

Philosophy and Critical Thinking
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Lecture 50: Samkhya Philosophy

Namaskar to all. Today I am going to talk about a Sāṁkhya philosophy. In last class, we have discussed Sāṁkhya philosophy, theory of causation where we have talked about how the cause and effect for Sāṁkhya philosophy is a very important concept where we have talked about how what is effect and nature of effect and Sāṁkhya understanding of the cause. So, in last class, we have discussed in very detail and now today, I am going to talk about the concept of *Prakṛti*. So, one thing it is important to know first is the cause and effect, and we also have discussed how Sāṁkhya philosophy has argued that pre-existence of effect in cause. These concepts are very significant because this concept is going to help you to understand, and then theory of creation from Sāṁkhya perspective. As we have discussed in the last class as well that Sāṁkhya advocates the ontological dualism of *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa*. So, as we have been discussing about the many different Indian philosophy or Indian philosophy where we have talked about the ontological reality, whether ontological reality is one or more than one. So many of the philosophers believe that there is one ontological reality or this in Vedanta philosophy, more precisely the Brahman is the only ontologically real and everything is unreal. Now, Shankaracharya will say the Brahman is Nirguna Brahman and the Nirguna Brahman is only real. Sāṁkhya philosophy advocates that there are two things, the *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, and ontologically, both are real. So, first one is *Prakṛti* and then *puruṣa*. So, ultimately if you ask what is real in the Sāṁkhya philosophy, answer is the *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*. The two things is ultimately real. Now, what does it mean like for example, someone is arguing that there is a body and there is a mind and both are real ultimately real. So, this is what we say that dualism the two substance we talk about. Similarly, in Sāṁkhya philosophy, the philosopher argued that the two things are ultimately real. First one is *prakṛti* and then *puruṣa* or *Prakṛti*, is the concept which Sāṁkhya believes that is an ultimate real and the same time, he also believes that the *puruṣa* also is ultimately real. Now, if they are going to talk about dualism, two things as an ontological real then what does it mean? It means that there are two things which is different from each other. We have in this course discussed Spinoza, where he has argued where in process of coming to conclusion, he was developing a preposition, one two three four five six and we have discussed all the proposition there. There, Spinoza has argued that if there is a two substance it only means that both substance is a different from each other there is no common attributes then only we can say that there is a two substance. We cannot have a two substance which is a similar or identical for example, mind and mind. We cannot say there is a two kind of substance which is a mind and body which is also like mind or some attributes of mind is there in body. So, this argument will have no

meaning. So, therefore if there is a two substance it means that there is no common attributes. So, they are not common in each other then only we can argue that there is a two substance. So, I mean it is, one can explain this idea from for example, we are talking about the world, and the cause of this world. Discussing thinking of is there any cause and what is the starting point of this universe or is there anyone who has started this creation or is there anyone who is the cause of this world. So, if we are talking about any starting point, it means there is a cause of this universe, or is there any cause then is that cause of this cause any cause or is there something which is in a causeless. So, those things are we have discussed in detail. So, we have to stop somewhere and saying that okay there is an X which is a cause of everything and which is an ultimately real. Now, when we are using this word real as we have discussed real means our ultimate real means which is something beyond the change. So, it is not subject to change, it is not changing. So, it is not changing means it is real eternal. So, it is eternal there is no change, it means it is ontologically real. It is not depends on time person in place. So, finally we concluded by saying that X is the cause of everything. For example, we said God is the cause of everything. So, there is no God and God created this world. Therefore, there is a world, simple. Now we are accepting that apart from this one cause there is another cause, Dualism two things. So, when we are saying that something else also is an ontologically real, then there is a problem. Problem in the sense that what is the nature of that. So, X and Y. So, when we are saying Y, then we have to talk about some attribute something which is not in X, then only we can accept X and Y to a substance and if there is all the attributes are there or infinitely in X then there is a no possibility of Y. So, for example in Shankaracharya philosophy, Shankara argued that Brahman is what, is an infinite. There is no attribute, and so there is no question of the second substance. If there is a God who is infinitely all the attributes or he is a perfect being nothing is lacking. Basically, He is resulting in any possibility or all the possibility of another substance. Since, X is a perfect being, then there is a no possibility of another substance. Sāṃkhya philosophy argued for two things *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. So, when it says sort of *Prakṛti* and *puruṣa* it means that the two things which is there is no common. Nothing is common in two things. So, both things is an independent first, and second both is uncommon. So, there is no common attributing X and Y. No common attributing *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. And for this world both is important, significant. Then only there is an argument that one can build an argument for him and an argument saying that there is a *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. So, this is what Sāṃkhya argument Sāṃkhya believed that and argued that there is a two-substance called *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. Now, today in this class I will be discussing the *prakṛti*. What is *Prakṛti* in all about in Sāṃkhya philosophy, and next class we will discuss what is *puruṣa*. So, things will be very clear what is *prakṛti* and what is *puruṣa*. In Sāṃkhya philosophy *prakṛti* is the state of equilibrium of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. So, there are three things Sattva, Rajas and Tamas and are very important concept. So, if you know this Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, it will be easy to understand the *prakṛti* and

this world from Sāṃkhya perspective. So, let us understand first what is these three things Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are not qualities but substances. So, what Sāṃkhya argued that Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are substance, it is not quality. So, do not take it as an quality. They are known as Gunas. So, they are Gunas because they are subordinate to the *puruṣa*, realizing their ends or they are three strands in the constitution of *prakṛti* or because they are tied on *puruṣa* to empirical life. So, this is called Sattva Guna, Rajas Guna and Tamas Guna. They are not qualities, but the equilibrium position of the three Gunas is known as a *prakṛti*. So, what is *Prakṛti*? Just equilibrium position of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas Guna. They are known as substance, because they are capable to conjunction, disjunction and endowed with the qualities. These Gunas are inferred from their effect or modification. So, if you ask a question that how do you know there is Guna at we have been like discussing in Vedanta philosophy about any concept for example, the avidya and there is a question that what is the valid means of this knowledge? Similarly, if you bring this idea in Sāṃkhya philosophy and so Sāṃkhya philosophers arguing that look, we can talk about these Gunas based on inference from its effect. So, there is an effect or modification, and now, based on these effects, we can talk about the endowed Gunas.

Now, let us understand all these Gunas. So, Sattva is characterized by pleasure. Function of activity and manifest as an object to consciousness. So, this is the Sattva is a pleasure. So, for example if you take any object and that is an object of pleasure because of the Sattva Guna right and also this is an activity and it manifests an object to consciousness. So, the existence constitutes the intelligibility of an object and all intelligible object must have a Sattva. So, if for example any kind of knowledge you need in there is something there let us say in this one is intelligible. Now, this intelligibility is an important for a knowledge. So, for example there is a subject and there is an object. So, if the object is thought intelligible then knowledge will not be possible. So, this is only possible because of Sattva Guna. So, Sattva Guna is an important in that case, and the role of Sattva is to manifest an object to consciousness. So, if the object is intelligible is not there then we may not be able to know any object. So, we are able to experience any object because of Sattva. For example, table and chair. So, we see a table and we can experience a table right or we can experience a chair because this object and is intelligible and this is because of Sattva Guna. Now, the next Guna is Rajas, is characterized by pain. Any object is an object of pain or we are experiencing pain because of this guna. Rajas, function activity makes an object move and act. So there is an act because of this presence of Rajas. So, the object undergoes changes because there is a Rajas Guna in object. So, in this world if there is an object is changing it undergoes the changes because of this Guna. Now, third one third gun is Tamas Guna. Now, Tamas Guna is characterized by delusion. Functions of restraint, inertia resistance or restraint. Tamas Guna is responsible for the shape and resist it utters destruction through changes. So, there is an object intelligible and then there is a shape.

This is because of the Tamas Guna. So, these are the very basic level about Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas Guna, and the Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas are responsible for all sort of experience. So, without these Gunas, it will be difficult to talk about an experience. So, this if you are experiencing an object because of this Guna. Sattva Guna Rajas Guna and Tamas Guna. So, this was an explanation from a very basic level from Sankhya philosophy about Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas Guna. Now, this three Gunas functions with mutual support. For example a lamp. So, lamp there is in a wick there is in a oil. Now, so there is in a wick and oil if you see they have a different nature. But still, they are working together. So, and fire. So they are working together function together. Similarly, these three Gunas you see that what we have discussed in nature, they are different. But they are functioning together. Rajas energize and activate Sattva and Tamas which are inactive in themselves. They cannot function without its aid. So, Rajas in that sense is a significant for an activity and they are infinite in number and cannot change into one another. So, the Sattva cannot change in Rajas. Rajas Guna cannot change in Tamas or Sattva. And, if you ask about the causes and numbers so they are infinite in number. So, this Gunas these Gunas are infinite but the same time, they cannot change in into one another. Now, from knowledge point of view, it is known as Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. So, we are talking about the three gunas that is in a Sattva Rajas and Tamas. Now, but from point of view of feeling they appear as a pleasure Sattva, pain Rajas, delusion Tamas. So, this is how Sāṁkhya philosophy has argued for these three Gunas. Now, for instance a lovely woman excites the feeling of pleasure in the beloved person. Second, the feeling of pain in the co-wife, and third and the feeling of delusion in the disappointed person. So, there is one object and there are three different of experiences. So, one experience one person is experiencing some pleasure, one person is for pain, and for the third person is a delusion. So, these three kinds of experiences because all three Gunas are there in the object. So, this kind of or any kind of experience is possible only because of this Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. Sāṁkhya philosophy just to make it clear argues that this world this universe, every object is made of this gunas. So, these Gunas is in all the objects. As I discussing about the Sattva, we argued that there are no object or knowledge of an object. It is only possible when there is Sattva, change is only possible when you have another Guna, shape is only possible when you have another gun. So, this world is made of this all these Gunas. Because Sāṁkhya argued that matter is *prakṛti*, is the main cause of all this world, all in universe. So, first cause of this world is *Prakṛti* and what is *Prakṛti*? *Prakṛti* is the equilibrium position of three Gunas. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas and now is everything in this world is coming from where is the production of this *prakṛti* and if you remember, we have in last class we have discussed that these effects are not different from cause in the sense of in the nature. So therefore, all the object which in a product of this *Prakṛti* is made of the three Gunas, sattva, rajas, and tamas. Is it clear? Now this because of the Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas we are experiencing a same object differently. So, maybe there are one object is an object of pleasure for me or maybe the same object is pleasure for something else for you so on. Like for example, this

instance the lovely woman the matter of the pleasure for one person, the matter of pain for another, and matter of delusion for someone else. It is because of these Gunas. So, this different experience is because of this Gunas. So, Gunas this Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas are playing a role in this experience. So, this state of this equilibrium of three Gunas is called *Prakṛti*. So, these three Gunas when you are in perfect position is called *Prakṛti*. The Sāṃkhya infers that existence of *prakṛti* from its products in the universe and presents an argument for the existence of *prakṛti*. As we have discussed that we can talk about the *Prakṛti* based on the products. So, there is an effect, and based on effect we can infer about the cause. So, based on the effect we can talk about and can argue for the existence of its cause, the nature of its cause. So, as we have discussed in last class that how the Īśvarkṛṣṇa has written *Samkhyakārikā* and in this Karika, he presented the five arguments for existence of *prakṛti*. He proves that how there is a possibility, how there is a *prakṛti* and we can argue for the *prakṛti*. So, first argument is the non-productivity of non-being. All the individual things manifest to our experiences are conditional, dependent, finite. Therefore, this cannot be uncaused. So, about the cause and effect we have been discussing from beginning and while discussing the Western philosophy, we also have discussed about the cause and then effect. Spinoza in particularly we also have discussed how this determinate object cannot be a cause of, cannot be uncaused, cannot be a primary cause and Spinoza argued well in detail that how the definite and finite things cannot be a primary cause. So, that argument is there. However, there is no intention of comparison between Spinoza and Sāṃkhya philosophy. Just, I am reminding that we have discussed this cause-and-effect things from the first class. In the Indian philosophy we also have discussed how philosopher has argued for the primary cause. Sāṃkhya philosophy similarly is arguing for the first cause and the primary cause and argued that this world is full of what we are experiencing all the objects, all the individual thing which we are experiencing are conditional and dependent and finite. So, it means that there is a cause of this object. We cannot argue that all this object is uncaused. So, it means that there is a cause of this object. So, if this is then a cause of this object and this cause will not be again finite. So, all this object, all this individual thing is a product of something which is not finite, which is not conditional, it is not limited or like this is worldly object.

Now, Sāṃkhya philosophy argues that only *prakṛti* is infinite, independent and unconditional and therefore there is a *prakṛti*. Therefore, there is a cause of this world is *prakṛti* because again non-being cannot produce all this small, all this finite, all this conditional and dependent objects. So, first argument is all are conditional. So, there is a cause of this object. We cannot argue that there is a no cause. Second, again if there is an a cause, we cannot say that there is a no being who is producing these individuals. That also is not possible and therefore what Sāṃkhya philosophy argues that there is a cause which is an infinite, independent, and unconditional that is called *prakṛti*. Now, the second argument, the need of an appropriate material cause. So, all worldly objects possess certain common specific characteristics like pleasure, pain and indifference. So, it means if there

is a cause of this cause, which is a very common cause, because in all the objects has a very common characteristic. So, it means that all the objects coming from the one thing, all the objects individual thing in this universe are product of the same thing. Reason that all of them has a similar characteristic and therefore cause of all of these objects are common or same. And *prakṛti* is the ultimate material cause into which the whole world is dissolved. So, suppose there is given in the last class an example of cause and effect where clay and then pot, cause and effect. Now, effect is what is in a creation and then which is like destructing, it is going back to the again cause, observation in the cause. So, now *prakṛti* is what they believe that it is an ultimate material cause and when it is in destruction, it is again dissolving where in the *prakṛti*. So, third argument is the impossibility of all thing coming from all things. So, there is individual things are which have limited in magnitude and non-perceptive or finite. The cause must contain more reality than the effect or as much reality as the effect is. In last class, we have discussed that about how Sāṃkhya philosophy has argued the cause and effect and for Sāṃkhya philosophy, both are real. So, if you take the Sankara philosophy where he talks about the Brahman, and then world, world is unreal, Brahman is real. Shankaracharya argue that Jīvas are, this appearance is unreal. Sāṃkhya philosophy says that this cause and effect both are real. Now, they are arguing that the cause must contain more reality than this effect or as much as reality than effect, as the effect does. So, these two things are very important. Therefore, the ultimate cause must be infinite and all pervasive. So, we cannot argue that all these individual things which are this world are limited, and they are coming from all things. That also is not possible. So, they are coming for something which is an infinite and also should be a real as an effect. So, the effect is real. So, you also have to think of as a real cause. The fourth argument something can only produce if it is a capable of producing. Now, individual things are active, and mobile which is subject to change and mutation. Now, there is a difference between the cause and effect. So, these are the cause. This is cause and effect is two different things. The milk and then curd. It is not milk and milk. It is milk and curd. So, two different things, effect and then cause. Now, what Sāṃkhya philosophy is arguing that something which only produce when it is capable of producing, if it can produce things, if it cannot then there is a no cause. It means that it cannot be a cause of anything. Now, both things should be a different because individual thing is what is active and mobile which is subject to change. So, therefore the ultimate cause of this universe is something which is inactive and immobile. So, if you see this world and all the worldly objects are, what is this one? Is it an active, is it a mobile? So, it means that the cause of all this effect is something which is different, something which is inactive or immobile. That is a *prakṛti*. And, then fifth argument is presented by Sāṃkhya philosophers, Iśvarakṛṣṇa that nature of the cause or the effect is non-different from the cause. Now, so first we will say that there is a different cause and effect. Now, we are saying this is a non-different. It only means that we are talking about in terms of nature. So, individual things are manifold, conditioned, determined and composed of the parts. But if you see the cause is which is not infinite, it

is not unconditioned, indeterminate, it is not composed of the parts. So, all effects are same or identical in nature. For example, the Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas are in objects are where, in this cause. Similarly, if you take the example of *prakṛti*, *prakṛti* also was what equivalent position of these three Gunas. So, the nature is then a same, is then a non-different from the effect, cause and effect. So, this is how the Sāṃkhya philosophy argues that it means that there is a *Prakṛti* which is infinite. So, in conclusion from Sāṃkhya philosophy is *Prakṛti* is uncaused cause of all universe. So, the *prakṛti* is the first cause of this universe. And this *prakṛti* is there is no cause of the *Prakṛti*. It is called uncaused. Again, we cannot perceive *prakṛti* because of his subtlety and it means general attributes which prevent the right cognition by its perception. Again, it is also called *pradhāna*, because all effects are founded on it, and it cannot be called a primal matter, because it is the ground of all the modifications, physical, and psychical. So, this is what from the Sāṃkhya perspective the notion of *prakṛti*. So, *Prakṛti* is then a equilibrium position of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas and we also have discussed what is Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. All the objects, worldly objects are there and we are able to experience because of these three Gunas. We have discussed the Gunas and its effect in detail and also, we have seen that how Iśvarkṛṣṇa has presented an argument for the existence of *prakṛti*.

So, thank you for your attention. This talk was based on these books, the Indian philosophy, the classical Sāṃkhya, a critical study and then the classical Sankhya and interpretation of its history and meaning. So, thank you so much for your kind attention. Thank you.