

## PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE THROUGH DIVERSITY: INDIA'S PHILOSOPHICAL MOSAIC RE-EXAMINED

JUNGHARE, Indira Y.  
ABD/USA/CIIIA

### ABSTRACT

Most philosophies and worldviews including those of Buddhism and the *Upanishads*, focus on the sameness of human beings, especially on the metaphysical/absolute level. The primary purpose of these philosophies has been to create unity among people of different races, ethnicities and cultures on the basis of their relationship with the Ultimate Truth or impersonal God and to create compassion for people on the basis of their similar divine nature. However, though these philosophies have been quite successful in creating tolerance for others, especially for diverse belief systems, they seem inadequate to meet the needs of today's world of tensions, conflicts, and violence. This paper examines other Indian philosophical systems --Vaisesika's categories, Carvaka's materialism, and Samkhya's dualism-- and drawing upon those ideologies, proposes a synthetic philosophy of diversity and difference that can lead to the development of positive attitudes and a joyous environment for peaceful coexistence.

**Key Words:** Philosophy, Carvaka, diversity, ethics, peace, co-existence,

### 1. Introduction

In an era stricken by religious grievance and marked with the bloodstains of the victims of violence, we as a species on this planet need to come to the realization that our intolerance of one another's faiths, ideologies, languages, cultures, ethnicities, etc. is killing us. It is people hating people for being different than themselves.

We live in a global community. Even locally, one can see that this is true. There are people of all different nationalities and cultural heritages in hundreds, nay thousands of cities across America and across the globe. We must come to terms with our linguistic, cultural and religious differences, for the sake of the health of our societies, nations and our world.

We must begin to see diversity as a virtue, something to be encouraged, rather than shunned. In order to achieve harmony in our society, we ought to emphasize diversity, rather than homogeneity, and revel in our differences. It is our differences that can make us stronger: variety is not only the spice of life, but it is of the utmost importance in evolving into a healthy society and a healthy species.

India has contributed to world civilization in numerous ways. *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, the epics *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, the story-literature, the Hindu *Panchatantra* and the Buddhist *Jatakas*, (which have been transferred to Aesop tales) represent India's rich literature tradition. As for linguistics, India is known for Panini's generative grammar, socio-linguistics, dialectology, anthropological and areal linguistics. India provides a storehouse for all kinds of linguistic variations. In the colonial and postcolonial period, excellent literature has been produced in various languages of India--Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Marathi, Kannada, Malayalam, Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi and Oriya.

In the fields of philosophy and religion, India's contributions to the world are truly unmatched. The study of Indian philosophy is important historically, philosophically, and even politically. In S. Radhakrishnan's (1957: XXX) words, "India's concentrated study of the inner nature of man is, in the end, a study of man universal." The philosophies of India, both religious and secular, deal with the study of human in relation to the universe that is marked by diversity of being (ontological level), becoming and behaving (pragmatic level).

India has always been a place apart in which culture and religion often outdid armies and administration in influencing the course of events. Though India produced a number of religions--Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism-- it was Europe, not India, which consistently made religion grounds for war and the state an instrument of persecution.

In India, the diversity of ideologies produced competing systems of thought, which comprise a philosophical tradition in an overall synthetic manner. This synthetic approach tends to favor the addition of new ideas over the refutation or negation of old ideas. For example some philosophical systems, such as Yoga, provided a technique for individual health, whereas, the philosophy of *Vedanta* provided the ideology of non-dualism for inner peace.

We first briefly analyze the philosophy of Buddhism, the Upanishadic/Vedantic non-dualism, Samkya-Yoga's dualism, Nyaya-Vaisheshika's pluralism, and Carvaka's materialism. Using these philosophies as the

foundation, the paper proposes the non-denominational philosophy of diversity and difference for attaining peace at the individual, societal and global level.

## 2. Buddhism and Upanishadic Hinduism

Buddhism, as an individual phenomenon, cannot be considered without the recognition of its historical context. As stated by Radhakrishnan and Moore (1957: 272), the Buddha merely took up some of the insights of the *Upanishads* and presented them with a new orientation: “The Buddha is not so much formulating a new scheme of metaphysics and morals as he is rediscovering an old norm and adapting it to the new conditions of thought and life.” From this statement of Radhakrishnan and Moore, it becomes quite clear that there are many similarities in the philosophies and concepts of Upanishadic Hinduism and Buddhism, and also the philosophy of Shankara’s non-dualism (*Advaita Vedanta*) and Nagarjuna’s Middle Doctrine (*Madhyamika-sastra*).

In the section below, two primary concepts are examined and compared—one of God, godliness or divinity and the other of a self or individual being. Though both religions and philosophies—Buddhist and Hindu—have been serving their believers, parishioners, and scholars for over thousands of years, we need to go beyond them to create a viable system for a modern world of diversity and differences. In the face of religious conflicts, embedded socio-cultural biases, and mind-boggling prejudices, worldly existence is marked by violence of all types—in words, thoughts, and deeds. Since many conflicts are based in religion, it is necessary to cross the boundaries of faiths and enter into the realm of secular philosophies, such as those of Carvaka, Samkhya, and Vaisheshika. It is possible that a combination of such secular philosophies may provide us with a system of “universal” ethics where all culture-specific systems stand on the same level. Even Buddha did not proclaim himself to be the God or the Absolute Reality, nor did he affirm a positive reality underlying the world of change. The primary reason for this was that he was deeply interested in the “ethical remaking of man,” feeling that metaphysical debate would take us away from the task of “individual change.” He kept silent on the nature of the absolute reality, the self (soul), and *nirvana*. Buddha walked in the great tradition of the *Upanishads*: where we cannot speak so we must keep silent (Radhakrishnan and Moore, 1957: 272).

Using the same pragmatic approach of the Buddha, we will focus on the philosophy of individual change, and by extension, social change.

## 2.1. Some Basic Concepts and their Comparison

As mentioned earlier, the Buddha Sakyamuni did not deal with the concept of an Absolute Reality or a God. The Buddha was far more interested in the wellness of an individual rather than a speculative philosophy of an unknown and an abstract absolute. This does not mean he did not believe in the power of an absolute nor does it mean he did not believe in the divine nature of man. Quite the contrary, he empowered human being by endowing each individual with “Buddha Nature.” Similarly, though he did not believe in the concept of a **substantive** soul, he believed in “individual” as well as the “universal” concepts of consciousness.

**Brahman:** Different *Upanishads* define *Brahman* differently. The longest and one of the oldest *Upanishads*, the *Brhadaranyaka*, portrays the notion of a transcendental *Atman* as universal and undifferentiated consciousness. It is this *Upanishad* which has made famous the doctrine of “Neti, Neti” (“not this, not this”), the mystical doctrine of the indescribability of the Absolute. According to this text, *Brahman* is two forms: the formed and the formless, the mortal and the immortal. Thus, *Brahman* can be seen as both the world and its creator, the individual self (*Atman* with the body), and the Universal Self (the abstract Absolute). The abstract *Brahman* is further defined as *Sat-Cit-Ananda*. *Sat* means “pure existence,” *Cit* means “pure consciousness,” and *Ananda* means “pure happiness.”

*Upanishads* emphasize the inseparability of *Atman* and of *Brahman* in brief axioms such as, *Atman* is *Brahman*, *Brahman* is *Atman*, You are It, He is It, She is It, etc. Essentially, every form is part of the *Brahman*. “The *Upanishads* thus set forth the distinction between *Brahman* in itself and *Brahman* in the universe, the transcendent beyond manifestation, and the transcendent in manifestation, the Self pure and essential and the Self in the individual selves” (Radhakrishnan and Moore, 1957: 38). This concept not only assists people in understanding his/her own power but also the (inborn divine) power of “others.” This philosophy of empowerment teaches everyone to not merely value ones own self but to also value others because they too are part of the Absolute Reality and possess the divine nature.

**Buddha Nature:** The concept of *Buddha Nature*, in many ways, seems quite similar to the concept of *Brahman*. The word Buddha means “enlightened.” It is derived from the verb root: *budh*, “to know,” “to be aware of,” “to be fully conscious of,” “to know the nature of reality,” “to know the nature of momentary and interdependent existence, which is

marked by non-satisfactoriness.” A close analysis of this concept clearly points out that realizing *Buddha Nature* implies having the virtues of a “wise” man, and the “qualities” of a saint. In simple words, *Buddha Nature* refers to the “divine” qualities that one possesses. In line with Buddhism’s focus on “wellness of the individual,” the slogans “You are a Buddha,” “He is Buddha,” “She is Buddha” are equivalent to “You are *Brahman*,” “He is *Brahman*,” and “She is *Brahman*.” Similarly, the Buddhist claim that one possesses “Buddha Nature,” is basically equivalent to the *Upanishadic* idealism that everyone is divine or saintly, i.e. possessing the qualities of *Brahman*.

It is necessary to point out the fact that both the *Upanishads* as well as Buddhism do not convey through their slogans “You are *Brahman*” and “You are Buddha,” the literal meaning that “You are God.” Rather, it simply implies that everyone possesses the positive qualities which one should use for the betterment of oneself and the world.

**Self:** The concept of “small” self or individual seems to be quite similar in both *Upanishadic* and Buddhist thought. The *Upanishads* divide self into “body” and “soul.”

Though Buddhism claims to adhere to the theory of non-soul (*anatta*), its focus of criticism is on the **substantive** soul, or bodily soul. However, Hindus never assumed or theorized that soul was substantive. The Hindu philosophers could not specify the location of the soul in the same way Jain philosophers could. According to Jaina philosophy, the whole body (legs, hands, arms, eyes, etc.) is constituted of “jiva” the substantive soul.

The *Katha Upanishad* defines the eternal indestructible Self as:

“The wise one [i.e., the *Atman*, the Self] is not born, nor dies.

This one has not come from anywhere, has not become anyone.

Unborn, constant, eternal, primeval, this one

Is not slain when the body is slain.”

(stanzas 18 & 19 from the *Katha Upanishad*, quoted from Radhakrishnan and Moore, 1957: 44)

The above definition of *Ataman* or “soul” clearly tells us that neither the *Upanishads* nor the followers of Hinduism equated limbs with the “soul.”

**Self in Buddhism:** The “self” in Buddhism is consisted of five *skandhas*: (1) Form, “body”; (2) Feelings; (3) Perception; (4) Dispositions;

and (5) Consciousness.

A careful analysis of the above aggregates clearly divides a “person” into two forms: (1) a body with various modalities; and (2) consciousness

Both Hinduism and Buddhism affirm the law of *karma* and the theory of incarnation or Birth and Rebirth (of Buddhism). If a person is reincarnated according to his good or bad *karma* “deeds,” then a question arises as to what it is that is reincarnated or reborn. In the case of Hinduism, it is the *atman*, “soul,” that gets reincarnated after its bodily passing away; whereas, in Buddhism it is the bunch of aggregates or the *skandhas*, due to its merits or demerits, which continue into a different bunch of the *skandhas*. In simple words, “John” becomes “Mary,” but “Mary” exists dependent on the acts of “John. In any case, the consciousness seems to be the primary aggregate that seems to carry the burden of merits/demerits. In essence then, the Hindu concept of the non-bodily or abstract soul seems to be equivalent to the Buddhist concept of “consciousness.”

**Goals of Life:** Both in Hinduism and Buddhism the end goal of life is to be free from suffering, which is caused by reincarnation or birth and rebirth. Worldly suffering is primarily due to the nature of existence—the body and its dependent existence. As long as there is body, so are there needs, wants, desires, and cravings. So, the primary goal is that one must combat ignorance and desire/greed and become wise and detached. Ultimately, our becoming detached in this life may make us free from the cycle of birth and rebirth. What happens to the free self, “soul” or “consciousness,” differs depending on the sect to which one belongs. In Theravada Buddhism, the free soul will remain all alone in an atmospheric vacuum. In the case of Mahayana Buddhism, it will reside in the kingdom of the Buddha of one’s liking. In the case of Hinduism, it will merge into Brahman. The *Atman* will become one with the *Brahman*.

The goals in Hinduism and Buddhism are part pragmatic and worldly, dealing with the empirical world of experiences and its sorrowful rendering, and part metaphysical and speculative.

The pragmatic aspect of the “ultimate goal” both in Hindu and Buddhist thought is to deal with life by following the right path. The religion of Buddhism equips its believer with the Eightfold path: (1) Right Understanding; (2) Right Thought; (3) Right Speech; (4) Right Action; (5) Right Livelihood; (6) Right Effort; (7) Right Mindfulness; and (8) Right Concentration (Mitchell, 2002: 53-59).

Right understanding means “knowledge and insight” into the true nature of all things, of how they really are (*yathabhutam*). “In this sense, it is the ‘seed’ of a wisdom that destroys ignorance and becomes complete in the attainment of Awakening and Nirvana” (Mitchell, 2002: 53). Right thought entails thoughts of compassionate aspiration for the well-being of all, tender thoughts of concern for all who are suffering, and the desire to bring goodness and freedom to all living beings (Mitchell, 2002: 54).

Right effort requires one’s abandoning of unwholesome mental states, such as evil desires and temptations, in order to avoid painful consequences to oneself and to others. Right mindfulness is directed toward one’s ideas or views. This practice can help one to see the world in a clearer, less judgmental, and more compassionate way.

Right concentration contributes to the healing and integrating of the various aspects of one’s being into a pure and unified wholeness leading to Nirvana. “This practice brings about mental/emotional ‘equanimity,’ ‘peacefulness,’ and ‘harmony,’ which in turn foster the wisdom and mental/emotional integration needed to realize Awakening and Nirvana” (Mitchell, 2002: 59).

It is clear that the eightfold path focuses on a person’s physical, psychological, and emotional health. This path is quite fitting for a monastic lifestyle.

As for Hinduism, the *Bhagvad Gita* gives us a number of paths which are referred to as the yogas, meaning each path is to be followed with the utmost mindfulness and concentration: (1) *Karma*-yoga—every one must engage in some sort of activity in this material world; (2) *Dhyana*-yoga—*Astanga*-yoga, a meditative practice, that controls the mind and senses; (3) *Jnana* Yoga—the path of knowledge; (4) *Bhakti*-Yoga—Devotion to Lord Krishna (or any other deity of one’s preference); (5) The Yoga of Mysticism; and (6) The Yoga of Renunciation (A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, 1986).

The various paths elaborated upon in the *Bhagvad Gita* are in accord with the diverse nature of Hinduism. One has the freedom to choose the path according to his/her constitution—physical, mental, etc.

## 2.2. Social Concerns

The philosophies of *Upanishadic* and Epic Hinduism and of Buddhism have shown their concern for the wellness of a human being. This is not to

say that they have not been concerned with the welfare of their respective societies. Even the *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*, one of the oldest, talked about the three cardinal virtues: "... This same thing does the divine voice here, thunder, repeat: Da! Da! Da! that is, restrain yourselves, give, be compassionate. One should practice this same triad: self-restraint, giving, compassion." (*Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*, V.II.3.)

**Social Concerns in Buddhism:** The Buddha founded his own religious communities but also spoke out about the broader social and political conditions of his time. He often denounced the injustices of the caste system; hence his Sangha was open to persons of all classes. The Buddha taught that respect should be earned by moral deeds and spiritual attainment, not given on the basis of one's birth. Buddha was also very much concerned with social violence. Donald Mitchell (2002: 25) rightfully points out that in one early text (namely *Digha-nikaya*, III, 68), after telling a story of a king who did not care for the poor, the Buddha said: "Thus, from not giving to the needy, poverty spreads; from the growth of poverty, stealing increases; when theft becomes more and more common, there is an increased use of weapons; when this happens, there is a greater loss of life."

There are a number of stories which reflect an attitude of compassionate concern for those in need. According to one story, Buddha secured the release of five hundred bandits who were awaiting execution and gave them, by his teaching, spiritual as well as physical freedom. Another story tells us how Buddha tended personally to a monk who was suffering from an advanced skin disease.

### 2.3. Deficiency or Inadequacy of Social Concerns

Hinduism, as well as Buddhism, served their respective societies well in the early periods of their historical growth. Though Buddhism came as a revolutionary movement against the ritualistic and caste/class based Brahmanic Hinduism, it itself advocated a system of hierarchy in Buddhist communities: Monks, Nuns, Lay Men and Lay Women. No matter which Buddhist society one studies, whether from Thailand or from Japan, or Tibet, one notices the fact that monks are more respected than nuns, and of course, the monks are more respected than the lay people. Similarly, every sect of Buddhism considers itself superior to other.

Almost all the sects, with the exception of Zen, consider the Sakyamuni Buddha as the founder of Buddhism. Accordingly, a person who practices Buddhism takes refuge in the three jewels of Buddhism: Buddha, the

Buddha's teaching (*dharma*), and the Buddhist community (*sangha*). Despite Buddha's teaching of "compassion" and "donation," Buddhism, like Hinduism, does not overly concern itself with public service, perhaps due to its emphasis on "individualism."

Thus, Buddhism seems to be inadequate to serve the needs of the globe, a place which is marked by diversity and conflict. Maximally, Buddhism is understood as an introspective system for an individual's psychological and emotional health.

In the modern world of religious conflicts, violence, communalism, and various *isms*, it seems necessary that we transcend Buddhism and search for a secular philosophy or a combination of philosophies that will be most conducive to universal agreement.

### **3. Secular Philosophies: Carvaka, Samkhya & Vaisesika**

In this section, we discuss the basic ideas of Carvaka, Samkhya & Vaisesika which provide the foundation for the philosophy of substance, matter or form. Their focus is on the outer world rather than on the inner and the abstract metaphysics.

According to Indian thinkers, the aim of philosophy is not just the satisfaction of intellectual curiosity or the pursuit of theoretical truths; the more important aim is that philosophy should make a difference to the style and quality of life. If a philosophy, no matter how intellectually satisfying it may be, has no bearing on our life, it is deemed an empty and irrelevant sophistry (R. Puligandla, 1975: 19). In a real sense, Indian philosophies are pragmatic.

Each Indian system is classified as orthodox or unorthodox according to whether it accepts or rejects the authority of the Vedas, the sacred scriptures of the Hindus. One must know that a system can be both orthodox and atheistic. The reason for this is that theism and atheism are both compatible with the teachings of the Vedas. The following are generally regarded as orthodox systems: Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisesika, Mimamsa, and Vedanta. The unorthodox systems are Carvakism (materialism), Jainism, and Buddhism. However, one may consider Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, and Vaisesika as neither orthodox nor unorthodox, since they originated independently of the Vedas—that is, without accepting or rejecting them. It may be noted that Samkhya and Yoga in their original forms are atheistic, whereas Nyaya and Vaisesika are theistic; however, the former are theistic in their later development.

### 3.1. Carvaka's Materialism

This system assumed various forms of philosophical skepticism, logical fatalism, and religious indifferentism (Radhakrishnan and Moore, 1957: 227). The main work on the system, the *Brhaspati Sutra* (600 B.C.), is not available, and we have to reconstruct the doctrines of materialism from statements of the position and criticism of it found in other works. The doctrine is called *Lokayata*, as it holds that only this world (*loka*) exists and there is nothing beyond it. There is no future life. Perception is accepted as the only source of knowledge.

#### 3.1.1. Metaphysics

The metaphysics of the materialist is a direct consequence of his epistemological doctrine that perception is the sole source of reliable knowledge. Carvaka holds that gods, souls, heaven, hell, and immortality have no basis in our experience (perception) and hence are to be rejected as nonexistent and fictitious.

According to Carvaka, matter is the only reality. The world is constituted of matter in the form of the four elements, air, fire, water, and earth. All objects, both inanimate and animate, are the result of different combinations of these elements. Just as the intoxicating quality of wine arises out of fermented yeast, and saltiness out of a certain combination of sodium and chlorine, so also consciousness arises out of the four elements combining to produce a certain aggregate (from *Sarvasiddhantasamgraha*, quoted in Radhakrishnan and Moore, 1957: 34). What others call "the soul" is no more and no less than the conscious body. The soul is only the body qualified by intelligence.

Thus consciousness or mind is an epiphenomenon, a by-product of matter. According to Carvaka, qualities not possessed by any of the elements individually may arise in the aggregates constituted of them: for example, although neither hydrogen nor oxygen is wet, water, produced by a certain combination of them, is wet. R. Puligandla (1975: 33) points out that this doctrine of Carvaka is of emergent evolution concerning qualities, including consciousness.

In Carvakan thought, God is not a perceived reality and the universe has neither a beginning nor an end. Matter has always existed and will always exist. The elements themselves, by their intrinsic natures, act as the efficient cause bringing about the different objects constituting the world.

### 3.1.2. Ethics

Since according to Carvaka death is the annihilation of life, people should pursue and secure for themselves the maximum pleasure compatible with their lot in life. Carvaka warns us that we should not seek a pleasure or enjoyment if it brings in its wake pain and misery. An action is good if it produces more pleasure than pain, and bad if it results in more pain than pleasure.

It is necessary to point out that a good number of materialists did draw a distinction between crude and egoistic hedonism and refined and altruistic hedonism. They not only distinguished qualitatively between pleasures but also recognized the need for society, law, and order and the need for sharing one's pleasure and enjoyment with one's fellowmen (from *Sarvasiddhantasamgraha*, quoted in Radhakrishnan and Moore, 1957: 235).

R. Puligandla (1975: 35) points out the similarities between Carvaka of ancient India and Epicurus of ancient Greece, "Both were philosophical materialists whose hedonism was tempered with self-discipline, discriminating intelligence, refined taste, and genuine capacity for friendship."

The philosophy of Carvakan materialism makes a significant contribution to the philosophy of diverse forms in that the consciousness is a byproduct of the material composition and that every form will have its consciousness depending on its elemental form. This gives a basis for differing consciousnesses not only of individuals, but also animals, plants, etc. Thus bio-diversity can be explained on the basis of this philosophy of substantive materialism.

### 3.2. Vaisesika's Pluralism

This system takes its name from "*visesa*" (particularity); it emphasizes the significance of particulars or individuals, and is decidedly pluralistic. Vaisesika is mainly a system of physics and metaphysics. It adopts a six-fold classification of the objects of experience (*padarthas*): substance, quality, activity, generality, particularity, and inherence, to which later Vaisesika added a seventh, non-existence.

Reality consists of substances possessed of qualities. Earth, water, light, air, ether (*akasa*), time, space, soul (or self), and mind are the nine substances which comprise all corporeal and incorporeal things.

The existence of soul is inferred from the fact that consciousness cannot be a property of the body, the sense organs, or the mind. The plurality of souls is inferred from their differences in status and their variety of conditions. Each soul experiences the consequences of its deeds, and the Vaisesika system uses this fact as proof of the plurality of souls. Each soul has its characteristic individuality (*visesa*). Even the freed souls exist with specific features.

The Vaisesika adopts the atomic view. Things are composed of invisible eternal atoms which are incapable of division. There are four kinds of atoms: earth, water, light, and air.

The Vaisesika has been regarded as non-theistic. Kanada (or Kasyapa), the author of the *Vaisesika Sutra* (much older than Nyaya but later than 300 B.C.), does not mention God, but later commentators felt that the immutable atoms could not by themselves produce an ordered universe unless a presiding God regulated their activities. The world cannot be explained by the activities of the atoms alone or by the operation of *karma*. The system therefore adopts the view of God as a prime mover, which is found in the Nyaya.

The Vaisesika conception of God as wholly transcendent to man and the world is subject to criticism. It is hard to see how such a God could be the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the world. R. Puligandla (1978: 164) asserts that the Vaisesika God satisfies neither the atheist nor the theist; the former rejects him as an unnecessary and arbitrary appendage to the all-sufficient law of *karma*, and the latter rejects him as wholly uninspiring and inadequate to the supreme religious quest of union with him.

Like all other Indian schools of philosophy, with the exception of Carvaka, the Vaisesika regards mundane existence as one of bondage and ignorance and considers knowledge to be the means to freedom and liberation. For the Vaisesika, liberation is freedom from pain as well as pleasure. In short, liberation is the state of utter lack of consciousness, which is necessary for experiencing anything, painful or pleasurable. For the Vaisesika, then, the liberated soul exists as a substance devoid of any attributes, including consciousness. Nevertheless, the Vaisesika teaches that since particularity (*vaiesesa*) is an eternal characteristic of the soul, the soul exists as a unique individual even in the liberated state. This claim of Vaisesika has come under attack by various critiques. The objection they put forward is that if Vaisesika asserts on the one hand that the liberated soul lacks all qualities, it asserts on the other that the liberated soul retains

its individuality. Particularity, continues the objection, makes sense only with respect to entities, which are atomic, and not to an all-pervading entity such as the soul; particularity implies the ability to be distinguished between two entities of the same kind.

Regardless of the problems with their concept of God, the Prime Mover, or the nature of the all-pervading non-qualitative, yet individual soul, this philosophy provides the basic concept of “particularity” of substances with varied qualities--a unique idea for the explanation of the diverse forms.

### 3.3. Samkhya Philosophy

This system is notable for its theory of evolution, which is accepted by many other Indian systems, and for the reduction of the numerous categories of the Nyaya and Vaisheshika systems to the two fundamental categories of *purusa* and *prakrti*, subject and object. All experience is based on the duality of the knowing subject, *purusa*, and the known object, *prakrti*. *Prakrti* (usually translated “nature”) is the basis of all objective existence, physical and psychical. As the changing object, *prakrti* is the source of the world of becoming. *Prakrti* is composed of three constituents (*gunas*), *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. *Prakrti* is like a string of three strands. *Sattva* is potential consciousness; *rajas* is the source of activity, and *tamas* is that which resists activity. They produce pleasure, pain, and indifference, respectively. All things, as products of *prakrti*, consist of the three *gunas* in different proportions. The **varied interaction** of the *gunas* accounts for the variety of the world. When the three elements are held in equipoise there is no action. When there is a disturbance of the equilibrium, the process of evolution begins.

The evolution of unconscious *prakrti* can take place only through the presence of conscious *purusa*. The presence of *purusa* excites the activity of *prakrti*, thus upsetting the equilibrium of the *gunas* in *prakrti*, and starts the evolutionary process.

The development of this process of evolution follows a law of succession. *Mahat* (literally “the great” or “the great one”) is the first product of the evolution of *prakrti*.

It is the basis of the intelligence (*buddhi*) of the individual. *Mahat* brings out the cosmic aspect of the self, and *buddhi* is the cause of its psychological counterpart. *Buddhi* is not *purusa*, the self. It is merely the subtle substance of all mental processes. *Ahamkara* or self-sense, which develops out of *buddhi*, is the principle of individuation.

Three different lines of development arise from *ahamkara*. From its *sattva* aspect arise *manas* (the mind), the five organs of perception, and the five organs of instruments of action; from its *tamas* aspect arise the five fine or subtle elements. From these the gross elements develop by a preponderance of the quality of *tamas*.

Creation is the unfolding of the different effects from the original *prakrti*, and destruction is the dissolution of them into the original *prakrti*. *Prakrti* and its products are unconscious. They cannot discriminate between themselves and *purusa*, the self. The individual is not body, life, or mind, but the informing self: silent, peaceful, eternal. The self is pure spirit.

As there are many conscious beings in the world, the Samkhya adopts the view of the plurality of selves, both in the condition of bondage and in that of release.

The empirical individual, the *jiva*, is the self limited by the body and the senses. It is a member of the natural world.

Salvation in the Samkhya system is only phenomenal, for the true self is always free. Bondage is the activity of *prakrti* towards one not possessing discrimination, that is, the knowledge of the distinction of *purusa* and *prakrti*. Freedom is obtained by discriminative knowledge, but it is not theoretical. It is the result of the practice of virtue and *yoga*. The Yoga system constitutes, as it were, the practical side of the Samkhya-Yoga philosophy; it elaborates the practical methods which lead to discriminative knowledge and thus to release.

Tradition ascribes the authorship of the Samkhya system to Kapila. He probably lived during the seventh century B.C. There is no evidence to show that the *Samkhya-pravacana Sutra*, which is attributed to him, was actually written by him. The *Samkhya-Karika* of Isvarakrishna, of the third century A.D, is the earliest available text on the Samkhya philosophy.

#### **4. Contribution of the Indian Philosophical Systems to the Formation of the Philosophy of Diversity and Difference**

A close analysis of the specifics of the above systems—i.e. the Carvakian philosophical explanation of the universe through only observable substance/matter (emergent evolution of the world through matter); the Samkhya's evolution of the universe through the dual system of *purusa* (spirit) and *prakrti* (matter), where *prakrti* (matter) plays an active role;

and Vaisesika's account of the uniquely diverse universe through their particular categories, especially of substance, quality, and activity—have helped us to design the philosophy of substantive forms to help the nature of diverse universe.

### **5. Philosophy of Diversity and Difference**

The belief behind the philosophy of diversity is that matter (elements and nature) is primary and that consciousness is a product dependent upon matter. Hence, consciousness differs according to the quality, quantity, and experience of the physical form. Because of the varieties of physical forms the world is filled with diversity of persons with differing consciousnesses, viewpoints, and abilities.

- \* Diversity here refers to diversity of both observable material forms and non-observable energy forms, such as mind, consciousness, spirit, etc.

- \* Each form is unique. While two things may be similar, they are never the same.

- \* Forms exist in symbiotic relationships, thereby exhibiting mutual dependency.

- \* All forms exist with a purpose and function including contributing to the enjoyment of other forms. Hence, we must cultivate our own existence and the existence of forms different from ourselves.

- \* Existence is temporary and the nature of every form is ephemeral. The realization of this philosophical principle is necessary in order to develop empathy and compassion for others.

- \* The concept of virtue is likely to differ depending on the form and its consciousness.

- \* In order to develop tolerance for one another, we must recognize that change is constant.

- \* It is necessary to promote a community of respect and affirm the value of each individual.

- \* If the concept of virtue is based on the recognition of and respect and admiration for all, peace will follow.

- \* We must learn that everybody has the right to hold whatever view he/she holds about the world, God, etc.

- \* It is necessary to deconstruct oppressive labels and colonial ideologies

in order to eradicate valuing particular genders, races, ethnicities, religions, body forms, and all other social constructs of identity as better than others.

\* Greed for things is unnecessary because no one can take material objects with him/her when he/she dissolves into another form.

\* Inherently, no task, work, or job is superior to others.

\* Excessive comparison creates stress and harms all forms. In reality, no two forms can be accurately compared because of the extent to which they differ from each other.

\* Change in form can be either inherent or due to external factors, either socio-political or natural. Therefore, we should understand the fragile nature of life/existence and live every moment deeply and fully. We must make time to enjoy all life forms. In enjoying other forms, one energizes one's own form. This can be called mundane spirituality of diversity; one is spirited by the spirits of others.

DO NO HARM TO ANY FORM

HUMAN, ANIMAL OR TREE

EACH IS UNIQUE IN MODALITY

IN THE RELATIVE WORLD OF REALITY

DEFINING THE INNATE DIVERSITY

## **6. Essential Realities (Summary)**

(1) Existence is marked by diversity and differences; no two forms are exactly alike.

(2) Each being/form is unique in purpose and function.

(3) All things live in symbiotic relationships with others. Our existence is interrelated and interdependent.

(4) We must respect, admire, appreciate and value every form.

(5) We must promote ethical values suitable for today's global society.

(6) We should create ethical and peaceful civil societies.

(7) Freedom is to choose virtue

## **7. Summary and Conclusion**

After a brief outline of the history of Buddhism as a religion and as a heterodox Indian philosophy, some basic concepts between Hinduism and Buddhism, such as *Brahman*, *Atman*, Self, Buddha Nature, etc. have

been discussed in terms of their similarities and differences. Though both Hinduism and Buddhism expressed their concerns for the welfare of the society through compassion and giving, they seemed to have focused much more on the individual and his/her wellbeing. They have used inner similarities of soul or consciousness to evoke feelings of compassion and giving in order to face the challenges of suffering caused by a changing world. Since the concept of inner similarities of selves or human beings does not seem to work in the modern world of racial, ethnic, national, and religious conflicts caused by differences, it is necessary at this point in time to develop a philosophy of diversity that is pragmatic and based on external differences. This philosophy of diversity/outer form receives its inspiration from three Indian philosophical systems: Carvaka's materialism, Vaisesika's pluralism, and Samkhya's dualism. All three systems primarily focus on substance and matter. Carvaka's system is solely of matter; Vaisesika's plurality (various forms) of matter and their particular (*visesa*) characteristics; and in Samkhya's dualism, it is matter that is dynamic and active and which gives rise to the external world of forms. Though the system of Vaisesika posits God as the mover of the atomic matter, he is not perceived to be a creator of the world. Similarly, in the Samkhya philosophy, though the *purusa*, "Supreme Self," acts as a catalyst for the evolution of the world, all the 23 products evolve from *prakṛti*, "the nature, matter."

In essence, in all three philosophical systems—Carvaka, Vaisesika, and Samkhya—matter or substance is primary substance that existed, exists and will exist. Only its qualitative or elemental nature will change according to time, and conditions. In the Carvaka system, the creator does not exist; and in the Vaisesika and Samkhya system, the mover of the matter and the activator of the evolution, respectively, are secondary or nominal principles.

This grand philosophy of matter/substance then helps us explain the differences in various substantive forms. Their emphasis on matter should not be misunderstood as lacking in spirituality or faith in the ultimate reality or in an Absolute God. Nor does it want to argue against the existence of God or the creator. Its main purpose is to explain the diverse nature of the universe—of all the beings, small or large, black or blue, fat or thin, beautiful or ugly; and of all the species—plants, animals, etc. The basic philosophical principle is that existence as we experience it in the material world is marked by diversity and inter-dependency. Therefore, we must respect all "other" forms for their contribution to the complex system of the world. An ethical system based on the knowledge and awareness of

the interdependency of all forms, and on this basis, respect and admiration for all individual beings will ultimately lead to a more peaceful existence.

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