

46. He saw God, *Bhagavān*, as the Supreme Soul situated within all beings, and all beings within *Bhagavān*, the Supreme Soul.

47. With his mind free from desire and aversion, and seeing everything equally, Kardama attained the divine destination by engaging in devotion to God.”

The Teachings of Lord Kapila: Sāṅkhya Yoga

Yoga Blueprint

The result of the union between Kardama and Devahūti is the birth of Kapila, an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Kṛṣṇa informs us in the Bhagavad Gītā (IV.7–8) that He descends into the world, among other reasons, to reestablish dharma. This is the bhakti notion of avatāra, the incarnating of Viṣṇu into the world in times of need. Of particular relevance to Yoga, however, is that tradition recognizes Kapila as the original expounder of the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy.⁵⁹ Yoga operates within the metaphysical contours provided by the Sāṅkhya principles—indeed, while later tradition pairs Sāṅkhya and Yoga as “sister schools,” earlier sources, including the Gītā (V.4–5) consider them one and the same—Sāṅkhya providing the metaphysics, and Yoga the practices relevant to liberating the soul, ātman/puruṣa, from the world of matter, prakṛti.⁶⁰

Kapila’s instructions to his mother represent classic Yoga teachings embedded in the highly devotionalized context of bhakti. This section contains some of the most important core teachings of the Bhāgavata: many of the verses illustrating the teachings of bhakti in part I are found in these instructions. Particularly noteworthy are the teachings on the experience of birth, as well as on the process of dying and the fate awaiting those who have squandered their human life after the moment of death.

Book III, Chapter 25

1. Śaunaka spoke:

“Although He Himself is actually unborn, Kapila, who is *Bhagavān* in person, took birth through His spiritual potency as the expounder of Sāṅkhya philosophy, so as to impart knowledge of the *ātman* to mankind.

2. My life force⁶¹ is never satiated from repeatedly hearing about the Lord of the Vedas.⁶² He is the best of men, and the foremost of all *yogis*.

3. Please narrate to me whatever deeds the Lord performed through His own potency and out of His inherent free will. I am a faithful soul, and these deeds are praiseworthy.”
4. Sūta replied:
 “At this, feeling pleased at being requested in this way about metaphysical subjects, the noble Maitreya, the friend of Vyāsa, proceeded to speak the following words to Vidura.”
5. Maitreya said:
 “After His father had set out for the forest, Lord Kapila resided there in that forest of Bindusara, desiring to please His mother, Devahūti.
 6. One day, remembering the words of Brahmā, the creator, Devahūti asked her son, when He was sitting leisurely, to disclose the highest path to Truth.”
7. Devahūti said:
 “I am completely disgusted with the illusory thirst for sense pleasure, O Lord. I have fallen into a state of darkest ignorance, O Master.
 8. You are the guide over that dense darkness of ignorance (*tamas*), which is so difficult to overcome. By Your grace, today, after many births, I have gained my eye of Truth.
 9. Your Lordship is truly the Primeval God, the Supreme *Īśvara* of humankind. You are the eye of the world, which is blinded by ignorance (*tamas*). You are like the risen sun [which dispels darkness].
 10. This impediment in this life—the notion of ‘I,’ ‘me,’ and ‘mine’ [the ego]—was created by You.⁶³ Therefore, it is You, O Lord, who should dispel my illusion.
 11. I offer homage to You. You are the supreme Knower of the real goal of life. I desire to know about [the relationship between] *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* (spirit and matter). I have submitted myself to You for refuge, because You are worthy of refuge. You are the axe [that cuts] the tree of *saṁsāra* for Your dependents.”
12. Maitreya said:
 “Kapila, His handsome face gently smiling, listened to the faultless request of His mother, and welcomed it in His mind. A request such as this advances the goal of liberation for saintly people who are self-controlled.”
13. The Lord said:
 “I hold the Yoga system directed toward the *ātman* to be the highest

goal for humankind. From this comes the ultimate detachment from happiness and distress.

14. Today, I will explain to you that same Yoga system that I imparted of old,⁶⁴ O sinless lady, inclusive of all its limbs (*sarva-aṅga*).⁶⁵ This is the *yoga* of the sages who are eager to hear.
15. Consciousness is considered to be [inclined] toward either bondage or liberation. Attached to the *guṇas* [it experiences] bondage; on the other hand, devoted to the Supreme Person, [it experiences] liberation.⁶⁶
16. When the mind is freed from the impurities of desire and greed, etc., which are produced from the false notion of ‘I,’ ‘me,’ and ‘mine,’ it becomes pure, equipoised, and transcends happiness and distress.
17. When this occurs, a person [realizes] the soul as autonomous, transcendent to *prakṛti*, eternal, self-effulgent, minute, and indivisible.
18. When consciousness is immersed in knowledge and renunciation as well as devotion, one realizes that *prakṛti* acts with indifference,⁶⁷ through this realization, its power is dispelled.
19. There is no auspicious path for *yogis* to attain *Brahman* that is comparable to the practice of *bhakti* to *Bhagavān*, who is the Universal Soul.
20. The sages know that it is attachment that is the ever-present snare of the soul. Yet, when directed to the *sādhus* (ascetics), attachment opens the door to liberation.⁶⁸
21. The virtues⁶⁹ of a *sādhu* are tolerance, compassion, friendship toward all beings, holding no enemies, and peacefulness.
22. *Sādhus* perform staunch *bhakti* to Me with undeviating minds. For My sake, they have abandoned all actions, and they have renounced family and friends.
23. Fully absorbed in Me, they hear and narrate the relishable narratives of My activities. The various sufferings [of the world] do not afflict them, since their consciousness is absorbed in Me.
24. These *sādhus*, O virtuous lady, are free of all attachments—indeed, they themselves remove the faults of attachment [from others]. So you should aspire for their association.
25. From association with saints, the realization of My power arises. These narratives of My activities become pleasing to the ears and the heart. By enjoying them, faith, love, and devotion quickly manifest consecutively on the path to liberation.

26. By means of *bhakti* and the contemplation of My creations, a person experiences the arising of detachment from sensual pleasure—whether pleasure experienced in the past or heard about in scripture.⁷⁰ Engaged on the path of *yoga*, and intent on the control of the mind, such a person will persevere with correct *yogic* practices.

27. Such a person, through not dedicating himself or herself to the *gūṇas* of *prakṛti*, but rather through dedication to knowledge, the cultivation of detachment, *yoga* focused on Me, and *bhakti*, attains Me, while still in this world. I am the innermost Soul.”

28. Devahūti said:

“What type of *bhakti* to You is optimal, and what should my sense activity be, by means of which I can easily attain Your abode, *nirvāna*?⁷¹

29. O You who are the essence of *nirvāna*, what is the nature of that *Yoga* centered on *Bhagavān* that You previously spoke about?⁷² How many limbs of *yoga* (*yoga-aṅgas*) are there, by which [one attains] an understanding of Truth?

30. Explain those to me, a woman,⁷³ O Lord, such that I can easily understand that which is difficult to understand by your grace. My understanding of such things is limited.”

31. Maitreya said:

“After understanding the intention of His mother in this way, Kapila felt love for her—He had, after all, taken birth from her body. So He spoke to her about the knowledge of Truth transmitted down [through the ages] that they call Sāṅkhyā, as well as about the *yoga* of the various forms of *bhakti*.”

32.–33. The Lord said:

“*Bhakti* to *Bhagavān* has no cause. It consists of *satva* in the activities of the senses⁷⁴ and it includes the performance of action prescribed by scripture. It is the natural state of the mind when it is fixed [on God], and is more profound than [conventional] liberation. *Bhakti* dissolves the subtle body quickly,⁷⁵ just like the digestive fire burns food that has been eaten.

34. The *bhāgavata* devotees associate among each other and celebrate My deeds [when I incarnate in the world]. Their endeavors are devoted to Me, and they are satisfied in serving My feet.⁷⁶ Some of them do not desire to attain oneness with Me.⁷⁷

35. These saints, O mother, perceive My beautiful Divine forms, with their reddish eyes⁷⁸ and smiling faces, and they converse with them with pleasing words. These forms bestow blessings.

36. *Bhakti* leads those whose hearts and life forces have been captivated by those forms to My subtle abode,⁷⁹ even if they did not desire this. These forms have captivating limbs, sweet words, smiling glances, and perform wondrous pastimes.

37. I am the Lord of *māyā*, but these saints do not desire My majesty, nor Godly opulence,⁸⁰ nor the power that ensues from the eight-limbed path of *yoga*,⁸¹ nor the beauty of the Supreme.⁸² They nonetheless attain all these in My abode.⁸³

38. O mother, you are the embodiment of peacefulness. Those who place Me as the Supreme will never perish, and My weapon, the ever-vigilant Time, does not destroy them. For such people, I am their intimate soul, the son, friend, teacher, well-wisher, and beloved deity.

39.–40. They have renounced this world, as well as that world beyond [the celestial realms],⁸⁴ and the [subtle] body that travels between both of them. In this world they have renounced everything—friends and family, wealth, livestock, and household—and they worship Me alone, the all-observing Godhead, with exclusive devotion. I take these devotees to the place beyond death.

41. The oppressing fear [of death] cannot be removed by any means other than by I Myself, *Bhagavān*, the *Īśvara* of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, and Supreme *Ātman* of all beings.

42. Out of fear of Me, the wind blows, out of fear of Me, the sun burns, and out of fear of Me, Indra⁸⁵ makes the rain pour and Death perform its task.

43. Immersed in knowledge and renunciation and engaged in *bhakti yoga*, the *yogis* fearlessly take shelter of My feet for deliverance.

44. The mind fixed on Me through the ardent practice of *bhakti yoga* becomes steady. It is only in this manner that ultimate perfection manifests in people in this world.”

Book III, Chapter 26

[We have omitted this chapter as it includes a highly technical and theistic rendition of the evolution of the Sāṅkhyā metaphysical categories.]

1. The Lord said:

“Although situated in *prakṛti*, the soul is not affected by the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*. This is because it is unchanging, is not an agent, and is transcendent to the *guṇas*. It is like the sun [reflected] on the water⁸⁶ [which remains unchanged although its reflection in the water may appear to change].

2. When this soul is absorbed in the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*, deluded by the ego,⁸⁷ it thinks: ‘I am the doer.’

3. Because of this, one enters the state of *samīśāra* against one’s will, and is frustrated. As a result of becoming entangled with the negative consequences of action,⁸⁸ one [finds himself] in good, bad, or mixed births.

4. Although the objects do not actually exist⁸⁹—just like the appearance of misfortunes in a dream—*samīśāra* nonetheless does not cease for one who contemplates the objects of the senses.

5. Therefore, by the intense practice of *bhakti yoga*, one should gradually make the mind, which has been attached to the path of illusion, indifferent [to the objects of the senses], and bring it under control.

6. Endowed with faith, one should [bring the mind under control] by practicing the principles of *yoga*—the *yamas* (moral precepts), etc.,⁹⁰ and listening to narratives about Me with real affection for Me.

7. Detached, [one should control the mind] by equanimity to all creatures, by being hostile to none, by celibacy, by silence, and by the performance of one’s duty which has become more powerful [by being offered to God].

8. The sage is satisfied with whatever comes spontaneously. He is measured in eating, dwells in a solitary place, and is peaceful, friendly, compassionate, and self-possessed.

9. By dint of knowledge and perceiving the reality of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, he does not create false attachments to this body and its relations.

10. Transcending the states of the intelligence⁹¹ and renouncing all other conceptions, the seer of the self realizes the self by means of the self,⁹² as clearly as one sees the sun with one’s eyes.

11. He perceives it as distinct from the subtle body, a reflection of the real in the unreal.⁹³ It is the true existent, the friend, the perceiver

of that which is nonreal and nondual, and it is that which pervades all reality.

12. This is just like when one’s reflection in water is seen by one standing on land. It is like the sun which is perceived through its reflection situated in a body of water although it itself is situated in the heavens.

13. In this way, the threefold ego [in *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*] is characterized by its reflections made of the mind, senses, and physical body. It is through this ego, which contains the reflection of the truth, that the *ātman*, the seer, is realized.⁹⁴

14. When the gross and subtle elements, mind, and intelligence, etc., are merged in *prakṛti* during sleep, the seer remains awake, free of ego.

15. At the time of deep sleep, when the ego has ceased to function, the seer falsely thinks that the self has ceased to be, although it has not ceased to be, just like a person who is afflicted when his or her wealth has been lost.

16. Contemplating this, one realizes that the one who is the support and animator of all things including the ego, is the *ātman*.”

17. Devahūti said:

“O *brāhmaṇa*, *prakṛti* can never free the *puruṣa*, because of the mutual interdependence of the two of them since beginningless time.

18. Just as the existence of smell can never be separate from the element of earth, or taste from water, so in the same way the intelligence (*buddhi*) can never be separated from the higher self, the *ātman*.

19. How can liberation occur while the *guṇas* are still active? The bondage of *karma* envelops the passive *puruṣa* within them.

20. Sometimes, through contemplation on the true nature of reality, the great fear [of *samīśāra*] can be curbed somewhat. But because its cause has not ceased, it again reappears.”

21.–23. *Śrī Bhagavān* said:

“By performing one’s *dharma* with a pure mind without attachment to the results; by intense *bhakti* to Me over a long period of time nourished with hearing about Me; by knowledge, which perceives the true nature of the world; by strong detachment; by the practices of *yoga* performed with austerity (*tapas*); and by intense concentration on the *ātman*, *prakṛti*, which engulfs the *puruṣa* day and night, gradually disappears, just like the wooden kindling stick that produces fire becomes consumed [by the fire].