

Svarajya Siddhih: Attaining Self-dominion

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(Continued from the July issue)

WHEN THE EQUILIBRIUM of the three *gunas* is disturbed by the process of creation, modifications like *mahat* take place. This is not created by *pradhāna* because it is not conscious and is incapable of creating the universe. It is not conscious itself and does not have any other conscious entity as its basis. It is normally seen in the world that inert things like clay and gold appear to be active by coming into contact with a conscious entity like the potter or the goldsmith. The potter rotates the potter's wheel and the clay appears to move. Similarly, the goldsmith melts the gold and it seems to move or flow. This semblance of activity is brought about by a conscious person, who is the basis of these actions. Seeing this, if we conclude that gold or clay have the power to move, it will be mere imagination.

Objection: On seeing its calf, milk oozes out from the udder of a cow, though the udder is not conscious. The water of water-bodies like rivers flows of its own for the welfare of the masses. Similarly, it can be held that though unconscious the *pradhāna* acts of its own for the enjoyment and liberation of the *puruṣa*.

Reply: No, that cannot be accepted. The milk of a cow oozes from its udder because of the conscious love of the cow for its calf and also because of the sucking of the udder by the calf, and the water of a river flows because of gravitation towards lower lands. In both the cases these activities come under the ambit of the omnipresent

Lord. This is what is mentioned in the scriptures and seen in reality.

Objection: *Sattva* is light and luminous. *Tamas* is heavy and has the characteristic of covering things. The flame of fire moves upwards because of *sattva*. Heavy things fall down due to *rajas*, which is also of the nature of motion and obstruction of motion. Because of its nature, *rajas* moves *sattva* and *tamas*. Similarly, *pradhāna* becomes active to accomplish a particular task.

Reply: No, that is not possible, because *pradhāna* cannot create the universe. Moreover, if it is active by its very nature, then there is no reason for it to stop its activity. We, however, do not see a continuous creation, and though *rajas* is of the nature of activity, to hold that there is beginning of activity every moment leads to denial of dissolution and also goes against the state of equilibrium of the three *gunas*.

Objection: The world is created according to the fruits of the actions of living beings. Living beings perform actions, and the results of actions performed in the previous creation have to be exhausted by facing their consequences. Also, the living beings create new results of actions in the present creation. The interval of waiting between the creation in which the actions are done and the creation in which their results are exhausted is called *pralaya*, dissolution. Since the fruits of the actions of living beings are incurred and exhausted in the creation, there is a valid reason for

the creation of the universe, while the action of *pradhāna* is self-evident.

Reply: Righteous and unrighteous actions performed in a previous creation and their results belong to an earlier creation and cannot be accounted for in a later creation. These results cannot be exhausted before the creation itself. If it is held that *pradhāna* acts only for the exhaustion of these results and creates the universe from *mahat* to the body of the living being, then the action of *pradhāna* would depend on the results of actions, which in turn would depend on the action of *pradhāna* in creating the universe. This leads to the defect of *anyonya-āśraya doṣa*, interdependence. Also, this will necessitate the positing of results of actions performed in earlier creations, which would lead to the problem of *anavasthā doṣa*, infinite regression. The actions in themselves are not conscious, and the accumulation or exhaustion of their results is not possible without an intelligent conscious principle as the basis. Without such an intelligent and conscious principle the interval of waiting before the next creation is also not plausible. All the preceding arguments given by the Sankhyans are for establishing the activity of *pradhāna* as the reason for all the actions of living beings. In reality, however, according to Sankhya, *puruṣa* is free and has no cause. The bondage brought about by unrighteous actions is removed by righteous actions, and the bondage brought about by righteous actions is removed by unrighteous actions; thus both happiness and misery are removed. Once the bondage is removed, *pradhāna*, by itself, indulges in creation. Just like it has been told by Patanjali: ‘Good or bad deeds are not the direct causes of the transformation. They only act as breakers of the obstacles to natural evolution; just as a farmer breaks down the obstacles in a water course, so that water flows through by its own nature.’⁹⁵

Puruṣa is free from bondage and yet, how can there be the question of liberation? If it is held that *puruṣa* is bound by *prakṛti*, then it is the same as saying that the free Atman is bound, which is absurd. And if it is held that though *puruṣa* is free, it has to get liberation on coming in contact with *prakṛti*, then it is as good as saying that all and sundry should get liberation irrespective of whether they are bound or not, which again is absurd. And if it is said that *puruṣa* should be liberated because it is the rational path to take, then it would mean that the already free *puruṣa* should be freed, which is meaningless. It is also said: ‘The one (*puruṣa*) thinks “she has been seen by me” and therefore loses all interest; the other (*prakṛti*) thinks “I have been seen” and ceases to act further. Therefore, even if there still is connection, there is no motive for further evolution.’⁹⁶

Swami Vivekananda, while explaining the Sankhya philosophy, talks about the inadequacy of the theory of will in explaining the phenomena of the universe:

What makes nature (Prakṛiti) change? We see so far that everything, all Prakṛiti, is Jada, insentient. It is all compound and insentient. Wherever there is law, it is proof that the region of its play is insentient. Mind, intelligence, will, and everything else is insentient. But they are all reflecting the sentiency, the ‘Chit’ of some being who is beyond all this, whom the Sankhya philosophers call ‘Purusha.’ The Purusha is the unwitting cause of all the changes in the universe. That is to say, this Purusha, taking Him in the universal sense, is the God of the universe. It is said that the will of the Lord created the universe. It is very good as a common expression, but we see it cannot be true. How could it be will? Will is the third or fourth manifestation in nature. Many things exist before it, and what created them? Will is a compound, and everything that is a compound is a product of nature. Will, therefore, could not create nature. So, to say that the will of the Lord created the

universe is meaningless. Our will only covers a little portion of self-consciousness and moves our brain. It is not will that is working your body or that is working the universe. This body is being moved by a power of which will is only a manifestation in one part. Likewise in the universe there is will, but that is only one part of the universe. The whole of the universe is not guided by will; that is why we cannot explain it by the will theory. Suppose I take it for granted that it is will moving the body, then, when I find I cannot work it at will, I begin to fret and fume. It is my fault, because I had no right to take the will theory for granted. In the same way, if I take the universe and think it is will that moves it and find things which do not coincide, it is my fault. So the Purusha is not will; neither can it be intelligence, because intelligence itself is a compound. There cannot be any intelligence without some sort of matter corresponding to the brain. Wherever there is intelligence, there must be something akin to that matter which we call brain which becomes lumped together into a particular form and serves the purpose of the brain. Wherever there is intelligence, there must be that matter in some form or other. But intelligence itself is a compound. What then is this Purusha? It is neither intelligence nor will, but it is the cause of all these. It is its presence that sets them all going and combining. It does not mix with nature; it is not intelligence, or Mahat; but the Self, the pure, is Purusha. 'I am the witness, and through my witnessing, nature is producing all that is sentient and all that is insentient.'⁹⁷

Till now the view of Sankhya regarding the creation of the universe and the subsequent enjoyment and liberation has been discussed.

किञ्चाऽकर्तैव भोक्तता यदि बत कृतहानाकृताभ्यागमः स्यात्
कीदृग्भोगोऽप्यसङ्गोऽनतिशयिनि भवेत्तेन भोग्यस्य कोऽर्थः
कीदृक्कस्याविवेकः कथमथ स भवेद् भोगहेतुर्विवेकः
कस्य स्यात्तेन किं स्यादिति हि विमृशतो दुर्वचं ब्रह्मणोऽपि

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Further, if the non-doer *puruṣa* is the enjoyer, then alas, the actions done (by *pradhāna*) become futile and the actions not done (by *puruṣa*) yield results. How can there be any enjoyment for *puruṣa* free from any attachment to the three *guṇas* and free from any excellence brought about by the three *guṇas*? What will be the benefit to *pradhāna* by such enjoyment of *puruṣa*? (If it is held that the ignorance of *pradhāna* and *puruṣa* is the reason for enjoyment, then we ask that) what kind of ignorance is this? Then, how does this ignorance become the cause of the enjoyment of *puruṣa*? Who has this ignorance? (If it is held that neither *puruṣa* nor *pradhāna* have this ignorance), then what is the use of their knowledge? Thus analysed, this (Sankhya philosophy of Kapila) cannot be established even by Hiranyagarbha.

There are many other errors in the school of Kapila, that is Sankhya. According to Kapila, doership is attributed to *pradhāna* and enjoyership is attributed to *puruṣa*. We are now analysing this stand. If the non-doer *puruṣa* becomes the enjoyer, then unfortunately there is a fallacy in this view of the actions of *pradhāna* not producing any results and the actions not done by *puruṣa* producing results. *Pradhāna* performs actions and does not face the results, whereas *puruṣa* does not perform any action and yet enjoys the fruits of actions performed by *pradhāna*. The actions of *pradhāna* become futile, as they do not produce any results. This is absurd. To avert this fallacy, if we hold that the results of the actions performed by one are enjoyed by another, then again it leads to another fallacy: that if Yajnadatta has eaten food, the hunger of Devadatta should be appeased. This again is absurd. Further, *puruṣa* is free from the effects of the three *guṇas* and also the results like excellence brought about by them. How can such a *puruṣa* enjoy the fruits of actions, whoever may be the performer of such

actions? The *guṇas* are essential to any enjoyment and also to the nature of enjoyment such as good or bad. When *puruṣa* is free from these very *guṇas*, how can it be the enjoyer? If for the sake of argument we accept that *puruṣa* is the enjoyer, then what is the use of such enjoyment to *pradhāna*? *Pradhāna* is inert matter and can have no idea of self-interest or utility. Even when a compassionate person helps the suffering, the help is done to remove the pain caused by seeing others' suffering. When an evil person causes harm to others, it is due to a sense of revenge or for getting pleasure from others' pain. Thus, it is empirically seen that all actions are performed with self-interest. Since *pradhāna* has no self-interest, its actions have no motive.

If it is held that *puruṣa* and *pradhāna* are mutually ignorant, this ignorance being the cause of the actions of *pradhāna*, then what kind of ignorance is this? If this ignorance is of the nature of absence, then there is a fallacy in Sankhya, which goes against the tenets of this philosophy. And if this ignorance is actually the knowledge of the unity of *puruṣa* and *pradhāna*, then that also is not possible, because completely different entities cannot be one. If you hold that the unity of *puruṣa* and *pradhāna* is false, then again it goes against the tenets of Sankhya philosophy, as Sankhya does not accept falsity. Further, is this ignorance that of *puruṣa* or of *pradhāna*? Ignorance cannot be of either of them, because the inert material *pradhāna* cannot be the locus of ignorance, and the unattached *puruṣa* cannot be the locus of ignorance either. Even if we were to accept this ignorance, how could it be the cause of the enjoyment of the unattached *puruṣa*? Further, to whom does the knowledge, which is held by Sankhya to be the cause of liberation, belong to? To *puruṣa* or *pradhāna*? It can belong to neither of them, as *puruṣa* is unattached and *pradhāna* is material. Also, what would be the result of such

knowledge, since *puruṣa* is unattached? Hence, even the knowledge of Sankhya is fruitless. If we analyse this philosophy in this manner, even Hiranyagarbha or Brahma would not be able to establish the philosophy of Kapila.

(To be continued)

References

95. Patanjali, *Yoga Sutra*, 4.1.
96. Ishvara Krishna, *Sāṅkhya Karikā*, 66.
97. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 2.450-1.

According to Kapila, there are many Purushas; not one, but an infinite number of them. You and I have each of us one, and so has everyone else; an infinite number of circles, each one infinite, running through this universe. The Purusha is neither mind nor matter, the reflex from it is all that we know. We are sure if it is omnipresent it has neither death nor birth. Nature is casting her shadow upon it, the shadow of birth and death, but it is by its nature pure. So far we have found the philosophy of the Sankhya wonderful. ...

But if we ask the Sankhya the question, 'Who created nature?'—the Sankhya says that the Purusha and the Prakriti are uncreate and omnipresent, and that of this Purusha there is an infinite number. We shall have to controvert these propositions, and find a better solution, and by so doing we shall come to Advaitism. Our first objection is, how can there be these two infinities? Then our argument will be that the Sankhya is not a perfect generalisation, and that we have not found in it a perfect solution. And then we shall see how the Vedantists grope out of all these difficulties and reach a perfect solution, and yet all the glory really belongs to the Sankhya. It is very easy to give a finishing touch to a building when it is constructed.

—*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 2.452-3