

Darśana, philosophy and religion in pre-modern India

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Recibido: octubre 1 de 2015 – Revisado: diciembre 15 de 2015 – Aceptado: enero 20 de 2016

Referencia formato APA: Bhattacharya, R. (2016). Darśana, philosophy and religion in pre-modern India. *Rev. Guillermo de Ockham*, 14(1), 25-32. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21500/22563202.2308>

Abstract

The Sanskrit word, *darśana*, is generally translated into English as philosophy, but it is admittedly inadequate. The so-called six (*āstika*, affirmativist or orthodox) systems of philosophy have been described by Louis Renou as 'philosophico-religious,' since religion and philosophy cannot be separated in their tradition. On the other hand, Maurice Winternitz brands some of the six (such as *Mīmāṃsā* and *Vedānta*) as religion and some others (such as, *Nyāya* and *Vaiśeṣika*) as philosophy. A.K. Warder claims that, despite everything, religion and philosophy can be separated quite adequately, and the *darśanas* are all philosophies. All this however leaves the so-called six (*nāstika*, negativist or heterodox) systems, particularly the materialist systems out of consideration. While the Jain and the Buddhist systems do have religious associations, the pre-Cārvāka and the Cārvāka materialist systems remained thoroughly philosophical, untouched by any religion. The orthodox systems, mostly in their syncretic forms, became religio-philosophical (although some of them might have originated as philosophy) while the materialist systems retained their original secular character.

Keywords: *Darśana*, materialism, religion, six systems of philosophy

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Resumen

La palabra sánscrita *darśana* se traduce generalmente en inglés como filosofía, pero esto es inadecuado. Los llamados seis sistemas *āstika* (afirmativista u ortodoxa) de la filosofía han sido descritos por Louis Renou como "filosófico-religiosos," ya que la filosofía y la religión no pueden separarse en sus tradiciones. Por otro lado, Maurice Winternitz califica algunos de los seis (tales como *Mīmāṃsā* y *Vedānta*) como religión y otros (tales como *Nyāya* y *Vaiśeṣika*) como filosofía. A.K. Warder asegura que, a pesar de todo, la religión y la filosofía se pueden separar de una manera adecuada, y que los *darśanas* son todas corrientes filosóficas. Sin embargo, todo esto deja los llamados seis sistemas *nāstika* (negativista o heterodoxa), en particular los sistemas materialistas, fuera de consideración. Mientras los sistemas jainistas y budistas tienen asociaciones religiosas, los sistemas materialistas pre-Cārvāka y Cārvāka se mantuvieron filosóficos, sin ser tocados por ninguna religión. Los sistemas ortodoxos, sobre todo en su forma sincrética, se convirtieron en religio-filosóficos (aunque algunos de ellos pudieron haber originado como filosofía) mientras que los sistemas materialistas mantuvieron su carácter secular original.

Palabras clave: Darśana, materialismo, religión, seis sistemas de filosofía

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Darśana, filosofia e religião na Índia premoderna

Resumo

A palavra sânscrita *darśana* traduz geralmente em inglês como filosofia, mas isto não é inadequado. Os chamados seis sistemas (*āstika*, afirmativista ou ortodoxa) da filosofia han sido descritos por Louis Renou como “filosófico-religioso”, já que a filosofia e a religião não podem ser separados de suas tradições. Por outro lado, Maurice Winternitz qualifica alguns dos seis (tais como *Mīmāṃsā* y *Vedānta*) como religião e outros (tais como *Nyāya* y *Vaiśeṣika*) como filosofia. A.K. Warder assegura que a pesar de todo, a religião e a filosofia se podem separar de uma maneira adequada, e que as *darśanas* são todas filosofias. Apesar disso, todo esto deixa os chamados seis sistemas (*nāstika*, negativista ou heterodoxo), em particular os sistemas materialistas fora de consideração. Enquanto os sistemas Jain e Budistas têm associações religiosas, os sistemas materialistas pre- *Cārvāka* e *Cārvāka* se mantiveram filosóficos, sin ser tocados por nenhuma religião. Os sistemas ortodoxos, em maioria em sua forma sincrética, se mudaron en religio-filosoficos (embora alguns de eles poderiam ter fonte como filosofia) enquanto os sistemas materialistas mantiveram seu carácter secular original.

Palavras-chave: *Darśana*, materialismo, religião, seis sistemas de filosofia

Three Views of Darśana

The *darśanas* in India, Louis Renou said, were ‘philosophico-religious systems’ and more elaborately speaking, ‘the generic name of the great area of the philosophical and religious speculation of ancient India’ (qtd. Gerschheimer, 2000-2001, p.173). Here and elsewhere, by *darśana* only those six systems are meant that admit the Veda as an instrument of cognition. Not only materialism but also Jainism and Buddhism are excluded from this category. Materialism is generally called the *Cārvāka* or *Lokāyata* system, but we shall see that by the early centuries of the Common Era more than one materialist school had already come into being in ancient India. Hence I opt for the use of the umbrella term, materialism. (Gerschheimer too elected this general appellation/designation rather than specific names of all the systems. See Gerschheimer, 2000-2001, pp. 179-188; 2007, p. 239 n4). However, five other systems, the four schools of Buddhism and the Jain school, can also be called ‘philosophico-religious’. Some other minor systems, mentioned in doxographical works like the *Sarva-darśana-saṅgraha* (*SDS*), such as the *Pūrṇa-prajñā* (ch.5), *Nakulīśa-Pāśupata* (ch.6), *Pratyabhijñā* (ch.8), and even *Raseśvara* (ch.9) systems too have religious or cultic associations. Only the *Pāṇini* system mentioned in the *SDS* (ch.13) may be excluded from this category of both philosophy and religion, for it is concerned with grammar alone.

Maurice Winternitz, however, claimed that at least some of the philosophical systems, such as *Nyāya* and *Vaiśeṣika*, were non-religious in origin but admitted that some others, such as *Advaita Vedānta* and *Yoga*, were *ab initio* connected with religious sects. (Winternitz, 1985, 3:523-524, 533, 558, 566). He even goes to the extent

of claiming: “The *Vaiśeṣika* system, that tries to explain nature independently of religious belief in its character does not appear to be widely separated from the *Lokāyata* system. *Nyāya* and *Vaiśeṣika* constitute the secular philosophies of lay scholars of nontheological *paṇḍitas* and of ‘heretics’”. (3:558).

A. K. Warder, on the other hand, is of the opinion that religion and philosophy could be separated in the Indian tradition. Following this idea, he proposed to study the major philosophical systems without any reference to religion. He takes his stand on the basis of a distinction: religion relies on revelation and admits its authority whereas philosophy deals critically with the pursuit of knowledge, admitting no absolute authority (Warder, 1971, p. 2).

Philosophies in India: Independent Origins

What needs to be emphasized is that even though some philosophical systems in the course of time got tied up to some religious sects, philosophy in India had its own and independent origin, both secular and rational, quite distinct from religion. Some may argue that religion came first, philosophy later. It may very well be so, but the distinction between philosophy and religion is valid and can be made at every stage in the Indian context too. For example, *Nyāya* and *Vaiśeṣika* in their syncretic form declared their adherence to the Veda, and consequently got attached to the *Śaiva* and the *Pāśupata* sects (Guṇaratna, Ch. 2, p. 49 and Ch. 5, p. 266). Yet it has been argued that such a declaration of faith in the Veda was no more than a ruse. S.C. Vidyabhushaṇa suggested so: ‘It seems that the unfavourable criticism to which *ānvīkṣikī* had long been exposed terminated when, under

the name of Nyāya-sūtra, it accepted the authority of the Vedas' (S.C. Vidyabhushaṇa, 1988, p. 39). Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya heartily endorsed this view: 'The law-makers demand that the authority of the Vedas must be accepted by the philosophers. Goutama and Vātsyāyana accept this authority, and thereby save themselves from the possibility of being branded as *nāstika*-s or heretics' (Chattopadhyaya, 1982, pp.lxxxviii-lxxxix). Chattopadhyaya further observed: 'At the same time they (sc. The Nyāya philosophers) leave enough hints that this submission to scriptural authority is of the nature of ransom paid to the authorities for the purpose of saving ānvikṣikī' (ibid. p.lxxxix). Elsewhere too he calls it: loyalty to the counter-ideology pledged under duress (2014, p. 316). Their religious beliefs – insofar as they were genuine – did not affect the contents of these two philosophical systems. It can be demonstrated that the fundamentals of the pro-Vedic philosophical systems owe nothing to the Vedas or the ancillary literature related to them. Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta too, despite their unmistakable links to the Vedic and the Upaniṣadic traditions respectively (hence called Pūrva-mīmāṃsā and Uttara-mīmāṃsā, the earlier and the later Mīmāṃsās), developed their own logical tools and reached their conclusions in the same way as Sāṃkhya, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika did.

Turning to the non-Vedic (or rather anti-Vedic) systems, we have to note that Buddhism and Jainism did have their origins in two godless religions. Yet they joined 'the battle of the books', the philosophical debates between several Vedic and non-Vedic systems, that continued from the eighth century CE to the twelfth century CE. When the Buddhist and the Jain philosophers did so, they left all their religious trappings behind and got into the fray with unlimited gusto, not only to defend their own systems, *both religious and philosophical*, but also to demolish their opponents. Their opponents included both materialists (the Cārvāka/Lokāyata in particular) and systems of other hues, mostly Nyāya and Vedānta.

Vedic and Non-Vedic Philosophical Systems

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the division between the Vedic and non-Vedic philosophical systems has been regarded as something fundamental in the history of philosophy in India, although Western scholars have not paid enough attention to this division. (Wilhelm Halbfass has dealt with the questions of *darśanas* and ānvikṣikī vis-à-vis philosophy in 1988 pp. 263-286, but has not considered the āstika-*nāstika* division as basic).

In Sanskrit philosophical literature the word *nāstika* (lit. negativist, meaning any denier, dissenter, etc.) is

often found used in two senses, one broad and the other, narrow. In the *broadest* sense, *nāstika* refers to the Buddhists, the Jains, and the materialists or quasi-materialists of all hues, as well as all heretical and heterodox doctrines that do not adhere to the Vedic religious practice of offering sacrifice to the gods (*yajña*). The earliest reference to the existence of such *nāstikas* is documented in the *Maitrī Upaniṣad* (*MaiUp*) 7.8 (See below).

In the *narrow* sense, however, *nāstika* signifies the materialist alone. But the term is applied to suggest two different but not altogether unrelated characteristics. In the first instance, a *nāstika* is 'a defiler of the Veda,' *veda-nindaka* (as *Manu* 2.11 says); in the second, it indicates exclusively a denier of the Other World (*paraloka*). In this narrow sense the Buddhists and the Jains are obviously excluded, since they are as much believers in heaven and hell as the Vedists, al ther heaens and hells are located elsewhere, not exactly wher the brahmanical abodes of the dead are. It is in this sense that the Buddhists and the Jains too speak of the materialists as *nāstika*.

The term āstika-vādin is first found most probably in Haribhadra (eighth century CE)'s *Ṣaḍ-darśana-samuccaya* (*ṢDSam*), Ch. 6, verse 78 (*pañcaiva āstika-vādinah*, the five are affirmativists). This obviously presupposes its antonym *nāstika-vādin*. Śaṅkara (ninth century CE) speaks of *astitva-vādinah* (those who say (it) exists) and *nāstikavādin* (he who says (it) does not exist) in his gloss on *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (*KUp*) 2.3.12. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī (seventeenth century CE), in his *Prasthānabheda*, p.1, first identifies the following six – the four Buddhist systems, namely, Mādhyamika, Yogācāra, Sautrāntrika, and Vaibhāṣika, then Jainism and finally the Lokāyata – as 'six [negativist] philosophies' (*ṣaḍ [nāstika] darśanāni*). Cimanabhaṭṭa repeats it (1923, pp. 89-90), emphasizing their anti-Vedic character. (See also Radhakanta Deva's Sanskrit lexicon, the *Śabda-kalpa-druma*, s.v. *nāstika*. The so-called 'six [Indian] systems of philosophy,' however, refer to the affirmativist systems only. For details see F. Max Müller (1899/1971).

Authors right from Kamalaśīla (eighth century) down to Hemacandra (twelfth century) and Sāyaṇa-Mādhava (fourteenth century) follow this practice. A *nāstika* then is to be understood either as a follower of the non-Vedic path (but not necessarily a materialist) or as a professed naturalist or physicalist (the two innocuous names that are used euphemistically to mean materialism) or both.

In the ancient Indian context, a materialist is first known by his denial of the Other World (heaven and hell) and consequently, of, what is quintessentially Indian,

rebirth. Later, he is described as a denier of the authority of the Vedas. The materialists denied both the existence of the Other World and the supreme authority of the Veda, while the Buddhists and the Jains differed from the materialist in accepting the first, but were at one with them in denying the second. There had also been hundreds of minor religious congregations formed around one or the other guru belonging more often than not to a so-called lower caste. These folk cults are vehemently anti-Veda and anti-Brahmana. They comprise the so-called Little Tradition in Bengal (present-day West Bengal in India and Bangladesh) and the rest of eastern India. S. Dasgupta called them as 'obscure religious cults'. They too are as much opposed to the Vedic religious practices as the Buddhists and the Jains are. They are still there in all parts of the sub-continent as they were in Upaniṣadic India. The *Maitrī Upaniṣad* (*MaiUp*) 7.8 describes in graphic details such communities as are marked by (a) anti-Vedic attitude and (b) *sūdra* ("low-caste") associations. The passage runs as follows:

Now follow the impediments to the attainment of knowledge, O King! This is verily the source of the net of infatuation, – that he who is fit for heaven has intercourse with those who are not fit for heaven; this is the source. Even though a tree with wide-spreading branches is pointed out before them, they take up with the mean bush. Those too, besides, who are for ever (sic) lured by pleasure, for ever (sic) sent on another's errands, for ever (sic) begging, for ever (sic) living by mechanical trades, – and those too who beg in cities, who perform sacrifices for those who should not offer them, the disciples of Śūdras, and Śūdras who read the sacred books; and those two who are knaves, who wear matted hair, dancers, soldiers, religious mendicants, actors, those employed in kings' business, outcasts, &c.; and also those who worshipping wealth pretend to propitiate the yakshas, rakshasas, goblins, the *gaṇas*, *piśāchas*, snakes, imps &c.; also those who under false pretexts wear red garments and earrings and skulls; and also those who oppose the followers of the Veda by false arguments and examples, deceptions and magic, – with all these let him not associate. They are all open thieves and unfit for heaven. Thus saith (the Śruti); The world, bewildered by juggling denials of the soul, and by false examples and reasons, knows not what is the difference between the Veda and (pretended) science. (E.B. Cowell's translation, 1935, pp. 287-288. For another translation (and notes) see Van Buitenen, 1962, pp. 88, 153).

It is no wonder then that the term *a-vaidika* (non-Vedic) is used in this Upaniṣad precisely in this context (7.8). Interestingly enough, this term occurs only *once* in the whole corpus of the eighteen principal Upaniṣads, and that too in the *MaiUp* alone. There is another loaded word, *nāstikya*, in this very Upaniṣad (3.5). This word too

is unique in the Upaniṣadic literature. However, there is no evidence that these heterodox congregations were materialists, although they shared both the anti-Vedic and anti-brahmanical stance of the materialists (cf. Ajita Kesakambala's exposition of the basic materialist doctrine in the 'Discourse on the Fruits of Being a Monk' ('Sāmañña-phala-sutta') in the *Long Discourses* (*Dīghanikāya*)). Apparently, they adhered to some forms of meditation and worship, quite unlike the Vedic rituals.

Here I must differ from the view advocated by Dr Saktinatha Jha, who has specialized in the study of Bauls and Fakirs in Bengal. He describes the Bāuls as *vastuvādin* (materialist) by positing several points of similarity between the Cārvāka/Lokāyata and the Bāul doctrines by quoting extensively from the literature of both (Jha, 1999, pp. 440-489). In their epistemology they insisted on direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) and oppose the Veda. However, the basic points he misses are that, all said and done, the Bāuls follow a system of meditation (*sādhana-paddhati*); they as well as all members of similar congregations form a community of worshippers (*sādhakas*), who aspire after something extramundane. Second, there is a strong streak of allegiance to the guru (*gurubhakti*) which is the hall mark of all such popular congregations, not just the Bāuls. This kind of guru cult is totally alien to the materialist tradition in India or anywhere else in the world. Other than perception and inference based on perception, no materialist worth his salt would consider the guru as omniscient (cf. Purandara's statement quoted in *Tattva-saṅgraha-panjikā*, on *Tattva-saṅgraha*, ch. 18, verse 1481, p. 528: 'The Cārvākas, too, admit of such an inference as is well-known in the world, but that which is called inference [by some], transgressing the worldly way, is prohibited [by them].'). Third, the songs and hymns of the Bauls belong basically to the oral tradition; all of them are composed in local vernaculars (dialects, to be more exact) whereas the Cārvāka/Lokāyata or the materialist tradition adopted Sanskrit as their vehicle, at least from the early centuries of the Common Era. One may argue that both of them drew from a single popular tradition. Quite probable, but it should not be overlooked that the two at some point of time bifurcated into two distinct traditions: one connected with a system of meditation and worship, anti-Vedic to be sure, but essentially religious. The other developed into a proper philosophical system with its own base (*mūla*) text, that is, a book of aphorisms (*sūtras*) and its commentaries. They had no track with either the Vedic or the Purāṇic gods and goddesses, which the Bāuls never got rid of, even if it involved the guru alone. In short, the popular anti-Vedic cults, despite their anti-caste stand,

remained at the bottom theistic and would be grouped under the *āstikas*, whereas the materialists right from their inception were branded by the Brahmanical, Jain and Buddhist opponents as *nāstikas*.

The *āstika* and the *nāstika*

Modern scholars seem to pay little or no attention to the basic distinction between the *āstika* (brahmanical) systems of philosophy and the six other *nāstika* schools, the so-called *ṣaḍdarśanāni* (six systems) on both sides. There are Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśe Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta on the *āstika* side; Madhyamaka, Yogācāra, Vaibhāsika and Sautrāntika (four Buddhist schools), the Jain (*anekāntavādasyādvāda*), and materialism on the *nāstika* side. The list of these twelve systems, neatly divided into two sets of six each, is probably first found in the *Prasthānabheda* by Madhusūdana Sarasvatī (see above). Another such list of six systems based on adherence to reasoning (*tarka*) is found in earlier works. It is known as *ṣaṭ-tarkī*. The list of such six systems, however, is never uniform (For a detailed study, see Gerschheimer, 2001, pp. 173-189; 2007, pp. 239-258). It can be demonstrated that the contradiction between the *āstika* and the *nāstika* systems of philosophy is, at bottom, *religious*; philosophical questions come later. It is the anti-Vedic nature of the *nāstika* schools that is at the root of all antagonism.

In relation to materialism, however, there is another point of controversy. Materialism is targeted by all brahmanical and two chief non-brahmanical schools, the Jains and the Buddhists, because of its non-adherence to another *religious dogma* shared by the Vedists and the two non-Vedic schools alike. That is the belief in the existence of the Other World. The hostility is more religious than philosophical. Jayantabhaṭṭa (ninth century) controverts materialism mostly on epistemological grounds, but notes that the denial of the Other World is the chief point to be refuted. He thinks that, if the existence of the Other World could be established, the materialists could then be made to admit God as well (see Chattopadhyaya and Gangopadhyaya, 1990, p.156). The existence of the Other World can be taken as a philosophical issue as much as the question of the First Cause (in Sanskrit, *jagatkāraṇa*, lit. the cause of the world). But acceptance of the existence of the Other World involves a set of rituals, particularly the annual rite for the ancestors (*śrāddha*), which was the target of attack of all the three main non-Vedic philosophical communities (See R. Bhattacharya 2013c).

The Other World and *karman*

The first question to ask is: What has the Vedas got to do with philosophy? Even if the Vedas, mainly the Ṛg and the Yajur, contain philosophy, that is a philosophy of sacrifice and the gods, in other words, a religious dogma.

Haribhadra and Śāntarakṣita in their doxographical works, however, show little concern with the issue of the denial of the Other World. To them materialism is to be combatted purely on epistemological and ontological grounds, without any reference to religious beliefs, including the belief or non-belief in the Other World.

When and how the doctrine of *karman* became a part of *all the philosophical schools* (again, except materialism), irrespective of their religious affiliations, is to be probed in greater details (see Halbfass 1992, pp. 292-293). The basic difference between the materialist systems on the one hand and *all* idealist and fideist systems on the other, hinges on this issue – acceptance or rejection of the doctrine of *karman* – although written records do not seem to highlight this point. Halbfass has pointed out:

In contrast with its absence in the Vedic hymns and with its still controversial and somewhat tentative status in the most ancient Upaniṣads, the doctrine of karma and *saṃsāra* seems to be fully established and almost universally accepted as a comprehensive world-view in classical and later Indian thought. *Only the Cārvākas and other “materialists” appear as rigorous critiques of its basic premises . . .* (1992, pp. 292-293. Emphasis added).

The objection raised by the pro-Vedic schools against the non- or anti-Vedic ones, however, was more religious than philosophical. Once the issue of adherence to the Veda has been grafted to philosophy, the feud assumed a religious character. Śāṅkara’s denunciation of Mīmāṃsā is not of the same nature as that of Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika (see his comments on the *Brahmasūtra* 2.1.3, 2.2.1 and 2.2.11). The one objection he uses almost as a mace is their alleged non-Vedic character, in spite of their open declaration of total adherence to the Veda (see his comments on the *Brahmasūtra* 2.2.17-18). Śāṅkara’s choice of words is always remarkable. If the opponent is not to be dismissed as non-Vedic because of their pronounced faith in the Veda, he calls them “semi-nihilistic,” *ardha-vaināśika* (as in his comments on 2.2.18), meaning half-Buddhistic. Śāṅkara’s orthodoxy is not so much philosophical as religious, for what has the Veda got to do with philosophy, or with what in India is traditionally known as *darśana*? Right from the time of the *MaiUp*, admit-

tedly a late Upaniṣad and definitely post-Buddhist, the word non-Vedic, *a-vaiddika* (7.10) came to be recognized as a term of censure, if not of abuse. Another such word in the same Upaniṣad is negativism, *nāstikya* (3.5). The import is equally objectionable to orthodoxy. *Nāstikya*, however, concerns denial of the Other World, a term that most probably originated from the *KUp* 1.1.20. Naciketas there asks Yama:

This doubt that [there is] in regard to a man that is departed – “he is,” say some; and “this one is not,” say some – this I would fain know, instructed by thee. . . . (D.W. Whitney’s translation)

yeyam prete vicikitsā manuṣye ’stīty eke nāyam astīti caike |
etat vidyām anuśiṣṭas tvayāham. . . . ||

(Cf. also “This [is] the world; there is no other,’ *ayaṃ loko nāsti para iti. KUp*, 1.2.6c. Franco has called it, doubtless inadvertently, ‘a *Cārvaṅka* saying’ (1997, p.112 n35). It actually occurs in the *KUp*, spoken by Yama himself.)

The antagonism between faith/credo and doubt that is apparent in this Upaniṣad, however, has nothing to do with the Veda. Nor does Yama, the lord of the dead, denounce even once the *nāstikas* as anti-Vedic. What he is made to do is to pronounce, or to assert without any evidence based either on perception (*pratyakṣa*) or inference (*anumāna*), or even learning the sacred books (*śāstra*): *na medhayā na bahunā śrutenā*, 1.2.26b. It is only the assertion of Yama, who is called Death (*Mṛtyu*) in this Upaniṣad (1.1.11, 3.15-16) that is to be believed and accepted, as if his is the last word on this issue. It is the authoritative nature (*āptatva*) of Yama that is projected as the only source of knowing that there is such a world beyond this perceptible world called the Other World. Thus *āpti*, authoritativeness of a person who is most knowledgeable in this area, is the only instrument of cognition (*pramāṇa*) so far as the existence of the Other World is concerned.

All this is relevant to our study, for the two issues that brought forth several rival approaches are related to purely philosophical questions, namely, the origin of the world and the existence of the Other World. The first is mentioned in the *Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (1.2) and the second in the *KUp* (1.1.2). There was another issue that troubled the thinkers both in the West and India: what came first, matter or consciousness. Yājñavalkya in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* and Uddālaka Āruṇi in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* are engaged in discourses related to this issue. This is why Yājñavalkya has rightly been designated as the founder of Idealism and Uddālaka Āruṇi as

the founder of materialism in India (See Ruben 1962, pp.345-354, followed by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya 1985, pp.196-227).

The existence of the Other World can be called a matter of both philosophical and religious quest, since it involves the question of heaven and hell, of reward and punishment for meritorious and unmeritorious acts of humans, in one word, *karman*. What might have begun as a matter of natural curiosity regarding what or if anything happens after death ultimately turned out to be a matter of vital importance in relation to religious beliefs. The doctrine of *karman* added its weight to the concept of retribution without however any resort to God or any such supernatural agency. The doctrine might have originated with Buddhism, a religion without any god. The office of *karman* is basically autonomous: even in Hinduism, *karman* has its own ‘as you sow, so you reap’ kind of arrangement. In any case, *nāstikya* is basically a religious concept, essentially connected with the Other World and later with the Veda. Only much later, unfortunately we do not know from when, *nāstikya* was grafted to philosophy. Right from Śāṅkara *āstikya* becomes the yardstick for judging the *orthodoxy* of any philosophical system. In his commentary on the *KUp* Śāṅkara uses the words *āstikya* and *nāstikya* to distinguish between those who are to be counted as sheep and those as wolves (gloss on *KUp* 2.3.12). Śāṅkara employs the terms, *astitva-vādinah* and *nāstikavādin* (see n9 above). The former believes in the existence of the extra-corporal spirit whereas the latter does not. As we have shown before, Śāṅkara spares none – not only the traditional *nāstikas* like the Buddhists, the Jains, and the materialists (whom he generally describes as the Lokāyatikas) but also the so called *āstika* systems. Sāṃkhya is his main opponent, and by referring to the *pradhāna malla-nirvahaṇa-nyāya* (like defeating the chief wrestler) he makes it clear that there were others, professedly pro-Vedic systems that he considers equally worth refuting.

Āstikya and *nāstikya* in the *Gītā* and the Religious Law-books

It may also be mentioned in this connection that the word, *āstikya*, is found in the *Gītā* as well. Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna:

Internal and external self-control, purity, forgiveness, rectitude, learning, spiritual perception, and faith (*āstikya*) are the nature-born duties of Brahmans. (18.42. Mohini M. Chatterji’s translation.)

The context is definitely religio-philosophical: Sāṃkhya here turns into Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Yoga itself

becomes the second term for several other compounds (all the 18 chapters in the *Gītā* have names ending with *-yoga*). Kapila, the legendary founder of the Sāṃkhya system, is not rejected. On the other hand, Kṛṣṇa himself reveals his identity as Kapila among the Siddhas (10.26). In the religious law-books, the Dharmaśāstras, *nāstikya* is treated invariably as a sin, nominally a minor sin (*upa-pātaka*) but in many cases it is on a par with such great sins (*mahā-pātakas*) as stealing the gold of a brahmana, *steja* (See Moghe, 2000, p.444-448; for further details see Kane, 1973, 4: 13-16).

This is how religious texts like the *Gītā* and the Dharmaśāstra intrude into *darśana*; dissidence is considered to be a heinous sin as in social and religious life so in philosophy. The whole course of events cannot be traced with certainty; there are many missing links and wide gaps in information. But the broad outline of the course of *darśana* evinces two sharply distinguishable phases. First, a totally secular stage when enquiries regarding the origin of the world, relative priority of matter and consciousness, and what happens after the death of humans are raised, and the second stage when the concept of *āstikya* and *nāstikya* permeates the scenario, changing thereby the secular nature of *darśana* itself.

Coda

The upshot of the whole discussion then is that the *darśanas* in India had their origin in philosophical quest, quite distinct from religion. But in the course of time, all but the materialist systems (Lokāyata, *bhūtavāda*, the Cārvāka, etc.) *turned out* to be philosophico-religious ones. On the contrary, the Pre-Cārvāka and the Cārvāka systems remained purely philosophical, free from any religious belief or adherence to any religious community or text such as the Veda. There were differences between the materialist schools regarding epistemological and some other questions as well, but they were the only a-religious systems of philosophy known to us. It is possible that originally Sāṃkhya and Vaiśeṣika were free from religious associations, but the fact is that the syncretic Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika became theistic, closely related to two religious communities. Guṇaratna's description of the seven philosophical schools seeks to attach a religious community to the philosophical systems he deals with, all in a one-to-one correspondence. How far he is stating facts and how far he is inventing such connections is open to question. What, however, can be definitely challenged is the connection he proposes to establish between the Cārvāka/Lokāyata and the Kāpālika doctrine, which is

totally absurd. So far as the Kāpālikas are concerned, they were known to have no philosophy of their own. It was a religious community living at the fringe of the Hindu society. Their existence as a sect is recorded from the ninth century CE (Vācaspatimiśra on the *Brahmasūtra*). Even before him, Bhavabhūti in his play, *Mālatī-mādhava* (eighth century) mentions one such Kāpālika (it was from this play that Bankimacandra Chattopadhyaya (1834-1894) drew the name of the heroine of his novel, Kapāluṅḍalā (the novel, which came out in 1866, too bears the same title). There is an evil Kāpālika in this novel as well). As S.N. Dasgupta states, '[W]e have no proof that the Kāpālikas and the Kālamukhas had any distinct philosophical views which could be treated separately' (5:3). He further says, '[W]e know practically nothing of any importance about the Kāpālikas and the Kālamukhas' (5:5). He reiterates this view on other occasions too (5:50). There were hundreds of religious communities claiming adherence to the mother goddess, Śakti, but they had no philosophy worth the name; they differed only in the details of rituals (including the identifying marks to be painted on their foreheads). Guṇaratna's facile identification of each and every of the seven systems cannot be relied upon. More particularly his identification of the Cārvāka/Lokāyatas with the Kāpālikas is, in all probability, a figment of his fancy.

Acknowledgements: Tarun Basu, Amitava Bhattacharya, Sunish Kumar Deb and Elisa Freschi.

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