Samkhaya: Theory of Causation

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• Samkhya is an enumerationist philosophy that is strongly dualist. Samkhya philosophy regards the universe as consisting of two realities: Purusha (consciousness) and Prakriti (phenomenal realm of matter). Prakriti further bifurcates into animate and inanimate realms. On the other hand, Purusha separates out into countless Jivas or individual units of consciousness as souls which fuse into the mind and body of the animate branch of Prakriti.

• There are differences between Sankhya and Western forms of dualism. In the West, the fundamental distinction is between mind and body. In Samkhya, however, it is between the self (as Purusha) and matter (Prakriti).
The Samkhya recognizes only two ultimate entities, Prakriti and Purusha. While the Prakriti is a single entity, the Samkhya admits a plurality of the Purushas. Unintelligent, unmanifest, uncaused, ever-active, imperceptible and eternal Prakriti is alone the final source of the world of objects which is implicitly and potentially contained in its bosom. The Purusha is considered as the intelligent principle, a passive enjoyer (bhokta) and the Prakriti is the enjoyed (bhogya). Samkhya believes that the Purusha cannot be regarded as the source of inanimate world, because an intelligent principle cannot transform itself into the unintelligent world. It is a pluralistic spiritualism, atheistic realism and uncompromising dualism.
The Samkhya theory of causation is known as Satkarya-vada. The basic question involved in any theory of causation is: Do the effects pre-exist in its material cause? Those who answer this question in the negative are called Asatkaryavadins, while those who answer it in the affirmative are called Satkaryavadins. Samkhya believes that the effect exists in the material cause even before it is produced.

Samkhya gives the following arguments in support of Satkaryavâda:

(A) If the effect does not pre-exist in its cause, it becomes a mere non-entity like the sky-flower or hare’s horn.

(B) Everything cannot be produced out of everything. Can any man turn sugar into salt?

(C) There is an invariable relationship between a material cause and its effect.

(D) Only certain effects can be produced from certain causes. Curd cannot be produced out of water and oil out of sand.
(E) The effect is not different from, but essentially identical with, the material cause. A cloth is not really different from the threads.

Hence, this is the Samkhya theory of Satkarya-vada, where the effect is existent before its appearance. Again, the Sakhya theory of Satkarya-vada is known as the parinama-vada, because it holds that when an effect is produced, there is a real transformation (parinama) of the cause into the effect. For example, the production of a pot from the clay, or of curd from milk.
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