

CHAPTER VII

The Sāṅkhya Philosophy

I. INTRODUCTION

The Sāṅkhya system is the work of a great sage of the name of Kapila. The Sāṅkhya must be a very old system of thought. Its antiquity appears from the fact that the Sāṅkhya tendency of thought pervades all the literature of ancient India including the śrutis, smṛtis and purāṇas. According to tradition, the first work of the Sāṅkhya school is the *Sāṅkhya-sūtra* of Kapila. This being very brief and terse, Kapila, we are told, wrote an elaborate work entitled the *Sāṅkhya-pravacana sūtra*. Hence the Sāṅkhya philosophy is also known as Sāṅkhyaprayacana. This system is sometimes described as the 'atheistic Sāṅkhya' (nirīśvara-sāṅkhya), as distinguished from the Yoga which is called the 'theistic Sāṅkhya' (śeśvara-sāṅkhya). The reason for this is that Kapila did not admit the existence of God and also thought that God's existence could not be proved. But this is a controversial point.

Next to Kapila, his disciple Āsuri, and Āsuri's disciple Pañcaśikha wrote some books which aimed at a clear and elaborate exposition of the Sāṅkhya system. But these works were lost in course of time and we have no information about their contents. Īśvarakṛṣṇa's

Sāṅkhya-kārikā is the earliest available and authoritative text of the Sāṅkhya. Gaudapāda's *Sāṅkhya-kārikā-bhāṣya*, Vācaspati's *Tattvakaumudī*, Vijnānabhikṣu's *Sāṅkhya-pravacana-bhāṣya* and some other important works of the Sāṅkhya system.

The origin of the name 'sāṅkhya' is shrouded in mystery. According to some thinkers,¹ the name 'sāṅkhya' is an adaptation from 'saṅkhyā' meaning number, and has been applied to this philosophy because it aims at a right knowledge of reality by the enumeration of the ultimate objects of knowledge. According to others, however, the word 'saṅkhyā' means perfect knowledge (samyag-jñāna), and a philosophy in which we have such knowledge is justly named sāṅkhya. Like the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system, the Sāṅkhya aims at the knowledge of reality for the practical purpose of putting an end to all pain and suffering. It gives us a knowledge of the self which is clearly higher than that given by the other systems, excepting perhaps the Vedānta. So it may very well be characterised as the 'sāṅkhya' in the sense of a pure metaphysical knowledge of the self. It is a metaphysic of dualistic realism. While the Nyāya and the Vaiśeṣika admit the ultimate reality of many entities—atoms, minds and souls—the Sāṅkhya recognises only two kinds of ultimate realities, namely, spirit and matter (puruṣa and prakṛti). The nature of these two ultimate and other derivative realities will be considered in the Sāṅkhya metaphysics.

II. THE SĀṆKHYA METAPHYSICS

1. Theory of Causation²

The Sāṅkhya Metaphysics, especially its doctrine of prakṛti, rests mainly on its theory of causation which is known as satkārya-vāda.

1. Vide *Bhāgavata*, 3.25, et passim and Śrīdhara svāmin thereon.

2. Vide *Sāṅkhya-kārikā* and *Tattvakaumudī*, 8, 9; *Sāṅkhya-pravacana bhāṣya*, 1. 113-21; Anirudha's *Vṛtti*, 1. 113-21.

It is a theory as to the relation of an effect (kārya) to its material cause. The specific question discussed here is this: does an effect originally exist in the material cause prior to its production, i.e. appearance as an effect? The Bauddhas and the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas answer this question in the negative. According to them, the effect cannot be said to exist before it is produced by some cause. If the effect already existed in the material cause prior to its production, there is no sense in our speaking of it as being caused or produced in any way. Further, we cannot explain why the activity of any efficient cause is necessary for the production of the effect. If the pot already existed in the clay, why should the potter exert himself and use his implements to produce it? Moreover, if the effect were already in its material cause, it would logically follow that the effect is indistinguishable from the cause, and that we should use the same name for both the pot and the clay, and also that the same purpose would be served by a pot and a lump of clay. It cannot be said that there is a distinction of form between the effect and its material cause, for then we have to admit that there is something in the effect which is not to be found in its cause and, therefore, the effect does not really exist in the cause. This theory that the effect does not exist in the material cause prior to its production is known as asatkārya-vāda (i.e. the view that the kārya or the effect is *asat* or non-existent before its production). It is also called ārambhavāda. i.e. the theory of the beginning of the effect anew.

The Sāṅkhyas repudiate this theory of causation and establish their view of satkārya-vāda, namely, that the effect exists in the material cause even before it is produced. This view is based on the following grounds: (a) If the effect were really non-existent in the material cause, then no amount of effort on the part of any agent could bring it into existence. Can any man turn blue into red, or sugar into salt? Hence, when an effect is produced from some material cause, we are to say that it pre-exists in the cause and is only manifested by certain favourable conditions,

as when oil is produced by pressing seeds. The activity of efficient causes, like the potter and his tools, is necessary to manifest the effect, pot, which exists implicitly in the clay. (b) There is an invariable relation between a material cause and its effect which is causally related. It cannot produce an effect with which it is not related to it. But it cannot be related to what does not exist. Hence the effect must exist in the material cause before it is actually produced. (c) We see that only certain effects can be produced from certain causes. Curd can be got only out of milk and a cloth only out of threads. This shows that the effect somehow exists in the cause. Had it not been so, any effect could be produced from any cause; the potter would not have taken clay to produce pots, instead of taking milk or threads or any other thing. (d) The fact that only a *potent* cause can produce a desired effect goes to show that the effect must be *potentially* contained in the cause. The potent cause of an effect is that which possesses some power that is definitely related to the effect. But the power cannot be related to the effect, if the latter does not exist in some form. This means that the effect exists in the cause in an *unmanifested* form before its production or manifestation. (e) If the effect be really non-existent in the cause, then we have to say that, when it is produced, the non-existent comes into existence, i.e. something comes out of nothing, which is absurd. (f) Lastly, we see that the effect is not different from, but essentially identical with, the material cause. If, therefore, the cause exists, the effect also must exist. In fact, the effect and the cause are explicit and implicit states of the same substance. A cloth is not really different from the threads, of which it is made; a statue is the same as its material cause, stone, with a new shape and form; the weight of a table is the same as that of the pieces of wood used in it. The conclusion drawn by the Sāṅkhya from all this is that the effect exists in the material cause even before its production or appearance. This is the

theory of *satkārya-vāda* (i.e. the view that the effect is existent before its appearance).

The theory of *satkārya-vāda* has got two different forms, namely, *parināma-vāda* and *vivarta-vāda*. According to the former, when effect is produced, there is a real transformation (*parināma*) of the cause into the effect, e.g. the production of a pot from clay, or of curd from milk. The Sāṅkhya is in favour of this view as a further specification of the theory of *satkārya-vāda*. The second, which is accepted by the Advaita Vedāntins, holds that the change of the cause into the effect is merely *apparent*. When we see a snake in a rope, it is not the case that the rope is really transformed into a snake; what happens is that the rope only appears as, but is not really, a snake. So also, God or Brahman does not become really transformed into the world while we may wrongly think that He undergoes change and becomes the world.

2. Prakṛti and the Guṇas³

The Sāṅkhya theory that causation means a real transformation of the material cause into effect logically leads to the concept of *prakṛti* as the ultimate cause of the world of objects. All objects of the world, including our body and mind, the senses and the intellect, are limited and dependent things produced by the combination of certain elements. So we see that the world is a series of effects and that it must have a cause. What, then, is the cause of the world? It cannot be the *puruṣa* or the self, since the self is neither a cause nor an effect of anything. So the cause of the world must be the not-self, i.e. some principle which is other than and different from spirit, self or consciousness. Can this not-self be the physical elements or the material atoms? According to the Cārvākas or the materialists, the Bauddhas, the Jainas and

3. Vide *Kārikā* and *Kaumudī*, 3, 10-16; *Pravacana-bhāṣya* and *Vṛtti*, 1. 110, 1. 122-37.

the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, the atoms of earth, water, light and air are the material causes of the objects of the world. The Sāṅkhya objects to this on the ground that material atoms cannot explain the origin of the subtle products of nature, such as the mind, the intellect and the ego. So we must seek for something which can explain the gross objects of nature like earth and water, trees and seas, as well as its subtle products. Now it is found that in the evolution of things, the cause is subtler than the effect and that it pervades the effect, as when a seed develops into a tree or a wish into a dream-object. Hence the ultimate cause of the world must be some unintelligent or unconscious principle which is uncaused, eternal and all-pervading, very fine and always ready to produce the world of objects. This is the prakṛti of the Sāṅkhya system. It is the first cause of all things and, therefore, has itself no cause. As the uncaused root-cause of all objects it is eternal and ubiquitous, because nothing that is limited and non-eternal can be the first cause of the world. Being the ground of such subtle products of nature as mind and the intellect, prakṛti is a very subtle, mysterious and tremendous power which evolves and dissolves the world in a cyclic order.

The existence of prakṛti as the ultimate subtle cause of the world is known by inference from the following grounds: (a) All particular objects of the world, from the intellect to the earth are limited and dependent on one another. So there must be an unlimited and independent cause for their existence. (b) Things of the world possess certain common characters owing to which everyone of them is capable of producing pleasure, pain and indifference. Therefore, they must have a common cause having these three characters. (c) All effects proceed from the activity of some cause which contains their potentiality within it. The world of objects which are effects must, therefore, be implicitly contained in some world-cause. (d) An effect arises from its cause and is again resolved into it at the moment of its destruction. That is, an existent effect is manifested by a cause, and eventually

it is re-absorbed into the latter. So the particular objects of experience must arise from their particular causes, and these again from other general causes, and so on, till we come to the first cause of the world. Contrariwise, at the time of destruction, the physical elements must be resolved into atoms, the atoms into energies and so on, till all products are resolved into the unmanifested, eternal prakṛti. Thus we get one unlimited and unconditioned, all-pervading and ultimate cause of the whole world including everything but the self. This is the eternal and undifferentiated causal matrix of the world of not-self, to which the Sāṅkhya gives the different names of prakṛti, pradhāna, avyakta, etc. We should not imagine a cause of this ultimate cause, for that will land us in the fallacy of infinite regress. If there be a cause of prakṛti, then there must be a cause of that cause, and so on, *ad infinitum*. Or, if we stop anywhere and say that here is the first cause, then that first cause will be the prakṛti which is specifically described as the supreme root cause of the world (parā or mūlā prakṛti).⁴

Prakṛti is constituted by the three guṇas of sattva, rajas and tamas. It is said to be the unity of the guṇas held in a state of equilibrium (sāmyāvasthā). Now the question is: what are these guṇas? Guṇa here means a constituent element or component and not an attribute or quality. Hence by the guṇas of sattva, rajas and tamas we are to understand the elements of the ultimate substance called prakṛti. The reason why they are called guṇas is either their being *subservient* to the ends of the puruṣa which is other than themselves, or their being intertwined like the three strands of a rope which binds the soul to the world.⁵

The guṇas are not perceived by us. They are inferred from the objects of the world which are their effects. Since there is

4. Vide *Pravacana-bhāṣya*, 1. 67-68, 1. 76-77, 6.35.

5. *Op. cit.*, 1. (5). The word *guṇa* has many senses, such as 'quality,' 'strand,' 'subservient.'

an essential identity (tādātmya) between the effect and its cause, we know the nature of the guṇas from the nature of their products. All objects of the world, from the intellect down to the ordinary objects of perception (e.g. tables, pots, etc.), are found to possess three characters capable of producing pleasure, pain and indifference, respectively. The same things are pleasurable to some person, painful to another, and neutral to a third. The cuckoo's cry is a pleasure to the artist, a pain to his sick friend and neither to the plain rustic. A rose delights the youth, dejects the dying man and leaves the gardener cold and indifferent. Victory in war elates the victor, depresses the vanquished and leaves the third party rather apathetic. Now, as the cause must contain what is in the effect, we can infer that the ultimate cause of things must have been constituted also by the three elements of pleasure, pain and indifference. The Sāṅkhya calls these three sattva, rajas and tamas respectively. These are constitutive of both prakṛti, the ultimate substance, and the ordinary objects of the world.

Sattva is that element of prakṛti which is of the nature of pleasure, and is buoyant or light (laghu), and bright or illuminating (prakāśaka). The manifestation of objects in consciousness (jñāna), the tendency towards conscious manifestation in the senses, the mind and the intellect, the luminosity of light, and the power of reflection in a mirror or the crystal are all due to the operation of the element of sattva in the constitution of things. Similarly, all sorts of lightness in the sense of upward motion, like the blazing up of fire, the upward course of vapour and the winding motion of air, are induced in things by the element of sattva. So also pleasure in its various forms, such as satisfaction, joy, happiness, bliss, contentment, etc. is produced by things in our minds through the operation of the power of sattva inhering in them both.

Rajas is the principle of activity in things. It always moves and makes other things move. That is, it is both mobile (cala) and

stimulating (upaśambhaka). It is on account of rajas that fire spreads, the wind blows, the senses follow their objects and the mind becomes restless. On the affective side of our life, rajas is the cause of all painful experiences and is itself of the nature of pain (duḥkha). It helps the elements of sattva and tamas, which are inactive and motionless in themselves, to perform their functions.

Tamas is the principle of passivity and negativity in things. It is opposed to sattva in being heavy (guru) and in obstructing the manifestation of objects (varaṇaka). It also resists the principle of rajas or activity in so far as it restrains (niyam) the motion of things. It counteracts the power of manifestation in the mind, the Intellect and other things, and thereby produces ignorance and darkness, and leads to confusion and bewilderment (moha). By obstructing the principle of activity in us it induces sleep, drowsiness, and laziness. It also produces the state of apathy or indifference (viśāda). Hence it is that sattva, rajas and tamas have been compared respectively to whiteness, redness, and darkness.

With regard to the relation among the three guṇas constituting the world, we observe that it is one of constant conflict as well as co-operation. They always go together and can never be separated from one another. Nor can any one of them produce anything without the help and support of the other two. Just as the oil, the wick and the flame, which are relatively opposed to one another, co-operate to produce the light of a lamp, so the guṇas co-operate to produce the objects of the world, although they possess different and opposed qualities. So all the three guṇas are present in everything of the world, great or small, fine or gross. But each of them tries to suppress and dominate the others. The nature of things is determined by the predominant guṇa, while the others are there in a subordinate position. We cannot point to anything of the world which does not contain within it all the three elements, of course, in different proportions. The classification of objects into good, bad and indifferent, or

into pure, impure and neutral, or into intelligent, active and indolent, has reference to the preponderance of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* respectively.

Another characteristic of the *guṇas* is that they are constantly changing. 'Change or transformation belongs to the very essence of the *guṇas*, and they cannot help changing even for a moment.' There are two kinds of transformation which the *guṇas* undergo. During *pralaya* or dissolution of the world, the *guṇas* change, each within itself, without disturbing the others. That is, *sattva* changes into *sattva*, *rajas* into *rajas* and *tamas* into *tamas*. Such transformation of the *guṇas* is called *svārūpaparīṇāma* or change into the homogeneous. At this stage, the *guṇas* cannot create or produce anything, because they do not oppose and co-operate with one another. No object of the world can arise unless the *guṇas* combine, and one of them predominates over the others. So before creation, the *guṇas* exist as a homogeneous mass in which there is no motion (although there is transformation), nothing, and none of the qualities of sound, touch, colour, taste and smell. This is the state of equilibrium (*sāmyāvasthā*) for the *guṇas* to which the Sāṅkhya gives the name of *prakṛti*. The other kind of transformation takes place when one of the *guṇas* dominates over the others which become subordinate to it. When this happens, we have the production of particular objects. Such transformation is called *virūpa-parīṇāma* or change into the heterogeneous, and it is the starting-point of the world's evolution.

3. *Puruṣa* or the Self⁶

The second type of ultimate reality admitted by the Sāṅkhya is the self. The existence of the self must be admitted by all

6. Vide *Vedāntasāra*, 59-61; *Kārikā* and *Kaumudī*, 17-20; *Pravācaṇabhāṣya* and *Vṛtti*, 1.66, 1.138-64, 5.61-68.

Everybody feels and asserts that he or she exists, and has this or that thing belonging to him or her. The feeling of one's own existence is the most natural and indubitable experience that we all have. In fact, no one can consistently deny the existence of his self, for the act of denial presupposes the reality of the denying self. So it has been said by the Sāṅkhyas that the self exists, because it is self-manifest and its non-existence cannot be proved in any way.

But while there is general agreement with regard to the existence of the self, there is a wide divergence of opinion about its nature. Some Cārvākas or materialists identify the self with the gross body, some with the senses, some with life, and some others with the mind. The Buddhists and some empiricists regard the self as identical with the stream of consciousness. The Nyāya-vaiśeṣikas and the Prābhākara Mimāṃsakas maintain that the self is an unconscious substance which may acquire the attribute of consciousness under certain conditions. The Bhāṭṭa Mimāṃsakas, on the other hand, think that the self is a conscious entity which is partially hidden by ignorance, as appears from the imperfect and partial knowledge that men have of their own selves. The Advaita Vedānta holds that the self is pure eternal consciousness which is also a blissful existence (*saccidānanda-svarūpa*). It is one in all bodies, and is eternally free and self-shining intelligence.

According to the Sāṅkhya, the self is different from the body and the senses, the *manas* and the intellect (*buddhi*). It is not anything of the world of objects. The self is not the brain, nor the nervous system, nor the aggregate of conscious states. The self is a conscious spirit which is always the subject of knowledge and can never become the object of any knowledge. It is not a substance with the attribute of consciousness, but it is pure consciousness as such. Consciousness is its very *essence* and not a mere quality of it. Nor should we say that it is a blissful consciousness (*ānandasvarūpa*), as the Advaita Vedāntin thinks;

bliss and consciousness being different things cannot be the essence of the same reality. The self is the transcendent subject whose essence is pure consciousness. The light of the self's consciousness ever remains the same, although the objects of knowledge may change and succeed one another. It is a steady constant consciousness in which there is neither change nor activity. The self is above all change and activity. It is an uncaused, eternal and all-pervading reality which is free from all attachment and unaffected by all objects. All change and activity, all pleasures and pains belong really to matter and its products like the body, mind and intellect. It is sheer ignorance to think that the self is the body or the senses or the mind or the intellect. But when, through such ignorance, the self confuses itself with any of these things, it seems to be caught up in the flow of changes and activities, and merged in the mire of sorrows and miseries.

The existence of the self as the transcendent subject of experience is proved by the Sāṅkhya by several arguments:

- (a) Objects of the world like tables, chairs, etc. which are composed of parts are means to the ends of other beings. These beings whose purpose is served by the things of the world must be quite different and distinct from them all. That is, they cannot be said to be unconscious things, made up of parts like physical objects, for that would make them means to the ends of others and not ends in themselves. They must be conscious selves, to whose ends all physical objects are the means. (b) All material objects including the mind and intellect must be controlled and directed by some intelligent principle in order that they can achieve anything or realise any end. A machine or a car does its work when put under the guidance of some person. So there must be some selves who guide the operations of prakṛti and all her products. (c) All objects of the world are of the nature of pleasure, pain and indifference. But pleasure and pain have meaning only as they are experienced by some conscious experience. Hence there must be some conscious subjects or selves who enjoy and suffer

pleasure and pain respectively. (d) Some persons at least of this world make a sincere endeavour to attain final release from all suffering. This is not possible for anything of the physical world, for by its very nature, the physical world causes suffering rather than relieve it. So there must be some immaterial substances or selves transcending the physical order. Otherwise, the concept of liberation or salvation and the will to liberate or to be liberated as found in saints and the saviours of mankind would be meaningless.

There is not, as the Advaita Vedāntin says, one universal self pervading all bodies alike. On the other hand, we must admit a plurality of selves, of which one is connected with each body. That there are many selves in the world follows from the following considerations: (a) There is an obvious difference in the birth and death, and the sensory and motor endowments of different individuals. The birth or death of one individual does not mean the same for all other individuals. Blindness or deafness in one man does not imply the same for all men. But if all persons had one and the same self, then the birth and death of one would cause the birth and death of all, and the blindness or deafness of one would make all others blind or deaf. Since, however, that is not the case, we are to say that there is not one but many selves. (b) If there were but one self for all living beings, then the activity of any one would make all others active. But as a matter of fact, when we sleep, others make restless efforts, and *vice versa*. (c) Men and women are different from the gods, on the one hand, and birds and beasts, on the other. But there could not have been these distinctions, if gods and human beings, birds and beasts possessed the same self. Thus we see that there must be a plurality of selves, which are eternal and intelligent subjects of knowledge, as distinguished from prakṛti which is the one, eternal and non-intelligent ground of the objects of knowledge, including manas, intellect and the ego.

4. Evolution of the World⁷

Prakṛti evolves the world of objects when it comes into relation with the puruṣa. The evolution of the world has its starting-point in the contact (saṁyoga) between puruṣa or the self and prakṛti or primal matter. The contact (saṁyoga) between puruṣa and prakṛti does not, however, mean any kind of ordinary conjunction like that between two finite material substances. It is a sort of effective relation through which prakṛti is influenced by the presence of puruṣa in the same way in which our body is sometimes moved by the presence of a thought. There can be no evolution unless the two become somehow related to each other. The evolution of the world cannot be due to the self alone, for it is inactive; nor can it be due to matter (prakṛti) alone, for it is non-intelligent. The activity of prakṛti must be guided by the intelligence of puruṣa, if there is to be any evolution of the world. It is only when puruṣa and prakṛti co-operate that there is the creation of a world of objects. But the question is: how can two such different and opposed principles like puruṣa and prakṛti co-operate? What brings the one in contact with the other? The answer given by the Sāṅkhya is this: just as a blind man and a lame man can co-operate in order to get out of a forest, so the non-intelligent prakṛti and the inactive puruṣa combine and co-operate to serve their respective interests. Prakṛti requires the presence of puruṣa in order to be known or appreciated by someone (darśanārtham), and puruṣa requires the help of prakṛti in order to discriminate itself from the latter and thereby attain liberation (kaivalyārtham).

With the contact between puruṣa and prakṛti, there is a disturbance of the equilibrium in which the guṇas were held before creation. One of the guṇas, namely, rajas, which is naturally

active, is disturbed first, and then, through rajas, the other guṇas begin to vibrate. This produces a tremendous commotion in the infinite bosom of prakṛti and each of the guṇas tries to preponderate over the rest. There is a gradual differentiation and integration of the three guṇas, and as a result of their combination in different proportions, the various objects of the world originate. The course of evolution is as follows.

The first product of the evolution of prakṛti is mahat or buddhi.⁸ Considered in its cosmic aspect, it is the great germ of this vast world of objects and is accordingly called mahat or the great one. In its psychological aspect, i.e. as present in individual beings, it is called buddhi or the intellect. The special functions of buddhi are ascertainment and decision. It is by means of the intellect that the distinction between the subject and other objects is understood, and one makes decisions about things. Buddhi arises out of the preponderance of the element of sattva in prakṛti. It is the natural function of buddhi to manifest itself and other things. In its pure (sāttvika) condition, therefore, it has such attributes as virtue (dharma), knowledge (jñāna), detachment (vairāgya) and excellence (aiśvarya). But when vitiated by tamas, it has such contrary attributes as vice (adharma), ignorance (ajñāna), attachment (āśakti or avairāgya) and imperfection (aśakti or anaiśvarya). Buddhi is different from puruṣa or the self which transcends all physical things and qualities. But it is the ground of all intellectual processes in all individual beings. It stands nearest to the self and reflects the consciousness of the self in such a way as to become apparently conscious and intelligent. While the senses and the mind function for buddhi or the intellect, the latter functions directly for the self and enables it to discriminate between itself and prakṛti.⁹

7. Vide *kārikā* and *Kaumudī*, 21-41; *Pravacana-bhāṣya* and *Vṛtti* 1. 64-74.
? 10-32.

8. Vide *Sāṅkhya-sū.*, 1.71.

9. Vide *Kārikā*, 36-37; *Sāṅkhya-sū.*, 2.40-43.

Ahaṅkāra or the ego is the second product of prakṛti, which arises directly out of mahat, the first manifestation. The function of ahaṅkāra is the feeling of 'I and mine' (abhimāna). It is on account of ahaṅkāra that the self considers itself (wrongly indeed) to be an agent or a cause of action, a desirer of and striver for ends, and an owner of properties. We first perceive objects through the senses. Then the mind reflects on them and determines them specifically as of this or that kind. Next there is an appropriation of those objects as belonging to and intended for me, and also a feeling of myself as somehow concerned in them. Ahaṅkāra is just this sense of the self as 'I' (aham), and of objects as 'mine' (mama). When ahaṅkāra thus determines our attitude towards the objects of the world, we proceed to act in different ways in relation to them. The potter constructs a pot when he accepts it as one of his ends and resolves to attain it by saying within himself: 'Let me construct a pot'.

Ahaṅkāra is said to be of three kinds, according to the predominance of one or the other of the three guṇas. It is called vaikārika or sāttvika when the element of sattva predominates in it, tājasa or rājasa when that of rajas predominates, and bhūtādi or tāmasa when tamas predominates. From the first arise the eleven organs, namely, the five organs of perception (jñānendriya), the five organs of action (karmendriya), and the mind (manas). From the third (i.e. tāmasa ahaṅkāra) are derived the five subtle elements (tanmātras). The second (viz. rājasa) is concerned in both the first and the third, and supplies the energy needed for the change of sattva and tamas into their products.

The above order of development from ahaṅkāra is laid down in the *Sāṅkhya-kārikā* and accepted by Vācaspati Miśra.¹⁰ Vijñānabhikṣu,¹¹ however, gives a different order. According to

him, manas or the mind is the only sense which is pre-eminently sāttvika or manifesting, and is, therefore, derived from sāttvika ahaṅkāra. The other ten organs are developed from rājasa ahaṅkāra and the five subtle elements from the tāmasa.

The five organs of perception (buddhindriya) are the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. These perceive respectively the physical qualities of colour, sound, smell, taste and touch, and are developed from ahaṅkāra for the enjoyment of the self. It is the self's desire to enjoy objects that creates both the objects of and the organs for enjoyment. The organs of action (karmendriya) are located in the mouth, hands, feet, anus and the sex organ. These perform respectively the functions of speech prehension, movement, excretion and reproduction. The real organs are not the perceptible external organs, like the eye-balls, ear-holes, skin, hands, feet, etc. There are certain imperceptible powers (śakti) in these perceptible end-organs which apprehend physical objects and act on them, and are, therefore, to be regarded as the organs (indriyas) proper. As such, an indriya cannot be sensed or perceived, but must be known by inference.¹² The mind (manas) is the central organ which partakes of the nature of the organs of both knowledge and action. Without the guidance of the manas neither of them can function in relation to their objects. The manas is a very subtle sense indeed, but it is made up of parts, and so can come into contact with several senses at the same time. The mind, the ego and the intellect (manas, ahaṅkāra and buddhi) are the three internal organs (antaḥkaraṇa), while the senses of sight, hearing, etc. and the organs of action are called the external organs (bāhyakarana). The vital breaths or processes are the functions of the internal organs. The ten external organs condition the function of the internal ones. The mind (manas) interprets the indeterminate sense-data supplied by the external

10. Cf. *Kārikā* and *Kaumudī*, 25.

11. Cf. *Pravacana-bhāṣya*, 2. 18.

12. Cf. *Sāṅkhya-sūtra*, 2.23; *Kārikā* and *Kaumudī*, 25 and 28.

organs into determinate perceptions; the ego owns the perceived objects as desirable ends of the self or dislikes them; and the intellect decides to act to attain or avoid those objects. The three internal and the ten external organs are collectively called the thirteen *karanas* or organs in the Sāṅkhya philosophy. While the external organs are limited to present objects, the internal ones deal with the past, present and future.¹³

The Sāṅkhya view of the *manas* and other organs has certain obvious differences from those of the other systems. According to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, *manas* is an eternal atomic substance which has neither parts nor any simultaneous contact with many senses. So we cannot have many experiences—many perceptions, desires and volitions—at the same time. For the Sāṅkhya, the *manas* is neither atomic nor eternal, but a composite product of *prakṛti*, and so subject to origin and destruction in time. It is also held by them that we may have many experiences—sensation, perception, feeling and volition—at the same time, although ordinarily our experiences come one after the other. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas admit only the *manas* and the five external senses as *indriyas* and hold that the external senses are derived from the physical elements (*mahābhūta*). The Sāṅkhya enumerate eleven *indriyas*, e.g. the *manas*, the five sensory organs and the five motor organs and derive them all from the ego (*ahaṅkāra*), which is not recognised as a separate principle by the other systems. The Vedāntins treat the five vital breaths (*pañca-prāṇa*) as independent principles, while the Sāṅkhya reduce them to the general functions of *antaḥkaraṇa*.¹⁴

The five *tanmātras* are the potential elements or generic essences of sound, touch, colour, taste and smell. These are very subtle and cannot be ordinarily perceived. We know them by

inference, although the yogins may have a perception of them. The gross physical elements arise from the *tanmātras* as follows:

- (i) From the essence of sound (*śabdatanmātra*) is produced *ākāśa* with the quality of sound which is perceived by the ear.
- (ii) From the essence of touch (*sparsatanmātra*) combined with that of sound, arises *air* with the attributes of sound and touch.
- (iii) Out of the essence of colour (*rūpatanmātra*) as mixed with those of sound and touch, there arises *light* or *fire* with the properties of sound, touch and colour.
- (iv) From the essence of taste (*rasatanmātra*) combined with those of sound, touch and colour is produced the element of *water* with the qualities of sound, touch, colour and taste.
- (v) The essence of smell (*gandhatanmātra*) combined with the other four gives rise to *earth* which has all the five qualities of sound, touch, colour, taste and smell. The five physical elements of *ākāśa*, *air*, *light*, *water* and *earth* have respectively the specific properties of sound, touch, colour, taste and smell. In the order in which they occur here, the succeeding element has the special qualities of the preceding ones added to its own, since their essences go on combining progressively.¹⁵

The whole course of evolution from *prakṛti* to the gross physical elements is distinguished into two stages, namely, the psychical (*pratyayasarga* or *buddhisarga*) and the physical (*tanmātrasarga* or *bhautikasarga*). The first includes the developments of *prakṛti* as *buddhi*, *ahaṅkāra* and the eleven sense-motor organs. The second is constituted by the evolution of the five subtle physical essences (*tanmātra*), the gross elements (*mahābhūta*) and the products. The *tanmātras*, being supersensible and unenjoyable to ordinary beings, are called *aviśeṣa*, i.e., devoid of specific perceptible characters. The physical elements and their products, being possessed of specific characters, pleasurable or painful or stupefying, are designated

13. Cf. *Sāṅkhya-sūt.*, 2. 26–32, 2.1.38, 5. 71; *Kārikā* and *Kaumudī*, 27. 29–30, 32–33.

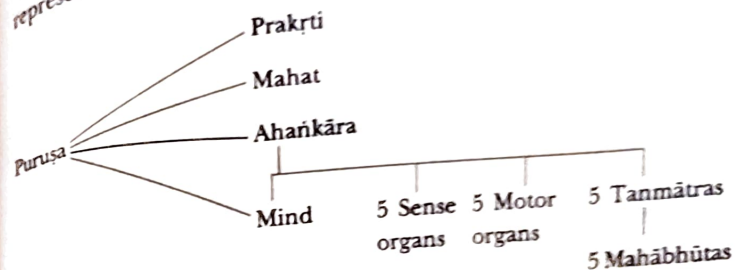
14. Cf. *Sāṅkhya-sūt.*, 2.20–22, 2. 31–32, 5. 84; *Kārikā*, 24 and 29–30.

15. Cf. *Kārikā* and *Kaumudī*, 22.

as *viśeṣa* or the specific. The *viśeṣas* or specific objects are divided into three kinds, namely, the gross elements, the gross body born of parents (*sthūlaśarīra*) and the subtle body (*sūkṣma* or *liṅga śarīra*). The gross body is composed of the five gross elements, although some think that it is made of four elements or of only one element. The subtle body is the combination of buddhi, *ahañkāra*, the eleven sense-motor organs and the five subtle elements (*tanmātra*). The gross body is the support of the subtle body, in so far as the intellect (*buddhi*), the ego (*ahañkāra*) and the senses cannot function without some physical basis. According to Vācaspati there are only these two kinds of bodies as mentioned before. Viṇṇābhikṣu, however, thinks that there is a third kind of body called the *adhiṣṭāna* body which supports the subtle one when it passes from one gross body into another.¹⁶

The history of the evolved universe is a play of twenty-four principles, of which *prakṛti* is the first, the five gross elements are the last, and the thirteen organs (*karaṇas*) and five *tanmātras* are the intermediate ones. But it is not complete in itself, since it has a necessary reference to the world of selves as the witnesses and enjoyers thereof. It is not the dance of blind atoms, nor the push and pull of mechanical forces which produce a world to no purpose. On the other hand, it serves the most fundamental ends of the moral, or better, the spiritual, life. If the spirit be a reality, there must be proper adjustment between moral deserts and the joys and sorrows of life. Again, the history of the world must be, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, the progressive realisation of the life of spirit. In the Sāṅkhya, the evolution of *prakṛti* into a world of objects makes it possible for spirits to enjoy or suffer according to their merits or demerits. But the ultimate end of the evolution of *prakṛti* is the freedom (*mukti*) of self. It is through a life of moral training in the evolved

universe that the self realises its true nature. What that nature is and how it can be realised, we shall consider presently. Now the evolution of *prakṛti* in relation to the *puruṣa* may be represented by the following table:



III. THE SĀṆKHYA THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE¹⁷

The Sāṅkhya theory of knowledge follows in the main its dualistic metaphysics. It accepts only three independent sources of valid knowledge (*pramāṇa*). These are perception, inference and scriptural testimony (*śabda*). The other sources of knowledge, like comparison, postulation (*arthāpatti*) and non-cognition (*anupalabdhi*), are included under these three, and not recognised as separate sources of knowledge.

Valid knowledge (*pramā*) is a definite and an unerring cognition of some object (*arthaparicchiti*) through the modification of *buddhi* or the intellect which reflects the consciousness of the self in it. What we call the mind or the intellect is an unconscious material entity in the Sāṅkhya philosophy. Consciousness or intelligence (*caitanya*) really

16. Cf. *Kārikā* and *Kaumudī*, 38-41; *Sāṅkhya-sūtra*, 3. 1-17; *Pravacana-bhāṣya*, 8.11.

17. Vide *Kārikā* and *Kaumudī*, 4-6; *Pravacana-bhāṣya*, 1. 87.89.99-103; 5, 27, 37, 42-51. Cf. *The Nyāya Theory of Knowledge* (Ch. V. ante) for a fuller account of this subject.