Svarajya Siddhih: *Attaining Self-dominion*

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Translated from Sanskrit and annotated by Swami Narasimhananda

(*Continued from the previous issue*)

The followers of the Nyaya and Vaisheshika schools hold that this universe was created out of atoms. This position has to be examined because we, the Advaitins, feel it to be untenable. These schools of thought believe in Asatkaryavada and consequently hold that the effect is not present before its production. Let us now examine the line of reasoning of these schools regarding the creation of the universe. In the beginning the atoms were in a state of motion or flux, something similar to the chaotic state propounded by modern science. Nothing was produced for some time and there was no effect whatsoever, only the cause in the form of the atoms. So, the name and form of the atoms did not change, nor did their size. They had their original sizes.

So far so good; the problem arises after this. At the time of the beginning of creation, because of the merits and demerits of the jivas, individual souls, and by the will of Ishvara, these atoms come together in various combinations and form dyads, triads, and so on, and thereby start forming complete objects as effects. The dyads and triads acquire the same form and properties of the atoms they are made of. However, the dyads and triads have changes in their sizes that are not present in the atoms. The dyads and triads are only better combinations of the same kind as that of their constituent atoms, that is, similar atoms come together and create a better compound of that kind. This implies that whatever is formed by the atoms would be similar to them. But the number and size of the atoms are smaller than the number and size of the dyads. Also, the number and size of the triads are bigger than the number and size of the dyads. However, this is not logical, as the atoms are eternal and indivisible. If it is held that the dimensions are the same till the level of dyads but they increase from the stage of triads, that does not make sense because if atoms do not change in size, the dyads and triads also cannot change in size.

If it is held that atoms combine and become dyads and triads by slowly breaking up and thus losing their indivisible nature, then we hold that such a situation is not possible because atoms are action-less according to the schools of Nyaya and Vaisheshika. That is why we Advaitins put forth the questions: How do the numerous atoms come together to produce dyads and triads? What is the cause of the activity in the atoms leading to their forming dyads and triads? Is it because of the effort or will of Ishvara? Or is it because of the merits and demerits of the individual souls? Or is it because of the removal of the differences between different substances by combination of atoms? Is it because of the characteristics, like speed? It cannot be because of the will of Ishvara, as we have set aside that argument earlier. It cannot be because of the merits and demerits of the individual souls, as the individual souls can have no merit or

demerit after the dissolution of the universe and before the next creation. It cannot be because of the removal of differences, as there is no 'after dissolution' and before the next creation—there is no substance other than the atoms. Also even for an interaction between atoms in the beginning of creation, there is the need of action, and for action between atoms to take place there should be creation, and such reasoning would lead to infinite regress. The reason for the combination of atoms in the beginning of creation cannot be the characteristics such as speed, because there is no evidence to suggest that just after dissolution and before a new creation there are such characteristics in atoms. Such postulation would also lead to the defect of cumbersomeness. Further, it is held by the schools of Nyaya and Vaisheshika that in the previous dissolution too the atoms were indivisible, and that in the earlier creation also the combination of atoms was the cause of creation. Then the defect will be same across creations, and the indivisibility of only the atoms is disproved. Also in the beginning of creation there cannot be any merit or demerit of individual souls, and consequently there cannot be any happiness or misery. As that would be not present then, and also there would not be a setting conducive for the incurring of merit or demerit. This would also mean that if the line of reasoning of the Nyaya and Vaisheshika schools is followed, then there cannot be any dissolution because the merits or demerits of the individual souls are considered to be always present. Hence, their affirmation of the atoms being in a state of chaos or vibrant activity is nothing but empty talk.

Even if we were to accept that atoms are active at the beginning of creation, there is no ground for concluding that there is combination of atoms. It is held that atoms are indivisible and cannot be divided or modified. If that is so, then how do two atoms combine? It is empirically observed that a combination of objects always takes place in a particular portion of that object. However, if we were to hold that the combination of atoms takes place at a particular part of the atoms, then the indivisibility of the atoms would be quashed. We can neither hold that atoms combine in their entirety, because then there would be no essential difference between an atom and a dyad. Also, a combination of objects cannot pervade both the objects in their entirety, since it is common knowledge that without an entry point, like a hole, it is impossible for one object to enter into another. Hence, the atoms cannot be held to combine in their entirety. If it is held that an atom combines with another from whichever direction it comes and it enters from an imagined area, then we would say that the Nyaya and Vaisheshika schools are also resorting to an inexplicable and unidentified cause of creation just like the maya or ignorance of Advaita Vedanta. We welcome them for having the same idea as ours. However, this does not appear to be their stand.

Even if we were to accept that the atoms somehow combine with other atoms, the formation of a dyad different from the constituent atoms is not plausible. The cause and the effect have a relation of similarity. But here the effect is said to be totally different from the cause. The position that the parts are inherent in the whole and the atoms are inherent in the dyad is also not plausible. The atoms are different from the dyad. The relation of two atoms produces something that is unrelated to them. By the combination resulting in a dyad we cannot understand the relation between the dyad and the atoms. And to understand the relation, if we go back to the state of the atoms before combination, then again we are left with the problem of non-similarity of the atoms with the dyad. This would go on in a cycle and lead to the defect of infinite regress. Two atoms coming together are the same as the

Samudra manthan, ***the churning of the ocean of milk (c.1860–70)***

dyad they form, but this is not accepted by the Nyaya and Vaisheshika schools. Then we can also not accept that two atoms combine to form a dyad, as such position is a wrong one. The parts of the effect cannot be different from the parts of the cause. Further, it is only proper to posit a combination of two different objects like a pit and a tree. One plants a tree in a pit or a tree grows from a pit. So, how can one think of the combination of two similar atoms? As has been proved earlier, it is not possible to hold that such combination occurs because of the action of the atoms. Moreover, inherence is based upon the relation of the two objects concerned, the destruction of one object leads to the destruction of the relation, as relation cannot be established based on one object alone. The relation between two objects is different from the objects themselves, and the destruction of such relation destroys the possibility of their combination. Is the relation between the part and the whole an all-pervasive, whole relation? No, because we see that though different organs, like the ears, form part of the cow, it is only through the udder that one can milk the cow. It is observed that if an object is completely present in one place, it is impossible for that same object to be present elsewhere. There is also a difference between the part and the whole. If it is held that a part is located at a particular place of another part, then in a particular place of the second part the first part would be located, and again, the second part would be located in a particular place of the first part, and this cycle of dependent location would go on forever leading to the defect of infinite regress. To establish the relation between two objects they should be of comparable dimensions. In the Bhagavata there is the description of the churning of the milk-ocean.[101] The gods had incurred a curse that took away all their strength. A delegation of the gods went to Bhagavan Vishnu seeking a cure for this lack of strength and also to find a way to check the rising power of the demons. Vishnu advised them to churn the milk-ocean in order to obtain nectar. Since the milk-ocean was big, the churning rod and the churning rope were to be of similar proportions. So, Mount Meru was used as the churning rod and the giant snake Vasuki was used as the churning rope. Here is an example of

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how only objects of comparable proportions are used together or are mutually related.

Let us approach this issue from a different perspective. The characteristics of the substance produced out of the combination of atoms are inherent and all-pervasive, and the qualities of the cause are the source of the qualities of the effect. Even if we hold that the combination of the atoms is possible, there is a problem regarding the difference in the dimensions of a dyad and a triad. Since the properties of the effect have their source in the properties of the cause, the dimensions of a triad should be similar to that of a dyad. But then the Nyaya and Vaisheshika schools hold that a triad is larger than a dyad. How can a triad be larger than a dyad? Such a position is not logical and is also against empirical experience. Also, how can the triad be not eternal when the atom is eternal? Being illogical, the stand of the schools of Nyaya and Vaisheshika is being set aside.

Every object like the pot is based on the substratum of Brahman, and thus it is existent in Brahman even before its production. This is what we Advaitins uphold. There is no entity different from Brahman in the effect. It is said in the Upanishads: 'All transformation has speech as its basis, and it is name only. Earth as such is the reality.'[102] 'All reject one who knows it as different from the Self. This brahmana, this kshatriya, these worlds, these gods, these Vedas, these beings, and these all are this Self.'[103] The evolution and dissolution of this universe is due to maya, which is inexplicable.

The stand of the Nyaya and Vaisheshika schools has been quashed. They are also called half Buddhists because of some similarities with Buddhist thought. Now we will quash the position of Buddhists proper. Buddhists are broadly of four schools: Sautrantika, Vaibhashika, Yogachara, and Madhyamika. Buddha and his disciples saw the attachment of people to sense objects and accordingly preached the non-reality of everything. The avatara of Buddha demonstrated the truth that attachment to external sense objects is futile. The Vaibhashikas are similar to the Sarvastivadins, who hold that everything exists and is real. The Madhyamikas directly propound Shunyavada, the non-reality of this universe. It has been said: 'The teachings of the protectors of the world accord with the (varying) resolve of living beings. The Buddhas employ a wealth of skilful means, which take many worldly forms. (Teachings may differ) in being either profound or vast; at times they are both. Though they sometimes may differ, they are invariably characterized by *shunyata* or non-reality.'[104]

(*To be continued*)

References

101. See Bhagavata, 8.8,
102. *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 6.1.4.
103. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 4.4.7.
104. Arya Nagarjuna, *Bodhichittavivarana*, 98–9.

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References

7. *The Diamond Sutra that Cuts through Illusion*, 56.
8. Quoted in Jude Thaddeus Langeh Basebang, *Africa Needs Gandhi!—The Relevance of Gandhi's Doctrine of Non-violence* (Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal / Gandhi Book Centre); available at <http://www.mkgandhi.org/africaneedsgandhi/gandhi's_message_to_christians.htm> accessed 6 September 2013.
9. Luke, 17:20–1.
10. Matthew, 5:3–9.
11. *Dhammapada*, 1.5.
12. Matthew, 5:17.
13. John, 10:30.
14. Bhagavadgita, 2.56–7.
15. Galatians, 2:20.
16. *The Path of Compassion: The Bodhisattva Precepts*, trans. Martine Batchelor (California: Altamira, 2004), 5.