

# Comparative Study between the *Kaivalya* of Yoga and the *Nirvāna* of Buddha

Dr. Sukanta Das

## ABSTRACT

*It is known to all that the Buddhist Philosophy is different from the other systems of Indian Philosophy. Like the other systems they have also admitted that suffering or bondage is the main problem to men which comes from ignorance. Our aim should be free from this bondage through removing ignorance which is possible by practising eight-fold means. We know that the Sāṅkhya - Yoga is most ancient systems and almost all the systems have followed the yogic methods for attaining liberation. This paper is attempted to show how we find yogic systems in the Buddhist Philosophy for the attainment of absolute goal (liberation).*

**Keywords:** *Kaivalya, Nirvāṇa, samādhi, aṣṭāṅgayoga, aṣṭāṅgika mārga liberation.*

### Introduction:

We know that the Indian Philosophy leads us to the way of liberation. All the Philosophers of India had realized the reality or truth. Hence, the term 'Philosophy' has been defined in Indian Philosophy as 'the realization of truth'. All of them have admitted 'mokṣa' as the absolute goal of every human being except the Cārvākas. Though their aim ('mokṣa') is same yet means are different. Many Philosophers of India have realized the cause of sorrow of men from long days and through the meditation they found various means for attaining freedom from suffering viz. Buddha has realized reality as four noble-truths, Kapila, Patañjali and others advise us to realize ourselves (essence of own self). It becomes possible through the

attainment of right knowledge. Hence, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the 'Gītā' rightly in the following:

*“Na hi jñānena sadṛś'am pavitrāmīha vidyate,  
Tat svayam yogasāmsiddhaḥ kālenātmani vindati”.*<sup>1</sup>

I

It is known to all that all the systems except the Cārvāka have mentioned that ignorance is the root cause of bondage and when it becomes removed, liberation is attained. Each and every man suffers pain for whole life and it is very true that everywhere where birth there is sorrow. If we are able to stop the birth process, must be free from any kind of suffering. In this context, we may note a quotation of Jatindranath Sengupta: “*Mithyā*

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*Guest Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, Garhbeta College, Paschim Medinipur, W.B., India*

*prakṛti*, *miche ānanda*, *mithyā raṅgin sukh*; *Satya satya sahasragun satya jīver dukh*". We find four-fold *puruṣārthas* in Indian Philosophy viz. *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. Among these, only *mokṣa* is absolute and eternal where other three are non-eternal. The term '*mokṣa*' refers to 'eternal cessation of suffering'. In the standpoint of the Vedas, *mokṣa* is the attainment of heaven where aspirant can enjoy eternal pleasure and rejoice. The *Upaniṣads* state that *mokṣa* is an identity of the self with the Brahman, the ultimate reality. The *Gītā* has defined *mokṣa* differently in various places such as equivalence with God, not identity with God, as the contact with God, as transformation into the divine existence etc. According to the *Sāṃkhya* -Yoga, *mokṣa* or liberation is only (*aikāntika*) and eternal (*ātyantika*) cessation of suffering (*Trividha duḥkhātyanivṛttiratyaṅta - puruṣārthaḥ*). In this system, *puruṣa* becomes devoid of three ingredients and remains in its own pure essence at the state of liberation or *mokṣa* which is called also as *kaivalya*. According to the Buddhist Philosophy, liberation is called *nirvāṇa* which literally means 'cooling down' or 'blowing out'. Buddha says that desire, passions etc. are the cause of suffering. If we are able to blow out our passions, desires completely, must be free from all kinds of suffering. On the other side, according to some, *nivvāṇa* is the attainment of positive bliss (*nivvāṇam paramam sukham*).

However, in the perspective of aforesaid descriptions we can say here that liberation is the cessation of suffering.

## II

Let us see now what the yoga is and the nature

of *kaivalya* is. It is not needed to mention that the founder of the Yoga Philosophy is Patañjali who wrote the '*Yogasūtra*'. The term 'yoga' has been used in different senses. Generally, the term 'yoga' is used as 'the conjunction of any two individuals'. Literally, we can define it that the term 'yoga' comes from the root '*yuj*' which means 'to yoke' or 'to join'. In this regard, yoga is defined as the union between the individual self and the supreme self, union between *prāṇa* (*vāyu*) and *apāna* (*vāyu*) etc. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the '*Gītā*' that equanimity (*samatvam yoga ucyate*) is yoga. Though we find various definitions of yoga like mentioned above yet we have to accept the definition of Patañjali, because, his definition is more effective than others. He says, "*Yogas' cittavṛttinirodhaḥ*";<sup>2</sup> that is to say, yoga is the suppression of mental modifications. Vyasa, the commentator of yoga says, 'Yoga is *samādhi*'. Both Patañjali and Vyasa have mentioned definitions of yoga in the same sense; because, in both of the cases mental modifications are arrested. The absolute aim of a yogi is the attainment of *kaivalya*. The term '*kaivalya*' has been mentioned in the *Sāṃkhya* Philosophy. According to the *Sāṃkhya*, our main aim is the attainment of *vivekakhyaṭi*. The term '*vivekakhyaṭi*' means the discriminative knowledge between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. According to them *aviveka* (the identity knowledge between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*) is the root cause of bondage, that is, three-fold suffering (*ādhyātmika*, *ādhibhautika* and *ādhidaivika*) and after attaining *vivekakhyaṭi* an aspirant becomes free from all kinds of suffering. According to the Yoga Philosophy, though a yogi attains *vivekakhyaṭi* through the practice of eight steps

of yoga viz. *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi* yet his absolute aim will be completed then when he will be disinterested not only in various supernatural powers but also in *vivekakhyāti*. At that time, the pure self is devoid of three ingredients eternally; that is to say, and then only pure self remains in its own essence. It is called the attainment of *kaivalya* of *puruṣa*.

### III

Let us see now the means to *kaivalya* of Yoga and the means to *nirvāna* of Buddhism.

Patañjali has mentioned that yoga is attained through the repeated practice and detachment.<sup>3</sup> In which way a yogi can remove *rājas* and *tāmas vṛttis* from the mind and *sāttvika vṛttis* remains that is called practice. Detachment is the complete non-attachment to any external object. Like the Sāṃkhya Philosophy Yoga also comments that the cause of suffering (*heya*) is the conjunction between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* which are called as *draṣṭā* (seer) and *drś'ya* (seen).<sup>4</sup> Though we know that *puruṣa* is sentient and *prakṛti* is insentient yet when both are contacted with each other for their own necessities, *prakṛti* becomes sentient like *puruṣa* due to ascription of *puruṣa*. Our duty is to be detached from that contact which has been started from beginningless time (*anādikāla*). For this achievement Patañjali has prescribed us to practice eight-fold means of yoga. As a result, our impurities (all the afflictions) become removed and we can attain right knowledge (*vivekakhyāti*). In this context, we may mention a quotation from the *Vyasabhāṣya*:

“*Yogāṅgānuṣṭhānamas'uddherviyogakāraṇam yathā paraśuśchedyasya, vivekakhyātesttu*

*prāptikāraṇam yathā dharmmaḥ sukhasya, nānyathākāraṇam*”.<sup>5</sup> These eight steps are-*yama*, *niyama* etc. The first step *yama* is divided into five viz. non-violence (*ahimsā*), truth (*satya*), non-covetousness (*asteya*), celibacy (*brahmacharya*) and not receiving anything from others (*aparigraha*). *Niyama* is divided into five parts viz. cleanliness (*śauca*), contentment (*santoṣa*), austerity (*tapah*), study the scriptures (*svādhyāya*) and complete surrender to God (*Īśvara praṇidhāna*). The third step is *āsana* (bodily posture). Next step is *prāṇāyāma*. In the definition of *prāṇāyāma*. Patañjali says, “*Tasmin sati s'vāsapras'vāsayorgativicchedaḥ prāṇāyāmaḥ*”<sup>6</sup> *Āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* help us to keep the body fit and grow both physical and mental strength. The last step of external aids is *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal of the senses from taking their own object form). Among these eight steps, rest three viz. *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi* are called internal aids. When a yogi can fix his mind on any particular object (any spot of his body or image of any goddess etc.), is called *dhāraṇā*. If that yogi's fixation of mind becomes breakless like flow of oil, will be called *dhyāna*. After attaining deep meditation that yogi attains *samādhi*. In this state, a yogi's mind becomes identical with the particular object. Hence, Patañjali says, “*Tadevārthamātra nirbhāsaA svarūpaśū-nyamiva samādhiḥ*”.<sup>7</sup> Again, according to the Yoga, *samādhi* is of two types viz. *samprajñāta* and *asamprajñāta*. Again, *samprajñāta* is divided into four parts viz. *vitarka*, *vicāra*, *ānanda* and *asmitā*. In the state of *samprajñāta* yoga, there may remain any type of seed of disposition or object-form. Hence, it is called *savīja samādhi*. Though the main aim of a

yogi is *samādhi* yet here we have to understand that *samādhi* means *asamprajñāta* ; because, in this state a yogi can remain in its own essence. This is called the attainment of *kaivalya* of *puruṣa* .

In the Buddhism, liberation is called *nirvāṇa* . According to them, everything of this world even self is also non-eternal. Everything is changeable in this world like flow of water of a river. Even, the self is also an aggregate of some physical and mental sensation, idea, feeling etc. In other words, it may be stated that it is the aggregate of five parts (*skandhas*). Like Patañjali, Buddha also says that ignorance is the root cause of suffering and bondage which comes from the series of birth and death. He meant to say here that if we attain the right knowledge (knowledge of four noble truths), must be free from all kinds of suffering. The last noble truth leads us to the way of *nirvāṇa* . In this state, we find the noble eight-fold path which is called ‘*ārya aṣṭāṅgika mārga*’. These eight steps are divided into three parts viz. *prajñā*, *śīla* and *samādhi*. Right faith (*samyak dīṭṭi* ) and right mindfulness (*samyak smṛti* ) allowed as *prajñā*. The next is *śīla*. *Śīla* refers to ‘right conduct’. *Śīla* contains various ethical, religious or scrupulous works in mind, speech and deed viz. non-violence, truth, non-covetousness, honesty etc. It purifies our mind and body. After the attainment of *śīla*, a mendicant can attain *samyak samādhi*. ‘*Samādhi*’ is mental restraint. In the Buddhist Philosophy, *samādhi* is known as meditation or *dhyāna*. *Samādhi* has been constructed with the three parts viz. *samyak vyāyāma*, *samyak smṛti* and *samyak samādhi*. Again, in some places, we find that *samādhi* is of four kinds viz. *savitarka-savicāra*,

*vitarka* and *vicāra*, *avitarka-vicāra* and *avitarka-avicāra*. Nun Dharmadinnā says, “*Samādhi* is one-pointedness of mind”.<sup>8</sup> However, we see that at the last state of *samādhi*, a mendicant attains right knowledge (*samyak jñāna*) and through it he must be free from bondage.<sup>9</sup> One who attains liberation, rightly feels that ‘I am free, I am free from rebirth, my celibacy has been completed; now I have nothing to do more, all of my actions have been done’.<sup>10</sup> But, the question is- we know that in the last state of *samādhi*, mind becomes completely arrested, so how can we say that after attaining *samādhi* a person attains *prajñā*? In reply, it may be observed that like the Advaita Vedanta, Buddhist *nirvāṇa* is that state where everything is known as Brahman. Brahman is absolute or complete like a pot full of water. We know that such a pot has no sound and ripple just like the state of *prajñā* which is full of knowledge. According to the Vijñānavādin, *nirvāṇa* is the essence of spirit or pure knowledge. They also told, *nirvāṇa* is of four kinds viz. *dharmakāya*, *upadhis'eṣa*, *anupadhis'eṣa* and *apraṭiṣṭita nirvāṇa* . Among these four, the last is the pure state of knowledge.

#### IV

Let us see now a comparison between the *kaivalya* of Yoga and the *nirvāṇa* of *Bauddha*.

Generally, we see that both of them have admitted eight-fold means ( *aṣṭāṅga yoga* and *aṣṭāṅgika mārga*) to liberation. Buddhist eight-fold means have been divided into three parts viz. *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*. On the other side, *aṣṭāṅga yoga* is divided into two viz. external and internal aids.

The first step *śīla* of Buddhism is same as *yama*

of yoga; because, it prescribes us to be non-violent, to maintain the truth and earn in honest way. The second *śīla* restrains us from killing, lust or non-chastity which is equal as non-violence and celibacy of *yama* of yoga. The last *sīla* or *samyak ājīva* restrains us from stealing and it is as avarice of *yama* of yoga. Even, Buddha has pointed out: “I say him as Brahman who is remained in the state of *aparigraha*”.<sup>11</sup>

Like the *niyama* of yoga, Bauddha have adopted *aśubhakammaththāna*, *khanti-saAvara* etc. According to them, a mendicant should maintain internal and external purity which is called ‘*aśubha-kammaththāna*’ and ‘*dhūtaEgas*’ or pure disciplinary parts.<sup>12</sup> Regarding the *tapa%* Buddha himself says that a mendicant must overcome the conflict of winter-summer, hot-cold, hunger-thirst etc. or keep the body fit and will remain silent in speech.<sup>13</sup>

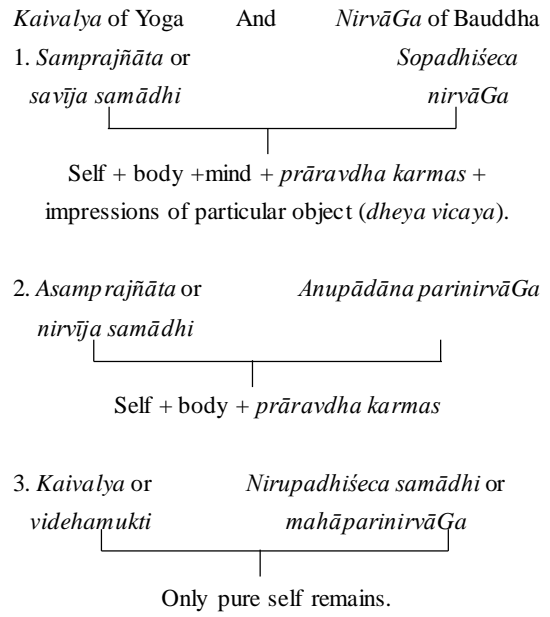
Buddhists have advised to practice *āsana* and *prāGāyāma* for keeping the body fit and calm mind. Regarding the *prāṇāyāma* we find a statement in the ‘*Viśuddhimagga*’ as the name of ‘*ānapānasati*’ where it has been mentioned that a mendicant should fix his mind on the inhaling (*paśśāsa*) and the exhaling (*āśśāsa*) of his breath with counting numbers.<sup>14</sup>

It is needless to mention that for the attainment of *samādhi* Buddhists have maintained other rest parts from *pratyāhāra* to *dhyāna*. Regarding the *samādhi* they have mentioned seven kinds of *samādhi* which is called ‘*saptasamādhipariṣkāra*’.

Both the systems have admitted *samādhi* as the highest goal of men. Like Patanjali, Buddhist *samādhi* is of two types viz. *sopadhis'eṣa* and

*nirupadhis'eṣa*. *Sopadhis'eṣa samādhi* of Bauddha contains various gross and subtle object-forms like the *samprajñāta samādhi* of yoga. On the other side, there is no impression in the state of *asamprajñā samādhi*. Similarly, in the course of *nirupadhis'eṣa samādhi*, the mind of a mendicant becomes free from all kinds of impressions. Hence, Buddhist nun Śīsupacālā says, “*Vimutto upadhisamkhaye*”.

In the perspective of above mentioned comparison a picture may be shown in the following:



In the picture mentioned above we have shown a comparison where the *kaivalya* and *nirvana* explain some state with different terms. In the first step both of the cases self, body, mind, *prāravdha karmas* and dispositions of concentrating object remains. In the second step, mind, body and organs are arrested. As a result, all the activities of mind, body and organs become stopped. But, for the

enjoyment of *prārvdha karmas* yogi's body still remains. At the last step, after enjoyment of *prārvdha karmas* a yogi becomes disembodied which is called in Yoga the attainment of *kaivalya* and in the Bauddha attainment of *mahāparinirvāna*.

V

In conclusion, after profound searching it has been found that the Yoga Philosophy and its means have acquired an important place in the Indian Philosophy. Almost all the systems have adopted their means for the attainment of liberation but they have used different terms. As an example we have taken the Bauddha system here and saw that their eight-fold paths are similar as yoga. Of course, there is much dissimilarity between their theories but our aim is only regarding the liberation. Patañjali has admitted God in his '*Yogasūtra*' for helping a yogi to attain *samādhi* easily; but, Buddha himself is an idol like God to all the Buddhists and they believe that by His grace a mendicant can attain *nirvāna*.

**Notes and References**

1. The '*Gita*', Verse No. 4/38.
2. '*Yogasutra*', Verse No. ½.

3. "*Abhy±savair±gy±bhyāA tannirodha%*", "*Yogasutra*", Verse No. 1/12.
4. '*Yogasutra*', Verse No. 2/17.
5. *Yogabhāṣya*, Verse No. 2/28.
6. '*Yogasutra*', Verse No. 2/49.
7. '*Yogasutra*', Verse No. 3/3.
8. Vidyaranya Swami, 1999, "*Bauddhadarsan O Dharma*", Paschimvanga Rajya Pustak Parsad, Kolkata, P. 70.
9. Vidyaranya Swami, 1999, "*Bauddha-darsan O Dharma*", Paschim-vanga Rajya Pustak Parsad, Kolkata, P. 79.
10. Vidyaranya Swami, 1999, "*Bauddha-darsan O Dharma*", Paschim-vanga Rajya Pustak Parsad, Kolkata, P. 195.
11. Vidyaranya Swami, 1999, "*Bauddha-darsan O Dharma*", Paschim-vanga Rajya Pustak Parsad, Kolkata, P. 120.
12. Dasgupta, S. N., 1975, "*A History of Indian Philosophy*", Vol. 1, Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi, P.101.
13. Vidyaranya Swami, 1999, "*Bauddha-darsan O Dharma*", Paschim-vanga Rajya Pustak Parsad, Kolkata, P. 111.
14. Dasgupta, S. N., 1975, "*A History of Indian Philosophy*", Vol. 1, Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi, P. 103.