

Samkhya Philosophy, Deep Ecology and Sustainable Development

Filozofia Sankhja, głęboka ekologia i zrównoważony rozwój

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Abstract

Samkhya philosophy is one of the oldest philosophies in the Indian philosophical system. This philosophy is independent in origin and mainly known for its evolution theory. Samkhya philosophy has accepted the two ultimate and independent realities, Nature and pure Consciousness. This paper is an attempt to comprehend the notion of deep ecology from the Samkhya's evolution theory perspective. In this paper, firstly, we have elucidated the Samkhya philosophy of suffering and the solution to the problem. In the second part of the article, we have argued that how Samkhya's philosophical notion of Nature demonstrates our embeddedness in Nature. Therefore, the idea of deep ecology is always there in one or another form in Samkhya philosophy. It has also connections to the idea of sustainable development.

Key words: Samkhya philosophy, deep ecology, ethics, religion, sustainable development

Streszczenie

Filozofia Sankhja jest jedną z najstarszych filozofii indyjskiego systemu filozoficznego. Ma niezależne pochodzenie i znana jest głównie z teorii ewolucji. Filozofia sankhji zaakceptowała dwie ostateczne i niezależne rzeczywistości: Naturę i czystą Świadomość. Niniejszy artykuł jest próbą zrozumienia pojęcia głębokiej ekologii z perspektywy teorii ewolucji Sankhji. Po pierwsze, wyjaśniamy filozofię cierpienia Sankhji i pokazujemy rozwiązanie problemu. W drugiej części artykułu dowodzimy, że filozoficzne pojęcie Natury stosowane przez Sankhję ukazuje nasze zakorzenienie w Naturze. Dlatego idea głębokiej ekologii jest zawsze obecna w tej czy innej formie w filozofii sankhji. Ma ona także powiązania z ideą rozwoju zrównoważonego.

Słowa kluczowe: filozofia Sankhja, głęboka ekologia, etyka, religia, rozwój zrównoważony

Introduction

The term deep ecology coined by philosopher Arne Naess (Edelglass 2009, p. 435). This concept is a fundamental and significant shift to see natural resources. An environmentalist is concerned with the decreasing condition of Nature, but they see the environment or natural world as different from the agent. Therefore, we exploit Nature to fulfill our desire for comfortable adaption, which has shaped the situation like global warming (Singh 2019, p. 57). One does not pay the attention to the ecosystem and

its significance. Because we have alienated ourselves from Nature. As a result, there are not enough natural resources are left for the future generation. In other words, we have reached to such point from there we are confused to proceed future as Nature has started giving dangerous sign which is a threat to human existence. The notion of deep ecology argues for our embeddedness in Nature. It means that we are not different from this Nature, and therefore, we will have to treat Nature equally. We have to understand the relationship between the natural world and hu-

mans from an ecocentric perspective (Prakash 2018, p. 218).

In India, many human actions are guided by religion. Again, there is an argument that Indian religion does not argue for Nature or sustainable development. Many scholars have argued that Indian religion is mainly for human suffering and its solution. Primarily, the ultimate reality or ultimate goal of life is discussed in Indian philosophy (Prakash 2018). In this paper, we will be discussing the Samkhya philosophy, which is one of the oldest philosophical systems in India and also independent in origin (Hiriyanna 2009, p. 267). It is said that this philosophy is as old as *Upanisads* (Hiriyanna 2009, p. 267; Sharma 2003, p.149). Samkhya philosophy elucidates the number as the word *Samkhya* means number. This philosophy accepts the ontological dualism and argues for 23 categories to explain the universe.

In this paper, we have argued that Samkhya's philosophy of evolution supports the notion of deep ecology. Therefore, we have demonstrated that Samkhya philosophy does argue for the natural world and suggests for the balance behavior. If people are morally aware, then people can make a better world based on their wise action. Here philosophy and ethics are needed in the field of Sustainable Development. This paper is an attempt to elucidate that there is a need for philosophy and ethical teaching for sustainable development from a different religious point of view. We have taken Samkhya ethics for the analysis. Since Samkhya philosophy is the oldest system; therefore, the ethical and philosophical elucidation of the Samkhya is very significant for the contemporary debate on sustainable development.

The theory of evolution in the Samkhya philosophical system

Samkhya philosophy is the oldest philosophy of the Indian philosophical system, which is propounded by Kapila. However, Samkhya's philosophical text, namely *samkhyakarika* (350-450 AD), is the earliest authentic text available to Samkhya philosophy. This philosophy elucidates like other Indian religions, the main problem or, more precisely, the leading cause of human suffering and its solution. The feeling of sorrow is one of the most penetrating and challenging feelings in human life. Basically, for most of the Indian religion, life is the sum of countless sufferings. There are many different causes of this sorrow. Therefore, the human being has always sought ways to overcome or overcome this suffering. The various Indian philosophical ideas originate through this paradigm. *Samkhya* Philosophy is no exception. However, *Samkhya* philosophy is independent in origin. According to *Samkhya* philosophy, liberation is the extinction of happiness-sadness-ignorance. This emancipation is called *kaivalya*, and this is the supreme or absolute object of human pursuit. Accomplishing the happiness is the summum bonum of life

in *Samkhya* philosophy. This philosophy accepts the matter or nature (*Prakrti*) and pure consciousness (*Purusa*) as ultimate reality (Hamilton 2001, p. 117). However, both reality alone cannot produce the world. Because Nature is not intelligent, so it cannot create the world. And again, the pure Consciousness does not have a matter, so it cannot produce something which does not belong to it. Therefore, Nature needs the influence of pure Consciousness. This can be understood with a simile mentioned by Buddhist monk Buddhaghosa in his work. Buddhaghosa gives the analogy of a man who is blind by birth and a stool crawling or lame. Both of them wanted to go somewhere but they cannot go outside, since blind man cannot see and lame cannot walk. The blind man said to the person who cannot walk 'look, I can do what should be done by legs, but I have no eyes with which to see where is rough and smooth'. The crippled also express his problem and said 'look I can do what should be done by eyes, but I have no legs with which to go and come'. The blind man was delighted, and he made the cripple climb upon his shoulder. Sitting on the blind man's shoulder the cripple instructs him the path. Here the blind man has no efficient power to travel by his active power or by his strength. Again, the disabled person also has no active ability to move by his efficient power or by his strength. But there is nothing to prevent, their going when they support each other. (Nanamoli 1956, XVIII: 35). The same way, matter, and pure Consciousness are the leading cause of evolution. But Nature cannot produce the universe because it is not intelligent. And again pure Consciousness do not have matter. However, *Samkhya* philosophy has given independent status to both. Therefore, there is a debate over the starting process of this evolution. Because there is an argument that if both entities are independent than who compel them to come together for evolution. How it all started. However, we are not going to elucidate this here because this is the out of scope of this paper. Here it is significant to understand the nature of the matter in *Samkhya* philosophy. Nature (*Prakrti*) is comprise of the three substance or in other words matter is the equilibrium position of the three *gunas* namely, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. However, it is significant to note that they are not qualities but substance (Sinha 2015, p. 13). These three substances are significant in understanding the nature of the world and the cause of human suffering. The first quality, *sattva*, is the cause of pleasure, love, and joy. The second substance, *rajas*, produces all forms of grief, and finally, the third substance, *tamas*, is the cause of all kinds of delusion, laziness, and sleep (Sinha 2015, p. 13). Since the world is the manifestation of matter and the pure Consciousness, therefore, all three substance is present in every object of the world, and we perceive the object differently due to above mentioned three different substances. Now, it is significant to elucidate the evolution process. As we have discussed above,

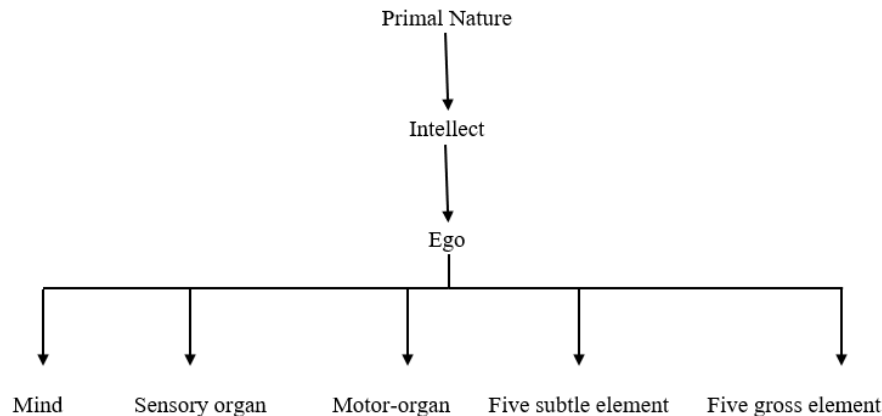


Figure 1. The evolution process

that Nature and pure Consciousness produce the universe, but how both realities come together is debatable. However, after the influence of pure Consciousness, Nature creates the world. The evolution process can be understood by the figure 1.

As we have shown in figure 1 that Primal Nature produces intellect and then ego. Here it is significant to note that Primal Nature is an equilibrium position of above mentioned three substance. However, ego function is the leading cause of ignorance, and these ignorances lead us to the cycle of birth and rebirth. It is significant to elucidate the notion of suffering in *Samkhya* philosophy. This suffering and attachment of the soul with the body is called bondage in *Samkhya* philosophy. Ignorance is the main cause of suffering. For *Samkhya* philosophy, human beings suffer in three different ways. Firstly, human emotion and passion caused physical disorder or mental agitation. Intra-organic, it is due to physical, mental, includes all kinds of bodily and mental suffering. Disease, anger, hunger, etc.. Second is called extra-organic caused by external influences, other human beings, animals, insects, birds, etc. And the last kind of suffering is caused by supernatural causes; this suffering is also due to external influences, but extraordinary causes like starts, earthquake, flood etc. (Sinha 2015, p. 73). The cessation of these three types of suffering is liberation in *Samkhya*. People have been searching for and inventing ways to get rid of this triple misery. It is said that although temporarily relieved of pathological grief in medicine, it does not eliminate pain. The grief comes to an end, but it does not mean that it is over. In the stimulation, that suffering begins again. Various philosophical communities have sought ways to end this suffering forever. In that case, many philosophers consider the theory to be the only way of salvation.

Though Indian philosophers thought liberation or liberation is the ultimate goal of life, they could not agree on the nature of liberation. *Samkhya*, philosophers believe that after attaining salvation, the creature has no doubts. But many philosophers also believe that salvation or liberation is not a state of happiness. Because happiness and sorrow are relative

terms, where there is no sorrow, there can be no happiness. There are two aspects to salvation.

On the one hand, salvation means liberation. On the other hand, many philosophers think of salvation as a state of happiness and sorrow. However, *Samkhya* philosophy argues for the right knowledge for the ultimate happiness. Ultimate happiness can be attained through realizing the Nature of pure Consciousness, and it is only possible through the right knowledge (Sharma 2003, p. 163).

So far, we have been discussing the *Samkhya* philosophy of Nature and pure Consciousness. In the next section, we have argued that how *Samkhya* philosophy has supported the western concept of deep ecology.

Samkhya Ethical Teaching, Deep Ecology and Sustainable Development

The main aim of this section is to argue for deep ecology from *Samkhya*'s perspective. As we have mentioned in the introduction that Indian religion is known for human suffering and its solution. In Indian philosophy, elucidation of the external world and Nature of humans are only stepping stones because the highest end of the philosophy is to guide the human for ultimate reality. Therefore, right thought and right action is a significant to all the religion. In this section, we have argued that *Samkhya* philosophy ethical teaching has great implication for sustainable development. We would like to pinpoint our argument as following:

(1) The word *Prakriti* can be understood in the western term 'nature' (Nath 2015, p.130). In this philosophy, as we have discussed, everything, for instance, mind, sense, organ subtle, and the gross element, is the product or evolve form Nature (Nath 2015, p.130). This is shown in *figure 1* that sensory organs, motor organs five gross element and five subtle element are physical. Mind is also physical in character (Hiriyanna 2009, p. 274). Therefore, we as human being is the part of this ecosystem and that is very analogous to notion of the deep ecology. This philosophy had defended the very sense of ecology and

has argued that Nature is the cause of everything, and knowledge of this fact can lead us to happiness. In other words, if one is aware that he is not different from Nature but part and parcel of it, then he may not be able to exploit or extinguish the natural resources. Because abolishing natural resources means destroying oneself.

(2) *Samkhya's* ethics is intellectualistic (Sinha 2015, p.101). Moral life should be based on reasoning or knowledge. It argues that one has to understand or dispel the non-discrimination, and one has to act without the desire of its fruit (Sinha 2015, p.101). It is significant here to elucidate the nature of the action in *Samkhya's* ethics. For this philosophy, desire always forces us to perform certain activities, and actions produce the inclination towards something. Therefore, if one wants to break the chain and achieve happiness, then he has to act without the desire for any result. It means that one has to make sure that he is not going to perform any evil action. Here lousy action can be understood as harming other's life. Many other living beings is dependent on the natural world for their survival. Therefore, destroying natural resources means killing dependent living beings.

(3) As we have elucidated that Nature and Pure Consciousness is the main cause of the world. It means that the natural world is also the product of the same cause, and we are also part of the same chain. Therefore, alienation of ourselves from the natural world is not a precise model that is precisely analogous to the notion of deep ecology. Thus, the idea of deep ecology was always in *Samkhya* philosophy in one or another form.

(4) *Samkhya* philosophy believes in the cycle of birth and rebirth. This philosophy has argued that ignorance is the main cause of this problem. Due to ignorance and our ego function, our desire always lead us to the wrong action. For instance, we are using natural resources not only for basic needs but also for our extravagant life. This philosophy argues that our desire causes physical suffering. We are misusing natural resources to accomplish our desire, and this led to abolishing the stability of the natural world. As a result, human existence is in danger now. Therefore, one has to understand that rational thinking is significant before any act, and this logical thinking is always should be beyond our desire.

(5) For this system of philosophy, due to ego function, we believe that we are performing this action, or we are enjoyer (Zimmer 2005, p. 319). In other words, due to ego function, we believe that we are different for another living being. *Samkhya* philosophy argues that these are phenomenal experiences, and we are not separate from each other. Therefore, one has to always think of other pleasures and the significance of other's life.

(6) The practitioner of the system is in such a mental state where he does not think of his pleasure and pain. In other words, a person who is wise and does

not bothered by unpleasant events and is not over-powered by joy. It only means that he will not be harming any other living being for his pleasure and pain.

(7) *Samkhya* philosophy offers a complete practical solution to human suffering. One should control his desire because it creates an illusion and can impair the intellect. This philosophical system argues that an examination of thought is needed to purify the thought and take a significant step towards happiness. Pure happiness comes only with a wise act, and prudent action will not license for exploiting the Nature.

(8) *Samkhya's* philosophical analysis of the universe has demonstrated that ancient Indian philosophy has specified a substantial place to the Nature. This philosophy has acknowledged that primal Nature is the ultimate reality. Therefore, one cannot abandon the Nature or in other words, exploiting the natural resources can be hazardous for human existence. Because we are part of the natural world.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued that *Samkhya's* philosophy, the oldest philosophical system, of Nature is very similar to the notion of deep ecology. We have argued that there is an significant implication of this philosophy on sustainable development. This philosophy has demonstrated how Nature is the cause of everything. Therefore, we are part and parcel of this Nature. One cannot alienate himself from the Nature. We have also argued that how ego function led us for self-centric action and that is the main cause of our suffering. So if one wants happiness than he has to treat others in more rational way. In this paper, we have shown how Nature has got a significant place in the oldest Indian philosophical system. Therefore, we have to consider our action very seriously before the act. Since happiness is the main goal of our life, therefore, it is essential to treat natural resources in a controlled way, and we have to understand the significance of the Nature in our life. In concluding remarks, we can argue that the notion of deep ecology is always there in one or another form in *Samkhya* philosophy.

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