Kundakunda on Śāṅkhyā-Purusa

Dr. Shiv Kumar

Kundakunda occupies a unique position in Jaina tradition. His early date, the authoritative character of his works, the utility of his writings equally for all spiritual minded persons monks or laymen, Jaina or Non-Jaina, are some of the important features which raise him to the place of honour in the arena of Indian philosophy. His writings carry still more importance for history of Indian philosophy specially the Śāṅkhyā system. At his age the philosophical doctrines of the Śāṅkhyā were crystalised. However, the early works of Śāṅkhyā are in oblivion and we know very little of the Śāṅkhyā theories before Īśvarakṛṣṇa. Kundakunda’s exposition of Śāṅkhyā presents a picture of pre-Īśvarakṛṣṇa Śāṅkhyā. His exposition is significant for the reconstruction of pre-Īśvarakṛṣṇa Śāṅkhyā. The points of criticism raised by the early authors like Kundakunda surely help in the further clarification of the Śāṅkhyā thought. The present paper purposes to study Kundakunda’s comments on the Śāṅkhyā concept of Puruṣa with the above view point.

Kundakunda finds following faults in the Śāṅkhyā-explanation of the nature of Puruṣa.

The Śāṅkhyas do not hold that the molecules of karmans change into various modes of karmans. Therefore, Śāṅkhyā theory implies the non-existence of worldly state and transmigration of soul. The same defect will further result if it is again supposed that the soul does not undergo emotional modifications like anger, etc.

Kundakunda further finds fault with the theory that agency of all kinds belongs to Prakṛti and the Purusa is ever free, eternal, non-agent, not liable to any change and contamination. According to this theory Purusa is bound by karmans and the karmans are done and belong to Prakṛti, though the experiencing entity is the Purusa. It implies that the acting entity and the entity experiencing the fruits of the karmans are different and, hence, the acting agent will not enjoy or suffer for the acts. Consequently, it will leave no utility for the prescription of ethical discipline. No one will suffer for the sin of co-habiting with other’s wife because the soul, the experiencing entity, is not involved in such an act. The karmic material in man creating or longing for woman belongs to Prakṛti and the karmic material in woman longing for man also belongs to Prakṛti. Prakṛti is not an experiencing entity. Similarly, no one will experience the fruit of killing

1. ‘कामविनामु शास्त्रिजानमनादतूतू कर्मभावन ।
संवार्तायाय: प्रक्रिया शास्त्र समयो या ॥१।’ Samayasāra, Kashi, 1950, 117
2. ‘अपरिपरमात्रार्थ हि स्वयं गीतवादिष्ठ: भाव: ।
संवार्तायाय: प्रक्रिया शास्त्र समयो या ॥२।’ Samayasāra, 122
3. ‘एवं लक्षणपदेषि येन नु प्रक्रियश्च अभ्य: ।
केन प्रकृत: कार्यार्थायामपरात्मिका: सर्व ॥३।’ Samayasāra, 340
4. Samayasāra, 335-37

चैता बलात्त नीता
others. The act of killing someone is the karmic material belonging to Prakṛti and the act of being killed also is the karmic material belonging to Prakṛti.1 Therefore, the experiencing entity, viz., the Purusa is not affected at all.

Kundakunda’s record of Sāṅkhya presents the pre-Īśvarakṛṣṇa stage of Sāṅkhya. On account of the non-availability of some work of that period we have no evidence to test the veracity of the account. The fundamental position of Sāṅkhya recorded by Kundakunda that Purusa is not an agent; the agency belongs to Prakṛti is in accordance with the Sāṅkhya position. The Sāṅkhya emphatically maintain that Purusa is inactive, though an experiencing entity. The Sāṅkhyaas further emphasize as expressed by Kundakunda, that agency belongs to Prakṛti. Kundakunda, in accordance with the Jaina doctrine, assigns independent status of a category to karman and thinks that the karma-molecules should be regarded as causing some mode of karmans while the self undergoes emotional modifications. When Kundakunda states that the Sāṅkhyaas do not believe in it; it implies that it is the presupposition of the Jainas while the Sāṅkhyaas do not accept it. According to the Sāṅkhyaas, karmans are not an independent category. It can be reduced by them to the substratum of activity through the maxim of non-difference between act and the agent. In case of an embodied being, according to the Sāṅkhyastra, agency belongs to Ahaṅkara which, according to Vijñānabhaṭṭa, represents the internal organs.5 It is again right to say from Sāṅkhya point of view that the soul does not undergo any psychic change.

No post-Kundakunda Sāṅkhya author has tried to alleviate these objections. It will worthwhile, therefore, to evaluate them from Sāṅkhya point of view. The Sāṅkhyaas do not consider acts as molecules or having substial existence. The acts cast their impressions on Buddhī and these impressions determine Purusa’s future state of birth. In worldly existence karmans are erroneously ascribed to Purusa. Even though Purusa may appear active, yet he is not really so.4 Activity is falsely attributed to him due to his association with Buddhī just as a brahmīn being taken up along with the thieves is falsely considered to be a thief.7 He can only be metaphorically considered to be active just as the lord of warriors is metaphorically called a warrior.4 The Yuktidipikā remarks that activity may be of seven kinds and Purusa does not have any of them. (i) It does not ascertain the objects through its contact with the external and the internal organs, (ii) It does not attain the state of subordination or principal through the qualities in the form of consciousness, etc., to the three Guṇas. Thus, Purusa does not act with the Guṇas as woman and a boy. (iii) It does not employ anyone to activity while situated at one place just as the one who sets a charriot, a cart or a machine in motion. (iv) It does not produce anything from itself like a lump of clay. (v) It does not act upon something like a potter. (vi) It does not get something done through mere order just as juggler. (vii) It does not produce something jointly like mother and father.9 The Yuktidipikā further observes that Purusa cannot be active because it is conscious

1. ‘समान्यो निभावित ऊपरांकोलेन दुष्याकृतिः।’ Samayasātra, 339
2. Sāṅkhya-kārikā (with Tattvakaumudi), Delhi, 1967, 19,
3. Sāṅkhya-kārikā, 11
4. ‘अत्तुकः कर्मोऽपि दुष्याकृतिः।’ Sāṅkhyastras (with Pravacanabhāṣya), Delhi, 1977, 6154
5. ‘अत्तुकः या तत् बृहदावर्तः।’ Sāṅkhyaapravacanabhāṣya, 6154
6. Sāṅkhyastras, 116164
7. Mātharavṛtti (with Jayamangala), Varanasi, 1920, 20
8. ‘पवन तस्य नाबिनिः गोविन्दस्तनोगच्छति।’ Jayamangala, 20
9. Yuktidipikā, Delhi, 1971, 19

162
in nature while activity is observed in unconscious objects only. Moreover, Purusa is pure and unmixed in nature and, hence, the activity is not possible in him. Activity is observed only in the objects which are mixable in nature as the case with milk. It suggests that the Sāṃkhya school admit contrast or opposition between conscious and unconscious and when the unconscious element is supposed to be active on account of its very constituents, the conscious principle is supposed to be inactive. The Sāṃkhya hold that Purusa is above all kinds of agency to retain its immutability and eternity. Agency involves some change and the change ultimately amounts to non-eternity. Though the Prakṛti is accepted by the Sāṃkhya as eternal even though liable to change also, but such a case is not possible with Purusa. Change is possible in case of an object having form and shape but Purusa is not so. Moreover, agency may be understood as producing something from itself or inducing others to activity. The former is not possible because Purusa is formless and unproductive, and the acceptance of second will lead to the further absurdities of admitting in Purusa the desire, aversion, effort, volition, etc., as also the power of inducing others to activity. Since no activity is possible in case of Purusa, the doership is also negated in him. In this way logically speaking from Sāṃkhya point of view the acts cannot bring any change in Purusa. Therefore, all types of reactions to karmans are negated in case of Purusa.

The crux of the problem lies in the supposition of the Sāṃkhya school that in spite of its non-agency Purusa is the experient of results of the acts done by Prakṛti. This, according to Kundakunda involves various absurdities. The major defect is that there remains no cause to bring Purusa to worldly state. Further, it leaves no scope for the prohibition of transgression of ethical conduct. If Purusa is not an agent, there remains nothing to make him bhoktā. It is unreasonable to suppose that one experiences the result of the acts done by the other. The absolute uncompromising dualism of Sāṃkhya allowing no scope for any change in soul in empirical stage exposes Sāṃkhya for such a criticism. The Sāṃkhya justify their theory on the basis of common experience. Purusa experiences the result of the acts though not doing the acts thinking itself identical with or owner of Buddhi which is the real agent just as the result of victory or defeat of the soldiers is experienced by the king when the king considers himself identical with or owner of the soldiers. The case is further exemplified as Purusa though inactive experiences the result done by other entity just as the king enjoys the gains grown by others. The Jayamaṅgalā states that Purusa, though inactive, is the enjoyer as a child, fire or a tree are enjoyer though doing nothing for themselves. As a matter of fact, bhoga in real sense is not possible in Purusa. Purusa is devoid of all physical and mental faculties required for it. Hence, he is considered to be an experiencer only as inactive spectator. Therefore, earlier authors of Sāṃkhya-Yoga like Īśvarakṛṣṇa and Vyāsa explain experience through Purusa’s proximity or contact with Buddhi, through which the Purusa develops in himself a sense of pleasure or pain arising of the real experience by Buddhi. Due to its contact with Buddhi which is real enjoyer Purusa considers itself an owner of Buddhi’s activities and experiences pleasure or pain really situated in Buddhi. Here, process of Purusa’s experience remains unexplained.

1. "प्रयत्नस्य निर्भायमानीति वेत ॥ वैत्तावतु ।" Yuktidipikā, 19
2. "ते ष रत्नं वर्ष्यं त्वं पुरवे स्थायिकस्ते । स हि तस्माय बोधितः। यहम वय: परस्यं यो योभु स्वाभावान: स्वाभावं ध्वस्वस्ते।" Yogabhāṣya, Varanasi, 1970, 124
also: Śāṅkhyaatatravyakṣamud, 62
3. "विकल्पतिः कल्याणाभधोऽचारणम्", Śāṅkhyaśūtra, 1:105
4. "सागल्वागारिनां तथा हि भोक्तां । पुद्रदीर्धम् विध्वस्ताः स्वाध्वस्ताः तथापि भोक्ता ।" Jayamaṅgalā, 19
5. Śāṅkhyaśāstra, 20
6. "न्यात्सप्तमानस्य न निर्भियायोक्षकरं दुर्योगभेद स्वयं भवति प्रयत्नं स्वाभिं।" Yogabhāṣya, 14
Vācaspatimīśra introduces his theory of single reflection and Vijñānabhikṣu of double reflection to explain it. According to the former Purusa is reflected into Buddhi and according to the latter the Buddhi having Purusa’s reflection is again reflected back into Purusa. It implies that the bhoga of Purusa is different from that of Buddhi. The bhoga understood in common parlance can be divided into two stages in Sāṁkhya. In the case of experience of taste, for example, the physiological organ of taste conveys its impression to Buddhi which assumes a state abounding in Sattva, Rajas and Tamas in accordance with the nature of the object. This is real bhoga. Purusa situated in contact with Buddhi as a witness feels himself the owner of the feeling. This is the bhoga of Purusa. Purusa develops this feeling as long as his sense of ownership is not dispelled by true knowledge of his unrelated nature.

Here also a question naturally arises if experience of Purusa is not real why Purusa is considered to be an en joyer and not an apparent en joyer as is the case with its being active. The real position of Sāṁkhya remains that the characteristics not demanding some change are supposed to really belong to Purusa while the others requiring some deviation from the real nature are negated in him. It clarifies why Purusa is not an agent, but is an experiencer. The sufferings due to committing sin are actually experienced by Buddhi which accompanies Purusa as long as he is bound. The impressions of past acts—good or bad are stored in Buddhi while Purusa enjoys or suffers only through its association with Buddhi. The Sāṁkhyas can thus alleviate the objection raised by Kundakunda that the experience of suffering through transgressing the moral conduct cannot be satisfactorily explained in Sāṁkhya. As a matter of fact all experiences are unreal from Purusa’s side but seem to be real due to ignorance. This is precisely bondage. When this notion is dispelled, Purusa gets liberation.

The above discussion is concluded with the following remarks. Sāṁkhya is very close to Jainism in metaphysical position but some presuppositions of the two systems introduce such differences. The Jainas consider karmans as molecules affecting the soul while the Sāṁkhyas consider karmans to be the functioning of Buddhi. According to Jain metaphysics soul reacts to the karmans and becomes the object of vyavahāranaya, while according to the Sāṁkhyas there is no fundamental difference in Purusa in its vyāvahārīka state from the pāmrthikā state. Even in body Purusa remains uncontaminated and without change. The above defects may apply to Sāṁkhya if the whole situation is viewed in light of Jaina metaphysics, but the Sāṁkhyas may alleviate them in their own way, which may not be acceptable to the Jaina position. At the present state of our knowledge we cannot rise above certain presuppositions to explain the metaphysical problems, and hence the objections. Kundakunda has suggested the drawbacks in uncompromising absolute dualism of Sāṁkhya, which serves as a guideline for later authors. No Sāṁkhya text tries to alleviate these objection from Sāṁkhya point of view. It adds to the credit of Kundakunda that his discussion of the nature of Purusa presents picture more vivid than that presented by Sāṁkhya authors themselves.

1. Sāṁkhyaattractvakaumudi, 5
2. Sāṁkhyaapravacanabhāṣya, 187