

A Study of the Concept of Suffering in *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* Philosophy

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Abstract

Some scholars, especially almost all Indian philosophers, defined man as an ethical animal. Why do they say that man is an ethical animal? The aim of this paper is to present the concept of suffering in *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* Philosophy. The usage methods are the descriptive and evaluative method. The research finding is that principle of reciprocity can be used as an ethical principle. The moral principle in Eightfold Mean of *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* Philosophy will be used in this research paper. This paper will contribute an understanding of the ethical conduct is indispensable foundation in *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* Philosophy.

Introduction

In ancient times, Indian sages laid down the ethical ideals which are universal standards. In modern Indian society, these ideals are a lasting cure for the evils. We shall find that each and every system of Indian philosophy is replete with ethical attitudes and regards the highest moral life as the only way to attain spiritual perfection, which has always been regarded as the *summum bonum*, or supreme good of life. Indian philosophy accepted the practice of the four ends of human life-*Artha* which is economics end, *Kama* which is emotional end, *Dhama* which is ethical end and *Moksa* which is spiritual end. These all are respectively associated with the physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual perfection of the individual and of society.

Among the Indian philosophies *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* philosophy laid emphasis on (*Dhama*) the ethical and (*Moksa*) the spiritual aspects. *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* philosophy holds that there is a fourfold division of the doctrine of final release, and the fourth division is a perfect way to attain liberation.

Moreover, they used ethics as a foundation value to be attained their ends. This paper will try to present the principle of reciprocity is important role and indispensable foundation of human society in *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* philosophy.

The Existence of Suffering

Their ethics confesses that pleasure is bound to be mixed up with pain. They also said that sensual pleasures are transitory and its end is always painful. They accepted that the existence of suffering in all living beings. This system holds that no amount of material progress, whether of science or of technology, can ever help us to put an end to miseries once for all. Moreover, no one is ever fully satisfied by the appeasement of sensual desires. It is that true happiness comes from within the individual but it does not arise from outside. This system states that everyone desire to avoids all kinds of suffering or to get rid of suffering. They aim to attain liberation which is abolition of suffering.

According to the *Sāṅkhya Yoga*, there are three types or three mains classes of suffering. They are: *Adhyātmika*, *Adhibhautika* and *Adhidavika*.

Adhyātmika means suffering aroused by the psycho-physical nature of man. It is due to intra-organic causes like bodily disorders and mental affections. All pains and diseases due to bodily and mental disorders are included in *Adhyātmika*.

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Adhibhautika is suffering issuing from the physical world. It is produced by extra-organic natural causes like men, beasts, etc. It includes physical injuries which are due to one who is aggressive and beasts, and other physical objects.

The last type of suffering is *Adhidavika* which is predominated by an invisible power. It means that it is caused by extra-organic supernatural causes. By supernatural causes, *Sāṅkhya* means, ghosts and demons and so on.

But these supernatural causes do not imply *Devatā*. It is because; in the Vedas the word “*Devatā*” does not stand for any ghost and demon. It is assumed that of the *Tattvas* or physical though invisible forces like heat, motion, etc; some are benevolent and life-giving but some are malevolent and harmful to life and health. According to the Vedic terminology, the third type of suffering is caused by invisible physical agencies and planets, but is not supernatural.

The Cause of Suffering

The *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* accepts suffering as a factual existence and holds that everyone wishes to get rid of suffering. The *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* mentioned that as long as the soul resides in the imperfect body, pleasures are transitory and then their end is always painful. They assumed that the root cause of suffering is ignorance of the true nature of things. Here, they hold that ignorance means the failure to realize the external distinction of spirit and nature.

According to the *Sāṅkhya-Yog*, there are 25 principles of the evolution of the world. These are: Ignorance, not-self (*prakṛiti*), self (*purusa*), citta (*mahat* or *buddi*), individuation (*ahankara*), mind (*manas*), 5 sense organs (eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin), 5 motor organs (hands, feet, mouth, anus and sex organ), 5 subtle elements (sound, touch, colour, taste and smell), 5 gross elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth).

According to the *Sāṅkhya-Yoga*, since the world of nature is beginning less one cannot inquire about the origin of ignorance (*Avidya*). In every individual *citta* there is ignorance. When one's *citta* is recreated at the beginning of evolution, his ignorance is again responsible for the appearance of suffering. According to *Sāṅkhya-Yoga*, *citta* means *Mahat* or *Buddhi*. *Mahat* is the first product of *prakṛti*.

Mahat includes mind (*Manas*) and self-consciousness or ego (*Ahamkāra*). They hold that *citta* is connected with every *purusa*, and then it appears to be a shadow of *purusa*. For them there are two types of *citta*. These are: 1. *Kāraṇa Citta* and 2. *Kārya Citta*.

Kāraṇa Citta is the all-pervasive cause. It is originally unconscious. By the reflection of the self it becomes conscious. It does not manifest the state of consciousness in it. *Kārya Citta* manifests itself in the states of consciousness. In fact, the all-pervasive *Kāraṇa Citta* manifests itself as the *Kārya Citta* in every incarnation according to past Karmas.

Citta is all-pervasive, conscious, and pure due to its proximity with the *purusa*. On the other hand it assumes the form of the object when the latter is reflected into it, because the *Kārya Citta* is very closely associated with the world.

According to Sharma, it is assumed that *citta* does not arise out the self but the self is arised by the ignorance which is including in the *citta*. The self appears to be experiencing five sources of suffering. These are: 1. *Avidyā*, 2. *Asmitā*, 3. *Rāga*, 4. *Dvesa* and 5. *Abhinivesa*.

Avidyā which is responsible for taking not-self to be the self, the non-eternal to be the eternal, the unpleasant to be the pleasant and impure to be pure. *Asmitā* is identifying the self with the intellect or mind. *Rāga* is attachment to sensual pleasures. *Dvesa* is the tendency to hate or avoid pains and their causes. *Abhinivesa* stands for the presence of the fear of death.

From these five kinds of *kilesas* ignorance is, *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* holds, the cause of suffering which is the non-discrimination between self and non-self. This discrimination between self and non-self leads to freedom from all suffering. Indeed, freedom from suffering is to be attained through right knowledge.

According to the *Sāṅkhya-Yoga*, ignorance of the real nature of *purusa* (self) is the sole cause of human suffering. And then they observed that the absolute freedom from all pain and suffering which they called *Moksa* or liberation. No one needs to understand what they called *Moksa* or liberation.

The Cessation of Suffering

The aim of the *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* philosophy is to attain liberation (*Mutti*) which is through the understanding of the evolutionary process. The *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* believed that since sensual pleasures are bound to be mixed up with pains, these pleasures are transitory and their end is always sufferings. Therefore human beings want to avoid every kinds of suffering but they want to attain liberation.

They hold that liberation is the absolute and complete cessation of all suffering without a possibility of return. It is the ultimate end of one's life. Here, they point out that after the attainment of *moksa(mutti)* there is no return. It means that if a person attained liberation, then he does not return to the lower stage which is full of suffering.

The *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* accepted that there are two kinds of liberation (*mutti*). These are: 1. *Jivanmutti* and 2. *Videhamutti*. *Jivanmutti* is emancipation of the soul while living in this body. On the other hand, liberation which is possible to attain before the death of one's body is called *Jivanmutti*. Liberation which is possible to attain after the death of one's body and the liberated self is called *Videhamutti*. This kind of *mutti* is also known as emancipation of spirit from all bodies, gross and subtle elements.

Since the *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* holds that liberation is the complete cessation of all suffering, one requires understanding the way to attain the highest state of freedom from all suffering.

The Means to Cessation of Suffering

The *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* system holds that liberation is to be attained by eightfold means of Yoga that is the cessation of all suffering. They are: 1. *Yama* (restraints), 2. *Niyama* (culture), 3. *Asana* (posture), 4. *Pranāyāma* (breath-control), 5. *Pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses), 6. *Dhāranā* (attention), 7. *Dhyāna* (meditation) and 8. *Samādhi* (Concentration)

Yama (Restraints)

It is required control of the behaviour of a person. It consists in (5) characteristics. These are:

1. *Ahimsa* (Non-violence)
2. *Satya* (Truthfulness)
3. *Asteya* (Non-stealing)
4. *Brahmcharya* (Continence)
5. *Aparigraha* (Non-possession).

Ahimsa which requires a person should not cause injury to any living being through body, mind, or speech. *Ahimsa* exhorts to a person to avoid mental, verbal or physical violence. *Ahimsa* which is understood to avoid hatred, jealousy etc, but to cultivate friendliness, sympathy, cheerfulness and etc. In Indian philosophy, Gandhi assumed that non-violence as the highest virtue. *Satya* which is needed a person to adhere to truthfulness. It means that *Satya* is a restraint on indulgence in falsehood. For example, a person is caused the mental injury by other person because the second person is not truthful and deceives the first person. The non-violence is related to the truthfulness because the observance of the former implies the

observance of the later. *Asteya* is indicative of respect for property. It is a great ethical significance and important for the purification of mind. *Brahmçarya* is restraint from sexual intercourse. *Aparigraha* is non-acceptance of unnecessary gifts from other people.

According to the Yoga, a person who practiced *yama* has positive motives and positive effects on both oneself and others. Therefore it is assumed that *yama* aims at progressing moral and peaceful conduct.

Niyama (Culture)

It is the principles of the development of the personality. There are five kinds of good habit in *Niyama*. These are:

1. *Sauca*
2. *Santosa*
3. *Tapas*
4. *Svādhyaya*
5. *Isvarapranidhāna*.

Sauca which consists in both external and internal purification or bodily and mental purity; that is washing and taking pure food, friendliness, kindness, cheerfulness for the virtue etc., respectively. *Santosa* is not being overenthusiastic in pursuing the pleasures of the world. *Tapas* stand for the habit of forbearing the odds of life and the suffering caused by heat and cold, etc. *Svādhyāya* is habitual form for a person to study regularly. *Isvarapranidhāna* which is most important principle of culture enjoined upon the spiritual aspirant.

The principles of *niyama*, including five good habits, enhance the spiritual power of a person. By the cultivation of benevolent habits one's mind is purified. According to the *Sāṅkhya-Yoga*, two principles such as *santosa* and *tapas* have been recognized as ethical virtues.

Asana (Posture)

It is a special feature of this system and it advocates the adoption of various bodily postures, that contribute to bodily, mental and spiritual health and development respectively. *Yoga* system assumed that various *āsana* ward off various physical diseases. I. C. Sharma mentioned that:

“A sound mind in a sound body is essential for the aspirant because psychological balance is the prerequisite of concentration or *Samādhi*.”¹

This system holds that when a person attempts to adopt *āsana* difficulty without proper guidance, he falls victim to physical diseases and deformities. Moreover, according to the *Sāṅkhya-Yoga*, if a person makes to attain concentration, he is necessary *āsana*, and then his body and mind are healthy and partially free from diseases, thence he will be reduced physical as well as mental suffering.

Pranāyāma (Breath-Control)

It is a technique of bringing the body and the mind under control. There are three steps of breath-control. These are: 1. gradual inhaling, 2. checking the breath and 3. exhaling the breath slowly.

¹ Sharma, I.C., (1965), *Ethical Philosophies of India*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 211

For the *Sāṅkhya-Yoga*, if a person who can successfully control his breath gains physical and mental powers, then his capacity for concentration increases. The *prāṇayāma* or breath-control is useful for a person with weak heart because it strengthens the heart.

***Pratyahara* (Withdrawal of the Senses)**

The fifth means advocated the withdrawal of the senses from their respective external objects and taking them under the control of mind. At this step, when one's mind controls the senses then these senses follow not their natural objects but the mind itself. Therefore the control of the senses helps one to progress towards the step of *Samādhi*. For the *Sāṅkhya-Yoga*, a person who is a layman draws himself into the vicious circle because he is striving to satisfy sensual desires of objects in this circle.

***Dhāranā* (Attention)**

It is a mental discipline which implies fixing the mind on the desired object. It is a mental exercise and is also the first step towards *Samādhi*.

***Dhyāna* (Meditation)**

It is continuous contemplation and this step is the fixing of the mind on its object without a break while attention is short-lived. S. Chatterjee shows *dhyāna* in the following:

“It is steadfast contemplation of the object without any break or disturbance... But by long-continued meditation the mind can develop the partial representation of the object into a full and live presentation of it. Thus *dhyāna* reveals the reality of the contemplated object to the *yogin's* mind.”²

***Samādhi* (Concentration)**

It is a final step and the climax of concentration. In this step the mind is absorbed in the object of contemplation. This state, in which the contemplative consciousness, is lost in the contemplated object and has no awareness of itself.

According to the *Sāṅkhya-Yoga*, the five disciplines such as *yāma*, *niyāma*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma* and *pratyāhara* aim at to control or to effect the environment.

Among the eightfold means these five steps are regarded as the external means which are not adequate to stop to mental modifications but these are supply to the other three steps. These eightfold means, in *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* philosophy, is the perfect way to removal of suffering.

Conclusion

Man always live in some cultural environment as necessarily as in a physical one. No man can completely detach himself from culture. Culture is the way and condition of living of the people who create it with a view to meet the needs for their survival, for the survival of their race and for making their society run smoothly. There are as many patterns of culture as there are human societies. In every society there must exist ethics for human actions, behavior and social relations. Ethics is an important role for the relation of humanity in culture. The *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* philosophy advocated the practical method is the ethical discipline and the adoption of it alone is responsible for the attainment of the knowledge of ultimate reality. The aim of this discipline is to assist man in the ascent from the narrow view congenital to him to

² Chatter Jee, S. & Datta, D., (1960), An Introduction to Indian Philosophy, Sixth Edition, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 305

the larger vision which brings freedom with it. In analyzing the eightfold means of the *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* philosophy, these means mainly have two parts: – one is concerned with the right direction of the will; – the other is dealt with the specific cultivation of the power of mental concentration. The latter part consists of *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *Samadhi*. Among these *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara* are devised to secure control of the physical frame with a view to facilitate the control of the mind. Then *dharana* and *dhyana* assist in getting a direct but gradual mastery over the ever-fitful mind. The last stage *Samadhi* consists in direct meditation on the *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* truth. It should be practiced in two grades: the first is designated as *Samprajnata-Samadhi* and the second is designated as *Asamprajnata-Samadhi*. The former part consists of *yama* and *niyama*. *Yama* may be regarded as negative and consists of 1. *Ahimsa* (Nonviolence), 2. *Satya* (Truthfulness), 3. *Asteya* (Non-stealing), 4. *Brahmcharya* (Continence) and 5. *Aparigraha* (Non-possession). *Niyama* may be regarded as positive and consists of 1. *Sauca*, 2. *Santosa*, 3. *Tapas*, 4. *Svādhyaya* and 5. *Isvarapranidhāna*. These two disciplines produce unselfish side in man's character. Moreover, they relate to the acquirement of virtues. *Yama* and *Niyama* have ten features and these may be stated as the Ten Commandments of *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* system. These disciplines represent the attainment of the good as distinguished from the truth.

The *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* system holds that man must overcome the egoistic impulses in him. These impulses are the source of many evils in the world. The first two disciplines, *yama* and *niyama*, are not only to bring ascetic in man but also to point out the nature of virtues. Human beings in a society may attain impersonal attitude by means of these disciplines. So we have to say that since man has to be impersonal and unselfish he has to follow the principles of reciprocity. This principle is not only means as the foundation to attain liberation but also guides to peaceful and harmony in every human society in the world.

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