

# 1 Nature of Vedic Ethics and its Critique as Soteriology

2  
3 *The present paper deals with the idea of understanding Vedic ethics as a code*  
4 *of righteous living, in the light of Mīmāṃsā philosophy, and to reflect upon the*  
5 *possibility of such methods as a means of attaining liberation. In other words,*  
6 *the Vedas provide us with prescriptive codes of right and wrong actions. It*  
7 *commands us about performatives and non-performatives, in order to lead a*  
8 *good life. We know that human endeavours are primarily based on attaining the*  
9 *desired, and to prevent the unwanted ends. Hence, the entire effort of human*  
10 *actions lies in the fact that we want to attain the cessation of sufferings. This*  
11 *paves the way for studies in Soteriology, and the question arises that could the*  
12 *Vedas be considered as a literature on Soteriology. The paper consists of two*  
13 *parts, that is, the linguistic analysis of the Vedic statements based on grammar*  
14 *and semantics. It is aimed at depicting the manner in which Vedic sentences act*  
15 *as prescriptive ethical codes. The next part deals with the questions raised by*  
16 *the opposing schools, like Sāṃkhya, against the idea of considering Vedas as a*  
17 *supreme sanction of means, leading beings to their salvation from empirical*  
18 *sufferings, and its plausible responses.*

19  
20 **Keywords:** duties, ends, liberation

## 21 22 23 Introduction

24  
25 Indian philosophical conception of morality is widely based on the Vedic  
26 notions of right and wrong. The philosophical traditions not only restrict  
27 themselves in advancing various theories on ethics regarding the standard of  
28 evaluation of voluntary acts, or trying to determine the import of ethical terms, or  
29 even factors influencing moral judgement and the like, rather the orthodox  
30 traditions hold that the ultimate sanction of morality is the Vedas. This is because  
31 of the fact that the various schools of thought in the Indian tradition are primarily  
32 based on soteriology. Thus, we find that any discussion on morality, however, is  
33 two-fold – one aspect deals with the qualitative evaluation of intentional actions,  
34 while the other prescribes or commands ways of righteous living, which  
35 eventually lead to the liberation of individuals. Both the functions are deeply  
36 related to linguistic employments, and hence, our main contention in this paper  
37 would be to carry out an analytic discussion on morality as expressed through  
38 linguistic usage in the Vedas. And also, to critically evaluate the possibility of  
39 emancipation from sufferings, following the Vedic rites and rituals.

40 The research article in question has been prepared as per the following  
41 structure:

- 42  
43 • **Introduction** includes briefly stating the idea of ethics, research questions  
44 and the objective of the work.  
45 • **Methodology** adopted in this paper is argumentative in nature. It critically  
46 analyses the views held by the proponents and the opponents of the thesis  
47 in question.

- 1 • **Literature reviews** involved in preparing the research article depicts the  
2 views held by the proponents and the opponents of the Vedic ethical  
3 standpoints considered here, followed by their critical examination. It  
4 portrays and clarifies the nature and efficacy of Vedic ethics, especially in  
5 the light of Mīmāṃsā ethics. Further, the efficacy of such means as  
6 Soteriology are questioned from the standpoint of Sāṃkhya philosophy.  
7 • **Discussions** include detailed and focussed analyses of the concerned  
8 subject matter with resonance to and departures from the classical  
9 scriptural doctrines, with a critical approach.  
10 • **Concluding remarks** include plausible answers, as far as practicable,  
11 towards the defence of the Vedic ethics, have been provided with  
12 appropriate excerpts from and citation of literatures.  
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## 15 **Methodology, Literature Review, Discussions and Analyses of the Subject** 16 **Matter**

### 17 **Dichotomy of Ethical Statements**

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19  
20 At the very outset of the discussion let us split the entire set of ethical  
21 statements into two realms, namely, the domain of public usage and that of the  
22 Vedic context. The ethical statements in the Vedas mostly speak of duties and  
23 non-duties of individuals belonging to certain sections and particular stations of  
24 life. The ethical sentences of ordinary parlance, like, 'Always speak the truth', 'Do  
25 not steal' etc. inhere a power to direct individuals accordingly, yet, they differ  
26 greatly from sentences of the Vedic realm, which speak of performatives and non-  
27 performatives in Vedic context only. However, at times we find Vedic sentences  
28 acting as the cause of our inclination towards an action or our refraining us from  
29 an activity which is of empirical nature as well, as in '*māḡṛdhaḡ*  
30 *kasyasviddhanam*'<sup>1</sup>, meaning, we should not be jealous about others' properties,  
31 again in other sentences like, '*nakalañjambhakṣayet*'<sup>2</sup>, we find restrictions on  
32 intake of certain food items. In the present context, the initial part of our discussion  
33 would be precisely to the linguistic analyses of the Vedic sentences only, with  
34 regard to the PūrvaMīmāṃsā school, in context to their potency of moral  
35 communication and their power to determine ethical performances and non-  
36 performances of various acts related to Vedic rites and sacrifices.  
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### 39 **Vedas as the Ultimate Sanction**

40  
41 According to the Indian orthodox philosophical traditions, Vedic sentences are  
42 taken to be the sources of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) of the domain which lies beyond  
43 our sense-experience. Whatever be the content of the injunction, empirical or supra-  
44 empirical, the force involved in the verb '*liṅ*' leads us to act or to refrain from  
45 accordingly. The importance of *vidhi* and *niṣedha* also lie in the fact that they are  
46 capable of indicating that which is in the past, present or future, and also which is

1 subtle, imperceptible, remote and the like. The objects, thus, veiled to our senses is  
 2 revealed to us by the *codanāvākyas*. ‘*codanā hi*  
 3 *bhūtambhavisyantamsūkṣamvyavahitamjātīyakamarthamsaknotyavagamayitumnā*  
 4 *nyat kiñcanendriyam*’.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, the Vedic injunctions and the prohibitions  
 5 are considered to be most efficacious in the realm of supra-sensuous (*atīndriya*)  
 6 matters.

7 The Vedas, also referred to as *Śruti*, are the absolute sanction of verbal  
 8 testimony. According to the PūrvaMīmāṃsakas, the Vedas are not created. They  
 9 are self-generated (*svayambhu*), without a beginning (*anādi*), eternal (*nitya*) and  
 10 authorless (*apauruṣeya*). The Vedas consist of millions of sentences which are  
 11 passed on only verbally through ages from a preceptor to his pupils  
 12 (*guruśiṣyaparampara*). The Vedas provide us knowledge of that which is supra-  
 13 sensory (*atīndriya*) and one such knowledge is that of *dharma*. The term  
 14 ‘*dharma*’ originating from the root verb *dhṛ*, meaning to hold or to sustain, refers to  
 15 ethics or morality. That is, morality is such that sustains human existence, and the  
 16 entire creation as such. It strictly refers to ethical codes and performance of  
 17 morally sanctioned actions. Such knowledge is imparted to us primarily through  
 18 the Vedic injunctions and prohibitions.

### 21 **The Compelling Force of Vedic Injunctions**

22  
 23 Vedic injunctions possess such undeniable persuasive power because of the  
 24 fact that their authority and reliability are beyond the realms of doubt and error.  
 25 For instance, injunctions like, ‘*yajetasvargakāmo*’ are neither questionable nor  
 26 deceptive. The above linguistic expression does not inhere any sense of probability  
 27 or uncertainty in it. Śābaraswami, the commentator on Mīmāṃsā aphorisms,  
 28 points out that the utterance of human beings in the ordinary parlance, like, “There  
 29 are fruits on the bank of the river” (*nadyāstīrephalānisanti*)<sup>4</sup>, may be either true or  
 30 false, and it is empirically verifiable. On the contrary, whatever is expressed by the  
 31 Vedic sentences is not at all contradicted by the subsequent cognition of a person in  
 32 a different situation, or by different individuals in different time and space. Hence,  
 33 its infallibility is unquestioned and is free from all kinds of uncertainty. ‘*na ca*  
 34 *svargakāmoyajetaityatovacānātsandigdhamavagamayatebhavativāsvargonavābhav*  
 35 *atīti/ na ca*  
 36 *niścitamavagamyamānamidammithyāsyāt...nacaīṣakālāntarepuruṣāntare*’ *vasthānt*  
 37 *aredeśāntarevāviparyeti/ tasmādavitatathāḥ*’.<sup>5</sup> For instance, the following *vidhi* –  
 38 ‘*agnihotraṃjuhuyātsvargakāmaḥ*’. The injunction prescribes that one desirous of  
 39 attaining *svarga* must perform the *agnihotra* sacrifice. It is evident that such  
 40 knowledge is never obtainable by *pramāṇas* like, the perception, inference,  
 41 comparison, presumption *etc.*, which are strictly means of attaining cognitions of  
 42 empirical verifiability only. Hence, we must admit that the Vedas are the sole  
 43 source of knowledge on matters apparently beyond the empirical realm.

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 46

## 1 Grammatical Analysis of an Injunction

2  
3 Let us now try to analyse how a Vedic injunction works. In the  
4 *vidhi* ‘*yajetasvargakāmah*’, the verb inheres in it the directive power of the *vidhi* in  
5 question. The verb ‘*yajeta*’ is constituted of the root (*dhātu*) ‘*yaji*’ and the suffix  
6 (*pratyaya*) ‘*ta*’. The *pratyaya* ‘*ta*’ again consists of two parts, namely, *ākhyātatva*  
7 and *liñtva*. We know that there are ten *lakāras*, like *lat*, *lot* etc. which signify tense  
8 or mood.<sup>6</sup> The *ākhyātatva* is present in all the ten *lakāras*, but the *liñtva* is specific  
9 to the *liñlakāra* only. Hence, *ākhyātatva* is wider in sense (*vyāpaka*) and *liñtva* is  
10 restricted (*vyāpya*). The conjugated sense of both the *pratyaya* gives rise to an  
11 inspiration (*preraṇā*) towards performing actions. This is technically referred to as  
12 *bhāvanā*, and it is evidently internal or mental. Before the production of an action,  
13 the conducive factor, that is, a kind of mental propensity (*pravṛtti*) of the  
14 individual which propels the action is termed as *bhāvanā*.<sup>7</sup> This *bhāvanā* is again of  
15 two types – *śābdībhāvanā* and *ārthībhāvanā*. *ārthībhāvanā* is preceded by  
16 *śābdībhāvanā*. In other words, *śābdībhāvanā* produces *ārthībhāvanā*. We might  
17 consider an ordinary everyday experience to explicate the above notions.  
18 ‘*devadattaḥodanāmpacati*’ (Devadatta is cooking rice). This action is preceded by  
19 the mental inspiration of Devadatta which leads to the performance of the action.  
20 Now, Yajñadatta asks Devadatta to cook rice. Devadatta first listens to the  
21 sentence ‘*devadattaḥodanāmpacatu*’ consisting of certain words (*śabda*). These  
22 words, accordingly, produce an inspiration in the listener’s mind (here, Devadatta)  
23 and it is known as *śābdībhāvanā*. At the next moment, the meaning of the words  
24 (*artha*) produces yet another inspiration in his mind and that is referred to as  
25 *ārthībhāvanā*. This finally leads to the propensity (*pravṛtti*) to perform the act.

26 Analogously, in case of Vedic injunctions like, ‘*yajetasvargakāmah*’, the  
27 term ‘*yajeta*’ is responsible for the production of both *śābdī* and *ārthībhāvanā*  
28 successively in the individual’s mind in a similar manner, which then leads to the  
29 production of inclination (*pravṛtti*) in the listener. The inclination is of the form,  
30 ‘This Vedic injunction is inspiring me to perform the sacrifice’. Thus, it might be  
31 claimed that the persuasive power, technically known as, *codanā* or *preraṇā*, of  
32 the Vedic injunctions (*vidhi*) is communicated to the individual through a  
33 psychological experience, namely, *bhāvanā*, and the entire force inheres in the ‘*ta*’  
34 *pratyaya* in the form of *liñtva*. ‘*saevāliṅpratyayoliñtvāvacchedenaśabdabhāvanām*  
35 *preraṇākhyāṁabhidhatte*’<sup>8</sup>. Due to this reason, the *vidhivākyas* are also termed as  
36 *codanāvākyas*, meaning sentences which inspire to act. However, it is important to  
37 mention here that there is a difference between the compulsive force of  
38 *vidhivākyas* and that of empirical imperatives or mere commands. The *vidhiliṅ*  
39 does not merely act as a propeller or stimulant (*pravartaka* or *prayojaka*), rather  
40 there is a rigorous sense of obligation entwined with it.

## 41 42 43 Vedic Prohibitions

44  
45 Now let us turn our attention to another significant part of the Vedas, namely,  
46 the prohibitions or the *niṣedhavākyas*. As mentioned earlier, we know that

1 whatever is desired by an individual and whatever he strives to attain is technically  
 2 termed as '*iṣṭa*'. Now, just as one desires to attain pleasure, he also wants to avoid  
 3 pain and misery. This is specifically where the prohibitory statements play their  
 4 active roles. These sentences prevent us from performing certain acts which may  
 5 bring about misery and pain (*aniṣṭa*) upon us. Thus, they are regarded as  
 6 statements which refrain us from actions (*nivartakavākya*).<sup>9</sup> These Vedic  
 7 sentences, in turn, are equally powerful in communicating and strictly preventing  
 8 acts like the of enjoyment of prohibited objects out of sheer passion, as it would  
 9 inevitably lead to extreme sufferings (*narakabhoga*).

10 One such instance of the Vedic prohibitions is, '*nabrāhmanohantavya*',  
 11 meaning that one should not kill a Brahmin, that is, a person who might be a  
 12 possessor of supreme knowledge, or a servant of God. Such prohibitory statements  
 13 again inhere a sense of obligation, and thus, on hearing such sentences  
 14 (*nivartakavākya*) refrain from committing such acts.

15 It is, thus, evident that the Vedic injunctions inspire an individual to perform  
 16 rites and rituals in accordance with one's desire and one does so out of the sense of  
 17 obligation as imposed on them by *vidhilin*. Similarly, the Vedic prohibitions  
 18 refrain one from involving in prohibited acts with the same intensity as the  
 19 injunctions. The *vidhi* and *niṣedha* respectively communicate the senses of 'duty'  
 20 (*kartavyatā*) and 'non-duty' (*akartavyatā*) to an individual. One realizes what  
 21 *should* be done and what *should not* be done. Clearly, this is nothing but the basic  
 22 tenet of moral prescription.

### 23 24 25 **Are the Vedic means Soteriological?**

26  
27 The Vedas being the ultimate source of soteriology, at this point, let us  
 28 examine the efficacy of the Vedic prescriptions in order to attain emancipation  
 29 from sufferings. All individuals on earth strive to attain cessation of sufferings  
 30 through various means. All human endeavours are directed towards such. Thus, a  
 31 prudent being would strive to attain such cessation of sufferings which would be  
 32 utmost (*avaśyambhāva* or *aikāntika*) and that which would never relapse  
 33 (*ātyantika*). We know that such cessation of sufferings is never attainable by  
 34 empirical means, since, those means are not strong enough to prevent the  
 35 recurrence of sufferings. Hence, reflective individuals would always resort to such  
 36 paths which would lead them to their desired end. That is, adopting scriptural  
 37 means, as stated in the *śāstra*, would provide us with absolute cessation of  
 38 sufferings. In Sāṃkhya philosophy, the most ancient orthodox school of thought in  
 39 the Indian philosophical tradition, we find some intriguing critiques regarding the  
 40 tenability of the Vedic performatives as a means of emancipation from sufferings,  
 41 as admitted by the PūrvaMīmāṃsakas or the KarmavādīMīmāṃsakas. According  
 42 to the Sāṃkhya philosophers, though liberation is identical with the absolute  
 43 cessation of sufferings, but it can only be attained by acquiring discriminatory  
 44 knowledge (*vivekajñāna*) between the consciousness (*puruṣa*) and the  
 45 matter (*prakṛti*). In case of an embodied consciousness, there appears an apparent  
 46 non-discrimination in cognition, between the psycho-somatic states of the

1 individual and the being as pure consciousness. This precisely acts as the root of  
2 all our sufferings, and hence, to liberate oneself from such induced bindings  
3 permanently, one has to attain discriminatory cognition (*vivekakhyāti*) between the  
4 consciousness(*puruṣa*) and the matter(*prakṛti*).

5 On that note, as discussed so far, we find that the means stated by the *Vedas*  
6 are similar to the empirical methods of pain eradication. That is, they cannot bring  
7 about absolute cessation of sufferings. As elaborated above, there are various  
8 sacrifices, rites and rituals mentioned in the *Vedas* which help to fulfil the different  
9 kinds of desires of beings, and thus, remove sufferings. These include sacrifices  
10 like *jyotiṣṭoma*, *aśvamedha*, *viśvajita*, *agnihotra* etc. which fulfil the purposes of  
11 attaining *svarga*, victory over enemies, acquiring huge areas of land and thus  
12 widening the territory of the kingdom etc. All these apparently are responsible for  
13 removal of sufferings, as they bring about immense pleasure as their respective  
14 consequences. However, the question remains that whether such freedom from  
15 sufferings is eternal or not. That is, whether ends like *svarga* can provide absolute  
16 cessation of sufferings or not. According to the noted critic VācaspatiMiśra, -  
17 ‘*duḥkhavirodhīsukhaviśeṣaśca svargah*’<sup>10</sup>. That is, *svarga* involves that state of  
18 pleasure which is not only unstinted by sufferings, rather it is contradictory to  
19 sufferings. Further, KumāriBhaṭṭa states that –  
20 ‘*yāpṛīṭhiniratiśayā, anubhavitavyāsācāuṣṇāśītādidvandvarahitedeśeśakyāanubhav*  
21 *itum/ asmin ca deśemuhūrtaśatabhāgahapidvandvainamucyate/ tasmāniratiśaya-*  
22 *pṛīṭyanubhavāyakaḥpyaḥviśiṣṭadeśah*’<sup>11</sup>. It means that the unstinted and the  
23 extreme pleasure (*niratiśayapṛīṭi*) which is to be enjoyed, can only be experienced  
24 in a place which is devoid of clashes and contradictions. In the empirical world we  
25 can never find such a place which is free from contradictions, even momentarily.  
26 Thus, the unstinted pleasure called *svarga* can only be experienced at a particular  
27 place, that is, the abode of the deities (*devaloka*)<sup>12</sup>, though it is to be noted that  
28 traditionally heaven is accepted by most philosophers as a *state of being*, and not  
29 as a place, - ‘*yannaduḥkhenasambhinnaṁna ca grastamanantaram/*  
30 *abhilāṣopanītam ca tatsukhaṁsvaḥpadāspadam*’<sup>13</sup>.

### 33 Debate between Karmavādī Mīmāṁsakas and their opponents on the nature 34 of liberation

35  
36 There is a section of the Mīmāṁsā system called the Karmavādī  
37 Mīmāṁsakas who admit heavenly bliss or *svargasukha* to be the highest end of  
38 human life. Reference to the views of these philosophers may be found in the  
39 following verses of the second chapter of *Śrimadbhagavadgītā*–

40  
41 ‘*yāmimāṁpuspitām vācāṁ pravadyantavyavipāścitah/*  
42 *vedavādaratāḥpārthanānyadasītītvādīnah*’<sup>14</sup>  
43 *kāmātmānaḥsvargaparājanmakarmaphalaprādām/*  
44 *kriyāviśeṣavahulāmbhogaiśvaryaगतमप्रति*’<sup>15</sup>  
45 *bhogaiśvarya prasaktānāmtayāpahṛtacetasām/*  
46 *vyavasāyātmikābuddhiḥsamādhaunavidhīyate*’<sup>16</sup>,  
47

1 However, the mainstream schools of the Mīmāṃsā system, such as the Bhāṭṭa  
2 Mīmāṃsā school, do not admit this view of the Karmavādī Mīmāṃsakas. The  
3 Sāṅkhya philosophers also do not consider heaven to be eternal. The Karmavādī  
4 Mīmāṃsakas establish the eternal character of the heavenly bliss on the basis of  
5 the scriptural statement – ‘*apāmasomamṛtā abhūma*’<sup>17</sup>.

6 The philosophers who do not admit the eternal character of heavenly bliss  
7 establish their thesis on the basis of both inference and scriptural statements. The  
8 inference which they employ to establish their thesis is as follows –  
9 ‘*vimataḥsvargaḥanityaḥkṛtakatvātghaṭavat*’.

10 The Karmavādī Mīmāṃsakas might argue that this inference is not capable of  
11 establishing the non-eternal character of heavenly pleasure. The eternal character  
12 of heavenly pleasure is established by the scriptures themselves. It is said in the  
13 scriptures - ‘*apāmasomamṛtāabhūma*’. In this statement it is said that the deities  
14 (*devatā/deva*) performed the Vedic rite called *soma yāga* and drank the extracts of  
15 the creeper *soma*, and as a result of which they attained the status called *amṛtatva*.  
16 Now the term ‘*amṛta*’ etymologically means deathlessness or going beyond death.  
17 Thus, the deities went beyond death or transcended death by performing this rite  
18 and became eternal. Since the deities are eternal, the heavenly bliss or heavenly  
19 pleasure enjoyed by them is also eternal. This scriptural statement overrides the  
20 inference by which other philosophers have tried to establish the non-eternal  
21 character of heavenly pleasure.

22 Against this argument of the Karmavādī Mīmāṃsakas, the Sāṅkhya  
23 philosophers point out that whenever there is a conflict or contradiction between a  
24 scriptural statement on one hand and some other valid epistemic instrument  
25 (*pramāṇa*) on the other, it cannot always be said that the scriptural statement is  
26 stronger than the other instruments. For, a perceptual cognition and an inference  
27 cannot establish its object in any way other than it actually does. If the scriptural  
28 statement is always considered as stronger than the other epistemic instruments,  
29 then one would have to forego or give up some other valid epistemic instrument,  
30 such as a veridical perception or a valid inference. However, if the validity of valid  
31 epistemic instruments is denied, then the entire epistemology will lose its  
32 trustworthiness. For this reason, no orthodox Indian philosopher places any kind of  
33 blind trust or credence upon a scriptural statement, whenever there is any conflict  
34 between the scriptures and other epistemic instruments. Rather the classical Indian  
35 philosophers evaluate the relative strength and weakness of each epistemic  
36 instrument and only such assessment of relative strength can determine whether a  
37 particular epistemic instrument can override another.

### 40 Sāṅkhya Critique of the Karmavādī Mīmāṃsakas view

#### 42 i) *Methodology and arguments from the paradigm of Sāṅkhya philosophy*

44 To prove the eternal character of heavenly pleasure, the Sāṅkhya  
45 philosophers employ the Mīmāṃsā methodology (*nyāya*) called *sāvakāśa-*  
46 *niravakāśanyāya*. The Mīmāṃsānyāyas are techniques evolved by the Mīmāṃsā

1 system to interpret the scriptural statements. The *sāvakāśa-niravakāśanyāya* states  
 2 that whenever there is a conflict between two rules or two scriptural statements of  
 3 which one has a greater or a wider scope than the other, the rule or the statement  
 4 with lesser scope should be considered as stronger than the rule or the statement  
 5 having the wider scope. For, if the rule or the statement having the wider scope  
 6 (*sāvakāśāśruti/ sāvakāśaniyama*) is considered as stronger then the statement or  
 7 the rule having the smaller scope would have no scope at all. In that case the rule  
 8 or the scriptural statement having the smaller scope would not have any  
 9 application at all, and hence, could not be regarded as a veracious statement or  
 10 rule. The matter is clarified by the Sāṃkhya philosophers by referring to another  
 11 employment of this methodology. For instance, the scriptural statements –  
 12 ‘*nahimśyātsarvābhūtāni*’ and ‘*agniṣomīyampaśumālabheta*’ contradict one  
 13 another. This is because the former statement forbids violence towards any  
 14 organism, whereas the second prescribes animal sacrifice for appeasing the deities  
 15 *agni* and *soma*. Here the former statement obviously has a wider scope than the  
 16 latter. Now if the statement with the wider scope, that is, the first statement -  
 17 ‘*nahimśyātsarvābhūtāni*’, is considered as stronger than the latter statement, then  
 18 the latter would not be applied at all. Hence, it cannot be treated as a *pramāṇa* or  
 19 as a source of veridical cognition. Now if the validity of one Vedic statement is  
 20 denied, then the entire *Vedas* might lose their acceptability. For this reason, the  
 21 statement with the smaller scope, that is, the *niravakāśa* statement is considered as  
 22 stronger than the statement having a wider scope. In that case, the latter statement  
 23 would mean what it literally means, but the significance of the former statement  
 24 would have to be restricted in conformity with the significance of the latter  
 25 statement. Thus, the former statement would mean that violence is forbidden in all  
 26 other cases, except in case of sacrifice. When so interpreted, neither of the two  
 27 statements would lose their validity and the veracity of the entire *Vedas* also will  
 28 not be subjected to doubt. Similarly, whenever a valid inference clashes with any  
 29 scriptural statement, the inference is considered as having a smaller scope than the  
 30 scriptural statement, because an inference establishes its probandum in the locus of  
 31 the inference in a particular manner and it cannot establish the probandum in any  
 32 other form. On the contrary, a scriptural statement being a linguistic entity can be  
 33 interpreted in many different ways. So the scope of a scriptural statement is always  
 34 greater than a veridical perception or a valid inference. For this reason, whenever a  
 35 veridical perception or a valid inference comes into conflict with a scriptural  
 36 statement, the scriptural statement is interpreted in accordance with the perception  
 37 or the inference. The inference which demonstrates the non-eternal character of  
 38 heavenly pleasure is a valid one. So the validity of this inference cannot be denied.  
 39 Hence, the term ‘*amṛta*’ occurring in the statement ‘*apāmasomamṛtāabhūma*’  
 40 must carry some other sense. In fact, this other meaning is indicated by another  
 41 scriptural statement in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, - ‘*ābhūtasamplavasthānamamṛtatvaṃ hi*  
 42 *gīyate*’. This statement clearly states that the heavenly bliss lasts till the destruction  
 43 of a particular creation. So compared to ordinary pleasures, heavenly bliss or  
 44 heavenly pleasure lasts for a long time, but it is not everlasting or eternal. That is  
 45 why, the Vedic means (*ānuśravikaupāya*) are vitiated by the defect (*kṣaya*) or  
 46 destructibility. It is to be noted here that Īśvarakṛṣṇa, the author of *Sāṃkhyakārikā*,



1 or other Sāṃkhya philosophers are not talking about the destructibility of the  
2 means. This is because a Vedic rite being an action is obviously of a particular  
3 duration. So Īśvarakṛṣṇa here, is talking about the destructibility or the non-eternal  
4 character of the end which is attained through these Vedic rites, and this end is  
5 nothing but heavenly pleasure. Since, the end attained through the Vedic means  
6 may be destroyed, the Vedic means are at par with the ordinary means of  
7 overcoming sufferings, such as medicines *etc.*

8  
9 *ii) Discussions on the nature of heaven*

10  
11 Now there remains an apprehension that due to the presence of the causes of  
12 sufferings, one might be afflicted by pain even after the attainment of *svarga*. In that  
13 case, the attainment of *svarga* might not be the desired end of the individual. To  
14 resolve such discomfort, Vācaspati Mīśra says that – ‘*sa ca*  
15 *svasattayāsamūlaghātāmapahanti duḥkham*’<sup>18</sup>. That is, *svarga* is that kind of  
16 pleasure which is not only contradictory to sufferings, rather it destroys all kinds of  
17 pain which are impediment to it. Furthermore, it also eradicates all the causes of  
18 sufferings, including the root cause *adrṣṭa*. He further claims that *svarga* is not  
19 something which would erode after a point of time (‘*na ca eṣakṣayī*’)<sup>19</sup>. However,  
20 the opponents might argue that *svarga* being the result of Vedic sacrifices, is a  
21 positive entity which is produced, and hence, it cannot be eternal. This is expressed  
22 as – ‘*svargahkṣayīuṭpattimatbhāvāpadārthatvātaihikasukhavat(ghaṭapaṭādivat)*’<sup>20</sup>.  
23 In refutation of the above, the Vedic tenet (*śrutivākya*) which has been cited is –  
24 ‘*apāmasomamamṛtāabhuma*’, which means that one who drinks the *soma*, that is,  
25 the person performing the Vedic sacrifice attains *amṛtatva*, meaning that the  
26 individual transcends death. This further establishes that whatever is produced as a  
27 result of the sacrifice, that is indestructible (*amṛta*). Thus, from the above standpoint  
28 the advocates of the Vedic means of pain eradication argue that the method of  
29 attaining discriminatory cognition (*vivekajñāna*) as held by the Sāṃkhya  
30 philosophers, is extremely difficult to achieve, as it requires the effort and care on  
31 the part of the individual over multiple lives. In contrast to that the Vedic means are  
32 easier and involve much less effort as regards the performance of the sacrifices.  
33 Thus, one should adopt the Vedic means of rites and rituals in order to remove  
34 sufferings.

35  
36  
37 *iii) Vedic means are comparable to empirical means in terms of removal of*  
38 *sufferings*

39  
40 In response to the entire above discussion and the objection raised thereafter,  
41 Īśvarakṛṣṇa states the second *Sāṃkhyakārikā* as follows –  
42 ‘*drṣṭavadānuśravikaḥsaaviśuddhikṣayātīśayayuktah/tadviparītaḥśreyānvyaktāvya*  
43 *ktajñāvijñānāt*’<sup>21</sup>.

44 The Vedic means are similar to the empirical means in terms of the fact that  
45 the Vedic sacrifices too are not capable of providing absolute emancipation from  
46 sufferings. The term ‘*ānuśravika*’ refers to the Vedic means, that is, it refers to that

1 kind of knowledge which can be known after listening to the Vedic tenets from the  
 2 teacher ('*gurupāthātānuśrūyate*'). However, the knowledge attained thereby, that  
 3 is, the cognition of the Vedic sacrifices, is analogous to the empirical means of pain  
 4 removal as they are neither inevitable (*naaikāntika*) nor can they assure the non-  
 5 recurrence of sufferings (*naātyantika*). Now one might argue that the notion of the  
 6 discriminatory knowledge (*vivekajñāna*) between the *puruṣa* and the *prakṛti* is also  
 7 obtained from the *Vedas*, that is, it is also *ānuśravika*. Hence, similar to the other  
 8 means which are *ānuśravika* in nature, *vivekajñāna* too cannot ensure the absolute  
 9 cessation of sufferings. In response to the above apprehension, it is stated that  
 10 '*yadyapi ca*' etc. The following inference shows the inefficacy of the Vedic means

11 –  
 12 '*vaidikahūpāyahdrṣṭatulyahnaaikāntikātyantikaduḥkhatrayapratikāropāyahaviśud*  
 13 *dhiyuktatvātksayayuktatvātatiśayayuktatvāt ca*'<sup>22</sup>. That is, the *ānuśravikaupāya* or  
 14 the Vedic means are at par with the ordinary means of alleviating sufferings,  
 15 because the Vedic means are vitiated by three defects, namely, *aviśuddhi*, *kṣaya*  
 16 and *atiśaya*.

17

18 *iv) Analysis of the inference on the attributes of heaven*

19

20 In the above inference the locus is *vaidikaupāya* and the probandum is  
 21 *drṣṭatulyatva*, that is, *aikāntikātyantikaduḥkhatrayapratikāropāyatvābhāva*. Now  
 22 the locus being *vaidikaupāya*, whatever is known by the Vedic means, - the  
 23 sacrifices as well as *vivekajñāna*, all get included in the *pakṣa*. Thus, the afore-  
 24 mentioned apprehension gets revoked. However, an inference can only establish a  
 25 probandum if it is free from fallacies. If we consider *vivekajñāna* to be included in  
 26 the *pakṣa* then due to the absence of the probandum in the locus, that is, in  
 27 *vivekajñāna*, the inference would consist of the fallacy of *bādha*. Hence,  
 28 *vivekajñāna* cannot be considered to be a part of the *pakṣa*. Further,  
 29 VācaspatiMiśra endorses the above position by stating that Īśvarakṛṣṇa has  
 30 mentioned the term '*ānuśravika*' in the *kārikā* to refer to the Vedic rites and rituals  
 31 only. Though it is true that *vivekajñāna* is *ānuśravika* too, yet there are Vedic  
 32 sentences like, '*ātmāvā*' are *draṣṭavyaḥ*'<sup>23</sup>, which according to VācaspatiMiśra,  
 33 should be interpreted as '*prakṛtitaḥ vivekatavyaḥ*'<sup>24</sup>, and it means that the self or  
 34 the consciousness is to be perceived as radically different from *prakṛti*. Once such  
 35 perception is produced and is practiced over ages and through multiple lives of an  
 36 individual, sufferings are eradicated in such manner that they can never recur  
 37 ('*nasa punarāvartate*'<sup>25</sup>).

38

39 *v) The Sāṃkhya claim*

40

41 Further, it is also to be noted that the probanses used in the inference are not  
 42 to be found in the locus if *vivekajñāna* is included in it. The  
 43 *probansaviśuddhiyuktatva* indicates the production of sin (*pratyavāya*) and the  
 44 consequent sufferings which are produced due to the violence committed against  
 45 animals which are sacrificed in the Vedic rites. Thus, the Vedic sacrificial rites and  
 46 acts involve impurity or are inflicted with sufferings due to the violent actions

1 performed against animals. Moreover, pleasure of the form of *svarga* is bound to  
 2 erode after a certain point of time, and it can be proved by the following inference  
 3 – ‘*svargādikaṃkṣayasattve sati kāryatvāt*’<sup>26</sup>. That is, *svarga* being a positive entity  
 4 (*sattvaviśiṣṭa*) and is something which is produced (*kārya*), just like a pot, is bound  
 5 to be destroyed at some point or the other. Furthermore, the results of the Vedic  
 6 sacrifices vary in their quality and status. For instance, the *jyotiṣṭomayāga* merely  
 7 yields the attainment of *svarga*, whereas sacrifices like, *vājapeya* helps to attain  
 8 the lordship of *svarga*. Thus, there are variations in the degree and nature of the  
 9 pleasure attainable through Vedic sacrifices. That is why *svarga* is attributed as  
 10 *atiśaya*, like the worldly means. Evidently, such is never the case with  
 11 *vivekajñāna*. It is devoid of and is essentially radically different from the above  
 12 three features as we find in case of empirical pleasures and that of the form of  
 13 *svarga*. Hence, Īśvarakṛṣṇa claims that the discriminatory cognition between the  
 14 *puruṣa* and the *prakṛti* is more fundamental and most efficacious in terms of  
 15 eradication of sufferings. The Vedic means might often bring about tremendous  
 16 sufferings too in the form of *narakabhoga* due to the sin incurred by performing  
 17 certain sacrifices like, *śyena*. Moreover, the sacrifices themselves are, in some way  
 18 or the other, afflicted with some amount of sufferings, in spite of the fact that they  
 19 produce immense pleasure by fulfilling the desired ends. Whereas it is never the  
 20 case with *vivekajñāna*, or more specifically, *sattvapuruṣānyatākhyāti*. Thus,  
 21 Īśvarakṛṣṇa argues that the Vedic rites and rituals are merely means of eradication  
 22 of sufferings, if at all, in the empirical realm, but not the means of attaining  
 23 liberation of the spirit in the absolute sense.

### 24 25 26 **Concluding remarks**

27  
28 In conclusion, it may be stated that, we find in *Sāṃkhyatattvavivecana* of  
 29 Kṣemendra, we find that the Sāṃkhya philosophers are *abhāvamokṣavādins*. That  
 30 is, liberation for them is the state of consciousness-as-it-is, and hence, not qualified  
 31 by any other state of feelings like pleasure *etc.* Such kind of absolute cessation of  
 32 sufferings is considered as liberation to the Sāṃkhya philosophers. However,  
 33 philosophical schools like the PūrvaMīmāṃsakas or the KarmavādīMīmāṃsakas  
 34 consider liberation to be not only the cessation of sufferings, but the state of  
 35 realisation of eternal pleasure (*nityasukhupalabdhi*). They are known as the  
 36 *sukhamokṣavādins*. Thus, according to them the attainment of *svarga* itself is the  
 37 eternal and unwavering state of bliss. Sāṃkhya philosophers, however, point out  
 38 that the realisation of pleasure, be it eternal (*nitya*) or fleeting (*anitya*), the  
 39 realisation (*upalabdhi*) itself is always non-eternal (*anitya*). Hence, liberation is  
 40 not a state of realisation of eternal pleasure, rather it is the state of absolute  
 41 cessation of the trifold sufferings. This has been expressed as –  
 42 ‘*darśanaśaktirahitasyakriyāśaktimataḥpradhānasyāpipuruṣeṇasamyogaḥmokṣārt*  
 43 *hapuruṣasyabhinnatvenavyaktāvyaktapuruṣajñānejātepradhānasyamokṣobhavati/*  
 44 *nityasukhopalabdhirmokṣaiticedupalabdherapinityānityavivekagrastatvādasāram/*  
 45 *na ca nityasukhagocarasyāvidyādiyatkiñcidāvaraṇabhaṅgaevapuruṣārthe/*  
 46 *vācyahsukhānubhavasyaivapuruṣārthatvāccaitanyanityatvenāvaraṇasyāpiasambh*

1 *avācca/ mokṣeparamānandaśrutismṛtayastu - mokṣasāstraparibhāṣāmātrā/*  
 2 *duḥkhamevāstinasukhamīyasmāttadupalabhyate/*  
 3 *duḥkhārtasyapratīkāresukhamśajñāvidhīyate//*  
 4 *duḥkhamkāmasukhāpekṣāsukhamduḥkhātyayaḥsmṛtaḥ/*  
 5 *ityādismṛtibhirduḥkhanivṛttirevasukhatvenaparibhāṣitā*.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, keeping  
 6 our contention of the present paper in mind, we can assert that since, the  
 7 *sukhamokṣavādins* like the PūrvaMīmāṃsakas or the KarmavādīMīmāṃsakas  
 8 consider liberation to be not only the cessation of sufferings, but the state of  
 9 realisation of eternal pleasure or bliss, then according to the school of thought in  
 10 question, the Vedic performatives, and accordingly, the duties and non-duties are  
 11 the sole means of attaining liberation. Accordingly, the Vedic scriptures pose to be  
 12 the absolute sanction of soteriology in the arena of such philosophical thoughts.

13 Further, it may also be asserted that the Vedas though prescriptive in nature,  
 14 are of the structure of hypothetical imperatives. This is because, the injunctions are  
 15 end-specific. They posit that if one desires a particular end, then they must perform  
 16 a specific sacrifice. For instance, *if* individuals desire to attain *svarga*, *then* they  
 17 must perform the *agnihotra* sacrifice. The evident *if-then* form presents the  
 18 injunction as a hypothetical imperative. This portrays the fact the Vedic  
 19 prescriptions, though of the nature of commands, accommodates the free will of  
 20 individuals. Hence, the good or bad of actions are not merely directed by the  
 21 Vedas, rather it depends upon the choices that the individuals make for  
 22 themselves. Thus, it could be claimed that the Vedic ethics involves paradigms to  
 23 ascertain a good life for beings, based on individual choices. At the same time,  
 24 based on such action-consequence principle discussed throughout, we may further  
 25 claim that it provides the means of eradication of sufferings in order to attain  
 26 eternal bliss, or in other words, liberation for certain sections of philosophical  
 27 schools.

### 30 Notes & References

- 31  
 32 1. *Īsopaniṣad* 1  
 33 2. *LaugākṣībhāskaraviracitaḥArthasaṃgrahaḥ*, Tr. by Swami Bhargananda and  
 34 introduction by Sri Amar Kumar Chattopadhyay, Sanskrit PustakBhandar, Kolkata,  
 35 First published on Buddhapurnima, 1411 (Bengali year), p. 140. Henceforth,  
 36 *Arthasaṃgrahaḥ*.  
 37 3. *Śābarabhāṣya* on 1.1.2  
 38 4. *Ibid.*  
 39 5. *Ibid.*  
 40 6. The central force of persuasion which remains embedded in the Vedic injunctions  
 41 lies in the verb ‘*yajeta*’ in the above example and is discussed in much detail  
 42 in *Arthasaṃgrahaḥ*, p. 11 onwards.  
 43 7. ‘*Ubhābhyāmapyaṃśābhyāmbhāvānaivaucyate.*  
 44 *Bhāvanānāmabhaviturbhavanānukūla-bhāvayiturvyāpāra-viśeṣaḥ.* *Sādvedhā,*  
 45 *śābdībhāvanā, ārthībhāvanāceti*’, *Arthasaṃgrahaḥ*, p. 11.  
 46 8. *Mīmāṃsāparibhāṣā*, Br: Medhachaitanya, Kolkata, 1980, p. 53.  
 47 9. ‘*Puruṣasyanivartakāṃvākyāṃniṣedhaḥ,*  
 48 *niṣedhavākyānāmanarthahetukriyānivṛttijanakatvenavārthavatvāt.* *Tathāhi,yathā,*

- 1 *vidhihpravartanāmpratipādayansvapravartakatvanirvāhārthamvidheyasyayāgāderi*  
2 *ṣṭasādhanatvamākṣipanpuruṣam̐tatrapravartayati. Tathā ‘nakalañjambhakṣayet’*  
3 *ityadiniṣedho ‘pinivartanāmpratipādayansvanivartakatvanirvāhārtham̐niṣedhasyaka*  
4 *lañja-bhakṣaṇasyaparāniṣṭasādhanatvamākṣipanpuruṣam̐tatonivartayati’,*  
5 *Arthasaṁgrahaḥ*, p. 140.
- 6 10. Mīśra, Vācaspati, 1406 (Bengali year), *Sāṁkhyatattvakaumudī* on *Sāṁkhyakārikā*, p.  
7 20
- 8 11. Mīśra, Vācaspati, 1406 (Bengali year), *Sāṁkhyatattvakaumudī* on *Sāṁkhyakārikā*, p.  
9 19
- 10 12. Mīśra, Vācaspati, 1406 (Bengali year), *Sāṁkhyatattvakaumudī* on *Sāṁkhyakārikā*, p.  
11 20
- 12 13. Mīśra, Vācaspati, 1406 (Bengali year), *Sāṁkhyatattvakaumudī* on *Sāṁkhyakārikā*, p.  
13 19
- 14 14. Verse 42, Vyāsa, 1986, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* with the commentary (*gūdhārthadīpikā*)  
15 of MadhusūdanaSarasvatī, ed. Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata: Navabharata Publishers.
- 16 15. Verse 43, Vyāsa, 1986, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*.
- 17 16. Verse 44, Vyāsa, 1986, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*.
- 18 17. Mīśra, Vācaspati, 1406 (Bengali year), *Sāṁkhyatattvakaumudī* on *Sāṁkhyakārikā*, p.  
19 20
- 20 18. Mīśra, Vācaspati, 1406 (Bengali year), *Sāṁkhyatattvakaumudī* on *Sāṁkhyakārikā*,  
21 p. 20
- 22 19. Mīśra, Vācaspati, 1406 (Bengali year), *Sāṁkhyatattvakaumudī* on *Sāṁkhyakārikā*, p.  
23 20
- 24 20. Mīśra, Vācaspati, 1406 (Bengali year), *Sāṁkhyatattvakaumudī* on *Sāṁkhyakārikā*,  
25 p. 21
- 26 21. *Sāṁkhyakārikā* 2
- 27 22. Mīśra, Vācaspati, 1406 (Bengali year), *Sāṁkhyatattvakaumudī* on *Sāṁkhyakārikā*, p.  
28 23
- 29 23. Mīśra, Vācaspati, 1406 (Bengali year), *Sāṁkhyatattvakaumudī* on *Sāṁkhyakārikā*,  
30 p. 23
- 31 24. Mīśra, Vācaspati, 1406 (Bengali year), *Sāṁkhyatattvakaumudī* on *Sāṁkhyakārikā*, p.  
32 23
- 33 25. *Chāndogya*8/15
- 34 26. Mīśra, Vācaspati, 1406 (Bengali year), *Sāṁkhyatattvakaumudī* on *Sāṁkhyakārikā*, p.  
35 29
- 36 27. Kṣemendra, 1920, *Sāṁkhyatattvavivecana* in *Sāṁkhyasaṁgraha*, ed.  
37 Vindhyesvariprasad Dvivedi, Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Office, p. 33  
38