

Background Information

ṣad darśanam (Six Philosophical Views)

“ṣad” means “six,” and “darśana” means “sight” or “view”. The theories of Ayurveda are based upon six philosophical systems, though many others have contributed to the deep knowledge of Ayurveda. These systems look at the same truth in different ways. It is like blind men feeling different parts of an elephant. Though each may have a different impression of the elephant, they each have a valuable and valid experience to share. These philosophies compliment and build upon on another. Together they create the mystical philosophy upon which Ayurveda is based. This is important for Westerners in particular to understand because these mystical systems provide a different way of looking at the world than Westerners are accustomed to.

These six philosophies are

- 1) sāmkhya darśanam
- 2) nyāya darśanam
- 3) vaiśeṣika darśanam
- 4) mīmāṃsa darśanam
- 5) vedānta darśanam
- 6) yoga darśanam (Buddhism)

also important are

- 7) siddhānta darśanam
- 8) buddhism
- 9) tantra

1) sāmkhya (realization “khya” of truth “san”)

Philosophy laid out by Kāpila ṛṣi (ṛṣi means a Sage or Seer) The ṛṣis are said to have perceive mystical truths in their meditations. The śāstras including the yoga śāstras are said to have been revealed to the ṛṣis. Sāmkhya is one of the oldest schools of Indian thought.

Tattvas: Sage Kāpila is said to have perceived 24 mystical principles governing creation. These subtle principles of being are called tattvas (which means that-ness or “being principle.) The tattvas are cosmic elemental principles throughout the manifest world. They are subtle. The perception of the tattvas is possible through meditation. These principles of creation can serve as sign posts for the meditating yogi in his quest for realization of the Self.

The 24 tattvas are
Prakṛti (Pure Nature)
Mahad (Universal Intelligence)
ahaṅkāra (Ego the “I-maker”)
manas Individual, instinctive mind)
jñānendriyas (5 faculties of sense)
śrota (hearing)
tvak (touching)
cakṣu (seeing)
rasana (tasting)
ghrāṇa (smelling)
karmendriyas (5 faculties of action)
vak (speaking)
pāṇi (grasping)
pada (walking)
pāyu (procreation)
upastha (elimination)
tanmātras (5 objects of sense)
śabda (sound)
sparśa (feel)
rūpa (form)
rasa (taste)
gandha (smell)
pañca mahā bhūta (5 great elements)
ākāśa (ether / space)
vāyu (air)
agni (fire)
āpas (water)
pṛthivī (earth)

IMPORTANT CONCEPTS OF SAAMKHYA PHILOSOPHY

1) Brahman - the formless Absolute - God

Brahman relates to the suṣumṇa nāḍī in the body. Brahman is neither masculine nor feminine. He is beyond form and beyond the world of creation. Yet He is the source of all, the un-caused Cause of all, and He pervades all things.

2) ātman - the (Divine) Self

The highest realization of Yoga is that the soul (ātman) is one with the formless absolute (brahman). The Upaniṣats say ayam ātmā brahma, which means the “Soul is God”. People do not see this, due to the false identification with the impermanent aspects of their being like the body, mind, feelings, and thought. Through meditation and yoga the truth of the Soul's divinity is revealed to the person who seeks to know himself. The word ātman always refers to the higher, divine Self. This is differentiated from the lower aspects of the embodied soul. The embodied soul, which is bound by the world is called “jīva.” In comparison, the ātman is free from the bounds of the world. It is not limited by matter or time. The yogi who has realized his oneness with Brahman, can be seen to possess the divine attributes (like omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence).

3) Puruṣa - Pure being (which is) Consciousness –

this consciousness is absolute experience, beyond judgment and attachment. It is not limited by a sense of individual identity. It pure undifferentiated awareness. It cannot be described by words. This experience is attained directly in meditation and it is beyond the intellectual processes of the mind.

- Puruṣa is the Divine Masculine - Shiva.
- Puruṣa relates to the piṅgala nāḍī in the body
- And it relates to to the Soul in the world.
- Puruṣa's being is said to be incapable of action without the will of prakṛti.
- Puruṣa is said to separate into the countless jīvas (souls).
- Puruṣa is beyond all attributes
- It is neither created, nor does it create
- It is independent of all things, but all things derive their being from its pure consciousness

Prakṛti - Pure Nature / Pure Will

This is undifferentiated will, or Divine will. It is the first cause of all material being and action and it empowers all things. Its will is unhindered by attachments and limitations. What it wills simply is.

- Prakṛti is the Divine Feminine
- Prakṛti relates to the īḍā nāḍī in the body
- And it relates to the World itself
- Prakṛti is the primal cause of all matter and action
- Prakṛti means nature and it is the guiding force throughout the nature of all that is.

Tri guṇa (three cosmic qualities)

These three universal qualities (guṇa means quality) or forces arise from Prakṛti. The interplay of these three forces causes all action. Prakṛti acts throughout the world through these three qualities.

a) sattva - the Quality of light, equilibrium, clarity, and potential

b) rajas - the Quality of kinesis, movement, agitation

tamas - the Quality of inertia, dullness, darkness

- The three guṇas are within all things

- Though everything in the universe possesses all three guṇas to some degree, certain things and actions will be dominated by a predominance of one or another of the guṇas

- Rajas is responsible for all action (the other guṇas are not capable to act without the assistance of rajas)

- The world functions through the interplay of these three forces.

- All three are necessary

- The triguṇa in the universe can be related to the tridoṣa in the physical body

Other important concepts

Karma - The Law of Action

Dharma - Spiritual Duty

Punarjanaman - Reincarnation

catur puruṣārtha (Four Goals of Worldly Life)

Dharma - Fulfilling one's duties

Artha - Wealth, Prosperity

Kāma - Pleasure

Mokṣa - Liberation (from suffering and ultimately from the cycle of death and rebirth)