

Relevance of the Sāṃkhya Principles in Modern Education System

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Abstract

This paper delves into the enduring relevance of Sāṃkhya philosophy within the context of contemporary educational systems. The foundational principles of Sāṃkhya, including the dualism of puruṣa and prakṛti, the theory of guṇas, the evolutionary framework of principles and its epistemological approach, offer valuable insights for fostering holistic and effective learning. By emphasizing the balance between subjective and objective knowledge, understanding individual temperaments, promoting critical thinking, and encouraging interdisciplinary connections, Sāṃkhya provides a framework for addressing the multifaceted challenges of modern education. This paper argues that integrating Sāṃkhya principles can contribute to a more balanced, personalized and ethically grounded educational experience, ultimately cultivating well-rounded individuals capable of navigating the complexities of the 21st century.

Keywords: Sāṃkhya, prakṛti, puruṣa, guṇa, mokṣa

Introduction:

The Sāṃkhya system is considered to be one of the oldest and important systems of Indian philosophy. It occupies a unique and esteemed place in the system by virtue of rational and realistic approach towards systematizing the philosophical thinking. Some scholars explain it as derived from the Upaniṣads, but others maintain that it is an independent doctrine. Whatever be its origin, it maintains a prominent place among all the systems of Indian philosophy, since it is either supported or contradicted by every philosophical system. It offers a unique perspective on the nature of existence, consciousness, and the universe. Thus, the importance of this system is recognized by all the schools of Indian philosophy.

Education has always been a keystone of human civilization, nurturing minds and forming societies. As we progress further into the 21st century, the demands placed upon educations have evolved significantly. The educational system of present time requires a thoughtful integration of traditional wisdom and modern knowledge

to obtain the diverse needs of students and prepare them for ever-changing world. In this objective, turning to the infinite enlightenment of ancient philosophies may provide valuable guidelines or ideas. The Sāṃkhya system offers valuable insights that can be applied to modern educational systems.

The aim of this paper is to explore the relevance of the Sāṃkhya principles in the context of modern education system. By understanding its fundamental and intricate nuances, we can find the probable applications of the teachings of Sāṃkhya philosophy to grow holistic and well-rounded development in students. We embark on this journey with the intention of bridging the gap between the wisdom of the ancients and the demands of the present.

Objective of the study:

The study intends to attain the following specified objectives:

- To analyze the basic concepts of Sāṃkhya philosophy.
- To explore the impact of Sāṃkhya principles on educational practices.
- To explore the ethical values of Sāṃkhya and their relevance in education.

Methodology:

The research paper is primarily based on qualitative approach. The present study uses both the primary and the secondary sources. The primary sources are the classical Sāṃkhya texts, commentaries and modern scholarly interpretations. The secondary sources are related to the journal, article and various websites.

The present paper is descriptive in nature. Thus, the descriptive outlook paved the way for bringing to the fore the objectives of the research. Additionally, the study incorporates educational research, case studies and observations to explore practical implications for integrating Sāṃkhya philosophy into educational practices.

Key Principles of Sāṃkhya Philosophy:

Dualism of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* :

The Sāṃkhya system is known as a dualistic system, because it advocates the dualism of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. According to this system, the world has been explained only with the reference to *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, described as two distinct and independent principles. Of them, *puruṣa* means the self and *prakṛti* is the ultimate ground out of which the world evolves. The Sāṃkhya does not establish the existence of God, because according to them, *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* are sufficient to explain this universe.

Nature of *prakṛti* :

The word *prakṛti* literally means the nature. It is the basic nature of intelligence by which the universe exists and functions. In the Sāṃkhya system, it is explained as *mūla-prakṛti* (root evolvent) because it is the root of all other evolves, while it has no root of its own. The *Sāṃkhyakārikā* (10-11) of Īśvarakṛṣṇa describes *prakṛti* as – uncaused, unmanifest, unsupported, non-mergent, non-intelligent, eternal, all-pervading, immobile, single, part-less, independent, constituted of the three *guṇas*, indistinguishable, objective, common and productive.

In the *Sāṃkhyapравacanasūtra* (I.61), it is stated that *prakṛti* is constituted by the three *guṇas*, viz., *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Prakṛti* is the unity of the three *guṇas* held in a state of equilibrium. The most important characteristic of *prakṛti* is that it is out and out productive. It undergoes changes. It changes into forms and categories. *Prakṛti* has two movements: *anuloma* (forward) and *pratiloma* (backward). In its forward movement *prakṛti* becomes the generating agent of all *sargas* (evolutes), while in the backward movement, it retraces the stages through which it is developed.

Nature of *puruṣa* :

According to the Sāṃkhya, *puruṣa* is a pure spirit and entirely different from *prakṛti*. *Puruṣa* is beyond of all empirical attributes. It is unchangeable and immutable. It is eternal in the sense that it is not affected by the change of time, and that it is an uncaused ultimate principle. It is independent and is not supported by anything else. The *Sāṃkhyakārikā* describes *puruṣa* or *pumān* as intelligent, conscious, non-productive, devoid of attributes etc. The fundamental point regarding the point of *puruṣa* is that it is always the subject of knowledge and never an object of it.

The Sāṃkhya system believes in the plurality of the *puruṣa*. According to them, the self is not one, but many and it is different in different organisms. Further reasons are advanced by the Sāṃkhya philosophers for the plurality of the *puruṣas*. The arguments are as follows – (i) from the individual allotment of birth, death and the instruments, (ii) from the simultaneity of activities and (iii) from the diverse modifications due to the three *guṇas*.

Relation between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* :

The Sāṃkhya holds that though *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* are quite opposite natures, there is harmony between these two realities. In their view, there can be no evolution unless these two realities are somehow related to each other. According to Sāṃkhya, the contact between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* is not an ordinary kind of conjunction. The said contact means that the *prakṛti* is influenced simply by the presence of *puruṣa*, just as our body is sometimes moved by the presence of a thought or a piece of iron is moved by a piece of magnet. *Prakṛti* is unconscious and active, while *puruṣa* is conscious but inactive. But through the union or contact between these two, the unconscious *prakṛti* appears as if it is conscious and similarly the neutral *puruṣa* appears as if it were the agent. However, the evolution of the world cannot be due to the *puruṣa* alone, for its inactivity; nor can it be due to *prakṛti* alone, because it is unconscious. Hence for the evolution of the world, the activity of *prakṛti* must be guided by the intelligence of the *puruṣa*. The Sāṃkhya philosophers say that though distinct from each other, *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* can co-operate for the evolution purposes, just as a lame man and a blind man can co-operate with each-other and came out of the forest.

Theory of the *guṇas* :

According to the Sāṃkhya, all the mental and material objects of this phenomenal world are made up of an admixture or rather a combination in different proportions of three classes of ultimate reals, which are

technically called as *guṇas*. All the objects of the world are found to possess three characters capable of producing pleasure, pain and delusion, which are known as *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* respectively.

The first of the three *guṇas* is called *sattva*. Etymologically, the term *sattva* is derived from the word *sat*, which means real or existent. Generally, consciousness is granted such existence and therefore *sattva* is said to be potential consciousness. Another meaning of the word *sat* is perfection and thus, it is said that goodness and happiness are produced from the *sattvaguna*. The Sāṃkhya philosophers hold that among the three *guṇas*, *sattva* is *laghuh* (buoyant, active) and *prakāśakam* (illuminating or enlightening).

The second *guṇa*, i.e. *rajas* is described as the source of all activity. The term *rajas* is derived from the root *rañj*, which means to colour, to be attached or to moved. Hence, its function is to move things and overcome resistance. The Sāṃkhya philosophers describe it as both *upaśtambhaka* (exciting) and *cala* (mobile).

The third *guṇa* is known as *tamas*, which means darkness. *Tamas* is used to signify that power of nature which restraints, obstructs and envelops the other two *guṇas*. *Tamas* is opposed to *sattva* in being heavy (*guru*) and in obstructing the manifestation of objects (*varaṇaka*). It also resists the *rajas*, since it restrains the motion of things. *Tamas* hinders the power of manifestation in the mind, the intellect and thereby produces ignorance and bewilderment (*moha*). Restraining and binding are its nature. It is the cause of mass, weight and inertia.

Though these *guṇas* are essentially distinct in their nature, they can never be separated from each other. They support one another and intermingle with one another. Moreover, though the three *guṇas* are mutually opposed, they can operate to achieve a common purpose.

Sāṃkhya theory of Creation:

Prakṛti is the fundamental substance out of which the world evolves. Before creation, there is an equal balance of the three *guṇas*. When this equilibrium is destroyed by the presence of *puruṣa*, there arises an equal aggregation of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* at different moments. Being disturbed and dislocated from its state of equipoise, *prakṛti* undergoes transformation and creates *mahat* or *buddhi*. *Mahat* or the cosmic intellect is the first product of the evolution. From *mahat* or *buddhi*, *ahamkāra* appears. The *guṇas* take three different courses of development from *ahamkāra* and accordingly the latter is known as *vaikārika* or *sāttvika*, *taijasa* or *rājasa* and *bhūtādi* or *tāmasa*. As the transformation continues, the *manas* (mind), the *pañcajñānendriyas* (the five organs of knowledge) and the *pañcakarmendriyas* (the five organs of action) come forth from *sāttvika-ahamkāra*; and the five *tanmātras* (subtle elements) viz., *śabda*, *sparśa*, *rūpa*, *rasa* and *gandha* are emerged from *tāmasa-ahamkāra*. The *rājasa* aspect stands midway and plays its part in both. From the five *tanmātras* come out the five gross elements, viz., *ākāśa*, *vāyu*, *tejas*, *āpa* and *pṛthivī*.

The thirteen evolutes of *prakṛti*, viz., *buddhi*, *ahamkāra*, *manas*, the five organs of sense and the five organs of action constitute the *linga* or instrument. The *linga*, when taken together with the five *tanmātras* is characterized as the *lingaśarīra* or subtle body. And the subtle body when supported by the five gross elements

is known as gross body, which is finally destroyed. Thus, the gross body is the receptacle of the subtle body.

With the manifestation of the sense particular (*mahābhūtas*), the process of cosmic evolution comes to rest. The Sāṃkhya concept of evolution indicates the gradual development of different categories of existence and not mere changes of qualities or new combinations of the objects of the same order. The whole course of evolution of Sāṃkhya purely exists in the chain of causation from the cosmic substance (*prakṛti*) to the gross elements.

Epistemology:

The Sāṃkhya accepts three means of valid knowledge or *pramāṇa*, viz. *pratyakṣa* or *dṛcma* (perception), *anumāna* (inference) and *śabda* or *āptavacana* (testimony). By these three all other means of valid knowledge too established, as they are included in the above three. Perception is the ascertainment of each respective object by the senses. Inference is preceded by knowledge of the middle term (*liṅga*) and major term (*liṅgi*) and it is declared to be three kinds. Verbal testimony is the statement of trustworthy persons and the scriptures.

Liberation:

The Sāṃkhya system has started with an analysis of three kinds of misery or *duḥkhatraya*, which generally destroy the pleasures of life. These are namely *ādhyātmika* (intra-organic), *ādhidaivika* (caused by external influences) and *ādhibhautika* (caused by supernatural agencies). All these evils of life cannot be removed forever either by science or by religious practices and other known means. The knowledge of science and performance of religious practices may remove pain for a short period but they cannot lead to the final annihilation of sufferings and pains. Thus, the Sāṃkhya says that the three kinds of pain can be removed by the direct knowledge of *vyakta*, *avyakta* and *jñā*.

The Sāṃkhya holds that the *puruṣa* experiences misery due to its conjunction with *prakṛti*. The cause of conjunction of these two distinct and separate principles is *avidyā* or *aviveka*. According to the Sāṃkhya, bondage and liberation are merely phenomenal. Bondage and liberation refer to the conjunction and the disjunction of the *puruṣa* resulting from non-discrimination and discrimination.

According to the Sāṃkhya, the non-discrimination can be removed through the knowledge. But the knowledge is not merely an intellectual understanding of the truth. It must be a direct knowledge or clear realization of the real nature of *puruṣa*.

Implications of Sāṃkhya Principles in Education:

The Sāṃkhya philosophy, with its keen metaphysical, epistemological and axiological thoughts, offers several implications for education. Integrating the Sāṃkhya principles into educational practices can lead to a balanced and holistic approach to learning, personal development and self-realization. Some implications of Sāṃkhya philosophy for education sector are as follows:

- The Sāṃkhya philosophers hold that the human being is a combination of multiple aspects, including the physical, mental and spiritual dimensions. Education can be designed to address all these aspects, fostering physical health, emotional intelligence, intellectual growth, and spiritual development. A holistic approach to education helps students become well-rounded individuals capable of dealing with life's challenges with wisdom and compassion.
- The Sāṃkhya recognizes the distinction between *puruṣa*, the eternal consciousness and *prakṛti*, the ever-changing material world. This understanding can lead to self-awareness and mindfulness, allowing students to recognize their true nature beyond the fluctuations of the mind and external circumstances. Incorporating practices like meditation and self-reflection in education can help students to develop a deeper understanding of their inner selves and emotions.
- The Sāṃkhya system emphasizes *prakṛti* as the creative force behind the material world. Education can introduce in students a deep respect and reverence for nature, leading to environmental consciousness and sustainable living practices.
- The Sāṃkhya philosophers highlight the distinctions between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* with its ethical implications. Education can emphasize the importance of ethical behaviour, compassion, and non-attachment to material possessions, encouraging students to live a life of integrity and moral values.
- The *guṇa* theory of Sāṃkhya can significantly influence the mind and behavior of the educators. Understanding the three *guṇas* and their impact can help the students to create a supportive and conducive learning environment. Student can focus on cultivating *sattvagūṇa*, the quality of purity and harmony, which promotes clarity on thinking, calmness, positive attitude and self-discipline. Encouraging students to develop a Sattvic state of mind can lead to improved focus, emotional stability and better decision-making. *Rajas* represents the qualities of activity, passion and restlessness, through which students are likely to be energetic and enthusiastic about various activities and subjects. *Rajas* can lead to a competitive spirit, encouraging students to excel and achieve success in academics and extracurricular pursuits. On the other hand, *tamas* represents qualities of inertia, lethargy and darkness. When students exhibit tamasic tendencies, they may display the following behaviours like, lack of motivation, procrastination, difficulty focusing, resistance to change and low self-esteem.
- The Sāṃkhya philosophers hold that knowledge acquired through valid means of knowledge, *i.e. pramāṇa*. Teachers can promote inquiry-based learning and critical thinking, encouraging students to question, analyze and seek knowledge through direct perception, logical inference and reliable testimony. Such approaches of teachings enhance the problem-solving and analytical skills of the students.
- According to the Sāṃkhya philosophy, knowledge is the means to attain the salvation from the cycle of birth and death. Teachers can inspire students to seek the knowledge not just for the utilitarian approach but also for their personal growth and self-realization, aligning with the Sāṃkhya's pursuit of liberation.

In this way, the Sāṃkhya system offers a profound framework for shaping an education system that fosters both academic excellence and inner transformation. By integrating the Sāṃkhya principles into pedagogy, educators can create a more holistic and transformative educational experience that nurtures the intellectual, emotional and spiritual development of students, enabling them to become well-rounded individuals capable of leading meaningful and purposeful lives.

Conclusion:

From the above discussion, it is clear that the Sāṃkhya principles offer a framework for creating a more balanced, holistic, and meaningful educational experience. The emphasis of Sāṃkhya on inner and outer development supports a holistic educational approach that addresses the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs of the students. Understanding the *guṇas* can help educators tailor instruction to individual students' learning styles and needs. The focus of Sāṃkhya on discrimination and self-awareness can contribute to values education, promoting ethical behavior and responsible citizenship. Again, the epistemological view of Sāṃkhya emphasizes the importance of perception, inference, and testimony, which are essential for developing critical thinking skills. The Sāṃkhya theory of evolution promotes an understanding of the interconnectedness of all things, fostering interdisciplinary learning. Thus, it can be said that the teachings of Sāṃkhya philosophy have so much relevance to modern education system.

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