

SAMKHYA COSMOLOGY: the 25 tattvas

Purusha and *prakriti* are the two primary principles of the universe. *Purusha*, or contentless consciousness, is inactive, conscious, and not subject to change. *Prakriti*, or original materiality, is active and unconscious. There is a complete duality between these two primary principles of the universe.

Prakriti has three primary constituents or qualities, the three gunas:

SATTVA
lucidity

RAJAS
activity

TAMAS
inertia

When the three gunas are in equilibrium, the universe remains unmanifested. But when this equilibrium is disturbed and becomes unbalanced, the material world unfolds into manifestation. All of the 23 *tattvas* from *buddhi* on down unfold out of *prakriti*, while *purusha* remains completely separate and unchanging.

(1) PURUSHA
consciousness, “spirit”

(2) PRAKRITI
nature, “original materiality”

(3) BUDDHI: intellect, discrimination

(4) AHAMKARA: ego, the “I-maker”

(5) MANAS: mind

(6-10) COGNITIVE INSTRUMENTS (sense organs)
hearing, touching, seeing, tasting, smelling

(11-15) ACTION INSTRUMENTS
speaking, holding, moving, procreating, eliminating

(16-20) SUBTLE ELEMENTS
sound, touch, form, taste, odor

(21-25) GROSS ELEMENTS
earth, water, fire, air, ether

Samkhya terminology

Purusha: "person" or spirit

Purusha is contentless consciousness, inactive and unchanging. It is a passive witness to material reality, including mental phenomena, which are seen as part of the materiality of the body. Purusha is identified with an individual's true and eternal Self.

Prakriti: "nature" or the phenomenal world

Prakriti is material reality, the unconscious and ever-changing phenomena of the universe. Prakriti includes both the outer world and the ever-fluctuating inner world of the mind.

Kaivalya: solitude, detachment

In Samkhya the cause of ignorance and bondage is the failure to discriminate between the two primary principles of reality, purusha and prakriti. Liberation is kaivalya, the complete detachment of purusha (the soul or spirit) from its entanglement in prakriti, or material nature.

Drashtir: the observer or witness

The purusha, the self within, who observes the outer phenomenal world, the body, and the movements of the mind.

Guna: "quality"

Prakriti contains within it three different qualities or tendencies:

- * **sattva** - clarity, lucidity, spirituality, tending toward liberation
- * **rajas** - activity, passion
- * **tamas** - heaviness, darkness, inertia

Everything in the mental and material world arises as a mixture of these three essential qualities of lucidity, activity and inertia.

Tattva: thatness, principle, reality

The 25 levels of the material world

Texts associated with Samkhya: Patanjali's Yoga Sutra and the Bhagavad Gita

This is the teaching of yoga. Yoga is the cessation of the turnings of thought. When thought ceases, the spirit stands in its true identity as observer to the world.

-- Yoga Sutra 1:1-3

When his thought ceases, checked by the exercise of discipline, He is content within the self, seeing the self through himself.

-- Bhagavad Gita 6:20