

A Short Introduction to Indian Philosophy

Indian Philosophy can be difficult and confusing for the novice yoga practitioner. One book I have found which is easy to read while also being very thorough and scholarly is Pandit Rajmani Tigunait, *Seven Systems of Indian Philosophy* (Himalayan Institute Press). Although it covers the six darshanas plus Buddhism, you don't really need a knowledge of all of them to grasp the essential concepts that occur in most systems of yoga. What I have done here is extract key ideas and passages from the three chapters dealing with Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Vedānta.

Chapter 5: Sāṃkhya - a Dualistic Theory

Sāṃkhya is probably the most ancient Indian philosophy. It was systematised by Kapila.

Key texts include: *Sāṃkhya kārikā* of Iśvarakṛṣṇa and Gaudapada's *Bhāṣya* (a commentary on the *Sāṃkhya kārikā*)

The following topics are traditionally emphasised:

- theory of causation
- concept of *prakṛti* (unconscious principle) and *puruṣa* (conscious principle)
- evolution of the world
- theory of knowledge
- concept of liberation

1. Theory of Causation

An effect is already existent in unmanifested form in its cause (for example, the tortoise: its limbs already exist inside the shell, but are not visible until it extrudes them). So no-one can convert non-existence into existence; nor can anything that exists be entirely destroyed.

This theory forms the corner-stone of Sāṃkhya philosophy. (*SSIP*, pp. 123-124)

2. Prakṛti - the Unconscious Principle

"The entire world – including body, mind and senses - is dependent upon, limited by, and produced by the combination of certain effects." "The ultimate cause of the world must. . . be a latent principle of potential, and it must be uncaused, eternal and all-pervading. It must be more subtle than the mind and intellect, and at the same time it must contain all the characteristics of the external objects as well as of the senses, mind and intellect. In Sāṃkhya philosophy this ultimate cause is *Prakṛti* ." (*SSIP*, p. 124)

[There are 5 proofs of its existence.]

The Guṇas

"*Prakṛti* is neither atomic substance nor consciousness, but it possesses the three guṇas of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*... They are called *guṇas* (that is "ropes") because they are intertwined." (SSIP, p. 125)

"According to Sāṃkhya philosophy, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are the root causes from which the entire universe is derived... The state in which they are in their natural equilibrium is called *Prakṛti*, and when their balance is disturbed, they are said to be in *Vikṛti*, the heterogeneous state. These three *guṇas* are said to be the ultimate cause of all creation. *Sattva* is weightlessness and light; *rajas* is motion or activity; and *tamas* is heaviness." (SSIP, p. 126)

"The *guṇas* constantly change their predominance over one another. . . . It is through their constant interaction that the flow of cosmic and individual life continues. They are essentially different from but interrelated with one another. Just as the oil, wick and flame of a lamp work together to produce light, so the different *guṇas* co-operate to produce the objects of the world." (SSIP, pp. 127-128)

The *guṇas* work within an individual person in the same way. You can use *rajas* to convert *tamas* into *sattva*, or vice versa. Ideally you work to increase *sattva* by following a lifestyle that encourages peace and harmony. "It is because of its purity and lightness that *sattva* is able to reflect peace and happiness from pure consciousness. Thus peace and happiness are perceived in the *sattva*-predominated state of mind, and the mind experiences peace and happiness as its object." (SSIP, p. 128)

The *guṇas* are constantly changing into one another. Ultimately they come into a state of perfect balance - *Prakṛti*. This state can't be observed, merely inferred. (SSIP, p. 129)

Puruṣa – Consciousness

"Each body contains a Self [*Puruṣa*], but the Self is different from the body, senses, mind. and intellect. It is a conscious spirit, at once both the subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge. It is not merely a substance with the attribute of consciousness, but it is rather pure consciousness itself – a self-illuminated, unchanging, uncaused, all-pervading reality." (SSIP, pp. 129-130)

[5 proofs of the existence of *Puruṣa*]

Sāṃkhya also teaches that there are many such Selves, one in each living being. (SSIP, p. 131)

3. The Process of Evolution of the Universe.

The whole world evolves from the interaction of *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa*. Evolution can't happen by *Puruṣa* alone, because *Puruṣa* is inactive; it can't occur by *Prakṛti* alone because *Prakṛti* is unconscious. The activity of *Prakṛti* is guided by the consciousness of *Puruṣa*.

Prakṛti requires *Puruṣa* in order to be known; *Puruṣa* requires *Prakṛti* in order to distinguish itself from *Prakṛti* and thus acquire liberation. The interaction of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* causes a disturbance in the equilibrium of the *guṇas*. This irritates *rajas*, and thus causes the other two *guṇas* to vibrate; the vibration releases tremendous energy within *Prakṛti* and from this the universe is manifested. This process of manifestation goes through 24 stages, and begins with the infusion of *Puruṣa* into *Prakṛti*. (SSIP, pp. 132-133)

Mahat or Buddhi

The first evolute of *Prakṛti* is *mahat* or *buddhi*, the intellect.

"*Mahat* is the state in which *Prakṛti* receives light from *Puruṣa*, the fountain of light, and sees itself. . . . The individual counterpart of this cosmic state, *mahat*, is called *buddhi*, the intellect. . . . *Buddhi* is manifested from the sattvic aspect of *Prakṛti* because the nature of *sattva* – weightlessness, clarity and light – is affected sooner by the active force of manifestation than would be the heavy and unclear nature of *tamas*. Because of the sattvic quality of *buddhi*, the light of the Self reflects in the intellect similarly to the way an external object reflects in the clear surface of a mirror. The Self, seeing its reflection in the mirror of *buddhi*, identifies itself with the reflected image and forgets its true nature. Thus the feeling of "I-ness" is transmitted to *buddhi*. In this way the unconscious *buddhi* starts functioning as a conscious principle. . . . But through the use of the *buddhi's* eighth attribute, knowledge, it reflects pure and well-filtered knowledge onto *Puruṣa* from its mirror, and *Puruṣa* comes to realise its false identification with *buddhi's* objects and to recognize its transcendent nature in all its purity. Thus *buddhi*, the discriminating or decision-making function, stands nearest to the Self and functions directly for the Self, enabling it to discriminate between itself and *Prakṛti* and thereby achieve realization of its liberated nature." (*SSIP*, pp. 133-134)

Ahaṅkāra: the Sense of "I"

Ahaṅkāra is a derivative of *buddhi/mahat*. It is usually, but confusingly, translated as "Ego". *Ahaṅkāra* is the sense of "I" that separates oneself from all others, and creates an individual personality. (*SSIP*, p. 134)

There are three categories of *ahaṅkāra*: *sāttvika*, *rājasa*, *tāmasa*.

Eleven senses arise from *sāttvika ahaṅkāra*:

- 5 sense of perception (hearing, touching, seeing, tasting, smelling);
- 5 senses of action (verbalisation, apprehension, locomotion, excretion, procreation);
- mind (*manas*).

From *tāmasa ahaṅkāra* come five *tānmatras* (subtle elements): sound, colour, touch, taste, smell.

The function of *rājasa ahaṅkāra* is to motivate the other two.

The senses can't be perceived; they can only be inferred from the actions of the physical organs that are powered by them. "The mind, the ego and the intellect are called the internal senses, while the five cognitive senses and five senses of action are called external. The mind is master of all the external senses, and without its direction and guidance, they could not function." (*SSIP*, p. 135)

Sāṃkhya teaches that the mind is a product of *Prakṛti*, and thus subject to origin and dissolution. "The cognitive senses contact their objects and supply their experiences to the mind, which then interprets the data into determinate perceptions. *Ahaṅkāra* then claims the objects of the world, identifying itself with the desirable ones while disidentifying with the undesirable ones, and finally the intellect decides whether to pursue or avoid these external objects." (*SSIP*, p. 136)

[There follows information on the *tānmatras*, p. 136]

"Thus the course of evolution takes place in twenty-four stages. It starts from the root cause, *Prakṛti*, and it ends with the earth element." (*SSIP*, pp. 136-137)

4. Sources of Valid Knowledge

The source of valid knowledge are Perception, Inference and Testimony. Their functions are described in *SSIP*, pp. 137-142.

5. The Concept of Liberation

The world is full of pain and misery. It's only possible to be rid of this pain and misery through "the correct discriminative knowledge of reality." (*SSIP*, pp. 142-143)

"The entire external world and all internal phenomena belong to *Prakṛti*, but pure consciousness, *Puruṣa*, is free from the limitations of space, time and causation. All activity, change, thought, feeling, pain and pleasure belong to the body/mind complex. The Self has a body, but the body is not the Self. In the same way, the Self has a mind, ego, and intellect, but it is quite distinct from all of these. . . . All the experiences of the phenomenal world are received by *Puruṣa* because of its false identification with the mind, intellect and ego. The intellect is responsible for all experiences, but whenever *Puruṣa* ignorantly identifies itself with the intellect, it thinks it experiences as the intellect does, even though *Puruṣa* is actually always and forever beyond the evolutes of *Prakṛti* ." (*SSIP*, p. 143)

"The predominance of *rajas* and *tamas* in the mind, ego and intellect does not allow these instruments to filter external experiences properly, so *Puruṣa* receives unfiltered, contaminated experiences and ignorantly thinks it is suffering the pain and misery reflected by the intellect." (*SSIP*, pp. 143-144)

[There follows a paragraph explaining how *Puruṣa* comes to be so closely involved with *Prakṛti* and entangled with it. But when *Puruṣa* remembers **why** this came about, and discriminates itself from the manifest world, *Puruṣa* can attain freedom.]

"Through the practice of the yoga of discrimination – that is, the repeated affirmation of nonidentification with the body, senses or mind. . . – one polishes one's intellect and. . . becomes more consciously aware of one's true nature. . . . After the Self realises its true nature, all anxieties are dissolved." (*SSIP*, p. 145)

The Concept of God

There is much controversy among Sāṃkhya philosophers about the concept of God (see *SSIP*, pp. 146-147).

"The practical aspect of Sāṃkhya is the Yoga system, which unanimously recognises the existence of God."

The Practical Teachings of Sāṃkhya

"From earliest times, Sāṃkhya philosophy understood the basic problem of human life: that the mind turns one's bliss into misery by its projections, preoccupations, and identifications with noneternal things. As has been discussed, Sāṃkhya recognises three functions of the mind: the lower mind, the ego and the intellect. The intellect presents this experience to the Self. However, the Self (*Puruṣa*), which falsely identifies itself with the intellect, enjoys or suffers that experience as the intellect does, even though actual enjoyment or suffering does not belong to the Self. The senses contact many objects, and in the process of receiving the experience of external objects there is a constant process of filtration. The mind transmits only those experiences that are profitable and desirable to the ego. The ego identifies with those experiences and filters them again, transmitting to the intellect only those that are related to the ego. Before the intellect forwards experiences to the Self, it also filters them, providing only those experiences necessary and beneficial to the Self.

"This is the natural process, but because of the predominance of *tamas* and *rajas* in the personality and because of intense attachment to worldly objects, the mind, ego, and intellect lose their capacity of filtration. They accumulate unnecessary mental garbage, and it becomes a great burden for the

intellect to discriminate good from bad, important from unimportant. because of this lack of filtration, mind, ego, and intellect lose their strength and block the path for going inward. Thus one remains at the stage of the lower mind, whose very nature is to doubt, to suspect, and to vacillate. One becomes confused, and that confusion leads to frustration, which consequently leads to disappointment and complete destruction. For this reason, Sāṃkhya philosophy emphasizes polishing the mind so it can filter experience and provide valid knowledge with full understanding." (SSIP, p. 148)

"The Sāṃkhya system reminds one to examine one's thinking process to purify it so that he can develop proper attitudes toward the objects of the senses. If one is aware of the very first flicker of an arising desire, it is easier for his intellect to discriminate and to make proper decisions. But if the thinking process is not examined in the very beginning and if it becomes caught up in the stream of attachment, desire, anger, and so on, then it becomes very hard to extricate oneself from this flow. However, a strong, positive thought led by discrimination does not permit the senses to wander blindly toward external objects. The enjoyment of external objects with full awareness and discrimination does not disturb one's internal state, but rather it provides great internal peace and cheerfulness. This is the basis of the steadiness of intellect that reveals the true nature of the world and helps *Puruṣa* attain realization, the highest goal. Thus, Sāṃkhya philosophy advises a person not to run away from the world but to have perfect mental control so that he will not be agitated by the tides of the ocean of worldly objects. As the *Bhagavad Gītā* (Ch.2 v. 70) states: 'He attains peace into whom all sensual experiences enter, just as so many rivers flow into the ocean, which, though being ever filled, remains unaffected. But he who is desirous of enjoyments, never attains peace.'" (SSIP, pp. 149-150)

Chapter 6: Yoga – Practical Disciplines for Knowing the Self

Tigunait considers only Patañjala Yoga because it's the most comprehensive school of Yoga.

"The Yoga system is highly practical; it discusses the nature of mind, its modifications, impediments to growth, afflictions, and the method for attaining the highest goal of life -- kaivalya. Since this method is described in eight steps, it is also known as Aṣṭāṅga Yoga, the eightfold path." (SSIP, p. 153)

1. The Yogic View of Mind

Patañjali realised the importance of mind – most human problems are mental; the only solution to these problems is mental discipline. The mind is also the link between consciousness and the physical body. This is why Patañjali puts such great importance on the study of the mind, its modifications, and the means to control them, and thus "unfolds its [i.e. the mind's] great power for higher attainment."

"Theoretically, the Yoga system is based on the same tenets as Sāṃkhya philosophy, and it also assimilates the teachings of Vedānta. In Sāṃkhya philosophy, the mind is categorized into three functions or parts (lower mind, ego, and intellect), but in Vedānta philosophy the mind is divided into four parts (lower mind, ego, intellect, and 'mind-stuff' or *citta*, the storehouse of memories). In Yoga, however, the mind is studied holistically, and the term *citta* is used to denote all the

fluctuating and changing phenomena of the mind."

Tigunait uses the simile of "mind like a vast lake" to explain the Yogic view of the nature of mind. "Deep within, the mind is always calm and tranquil, but one's thought patterns stir it into activity and prevent it from realizing its own true nature. . . ." (SSIP, p. 154)

"There are two main sources for the arising waves of thoughts: sense perceptions and memories. . . . When one's thought patterns are quieted, one can see one's innermost potentials hidden deep within the mind. Because the mind is an evolute of *Prakṛti* . . ., it is composed of the elements of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The relative proportions of these three qualities determine the different states of *citta*, the mind. The turmoil caused by the interaction of the *guṇas* is responsible for the arising thought patterns in the mind." (SSIP, p. 155)

Five Stages of Mind

[The five stages – disturbed, stupefied, restless, one-pointed and well-controlled – are described, and the balance of the *guṇas* in each is explained.] (SSIP, p. 155)

The modifications appear only in the first three stages. But there are none at all in the other two. In the first of these two (*ekāgraha* or 'one-pointed'), *sattva* is predominant; in the second (*niruddha* or 'well-controlled') there is no disturbance, and it is purely *sattvic*. It is only in these two stages of mind that meditation is possible, and many yogic practices are designed as aids to acquire such states of mind. "When all the modifications cease and the state of stillness is acquired, then *Puruṣa* (Consciousness) sees its real nature reflecting from the screen of the mind." (SSIP, p. 156)

The Modifications of Mind

[This summarises *Yoga Sūtras*, I.5-11 and II.3-9]

Overcoming the Modifications

[See *Yoga Sūtras*, I.15, 30-32 (*abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*); II, 1-2 (*kriyā yoga*)]

On *abhyāsa* (practice), Tigunait says, "Practice does not mean engaging in mental gymnastics; it is, rather, sincere effort for maintaining steadiness of the mind. Perfection in practice is attained through sincerity and persistence." Of *vairāgya* (detachment), Tigunait says, "It means to have no expectations from external objects. Detachment means to eliminate identification with the evolutes of nature and to understand oneself as pure Self, as a self-illuminating conscious being." (SSIP, p. 158)

Tigunait also give an excellent gloss on *kriyā yoga*:

tapas: "the greatest of all austerities is to perform one's duty skilfully and selflessly for the sake of duty and in the service of others without any intention of enjoying the fruits of one's action oneself."

svadhyaya: "helps one discover ways he can deal effectively with himself and explore all his potentials within and without. It also includes self-study and *japa*."

Īśvarapraṇidhāna: "There remains no place for hatred, jealousy, anger, greed, or any other negative feelings. There remains only love for all creatures, which radiates its light of bliss and knowledge in every mental and physical action." (SSIP, pp. 158-159)

2. The Eightfold Path of Yoga

There are many different paths [Karma, Bhakti, Jñāna, Kundalinī, Mantra, Hatha, etc]. They are all interconnected, and simply emphasize one aspect or another.

Patañjala Yoga is highly scientific, and combines many different practices in a systematic way.

[See *Yoga Sūtras*, II.29-III.12 for Patañjali's presentation.]

Tigunait gives his own account of the eight limbs on pp. 161-179:

yama – pp. 161-163

niyama – pp. 163-166

Asana – pp. 166-167

prāṇāyāma – pp. 167-172 (with details of types of *prāṇa*, and the importance of breath in yoga)

pratyāhāra – pp. 172-173 (including relaxation as *pratyāhāra*)

dhāraṇā – pp. 173-175 (useful information, including a quote from Swami Rama on p. 175)

dhyāna – pp. 175-176 (excellent description of what meditation is like – river flowing to the sea.)

samādhi – pp. 176-178 (good description, including *sabija* and *nirbija* – sounds as if Tigunait really knows what he is describing.)

3. Samyama

samyama – pp. 178-179 [see *YS* III which describes *samyama* and the *siddhis*]

4. The Concept of God

"Patañjali accepts the existence of God. According to him God is a perfect supreme being who is eternal, all-pervading, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. God is a particular Puruṣa who is unaffected by the afflictions of ignorance, egoism, desire, aversion and fear of death. He is also free from all *karmas* (actions), from the results of action, and from all latent impressions. This conception of God can give hope to human beings, for when one overcomes all afflictions (ignorance, egoism, attachment, aversion, fear of death) and does not allow himself to identify with his *karmas* or to reap its consequences, and when one becomes free from all *saṃskāras*, then he becomes a liberated soul and merges into God-consciousness.

"Patañjali views the individual in essence as God, but because of the limitations produced by afflictions and *karmas*, one separates oneself from a God-consciousness and becomes a victim of the material world. There is only one God. It is ignorance that creates duality from the one single reality called God. When ignorance is dissolved into the light of knowledge, all dualities are dissolved and full union is achieved. When one overcomes ignorance, duality dissolves and he merges with the perfect single being. That perfect single being always remains perfect and one. There is no change in the ocean no matter how many rivers flow into it, and unchangeability is the basic condition of perfection." (*SSIP*, pp. 169-180)

Chapter 8: Vedānta – the Philosophy of Monism

Vedānta is also known as *Uttara-Mīmāṃsā*. It developed from the *Upaniṣads*, and is the culmination of Vedic thought. Most of the *Upaniṣads* are written in symbolic language, and you need a good teacher to unravel their meaning. The subject matter of the *Upaniṣads* is not clearly organised. Vyāsa systematised their content in the *Brahma Sūtras*. But the *BS* are very terse, and various commentaries exist to clarify them – e.g. Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, etc. – which each have their own "school" of adherents. (*SSIP*, pp. 213-214)

1. Views Common to All Schools of Vedānta

All schools try to answer the following questions:

- What is the ultimate reality?
- From where do all physical and mental phenomena originate?
- What is the nature of the state in which all phenomena dissolve?
- What is that reality through which everything is known?
- What is that which makes an unknown known?
- What is the means for attaining immortality?
- What is the nature of the Self?
- What happens after death?
- What is the importance of the body, mind and senses? (*SSIP*, pp. 214-215)

The *Upaniṣads* share a view on these questions. They maintain the existence of an all-pervasive Reality, called Brahman or Atman. They say the Self is distinct from the body, breath, mind and intellect; and that these latter four cover the Self like sheaths (*koṣas*). Pain and pleasure are transient, just the changing modes of body, breath, mind and intellect. The Self is eternal, and the ultimate source of joy. The highest goal of life is Self-realisation; the way to achieve this goal is by "the internalization of awareness". The *Upaniṣads* also say that all names and forms are unreal, and that only the underlying eternal Reality truly exists. It always remains the same, regardless of the various changing shapes it assumes.

Śaṅkara is the most important commentator in Vedānta. (*SSIP*, p. 215)

2. Monism – the School of Śaṅkara

Śaṅkara was the first to set up a formal school of Advaita (monistic) Vedānta. His theory was based on the *Upaniṣads*, *Brahma Sūtras* and *Bhagavad Gītā*. He chose only eleven *Upaniṣads* for commentary. (*SSIP*, p. 217)

3. The Concept of Self (Atman)

Śaṅkara says that the Self is the all-pervading, self-illuminated Consciousness – an absolute unconditional Reality that has neither beginning nor end, and that cannot be experienced by the senses or the mind. (*SSIP*, p. 218)

This Self is within the body, and also outside the body and also separate from it. It is an eternal

witness, watching the comings and goings of thoughts and emotions. It is the source of vitality and energy for the functions of senses, mind and intellect. "In daily experience one says, 'I have a body, a brain, and a mind.' This implies that one is not body, brain and mind, but something separate and different from all of these." (SSIP, pp. 218-219)

The following is a common analogy in Vedānta philosophy:

"Atman is like an ocean of bliss and consciousness, and the physical appearance of an individual is like a wave in the ocean of bliss. When the wind of *saṃskāras* and desires blows, the waves appear and disappear. Those who think that the waves are different from the ocean are ignorant. The rising and falling of waves in the ocean does not affect the existence of the ocean. Such is the case with birth and death, which cannot create any difference in the essential nature of the Atman."

Death is simply a return to the origin from which one has come, and from which one will emerge again. The *Bhagavad Gītā* says that the Self cannot be born, cannot be killed. (SSIP, p. 220)

4. The Concept of Brahman, the Supreme Consciousness

"According to Śaṅkara, Brahman is the ultimate Truth within and without." Brahman is the all-pervading consciousness. Thus Brahman and Atman are identical, in the same way that the forest and trees are identical. (SSIP, pp. 220-221)

"The absolute Brahman is like the self-effulgent sun, from which radiates the light of knowledge, bliss and consciousness. It is because of that radiation of light from Brahman that all the names and forms of the world are perceptible to the senses." (SSIP, p. 221)

"Nothing exists separately from Brahman. The concept of duality, or the relation between the manifold universe and the singular Brahman, is a projection of the cosmic power of illusion." Atman and Brahman are the same. (SSIP, p. 222)

5. The Concept of Māyā

"If there is only one single Reality called Brahman, then why do human beings perceive diverse worldly phenomena and behave according to the dictates of their own environment?... The *Upaniṣads* state that the face of Truth is veiled with the golden disc of *Māyā*, which must be removed for one to realize the ultimate Truth. . . . Brahman is the only Reality, and the world is ultimately false. . . . Because *Māyā* veils the Truth, the individual self misconstrues both the world and itself as being different from Brahman. In the cosmic sense, ignorance is called *Māyā*, but in reference to individual misconceptions, it is called *avidyā*." (SSIP, p. 224)

Māyā and Brahman

"*Māyā* is tangibly existent, but it cannot be described either as being or as nonbeing. [It is not real because it doesn't exist separate from Brahman; it's not unreal because it's the power by which Brahman manifests itself as this apparent universe.] . . . By the power of the projection of *Māyā*, the entire universe is created, exactly as the objects of dreams are created in the dreaming state. . . . The state in which Brahman is consciously associated with *Māyā* to create the universe is called *Īśvara*, God. . . . In the same manner, Atman appears as *Jīva*, or the individual self." (SSIP, p. 225)

6. The Concept of the Universe

According to Śaṅkara the world is only an appearance – it isn't the ultimate reality. But as long as

you are in the world, and ignorant, the world seems to be real. When knowledge dawns, you become aware that the world doesn't exist separately from Brahman. (SSIP, 225)

The Theory of Causation

[I've missed this out: pp. 227-228]

Prāṇa, the Life Force

"All animate and inanimate objects of the world are the results of the vibration of *prāṇa*, the life force, which is not different from *Māyā*". . . *Prāṇa* is the source of all life. (SSIP, p. 226)

"What is seen as creation or destruction is merely the appearance of something changing form. . . . Life and death are only different vibrational states of *prāṇa*

"From the standpoint of gross matter, the universe and everything in it is subject to decay and death, and therefore everything is ultimately a source of pain and misery. But from the standpoint of universality, or the cosmic life force, or absolute Reality, this universe is as real and eternal as Reality itself." (SSIP, p. 230)

"In Sāṃkhya there are three inner instruments (intellect, ego and mind), but according to Vedānta there are four inner instruments for cognition. These are intellect, ego, mind, and *citta* (mindstuff or memory bank). The ten senses, the five subtle elements, and the five gross elements are the same in Vedānta as they are in Sāṃkhya. Vedānta also describes *prāṇa*, the life-force, as having ten varieties." Of these, the first five – *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *samāna*, *udāna*, *vyāna* – are the most important. (SSIP, p. 231)

Vedānta also says the physical universe is made of five elements: earth, water, fire, air and space/ether. (SSIP, p. 229)

7. The Concept of God

[I have missed out this section. The Vedānta concept of God is quite complex.]

8. The Self and Human Life

"A human being is a combined state of Self, mind, *prāṇa*, and body. The body is the dwelling place of the Self." (SSIP, p. 233)

The Five Sheaths, or Koṣas

"The Self is hidden in the innermost chamber of the heart, and five sheaths veil it. Human life is a composite of these five sheaths and the Self. The five sheaths are the physical sheath, the energy sheath, the mental sheath, the sheath of wisdom, and the sheath of bliss." (SSIP, p. 235)

[There follows a description of the sheaths – N.B. the mental sheath has four parts: lower mind – *manas*; ego – *ahaṅkāra*; intellect – *buddhi*; mind stuff – *citta*.] (SSIP, pp. 235-236)

"The Self has a body, but the body is not the Self. The Self becomes a slave of the senses and their objects because of its identification with the body, senses, mind and the other sheaths." But when the Self becomes aware again of its real nature, it detaches itself from the five sheaths, and is no longer affected by worldly things. (SSIP, p. 236)

Four Aspects of Being for Practical Study

Body: composed of the five gross elements. Its physical health depends on *prāṇa*, a subtle force which governs, regulates and nourishes the body. (*SSIP*, p. 237)

Prana: provides sustenance; is also the link between body and mind. Its grossest manifestation is the breath. "Breath is therefore considered to be the key for unlocking the secrets of the body and mind and for opening the final gate to go beyond all the mental states." (*SSIP*, pp. 238-239)

Mind: it has four parts [N.B. The big difference between Vedānta and other philosophies is its concept of the mind: Vedānta has mind in **four** parts; Sāṃkhya has mind in **three** parts; Yoga has mind in **only one** part (*citta*)]:

- *manas* – the importer/exporter of feelings and sensations from/to the outside world via intellect to/from Self.
- *ahankāra* (ego) – the sense of "I-ness"; develops an attachment to or aversion from things of the outside world; passes information to *buddhi*.
- *citta* (mind stuff) – faculty in which all memories are stored.
- *buddhi* (intellect) – decision-making faculty; predominated by *sattva*. It decides what to do with information provided by *manas* and *ahankāra*. (*SSIP*, p. 240)

Self: "All these faculties become conscious because of the association of consciousness, the Self, with them. Without consciousness they are inert and lifeless. Intellect gets its intelligence from this source, *prāṇa* receives its vitality from this source, and the body grows and becomes active by virtue of this source. The realization of one's unity with this source is the very goal of life." (*SSIP*, pp. 240-241)

9. Liberation and the Means for Attaining It

The Self is eternal, but the physical world can obscure its awareness of perpetual bliss. In Vedānta, liberation is simply the casting away of the veil of ignorance; and a realization of the true nature of the Self. (*SSIP*, p. 241)

Vedānta provides a systematic method of spiritual practice (*sādhana*) which helps in this process:

śravaṇa; studying the scriptures and listening to learned teachers, so that one can learn to discriminate the real from the unreal;

manana: contemplation – repeatedly analysing particular concepts received from one's study;

nididhyāsana: the process of applying these concepts to one's daily life. (*SSIP*, p. 242)

"Vedānta is the path of knowledge. . . . [It] requires great concentration and good balance. . . . Purification of heart and mind and balance between intellectual and emotional activities are essential." (*SSIP*, p. 243)

Four stages of Self-realization

Vedānta is based on the *Upaniṣads*. They provide several key statements (*mahāvākyas*):

- Brahman alone is real and the universe is unreal;
- there is only one Brahman;
- this Self [or "I"] is Brahman;
- this entire universe is Brahman. (*SSIP*, pp. 243-244)

[These are all explained on pp. 244-247]

Contemplation and Meditation

Vedānta is known as Jñāna Yoga, the path of knowledge. Jñāna Yoga is practised through contemplation and meditation. The *mahāvākyas* are the guidelines for contemplation and the stages of inner realisation.

"Contemplation and meditation are complementary practices. Without contemplation, meditation becomes a mental exercise, and without meditation, contemplation becomes mere imagination." (SSIP, p. 247)

One technique of contemplation is contemplation on the meaning of OM. This is a technique common to both Vedānta and Patañjala Yoga. "Both systems teach how to use the eternal sound OM as an object of meditation while co-ordinating its mental repetition with the flow of the breath. . . . The *Upaniṣads* say that OM is the bow, the individual Self is the arrow, and the supreme Consciousness, Brahman, is the target." (SSIP, pp. 248-249)