

Samkhya, Yoga & Vedanta

By Mikael L Chuaungo, Asst Professor, Govt. J.Buana College

Based on the Upanishads, two schools of philosophy developed in India:

- (1) The realistic (e.g. **Samkhya**)
- (2) The idealistic (e.g. **Vedanta**)

Samkhya

Samkhya is one of the most prominent and one of the oldest of Indian philosophies. It was founded by sage Kapila. The word Samkhya means 'number' in Sanskrit language. The school specifies the number and nature of the every object in the universe and by having knowledge of it, we will understand reality. The term *Samkhya* also means perfect knowledge. Hence it is a system of perfect knowledge.

The Samkhya philosophy is the theoretical aspect of this philosophy. Its practical aspect is **Yoga**.

Followers of Samkhya philosophy believe in dual (two) aspects of reality

- a) *Prakriti*, matter
- b) *Purusha*, self, spirit.

Samkhya considers that both Prakriti (matter) and Purusha (spirit) are equally real. Samkhya is pluralistic also because of its teaching that *Purusha*(*spirit*) is not one but many.

Prakriti is the non-self. It is devoid of consciousness, like spirits. *Prakriti* is greatly influenced by the *Purusha*(*spirit*, self) . It can only manifest itself as the various objects of experience of the *Purusha*.

Prakriti is constituted of three qualities, namely

- i. *Sattva* : concerned with happiness
- ii. *rajas* : concerned with our actions
- iii. *tamas*.: concerned with in-actions (refusal to act)

Sattva is the component concerned with lightness, brightness and pleasure. *Sattva* is associated with ego, mind and intelligence. Its association with the consciousness is the strongest. Though *sattva* is an essential condition for consciousness, it is not sufficient. It should be remembered that consciousness is exclusively the *Purusha*.

Rajas is concerned with the actions of objects. It is associated with activity and motion. In material objects, motion and action are the results of *rajas*. In living beings not only activity and restlessness, but pain also are caused by *rajas*.

Tamas is the constituent concerned with the inertia and inaction. In material objects, it resists motion and activity. In living beings, it is associated with coarseness, negligence, indifference and inactivity. In man, it manifests itself as ignorance, insensitivity and inaction.

According to Samkhya the radical interactions among the three qualities disturb the state of equilibrium in *Prakriti*. Then there may be dominance of one or the other **quality**. This disequilibrium, with certain other influencing factors, brings change to the prakriti.

Samkhya and God

Sage Kapila asserts that the existence of God cannot be proved and that God does not exist. Samkhya argues that if God exists and if God is eternal and unchanging as is widely claimed, then he cannot be the cause of the world. A cause has to be active and changing.

Bondage and Salvation

Like other major systems of Indian philosophy, Samkhya regards ignorance as the root cause of bondage and suffering. According to Samkhya, the self is eternal, pure consciousness. Due to ignorance, the self identifies itself with the physical body and its constituents

Educational implications of Samkhya:

- 1) Self-realization is the source of knowledge or cognition.
- 2) Intellectual development for self-consciousness
- 3) Development of Sense organs.
- 4) Mental development.

Yoga

Patanjali was the proponent of the Yoga system. Yoga is closely associated with Samkhya philosophy. They are two sides of the same coin. Samkhya is the theory, Yoga is the practice. However, that Samkhya is basically an atheistic system (Doesn't believe in God), but Yoga is theistic(believes in God).

Patanjali propagated his philosophy of Yoga in his great work – Yoga-Sutra. Yoga-Sutra consists of four parts. Patanjali shows the way to emancipation by **ashtanga-yoga**. Yoga is a self-disciplining process of concentration and meditation. Such a Yogic practice leads one to higher states of consciousness. This helps one in acquiring direct knowledge and the result is Self–Realization.

Patanjali proposes the practice of certain physical and mental exercises. They form the basis of *ashtanga-yoga*.

These 8 steps are divided into two parts:

External part of five

1. *anga: yama,*
2. *niyama,*
3. *asana,*
4. *pranayama*
5. *pratyahara.*

Internal part of three

1. *anga: dharana,*
2. *dhyana*
3. *samadhi.*

Anga Yama means restraint. One must turn to ethics by refraining himself from immoral activities. This is the first step towards self-discipline.

Niyama means observance. It refers to the cultivation of values and virtues in life. These two *anga –Yama* and *Niyama* – protects the aspirant from irresistible temptations and desires and offer a protection from the distractions.

The next two steps, *asana* and *pranayama*, prepares the physical body for the Yogic practice.

Asana means posture of the body. A steady but comfortable posture is essential for Yoga. *Pranayama* is concerned with the control of breath. The cycles of inspiration, *kumbhaka* and expiration have to be carefully monitored. Both these *anga* enhances the steadiness of the body and mind.

Pratyahara is concerned with the withdrawal of the senses. The senses, by their inherent nature, remain focused on the external world. *Pratyahara* helps to detach the sense organs from the objects of the world. The isolation from the world objects facilitates the concentration of the mind on any particular object.

The ultimate three steps are: *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation) and *Samadhi* (spiritual absorption).

Dharana is concerned with the concentration. It is concerned with concentrating the *mind* on a single object. The subject is focusing on an object. If the mind diverts to some other object, it has to be fixed again on the chosen object of concentration.

Dhyana is concerned with contemplation. In this stage, the aspirant can keep the mind steady on the object chosen for contemplation. The mind is focused without interruptions and there is unidirectional flow of *mind*.

Samadhi is the ultimate stage of Yogic practice. Now all self-awareness of the mind disappears. The aspirant (seeker) becomes aware that his attachment to the *Prakriti* was owing to the ignorance. The illusion is gone. There is the unification of the subject and the object.

Samkhya system is based on atheism but Yoga believes in God. Both Yoga and Samkhya holds that there are many *purushas* (*self, spirit*). Unlike Samkhya, Yoga holds that there is one Supreme *Purusha* (God) who is above all *purushas* and that no other *Purusha* can be like that Supreme *Purusha*.

Educational implications of Yoga:

1. It enhances the self-realization or self-awareness within the children.
2. It unfolds the physical, mental and spiritual attributes which eventually inculcates the social as well as ecological awareness within children.
3. It helps the children for the pursuit of the transcendental state of psyche.
4. It promotes uniqueness within the child.
5. It promotes the perseverance as well as will power within the child.
6. It helps in unfolding the creative consciousness.
7. It helps in treating the physical difficulties by making the body active.
8. Yoga provides ease to respiratory system, neuro-endocrine system, cardiovascular system and musculo-skeletal system to enhance the determination within the child.
9. Regular practice of yoga helps the child in managing the stress disorders.

Advaita Vedanta

The *Advaita Vedanta* focuses on the following basic concepts:

Brahman, atman, vidya (knowledge), *avidya* (ignorance), *maya, karma* and *moksha*.

Brahman is the Ultimate, Supreme Reality. *Brahman* is eternal. It is beyond names and forms. *Brahman* cannot be seen, nor could it be described by words and therefore man cannot define it. *Brahman* can be considered as Pure Consciousness.

Atman is the inmost Self or Spirit of man but different from the 'empirical ego'. *Atman* is the fundamental, ultimate, eternal, immutable pure consciousness. Thus, it appears that *Brahman* is the ultimate reality behind all world-objects and *Atman* is pure spirit in all beings.

Vidya (Knowledge) are of two kinds: the lower one and the higher one. The lower, conventional knowledge and truth is referred to as *vyavavahrika satya*. It is a product of the senses and the intellect. The higher one is referred to the *paramarthika satya*. It is absolute. It is beyond words, thoughts, perception or conception.

Maya represents the things that we think are real but are not. The most important of these is the perception that there is a division between one's self and the universe, because our thoughts and feelings, also, belong to the great unity of all things. When we see things which are not real, that is Maya.

Avidya is the opposite of Vidya. It means absence of knowledge or presence of incorrect knowledge. A man trapped in *Avidya* does not know what is real and thinks that the appearances are real. An individual identifies himself the physical body. If he is under the influence of *Maya* and *Avidya*, he moves farther away from the ultimate reality.

Moksha is freedom from bondage of ignorance. Man suffers from desires and ignorance. Upon realization of the self, one becomes free from the desires, aspirations, passions, karma and avidya. *Moksha* is to be attained during this life-span only.

Educational implications of Advaita Vedanta:

1. The aim of education is to prepare the child to attain of pure consciousness. Education should fully make the child able to realize his self in all its aspects so that he identifies and realizes the ultimate reality.
2. The child can become one with this ultimate truth through real knowledge obtained by his own efforts.
3. Students are given knowledge of means to practice good deeds , while also be taught about bad deeds and how to avoid it.
4. Teaching students to be more spiritual and less materialistic. Thus the knowledge of materialistic things has to be shunned if one has to strive for the realization of essential unity between soul and God.
5. Co-curricular activities are prescribed such as worship of God, pilgrimages, practice of yoga, etc. From the spiritual point of view the curriculum has to be oriented towards the ultimate realization of God