Chapter IX

UTILITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN SĀMKHYA-YOGA

Sāmkhya-yoga is a dualistic realism accepting the two realities of Purusa and Prakṛti. Purusa is pure consciousness. But it loses its purity of consciousness due to the influence of avidyā. Purusa does not really enjoy or suffer but for the influence of avidyā, it appears to enjoy or suffer. But this seeming enjoyment or suffering might be brought to an end by developing correct knowledge. Correct knowledge dawns to the soul, after it has realised pure consciousness. Sāmkhya-yoga has accepted twenty ṭatī principles including the Purusa to explain the course of the universe. Prakṛti is the causal matrix of the universe. The evolution of Prakṛti starts when there occurs conjunction of Purusa and Prakṛti. Prakṛti being unconscious, without Purusa the evolutionary process cannot start. Kaivalya or liberation of Purusa is the goal of Sāmkhya-yoga. But it is not possible without the consciousness of Purusa. Kaivalya results from the realisation of truth. Correct knowledge arises, when the Purusa realises itself to be different from Prakṛti and her products. In Sāmkhya-yoga the material side of the universe is supplied by Prakṛti and the intellectual side is constituted by Purusa.

Prakṛti has no consciousness but it grows or develops into consciousness when it is seen by Purusa. Prakṛti not only evolves the objective world, but it also evolves the subjective or the intellectual world. Prakṛti evolves the organs of sense as well as the objects which are to be perceived by them.
Further Prakṛti remains active so long as it is being perceived by the Purusa. This fact brings in the notion of subjectivity to our knowledge. It is the buddhi that makes matter perceptive and perceptible.¹ Buddhi furnishes all the necessary conditions for knowledge. Buddhi is also a product of Prakṛti like Ahankāra and other organs. But all the developments of the material world remains without consciousness so long as they cannot draw the attention of some Purusa.²

"Sambhata parārthatvāt purusasya"³

"(The existence) of soul is inferred from the fact that the combination of the principles of nature into their various effects is for the sake of another (than unintelligent nature or any of its similarly unintelligent product)."

According to Sāmkhya, the world is evolved of Prakṛti and it requires the consciousness of Purusa to perceive it. The evolution indicates that there is some purpose to be fulfilled by the evolution. The evolutes are the objects of knowledge and enjoyment and hence they are to be known and enjoyed. Thus the Purusa, the knower is an inevitably necessary idea in the Sāmkhya-yoga philosophy. "As the seniors of the village collect taxes from the house holders and hand them over to the governor of the district, who again remits them to the treasurer and the treasurer to the King, thus do the outer senses

¹. Six systems of Indian Philosophy - Maxmuller - p. 282
². Ibid., p. 284
³. Sāmkhya Aphorism, Bk. I, Sl. 66
when they have perceived anything hand it on to the inner sense, the manas, the organ which determines what there is and then hands it over to Ahankāra and the Ahankāra after appropriating it to buddhi, the supreme lord. "Purusasyārtham prakāsy buddhau prajacchati."4

"Tat yogopavivekād na samānatvam"5

"Moreover the conjunction thereof does not, through non-discrimination take place (in the case of the emancipated) nor is there a parity in this respect between the emancipated and the unemancipated."

Emancipation results from discriminative knowledge. To the emancipated soul there is no possibility of bondage. It is with the help of pure consciousness that the soul discriminates itself from Prakṛti and her products. Thus consciousness has immense value in the Sāmkhya-yoga philosophy. Emancipation of the soul from the fetters of the world is attempted in Sāmkhya-yoga through the development of consciousness.

Western psychology accepts the mind as immaterial, subtle and the source of consciousness. But Indian psychology regards the mind as the product of Prakṛti with its states of cognition, conation and feeling. The mind gets its consciousness and intelligence by virtue of the presence of the self or Purusa, the source of light and consciousness. Though the Purusa exists in the mento-physical system and experiences the results of their

4. Six Systems of Indian Philosophy—Maxmuller—p. 293
5. Sāmkhya Aphorism, Bk. I, St. 55
works, is in active, pure light or consciousness. Without activity the spirit is the lord of the system but the psycho-physical system is at work for the future of the spirit. The mind body system is active due to the presence of the ever-shining principle of consciousness. The unity of the mento-physical system is due to the presence of the spirit with consciousness. The psycho-physical system will be futile if consciousness remains absent. At the absence of consciousness no mental work, thinking, feeling and willing will have any meaning. Further the denial of consciousness is not possible. Because the denial of consciousness is to be done with consciousness. Consciousness comes prior to self consciousness. The evolution of consciousness precedes the evolution of self consciousness. According to Kapila consciousness is the basis of all reality. Sensations are reflections of the original form of consciousness. They can exist and have meaning so long as we are conscious of them. To understand something psychical is a part of apprehending consciousness. Psychical facts are the modes of consciousness. A conscious element is apprehended by consciousness alone.

"Becoming and knowing transcends what becomes and knows."

It has been noticed that consciousness is necessary in all phases of mental work. To deny consciousness is an

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6. Concept of Personality in Sāmkhya-yoga - Dr. K.C. Das - p. 151
7. Psychology of consciousness - Daly King - p. xv
8. Study of Consciousness - Annie Besant - p. 144
10. Sri Aurobinda and Some Other Problems - A.C. Das - p. 104
impossibility because it involves the denial of original consciousness. Sāmkhya-yoga believes that there is the evolution of consciousness. The yogin realises that there is a spirit, a consciousness in the universe. The yogin can have communion with that consciousness in his yoga practice. The yogin is freed from the false notions of growth and duration. He gets the true knowledge that the sole characteristics of things is not mere existence. He comes to realise that the holy knowledge is to be realised within one's own self. The above mentioned four kinds of realisation rescues the yogin from samsāra. The Prajñā that grows through yoga practice dissolves the veil of ignorance to the yogin. The yogin gets rid of illusions. Finally the yogin is led to realise the potential universal consciousness. The yogin can arouse kundalini and bring it to the sahasrāra. At this stage he is detached from the sense consciousness. He is then above the consciousness of the body and his surroundings. Consciousness of his mind and the senses are suspended. At this time his consciousness rests on a higher plan.

"Sva-visayā samprayoge citta svarupānukāra
ivendriyānāṁ pratyāhāraḥ." 13

"Abstraction is as it were the imitation by the senses of the thinking principle by withdrawing themselves from their objects."

12. Yoga Psychology - Abhedananda - pp. 89-90
It is however, customary that the senses must receive the impressions, which come from the objects. But through yoga practice the yogins can acquire a power of abstracting the senses from their stimulating objects. The intellect (citī) illumines the inert but the inert can never illumine the intellect. The sattva of the thinking principle reflects the consciousness of the self. It is the intelligence that formulates the idea in the mind. In the Sāmkhya-yoga, the utilitarian aspect of consciousness has been thoroughly discussed. It is through the withdrawal of the senses from their respective objects that consciousness can perform certain functions of higher category. In yoga practice consciousness is a power with which the yogin acquires knowledge of anything he likes. Without consciousness yoga practice is meaningless. There exists a conscious link between the tiniest living being and man. In other words the universal consciousness is linked up with the individual consciousness. The jīvātmā is related with the Paramātmā. Rather it is the Paramātmā which is the reality behind all appearances. It is the substance behind the shadow of the world. It is the one behind the many. In yoga the mind is trained so that it can acquire inner equipoise. This is the master key for opening the heart for self realisation. And self realisation is the supreme objective of yoga. The empirical ego is the unity among the fluctuating sensations. Sensibility, mind, understanding etc. are just like channels which constitute

15. Yoga today - Joydeva Jogendra - p. 14
16. Ibid., p. 22
perception. But all these are different from the self (Purusa). The Purusa alone is conscious. Whereas sensibility, mind, empirical ego and intellect are the insentient evolutes of Prakṛti. They are meant for the experience of Purusa. The internal and external organs are both unconscious. The Purusa makes them to have experience of objects by reflecting its consciousness on them through buddhi. According to Sāmkhya-yoga perception depends upon metaphysical condition. Perception implies that there is an extramental world and a self to have that perception.17

It has been clear from the above discussion that there exists a unity in the world and that unity is effected by consciousness. The world is not a chaos but an ordered unity, where there exists regularity and discipline. All these are possible for the universal consciousness. The universal consciousness impels the human soul for its self realisation. Sāmkhya-yoga may be regarded as a systematic and coherent attempt for the realisation of the universal consciousness.

Yoga practice is considered as an attempt to attain perfection. It tries to terminate the imperfections and uncertainties of human life. It is a procedure to train the whole nature of man. Yoga means a conscious control and self direction. It teaches us that when self awareness and the power of spiritual insight are achieved, the real values of things can be realised. Such an achievement brings in a sense of self security.18 To a student of yoga the idea of God is a

18. Yoga and Western Psychology - Coster - p. 47
necessity. Because the idea of God enables the yogin to uplift his consciousness. The inner consciousness can feel the prānic action in the susumā. There occurs an inner experience of breath and its vision. It is this inner experience that suddenly opens consciousness in all directions. It is this inner consciousness, which acts as the receiving centre of the oscillations and subtle urges of life. The pulse of the infinite life makes a vibration in the susumā. Then the yogin can feel the range of the Prānic urge. And a time comes when the prānic urge begins to move in rhythms. And then consciousness is freed from its gross entanglements. Habitual accumulation of consciousness is stopped. It then awakens a fine move and delicacies of being. The move of the prān in the susumā is an access to the cosmic consciousness. Spirituality grows in the finest form in the personal form of consciousness. It has a profundity. It arises from detachment. Consciousness is to be detached from false values and egoistic constructions. Real personalism springs up from impersonal ones. It is distinct from the egoistic or surface consciousness. Yoga is a procedure to purify the consciousness of its imperfections and limitations. Consciousness is attempted to expand as far as practicable in yoga. The prānic urge running in us can never be felt without consciousness. Yoga prajñā unfolds to us new forms of consciousness. It is at that moment alone that the beauty and

19. Yoga and Western Psychology - Coster - p. 82
grace of the soul is realised by the yogin. This gives a new power of consciousness to the yogin. Penance (Tapas), Sama, dama, uparati, Titiksa are processes prescribed in yoga for self control. These are the pre-requisites for intuitive realisation of the self. When the yogin in his practice can raise the prana to the upper brain (sahasrara) the whole body becomes corporeal like. At that moment only warmth is felt at the top of the skull. It is the sahasrara, where the kinetic and static aspect of consciousness are united. Yoga is a gradual process and every step of yoga heightens consciousness from the lower level to the higher. When consciousness reaches the sahasrara, the yogin can realise pure consciousness in full. According to great scholar Aurobinda the world process is a continuous process of evolution. The continuity of the evolutionary process requires a divinely controlled supreme form of consciousness. He thinks that life can emerge as result of a fresh descent of the supreme energy of consciousness. The primary objective of human life is the conscious realisation of our oneness with the infinite life. It aims at opening ourselves fully into the divine inflow. This means the actualisation of the qualities and powers of infinite life in ourselves. With the growth of life there occurs a change of interests and our ideas. These changes move from the

23. Indian Idealism - S.N. Dasgupta - p. 25
peripheral to the central part of consciousness. The soul is nothing else but a succession of the fields of consciousness.27

The kundalini sakti in the individual body is a power at rest. It is a static but active centre of force. The consciousness is polarised into the static (Siva) and kinetic (Sakti). They are made active through yoga for the purpose of action.28 In consciousness it is the feeling that brings interests to our life. It is this feeling that stirs activity in the animated world. It is at the root of all inner and outer experiences. The yogin however tries to detach himself from all these.29 The main stream of consciousness is a record of the interplay of the internal and external. This interplay is performed through stimulation, adjustment and response.30

Consciousness is at the root of the evolutionary process. The internal and external are unified through consciousness. However late Aurobinda wanted to solve the problem of knowledge by accepting two powers of consciousness - apprehension and comprehension. In apprehension the object is set in front, away and separate from itself. In comprehension consciousness comprehends the object as a part of its own being. These two functions of consciousness go together. Comprehension is complex and means more than one thing. It is the determination of one thing by an idea or concept.31

28. Serpent Power - A. Avalon - p. 36
29. Yoga in relation to other systems - S.N. Dasgupta - pp. 88-89
30. A Study of Yoga - J. Ghose - p. 165
31. Aurobinda and some modern problems - A.C. Das - p. 47
In every form of consciousness there is an interplay of (pravṛtti) activity and (prākāśa) expression. But the expressive capacity of consciousness remains a dominant feature throughout.\(^\text{32}\)

According to Sāmkhya the manas is the receptacle of impressions. It is for this reason that person who had lost his sense organ's power can remember things already perceived by him. But Sāmkhya does not regard the self as the substrate of impressions. Because the self is to this philosophy indefinable and devoid of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.\(^\text{33}\) Through yoga practice a serene atmosphere is created, wherein consciousness shines forth in its own light. It is the redeemed state of consciousness from all entanglements. The transparent inner firmament of the soul reflects the calmness of the deep inner sea. It is not at all moved by an emotion. It is not disturbed by any feeling. This remains only as the pure consciousness.\(^\text{34}\) Emotions and passions normally darkens the inner atmosphere. When the Tamas and Rajas are subdued, the Sattva becomes predominant. At this time Prakṛti becomes calm and transparent like a lake without ripples.\(^\text{35}\)

It has been found that no mental work is possible without consciousness. But generally consciousness is disturbed by emotions and passions. Yoga psychology attempts to purify the mind through various means. It has prescribed different

\(^{\text{32}}\) A Study of Yoga - J. Ghose - p. 151
\(^{\text{33}}\) Indian Psychology, Vol. I, N. Sinha - p. 378
\(^{\text{34}}\) Indian Philosophies - H. Zimmer - pp. 301-302
\(^{\text{35}}\) Ibid., p. 304
techniques to control the mind and body so that consciousness can work freely.

"Taduparpaśkeṣitvac cittasya vastu jñātajñātam" 36

"In consequence of the (mind standing in) need of being tinged by it, a thing is known or unknown."

The mind cannot know the thing so long as it fails to reproduce the thing in mental form. This reproduction is possible with the help of consciousness alone.

There occurs an identification of consciousness with the self. It is through this process that the self knows its own consciousness. Geraldine Coster remarks that "In yoga and psychotherapy the old and the new converse. From their meeting there may well result an enlargement and intensification of consciousness which will inaugurate a new and more hopeful era for mankind." 37

Yoga practice is based on consciousness. In yoga practice it is trained how the consciousness is to be raised from the peripheral level to the sahasrāra, wherein pure consciousness functions. The ordinary consciousness is busy with the unrefined material objects, whereas through yoga practice it can be raised to the subject objectless state. Intuition develops at the supreme form of development of consciousness.

The western psychologists regard psychology as the science of mind. It is the mind that thinks, feels and wills.

36. Yoga Sutra, Bk. IV, Sl. 17
37. Yoga and Western Psychology - Coster - p. 247
Now what is the exact nature of the mind? This very important question compelled many psychologists to start the investigation of the self or ego. The ego in its active aspect gives rise to the process of cognition, feeling and conation. Thought, feeling and volition are the activities of the self. But the metaphysical standpoint of Sāmkhya-yoga does not encourage such a psychological theory. Because according to Sāmkhya theory of evolution there are two ultimate reals Prakṛti, the fundamental principle of causation and Purusa the consciousness and intelligence. From the different commentaries on Sāmkhya-yoga we can gather the clear idea that Mahat or Mahattatva is consciousness or gnosis in its pure and indeterminate form. But when it is transformed or determined it takes the form of reason or intelligence (buddhi) I-feeling or egoism and mind (manas). Thus Mahat with the preponderance of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas appears in the human self in three different forms as buddhi, Ahankāra and Manas. According to Geraldine Coster "In a sense it is true to say that one fundamental difference between eastern and western psychology is that the former habitually and as a matter of course recognises these layers of consciousness objectively hardly as yet begun to differentiate them at all." Modern concept of consciousness is that it is a process involving reasoning, imagination and learning of new technique to adjust oneself to the changing environment. Consciousness is

38. Concept of Personality .. and the Gitā - Dr. K.C. Das - p. 45
39. Ibid., p. 50
40. Yoga and Western Psychology - Coster - p. 232
a quality of the mind and thinking, feeling and willing are the activities of the mind. According to western psychology mind is immaterial, subtle and source of consciousness. To Indian psychology on the other hand the mind with its states of cognition, conation and feeling is the product of nature as it has been already stated. But it gets its consciousness and intelligence by virtue of the presence of the self or Purusa. Dr. N.K. Devaraja states that Sāmkhya-yoga Moksa is not identical with the highest reality. But the Ātman or Purusa is regarded from the human standpoint. It is the significant entity to be realised by man. According to him "release in these systems consists not in the establishment of a relationship with a thing external to the self but in the realisation of the essential nature of one's own self." In the state of samādhi the seer or Purusa exists in its own nature. The Indian idea of the world of nature and existence is not something physical. It is psychological and spiritual. The ideas of spirit, soul and consciousness are always greater than inert matter. They always come before and are causes of inert matter. All force is power. The power, which contains the world is the conscious will.

Consciousness is of primary importance in the Sāmkhya-yoga philosophy. Sāmkhya-yoga aims at self realisation and attainment of liberation of the soul from the entanglements of the worldly life. This requires a constant endeavour on the part of the yogin. The attainment of pure consciousness in

41. Mind and Spirit of India - Dr. N.K. Devraja - p. 223
42. Philosophy of History - Dr. S.P. Banerjee - p. 15 (Indian Philosophical Congress, 52 Session)
Sāmkhya-yoga depends on the gradual control of the body and mind. Because consciousness cannot arise in a disturbed mind. The peripheral and the sensory levels of consciousness are to be withdrawn from their respective objects and they are to be concentrated in the brain proper in order to have pure consciousness. The successful arousal of consciousness in the brain gives the yogin the power of intuition. It is with the help of intuition that the yogin can transcend the limits of space and time altogether. The yogins acquire the Prajñā state of consciousness called Rāmabhara. At this stage he can know anything he likes. In Yoga an attempt is made to make an unfoldment of all the capacities of the yogin. This process of unfoldment depends on the growth of consciousness. To start the yoga practice there is the preliminary requisite of certain forms of consciousness development. The entire potentiality of the yogin is attempted to be revealed through yoga practice. Sāmkhya too values consciousness and clear conception to be the basis of mental development. Thus without conscious Sāmkhya-yoga philosophy will be a barren subject of study.