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SĀMĀKHYA IN THE ABHIDHARMAKOŚA BHĀŚYA

In my recent article (Bronkhorst, 1994) I drew attention to a number of variations in various early authors that ascribe to Sāṃkhya a position we do not find in the classical texts of that school. In Sāṃkhya, if we can believe these authors, a substance used to be looked upon as a collection of qualities. The classical doctrine of the school, on the other hand, distinguishes clearly between a substrate which remains the same, and properties that undergo modification. Modification (*pariṇāma*) itself is described in the following terms in the *Yuktidīpikā*:¹

...the substrate (*dharmin*), without abandoning its essence, drops the earlier property (*dharma*) and accepts the next one, that is called modification (*pariṇāma*); again:²

...modification is the destruction of one property of a substance which remains the same, and the appearance (*pravṛtti*) of another property;

...a third time:³

...destruction of a substrate (*dharmin*) is the appearance [in it] of another property and disappearance of the earlier one.

Yoga Bhāṣya defines the same concept in the following manner:⁴

...production of a new property in a substance which remains the same, while the old property is destroyed.

In my earlier article I did not refer to the way in which the Abhidharmakośa Bhāṣya defines *pariṇāma* in Sāṃkhya in its discussion of Abhidharmakośa 2.50a. There was no need for this, for its definition is most identical with the one in the Yoga Bhāṣya, followed by a short discussion. The whole passage reads:⁵

How do the Sāṃkhyas [define] modification?

As follows:] The appearance of a new property in a substance which remains the same, while another property is destroyed.

What is wrong with that?

For there is no such substrate (*dharmin*) which remains the same and whose properties could undergo modification.

¹ *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 25: 393–400, 1997.

² Kluwer Academic Publishers. Printed in the Netherlands.

- (e) Who says that the substrate is different from the property? Modification is merely the becoming otherwise of that very substance.
- (f) This, too, is incorrect.
- (g) What is incorrect about it?
- (h) This is a new way of speaking, to say that this is that, but [at the same time that] it is not like that.

In this discussion two persons speak: a Buddhist and a Sāṃkhya. The Buddhist asks questions and criticizes the answers of the Sāṃkhya. To the Sāṃkhya, it would appear, belong (b), (e), and (g);⁶ the Buddhist questioner may then pronounce (a), (c)–(d), (f) and (h). The Sāṃkhya explains first that modification is “the appearance of a new property in a substance which remains the same, while another property is destroyed”, then specifies that the substrate is not different from the properties, so that “modification is merely the becoming otherwise of that very substance”. The Buddhist disagrees with the initial explanation by pointing out that “there is no such substrate which remains the same and whose properties could undergo modification”, and with the subsequent specification by rejecting the Sāṃkhya’s procedure, according to which “this is that, but at the same time it is not like that”.

This passage gives the impression of presenting Sāṃkhya in its classical form, and not in its pre-classical shape, in which no unchanging substrate of properties had yet been introduced. Yet Louis de la Vallée Poussin’s translation of this passage creates a different impression. It reads:⁷

Qu’entendent les Sāṃkhyas par *parināma*? – Ils admettent que, dans une substance permanente (*dharmīn*, *dravya*), les *dharma*s ou essences naissent et disparaissent. – En quoi cette doctrine est-elle absurde? [3a] – On ne peut admettre, d’une part, un *dharmīn* permanent, d’autre part des *dharma*s naissant et disparaissant. – Mais les Sāṃkhyas ne supposent pas qu’il y a un *dharmīn* à part des *dharma*s; ils disent qu’un *dharmīn*, quand il se transforme (*parinām*), devient le support de divers caractères: ce *dharmīn*, ils l’appellent *dharmīn*. En d’autres termes, la transformation (*parināma*) c’est seulement la modification (*anyathābhāvamātra*) de la substance (*dravya*). – Cette thèse n’est pas non plus admissible. – Pourquoi? – Parce qu’il y a contradiction dans les termes: vous admettez que cela (la cause) est ceci (l’effet), et que ceci n’est pas comme cela.

This translation deviates in one essential aspect from the Sanskrit passage which we have just studied. The phrase “ils disent qu’un *dharmīn*, quand il se transforme (*parinām*), devient le support de divers caractères: ce *dharmīn*, ils l’appellent *dharmīn*” has nothing corresponding to it in the Sanskrit.

It should not of course be forgotten that La Vallée Poussin prepared his translation at a time when the original Sanskrit text of the

Abhidharmakośa Bhāṣya was not yet accessible, nor indeed known to exist. He worked exclusively on the basis of translations of this text into Chinese and Tibetan, using commentaries where available. The fact that his French translation has still lost none of its usefulness even after the discovery of the Sanskrit original, testifies to its excellence. In spite of this, one might be tempted to think that, in the case of the passage under consideration, La Vallée Poussin’s lack of access to the Sanskrit original is responsible for an inaccuracy in his translation.

However, La Vallée Poussin’s translation expresses something that, though not present in the Sanskrit original, seems to be close to the position of pre-classical Sāṃkhya, so far as we know that earlier position. His translation states that, properly considered, a substance is nothing but a collection of properties (*dharma*), one of which may, in certain circumstances, be called substrate (*dharmīn*). Is it possible that La Vallée Poussin used, in preparing his translation, material that contained information about preclassical Sāṃkhya? Where did he find this?

A look at Yaśomitra’s Sphuṭārthā Abhidharmakośa Vyākhyā, the only commentary that has been preserved in Sanskrit, may shed light on the question. This text contains some passages that are of the greatest interest in this context. First the following one, which occurs in an altogether different context:⁸

What is modification (*parināma*)? ... It is the becoming otherwise of a chain (*saṃtati*). ... What is this chain? Is it the becoming otherwise of a chain which remains the same, just as for the Sāṃkhyas it is the appearance of a new property in a substance which remains the same, while another property is destroyed?

The underlined part ascribes exactly the same position to the Sāṃkhyas as does the passage – esp. sentence (b) – found in the Abhidharmakośa Bhāṣya. However, Yaśomitra also comments on Vasubandhu’s passage (and therefore in a way on his own), and there he explains “a substance which remains the same” (*avasthitasya dravyasya*) as meaning “constituted of colour, taste, and so on” (*rūparasādyātmakasya*).⁹ This seems to be what we were looking for. Yaśomitra would seem to interpret Vasubandhu in accordance with early Sāṃkhya doctrine. One is likely to get the impression that, according to Yaśomitra, substance in Sāṃkhya consists in its qualities (*rūparasādyātmaka*), and is not their substrate.

This interpretation looks puzzling. It raises the question whether Vasubandhu had this interpretation in mind while writing this passage. And if Vasubandhu intended this, did the author of the Yoga Bhāṣya, too, hold on to the early position of Sāṃkhya? And what about the

author of the *Yuktidīpikā*? It becomes vital to find out whether we have understood Yaśomitra correctly.

Note first that Yaśomitra does not comment on exactly the passage of Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa Bhāṣya* cited above from Pradhan's edition. Yaśomitra knew a slightly different reading, which is also the one adopted by Dwarikadas Shastri in his edition. The difference is minimal, but crucial. Yaśomitra and Dwarikadas Shastri have the two words *na hi* at the beginning of sentence (b), and lack *hi* in sentence (d). The whole passage now becomes:¹⁰

- (a) How do the Sāṃkhyas [define] modification?
- (b) For there is no appearance of a new property in a substance which remains the same, while another property is destroyed.
- (c) What is wrong with that?
- (d) There is no such substrate (*dharmīn*) which remains the same and whose properties could undergo modification.
- (e) Who says that the substrate is different from the properties? Modification is merely the becoming otherwise of that very substance.
- (f) This, too, is incorrect.
- (g) What is incorrect about it?
- (h) This is a new way of speaking, to say that this is that, but [at the same time that] it is not like that.

Here, too, we may attribute the different sentences to two speakers, but they will now have to be attributed differently from before. The new reading of (b) is somewhat clumsy, and one might be tempted to think, with Yamashita (1994: 58 n. 47), that it is erroneous. But if we assume, with Yaśomitra, that it is correct, we cannot but conclude that (a) and (b) go together and are pronounced by the same person, the Buddhist, who knows the position of Sāṃkhya, but raises a question about it, knowing that "there is no appearance of a new property in a substance which remains the same, while another property is destroyed". Question (c) is then asked by the Sāṃkhya; and answer (d) is to be put in the mouth of the Buddhist. To the Sāṃkhya further belong (e) and (g), to the Buddhist (f) and (h).

In this reading sentence (b) cannot but be a remark made by the Buddhist, i.e. by Vasubandhu, about the nature of modification as he sees it, whereas in the reading accepted by Pradhan sentence (b) gives the position of the Sāṃkhya. Yaśomitra comments on the sentence with *na hi* and therefore on Vasubandhu's position, not on the Sāṃkhya position. He does so in the following words:¹¹

"For not in a substance which remains the same" means "constituted of colour, taste, and so on". "While another property is destroyed" means "while the milk is destroyed". "Appearance of a new property" means "production of curds".

On sentence (d) Yaśomitra comments:¹²

"No such substrate (*dharmīn*)" means "a property different from the properties of milk etc., which are colour etc., a property which does not arise and does not get destroyed even when [those other properties] arise and get destroyed".

Sentence (d), too, expresses Vasubandhu's opinion, and not that of the Sāṃkhyas. This means that Yaśomitra explains Vasubandhu's opinion on the nature of substance. And there substance is conceived of as being "constituted of colour, taste, and so on".

This last point is clear from such passages as the following one from the *Abhidharmakośa Bhāṣya*:¹³

[Opponent:] The atom is a substance, and a substance is different from colour etc. It is not established that when those [qualities] disappear that [substance] will disappear, [too].

[Reply:] It is not acceptable that [a substance] is different [from its qualities], since no one distinguishes them, [saying:] "these are earth, water and fire, and these are their colour etc."

Indeed, for Vasubandhu and the Buddhists in general, there is no such thing as a lasting substance that is the substrate of qualities. Strictly speaking there are only qualities, without substrate. This is what Yaśomitra explained correctly.

La Vallée Poussin must have believed that Yaśomitra attributed the position which we now recognize as Buddhist to Sāṃkhya. This would explain his misleading translation into French of the passage under consideration. He can hardly be blamed for this, given that he had no access to the Sanskrit text of Vasubandhu's work.

Recently an English translation has been published of La Vallée Poussin's French translation. The translator, Leo M. Pruden, explains in the Translator's Preface (1988–1990: I, xxiii f.) that the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* can best be understood from its Sanskrit original, and he relates how his translation from the French of La Vallée Poussin went hand in hand with a study of the Sanskrit original. Indeed, it was his original intention to publish his work with the English translation on the right facing page, and the romanized Sanskrit on the left facing page; only the high cost of publishing prevented him from doing so. The question that interests us at present is what effect this acquaintance with the Sanskrit text has had on Pruden's English translation of the passage under consideration. Pruden translates as follows (1988–1990: II, 453):

What do the Sāṃkhyas understand by *pariṇāma*?

They admit that *dharma*s arise and disappear within a permanent substance (a *dharmin* or *dravya*).

How is this incorrect?

One cannot admit the simultaneous existence of a permanent *dharmin*, and of *dharma*s arising and disappearing.

But the Sāṃkhyas do not hold that there is a *dharmin* separate from the *dharma*s; they say that a *dharma*, when it is transformed (*pariṇam*), becomes the support of different characteristics: this *dharma* they call *dharmin*. In other words, transformation (*pariṇāma*) is only the modification (*anyathābhāvamātra*) of a substance (*dravya*). This thesis is not correct.

Why is it not correct?

Because there is a contradiction in terms: you admit that that (the cause) is identical to this (the result), but that this is not like that.

It can easily be seen that this is a satisfactory translation of La Vallée Poussin's French. But quite obviously, the Sanskrit has not been taken into consideration. We still find the claim that "the Sāṃkhyas say that a *dharma*, when it is transformed (*pariṇam*), becomes the support of different characteristics: this *dharma* they call *dharmin*"; we have seen that the Sanskrit says nothing of the kind.

NOTES

¹ YD p. 49 l. 10–11; p. 75 l. 6–7: *jahad dharmāntaram pūrvam upādatte yadā paramtattvād apracyuto dharmī pariṇāmaḥ sa ucyate*/. Compare this with Vkp 3.7.118: *pūrvāvasthām avijahat* (v.1. *pūrvām avasthām ajahat*) *saṃsprṣṇān dharmam uttaram/saṃmūrchita ivārtātmā jāyamāno 'bhidhīyate*/.

² YD p. 49 l. 6–7: *pariṇāmo hi nāmāvasthitasya dravyasya dharmāntaranivṛttiḥ dharmāntarapravṛttiś ca*. Muroya (1996: 49) rightly points out that this definition of *pariṇāma* occurs in a passage defending the point of view of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. The next definition of the Yuktidīpikā essentially substitutes *āvirbhāva* for *pravṛtti*, and *tirobhāva* for *nivṛtti*, in order to answer an objection from the side of these opponents.

³ YD p. 53 l. 25–26: ... *dharmiṇo dharmāntarasyāvirbhāvaḥ pūrvasya ca tirobhāvaḥ pariṇāmaḥ*. I prefer this interpretation to the alternative one "Modification is the appearance of another property which is the substrate and the disappearance of the earlier one"; cp. Muroya, 1996: 50.

⁴ YBh 3.13: *avasthitasya dravyasya pūrvadharmanivṛtttau dharmāntarotpattiḥ*. Cp. the Nyāya Bhāṣya introducing sūtra 4.1.33: *avasthitasypādānasya dharmamātram nivartate dharmamātram upajāyate*. ...

⁵ Abhidh-k-bh(P) p. 159 l. 18–19: *katham ca sāmkyānām pariṇāmaḥ/avasthitasya dravyasya dharmāntaranivṛtttau dharmāntaraprādurbhāva itikaś cātra doṣaḥ/sa eva hi dharmī na samvidyate yasyāvasthitasya dharmānām pariṇāmaḥ kalpyeta/kaś caivam āha dharmebhyo 'nyo dharmī/tasyaiva tu dravyasyānyathābhāvamātram pariṇāmaḥ/evam apy ayuktam/kim atrāyuktam/tad eva cedam na cedam tatheti apūrvaiṣā vācayuktiḥ*. Instead of *vācayuktiḥ*, Pradhan's edition has *vāyo yuktiḥ*.

⁶ An independent confirmation that – at least from the Buddhist point of view – modification in Sāṃkhya is "merely the becoming otherwise of that very substance" may be the following observation in the Abhidharmadīpa (Abhidh-d p. 106 l. 10–

12): *sāmkyasya tv avasthitasya dharmiṇaḥ svātmabhūtasya dharmāntarasyotsargaḥ svātmabhūtasya cotpādaḥ pariṇāma itī*.

⁷ Abhidh-k(VP) II p. 142.

⁸ Abhidh-k-vy p. 148 l. 3–7; Abhidh-k-bh(D) p. 217 l. 18–21: *ko 'yam pariṇāmo nāmeti.../saṃtater anyathātvam itī.../kā ceyam saṃtatīr itī/kim yathā sāmkyānām avasthita-dravyasya dharmāntara-nivṛtttau dharmāntara-prādurbhāvaḥ tathā 'vasthāyinyāḥ saṃtater anyathātvam itī*

⁹ Abhidh-k-vy p. 324 l. 31–34; Abhidh-k-bh(D) p. 509 l. 17–20; cited below.

¹⁰ Abhidh-k-bh(D) p. 509 l. 3–6: *katham ca sāmkyānām pariṇāmaḥ/na hy avasthitasya dravyasya dharmāntaranivṛtttau dharmāntaraprādurbhāva itī/kaś cātra doṣaḥ/sa eva dharmī na samvidyate yasyāvasthitasya dharmānām pariṇāmaḥ kalpyeta/kaś caivam āha dharmebhyo 'nyo dharmī/tasyaiva tu dravyasyānyathābhāvamātram pariṇāmaḥ/evam apy ayuktam/kim atrāyuktam/tad eva cedam na cedam tatheti apūrvaiṣā vācayuktiḥ*

¹¹ Abhidh-k-vy p. 324 l. 31–33; Abhidh-k-bh(D) p. 509 l. 17–18: *na hy avasthitasya dravyasyeti/rūparasādyātmakasya/dharmāntaranivṛttāv itī/kṣīranivṛtttau/dharmāntara-prādurbhāva itī/dadhijanmal*

¹² Abhidh-k-vy p. 324 l. 33–35; Abhidh-k-bh(D) p. 509 l. 18–20: *sa eva dharmī netī/rūpādyātmakakṣīrādīdharmebhyo 'nyo dharma utpādayaye 'py anutpanno 'vinaṣṭaḥ/pariṇāma itī/kṣīranivṛtttau dadhibhāvaḥ*

¹³ Abhidh-k-bh(P) p. 190 l. 3–5; Abhidh-k-bh(D) p. 562 l. 4–7: *dravyam hi paramāṇur anyac ca rūpādibhyo dravyam itī na teṣām vināśe tadvināśaḥ siddhyati/ayuktam asyānyatvam yavātā na nirdhāryate (paricchidyate, D) kenacit imāni prthivyaptejāmsi ime teṣām (eṣām, D) rūpādaya itī*. Cp. Frauwallner, Phil. d. Buddh, p. 101; Abhidh-k(VP) Vol 2, p. 213–214.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abhidh-d	Abhidharmadīpa with Vibhāṣāprabhāvṛtti, ed. P. S. Jaini, Patna 1959 (TSWS 4)
Abhidh-k(VP)	Vasubandhu, Abhidharmakośa, traduit et annoté par Louis de La Vallée Poussin, 6 vols., Paris 1923–1931
Abhidh-k-bh(D)	Abhidharmakośa and Bhāṣya of Ācārya Vasubandhu with Sphuṭārthā Commentary of Ācārya Yaśomitra, pts. 1–4, ed. Swami Dwarikadas Shastri, Varanasi 1970–1973 (BBhS 5, 6, 7, 9)
Abhid-k-bh(P)	Vasubandhu, Abhidharmakośabhāṣya, ed. P. Pradhan, rev. 2nd ed. Aruna Halder, Patna 1975 (TSWS 8)
Abhidh-k-vy	Yaśomitra, Sphuṭārthā Abhidharmakośavyākhyā, ed. Unrai Wogihara, Tōkyō 1932–1936
BBhs	Baudha Bharati Series, Varanasi
Frauwallner, Phil.d.Buddh	Erich Frauwallner, Die Philosophie des Buddhismus, Berlin 1956
TSWS	Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series, Patna
Vkp	Bhartrhari, Vākyapadīya, ed. W. Rau, Wiesbaden 1977
WZKS	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens, Wien
YBh	Yoga Bhāṣya
YD	Yuktidīpikā

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