# CONCEPT OF MOKSA AS TREATED IN THE SĀMKHYA PHILOSOPHY OF THOUGHT

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The concept of *mokṣa* occupies the paramount position in the Sāmkhya philosophy. It states mokṣa is attained by means of knowledge of the distinction of Puruṣa and Prakṛti. This discriminative knowledge is known as *viveka jñāna*. In almost all the philosophies, there is the constant repetition of the fact that material life is not of primary importance and death does not mean the final release of the soul. Sāmkhya philosophy accepts two kinds of *mukti*, both *jīvana mukti* and *videha mukti*. *Jīvana mukti* is the state of liberation which is attained while the individual is still living in this world. This is possible only when the right knowledge of discrimination is attained. On the other hand, videha mukti is attained after death of the individual.

**KEY NOTES**: mokṣa, prakṛti, puruṣa, jīvanmukti, videha mukti etc.

#### INTRODUCTION

The concept of *mokṣa* or liberation occupies the supreme position in the different branches of Indian philosophy as well as literature. The Vedic and Puranic literatures together with different systems of philosophy have emphasized upon the concept of mokşa as it is the highest puruṣārtha among the four. The thinkers of ancient India devoted their intellectual resources to find out the path leading to moksa, the ultimate goal of human life. In Indian philosophy, different philosophers use various terms to mean liberation namely mukti, kaivalya, nirvāṇa, śreyaḥ, niḥśreyasam, amṛtam, mokṣaḥ, apavarga etc. All these terms stand for the same meaning. Liberation means getting freedom or free or release from the cycle of birth and death. In Indian philosophy, moksa is the summum bonum of life i.e., the final destiny of man. The term mukti is derived from root muc means release of the self from the cycle of birth and death. In fact, the self by nature is eternally free, from violations and distresses, birth and death and cessation of pains and sorrows. But due to the ignorance, the self wrongly identifies itself with the mind to which an individual is subjected to bind is termed as bondage in Indian philosophy and on the other hand the act of releasing of this process of birth and death is called liberation or mokşa.

#### CONCEPT OF *MOKSA* IN THE SĀMKHYA PHILOSOPHY

The Samkhyists maintain that only discriminative knowledge is the only way that can lead to liberation. While bondage is the activity of Prakrti, towards one, not possessing the knowledge of discrimination, release in its inactivity towards one possessing the discriminative knowledge.<sup>2</sup> Gaudapāda Bhāsya states bondage is of three kinds (i) natural, (ii) evolutional and (iii) personal. The bondage is natural when *Prakṛti* is wrongly worshipped as *Puruṣa*. The bondage is evolutional when

different evolutes of *Prakṛti* i.e., the five elements, senses organs are taken to be the *Puruṣa* or they are wrongly worshipped as *Purusa*. The bondage is personal when the person not knowing the true nature of self performs sacrifices or gives charity to others. Thus we notice, there are three kinds of bondage in this system. <sup>3</sup> Mātharavrtti also supports the above viewpoint of Gaudapāda by saying that bandha is of three kinds viz., prakrti, vaikārika and daksinā. 4

According to Sāmkhya, freedom lies in complete isolation of *Puruṣa* from *Prakṛti*. When *Puruṣa* identifies its absolute distinction from Prakrti and gets separated from Prakrti and then it becomes liberated. Prakrti now ceases its activity from the Purusa who has attained discriminative knowledge, but it continues its activity towards one who has not acquired this discriminative knowledge and hence such a man remains in bondage.

Bondage is wrong identification of *Purusa* with *Prakrti*. If the self fails to discriminate itself from *Prakṛti* and her evolutes, it will remain in bondage. Vijnānabhikṣu clearly states, bondage and liberation are not belong to *Puruṣa*. <sup>5</sup> It is the knowledge of the distinction between *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* that liberates the self from all sorts of sufferings. Mokşa is a state in which there is complete freedom from all kinds of sins and sufferings. Liberation means becoming immortal. It is a state of identity of the individual self with the Supreme Self. 6 Liberation from worldly bondage is everyone's goal in life and it cannot be attained unless and until a man can not overcome the threefold miseries.

Sāmkhya philosophy maintains the concept of mokşa in its own way. The Sāmkhya recognizes the concept of *moksa* as the complete cessation of all sufferings. S.N. Dasgupta observes that emancipation thus is not a new acquisition, product, an effect or result of any action, but it always exists as the truth of our nature. We are always emancipated and always free. 7

In the realm of philosophy, the Sāmkhya represents first with the idea of sufferings, which is of three kinds viz., ādhyātmika, ādhibhautika and ādhidaivika. Ādhyātmika is due to physical, mental and intra-organic causes. It includes all kinds of bodily and mental ailments like diseases, anger, hunger etc. Ādhibhoutika sufferings are induced by natural causes such as human beings, animals, birds, insects etc. They are caused by external, physical objects.  $\bar{A}$  dhidaivika sufferings arise from the supernatural agencies like stars, ghosts, witches etc.

According to the view of Sāmkhya, the eradication of these three kinds of sufferings is termed as moksa or apavarga. This philosophy also remarks that pain cannot be removed permanently by any remedies, made by science of medicine or by scriptures.9

Sāmkhya states moksa is not attainable only by the observance of Vedic rites as Vedic means is inadequate to remove these pains. Though the physical diseases can be cured by medicine and mental sufferings by compliance in ordinary pleasures, these types of reliefs are also very short lived. Because, there will be reoccurrence of the physical diseases and mental sufferings. These devices and the ways are not sufficient for the annihilation of the miseries because one's feeling of pleasure leads to pain which in turn leads to joy in a cyclic way. This system of thought is strongly against the ritual work, opines that when we kill an animal for sacrifice then the law of ahims  $\bar{a}$  set aside. So by the observance of Vedic rites

there occurs a violation of the great moral principles. Any type of killing is a sin, even though it is done for sacrifice

The aim of man is to get rid of these three kinds of pain and sufferings. So it is rightly said, complete cessation of three-fold pain is the highest end of life which is called as *apavarga* or *puruṣārtha*.

The Sāṁkhya considers absolute negation of three fold sufferings as release. In the state of release there is complete isolation of the self from the mind-body complex, which is a modification of *Prakṛti*. In the state of liberation there is complete destruction of mental functions and dispositions. Dr S. Radhakrisnana says, 'salvation in the Sāṁkhya system is only phenomenal, since bondage doesn't belong to *Puruṣa*. Bondage and liberation refer to the conjuction and disjunction of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* resulting from non-discrimination and discrimination.' <sup>10</sup> Liberation is the state where there is complete cessation of sufferings or pain i.e., permanent cessation of pain is the state of liberation. *Bandha* means nothing but connection or association with pains. Again, Sāṁkhya system says manifestations of bliss are not liberation because bliss or *āṇanda* is an attribute of the *Puruṣa* by virtue of its nature. Sāṁkhya believes the self or *Puruṣa* is eternally liberated, enlightened and pure bliss by nature. The self or *Puruṣa* is devoid of three guṇas i.e. *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. It is inactive, indifferent and possesses no attributes. Due to non-discrimination between *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* or its product, the self has a false sense of bondage. *Puruṣa* is above time and space, merit and demerits, bondage and liberation.

In the view of Sāṁkhya the self or *Puruṣa* is conscious and pure. *Puruṣa* is the witness and has final emancipation. The absence of three attributes leads to final emancipation, by which it means the final and absolute removal of pain. <sup>11</sup> Bondage does not belong to *Puruṣa* as it is ever free. The Sāṁkhya says that bondage is nothing but false sense of identity of the self with the mode of *buddhi*. <sup>12</sup> *Puruṣa* is free from all attachment or association. In the *Sāṁkhyasūtra*, *Puruṣa* is stated as *asaṅgo 'yaṁ puruṣa iti*. <sup>13</sup>

Sāmkhyakārikā explains the nature of apavarga. Having described the evolution of this universe from Prakṛti, Sāmkhyakārikā says that this evolution is the source of sorrows and suffering and the purpose of creation is the liberation of each Puruṣa. That purpose arises in Prakṛti and therefore purpose of Prakṛti is to liberate each Puruṣa. <sup>14</sup> Thus, for the emancipation of every Puruṣa, Prakṛti acts, though it appears as if it is for the sake of Prakṛti herself. Just as one undertakes action in order to satisfy others desires, so Avyakta acts for the attainment of apavarga of the spirit. <sup>15</sup>

Sāmkhya philosophy explains apavarga as a state of complete freedom from pain. It is not a state of pleasure or even the state of ānanda because it is the cessation of both pleasure and pain. If ānanda is only the cessation of both pain and pleasure it can be considered as a state of bliss. Freedom in the Sāmkhya system means complete isolation or aloofness of Puruṣa from Prakṛti. 'Salvation in the Sāmkhya system is only phenomenal.' <sup>16</sup> It is only empirically true. The self is here eternally free. The self is not bound by Prakṛti. What Prakṛti binds is not the self, but it binds itself. Bondage belongs to Prakṛti only. Conjunction of Puruṣa with Prakṛti is the cause of bondage and their disjunction leads to liberation. When Puruṣa wrongly identifies itself either with Prakṛti or with any of her evolutes, it appears to be bound. The dawning of the discriminative knowledge enables the self to realize that it is eternally free. Liberation means the self's realization of its true nature.

#### MEANS TO ATTAIN DISCRIMINATIVE KNOWLEDGE

According to Sāmkhya, the knowledge of distinction between Prakrti and Purusa is the real knowledge which can dispel the cover of bondage forever. <sup>17</sup> Due to avidyā or non-discrimination of Purusa and Prakrti, all pains and sufferings, limitations etc., which really belong to Prakrti are falsely ascribed to Purusa. When this illusion is destroyed by sattva guna in Prakṛti the falsity of bondage is disappeared. This is the state of tattvajñāna. Only with the help of tattvajñāna one can attain the absolute cessation from the pains and sufferings of the world. Sāmkhya opines that the knowledge of vyakta, avyakta and the jña is the sole means for the attainment of moksa. This kind of knowledge is called kevalajñāna or viśuddhajñāna in Sāṁkhya philosophy. 18 Ignorance is the cause of bondage and removal of ignorance will lead one to liberation. Again discriminative knowledge can be attained through tattvābhāsa also. Dr. Anima Sengupta points out, "it is necessary, therefore, that through tattvābhyāsa, we should form in buddhi, the true conception of the nature of *Purusa* and then with the help of this saving knowledge, we shall be able to attain liberation from the sorrows and sufferings of this world". <sup>19</sup>

Though Sāmkhya's two ultimate realities i.e., *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* exist independently, yet *Prakṛti* acts unconsciously for the liberation of *Purusa*. Actually, when this distinction is realized, *Purusa* realizes its own pure nature. This knowledge becomes pure and absolute by concentrated meditation and then the spirit obtains emancipation.

With the dawn of discriminative knowledge, the self becomes liberated. And the task that lies before *Prakrti* is to liberate the *Purusa*, and when the *Purusa* is liberated, it ceases its activity towards it. Prakṛti, on her part, knowing well that she has been seen by Puruṣa withdraws her activity for that Purusa. Sāmkhya philosophy points out that the discriminative knowledge alone can lead to apavarga. The cause of bondage is the lack of this discriminative knowledge. Hence, this alone can save *Puruṣa* from bondage and make him ultimately free. In the Sāmkhyakārikā, it is said that apavarga can be attained by the knowledge of viveka between the evolved, unevolved and the knower. 20

The discriminative knowledge is very different from the phenomenal knowledge acquired by the sense organs. It is pure that we can get knowledge of *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* by reasoning itself. Vācaspati Miśra states 'The knowledge of the distinction of spirit from matter arises from right cognition consisting in meditation and contemplation uninterruptedly and patiently carried on for a long time, of the manifested etc. 21

Discriminative knowledge helps to remove *klesa*, there arises the distinction of spirit from matter. The discriminative knowledge is the main path for the state of complete liberation. It is absolute and unmixed with error, will remove the false knowledge and the miseries of birth and death. This knowledge is the realization of self i.e., apavarga. It cannot be attained suddenly. There are many steps to get this knowledge. The attainment of the discriminative knowledge is called *siddhi* in Sāmkhya. Describing the intellectual creation, Sāmkhyakārikā says that virtue, wisdom, dispassion and power, and the reverse of these four, are the forms of the *buddhi* and that they can be grouped again into four, i.e., *viparyaya*, *aśakti*, tusti and siddhi. 22

Among the four, viparyaya, aśakti and tusti are checks to success. 23 Vācaspati also says, 'It is well known that *siddhi* is the most desired by all and, as the other three (error, disability and contentment) are impediments to siddhi. 24 The same view is also found in the Gaudapādabhāṣya. Gaudapāda says error, disability and contentment are checks to success. Just as an elephant is kept under control with the help of the goad, in the same manner, a person, who is under the influence of error, disability and contentment, remains in ignorance. So in order to attain liberation he should try to avoid them. <sup>25</sup>

Besides, Sāmkhya philosophy explains about eight steps. There are eight steps to this attainment from oral instruction to the suppression of the three kinds of pains. They are thorough study or adhyayana, oral instruction or śabda, proper reasoning or ūha, friendly discussion or suhṛtprāpti, purity of discriminative knowledge or dāna, the suppression of the intrinsic pain or ādhyātmika duḥkhavighāta and lastly, the suppression of the superhuman pain or ādhidaivikaduhkhavighāta. <sup>26</sup>

The aim of attaining apavarga is to abolish the three kinds of pain. So, moksa is a state of absolute negation of pain. Liberation does not consists in the manifestation of bliss (ānada) as bliss is an attribute of Purusa which is free from all attributes.

Hence the attainment of these three siddhis is nothing but the attainment of apavarga. These eight attainments are called *tāra*, *sutāra*, *tāratāra*, *ramyaka*, *sadāmudita*, *pramoda*, *mudita* and *modamāna*. <sup>27</sup>

#### **OBSTACLES OF LIBERATION**

Sāmkhya philosophy mentions about three varieties of ankuśa which should be avoided in the attainment of state of apavarga as they are regarded as the obstacles of liberation. These are viparyaya, aśakti and tusti. 28

# (a) VIPARYAYA:

There are five types of viparyaya.<sup>29</sup> They are called tamas, moha, mohāmoha, tāmisra and andhatāmisra. Vācaspati identifies the five fold viparyaya with avidyā, asmitā, rāga, dveṣa and abhinivesa which are the varieties of kleśa in the yoga system. 30

#### i) AVIDYĀ OR TAMAS:

Avidyā or tamas is one of the dispositions of buddhi which is a product of Prakrti. Tamas is of eight fold. The variety comes from recognizing the self with one or other of the principles, intellect, individualization, the mind, and the five subtle elements.<sup>31</sup>

# ii) ASMITĀ OR MOHA:

This is the identification of the spirit with matter. Yoga Sūtra mentions asmitā as the identity of blending together of the power of consciousness with the power of cognition. <sup>32</sup> It is of eight kinds characterized by love of eight attainments such as animā, laghimā, mahimā etc.

We have already mentioned that Sāmkhya admits  $j\bar{n}\bar{a}na$  as the only means of attaining liberation. Knowledge paves the way to complete release and opposite of knowledge i.e.,  $avidy\bar{a}$  is accepted as the cause of bondage. 33

# CONCEPT OF JĪVAN MUKTI

Sāmkhya philosophy accepts two kinds of *mukti*, both *jīvana mukti* and *videha mukti*. *Jīvana* mukti is the state of liberation which is attained while the individual is still living in this world. This is possible only when the right knowledge of discrimination is attained. On the other hand, videha mukti is attained after death of the individual.

Sāmkhyakārikā gives the status of jīvanmukta as 'By the attainment of perfect knowledge, virtue and the rest becomes devoid of causal energy, yet the spirit remains a while invested with the body, just as potter's wheel continues to revolve through the momentum of the impulse previously imparted to it'. 34 This explanation is given by Sāmkhyakārikā about the jīvanmukta state of Puruṣa. In the state of jīvanmukti, a person attains liberation even his body persists. Again, a person who has attained discriminating knowledge but continues to live in the mind, body complex is called a *iīvanmukta*. Again, Prakṛti does not release the Puruṣa immediately even when discrimination arises. One has to continue the life for a while on account of his *prārabdha* karmans. Because of his force of the past actions, the work of *Prakrti* continues for some time. In this state of mind no fresh *karma* is accumulated. Though no fresh karma is accumulated yet the body continues by the virtue of prārabdhakarma. As the jīvanmukta possessing a body, it has no non-discrimination (aviveka).

Vācaspati Miśra states that, when wisdom has been attained, the body continues for a while on account of the previous impulse just as even after the action of the potter has ceased, the wheel continues for a while, on account of the momentum imparted to it. In due time, when the impulse becomes exhausted, it becomes inactive. In the continuance of the body, the impulse is supplied by such virtue.<sup>35</sup> The cause for continuing the life is the force of the impression of the past actions. The instance of the potter's wheel substantiates this fact clearly. When a potter makes a pot he turns the wheel to give the proper form to the pot. Even after removing the pot from the wheel it continues to whirl on account of the power previously applied to it.

Following the words of Vācaspati Miśra, we can say, the moment, the right knowledge starts the person become liberated even though he may have to continue to live in the body for a short period of time because of actions accumulated in the past or due to existence of prārabdha karma. By virtue of the force of prāabdha karma, the body continuesto exist for some time, though no fresh karma is accumulated; just as the wheel of a potter goes onrevolving for some time due to previous momentum even though the potter has withdrawn his hand from it. Similarly, the *jīvanmukta* remains in this body even after the attainment of discrimination by virtue of the force of the samskaras in the form of prārabdha karma. 36

Yoga philosophy also says about jīvanmukti. This philosophy advocates two kinds of samādhi viz., samprajñāta and asamprajñāta. 37 Samprajñāta samādhi is that with prajñā and pratyaya; the other is that without them. Yoga philosophy says about seven kinds prajñā 38 from which jīvanmukti arises. Hence the former leads to jīvanmukti and the latter to the ultimate apvarga. 39

#### THE CONCEPT OF VIDEHA MUKTI

In the state of *videhamukti* there is no cause for future action and the body will annihilate. The final and complete liberation is attained only after death and there is no relation even with the body. In this state complete liberation is attained after freedom from all kind of bodies, subtle and gross etc. The term *videha mukti* refers the state of liberation after death. At death, *jīvanmukta* attains complete disembodied isolation (*videhamukta*). The disembodied isolation is the real liberation or *mokṣa*.

The Sāṁkhya philosophy opines that liberation from bondage and continuance of the body can go on simultaneously as they are determined by different causes. After the ruin of jīvanmuktas, the liberated Puruṣas attain the state of *videhmukti*. This liberation is the state of complete freedom when the selves acquire freedom from gross subtle bodies. That's why; it ensures absolute and complete freedom.<sup>40</sup>

#### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it can be said that liberation is the complete cessation of all kinds of pains and sufferings including both physical and mental. Sārikhya philosophy says *mokṣa* is attained by means of knowledge of the distinction of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*. This discriminative knowledge is known as *viveka jñāna*. The Sārikhya bears no exception in it, and it teaches that discriminative knowledge or wisdom gives release from the material world. *Jīvan-mukti* is a state of relaxation of mental agonies and on the other hand, the state of relaxation from body is *videha mukti*. Sārikhya's liberation is complete isolation, complete cessation of pain, Puruṣa's return to its pure nature as consciousness. It is a state where there is no existence of pleasure and happiness because these attributes gives birth to mere pain. These are the products of *sattva guṇa* and liberation is devoid of all gunas

# **END NOTES:**

- 1. vyaktāvyaktajňavijňānāt, SK., 2 (b)
- 2. Ibid., 61
- 3. prākṛtena ca bandhna tathā vaikārikeṇa ca/ dakṣiṇābhistṛtīyena baddho nānyena mucyate// GB. on SK., 44
- 4. sa ca bandhastrividhaḥ/ prakṛtibandho vaikārikabandho dakṣiṇābandhaśceti// *Māṭharavṛtti* on SK., 44
- 5. SPB., 3.71
- 6. yadā paśya paśyate rukmavarṇam kartāramīrām puruṣam brahmayonim/tadā vidvānpuṇyapāye vidhuya nirañjanaḥ paramam sāmyamupaiti// Ibid., 3.1.3
- 7. Dasgupta, S.N., A History of Indian Philosophy, p. 58
- 8. atha trividhaduhkhātyantanivṛttirntyanta purusārthaḥ/ SS., 1.1
- 9. drstavadānuśrāvikah sa hi aviśuddhih ksayātisayayuktah/ SK., 2(a)
- 10. Radhakrishnan, S., Indian Philosophy, VOL. II, p. 286

- 11. tasmācca viparyāsātsiddham sākṣitvamsya puruṣasya/
- kaivalyam mādhyasthym draṣṭṛtvamkartṛbhāvaśca// SK., 19
- 12. tasmānna badhyate'ddhā, na mucyate nāpi samsarati kaścit/samsarati badhyate mucyate ca nānā'śrayā prakṛtiḥ// Ibid., 62
- 13. SS., 1.15
- 14. SK., 56
- 15. Ibid., 58
- 16. Radhakrsnan, S., Indian Philosophy, Vol. II, p.311
- 17. jñānena cāpavargo viparyayāt isyate bandhaḥ/ SK., 44 (b)
- 18. evam tattvābhyāsānnā'smi na me nā'hamityapariśeṣam/aviparyayādviśuddham kevalamuutpadyate jñānam//Ibid., 64.
- 19. Sengupta, Dr. Anima, Classical Sāmkhya: A Critical Study, p.166
- 20. SK., 2
- 21. vyaktañca avyaktañca jñañca vyaktāvyktajñāḥ, teṣām vijñānam vivekena jñānam. vyaktajñānapūrvakam vyaktasya tatkāraṇasya jñānam, tayośca pārārthenātmā paro jñāyate, iti jñānakrameṇābhi dhyānam/ STK. on SK., 2
- 22. eṣa pratyayasargo viparyayāśaktituṣṭisiddhākhyaḥ/
  guṇavaiṣmyavimardāt, tasya ca bhedāstu paścāśat// SK., 46
- 23. siddheh pūrvonkuśastrividhah/ Ibid., 51(b)
- 24. STK. on Ibid., 51
- 25. siddheḥ pūrvā yā viparyayāśaktituṣṭayasta eva siddheraṅkuśastadbhedādeva trividhaḥ, yathā hasti gṛhitāṅkuśena vaśī bhavati evaṁ viparyayāśaktituṣṭibhirgṛhīto loko'jñānamāpnoti, tasmādetāḥ parityajya siddhiḥ sevyā, siddhestattvajñānamutpadyate tasmānmokṣa iti/ GB. on Ibid.
- 26. ūhaḥ śabdo'dhyayanaṁ duḥkhavidhātāstayaḥ suthṛtprāptiḥ/dānaṁ ca siddhayo'ṣṭau siddheḥ pūrvo'ṅkuṣastrividhaḥ// Ibid., 51
- 27. STK. on Ibid., 51
- 28. siddheh pūrvankuśas trividhah, SK., 51(b)
- 29. pañca viparyayabhedaḥ, Ibid., 47.
- 30. avidyāsmitārgadveṣābhiniveśāḥ yathā sakhyaṁ tamo-moha-mahāmoha-tāmisra-andhatāmisra saṅjñakāḥ pañca viparyayaviśeṣāḥ/ STK. on Ibid., 47
- 31. STK. on Ibid., 44.
- 32. YS., 2.6
- 33. dharmena gamanamūrdhva gamanamdhastādbhavatyadharmena/ jñānene cā'pavargo viparyayādiṣyate bandhaḥ// SK., 44
- 34. samyg jñānadhigamātdharmādīnāmakāraṇaprāptau/ tiṣthati saṁskāravaśāñcakrabhramvddhṛtaśarīraḥ// Ibid., 67
- 35. utpannatattvajñāno'pi ca samskārovaśāt tiṣthati, yatho parate'pi kulālavyāpāre cakram vegākhyasamskāravaśāt bhrama tiṣṭhati/ STK. on Ibid.

- 36. samskārastadvaśāt tatsāmarthyād dhṛtaśarīrastiṣṭhati/ Ibid.
- 37. YS., 1.51
- 38. Ibid., 2.27
- 39. vyāsa bhāsya on Ibid., 1.17, 1.51
- 40. SK., 68

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