Abstract

This study offers a fresh interpretation of the terms *pratiprasava* and *kaivalya*, both of which are central in understanding the soteriological vision of Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*. It argues that any comprehensive understanding of *kaivalya*, the declared goal of classical yoga, necessarily depends on a proper interpretation of *pratiprasava*. Literally, *pratiprasava* denotes the antithesis of creation or birth, implying dissolution, annihilation, or destruction. Philosophically, it signifies the reversal of nature's creative activity, leading to the dissolution of afflictions (*kleśa-s*) in an empirical context (YS 2.10) and the reabsorption of the qualities (*guṇa-s*) in an ontological/cosmological context (YS 4.34). Scholarly interpretations of *pratiprasava* vary widely. They may be broadly grouped into (1) ontological/cosmological readings, which understand it as the dissolution of the physical body and mind, culminating in liberation after death or *videhamukti*; and (2) epistemological/psychological readings, which see it as the dissolution of misidentification of *puruṣa* with *prakṛti*, resulting in liberation while living (*jīvanmukti*). Some contemporary scholars understand *pratiprasava* as simultaneously a psychological and cosmological process. This study argues that *pratiprasava* has a dual nature, functioning as both an empirical (epistemological/psychological) process and a transcendent (ontological/cosmological) one. In YS 2.10, it appears as a yogic practice for the purification of the mind (*citta*) by eliminating subtle *kleśa-s*, whereas in YS 4.34, it refers to the cosmological dissolution of the three *guṇa-s*, culminating in the dissolution of both *citta* and the physical body. These two functions, rather than being contradictory, form successive stages in a single process of liberation. *Kaivalya* is considered the highest stage of a yogi's spiritual journey. Patañjali mentions *kaivalya* five times in the *Yogasūtra*, each context offering nuanced meanings. This study posits *kaivalya* not as a single, instantaneous state, but as a dynamic yogic journey of freedom, comprising distinct incremental stages. These stages may be outlined as follows: 1. *Cittavṛtti-nirodha*-oriented *kaivalya* (*kaivalya* I, YS 1.3): *puruṣa* abides in its original form once all mental modifications have ceased. 2. *Hāna*-oriented *kaivalya* (*kaivalya* II, YS 2.25): characterised by the removal of *avidyā* (ignorance) and the consequent disjunction of *buddhi* from *puruṣa*. 3. *Siddhi*-oriented *kaivalya* (*kaivalya* III, YS 3.50): associated with the absence of "seeds of faults" and supernatural attainments. 4. Purity-oriented *kaivalya* (*kaivalya* IV, YS 3.55): attained when *sattva* (purified *buddhi*) attains parity of purity with *puruṣa*, resulting in embodied liberation (*jīvan-mukti*). 5. *Pratiprasava*-oriented *kaivalya* (*kaivalya* V, YS 4.34): defined as the

reabsorption of the *guṇa-s* to their unmanifest state, culminating in disembodied liberation (*videhamukti*). The study concludes that *pratiprasava* and *kaivalya* are interconnected, and that the dual interpretations of *pratiprasava* provide a coherent framework for resolving apparent contradictions in the understanding of *kaivalya*. Empirical *pratiprasava* the purification of the mind—leads to embodied liberation (*jīvan-mukti*), enabling the yogin to remain in the world while remaining unaffected by *prakṛtic* effects. Transcendent *pratiprasava*, involving complete dissolution of mind and body, leads to disembodied liberation (*videhamukti*), wherein *puruṣa* becomes entirely disentangled from all prakṛtic manifestations. This study presents the journey of liberation as sequential embodied liberation preceding disembodied liberation—without implying the superiority of either state..

.....

.....