

Does Prakriti Really Interplay With Purusha?

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Abstract

In the Samkhya philosophy the world is not derived from consciousness, nor is consciousness derived from the world. There is a fundamental dualism at the very heart of reality, and this dualism is the fundamental fact of existence. This fact is the reason why there is a manifest world, although in itself purusha adds nothing to the world. The purusha only witnesses the world, but since its nature is to witness, it thus uses the world as an instrument for its own purposes and end.

Samkhya refuses to understand the world simply as a product of consciousness.² It refuses to see the world as an illusory projection of consciousness, and thus it rejects any idealistic monism. Similarly, it refuses to see consciousness simply as a product of world, and thus it rejects any kind of materialism or naturalism. It maintains, fundamental dualism, the opposite poles of which function in a kind of dialectical interaction. The fact of consciousness and the fact of the world are two irreducible realities in constant interplay with one another, and it is this interplay which is central matter of discussion in the present paper.

Keywords: Sankhya Philosophy Purusha (Self), Prakriti (Nature), Relation, Reality, Dualism, Isolation, Manifest, Unmanifest, World

Introduction

Sankhya Philosophy is one of the oldest systems of thought of Indian Philosophy. This system clearly believes in dualism. Purusha and Prakriti are two utterly opposite eternal entities of this system. Purusha is uncaused, eternal, inactive and pure conscious where as Prakriti is unconscious, eternal, active and creator of this universe.

Purpose of Study

In Sankhya Philosophy Prakriti is unconscious and ever-active eternal element but purusha is conscious and constant eternal element. But how can the two opposed and independent entities really come into contact? The purpose of writing this paper is to solve the problem.

In the karika of Isvarakrisna, little attention is given as to how the two basic principles- i.e., prakriti and purusa - come together, although the text does tell as they are together and what happen when they come together. With respect to the problem of how they come together, the author of the karika evidently never asked that question. He simply assumes from the beginning that they are together, and his analysis includes only a description of the mutual interaction of the principles together with a description of the means to attain isolation or freedom. So, first and foremost, it is necessary to keep in mind the purpose of the text.

Thus, the purpose of the text is not to explain how prakriti and purusa first came together. The purpose, rather, is to describe the nature of human existence and suffering in view of the fact that purusa and prakriti are together, and then to offer a solution. The purpose of this interaction or dialectic, according to karika, is to bring or release of purusa.

पुरुषस्य दर्शनार्थं कैवल्यार्थस्तथा प्रधानस्य ।

पङ्. ग्वन्धवदुभयोरपि संयोगस्तत्कृतः सर्गः ॥ (Karika 21)

In the above karika, purusa and prakriti co-operate like the blind man and the lame man, each one benefiting from the capacities of the other. The prakriti becomes active by being seen by the purusa, and the purusa is finally released by the knowledge of itself which arises in its opposite. Actually, of course, only the purusa is really benefited in this interaction, for only purusa is free.³

The prakriti becomes active, but its activity ultimately is only for the purpose of generating the discriminative realization that it is not purusa. It can only do this, because of the presence of purusa.

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Here, it is necessary to clarify that the illustration of the lame man and the blind man, are only used to suggest the general principle that two separate entities or things when construed with one another, may lead to a common result. The illustrations are not meant to provide information about the content or nature of the two things or entities, as Sankara's criticism implies. Actually, analogies are given to explain the phenomenon and such terms are only symbolic and derived from our manifest experience.

Once again, it is also necessary to clarify that without proximity of purusa and prakriti the manifest world would never appear. This interaction of purusa to the prakriti brings about the creation of the manifest world. As in the karika 20th this interplay or dialectic is described –

तस्मात् तत्संयोगादचेतनं चेतनावदिव लिंगम् ।
गुणकर्तृत्वे च तथा कर्तव्यं भवत्युदासीनः ॥⁵

It is perhaps tempting to suggest that purusa or consciousness is the presupposition or foundation for all relations and as such can not be construed in the terms of particular relations. How does evolution take place? In the Yogasutra the reason given for the emergence or evolution of the manifest world is avidya (ignorance). In the Samkhya pravachansutra, it is stated that the disturbance of the equilibrium of the gunas which starts evolution is made possible by the contact of Purusa and Prakriti. Actually, Purusa sannidhi matram is sufficient to disturb the equilibrium of the gunas and thus lead to evolution. T.20. Purusa is reflected in the intellect and due to lack of discrimination identifies himself with his own reflection and it is this reflection of the Purusa which comes into contact with Prakriti and not the Purusa himself.

Actually, Samkhya realizes difficulties to explain the relation between Purusa and Prakriti, in order to avoid it says there are no phenomenal relation between Purusa and Prakriti. Both are transcendental entities, so their relation is also transcendental.

Samkhya admits that there are two types of relation between Purusa and Prakriti –worldly relation and transcendental relation. Worldly relation is due to ignorance and ignorance can be removed by knowledge, by discriminative knowledge, where transcendental relation is liberation and liberation can be attained by knowledge. ka. 44.

It is only knowledge which leads to liberation (ज्ञानेन चापवर्गः) because bondage is due to ignorance and ignorance can be attained only by knowledge.

Here, it should be noted that purusa is not a direct cause of the appearance of the manifest world (न प्रकृतिः न विकृतिः पुरुषः).⁶ The purusa is simply present, and this presence functions as a kind of catalyst in releasing the casual process of transformation in the mulaprakriti. Because of the presence of purusa the mulaprakriti and its transformations appear as if they are conscious. Because of the presence of mulaprakriti and its transformations the purusa appear as if it is active. In other words, the mulaprakriti and its transformations

appear as what they are not, and the purusa appear as what it is not. A kind of double negation occurs.⁷

Therefore, the fact of suffering arises because the purusa appears as what it is not. The purusa can only be witness when there is something to witness, but, when it witnesses the manifestations of prakriti, suffering arises. Actually, suffering is of the nature of things until the purusa becomes separated or isolated from the linga. As karika says -

अत्र जरामरणकृतं दुःखं प्राप्नोति चेतनः पुरुषः ।
लिङ्गस्याऽविनिवृत्तेस्तस्माद् दुःखं स्वभावेन ॥⁸

Thus, the world is understood primarily in terms of its relationship to purusa. There is no attempt in the Samkhya to map out the intelligibilities of the world for its own sake. The world, rather, even though it is quite real, is a kind of tool or instrument to be used by the purusa for achieving salvation . पुरुषार्थ एव हेतुर्न केनचित् कार्यते करणम्⁹

Actually, the purusa is everything which is not prakriti, and prakriti is everything which is not purusa. This discriminative realization is the ultimate goal of Samkhya for when this "knowledge" arises suffering ceases. At that point one has achieved the realization that purusa is radically distinct from prakriti and, thus, is isolated or free.

The man who possess salvation- knowledge (dsoy Kku) attains 'certain' and 'final' isolation--
एकान्तिकमात्यन्तिकमुभयं केवल्यमाप्नोति ॥¹⁰

It is a "knowledge" which transcends all knowledge and is the final, absolute awareness or pure consciousness. This salvation-knowledge comes as a result of the study and analysis of the tattvas or principles which make up the manifest world—

एवं तत्त्वाभ्यासान्नास्मि न मे नाहमित्यपरिशेषम् ।
अविपर्ययाद्विशुद्धं केवलमुत्पद्यते ज्ञानम् ॥¹¹

Thus, the 'study of the tattvas' implies a kind of intuitive realization or discrimination which separate out pure consciousness from everything that is not consciousness. This ultimate process of intuitive discrimination occurs in the Buddha¹² and its effect is to expel everything from consciousness except consciousness itself.

All notion of 'I', all strivings, all thoughts, all the process of ordinary existence are radically eliminated, and one is left with the pure fact of consciousness. It is because of the radical nature of this ultimate discrimination that this 'knowledge' is called 'complete' (aparisesam), 'pure' (visuddham), and 'solitary' (kevalam)-ka 64. That is, one who possess this 'knowledge' or has realized this ultimate intuitive discrimination dwells apart from involvement in the manifest world. He dwells in 'kaivalya'. It is a condition of absolute freedom, and complete cessation of all suffering.

In criticizing the samkhya notion of pradhan, Sankara has overlooked or perhaps misconstrued a fundamental distinction of samkhya position. Sankara argues that the entire animate and inanimate world in its intricate and marvelous design must have had a conscious cause. Stones and clods of earth do not have such power. Sankara conveniently ignores, however, that samkhya does not argue that the pradhana is like a stone or clod of earth.

The ultimate material cause, however, is not a stone or dish. The ultimate material cause is made up of sattva, rajas and tamas, or thought, activity and stuff or inertia. The material cause encompasses intellect (buddhi), ego (ahamkara) and mind (manas) as well as subtle and gross matter.

Here again, it is necessary to clarify that cognition, self-awareness, intellectual elaboration and all conative decisions and acts are to be construed as manifestations of subtle matter. Samkhya is not a dualism of mind and body or even a dualism of subject and object. Intellect, will, self-awareness and gross objects are all products of pradhana.¹³ Thus, when Sankara asserts that houses and so forth are made by workmen, Samkhya fully concurs that the entire world with its intricate and marvelous design requires an all-powerful operative cause. The workmen and the all-operative cause, however, are as much aspect of pradhana as are jars, dishes and houses.

Once again, it is noted that Samkhya clearly distinguishes between awareness (antahkarana-vritti) and consciousness (purusa=cetana). Whereas 'awareness' is the reflective content of all manifestation, 'consciousness' is the contentless medium in which and for which manifestation shows itself. Whereas awareness is creative and created both, consciousness is neither creative nor created (Na prakriti na vikriti punsah). But Sankara's criticism does not raise this point and as such his critique misses the mark.

To conclude, Purus needs Prakriti for enjoyment as well as for liberation, for Samsar as well as for apavarg. Evolution supplies objects to be enjoyed to the purusa and works for his liberation by enabling him to discriminate between himself and Prakriti. Ī. 42.

Prakriti and all its evolutes, from mahat to mahabhutas tend to serve the purpose of the purus. The goal of the spirit is alone the cause, the goal of the spirit is to attain liberation and liberation means complete cessation of all miseries, which is summom bonum, the highest end of life

The prakriti desist, having exhibited herself to the purusa. Prakriti and purusa may live together but there is no impulse to create. सति संयोगेऽपि तयोः प्रयोजनं नास्ति सर्गस्य (ज्ञं.-66). Acharya Mathara illustrate this by the unproductive union of an elderly couple. Purusa is resting like a spectator. प्रकृतिं पश्यति पुरुषः प्रेक्षकवदवस्थितः स्वस्थः (ज्ञं.-65).

The knowledge that 'I am not' that 'nothing is mine' that 'Ego is unreal' when constantly meditated upon becomes pure, absolute, and leads to liberation.

Actually, liberation is nothing but a return of the purusa to its pure nature as consciousness, which in fact it always was. It is Praptasya Prapti.

All proves apply properly only to the empirical soul and not to the pure spirit (ज्ञं). Pure spirit (ज्ञं) is free and pure consciousness. It is inactive, indifferent, and posses no attributes. Purusa is the silent witness, the emancipated alone, the neutral seer, the peaceful eternal. It is beyond time and

space, beyond change and activities, it is self luminous and self proved. It is uncaused, eternal and all pervading. It is the indubitable, the postulates of knowledge and all doubts and denials presuppose its existence.

Actually, samkhya liberation is a state of complete isolation of all suffering, freedom from all miseries, there are no pleasure, no happiness, no bliss because pleasure, is the result of satva guna and liberation transcends all gunas.

Actually, the purusa is always free and can never become bound ontologically. Bondage, liberation and transmigration is belongs to prakriti. As karika says –

तस्मान्न बध्यतेऽसौ न मुच्यते नाऽपि संसरति कश्चित् ।
संसरति बध्यते मुच्यते च नानाश्रया प्रकृतिः ॥⁴

Conclusion

Actually, Purusa has nothing to do with the play of Prakriti. It is Prakriti who bind herself, liberate herself and transmigrate. Purusa is neither bond, nor is it liberated, nor does it transmigrate. Bondage, liberation and transmigration is belongs to Prakriti.

Bondage and liberation are problems, rather, on the level of "awareness" (antahkarana-vritti) and occur because of non-discrimination (aviveka) or discrimination (viveka) by buddhi. In this way we can say that transcendently, purusa does not interplay with prakriti. There is no relation between the both, expect discriminative relation.

References

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2. *Matharvritti Karika*, 17.
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गुणवत्यगुणस्य सतस्तस्यार्थमपार्थकंचरित । *Karika*, 60
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5. *Samkhya Karika*, 20.
6. *Samkhya Karika*, 3.
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9. *Samkhya Karika*, 31.
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12. *Samkhya Karika*, 37.
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