# LIBERATION IN YOGA AND ADVAITA VEDANTA: A COMPERATIVE STUDY

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Abstract: Both the systems of the Yoga and the Advaita Vedanta have an important place in Indian Philosophy. The main aim of the both is liberation of bound self. This paper is attempted to show what the bondage is and what the liberation is, according to them and in the fourth section, a comparison has been shown between their bondage and means to liberation. It has been found that for the attainment of liberation the Advaita Vedanta has followed the way of Yoga but the terms used by them are different. At last, it has been shown why the means of liberation of Yoga is more effective than that of the Advaita Vedanta .

Key-words: Bondage, liberation, Brahman, kaivalya, samādhi, kāyabyūha.

Indian Philosophy prescribes us different means by which we may attain our absolute goal (mokṣa). If anybody is able to know his own essence, he must be free from all kinds of suffering eternally. Hence SriKṛṣṇa, the God of yoga says, Brahmabhūtah prasannātmā na s'ocati na kāṅkṣati, the 'Gitā', Verse No. 18/54. Indian Philosophy prescribes us to become introspective which helps us to attain highest goal (s'reya). It has been proved that there is nothing in the world which can provide us eternal pleasure except self-realization. It takes the help of various means for the attainment of liberation where men may be free through their own will and action. It inspires us to do those actions which can provide us nectar. This nectar is called as various names viz. mokṣa, nirvāṇa, amṛṭaprāpti, apavarga, kaivalya etc. Here, the term 'nectar' refers to the term 'realization of truth or reality'. We can realize the reality or truth of all truths in any way (yoga, karma, jīnāna, bhakti) and state (kaivalya, samādhi, apavarga, nirvāṇa etc.). Hence, Maxmuller says in his book 'Six Systems of Indian Philosophy', "Indian Philosophy is not for the sake of knowledge, but for the highest purpose that man can strive after in this life".

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It is known to all that the source of Indian Philosophy is arising various questions in the mind of men. Similarly, when we talk about *mokṣa*, some questions may raise viz., what is *mokṣa*? Who attains *mokṣa*? How may anybody attain *mokṣa*? What is the essence of *mokṣa*? All of these questions and their answers have been explained in Indian Philosophy. Hence, it is called the Philosophy of *mokṣa* or liberation.

In this regard the world famous poet R.N. Tagore says,

"Mukta karo he mukta karo āmāre.

Tomār nivida nīrab udār
ananta āndhāre
Nirab rātre hārāiyā vāk
vāhir āmār vāhire, mis'āk;
Dekhā dik mama antaratama
akhanda ākāre ". 'Gītānjali' (Bengali), 94(last stanza),1317(Beng.)

The term 'mokṣa' has been used in Indian Philosophy, which means to be free from all kinds of suffering eternally. According to some, moksa is freedom from birth-death circle. We find a verse in the 'Mahopanisad': "Icchamatramavidyeyam tatnas'o moksa ucayate", Verse No. 4/116. According to the 'Samkhyapravacanasutra', moksa is the freedom from aviveka his says No.6/20). Umasvati (muktirantarāya-dhvasterna paraḥ-Verse 'Tattvarthadhigamasutra': "Krtsnakarmmaksayah moksah", Verse No. 10/3. That is to say, mokṣa is destruction of all actions. It has been mentioned in the 'Kaivalyopaniṣad' that mokṣa is the freedom from all kinds of bondage (sarvvavandhaih pramucyate, Verse No. 1/17.). S'rī Kṛṣṇa says in the 'Gītā': "Janmamṛtyunjarā duhkhairvimuktohamṛtamas'nute", Verse No. 14/20. In the perspective of all the definitions mentioned above it may be stated that birth is the cause of suffering and ignorance is the cause of birth and if we are able to cease ignorance, birth will be ceased. As a result, there will be no bondage. Hence, moksa may be defined as the cessation of the cycle of birth and death. Again, moksa is that state where a man remains in his own essence.

The term 'yoga' is used in a variety of senses. Literally, the term 'yoga' means 'union' which refers to 'unite any two individuals'. In this regard, yoga has been defined as the union between the individual self and the supreme self. In this context, we can mention a quotation of yogi Yajñyavalkya: "Sañyogo yoga ityukto Jīvātmaparamātmanoriti". Brahmananda yogi points out that yoga is the union between prāṇa and apāna. ¹ S'rī Krṣṇa says in the 'Gītā': "Tam vidyādduḥkhayogaviyogam yogasamjñitam",² and He also says, "Sidhyasidhyoh samo bhūtvā samatvam yoga ucyate";³ that is to say, one whose mind remains in equality in every situation and in any action, is called yogi. According to Bhojarāja (the author of the book Rājamārtandavrīti), yoga is the separation (bheda) between prakrīti and puruṣa. We find in the 'Bhaktirasāmrtasindhu' that yoga is the union between Rādhā and. A great Indian sage Sr imat Nityapadānanda opines that yoga is the unification of the kundalinī s'akti with the supreme Siva (which is seated on the sahasrāra). ⁴ Patañjali, the founder of the Yoga Philosophy, has defined the yoga as the cessation of mental modifications (Yogas'cittavrītinirodhah). ⁵ Vyasa,

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the commentator of the 'Yogasutra' says, "Yoga is Samadhi'. In the perspective of all the definitions mentioned above we can say that in the state of yoga mental modifications must be arrested in the state of yoga. We know that an aspirant may attain Samādhi after arrested his mental modifications. In this regard, it may be stated that the term 'Samādhi ' has been used in the sense of yoga. Though Patañjali does not mention the term 'all' or 'sarvas'cittavrttinirodha' in the definition of yoga, yet we have to understand here that in the real state of yoga there will be no mental modification and impression. Hence, Svatmarama yogi says in his book 'Hathayoga Pradipika' rightly:" Sarvāvasthāvinirmuktah, sarvacintāvivarjitah, mrtavattistate yogi sa mukto nātra sains' ayah".6 We find some cases where a person's mental modifications are arrested automatically viz. fainting fit, catalepsy, hysteria etc. but these will not be allowed as yoga because, in these cases there is no will power of that person for arrested mental modifications. Hence, yoga must be dependent on that person's will power. Again, we can say here on the basis of the definition of Patañjali that if a person is able to cease some mental modifications through his own wish, he will be called a yogi. Thus, there we find two kinds of yoga, according to Patañjali and Vyasa viz. samprajañata and asamprajañata. In the state of samprajañata, some modifications (sattvika vrtti) remains and some are arrested (rajas and tamas) but all kinds of modifications are arrested in the state of asamprajañata Samadhi (sarvvavrttinirodhe tvasamprajñata samādhih).7

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It is known to all that the Samkhya and the Yoga are allied systems. The Yoga system has admitted all the realities of the Samkhya. Similarly, they have mentioned that ignorance and aviveka are the root cause of bondage. Though purusa is ever-free, ever-pure, non-relational etc. yet due to ignorance it becomes connected with prakrti and feels itself as doer, enjoyer, knower etc. This is the form of aviveka bondage. Hence, Patanjali "Drastrdrs'yayoh samyogo heyahetuh". Purusa can be free from this bondage after attaining kaivalya. But, the question is-how can that bound purusa becomes free or remains in its own pure essence? In reply we may mention another quotation of Patañjali: "Yoganganustanadas'uddhiksaye jinanad iptiravivekakhyateh ";9 that is to say, any bound purusa attains pure vivekakhyāti through the practice of eight-fold means of yoga. These eight steps are yama, niyama, āsana, prānāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāranā, dhyāna and samādhi. Among these, first five are called external aid where the last three are called inner limbs.

Our ultimate goal is the attainment of samādhi where the pure self becomes free from the contact of prakṛṭi. A yogi must hold first two steps for attaining purity and morality. Then

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asana and pranayama help a yogi to keep the body fit and grow strength. A yogi fixes his mind in his own inner essence through the practice of pratyahara. We can observe here that a yogi is able to fix his mind on any particular spot or object through the practice of pratyahara; that is to say, dharana is dependent on pratyahara. If dharana is constant then dhyana will be started. In the state of meditation mind is fixed on any object like flow of oil. Samādhi is the absolute form of meditation. According to them, samādhi is of two types viz. samprajnāta and asamprajnāta. Again, samprajñata has been divided into four parts viz. vitarka, vicara, ananda and asmita. Asamprajñāta is attained after the attainment of samprajñāta samādhi. Any type of seed of any object (viṣayavija) remains in the state of samprajnata samadhi, but in the state of asamprajñata samadhi there is nothing except the impression of paravairagya. Hence, Patañjali points out that samprajñata samādhi is called savīja and asamprajñata is called nirvīja.10 Here we can say that in the state of samprajñata samadhi aspirant must attain vivekakhyati, but after a few days, any impression of any object may arise in his mind. Hence, that aspirant should not be satisfied in this state. He has to attain dharmamegha samadhi in this course and at that time he will not be interested in the vivekakhyāti also. This vivekakhyāti remains in aspirant's mind until he does not attain dharmamegha samadhi . In the state of dharmamegha samadhi aspirant's all kinds of seeds of impressions are dissolved eternally.11 Here, it may be stated that attainment of dharmamegha samādhi is the attainment of jīvanmukta state; because, in this state yogi's all troubles (kles'as), actions (merit and demerit) and false knowledge are dissolved. Hence, Patañjali says, "Tatah klesakarmmanivrttih".12 In this context, Vyasa has mentioned in his commentary rightly" Kusalākusalasca karmāsayāh samūlaghātam hatā bhavanti, kles'akarmanivrttau jīvanneva vidvān vimukto bhavati".13 Due to enjoyment of prāravdha karmas he still lives. When a yogi attains dharmamegha samadhi, three ingredients are detached from that puruṣa. In the meantime, purusa remains in its own essence. In other words, it is called the attainment of kaivalya of puruṣa. Through the practice of samādhi the aspirant is able to exhaust the fruits of his prāravdha karmas.14 Here, a question may be arisen: Does puruṣa really attain liberation? We know that purusa is ever-free, non-relational, ever pure etc. Here, it may be replied that though it is true that purusa never becomes bound and free but due to ignorance (aviveka) feels other's ( prakṛti ) activities as his own and prakṛti ascribes it's all activities to puruṣa . When puruṣa can feel its own essence through the vivekakhyāti, prakrti is desisted from that particular purusa. It is called the attainment of kaivalya of purusa. Hence, Is'varakrsna says in his 'Sāmkhyakārikā ':

"Tasmanna vadhyatehaddha na mucyate nahapi samsarati kascit,

Samsarati vadhyate mucyate ca nānās'rayā prakṛtiḥ". 15

That is to say; actually *prakṛti* plays various roles for the enjoyment and liberation of *puruṣa*. When *prakṛti* becomes desisted from that particular *puruṣa*, it remains in its own pure essence. It is called in the *Samkhya*-Yoga the attainment of *kaivalya* of *puruṣa*.

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In accordance with the Advaita Vedanta both bondage and liberation are the activities of illusion  $(m\overline{a}y\overline{a})$ . Though soul is essentially eternal, ever-free, ever-pure etc. yet due to ignorance feels itself as doer, enjoyer, knower etc. and suffers various pains in this world. It Illusion or  $m\overline{a}y\overline{a}$  has two powers viz. it covers the essence of reality and distract to other way. Due to these powers of  $m\overline{a}y\overline{a}$ , purusa forgets its own essence, which is defined as bondage. The pure self feels itself as doer, enjoyer, knower etc. after forgetting own essence. S'amkaracarya says that this bound self can be free through the practice of vairagya. Again, Sruti says that anybody may attain Brahman through s'ravana, manana and nididhyasana. In the Advaita Vedanta, the absolute goal of every aspirant is the attainment of Brahman. It becomes possible through the study of Vedanta scripture and austere of four steps viz. deliberation of eternal and non-eternal entity (nityanityavastuviveka), callousness regarding worldly and heavenly entity (ihamutraphalabhogaviraga), manifestation of six ingredients (s'ama, dama, uparati etc.) (s'amadisatkasampatti) and desire of liberation (mumuksutva).

Here, the third upstair has been mentioned in the following:

S'ama: It is the coercion of mind (antarindriya-nigrahah s'amah). Again, in another way, it may be stated that in this course mind is engaged in Brahman only.

Dama: It is the coercion of all external organs. Mind controls other external organs from taking their own objects.

Uparati: In a single word, it may be pointed out that it is the absence of distracting of mind (vikṣepābhāvaḥ uparatiḥ).

 $Titiks\overline{a}$ : It is the power of tolerance of hot-cold, honour-dishonour, fame-infame, pleasure-pain etc. Regarding it  $Sr\overline{i}$  Krsna says in the  $G\overline{i}t\overline{a}$ :

" Jītātmanaḥ prasāntasya paramātmā samāhitaḥ ,

Sītosñasukhaduhkhesu tathā mānapamānayoh". Verse No. 6.7.

Samādhāna: One who attains those steps mentioned above will be established in the step of samādhāna. In this state, aspirant's mind becomes fixed on Brahman only.

 $S'raddh\overline{a}$ : It is the faith in the Vedanta scripture and teacher of the Vedanta. It is the basis of all other steps mentioned above.

Mumuksutva: the term 'mumukṣā' means desire for liberation. Here, desire refers to the attainment of knowledge of Brahman. One who attains Brahman, becomes free from all kinds of suffering.

After attaining these four steps of the Advaita Vedanta mentioned above a mumukṣu must try to acquire the grace of teacher who has attained the knowledge of Brahman. As a result, he will be able to attain self knowledge through s'ravana, manana and nididhyāsana. The term 's'ravana' means to realize the knowledge of Brahman through six kinds of liṅgas from a real Vedanta teacher. These six liṅgas are-upakrama, upasamhāra, abhyāsa, apūrvatā, phala, arthavāda and upapatti or logic. On the other side, the term 'manana' means the constant thinking of the Brahman. In this regard, Sadananda Yogindra says, "Mananam tu s'rutasya advitīyavastunah vedāntanugunayuktibhih

anavaratam anucintanam). That aspirant will fix his mind on Brahman without any break after manana like flow of oil. In this context, we may mention a quotation from the ' $Pa\tilde{n}cadas'\tilde{i}$ ' of Vidyaranya:

"Tābhyām nirvicikitscarthe cetasaḥ sthāpitasya yat,

Ekatānatvametadhvi nididhyāsanamucyate".-Verse No. 1.54.

In this state, a yogi's main aim is the attainment of Brahman only, not any other thing like heaven etc. and he attains Brahman. It is called 'Brahmaprāpti'. This state may be defined also as samādhi. Though Sadananda Yogindra has admitted two types of samādhi viz. savikalpaka and nirvikalpaka yet Sankaracarya says of only nirvikalpaka samādhi. He says rightly:

"S'ruteh s'atagunam vidyānmananam mananādapi,

Nididhyāsam lakṣaguṇamanantam nirvikalpakam" 22

He also says that the state of *nirvikalpaka* is better than the state of *nididhyasana*; because, in that state aspirant must attain Brahman forever.

However, we are to understand here that according to the Advaita Vedanta, samādhi means nirvikalpaka. In this state there is no division among three objects (knowledge, knower and knowing) in the mind of aspirant.

### IV

Let us discuss some similarities and dissimilarities between both the Yoga and the Advaita Vedanta. Both the systems have admitted that ignorance is the root cause of bondage. But, according to the Yoga, ignorance has been defined as 'aviveka' (the knowledge of identity between purusa and prakrti) where Samkaracarya says that mind is the cause of bondage and liberation. If any aspirant can arrest his mind through any means (sadhanpaddhati) in both the views, he must remain in own essence. According to Patañjali, a yogi remains in his own essence after restraining

mental modification which is called the attainment of kaivalya. Similarly, Samkaracarya says that an aspirant becomes Brahman himself after restraining mental modifications, which is called the attainment of Brahman (Brahmasvarūpatāprāpti). We find a difference between the attainment of kaivalya and the attainment of Brahman; because, in the state of kaivalya there is no feeling of pleasure and pain where in the state of Brahmasvarūpatāprāpti aspirant attains bliss which is the nature of Brahman. Here, a question will be arisen-if the mind becomes arrested, how can it feels bliss? Following Patañjali we can say that in the state of kaivalya, citta has no activity; that is to say, due to attaining vivekajñāna his mind becomes purified and all kinds of impressions are vanished like burning seeds.

Again, we see that the main aim of both the systems is the attainment of samādhi through some steps (aṣtāṅgayoga and s'ama, dama, uparati, titikṣā etc.). We find some similarities regarding austerities which are as follows:

Among the eight steps of yoga, yama, niyama and kriyāyoga are auxiliaries for purifying the mind and body of an aspirant. These steps lead an aspirant to the way of morality. The Vedanta also commands to do kāmya and naimittika karma for becoming moral like kriyāyoga of the Yoga.

Both Patanjali and Sankaracarya have admitted that an aspirant must practice bodily posture (asana) for concentration of the mind. Patañjali says, "Sthirasukhamasanam" and Sankaracarya says in his 'Yajñavalkya':

"Āsanāni samabhyasya vānchitāni yathāvidhi , Prāṇāyāmam tato Gārgi Jītāsanagatohabhyaset".28

Among the eight steps of yoga, the fifth step i.e. 'pratyāhāra' is same as uparati of satkasampatti of the Vedanta. Again, Titikṣā of the Vedanta is same as tapah of the Yoga. Vyasa comments in his commentary of Yoga regarding the tapah: "Tapah dvandvasahanam". 29

After attaining titikṣā that aspirant will fix his mind on Brahman. He will be able to attain samādhi and becomes identical with the Brahman. In other words it may be said that he remains in his own essence. This state is defined in the Vedanta as samādhāna or samādhi. According to Patañjali, at the time of meditation aspirant's mind takes the form of meditated object (dheyaviṣaya) like own self. When his meditation becomes profound, that is called samādhi. If the duration of samādhi is long, the aspirant will attain asamprajñāta samādhi.

According to the Yoga, samādhi is of two types viz. samprajñāta and asamprajñāta which are same as savikalpaka and nirvikalpaka of the Vedanta. We find that in the state of nirvikalpaka samādhi, aspirant's mind is engaged in the concept of Brahman; that is to say, his mind contains the impression of Brahman and this is the highest state. In this state, aspirant

remains in the state of Jivanmukti. Then he has to enjoy prāravdha karmas. After enjoying prāravdha karmas he becomes bodiless which is called videhamukti. According to Samkarācārya, videhamukti is the real mukti. On the other hand, though a yogi attains self knowledge in the state of samprajnāta yet his body still remains for the enjoyment of prāravdha karmas. A yogi who has attained samprajnāta state, remains also in the state of Jīvanmukti. After attaining Jīvanmukti state he attains asamprajnāta samādhi and this is the highest state of yoga.

Here, a question may be raised - which is better than the other (nirvvija or nirvikalpaka samādhi)? According to some, nirvvija samādhi is better than the Vedanta's nirvikalpaka; because, a yogi can destroy his prāravdha karmas in samprajnāta yoga. Teven, a yogi's death will depend on his own will. But, according to the Vedanta, without enjoyment prāravdha karmas are not destroyed. An aspirant attains videhamukti after enjoyment of prāravdha karmas.

At last, we must see that in both of the views pure self never becomes bound and free; actually *prakṛṭi* or *māyā* becomes bound and free. In this context, we may quote two verses from the 'Vivekacūdāmaṇi' and the 'Yogasūtra' in the following:

"Māyākaptau vandhamokṣau na staḥ svātmani vasttutaḥ, Yathārajjau niṣkriyāyām sarpābhāsavinirgamau". Verse No. 570

And

"Puruṣārthasūnyānām guṇānām pratiprasavaḥ kaivalyam svarūpapratiṣtā vā citis'aktiriti. 'Yogasūtra' ,Verse No. 4/34.

In conclusion, we may say that though the Advaita Vedanta does not admit eight-fold means of yoga in their theories yet we have tried to show how some steps of yoga have been used in different words. The means of Advaita Vedanta for attaining Brahman are same as that of the Sārikhya - Yoga. Again, we find that bondage and liberation of the Advaita Vedānta is actually the activity of māyā and when it becomes desisted from the pure self, attains the essence of Brahman. On the other hand, according to the Sārikhya - Yoga, bondage and liberation are of prakrti, not of puruṣa. When a yogi attains asamprajñāta samādhi, prakrti becomes desisted from that particular puruṣa and at that time it remains in its own essence (Tadā draṣtuḥ svarūpehavasthānam). The means for liberation of Yoga is better than the means of the Advaita Vedanta; because, a yogi can attain liberation in this present life through the kāyabyūha for quick enjoyment of prāravdha karmas. Otherwise, an aspirant has to take rebirth for the enjoyment of prāravdha karmas. Of course, the Advaita Vedanta has taken a great place in Indian Philosophy for its high subtle thinking and logical establishment.

## Notes and References

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- 30. Asamprajñātayogasttu akhilavāsanā kṣayena prāravdhatikramadvārā jhatati svecchayā mokṣe evopayujyate, (Na tu niyamena). Yogasūtra, Verse No. 1.
- 31. Yogasūtra, Verse No. 3/21.