Zeitschrift: Asiatische Studien : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société Suisse-Asie

Herausgeber: Schweizerische Asiengesellschaft

Band: 53 (1999)

Heft: 3

Artikel: Smkhya as Smnyastra

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-147467

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SĀṂKHYA AS *SĀMĀNYAŚĀSTRA*

Raffaele Torella, Roma

At the very outset of the Sāṃkhya volume in the *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, G. J. LARSON wrote:

> Many years ago when I met the great Gopinath Kaviraj for the first time in Varanasi, he inquired about my work. I commented that I was working on one of the ancient systems of Indian philosophy, namely, the Sāṃkhya. He impatiently waved his hand to interrupt me. "Sāṃkhya" he said "is not one of the systems of Indian philosophy. Sāṃkhya *is* the philosophy of India.".

In its classical formulation, Sāṃkhya is only one *darśana* among other *darśana*s, and, in a sense, even one of the most generally criticized. However, this conflicts with other aspects. First of all, no other *darśana* has ever exported its doctrines so far and to spheres of Indian civilization so varied, and for so long. It is Sāṃkhya that is the source of paradigms such as, for example, spirit-consciousness-inactivity as opposed to matter-unconsciousness-productivity, so widespread throughout Indian civilization; and, besides this doctrine, which is after all schematic and generic – and can be found in other cultures too –, there also are extremely specific doctrines, which, in spite of their specificity, imposed themselves and circulated to such an extent as to almost make us forget their origin, as in the case of the *guṇa*s. One might reply by saying that Sāṃkhya represents the common sense, existence as commonly understood, and therefore it underlies (or lies side by side) all the bolder and more personal speculative efforts. But it is not so. Sāṃkhya has never been the philosophy of common sense, of *vyavahāra*. On the contrary, one of its late interpreters, Vijñānabhikṣu, explicitly denies this and attributes this qualification to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika instead.[1]

1 *Sāṃkhyapravacanabhāṣya*, p. 2 *nanu nyāyavaiśeṣikābhyām apy eteṣv artheṣu nyāyaḥ pradarśita iti tābhyām asya gatārthatvaṃ, saguṇa-nirguṇatvādiviruddharūpair ātmasādhakatayā tadyuktibhir atratyayuktīnāṃ virodhenobhayor api durghaṭaṃ ca prāmāṇyam iti / maivam, vyāvahārika-pāramārthikarūpaviṣayabhedena gatārthatva-virodhayor abhāvāt*. Cf. also Abhinavagupta's statement: *naiyāyikakramasyaiva māyāpade pāramārthikatvam* (*Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* vol.I p. 25). Again, in

As we said, Sāṃkhya has been the object of many critical remarks, for example, those by Śaṅkara, who proposes to demolish particularly one of its main doctrines, that of *pradhāna*, leaving, however, the impression that he does not want to deny the importance and coherence of a tradition as a whole but that he aims, through the criticism of it, at better defining his own position. In fact, after about two centuries, we see Vācaspati Miśra take up the issue again and try to integrate Sāṃkhya into Vedānta, just as Vijñānabhikṣu is to do again some centuries later. Another meaningful characteristic, also deserving to be analysed, is the fact that old and new Sāṃkhya texts continue being commented upon, even when, strictly speaking, Sāṃkhya adepts – I mean followers of Sāṃkhya as a school – perhaps do not exist any longer. If the commentators are not Sāṃkhyas proper, why should they take the trouble of commenting upon Sāṃkhya texts? The answer is quite obvious. In all traditions, the commentary literature mainly follows two lines. On the one hand, a commentary is written with a view to making explicit the teachings of a text and defending them against the criticism of adversary schools. On the other, a commentary is written with an aim at attracting towards one's own orbit a text that is deemed to be important but at the same time ideologically somewhat distant from one's own position; thus a commentary is a device aimed at attempting to appropriate the text. In the latter case, in other words, a prestigious work is mostly commented upon when one, at least *prima facie*, disagrees with it. But this generally obtains for texts belonging to the same tradition as the commentator's. Why, then, comment upon a Sāṃkhya text, if one is outside the Sāṃkhya tradition? We may answer by putting one more question, which is, after all, the main subject of this paper: Is it really possible to be outside, totally outside, Sāṃkhya? I should like to conclude these preliminary remarks by pointing out that Sāṃkhya, although so strongly criticized by the Vedāntins, is yet assigned, by the Vedāntin Mādhava in the *Sarvadarśanasaṃgraha*, one of the absolutely highest ranks in the hierarchy of philosophical systems.

Let us now try to go a bit deeper into the question by examining the role of Sāṃkhya within one specific tradition, the Tantric one (admitting that we are allowed to speak of Tantrism as of a unitary phenomenon).

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commenting *Tantrāloka* XIII.346cd *lokādhyātmātimārgādikarmayogavidhānataḥ*, Jayaratha says: *lokaḥ śrutismṛtyādiḥ, adhyātmaṃ vedāntādiḥ, atimārgo laukikamārgātītaṃ sāṃkhyapātañjalādi* ...

Furthermore, speaking of Tantrism means speaking not of a marginal element but of an essential and strongly characterizing component of the entire civilization of the subcontinent, from the medieval age onwards – in the social, religious, philosophical, and artistic spheres. We find Sāṃkhya doctrines in the very core of the metaphysics, cosmology and psychology of Tantrism, and we are not talking of single details but of fully structured systems of beliefs – such as the *tattva* theory –, which are so perfectly integrated into the tantric speculation that, most likely, we would never have thought of a derivation, had we not been aware of the remote origin of Sāṃkhya. This is particularly true for the Śaiva side of Tantrism.

In addition to the doctrine of *tattva*s, or at least the first twenty-three or twenty-four in the Śaiva outlook, we find the doctrine of *bhāva*s and *pratyaya*s, obviously that of the three *guṇa*s, the opposition/ complementarity of the male and female principles in the Absolute, and all this does not concern only the speculative plane but is also firmly grounded in ritual (see for example the role of *buddhi-bhāva*s in the mental construction of the Śiva throne,[2] or the five *mahābhūta*s as pervading the entire universe in the so-called *pañcatattvadīkṣā*,[3] and so on). Neither the tantras nor the commentaries and secondary works ever acknowledge these elements as "deriving" from Sāṃkhya, to which, moreover, a somewhat ambiguous treatment is reserved: a certain basic respect, on the one hand,

2 *Somaśambhupaddhati* I (BRUNNER 1963) p. 158 ff.; *Mṛgendrāgama, kriyāpāda*, III.12 and Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha's *Vṛtti* (cf. BRUNNER 1985: 46); *Svacchandatantra* II.61cd-62 and Kṣemarāja's *Uddyota*; *Sārdhatriśati-kālottara* V.2cd-3ab and Rāmakaṇṭha's *Vṛtti*. But cf. Rāmakaṇṭha's remarks (*Sārdhatriśati-kālottara-vṛtti* p. 49 *dharmādayas tv ete 'nantasya sāmārthyaviśeṣāḥ yaiḥ sarvaṃ dhatte, jānāti, na kenacid anurajyate, sarveśvaraś ca bhavatīti / na tu buddhidharmā iti maurkhyād vyākhyeyam, teṣām atra pragamāsaṃbhavāt)* and Kṣemarāja's (*Svacchandatantra-uddyota* vol.I p. 45 *īśvaraśaktyadhiṣṭhāne eva etad eṣāṃ ghaṭate*).

3 *Mahābhārata* XII.187.3-5 *pṛthivī vāyur ākāśam āpo jyotiś ca pañcamam / mahābhūtāni bhūtānāṃ sarveṣāṃ prabhavāpyayau // tataḥ sṛṣṭāni tatraiva tāni yānti punaḥ punaḥ / mahābhūtāni bhūteṣu sāgarasyormayo yathā // prasārya ca yathāṅgāni kūrmaḥ saṃharate punaḥ / tadvad bhūtāni bhūtātmā sṛṣṭvā saṃharate punaḥ // mahābhūtāni pañcaiva sarvabhūteṣu bhūtakṛt / akarot teṣu vaiṣamyaṃ tat tu jīvo 'nu paśyati //. Sārdhatriśati-kālottara* VIII.1-2 *atha dīkṣāṃ pravakṣyāmi pañcatattvavyavasthitām / pṛthivy āpas tathā tejo vāyur ākāśam eva ca // pañcaitāni ca tattvāni yair vyāptam akhilaṃ jagat / sarvatattvāni tatraiva draṣṭavyāni tu sādhakaiḥ //*. See also the *kalādīkṣā*, where the five *kalās* are related to the five *mahābhūta*s, *Mṛgendrāgama, kriyāpāda*, VIII.154cd-155; *Svacchandatantra* V.12cd-13.

and a strong criticism on specific points, on the other.[4] The basic respect does not seem essentially different from that paid to other traditions, too. We may quote statements like this: "Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Pāñcarātra and Vedas cannot be despised, for they originated from Śiva; all of them bestow the fruit of liberation" (*Svacchandatantra* V.44cd-45ab).[5] In the hierarchies of philosophical-religious systems and the levels of liberation they can attain, Sāṃkhya mostly occupies an intermediate rank:[6] its *puruṣa*, once liberated, is made to correspond approximately[7] to the plane of *vijñānākala* "devoid of *kalā* because of knowledge" or *vijñānakevala* "isolated because of knowledge" (cf. TORELLA 1994: 199-200), and it is added elsewhere that this plane can be fully reached only through the practice of the yoga (related to the Earth principle) according to the Śiva doctrine (*Tantrāloka* X.170cd-171 *dharātattvagataṃ yogam abhyasya śivavidyayā // na tu pāśavasāṃkhyīyavaiṣṇavādidvitādṛśā / aprāptadhruvadhāmāno vijñānākala-tājuṣaḥ //*). Sometimes, specific points are discussed, e. g. the theory of the single quality *versus* the theory of the accumulation of the qualities in the *mahābhūta*s (cf. *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivimarśinī* vol. III pp. 297-300).

4 See e.g. *Mṛgendratantra, vidyāpāda*, II.15 *sāṃkhyajñāne 'pi mithyātvaṃ kārye kāraṇabuddhitaḥ / akartṛbhāvād bhoktuś ca svātantryād apy acittvataḥ //.*

5 Cf. the Pāñcarātra's position on the matter as expounded in a passage cited by Yāmunācārya in the *Āgamaprāmāṇya* (pp. 61-62) *purāṇaiś caiva vedaiś ca pañcarātrais tathaiva ca / dhyāyanti yogino nityaṃ kratubhiś ca yajanti tam // evam ekaṃ sāṅkhyayogaṃ vedāraṇyakam eva ca / parasparāṅgāny etāni pañcarātraṃ ca sattama //*. After quoting and commenting upon the latter verse in the *Śrībhāṣya* (vol.II p. 561, on *Brahmasūtra* II.2.42), Rāmānuja refers to one more verse: *sāṃkhyaṃ yogaḥ pañcarātraṃ vedāḥ pāśupataṃ tathā / ātmapramāṇāny etāni na hantavyāni hetubhiḥ //.*

6 See e. g. the passage quoted by Rāmakaṇṭha in his *Prakāśa* on Sadyojyotis's *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* (p. 207, on III.80) *yac chrūyate – buddhitattve sthitā bauddhā guṇeṣu tv ārhatāḥ sthitāḥ / gunamūrdhni sthitāḥ sāṃkhyā avyakte pāñcarātrikāḥ / sthitā vedavidaḥ puṃsi.* A very similar passage (but omitting the reference to the Sāṃkhyas) is quoted in *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya* p. 18, *Tantrālokavārttika* vol. IV p. 131, and in many other Śaiva texts.

7 Cf. *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikāvṛtti* p. 68 (on III.2.7) *te ca sāṃkhyapuruṣaprāyā vijñānakevalā ity ucyante*; *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya* p. 18 *sāṃkhyādayas tu vijñānākala-prāyāṃ bhūmim avalambante*. The reason of this imperfect equivalence is thoroughly explained by Abhinavagupta in *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivimarśinī* III p. 322, where he concludes his argumentation by saying, once again: *tataḥ sāṃkhyaiḥ puruṣair yat sādṛśyaṃ, tad ātyantikaṃ tajjātīyatāparyantaṃ na bhavati – iti prāyikaṃ sādṛśyaṃ yuktam.*

Generally, preference is given to the latter, but mainly on the basis of the observation of Śaiva ritual, which mostly presupposes it.[8] Sometimes, this is also accompanied by a certain annoyance at entering into the play of the rival positions within the Sāṃkhya schools (*Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* vol.II pp. 213-214 *tatraikaikaguṇam ākāśādi, ekaikavṛddhaguṇaṃ vā – iti darśanabhedaḥ – iti na vivecito 'nupayogāt*)[9].

In order to attempt an overall evaluation of the Śaiva position towards Sāṃkhya, I will focus on a specific point: the doctrine of *bhāva*s and *pratyaya*s, i.e. the basic components of intellectual and psychological life of the individual. This doctrine, or perhaps two distinct doctrines belonging to distinct phases in the evolution of Sāṃkhya,[10] has been the object of different interpretations and formulations.[11] The *Mṛgendratantra* basically presents this doctrine in the terms in which it occurs in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, and the commentator Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha remains on the same lines. Only, they solve the question of the relationship between *bhāva*s and *pratyaya*s – a question that the Sāṃkhya texts essentially leave unanswered – in terms of genetic connection: *bhāvas* are explicitly made to be the causes of *pratyayas* (*Mṛgendrāgama, vidyāpāda,* X.25a *pratyayās tadupādānās*; *Vṛtti*, KSTS ed., p. 220 *...utpattihetur yeṣām ...*), or the latter the gross form, or actualization, of the former (Aghoraśiva's *Ṭīkā* on *Bhogakārikā* 60, p. 217, *ta eva [bhāvāḥ] prakarṣāvasthāṃ prāptāḥ sthūlena rūpeṇa bhogyadaśām*

8 *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivimarśinī* III p. 299 *dīkṣākālena ca viśuddhaṃ pūrvaṃ tattvaṃ dharām apsu uttaratra yojanīyam iti [...] tatra kāraṇe kāryasya pravilayo yojanaṃ ca / 'yuktaḥ' iti sa eva ayaṃ bahutarāgamānugṛhītaḥ pakṣaḥ iti yāvat.* Also the yoga practice named *dhāraṇā* – in this case a practice shared both by Śaivas and Sāṃkhyas – is in accordance with the accumulation theory (ibid. *nanu kimarthaṃ śaivasāṃkhyādaya ittham āhuḥ ...*).

9 However, a fairly detailed discussion of the issue can be found in *Tantrāloka* IX and *Tantrasāra* VIII.

10 This is the opinion of FRAUWALLNER 1973: I, 268.

11 We may start from the derogatory remarks of GARBE 1917: 341: "In der Beschreibung dieser Zustände zeigt sich die Klassifizierungssucht der Sāṃkhya-Philosophie im hellsten Lichte; ihre Zahlenmanie nimmt geradezu den Charakter des Albernen an. Der ganze Gegenstand darf als die schwache Seite des Systems bezeichnet werden." On *bhāva*s see e.g. GARBE 1917: 339-340, VAN BUITENEN 1956: 153-157, LARSON-BHATTACHARYA 1987: 53-54; on *pratyaya*s see, besides FRAUWALLNER 1973, GARBE 1917: 340-345, OBERHAMMER 1961, OBERHAMMER 1977: 17-57, LARSON-BHATTACHARYA 1987: 56-59, 631-634. A detailed treatment of the *bhāva-pratyaya* doctrine can be found in *Yuktidīpikā* pp. 230-253.

āpannāḥ saṃsāriṇāṃ pratyāyanāt pratyayāḥ kathyante). The latter passage also contains an etymological explanation of the term *pratyaya*, derived from Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha (*Mṛgendravṛtti* p. 220 *te dharmādaya upādānam utpattihetur yeṣāṃ te saṃsāryāṇoḥ pratyāyanāt pratyayā iṣṭāḥ*), who also quotes *ibid.* an anonymous verse with an etymological explanation of *bhāva* (*bhāvayanty ātmano liṅgaṃ tena bhāvā iti smṛtāḥ*).[12] Neither of these two etymological explanations belongs to the Sāṃkhya tradition.[13] After following the *Mṛgendra* and Nārāyaṇkaṇṭha's discourse about the fifty *pratyaya*s with no objection, the sub-commentator Aghoraśiva rather unexpectedly remarks that this is not the final assessment of the question – both as regards the features and number of the *pratyaya*s – which instead is to be found in the Śaiva tradition and, particularly, in the *Mataṅga-pārameśvaratantra* (*Mṛgendravṛtti-dīpikā* p. 282 *te ca siddhyādayaḥ pañcāśat pratyayāḥ sāṃkhyasiddhā evātra darśitāḥ / natu siddhāntasiddhāḥ śrīmataṅgādāv anyathaiva tallakṣaṇasya tatsaṃkhyāyāś cābhidhānāt*). In fact, if we look into the *vidyāpāda* of this Āgama (*paṭala* XVII), we find a

12 This still cryptic explanation (but cf. also *Mataṅgapārameśvaravṛtti*, *vidyāpāda*, p. 389: *bhāvayanti adhivāsayanti buddhiṃ yato dharmādayo 'nuṣṭhitāḥ, tato bhāvāḥ kathyante*) is partly elucidated by Aghoraśiva in his *Dīpikā* on the *Mṛgendravṛtti* (p. 280 *buddhau vāsanātvena sthitā dharmādayo 'ṣṭau bhāvā ity arthaḥ / ete cetyādi / sāttvikaśuddhā [*read *sāttvikā śuddhā] matiḥ pravṛttā yasya puṃsaḥ tasya dharmādayaś catvāro bhāvā bhavantīti bhāvāḥ*). I am very grateful to Professor Alexis SANDERSON for providing me with a copy of this rare text. The editor of the *Dīpikā* traces the verse explaning the term *pratyaya* to the *Pauṣkarāgama*. In fact, in *paṭala* VI of the *vidyāpāda* of the edited *Pauṣkara* we can find not only the same explanation of *pratyaya* (VI.124ab *pratyāyayanti kṣetrajñaṃ tena te pratyayāḥ smṛtāḥ*) but also that of *bhāva* (VI.50cd-51a *ete dharmādayaś cāṣṭau bhāvayanti yatas tataḥ // liṅgabhāvāt [*read *liṅgaṃ bhāvāḥ] samuddiṣṭā[ḥ]*). However, it seems very unlikely that such a late (and southern) compilation as the edited *Pauṣkarāgama* can represent the source of this old doctrine, and all the more so if we consider that this text shows at many points its endebtment to the *Mataṅga*, probably read in the light of Rāmakaṇṭha's *vṛtti*. In the latter work (p. 389), both verses are quoted, while Rāmakaṇṭha comments upon *vidyāpāda*, XVII.26cd-27ab *pratyayo 'kṣārthayogotthaḥ puṃsaḥ pratyayakṛt sadā // bhāvanātaḥ smṛto bhāvo vāsyate yena pudgalaḥ /*.

13 See e.g. *Yuktidīpikā* p. 239 (on *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 46ab): *pratyayasarga iti pratyayaḥ padārtho lakṣaṇam iti paryāyāḥ / [...] athavā pratyayo buddhiḥ niścayo 'dhyavasāya iti paryāyāḥ / tasya sargo 'yam, ataḥ pratyayasargaḥ pratyayakāryaṃ pratyaya-vyāpāra ity arthaḥ / athavā pratyayapūrvakaḥ sargaḥ pratyayasargaḥ / buddhi-pūrvaka ity uktaḥ.*

conception that is essentially new with respect to Sāṃkhya.[14] Not only does this scripture view the *pratyaya*s as the direct outcome of the eight *bhāva*s, as also the *Mṛgendra* does, but also amplifies their number and in many a case modifies their meanings and functions. Without going into details, we can limit ourselves to saying that 5 *yama*s and 5 *niyama*s derive from *dharma*; 8 *siddhi*s, multiplied by 10 different philosophical viewpoints, derive from *jñāna*; 10 *tuṣṭi*s, also multiplied by 10 different philosophical viewpoints, derive from *vairāgya*; 10 *aiśvarya*s (the usual list *aṇimādi*) multiplied by 8 different ways of existence derive from *aiśvarya*, 10 opposites to *yama*s and *niyama*s derive from *adharma*, 5 *viparyaya*s (i.e. the usual Sāṃkhya list: *tamas*, *moha*, etc.) derive from *ajñāna*; 10 *atuṣṭis* derive from *avairāgya*; and 21 *aśakti*s derive from *anaiśvarya*.[15] Thus the number of *pratyaya*s raises to three hundred. But the Śaiva elaboration of the *bhāva-pratyaya* doctrine does not stop here. In the *Pauṣkarāgama*, mentioned above, the *pratyaya*s are further multiplied: now they are six hundred twelve (*vidyāpāda*, VI.127ab *saṃbhūya vṛttayo buddheḥ ṣaṭ śatam dvādaśādhikam*).

This handling of Sāṃkhya concepts and doctrines by Śaiva tantras as they were their own, that is, tantric Śaiva doctrines – particularly in the case of a doctrine so typically Sāṃkhya, with all the peculiarity of its often abstruse and archaic terminology – the familiarity that these tantras and their commentators show in modifying and integrate them, all this suggests a tentative conclusion. There is not one Sāṃkhya but, as it were, two Sāṃkhyas. One is a relatively coherent complex of doctrines and beliefs which has become, subliminally as it were, an integral part of Indian

14 As is often the case in Tantrism (cf. the attitude of most of tantric literature towards vedic *śruti*), the relationship between the two conceptions is assumed to be that of *sāmānya/viśeṣa* (see *Mṛgendravṛttidīpikā* p. 291, on XI.1, *aṣṭau navetyādinā saṃkṣepeṇa sāṃkhyāśritapañcāśatpratyayasaṃkhyāyā darśitatvāt siddhyādīnāṃ svarūpalakṣaṇam api tad uktam eveti [...] viśeṣalakṣaṇam asmābhiḥ pūrvaprakaraṇa eva darśitam).*

15 A couple of verses by Rāmakaṇṭha himself aptly summarize the entire doctrine (*Mataṅgapārameśvaravṛtti*, *vidyāpāda*, p. 417, ad XVII.157cd): *dharmādaya eva bhāvāḥ krameṇa pratyayarūpatāṃ prāptā iti / evaṃ śatatrayasaṃkhyātra darśitā / na tu sāṃkhyair iva pañcāśad ity uktam anyatra – dharmo daśabhir bhedair jñānam aśītyā śatena vairāgyam / aiśvaryaṃ catuṣṣaṣṭyā daśabhir adharmas tadardhato 'jñānam // daśabhir avairāgyaṃ cānaiśvaryaṃ bhinnam ekaviṃśatyā / bhāva-pratyayabhedaḥ saṃkṣepoktaḥ śatatrayeṇāyam //.*

tradition,[16] impelled by its intrinsic power and prestige deriving above all from its being the first bold and consistent systemization of the scattered patrimony of upaniṣadic speculations. The other is the Sāṃkhya as a *darśana* trying to put in order or develop, in some way or other, these doctrines, which are perceived as a timeless legacy even by those that are not their direct upholders. One wonders whether this could be an acceptable explanation of the sentence, apparently so incongruous, pronounced by Aghoraśiva in the *Mṛgendravṛttidīpikā*: Also the followers of Sāṃkhya ["also", that is, in addition to us Śaivas] admit of 24 *tattvas* ...[17]

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16 For example, it even seems that Sāṃkhya was one of the subjects taught in Buddhist universities. Hsuan-Tsang's report refers to Nālanda: "The priests, belonging to the convent, or strangers (residing therein) always reach the number of 10,000, who all study the Great Vehicle, and also (works belonging to) the eighteen sects, and not only so, but even ordinary works, such as the Vedas and other books, the Hetuvidyā, Śabdavidyā, Chikitsāvidyā, the works on Magic (Atharvaveda), the Sāṃkhya;" (BEAL 1911: 112)

17 P. 276 *sāṃkhyair apy uktaṃ "prakṛter mahāṃs tato 'haṃkāras tasmād guṇaś* [read *gaṇaś*] *ca ṣoḍaśakaḥ / tasmāt ṣoḍaśakāt pañcabhyaḥ pañcabhūtāni* [*Sāṃkhyakārikā* 22]"; see also p. 237 *sāṃkhyair api gauṇaṃ caturviṃśatitattvātmakam iṣyate*, etc.

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