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## A Philosophical Study of Mukti (Liberation) in the Godādhara School of Thought : With Reference to the Muktivāda Text

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### Abstract:

The present discussion, rooted in the principles of Nyāya philosophy, examines the nature of mokṣa (liberation), its relation to tattva-jñāna (true knowledge), and its status as the highest human goal (puruṣārtha). It begins by establishing that human activity is always guided by prayojana (purpose), and hence śāstras first declare their objective to inspire engagement. Mokṣa is identified as the ultimate purpose, attained indirectly through śāstra-jñāna and directly through tattva-jñāna.

A major philosophical inquiry concerns the nature of liberation. Different views—such as mokṣa being duḥkha-prāgabhāva (prior absence of pain), atyantābhāva (absolute non-existence of pain), or duḥkha-dhvaṃsa (cessation of suffering)—are critically examined. The accepted view establishes mokṣa as the absolute cessation of suffering, characterized by the complete destruction of karmic bondage (durita). However, this destruction is not merely incidental but connected with the rise of true knowledge.

The role of tattva-jñāna is analyzed in depth. It is shown not always as a direct cause (kāraṇa) of liberation, but more precisely as a necessary condition or instrumental cause (prayojaka), without which liberation cannot arise. While karmas are primarily destroyed through experience (bhoga), knowledge facilitates their exhaustion and prevents further accumulation, ultimately leading to liberation.

The text also addresses objections regarding human motivation: if liberation requires difficult practices (like yoga), why would one pursue it? The answer lies in the unique desirability of absolute freedom from suffering, which generates strong motivation despite effort. Similarly, it resolves doubts about eligibility (adhikāra), concluding that only discriminative (vivekī) individuals, who recognize the inherent suffering in worldly pleasures, are fit to pursue liberation.

Finally, the discussion establishes that mokṣa qualifies as a puruṣārtha (supreme human goal) even though it is not directly perceptible. Human action is driven not by direct perception but by desire for the cessation of suffering, making liberation intrinsically desirable (svataḥ-prayojana), unlike secondary goals which depend on other desires.

In conclusion, the work systematically defends that mokṣa is the ultimate end of life, attainable through true knowledge, and characterized by the complete and irreversible cessation of suffering, as logically grounded in Nyāya philosophy.

**Keywords :** Mukti, Liberation, Godādhara School, Muktivāda, Indian Philosophy



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### Key notes:

- The system is based on Nyāya philosophy, which analyzes liberation through logic and reasoning.
- Prayojana (purpose) is essential for all human action; hence every śāstra begins by stating its objective.
- The ultimate purpose (parama-prayojana) of śāstra is mokṣa (liberation).

- Mokṣa is defined as the absolute cessation of suffering (duḥkha-nivṛtti / duḥkha-dhvaṃsa).

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- Competing views such as *prāgabhāva* (prior absence) and *atyantābhāva* (absolute absence) of pain are examined and refuted.
- *Tattva-jñāna* (true knowledge) is essential for liberation; it acts as a necessary cause (*prayojaka*) rather than always a direct cause.
- *Karma* (*durita/adrṣṭa*) is the root of suffering; its destruction is necessary for *mokṣa*.
- *Karma* is exhausted mainly through experience (*bhoga*), but knowledge prevents further accumulation and aids final liberation.
- Liberation is not immediate after knowledge due to *prārabdha karma*, which must be exhausted.
- *Mokṣa* is characterized by irreversible freedom from suffering, not by the presence of pleasure.
- The desire for liberation arises because cessation of suffering is intrinsically desirable (*svataḥ-prayojana*).
- Even though *mokṣa* is not directly perceptible, it is still a valid *puruṣārtha* (human goal).
- Difficult means like *yoga* and knowledge-practice are justified because the result (*mokṣa*) is supremely valuable.
- Only qualified seekers (*adhikārī*)—those with discrimination (*viveka*)—are truly fit to pursue liberation.
- Worldly pleasures are mixed with suffering; realizing this leads to detachment and pursuit of *mokṣa*.
- *Śāstra*, through knowledge, ultimately guides the aspirant toward final liberation from *samsāra*.

**Introduction- Gadādhara Bhaṭṭācārya Cakravartī** is recognized as one of the greatest and last major commentators of the “*Anumāna-Dīdhiti*” tradition in *Navya-Nyāya*. His extensive and profound commentarial works mark the culmination of the third phase of *Navya-Nyāya* development. Due to the depth and authority of his scholarship, many earlier *Dīdhiti* commentaries gradually fell out of circulation, and only the works of *Jagadīśa* and, to some extent, *Bhavananda* continued to survive in scholarly use. Numerous traditions and legends regarding his life are current in *Navadvīpa*, though their historical authenticity remains uncertain.

His literary corpus primarily consists of a vast range of *Dīdhiti*-based commentaries and logical treatises within the *Navya-Nyāya* system. His major works include commentaries on the *Tattvacintāmaṇi* (on both the *Śabda-khaṇḍa* and *Anumāna-khaṇḍa*), *Śabdamañjālokā*, *Pratyakṣāloka*, *Pratyakṣa-Dīdhiti*, *Anumāna-Dīdhiti* (his most celebrated work), *Anumāna-Āloka*, *Bauddhādhikāra-Dīdhiti*, *Kusumāñjali Tīkā*, and *Nyañāvādavyākhyā*, along with an incomplete commentary on the *Kāvya prakāśa*. A commentary on the *Caṇḍī* text is also attributed to him, though its authenticity is debated. In addition to these commentaries, he composed numerous independent logical treatises such as *Śaktivāda*, *Muktivāda*, *Vyutpattivāda*, *Viśayatāvāda*, and *Vidhi-svarūpavāda*. According to tradition, the total number of such “*vāda*” texts attributed to him may be as many as sixty-four, although many of them are no longer fully available.

Many of his works survive today only in partial manuscripts or printed fragments. His *Anumāna-Dīdhiti-Tīkā* is especially renowned throughout India for its subtle and rigorous analysis of logical fallacies (*hetvābhāsa*) and its remarkable precision in *Nyāya* reasoning. His writing reflects not only deep logical acumen but also a broad engagement with Sanskrit poetics and grammar. Overall, *Gadādhara Bhaṭṭācārya* stands as a transformative thinker of late *Navya-Nyāya*, after whom the creative tradition of *Dīdhiti*-style commentary gradually declined.

1

**Prayojanaprakaraṇa** (That for the attainment of which a person engages in activity is called *prayojana*.)- All living beings in the world, when they engage in any activity, do so only with the desire for a result. A person suffering from hunger engages in eating to remove hunger; a thirsty person drinks water to remove thirst; and a patient takes bitter medicine to relieve bodily pain.

We never engage in an action whose result we do not understand. For example, in early childhood, as long as a child does not know that studying scriptures leads to knowledge and happiness, he cannot be made to study even with repeated persuasion. But when the same person grows up and understands the beneficial results of study, he naturally engages in it without external pressure.

From such examples of everyday life, it is established that without understanding the result of an action, engagement in it is impossible. Therefore, at the beginning of scriptures, scholars state the “purpose” (*prayojana*) in order to motivate people toward studying them.

Even if the purpose is not explicitly stated at the beginning of every text, a careful analysis reveals the intended goal of the scripture. From this discussion, it can also be understood that “that which generates desire leading to action is called purpose.” Hence, there is no fault in stating the specific definition after presenting the general idea.

It should also be understood here that in this treatise on liberation, the principal subject is liberation itself. Therefore, liberation is the main topic of exposition. Once the knowledge of liberation arises, it generates the inclination toward it, and through that inclination liberation is attained. Thus, liberation is the ultimate purpose (final goal) of this scripture.



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The “purpose” (prayojana) previously discussed is divided into two types—self-dependent purpose (svataḥ-prayojana) and secondary purpose (gaṇa-prayojana). This self-dependent purpose is called “primary purpose” (mukhya prayojana) by Viśvanātha Nyāyapañcānana in his *Chāyāsūtra-vṛtti*.

Among these, self-dependent purpose consists of three entities: (1) happiness (sukha), (2) direct experience of happiness (sukha-sākṣātkāra), and (3) absence of suffering (duḥkha-abhāva). However, sukha-sākṣātkāra is not accepted as a purpose by all scholars. For when a person engages in action, the desire that arises is generally “may I obtain happiness” or “may I be free from suffering,” not “may I experience happiness directly.” According to the definition, that which generates action through desire is called a purpose (prayojana). Therefore, sukha-sākṣātkāra does not appear to qualify as a true self-dependent purpose.

Gangeśa Upādhyāya, in the *Īśvarānumāna* section of the *Tattvacintāmaṇi*, has clearly discussed this view. However, according to Gadādhara’s position, just as desire for happiness produces action, so too the desire for direct experience of happiness can also produce action. Therefore, there is no contradiction in accepting sukha-sākṣātkāra as a purpose alongside happiness and absence of suffering.

To clarify this for students, the object of definition (lakṣya) is stated even before the definition (lakṣaṇa). That which gives rise to desire without depending on any prior desire is called self-dependent purpose or primary purpose. For example, the desire for happiness, the desire for direct experience of happiness, and the desire for absence of suffering arise independently of any other prior desire. However, in the case of activities such as eating and sleeping, their desire depends primarily upon the desire for happiness or absence of suffering. Therefore, in scriptural usage, the desire for the result is stated as the cause of desire for means, but no separate cause is specified for the desire for the result itself. Thus, happiness, absence of suffering, and direct experience of happiness are established as self-dependent (primary) purposes, while eating, sleeping, etc., are secondary purposes.

Some others argue that whatever is not the cause of any other purpose but itself becomes the object of desire and the cause of action is self-dependent purpose. This view is not acceptable. For in order to avoid contradiction in perception of past and future objects, even the object (viśaya) is sometimes accepted as a cause of cognition. That which, when present, produces an effect and when absent, does not produce it, is called a cause.

According to this rule, the object (such as happiness) is also a cause of perceptual cognition such as the direct experience of happiness. Hence, if happiness is taken as self-dependent purpose, a fault of over-extension (avyāpti) arises, since happiness would become a cause of another purpose (sukha-sākṣātkāra). However, this objection is resolved because sukha-sākṣātkāra has already been accepted as a purpose in the author’s own view. Therefore, the earlier definition of self-dependent purpose stands as valid and established.

Earlier it has been shown that the desire for happiness, absence of suffering, or direct experience of happiness does not depend upon any other desire at its root. Rather, all other desires are ultimately rooted in the desire for happiness itself. For example, when we suffer from hunger or become extremely distressed due to thirst, a desire arises in us that this suffering should be removed through some means. Immediately thereafter, we develop a desire toward whatever object is understood to be capable of removing hunger or thirst. Thus, the desire for food or water arises as a means for the removal of suffering. Therefore, such objects are considered secondary ends (gaṇa prayojana), as they depend upon the primary aim of removing suffering.

For instance, in the Vedic statement “one who desires heaven should perform the horse sacrifice (Aśvamedha),” a person desirous of heaven performs the sacrifice, and through it attains heaven. In the same way, heavenly pleasure—being free from the relation with suffering—is considered a primary end (svataḥ-prayojana), not a secondary one.

According to Nyāya philosophy, liberation (mokṣa), which is the complete cessation of suffering, is also a primary human goal. Just as heaven, being characterized by uninterrupted happiness and excellence, is naturally desirable and does not depend on any other desire, similarly the complete cessation of suffering is also supremely excellent. Therefore, the knowledge of it, obtained through scriptural study and reflection, immediately generates desire for it without depending on any other desire.

Here, briefly, heaven may be understood as follows: that state of happiness in which the soul (the substratum of happiness) is free from intense suffering during its experience, and in which neither before nor after that bodily condition there is suffering in that soul, is called heaven. It is a desirable form of happiness.

In various texts, such a definition of heaven is found. When the word “heaven” is used to denote a specific place, that is not its primary meaning but a figurative (secondary) one.

The nature of liberation (apavarga or mokṣa) will be discussed in detail in the subsequent sections. The term “hell” is also explained by the śāstra authors in a similar manner, by substituting happiness and suffering appropriately and



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interpreting them through exclusion of the undesired and acceptance of the desired meaning.

2

**Muktipramāṇa-prakarāṇa** - (Muktipramāṇa-prakarāṇa is the section that establishes liberation through valid means of knowledge such as scripture and inference.) Knowledge (pramāṇa) alone establishes the existence of things; without pramāṇa, nothing can be established as real. Therefore, through agreement and difference (anvaya-vyatireka), pramāṇa must be accepted as the cause of object-cognition. Whatever is not established by any pramāṇa is considered unreal or non-existent, like a sky-flower or a hare's horn.

Hence, in order to establish liberation (mokṣa) as a real entity, one must depend upon valid means of knowledge. According to the Naiyāyikas, there are four pramāṇas—perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāna), comparison (upamāna), and testimony (śabda). However, liberation is not an object of sensory perception, since it is not an external object accessible to the senses. Nor can it be perceived mentally in the state of liberation, because at that time the body, senses, and latent karmic impressions (adrṣṭa) cease to exist. Even prior to liberation, perception is not possible due to the absence of its conditions. Therefore, liberation cannot be established through perception.

Comparison (upamāna) merely yields knowledge of verbal association; hence, for the cognition of liberation, inference and verbal testimony are primarily required.

The inferential argument for liberation may be presented as follows:

Just as in a lamp, the property called “lamp-ness” exists only in that lamp-substance, is confined to a particular entity, and is destroyed in the immediately succeeding moment, similarly, qualities such as “pain-ness” or “Devadatta's suffering” also exist only in a particular substrate (the self) and may be destroyed in a subsequent moment.

The intention of this example is that suffering is a produced entity, which exists in the self as its substrate and can be destroyed through appropriate causes. The complete and final destruction of suffering is what is called liberation.

Here, “continuity (santatitva)” means the condition in which a property does not remain simultaneously in multiple entities, but exists sequentially across different moments.

Thus, if “pain-ness” is accepted as the counter-positive of destruction occurring in a different time than its substrate, then that destruction must be the destruction of pain itself. A time must be assumed in which suffering is entirely absent. If we take cosmic dissolution (mahāpralaya) as that time, it becomes problematic due to lack of independent proof; hence another special state must be accepted—namely, the state in which suffering is entirely absent. That state is liberation.

In this way, the complete eradication of suffering is established as liberation.

A possible objection arises: just as in scripture the inference “the body is impure because it is produced from impurities like semen, blood, etc.” is sometimes contradicted, similarly, if there are scriptural statements opposing this inference, how can liberation still be established?

In reply, it is said that scriptural testimony also supports this conclusion. For example, the Upaniṣads declare that knowledge of the Self is the means to liberation, and that one who realizes the Self is not reborn. Liberation is also called “apunarbhava”—non-return to birth.

Until self-knowledge arises, birth and karmic fruition necessarily continue. But through self-realization, all karmic impressions are destroyed, and therefore the possibility of rebirth ceases. Consequently, the complete cessation of suffering is established, and this is liberation.

3

**Resolution of the doubt regarding the impossibility of desiring liberation (apavarga/mokṣa)**- An action toward which a person has natural aversion is one that is opposed to their happiness, meaning that performing it necessarily results in the loss of some form of pleasure. Generally, no one is inclined toward such actions. For example, a person engaged in continuous study does not abandon it merely to gain the temporary comfort that comes from rest, because the value of the outcome of study outweighs the loss of such comfort. Similarly, someone may leave their home and relatives and go to a distant land to earn a livelihood through great hardship. Although staying at home would provide comfort, the person does not choose it because the goal of earning wealth is considered more important.

From these examples, it follows that if an action necessarily results in the complete cessation of happiness, then ordinarily no one would be inclined toward it. Thus, a doubt arises: how can mokṣa, which is defined as the complete cessation of suffering—and which also implies the absence of worldly happiness—be considered a desirable human goal (*puruṣārtha*)?

The answer is that although complete cessation of suffering is necessarily accompanied by the absence of worldly pleasure, still, if there is no opposing force of aversion toward that state, then mere cognition of “absence of suffering”



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is sufficient to generate desire for it. In other words, the absence of suffering is itself experienced as desirable. If it is objected that the absence of suffering also entails the absence of happiness and therefore should naturally evoke aversion, the reply is that what is regarded as *self-evident ultimate good* (svataḥ-prayojana) does not become an object of hatred. Since the complete cessation of suffering is regarded as the highest good, it does not generate aversion; rather, it generates desire.

Therefore, mokṣa—understood as the complete cessation of suffering—is properly established as a *puruṣārtha* (a valid human goal), and there is no logical contradiction in accepting it as such.

4

**Determination of the Qualified Person (Adhikārin) for Liberation** - The scriptures state that when a person, through disciplined yogic practice and the development of yogic powers, attains true knowledge (tattvajñāna), all inner desires are destroyed, all doubts are eliminated, and both merit and demerit (dharma and adharma)—which are the basis of karmic bondage—are completely removed. In this state, knowledge produced through yoga destroys dharma and adharma, thereby bringing about the cessation of suffering. Since pleasure depends on merit (dharma), the destruction of dharma also implies the cessation of worldly happiness.

However, the cessation of happiness is generally not desired by all beings; rather, it is something naturally opposed and even hated. Therefore, if one understands that yogic practices lead to the cessation of happiness, ordinary individuals would develop aversion toward such practices instead of engaging in them. This raises the question: how can anyone voluntarily undertake the difficult path of liberation, which appears to destroy happiness itself?

The answer is that in worldly people, there is intense attachment (utkāṭa-rāga) toward pleasure and intense aversion (utkāṭa-dveṣa) toward the absence of pleasure. But when one reflects deeply on the nature of worldly happiness—seeing it as mixed with suffering, impermanent, and ultimately unstable—this intense attachment gradually weakens. In such a case, aversion toward the path of liberation does not arise.

To explain this, the notion of “intensity” (utkāṭatva) is introduced as a distinguishing factor. Mere attraction or aversion is not sufficient to determine action; rather, it is the intensity of these feelings that governs human engagement or withdrawal from a course of action.

Thus, although both the worldly person and the discerning (vivekī) person recognize that worldly happiness is mixed with suffering, the worldly person remains attached to it due to strong attraction, whereas the discerning person does not. Hence, mere intellectual knowledge is not enough to determine action; it is the psychological structure of attraction and aversion that governs human behavior.

This point is also illustrated by Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya in the *Īśvarānumāna* section of the *Tattvacintāmaṇi*. He explains that foolish, non-discerning people, being solely desirous of pleasure, engage even in sinful acts for the sake of pleasure mixed with suffering. In contrast, the wise person understands that worldly happiness is unstable and filled with suffering, and therefore does not become attached to it. Just as a traveler seeking relief from heat would not take shelter under the hood of a venomous snake—mistaking danger for safety—similarly, worldly beings mistakenly take refuge in household life, only to suffer further distress.

Therefore, only those who have developed discrimination (viveka) and whose attachment to worldly pleasure and aversion to renunciation are weakened become qualified for the pursuit of liberation. These discerning individuals are the true *adhikārins* (eligible aspirants) for the path of mokṣa.

5

**Establishing Mokṣa as a Human Goal (Puruṣārtha)**- Earlier, liberation (mokṣa), defined as the complete cessation of suffering (atyanta-duḥkha-nivṛtti), has been established as a *puruṣārtha* (human goal). However, some object to this view and argue that people do not engage in pursuit of anything that is not available to perception. For example, states like unconsciousness (mūrchā) are not directly perceptible, and therefore no one is seen to consciously strive for them. In the same way, since liberation is not an object of direct perception, it cannot be considered a human goal.

This objection is not valid. The status of something as a *puruṣārtha* does not depend on its being perceptible. Human beings do not act with the intention of “I should perceive the absence of suffering,” but rather with the intention that “I should be free from suffering itself.” Action is directed toward the result (phala), not toward its perception.

In practical experience, when a person seeks relief from suffering, the desire is not for the knowledge of absence of suffering, but for the actual removal of suffering. This is why even a person whose body is afflicted by severe pain may be willing to undergo extreme measures, even death, in order to eliminate suffering—though after death there is no perception of that state of freedom from suffering.



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Therefore, since human effort is directed toward the attainment of desired results and not toward perceptibility, liberation remains a valid *puruṣārtha* even though it is not an object of direct perception. Mokṣa, understood as the complete and final cessation of suffering, is thus accepted as the highest human goal.

6

**Causality of Liberation through True Knowledge (Tattvajñāna-mukti-hetutā-vicārah)** - Earlier, liberation (mokṣa) has been defined as the cessation of suffering (duḥkha-nivṛtti), but a proper understanding of the exact nature of this cessation is necessary before deciding whether it is an end (*puruṣārtha*) and whether true knowledge (tattvajñāna) is relevant to it. The author therefore explains that this cessation of suffering is not merely a prior non-existence (*prāgabhāva*), but a destruction (*dhvaṃsa*) of suffering. It cannot be *prāgabhāva* because *prāgabhāva* and absolute non-existence (*atyantābhāva*) are beginningless and unproduced, whereas what has no origination cannot become a goal to be achieved. If liberation were understood as *prāgabhāva*, then effort such as yoga and spiritual practice would become meaningless, since one does not strive to produce what is eternally non-produced.

Thus, liberation must be understood as the destruction of suffering. Yet a further question arises: if suffering naturally ceases in the very next moment through the production of a succeeding state in the self, then what role does true knowledge play? In ordinary experience, every particular quality of a substance is destroyed by the immediately succeeding quality arising in the same substratum. Hence, even without knowledge, suffering would be destroyed by the next moment's mental or experiential state, and liberation would occur automatically.

To this objection it is answered that such natural momentary destruction is different from the destruction produced by true knowledge. The ordinary cessation of suffering, caused by other factors, is not the same as the complete and final cessation (*atyantika-duḥkha-nivṛtti*) that occurs only when true knowledge arises. In ordinary worldly experience, suffering is replaced by another state, but it remains within the same cycle of bondage. However, when true knowledge arises, it destroys the causal chain of suffering itself, since it removes ignorance and the resulting accumulation of merit and demerit (*dharma-adharma*). Therefore, true knowledge must be accepted as a necessary means for liberation.

However, a further objection is raised: if the defining characteristic of liberation (namely, suffering's destruction in relation to its substratum) can be produced by other causes, then it becomes an "extraneous characteristic" (*arthasamagrahita*), and such a property cannot serve as the defining condition (*jātivacchedaka*) of the effect of knowledge. If so, knowledge cannot be the cause of liberation.

In response, it is said that even if a property is shared or externally determined, it is not necessarily excluded from being the defining condition of an effect. Only when there is a strong reason against such causality is it rejected. In the present case, scripture (*śruti*) and authoritative tradition establish that liberation is directly connected with true knowledge. Therefore, even if the defining feature appears externally determined, it is still valid to accept it as the causal condition of liberation.

Thus, liberation is established as the destruction of suffering that is specifically dependent on true knowledge, and therefore true knowledge is rightly affirmed as its cause.

7

### Establishing the Role of Knowledge as the Means to Liberation (Tattvajñāne Mukti-prayojakatva-sthāpanam)-

In the previous discussion, it was argued that liberation (mokṣa) cannot be taken as a limiting condition of the effect (*kāryatāvacchedaka*) of true knowledge (tattvajñāna), and this was supported with scriptural evidence. However, it cannot be accepted that scriptural testimony alone settles the matter conclusively. For even if, on interpretative grounds, liberation is not taken as the limiting condition of the effect of knowledge but instead as the limiting condition of its applicability (*prayojyatāvacchedaka*), the meaning of the scriptures remains consistent. Hence, the author's intention is to establish liberation as the condition that gives purpose or relevance (*prayojyatāvacchedaka*) to knowledge.

Even if liberation is not the effect-limit of knowledge, there is no obstacle in accepting it as its applicability-limit. The general rule is that a property included within a broader conceptual grouping (*arthasamagraha*) does not function as a limiting condition of effect; however, there is no such restriction regarding its role as a condition of applicability.

Until true knowledge arises, the continuous flow of demerit (*pāpa*) in the self does not cease. As long as this flow continues, suffering caused by demerit is inevitable. When suffering persists, its cessation cannot be considered temporally distinct or final. However, once knowledge arises, the stream of demerit is cut off, and as a result, suffering ceases to arise. At that stage, the cessation of suffering becomes temporally distinct and final. Thus, knowledge functions as the cause of liberation in the sense that it is the indispensable condition without which liberation does not occur.

This "causal" relation is not to be understood as a heavy metaphysical entity but as a specific relational dependence: that without which a particular effect does not arise is called its cause in a practical sense.



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When an aspirant for liberation understands that knowledge is the means to liberation, this very cognition produces a desire for knowledge, since awareness of something as the means to an desired end generates motivation toward it. It is not merely awareness of causal relation in general that produces such desire. Therefore, in the case of a discerning seeker, the recognition of knowledge as the means to liberation does not obstruct the desire for knowledge.

Scriptural statements such as “having become free from all suffering, he moves” and “being disembodied, he is not touched by pleasure and pain” also indicate knowledge as the means leading to liberation, rather than as its direct cause. Hence, scriptural and traditional sources do not contradict the establishment of knowledge as the means to liberation.

Thus, by establishing this functional relation between knowledge and liberation, the usefulness and purpose of knowledge in relation to liberation is fully preserved.

### 8

**Refutation of the Theory that Liberation is Mere Prior Non-Existence of Suffering (Prāgabhāva)**—Among the Mīmāṃsakas, the Prābhākara school holds that liberation (mokṣa) is nothing but the prior non-existence (prāgabhāva) of suffering, i.e., the absence of future arising of suffering. They argue that although prāgabhāva is a negative entity, it is still knowable through knowledge of reality (tattvajñāna). People are observed to engage in rituals such as expiatory rites (prāyaścitta) and practical efforts like removing snakes and thorns with the intention that “may I not suffer.”

According to them, the destruction of suffering is not the direct aim in such practices, because destruction presupposes prior existence. Instead, what is really aimed at is the absence of future suffering. Since prior non-existence is eternal and always present, it does not depend on human effort, yet its awareness motivates action. Hence, liberation is defined as the prior non-existence of suffering, which is revealed through knowledge. However, this view is not acceptable.

For, a general and undifferentiated “prior non-existence of suffering” cannot be identified as liberation. Prior non-existence is always relative to a specific future event; therefore, for each particular suffering, there is a separate prior non-existence. There is no single universal prior non-existence of suffering as such. Hence, even in the life of a bound soul, there is always some prior non-existence of some future suffering. If that alone were liberation, then even ordinary worldly beings would be considered liberated.

Moreover, in liberation, since there is no possibility of future suffering at all, the notion of its prior non-existence becomes meaningless. Prior non-existence presupposes the possibility of future production, but in the liberated state no such possibility exists.

The desire expressed in practices like expiation—“may I never suffer”—does not actually refer to prāgabhāva, but rather to the **absolute non-occurrence (atyantābhāva)** of suffering. While absolute non-existence is eternal, it does not function in the same way as prior non-existence. Even in deep sleep (susupti), suffering does not arise, yet that state cannot be called liberation, because the prior non-existence of suffering there is temporary and not final. Thus, prior non-existence and destruction of suffering must be distinguished from absolute non-existence.

Therefore, even though liberation involves the destruction or cessation of suffering, it is not merely prāgabhāva, but rather the complete and final absence of suffering (atyantika duḥkha-abhāva), which alone can properly be identified as mokṣa.

### 9

**Explanation: “Justification of Effort in the Difficult Means to Liberation”**—An objection is raised as follows: Just as a distant lake may provide relief from heat through bathing, even though similar relief can be easily obtained through rain or other effortless means, a person does not undertake the difficult journey to such a lake. This is because, once we abstract away the special features (qualifications) and focus only on the general result (relief from heat), we see that the same result can be achieved through easier means.

Similarly, if liberation (mokṣa) is understood simply as “cessation of suffering” without emphasizing its special qualification of absolute or final cessation (atyantika duḥkha-nivṛtti), then it appears that the same result could be achieved through simpler means. Hence, there would be no rational motivation to engage in arduous spiritual practices such as yoga, meditation, and austerities.

This objection is not valid. Just as people, though aware that some pleasures are easily available, still undertake expensive and laborious rituals (such as sacrifices) in order to attain heavenly pleasures—because such pleasures are understood to be unique, intense, and free from all suffering—in the same way, liberation is not merely general cessation of suffering.

Liberation is characterized by the special feature of absolute, final, and irreversible cessation of all suffering. It is precisely this qualification that creates a strong and compelling desire (intense attraction) toward mokṣa, which in turn motivates people to engage in even extremely difficult spiritual disciplines. Thus:



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- When the result is ordinary and easily obtainable, effort is not made.
- But when the result is understood as supreme, final, and incomparable (as in mokṣa), strong effort naturally arises.
- A distant lake does not attract effort because its benefit is not uniquely superior or compelling.
- But heavenly happiness attracts people despite great difficulty because it is understood as superior and free from suffering.

Therefore, liberation is defined not as simple removal of suffering, but as its complete and final cessation, and this special character justifies the human willingness to undertake difficult spiritual practices for its attainment.

### 10

**Examination of Liberation as the Destruction of Sin (Durita-nāśa)**- Some thinkers argue that even though true knowledge (*tattva-jñāna*) is accepted as the cause of the destruction of suffering, it cannot itself be identified with liberation (*mokṣa*). This is because, strictly speaking, liberation must be that state which is the direct and primary result of knowledge. However, the destruction of suffering is not a direct product of knowledge. According to some scriptural interpretations, sin (*durita*) is destroyed only when its effects have been experienced; thus, destruction follows experience rather than knowledge alone.

To ensure that liberation is properly defined, it is therefore suggested that only the ultimate and irreversible destruction of sin (*ātyantika durita-nāśa*) should be regarded as liberation. Here, “ultimate destruction” means the complete cessation of sin existing in the self such that it does not arise again, i.e., destruction that is not co-temporal with the existing sin. Ordinary destruction occurring through experience or expiation does not qualify, since it lacks this finality. An objection is raised: even after the rise of knowledge, sages such as Nārada are seen engaging in actions aimed at happiness and avoiding causes of suffering. This suggests that even after knowledge, the possibility of happiness and suffering remains, which implies the continued existence of merit and demerit (*dharma* and *adharma*). Therefore, the destruction of sin caused by knowledge cannot be simultaneous with existing sin, and thus cannot be equated with liberation.

The reply is as follows: although *prārabdha* karma continues for some time even after the rise of knowledge, it is eventually exhausted through experience. After that, the final and subsequent rise of knowledge leads to the complete destruction of all remaining karmic residues. This final destruction alone constitutes liberation. The earlier partial destruction of sin following initial knowledge is not liberation; only the final, irreversible cessation is.

Another position holds that true knowledge destroys all sins completely and immediately. However, this is also challenged. The reason is that the absence of a uniform “class” (*jāti*) among sins prevents us from establishing a single universal relation between knowledge and all types of sin destruction. Different sins (such as those arising from different actions like violence or wrongdoing) have different causal structures; hence, no single uniform principle can explain their destruction by knowledge in the same way.

It is therefore concluded that a general notion of “sin-destruction” cannot be uniformly assigned as the effect of knowledge without encountering inconsistencies. Even destruction produced through experience (*bhoga*) shows similar characteristics, making it difficult to distinguish cases consistently.

The resolution offered is that knowledge should not be regarded as the cause of all forms of sin-destruction in general, but only of ultimate sin-destruction (*ātyantika durita-nāśa*). Experience-based destruction explains ordinary karmic exhaustion, but only knowledge accounts for the final, irreversible cessation of all sin.

Although it may be difficult to establish a universal class among sins destroyed by knowledge, this does not undermine the doctrine, since what matters is not uniform classification but the final causal relation.

Liberation should therefore be understood as the ultimate and irreversible destruction of sin, and true knowledge is the specific cause of this final destruction.

### 11

**Examination of the Causal Role of True Knowledge (Tattva-jñāna) in the Destruction of Sin (Durita-nāśa)** - Some philosophers argue that there is no valid proof that true knowledge (*tattva-jñāna*) is the cause of the destruction of sin (*durita*). According to them, scripture establishes that the destruction of unseen karmic forces (*adṛṣṭa*) occurs only through experience (*bhoga*). The statement “*mā abhuktaṃ kṣīyate karma*” (“karma is not destroyed without being experienced”) seems to contradict the idea that knowledge can destroy karma.

It may be argued in response that if knowledge does not destroy karma, then even a knower of truth would inevitably experience suffering caused by past actions. This would make complete cessation of suffering (liberation) impossible. Therefore, even from the standpoint that liberation is total cessation of suffering, the destruction of karma by knowledge must be accepted.



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The reply to this is that past karmas are exhausted through experience, and since desires (*vāsanā*) cease after the rise of true knowledge, no new karmas are produced. Consequently, after some time, complete cessation of suffering becomes possible. Thus, the motivation to pursue knowledge remains intact.

Another argument is that many scriptural passages declare that true knowledge destroys all karmas, removes doubts, and annihilates *adr̥ṣṭa*. For example, just as blazing fire reduces fuel to ashes, so does the fire of knowledge destroy all actions. Hence, the role of knowledge as a destroyer of karma cannot be denied.

The response is that to reconcile such statements with the doctrine that karma is destroyed only through experience, we must interpret them as meaning that knowledge leads to the rapid exhaustion of karma by enabling its experience (even through extraordinary means like multiple embodiments). Thus, knowledge is not the direct (primary) cause but an indirect (secondary) cause of the destruction of karma—just as fire indirectly reduces wood to ashes through a sequence of processes.

If it is suggested that the word *karma* should be interpreted figuratively (by *lakṣaṇā*) to mean only that type of *adr̥ṣṭa* which is not destroyed by knowledge, then the need to assume universal karmic experience disappears. However, this interpretation is rejected because the use of *karma* in the sense of *adr̥ṣṭa* is already well-established, whereas introducing a new restricted meaning is unjustified.

An objection may arise that if all karma must be experienced, then the statement “unexperienced karma is not destroyed” becomes redundant. This is resolved by noting that *abhukta* (“unexperienced”) refers to the state prior to experience; thus, the statement only denies destruction before experience, not after it.

Although *bhoga* (experience) technically refers to conscious experience and *adr̥ṣṭa* is supersensible, in practice *adr̥ṣṭa* associated with pleasure and pain is treated as “experienced,” as seen in common expressions like “one experiences merit and demerit.”

Scriptural statements such as “even after millions of ages, karma is not destroyed without being experienced” imply that karma does not perish merely by the passage of time—it must produce its effect. However, this does not rule out the possibility that knowledge may also contribute to its destruction.

A further issue concerns *prāyaścitta* (atonement). If karma is destroyed only through experience, then atonement would be ineffective. To preserve its validity, it may be argued that atonement accelerates karmic experience. Yet since all suffering is equally unpleasant, there is no essential difference between immediate and delayed experience, which raises doubts about the necessity of atonement.

Statements like “*avaśyam eva bhoktavyaṃ kṛtaṃ karma śubhāśubham*” (“one must necessarily experience the results of one’s good and bad actions”) do not require that even a knower of truth must undergo all karmic results. For certain karmas (e.g., those neutralized by atonement), experience is not required. Hence, *karma* may be interpreted as that which is not destroyed by other scripturally enjoined means. Since true knowledge is also scripturally sanctioned, it can be accepted as a destroyer of karma even without experience.

Finally, the concern that accepting both experience and knowledge as causes of karmic destruction leads to inconsistency (*vyabhicāra*) is resolved by distinguishing their domains:

- Experience causes the destruction of karma that is to be experienced.
- Knowledge causes the destruction of karma associated with true knowledge.

Thus, no contradiction arises. True knowledge has a distinct causal role in the destruction of sin (*durita-nāśa*). Therefore, it is reasonable to identify liberation with the destruction of sin brought about by true knowledge.

## 12

**Deliberation on Liberation as the Destruction of Sin (Durita-nāśa)**- In the previous discussion, the destruction of sin (*durita-nāśa*) arising from true knowledge (*tattva-jñāna*) was described as the nature of liberation (*mukti*). However, this position is challenged on the ground that unless something is intrinsically desirable (*svataḥ-prayojana*), it cannot be regarded as liberation. Since the destruction of sin is desired only as a means to the absence of suffering, it does not possess independent desirability; rather, it has only instrumental (secondary) value (*gauṇa-prayojana*). Therefore, it seems inappropriate to identify it with liberation.

In response, it is argued that although *durita-nāśa* is primarily of instrumental value, it can still, in a certain sense, be regarded as intrinsically desirable. Thus, on this qualified basis, it may be accepted as liberation.

A further objection arises: if something that is only instrumentally valuable can be called liberation, then the cessation of desires (*vāsanā-nāśa*)—which are produced by false knowledge and which, through unseen forces (*adr̥ṣṭa*), lead to suffering—should also be considered liberation, since it too leads to the cessation of suffering.



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The reply to this is as follows: even when false knowledge has been removed and desires have ceased, liberation is not immediately attained as long as the accumulated *prārabdha karma* has not been exhausted. Scriptural statements such as “*tāvad eva ciraṃ...*” indicate that even for a knower of truth, liberation is delayed until the exhaustion of *prārabdha karma*. Therefore, since liberation necessarily depends on the destruction of karmic residues, it is more reasonable to identify liberation with the destruction of sin (*durita-nāśa*) rather than merely with the cessation of desires (*vāsanā-nāśa*), which alone is insufficient.

Hence, the destruction of sin stands as the more logically consistent candidate for being identified with liberation.

13

**An examination of the established concept of liberation according to the Ekadaṇḍi doctrine** -Among the Vedāntins, there are mainly two groups—**Ekadaṇḍins** and **Tridaṇḍins**. The Ekadaṇḍins do not wear the traditional tuft (*śikhā*) or sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*), whereas the Tridaṇḍins maintain these external marks. Philosophically also, there is a difference between them.

According to the Tridaṇḍins, *upādhi* (limiting adjunct) has a certain level of reality, and worldly objects like pots are explained as transformations of *avidyā*. But according to the Ekadaṇḍins, the *upādhi* is false in all three times (*trikāla-mithyā*). Therefore, it cannot be the real cause of worldly experience; rather, beginningless impressions (*saṃskāras*) are responsible.

Some also explain that those who practice control of speech, body, and mind (*vāk-daṇḍa*, *kāya-daṇḍa*, *mano-daṇḍa*) are called Tridaṇḍins, while those who hold only the “staff of knowledge” are Ekadaṇḍins. Here, control of speech means silence, control of body means non-violence or restraint, and control of mind refers to practices like *prāṇāyāma*. According to the Ekadaṇḍins, liberation (*mokṣa* or *kaivalya*) is the removal of *upādhi*, by which Brahman remains in its pure nature, free from all limiting reflections. This *upādhi* is nothing but *avidyā* (ignorance), not any separate real entity. Therefore, the destruction of *avidyā* itself is liberation.

Suffering belongs to the internal organ (*antaḥkaraṇa*), especially the intellect (*buddhi*). Since this intellect is caused by *avidyā*, when *avidyā* is destroyed, the intellect also ceases, and along with it, suffering disappears. Thus, removal of *avidyā* becomes the main means for the removal of suffering, which is the ultimate human goal.

In this view, *avidyā* is not simply absence of knowledge; it is a positive entity. Just like in Nyāya philosophy *prāgabhāva* (prior non-existence) has no beginning but can still end, similarly *avidyā* is beginningless but is destroyed by the rise of *Brahma-jñāna*.

Now a question arises: if *avidyā* always covers Brahman, how can Brahman be known? The answer is that Brahman-knowledge arises as a modification of the internal organ (*antaḥkaraṇa-vṛtti*), and this *vṛtti* removes the covering of ignorance.

As explained by Vidyāraṇya in the *Pañcadaśī*, both mental modification (*buddhi-vṛtti*) and reflected consciousness (*cidābhāsa*) relate to objects. The *vṛtti* removes ignorance, and *cidābhāsa* reveals the object. This shows that *avidyā* does not oppose the mental modification itself, but it opposes the manifestation (appearance) of the object.

Another doubt arises: if Brahman is known through a mental modification, does it not contradict the idea that Brahman is self-luminous (*svaprakāśa*)? The answer is that self-luminosity means that Brahman shines by itself, not that it cannot be associated with a mental mode. The mental mode only removes ignorance; it does not produce Brahman.

As Suresvarācārya explains, Brahman appears in different ways—pure in itself, as the illuminator of the world when associated with ignorance, as the knower (*pramātā*) when reflected in the mind, as knowledge (*pramāṇa*) when connected with mental modifications, and as the known object (*prameya*) when conditioned by objects.

Thus, Brahman shines by itself, not through reflection. Just as two transparent objects do not reflect each other, pure consciousness cannot reflect itself.

Therefore, Brahman-knowledge is a unique self-revealing knowledge. In the state of bondage, since the specific mental modification (*Brahmākāra-vṛtti*) does not arise, ignorance continues. But when this *vṛtti* arises, ignorance is destroyed, and liberation is attained.

14

**An examination of liberation according to the Tridaṇḍi doctrine**- According to the Tridaṇḍi Vedāntins, liberation (*mokṣa*) consists in the dissolution of the individual self (*jīvātman*) into the blissful Supreme Brahman. Although there is no real difference between the individual self and the Supreme Self, the self conditioned by the *liṅga-śarīra* (subtle body) is conventionally referred to as the ‘*jīva*’. Thus, the apparent distinction between the *jīva* and Brahman is due solely to limiting adjuncts (*upādhi*).



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When these differentiating adjuncts are removed, no distinction remains between the individual self and Brahman. This state is described as the dissolution of the *jīva* into Brahman. Just as, upon the destruction of a pot, the pot-space (*ghaṭākāśa*) merges into the infinite space (*mahākāśa*), and no separate entity called pot-space remains, similarly, upon the destruction of the subtle body, the individual self merges into Brahman, leaving no independent existence apart from Brahman. Therefore, the destruction of the subtle body ultimately constitutes liberation.

The subtle body is constituted by various elements, including *mahat* (intellect), *ahaṅkāra* (ego), the five subtle elements (*tanmātras*: sound, touch, form, taste, smell), the five cognitive senses, the five active senses, and the mind. Since experiences such as pleasure and pain arise only in association with this subtle body, their cessation follows from its destruction.

The subtle body, when attributed to the self, functions as a delimiting adjunct (*avacchedaka*), indicating the locus of experiences like suffering. In this sense, it is the basis of bondage and suffering. Hence, its destruction leads to the cessation of suffering and can justifiably be regarded as the attainment of the highest human goal (*puruṣārtha*), namely liberation.

Furthermore, according to this view, the cessation of *māyā* leads to the cessation of the phenomenal world, and liberation necessarily requires the removal of *māyā*. Here, *avidyā* (ignorance) is identified with *māyā*. Consequently, this doctrine does not substantially differ in its final outcome from earlier views that define liberation as the cessation of ignorance.

However, the Naiyāyikas raise an objection to this position. They argue that the so-called entity termed *avidyā* is not epistemically established. The scriptural usage of the term 'avidyā' should instead be interpreted as referring to *adr̥ṣṭa* (unseen force or karmic residue), which is opposed to true knowledge (*vidyā*). This interpretation is supported by deriving the meaning of 'avidyā' through the negating prefix (*nañ*) in the sense of opposition.

Although *adr̥ṣṭa* is produced, its continuity is beginningless, and hence it is metaphorically termed 'beginningless ignorance'. Therefore, the cessation of this *adr̥ṣṭa*, or the cessation of suffering produced by it, alone constitutes liberation, and this view does not encounter any logical inconsistency.

15

**An Examination of Liberation According to the Pātanjala (Yoga) School-** Some philosophers maintain that with the cessation of ignorance (*avidyā*), the intellect (*buddhi-tattva*) also ceases, and consequently the qualities inherent in it—such as pleasure and pain—are eliminated. However, this position is not logically tenable.

If *buddhi* is indeed the substratum of pleasure and pain, there is no valid proof for its destruction. Rather, its continued existence must be assumed as the locus of *adr̥ṣṭa* (unseen karmic force), which accounts for the experience of pleasure and pain across different births. Without such a substratum, the regularity of karmic experience cannot be explained.

Even if one accepts that *buddhi* persists until liberation and is then destroyed to ensure the complete cessation of suffering, this too is problematic. For the cessation of suffering can be explained simply through the destruction of *adr̥ṣṭa*, even without the destruction of *buddhi*. Nor can it be argued that *adr̥ṣṭa* cannot be destroyed without the destruction of its substratum, since even when the substratum remains, *adr̥ṣṭa* can be completely eliminated through true knowledge (*tattva-jñāna*) operating in a relation of co-location (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*).

Even according to this view, *tattva-jñāna* must be accepted as the cause of the destruction of ignorance. Furthermore, the non-production of future *adr̥ṣṭa* depends upon the absence of latent impressions (*vāsanā*). Since even in yogins—who still possess *buddhi*—new *adr̥ṣṭa* does not arise, *vāsanā* must be admitted as the true cause of karmic accumulation. If one is unwilling to accept *avidyā* as a separate ontological category, it may instead be identified with *adr̥ṣṭa* or with the latent impressions produced by false cognition.

It may further be argued that *tattva-jñāna* is not the direct cause of the destruction of *adr̥ṣṭa*, but rather the direct cause of the destruction of *buddhi*, since *buddhi* is the substratum of cognition. In this way, causal explanation through the relation of substratum (*āśrayatā*) is simpler than positing causality through co-location.

However, this view is also untenable. Without a regulating principle, the destruction attributed in this way could improperly extend to other entities. Moreover, if *tattva-jñāna* is separately posited as the cause of the destruction of *vāsanā*, it leads to unnecessary theoretical complexity. In fact, once the destruction of *buddhi* is accepted, the destruction of both *adr̥ṣṭa* and *vāsanā* can be explained as consequent upon it. Therefore, it is not necessary to posit separate causal roles for *tattva-jñāna* in each case. The destruction of the substratum itself sufficiently accounts for the destruction of its dependents.

Thus, it may be concluded that liberation consists in the complete dissociation of the self from all limiting adjuncts (*upādhi-vigama*). However, this position also faces serious objections. If *buddhi* is beginningless (*anādi*), its destruction becomes impossible, since only that which is produced can be destroyed. On the other hand, if *buddhi* is produced (*sādi*),



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then the stream of *adr̥ṣṭa* associated with it must also have a beginning. In that case, the initial diversity of *adr̥ṣṭa* and the corresponding diversity of experiential results (such as pleasure and pain) cannot be adequately explained. If one attempts to explain this diversity by appealing to a prior diversity of actions (*karma*), this too fails, since the origin of such initial diversity remains unaccounted for.

Therefore, it must be accepted that the substratum of *adr̥ṣṭa* is eternal, and that the beginningless and variegated stream of *adr̥ṣṭa* alone accounts for the diversity of worldly experience.

16

**An Examination of Liberation According to the Sāṅkhya (Kāpila) School-** According to the Sāṅkhya system founded by Kapila, *buddhi-tattva* (intellect), also known as *mahat-tattva*, is the first transformation (*pariṇāma*) of primordial *प्रकृति* (*prakṛti*), which is constituted by the three *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. The terms *mahat* and *buddhi* are essentially synonymous. It is within this intellect that properties such as *dharma*, *adharma*, pleasure, pain, desire, aversion, effort, and cognition reside.

Individual selves (*puruṣas*) are many and distinct. Each self is immutable consciousness (*kūṭastha-caitanya*), which does not serve as the substratum of changing attributes. However, the common notion that the self is the locus of pleasure, pain, knowledge, and ignorance is merely an illusion (*bhrama*). This erroneous cognition arises due to the influence of *ahaṅkāra* (ego), which itself evolves from *buddhi*.

This idea is also reflected in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, where it is stated that although *prakṛti* performs all actions through its *guṇas*, the deluded self, due to ego, considers itself the agent.

Thus, bondage consists in the superimposition (*uparāga*) of *buddhi* upon the self, and liberation (*mukti*) is attained when *buddhi* dissolves back into *prakṛti*, resulting in the cessation of this superimposition.

In Sāṅkhya philosophy, the aphorism stating that “the absolute cessation of the three kinds of suffering constitutes the highest human goal” defines liberation as the complete removal of *ādhyātmika* (internal), *ādhibhautika* (external), and *ādhidaivika* (cosmic) sufferings. However, according to the interpretation of *Vijñānabhikṣu*, what is ultimately meant is the cessation of the *experience* of suffering. If suffering is understood as the result of the superimposition of *buddhi* upon the self, then this interpretation remains consistent with Sāṅkhya doctrine.

Nevertheless, this Sāṅkhya position is not free from criticism. A major difficulty arises regarding the ontological status of *buddhi*: whether it is eternal (*anādi*) or produced (*sādi*). Both alternatives lead to philosophical complications and unresolved doubts. Consequently, a theory of liberation that depends upon the dissolution of *buddhi* lacks a fully secure foundation.

17

**An Examination of Liberation According to the Bhāṭṭa School-** According to the Bhāṭṭa school, liberation (*mukti*) consists in the direct realization of eternal bliss (*nitya-sukha-sākṣātkāra*). This view is not without scriptural support. Statements declaring that bliss is the very nature of Brahman and that it becomes the object of realization in liberation serve as its foundation. Such passages establish that in the state of liberation, there exists a direct apprehension of bliss. If one were to admit that this bliss is produced and destroyed, one would be compelled to accept additional entities such as prior non-existence (*prāgabhāva*) and destruction (*dhvaṁsa*), leading to unnecessary theoretical complexity (*gaurava*). Therefore, on the principle of economy (*lāghava*), it is preferable to deny both origination and destruction in this case and to accept bliss as eternal.

Some interpreters, relying on statements like “*nityam vijñānam ānandam brahma*”, argue that what is established is the eternity of the self qualified by bliss. In the absence of any *बाधक* (counteracting factor), the predicate naturally connects with the qualified entity. Since liberation is incompatible with suffering, a suffering-qualified self cannot be connected with liberation; however, no such obstacle exists in the case of a bliss-qualified self. Hence, the eternity of the self endowed with bliss is affirmed. From this, it follows that if the self qualified by bliss is eternal, then bliss itself must also be eternal.

However, this reasoning leads to a difficulty: if the eternity of bliss is established in this manner, then by a similar line of reasoning, the eternity of knowledge could also be established. This would entail accepting an eternally cognizing God, which conflicts with the Bhāṭṭa position, since that school does not accept eternal cognition.

Vedāntins, on the other hand, interpret scriptural statements such as “the liberated person is completely free from suffering” as indicating that liberation consists in the absolute absence of suffering. Thus, they equate bliss with the mere absence of suffering. In response, it is argued that statements like “*priyāpriye na spr̥ṣataḥ*” (“the pleasant and unpleasant do not touch him”) do not imply the total absence of both pleasure and pain; rather, they indicate the absence



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of relational contact between the liberated self and pleasure or pain. That is, pleasure and pain do not affect the liberated self.

The reasoning here is that if a property exists in even one instance, its complete absence cannot be asserted collectively. For example, if “potness” exists in a pot, one cannot claim its total absence across all related entities. Some attempt to interpret “na spr̥ṣataḥ” as indicating non-existence, but this interpretation is not acceptable due to grammatical and semantic constraints. Instead, statements such as “*ānandaṁ brahmaṇo rūpam, tac ca mokṣe pratiṣṭhitam*” are understood to mean that bliss is the nature of Brahman and is realized in liberation. Thus, it is appropriate to accept that eternal bliss exists in the liberated self.

However, statements like “*aśarīraṁ vā santam na spr̥ṣataḥ*” assert that pleasure and pain do not touch the disembodied liberated being. To reconcile this, it is argued that terms like “priya” (pleasant) refer to produced pleasure (*kārya-sukha*). Therefore, while produced pleasure and pain are absent in liberation, eternal bliss remains unaffected. Hence, no contradiction arises. In other words, the liberated self is characterized by eternal bliss, while all empirical (produced) pleasure and pain are entirely absent. Some scholars propose that, to avoid splitting the sentence meaning (*vākya-bheda*), one may posit a common property underlying both pleasure and pain and deny that property. However, this approach is not convincing, since such an interpretation requires a clearly established referent, which is lacking in this case.

Therefore, the most reasonable conclusion is **that** liberation consists in the coexistence of two aspects: the complete cessation of suffering and the realization of eternal bliss as the nature of the self.

18

**Refutation of the Bhāṭṭa View of Liberation)**- An important objection arises here: scripture identifies the body as a causal condition for the production of cognitions such as knowledge. If so, how can a liberated being—who is devoid of a body—experience cognition in the form of the realization of bliss? If such realization is said to be eternal, then no distinction would remain between the liberated state and the state of worldly existence. In that case, the necessity of rigorous practices such as austerity and yogic discipline would be undermined. For if this knowledge is eternal, it must also exist in the state of bondage, rendering scriptural injunctions for liberation meaningless. In response, it may be argued that the body is a cause only of *delimited cognition* (*avacchinna-jñāna*), not of *non-delimited or continuous cognition* (*anavacchinna-jñāna*). The realization of eternal bliss in liberation is of the latter type; therefore, its occurrence does not depend upon the body.

However, this explanation is not satisfactory from the standpoint of Nyāya. According to Nyāya, causality must be determined without introducing unnecessary properties. The body must still be accepted as the cause of produced cognition (*janma-jñāna*). The distinction between delimited and non-delimited cognition does not adequately resolve the issue.

In reality, the body functions as a cause only in relation to cognition arising under specific limiting conditions (*avachedakatā*). The realization of eternal bliss, however, does not arise under such limiting conditions and therefore does not require the body. The reason why such continuous cognition does not arise in the state of bondage is that the conditions required for delimited and non-delimited cognition are different: the former depends on bodily conditions, while the latter depends on true knowledge (*tattva-jñāna*). In the absence of such knowledge in the worldly state, continuous cognition does not arise.

If it is argued that produced cognition is perishable and therefore liberation would also be impermanent, the reply is that although individual cognitions perish, a continuous stream of similar cognitions arises successively, giving the appearance of uninterrupted continuity. Thus, the notion of liberation as a continuous realization of bliss can still be maintained.

Nevertheless, the author rejects this view and argues that the true nature of liberation is the complete cessation of suffering and the total destruction of its causal factors (*adṛṣṭa*). This cessation is brought about by true knowledge. Therefore, it is more appropriate to define liberation as the absolute cessation of suffering rather than as the experience of eternal bliss.

Scriptural expressions such as “ānanda is the nature of Brahman” do not denote sensory pleasure but rather the absence of suffering. Similarly, statements like “established in liberation” do not imply a particular experience but indicate an unbounded state. Scriptural injunctions such as “the Self is to be realized” establish that knowledge of the self is the cause of liberation. However, this knowledge matures through *śravaṇa* (hearing), *manana* (reflection), and *nididhyāsana* (deep contemplation), culminating in direct realization (*sākṣātkāra*), which alone is the immediate cause of liberation. An objection may be raised that verbal knowledge cannot remove deeply ingrained false notions such as “I am the body,” since such errors arise from latent impressions (*saṁskāra*). Indeed, only direct perception can counter perceptual



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error; just as a lost traveler cannot determine the correct direction merely through verbal instruction, but only through direct perception. Therefore, *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana* function only as indirect means leading to direct realization, which alone produces liberation.

This realization is achieved through prolonged meditative discipline, which explains why liberation does not occur immediately upon hearing or reflection. Hence, scripture teaches that through the combined means of scriptural testimony, inference, and repeated contemplation, one attains the highest realization of the self. Reasoning (*tarka*) plays a crucial role in this process. Although scriptural statements establish that the self is distinct from the body, apparent contradictions may give rise to doubt. Logical reasoning removes such doubt and makes sustained contemplation possible.

Thus, the study of logical systems such as Nyāya–Vaiśeṣika is highly conducive to liberation. Philosophers have always relied on reasoning to establish their doctrines and instruct their students. Even in Vedānta, reasoning consistent with scripture is encouraged. Although reasoning by itself may not always be conclusive, reasoning aligned with scripture is valid. Therefore, disciplines like Nyāya are by no means futile; rather, they are indispensable aids in the pursuit of liberation.

## 19.

**Some Ācāryas hold that the direct realization of God, not the realization of the individual self, is the primary cause of liberation-** Some philosophers maintain that the direct realization of God (*Īśvara-sākṣātkāra*) alone is the true cause of liberation, and not the realization of the individual self (*jīvātman*). Although God is beyond the reach of the senses, His direct apprehension is nevertheless possible through an extraordinary yogic relation (*alaukika-yogajasaṁnikarṣa*); hence, there is no obstacle to such realization.

An objection may be raised here: in scriptural statements such as “the Self is to be heard” (*ātma śrotavyaḥ*), the term *ātman* appears to refer to the individual self rather than the Supreme Self, since the context concerns the former. Therefore, it may be argued that scriptural authority supports the view that knowledge of the individual self alone leads to liberation.

However, this position is not tenable. Scriptural passages such as “I know that great Person” (*vedāham etaṁ puruṣaṁ mahāntam*) and “knowing Him alone one crosses beyond death” (*tam eva viditvā atimṛtyum eti*) clearly establish that the realization of God is the cause of liberation. Accordingly, in order to preserve consistency across scriptural statements, the term *ātman* in passages like “*ātma śrotavyaḥ*” must also be interpreted as referring to the Supreme Self. In support of this view, Udayanācārya, in his *Kusumāñjali*, explains that the inference of God through the five-membered syllogism (*pañcāvayava-nyāya*) is termed *manana* (reflection). Since such reflection is enjoined after *śravaṇa* (hearing), it follows that contemplation of God constitutes the intended practice.

A further objection arises: false knowledge (*mithyājñāna*) is the root of bondage, and liberation requires its removal. But the realization of God is not directly opposed to the false cognition that identifies the self with the body. How, then, can it function as the remover of such ignorance? From this standpoint, the realization of the individual self as distinct from the body appears to be the true eliminator of false knowledge and thus the cause of liberation.

In reply, it is argued that the realization of God brings about the cessation of the latent tendencies (*vāsanā*) that give rise to false knowledge. Once these tendencies are destroyed, false knowledge no longer arises. Thus, even if indirectly, the realization of God serves as the remover of ignorance. Although ordinarily the destruction of a mental disposition requires a cognition directly opposed to it, positing the realization of God as a distinct causal factor in the destruction of such dispositions does not involve any logical defect.

Alternatively, it may be admitted that realization of the individual self contributes to the removal of ignorance; nevertheless, **the primary cause of liberation remains the realization of the Supreme Self**, while self-realization is only auxiliary.

Another difficulty may be raised: due to yogic perception, a yogin can apprehend all objects. Therefore, if God is realized through such perception, all other objects should also be simultaneously cognized. In that case, how can scriptural statements like “knowing Him alone” (*tam eva viditvā*), which imply the exclusion of all other objects, be justified?

To resolve this, it is argued that the conditions giving rise to the indeterminate (*nirvikalpaka*) knowledge of the Supreme Self function in such a way as to exclude the manifestation of other objects. Thus, the cognition in question remains exclusively focused on the Supreme.

Moreover, the particle *eva* in “*tam eva viditvā*” may be construed in connection with the verb (*viditvā eva*), yielding the sense “only by knowing Him,” which accommodates both interpretations. In fact, the statement “there is no other path to that goal” (*nānyaḥ panthā vidyate ayanāya*) already establishes that knowledge alone is the means to liberation; the



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particle *eva* merely reinforces this exclusivity. Hence, it is more coherent to accept the realization of God as the true cause of liberation.

Finally, scriptural statements such as “from which all beings arise” and “That thou art” (*tat tvam asi*) teach the identity of the individual self and the Supreme Self. Accordingly, the knowledge “I am Brahman” may also be accepted as a cause of liberation. However, even in that view, interpretive adjustments regarding the exclusivity implied by *eva* become necessary.

## 20

**An Inquiry into the Means of Attained Liberation (Siddha Mukti) according to the Dīdhiti Tradition-** According to Dīdhiti-kāra Raghunātha Śīromaṇi and other scholars, a wife does not love her husband, nor a parent their child, for their own sake; rather, they are loved for the sake of one’s own self and its happiness. In this sense, the scriptural statements (śruti) establish that entities such as husband and son become objects of affection insofar as they serve as instruments of one’s own happiness. Thus, their “dearness” (*priyatva*) is grounded in their capacity to produce self-related pleasure.

In this context, the term *ātman* is to be understood as referring to the individual self (*jīvātman*), not to God (*Īśvara*). For, if interpreted as referring to God, inconsistencies arise: if God is considered devoid of pleasure, the scriptural statement becomes untenable; and even those who admit pleasure in God regard it as eternal, in which case no purposiveness (*uddeśyatā*) can be meaningfully ascribed to it.

Moreover, Smṛti statements such as “O King, the self alone is dear to all beings” further affirm the intrinsic dearness of the self. In light of this, scriptural injunctions like “the self must be heard, reflected upon, and meditated upon” (*ātma vā are draṣṭavyaḥ*, etc.) indicate that hearing (*śravaṇa*), reflection (*manana*), and contemplation (*nididhyāsana*) of the self alone constitute the means to liberation (*mokṣa*), not those directed toward the Supreme Self.

If it is objected that the cessation of false knowledge, along with the destruction of desire and merit/demerit (*dharma-adharma*), leads to true knowledge of the self, which in turn brings about the absolute cessation of suffering—thus justifying such an interpretation of the śruti—still, scriptural passages like “knowing Him alone...” (*tam eva viditvā*) appear to establish the realization of God as the cause of liberation.

To this, the reply is that if liberation is defined as the complete cessation of suffering resulting from the destruction of *dharma* and *adharma*, then there is no logical basis for positing the realization of the Supreme Self as its cause. Therefore, in order to maintain consistency with injunctions regarding yogic practice, it is reasonable to interpret “*tam eva viditvā*” as referring to the realization of one’s own self, achieved through yogic contemplation on the non-difference (*abheda*) between the individual self and Brahman, which in turn leads to liberation.

Even if such an interpretation involves a shift in syntactical connection (*anvaya-vyatireka*), no fault arises, since passages like “there is no other path to that goal” (*nānyaḥ panthā vidyate ayanāya*) can still meaningfully reinforce this interpretation.

For example, in the Raghuvamśa, the expression “*maheśvaras tvam eva nāparaḥ*” (“You alone are Maheśvara, none other”) uses the particle *eva* to exclude all others, while *nāparaḥ* serves to explicitly clarify that exclusion.

However, this interpretation faces difficulty when reconciling statements such as “yogins directly perceive Lord Nārāyaṇa,” which imply that yogic practice leads to the realization of God. According to the earlier view, yogic practice produces realization of the individual self, which alone leads to liberation. But these statements suggest that yogic practice results in the realization of God. Therefore, it becomes problematic to maintain that realization of the individual self alone is the sole cause of liberation.

## 21

**An Inquiry into the Alternative Causality of Kāśī-Death and Related Acts)-** Some scholars maintain that when a person dies in Kāśī, Lord Mahārudra imparts the *Tāraka-Brahma* mantra to the departing soul, and from this instruction true knowledge (*tattva-jñāna*) arises. Thus, death in Kāśī, though not the direct cause of knowledge, becomes indirectly instrumental in producing it through the imparting of the Tāraka mantra.

It is further held that this instruction, even if it does not generate knowledge immediately within the same body, gives rise—through the unseen force (*adrṣṭa*)—to the realization of the self in a subsequent embodiment. In this way, acts such as dying in Kāśī, dying in the Gaṅgā, or dying in Mathurā may collectively contribute, through *adrṣṭa*, to the attainment of liberation.

However, a difficulty arises: when one is aware of the impracticability of disciplines such as yogic practice, it becomes unreasonable to undertake actions like Kāśī-death as means to liberation. Therefore, the causal relation of such acts to



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true knowledge must be understood as **alternative (vaikalpika)** rather than cumulative. Just as fire may be produced alternatively from grass, fire-sticks (*araṇi*), or gems, so too these acts function as optional causes.

Yet, the analogy with Vedic alternatives such as rice (*vr̥hi*) and barley (*yava*) is not entirely applicable. In those cases, the two are prescribed as alternative means to the same ritual, and their simultaneous application does not produce the intended result. This is because, once rice is prescribed as the instrument, no further expectancy for another instrument arises unless the ritual remains unaccomplished, in which case barley is introduced as an alternative.

Thus, in such contexts, each alternative operates with an implicit exclusion of the other, grounded in mutual absence-dependence. But in the case of Kāśī-death, Gaṅgā-death, and similar acts, no such mutual exclusion is present. Hence, they are not mutually contradictory and may, in principle, be jointly operative without obstruction to the attainment of liberation.

Accordingly, practices such as dying in Kāśī, dying in the Gaṅgā, and departing while remembering Lord Nārāyaṇa may all be undertaken together, and their combined application does not hinder the realization of the desired result.

The rule that alternatives (*vikalpa*) do not admit of combination applies only in cases where the alternatives are mutually विरोधी (contradictory), not where they are merely distinct but non-opposed. Therefore, Kāśī-death and related acts are better understood as **non-contradictory alternatives**, allowing for their coexistence.

Some object that even in the case of rice and barley, no strict proof exists for mutual absence-dependence. However, this objection is not tenable. For instance, although a gem can produce fire independently of grass, ordinary usage does not express this as “fire arises from grass or from any substance whatsoever.” Rather, linguistic usage reflects a structured exclusion.

Similarly, the disjunctive particle “or” (*vā*) conveys not only the exclusion of the prior alternative but also the exclusion of the subsequent one in relation to the former. Thus, statements like “one should perform the sacrifice with rice or barley” imply the absence of the other in each case. This mutual exclusion is therefore grounded in semantic derivation itself.

22

***An Inquiry into the Causal Status of Kāśī-Death and Related Acts in Producing Liberation***- At this point, a significant objection arises: the scriptures declare that death in Kāśī and the vision of the Supreme Person (*puruṣottama-darśana*) are causes of liberation. However, how can this be reconciled with the well-known śruti statement, “there is no other path to that goal” (*nānyaḥ panthā vidyate ayanāya*), which asserts that liberation is attainable only through true knowledge (*tattva-jñāna*)?

Furthermore, how can both true knowledge and specific ritual actions be regarded as causes of liberation? If it is argued that in some cases liberation results from knowledge and in others from action, then neither can be established as a universal cause. On the other hand, if both are accepted equally as causes, inconsistency (*vyabhicāra*) becomes unavoidable, since all actions are not present in every case.

In other contexts, such inconsistency is avoided by admitting diversity in effects. For example, fire produced from grass, fire-sticks (*araṇi*), or gems is considered qualitatively distinct, thereby allowing different causes to be assigned without contradiction. However, in the case of liberation—understood as the absence of suffering (*duḥkha-nivṛtti*)—no such differentiation is possible, since it is of the nature of negation (*abhāva*). Even if one attempts to resolve this by positing distinctions within the counter-positive (such as different types of suffering), it remains difficult to reconcile the causal roles of knowledge and acts like death in Kāśī without logical confusion.

Moreover, in Vedic contexts where multiple means are prescribed as alternatives—such as rice (*vr̥hi*) and barley (*yava*) in sacrificial rites—they function optionally, not cumulatively. If knowledge and action are similarly treated as alternative causes of liberation, then their combination cannot produce liberation. Conversely, if their combination (*samuccaya*) is accepted, further difficulties arise: for instance, the means to knowledge, such as yogic practice, may not always be feasible; and actions like dying in Kāśī and Mathurā cannot occur simultaneously, making their conjunction impossible.

Therefore, the consistent conclusion is as follows: true knowledge of the self (*ātma-tattva-jñāna*) alone is the immediate (direct) cause of liberation, while acts such as dying in Kāśī function only as indirect (mediate) causes. Thus, scriptural statements attributing liberating power to Kāśī-death do not imply direct causality; rather, they indicate a contributory or instrumental role (*prayojakatva*), in that such acts eventually lead to the utpatti (arising) of true knowledge. In this way, a mediated relation between action and knowledge is established, preserving the authority of the śruti that knowledge alone leads to liberation.



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It is further held that at the moment preceding death in Kāśī, Lord Rudra imparts the *Tāraka-Brahma mantra* to the departing soul. Since instruction cannot occur after death, this transmission must take place in the final moments of life. Through the unseen force (*adr̥ṣṭa*) generated thereby, true knowledge arises subsequently—often in another embodiment—leading ultimately to liberation. If it is argued that such knowledge could arise immediately within the same body, then the special causal status attributed to Kāśī-death would become untenable. Hence, the acceptance of a subsequent embodiment becomes necessary to preserve the doctrinal consistency of scriptural claims.

**Conclusion:** The entire discussion, grounded in Nyāya philosophy, establishes that mokṣa (liberation) is the highest puruṣārtha (ultimate human goal). It is not merely a temporary relief but the complete and irreversible cessation of suffering (*duḥkha-nivṛtti*). The inquiry critically examines various interpretations of liberation—such as *prāgabhāva* (prior absence) and *atyantābhāva* (absolute absence)—and concludes that mokṣa must be understood as the final destruction of suffering along with its causes (*karma/durita*). In this process, *tattva-jñāna* (true knowledge) plays a decisive role. Although not always the immediate cause, it is the indispensable condition (*prayojaka*) that brings about the cessation of ignorance, stops further karmic accumulation, and leads ultimately to liberation. The text also resolves important philosophical doubts regarding motivation, perception, and eligibility. It shows that even though mokṣa is not directly perceptible, it remains intrinsically desirable (*svataḥ-prayojana*) because all beings seek freedom from suffering. Therefore, striving for liberation through *śāstra*, knowledge, and disciplined practice is both rational and necessary. In conclusion, mokṣa is affirmed as the supreme end of life, attainable through right knowledge and the exhaustion of *karma*, and characterized by absolute freedom from all forms of suffering, thus marking the final release from *saṃsāra*.

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