



International Journal of Sanskrit Research

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ISSN: 2394-7519

IJSR 2020; 6(5): 397-399

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www.anantaajournal.com

Received: 13-08-2020

Accepted: 22-09-2020

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Íśvara in Sāṃkhya Philosophy: A Comparative Study between Vācaspatimiśra and Vijñānabhikṣu

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The word 'Sāṃkhya' is derived from the Sanskrit noun Saṃkhyā (number) based on the verbal root *khyā* (make known, name) with the proverb *saṃ* (together). "Sāṃkhya" thus denotes the system of enumeration or taking account. The first meaning is acceptable, as Sāṃkhya is very fond of sets, often naming them as "triad," "the group of eleven," and so forth; but the second meaning is more fitting, as the aim of Sāṃkhya is to take into account all the important factors of the whole world, especially of the human condition. Sāṃkhya is one of the major "orthodox" (or Hindu) Indian philosophies. Two millennia ago it was the representative Hindu philosophy. Its classical formulation is found in Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhya -Kārikā*, a condensed account in seventy-two verses. It is a strong Indian example of metaphysical dualism, but unlike many Western counterparts it is atheistic. The two types of entities of Sāṃkhya are *Prakṛti* and *puruṣa*-s, namely Nature and persons. Nature is singular, and persons are numerous. Both are eternal and independent of each other. Persons (*puruṣa*-s) are essentially unchangeable, inactive, conscious entities, who nonetheless gain something from contact with Nature. Creation as we know it comes about by a conjunction of Nature and persons. *Prakṛti*, or Nature, is comprised of three *guṇa*-s or qualities. The highest of the three is *sattva* (essence), the principle of light, goodness and intelligence. *Rajas* (dust) is the principle of change, energy and passion, while *tamas* (darkness) appears as inactivity, dullness, heaviness and despair. Nature, though unconscious, is purposeful and is said to function for the purpose of the individual *puruṣa*-s. Aside from comprising the physical universe, it comprises the gross body and "sign-body" of a *puruṣa*. The latter contains among other things the epistemological creation of embodied beings (such as the mind, intellect, and senses). The sign body of a *puruṣa* transmigrates: after the death of the gross body, the sign-body is reborn into another gross body according to past merit, and the *puruṣa* continues to be a witness through its various bodies. And escape from this endless circle is possible only through the realization of the fundamental difference between Nature and persons, whereby an individual *puruṣa* loses interest in Nature and is thereby liberated forever from all bodies, subtle and gross. Most of the Sāṃkhya system became widely accepted in India: especially the theory of the three *guṇa*-s; and it was incorporated into much latter Indian philosophy, especially Vedānta.

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There is no mention of *Īśvara* in the twenty five *tatvas* of Sāṃkhya Philosophy. But as they follow the Veda as the maximum truth, they are called āstika-darśana. But there are some contradictions about *Īśvara* in the commentaries of Sāṃkhya philosophy. Here the contradiction between Vācaspati Miśra and Vijñānabhikṣhu is discussed according to the texts of their commentary.

There are a lot of important commentaries on Sāṃkhya Philosophy. Among them most popular and important commentaries are Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudi of Vācaspati Miśra and the other one is Sāṃkhyapravacanavāśya of Vijñānabhikṣhu. As the both commentary are the explanation of Sāṃkhyatattva, it is very possible that their explanations are very similar to each other. But it seems that there are also some differences into their explanations about *Īśvara*. The most important areas of their differences are the commentaries on Pratibimbavāda and the existence of *Īśvara* in Sāṃkhya Philosophy.

There are two philosophical trends in Indian Philosophy – āstika and Nāstika. Here the division does not depend on belief or faith in god, but belief on the authenticity of the Veda. Among them three schools are called Nāstikas, as they do not believe in Vedas or the maximum authenticity of Vedas and the other six schools are called Āstikas.

Sāṃkhya is a very popular āstika philosophy in Indian Philosophical literature as they follow the Vedas but the main problem arises when it is questioned that is there any position of god in Sāṃkhya philosophy i.e. the Sāṃkhya Philosophy follows the existence of God? This is the most controversial question in Sāṃkhya Philosophy. It is said that the Sāṃkhya philosophers of ancient stages are atheists or skeptics, such as kapila, Īśvarakṛṣṇa, Vācaspati Miśra etc. But the Sāṃkhya philosophers of next era believe in God. They are theist, such as Vijñānabhikṣhu. Here the contradictions between Vācaspati Miśra and Vijñānabhikṣhu about God is depicted below—

It seems that Vācaspati Miśra's commentary does not follow the existence of God because he never mentions the word 'God' or the existence of God in his commentary. At the *maṅgalacarana* of his commentary Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudi, there is no praise of God. But he praises for Prakṛti and Puruṣas.

अजामेकां लोहितशुक्लकृष्णां बह्वीः प्रजाः सृजमानां नमामः ।
अजा ये तां जुषमाणां भजन्ते जहत्येनां भुक्तभोगां नुमस्तान् ॥११

Vācaspati Miśra has written six important commentaries on six Āstika Indian Philosophy. It is

noticed that except the Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudi he praises for God in every *maṅgalacarana* of his commentaries, such as *paramabrahma* and *Bhava* in Bhāmati, *Pinakpāṇi* in Nyāyavārtika-tatparya, *Vīṣavahana* in Tattvabaiśārādī, *Vīṣṇu* and *Maheśvara* in Bidhivivekatikā.

So here it is a very relevant question that, why he has broken his own tradition of praising God in the commentary of Sāṃkhyakārikā.

After that, in the commentary of ūāst verse –

स्वां स्वां प्रतिपद्यन्ते परस्पराकूतहेतुकां वृत्तिम् ।
पुरुषार्थ एव हेतुर्न केनचित् कार्यते करणम् ॥२

of Sāṃkhyakārikā Vācaspati Miśra describes – “‘स्वाम्’ इति। करणानीति शेषः। यथा हि वहवः पुरुषाः शाक्रीकयाष्टीकधानुष्ककार्पाणिकाः कृतसङ्केताः परावस्कन्दनाय प्रवृत्ताः तत्राऽन्यतमस्याऽऽकूतमवगम्यान्यतमः प्रवर्तते, प्रवर्तमानस्तु शाक्रीकः शक्तिमेवाऽदत्ते, न तु यष्ट्यादिकम् एवं याष्टीकोऽपि यष्टिमेव, न शक्त्यादिकम्। तथाऽन्यतमस्य करणस्याऽऽकूतात् स्वकार्यकरणाभिमुख्यादन्यतमं करणं प्रवर्तते। तत्प्रवृत्तेश्च हेतुमत्तय वृत्तिसङ्करप्रसङ्ग इत्युक्तम् – “स्वां स्वां प्रतिपद्यते” इति।

स्यादेतत् – याष्टीकादयश्चेतनत्वातनत्वात्परस्पराकूतमवगम्य प्रवर्तन्त इति युक्तम्। करणानि त्वचेतनानि तस्मान्नैवं प्रवर्तितुमुत्सहन्ते। तेनैषामधिष्ठात्रा करणानां स्वरूपसामर्थ्योपयोगाभिज्ञेन भवितव्यमित्यन आह – “पुरुषार्थ एव हेतुः न केनचित् कार्यते करणम्” इति। भोगापवर्गलक्षणः पुरुषार्थ एवाऽनागतावस्थः प्रवर्तयति करणानि, कृतमत्र तत्स्वरूपाभिज्ञेन कर्ता। एतन्न “वत्सविवृद्धिनिमित्तम्” (का ५७) इत्यन्नोपपादयिष्यते।”३

It means a number of persons wielding different weapons, unite for the suppressing a common enemy, they are holding a lance uses that alone and so on, each using his own particular weapon. In the same manner one organ operate towards the fulfillment of another's purpose, which tends to help its own and since this movement towards action goes on (and hence the regulating motive power). The actions of the organs cannot raise any absurd collection of the functions.

So in that sense Vācaspati wants to depict that the activity of the sense organs only for the *bhoga* and *apabarga* of Puruṣa. And the consciousness of *Puruṣa* is the *hetu* of the activities of organs. So it seems that the main objective of this part of commentary of Vācaspati is to prove that there is no need of God in the activity of organs.

But Vijñānabhikṣhu stands in a opposite position to Vācaspati Miśra. He thinks that a Śāstra without the theory of God is always disgraced. The main problem arises in the word *asiddheḥ* in the Sāṃkhyasūtra of kapila. The sūtra is ‘ईश्वरसिद्धेः’^४. What is the meaning of ‘*Asiddheḥ*’? - Ultimate absence or present but not in any activity? According to Vijñānabhikṣhu if the *sūtrakāra* wants

to express the ultimate absence of God, the *sūtra* can be formed like 'ईश्वराभावात्' But use of the word '*Asiddheḥ*' means the God exists but it is impossible to know him with the help of *laukikapramāṇa*. In the commentary *Vijñānabhikṣu* says – “अत्रापि व्यवहारिक पारमार्थिकभावो भवति। “असत्यमप्रतिष्ठंते जगदाऽरनीश्वरम् इत्यादि शास्त्रनिरीश्वरवादस्य निन्दितत्वात्। अस्मिन्नेव शास्त्रे व्यवहारिकस्यैवेश्वर प्रतिषेधस्यैश्वर्य्य वैराग्याद्यर्थमनुवादत्वौचित्यात्। यदि हि लोकायतिकमतानुसारेण नित्यैश्वर्य्यं न प्रतिषिध्येत, तदा परिपूर्णं नित्यनिर्दोषैश्वर्य्यदर्शनेन तत्र चित्तावेशतो विवेकाभ्यासप्रतिबन्धः स्यादिति सांख्याचार्याणामाशयः।”^५

Vijñānabhikṣu wants to prove the *Sāṃkhya* is not a atheistic philosophy with the help of some words of *Kūrmapurāṇa* – “तथा यं न पश्यन्ति योगीन्द्राः सांख्या अपि महेश्वरम्। अनादिनिधनं ब्रह्म तमेव शरणं ब्रज। इत्यादि कौर्मादिवाक्यैः सांख्यानामीश्वराज्ञानस्यैव नारायणादिना प्रोक्तत्वाच्च।”^६

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