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ON SEŚVARA-SĀṂKHYA

Masaaki Hattori, Kyōto

In the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* of Mādhava, the followers of the Yogadarśana propounded by Patañjali are called the Seśvara-sāṁkhyas (theistic Sāṁkhyas) in contradistinction to the Nirīśvara-sāṁkhyas (atheistic Sāṁkhyas), which name is applied to the followers of Kapila. Mādhava introduces the view of the Seśvara-sāṁkhyas with the following words:

The same twenty-five principles (*tattva*), primordial matter (*pradhāna*) etc., mentioned previously [in the chapter dealing with the views of the followers of Kapila] are admitted [in this system, too]. But there is the twenty-sixth [principle], that is, *parameśvara* (supreme God). He is a *puruṣa*, not affected by defilements (*kleśa*), action (*karman*), its fruition (*vipāka*), and subliminal deposits [of actions] (*āśaya*). He assumes a transformation-body (*nirmāṇa-kāya*) at will and sets forth in motion the worldly and Vedic traditions (*saṁpradāya*). He is a giver of favours (*anugrāhaka*) to living beings who are suffering pains in the charcoal fires of transmigration.¹

In the section elucidating the ‘action-yoga’ (*kriyā-yoga*), which consists of *tapas* (austerity), *svādhyāya* (recitation of *mantras*) and *īśvarapraṇidhāna* (devotion to God), Mādhava states that *īśvarapraṇidhāna* is the consignment (*samarpaṇa*) of all actions to the *īśvara* or the abandonment of [the desire for] fruits which actions may produce (*kriyāphalasamnyāsa*), and quotes the *Bhagavadgītā* II. 47, “On action alone be thy interest, never on its fruits; let not the fruits of action be thy motive, nor be thy attachment to inaction.”²

As is well known the *Yogasūtra* (YS) admits the existence of God (*īśvara*). He is a ‘special kind of *puruṣa*’ (*puruṣa-viśeṣa*), who is, as described by Mādhava, unaffected by defilements, etc. While an ordinary *yogin* is at first affected by defilements and later gets free from them through yogic practices, the *īśvara* is ever liberated from them, and in this respect he is a model of *yogins* who are seeking to attain *samādhi*. He is not a benevolent god, who bestows favours to living beings, assuming a transformation-body and giving his merciful hands to those who are

1 SDS 333.6-334.2

2 *Ibid.* 371.2-11. For the translation of the *Bhagavadgītā*, cf. EDGERTON 1952.

suffering pain and seeking for his help. Several times YS mentions *īśvarapraṇidhāna* as a means to attain *samādhi*. In his commentary on YS, Vyāsa takes the term *praṇidhāna* as meaning a special kind of devotion (*bhakti-viśeṣa*), and explains that the *īśvara* who is inclined [to a *yogin*] because of his *praṇidhāna* bestows favours to him.³ He further states that *īśvarapraṇidhāna* means the consignment of all actions to *paramaguru* (*sarvakriyāṇām paramagurāv arpaṇam*), or the abandonment of [the desire for] fruits of actions (*tatphalasamnyāso vā*).⁴ Mādhava's characterization of *īśvara* as one who bestows favours to living beings and his interpretation of *īśvarapraṇidhāna* are obviously based on Vyāsa's commentary on YS.

That the *īśvara* plays only a minor role in the yoga system as presented in YS has been remarked by several scholars.⁵ In YS I. 2, the yoga is defined as the restraint of activities of the mind (*cittavṛttinirodha*). As the means to realize it YS propounds the doctrine of eight-membered yoga (*aṣṭāṅga-yoga*), which describes the eight stages of yogic practice. In the final stage called *samādhi* (concentration), the activities of the mind are completely restrained, and the mind, which is as if it were empty of itself as consciousness, shines forth in the form of the contemplated object.⁶ Besides the eight-membered yoga, some other means to attain *samādhi* or the restraint of activities of the mind are mentioned in YS, and it is supposed that Patañjali incorporated in YS different yoga traditions that existed in his time. Perhaps among those who worship the *īśvara*, the devotion to the *īśvara* was regarded as a means to attain the goal of yogic practice. After the explanation of the activities of the mind to be restrained, YS I. 12 mentions repeated practice (*abhyāsa*) and detachment (*vairāgya*) as the

3 Ybh I. 23: *praṇidhānād bhaktiviśeṣād āvarjita īśvaras tam anugṛhṇāti ...* Cf. also I. 25.

4 Ybh II. 1. Cf. also II. 32: *īśvarapraṇidhānam tasmin paramagurau sarva-karmārpaṇam*; II. 45: *īśvarārpitāsarvabhāvasya samādhisiddhir...*

5 J. W. HAUER, who propounds the view that the yoga has its origin in the tradition of Rudra-Śiva worship, disapproved of GARBE's remark that God was "nur lose" introduced into the "Yogasystem" (HAUER 1958, 293-294). However, several scholars do not attach much importance to the *īśvara* in YS, cf. ELIADE 1958, 74: "... *īśvara*'s role is comparatively small."; FRAUWALLNER 1953, 425: "... so zeigt ..., wie äusserlich sie (viz., die Lehre von Gott) hier eingefügt ist."; OBERHAMMER 1977, 164: "Die theistische Form yogischer Meditation hat in den Yogasūtren eine untergeordnete Bedeutung."

6 YS III. 3: *tad (= dhyānam) evārthamātranirbhāsam svarūpaśūnyam iva samādhiḥ*.

means to restrain them, and as an alternative to these two means, *īśvarapraṇidhāna* is introduced in YS I. 23: “Or [the restraint of activities of the mind is attained] through the devotion to God” (*īśvarapraṇidhānād vā*).⁷ In YS II. 1ff. the action-yoga, which includes *īśvarapraṇidhāna*, is described as the means for the realization of *samādhi* (*samādhībhāvana*) and the attenuation of defilements (*kleśatanūkarāṇa*). The action-yoga is incorporated into the eight-membered yoga and forms part of *niyama* (observance), which constitutes, along with *yama* (abstention), the preliminary stage of the yogic practice. It is thus understood that *īśvarapraṇidhāna* is recognized as a subordinate means for the attainment of the restraint of activities of the mind in YS.

The meaning of the term *īśvarapraṇidhāna* is not quite clear. Vyāsa’s interpretation that it means the consignment of all actions to the *īśvara* or the complete submission to the benevolent God does not seem appropriate, because it does not match with the instruction for *prāṇāyāma*, etc., which are to be practiced by a *yogin* with a will for self-mastery. It seems likely that the *īśvara* was introduced into the yoga system of Patañjali from the religious circle worshipping Rudra-Śiva,⁸ but the term *praṇidhāna* is not found in relevant literature.⁹ This term is often used in Buddhist literature in the sense of ‘fixation of mind’ or ‘taking a vow’.¹⁰ A *bodhisattva* takes a vow or declares his earnest wish before starting his practice for the attainment of enlightenment. Since many Buddhist technical terms are

7 For the interpretation of this *sūtra*, see HAUER 1958, 241; 465, n. 1; OBERHAMMER 1977, 162.

8 HAUER 1958, 294: “Sein Ursprung und seine ganze Entwicklung vor dem YS war ... aufs engste verknüpft mit dem Ur- und Grossgott Vāyu-Rudra-Śiva, der schon sehr früh den Titel *īśvara*, der Mächtige, Herr, Herrscher erhielt, ...” HARA 1961 clarifies that the name *Śvetāśvatara* and some technical terms in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* VI-21 reflect the existence of a group of ascetics, who, neglecting the orthodox Brahmanical *āśrama* (*atyāśrama*), perform austerities (*tapas*), recite sacred formulae (*brahman* = *mantra*), and worship Śiva in accordance with Pāśupata rules. It is noteworthy that the three factors constituting the action-yoga, viz., austerity (*tapas*), recitation of *mantras* (*svādhyāya*) and devotion to God (*īśvarapraṇidhāna*) are included in this early Śaiva (Pāśupata) practice, cf. TAKAGI 1966, 443.

9 The expression ‘*praṇidhāya kāyaṃ*’ occurs in the *Bhagavadgītā* XI. 44: *tasmāt praṇamya praṇidhāya kāyaṃ prasādye tvām aham īśam idyam* (Therefore, bowing and prostrating my body, I beg grace of Thee, the Lord to be revered).

10 Cf. EDGERTON, F., *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*.

adopted in YS,¹¹ it may well be assumed that this term also was taken into YS from the Buddhist tradition. As a matter of fact, the existence of *īśvara* is not accepted in Buddhism. However, the *īśvara* has changed his character in YS. Unlike the God in theistic Hindu religions, the *īśvara* in YS is not a ruler of the world and has nothing to do with creation and destruction of the world. He is simply regarded as a means to attain *samādhi* by those who practice yoga. The attitude towards the *īśvara* of this nature is not to be characterized as devotion (*bhakti*). The Buddhist term *praṇidhāna* may be more appropriate to express the *yogin*'s attitude towards the *īśvara*. A *yogin* takes a vow or declares his firm resolution for the perfection of his yogic practice. His vow is addressed to the *īśvara*, and the *īśvara* assists him by being the witness of his vow or by being the object on which he concentrates his mind. It seems inappropriate to apply the name *Seśvara-sāṃkhya* to the yoga system as presented in YS, in which the *īśvara* plays only a minor role and is not related to *Sāṃkhya* doctrine, excepting that he is called a special kind of *puruṣa*. The application of the name *Seśvara-sāṃkhya* to the yoga system of Patañjali is nowhere attested before SDS.

In his article titled "God in *Sāṃkhya*" (*Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 27), J. BRONKHORST proved with sufficient evidence that the *Sāṃkhyas* of the commentators of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, who are called *Nirīśvara-sāṃkhyas* in SDS, also admitted the existence of God, not a ruler of all the worlds but God as an aid to yogic practices. Why, then, are the followers of Pātañjala-yoga alone called *Seśvara-sāṃkhyas*, while the follower of Kapila are called *Nirīśvara-sāṃkhyas*? On this point BRONKHORST states that the names *Nirīśvara-* and *Seśvara-sāṃkhyas* originally meant respectively the *Sāṃkhyas* who denied the existence of 'Creator God' and those who accepted the existence of 'Creator God'. His view is based on the following statement in the *Tattvasaṃgraha* (TS) of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's *pañjikā* on it (TSP), both dating from the 8th century, A.D. Śāntarakṣita states: "Out of the primordial matter alone, provided with all potencies, the several effects come forth; they are by their nature nothing but the primordial matter" (TS I: *Prakṛtiparīkṣā*, k. 7: *aśeṣa-śaktipracitāt pradhānād eva kevalāt / kāryabhedāḥ pravartante tadrūpā eva bhāvataḥ* //). Kamalaśīla comments "The followers of Kapila [think] that ... these several effects, *mahat* etc., come forth out of the primordial matter. ... The word 'alone' (*kevala-*) is [used] to exclude God

11 Cf. LA VALLEE POUSSIN 1936-37.

who is assumed [to take part in the creation] in addition to [the *pradhāna*] by the Seśvara-sāṁkhyas.”¹² We learn, BRONKHORST remarks, from this that those who think that the world comes forth out of *pradhāna* alone are not Seśvara-sāṁkhyas irrespectively of their opinions regarding God’s existence.¹³

The distinction between Nirīśvara- and Seśvara-sāṁkhyas is recorded in some Jaina texts. In the *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya* of Haribhadra (8th century) we read: “Some Sāṁkhyas are *nirīśvaras*, while other Sāṁkhyas have the *īśvara* as their deity” (*sāṁkhyā nirīśvarāḥ kecit kecid īśvara-devatāḥ*).¹⁴ In his commentary Guṇaratna explains that “for those who are *nirīśvarāḥ*, Nārāyaṇa is their deity.”¹⁵ Here the difference between the two schools of Sāṁkhyas is not whether they are theistic or atheistic, but whether their deity is the *īśvara* or someone else, i.e., Nārāyaṇa. As proponents of this view Guṇaratna mentions Kapila, Āsuri, Pañcaśikha, etc.¹⁶ As remarked by F. O. SCHRADER, a Jaina scholar Abhayadeva (10th century?) states in his commentary on *Aupapātika-sūtra* that the Kāpilas (*kāvilā*), viz., those who have Kapila as their deity, are Nirīśvara-sāṁkhyas, while the Sāṁkhyā-yogas (*sāṁkhā yogī*) admit primordial matter and *īśvara* as the causes of the world.¹⁷ It is thus understood that in the Jaina tradition the appellation Nirīśvara-sāṁkhyā is applied to the followers of Kapila, who is recognized by Guṇaratna as a proponent of the Nirīśvara-sāṁkhyā doctrine and by Abhayadeva as deity. The Seśvara-sāṁkhyas as distinguished from them admit the existence of God, who, according to Abhayadeva, is a cause of the world.

A reference to Nirīśvara- and Seśvara-sāṁkhyas is made also by Rāmānuja (11-12th century) in his commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*, viz., the *Śrībhāṣya*. The *Brahmasūtra* I.4.1ff. are meant for the refutation of the

12 TSP 21.2-4: ... *pradhānam, tata evaite mahadādayaḥ kāryabhedāḥ pravartante iti kāpilāḥ. ... kevalād iti vacanaṃ seśvarasāṁkhyopakalpīteśvaranirāsārtham.*

13 BRONKHORST 1983, 158.

14 ṢaḍDS k. 34ab.

15 TRD 96.2: *ye ca nirīśvarās teṣāṃ nārāyaṇo devaḥ.*

16 *Ibid.* 96.3-4: *teṣāṃ matavaktāraḥ kapilāsūripaṇcaśikhabhārgavolūkādayaḥ.*

17 SCHRADER 1914, 102, n. 1: *kapilo devatā yeṣāṃ: sāṁkhyā eva nirīśvarā ity arthaḥ.* n. 3: ... *prakṛtīśvarayor jagatkāraṇatvam abhyupagatāḥ.* It is worthy of note that Vācaspatimiśra admits that Kapila is an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, cf. *Tattvavaiśārādī*, I. 25: *kapilo nāma viṣṇor avatāraviśeṣaḥ prasiddhaḥ.*

Sāṃkhya view that *pradhāna* is the material cause of the world. In *Śrībhāṣya* I.4.23, Rāmānuja introduces the argument set forth by the Seśvara-sāṃkhyas against the Vedāntins that the omniscient God cannot create the world unless there is *pradhāna* as the material cause of the world. He states:

The Nirīśvara-sāṃkhyas being thus refuted [in I.4.1-22], the Seśvara-sāṃkhyas raise the following objection: –Although the Upaniṣads propound that the omniscient *īśvara* is the cause of the world on account of his association with attributes, such as *īkṣaṇa*,¹⁸ etc., still it is apprehended that by the same Upaniṣads *pradhāna* is propounded as the material cause (*upādāna*) of the world. Not indeed do the Upaniṣads teach that the *īśvara*, who is omniscient, not subject to transformation (*aparīṇāmin*), and the supervisor (*adhiṣṭhātṛ*), is the cause of the world without *pradhāna*, which is the supervised (*adhiṣṭheya*), non-sentient (*acetana*) and subject to transformation.¹⁹

Then he quotes some passages from the Upaniṣads as testimony of this Seśvara-sāṃkhya argument. From this information supplied by Rāmānuja it is known that the Seśvara-sāṃkhyas admitted the existence of ‘Creator God’.

In his introduction to TS III: *Ubhaya-parīkṣā*,²⁰ Kamalaśīla makes reference to the view held by some Sāṃkhyas:

On this point (= regarding the cause of the world) some Sāṃkhyas (*kecit sāṃkhyāḥ*) assert as follows: These various effects do not come forth from *pradhāna* alone, because it (= *pradhāna*) is insentient (*acetana*). No insentient entity is found to produce its own effect without a controller (*adhiṣṭhāyaka*). And the *puruṣa* cannot be the controller, because at that time he is unconscious (*ajñā*). The *puruṣa* cognizes only that object which is apprehended by *buddhi*, and prior to the association with *buddhi*, he is absolutely unconscious: he cognizes nothing at all. Since no one can create anything that has not been known, he is not a creator (*karṭṛ*). Therefore, the *īśvara*, only when he is in dependence on *pradhāna*, is the

18 Cf. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.2.1: *sad eva somyedam agra āsīd, ekam evādvitīyam. tad aikṣata bahu syāṃ prajāyeyeti.*

19 *Śrībh* I.4.23: *evam nirīśvarasāṃkhye niraste seśvarasāṃkhyāḥ pratyavatiṣṭhate. yady apīkṣanādiguṇayogāt sarvajñam īśvaram jagatkāraṇatvena vedāntāḥ pratipādayanti tathāpi vedāntair eva jagadupādānatayā pradhānam eva pratipādyata iti pratīyate. na hi vedāntāḥ sarvajñasyāparīṇāmino 'dhiṣṭhātṛ īśvarasyādhiṣṭheyaṇācetanena parīṇāminā pradhānena vinā jagataḥ kāraṇatvam avagamayanti.*

20 *Ubhaya* means *prakṛti* and *īśvara* examined in the foregoing chapters.

creator of the various effect. Not indeed does someone, say Devadatta, give birth to a son by himself, nor does a potter alone make a pot.²¹

Here we find that the reason why they admitted the existence of 'Creator God' is clearly stated, and we may identify them with those whom Kamalaśīla called Seśvara-sām̐khyas in the first chapter of TSP.

Against the Seśvara-sām̐khyas, Śāntarakṣita raises the following objection. –The view that the *īśvara*, in cooperation with *pradhāna*, produce the various effects is to be accepted only under the assumption that (1) an eminent quality (*atiśaya*) is newly given to each of them, which by itself cannot produce the effects, or that (2) they jointly serve a common purpose (*ekārtha-kārin*). But there follows absurdity in both cases. (1) In the first case, the *īśvara* and the *pradhāna* would not be admitted to be eternal, since they undergo modification. (2) In the second case, all effects would be produced simultaneously, since the two causes are in constant conjunction as they both are eternal. In the answer given by the Seśvara-sām̐khyas to this objection, it is clearly noticed that the *īśvara* is closely related to the doctrine of the three *guṇas*, which is characteristic of the Sām̐khyas system of thought:

Even though these two causes, [*īśvara* and *pradhāna*,] are constantly present together, yet the various effects come forth only successively, because the three *guṇas*, viz., *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, of *pradhāna* are cooperators of the *īśvara*. Since these *guṇas* function only successively, there is succession in the effects. When the *īśvara* is in conjunction with *rajas* of which the function is manifested (*udbhūta-vṛtti*) then he is the cause of the creation of the world, because *rajas* has procreation as its effect. When, on the other hand, the *īśvara* is in conjunction with *sattva* or *tamas*, then he is the cause of the duration or the destruction of the world.²²

21 TSP 74.12-18: *tatra kecit sām̐khyā āhuḥ – na pradhānād eva kevalād amī kāryabhedāḥ pravartante, tasyācetanatvāt. na hy acetano 'dhiṣṭāyakam antareṇa svakāryam ārabhamāṇo dṛṣṭaḥ. na ca puruṣo 'dhiṣṭhāyako yuktaḥ, tasya tadānīm ajñatvāt. tathā hi – buddhyadhyavasitam evārthaṃ puruṣas cetayate, buddhi-samsargāc ca pūrvam asāv ajña eva, na jātu kiṃcid arthaṃ vijānāti. na cāvijñātam arthaṃ śaktaḥ kaścit kartum iti nāsau kartā. tasmād īśvara eva pradhānāpekṣaḥ kāryabhedānām kartā, na kevalaḥ. na hi devadattādiḥ kevalaḥ putraṃ janayati, nāpi kevalaḥ kulālo ghaṭaṃ karotīti.*

22 TSP 75.18-24 (ad TS kk. 97-100): *yady api kāraṇadvayam etan nityasam̐nihitam tathāpi krameṇaivāmī kāryabhedāḥ pravartante, yata īśvarasya pradhānagatās trayo guṇāḥ sattvādayaḥ sahakāriṇaḥ, teṣāṃ ca kramavṛttitvāt tatkāryeṣv api kramo bhavati. tathā hi – yadodbhūtavṛttinā rajasā yukto bhavati maheśvaraḥ tadā*

The source materials for the study of the *Seśvara-sāṃkhya* are unfortunately very limited. Although there are references to the *Sāṃkhya* ideas in Chinese translation of some Buddhist treatises, the *Seśvara-sāṃkhya* is nowhere mentioned. This is perhaps because the *Seśvara-sāṃkhya* doctrine was maintained by a minor group among the *Sāṃkhyas*. Since the *Sāṃkhya* system came to be represented by the *Śaṣṭitantra* and Īśvarakṛṣṇa's summary of its contents, viz., the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, the *Seśvara-sāṃkhya* was scarcely referred to in opponents' literature.

In the *Mokṣadharma-parvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, Book XII, there are many sections in which the *Sāṃkhya* ideas are expressed. In some of them, mention is made of the twenty-sixth principle (*tattva*) besides the twenty-five that are enumerated in the classical *Sāṃkhya* system. In the *Upaniṣads*, the *Sāṃkhya* ideas first appear in those which were composed in the second period among the old *Upaniṣads*, and some of them are tinged with theistic colour.

It is known that there existed many branches of the *Sāṃkhyas*, maintaining different doctrines. Among them a certain group admitted the existence of the *īśvara* as the creator of the world, and formed the theory that explains the process of creation and destruction of the world by the cooperation of the *īśvara* with the three *guṇas* of *pradhāna*. They were called the *Seśvara-sāṃkhyas*. In the course of time, the *Sāṃkhya* came to be represented by the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, and the doctrines maintained by the *Seśvara-sāṃkhya*, which were known to Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla in the eighth century, were gradually forgotten. In the *Sāṃkhyadarśana* maintained by the followers of Kapila, the *īśvara*, who played not so important role from the beginning, came to be neglected, while in the *Yogadarśana* maintained by the followers of Patañjali, the *īśvara* is clearly mentioned in several *sūtras*, and moreover, the religious attitude towards God in *bhakti*-religion was introduced into the system. Thus by the time of Mādhava the appellation *Seśvara-sāṃkhya* came to be applied to the *Yogadarśana*.

sargahetuḥ prajānāṃ bhavati, prasavakāryatvād rajasah. yadā tu sattvaṃ samudbhūtavṛtti samśrayate tadā lokānāṃ sthītikāraṇaṃ bhavati, sattvasya sthītihetutvāt. yadā tu tamasodbhūtaśaktinā samāyukto bhavati tadā pralayaṃ nāśaṃ sarvajagataḥ karoti, tamasaḥ pralaya (Text: pratyaya) hetutvāt.

ABBREVIATIONS

- TRD: *Tarkarahasyadīpikā*. See ṢaḍDS.
- TS: *Tattvasaṃgraha* of Śāntarakṣita. Bauddha Bharati Ser. 1. Vārānasi 1968.
- TSP: *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā* of Kamalaśīla. Bauddha Bharati Ser. 1. Vārānasi 1968.
- YS: *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali. Ānandāśrama Skt. Ser., 47. Poona 1932.
- Ybh: *Yogabhāṣya* of Vyāsa. Ānandāśrama Skt. Ser., 47. Poona 1932.
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