

The Supreme Power Of Mahimā Dharma: It's Glory In Spiritual Yoga Sādhanā

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Abstract:

The present study explores the pursuit of self-realization as the central path to spiritual liberation within Mahimā Dharma. Liberation is presented as the highest destiny of human life, attainable only through inward journey, self-knowledge, and direct realization. The Mahimā Dharma yoga techniques underscore the role of true spiritual guidance in directing seekers away from external observances toward understanding of unity and ultimate truth. It has emphasized that the need to transcend forms, symbols, and doctrines to realize the Supreme Brahma, which lies beyond thought and worship. However, the daily external religious practices, such as ritual worship, idol veneration, and austerities, are often hinder rather than facilitate the attainment of spiritual knowledge. This is also examined how reliance on ritual can reinforce attachment and duality, delaying spiritual awakening. The discussion draws upon classical Indian texts to illustrate the primacy of knowledge over practice. Further, the study reflects the relevance of self-realization in contemporary life marked by material pursuit and religious formalism. Ultimately, it affirms self-knowledge as the essence of spiritual freedom and fulfillment of followers.

Key Words: Self-realization, Liberation, Idol worship, Detachment, Seeker.

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I. Introduction

Human existence encompasses righteousness, wealth, desire, and liberation. Liberation is a part of human life that gives ultimate meaning. Enlightened teachers have been emphasizing the renunciation of these external forms and seeking refuge solely in the Supreme Brahma, which transcends the thoughts, vision, and the way of worship (1). True liberation, the ultimate goal of human life, can be attained only through self-knowledge, not through ritualistic means. Aspirants are used to move beyond ritual practices and focus inward on self-realization on the path of spiritual knowledge in Mahimā Dharma. Such an inward journey requires discrimination, detachment, and sustained inquiry into the nature of the self. Many traditional practices such as deity worship, idol worship, rituals, pilgrimages, fasting, and austerities, are viewed as obstacles rather than aids in the path of self-realization and spiritual knowledge. External symbols and practices may offer temporary solace, but they cannot reveal the ultimate truth. Spiritual wisdom arises from direct realization rather than belief or tradition. The role of a true teacher is to turn the seeker's attention inward, away from forms and doctrines. In this self-realization, the seeker discovers unity beyond all divisions and names (2).

II. The Path Yoga Sādhanā To Self-Awareness In Mahimā Dharma

The Vedas primarily glorify one supreme reality, the Supreme Brahma, as the ultimate truth. Devi worship is not prominently supported in Vedic script or in the core texts of spiritual philosophy. According to Veda, Brahma alone is worthy of worship, while all other forms are considered secondary or imperceptible (3). Sacred texts such as the Upanishads, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Nārada Bhakti Sutra*, and the *pañcadasi* emphasized the exclusive devotion to the Supreme Brahma. Therefore, in Vedic teachings guide, the seekers need to focus solely on the Supreme Brahma and refrain from worshipping other deities in the pursuit of spiritual realization (4).

In Buddhism, the worship of Gods and Goddesses, including Devi, is critically viewed. Similarly, ritualistic Devi worship is not a dominant feature of Odisha's *tāntric*-Vaishnava tradition (5). However, the spiritual aspirants of the Pañcasakhā era and their followers focused on the worship of the formless Brahma. This approach is clearly reflected in the literature of Balarama Dās, a devoted follower of the five saints, who strongly advised the complete renunciation of idol worship. Although the devotion to the formless principle, the

Pañcasakhā tradition entered what may be called the true glory of religion. With these beliefs, devotion literature consistently critiques idol worship (6). The poet Bhima Bhoi, in his work *stuticintāmaṇi*, also criticized deity worship and urged seekers to abandon such practices. The saint Bhima Bhoi rejected the worship of idols and images, and used to teach that the human body itself is the dwelling place of the Divine. Further, The Gītā expressed this idea clearly described “In this vessel resides Jagannath, worshipping the image is fruitless. Will dry wood take you to *vaikuṇṭha*” (7).

In the *Kali Yuga*, Bhima Bhoi observed that people have been neglecting the worship of their own inner divinity and instead bow before stone and wooden images, thereby dishonouring their own souls. Bhima Bhoi strongly condemned such practices, calling them ignorant and spiritually harmful (8). Moreover, similar views are reflected Jayakrushna Baba, where idol worship is firmly criticized. This perspective is further supported by Biswanath Baba, who draws upon scriptural references from the Vedas and the Bhagavad Gītā to reinforce this position. Together, these teachings affirm that the true glory of *dharma*, as rooted in ancient India, spiritual traditions, lies in inner realization rather than external worship (9). By worshipping the one Supreme Brahma and practicing devotion, the soul ascends, ultimately attaining liberation. This reflects the uniqueness of the doctrine of glory, which preserves the essence of the eternal, primordial religion (10).

Bhima Bhoi emphasizes “The wooden image, the idol, and all the Gods and Goddesses leave the mind, *mantra*, *yantra*, *tantras*, and all four Vedas also become ineffective” (11). Further, Bhima Bhoi describes the worship of deities as an act of ignorance and described as “In their unconscious state, people perform deity worship. They believe in the protective power of the deity's image, seeking refuge at the feet of the deity, the Lord of Puri, the lord of cremation grounds. They consider the deity's image as the soul of the living being, unaware of the illusion of Viṣṇu's dance” (12). This belief reflects ignorance, scriptures suggested that worshipping deities may lead to heaven, but such rewards are temporary, and one is reborn as a mortal after their depletion. The true liberation, however, arises from self-realization. Across many religious traditions, worship often centres on avatars, incarnations, and deified human figures (13). However, this approach limits the infinite by binding it to names and forms.

Spiritual thinkers such as Bishwanath Baba and devotional poets like Jayakrushna Rāma reject the worship of avatars and personal deities, emphasizing devotion to the formless Brahma alone. This view is strongly echoed by Bhima Bhoi, he says that true religion transcends all gods, goddesses, names, and forms, recognizing only the formless absolute as the ultimate reality. “In the ancient time, by accepting all principles and laws, the glory of religion has been rejuvenated, and the tradition of Hinduism continues to thrive” (14). Idols are made of wood, stone, or clay by human hands and are therefore creations, not creators. Being inert, they cannot receive offerings or respond to devotion, making idol worship a misplaced practice. Devotional literature and ancient scriptures critique such worship as ignorance and an obstacle to spiritual realization, urging seekers to move beyond external forms toward the formless truth (15). Ancient texts teach that our actions have consequences. Bhima Bhoi also emphasizes that true spiritual liberation cannot be attained through idol worship alone, urging devotion beyond mere statues. Bhima Bhoi's contribution to the doctrine of non-duality, which challenges the prevalent idol worship, remains remarkable. Further, he describes liberation through self-realization and the philosophy of self-awareness as the true glory of *dharma*. While pilgrimage, fasting, austerity, chanting, and other spiritual practices are often followed as paths to liberation, they are subject to the mind's fickleness. Scriptures remind us that the body itself is the primary instrument for fulfilling one's duties, and when the sacred resides within, external rituals and pilgrimages are not essential for self-realization. Excessive attachment to such practices marks the limitations of lesser devotees (16).

In the Vedic era, texts like the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gītā cautioned against excessive reliance on pilgrimage and fasting. The devotee observed that the divine is sought within one's own heart, yet humans often search elsewhere, like a deer seeking fragrance in its own navel (17). Similarly, Bhima Bhoi emphasizes that victory, austerity, meditation, pilgrimage, fasting, and virtuous deeds are all futile without devotion; true knowledge can only be attained through honest devotion. Devoted poets hold that to perceive the unseen Brahma, one must transcend practices. True devotees seeking liberation offer flowers, fruits, and water with pure devotion. Bishwanath Baba also described spiritual scriptures and advocated the complete renunciation of ritualistic practices (18).

According to Bhima Bhoi, empathy carries no sin if one resists worldly attachments, and while offerings reach the divine, responsibility lies with the guru to guide the right path. The followers never focus on physical offerings to the divine, such as basil, betel, or bilva leaves. According to tradition, all living beings come from four sources—womb, sweat, eggs, and seeds. Among seed-born beings are trees, climbers, shrubs, and grasses, with Tulsi being the most revered. As *sādhaka*, ‘Worshipping Tulsi, one meets Hari; worshipping a stone, one sees only a mountain’ (19). There is a controversy over the birth of Tulsi. Worldly-wide people, despite detesting Tulsi worship, have been advised by Bishwanath Baba to listen to the sermon of the great souls. The prohibition of listening to scripture in the Gītā mentions that worshipping *tulsi* is included (20).

III. Self-Knowledge: The Path To Liberation In Mahimā Dharama

The ultimate goal of human life is the realization of Brahma, which brings inner peace and liberation. The essence of formless Brahma is truth, consciousness, and bliss, which cannot be achieved by effort alone. Throughout life, the saints and seekers have pursued Brahma through devotion, knowledge, and action. Devotion holds the real place, faith resides in the heart, and opens the way to self-realization. Knowledge guides the intellect, but devotion unites the soul with the divine. Devotion is recognized as the most accessible and transformative path in religions like Buddhism, Vaishnavism and Christianity. It has been reviewed in the tradition of Brahma *jñānayoga*, devotion and knowledge work together (21). According to Aurobindo, self-realization forms the foundation of devotion, while practitioners like Richard connect faith with devotion. Moreover, Shankaracharya describes devotion as the recognition of the self within, and Bishwanath Baba emphasizes Bhakti as the highest and liberating path. Additionally, scholars like Surendra Mohanty highlighted that devotion sweetens the journey towards spiritual knowledge, making knowledge and action. It is worthy to mention that in the Vedic era, teachings encourage complete surrender of body, mind, intellect, and soul to the supreme, which establishes devotion as the supreme of spiritual attainment (22). According to Pañcasakhā, it has been emphasized that the union of knowledge and devotion. Scriptures describe this knowledge-infused devotion as the highest form of spiritual practice. In Mahimā Dharma, Bhima Bhoi categorizes devotion into Pure Devotion, Knowledge Devotion, Selfless Devotion, Selfish Devotion, and Devotion to Brahma Knowledge, highlighting that the ultimate path of *sādhanā* lies in devotion (23). Subsequently, the devotion melts the heart with no gain to seek, to whom shall it surrender its mystic. Through self-surrender, a devotee's heart is filled with the divine presence, devotion is offered solely for the sake of the Lord, free from personal desire, which is considered the highest form.

Bhima Bhoi proclaimed that Jayakrushna Baba's surrendering himself to the Guru is the highest form of devotion (24). This true devotion requires offering everything to the Guru, renouncing outward show and focusing entirely on the Supreme. It is an inner surrender that transcends pride, shame, and ritual, symbolizing divine consciousness rather than mere knowledge. Further, Bhima Bhoi presented devotion as the supreme path, integrating knowledge and devotion: true knowledge leads to the vision of Brahma, attainable only through devotion, which awakens the eye of knowledge to hold the realm of fearlessness. Bhima Bhoi also emphasized on dwell in the realm of the Supreme, the self, can recognize it as the abode of the divine (25). Further, he asserted that Brahma's realm is to be seen through the eye of knowledge and urges seekers to acknowledge Brahma's omnipotence, which forms the essence of true devotion. At the same time, the path of knowledge reveals the vastness of existence and the majesty of the Supreme. Bhima Bhoi says, 'Without devotion, attaining knowledge is not easy,'. It is through the union of knowledge and devotion that the ultimate realization is reached, the essence of religion, where self-surrender leads to truth. This union forms the highest path, known as the Yoga of Knowledge and Devotion (25).

The union of knowledge and devotion is called the 'Yoga of Brahma- *jñāna*,' where understanding awakens devotion, leading to the realization of Brahma with whole-hearted surrender to the Guru. Bishwanath Baba termed this union as "*Brahma jñānayoga*" (26). In a devotee's life, devotion forms the central narrative. To attain Brahma Darshan (the vision of the Absolute), the practitioner transcends even the highest step of knowledge. Through a complete surrender and selfless offering, the devotee draws closer to the worshipped deity and experiences true joy. By glorifying the deity and renouncing all personal desires, one can practice the highest form of devotion (27).

IV. The Glory Of Religion Lies In Selfless And Dedicated Actions: In Mahimā Dharama

The origin of action lies in ignorance, and its dissolution comes through knowledge. Until the end of life, one continues to act through the senses, guided by determination, necessity, and self-interest (28). Thus, the human journey is inseparable from action, which forms both the resources and the path toward spiritual growth. The ultimate purpose of creation is for living beings to act, through which liberation becomes possible. The living being is merely an instrument, performing actions, experiencing their results, and undergoing pleasure, pain, and suffering. If all actions are offered to the Supreme, even those performed unconsciously, it leads to peace and spiritual growth. Scriptures describe the interrelation of action, knowledge, and devotion. Moreover, the epic *Mahābhārata* emphasized that selfless action brings divine knowledge (29). This involves performing duties without attachment to outcomes, dedicating all acts to the Supreme, and surrendering all karma. A selfless yogi renounces personal gains, performs only Brahma-associated actions, and offers all works to the Supreme, exemplifying the highest wonder of righteousness. Sadhaka performs without attachment; such actions become generators of inaction. However, an universal action, driven by desire, entangle one in *māyā*, subjecting the soul to the cycles of birth and death, and sinful deeds in the realm of illusion lead to suffering. Only the *sādhaka* worships, meditate and remember the formless Brahma becomes absorbed in it. Bhima Bhoi says renouncing the fruits of actions, worshipping Brahma, and seeking liberation (30).

V. Conclusion

Self-knowledge is the primary path for human beings. Rituals and worship of deities can become obstacles to realizing the self. Worship of the formless Brahma involves recognizing the unity of the self and the formless principle. By turning inward, abandoning imaginary images and rituals, and immersing in the self, one can attain liberation. While the Vedic texts uphold this truth, devotional literature also celebrates it, emphasizing the excellence of self-realization throughout. Bhima Bhoi's vision is to illuminate the path of true spirituality, where devotion, knowledge, and selfless action converge. The devotion, rooted in faith and self-surrender towards the Supreme, awakens the heart and unites the soul with the Supreme Brahma. Knowledge guides the intellect, revealing the vastness of existence, but without devotion, it cannot lead to liberation. When a *sādhaka* performs various actions, selflessly and is dedicated to the Supreme, become free one from the bonds of ego, desire, and the cycles of birth and death. Through this harmonious integration of devotion, knowledge, and selfless action (Yoga of Brahma, Knowledge), the seeker attains ultimate peace, liberation, and realization of Brahma. Bhima Bhoi emphasizes that such a life of devotion is not limited to ascetics alone; every seeker can step on this path regardless of their social or universal standing. By renouncing attachment to results and offering all actions to the Divine, the practitioner transforms mundane life into a spiritual journey. The process of teaching and learning highlighted that selfless devotion has the invaluable power to purify the mind, elevate the soul, and inspire others to follow the path of righteousness. Ultimately, the glory of human existence is realized when knowledge, devotion, and action unite to reveal the infinite light of Brahma within.

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