

Samkhya Philosophy: Foundation for Yoga and Ayurveda

Chapter 1: The Philosophy of Samkhya

Outline

1. The Vedic and Non-Vedic Philosophies of India
 - The six vedic philosophies
 - The non-vedic philosophies
2. Why Samkhya Philosophy Is Distinctive
 - It enumerates the building blocks of our creation
 - Its model of reality is dualistic
3. The Goal of Samkhya Philosophy—Freedom from Pain and Suffering
 - The problem of removing pain and suffering
 - The state free from pain and suffering
4. Removing Pain: The Doctrine of Cause and Effect and the Techniques of Yoga and Ayurveda
 - The doctrine of cause and effect—the basis for removing the cause of pain
 - Ayurveda and Yoga—the techniques for removing the cause of pain
 - Why understanding Samkhya is important for Yoga practitioners
5. The Main Features of Samkhya Philosophy
 - There are three types of pain and suffering
 - We are a blend of pure consciousness and the material world
 - The purpose of the universe: overcoming pain and experiencing our pure being
 - Purusha and Prakriti—Self and non-Self—work together toward the goal

Samkhya Facts

- Samkhya is the oldest Indian philosophy and is the conceptual foundation for Yoga and Ayurveda.
- The principles of Samkhya were first taught in ancient times by the sage Kapila in order, it is believed, to guide his mother.
- The seminal text of Samkhya is the *Samkhya Karika*, compiled by Ishvarakrishna.
- Meaning and pronunciation of the word “Samkhya:”
 - *Sam* – balanced, equal, harmonious
 - *Khya* – knowledge, understanding, wisdom
 - The first “a” in “Samkhya” is long—pronounced like the “a” in “father.”
 - The “m” is a Sanskrit nasal sound pronounced like the “n” in “monk.” (“Samkhya” is sometimes written with an “n” instead of “m.”)
 - The second “a” is short—pronounced like the “a” in “about.”

Lecture Notes

1. The Vedic and Non-Vedic Philosophies of India

A. The six vedic philosophies

- The Vedas are a pool of revealed knowledge and information based on the experiences over time of many sages and philosophers of the ancient Indian subcontinent, an area stretching from Afghanistan all the way to Burma (Myanmar) and Sri Lanka. The Vedas are not the discovery of a single individual—there is no founder or author.
- This vedic knowledge, developed over thousands of years, was organized by the sage Vyasa into four parts or books: *Rig Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda*, and *Atharva Veda*.
- The Vedas encompass many philosophical concepts and ideologies.
- Six philosophies of India are directly associated with the Vedas and acknowledge the Vedas as their authority.*

Yoga
Samkhya
Vedanta
Mimamsa
Nyaya
Vaisheshika

- Authors documenting the knowledge contained in the six vedic philosophies never claim that these philosophies were invented or discovered by them. These philosophies have no founders.
- All six vedic philosophies have been organized into compact books containing sutras or verses.
 - *Yoga Sutra* has 195 sutras.
 - *Samkhya Karika* has 70 verses.

B. The non-vedic philosophies

- These schools attribute their knowledge to a specific individual or individuals and do not acknowledge the Vedas as their source, although vedic knowledge is found in them.

Buddhism
Jainism
Charvaka
Many others

*For more on the vedic philosophies (plus Buddhism), see *Seven Systems of Indian Philosophy*, by Pandit Rajmani Tigunait.

2. Why Samkhya Philosophy Is Distinctive

A. Samkhya enumerates the building blocks or elements that make up our creation.

- Samkhya is the first evolution of philosophical thought to create a sequence of philosophical presentation. It enumerates the distinct principles or building blocks that constitute our world. Philosophy before that was abstract and floating, and it lacked consistency.
- The 25 *tattvas* (elements that make up our universe)
 - The five gross elements: earth, water, fire, air, space
 - The corresponding five subtle elements or essences: smell, taste, form, touch, sound
 - The five cognitive senses: smelling, tasting, seeing, touching, hearing
 - The five active senses: grasping (hands), locomotion (feet), speech, elimination, procreation
 - Mind, ego, and *buddhi* ((intellect)
 - *Prakriti*—the primordial cause of the material world. From Prakriti evolve all the other elements except Purusha.
 - *Purusha*—pure consciousness
- These 25 principles or elements—Purusha, Prakriti, and the 23 elements of nature that evolve from Prakriti—encompass the knower, the known, and the process of knowing.

B. Samkhya's model of reality is dualistic.

- Samkhya is a dualistic philosophy, meaning that there is a clear distinction between matter and consciousness—changing and unchanging.
- There is also a clear distinction between right and wrong, birth and death, and bondage and liberation. Until Samkhya, all this was muddy.
- Because Samkhya is clear, concrete, and specific, it is the foundation for practical systems of health and wellbeing, mainly Yoga and Ayurveda.
- Before Samkhya, there was a tendency toward non-dual thinking, which says that everything is just one pure consciousness and that all we experience in the material world, including our own mind, body, pain, and pleasure, is an illusion.
- According to Samkhya, there are two basic components of reality: Prakriti and Purusha.
 - Prakriti is the primordial cause of the natural world and cause of experiences pertaining to matter and energy. It is distinct from consciousness. From it evolves everything we perceive in our everyday life, and it is the source of our own pleasure, pain, anger, love, and hatred. Prakriti is unmanifest, unchanged, and the source all that is changing and short lived.
 - Purusha is the observer, seer, pure witness, pure consciousness. It is the unchanging witness of Prakriti and all that evolves from Prakriti. Purusha is the only independent category.

3. The Goal of Samkhya Philosophy—Freedom from Pain and Suffering

A. The problem of removing pain and suffering

- If the pain in our body or mind is so deep that we can't get rid of it, then we want to get rid of our body or mind. However, we don't know how to remove our body and mind and be just pure consciousness, because body, mind, and consciousness are all intermingled.
- Therefore, do not impose the thought on yourself that you are just pure consciousness and that pain and pleasure are an illusion. Life means integration of all these things—some desirable and some undesirable.
- Samkhya acknowledges our actual experience of pain—anger, fear, physical pain, pain of loss, and other pain—and gives us a framework for removing it. This is the goal of Samkhya. Yoga and Ayurveda are based on this.

B. The state free from pain and suffering

- When you are free from pain and suffering, Samkhya calls this *kaivalya*, from the word *kevala*, meaning you have nothing other than your Self.
 - There is no desire to achieve anything or to avoid losing anything.
 - You are fully established and content in your Self—pure being.
 - Your body and mind are no longer a burden.
 - Relationships are no longer a source of pain.
 - You are not bothered by loss and gain, honor and insult, youth and old age.
- Kevala is the experience of pure being, and kaivalya is the state in which we experience the essence of pure being.

4. Removing Pain: The Doctrine of Cause and Effect and the Techniques of Yoga and Ayurveda

A. The doctrine of cause and effect—the basis for removing the cause of pain and suffering

- There was a time and process by which undesirable, painful elements walked into our body, mind, and consciousness, and there is a way to reverse the process.
- The process of reversing pain is based on Samkhya's doctrine of cause and effect, or in Sanskrit, *karya-karana-vada*.
 - Karya – effect
 - Karana – cause
 - Vada – doctrine
- Every result is unfailingly connected to its cause. There cannot be an effect without a cause. This is the most valuable discovery of Samkhya philosophy.
- It is possible to go backward and remove the cause, thereby removing the effect. Remove the cause of sorrow and you remove sorrow. Removing the cause in

order to have permanent freedom from pain is the goal of Samkhya. When you are free from pain, you experience the essence of pure being—kaivalya.

- B. Ayurveda and Yoga—the techniques for removing the cause of pain and suffering
- In Ayurveda, the treatment comes from outside us. For example, taking triphala removes the cause of constipation.
 - In Yoga, the remedy to act on the cause is from inside us.
 - Using Ayurveda and Yoga together is the best way to overcome pain. Ayurveda is especially needed in treating illness when conscious access to our body is blocked, and therefore our willpower and determination cannot cure the problem.
- C. An understanding of Samkhya is important for Yoga practitioners because it expands our expectations of Yoga practice.
- We will look for the proper applications of Yoga practices and stretch our imagination beyond being content with just feeling good momentarily.
 - The realization that Yoga can help us overcome all forms of suffering will inspire us to look into the deeper aspects of Yoga.

5. The Main Features of Samkhya Philosophy

- A. There are three types of pain and suffering. Real freedom is attaining freedom from these.
- Physical
 - Five things help to prevent and overcome physical pain and suffering: proper diet, proper exercise, balanced conduct / behavior, going to bed on time, and waking up on time.
 - If some illness has already occurred, seek help from doctors and medicines, along with lifestyle changes.
 - Ayurveda is an important tool here.
 - Psychological / emotional
 - This type of suffering needs help from both outside and inside—body and mind.
 - From inside, changing your attitude toward yourself—trusting and believing in yourself—creates psychological support. This, combined with external measures to alleviate physical suffering, helps to overcome sorrow and grief.
 - The first four limbs of Yoga address mental / emotional suffering.
 - Spiritual
 - To overcome spiritual pain and suffering, dive deep into yourself and know your pure being. Work toward removing all non-essentials—all that which is not the Self.
 - The way to do this is covered by the last four limbs of Yoga—the meditative aspects—which are the purest form of Yoga and are all internal. These are *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi*.

- All of this is a complete treatment, with Samkhya philosophy as the foundation.
- B. We are a blend of pure consciousness and the material world, right and wrong, vice and virtue, mortal and immortal.
- Pure consciousness is something to aspire to. There is no need to condemn the part of us that is not pure consciousness. It's better to establish a good relationship with it.
- C. Everything in this universe is for overcoming the three types of pain and experiencing our pure being.
- The creation is not an accident and life is not a punishment.
 - Life gives us the opportunity and tools to:
 - Embrace and enjoy experiences and understand how valuable or useless they are, or
 - Come to the understanding that experiences are the same thing again and again and be through with them (the path of renunciation)
 (Our choice depends on which of these paths is most compatible with our individual nature.)
 - The goal is a life that is free from pain and sorrow—a life that is not dependent on anything or anyone.
- D. Live in the world in an integrated fashion whereby Purusha (Shiva) and Prakriti (Shakti) walk together and help each other toward the goal.
- Purusha cannot move, but sees, and Prakriti cannot see, but moves.
 - Thus, we work with all aspects of ourselves—consciousness, body, breath, and mind—to achieve the goal.

Study Questions

1. What are the Vedas? Do they have a founder?
2. Who organized the Vedas into four books, and what are the names of these books?
3. What is the main text of Samkhya?
4. What are the two most distinctive aspects of Samkhya philosophy?
5. What are the tattvas? Which 23 evolve from Prakriti?
6. Define Purusha and Prakriti.
7. Explain the difference between dualistic and non-dualistic philosophies.
8. What is the goal of Samkhya philosophy?

9. What is *kaivalya*?
10. What is *karya-karana-vada*? Why is it important to Yoga and Ayurveda?
11. How do Ayurveda and Yoga work together?
12. Why is an understanding of Samkhya important for Yoga practitioners?
13. What are the three types of pain and suffering, and what is needed to overcome each?
14. How should we regard the part of ourselves that is not pure consciousness?
15. What is the purpose for which this world was created?
16. What aspects of ourselves do we work with to achieve our goal?

Samkhya Philosophy: Foundation for Yoga and Aurveda

Chapter 2: Samkhya—The Guiding Force of Yoga

Outline

1. Two Sets of Creation
 - Divine (created by nature)
 - Self-created (created by us)
2. The Impairment of Buddhi (Conscience) and the Beginning of Sorrow
 - The 28 damages resulting from damage to buddhi
 - The importance of practicing *ahimsa*—not harming our conscience
 - Why we act against our conscience
3. Yoga: The Way to Eliminate the Cause of Self-Inflicted Misery and Attain Freedom Here and Now
 - Steps to cultivating a clear, calm, and tranquil mind and exploring the deepest aspects of our being

Lecture Notes

1. Two Sets of Creation

- Divine (created by nature)
 - *Ishvara sarga*: Ishvara means God, a combination of Purusha and Prakriti. Sarga means creation. Ishvara sarga is also known as *bhautika sarga*, the material creation.
 - Ishvara is the higher reality that provides guidance and structure to this creation.
- Self-created (created by us)
 - *Buddhi sarga*: Buddhi is the field of intelligence within us that has the capacity to know itself and everything else. Buddhi sarga—also known as *pratyaya sarga*—is the world created by our buddhi.
- The purpose of the divine creation is to benefit individual souls by providing us with everything we need to free ourselves from pain and suffering and know our essential nature. The foremost tool given us to do this is the mind.
- Among the elements we work with is our capacity for love and compassion, hatred, jealousy, etc., and along with that, our free will or conscience (buddhi), the biggest faculty in us.
- Using these tools and elements, we create our own world. When our carelessness or addictions work against our conscience, they force us to create a unique, private, ugly world and live there, suffering from self-inflicted misery and sorrow.
- So we live simultaneously in two parallel universes, one created by the higher reality and one created by us. The one we create can be healthy or quite damaging.

2. The Impairment of Buddhi (Conscience) and the Beginning of Sorrow

- When we do good things in our life, following our conscience (buddhi), we create a healthy reality that helps us attain freedom from other realities we may have created. Buddha's life is an example.
- When we act against buddhi, it becomes damaged, and from this, 28 other damages follow:
 - 1-11: Damage to the mind and ten senses.
 - When we work against our conscience, we plant a seed for cultivating a disturbed, distracted, and stupefied mind. We begin to lack self-respect and self-trust; we begin to fear ourselves, and project the cause of fear onto others. Thus begins self-deception.
 - Disorientation of the ten senses follows damage to the mind. Our power of discernment has been compromised. Our damaged buddhi blocks what we see and hear, and our speech and action toward others are unconsciously affected.
 - 12-19 : Eight powers (siddhis) unique to humans are damaged when the conscience, mind, and senses are damaged. These eight powers are:
 - 12) *Uha*—intuition, knowing beyond sensory knowledge
 - 13) *Shabda*—comprehending the intention in spoken language and in gestures
 - 14) *Adhyayana*—studying, contemplating, and elaborating on the meaning of communications
 - 15-17) The desire, will, and ability to overcome the three-fold pain, including the capacity to make plans to overcome it.
 - 18) *Dana*—the ability to give, share, pass on, and expand; the desire to see your mission expand beyond your own life; the courage to sacrifice smaller personal interests for a higher cause that benefits others.
 - 19) *Suhrit prapti* or “good friend achievement”—the ability to meet and retain good friends and to respect and value the virtue of the heart of others; the ability to demolish the walls of time and space to connect with others.
 - 20-28: Nine *tushti*—categories of contentment—are damaged.
 - Contentment is the ground for happiness, as stated in *Yoga Sutra*, chapter 2, sutra 42. It is the antidote to a disturbed, distracted, and stupefied mind.
 - The nine types of contentment are described in *Samkhya Karika*, verse 50. They include contentment relating to nature, means, time, and destiny.
- Yoga gives us a way to stop harming ourselves. Practice *ahimsa*—don't harm your conscience and create inner conflict. This is why the first things taught in Yoga are the *yamas* and *niyamas*.
- Why do we inflict misery on ourselves? Because of deep *samskaras* and *vasanas* (strong grooves or impressions in the unconscious mind). They influence our buddhi, and thus we often act against our own conscience.

3. Yoga: The Way to Eliminate the Cause of Self-Inflicted Misery and Attain Freedom Here and Now

- The first step is to live a balanced life, so that the needs of body and mind are balanced.
- Then put more and more time into cultivating a clear, calm, and tranquil mind.
- Learn the art of turning the mind inward.
- Then train the mind to see what is inside and have the courage to acknowledge what it sees inside.
- Finally, train your mind to distinguish healthy from unhealthy, right from wrong, auspicious from inauspicious, your pure being from what is not pure being.
 - This process is called *samyama*, the last three limbs of yoga, as described in *Yoga Sutra*, chapter 3.
 - Concentration (*dharana*)
 - Meditation (*dhyana*)
 - Samadhi
 - *Samyama* is a continuous process of moving inward and discovering deeper and deeper aspects of yourself.
 - It allows you to discover your true Self, see the Self and the non-Self side by side, identify yourself with the pure Self, and skillfully use all aspects of yourself to achieve the highest goal of life—*bhoga* and *apavarga*—the experience of fulfillment and ultimate freedom.

Study Questions

1. What are the two sets of creation and how do they differ?
2. What are the 28 damages? Damage to what important faculty is their cause?
3. Why is ahimsa important?
4. What causes us to go against our conscience?
5. What is a five step plan for achieving the goal of Yoga?
6. What are the components of *samyama*?