

An Investigation into the Concept of Liberation in Different Philosophical and Religious Traditions

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ABSTRACT

The concept of liberation is one of the most fundamental concepts, a central notion of many different religious and philosophical traditions in the world. People always have desires for safety, happiness, perfection and a particularly earnest desire for liberation from the bondage, suffering of body and mind. Every successive religion has been more or less influenced by the previous religions in theories as well as in practices, yet there exist some differences among them. Most of the prophetic religions believe that the path leading to liberation is the service of God or submission to His orders. On the other hand, some religions subscribe to rites and pillars. However, humans are living in the modern world, which is an amalgam of multiple cultures and religions. The potential threats of violence, wars and social evils, especially religious conflicts are always present. The comprehensive knowledge of several cultures and religions may bridge the gaps among different faith groups. Every religion or tradition must be understood as one kind of flower among several kinds of flowers in a big garden. As such, every religion has its particular values that deserved to be respected and protected. And the common purpose of all religions is to serve human needs. Thus, the essence of this work is to reveal the concept of Liberation within some philosophical school of thought. This research employs the method of Historical, Analytical and Comparative method to arrive at its conclusions.

Keywords: Liberation; Religion; Philosophical Traditions

INTRODUCTION

The word '*liberate*' is derived from the Latin word '*liberatas*' that means 'to release' or 'to set free' someone from the feelings or conditions that make his life unhappy or difficult (Keefe 2016). Liberation from the conditions that make one's life unhappy or difficult is, therefore, the state of freedom or release from slavery, imprisonment, captivity, poverty, and several other forms of suffering; whereas liberation from the feelings that make one's life unhappy is the state of freedom from internal conflicts or troubles in one's own mind or thinking. The former is regarded as the state of freedom from material conditions or bad environments, whereas the latter is the

state of liberation from mental or spiritual crisis, i.e., worries, fear, despair, and tension. Thus, liberation is the state of freedom from all forms of fetters and afflictions from material to mental conditions. In this sense, liberation is often interchangeable with freedom, a state or quality of being free from the control of some other person or some arbitrary power (Aguilar 2015). The state of liberation relates to the word 'emancipation' which generally means "the liberation of the individual from the yoke of the community and its institutions" (Aguilar 2015, p. 56).

According to A. Dorner, there are two kinds of emancipation: (1) emancipation of thoughts and (2) emancipation in practical life. In the former, "thought becomes emancipated when it casts aside the traditional views and prejudices which have impeded its free movement in the past." Emancipation of thoughts becomes the fundamental premise for flowering of new thoughts and fading away of backward views and thus bringing about prominent advantages for the world. In society human life and social orders are improved; social un-justices, all sorts of evils and other acts of corruption are removed by the emancipation of thoughts. The emancipation of thought helps scientists in investigating new facts and ideas leading to inventions. Buddhism arose as a result of emancipation from the ascendancy and authority of the Brāhmaṇa priests and Sikhism, on the other hand, from the oppressive Hinduism and Islam; similarly Protestant Church, from the Catholic Christianity. Thus, according to A. Dorner "the prerogative of freedom in religious belief, in scientific inquiry, in the utterance of one's conviction, come to be regarded as inalienable, and the State is called upon to preserve it inviolate" (Keefe 2016, p. 154). In the case of the latter, it means that emancipation not only bears upon thoughts but also upon the practical life; and thus the individual becomes more and more independent.

The state of liberation may also be known as the state of salvation used mostly in the case of the theistic and monotheistic religions and others. According to the Webster's English Dictionary, the word '*salvation*' derived from the Latin *salvatus*, means (1) saving or being saved from danger, evil, difficulty, destruction, etc.; (2) deliverance from sin and the penalties of sin, redemption. The concept of salvation relates to the supreme God who is believed to be the creator of the universe and who is of omnipotence, omniscience and Omni-benevolence; and who can save his creations (people) from dangers and so forth, especially can free them from their sin as in Judaism, Christianity, etc. In the early history of humankind, people had a common belief in Gods as their spiritual refuges when they were frightened by unknown natural cyclones, wild animals or enemies. They hoped to be saved by their beloved gods from such dangers. Some religions have a common belief that the human sufferings in the present life are just the god's punishment for their previous sins and they have to endure their fixed destiny (Edet 2008; Edet 2008; Sasa 2018; Allam 2018). Salvation can be gained from them by obedience to God's commandments and performing penitence (Pilbeam 2013).

THE CONCEPT OF LIBERATION IN THE PROPHETIC RELIGIONS

In the history of western philosophies and religions, 'liberation' has been often understood as salvation or healing, a reunion with God as He exists in Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Most of them believe that the world has been created by God out of nothing and by His will alone. God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe, the only One who is omnipotent and omniscient.

Zoroastrianism

One of the most ancient religions in the world is Zoroastrianism or Parsiism, the national religion of ancient Iran, and a strict monotheism, which arose in Iran about 2000 B.C. by Prophet Zarathushtra (Szanto 2018). The Zoroastrians believe in Ahura Mazda, the Wise God as their only

God, father, brother and friend. Fire is said to be the symbol of light and purity (Elman 2010). Zoroastrianism believes in the resurrection of death, the Heaven-Hell, restoration, the Day of Judgment, etc. In this way, it influenced much in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. According to Y. Masih, 'Christianity came into the world as the reformation of Judaism, and, Islam has been regarded as a reformed movement of both Judaism and Christianity. But Judaism in its developing period owes much to the prophetic religion of Zoroastrianism' (Szanto 2018).

The concept of salvation, in the first acceptance, is very simple – the delivery from evil, moral, and physical in this life and the securing of eternal happiness in Heaven in a conscious individual life after death. By good thoughts (*humata*), good words (*hukhta*), and good deeds (*hvarshta*), a constantly repeated formula, one acquires merits during his lifetime here and thereby takes his share in the perennial warfare between the good and evil spirits (Elman 2010). This doctrine shows that each man 'works out his salvation' under the guidance of divine revelation, especially powerful spiritual aids of God Ahura Mazda and his hierarchy of spirits. For A.J. Carnoy, a Zoroastrian will realize in this world and hereafter the wished-for kingdom, the kingdom of the best, the good reward with perfect happiness and immortality, which will follow the last ordeal and the renovation of the world (*frasho-kereli*) (Hintze 2013).

Judaism

Judaism is the Jewish religion, a very ancient monotheistic religion based on the laws and teachings of the Holy Scriptures and the Talmud (the collections of writings constituting the Jewish civil and religious laws), which teaches strict obedience to the Laws, Statutes and Ordinances of God and justice, righteousness, holiness in the life and conduct of the people. Judaism was first introduced by Moses, their greatest prophet, and afterward elucidated by Ezra (Williams 2020). The Jews believe that their first ancestor was Abraham and regard themselves to be the chosen people on the earth. As the chosen people, the Jews are supposed to live the most strict life with great responsibility. 'A person who obeys God in everything and always does what is right, whose words are true and sincere, and does not slander others' (*Psalms* 15). They also believe in this world created by God, the existence of angels and the devil, the immortality of the soul, Hell and Heaven, and the Day of Judgment. For them, man who is created by God is found to fall into sins; and there are five solutions or remedies to overcome his sins: (1) repentance, (2) good and righteous acts, (3) fear of Hell and hope for Heaven, (4) the Messiah will bring salvation, and (5) praying. The purpose of this creation is to establish a divine order and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth (Ellis 2004).

Redemption from sin here and deliverance from its consequences hereafter is an idea that occupies a large place in Jewish theology. For the Jews, the contrite life and obedience suffice for salvation. In the Old Testament (OT) the word *salvation* occurs frequently. The Hebrew terms, *yeshah*, *yeshual*, *teshual* have various meanings, (1) help for deliverance from distress or peril of some kinds, particularly from enemies; (2) rescue from death and from sin; (3) victory, etc. In Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphical writings, the eschatological significance becomes more pronounced, for instance, the repentant sinners are saved, delivered from punishment at the Last Judgment. Besides, in Talmudic literature deliverance or salvation is one of the boons associated with the Messianic order (Levenson 1996).

Christianity

Christianity, the ethical, historical, universal, monotheistic, redemptive religion, was founded by Jesus Christ who was born perhaps in 4 B.C. in a small town of Bethlehem in the reign of Augustus Caesar (Williams 2020). Jesus Christ was a Jew bearing the spiritual aspiration of the Jews and was influenced by the Old Testament, especially the *Psalms*. It is believed that Jesus Christ was son of God who brought His message to all human beings. The Bible itself means

a collection of books recording the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As an ethical religion, God is in Christianity conceived as being capable of bestowing the moral and religious blessing and redemption. According to Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, 'Christianity emphasizes moral evil as the root of individual's unhappiness, insists on loving fellowship with God as life's highest good, and promises immortality of glory and blessedness with God' (Vegel 2018, p. 81). Both Judaism and Christianity have common beliefs in monotheism, the Day of Judgment, Heaven-Hell, Creatorship of God, and the immortality of the soul (Zamora 2020). However, according to *Philosophic Classics: From Plato to Nietzsche*, "they differ on one key point: the identity of the Messiah," for example, "whereas the Jews anticipated a spiritual-political figure to save them from the oppression of their enemies, Christians believed the Christ saved his people mainly from the spiritual oppressors of sin and death" (Zamora 2020, p. 1377).

According to Christianity, man is weak and commits sin; thus, salvation is gained not only by obeying the law, but by having faith (*bhakti*) in the redeeming and expiatory death of Jesus, the sinner is forgiven his sins and he gets united with God; and the service of God is the greatest freedom (Vegel 2018). Jesus promises paradise to the repentant thief who was hung by his side on the cross. "I promise you that today you will be in Paradise with me." (*Luke 23:43*) Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life whoever believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (Vegel 2018, p. 55).

Islam

Islam is a prophetic religion, issued out of both Judaism and Christianity, founded by Prophet Muhammad who was born in 570 A.D. and died in 632 A.D. At the age of forty whilst meditating in a cave of Mountain Hira, the prophet received his first revelation through the angel Jibrail (Gabriel). Islam accepts twenty-five prophets of the Old Testament and three of the New Testament and believes that Muhammad is the final and the last prophet (Duderija 2016). There are a number of things in common among Judaism, Christianity and Islam with regard to monotheism, the transcendence of God, the revelation of God through prophets, the doctrine of heaven and hell, the Day of Judgment, and so on (Duderija 2016).

'Islam' means surrendering one's will to the will of God, the complete obedience to the laws of God. The term '*najah*' means escape from future punishment in hell while the word '*khalas*' means deliverance in the same sense. Muslim theologians explain 'the way of salvation' as consisting in submission to the orders concerning the due performance of the five duties (five pillars) of Islam: (1) five prayers a day, (2) fasting (especially in the Ramadan month), (3) giving (5% income) to the needy, (4) pilgrimage to Mecca, and (5) recital of the creed (Ciftci 2018). A Muslim must observe three things: (1) faith, (2) action, and (3) realization. Faith means belief in Allah who is One, Omnipotent, Omniscient, and the sole Creator of everything that exists. Man has been created with free will so that by his surrender of free will to the divine will he may become worthy of God's fellowship (*Sura 51.56*). By expressing one's faith and observing such five pillars, a Muslim realizes his final salvation on the Day of Judgment. According to Islam, prayers, five times a day, form the key to Heaven. Keeping of fast during *Ramdan* (ninth month) helps in purifying the mind, controlling one's desires, and removing one's sin (Islam & Islam 2018). And pilgrimage to Mecca is also a sure means of salvation. Those who are judged as the faithful and obedient will be rewarded by Allah with a life in Heaven with unending happiness; but those who are evil doer and disbelievers will be hurled into hell-fire. So, according to Edward Sell, Islamic concept of salvation leads a man to have power over sin to repress it, but a release in the next world from the punishment of the hell, in virtue of certain good acts done in this life. It is not becoming, but receiving' (Islam & Islam 2018).

THE CONCEPT OF LIBERATION IN INDIAN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

In Indian philosophical and religious traditions, the concept of liberation is represented through some technical terms like *mokṣa* (also *mukti*), *vimutti* (Pāli, *vimokkha*) or *nirvāṇa* (Pāli, *nibbāna*). The term, *mokṣa* or *mukti* (Sanskrit), literally means “release,” is the state of liberation or deliverance from the cycle of birth and death or repetative reincarnation (*saṃsāra*) and its concomitant sufferings. The concept of *mokṣa* was first developed in ancient India by the non-Aryan people whose spiritual ideas greatly influenced later Indian religious thoughts. The scholars have generally designated it as the ‘Samaṇa’ (Śramaṇa) stream of thought representing the Samaṇa Saṃskṛti. Buddhism and Jainism continued this tradition, and the early Upanishadic movement was influenced by it (Tan 2017). The word ‘*vimutti*’ or ‘*vimokkha*’ means liberation, deliverance, release, or freedom from all fetters of craving and grasping and all forms of suffering. And the word ‘*nirvāṇa*,’ (Pāli, *nibbāna*), literally “extinction” (*nir* + *va*, to cease blowing, to become extinguished) means freedom or liberation from desire or lust, malice and delusion; being free from the path of rebirth; and free from the stench of karmās (*nir* + *vāṇa*) (Powers 2007). Likewise the concepts of *Samvara*, *Nirjarā*, and *Kevelya* in Jainism too need a thought enquiry. Thus a full-length enquiry into the matter has become all the more desirable here. The concept of liberation needs to be further investigated through the first three main religions in India i.e. Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism and also with the Lastest one known as Sikhism. Thus finally the Buddhist concept of liberation will be presented in the chapters that follow one after the other.

Hinduism

According to The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, “Hinduism is the group of religious and philosophical traditions of India that accept the authority of the Vedas and Upanishads, comprising the schools known as Mīmāṃsā, Sāṅkhya- Yoga, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Vedānta” (Appleton 2016). Initially, Hinduism has not been a single religion but really a federation of religions which has rooms for atheism, theism, yogic, spiritualism, all form of devotion, casteism, non-casteism with its roots in Indian origin of about 5000 years (Appleton 2016). It can be said that all those religions that accept the fourfold pillar in the form of of *Karma* – *Samṣāra* – *Jñāna* – *Mukti* may be called Hinduism.

In Hinduism, the term ‘*mokṣa*’ signifies in the first instance ‘deliverance’ or release in general from pains and penalties of any kind. However, it has become ‘deliverance’ from bondage to the world and its fetters. The ‘*mukta*,’ therefore, is one who is liberated from all fettered conditions of early existence and has entered upon a state of endless freedom and felicity (Appleton 2016). The Hindu is one who practices one or more forms of Yoga Bhakti, Karma, Jñāna, Raja – yoga knowing that God is unlimited and exists in many different forms, both personal and impersonal (Frykenberg 2005). All schools of Indian tradition belonging to Hinduism formally accept the doctrine that the individual Ātman (soul) infinitely transmigrates from body to body unless it attains enlightenment. The goal of philosophy, according to Hinduism, is typically taken to be not simply understanding, but enlightenment (*mokṣa*) which involves escape from the reincarnation, cycle of birth and death, and karma.

As per the R̥g-vedic teachings in the beginning, the ultimate end was the attainment of heavenly abode (*svarga*). However, in the extant Hinduism, liberation (*mukti*) from the endless cycle or chain of births and deaths is the highest end (Frykenberg 2005). According to Shaṅkara, since bondage in worldly existence is due to ignorance (*ajñāna*), so liberation is possible only through knowledge (*jñāna*). There are two kinds of liberation, namely, (1) liberation in this very life (*jīvanamukti*) and (2) liberation after the fall of the body (*videhamukti*) (Appleton 2016). For Rāmānuja, however, Bhakti (worship) is one of the most important means leading to the

liberation. He recommends Jñāna-karma-bhakti-samuccaya for attaining liberation (*mokṣa*) (Schmücker 2014).

According to the Nyāya system, there are four separate sources of true knowledge, viz. perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), comparison (*upamāna*), and testimony (*śabda*). Liberation is the absolute cessation of all pains and sufferings brought about by the right knowledge of reality (*tattvajñāna*). In the *Vaiśeṣika* system, the whole world can be divided into seven categories, known as (1) substance (*dravya*), (2) quality (*guṇa*), (3) action (*karma*), (4) generality (*sāmānya*), (5) particularity (*viśeṣa*), (6) the relation of inherence (*samavāya*), and (7) non-existence (*abhāva*). With regard to the problem of God and liberation of the individual soul, the *Vaiśeṣika* theory is substantially the same as that of the Nyāya system. According to the Sāṅkhya system, once we realize the distinction between the self and the not-self including the body and the senses, the mind, the intellect and the ego, our self ceases to be affected by the joys and sorrows, the ups and downs of life. This is the state of liberation or freedom from suffering (Chatterjee 1983). The Yoga holds that God is the highest object of contemplation for concentration and self-realization (Chatterjee 1983). The state of liberation in the Early Mīmāṃsā can be reached as one of unalloyed bliss or heaven by observing obligatory duties. But the Later Mīmāṃsā conceives liberation only negatively as the cessation of the cycle of births and deaths. For the Vedānta, liberation is the complete dissociation of the soul from the body.

Jainism

Jainism originated during the prehistoric times with twenty four liberated propagators designated as Tīrthaṅkara-s, wherein the last one was Vardhamāna Jñātrīputra, also known as Lord Mahāvīra (599-527 B.C.). Mahāvīra was the last and the most important Tīrthaṅkara titled as the Great Hero who lived in the sixth century B.C., a contemporary with the Buddha. He was born in a family of the warrior class (*Khattiya*) and belonged to the clan of Licchavi-s of Veshali.

He became a wandering ascetic at the age of thirty and achieved the stage of enlightenment at the age forty-two. In Jainism, the term '*mokṣa*' means liberation, salvation or emancipation, the blissful state of the soul, completely free from the karmic bondage, free from the cycle of birth and death (*saṃsāra*) (Schmücker 2014). For Jainism non-Vedic Yoga and austerities are regarded as important means for securing liberation (Tuminello 2018). The word '*Jina*', the common name applied to the twenty-four teachers (Tīrthaṅkara-s), etymologically means 'conqueror' who has conquered his passions and desires and has attained liberation (Chatterjee 1983). The Jainas always emphasize on the foundation of attaining liberation from all bondage and suffering by conquering all passions. They do not believe in the Creator God, but adorn the founders of their faith. According to Jain tradition, one, through his efforts, becomes liberated with perfect knowledge, power and happiness. According to Y. Masih, the process for achieving liberation must be performed through two important tasks: firstly, the fresh inflow of karma-s (*āśrava-s*) has to be stopped through the process known as *saṃvara*; and secondly, the past (old) karma-s have to be eradicated through the way known as *nirjarā* (Webster 2016). This spirit is illustrated in the Majjhima Nikāya of the Pāli Tipiṭaka through the discourse entitled the Devadahasutta, when the Buddha said that some recluses (indicated Jains) held these views: "whatever this individual experiences, whether pleasant or painful or neither painful nor pleasant, all is due to what was previously done. Thus by burning up, by making an end of ancient deeds, by the non-doing of new deeds, there is no overflowing into the future" (Nicholson 2004, p. 63). Hence, Right faith, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct, which have been known as the Three Gems (*triratna*), pave the way for liberation (*Samyagdarsana-Jñāna-caritrāṇi mokṣa-mārgaḥ*) (Nicholson 2004).

Right Faith (*Samyag Darśana*): Right Faith can be defined as the attitude of respect towards the truth. The Jainas do not accept blindly even what the great teachers said. As Haribhadra is of

the view that a Jaina is rationalistic, rather than dogmatic. Perfect faith always follows, therefore, right knowledge. Right Knowledge (*Samyag Jñāna*): Right knowledge at the preparatory stage means the comprehension of six *dravya-s* (substances), five *astikāya-s* (eternal categories of being), seven *tattva-s* and nine *padārtha-s* (categories). According to the *Dravya Saṅgraha*, “Right Knowledge is the detailed cognition of the real nature of the ego and non-ego, and is free from doubt, error and uncertainty” (verse 42).

Right Conduct (*Samyag Cāritra*): Right Conduct has been briefly described in the *Dravya-Saṅgraha* (verse 45) as refraining from what is harmful and doing what is beneficial. For the stoppage of the influx of new karma-s and eradication of the old ones one must perform five vows (*pañcamahāvratā*): (1) non-violence - *ahiṃsā*, (2) truth - *satya*, (3) not stealing – *asteya*, (4) abstention from self-indulgence – *brahmacarya*, and (5) renunciation – *aparigraha*.

An important matter that can remove the bondage is the practice of *tapas* or austerities. *Tapas* largely means ‘the mortification of the body’ both external and internal sides. Externally, it means observing fast, begging for food, standing under mid-day sun, etc. Internally, it means doing penances for all acts of commission and omission, respecting elders, saints and scriptures, etc. When a person practices these three gems in a harmonious way, he succeeds in overcoming the forces of all passions and karma-s, and his soul becomes free from bondage and attains liberation.

There are two sects of Jainism, namely, Svetāmbara and Digambara. Both of them accept the teachings of the Jina-s. While the recluse followers of the former are more accommodating with white clothes, while their counterparts in the latter one are more rigorous and *puritanic* without clothes (Tuminello 2018). The Digambara-s hold that a saint who has obtained perfect knowledge gives up all passions and possession, even clothes and food. According to the Digambara view a woman cannot obtain liberation. However, the Svetāmbara-s do not accept these views (Guha 2017).

According to the Jainism, liberation is the expulsion of matter from the soul. It is ignorance that makes the soul mingled in the states of craving and defilement. Knowledge alone can remove such ignorance. The Jaina-s, therefore, believe that right knowledge can be obtained only by studying and practicing carefully the teachings of the *Jina-s*. Man is having essentially a pure spirit, but he comes in bondage due to his karma-s in countless past lives. Karma can cover his knowledge, perception, and ethical conduct. It is the karma which soils the soul, distorts his intellect and will and hurtles him down towards his destruction. As long as the āśrava-s accumulated due to past karma-s are not eradicated, the man continues to suffer. Hence, the effects of the karma-s have to be totally and completely destroyed (Jain 2011).

Sikhism

According to Sikhism, the concept of *mokṣa* is essentially *jīvan-mukti*, the one attainable in one’s lifetime itself that brings him to the brink of the incorporeal emancipation (*videha-mukti*), the freedom from or the final cessation of the cycle of birth-death-birth (*janam maraṇ*). This ultimate *mukti* is a continuation of *jīvan-mukti*, going on after the shedding away of the corporeal frame to the final absorption into the One Absolute—the blending of the light with the Light (*joti jot samana*) (Jain 2011). Sikhism was born and developed in Punjab as a very new reformist religion enunciating a creed towards equality, tolerance, simplicity of worship, higher and practical ethics and an application of democratic principles in religion, founded by Guru Nānak (A.D. 1469-1539) during the 14th and the 15th centuries A.D (Guha 2017). Sikhism was not primarily a political movement, but essentially a religious reformist movement following the saint poets of India and crusading against idolatry, caste system, externalism, ritualism and other forms of superstitions. However, Sikhism accepts the four-fold pillars of *karma-saṃsāra-jñāna-mukti* as do Jainism and Buddhism. The word ‘*Sikh*’ is related with the Pāli word *sekha* (Sanskrit: *saikṣa*)

for derivation, which means one under training, a disciple or a pupil. The term “*guru*”, in the beginning, was being used for a master, teacher like *sādhū*, *bhakta*, etc., but, presently, it is used for the first ten Guru-s and also for the *Ādi Granth Sāhib* as well. According to Y. Masih, Sikhism is a religion of those who are willing to learn the truth taught by the Guru-s and are willing to live down for the sake of their faith (Tuminello 2018). As a reformist religion, the Sikh faith preached monotheism, the unity of God, and the equality of man before Him. In the *Guru Granth Sahib*, a few lines of Saint *Kabir* have been included according to which there are four states of liberated soul, namely, gaining of Heavenly abode, nearness with God, similarity with God and fellowship with God (Chatterjee 1983). Y. Masih has listed fifteen features of Sikhism which make it distinct from the rest of religious orders. These features are as follows: (1) Accept the fourfold pillar (*karma-saṃsāra-jāna-mukti*), (2) Guru-centered religion, (3) Keep the vow of five K’s, i.e. (long hair), *Karhā* (iron-bracelets), *Kacchā* (under drawer), *Kanghā* (comb) and *Katār* (sword), (4) Fight against social injustice and in defense of one’s faith, (5) Strict monotheism, (6) Do not admit the doctrine of incarnation (*avatāravāda*), (7) Admit only One God (*Ek-Oṃkāra*), (8) Rejection of caste, idolatry, ritualism and external observances, (9) *Māyā* is the creative manifestation of the God but is also a source of evils in man, (10) Constant muttering of God’s name (*nāma-sumirana*), (11) *Bhakti* or devotion for gaining release, (12) Live a life of house-holder, (13) Independent religion, (14) Respect other religions, (15) Favour local language and Gurmukhi is its script (Chatterjee 1983).

According to Sikhism, man is endowed with free-will and reason, either to move in the direction of God-realization or to lose himself in the endless transmigration fraught with endless suffering (Cole et al., 1993). The path leading to liberation is just the pathways to God-realization by means of constant concentration (*samādhi*) or listening to the lesson of the Guru-s (*suniai*) or pondering over the Truth given by the Guru-s (*mania*) or realization through deep meditation (*dhyāna*). Guru Nānak recommended the path of prayer, meditation, or *bhakti* leading to the grace of God; because it is easy and in accordance with human nature (Guha 2017). Like the Buddhist theory of *nibbāna* Sikhism held that liberation is the final destiny of God-realization, the freedom from suffering due to the endless transmigration of the soul.

CONCLUSION

The concept of liberation is an important philosophical concept within the philosophical branches of Philosophy of Religion and Political Philosophy. There have been many philosophers or prophets who sacrificed their lives for the sake of liberation not only for themselves, but also for the entire mankind. It is generally claimed that the key of liberation has been discovered and preserved in several religious and philosophical systems that we have to study and observe faithfully. Almost all the religious traditions not only accept liberation from the cycle of birth and death as the ultimate goal of life, but also prescribe a path which leads to the cessation of cycle of birth and death. In spite of this fact, the concept of liberation is one of the most debated themes of philosophies and religions, both in the Eastern and the Western countries. This research work tends to investigate the concept of Liberation from selected prophetic and Indian tradition religion. This work has been able to expose the difference conception of liberation from different religious and philosophical school of thought.

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