CHAPTER - II

DISTINCTION BETWEEN
INDIAN PHILOSOPHY
AND
YOGA
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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY AND YOGA

To say that Yoga and Indian Philosophy are related to each other is a gross oversimplified statement. In fact, the two are related to each in two ways. That is, (1) only a particular type of Indian philosophy can lead to Yoga and (2) Yoga can give rise only to a particular type of Indian philosophy.

(1) As we have noted in the Introduction, only those who are encountered with perennial pain and suffering are feel the necessity of philosophising. The kind of philosophical question they raise are interesting. For example, they ask (i) Are all people subject to misery? (ii) Do pain and misery come to an end at the point of our death? or do we have rebirth such that pain and suffering recur in some form or the other in the next birth also? (iii) Is it possible to overcome all misery and reach a state in which not only misery does not recur but also man finds himself in an eternal blissful state called, mokṣa (final liberation from all limitations)?

These questions have many philosophical implications. The first question presupposes the ubiquitous presence of misery, of which death is the most fearful form. As Dhammapada says “Not in the sky, nor in the depths of ocean, nor having entered the caverns of mountain, nay, such a place is not to be found in the world, where a man might dwell without being overpowered by death”. If Buddha concluded from this, “Sarvam Duḥkhamayaṃ” (“All is full of misery”) it is only true, though a little
exaggerated. Because by misery Buddha and other ancient Indian philosophers meant not merely death, but loss of property, loss of beauty, youth and health, inability to achieve desired result, etc., which every man faces. There may be instances of happiness, but both their recurrence and duration are so negligibly small. In fact, the attempts to obtain them and their loss themselves are painful. So the ancient Indian philosophers, almost rightly, regarded misery as existential, such that human existence could not be easily extricated from misery.

Most men, who are afflicted with misery, are interested in eradicating it, but without asking philosophical questions. Philosophizing misery requires a philosophical bent of mind, which only a few have. So the subject's own experience of pain and misery and philosophical bent of mind are a necessary condition of philosophizing in ancient India.

The second philosophical question implies two possibilities. Assuming that misery is a necessary accompaniment of human existence, we can think of overcoming it in either of the two ways (i) If we believe that this life is the only life we have and that there is no rebirth, then the way of overcoming the misery is hedonistic, based on scientism. A Cārvāka, for example, who does not believe in an eternal spiritual substance (ātman) or God (paramātman), tries to meet misery by adopting hedonistic ways. Since there is no opportunity of being reborn either in this world or in the next, he must depend on science and technology for medicine, etc., in order to be happy till he dies. Since he is not afraid of God in whose existence he has no belief, he may indulge in immoral way without hesitation in order to
enhance happiness and extend his life on earth. (ii) If, on the contrary, man believes in an eternal spiritual substance, he believes in karma and rebirth. Though the belief in karma and rebirth is a necessary condition for the practice of Yoga in the Indian context, it may not be so in a non-Indian context. For example, the Christians who do not believe in karma and rebirth can still practice Yoga and become good Christians in order to become eligible for salvation after death. In any case, it is believed by ancient Indian philosophers that belief in a chain of births and deaths in each of which man faces misery, is a good reason why Yoga must be practised and if man, like Carvaka, believed in only in this life, he would not resort to Yoga practice.

The third question presupposes two things. (i) It is possible to completely terminate the miseries; (ii) while termination of misery is a negative aspect, it is possible positively to enjoy bliss, which is qualitatively and quantitatively distinct from any pleasure we know of. In other words, by the regular practice of Yoga we can attain liberation - liberation for the soul from ignorance, karma, rebirth, selfishness and misery which derives from the complex of these.

Here some clarifications are needed. What is mokṣa? Is it the same as living in heaven (svarga)? Is it union with Brahman? Is it living in eternal companionship with God in his world? Is it simply realization that one’s self is not prakṛti or matter? Is it possible to attain mokṣa in an embodied state? Or, is it necessarily an after-death attainment?
All these sub-questions concerning mokṣa (liberation) presuppose that the soul, which was defiled in its worldly state, becomes pure in the liberated state and liberation is the necessary consequence of Yoga. Mokṣa is pursued not only as freedom from misery or as a state of blissfulness and peace, but as the highest value.

Here also, we can conclude that if man thought liberation or salvation were a myth or something which human beings can never attain, or if he thought that there are higher values than mokṣa, then he might not have attempted at its attainment. But since he believes in the possibility of attaining it as the highest value, he falls back upon Yoga.

Thus the three philosophical doctrines (i) that misery is inbuilt into human existence, (ii) that misery persists even in our next births and (iii) that misery can be successfully terminated by Yoga make us depend on Yoga for solution.

(2) The other, equally important side of the question is, How is Indian philosophy depended on Yoga? An answer to this question follows from a consideration of the question, What is Yoga?

Many moderners believe that Yoga means a set of āsanas (physical postures) coupled with prāṇāyāma (regulated breathing). In a few cases Yoga is mistaken for meditation. Those who have studied Indian philosophy may mean by Yoga one of the six systems of Indian Philosophy. But, though Yoga is really each one of these in a restricted sense, it is something more.
The word “Yoga” can be broadly used in two senses, to mean either (i) an end (goal) or (ii) a conscious, long and strenuous effort leading to that goal. When used in the former sense, it refers to a supra-sensory and supra-intellectual experience, which enhances one’s knowledge of oneself and of the world. Such a state is called ‘Yoga Samādhi’, ‘Yoga pratyakṣa’ ‘Turiya’ which are counterparts of the English ‘mystic experience’. Used in the second sense, the word ‘Yoga’ applies to various means to the end, such as Bhakti-yoga, Karma-yoga, Pātañjala-yoga, etc. This definition, therefore, is not restricted to any one form of Yoga, because this state can well be the result of Bhakti-yoga, Karma-yoga, Jñāna-Yoga, Rāja-yoga, or any other form of Yoga.

While “turiya”, “Yoga-samādhi,” etc., are general terms applicable to all schools of Yoga, “Brahma-sākṣātkāra”, “Śivanubhava” “Kaivalya”, etc., seem to be terms having specific connotations in addition to what the general terms connote. For example, when a Yogi disciplined in Advaita metaphysics of Śaṅkara has such an experience he tries to interpret it in terms of Advaita. He would say, for example, that in the turiya state his soul coming out of all limitations merged in Brahman or became Brahman.

In any case, interpretations of the turiya state gives rise to philosophy. About the emergence of Indian Philosophy from mystic intuition Karel Werner has this to say:

According to Indian tradition, the ancient Vedic religion is not a product of the imagination of primitive minds reacting to natural phenomena by personifying, worshipping and
dreading them, but on the contrary is the creation of exceptional individuals who had reached the fullness of mystical vision, which gave them an understanding of and insight into the problems of life and existence that may have amounted to the final knowledge of the truth itself.  

The earliest and clearest expression of deep mystical form which takes the form of philosophy is found in the Upaniṣads. 

The philosophy of Upaniṣads, which belongs to the time prior to the creation of Philosophical systems, was not predominantly speculative, but was obviously inspired to a great degree by mystical experiences in which the Yogic approach played an important part.

The importance the Upaniṣads attach to dhyāna (contemplation) as a method of verification of the so called mahāvākyas (maxims), such as “Aham brahmaḥ śāṃ”, “tat tvam asi”, etc. shows how dhyāna can be yardstick of measuring the philosophical truths.

While ‘original philosophy’ depends on the supra-intellectual perception of reality (such as Brahman or Ātman, or “Śūnya” as the Mādhyamika Buddhists preferred to call it), the philosophical systems such as Vedānta, for example, were the products of speculation. What Buddha perceived in his mystical state he conveyed to his disciples – perhaps in unclear terms and several schools of Buddhism sprang up, each claiming to be in possession of key to interpretation of his philosophy. His refusal to discuss metaphysical issues might also have added to our being in dark
about the original meaning of what he said. Similarly, the original Vedānta (which is a synonym of “Upaniṣads”) was compressed into the aphorisms called “Vedānta-sūtras” or “Brahma-sūtras” by Bādarāyaṇa. We are not sure whether Bādarāyaṇa was himself a mystic, but he is believed to have made the first attempt at culling out a systematic philosophy from the Upaniṣads. In fact all sūtras, such as Nyāya-sūtras, Vaiśeṣika-sūtras, etc., are believed to be systematic presentation of the various mystic intuitions. But the Vedānta systems, such as Advaita, Viśistadvaita, etc., are clearly speculative in nature. Their attempt is, on the one hand, to show that their own interpretation or commentary (bhaṣya) on the “Brahma-sūtras” is the most correct one, and on the other, to show, though indirectly, their own metaphysics (for example, Advaita) is what the Upaniṣads, and the Brahma-sūtras teach. As a result of these varied commentaries on the sūtras of different schools, there spring a variety of philosophical schools, upholding their own metaphysics, their own epistemology, their own logic and their own axiology. Occasionally, philosophy of language has sprung out of this speculation.

In addition to these commentaries, elaboration (vṛttis), and ṭikās (criticism) also help develop philosophy. It is believed that the six systems of Hindu Philosophy sprang up simultaneously and as a result, by mutual criticism, Indian Philosophy was able to develop both in width and depth.

As earlier, here also we can note that the philosophy that has sprung from Yoga is of a particular type. It is chiefly metaphysics – especially metaphysics that takes into consideration the reality as a whole. The reality
is Brahman which is the essence of the world or an identity of the Ātman and Brahman, or Prakṛti and Puruṣa, or God whose body the world is, are some which are claimed to be the contents of the mystical vision. In order to justify their method of interpretation of the mystic utterances, each school develops its own epistemology, logic, etc. Thus it can be said that while development of metaphysics is the main product of mystic intuition, development of logic, epistemology and other branches of philosophy is the by-product. We cannot fail to note in this context that the type of philosophy which gives rise to Yoga is not the same as the type of philosophy, which springs from Yoga, though both of them are termed “Indian philosophy”.

REFERENCES:

2. Karel Werner,: Yoga And Indian Philosophy (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1977), P.101.
3. Ibid., P.109.