

CAN WE CONCEIVE OF NIRANVAYA-VINĀSA IN NYĀYA-VAIŚEṢIKA?

It is customary to speak of total destruction (niranvaya-vināsa) in the Buddhist Philosophy of momentariness (kṣaṇikavāda).¹ Buddhism does not believe in permanent substances which serve as substrata for qualities to appear in and disappear from. It believes that every object — mental and physical — is under the grip of momentary existence. We cannot see the same object at two moments or at two different places. It is different at different moments and at different places. The idea of an enduring substance amidst these changes is a myth. It is nothing but a conceptual device constructed by our mind but not a reality independent of our mind. Thus in the absence of an abiding substratum, every object is looked upon as a series of discrete and discontinuous point-instants (svalakṣaṇas).

Each point-instant is a unique particular. It does not derive any essence from the preceding one and it does not transmit its essence to the succeeding one. There is nothing common between them except that they are causally related. They are absolutely dissimilar (atyantavilakṣaṇa). The last moment of the seed series is supposed to be causally related to the first moment of the sprout series. But before the sprout series begins, the seed series gets destroyed and when it is destroyed, the Buddhists believe, it is destroyed totally without leaving any trace behind. The sprout series is not a seed series in a different form, but an absolutely different existent, the former having disappeared totally. It is this kind of destruction without leaving any trace behind that is called niranvaya-vināsa by the Buddhists.

Can we conceive of this type of destruction without leaving any trace behind in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika? The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika distinguishes between two types of substances—the eternal and the non-eternal. The former viz., souls, atoms etc., have no beginning and end and hence they are construed as eternal. All those that are produced e.g., cloths, pots, trees, mountains

etc., are looked upon as destructible and hence non-eternal. Thus whereas Buddhism believes that everything is subject to total destruction, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika while admitting that certain things are subject to destruction, accepts certain others as indestructible. It is for this reason that Śāṅkara remarks that the Vaiśeṣikas are semi-destroyers (*ardha-vaināśikas*) as against the Buddhists whom he condemns as total-destroyers (*sarva-vaināśikas*)². Commenting on Śāṅkara's observation Vācaspati Miśra elucidates that the Vaiśeṣikas are called semi-destroyers because while agreeing that the atoms, ether, time, space, soul and mind and the categories, universal, particularity and inherence and also some qualities as eternal, they believe that the destruction of other objects involves total destruction (*niranvaya-vināśa*)³.

Thus no less a person than Vācaspati Miśra, applied the term *niranvaya-vināśa* to the destruction of objects in Vaiśeṣika. But is he justified in using that term in respect of destruction in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika? Suppose we take out all the threads one after another from a piece of cloth, the cloth no doubt disappears, but does it disappear totally without leaving any trace behind (*niranvaya-vināśa*)? Do its parts viz., threads not remain intact? In fact another cloth can be woven from these threads. In so far as its parts (cause) remain intact, though the effect (whole) disappears, it appears that we have no basis to speak of *niranvaya-vināśa* in respect of destruction according to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. It is not total destruction (*niranvaya-vināśa*) but partial destruction (*sānvaya*). In fact the writers of Nyāya tradition are totally opposed to the Buddhist view of *niranvaya-vināśa*.

The Nyāya-Sūtra refers to the Buddhist stand-point that objects are produced out of non-existence since there is no origination for an effect without the destruction of its cause.⁴ The seed has to disappear totally before the sprout comes into existence for as long as the seed remains as the seed, the sprout cannot come into existence. It is this destruction (of the seed) which is a kind of non-existence that is the cause of the sprout. Attacking the position of the Buddhists, Vātsyāyana observes it is true that the seed gets destroyed before the sprout comes into existence, but the destruction of the

seed does not mean its total annihilation. It only means that when the arrangement of the parts of the seed gets disrupted owing to an unseen force (*adr̥ṣṭa*) the previous arrangement of the parts that originated the seed disappears which results in the destruction of the object (seed) born of that arrangement and they undergo another arrangement from out of which the sprout is produced. The point is that destruction is destruction of the seed-whole and not its parts. The parts of seed continue to exist even after the destruction of the seed which subsequently originate another whole viz., sprout through a different arrangement⁵ Uddyotakara contends that if (non-existence) destruction itself were to be the cause, anything can be produced from the destruction of anything⁶. Vācaspati Miśra observes that if a paddy-seed is destroyed totally and destruction as such is the cause the destruction of the paddy-seed may give rise to a barley-sprout in so far as there is no difference between the destruction of the paddy-seed and the barley-seed⁷. Thus there is a clear suggestion in the Nyāya works that destruction of objects is not total.

One has to steer clear of this predicament if one wants to ascribe *niranvaya-vināśa* to the destruction of objects in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika.

Though we cannot conceive of *niranvaya-vināśa* in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika in the same sense in which we perceive it in Buddhism, there is a sense in which we can conceive of it in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika without absurdity. Amalānanda, a commentator on *Bhāmātī* makes efforts to throw light on the issue. He observes that the *satkāryavādin*, according to whom an effect is non-different from its material cause is not open to the charge of total destruction (*niranvaya-vināśa*) for though the effect (cloth) is destroyed it can still be supposed to persist in the form of its material cause (threads). On the other hand the Vaiśeṣika, who accepts essential difference between the material cause and its effect, has to admit total destruction of the effect (*niranvaya-vināśa*) when it is destroyed.⁸

Thus when a cloth (effect) disappears after its dissolution into threads, the Sāṅkhya can claim that the cloth is not destroyed totally but exists in the form of threads for according to its doctrine of *satkārya* the cloth is nothing but threads in

a different form. Even when threads are burnt to ashes, the satkāryavādin can argue in support of the continuity of the cloth in the form of ashes and even if ashes disappear, it does not imply total destruction of the cloth, for he can claim its existence in the form of **sattva**, **rajas** and **tamas** (prakṛti) since every product in the ultimate analysis is nothing but an aspect of the primordial Prakṛti. It is the fundamental tenet of the satkāryavādin that there is no destruction for the existent and origination for the non-existent⁹.

But according to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika doctrine of essential difference between the material cause and effect (asatkāryavāda) threads (cause) and cloth (effect) are different entities each with a distinct substance (**dravya**) and qualities (guṇāḥ) of its own. On this assumption when a cloth gets destroyed, even if threads remain intact, it does not imply the continuance of cloth in any form. The cloth with its substance and qualities is supposed to have been destroyed, and an object is nothing more than its substance and qualities. Thus when both the substance and qualities of an object get destroyed, we are logically constrained to conclude that it is destroyed (totally) without leaving any trace behind. When threads continue to exist after the destruction of the cloth, they exist simply as threads i.e., as substances essentially different from cloth and not as the traces of cloth and hence the existence of threads does not imply the existence of cloth even as the existence of bricks, after the demolition of a building, does not imply the existence of a building. On similar grounds, it must be held, that the eternal existence of the ultimate constituents of a cloth viz., atoms, does not mean the existence of the cloth in any form since the cloth and atoms are totally different kinds of substances. In contrast to Sāṅkhya the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika swears by the maxim that there is origination of the non-existent¹⁰ and (total) destruction of the existent.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika subscribes to the view that an effect is not pre-figured in its material cause (asatkārya) and hence when it comes into being, it originates afresh (ārambha). Prior to the existence of cloth, there were no traces of it in the threads. Accordingly we must assume that both the substance (**dravya**) and qualities (guṇāḥ) of the cloth were not

pre-existent in the threads (samavāyi-kāraṇa). Kaṇāda observes that substance and quality resemble in producing their congeners¹¹. Elucidating the idea he states that substance produces another substance and qualities produce another quality.¹² We may, therefore, conclude that the substance of the cause (threads) produces the substance of the effect (cloth) and the qualities of the cause (threads) produce the qualities of the effect (cloth). Thus when the cloth comes into existence owing to causal operation it must be supposed as a distinct entity with substance and qualities different from those of threads. The followers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika observe that the cloth which originates in threads subsists in them by the relation of inherence (samavāya) — a unique relation which enables distinct realities to exist indistinguishably without losing their identity^{1,3}. Though threads and cloth are distinct entities they appear as one owing to the relation of inherence that glues them intimately so as to mislead us to the view that they are not two but one. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika distinguishes between two types of reals viz., 1) those that can be conjoined and disjoined (e.g., the table and the table cloth) and 2) those that cannot be conjoined and disjoined (e.g., substance and its qualities or threads and the cloth) though distinct. The table and the table cloth can be conjoined and disjoined and they remain distinct both in their conjunction and disjunction. But the substance (**dravya**) and qualities (**guṇāḥ**) or threads (parts) and cloth (whole) cannot be conjoined and disjoined. The fact that substance and its qualities or threads and the cloth cannot be conjoined or disjoined does not mean that they are non-distinct. It is the relation of inherence between them that precludes us to perceive them as distinct. Praśastapāda observes that things that are united by inherence are in the relation of the container (ādharma) and the contained (ādheya).¹¹ In the case of threads and the cloth, threads are the container and the cloth is the contained since the latter subsists in the former by the relation of inherence. When the contained is destroyed, the existence of the container cannot be construed as the trace of the contained any more than the existence of the curds cup after the curds is eaten, can be taken as the trace of the curds. Similarly when the

cloth gets destroyed owing to the separation of the threads, the existence of the threads will not imply the continuity of the cloth in any form. It implies total destruction so far as the cloth is concerned. This is the inevitable outcome of its doctrine of essential difference between cause and effect.

In fact the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika contends that even if a single thread is added to or removed from a particular piece of cloth woven from a certain number of threads, it involves total destruction of that cloth. The cloth that exists after the addition or subtraction of a thread is construed as a totally different piece of cloth. The point is that the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika looks upon every effect-substance as a whole (avayavin) made of parts (avayavas). What is popularly known as the material cause or the matter or substance from which an effect is produced, such as threads in respect of cloth, is looked upon as the parts (avayavas) and the effect substance (cloth) produced in them is called the whole (avayavin) by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. Similarly in respect of pot, the pot-halves (kapāla) are the parts and the pot is the whole. The whole so produced simply inheres in its parts without any change in its essence. It is fundamental to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system that every whole (effect-substance)¹⁵ is a distinct object possessing (1) precisely those number of parts it possesses, (2) that particular arrangement of its parts and (3) those particular qualities it is characterised by. If there is any addition to or subtraction from its parts or change in the arrangement of its parts or in its qualities by way of the disappearance of the existing qualities and the emergence of new qualities the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika believes that the former whole (effect-substance) disappears totally and a new whole comes into existence.

Viśvanātha observes that if one thread is added to a cloth produced from a certain number of threads it results in the destruction of the previous cloth.¹⁶ Thus when we add one thread to a cloth produced by conjunction of ten threads it must be held that with the addition of the eleventh thread the original conjunction between the ten threads that produced the previous cloth gets destroyed which results in the destruction of the previous cloth in accordance with the rule that the destruction of *asamavāyi-kāraṇa* entails the destruction of

the whole (**avayavin**) born of that conjunction.¹⁷ Subsequently when the eleventh thread is added, a new type of conjunction between the first ten threads and the eleventh thread occurs and this results in the emergence of a new piece of cloth (whole). Similarly when a single thread is removed from a cloth produced from a certain number of threads, it should be understood that the previous cloth (whole) disappears totally.¹⁸ Udayana observes that when a pot is perforated with a needle, the pot which is a whole that existed in the parts prior to perforation disappears totally and the perforated pot is looked upon as altogether a different whole. The pot having lost a part of its body, however minute the part lost may be, cannot be the same whole.¹⁹ The whole is a single entity that pervades the entire substratum of its parts (*vyāpyavṛtti*) and hence it can never dispense with any of its parts if its identity is to remain undisturbed. A whole does not disappear in parts. Either it disappears totally or it exists intact.

Again if there is any change in the arrangement of the parts of a particular product, it involves total destruction of that whole just as the change in the arrangement of alphabets 'DGO' from 'GOD' to 'DOG' involves the disappearance of the word 'GOD'. It is obvious that a bangle and a necklace which are distinct wholes require different kinds of arrangement of parts of gold. If a woman possessing bangles wants a necklace to be made out of them the gold-smith melts the gold in the form of bangles which leads to the dissolution of the arrangement (of the parts of gold) that originated bangles and the dissolution of that arrangement necessarily leads to the destruction of the wholes viz., the bangles produced out of it.²⁰ When a bangle is destroyed thus, the parts of gold do exist but the existence of the parts of gold does not imply the existence of the bangle in any form just as the existence of threads after the dissolution of the cloth does not imply the existence of the cloth — the two being essentially different entities. The bangle which is a whole must, therefore, be supposed to have been destroyed totally without leaving any trace behind (*niranvaya-vināś*). Subsequently, when the parts of gold are arranged in a different way conducive to the emergence of necklace, the latter originates.

Similarly change of certain qualities in a whole leads to the total destruction of that whole. The Vaiśeṣikas believe that earth substances undergo changes in certain qualities under the impact of heat corpuscles (pāka). For instance, when an unbaked earthen pot is put in a kiln, its colour changes from black to red under the impact of heat. The Vaiśeṣikas hold the view that what looks like a simple change of colour from black to red, the pot in essence remaining the same, involves total destruction of the unbaked pot and the origination of another pot possessing red colour. They believe that the unbaked pot in the course of its baking gets resolved into its ultimate constituents (atoms) under the first impact of heat corpuscles. A second impact of heat corpuscles acting on the decomposed atoms destroys their black colour. A third impact produces red colour in those atoms. Subsequently the atoms that acquired red colour conjoin in the order of dyads, triads etc., and originate the pot with red colour.²¹ The Vaisesikas are firm that we cannot explain the change of colour from black to red in the entire body of the pot if the destruction of an unbaked pot is not assumed. The view of the Vaiśeṣika is the inevitable outcome of its dictum that the quality of the effect substance is determined by the quality of the cause-substance.²² This is clear from the fact that if threads are white the cloth is white and if they are blue the cloth is also blue. In accordance with this principle it must be admitted that the colour of the pot (whole) is determined by the colour of its parts. If the parts are black, the pot is also black and if they are red, the pot is also red. The point is that we cannot get a red pot from the combination of parts that are black. The colour of the parts of the unbaked pot being black, their conjunction can never explain the emergence of a pot which is red. A red pot is possible only by (the conjunction of) parts that are red. But as long as the black pot exists as a whole intact we cannot account for the change of colour in the (ultimate) constituents of the black pot and unless it is assumed that the ultimate constituents themselves have turned red we cannot explain the red colour of the pot after baking. Thus if we are to account for the red colour of the pot after baking, we must admit the

dissolution of the unbaked pot into its ultimate constituents, the disappearance of black colour from them, the emergence of red colour and their reconstitution in the form of a red pot all occurring under the impact of heat corpuscles.²³

Similar explanation holds good in respect of qualitative changes in all the earth-products. For instance, a mango fruit which is green, hard and sour when it is not ripe at time 't₁' turns yellow, soft and sweet after it becomes ripe at 't₂' the Vaiśeṣikas believe that the mango which was green, hard and sour gets destroyed totally and the mango which is yellow, soft and sweet is altogether a different one (whole).

Thus there seems to be no incongruity in ascribing total destruction (niranvaya-vināśa) in respect of the destruction of effect-substances in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. This is the inevitable outcome of its views that (1) the effect-substances are wholes (avayavins) that originate afresh in their parts and subsist in them and (2) that the parts and the whole are essentially different entities. The followers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika challenging the Buddhist notion of niranvaya-vināśa, could not, however, protect themselves from the 'perils of abrupt recoil.'

C. Ramaiah

S. V. University

NOTES

1 Stcherbatsky—Buddhist Logic, Vol. I. p. 80

2 Śāriraka-bhāṣya on 2.2.18

3 Vaiśeṣikāḥ khalu ardha-vaināsikāḥ, te hi paramāṇv-ākāśa-dik-kalātma-manasām ca sāmānya-viśeṣa-samavāyanām ca guṇānām ca keśāṁcin-nityatvamabhyupetya śeṣānām niranvaya-vināśam upanyanti, tena te' Ardha-vaināsikāḥ. Bhamatī on 2.2.18.

4 Nyāya Sutra 4.1.14

5 Nyāya Bhāṣya 4.1.18; 3.2.17

6 Nyāya-vārttika 4.1.18

7 Nyāya-vārttika-tātparyatīkā 4.1.18

8 Abhede hi kārya-kāraṇayoḥ kāryanaśepi kāraṇarūpeṇa t'ṣṭhati iti na niranvaya-vināśaḥ; bhede tu niranvayaḥ iti. Kalpataru on Bhamatī on 2.2.18.

9 Yoga Bhāṣya on 4.12; Bhagavad Gīta, 2.16.

- 10 Non-existent stands for the prior-non-existent entity (prāg-abhāva) but not an unreal entity like sky-lotus (atyantābhāva).
- 11 Vaiśeṣika Sūtra 1.1.9.
- 12 Ibid., 1.1.10.
- 13 It is significant to note that the inherent cause continues to exist intact even after the emergence of the effect constituting the substratum for the effect to subsist in. The peculiar feature of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system is that it is not only qualities (guṇāḥ) actions (kriyā) etc., but also all the effect-substances require a substratum to reside in (praśastapāda Bhāṣya, p. 19). The Buddhists believe that the cause gets destroyed totally before the effect comes into existence.
- 14 Praśastapāda Bhāṣya, p. 324.
- 15 Effects need not be substances like cloths. They may be qualities (guṇāḥ) or action (kriyā) or destruction (dharma).
- 16 Muktāvalī on verses 112-113.
- 17 Dinakarī, p. 43.
- 18 Yekavayavavibhāge tu dravyanivrttau śeṣāṇi dravyāni dravyāntaram ārabhante (iti nikriyanam ārambhah.) Nyāya-Varttika 4-1-21.
- 19 Kirāṇāvalī, p. 188; Upaskara on 7.1.6.
- 20 The arrangement (of the parts) that gives rise to a particular whole is called asamavāyi-Kāraṇa. There is a rule that the destruction of asamavāyi-kāraṇa leads to the destruction of the whole born of it. (Asamavāyi-kāraṇa-nāśasya dravya nāśajanakatvāt Dinakarī, p. 42).
- 21 Praśastapāda-Bhāṣya, p. 107
- 22 Vaiśeṣika Sūtra 2-1-24.
- 23 The Nyāya, however, does not accept the Vaiśeṣika view. It contends that the change of qualities under the impact of heat (pāka) takes place in an object that structurally remains the same. The Nyāya view is called pīṭharapāka-vāda. The Vaiśeṣika view according to which qualitative changes take place under the impact of heat in the individual atoms is called pīlupāka-vāda.