

Release, salvation, uplift and liberation in the classical medieval Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya

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Abstract

This paper presents the terms *niḥśreyasa* - salvation, *abhyudaya* - uplift and *mokṣa - liberation* in the Vaiśeṣika *sūtra*-s (VS) with Candrānanda's commentary. The main focus is on Candrānanda's interpretation of these terms. Moreover, the definition of *apavarga* – release, does not appear in the VS but in the Nyāya *sūtra*-s (NSū). Therefore, the definition of *apavarga* is taken from the NSū, as is the definition of *niḥśreyasa* for comparison with the definition in the VS.

1. Release – *apavarga*¹

The term *apavarga* is found in the NSū together with the *niḥśreyasa*. These two terms are usually translated indistinctly as release. However, Slaje shows in his paper that *apavarga* and *niḥśreyasa* differ in meaning. The term *apavarga* can be precisely defined, as it occurs eight times in the NSū. In NSū 1.1.2, the meaning of *apavarga* is explained:

NSū 1.1.2: *duḥkhajanmapravṛttidoṣasamithyājñānānām uttarottarāpāye tadanantarāpāyād apavargah.*

“Because of the disappearance of the previous one upon the annihilation of the respectively successive one pain, birth, activity, faults and misapprehension, release (*apavarga*) [follows].”

Further, in NSū 1.1.9, *apavarga* is mentioned in connection with the *prameya* (objects of knowledge):

NSū 1.1.9:
ātmaśarīrendriyārthabuddhimanahpravṛttidoṣapretyabhāvaphaladuḥkhāpavargās tu prameyam.

“Soul (*ātma*), body (*śarīra*), senses (*īndriya*), objects (*ārtha*), intellect (*buddhi*), mind (*manah*), activity (*pravṛtti*), faults (*doṣa*), transmigration (*pretyabhāva*), fruit (*phala*), pain (*duḥkha*) and release (*apavarga*) are the objects of knowledge.”

The *apavarga* is classified under the objects of knowledge. According to Slaje, the *apavarga* is a *terminus technicus* for release in NSū because it logically appears in the discussion of final salvation and the cessation of rebirth (Slaje, 1986:163).

NSū 1.1.22: *tad (scil. duḥkha - [cf. NSū 1.1.21])² atyantavimokṣo' pavargah.*

“Release is the final liberation from [sorrow].”

NSū 4.2.44: *tad (scil. niṣpanna - [cf. NSū 4.2.43])³ abhāvaś cāpavarge.*

“And [it is] the absence of it (i.e., a body) in release (*apavarga*).”

Before explaining the term *niḥśreyasa* in VS, the definition of *niḥśreyasa* in NSū is presented. The *niḥśreyasa* appears only in NSū 1.1.1 and is not mentioned again:

NSū 1.1.1:

*pramāṇaprameyasamśayaprayojanadṛṣṭāntasiddhāntāvayavatarkanirṇayavādajalpavita
ṇḍāhetvābhāsacchalajātinigrahasthānānām tattvajñānāniḥśreyasādhighamaḥ.*

“Salvation (*niḥśreyasa*) is attained from the cognition of the true nature (*tattvajñānām*) of means of right knowledge (*pramāṇa*), the objects of right knowledge (*prameya*), doubt (*samśaya*), purpose (*prayojana*), instance (*dṛṣṭānta*), settled opinion (*siddhānta*), component part of a logical argument (*avayava*) supposition (*tarka*), complete ascertainment (*nirṇaya*), discussion (*vāda*), discourse (*jalpa*), captious objection (*vitandā*) fallacious reason (*hetvābhāsa*) deceitful disputation (*chala*), futile answer (*jāti*) and the position of being unfit to carry on an argument from impossibility of agreeing about first principles (*nigrahasthāna*).”

The discussion on the relationship between *apavarga* and *niḥśreyasa*, whether they have the same meaning or not, is given by Slaje. One of the arguments against the terms having the same meaning is that if both terms had the same meaning, then the question arises why the NSū would use two different terms for the same meaning. However, in the translated sūtra-s above we can see that both terms occur in different contexts. *Niḥśreyasa* can be attained through the realisation of the true nature of the 16 categories, and *apavarga* is caused

by the annihilation of misconceptions and consists in the final salvation from pain. Reading the NSū commentaries of Uddyotakara and Vācaspati, whose translations are presented in Slaje's essay, we can see that they distinguish these two terms in terms of two different types. According to Uddyotakara and Vācaspati, we have two different types of *niḥśreyasa* - higher and lower, the higher being equivalent to *apavarga*⁴.

The definition of *niḥśreyasa* in VS of Candrānanda's commentary is different in comparison to NSū presented above.

2. Salvation – *niḥśreyasa*⁵

As it is already mentioned above the *niḥśreyasa* occurs only once in NSū as it does in VS.

VS 1.1.2: *yato'bhyudayaniḥśreyasasiddhiḥ sa dharmah.*

“Dharma is that accomplishment of the salvation and uplift.”

*niḥśreyasam adhyātmano vaiśeṣikaguṇābhāvarūpo mokṣaḥ.*⁶

“*niḥśreyasa* is the liberation from the self, [that is] the absence of specific qualities.”

The attainment of *abhyudaya*, as well as *niḥśreyasa*, serves the *dharmā*. Both here and above, the two paths of *niḥśreyasa* are mentioned. We have two paths that serve the *dharmā* when they are accomplished. Slaje addresses that *niḥśreyasa* from VS 1.1.2 is the same as *apavarga* in NSū 1.1.2. If we look at the above translation to *apavarga* in NSū 1.1.2 and Candrānanda's commentary on VS 1.1.2, we can see that in both cases the term *mokṣa* is used for a final form of liberation without further rebirth.

Here, in VS 1.1.2, *niḥśreyasa* is accompanied by *abhyudaya* - uplift. However, the term *abhyudaya* is used several times in VS and is precisely defined.

3. Uplift – *abhyudaya*⁷

We have seen that *abhyudaya* occurs in VS 1.1.2 with *niḥśreyasa*. Candrānanda's commentary on this Sūtra explains the meaning of *abhyudaya* (uplift):

yāgadevatāpūjādi kriyāṅāmājyapuṣpādi nirvatyānāṃ tadaiva vinaṣṭatvād uttarakālaṃ phaladānāsakter yasmāddhetor abhyudayaniḥśreyase bhavataḥ sa dharmā iti boddhavyaḥ. abhyudayo brahmādi lokesv iṣṭāsarīrapraptar anarthoparamaśca.

“Since the actions such as sacrificing, worshipping of Gods and so on, with ghee, flowers and so on, in as much as they are to be accomplished, have perished because of the non-power [to produce] the fruit afterwards, so that the cause from which salvation and uplift [results] is to be known as dharmā. The uplift is to obtain a desired body in the worlds of Brahma, and so on, and cessation of poverty (undesired thing).”

VS 6.1.8: *aduṣṭabhojanāt samabhivyāhārato 'bhyudayaḥ.*

“The uplift [results] from the association by feeding a person without fault.”

aduṣṭaṃ brāhmaṇaṃ bhōjayitvā tadīyād āśīrvād ādisamabhivyāhārāt puruṣābhyudayaḥ. tatkāraṇaṃ dharmo bhavātīyārthaḥ.

“The uplift (abhyudaya) of a man [comes] with the association of his blessings after having fed a faultless Brāhman. This means its cause is dharmā.”

It also explains what kind of actions do not count towards the attainment of *abhyudaya*. For example:

VS 6.2.9: *ayatasya śucibhojanādabhyudayo na vidyate yamābhāvāt.*

“Because there is an absence of restraint, there is no uplift from the unrestrained pure food.”

ayatasya viśiṣṭaprayatnarahitasya śucimāhāraṃ yadṛcchayo payuñjānasya abhyudayo nāsti, viśiṣṭasyābhisandher abhāvāt.

“For the one who is uncontrolled, one who is devoid of special effort, who is in as much as he is consuming by chance the pure food there is no uplift because there is no special intention.”

It is described that *abhyudaya* can be attained through the worship and sacrifice of the Gods, through attaining the desired body in the worlds of Brahma, and through practices, such as feeding a faultless Brahman. However, in Candrānanda's commentary on VS 6.2.9

abhyudaya can only be attained by one who restrains himself and eats pure food due to a special intention, none of these actions are for uplift if they happened by chance. Other practices for attaining abhyudaya are listed below.

VS 6.2.1: *ḍṛṣṭānām ḍṛṣṭaprayojanānām ḍṛṣṭābhāve prayogo 'bhyudayāya.*

“The application of the visible acts inasmuch as they have something visible as their purpose, serves the uplift when they have something invisible.”

śrutismṛtiparidṛṣṭānām snānādīnām ḍṛṣṭasya malāpakarṣāder anabhisandhāne prayogo 'bhyudayāya bhavati.

ke te?

“The actions like bathing, which is seen in śruti and smṛti, when there is no connection of something visible (when one does not attend something visible) as removal of a dirt, it serve in the purpose of uplift.

What are these?”

VS 6.2.2:

abhiṣecanopavāsabrahmacaryagurukulavāsavānaprasthyayajñadānaprokṣaṇadiṅnakṣa tramāntrakālaniyamās cāḍṛṣṭāya.

“Inaugurations (bathing in waters of different places, abhiṣeca), fasting (upavāsa), state of continence and chastity (brahmacarya), residence in the family of the preceptor (gurukulavāsa), retiring into a forest (vānaprasthya), sacrifice (yajña), oblation (dāna), sprinkling (prokṣaṇa), cardinal points (diṅ), stars (nakṣatra), the time of deliberation (mantrakāla) and religious restrictions (niyama), these are for the purpose of invisible”.

4. Liberation – *mokṣa*⁸

In Vaiśeṣika we can find two definitions of *mokṣa*:

1. VS 5.2.20: *tadabhāve saṃyogābhāvo 'prādurbhāvaḥ sa mokṣaḥ.*

“The absence of conjunction in the absence of that, non emerges, this is liberation.”

2. Nyāyakandalī (NK) (p.273, 17): *mokṣo navānām ātmaviśeṣaguṇānām atyantocchedaḥ.*

“Liberation is the complete destruction of the nine specific qualities of the Self.”

In the paper "On Vaiśeṣika Definition of Mokṣa" by Masanobu Nozawa, the overview of the dating of the two definitions is precisely presented. It is clear from Nozawa's work that both definitions existed in parallel around the 5th century. After the remarkable change in the Vaiśeṣika system between 450 AD and 550 AD, mainly due to Praśastapāda's reform of the system, the first definition of mokṣa is continued in the Padārthadharmasaṃgraha (PDhS)¹⁰.

In Candrānanda's commentary on VS, we find the first definition on *mokṣa*. The first definition on *mokṣa* occurs in the context of VS 5.2.18-20, section on the “activity of *ātman*.”

VS 5.2.18: *kāyakarmaṇā 'tmakarma vyākhyātam.*

“The activity of *ātma*, the self is explained with the instrument of a body.”

iha ātmaśabdena vāyuh, yathātmasaṃyogaprayatnābhyām haste karma tathātma vāyusaṃyogāt prayatnācca prāṇāyāmakarma.

“Here the word *ātma* means wind (breath), just as action in the hand (results, comes) from the effort of a conjunction with the soul, in the same manner, the action of *prāṇāyāma* (breath exercises) comes from an effort of the conjunction with the soul.”

VS 5.2.19: *apasarpaṇam upasarpaṇam aśitapītasamyoḡaḥ kāryāntarasamyoḡāścetyadr̥ṣṭakāritāni.*

“Moving away (the mind that moves the body at the time of death) and moving towards (mind moving the body at the time of creation), the conjunction with the growth of an embryo (lit. of what has been eaten and drunk), and the conjunction with another effects, these are affected by the unseen force.”

Candrānanda's commentary on VS 5.2.20:

evaṃ rūpasyanādy apasarpaṇādi nimittasyādr̥ṣṭasyābhāve jīvanākhyasyātmamaṇaḥ samyoḡasyābhāvo 'nyasya ca śārīrasyāprādurbhāvo yaḥ sa mokṣaḥ.

“In the absence of an unseen force that is the reason for moving away, and so on, of the form and so on, there is the non – existence of a conjunction between the soul and mind that

means life and there is also the non – emerges of another body, that is mokṣa.”

If we compare Candrānanda's definition of *mokṣa* and his explanation of *niḥśreyasa*, which could be understood similarly to *mokṣa*, we see that there is a difference between these two terms. *niḥśreyasa* would be the absence of certain qualities of the soul, which almost corresponds to the second definition of *mokṣa* in the NK, the complete destruction of the nine qualities of the soul. Candrānanda, on the other hand, defines *mokṣa* as the non-existence of another body. Candrānanda distinguishes *niḥśreyasa* from *mokṣa*. Since the NSū does not use the term *abhyudaya*, we could say that *apavarga* in the NSū is similar to *mokṣa* in Candrānanda's VS.

5. Conclusion

In VS of Candrānanda's commentary, we find *abhyudaya* and *niḥśreyasa*, the accomplishment of which serves the *dharma*. The first term, *abhyudaya*, defines the practices, religious rituals, etc., and *niḥśreyasa* is explained as the absence of certain qualities of the self. Candrānanda also explains *mokṣa*, which appears when there is no connection with another body.

In the NSū we have seen the definition of *apavarga*, which is similar to Candrānanda's *mokṣa*. *Apavarga* is defined as the final liberation from suffering and the absence of a body, as in Candrānanda's *mokṣa*. However, the NSū does not use the term *abhyudaya* but *niḥśreyasa* and can be divided into lower and higher *niḥśreyasa*, as explained above, which can be analogous to the terms *abhyudaya* and *niḥśreyasa* in Candrānanda's VS.

6. Bibliography

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1 *apa* -√*vṛj* – to abandon, release, see further translation in <https://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/scans/AP90Scan/2014/web/webtc/indexcaller.php>.

2 NSū 1.1.21: *bādhānālakṣaṇaṃ duḥkham iti*. “Pain [has] the characteristic of uneasiness.”

3. NSū 4.2.43: *na niṣpannāvaśyambhāvītāt*. “It is not to, because of the state of being (the cognition) surely (arises) in the accomplished (body).” The word *niṣpanna* is translated here as the accomplished body, the literal translation is 'born', 'arisen', 'sprung up', 'accomplished'. This *sūtra* is from the second part of the fourth chapter of Nyāya that deals with the development of cognition of the true nature (*tattvajñāna*) and its realization through the practice of meditation. NSū 4.2.37: *samādhiviśeṣābhyāsāt*. “(The cognition of the true nature arises) from practice of specific profound meditation (*samādhi*).”

The NSū 4.2.43 relates on previous NSū 4.2.41: *apavarge 'pyevaṃ prasaṅgaḥ*. “Such contingency [can appear] even in release.” Here it is claimed that such external objects that cause the disturbance (such contingency) may even appear in release. However, NSū 4.2.44 explains that release means the absence of that accomplished body. If the body is absent in the release then the sense-organs are as well absent since they are part of a body and the external objects can bring about cognitions only with the contact of sense-organs.

4 For the full interpretation on *niḥśreyasa* of Uddyotakara and Vācaspati, see Walter, Slaje. 1986. *Niḥśreyasam im alten Nyāya*. Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens, Vol. 30:163-177.

5 *niḥ - śreyasa*, n. – the best i.e., ultimate bliss, final beatitude, or knowledge that brings it. <https://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/scans/AP90Scan/2014/web/webtc/indexcaller.php>.

6 This is only a last sentence of Candrānanda's commentary, the full commentary on this *sūtra* is introduced in the section 3. Uplift – *abhyudaya*.

7 *abhi* –ud -√*i*, m. – rise, prosperity, good fortune, etc. <https://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/scans/AP90Scan/2014/web/webtc/indexcaller.php>.

8 √*muc* – let loose, release, liberate. <https://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/scans/AP90Scan/2014/web/webtc/indexcaller.php>.

9 For the full explanation of the origin of these two *sūtra*-s, see Karin Preisendanz (ed.), *Expanding and Merging Horizons: Contributions to South Asian and Cross-Cultural Studies in Commemoration of Wilhelm Halbfass*, Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007, pp. 385-399.

10 When we look in PDhS then one would assume that this is the beginning of the new definition of mokṣa:

“rāgadveṣādyabhāvāt tajjayor dharmādharmayor anutpattau...”

But when we compare this sentence with the sentence from Tattvārthavārtika (TAV), that refers to the old definition of mokṣa from VS, then we can see that it is only an inversion from the VS 6.2.17.

TAV: “...icchādveṣābhāvād dharmādharmābhāvaḥ...”

VS 6.2.17: “icchādveṣapūrvikā dharmādharmayoḥ pravṛtīḥ.”

Further on the sentence from PDhS shows that mokṣa definition is the same as the old *mokṣa* definition from VS 5.2.20:

PDhS: tadā nirodhān nirbījasyātmanaḥ śārīrādinivṛtīḥ. punaḥ punaḥ śārīrādyanutpattau dagdhendhanānalavad upāśamo mokṣa iti.

“When the body and so on occur no more, being calm like and [extinguished] fire whose fuel has been burnt up is emancipation.”