



## A comparative study of liberation (Kaivalya) in Sankhya Darshan and Yoga Darshan

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### Abstract

**Samkhya and Yoga:** Two Systems of Philosophical Thought: Both Samkhya and Yoga are ancient Indian philosophies. They developed independently but have interrelated and complementary ideas about human suffering and its resolution through liberation (kaivalya). Samkhya provides an understanding of reality through dualism, while Yoga offers methods to experience that truth through techniques aimed at achieving peace.

**Assessment of the Contrasts in Samkhya and Yoga regarding the Concept of Liberation (kaivalya):** This paper examines the similarities and differences between the ideas of liberation (kaivalya) in Samkhya and Yoga. It relies on Classical Samkhya and Classical Yoga texts, such as the Samkhya Karika and the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, along with current scholarly works on both philosophies.

**Key Findings and Discussion:** The main philosophical ideas of Samkhya, which relate to achieving liberation (kaivalya) through developing discriminatory knowledge (Viveka) of Purusha/Prakriti, inform the Yogic system. However, Yoga introduces a progressive path (Ashtanga) to calm disturbances in the mind. This guides practitioners to the direct experience of liberation (kaivalya) and features the concept of Ishvara, which is absent in classical Samkhya.

**Conclusions:** Although both Samkhya and Yoga aim to provide spiritual freedom (kaivalya), they take different approaches to reach this goal. One system focuses on theoretical understanding, while the other emphasizes practical application. Together, these systems lead individuals toward the possibility of liberation (kaivalya).

**Keywords:** Liberation, kaivalya, sankhya darshan, yoga darshan

### Introduction

Indian philosophy deals with three main issues: suffering, bondage, and freedom. There are six different schools of philosophy, called "Shad-Darshana," which are classified according to their mutual relationships. Sankhya is one of the oldest schools of philosophy, which gives a detailed and unique view of the universe. Another school of Indian philosophy, related to Sankhya, is yoga, which emphasizes the practical application of Sankhya philosophy.

Both philosophies deal with freedom, which is called "kaivalya" or "moksha." "Moksha" brings about total freedom from all suffering and all states of samsara. "Avidya," or ignorance, is considered to be the main cause of suffering. Avidya is a state of mind that is not aware of the distinction between consciousness and matter, which is considered "Separate" in "The Two Realities: Consciousness and Matter." When "Avidya" is removed from one's mind, freedom is attained, enabling one to realize their true self, which is considered to be incorporeal.

"Sankhya" emphasizes "discrimination through intellect" to attain "moksha," while "yoga" emphasizes "discipline" to attain "moksha." Knowing about these philosophies would help us understand their mutual relationship and their importance today.

### Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to:

1. Examine the metaphysical concept of liberation in Sankhya Darshan.
2. Examine the concept of liberation in Yoga Darshan.
3. Identify similarities and dissimilarities between Sankhya Darshan and Yoga Darshan.
4. Examine their philosophical and practical significance.

5. Examine how both philosophies complement each other in attaining liberation.

### Methodology

This study is qualitative, descriptive, and analytical in nature. Classical texts such as Samkhya Karika, which is attributed to Ishvarakrishna, and Yoga Sutras of Patanjali are considered as primary sources of this study. Classical commentaries and contemporary commentaries on Indian philosophy are considered as secondary sources of this study.

The study is a comparative study of classical texts, which includes:

- Bondage • Ignorance • Liberation • Knowledge/Practice • Ishvara

### Philosophical Foundations of Sankhya Darshan

Sankhya Darshan philosophy states that there exist two ultimate realities:

1. "Purusha," or pure consciousness, which is passive, eternal, and multiple.
2. "Prakriti," or material nature, which is original matter composed of three gunas: sattva, or thoughtfulness/peace; raajas, or activity energy/noise; and tamas, or darkness. Prakriti is responsible for all creations in the universe.

According to Sankhya Darshan, the universe is created by 24 "Tattvas" or principles of prakriti, which result in all that we see, experience, and know, including ourselves. Along with "purusha," these 24 "Tattvas" result in a total of 25 elements of existence, or the universe.

An individual, or "purusha," is bound due to ignorance, or "avidya," which leads to identification with evolutes created

by "prakriti," such as mind, ego, senses, and body, though "purusha" is actually not bound.

### How liberation is achieved in Sankhya

Liberation (Kaivalya) can be achieved by an individual through discriminatory knowledge (Viveka Jnana).

### Philosophical Foundations of Yoga Darshan

The philosophy of Sankhya and the practice of Yoga show a certain similarity. They both follow the same basic framework. The only difference is the practical experience of Yoga, as opposed to the theoretical knowledge of Sankhya. "Yoga is defined as 'yogaḥchitta-vritti-nirodhaḥ' or the cessation of thought and/or modification of mind."

Both Sankhya and Yoga accept the dualistic theory of Purusha and Prakriti. However, a third factor is introduced by Yoga, namely \*Ishvara\*, a special kind of Purusha, which is not affected by afflictions or karma. Ishvara is a special kind of Purusha, which is not affected by afflictions or karma. Ishvara is a special kind of Purusha, which helps the Yoga practitioner in his/her growth. Ashtanga

Yoga is divided into 8 limbs or aspects of practice:

1. Yama - the ethical restraints of society.
2. Niyama - the observances of society.
3. Asana - posture.
4. Pranayama - breath control.
5. Pratyahara - withdrawal of the senses.
6. Dharana - concentration.
7. Dhyana - meditation.
8. Samadhi - absorption in the object of meditation.

Each limb is designed to purify the individual and provide a means to experience discriminative knowledge.

### Kaivalya or liberation in Yoga

The realization of Purusha in its true state after the cessation of fluctuations in the mind.

Unlike Sankhya, which is purely intellectual in its understanding, Yoga places greater emphasis on personal experience gained from regular practice and detachment.

### The experience of kaivalya or liberation in Yoga

- It is experiential and meditative.
- It is achieved by discipline.
- It is achieved by devotion to Ishvara.
- It is the culmination of samadhi.

Even though Sankhya and Yoga have a similar philosophical understanding and practices, it is in the experiences that Yoga provides that differ from Sankhya's philosophical understanding.

Yoga places greater emphasis on the cessation and/or modification of thought and/or mind.

Both Sankhya and Yoga agree that Purusha and Prakriti are in a dualistic relationship and that Ishvara is a part of Yoga that makes it a better spiritual experience.

Both Sankhya and Yoga accept the dualistic relationship between Purusha and Prakriti, though they differ in the point that in the case of Yoga, there is a third entity, \*Ishvara\*, which is a special kind of Purusha that is not subject to affliction/karma. Ishvara is the subject of contemplation and devotion, and helps the yogis in their path of spiritual growth.

### Comparison of Liberation

1. The Ontological foundation for the concept of liberation in both philosophies is based on the concept

of dualism of Purusha and Prakriti. Thus, it can be seen that the fundamental metaphysical foundation for both philosophies' concept of liberation is the same.

2. The foundation for bondage in both philosophies is the absence of knowledge of the distinction of Purusha and Prakriti. Thus, it can be seen that it is the ignorance that results in suffering.
3. The means for attaining liberation is as follows:  
The Sankhya school of thought accepts only discriminative knowledge as a means for attaining liberation.  
The Yoga school of thought accepts non-discriminative knowledge with the help of discipline and meditation as a means for attaining liberation.
4. The role of Ishvara is different in both philosophies. The Sankhya school of thought does not accept Ishvara. The Yoga school of thought accepts that Ishvara is a special kind of Purusha, which helps in the liberation of other purushas.
  - The Sankhya philosophy does not accept Ishvara.
  - The Yoga philosophy accepts Ishvara as a special kind of Purusha, which helps in the liberation of other purushas.

5. The nature of the liberatory experience in both philosophies may be summarized as follows: "The liberatory experience is the Separation of Consciousness from Matter. The nature of the liberatory experience in both philosophies differs in that:

- In Sankhya philosophy, the liberatory experience is the cognitive awareness of the Separateness of Consciousness from Matter.
- In Yoga philosophy, the liberatory experience is the withdrawal of mental activity through meditation, which leads to the experiential awareness of the Separateness of Consciousness from Matter."

### Findings and discussion

In conclusion, Sankhya as well as Yoga are ways of looking at the same thing, just from different perspectives. While Sankhya gives the logical explanation for understanding the nature of reality, Yoga gives the practitioners a chance to experience the understanding of the nature of reality.

Sankhya gives the foundation for understanding the rational metaphysics of the nature of reality, which helps in understanding the unfoldment/evolution of the universe in a scientific manner, though it may appear abstract, so there is a need for guidance in order for the practitioners to be able to experience the understanding of the metaphysical concepts of the nature of reality as presented in Sankhya.

Yoga gives the step-by-step process of discipline, which helps the practitioners experience the understanding of the nature of reality in a practical manner using the abstract metaphysical knowledge/principles of the nature of reality as presented in Sankhya.

The addition of Ishvara (God) in the presentation of the nature of reality in the Yoga school makes the presentation more popular for the practitioners to use because of the addition of the element of love, which is missing in the presentation in Sankhya.

Both forms of knowledge are important in the development of self-effort, living an ethical life, and attaining inner purification. The attainment of Kaivalya in both forms of

Yoga implies the understanding of the importance of self-realization, which is the essence of Indian Philosophy.

In Conclusion: The philosophies of Sankhya and Yoga are the two sides of the same coin, and they go hand in hand with each other. The Sankhya gives us the logical reasoning to understand the reality, and the Yoga gives us the tools to realize the understanding.

Sankhya also gives us a firm foundation in rational metaphysics, which helps in understanding the unfoldment or evolution of the universe in a systematic manner, though it could be abstract in nature and require guidance for the practitioner to realize the understanding of the metaphysical concepts put forth in the Sankhya school of thought.

Yoga achieves this through the scientific and step-by-step discipline that transforms the metaphysical knowledge/principles of Sankhya into a real life experience of the same knowledge/principle. The incorporation of Ishvara (God) in Yoga makes it more accessible to the large number of practitioners of the philosophy because it carries the element of love, unlike the Sankhya philosophy.

Both philosophies of knowledge play a significant role in the development of self-effort, ethical living, and purification of the self. The ultimate aim of the two philosophies, Kaivalya, proves that self-realization is the core of Indian Philosophy.

Today, the practice of Yoga has gained worldwide recognition in the field of Mental Health and Wellness, while the relevance of Sankhya is in the philosophical sphere.

### Conclusion

The above comparative analysis clearly shows that the goal of both Sankhya Darshan and Yoga Darshan is the attainment of freedom through the realization of the separate nature of consciousness. Sankhya Darshan provides the metaphysical base with the emphasis on the importance of discriminative knowledge for the attainment of freedom, while Yoga Darshan adds practice for the purification of the mind for the attainment of freedom, as propounded in Sankhya Darshan. Though Sankhya Darshan is theoretical, while Yoga Darshan is practical, the fact remains that both are philosophically sound, and they complement each other. The concept of freedom as propounded in Sankhya Darshan and Yoga Darshan can be regarded as one of the greatest contributions of Indian philosophy.

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