical discussion, it has not shrunk the circumference of philosophical discussion. So, the standpoint of Indian philosophy is both -- practical and theoretical.

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