The Notion of a Motivated Agent

The Meaning of the word ‘Agency’

In the western tradition in some quarters, the idea of agency is conceptually associated with the idea of a being capable of doing something that counts as an act or action. As a conceptual matter, x is an agent if and only if x is capable of performing actions. It has been maintained that actions are doings, but not every doing is an action, breathing is something we do, but it does not count as an action. Writing a paragraph is an action and it is done by one’s own ability and by doing this, he himself is an agent. However, the difference between breathing and writing a paragraph is that the latter depends on one’s having a certain kind of a mental state. On the contrary, breathing is not an action precisely because of one’s taking breathe in a particular moment does not depend directly on an intention or belief.

As a matter of fact, agency, as a conceptual matter, is simply the capacity to cause actions- and this requires the capacity to instantiate certain intentional mental states that are capable of causing performances. Thus, the following constitutes an accurate characterization of an agent: x is an agent if and only if x can instantiate intentional mental states capable of directly causing a performance Here it is important to remember that intentional states include beliefs, desires, intentions and volitions. In any event, on the received view, doing ‘a’ is an action if and only if ‘a’ is caused by an intentional state and hence is performed by an agent.
It may be pointed out that the descriptive theories and the normative theories about human actions have been formulated from various perspectives. In the classical Indian philosophical tradition, we come across with the theories of actions and try to sort out the exact nature of an agent. It is to be noticed that different formulations about the notion of agency are available from the Grammarian school of thinkers and the philosophers like the Nyaya- Vaisesikas School and others. The individual, i.e. the jiva, is generally taken to be the agent and this call for the discussion about the nature of the jiva for the very idea of the individual is very much metaphysically overloaded. From the classical Indian perspective, to put it grammatically, the word, ‘agency’, may be defined as ‘kriyasrayatvam kartrtvam’, i.e. the agent is the locus of kriya. In that sense, action is the defining mark of being an agent. In philosophical text, ‘agency’ may be defined in terms of a personhood which is reckoned to be the prime one and substrate of actions. These two points of view are interrelated and share the same presupposition that the agent is the locus (asraya) of an action (kriya). Actually, the verb ’kriya’, signify the same meaning in both of the two points of view. Though the philosophical theories to account for the nature of agency are numerous, in this chapter not all of these theories are being considered. Mainly, the concept of agency according to the Nyaya-Vaisesikas school has been considered.

Now the question is: in what sense, does an agent relate to his performance or actions? From the Nyaya-Vaisesikas perspective, an agent relates himself to his actions by two ways and these are: by performing the automatic and reflex actions that are guided by the jivanjoni prayatna and by performing the voluntary actions that are prompted by desire (iccha) and aversion (dvesa) and these are aimed at the attainment of pleasure
(sukhaprapti) and avoidance of pain inducing objects (ahitaparihara). The detailed account regarding this distinction will be discussed in the next chapter.

In this connection, it would be observed that the Nyaya-Vaisesikas school admit two kinds of agents and they are prajojya karta and prayojaka karta. According to this school, the prayojaka karta refers to that individual who is the controller of all the karmaphala of a person in his present as well as in future life and he is none other than Isvara or God or the Supreme Being. As a matter of fact, in the ultimate sense, ‘agency’ can be ascribed to be the absolute self. But in an ordinary sense, i.e. in the empirical level, the individual or the finite selves are certainly the agent of different action and he is supposed as the prajojya karta of an action. However, the concept of an agent that will be explained in this chapter draws our attention to the prajojya karta.

**Concept of Moral Agency**

The concept of moral agency is ultimately a normative notion that picks out the class of being whose behavior is subject to moral requirements i.e. governed by the moral standards. The moral agent is someone who has duties or obligations. To say that one’s behavior is governed by moral standards and hence that one has moral duties or moral obligations is to say that one’s behavior should be guided by and hence evaluated upon those standards. Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy explains the notion of moral agency as follows: ‘moral agents are those agents expected to meet the demands of morality.’ According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ‘a moral agent is one who qualifies generally as an agent open to responsibility ascriptions.’ In fact, it might be said that moral agency is a special kind of agency in western tradition.
Further, it is also noticed that although only an agent can be a moral agent, it is crucial to realize that agency is different from moral agency. The idea of moral agency is conceptually associated with the idea of being accountable for one’s behavior. To say that one’s behavior is governed by moral standards and hence that one performs moral duties or moral obligation is to say that one’s behavior should be guided by and hence evaluated under those standards. In this connection, it must be pointed out that from the Nyaya-Vaisesikas perspective; there is no clear-cut distinction between the ordinary agent and the moral agent. Therefore, the characteristics that can be ascribed to an ordinary agent may also be applicable to the case of a moral agent. This only means that the kind of moral philosophy which the Indian philosopher practiced was different from what it is often thought to be in the west. But this does not mean that the Indian philosopher was not concerned with morality. Rather, he was deeply concerned with the problems of individual and the social morality.

Now the question is: who will become a moral agent and what are the conditions for becoming a moral agent. From the Nyaya-Vaisesika’s perspective, the embodied finite self is supposed to be a moral agent. To be a moral agent, one has to satisfy the following three conditions. Based on the famous Tarkasamgraha, a moral agent must be characterized by a direct cognition (a-paroksa-jnana) of the material cause (upadana) [of the effect], a desire to perform an action and that action should be performed voluntarily. In other words, it may be said that every voluntary action presupposes a volition or krti.¹

Now, if the embodied self is admitted as a moral agent, then the agent has the effort (cesta) to perform an action. The substratum of this kind of effort (cesta) is the physical
body of an individual. In the *Nyayasutra*², Gautama has explained that the physical body (*sarira*) is the substratum (*asraya*) of effort (*cesta*) and this is considered as bodily while *prayatna* is supposed to be mental activities. The relation of the finite self with its body has also been explored in the *Nyayasutra*. It has been examined by different arguments that without the finite self (*atman*), the physical body (*sarira*) can still do the effort (*cesta*), but without the finite self, the physical body itself could not experience the pleasure and pain. From the above arguments, it can be observed that the finite self is the substratum of the qualities like pleasure and pain. Thus, to account for the moral agency of the embodied finite self, it can be noticed from the *Nyaya* philosophy that there are nine special qualities of the finite self and these are cognition, desire, pleasure, pain, aversion, volition, merit, demerit, and disposition³. From the discussion about the nature of moral agency it follows that the agent is the empirical self having pleasure and pain. In other words, the physical body connected with the self is the empirical self, which is the enjoyer of the empirical actions. In the succeeding section, the relation between the agent and the enjoyer will be emphasized. However, the next question is: How do the *Nyaya-Vaisesika* philosophers place *jiva* as an agent of an empirical action?

In one word, it can be said that the empirical self connected with the physical body may become the agent of any empirical action. This empirical action must be the voluntary action, i.e. the action should be performed by agent’s volition. The volition of an individual will be produced from three kinds of *dosas* and these are attraction (*raga*), aversion (*dvesa*), and delusion (*moha*). Of these three, the last one is the most fundamental. In the *Nyayasutra*, ⁴ *dosa* is defined as what causes *pravrtti*. These *dosas* or faults incite the self to action, either good or bad. Now, the *pravrtti* is of two types:
Karanarupa and karyarupa pravrtti. The pravrtti that causes good or bad actions is the karyarupa pravrtti which gives rise to dharma and adharma in the empirical self. The good or bad actions are either produced by body or by words or by the mind and such kind of pravrtti are considered as the karanarupa pravrtti.

In fact, it is observed that the agent has the volition and he has the notion of ‘I’ in respect of the body- mind –sense complex. In this way, an individual will engage himself in any activity with the sense of agency of the form,’ I am the agent of this action.’ In this connection, the definition of the physical body shall be given. The reason of the question of body and its relation to atman is so crucial in the present context that some of the qualities that are ascribed to the atman seem to be also dependent upon the body. This is especially true of pleasure and pain and of activity. It should be kept in mind that the specific qualities of a self are cognition, pleasure; pain, desire, aversion, effort, merit demerit and such traces of past experiences give rise to memory. Each of these is dependent on the soul’s being in relation to body. None of them could arise in a purely embodied self.

In fact, it is worth mentioning that the physical body has been defined as the locus of activity, pleasure and pain. All the empirical activity aiming at attaining the good and warding off the evil or the harmful is located in the physical body. Actually, any action, if it is voluntary, is not mere physical movement. It is goal-oriented and also belongs to the body.⁵
To analyse the nature of the body in connection with the soul, it is found that the physical body is produced either by the earth, or by earth and water, or by earth, water and fire, or earth, water, air and fire, or by the five great elements altogether, i.e, earth, water, air, fire and akasa. Among them, Akasa, being one and ubiquitous in nature, can not produce another substance. Each and every physical body is a substance since it has some qualities and as it has some constituent parts (avayava), it is also a product (janyadravya). Thus, a body cannot be of the nature of akasa. There are atoms o the other four great elements and these atoms can combine to form composite substances like dyad (dyanuka), triads (tryanuka) and so on and these triads may produce visible composite substances. In this world, the physical body may be the last member (antyavayavi) in a chain of effects starting with earth dyads. Thus the physical bodies in this world may be subsumed under earthen substances (parthivadravya). The same words are echoed in the Nyayasutra. In this connection, a valid statement may be drawn like this way. The physical body is considered as earthen substances for the thing that has smell is considered as earthen objects and the physical body has the attribute of smell.

In this context, another point must be noted that though the fundamental elements of the physical body is supposed to be earthen substances, these bodies can be formed from other series of atoms also via a series of intermediate effects with increasing degrees of complexity. Thus, in the region known as Varunaloka, the bodies are formed by the substance known as water (ap) and in the region known as suryaloka, the bodies are formed by the substance known as fire (tejas) and so on. Thus, the real fact is that the other four elements except earth may also conjoined with the earth and all the five elements form a physical body. The body is defined as the locus of three things: activity
(cesta), sense organs (indriya) and object (artha). This definition needs some explanation. Cesta is explained by Vatsyayana as any activity that is intended to attain what is good and to avoid or shun what is harmful. Such activity does not belong to nonliving things such as a jar; it can belong only to a body of a finite soul (jiva). Likewise, the sense organs belong only to a body. Lastly, by saying that the body is the locus of the object (artha) of the senses, the sutra means by artha not the objects themselves, but the pleasure and pain they bring about. Such pleasure and pain belong to the body. To say that pleasure and pain have the body as their locus is to say that pleasure and pain belong to the self only as limited (avacchinna) by the body. The nature of the relation between the physical bodies with the finite self is so crucial that some of the qualities that are ascribed to the atman or the self seem to be dependent upon the body. This is especially true of pleasure, pain and activities. However, the relation of ‘embodiment’, i.e., the connection between the body and the self is generally brought under the relation or quality of conjunction or samyoga. However, it may be doubted that samyoga, being an external relation, cannot adequately do the job of that intimate relation of ‘embodiment’. This poses a great challenge for the Naiyayikas to provide an account of the type of relationship between the physical bodies with the finite self, i.e., jivatma.

The Carvaka admits the existence of four elements- earth, air, water and fire and everything which exists, including the mind, is due to a particular combination of these four elements. Consciousness is produced when the elements combine in a certain properties. It is found always associated with the body and vanishes when the body disintegrates. Sadananda, in his Vedantasara, mentions four different materialistic
schools. One identifies the soul with the gross body (*sthula sarira*), another with the senses (*indriya*), and another with vital breaths (*prana*) and the last with the mental organ (*manas*). All the schools agree in regarding the consciousness as arising out of the material body associated with vital breaths. Nevertheless, a number of difficulties may arise if that kind of materialistic position is accepted. This position can provide no satisfactory explanation as to the phenomena of recollection. The Carvakas show that it is a particular combination of the elements which obtains only in the human body that produces consciousness and that therefore living human body and consciousness are always associated together and nobody has seen consciousness apart from the living human body. But the argument is wrong.

If consciousness is an essential property of the human body, it should be inseparable from it as the carvaka claims. But it is not. In epilepsy, dreamless sleep, etc the living body is seen without consciousness, and on the other hand, in dream, consciousness is seen without the living body. Actually, consciousness persists through the three stages of waking life, dream life, and deep sleep life and is much superior to material body which is its instrument and not its cause. Again, the mere fact that consciousness is not experienced without the material body is no argument to prove that it is a mere product of matter. In this way, several criticisms have been drawn against the carvaka doctrine of consciousness.

For the Naiyayikas, there is no consciousness as such; there is of course a universal ‘consciousness’, which is intentional in every cognitive state or occurrence. ‘Consciousness’ stands for all such particular cognitive states of all selves. Each such
state- a perceiving, an inferring, a remembering, and so on is called either a buddhi, a jnana, or an upalabdhi. When it was said earlier that a self is a ‘conscious’ substance, what was meant is not that a self has consciousness always and under all circumstances (for it is not conscious when it is in a deep sleep, or in a coma), but that only the self can have consciousness. It is the ability to have consciousness that essentially belongs to a self.

It should be added that for the Nyaya- Vaisesikas, desire, aversion, pleasure and pain, effort and activity are not themselves ‘conscious’ states. They are, like cognition, qualities of a self, but they are not themselves cognitions. They are the objects of cognitions that objectify them. To have a pleasure is not, on the Nyaya view, to know that one has a pleasure. To know that one has a pleasure is to have a reflective cognition, which objectifies that state of pleasure as occurring in one’s self. In this connection, two extreme positions have been unfolded and these are: 1) consciousness is self-illuminating. And 2) consciousness is intentional. The first position has been held by the Vedantins and the other position has been held by the Naiyayikas, who defines the distinguishing feature of consciousness in its function of manifesting, making known or showing, whatever happens to be its object. In effect, consciousness has the property of having an object (savisayakatva). There is no objectless consciousness.

In this connection, the question that has been raised by Mohanty as to whether the other specific qualities of the self, such as desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, effort or activity are also intentional or not. Mohanty adds that the standard Nyaya view seems to be that only cognitions have intrinsic intentionality (i.e. svabhavika visayapravanatva) In addition to
this, he has expounded the fact that the discussions of intentionality seems to be more in accord with the overall framework of the theory that posits an interconnected structure of agency (*kartrtva*), being the subject of enjoyment and suffering (*bhoktrtva*), and being the subject of knowledge (*jnaratva*). By knowing, one is led to act, by acting, one enjoys or suffers the consequences, by enjoying or suffering, one acquires knowledge of what is to be shunned (that which causes unhappiness or suffering). In this interdependency, all three must be intentional and goal-oriented. While thus arguing for the thesis that cognition, action and feeling all have their intentional objects. Mohanty has expressed that only cognition is, by definition, consciousness, while action and feeling are not states of consciousness, rather possible states of consciousness.9

However, from the *Nyaya-Vaisesika* perspective, it is found that the conscious self rules over the physical body and regulates its movement. It is true that the *Nyaya-Vaisesika* philosophers speak of the conjunction relation (*samyoga*) between the physical body and the finite self, but it is a special kind of conjunction relation that is called ‘*vilaksana upastambha samyoga*’.10 In order to emphasize the uniqueness of this relation, Mohanty expresses the definition of the physical body accordingly in the language of *Nyaya-Vaisesika* system. “X is a body if i) being an ultimate whole, i.e. not a part of another whole, it possesses effort to act; or ii) being an ultimate whole, it is the locus of sense organs; or iii) being an ultimate whole, it is the limitor of suffering (and enjoyment); or iv) it is the cause of the application of the word ‘body’.11

In fact, it is true of the *Nyaya-Vaisesika* philosophers that they have agreed the *samyoga* relation between the self and the body and without the relation to a body, the soul by it
does not come to possess all these special qualities. After experiencing this relation, the agent has the feeling, ‘I am doing the action’, ‘I desire’, ‘I know’. As far as the Nyaya-Vaisesika view is concerned, the sense organs are not identical with the finite self. The discussion of this view is totally metaphysical but in the present context, it is somehow relevant for it is admitted by the Naiyayikas that the structure of the senses are the means for the experience of pleasure and pain of the individual self.

Further, one may object that the sense organs themselves are the conscious agent of apprehension and so the conception of a distinct self is basically superfluous. But it is open to doubt whether the sense organs are the causes of apprehension. There are two alternatives regarding this issue. One may argue that the sense organs are themselves conscious in nature and another view is that these sense organs are simply instruments used by a distinct conscious agent. Following the Nyaya-vaisesika perspective, the sense organs are only the instruments that belong to some intelligent agent. The law of restriction of each sense organ to its respective object also proves that the sense organs themselves are unconscious in nature.12

Another objection may be like this: If each sense organ is considered to be each individual self, then if one organ is abolished, the memory perceived through this organ may also abolish and the finite self along with these sense organs may also abolish. However, it will not be the case. Therefore, it must be considered that the sense organs are not identical with the finite self. Further, one may argue that though the external sense organs are not identical with the finite self, the internal sense organ may be identical with the finite self. Following Nyaya-Vaisesika perspective, the mind also is not
identical with the finite self. There are several arguments in support of this view. The Nyaya-Vaisesikas accept that the mind is atomic in nature. If the finite self is considered to be identical with the mind, then the finite self will also be atomic in nature. In that case, the self will be located in a particular place in the individual. If a thing is atomic in nature, then at the same time it must not be all pervading. And in that case, it will lead a certain kind of contradiction. Consequently, it must be admitted that the individual could not realize pleasure or pain in his or her whole body, rather in a specific portion of the body. But, in reality, it will never possible. Therefore, the experience of pleasure and pain must be present in the whole body of an individual. And in that case, the finite self will not be considered as identical with the mind.

However, from the above analysis, it might be concluded that the finite self is not identical with the sense organs, five external as well as one internal sense organ separately. In this connection, one may argue that though these sense organs are not considered separately to be identical with the self, the conjunction of the gross body, the external as well as internal sense organs might be considered to be the finite self. However, this is not acceptable to the Naiyayikas, for if it happens, then the dead body must be held to involve a sin. The Nyayasutra also claims that if the human body is responsible for killing any creature, then after the death of the body, nobody will be present to reap the result of his action. In the sutra 3/1/4, of the Nyayasutra, the Naiyayikas have presented two objections against the view given by the opponents. In that sutra, they have claimed that if the finite self is considered to be identical with the physical body, the sense organs and the mind, then after the death of the body, when the
body will be burnt, there will remain no merit (dharma) and demerit (adharma) at the end of the life.

This may lead to the two fallacies known as ‘krtahani’ and ‘akrtabhagama’. The Buddhists maintain that the agent is none other than the aggregate of a series of momentary bodies, sense organs, intellect and sensation. The aggregate that is destroyed at one moment, must be very different from that which appear at the next moment. In that case, the body, which is the only agent, ceases to exist in the very moment when the act has been done. Moreover, if this is so, the actual aggregate of body in the form of a living being that causes injury cannot be related to the result of causing injury, while another that gets related to them is one that does not cause any injury. In that case, two types of absurdity may take place. First, one is the absurdity of ‘being unrelated to the fruition of one’s own actions’, i.e, ‘krtahani’ and the second one is the ‘absurdity of being related to the fruition of one’s action that is not performed by the same individual, i.e, ‘akrtabhagama’. In this connection, an example has been given in support of these two fallacies. Suppose, an individual performs an action ‘killing’. Now, if the physical body is considered to be the finite self, after the death of the body it has to be admitted that the person has no connection with the result of ‘killing’ and that result might be suffered by some another person. In that case, the fallacy of krtahani results, i.e, and one may perform a certain action but he can not get the result of that action. The fallacy of ‘akrtabhagama’ is such that where the actual action ‘killing’ is not performed by the individual but the person is responsible for the consequences of the action, ‘killing’. Thus, it has been seen from the above discussion that if the aggregate of the body, the sense organs, intellect and the mind are to be considered as the finite self, then the
consequence would be like this: the individual who performs a certain kind of action and who experiences the result of that action are not the same person. One who commits the sin does not reap the result while one who does not commit any sin from any perspective, reaps the result. However, the interpretations of Sruti and the Upanisads as well as the other Indian philosophical traditions, have considered the fact that ‘as you sow, so you will reap’. The Naiyayikas also do not go against the position. In that case, the two kinds of fallacies will not arise.

In this context, one may argue, if the body that is burnt or that is injured is endowed with an eternal self, there cannot be any sin resulting from burning the body on the part of one who burns. It is due to the eternality of the self. One can never cause injury to this eternal self. If it happens, then it can never consider being eternal. In this case, there are two alternatives: either the self is a mere aggregate of body and there can be no sin in causing injury, or the self being eternal, distinct from the body and the act of causing injury becomes an impossibility. In reply to this objection, the Naiyayikas may answer that there is no absurdity of the absence of sin resulting from causing injury, for the injury is caused to the body and to the sense organs. The Naiyayikas have claimed in the sutra, ‘Na karyasraya kartrvadhat’ i.e, the eternal self limited by the body feels pleasure and pain and this kind of self may be regarded as kartr or the agent because it alone and no other else becomes the locus of the apprehension of pleasure and pain. The eternal self will not commit any himsa or it will not be destroyed. In this sutra, Gautama says that causing injury to the living beings does not mean injuring the eternal self residing in the bodies. It simply means injuring the body, the sense organs, etc through which the eternal self apprehends pleasure and pain. Injury, in this sense, results in sin. In this way, from
the Nyaya-Vaisesika perspective, it has been noticed that the individual self is the embodied self in the sense that most of its special qualities are engaged in it by contact of the sense organs and the mind with it in certain sensitive portions of the body. The self being ubiquitous in nature is in contact with the whole body in which it inhabits and also all other bodies, but the mind and the sense organs which are of limited dimension can come in contact with the self in the sensitive parts of the body only occasionally. This is why the self is not endowed with its own qualities at all times. According to their technical terminology, the Nyaya expresses that the self is the material cause of its qualities, but their efficient cause is the combination of the physical body, mind, sense organs and object contact in the absence of which the self’s own qualities cannot emerge in it. Thus, it has been seen that although the Nyaya thinkers have regarded the self and the body as radically distinct from each other, they did not treat the distinction as preventive of the mutual contact of the self and the body. Even a material and the non-material entity can quite well encounter with each other according to the Nyaya view.

In Nyaya kandali, Sridhara has stated that the finite self, connected with the physical body, i.e. the embodied self may be considered as the agent of a certain action. Further, it has been made amply clear by the Naiyayikas that the five gross elements, the external sense organs and the mind are not independent as they are ‘paratantra’¹⁶. The word ‘paratantra’ refers to the fact that these are always intended to do any action with the help of other constituents and they could not do any action with their own intention. However, if they are supposed to be independent (svatantra), they must have to be conscious in nature but it could not be acceptable by the Naiyayikas and so the conscious self that is present in the physical body in a special kind of relation that is called
‘Vilaksana Upastamba samyoga’ must be admitted. This kind of embodied self may be considered the agent of all kinds of voluntary as well as non-voluntary actions. In this way, with the help of different arguments, the Naiyayikas has established the fact that the physical body of an individual is the conjunction of the five gross elements, the five external sense organs and one internal sense organ, i.e., mind. Each and every individual performs any kind of action by this physical body. This living physical body always must be limited by the finite self. As far as the Nyaya-Vaisesika view is concerned, the human body and the soul form a whole that would be one individual whole, where the two limit (avacchinna) each other, the living body is the limitor (avacchedaka) of the soul and the soul of the body, the two are one thing experienced once from within and once from outside. Of this one thing, the cognitions, desires, efforts, actions, pleasure, and pain are intentional qualities, but not merit and demerit, for these two should be able to cling to the soul after the body perishes. Following the Nyaya literature, it may be stated that the embodied self is the agent of all kinds of voluntary as well as non-voluntary actions. This kind of agent may also be the experiencer of the actions, i.e, the individual who is considered as an agent must also experiences the result of his own actions and consequently, two kinds of fallacies, ‘krtahani’ and ‘akrtabhyagama’ can also be avoided.

It is important to note that the notion of agency has been discussed both by the Indian as well as western thinkers but not in the same way. The important fact that must be noticed is that this notion along with the notion of an enjoyer is very commonly present in almost all of the ethical thoughts of India, while the western thinkers may not necessarily correlate these two notions. It has to be kept in mind that all the consequences of the
voluntary actions must be enjoyed by the agent and for that reason the agent and the enjoyer of that action must be considered as the same individual.

According to *Nyaya-Vaisesika* philosophers, the physical body is considered as the ‘*Bhogayatana*’ i.e. the physical body is the locus of the various mental feelings like pleasure and pains. Now, a material body can not be considered as a locus of non-material things. So, the locus of these mental activities should be non-material in nature. The admission of the embodied self will help the *Naiyayikas* to think of the notion of an enjoyer of these mental feelings. The physical body and the finite self form a whole that would be one individual whole, where the two ‘limit’ each other. Thus, the *Nyaya-Vaisesika* school suggest that the physical body is the locus of all enjoyment and suffering that the self experiences.

**Relation of the Agent and the Enjoyer**

In this section, the attention is drawn, mainly, to the *Samkhya* position and the *Nyaya* position regarding the relationship between the agent and the enjoyer. It is found that these schools have agreement in their basic presuppositions, such as belief in *karma*, *samsara*, belief in rebirth etc, but their viewpoints are different on some metaphysical questions. Two things need to be discussed, first, the *Samkhya* view of agency in general, and the comparison between the *Nyaya* view and the *Samkhya* view on the nature of relation between agency and the enjoyer.

The observations that have been made on the basic metaphysical doctrine of the *Samkhya* system need to be clearly mentioned. The metaphysical orientation is a necessary
presupposition in the discussion of ethics by all the Indian schools of philosophy. There is no doubt that the metaphysical framework to some extent has overloaded moral discussion, and in the Indian tradition, no one discuss about the nature of morality, without any discussion of the metaphysics of that school. However, before entering into the discussion regarding the nature of agency, it can be recapitulated that the Samkhya recognizes twenty-five principles of reality. Among them, purusha or self is neither a cause nor an effect. It is the conscious sentient principle that is free, ubiquitous and eternal. Consciousness is not its property, it is pure consciousness. This conscious principle does not possess any attributes, and is not related to any one or anything, does not undergo any change and it is free from all defects. The Samkhya system admits the plurality of purusas who are diametrically opposed in nature to the ultimate material cause of the Universe, i.e, Prakrti. Prakrti is the ever-active cause from which the Universe emerges. It is eternal, one ubiquitous and is constituted of three gunas-sattva, rajas and tamas. It is unmanifest (avyakta). Mahat or buddhi, Ahamkara, and the five subtle essences (tanmatra) of sound, touch, smell, colour, and taste are both cause and effect. These are Prakrti-vikrti. The five sense organs of knowledge, the five sense organs of action, the internal organ of mind (manas), the five gross elements are only the effects (vikrti)\(^{18}\).

In this connection, the main point that has to be kept in mind about the nature of agency, is that though the self or purusa is inactive (niskriya) in the sense that it is devoid of desire, aversion, and volition, it appears to be active in connection with buddhi and ahamkara. Actually, according to them, the self or purusa is inactive (niskriya), i.e., He has no power of agency and the unconscious prakrti is the kartri in its true sense. To
most of the Indian traditional schools, the word, ‘agency’ may be defined as ‘kriyanukula krtimattva’, and that means the individual who has krtimattva, must be active (sakriya) in nature.

But following the Samkhya literature, it is not so easy to maintain this type of view. However, it is our task to analyse the nature of agency mainly following the Samkhyakarika of Isvarakrsna and some of the authentic Samkhya literature such as Samkhya Pravacana Sutram etc. It is observed that the non-agency of the self or purusa has been clearly stated in the Samkhyakarika of Isvarakrsna. To quote from the Karika:

*Tasmat ca viparyayasat siddham saksitvamasya purusasya.

Kaivalyam madhyastham drastrtvamkartrbhavasca/19,*

This karika has claimed that the characteristics of purusa are totally opposite to that of prakrti (avyakta) and the vyakta, Mahat, ahamkara etc. Purusa or self is eternal and immutable (aparinaminityya), it is conscious (cetana) in nature, but it is not an object of knowledge (avisaya). It is only the witness (saksin), the seer (drastr). An unconscious object cannot be the seer and consequently, Prakrti cannot be the seer. A witness is one to whom objects are shown. The self is the witness to whom the buddhi shows its mental modes. Purusa is inactive (akartr), but it appears to be active in connection with buddhi which is itself active as it is the conjunction (samyoga) of the three gunas, i.e, sattva, rajas, and tamas. The Samkhya School of philosophy provides two conditions (hetus) to prove that the self or purusa is not regarded to be as an agent. These two hetus are viveki and ‘aprasabadharmi’, i.e,’aparinami’. The details about these two hetus have been
discussed. It is observed in the Samkhya literature that the objects that can be transformed are in the nature of prasabadharmi. However, as the purusa or self are inactive in nature, it does not perform any kind of action including transformation. In that case, as the purusa cannot be transformed, so it cannot be the agent of any kind of action.

Another hetu will help to prove the non-agency of purusa and that is ‘vivekitva’. The objects, i.e., conscientious in nature, cannot be the agent but those which are devoid of conscience may be the agent of all actions. The objects that act in a combined way or together are supposed to be ‘aviveki’ in nature. But the purusa or self is opposite in character. For that reason, he cannot be considered to be an agent of any kind of action including the moral ones. That is to say, the purusa or the self has no knowledge, no desire as well as no volition behind any kind of action. The purusa is actually the nature of knowledge in itself and he is also self-revealed.

Can purusa or the self, being the non-doer (akarta) of any particular action; be considered as an enjoyer of the same action? The most of the Indian schools of philosophy accept that the bhokta must also be the karta, i.e., the two conditions, ‘katrtva’ and ‘bhoktrtva’ must belong to the same person. And if it is not so, fallacies, i.e., ‘krtahani’ and ‘akrtabhagama’ may take place. In the Samkhya literature, it is very difficult to maintain that the purusa or self, who is the non-agent of any action, may be the enjoyer or bhokta of that action. But, Isvarakrsna, in his karika, has admitted that the purusa become a bhokta, but not a karta and in this connection, the question may arise: how can it be possible to accept such a controversial issue? By examining the two karikas given by Isvarakrsna, it may be pointed out that from the Samkhya perspective, it
has to be admitted that the agency, that is attributed to purusa arises from the influence of buddhi and the intelligence that is attributed to buddhi, arises out of its proximity to the purusa. In Samkhya literature, this fact is explained by the metaphor of a lame person and a blind person. The lame person can see but he cannot walk. Further, the blind person can walk, but fails to see the way. In that situation, none of them can reach their destination without the help of each other. This metaphor has been used to illustrate the relation between the prakriti and the purusa. The unconscious prakrti is like the blind person who can move here and there by his own accord, but can not experience the result of his own activity. Similarly, the purusa or the self is like the lame person, who in spite of being the knower of everything, cannot walk properly. But when a lame person climbs on the shoulder of a blind person, under the direction of the lame person the blind person can walk and both of them together reach their destination. In the Samkhya Pravacana Sutra, the relation between the purusa and the prakrti is explained on the analogy of a cook and his master. The cook is the agent in the preparation of food although his master is only the enjoyer of the fruits of action, though not an agent, similar is the relation between the Purusa and the Prakriti. The purusa is the enjoyer of the action and this is due to the Aviveka-jnana or the non-discriminatory knowledge. But when the awareness about the distinction between the purusa or the self and the prakrti is established, the misconception due to which purusa thinks himself to be one with prakrti may disappear. Thus from the Samkhya perspective, it may be said that purusa is neither the agent nor the enjoyer of an action, but the abhimana or assumption arises in him through the reflection of the mahat principle and under this condition, the purusa may be an agent as well as an enjoyer. According to the Samkhya theory, if one acquires the discriminative
knowledge, i.e, the viveka-jnana, then the false knowledge about the agency and enjoyer hood will disappear. However, to account for the karmaphala theory and the theory of rebirth, a kind of answer has been provided by the Samkhya school of thought. They have provided a quite straight –forward solution within their own metaphysical framework. To resolve the problem of agent-enjoyer relationship in the empirical level, the school has drawn a distinction between the pure self and the empirical self. The empirical self, i.e., the phenomenal or the individual self is considered to be the jiva and this jiva may experience the pleasure and pain of the world due to ‘Aviveka’. Having veiled itself in the web of the gunas, this individual self forgets its true and real nature and being tormented by desires, unsteadiness, egoism, and eagerness etc. It suffers all kinds of miseries and pains in this worldly atmosphere. On the contrary, the pure self, i.e, transcendental in nature, remains unaffected by all kinds of desires and passions and it is devoid of any kind of bondage. Thus understood, no opposition would arise in holding the view that the empirical self is the agent as well as the enjoyer of a certain action whereas the pure self, i.e, the purusa or the pure consciousness may transcend all these factors.

This attempt of the Samkhya philosophers has not been accepted by the Nyaya-Vaisesika schools. The Naiyayikas have offered a set of alternative arguments to establish the fact that the agent and the enjoyer must be one and only one identical being and this being is none other than the embodied self, i.e., jivatma. Udayana, in his Nyayakusamanjali argues that a finite self, is the substratum of caitanya and krti and this finite self is also the locus of the qualities like dharma, adharma, iccha, dvesa-that are the causes of one’s enjoyment .In this way, it is noticed from the text that the conscious agent and the enjoyer must be the same and could not be otherwise.
Udayana in his *Nyayakusumanjali* has critically analyzed the absurdity of the *Samkhya* doctrine in the following way:

*Kartrdharma niyantarscetita ca sa eva nah*

*Anythanapavargah syadasamsaro athava dhruavah/*²³

The *Naiyayikas* have argued that according to the *Samkhya* theory, it is not permissible to assemble the two qualities, i.e., the desire and the knowledge in the same locus. Moreover, if it happens, it will go against the *Samkhya* theory itself. Thus, if the first evolute of *prakrti*, i.e., *Mahat* or *buddhi* is considered to be the agent, then there remain two alternatives and these are: if *buddhi* is eternal, the individual *jiva* will never be released from *samsara*. And the other alternative is: if the *buddhi* is considered to be temporal, i.e., not eternal, then there will be no *samsara* in the entire individual’s life.

The *Naiyayikas* have proved that the unconscious *prakrti* as well as its evolutes could not be the agent of a certain action; rather, the agent must be conscious in nature. In the *tika, kusumanjali karika vyakhya*, of the above verse, Rambhadra Sarvabhauma has explained the fact the finite self must be the locus of consciousness. ²⁴Following the *Nyaya-Vaisesika* literature, it may be stated that if the *buddhi* is supposed to be an agent, then as it reflects upon *purusa*, the agency may be attributed to the *purusa* and in that case if *buddhi* is eternal in nature, the *purusa* may also be eternal and in that case *purusa* will never be released. Again, if the *buddhi* is accepted to be temporal or ephemeral, then there will be nothing to bind the self and in that case, as the self is free and ubiquitous in nature, so it will never involve in bondage.
In this context, a couple of arguments and counter arguments have been provided by the Naiyayikas to go against the Samkhya doctrine of the agent–enjoyer relationship. The Naiyayikas have argued that with the help of the hetu, i.e., ‘parinamitvat’, it may be proved that buddhi is not an agent of any actions. The inference is like this: ‘buddhi is not an agent as it is changeable like the pot’. On the other hand, the Samkhya School has provided the inference ‘Buddhi is unconscious as it is changeable like the pot’. With the same hetu, ‘parinamitvat’, the Samkhya have proved the unconsciousness of the intellect and the Naiyayikas have proved the non-agency of the intellect. It is found a long controversy among the two schools regarding this issue. But, in this short sphere, all of the arguments and counter arguments should not be discussed. However, the Naiyayikas view may be regarded to be the more acceptable view for it does not go against the common valid cognition ‘cetanah aham karomi’. Further, following the Samkhya literature, it is found that the agent is unconscious as it is the effect of unconscious cause. It appears that the Naiyayikas also could not propose any counter argument against the Samkhya view. Because, if it is proved that the unconscious cause produces a conscious effect, then it will necessarily go against the metaphysical framework of the Samkhya School. Therefore, one may suggest that there is no way to the Naiyayikas to oppose that the agent is unconscious in nature.

But, actually, it would not be the possible case. The argument proposed by the Samkhya School has been totally rejected by the Naiyayikas and the hetu that is provided in this argument commits the fallacy of ‘asiddha’. The Nyaya sutra claims that the active agent must be beginning less in nature. And as it is beginningless or eternal, so it can never be an effect. In this sutra, it has been categorically asserted that the desire for
feeding a child will never arise without any repeated experience in the past. If an individual has any kind of desire for anything, then he has to be born repeatedly and if he borns repeatedly, the impression or the samskara of the past life transmigrates to his present life and this is the reason for admitting the eternality of the self. The same will happen in the case of all living individual. It is sometimes found that the desire of a hungry man for taking food arises out of the continuity of remembrance due to repeated experiences in the past. Therefore, in the case of a new –born baby, the appearance of such desire cannot be explained without the acceptance of the repeated experiences in the previous body and it has to be inferred that in that previous body, he had gone through the repeated experiences of feeding. From all of these evidences, it has to be admitted that the Naiyayikas enforce the existence of a permanent self as a distinct category.

Moreover, according to the Samkhya theory of causation, whatever properties appear in an effect, all of them must also appear in the cause. But, this view may be rejected on the ground that if the case will happen, then all the characteristics of buddhi, i.e., dharma, adharma, pleasure, pain, knowledge, desire, aversion, and volition must also present in the prakrti and then the unconscious prakrti would be equivalent to its first evolute, buddhi. In that case, there will be no difference between prakrti and its first evolute, buddhi. However, it can never be maintained. In this situation, the Samkhya may further argue that the eight states of intellect may be present in prakrti, but in the subtle form, though they appear in the state of intellect or buddhi in the gross form.

In that case, the Naiyayikas argue that as the eight states of intellect are subtle and imperceptible in the state of prakrti, so also the quality of consciousness may also be
present in subtle form in the *prakrti*. If it was so, then the earlier argument that the intellect cannot be conscious, as it is the product of unconscious *prakrti* cannot hold good. Even *prakrti* might be shown to have consciousness in subtle form. Again, if the *Samkhya* School has admitted that the consciousness is present in the *prakrti* in subtle form, then as the pot etc are the effects of *prakrti*, so also they have consciousness in subtle form and in that case the *raga*, *dvesa* may also present in the pot. No other school, including the *Samkhya* would maintain that the pot also has *raga*, *dvesa* in the subtle form. Now, if the internal states like love, hate etc are supposed to be present in subtle form in *prakrti*, as well as its inert products, the same can be supposed in the case of sentience also. The result of all this is the principle that when an effect of a certain type is found to be produced by a cause of a certain type, then from the kind of a generic character of the effect, the same kind of generic character of the cause may be inferred. But certainly one could not make a valid argument that all the properties of the cause must appear in the effect as properties absent in the cause appear in the effect and some of them that are present there do not appear in the effect and thus there is no parallelism between the properties of the cause and those of the effect. Moreover, the *Naiyayikas* may again argue that if the *Samkhya* School does not accept the property of consciousness of an agent and admit the *purusa* or the self as a *bhokta*, but not the agent, then how they will prove the state of bondage and release of an individual. In that case, again the *Samkhya* school answers that all kinds of experiences of the three states i.e., waking, dreaming and the sleeping state may leave their impressions on *mahat* or *buddhi*. All objects assimilated by *mahat* are imposed upon the *purusa* or the self. And it is due to the non-apprehension of the difference between the *mahat* and the self that there arises
the sense of agency in the self and the sense of sentience in the insentient mahat and through it in prakrti. And if one knows the difference between purusa and the buddhi, then he has the knowledge of release or mukti. On the other hand, if he has not that kind of knowledge, then he is in the state of bondage. In the Samkhya view, buddhi which is the first evolute of prakrti is conceived as the internal organ or antahkarana. The qualities like agent-hood (kartrtva), knowledge (jnana), pleasure (sukha) and others belong to buddhi and are only modifications of it. The purusa which is eternal and of the nature of consciousness cannot suffer any modification and as such, it can not be the locus of the said qualities. Re- cognition, being a form of knowledge, must be located in buddhi. It is to be admitted, therefore, that the same buddhi persists during the period of the different stages of knowledge leading to the ultimate re-cognition to be produced. If buddhi is considered to be impermanent and the buddhi which is the locus of the first knowledge does not continue to exist till the moment the second knowledge is produced, it would follow that an object cognized by one buddhi is re-cognised by another buddhi. This is, however, quite absurd.

Gautama argues here that presence of re-cognition in buddhi is not a proved fact and hence, it put forward as the probans of an inference, it involves the fallacy of the unproved (sadhya sama). Vatsyayana explains further that re-cognition being a form of knowledge is a property of the conscious self and not of the internal organ. It can, therefore, prove the eternality of the self only. Vatsyayana also offers an independent criticism of the Samkhya view. If jnana or caitanya is admitted to be a property of buddhi, buddhi itself would be the conscious agent and the other qualities like pleasure, pain, merits and demerits etc would belong to it. What, then, will be the specific
characteristics of the *purusa* or self? It cannot be said that the *purusa* or self is an unqualified entity, or there is no proof for the existence of such an indeterminate self.

The *Naiyayikas* may argue that if it is eternal, then the *purusa* or the self can never be released and bounded because being eternally conditioned by the intellect, it is impossible for the self to regain its unconditioned status. If intellect is susceptible to dissolution in *prakrti*, then it cannot be beginning less. However, before the intellect comes into existence, there is no one to determine the experiences of the *purusa*. *Prakrti* is common to all selves; it cannot regulate differently the experiences of different selves. So, there cannot be any kind of bondage of any self or the main cause of bondage is non-existent. Again, if the *buddhi* is considered to be non-eternal or temporal in nature, then it has to be produced for all temporal things are produced at a certain time, in a certain space. If it happens, then before the production of *buddhi*, there is no merit and demerit in it. If there is no merit and demerit, then nobody will bear. If no one will bear, there is no question of the existing world. However, the *Samkhya* philosophers have admitted the existences of the world as well as the existence of the material body and its merits and demerits. So, in accordance to their view, it must be admitted that *buddhi* or intellect cannot be regarded as a temporal entity.

Thus, following the *Nyaya-Vaisesika* argument, it may be asserted that the notion of the relationship between the agent and the enjoyer provided by the *Samkhya* school is contradictory in nature. It is found from the *Samkhya* theory that the sense of agency that is experienced by the self is the consequence of the imposition of the agency of the intellect on the self while following the *Nyaya* theory, the finite self is the actual agent.
Moreover, the kind of absolutely indeterminate sentience that the Samkhya School has ascribed to the self cannot be invested with agency even if Samkhya were willing to treat sentience and doer-ship as co-existent properties. Actually, according to the Naiyayikas, buddhi or intellect is not the agent but it is implemented by an agent, i.e., it is actually an instrument of the finite self. The self acts upon its instrument in order to know an object. Buddhi or intellect cannot be a conscious entity. Only a conscious being recollects the previous actions and the act of recollection proves that the conscious self, i.e., purusa is eternal whereas buddhi or intellect is non-eternal.

In this way, the eternality of the finite self has been established by the Naiyayikas. Actually, the confusion lies in the buddhi or intellect to be considered as a separate category. If buddhi or intellect is nothing but an instrumental cause, of the finite self as held by the Naiyayikas, then the question of its consciousness does not arise and in that case, it could not be an agent of the voluntary actions. Moreover, the admission of the embodied self may also help to establish the agent-enjoyer relationship properly within the Nyaya-Vaisesika framework.

To wind up, it may be asserted that the self, discussed above, is one who enjoys pleasure and pain (bhokta), the body is the locus where the self enjoys pleasure and pain (bhogayatana), the sense organs are the means of enjoyments (bhoga-sadhana), and the objects of those sense organs are the objects to be enjoyed by the self (bhogya). Even though the self is all-pervading, it does not experience pleasure or pain in any place whatsoever. The body delimits the occurrence of the pleasure and pain experienced by the self. This relation of delimitation is known as avaccedakata, and as we have stated
earlier, this relation between a self and the body which the self considers to be its own is determined by adrsta. Prof. Prabal kumar Sen has rightly pointed out that it is due to this factor that a self cannot consider any body chosen at random as its own body, even though it is related to all the bodies in the world through the relation known as conjunction. 29
Notes and References

1. This word has been given by Annambhatta, in his book, *Tarkasamgraha*, edited by Narayan Chandra Goswami, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Calcutta, 1986


4. *pravartanalaksana dosah*, 1.1.18, *Nyayasutra* of Gautama, ibid

5. ‘cestendriyarthasrayah sariram’, 1.1.11, *Nyayasutra* of Gautama, ibid

6. 3.1.27, *Parthivam gunantaropalabdheh*, *Nyayasutra* of Gautama, ibid

7. ‘cestendriyarthasrayah sariram’, 1.1.11, *Nyayasutra* of Gautama, ibid


10. Ibid

12. ‘Darsana sparsanabhyamekarthagrahanat’, 3.1.1, Nyayasutra of Gautama, ibid

13. ‘Sariradahe patakabhavat’, 3.1.4, Nyayasutra of Gautama, ibid

14. ‘Tadabhavah Satmakapradahaeapi tannyaityatvat’, 3.1.5, Nyayasutra of Gautama, ibid

15. ‘Na Karyasraya Kartrvadhat’, 3.1.6, Nyayasutra of Gautama, ibid

16. ‘Paratanra’- this word has been used by the Nyaya – Vaisesika philosophers to understand the mere fact that the sense organs are always intended to do any action with the help of other constituents and they could not do any action with their own intention.

17. ‘Vilksana Upastamba samyoga’– this is a special kind of samyoga relation that has been accepted by the Nyaya – Vaisesika philosophers.

18. Samkhya account of twenty –five tattvas has been presented in the karika 1.3. The karika is as follows: Mulaprakrtirvikrtir mahadadyah prakrtivikrtayah sapta . Sorasakastu vikar a na prakrtirna vikrtih purusah. 1/3 Samkhyaatattvakaumudi of Sri Vacaspati Misra (a commentary of Isvarakrsna’s Karikas) edited with the commentary ‘Adhyapana’ in Bengali by Narayan Chandra Goswami, Calcutta University, Calcutta, 1406 BS
19.  1.19, ibid

20.  Sanghatapararthatvat trigunadiviparyayaddhishthanat purusahasti bhoktrbhavat kaivalyartham pravrttesca. 1/17. The author of Samkhya karika, Isvarakrsna, in the karika 17, by the phrase ‘Bhoktrbhavat’, has admitted that purusa is bhokta or enjoyer. The notion of non-agency has been settled in the karika 19, ibid

21.  ‘Purusasya darsanartham kaivalyartham tatha pradhanasya, Pangavanadhavadhaylorapi samyogastatkrtah sargah’, 1/21, Samkhya karika of Isvarakrsna, ibid


23.  1.14, Nyayakusumanjali, Udayana, edited and translated into Bengali by Sri Srimohan Bhattacharyya, Paschim Banga Rajya Pustak Parsad, Kolkata, 1995

24.  ‘Krti Samanadhikarana stavadharma daya iti sthitam. Evascetita cetanahpi yah karta sa eva nohsmakam mata iti sesah krtisamanadhakaranasaiva krti janakatvaccetano aham kartetyavadhita nubhavat.’ Nyayakusumanjali, Karika Vyakhya, Tika of Ramabhadra Sarbabhauma, (Ramabhadri), ibid

25.  Asiddha Hettvabhasa- Annambhatta has used this term ‘Hettvabhasa’ to signify a faulty probans (dusta hetu). The asiddha probans is of three types: a) Asrayasiddha, b) svarupasiddha, c) vyapyatasiddha. Annambhatta,

27. ‘Karmakasasadharmanit samsayah’, 3.2.1, Nyayasutra of Gautama, ibid

28. ‘Visaya-pratyabhijnanat’, 3.2.2, Nyayasutra of Gautama, ibid

29. Sen, Prabal Kumar, The Concept of Body in Classical Indian Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Calcutta University. This paper was published in the Jadavpur Journal of philosophy, vol-8, and no-2, Jadavpur University, Calcutta, 1996