

Purusha and Prakriti: A Samkhya Philosophical Perspective on David Grossman's *A Horse Walks into a Bar*

Ribi Caroline Ravi*  

Abstract

This article interprets David Grossman's A Horse Walks into a Bar (2016) through the Samkhya concepts of Purusha and Prakriti. Samkhya, an ancient Indian philosophical system, defines Purusha as pure, passive consciousness and Prakriti as the material principle made up of the three gunas: Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. The study examines how these concepts illuminate Dovaleh Greenstein's character, since the character's consciousness, body, emotions, actions, and relationship with the audience show the interaction between Purusha and Prakriti. The analysis studies Dovaleh's experiences through the distinction between Purusha as witnessing consciousness and Prakriti as the domain of mental, bodily, and emotional activity, including the audience's responses. His wisdom reflects Sattva, his energetic, restless stage performance shows Rajas, and his experiences of trauma and suffering reveal the consequences of identifying with the material world. The study argues that Dovaleh's suffering intensifies through identification with his body, emotions, and remembered experiences, particularly following the death of a family member. Thus, Samkhya provides a philosophical structure for understanding Dovaleh's fractured identity, psychological suffering, and struggle between consciousness and experience. Using comparative close reading, the study also examines Avishai Lazar's mediation of Dovaleh's performance. Purusha is treated as a philosophical point of comparison, not as Dovaleh's personality or an agent controlling his body. The reading distinguishes psychic resilience from liberation and does not claim that Grossman intentionally adopts Samkhya.

Keywords: Samkhya, Purusha, Prakriti, Gunas, David Grossman, Hebrew Literature, Stand-up Comedy

Submitted: 18.07.2026

Revised: 25.09.2026

Accepted: 30.09.2026

Published 02.10.2026

*Ribi Caroline Ravi, PhD Research Scholar, Part-time, Reg No: 2422127022007, Assistant Professor, PG & Research Department of English, St. John's College, Palayamkottai - 627002, Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli - 627012, Tamil Nadu, India.

©2026 Ribi Caroline Ravi. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction, provided the original author and source are credited.

Introduction

Satischandra Chatterjee and Dhirendramohan Datta proclaim, “Philosophy in its widest etymological sense means ‘love of knowledge’. It tries to search for knowledge of itself, the world, and God. . . . Indian philosophy denotes the philosophical speculations of all Indian thinkers, ancient or modern, Hindus or non-Hindus, theists or atheists” (17, 19). Indian philosophy includes many traditions and schools of thought that have developed over thousands of years. Indian philosophy examines questions about existence, rebirth, knowledge, morality, and the nature of reality. Central to many of these philosophical traditions is the concept of Dharma, which plays an important role in shaping ethical behaviour, social order, and spiritual practice (Miller; “Dharma: The Social Order”).

Dr Swarupa Pal declares that “the system of Indian philosophy is divided into two broad classes, namely, Orthodox and Heterodox. Under Orthodox, there are six schools: Nyaya, Vaisesikas, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimansa, and Vedanta. Under the Heterodox, there are three schools, namely, Charvaka, Bouddha, and Jaina” (50). Nyaya, founded by Sage Gautama, focuses on logic, reason, and valid means of gaining true knowledge to end suffering.

In subsequent centuries, Indian education changed under the influence of other cultures, including Islamic culture during the medieval age. The establishment of several Madrasas broadened their subjects, including logic, the medical sciences, and juridical sciences, which were incorporated into the curriculum; they amalgamated with Indian traditional learning systems (Gupta and Maurya 2). This account concerns the wider history of education rather than the development of classical Samkhya. It does not establish a historical connection between Samkhya and Grossman; the comparison here is interpretive, not a claim of cultural transmission.

Vaisheshika, founded by Sage Kanada, uses naturalism and an early form of atomic theory to explain the physical universe. Indian educational philosophy has a very rich and historical background, which has linkages to historical Indian scriptures and traditions which have played a vital role in Indian society from time immemorial (Gupta and Maurya 2). Samkhya, founded by Sage Kapila, is an ancient dualistic school that teaches that reality divides into spirit, or *Purusha*, and matter, or *Prakriti*. Samkhya Yoga is a kind of metaphysical dualism: it posits just two fundamental categories of reality, purusa (‘self’, ‘consciousness’) and prakrti (‘nature’, ‘matter’). Suffering arises from confusing purusa with prakrti, and emancipation follows from correctly understanding purusa’s real nature and its difference from prakrti (Perrett 8).

Yoga, founded by Sage Patanjali, accepts Samkhya’s metaphysics but adds mental and physical disciplines, including meditation, to achieve liberation. Mimamsa, founded by Sage Jaimini, focuses on the ritual parts of the Vedas and the performance of sacred duties and sacrifices. Vedanta, founded by Sage Vyasa, centres on the philosophical lessons of the Upanishads and led to major sub-schools

like Advaita (non-dualism). Heterodox schools (Nastika) include Buddhism, Jainism, and Charvaka.

Samkhya and the relationship between Purusha and Prakriti

Samkhya is an ancient Indian school that was founded by Kapila. It is a dualistic school that is divided into *Purusha*, or consciousness, and *Prakriti*, or the foundation of being. Ivan Antic says, “*Sāmkhya* explains the essence of transcendence . . . *Purusha*, the human soul, as a principle of human consciousness,” which “always overcomes *Prakriti*, the emergent nature, and the body, whereas a soul is always either above or independent. . . the experience of existence because our consciousness is identified with the body of nature, with phenomena, like in a dream” (15).

According to Gerald James Larson and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, early references to Samkhya occur in traditions of law and politics, including Kautilya’s Arthashastra: “The Vedic corpus itself exhibits this tendency as do traditions of law (*nitisdstra*) and politics (*rajadharmā*), and it is in such environments that one finds some of the early references to *Samkhya*” (3). Larson and Bhattacharya further state that “When the term “*Samkhya*” becomes linked with a technical philosophical system, however, one has the impression that there has been a definite turn away from the older diffuse speculations and that philosophical Samkhya has become a parallel or sibling intellectual movement alongside Vaishesika and the early Buddhist schools, rather than a parental tradition to these schools” (11).

Raspoti Mandal describes *Prakriti* as follows:

Prakriti is without origin, and because it has no cause, it cannot be destroyed by any cause, making it eternal. It has no origin or cause; it is eternal, existing perpetually without beginning or end. It is the material cause of all effects. It does not depend on anything else for its existence, highlighting its autonomous nature. It does not derive energy from anything else, indicating its independence. It comprises three qualities: Sattva (goodness), Rajas (activity), and Tamas (inertia). These three qualities are inseparable from *Prakriti*, making it an integrated whole. (2). *Purusha* is an integral part of Samkhya that concerns a person’s consciousness. *Puruṣa* is the pure, passive consciousness or observer, unchanging and eternal. It represents the self or the spirit, which is beyond physical existence (Mandal 1). Mandal states:

The discussion of the relationship between qualities (gunas) and prakṛti reveals that the equilibrium of the three gunas represents prakṛti. Although the three gunas are mutually opposed, they work together to achieve the same purpose: the bondage and liberation of the *Purusha* (spirit). Just as a lamp’s oil and wick, though in opposition to fire, combine with it to produce light, similarly, the three gunas cooperate to manifest this world. (4)

Purusha and *Prakriti* are distinct principles whose conjunction makes experience possible; agency belongs to *Prakriti*. One’s nature and behaviour constitute a complex interplay of all three gunas. Sattva includes optimism, constructive action, and uprightness; Rajas involves activity and urges that may be

good or bad; and Tamas involves ignorance, inertia, and destruction (Baghel 57). Richa Bhagel describes *Purusha* as follows:

Purusha gets attracted to the elemental qualities of Prakriti. According to the elements' characters, Purusha's state of mind adapts and leads to a decision. This demonstrates the "what-why-how" questions of how an individual makes a decision based on the situation. (58)

The language of attraction and decision in this account requires qualification. Classical Samkhya locates decision in buddhi, an evolute of Prakriti; Purusha itself does not acquire a changing state of mind. The distinction matters when interpreting a character's motives: psychological activity cannot be attributed literally to an inactive witness (Ishvarakrishna, karikas 19–23).

Purusha is the soul, the Self, pure consciousness, and the only source of consciousness. . . . *Prakriti* is that which is created. It is nature in all her aspects. *Prakriti* literally means "creatix," the female creative energy... Unlike in Western religions, purusha did not create prakriti; in fact, if given a choice, purusha would prefer to have never met prakriti at all. But purusha is responsible for prakriti becoming animated, alive (*Yin Yoga*).

For the present analysis, the Samkhyakarika provides the primary doctrinal reference. Its account distinguishes witnessing from agency and places intellect within nature (Ishvarakrishna, karikas 19–23). The popular exposition quoted above is therefore read as an illustrative formulation, not as evidence that Purusha desires, chooses, or animates the world through an intentional act. Burley's scholarly study, which includes the text of the Samkhyakarika, also situates these concepts within a metaphysics of experience rather than a simple opposition between a person's soul and visible body (Burley).

Applying Samkhya to *A Horse Walks into a Bar*

Critical context and method

The existing criticism establishes why comedy and trauma must be considered together in this novel. Zhang Chenxiao reads Dovaleh's performance in relation to individual trauma and the collective wounds of Israeli history (12–16). Stephen Greenblatt's critical essay emphasises the disturbing comedy of the performance and the involvement of Avishai, a bereaved retired judge, as a spectator (Greenblatt). These approaches highlight the historical and interpersonal dimensions of suffering. A Samkhya reading adds a question about the distinction between witnessing and identification, while remaining accountable to these dimensions. The study uses comparative close reading of the passages quoted below. It considers diction, changes of tone, bodily gestures, and the movement between Dovaleh's speech and Avishai's narration before introducing philosophical terms. The comparison is heuristic: it tests what Samkhya helps the reader notice and where the novel resists its categories. It makes no claim of direct influence, and it does not equate an empirical character with Purusha. Mental attention, memory, judgment, and emotion remain within Prakriti; the narrator's act of witnessing is examined in

relation to, but distinguished from, the inactive witness of classical Samkhya.

Many studies have examined Samkhya and its divisions, *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. This study explores its use as a comparative interpretive framework and applies the concepts of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* to David Grossman's Booker Prize-winning novel, *A Horse Walks into a Bar*. David Grossman is an Israeli author who has written fiction, non-fiction, and children's literature. His works speak about child psychology, gerontology, Israeli life, trauma caused by wars and the Holocaust, and the Israeli landscape. His works also highlight Palestinian life. His famous works are *To the End of the Land*, *The Smile of the Lamb*, *See Under: Love*, *Falling out of Time*, *A Horse Walks into a Bar*, *More than I Love my Life*, etc. *A Horse Walks into a Bar* (HWIAB), 2016, originally published in Hebrew in 2014 by Ha'kibbutz Ha'meuchad, is one of his most famous works and portrays the life of a stand-up comedian who pours out his heart on stage. The researcher applies both *Purusha* and *Prakriti* to HWIAB, where *Purusha* provides a concept of witnessing against which the experiences of the comedian Dovaleh Greenstein may be examined, and *Prakriti* encompasses his mental activity, emotions, bodily actions, and the audience's reactions.

Dovaleh is the only son of a barber who sold fake jeans as genuine ones and a mother who survived the Holocaust. He is in his late fifties and performs stand-up comedy in Netanya. The novel follows his stand-up comedy act, through which he shares his life and engages the audience. The audience's reaction shifts as the novel progresses. Each person is there to enjoy the show and let go of their stress. Grossman describes their different reactions as the performance develops. The paper will analyse how the distinction between *Purusha* and *Prakriti* illuminates Dovaleh's experiences, including his mental life, his body, and his interaction with the audience.

Avishai Lazar and the narrative frame

Dovaleh's life reaches the reader through Avishai Lazar's narration. The retired judge watches his former childhood acquaintance while also confronting his own memories and bereavement. His account combines observation with recollection and evaluation; as a result, it offers no transparent access to Dovaleh's consciousness. This mediation is already visible in the passages discussed below: the childhood recollection on pages 24–25 belongs to Avishai, and the description of the performance on page 42 includes his recognition of its effect on the audience. Avishai's changing responses make witnessing an involved human activity. Neither his gaze nor Dovaleh's self-observation can therefore be equated with the unchanging *Purusha*.

Purusha as the observing consciousness

Pure consciousness is known as *Puruṣa*. This includes the subject, the knower, the soul, the self, and the spirit. It isn't the mind, the body, or the senses. The property of consciousness cannot be controlled by the material in question. It is the quiet observer, the liberated one by their own members, the impartial prophet, and the permanently tranquil. It is neither limited by space or time, nor by activity or

change (Biswas 1095). Dovaleh's recollections reveal an observant but limited understanding of his family. He was a good observer. He had been an observer from a young age. He observed his father and recognised his respectful love for his mother. Grossman reveals this in the passage: "But really touch her, the way a man touches a woman, even a little pat on the ass in the hallway, just a schemer – that I never saw him do" (8). Dovaleh offers several reasons for his father's respect for his mother. They all suggest that he has a consciousness that knows. Grossman presents them as rules: "Number One: Maybe he worshipped her so much, my dad, that he was afraid to touch her? . . . Maybe it was because of her Holocaust" (9). This reveals that he knew his mother and his father. This represents empirical interpretation, which belongs to buddhi within Prakriti. Purusha offers a distinct concept of witnessing; Dovaleh's observations do not establish that he possesses pure or omniscient awareness.

The repeated possibilities in Dovaleh's explanation of his father's conduct make uncertainty central to the passage. He reconstructs motives rather than simply knowing them. The movement from bodily intimacy to the memory of the Holocaust brings family history into an apparently comic account. Avishai's narration preserves this speculative speech, allowing the reader to see how Dovaleh makes meaning from partial childhood perceptions. The distinction between an observed memory and the interpretation attached to it is more productive here than identifying the character himself with Purusha.

Isolation and the idea of liberation

Kaivalyam characterises Puruṣa as emancipated. Here, isolation refers to the distinction of consciousness from nature, rather than social loneliness. Independence from the three gunas' shackles is the state that the self approaches. Pure and liberated from slavery, Puruṣa stands outside the three gunas (Biswas 1096). Dovaleh's social isolation invites comparison with this concept, but does not itself demonstrate emancipation. He was bullied throughout his life. He was bullied for his uniqueness in his neighbourhood and in his army training area. His experience of bullying made others stay away from him. He was beaten by his neighbourhood boys, but he paid them no attention and lived the way he wanted to. When he walked on his hands, his bodily skill served his concern for his mother. In Samkhya terms, this coordination and filial motivation belong to Prakriti rather than to the inactive Purusha. He acted strangely for her, so no one had the courage to look at his mother, the one truly affected. His tricks worked, as he became an object of mockery, and she was left alone. It also turned him into someone who could never be beaten. Grossman portrays his upside-down walk and his concern for his mother as follows:

But when I was on my hands, you know, no one beats up a kid walking upside-down. That's a fact. Let's say you want to slap an upside-down kid—well, how are you gonna get to his face? . . . Someone saw me on the street walking upside down behind my mom. And just so you understand—open parentheses –

that yours truly's job was to wait for her at five-thirty at the bus stop when she got back from her shift and walk her home and make sure she didn't get lost, didn't end up in places. . . And there was another bonus, which was that when I walked on my hands no one noticed her, see? She could walk around all day long with her face on the ground and the schmatte on her head and the rubber boots, and now suddenly no one looks at her all crooked like she always thinks they do, and the neighbours don't say anything about her, and men don't peek at her from behind shutters – they're all just looking at me all the time and she gets a free pass. (48, 49)

The upside-down walk redirects the neighbours' gaze from the mother to the child. Its comic visual form thus performs protective work, exposing him to attention while allowing her to pass. Dovaleh's direct address to his listeners also makes the remembered act a present appeal for understanding. Such resourcefulness depends on bodily vulnerability and attachment; it does not demonstrate freedom from either. The scene distinguishes survival through performance from *kaivalya*, which concerns discriminative knowledge rather than immunity to bullying.

Prakriti and Sattva in Dovaleh's life

Prakriti is nature, including the body, its emotions, and the material world that surrounds a person. It "is the balanced state of the three Gunas: Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. These three Gunas constitute the essence or components of *prakṛti*. Beyond this equilibrium of the three Gunas, there is nothing else that can be called *prakṛti*" (Mandal 667). Sattva represents goodness, Rajas represents action, and Tamas represents inertia. Suhani Sharma and others describe Sattva guna as follows:

Sattva guna is the "spiritual quality." A sattvic individual possesses qualities of wisdom which enable them to move forward on the path of self-growth and self-awareness. A sattvic individual undertakes activities without concern for personal gain. They understand nature and can deal with life's contradictions. They can also focus on the common good and view things from a larger perspective. This understanding of sattvics has been mentioned in one of the shlokas of the Bhagavad Gita: *kāryam ity eva yat karma niyatamkriyate 'rjuna saṅgam tyaktvā phalaṁ chaiva sa tyāgaḥ sāttviko mataḥ* (18:9). This allows them to look beyond their self-interest and redeem themselves from feelings of guilt, jealousy, and insecurity (164). It denotes that the Bhagavad Gita reflects the psychological account of sattvic qualities. Within this article's classical Samkhya framework, such qualities must be located in Prakriti. Sattva may illuminate the clarity or generosity of a particular response, but it is neither a virtue possessed by Purusha nor a permanent moral label for Dovaleh. The gunas coexist, so a character's conduct cannot be reduced to one of them.

Dovaleh is a wise man, but others never noticed his wisdom. In the childhood interaction recalled here, he encouraged Avishai to recognise value in his own experiences. Through Dovaleh, Avishai learned the value of his life. Whenever Avishai felt low, Dovaleh was always there to motivate him and lift his spirits. This

aspect of Dovaleh in Avishai's life is portrayed by Grossman as follows:

His questions led me to comprehend that I had a rare treasure: life experience. That my life, which up to then I had endured as a burdensome whirlwind of travel and frequent changes of apartments and schools and languages and faces, was an enormous adventure. I quickly discovered that exaggerations were warmly welcomed: no pinpricks would deflate my hot-air balloons, and it turned out that I could and should tell each story over and over again with embellishments and plot twists, some that were real and others that could have been. I did not recognize the enthusiastic, animated boy who emerged from me. I did not recognize the hotness in my temples, which burned with thoughts and images. And mostly I did not recognize the pleasure I took in the reward for my new talent: the eyes that grew wide with amazement and happiness and laughter. (24, 25)

This passage records Avishai's transformation as a storyteller. The repeated statements of non-recognition register his surprise at the animated boy he becomes, while the welcoming of embellishment makes their exchange an act of shared invention. Dovaleh's attentive response helps Avishai reinterpret a burdensome past as something narratable. The episode may be read through Sattva as an instance of increased clarity and confidence within experience. Its excitement and bodily warmth also prevent a neat separation from Rajas. The scene concerns interaction between two embodied subjects, rather than the disclosure of an isolated, pure consciousness.

Rajas and the energy of performance

Rajas represents the principle of activity and motion. In material objects, rajas drives their movement. In man, rajas causes activity, restlessness, and pain (Mandal b666). This is another guna that is predominantly present in Dovaleh. As a stand-up comedian, he uses this quality to express his emotions and engage the audience, which represents the material world. Throughout his act, when the audience feels bored and loses interest in the life he shares with them, he engages them through his violent activities and renews their interest. The actions of Dovaleh are portrayed by Grossman as follows:

He dances around the armchair, boxing at the air, jabbing, dodging, with a quick feint and punching again. 'Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee', he intones with a cantorial melody. From the audience come a few giggles and throat clearings, signs of relaxation in anticipation of delight. . . A lanky woman with straw hair at the edge of the room lets out a staccato burst of laughter, and he screeches to a stop and skewers her with his look: 'For fuck's sake, Netanyahu South! I say funeral and you laugh? That's your instinct around here?' The audience responds with more laughter, but he doesn't smile. He circles the stage, talking to himself and gesticulating. . . His voice suddenly reignites in a horrible roar and he runs across the stage with airplane-arms and then clap rhythmically over his head, goading the audience to join. . . Their eyes begin to

glaze over as they watch him, and by now I recognise the apparatus: he works himself to frenzy, and by doing so works them too. He inflames himself and ignites them too. (42)

The boxing gestures and invitation to clap first offer familiar cues for entertainment. Dovaleh then interrupts the audience's laughter by confronting it with the funeral, making the same response appear inadequate to the pain being narrated. Avishai's recognition of this process is part of the scene: the description interprets a reciprocal escalation between performer and spectators. Rajas helps name the restless movement of that exchange, but the abrupt shifts in tone reveal why activity alone cannot explain it. Bodily performance both enables disclosure and delays sustained attention to the remembered loss.

The Audience as part of *Prakriti*

Prakriti has been understood in several ways. It is said to be the originator of the universe, and it is also thought to be the material world. The researcher focuses on *Prakriti* as the material world. "Or we may say that *Prakriti* created the universe for the sake of itself, that is, for the sake of the removal of pain that really belongs to itself" (V. R. Gandhi 33). This reading relates to the audience who have come to see Dovaleh's performance. They come mainly to enjoy themselves, relax for a while, and let go of their pain. They want to see comedy, but they instead encounter Dovaleh's tragic life experiences. This makes them tense, and they begin to disperse one by one. This partly hurts Dovaleh, but he keeps the show going. Some even reveal their pain by shouting at Dovaleh. The excruciating pain of the audience and their departure is portrayed by Grossman as follows:

All at once, the club erupts. People stand up. Chairs are pushed back, an ashtray drops to the floor with a clang. Mumbles, grumbles, sighs of relief, plus then voices roll outside that do not belong here, unrestrained laughter, car doors slamming, groaning engines and screeching tyres. . . Five, eight. Ten. More and more, at least ten tables gone. It wasn't a coordinated move. Something ripened all at once in people, and they stream out like hurrying refugees, bottlenecking the door. The man with the thick shoulders who pounded his table before passes by me and grunts at his wife: 'Can you believe how he's using us to work out his hang-up?' She answers: Yeah, and what about the lokshen? And don't forget the used nylons! We got a full-on storytelling circle! (91)

The sequence of sounds and departures turns the audience's withdrawal into a collective event. Avishai's changing count registers his effort to follow it, while the accusation that Dovaleh is using the spectators exposes a disagreement over what listening should involve. The audience is therefore more than a material setting for his pain. Its members make judgements and respond to an uncomfortable demand for attention. Their embodied and mental responses can be discussed within *Prakriti*, without reducing other persons to objects or implying that Dovaleh alone possesses consciousness.

Identification and Suffering

Pains have a representational or intentional element: a pain in your left hand is some sense 'about' your left hand. But pains also seem to have a special phenomenal quality: the feeling of painfulness that is not exhausted by their representational character. If this is right, then the computational theory of cognition cannot hope to be a theory of the whole mind, since the whole mind includes mental states which are not purely intentional. Such states possess phenomenal properties or qualia (Perrett 7). The account of identification summarized by Dalvoy requires a doctrinal qualification: confusion concerns the attribution of mental and bodily activity to the self; it does not mean that an unchanging Purusha develops an illusion as a mental state. Classical Samkhya distinguishes witnessing consciousness from the activity of the gunas (Ishvarakrishna, *karikas* 19–23). This moment arrives in Dovaleh's life when he is informed that a death has taken place in his family. His account reveals an overwhelming identification with bodily distress, uncertainty, and the feared loss of a parent. The suffering makes him stand and walk upside down in the middle of the desert in the Gadana camp. He stays like that for a long time. When the driver's sister begins to ask about his family, he begins to vomit, unable to overcome his distress, but he does not know which one of his parents has died. Grossman portrays this response:

I yell at the driver to stop – now! I jump and puke my guts out on the front tyre. I vomit out everything that she fed me and it doesn't stop, there's more and more. My mother always holds my head when I throw up. First time in my life I'm throwing up on my own. (113)

Vomiting becomes an automatic bodily action tied to the remembered routine of maternal care. Food recalls what the mother has given him, and the absence of her supporting hand makes being alone physically immediate. Since he still does not know which parent has died, the narration holds together uncertainty and a sharply particular memory of dependence. Samkhya offers a vocabulary for distinguishing witnessing from these changing contents of experience; it cannot replace the bereavement, violence, and family history that give the distress its account cause. The passage provides no basis for claiming that Purusha itself has been damaged.

Conclusion

Throughout Dovaleh's life, the researcher has applied the Samkhya philosophy's integral divisions, Purusha and Prakriti. Through this application, the researcher has studied Dovaleh's consciousness, nature, emotions, bodily reactions, and the audience who came to watch his show. Purusha names the inactive witness, while Prakriti includes the changing mental and bodily processes through which a person experiences suffering. This distinction lets us examine the novel's portrayal of identification without attributing psychological change to Purusha. The ultimate breaking moment of Dovaleh arrives when he finds out which one of his parents died. He is unable to control himself and runs away erratically from the location of

the funeral. Through Avishai's mediation, the performance shows how remembering and being witnessed reshape the significance of bodily and emotional experience. Dovaleh's gestures, his protection of his mother, and his encouragement of Avishai remain acts within Prakriti. Their ethical value does not establish liberation, and the conclusion does not claim that Dovaleh attains kaivalya. The value of this comparative reading lies in separating the witness from the experiences narrated, while recognising that Grossman's novel locates human understanding in a vulnerable relationship between speaker and listener.

Works Cited

- Antic, Ivan. *SĀMKHYA: An Ancient Science of Nature and the Human Soul*. SAMKHYA PUBLISHING LTD, London, 2022.
- Bhagel, Richa. "Purusha and Prakruti of the Samkhyakarika Philosophy: Rationalising Decisions of an Individual in Synchronization with the Environment." *International Journal of Hinduism & Philosophy*, A Journal of the Bhagavad Gita Research Foundation (BGRF), November 2019.
- Biswas, Arpita. "The Notion of Purusha (Self) in Samkhya Philosophy: A Psychological Investigation." *International Journal of Progressive Research in Engineering Management and Science*, vol. 4, no. 8, August 2024, pp. 1086–1093.
- Burley, Mikel. *Classical Samkhya and Yoga: An Indian Metaphysics of Experience*. Routledge, 2007. <https://www.routledge.com/p/book/9780415394482>.
- Chatterjee, Satishchandra, and Dharendra Mohan Datta. "An Introduction to Indian Philosophy." *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 37, no. 19, September 1940, p. 529. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2017945>.
- Dalvoy Expert Team. "Purusha and Prakriti: Relationship Evaluation | UPSC Mains PHILOSOPHY-PAPER-I 2013." *Dalvoy - UPSC Preparation*, 4 January 2026, <https://www.dalvoy.com/en/upsc/mains/previous-years/2013/philosophy-paper-i/purusha-prakriti-relation>. Accessed 31 July 2026.
- "Dharma: The Social Order." *The Pluralism Project*, <https://pluralism.org/dharma-the-social-order>. Accessed 5 October 2026.
- Gandhi, V. R. *The Systems of Indian Philosophy*. Edited by K. K. Dixit, Shri Mahavira Jaina Vidyalaya, Bombay.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. "The King of the Bitter Laugh." *The New York Review of Books*, 20 April 2017, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2017/04/20/david-grossman-king-of-bitter-laugh/>.
- Grossman, David. *A Horse Walks into a Bar*. Translated by Jessica Cohen, Jonathan Cape, London, November 2016.
- Gupta, Aditya Kumar, and Sooraj Kumar Maurya. "Revivalism in Indian Educational Philosophy: Reinterpreting Ancient Wisdom for Modern Times." *Cogent Education*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2026, article 2584914. *Taylor & Francis Online*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2584914>.

- Ishvarakrishna. *Samkhyakarika with the Commentary of Gaudapada*. Translated by T. G. Mainkar. Digital text hosted by Rutgers University, <https://sites.rutgers.edu/edwin-bryant/wp-content/uploads/sites/169/2020/11/Samkhya-Karika-Gaudapada1.pdf>. Cited by karika number.
- Larson, Gerald James, and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya. *The Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, Volume 4: Samkhya, A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy*. Princeton UP, 2014.
- Mandal, Raspoti. "Prakṛti and Puruṣa in Sāṃkhya Philosophy: A Survey." *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, vol. 14, 2 February 2026.
- Miller, Christopher. "What Is 'Indian Philosophy?' – Dharma Traditions, Dharma Studies, and the Quest to Interpret South Asian Religions for Global Audiences." *Arihanta Institute*, 1 August 2025, <https://www.arihantainstitute.org/blog/101-what-is-indian-philosophy-dharma-traditions-dharma-studies-and-the-quest-to-interpret-south-asian-religions-for-global-audiences>. Accessed 26 July 2026.
- Pal, Swarupa. "Mind: Through the Lens of Some Schools of Indian Philosophy and Ayurveda." *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, vol. 9, no. 12, 2021, pp. 50–54. *Quest Journals*, <http://www.questjournals.org>.
- Perrett, Roy W. "Computationality, Mind and Value: The Case of Sāṃkhya-Yoga." *Asian Philosophy*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2001, pp. 5–14. *Taylor & Francis*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09552360120048807>.
- Sharma, Suhani, et al. "Sattva Guna as a Predictor of Wisdom and PWB." *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, vol. 4, issue 1, no. 75, October–December 2016, DIP: 18.01.054/20160401. <http://www.ijip.in>.
- Yin Yoga. "Purusha and Prakriti – Yin Yoga." *Yin Yoga*, 8 May 2024, <https://yinyoga.com/yinsights/purusha-prakriti>.
- Zhang Chenxiao. "A Study on the Trauma Theme in A Horse Walks into a Bar." *International Journal of Frontiers in Sociology*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2021, pp. 12–16. <https://doi.org/10.25236/IJFS.2021.030303>.