

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

The Philosophy of Sāṅkhya

In this chapter Lord Kṛṣṇa gives instruction how bewilderment of the mind can be dispelled by the science of Sāṅkhya. Herein the Supreme Lord again imparts to Uddhava instruction about the analysis of material nature. By assimilating this knowledge the spirit soul can drive away his confusion based on false dualities.

In the beginning of creation, the seer and seen are one and indistinguishable. This Supreme Absolute Truth, one without a second and inaccessible to words and mind, then separates into two — the seer, which means consciousness or personality, and the seen, which means substance or nature. The material nature, which comprises the three modes of matter, is agitated by the controlling male factor. The mahat-tattva then becomes manifest together with the energies of consciousness and activity. From these come the principle of false ego in its three aspects of goodness, passion and ignorance. From false ego in the mode of ignorance arise fifteen subtle forms of sense perception, followed by the fifteen physical elements. From false ego in the mode of passion come the ten senses, and from false ego in the mode of goodness come the mind and the eleven demigods who preside over the senses. By the conglomeration of all of these elements grows the universal egg, in the midst of which the Supreme Personality of Godhead as the creating Lord of the universe takes up residence in the role of indwelling Supersoul. From the navel of this ultimate creator comes a lotus, upon which Brahmā takes birth. Lord Brahmā, invested with the mode of passion, executes austerities by the grace of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and on the strength of these penances he is able to create all the planets of the universe. The region of heaven is meant for the demigods, that of inner space for ghostly spirits and that of the earth for human beings and others. In the region above these three planetary systems are the places of advanced sages, and in the lower worlds are those of the demons, Nāga serpents and so forth. The goals achieved by activities based on the three modes of material nature are all within the three mortal worlds. The destinations of yoga, severe austerity and the renounced order of life are the worlds known as Mahar, Janas, Tapas and Satya. The goal of devotional service to the Supreme Lord, on the other hand, is the lotus feet of the Personality of Godhead in His abode, Vaikuṇṭha. This universe of material action and reaction is

constituted under the control of time and the three modes of material nature. Moreover, whatever exists in this universe is simply the product of the combination of material nature and her Lord. In the same way that creation proceeds gradually from the one and supremely subtle to the multitudinous and very gross, the process of annihilation proceeds from the grossest to the subtlest manifestation of nature, leaving only the eternal spiritual substance. This ultimate Soul remains situated within Himself, alone and without end. The mind of a person who meditates on these ideas does not become bewildered by material dualities. This science of Sāṅkhya, narrated in alternating sequences of creation and annihilation, serves to cut off all doubts and bondage.

Text 1:

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa said: Now I shall describe to you the science of Sāṅkhya, which has been perfectly established by ancient authorities. By understanding this science a person can immediately give up the illusion of material duality.

Text 2:

Originally, during the Kṛta-yuga, when all men were very expert in spiritual discrimination, and also previous to that, during the period of annihilation, the seer existed alone, nondifferent from the seen object.

Text 3:

That one Absolute Truth, remaining free from material dualities and inaccessible to ordinary speech and mind, divided Himself into two categories — the material nature and the living entities who are trying to enjoy the manifestations of that nature.

Text 4:

Of these two categories of manifestation, one is material nature, which embodies both the subtle causes and manifest products of matter. The other is the conscious living entity, designated as the enjoyer.

Text 5:

When material nature was agitated by My glance, the three material modes — goodness, passion and ignorance — became manifest to fulfill the pending desires of the conditioned souls.

Text 6:

From these modes arose the primeval sūtra, along with the mahat-tattva. By the transformation of the mahat-tattva was generated the false ego, the cause of the living entities' bewilderment.

Text 7:

False ego, which is the cause of physical sensation, the senses and the mind, encompasses both spirit and matter and manifests in three varieties: in the modes of goodness, passion and ignorance.

Text 8:

From false ego in the mode of ignorance came the subtle physical perceptions, from which the gross elements were generated. From false ego in the mode of passion came the senses, and from false ego in the mode of goodness arose the eleven demigods.

Text 9:

Impelled by Me, all these elements combined to function in an orderly fashion and together gave birth to the universal egg, which is My excellent place of residence.

Text 10:

I Myself appeared within that egg, which was floating on the causal water, and from My navel arose the universal lotus, the birthplace of self-born Brahmā.

Text 11:

Lord Brahmā, the soul of the universe, being endowed with the mode of passion, performed great austerities by My mercy and thus created the three planetary divisions, called Bhūr, Bhuvar and Svar, along with their presiding deities.

Text 12:

Heaven was established as the residence of the demigods, Bhuvarloka as that of the ghostly spirits, and the earth system as the place of human beings and other mortal creatures. Those mystics who strive for liberation are promoted beyond these three divisions.

Text 13:

Lord Brahmā created the region below the earth for the demons and the Nāga snakes. In this way the destinations of the three worlds were arranged as the corresponding reactions for different kinds of work performed within the three modes of nature.

Text 14:

By mystic yoga, great austerities and the renounced order of life, the pure destinations of Maharloka, Janoloka, Tapoloka and Satyaloka are attained. But by devotional yoga, one achieves My transcendental abode.

Text 15:

All results of fruitive work have been arranged within this world by Me, the supreme creator acting as the force of time. Thus one sometimes rises up toward the surface of this mighty river of the modes of nature and sometimes again submerges.

Text 16:

Whatever features visibly exist within this world — small or great, thin or stout — certainly contain both the material nature and its enjoyer, the spirit soul.

Text 17:

Gold and earth are originally existing as ingredients. From gold one may fashion golden ornaments such as bracelets and earrings, and from earth one may fashion clay pots and saucers. The original ingredients gold and earth exist before the products made from them, and when the products are eventually destroyed, the original ingredients, gold and earth, will remain. Thus, since the ingredients are present in the beginning and at the end, they must also be present in the middle phase, taking the form of a particular product to which we assign for convenience a particular name, such as bracelet, earring, pot or saucer. We can therefore understand that since the ingredient cause exists before the creation of a product and after the product's destruction, the same ingredient cause must be present during the manifest phase, supporting the product as the basis of its reality.

Text 18:

A material object, itself composed of an essential ingredient, creates another material object through transformation. Thus one created object becomes the cause and basis of another created object. A particular thing

may thus be called real in that it possesses the basic nature of another object that constitutes its origin and final state.

Text 19:

The material universe may be considered real, having nature as its original ingredient and final state. Lord Mahā-Viṣṇu is the resting place of nature, which becomes manifest by the power of time. Thus nature, the almighty Viṣṇu and time are not different from Me, the Supreme Absolute Truth.

Text 20:

As long as the Supreme Personality of Godhead continues to glance upon nature, the material world continues to exist, perpetually manifesting through procreation the great and variegated flow of universal creation.

Text 21:

I am the basis of the universal form, which displays endless variety through the repeated creation, maintenance and destruction of the planetary systems. Originally containing within itself all planets in their dormant state, My universal form manifests the varieties of created existence by arranging the coordinated combination of the five elements.

Texts 22-27:

At the time of annihilation, the mortal body of the living being becomes merged into food. Food merges into the grains, and the grains merge back into the earth. The earth merges into its subtle sensation, fragrance. Fragrance merges into water, and water further merges into its own quality, taste. That taste merges into fire, which merges into form. Form merges into touch, and touch merges into ether. Ether finally merges into the sensation of sound. The senses all merge into their own origins, the presiding demigods, and they, O gentle Uddhava, merge into the controlling mind, which itself merges into false ego in the mode of goodness. Sound becomes one with false ego in the mode of ignorance, and all-powerful false ego, the first of all the physical elements, merges into the total nature. The total material nature, the primary repository of the three basic modes, dissolves into the modes. These modes of nature then merge into the unmanifest form of nature, and that unmanifest form merges into time. Time merges into the Supreme Lord, present in the form of the omniscient Mahā-puruṣa, the original activator of all living beings.

That origin of all life merges into Me, the unborn Supreme Soul, who remains alone, established within Himself. It is from Him that all creation and annihilation are manifested.

Text 28:

Just as the rising sun removes the darkness of the sky, similarly, this scientific knowledge of cosmic annihilation removes all illusory duality from the mind of a serious student. Even if illusion somehow enters his heart, it cannot remain there.

Text 29:

Thus I, the perfect seer of everything material and spiritual, have spoken this knowledge of Sāṅkhya, which destroys the illusion of doubt by scientific analysis of creation and annihilation.