

## A Comparative Analysis of Liberation and Contemplation in Sankara and Aquinas

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**Abstract :** Liberation is the act of liberating or the state of being liberated. Indian philosophy, in general, understands liberation as moksa, which etymological is derived from the Sanskrit root muc+ktin meaning to loose, set free, to let go, discharge, release, liberate, deliver, etc. According to Indian schools of thought, moksa is the highest value on realizing which nothing remains to be realized. It is the cessation of birth and death, all kinds of pain and at the same time, it is the realization of one's own self. Sankara's Advaita philosophy is based on the following propositions: Brahman is the only Reality; the world has apparent reality, and the soul is not different from Brahman. According to Sankara, Brahman is the basis on which the world form appears; it is the sustaining ground of all various modification. It is the highest self and the self of all reveals himself by dividing himself [ as it was in the form of various objects] in multiple ways. The whole world is the manifestation of the Supreme Being. Brahman modifying itself into the Atman or internal self of all things is the world. Since Brahman is the Upadhana karana of the world, the sruti speaks of the world as the modification of Brahman into the Atman of the effect. Contemplation as the fulfillment of man finds a radical foundation in Aquinas teaching concerning the natural end or as he also referred to it, natural desire. The third book of the Summa Contra Gentiles begins the study of happiness with a consideration of natural desire. According to him, all creatures, even those devoid of understanding are ordered to God as an ultimate end. Intrinsically, a part of every nature is a tendency or inclination, originating in the natural form and tendency toward the end for which the possessor of nature exists. It is the study of the nature and finality of inclination that Aquinas establishes through an argument of induction man's Contemplation of God as the fulfillment of his nature. The present paper is attempted to critically approach two important, seminal and originated thought, representing Indian and Western traditions which mark on the thinking of their respective times. Both these thoughts- Advaitic concept of Liberation in the Indian tradition and the concept of Contemplation in Thomas Aquinas' Summa Contra Gentiles'- confront directly the question of the ultimate meaning of human existence. According to Sankara, it is knowledge and knowledge alone which is the means of moksa and the highest knowledge is moksa itself. Liberation in Sankara Vedanta is attained as a process of purification of self, which gradually and increasingly turns into purer and purer intentional construction. Man's inner natural tendency for Aquinas is towards knowledge. The human subject is driven to know more and more about reality and in particular about the highest reality. Contemplation of this highest reality is fulfillment in the philosophy of Aquinas. Rather, Contemplation is the perfect activity in man's present state of existence.

**Keywords :** liberation, Brahman, contemplation, fulfillment

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