AN EXAMINATION OF THE SĀṀKHYA ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF PURUṢA

The Sāṁkhya philosophy has advanced a number of arguments for the existence of *puruṣa*. These arguments are, no doubt, important in the context of the Sāṁkhya philosophy because by the help of these arguments the Sāṁkhya philosopher attempts to establish one of the basic metaphysical entities in his philosophy, namely, *Puruṣa* or the pure conscious subject. In what follows, I shall make an examination of these arguments. These arguments are presented in different forms by different Sāṁkhya writers. For the purpose of authentic presentation, I shall take up these arguments as advanced by Īśvarakṛṣṇa in his *Sāṁkhya kārikā*. However, these arguments of Īśvarakṛṣṇa will be also taken up along with the commentaries of both Gauḍapāda and Vācaspati Miśra. The arguments are as follows :

Saṁ ghātaparārthatvāt, triguṇā diviparyayā dadhiṣṭhānāt   I

Puruṣo'sti, bhoktṛbhāvāt, kaivalyārthaṁ pravṛtteṣca   II

The translation[1] of the above passage is stated as follows : " Because all composite objects are for another's use, because there must be absence of the three attributes and other properties, because there must be control, because there must be some one to experience and because there is a tendency towards isolation or final beatitude, therefore, the Spirit must be there."

The Sāṁkhya, like other systems, aims at liberation or final release. It recommends a discriminative knowledge of the *Vyakta*, *Avyakta* and *Puruṣa* (*Kārikā*-2) which would put an end to all sorts of sufferings and the cessation of all sufferings is itself the final beatitude (*Kārikā*-44)[2]. *Vyakta* being evident does not require any further rational support. Arguments are already advanced for the existence of *Avyakta* (*Kārikā*-15). Now further reasons are adduced for the existence of *Puruṣa*. Despite its orthodoxy, Sāṁkhya does not defend its doctrine by an appeal to *śruti* but always attempts to explain the system by independent

logical arguments.[3] This is, no doubt, a merit on the part of the system. But, as we shall see, all the arguments (at least in so far as the existence of *Puruṣa* is concerned) are faulty because of certain fundamental linguistic confusions.[4]

This first argument (*Saṁghātaparārthatvāt*) suggests that all composite objects (*Saṁghātas*) are for another. Here the word ʻ another ʼ (*para*) is to be understood in an absolute sense. That means, the *para* must be necessarily non-composite. Since *Prakṛti* is composite in character, it is meant for some non-composite being which is no other than *Puruṣa*. Both Gauḍapāda as well as Vācaspati, while commenting on this argument, talk about the analogy of bed and its user.[5] Gauḍapāda says that as the bed which is composed of the bedding, props, cords, a covering cloth of cotton and a pillow is meant to serve the purpose of another and not of its own, so also the composition of *Mahat* and the rest is for the sake of *Puruṣa*. But here one important objection is anticipated by Vācaspati (*Kaumudī*-121). The user of the bed is a composite psycho-physical organism and hence a non-composite *Puruṣa* need not be inferred from the composite character of *Mahat* and the rest. Vācaspati himself replies to this objection by pointing out that *regressus ad infinitum* (*anavasthā*) would result if something composite is inferred from another composite thing. Logically one is bound to admit from the composite object, the non-composite Spirit (*asaṁghāta Puruṣa*).

The purpose of this argument is to prove the existence of *Puruṣa*. *Puruṣa* is argued to be independently existing apart from *Mahat*, etc. But the purpose of the argument fails when it merely states a formal truth, *viz.*, something composite cannot logically be meant for another composite but must ultimately be meant for something non-composite. *Regressus ad infinitum* is a formal fallacy which does not warrant anything of material significance. Supposing that the composite things of the world are meant for another composite being then at once a question may legitimately be asked in the formal level about the basis of that composite being. But if one cuts down this possibility of questioning from the very beginning just by defining the user of composite things as a non-composite being then every thing goes alright. This is formally cogent since the twist in the language is done by

verbal manipulation. But this, it seems to us, is mere avoidance of further questions and not really proving non-composite Spirit as existing. It appears that this argument is due to the confusion of material and formal levels.

The second argument (*Trigunādiviparyayāt*) says that *Puruṣa* must exist because it is the reverse of that which has the three attributes and the rest. From the nature of the non-composite character of Spirit it necessarily follows, argued Vācaspati, that *Puruṣa* must be devoid of the three attributes and the rest (*Kaumudī*-121). In *Kārikā*-11 *Prakṛti* is said to be *trigunam* (of three constituents), *avivekī* (non-distinguishable) *viṣaya* (objective), *sāmānya* (common), *acetanam*(non-intelligent) and *prasavadharmi* (productive). *Puruṣa* is explained as just the reverse of all these, *i.e.*, it is *nirguna* (devoid of three constituents), *vivekī* (distinguishable), *aviṣaya* (non-objective), *asāmānya* (uncommon), *cetanam* (intelligent) and *aprasavadharmi* (nonproductive).

It is not clearly an independent argument. Following Vācaspati the best that one can attribute to this argument is that *Puruṣa* being non-composite is also devoid of three attributes and the rest as when somebody is not a ' Brāhmana ' he cannot be a ' Katha '. We would not like' here to argue out the thesis whether being devoid of three attributes and the rest are necessary accompaniments of *Puruṣa* being non-composite. The main point is whether a non-composite *Puruṣa* being devoid of three attributes and the rest exists. Unless some further light is thrown in this direction the argument does not seem to serve any purpose. It may at best be said as a corollary to the first one which is already shown to be untenable.

Some times it is argued that *Puruṣa* being *vivekī*, *avisaya* and *cetana* cannot be neutral (*mādhyastha*) (*Kārikā*-19) and indifferent (*udāsīn*) (*Kārikā*-20)[6]. By differently interpreting these three terms, however, it is pointed out that these are quite consistent with neutrality and indifference[7]. But all these debates appear to be quite pointless in so far as the existence of *Puruṣa* is concerned. How does the absence of the three properties and the rest prove *Puruṣa's* existence?

The next argument (*Adhiṣṭhānāt*) argues that as a chariot is controlled by a charioteer so also the *triguṇātmikā* (*i.e., Pradhāna*) requires an *adhiṣṭhāna* (*i.e., Puruṣa*). Gaudapāda suggests that chariot can function only in so far as it is controlled and run by a charioteer. *Pradhāna* functions only when controlled by the *Puruṣa.*[8] Now here it can be pointed out that the charioteer as a controller is a living person who is an aggregate and is not free from pleasure, pain and delusion. But how can *Puruṣa* of the Sāṁkhya system which is already said to be noncomposite and devoid of three attributes, etc. be said as controller ? Vācaspati, anticipating this objection replies in his usual manner saying that if the controller is *saṁghāta* or *triguṇātmaka* then it will lead to *regressus ad infinitum.* Hence in order to avoid this difficulty *Puruṣa* must be ' beyond the three attributes and independent ' (*Kaumudī*-122).

All this shows that this argument too like the first argument suffers from the confusion of formal and material levels. It is argued that the controller of unitelligent *Pradhāna* must be pure intelligent *Puruṣa.* This is, no doubt, formally true. If somebody argues that matter, by definition, is moved by non-matter, *i.e.,* mind then this formal reasoning in hardly disputable since there is nothing to dispute. But the Sāṁkhya is not at all interested in exhibiting this formal reasoning. It has the further tendency to bring out the implication that this formal reasoning justifies the existence of pure intelligent *Puruṣa* as a matter-of-fact. And it is precisely here that the whole argument becomes weak.

The fourth argument (*Bhoktṛbhāvāt*) attempts to establish *Puruṣa* as enjoyer. Sāṁkhya suggests that the different things of the nature, which are the products of the *triguṇātmikā pradhāna,* are neither aggreeable or disaggreeable as they contain within themselves pleasure, pain and delusion. But to whom are they aggreeable or disaggreablee ? Who is to experience or enjoy them ? Sāṁkhya here insists that the experiencer or enjoyer cannot be *Buddhi,* etc. since they themselves are all composed of pleasure, pain and delusion. Here the ultimate experiencer or enjoyer must be the pure Spirit which is said to be devoid of pleasure, pain and delusion. To put it in another way, from the enjoyable characteristics (*Bhoktṛbhāva*) of the world the enjoyer (*Bhoktā*) is inferentially deduced. If a thing is enjoyable

then it is argued, there must be somebody who is to enjoy it. Enjoyability, it is made out, necessarily implies enjoyer and hence if we grant the things of the world to be enjoyable then we are constrained to admit that there must be some (other than things or the world, of course) who is to enjoy these things (either actually or possibly). This inference is, however, not un-challangeable. Since it is not self-contradictory to suppose that these things of the world are enjoyable though there is none to enjoy. But even if the two expressions, 'enjoyable' and 'enjoyer' are not logically related like that of 'enjoyed' and 'enjoyer' the Sāṁkhyaites insist on an inference of 'enjoyer' from 'enjoyable'. This shows that according to them these words are formally relative and therefore belong to one type. As one correlates 'enjoyable' and 'enjoyer' in such manner the correlation between 'enjoyable' and 'scrutiniser' for example, is not possible. Supposing one agrees with the Sāṁkhya about this formal relationship between these two expressions then also the situation is not much improved. Because materially at least the relation is not proved to be valid. Here the question may be raised why at all the Sāṁkhyaites insist on a definite inference from the enjoyable to enjoyer? Vācaspati argues that the observer is to be inferred from the visible[9]. This is alright in so far as 'observer' and 'visible' are derived from the common linguistic root 'see'. But this linguistic commonness need not lead to the factual conclusion in which Sāṁkhya is interested. I think, the Sāṁkhyaites are here victim to linguistic confusion when they press from the visibility of the things the visualiser or observer. There is merely a common origin between the two terms so far as syntax is concerned. It does not indicate anything regarding matter-of-fact.

Moreover, as it has been pointed out elsewhere,[10] the Sāṁkhya philosophers, in this context, are also victims to certain illusions of language when they say that pleasure, pain, etc. lie in different objects of the world. One distinguishes between two expressions such as 'He gave me money' and 'It gave me pleasure'. In the first case, it is perfectly meaningful to say that he has some amount of money and he gave it to me. That means his giving money to me implies that he had money with

him. Whereas ' It gave me pleasure ' does not likewise mean that it had pleasantness with it. Since in both the cases one uses ' gave ' the Sāṁkhya philosophers are misled to argue that meaning in both the cases must be understood in the same way, *i.e.*, ' giving pleasure ' is analogous to ' giving money '. The man who gives money must have possessed money prior to giving it. Similarly the object which gives pleasure must have possessed pleasure in some way, however, mystical it may be. From all these it may be well seen that there is much oddity in ascribing pleasure, pain, etc. to the things of the world.

The last argument (*Kaivalyārthaṁ Pravṛtteḥ*) does not also seem to have any strength. It says that because " there is a tendency in all scriptures and among all intelligent persons towards ' Isolation ', there must be something beyond (pleasure, etc., and hence) the Great Principle and the rest, and this is the Spirit ".[11] Now one can immediately retort by following Kant's refutation of ontological argument that merely because there is a tendency for ' Isoloation ' this does not necessarily prove that there is actually a state of ' Isolation ' which is said to be the state of the *Puruṣa*. From the idea of ' Isolation ' the existence of ' Isolation ' need not be validly inferred. In fact this argument unlike its predecessors even fails to keep up the formal tone and thereby ends in absurdity.

Thus all these arguments which are advanced by the Sāṁkhya philosophers fail to establish the existence of *Puruṣa*. Their failure is mainly because they have become victims to the illusions of both logic and language. While they seek to prove the actual existence of *Puruṣa* they employ most of the arguments which are merely formal in character and do not yield any conclusion regarding matter-of-fact. Further the type of *Puruṣa* that is sought to be established by means of these arguments may not be the type of *Puruṣa* which is described in other places (*kārikā*-18, 19 and 20). But to go into that is, I think, beyond the scope of the present paper.*

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NOTES

1. The translation is made by Prof. G. N. Jha.

2. *Jñānena cā'pavargo viparād iṣyate bandhaḥ*-īśvarakṛṣṇa *Jñānam mukti-Bhikṣu* (*Sāmkhya Pravacana Bhāṣya*, 3/23).

3. *Na hyāpta vacannabhāse nipatanti mahāsurāh*-Aniruddha in his *Vṛtti.*

4. I have analysed else where the arguments for *Satkāryavāda* and the arguments for the existence of *Prakṛti* and have come to the conclution that in both the cases the arguments are due to faulty logic and certain fundamedtal linguistic confusions. *Vide* : " Satkāryavāda and Asatkāryavāda ". *The Journal of Philosophical Association*. Vol. IX, No 35. 36, July-October, 1962; " Vācaspati on Satkāryavāda ", *Bharati-Utkal Univ. J. Humn.* Vol. 3, No. 5, Dec. 1969 and " Sāmkhya Arguments for Prakṛti ", *Bharati-Utka Univ. J. Humn.* Vol, I, 1967.

5. *Vide : Tattva-Kaumudī* (120) and Gaudapāda Bhāṣya on *Kārikā*-17.

6. Prof. D. D. Vadekar : " The Sāmkhya Arguments for Puruṣa " *The Philosophical Quarterly*, (Amalner) Vol. XXXII, No 4, Jan. 1960, pp. 252-59.

7. Jagannath Das : " Logical and Metaphysical Arguments For Puruṣa In The Sāmkhya '' *The Philosophical Quarterly* (Amalner) 1961, pp. 187–92.

8. *Puruṣa Adhiṣṭhitam Pradhānam Pravartate* (Gaudapāda Bhāṣya on *Kārikā*-17).

9. ' *Bhoktṛbhāvāt dṛṣṭabhāvāt,........iti arthaḥ* ' *Kaumudī*-124.

10. See my " Sāmkhya Arguments For Prakṛti " *op. cit.,* p. 52.

11. ' *Tasmāt kaivalyārtham ....ātmeti sidham* ' *Kaumudī*-125.

* Here I have adopted some of the materials of my earlier paper " Sāmkhya arguments for Puruṣa " read and discussed in History of Philosophy Section of the 44th session of the Indian Philosophical Congress held at Poona in 1970.