

The concept of suffering (*dukkha*) in Sāṃkhya *darśana*: a comparative study.

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Abstract

The fundamental aim of Indian Philosophy (*darśana*) is *mukti* (liberation). Now the question is what is the nature of the liberation? In general, it has thought that the meaning of liberation is the complete removal of sorrow from the self. Here in this paper, our main objective is to discuss the sorrow in the light of Sāṃkhya *darśana*. In this regard, we have been trying to discuss a comparative study among the different Indian schools and western ethics on behalf of Mill & Bentham. We are all more or less acquainted with the very notion of self and its salvation. The different schools of Indian philosophy explain it from their own philosophical standpoint. Most of the Philosophical sects conceived it as eternal, and free from all the worldly attachment. We practically suffered from sorrow and enjoyed the pleasure in our daily life; though human beings always want the highest pleasure of life rather than sorrow. It happens when the self comes into attachment with the material body. Therefore, removal of sorrow is possible only when the self is detached from the body. Therefore, sorrow merely occurs to the material body. In this connection, we would like to say that sorrow is an effect due to the action of the body. Therefore, sorrow exists whenever the body exists. Here, in this paper, we will focus on the concept of sorrow in the light of Indian Philosophy and after that; we will explain the nature of sorrow with special reference to the Sāṃkhya system.

Keyword: Indian Philosophy, *Dukkha*, *Sukha* self, *Mukti*, *āstika*, ethics.

Introduction

In general, suffering is nothing but dissatisfaction in life. Due to lack of satisfaction, human beings suffer. Every human being has been suffering from many aspects, such as lack of food, lack of money, lack of proper education, lack of essential needful things in their life. Therefore, suffering is nothing but a lack of essential things in human life. This human dissatisfaction comes out from inside of the human beings not from the outside of it. Therefore, suffering is dissatisfaction within but not out of it. However, it is well known to us that not every human being in the whole universe ever gets satisfied in his or her entire life; because, life is nothing but the full of suffering.

In Indian tradition, the word “*Darshan*” means the “vision of truth”. In Indian philosophy, the summum bonum of man is to achieve liberation. Most Philosophical schools, except *Vedānta*, conceives that the state of liberation is the restrained from suffering. So the concept of suffering has much attachment with the notion of liberation. In the Indian tradition of philosophizing there are two schools: Optimistic and Pessimistic schools. Of these two, the pessimistic school deals with the fact that there is suffering in human life and one can get rid of this very suffering. We know that Indian Philosophy is raise from a key question: how is the removal of suffering possible? Whenever we are too engaged to explicate the nature of liberation (*mukti*), we must first expose the concept of *dukkha* .

What is the fundamental nature of suffering? Aristotle also talks about the nature of suffering. He has stressed upon the fact that the suffering of the self has not only a physical aspect, but it has a spiritual phenomenon also. According to Stan Van Hooft, suffering has been associated with the concept of justice. ‘Suffering would result either from a human violation of the supernatural order or a divine response to such a violation.’ (Stan van Hooft, ‘The Meanings of Suffering’, Hastings Center Report 28, no. 5 (1998), 14.). Suffering must be seen as a part of the Divine law. However, it is inevitable that suffering is ultimately positive as it originated from Divine.

Some ancient Stoic philosophers and Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher, gave some explanation regarding the suffering and it attached with the tragic sense of life. They all have mentioned that there was no plan, purpose, or meaning to existence. The world is nothing but the dynamic system of change and becoming. Whatever happens is without purpose and motive. There is no transcendent meaning to it. It is just like the concept of *Jdricchavāda* in Indian tradition. According to this concept, there is no causal relation in this world. Each and everything is happening in this world by the flow of nature, nothing beyond it. Some other philosophers hold that suffering is not an evil, because everything is happening in our life in Accordance with nature. Seneca puts it: ‘Pain and poverty do not make a man worse; therefore, they are not evil.’(Stan van Hooft, ‘The Meanings of Suffering’, Hastings Center Report 28, no. 5 (1998), 14.). According to Stoic philosophers, those people who accept everything that happened with them in this physical world will live with equanimity. It is because physical events like illness, lameness, and other forms of suffering that only affect our body, cannot affect our will or morality.

The Greek philosopher Plato developed a worldview that explains the rationale of suffering in one’s life. According to him, there are two worlds, one is a perfect world, another is a world of change, it is a corrupted world.¹Here the corrupted world means a copy of the original world where human beings suffer due to bodily or worldly attachment.

General view of suffering

¹ (<https://www.esamskriti.com/essays/pdf/PB%20Editorial%20May%202021.pdf>).

Man has expressed his wonder to see the different things in the world; such as the mountain, the sea, the jungle. However, wise persons, after observing the worldly objects, conclude that our perceiving world is nothing but a full of suffering. There is no object in the world that gives permanent happiness. Sometimes we desire an object to get pleasure. In the similar way, when this object destroyed, the pleasure vanishes and the suffering gets started. Actually, what it means, the desired object itself causes happiness and suffering together. Therefore, material objects cannot fulfill our happiness. From birth to death, our lives are nothing but full of unhappiness. Men belong to three different stages, like birth, youth and old age; and in all these stages it occasionally seen that they feel the different types of suffering.

We can see that all the sects of Indian philosophy have a positive approach towards human life. They have a general agreement to deal with the problems of life and reality and they have said that there are sorrows and sufferings in life. That is why; they have drawn great attention to improve a concrete procedure by which human beings can totally overcome these sorrows and sufferings. According to them, the sorrows and suffering of man are due to ignorance about self. Now in our present discussion, we set-forth a general outline of *dukkha* or suffering of different philosophical schools. All the schools of Indian philosophy admit the existence of suffering in the world and they have declared that ignorance is the root cause of suffering. Moreover, it is true that from a nonprofessional to philosophers try to escape from the veil of suffering.

In the Nyāya philosophy there are 12 *prameyas* accepted among them the 11th *prameya* is *dukkha* (suffering). A question may arise why Maharshi Gautama did not discuss individually about *sukha* (pleasure) in his sutra. This does not mean that Maharshi Gautama directly refutes the presence of *sukha* (pleasure) because *sukha* is a mental perception. Maharshi Gautam in the *lakshana* of *dukkha*, said that “*badhanalakshanam*” *dukkham*.² *Dukkha* is define (*lakshana*) in N.S.1.1.21 as” being of the nature of pain (*badhana*)”.

According to Nyāya-Vaisesika school, *dukkha* also is a quality of individual self. Pleasure, pain, aversion etc., are the adventitious qualities of selves. Vacaspati Mishra augured that the word *dukkha* should not be considered as merely pain, but rather a broader notion of unhappiness. Some Nyāya scholars suggest that *dukkha* is disharmony, frustrations. Bhāsarvajña, thinks that frustration and pleasure both are eternal, as it is held in the case of knowledge and ignorance.³ Again, we can see in the *Bhāsā-pariccheda* of Viśvanātha, there is the causal relation between demerit and pain. It is the natural instinct of each human being to stay away of pain.⁴ According to Nyāya in the state of liberation there is no pain or pleasure, the self is there unconscious.

The concept of *dukkha* (suffering) is the keynote in Buddhist thought. In early Buddhist scriptures, the word *dukkha* has been used in more than one sense. *Dukkha* is suffering, miseries,

² Nyaya sutra, 1.1.21.

³ Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophy, Karl. H. Potter, Vol- II, P. 127.

⁴ *Bhāsā-pariccheda* with *Siddhānta-Muktāvali* by Viśvanātha Nyāya- Pañcānana, edited by Swami Madhabanada p. 240.

conflict, unsatisfactoriness in life. It is used in the psychological, physical and philosophical sense. The term *dukkho* which is the correlative of *sukha* or happiness is primarily used to refer to a mental state. It is something, which is disliked for its own sake (*dvesavisayah*). Hence it is something which is considered as repulsive to all creatures (*sarvesam pratikulavedaniyam dukham*). It is essential to know that *dukkho* is seen in the words of Buddha: he, who sees suffering, sees also the arising of suffering, the cessation of suffering. All these fruits are interconnected and interdependent. This document contains the four noble truths of Gautama Buddha: the world is full of suffering, the cause of such suffering or pain, the cessation of suffering and the way of cessation of suffering. Moreover Buddhist philosophers talks about three different kinds of the *dukkha* in the pali literature, such as follows:-

1) *Dukkha dukkha*: it includes ordinary sufferings as well as the fivefold aggregate, which constitute an individual. Hence, it refers to suffering due to birth, sickness, old age, death and a huge association with undesired things or persons, segregation from pleasant conditions. Therefore, it consolidates all kinds of physical and mental suffering.

2) *Vipariṇāma dukkha*: one of the causes of suffering is due to changes. There is a certain time when the happiest moment, pleasure or enjoyment is stable. Happy feelings are not stable for a long time. Due to changes in our happiest moment, *dukkho* arises.

3) *Sanḅhāra- dukkha* : this types of *dukkha* refers any kinds of conditional phenomenon in this universe. According to Buddhism, everything is conditional. James Boyd maintained that the term “Sanḅhāra” brings two meaning. The first meaning presents certain dispositional elements of our existence. Moreover, another meaning of the term refers to any conditioned things. However, here James Boyd argues that the earlier meaning of this term is more crucial in composition with the second one. Because “Sanḅhāra” is asserting an existential claim.⁵

Advaita has admitted two types of *dukkha*, like *sarir dukha* and *manasa dukha*. ‘Isha Upanishad says: ‘what sorrow can there be for that seer of oneness.’ (Isha Upanishad, 7.). The person who does not perceive the oneness of existence, this ignorant person feels the sorrow. There is no sorrow, our real nature is ananda; therefore, sorrow never be existe in our nature. Sorrow is transmigration from one body to another body; it is called the *samsāra*. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad explains the concept of transmigration and explains the concept of birth and death and cause of suffering. The individual soul when connected with the body and organ is called the birth and it is the source of evils and cause of suffering. When the individual leaves the body and organ it is called death.

It is like a mango fruit is detached from the stalk, the individual self completely detaches from all parts of the body and goes out in the same way in which it had entered the body. (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 4.3.8, 4.3.35, and 4.3.36.). The Bhagavadgita says that misery and

⁵ Concept of suffering in Buddhism, Narendra Kumar Dash, pp. 1-15.

impermanence constitute the very nature of this world: ‘Anityam asukhaṁ lokam imaṁ prāpya bhajasva mām; having come to this ephemeral and miserable world, you worship Me.’ (Gita, 9.33.). Sri Krishna also teaches where to find the marks of suffering: ‘seeing the evil, in birth, death, old age, diseases, and misery.’ (Gita,13.8). Sri Shankaracharya explains that the evil in birth consists in lying in the womb and coming out of it; evil in old age is in the form of deprivation of intelligence, strength, and vigor, and becoming an object of contempt.⁶

In western ethics according to hedonism, pleasure is nothing but avoiding sorrow. This concept of hedonism is very common to our human life. Bentham and Mill are the keen advocates of altruism or utilitarianism. Both of them claimed "the greatest happiness for the greatest number". According to hedonism, we must say sorrow exists in the world because man wants to be free from sorrow and tries to get pleasure. Here sorrow is nothing but seeking pleasure. This theory talks about the mental and physical pleasure and it is only possible when man gets free from physical and mental sorrow. This theory also talks about the difference between human sorrow and animal sorrow, though their sorrow is different due to their living style. Each & every living being wants pleasure and removing sorrow. According to hedonism, pleasure is the highest end of life.

Therefore, according to hedonism, sorrow comes from this material world and to get free from material sorrow man should remove this sorrow from their life. However, here removing sorrow means not getting permanent pleasure because due to the existence of sorrow in this world man can never be totally free from sorrow in living life. Man can be totally free from material sorrow only when get detached from the material body, otherwise it's impossible to get totally free from sorrow.

Concept of Suffering in Sāṁkhya Philosophy

Sāṁkhya system is one of the oldest systems in Indian philosophy. Their main aim is to remove three types of sorrow from human life. In the Sāṁkhya *karika*, Isvar Krishna has pointed out the hetu of the Dukkhho in the *karika* number one; his main aim is to invent the Sāṁkhya *Sastrya* to remove the sorrows from human life. Now a question is raised: What are the three types of dukkha? If the suffering does exist then is it possible to remove, if it is possible then what are the ways to remove it? Without the answers to these questions, the main aim of the Sāṁkhya *Sastrya* cannot be fulfilled.

Dukkhha is experienced by us. Its existence is known by the perceptual experience. Dukkhha is that which we do not want. In this world there are no such animals who have not suffered from the dukkha. If there is no dukkha in this world, then we do not search for the way of removal of the dukkhha. Because which is an indeterminate thing, no one tries to discover it. If dukkha is eternal then it is also an unremovable entity, then no one cannot try to remove this dukkha. If the dukkha

⁶ <https://advaitaashrama.org/bending-low-with-load-of-life-meaning-of-human-suffering/>

is a removable entity but, there is no way to remove the dukkha, then any one do not try to search the way the removal of dukkha. But dukkha is a removable entity and there is a way to remove the dukkha. Dukkha is non eternal, and there is a cause of dukkha, and if we can discover the dukkha then, the removal of dukkha is possible.(Samkhya darsaner bibaran, Bidhubhushan Bhattacharya (Sapta Tirta), PP, 155-156, 2nd edition, 2008/B). Therefore it is established that in this world there is a dukkha, the cause of dukkha and there is a way to remove it.

Those who always suffer from the dukkha wanted to know the way of removal of the dukkha. In this world there is a lot of controversy arising regarding the existence of things, but regarding the existence of *dukkha* anyone have not any doubt. *Bhaspoti* Mishra has stated three kinds of *dukkha*. But one thing keep in mind that here he wanted to say that there is a lot of dukkha but if we assemble them it is categories in three. According to Sāmkhya dukkha is the category of rojoguna. Earthly life is full of three kinds of suffering. These

three types of *dukkha* are *adhyātmika*, *ādhibhautika*, and *ādhidaiivika*.⁷ *adhyātmika* dukkha are two types like, sarir dukkha and manasa dukkha. These are *adhyātmika* because they occur in our body; it is intra-organic. *Ādhibhautika* dukkha is that which is the cause of animals, birds, beasts, thorns, man etc. it is called *ādhibhautika* because it is extra organic. and *ādhidaiivika* dukkha is due to supernatural causes like planets, ghosts, demons, elemental agencies etc.⁸ But one thing must be kept in mind: dukkha cannot be absolutely destroyed because it is the porinama of rajaguna; rajaguna is eternal if dukkha is the porinama of rojaguna it can not be absolutely destroyed. But the end of human life is to get rid of these three kinds of suffering.

Now the question is why do we want to remove the sorrow? We want to remove sorrow because the feeling of the dukkha is not suitable to us. *Dukkha* is eternal so absolute removableness is not possible, but we can decrease it as much as possible. There are different types of ways to remove sorrow. Carvaka darsana their main object is to gain pleasure as much as possible.

Some may question why we should take the way of removal of dukkha that is Sāmkhya sayas. Isvar Krishna has pointed out that Sāmkhya *Sastrya* is the easiest way for removal of sorrow. If honey is available in our locality then why should we go to the mountain to collect honey. (Sāmkhya *karika*, III). Our main objective is the removal of dukkha to achieve liberation. But Sāmkhya's *purusa* is naturally pure cannot attached with the *prakṛiti* and his evaluator. Therefore, dukkha is not the feeling of *purusa*, it is the porinano of *prakṛiti*). So dukkha is forever whether purusa achieved his goal or not.

⁷ Sāmkhyatattvakaumudi of Sri Vācasvati Miśra, edited by Narayana Chandra Goswami, Saskrito pustak Bhandar, reprint, 2016, p.11

⁸ A critical survey of Indian philosophy, C D Sharma, p.163.

Conclusion

From the above discussion and after reviewing all the philosophical standpoint on suffering (*dukkha*) one thing should be said that the reduction of pain must be possible. As we have seen in Indian philosophy is that somewhere suffering has been conceived as a particular quality of the self. again, in Sāṃkhya philosophy *dukkha* is *parinama* of *raja* guna. On the other hand, in western philosophy, especially Bentham and Mill, said that pain is always associated with pleasure. Pain itself (suffering) does not have any existence apart from pleasure. In this regard Sāṃkhya and Bentham both has spoken that decrease of pain is possible. Moreover, Sāṃkhya philosophy talks about *Vivekjanana* (the cognition concerning the segregation between two fundamental principle, i.e. *puruṣa* and *prakṛiti*) for emancipating the *dukkha* from living creatures. Here, one more interesting thing in Indian philosophy is that it is initially pessimistic and ultimately optimistic. But whatever the ways are followed (be it Indian or Western) to the abolishment of suffering, these should be applied practically to the society.

Suffering is a problem of our daily life; to live a good life we have to go through pain or sorrow, otherwise we cannot feel pure pleasure. However, there is no possibility to think of pure pleasure or pure pain. Because the total abolition of suffering is never possible. Throughout our entire discussion, we just want to share a message to the people of the society that to live a good life we must accept the frequency of pleasure and suffering together, and within this state of life we have to find out the pleasure as much as possible.

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