

Svarajya Siddhih: Attaining Self-dominion

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Translated from Sanskrit and annotated by Swami Narasimhananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

THE OPINION OF SANKHYA, Kapila's school, has been quashed. Now, the stand of Yoga, Vaisheshika, and Nyaya philosophies that Ishvara is the instrumental cause of Prakriti, the universe, and so on is set aside, and the stand that the non-dual Brahman is both the material and the instrumental cause of creation is established in accordance with Vedic statements and by categorically quashing the opposite views—this is done in the next two verses.

नेशोऽधिष्ठातुमीशोऽतनुकरणगुणस्तार्किकाणां प्रधानं
स्याच्चेत्तन्वक्षवत्त्वं सुचरितदुरितोद्भूतभोगप्रसङ्गः ।
दुःखाढ्यं कुर्वतोऽस्य प्रसरति विषमाचारनैर्घृण्यदोषः
कर्मेप्सोश्चक्रकाऽवस्थितिहतिविफलत्वाऽन्यथासिद्धयः स्युः
॥१९॥

According to the Logicians, Ishvara is free from qualities like body, senses, will, and effort. [And so,] Ishvara is incapable of creating *pradhāna*. And if Ishvara is held to have qualities like body and senses, then Ishvara will also be subject to the experiences of happiness and misery arising out of the merits and demerits done, just like a jiva. Having created the universe, full of misery, [if it is held that Ishvara, who is considered free and without a controller—to avoid the fallacy of infinite regress—creates happiness and misery also] then Ishvara will suffer from the defects of incongruous actions and cruelty. [If it is held that the jivas experience happiness and misery due to] the effects of their actions, then endless cycles, infinite regress, the futility of

Ishvara, and the proof of the universe without the instrumental cause of Ishvara—all these defects arise.

The followers of the Nyaya philosophy believe that Ishvara has created this universe out of his will from the eternal atoms. Every effect must have a cause. Then this world, which follows a definite order, should be due to some cause and, according to Nyaya, this cause is Ishvara. We cannot see Ishvara because it does not have a gross body, but that does not mean Ishvara does not exist. Ishvara has infinite knowledge and is all-merciful. At the beginning of creation Ishvara created the Vedas. According to the Vaisheshika philosophy, the entire creation consists of the basic units of the four kinds of atoms—earth, water, fire, and air. However, behind these basic units is the creative or destructive will of the Supreme Being who controls the activities of these atoms and also the direction the lives of individual souls will take. So, the creation or destruction begins with the will of the Supreme Being, Maheshvara, the ruler of the universe. Maheshvara wills to create a universe in which individual beings may get appropriate experiences of pleasure and pain according to their actions. The process of creation and destruction of the world being beginningless, the first creation of the world cannot be known. Every creation is preceded by destruction, and every destruction

is preceded by some creation. So, God creatively wills according to the merits and demerits done by an individual soul. Upon such a will of God, these merits and demerits come to fruition, and the creation is unfolded with each individual soul experiencing happiness and misery according to its actions done in the past. Thus God's will and the effects of actions of the individual souls create the activity of the atoms of air. The air-atoms combine in dyads and triads and form the gross element of air, which vibrates without stop in the eternal space. Similarly, the atoms of water create the gross element of water, which exists in air. The atoms of earth create, in a similar way, the gross element of earth, which exists in water. From the atoms of fire arises the gross element of fire with its light. After this process, by the will of God, the embryo of the universe is formed out of the atoms of light and earth.

The *Vaisheshika Sutra* of Kanada asserts the existence of God: 'But name and effect are the mark (of the existence) of beings distinguished from ourselves. Because name and effect follow from perception.'⁹⁸ God creates this universe and is thus its owner, its master. It is common practice to give different names to different people. Such names are usually given by the parents upon the birth of their children. This they can do because they perceive the birth of a new human being. We also have generic names for a class or type of things such as 'pot' or 'cloth'. These classes or types of things acquire these generic names because of the will of Ishvara. Though the parents think that they name their children, it is Ishvara who directs them to do so. All the names are thus proofs of the existence of Ishvara. Similarly, effects of causes also indicate the existence of Ishvara. For instance, the earth should have a Creator because we find the effects of earth such as a pot. However, in this case, that which has effects like the earth does not refer to something

that can be produced by the body; or something that can be produced by the will of something, which also has been produced; or something about which it is not known whether it has been produced by an agent; or something the agent of production of which is doubted.

The term 'logicians' in this verse refers to the schools of thought that establish the cause of this universe by reasoning alone, mainly by resorting to inference. They are the schools of Yoga, Nyaya, and Vaisheshika. They hold that Ishvara has no body and senses. Ishvara has neither external nor internal sense organs, nor the appropriate desire to perform any action. Ishvara is of the nature of pure Consciousness and is invisible to others. The supreme Ishvara is without limbs and without external characteristics like form. Therefore, it is not visible and is only a pointer to *pradhāna* and atoms. Ishvara is incapable of setting into action or bringing characteristics to *pradhāna* and atoms. We see in the world that only a conscious person, like a potter endowed with a body and form with limbs, can perceive, through eyes and other sense organs, and touch with hands different forms like clay and create objects like a pot. Since Ishvara is without body or sense organs and cannot perceive through them, it is incapable of touching or creating something.

Objection: It is seen that even if some parts of the body or some sense organs are damaged, some persons get their work done through other means or through the help of other people. Similarly, it can be held that though Ishvara is incapable of creation, it gets the work done through *pradhāna*, which has subtle body and organs.

Reply: If that stand were to be accepted, then Ishvara would be subject to the merits and demerits arising out of good and bad actions, and would have to experience happiness and misery just like a jiva. A body is seen to be always the locus of the exhaustion of karmas, and an

individual soul takes a body only to exhaust the karmas. Hence, if Ishvara is held to take up the body of *pradhāna*, then Ishvara would have to experience happiness and misery, which is absurd.

Objection: Let it be so. What harm is there to hold that Ishvara possesses a body and sense organs just like a potter?

Reply: Even then the same problem persists. If Ishvara is held to have a body and sense organs, then it would have to experience happiness and misery as the result of its good and bad actions, as the body is an instrument for the exhaustion of karmas. Further, it is held that the merciful, unattached, and free Ishvara would surely not create the universe for the misery of living beings. Now, if we hold that Ishvara creates the universe, whom does it create the universe for? For others, or for itself? If it is for others, then the others would also create for some others, and this cycle would go on and the argument would suffer from the fallacy of infinite regress. Also, Ishvara would become dependent on another entity just like the *jiva*. If it is held that Ishvara creates the universe for itself, then also there are problems. We find that the universe is full of misery. Also, while some people suffer, some others are happy. Having created this universe, why should Ishvara be partial in its actions? Why should there be an incongruity in the experiences of the individual souls? This makes Ishvara incongruous. Also, since Ishvara gives so much suffering to the universe, it would mean that Ishvara is cruel.

To avoid these fallacies, if we hold that Ishvara grants happiness and misery according to the actions performed by the individual souls, then it means that Ishvara is bound by actions. Further, Ishvara, who gives the fruits of actions, would be dependent on the actions, and this leads to the defect of interdependence. Also, if the actions done in the previous birth bring

about the present life, then the previous birth was also brought about by an earlier birth, and so on. This leads to infinite regress. And, if the actions were to lead to the effects in the form of next birth or creation, then there would be no necessity of an Ishvara, since all the individual souls would determine their births and creations. That also means that Ishvara would no longer be the instrumental cause of the creation of the universe.

If it is held that Ishvara creates this universe based on the karmas of the individual souls, then it would lead to another defect because Ishvara creates the universe based on the karmas of the individual souls. This would further make the *pradhāna* and the atoms act, which leads to the creation of the universe. Then, the body and the sense organs would be created, which are instruments for performing actions that would further create karmas or effects of actions, which again would form the basis of the creation of the universe by Ishvara. This becomes a vicious cycle.

If we hold that the universe is created due to the effects of actions of individual souls in the previous births, then it leads to the fallacy of the cause being unseen. We see that seeds sprout and there is no apparent cause or agent. The followers of the schools of Nyaya and Vaisheshika counter this argument by holding that even the seeds and the sprouts are created by Ishvara, and they are also effects. We do not see it not because it does not exist but because it is invisible. If it could be clearly proven that there is no invisible cause or agent of the sprouts coming out of seeds, then only it can be accepted that they do not have any cause. In the absence of such a clear proof, what can be best held is only a case of doubt, and that does not suffice to negate the presence of an invisible agent or cause in the form of Ishvara. This is the stand of the schools of Nyaya and Vaisheshika.

The above arguments cannot be accepted. In the case of seeds shooting sprouts, we do not know the cause of the sprouts by direct perception. Also, the cause of the tree is the seed, and the seed is the effect of the tree. Hence, we are put in a logical predicament of the ‘chicken and egg’, and it is impossible to ascertain which came first. Also, if we were to hold that Ishvara is the cause of the sprouts, then it cannot be proven by direct perception but only by inference. If we have to infer the cause as Ishvara, then Ishvara being subject to the effects of actions, the incongruence of Ishvara, and the dependence of Ishvara on the effects or actions—all these fallacies would come up.

Objection: If there is a problem with inference, we rely on the verbal testimony of the Vedas and hold Ishvara as the cause of this universe.

Reply: Verbal testimony cannot be relied on because the Purva Mimamsa of Jaimini does not accept this view. And if it be still held that the Vedas are the proof, then also it cannot be accepted because since the Vedas have been created by Ishvara, Ishvara cannot be proved by the Vedas. To hold this leads to the defect of interdependence.

Objection: Even the Ishvara accepted by Vedanta suffers from the same defects.

Reply: No, this is not true. We Vedantins accept Ishvara as the material cause non-different from Brahman. It is essentially the same conscious principle conditioned by maya, and such Ishvara has been validated by the Vedas. Since the Vedas do not require an additional proof, we hold that such Ishvara has created this universe. Thus, it is not only established that Brahman alone is the cause of this universe, but that the Ishvara accepted by other schools of thought are also set aside.

The schools of Nyaya and Vaisheshika take a commonsense view of the universe that is close to the day-to-day experience of human beings.

They take into account the special characteristics of atoms and do not accept that things continuously change. They are also of the opinion that not all atoms can create all kinds of materials and that specific atoms are required to create specific objects. They hold that the effect is not potentially present in the cause. They take a different view and hold that the material cause, like clay, has some power within it and the accessory and other instrumental causes have some other powers. The coming together of these causes destroys the material cause and produces an effect, which was not there before but was produced afresh. This view is countered by the statement that if what is non-existent is produced, then even impossible things as a flower in the sky could be produced. The Nyaya and Vaisheshika schools refute this objection by holding that it is not being told that what is non-existent is produced, but that what has been produced was non-existent.

(To be continued)

Reference

98. *Vaisheshika Sutra*, 2.1.18–19.

The Vedanta requires of us faith, for conclusiveness cannot be reached by mere argumentation. Then why, has the slightest flaw, detected in the position of the schools of Sankhya and Nyaya, been overwhelmed with a fusillade of dialectics? In whom, moreover, are we to put our faith? Everybody seems to be mad over establishing his own view; if, according to Vyasa, even the great Muni Kapila, ‘the greatest among perfected souls’, is himself deeply involved in error, then who would say that Vyasa may not be so involved in a greater measure? Did Kapila fail to understand the Vedas?

—*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 6.212