



Concept of *Atman* (Self) in Indian Philosophy: A Review

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Abstract

For a long time, the human being has been hedonistic and optimistic nature but he had been surrounded by several fears, grieves, and challenges over the thousand thousands of years. His entire effort had been continuing to get the pleasure to be free from all kinds of sorrows. Over passed time, a burning reaction appeared against the Vedic regime and it was considered that the cause of whole human grieves is connected with the internal world not external. Under this consideration, it is declared that the entire fear and grieves of human lives is due to the acquired Karma of previous lives. And therefore these all phenomena gave birth to a “Mystical scripture” which is the basis of four pillars- the doctrine of ‘self’, the doctrine of rebirth, the doctrine of karma, and the doctrine of bondage and salvation, and it is also the base of Indian philosophy and Ayurveda. Actually, the term ‘Atma’ has derived from the Sanskrit word ‘Atman’ and that referred meaning is ‘Antarika’ (Internal). The first time systematic definition and doctrine of ‘self’ in the oldest Upanishads strongly announced that pure-self (Atman) and individual-Self (Jivatman) both are one, primitive, eternal, immortal, omnipotent, and permanent. And Ishwara Krishna was also same announced in Bhagavad Gita. The concept of Atman's “self” is considered a Prana (Breath) in Indian philosophy including Ayurveda. Though seeing the significance of Atman's “self”, the Indian philosophy and Ayurveda are called Adhyatmavadi (Spiritualistic).

Keywords: Prana; Upanishads; Adhyatmavadi; Karma; Prarabhda; Jivatma

Introduction

The entire fear and grieves of the human's lives is due to the acquired Karma (Prarabhda) of previous lives. And therefore these all phenomena gave birth to a “Mystical scripture” based on the rebirth, Atman, Moksha, and Karma which are called “Upanishads” [1]. And thus the Indian Upanishads have mainly published ‘Spiritualism’ which is the basis of four pillars

- The doctrine of ‘self’
- The doctrine of rebirth
- The doctrine of Karma or bondage
- The doctrine of salvation

And it is also the base of Indian philosophy [2].

The Upanishadic sage firstly discovered the Atman as an eternal, infinite, immortal, and permanent element on the globe which was the biggest revolutionary phenomenon in the pan history of the human race. And the first time, the Upanishadic sage publically declared the ‘self’ centric religion in lieu of the God-centric Vedic religion in which, there was presents the resolution of whole nominal and phenomenal challenges. Actually, the term ‘Atman’ has derived from the Sanskrit word ‘Atman’ and that referred meaning is ‘Antarika’ (Internal). The first time doctrine of transmigration of ‘self’ was clearly mentioned in the Brhadaranyakopanishad. And

thus, the Upanishads strongly announced that pure-self (Atman) and individual-self (Jivatman) both are one that is primitive, eternal, immortal, omnipotent, and permanent. And Ishwara Krishna was also same announced in Bhagavad Gita like Upanishads. Therefore, in addition to the Vedas and Carvaka philosophy, the rest of the school of Indian philosophy frequently and without any hesitation has accepted the eternal being of 'self' [3].

Concept of Atman (Self) in Indian Philosophy

After over viewing the whole discourse concerned with Atma "self", in the Indian philosophy and mystical scripture, we find the two types of concepts

- Concept of 'self'.
- Concept of 'No-self'.

Concept of 'self'

The concept that believes that the 'self' is eternal and immortal, is called the ideal concept of 'self' that is found such as the Upanishads, Sadadarshana, Bhagavad Gita, Jainism, Tantra Scripture, Ayurveda, etc. And the one by one the connected concept will be discussed following

Concept of 'self' in Upanishads: Atman "self", is the central and extreme element of the Upanishadic thought in which the most of narratives move around 'self' and its presumption of all things. So the Upanishads say explicit some phrase like that-

- "Aham Brahmasmi"-I am Brahman (Brhadaranyakopaniṣhada),
- "Tattvamasi"- You are that (Chandogyopaniṣhad),
- "Ayamatma Brahman"- The 'self' is God (Mandukyopaniṣhada)
- "Atmanam Siddhi"-Know thyself (Mandukyopaniṣhada) and
- "Atman Anoraniyan Mahato Mahiyam"- the 'self' is micro of micro and macro of macro element (Kathopaniṣhada), etc.

And further, it says that basically 'self' is the pure conscious and transcendental being, transmind and body. It is not only the eternal, immortal, omnipotent but also a single permanent element in the world. And thus Indian Upanishada has mainly published 'Spiritualism' which is the basis of four pillars- First: the doctrine of 'self', Second: the doctrine of rebirth, Third: the doctrine of Karma or bondage and Fourth: the doctrine of salvation and it is also the base of Indian philosophy [4].

In the doctrine of Salvation and we find with an account of Upanishads, pure 'self' and supreme 'self' (Brahman) both are one being, when pure 'self' comes in contact

with mind, body, intellect, senses, and fully involved with Karma-bondage so it is called empirical 'self' (Jivatman) or individual 'self'. And the individual-self takes rebirth until it does not get Moksha. Here Moksha means entirely to be free from all kinds of grieves, desires, and Karma-bondages that is the supreme goal of the individual 'self' who is to become totally free from all birth and death. And thus the Moksha full Atman is a pure Atman who enjoys bliss and eternal pleasure forever.

Mandukyopaniṣhada has described the four states of consciousness:

- Jagratavastha (Aware full consciousness): It is a general conscious state of the individuals where the men consume the concrete and physical objects of the external world, is called "Vaishvanara".
- Svapnavastha (Dreaming consciousness): It is a dreamful conscious state of the individuals where the men consume the micro and imaginary objects of the internal world, which is called "Tejas". In this state our 'self' moves from the body and freely walks in the desirable place where she does enjoy, eating, playing, laughing, jumping, reading, etc. During this phenomenon, our 'self' is connected with the body via Prana (Breath).
- Sushuptavastha (Deep sleep consciousness): It is the deep sleep conscious state of the individuals that comes just after a dreaming state where the men see no dream, no experience, no consumption of internal or imaginary objects, is called "Prajna".
- Turiyavastha (Supreme consciousness): It is the absolute conscious state beyond the unconsciousness and consciousness. It is the form of pure consciousness, self-consciousness, full peace, Shiva, monistic, and Saccidananda [5].

According to Brhadaranyaka, Chandogya, Manduka, Katha. Upanishads, our 'self' has fully lapsed in the Nadi, Mana (Mind), and Prana (Breath) in the mode of deep sleep where our 'self' enters the Puritata region (Pericardium) via Hita-Nadi. Puritata is inner space like outer space where the Atman takes absolute rest and unifies with Brahman (Supreme Self). And it is equivalent to the state of "Samadhi". Thus the Atman travels regularly from aware full conscious to deep sleep consciousness and it daily goes to meet with Brahman in the deep sleep mode.

In accordance with Taittiriopaniṣhada, there are five stratum of the consciousness in the world

- Annamaya Kosha (Un-consciousness): Un-consciousness is a primary stratum of Consciousness that is called Consciousness of Jada (Physical matter). It is depending on 'Anna' (Matter). Thus the whole physical matter is considered under this stratum.
- Pranamaya Kosha (Consciousness): It is the second

stratum of Consciousness under the Annamaya Kosha that is called Consciousness of Prana (Breath). It is depending on 'Prana' (Breath) and it provides movement to the Jada (Physical matter). Whole the living plants are considered under this stratum.

- Manomaya Kosha (Sub-consciousness): It is the third stratum of Consciousness under the Pranamaya Kosha that is called Consciousness of mind. It depends on 'Vasana (Desire of mind). While the animal is considered under this stratum.
- Vijnanamaya Kosha (Self-consciousness): It is the fourth stratum of Consciousness under the Manomaya Kosha that is called Consciousness of intellect. It depends on 'Buddhi' (Intellect). While the human being is considered under this stratum who is capable to differentiate between the knower and knowable.
- Anandamaya Kosha (Supreme-consciousness): It is the fifth and supreme stratum of Consciousness under the Vijnanamaya Kosha that is called Supreme-consciousness and after knowing Brahman, the Jivatman becomes fully free from Karma-bondage and all desires [6].

Concept of Atman in the Bhagavad Gita: The writer of Bhagavad Gita makes equilibrium between the theistic and the atheistic concept of Atman which is one type of an integrated concept of Atman. The concept of Atman has been detailed and discussed in the second chapter of the Gita named "Samkhya-yoga" which is highly affected by the Upanishads and Somewhere Atman is called Purusha.

In pursuance of the Gita, there are two concepts pertaining to Atman:

- Shuddhatman (Supreme-self): It is pure conscious, atomic, abstract, transcendental, propertyless, formless form, eternal, immortal, indestructible, unchangeable, no-born, primitive part of Brahman. It is more micro than mind, body, and intellect.
- Second Jivatman (Individual-self): While the Parmatman (Supreme-self) comes in the contact with mind, body, and intellect so it is called Jivatman (Individual-self) [7].

The individual-self (Jivatman) is an indestructible Purusha (Akshar Purusha) who enjoys Nature-born Trigunas (Sata, Raja, and Tama) and due to Trigunas, the rebirth is taken by the Individual-self. And it is the substratum of mind, senses, and intellect. In reality, the individual self who is constant in the pericardium (Heart-region) is the eternal and supreme self. The Jivatman (Individual-self), after getting salvation (Moksha) it can reconstruct in its own original form "Shuddhatman" (Supreme-self).

Bhagavad Gita has described the three Path of salvation as the Path of action (Karma-yoga), the Path of devotion (Bhakti-yoga), and the Path of knowledge (Samkhya-yoga), any one of it, can be chosen according to own convenience.

The Individual-self has become entirely free forever to follow the sensual discipline and prescribed certain Paths from all kinds of thoughts, desires, birth-death cycles, and all that whatever else is ended permanently. Thus after getting salvation, the Atman enjoys eternal peace and bliss, and that becomes God (Saccidananda) [8].

Concept of Self in Nyaya-Vaisheshika and Mimamsa Philosophy: Generally, Nyaya-Vaisheshika philosophy is developed independently but it is nominally affected by the Upanishads. The very similar concept of Atman was reviled by Nyaya-Vaisheshika and Mimamsa Philosophy.

The Atman is a substance that is the substratum of permanent property, temporary property, Knowledge, and consciousness. Atman is naturally unconscious i.e. unconsciousness is the basic nature of it, that is inactive and consciously nil. Thus consciousness has the accidental property of Atman not the essential. The flow of consciousness in the Atman occurs in a specific condition while the Atman comes into the contact with the mind, sense and intellect then the Atman becomes conscious. The Atman is found as a conscious mode in only Jagratavastha (Awarding mode) and Svapnavastha (Dreaming mode) but there is no consciousness in Sushuptavastha (Deep sleeping mode) or Samadhi (Trans). The 'self', then it appears in its own basic model (Inactive mode) while it inters in the Sushuptavastha (Deep sleeping mode) or Samadhi (Trans mode). The Atman is eternal, many, and beyond Space and Time. It is under the law of Karma, that one or more souls can live in a body and it can be experienced only inside the body [9].

Concept of Self in Samkhya-Yoga and Jaina Philosophy: Generally, Samkhya, Yoga, and Jaina philosophy have expressed similar thoughts with reference to Atman but in which Samkhya is based on Upanishads that is a very ancient thought. According to Samkhya, the So-called eternal Atman is known as Purusha in Samkhya philosophy, it both is similar and it is an extreme element out of twenty-four of Samkhya. Atman is naturally conscious i.e. consciousness is the basic nature of it that is active (conscious) in the all mode-Jagratavastha (Awarding mode), Svapnavastha (Dreaming mode), Sushuptavastha (Deep sleeping mode), and Samadhi (Trans). The consciousness is the essential property of not the accidental.

Atman notwithstanding being naturally conscious is inactive, property less, un-doer, and un-enjoyer but while the Atman comes in contact with Prakruti (Matter) then she appears in active mode and it becomes full of property, doer, and enjoyer as a result of who contains commitment, desire, love, hate and several properties. Atman is beyond the law of Karma, Space and Time, and Trigunas, it is eternal and immortal, it is observer and knower, it is different from

Buddhi and Ahamkara and it is pure conscious and self-evident. Yoga philosophy supports Samkhya's notion of Atman [10].

According to Jainism, Mahavira says that "Cetana Lakshano Jivah" 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. The Jiva (Atman) is a conscious substance. The Jiva is naturally conscious i.e. consciousness is the basic nature of it that is always in the active mode. The consciousness is the essential property but not the accidental and Jivatman is not possible without consciousness. The Jiva is single, eternal, immortal, formless, etc. properties are inherent in it and the Jiva is knower, doer, and enjoyer, thus the multi-property holder is founded like eternal knowledge, eternal faith, and eternal bliss. While Jiva (Self) comes in the contact of mind, sense, body, and intellect then it attaches with Pudgala (Matter) as a result it becomes Baddha-Jiva and Baddha-Jiva is the individual 'self' which is attached with Karma-bondage (Pudgala). Thus Baddha-Jiva can be free of all kinds of Karma-bondage to consider a certain Path prescribed by Jainism and Jiva can be transformed into its own real form [11].

Concept of 'self' in Advaita Vedanta: Shankara emphasized the concept of Atman (Supreme Self) and Jivatman (Individual-self) under the doctrine of Advaitavada in which he considered that Atman and Brahman both are one, it both is Pure Consciousness and only a single reality, and the rest of the so-called reality like the world, God, and individual-self are an appearance (Maya) not the real. Shankara school of Vedanta revealed two approaches in the context of reality-First, Parmarthika Sata is a transcendental reality in which the Atman is Pure Conscious, ultimate, supreme, and single reality in this stratum. Second, Vyavaharika Sata is a practical reality, in which Jivatman is the appearance (Maya), untrue and unreal including Ishwara (God), Jagata (World) in this stratum. Atman is naturally conscious i.e. consciousness is the basic nature of it that is active (conscious) in the all mode- Jagratavastha (Awaring mode), Svapnavastha (Dreaming mode), Sushuptavastha (Deep sleeping mode). The consciousness is an essential property of Atman not the accidental. Atman is single, eternal, immortal, formless, property less, inactive, pure consciousness, the form of knowledge, atom less, transcendental, supreme reality, Bhedarahita, and as a Saccidananda, etc. Atman is beyond the knower, knowable, knowledge, space, time, enjoyer, undoer, etc. and by reason of ignorance (Avidya/Maya), Atman appears in lots of numbers but really it is single. One element seems to be a Jivatman with a subjective point of view and the same element has seemed in a Brahman with an objective point of view [12].

In accordance with Shankara, the so-called eternal

Atman is known as Individual-self (Jivatman). While the pure conscious Atman comes in the contact of mind, sense, body, and intellect, and as a result, it is attached with Karma-bondage. And this Karma-bounded Atman is become Jivatman due to ignorance (Maya). The Individual-Self (Jivatman) is untrue or unreal from a transcendental point of view and it is true or real from a practical point of view. Really, Jivatman is the false projection (Vivarta) of Brahman, it is under the law of Karma and it is a doer, knower, and enjoyer while Atman is the only an enjoyer. After getting the Moksha, the Karma-bounded Atman i.e. Jivatman is become totally free from all ignorance like desires, grieves, etc., and getting its own pure conscious form, it is got to Saccidananda Brahman [13].

Concept of 'No-Self'

On one hand the concept of eternal Atman 'self' is discussed in detail from Upanishads to Vedanta, on another hand, a unique concept of 'self' is also discussed in that contemporary period where Vedic religion and philosophy based on orthodoxies, superstitions, and unscientific facts were continued motivating to the civil society toward the wrong axis, therefore Carvaka, Buddhism and other leftist sects uplifted against Vedic regime to protect civil society and during criticizing the central theme of the 'self', the unique concept of 'self' was introduced with a scientific point of view by the Carvaka and Buddhism. Both roots can be seen vitally in the Upanishads.

Carvaka concept of Atman: The concept of 'self' in the Carvaka was introduced on the basis of Upanishadic ideologies and its roots go to Chandogya and Kaṭha Upanishads. It is a very ancient thought and it is known as Materialism. Its metaphysics and epistemology are emphasized in regard to Materialism. According to Carvaka, the real truth is that which internal or external perception (Sensual experience) is possible and perception is the only measurement of truth. On the basis of it, only the Bhuta (Matter) is the final reality because it can be experienced. Carvaka says that the final knowledge comes through sensual perception and beyond the senses; there is nothing, in the light of the sensual perception-based doctrine of Materialism. And the Atman is analyzed by the Carvaka that is called the concept of 'No-self' [6,7].

On the basis of scattered and uncompleted text in the different philosophical scriptures, Carvaka's philosophy has been analyzed. According to it, the Atman, Carvaka says that the Atman and Cetana (Consciousness) both are different things and consciousness is the present property of 'self' and body. And there is no existence of the so-called eternal Atman because it has no outer or inner perception. Consciousness is the practical reality that can be perceived via inner experience, and it is not transcendental but it is material. The

consciousness is born through the mixture of a certain ratio of material and thus the Atman is conscious added body i.e. the living body is 'self'.

Therefore, there is no existence of so called eternal-self but the existence is only of conscious added body and in its reference conscious added body is Atman which is living body that mean 'self' and body both are single, end of body is the end of 'self'. And everything is ended with death and nothing is rest after death. And thus there is no existence of the 'self' therefore no rebirth and no Moksha [9].

The Buddhist concept of Atman: The Anatmavada (Doctrine of 'No-self') of Buddha is stand on the doctrine of Kshanikavada (Doctrine of Momentariness) and it is rooted to Chandogya, Katha, and other Upanishads. Overall the whole Buddha's thought including the doctrine of 'No-self' is fully in the favor of the Upanishads. In emphasizing Kshanikavada (Momentariness) Buddha says that the existence of everything is momentary and changeable which means an object that exists present moment and that does not exist in the next moment. In the world, there is nothing permanent, and where everything is changeable. Thus even the 'self' is also changeable and temporary because it is made by 'Pancaskandha' like- Rupa (Matter), Nama (Subtle matter), Sambhedana (Sensual experience) Sakhara (Mental State), and Vijjana (Consciousness). And 'Pancaskandha' is a changeable physical and psychological element therefore the 'self' is not eternal [14].

In analyzing Anatmavada, Buddha has said that to believe in an eternal 'self' is like elusion. There is no reality as eternal 'self' and maybe to believe in Atman is just like falling in love with an imaginary and beautiful woman who is worthless? Buddha has said to define the soul that it is the stream of consciousness so it is changeable. Really the stream of consciousness is the different types of desires and it desires is cause coming rebirth. The meaning of rebirth of a 'self' is not penetrating from one to another body but the stream of consciousness has to penetrate from the last state of life to the first state of future life In other words, the eternal self does not take rebirth but the individual-self takes rebirth due to desires (Vasana or Mana)[15].

Discussion

Over viewing the above literature studies we find the two types of doctrines pertaining to Atman in the different schools of Indian philosophy – firstly doctrine of 'self' and secondly doctrine of 'No-self', it both rooted in the Upanishads. On one hand, Samkhya, Yoga, Jainism, Advaitavada, and Bhagavad Gita, have considered that consciousness is the essential property of 'self', on another hand, Nyaya-Vaisheshika and Mimamsa have considered that the consciousness is the

accidental property of 'self'.

On one side, in lieu of Shankara, Atman is many and many by the rest of all schools of Indian philosophy, on another side, in lieu of Carvaka and Buddhism, the Atman is eternal by the rest of all schools of Indian philosophy. Besides the Carvaka, all the school of Indian philosophy reckons with rebirth, Karma, and salvation. The Bhagavad Gita was compiled in third-century B.C.E after the texts of Buddhists, Carvaka, and another logical school of philosophy comes into existence. Therefore Bhagavad Gita tries to make a counterbalance between the doctrine of 'self' and 'No-self' as an integral concept of Atman which is highly affected by the Upanishads [16,17].

The doctrine of 'No-self' was discussed by Buddha from a highly scientific and logical point of view and it gave so many logical arguments against the eternal 'self'. There the eternal 'self' was criticized by the Buddha only with social and meditational causes. Buddha was kept silent forever on the metaphysical questions, probably the meaning of Buddha's silence, it was not that he did not legalize the 'self', actually, he legalized the 'self' well in the deep Samadhi but he could not say something that whatever legalized by him because the ultimate truth only can be realized but it can be said and cannot be shown, therefore the 'self' could only be realized through the practice of Yoga (Vipassana-yoga) but it could not be said by Buddha. So the Buddha has said the 'self' does not exist [18].

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 Atman (Self). But the doctrine of 'No-self' of Carvaka, cannot be strictly criticized because its original scripture (Brhaspati Sutra) is not found today, so we cannot blame his doctrine of 'No-self'. Thus we can say here, on one hand, 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 Upanishads or Vedanta is idealistic and illogical, but the Buddha's doctrine of 'self' is more relevant, scientific, realistic and logical in comparison to another school of philosophy.

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