

## Importance of the knowledge of Sāmkhya for Yoga practitioners

Dr Sukanta Das\*

\*Research scholar, Department of Philosophy and the Life-world,  
Vidyasagar University, Midnapur, West Bengal.

Email: [das.sukanta007@gmail.com](mailto:das.sukanta007@gmail.com)

### Abstract

It is known to all that the Sāmkhya and the Yoga Philosophy are allied systems; because, the Yoga has admitted all the realities of the Sāmkhya. The absolute aim of both the systems is *kaivalya* but their means are different. The Sāmkhya says that an aspirant may attain *vivekakhyaṭi* through the study of Sāmkhya and detachment. An aspirant must think like ‘I am not *prakṛti* (body, mind, intellect etc.) constantly. As a result, in this manner, after long days of thinking he must attain *vivekakhyaṭi* (the discriminative knowledge between *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*). When he will attain *vivekakhyaṭi*, remains in the state of *jīvanmukti*. At that time, *prakṛti* will be detached from that particular *puruṣa*. On the other hand, yoga is the practical application of the Sāmkhya. According to the Yoga, a yogi must attain *vivekakhyaṭi* through the sincere practice of eight steps of yoga and at last after enjoyment of *prāravdha karmas* he attains *videhakaivalya*. This paper is attempted to show that it is essential to a yogi or an aspirant to know both the systems for the attainment of *kaivalya*; because without the Sāmkhyān knowledge the Yoga is not completed, again, without practice of yoga *kaivalya* will not be possible.

**Key Words:** *Kaivalya, vivekakhyaṭi, prāravdha karma, kāyabyūha, samprajñāta samādhi, asamprajñāta samādhi, jīvanmukti, videhamukti*

---

### Introduction:

Like all other yogis at first I want to salute Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the God of yoga (*yatra yogeśvara*). Then I want to salute the founder of the Sāmkhya and the Yoga Philosophy Kapila and Patañjali; because, without their grace it would not be possible for me to complete this paper. We know that India is a land of sages. We find many sages who have attained their main goal (yoga or *samādhi*) in this land.

There we find many scriptures which lead us to the way of our main aim (*mokṣa*) viz. the Vedas, *Upaniṣads*, the *Gītā*, the *Rāmāyana*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *purānas*. Besides these scriptures, the Sāmkhya-Yoga also helps us to attain self-realization. Though the Sāmkhya is limited in the theory yet Yoga is its practical application. Hence, both the systems are called allied systems. The Yoga Philosophy has admitted all the realities

(*tattvas*) of the Sāmkhya. In this context, a verse from the ‘*Gītā*’ is given below:

“*Sāmkhyayogou pṛthagvālāḥ pravādanti na panditāḥ,*

*Ekamapyāsthitaḥ samyagubhayorvindate phalam*”.

And

“*Yat Sāmkhaiḥ prāpyate sthānam tadyogairapigamyate,*

*Ekam Sāmkhyañca yogañca yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati*”.<sup>1</sup>

These above mentioned verses have proved that both the systems are complementary to each other.

### I

The term ‘yoga’ has been explained in various senses. Generally, the term ‘yoga’ means ‘union or conjunction’. It has been derived from the root ‘*yuj*’ which indicates ‘to yoke’ or ‘to join’. In this regard, the term ‘yoga’ is

used as ‘the union between the individual self and the supreme self’. According to Patañjali (founder of the yoga), ‘yoga is the arrestedness of mental modifications’ (*Yogaścittavṛttinirodhah*).<sup>2</sup> Vyasadeva (commentator of the ‘*Yogasūtra*’) says, “*Yogaḥ samādhou*”. Bhojarāja (author of the ‘*Rājamārtandavṛtti*’) defined the yoga as the separation between *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā* that yoga is the cessation of suffering and equanimity.<sup>3</sup> Again, in accordance with the ‘*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*’, “Yoga is the union between Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa”. The ‘*Jñānasamkalinitantra*’ holds, ‘Yoga is freedom from all cares and anxieties on the total abandonment’. In this manner, we find various definitions, Patanjali’s given definition is appropriate than others; because, in every cases the nature of yoga is the arrestedness of mental modifications.

Hence, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

“*Yatroparamate cittam niruddhvam  
yogasevayāḥ,  
Yatra caivātmanātmānam paśyannātmani  
tuśyati*”.<sup>4</sup>

Till now, we have tried to see what the yoga is. Similarly, there a question will be arisen that what is the definition of a yogi or who is called a yogi? Following the definition of Patañjali we can say here that one whose mind has been arrested and remains in its own essence, he will be called a yogi. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that anybody who becomes unperturbed in any feeling, fame-infame, pleasure-pain etc. is called a yogi or *sthitaprajña*.<sup>5</sup>

Patañjali has admitted two types of *samādhi* viz. *samprajñāta* and *asamprajñāta*. In the state of one-pointedness of mind, a yogi can attain the right knowledge of all the material realities i.e. from the intellect to five gross elements. Hence, it is called also *savija samādhi* or yoga. It is necessary to mention here that the term ‘yoga’ and ‘*samādhi*’ have been used in same sense; because, in both the cases, mind becomes arrested. If anyone’s mind becomes arrested without any effort or consciousness, he will not be allowed as a

yogi; because, in this state he cannot attain right knowledge viz. the states may be *suśupti*, catalepsy, hysteria, fainting fit etc.

However, till now, we have tried to understand what yoga is and who is a yogi. Let us see now the main aim of a yogi.

## II

The term ‘*puruṣārtha*’ has been used in Indian Philosophy. Generally, the term ‘*puruṣārtha*’ means what the conscious self wants. In this regard, there we find four *puruṣārthas* viz. *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. Except the *mokṣa* other three are involved with the worldly affairs. It is known to all that any worldly thing is non-eternal and cannot provide us eternal pleasure; that is to say, in everywhere of this world there is no eternal pleasure without sorrow. *Artha*, *kāma* etc. are also worldly things and cannot free us permanently from suffering. On the other side, religious works (*dharma*) i.e. Vedic sacrifices, pray to God, worship to deities etc. produce worldly happiness and heavenly pleasure. Like worldly happiness, heavenly pleasure also is non-eternal. We know the name of king Nahuṣa in the ‘*Mahābhārata*’ that he had attained heaven by his power of virtue and he had come back in the world again for enjoying suffering when his virtue was dissolved. Hence, heaven cannot be an ultimate goal. Only *mokṣa* can free us from suffering permanently. In this context, we may mention a verse from the ‘*Sāmkhyakārikā*’ in the following:

“*Drṣṭavadānuśravikaḥ sa  
hyaviśuddhikṣayātiyuktaḥ,  
Tadviparītaḥ śreyān  
vyaktāvyaktajñāvijñānāt*”.<sup>6</sup>  
*Śruti* also says, “*Nālpe sukhamasti bhūmaiva  
sukham*”.

We find in the ‘*Yogasūtra*’ that a yogi is able to attain various miraculous powers viz. *animā*, *laghimā*, *mahimā*, *garimā*, *prāpti* etc. except these, a yogi can make similar many minds and bodies from his main one,<sup>7</sup> he also becomes disappeared from the general visual perception due to concentration on the spot of

the body.<sup>8</sup> But, any yogi should keep in mind that these aforesaid powers are not desirable. Each and every yogi's aim must be the attainment of *samādhi* or the discriminative knowledge between *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. Hence, Vacaspati Misra says, “*Tadviparītaḥ śreyān vyaktāvyakyañña vijñānāt*”.<sup>9</sup> That is to say; he meant to say here that the term ‘*tad*’ refers to ‘worldly happiness’ and the knowledge of the revealed (*vyakta*), unrevealed (*avyakta*) and conscious self (*jñā*) is better than the attainment of worldly happiness.

### III

Now, we shall try to see how an aspirant or a yogī may attain his main aim in both the systems. According to the Sāṃkhya, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* are eternal. *Puruṣa* is sentient and *prakṛti* is insentient. Though both are contradictory to each other yet due to their own necessities union and evolution becomes started. At the time of contact with *puruṣa*, *prakṛti* becomes sentient like *puruṣa*. Similarly, *puruṣa* feels itself as a doer, knower and enjoyer etc. Though in nature *puruṣa* is ever pure, ever free, indifferent, non-relational etc. yet due to contact with *prakṛti*, it forgets its own essence. This is called the bondage of *puruṣa*. *Puruṣa* is enjoyer and *prakṛti* is enjoyed. *Prakṛti* wants that *puruṣa* enjoys her and *puruṣa* becomes connected with *prakṛti* for its apparent *kaivalya*.<sup>10</sup> *Prakṛti* provides more sorrow than pleasure. As a result, once *puruṣa* must want to be free from threefold pain (*tāpatraya*). As the means for freedom from bondage of *puruṣa*, Sāṃkhya has prescribed us eight kinds of *siddhis* viz. *ūha*, *śabda*, *adhyayana*, *duḥkhavighātātraya*, *suhṛtprāpti* and *dāna*. An aspirant attains *vivekakhyāti* through the continuous practice of eight steps of yoga with deep respect and firm belief.<sup>11</sup> But the question is- is it true that *puruṣa* really becomes bound? In reply, we find a verse in the ‘*Sāṃkhyakārikā*’ where it has been mentioned that the bondage of *puruṣa* is ascription, not real. Actually, both bondage and freedom are of *prakṛti*.<sup>12</sup> But, due to ignorance (*avivekakhyāti*) it feels itself as bound. In this context, we may mention

another quotation from the ‘*Mātharavṛtti*’: “*Tatra yaḥ puṃso vandhamokṣasaṃsaraṇāṇi vrūte sa mūḍaḥ*”, ‘*Sāṃkhyakārikā*’, Verse No. 62. After practicing above mentioned means (*śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana* regarding the Sāṃkhya scripture) that particular *puruṣa* attains the discriminative knowledge and remains in its own essence; that is to say, three ingredient *prakṛti* becomes desisted from that particular *puruṣa* at that time which is called the attainment of *kaivalya* of *puruṣa*. The Sāṃkhya have admitted two types of *mukti* viz. *jīvanmukti* and *videhamukti*. After the attaining *vivekakhyāti* an aspirant remains in the state of *jīvanmukti* and when his *prāraṅdha karmas* are dissolved through the enjoyment, he attains *videhamukti*.

The Yoga Philosophy prescribes us to attain Yoga or *samādhi*. Like the Sāṃkhya the Yoga also has admitted that conjunction between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* is the root cause of *heya* (bondage and suffering). It may be mentioned as ignorance.<sup>13</sup> According to Patañjali, yoga is the suppression of mental modifications. It will be possible through the practice of eight-fold means of yoga viz. *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana* etc. According to them, if we practice eight steps of yoga mentioned above, must be able to attain pure *vivekakhyāti*.<sup>14</sup> *Samādhi* is divided classes viz. *samprajñāta* and *asamprajñāta*. In the state of *samprajñāta*, a yogi attains *vivekakhyāti* or *sattvapuruṣānyatāpratya*. This attaining knowledge is called *paravairāgya*. This is the highest state of knowledge. According to the definition of Patañjali though *samprajñāta* is called yoga, yet in this state there *sāttvika vṛtti* remains in the mind of that yogi. Hence, it is called *savīja samādhi*. It may be stated here that if *sāttvika vṛtti* remains in the state of mind, that aspirant cannot be free from three ingredient *prakṛti* completely. But, there will be no modifications and impression of knowledge in the state of *asamprajñāta samādhi*. As a result, ever free, ever pure self remains in its own essence.<sup>15</sup> This is called the attainment of yoga or *kaivalya* of *puruṣa*. On the other hand, it may be called that at that time *prakṛti* becomes desisted from that

particular liberated *puruṣa*. Hence, Patañjali says, “*Puruṣārthasūnyānām gunānām pratiprasavaḥ kaivalyaṁ svarūpapraṭiṣṭā vā citiśaktiriti*”, ‘*Yogasūtra*’, Verse No. 4/34.

The main difference between them is that the Sāṁkhya is limited in the theory where the Yoga is its practice. An aspirant may attain his absolute goal through both of the views. Both of them have admitted that ‘*aviveka*’ is the root cause of bondage and ‘*vivekakhyaṭi*’ leads an aspirant to attain liberation which is called ‘*kaivalya*’. An aspirant may attain *vivekakhyaṭi* through the means of Sāṁkhya but there is no guarantee that he must be able to attain *videhamukti* in his present life; because, *prāravdha karma* does not dissolve without enjoyment and though an aspirant may attain *jīvanmukti* in this present life yet for the enjoyment of *prāravdha karmas* he may have to take rebirth, but a yogi can enjoy his *prāravdha karmas* through the *kāyabyūha*.

#### IV

Here, we shall try to find how a yogi should attain the right knowledge of the Sāṁkhya and it is attainable through the practice of eight-fold means of yoga.

The main aim of both the systems is the attainment of *kaivalya*. It has been mentioned before that though *puruṣa* is essentially ever pure, ever free, non-relational etc yet due to ignorance it feels itself as doer, enjoyer, knower etc. This type of conjunction between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* has been started from beginningless time (*anādikāla*). Of course, this relation is apparent, not real. According to the Sāṁkhya, aspirant has to attain the knowledge of the revealed, unrevealed and *puruṣa*. *Prakṛti* is the equilibrium state of three ingredients (*sattva, rajas* and *tamas*). The first transformation (*pariṇāma*) of *prakṛti* is intellect (*buddhi*). *Buddhi* is made by the three ingredients like *prakṛti* but among these *sāttvika* and *tāmasika* is the cause of *vivekakhyaṭi*. An aspirant can attain four attributes viz. *dharma, jñāna, virāga* and *aiśvarya* (supernatural power) where the attributes of *tamas* are completely contrary to

*sāttvika dharmas* viz. *adharma, ajñāna, avairāgya* and *anaiśvarya*. Though these *tāmasika gunas* are not the cause of *vivekakhyaṭi* yet for comparing each other these are needed to know. On the other side, the *raja* takes the role of efficient cause. Here, the question is- what is the definition of *sāttvika dharma*? In reply, Vacaspati has mentioned:

“*Dharmaḥ-abhyudayaniḥśreyasahetuḥ*”. The term ‘*abhyudaya*’ refers to worldly pleasure which is attainable through the performance of sacrifice, mundane (*dāna*) etc. Again, the term ‘*niḥśreyasa*’ refers to ‘*kaivalya*’ or ‘eternal cessation of suffering’. It is attained through the constant practice of eight steps of yoga viz. *yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇā, dhyāna* and *samādhi*.<sup>16</sup>

As the nature of *sattva* is pleasure so when an aspirant performs sacrifice etc. and practice eight steps of yoga, he must feel pleasure in both of the cases. But as the *kaivalya* or *mokṣa* is only eternal so every yogi should attain it and it is possible only through the practice of yoga. J.N. Sinha has mentioned that the yoga practices are recognized by the Sāṁkhya as subsidiary means to liberation.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, according to the Yoga Philosophy, the aim of all yogis is the attainment of *vivekakhyaṭi* initially, but absolute aim is the attainment of realizing own essence. It becomes possible only through the sincere practice of eight steps of yoga. Like the Sāṁkhya, the Yoga also has admitted that the conjunction between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* is bondage and their disjunction is called liberation. It becomes possible then when a yogi’s impurity of mind will be removed through the practice of yogic parts and except it there is no other way.<sup>18</sup> ‘*Vivekakhyaṭi* remains in *buddhi*, not *puruṣa*’- thinking it that yogi must be indifferent to *vivekakhyaṭi* also. As a result, his all kinds of seeds of ignorance become vanished and attains *kaivalya*.<sup>19</sup> In this manner, when that yogi’s all kinds of *kleśas* (afflictions) and *karmas* (actions) become dissolved, his mind becomes arrested or in other words, it may be stated that at that time ‘only’ (*kevala*) *puruṣa*

remains. It is called the attainment of *kaivalya* of *puruṣa*.

## V

In conclusion, it may be pointed out that though the Sāṃkhya and the Yoga are allied systems yet we find some differences among them viz. a yogi can attain *samādhi* quickly by the grace of God but the Sāṃkhya does not admit the existence of God. Again, we have found here that the Sāṃkhya is limited in the theory where the Yoga leads us to attain *vivekakhyaṭi* through the practice of yoga. In the fourth chapter we find that though Īsvaraḅṛṣṇa does not mention the eight-fold means of yoga for attaining *vivekakhyaṭi* yet Vacaspati Misra has mentioned it in his

commentary ‘*Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudī*’. If an aspirant attains *vivekakhyaṭi* through the study of Sāṃkhya Philosophy, that may not be easy; because, there another seed of impression may be arisen in his mind but if a yogi once attains *nirvīja samādhi*, also attains *vivekakhyaṭi* then this type of attainment becomes eternal. Hence, we can say that for the attainment of *kaivalya* or liberation the means of yoga is better than that of the Sāṃkhya to a yogī. Of course, it is true that the Sāṃkhya is the basis of the Yoga. In this regard, a yogī should hold or maintain both the Sāṃkhya and the Yoga for the attainment of his absolute goal (*kaivalya*).

## References:

1. The ‘*Gītā*’, Verse No. 5/4 and 5/5.
2. ‘*Yogasūtra*’, Verse No.1/2.
3. The ‘*Gītā*’, Verse No. 2/48 and 6/23.
4. The ‘*Gītā*’, Verse No. 6/20.
5. The ‘*Gītā*’, Verse No. 2/53-61.
6. Īsvaraḅṛṣṇa, ‘*Sāṃkhyakārikā*’, Verse No. 2.
7. “*Nirmāṇacittānyasmitāmātrāt*”, ‘*Yogasūtra*’, Verse No. 4/4. And “*Pravṛttibhede prayojakaṃ cittamekamaṇeṣāṃ*”, ‘*Yogasūtra*’, Verse No. 4/5.
8. ‘*Yogasūtra*’ Verse No. 3/21.
9. Misra, Vacaspati. ‘*Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudī*’, Verse No. 2.
10. Īsvaraḅṛṣṇa, ‘*Sāṃkhyakārikā*’, “*Puruṣasya darśanārtham kaivalyārtham tathā pradhānasya*”, Verse No. 21.
11. Misra, Vacaspati. ‘*Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudī*’, Verse No. 51.
12. “*Tasmānnavadhyatehaddhā na mucyate nāhapi saṃsarati caścit, Saṃsarati vadhyate mucyate ca nānāśrayā prakṛtiḥ*”, Īsvaraḅṛṣṇa, ‘*Sāṃkhyakārikā*’, Verse No. 62. And “*prakṛtera syāt śaśaṅgatvāt paśuvat*”, ‘*Sāṃkhyasūtra*’, Verse No. 51.
13. “*Draṣṭṛdrśyayoḥ saṃyoga heyahetuḥ*”, ‘*Yogasūtra*’, Verse No. 2/24.
14. ‘*Yogasūtra*’ Verse No. 2/28.
15. ‘*Yogasūtra*’ Verse No. 1/3.
16. “*Aṣṭāṅgayogānuṣṭāṇajanaśca niḥśreyasahetuḥ*”, Misra, Vacaspati. ‘*Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudī*’, Verse No. 23.
17. Sinha, J. N., ‘*History of Indian Philosophy*’, Vol. 2, Central Book Agency, Delhi, P. 86.
18. “*Yogānuṣṭāṇasuddherviyogakāraṇam yathā paraśuścedyasya vivekakhyaṭesttu prāptikāraṇam yathā dharmah sukhasya, nānyathā kāraṇam*”, ‘*Vyasabhāṣya*’ on ‘*Yogasūtra*’, Verse No. 2/28.
19. ‘*Yogasūtra*’ Verse No. 3/50.