

STRUCTURAL EVOLUTION AND THE DOCTRINE OF KARMA

DR. HARI SATYA BHATTACHARYA, M.A., B.L., Ph.D.

In the philosophical systems of India, the development of the organic frame has been held not to be the work of Matter exclusively. Body has been generally described as the Bhogāyatana i.e. a frame in which certain pre-determined affective experiences (pleasurable or painful) are to be felt and its development has been held to be in strict accordance with those feelings which, though they are yet to be, are nevertheless pre-active. It is said that the Senses of cognition and of action owe their peculiarity in each organism to Adrṣṭa, a super-physical prenatal force with its two modes or forms viz., Dharma and Adharma, i.e. beneficial or harmful. The philosophers of the Sāṅkhya School refuse, of course, to look upon the Adrṣṭa as a force inherent in the soul; but this does not mean that according to them Adrṣṭa as the evolutionary factor, is to be identified with gross Matter or any thing grossly material. In 20, Pradhāna-Kāryādhyāya of the Sāṅkhya Sūtras, Kapila definitely rejects the view that the Sense-organs and the Organs of Activity are Bhautika i.e. as consisting in gross Matter. He characterises them as Ahaṁkārika. Ahaṁkāra, according to the Sāṅkhya philosophers, is no doubt an evolute from Prakṛti or Matter. But it is always to be remembered that Ahaṁkāra which consists in egoistic apprehensions and is practically Life in one of its essential aspects, does not arise from Prakṛti in its purity i.e. from Matter as an absolute equilibrium of three material tendencies. Ahaṁkāra, according to the Sāṅkhya philosophers is a supra-physical principle of Individuation, arising from Mahat which is Matter, thoroughly in-formed by spiritual effulgence and transformed beyond recognition. Real organs of sense and of activity, according to the Sāṅkhya School are not made up of gross Matter but are super-sensuous centres evolved by Ahaṁkāra, the vital principle of Individuation, as modified in each case by the super-physical Adrṣṭa, with its pre-natal tendencies of Dharma and Adharma. What we ordinarily call the Sense-organs e.g., the ears, the tongue etc. are brought about by those super-sensuous sense forces in and from gross organic matter.

Whatever little taint of materialism may be suspected to attach to the Adrṣṭa of the Sāṅkhya philosophy as the efficient cause of the structural

evolution, the Adrṣṭa as conceived in the Nyāya system, is absolutely free from it. For, although in direct opposition to the Sāṅkhya doctrine, the Nyāya thinkers hold that the Sense-organs are Bhautika i.e. evolved from Matter, they admit a distinctly super-physical principle as the 'efficient' cause of the organic evolution. A foetus is, no doubt, developed from the seminal fluid of the parents; but the seminal fluid does not in all cases develop the foetus. From this, the Nyāya thinker argues that in order that the foetus may grow out of the seminal matter, the hypothesis of Adrṣṭa is necessary. This Adrṣṭa is a super-physical principle, working from two directions, upon the germinal substance. On the one hand, Adrṣṭa is inherent in the parents,—a force which works upon the germinal matter of the parents towards the production of an offspring; on the other, there is the Adrṣṭa of the future offspring, a pre-natal force, operating upon the parental germinal fluid, for its embodied emergence. According to the Nyāya philosophers, no foetus can grow out of the germinal substance, without the operation of this bilateral Adrṣṭa and they contend further that each congenital peculiarity in an individual foetus is to be accounted for by the supposition of a corresponding peculiarity in the pre-natal Adrṣṭa.

As regards the nature of Adrṣṭa, the Nyāya thinkers have left us in no doubt. The Sāṅkhya philosophers held, as we have seen, that Adrṣṭa was a force, inherent in Ahaṁkāra, a materio-vital principle, tinged with a form of reflected Consciousness. The Nyāya way of thinking avoids this somewhat ambiguous position and points out in clear terms that Adrṣṭa is inherent in the Ātmā or the conscious principle, which persists through its varied embodiments. To this Ātmā, the Nyāya thinkers attribute, as we know, conscious 'desire', 'aversion', 'effort', 'feelings of pleasure and pain' and 'cognition', so that Adrṣṭa attaching to Ātmā and at the back of the organic evolution, implies that all congenital developments of and peculiarities in the embryo, are due to a pre-natal sub-conscious force, working upon the parental germinal matter, in accordance with its pre-determined inclinations and tendencies.

The Nyāya view of the Adrṣṭa is opposed to the doctrine that Adrṣṭa is inherent in the Manas—a view, which is attributed to the thinkers of the Sāṅkhya school. We may also recall in this connection that we have called the principle that transcends the purely material basis, the principle of 'Life-cum-Consciousness'. For reasons which need not be discussed here, Manas, as conceived by the Naiyāyikas, may be taken

as an independent real principle, identifiable with Life, as distinguishable and detached from the conscious principle. So that when the Nyāya thinkers contend that Aḍṛṣṭa does not inhere in the Manas but in the Ātmā, their position is that the embryonic growth and development are not even determined by a purely vital force but always by a sub-conscious principle with its own aims, efforts and inclinations, pre-fixed,—the principle which modifies not only the germinal mass but the principle of life, operating upon it.

Vātsyāyana's criticism of the doctrine, "that Aḍṛṣṭa is an attribute of the material atoms and that it accounts for their peculiar (atomic) activity, on account of which these atoms combine and constitute the (embryonic) body" is in the opinion of Vācaspati Miśra and others directed against the Jaina theory. According to the Jainas, it is the influx of the Karma of the class of Nāma into the Soul that determines the nature, the structure and the development of the Body. We are told that it is the Gati, a sub-class of the Nāma-Karma, which determines whether a being would be a man or a lower animal. The Jāti similarly accounts for an animal's having one, two, three, four or five senses. The Śarīra and the Aṅgopāṅga determine the nature of the Body and its limbs and sub-limbs. Their actual locations and dimensions are settled by the Nirmāṇa-Karma, while the Bandhana and the Saṁghāta Karmas determine the combination and the interfusion of the various molecules in the formation of the Body and its various parts. The figure of the Body is said to be accounted for by the Saṁsthāna-Karma while its osseous structure is the work of the Saṁhanana. It is said that the powers of the touch, of the taste, of the smell, as well as the complexion of the Bodies are also determined by the various modes of the Nāma-Karma. Karma determines similarly the powers of motion and of respiration in a Body. Whether the Body is to be mobile or immobile, whether it is to be the abode of one soul or of a number of souls, whether it will be attractive or otherwise, whether the voice would be pleasing or harsh etc., etc., are all said to be determined by the Kārmic force. It is said that the death of a Body without being fully developed, is due to the operation of what is called the Aparyāpti-Karma. It is the Paryāpti-Karma which accounts for the various manners of organic development. Thus the requisite bodily molecules are collected, owing to the Ahāra-paryāpti; the Śarīra-paryāpti develops the Body as a whole while the development of the Senses is due to the Indriya-paryāpti. The

Prāṇāpāna-paryāpti develops the organs of respiration; the vocal organs are accounted for by the Bhāṣā-paryāpti; the organs of the mind are developed by the operation of the Manaḥ-paryāpti. The Sthira-Karma makes steady the functions of blood-circulation etc. while the Asthira makes it unsteady. According to the Jainas, all physiological phenomena connected with the evolution of the body are thus determined by what they call the Nāma-Karma. The Nāma-Karmas are primarily divided into 42 kinds, which with their sub-classes are 93 in number. The Karma which is thus at the root of organic evolution is held by the Jainas to be Paudgalika or material in nature,—so that there are apparent grounds for holding that according to the Jainas, it is Matter and the Material forces that bring about the Body and its parts with all their peculiarities. In fact, the Jainas use the expression Adṛṣṭa in the sense of the determining cause of animal origination and call it Paudgalika in opposition to the Nyāya view of it as a power, pertaining to the Soul.

With all this, however, one may justly doubt if the above charge of Vācaspati and others against the Jaina theory of organic evolution is well founded. The Jainas, of course, emphatically deny that they leave the course of structural evolution to the operation of Matter alone. The embodiment of the Soul in a Body, according to them, is due to what they call Yoga which is a sort of peculiar vibration, as it were, set up in the Soul, in connection with the corresponding vibrations in the Body, the Mind and the Organ of Speech. It is further said that in order that the said embodiment may be possible, it is not only necessary that the requisite organic matter should be near at hand to the psychical principle but that the latter should also be rid of the Viryāntarāya-Karmas i.e. forces which obstruct its power of shrouding itself in a proper Body and similar powers regarding its limbs and sub-limbs. The Yoga which causes Āsrava i.e. actual influx of proper organic matter into the Soul and the consequent Bandha (literally, the bondage of the Soul in the material Body, but physiologically—the actual formation and development of the Body) thus requires the suitableness in the formative Matter and a responsive activity in the psychical principle to take it in. The Āsrava, however, is the way which introduces the organic matter,—just as a channel, as the Jainas describe it, lets in the outside water; and the Yoga is the internal activity modifying the state of the Soul in correspondence with the character of the in-coming organic matter. But in order that

the organic matter may be thoroughly assimilated to the Soul, the Soul must be supposed to have a basic tendency, an inclination or aptitude in itself for the said assimilation. This fundamental proneness in the soul for assimilating or absorbing the organic matter peculiar in each case, is called Kaṣāya or passion, by the Jainas. Referring to this basic and ultimate causality of the Kaṣāya in the matter of structural evolution, Akalaṅka lucidly says :—

“Just as a wet cloth catches in itself the dust brought towards it by winds from all sides, so does the soul, wet with Kaṣāya absorb in all its parts the Karma (Organic matter), introduced by the Yoga. Or, just as a red-hot iron-ball when thrown into (a pot full of) water, fully absorbs in itself the water (of the pot) so does the soul, filled with Kaṣāya, completely take in the Karma brought by the Yoga.”

It may thus appear that the Jaina philosophers also believe in an immaterial factor, required for the structural evolution in an animal, over and above the organic matter.

The dualistic systems of India thus maintain that the congenital differences in structure and other matters in animals, are due to the differences in the pre-natal super-organic forces that work upon the organic matter and shape it into the usual forms. Even the monistic Vedānta admits the causality of these pre-natal forces. In spite of its acosmistic position, the Vedānta concedes that for all practical purposes, the World must be accepted as real. From the practical standpoint, the animals are to be supposed to have their origination and God, to be their creator. The question, therefore, arises : How are the differences in animals to be accounted for ? Is God to be supposed to have meted out differential treatment to the different animals, owing to an unkind spirit of absolute indifference in him ? The theistic Nyāya was confronted with the same criticism and the Vedāntist reply to it, absolving God from the charge of unkindness in meting out unequal treatments to creatures is as that given by the Nyāya.

“Inequality in creatures” says Śaṅkara, “is due to the fact that God, in creating, is not free but is dependent on other factors. If you ask as to what other factors the creator had to rely on, we would say, he was dependent on the Dharma and the Adharma (the super-organic pre-natal forces, determining the forms and characters of

different animals from before their birth).....God is only the common moving cause....The differences in the animals are caused by the differences in the Karmas inhering in these animals.....”

The same efficiency of the Dharma and the Adharma as ante-natal causes, determining the peculiar characters of the animals, is acknowledged by the Buddhists,—at the obvious sacrifice of their fundamental doctrine of the absolute momentariness of all phenomena. The origin of an animal is not attributed to organic matter alone by the Buddhists. According to them, as Vācaspati points out,—

“Bhava means the Dharma and the Adharma and is so called because to it the Bhava or origination is due. The origination of Skandha i.e. the animal Body is caused by that (i.e. the Bhava consisting in the Dharma and the Adharma)”

The Bhava as the transcendental force, working upon the organic matter for the origination of the animal Body is peculiar in each case and is otherwise called the Vāsanā.

