

pristine but exclusive to discourses within it. All this clearly amounts to intellectual cowardice.

We must therefore shun intellectual cowardice and engage the other, rather than staying in our enclosed world and dangerously assuming that others are not worth talking to, that we are self-sufficient, that reason has its abode in our place, that the sanctity of our place must not be polluted or violated, etc. This is the summation of the idea behind conversational philosophy, whether it is thought of in terms of place or space, whether as a method or as a school, whether in African philosophy or in Western philosophy or in Oriental philosophy or in Martian philosophy. Philosophy in this age must therefore achieve consummation at a comparative level. That, now more than ever before, seems clear as philosophy's ultimate destination in our time. The ultimate goal of philosophy has been and will always remain ensuring the continuous unfolding of reason from the particular places to the universal space.

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From Proto-materialism to Materialism: The Indian Scenario

Abstract

Pāyāsi and Ajita Kesakambala in the Buddhist canonical literature and Uddālaka Āruṇi in the Upanisadic literature maybe taken as proto-materialists in the Indian context. The development from the primitive stage to a full-fledged doctrine saw the birth of two distinct materialist systems in the early centuries of the Common Era. They are called *bhūtavāda* (elementalism) and Lokāyata in the Tamil epic, *Maṇimēkalai*. These two systems are the representatives of old or Pre-Cārvāka materialism in India. By the eighth century CE we come to hear of the Cārvākas, the last of the materialists, who differed radically from the old schools by admitting the role of inference in however restricted a manner, without dispensing with its materialist fundamentals. The paper traces the growth, course of the development of materialism and enumerates the sources from which much information can be gathered.

Keywords

bhūtavāda, Cārvāka, inference, Lokāyata, perception, proto-materialism.

1 Introduction

The course of philosophy all over the world did not follow a single pattern. Yet it is interesting to note how the sixth/fifth century BCE threw up several socio-political ideas and philosophical doctrines, both materialist and idealist, in faraway places, unrelated and almost unbeknown to one another. D. D. Kosambi (1907–1966), the mathematician-turned-Indologist, once observed:

The sixth century B.C. produced the philosophy of Confucius in China and the sweeping reform of Zoroaster in Iran. In the middle of the Gangetic basin there were many entirely new teachers of whom the Buddha was only one, not the most popular in his own day. The rival doctrines are known mainly through biased reports in hostile religious documents. However, Jainism still survives in India, and traces its origins to founders before the Buddha. The Ajivikas are known from Mysore inscriptions who have survived as late as the fourteenth century A.D. [...] Obviously, the simultaneous rise of so many sects of considerable appeal and prominence in one narrow region implies some social need that older doctrines could not satisfy (1972: 97–98).¹

What Kosambi did not mention is a similar phenomenon in the west: the rise of a considerable number of thinkers in and around Athens, mostly in the surrounding islands of Hellas (Greece). They are collectively known as the Presocratics. Barring a few like Pythagoras and the like, most of these thinkers were materialists, or rather proto-materialists of some sort or the other.²

The term, proto-materialism, is employed to suggest the first inklings of an incipient philosophical doctrine when the link with mythology is already snapped but any systematization with a distinct ontology, epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, etc. is yet to be achieved. In the Indian context Ajita Kesakambala (Ajita of the hair blanket) has been called a proto-materialist (Kosambi 1975: 164).³ He was out to deny whatever was there to be denied. The exposition of his own

philosophical views, as found in the ›Discourse on the Fruits of Being a Monk‹ (Long Discourses) ›Sāmañña-phala-sutta‹ (*Dīgha Nikāya*) consists of a series of negations:

O King, there is no (consequence to) alms-giving, sacrifice or oblation. A good or bad action produces no result. This world does not exist, nor does the other world. There is no mother, no father. There is no rebirth of beings after death [...] (1987: 83, translation slightly modified).⁴

Besides this discourse which speaks of Ajita and five more itinerant preachers, there is the ›The Duologue between King/Governor Pāyāsi and Kassapa‹ (Long Discourses) ›Pāyāsirājāñña Sutta‹ (*Dīgha Nikāya*) in the Pali Buddhist tradition which reveals the first appearance of the denier or negativist (*nāstika*).⁵ This word came to signify, whether in the Brahmanical or the Buddhist or the Jain circles, heretics of all sorts (in religious terms) and heterodox thinkers or disbelievers (in philosophical contexts). Pāyāsi, however, here echoes Ajita in only one respect, namely, the denial of the post-mortem existence of a human's spirit or soul, and consequently of rebirth: ›Neither is there any other-world, nor are there beings reborn otherwise than from parents, nor is there fruit of deeds, well done or ill done‹ (Rhys Davids in Chattopadhyaya, and Gangopadhyaya 1990: 10).⁶

He is not content with making a simple declaration of denial ex cathedra as did Ajita Kesakambala; he is made to claim the validity of his statement by conscious observation and experimentation (following the joint method of agreement and difference). Ajita and Pāyāsi are the two proto-materialists⁷ found in the Buddhist canonical texts. Their words are quoted and re-quoted throughout the corpus of the Buddha's discourses (for instance, in the Middle-length Sayings

¹ D. D. Kosambi, *Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, 1965, New Delhi: Vikas, 1972.

² While studying Gottfried Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Lectures on the *History of Philosophy* (Vol. 2) and other philosophical works in a library in Bern, Switzerland, Vladimir Ilych Lenin was thrilled to learn of the Presocratics, particularly Democritus and Heraclitus. See V. I. Lenin, »Philosophical Notebooks,« in *Collected Works*, Vol. 38 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House), 1961 passim. He copied down in his notebook a fragment from Heraclitus (30 Diels) which runs as follows: »The world, an entity out of everything, was created by none of the gods or men, but was, is and will be eternally living fire, regularly becoming ignited and regularly becoming extinguished [...].« Lenin added his comment in appreciation: »A very good exposition of the principles of dialectical materialism« (1961: 349). For another translation of the fragment see K. Freeman, *Ancilla to The Pre-Socratic Philosophers. A Complete Translation of the Fragment in Diels, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell), 1952, p. 26.

³ D. D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1975 [1956].

⁴ *Ten Suttas from Dīgha Nikāya*, Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1987 (reprint of Burma Pitaka Association Publication, [1994]).

⁵ »Pāyāsirājāññasuttanta,« *Dīghanikāya*, Parts 1–3, J. Kashyap (ed.), Patna: Pali Publication Board (Bihar Government), 1958.

⁶ D. Chattopadhyaya, and M. K. Gangopadhyaya (eds.), *Cārvāka/Lokāyata*, New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1990.

⁷ Frauwallner has mentioned two more names, Purāṇa Kāśyapa and Kakuda Kātyāyana, in the list of early materialists (1956: 300–302; 1973: 219–221) but his view has not met with general approval (E. Frauwallner, *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 2, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973 [original: *Geschichte der indischen Philosophie*, Band II, Salzburg: Otto Muller Verlag, 1956]).

Part 2, = *Majjhimanikāya*, see ›Apaṇṇakasuttaṃ‹ 10.1.3,4, 1958: 78–79; ›Sandakasuttaṃ‹ 26.1.3.12–23, *ibid.*: 213).⁸

As to the Brahmanical tradition, Uddālaka Āruṇi of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* represents another aspect of proto-materialism, namely, the primacy of the body over consciousness. His name has been suggested as the first scientist in the world (Chattopadhyaya 1991: 89–148), who, before Thales of Miletus, had affirmed the basic materialist idea by proving experimentally (again following the joint method of agreement and difference) that consciousness cannot operate in a starving body (this view later came to be known as »the doctrine of matter and consciousness« (*bhūta-caitanya-vāda*) and »the doctrine of the body and the spirit (as one)« (*dehātma-vāda*).⁹

This is how Uddālaka Āruṇi teaches his son, Śvetaketu how mind depends upon the body:

»A man, my son, consists of sixteen parts. Do not eat for fifteen days, but drink water at will. Breath is made of water; so it will not be cut off if one drinks.« Śvetaketu did not eat for fifteen days. Then he came back to his father and said: »What shall I recite, sir?« »The Ṛg verses, the Yajus formulas, and the Sāman chants.« »Sir, I just can't remember them,« he replied. And his father said to him: »It is like this, son. Out of a huge fire that one has built, if there is left only a single ember the size of a firefly – by means of that the fire thereafter would not burn all that much. Likewise, son, you are left with only one of your sixteen parts; by means of that at present you don't remember the Vedas. »Eat, and then you will learn from me.« He ate and then came back to his father. And he answered everything that his father asked. And the father said to him: »It is like this, son. Out of a huge fire that one has built, if there is left only a single ember the size of a firefly and if one were to cover it with straw and set it ablaze – by means of that, the fire thereafter would burn very much. Likewise, son, you were left with only one of your sixteen parts, and when you covered it with food, it was set ablaze – by means of that you now remember the Vedas, for the mind, son, is made up of food; breath, of water; and speech, of heat.« And he did, indeed, learn it from him (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.7.1–6 in Olivelle 1998: 251).¹⁰

⁸ *The Majjhimanikāya*, Parts 1–3, Mahapandita Rahula Sankrityayana (ed.), Patna: Pali Publication Board (Bihar Government), 1958.

⁹ D. Chattopadhyaya, *History of Science and Technology in Ancient India*, Vol. 2, Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1991.

¹⁰ P. Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads Annotated Text and Translation*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998 (http://www.ahandfulofleaves.org/documents/The%20Early%20Upaniṣads%20Annotated%20Text%20and%20Translation_Olivelle.pdf; last accessed on 9 August 2015).

The parallel rise of proto-materialism in Greece and India are of course purely accidental. But the figures of Uddālaka Āruṇi on the one hand and Heraclitus on the other present us with certain insights into the growth and development of philosophical systems themselves. It will be rewarding to trace the course of materialism in ancient India from this point of view.

2 Intellectual Turmoil and the Rise of Proto-Materialism

It is evident from available sources, however fragmentary they may be, that materialism does not presuppose any special social basis congenial to or necessary for its birth. On the contrary, it was presumably an intellectual turmoil in the sixth century BCE which threw up both idealism and materialism, as in India so in Greece (See Chattopadhyaya 1991: 35–46, 71–88). It was the Second Urbanization and more importantly the use of iron that brought about a major change in the then Indian society particularly in the north. We read of no fewer than sixty-two heretical doctrines in the Pali *Tipiṭaka* (*Brahmajāla-sutta*, *Dīgha Nikāya*) as also in the *Maitrāyaṇī Upaniṣad* (7.8–10).¹¹

As Radhakrishnan succinctly pointed out:

It is to be noted that while the Upaniṣad thought developed in the western path of the Gangetic tract, the east was not so much assimilating it as acquiring it. The western speculations were not admitted in the eastern valley without debate or discussion.

There were also political crises which unsettled men's minds. Among the small states which were being then established there were pretty dissensions. Outside invaders disturbed the peace of the country. Loud complaints were heard about the degeneracy of the age, the lust of princess and the greed of men. [...]

The contradictions of the time appeared in conflicting systems, each of them representing one phase of the spirit of the age. It is necessary for us to distinguish in this period three different strata of thought, which are both chronologically and logically successive: (1) The systems of revolt, such as the Cārvāka theory, Jainism and Buddhism (600 B.C.); (2) The theistic reconstruction of the Bhagavatgītā and the later Upaniṣads (500 B.C.); and

¹¹ *Eighteen Principal Upaniṣads*, V. P. Limaye and R. D. Vadekar (eds.), Poona: Vaidika Samsodhana Mandala, 1958.

(3) The speculative development of the six systems (300 B.C.), which attained definiteness about the end of A.D. 200 or so (Radhakrishnan 1980: 276).¹²

In the Brahmanical tradition, following the sceptic tone concerning the origin of the world found in a late Ṛgvedic verse, the Nāsadiya Sūkta (10.129: »Then even nothingness was not, nor existence [...]«),¹³ the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* clearly voices the persistence of doubt (*vicikitsā*, 1.1.20) regarding the state of humans after their death: young Naciketas asks Yama: »This doubt that [there is] in regard to a man that is deported – »he is,« say some; and »this one is not,« say some [...]« (Whitney 1890: 96).¹⁴

A more detailed exposition of proto-materialism in this respect, namely, the non-existence of the other-world, is met with in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Book 2 (Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa) (Bhatt et al. 1960–1975, canto 100).¹⁵ Jābali, a thoroughgoing negativist, tries to persuade Rāma (*Rāmāyaṇa* 2.100.1–17) that all post-mortem rites are futile, for nothing of one's ancestor remains after his death (for details see Bhattacharya 2015).¹⁶ The primacy of the body over consciousness is asserted in the other epic, *Māhābhārata* (Book 12, The Book of Peace (Śānti-Parvan) critical edition canto 211.22–28).

These were the two issues, the problems of death and rebirth, and the priority of matter or consciousness, that divided the proto-materialists and the proto-idealists in India long before the Common Era. All other questions relating to epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, etc. arose later, presumably in the early centuries of the Common Era. The development of philosophy on this line, centering not only round the other-world but about rebirth as well, is somewhat unique in the world.

Another question, namely, how the world came into being, too arose simultaneously in India and Greece. If God was not to be ad-

mitted as the creator of the universe, how did it come into being? If the Presocratic thinkers differed among themselves in determining which one of the four elements (earth, air, fire and water) was to be called the first cause (Thales opted for water, Heraclitus for fire, Anaximenes for air, etc.), their counterparts in India thought of all the elements as one unit (with or without the fifth, space or void, *ākāśa* or *vyoma*, added to them) as a claimant to that title. There were other »competing causalities« (Halbfass 1992: 291) too.¹⁷ The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 1.2 records, besides the »elements« (*bhūtāni*), five more of such claimants for the title of the first cause: Time, Own-being (*svabhāva*), Destiny, Accident (*yadṛcchā*), the (Primeval) Person (*puruṣa*, meaning God or the Spirit). At least two of the doctrines, those of Time and Own-being, have been recognized as materialistic (Bedekar 1961 passim).¹⁸ In the course of time many more claimants to the title of the cause of the universe arose, of which *karman* was the most important one (For further details see Bhattacharya 2001: 19–23).¹⁹

However, the rise of such key concepts that comprise the materialist doctrine/doctrines – insofar as they can be identified and isolated – are significant pointers to the ongoing clash of ideas between several systems or quasi-systems of philosophy at a given period of history. The appearance of new ideas also reflects, as Kosambi noted (see above), the inevitable decay or hibernation of at least some of the old doctrines. The history of materialism too contains more than one period of such decay or hibernation and reappearance both in Greece and India. There was apparently no continuation of Ajita Kesakambala's brand of all-denying materialism.

Here I find myself in disagreement with Kosambi's opinion that »[t]he Lokāyata school [...] seems to have taken a great deal from this Ajita [...]« (1972: 104). There is not an iota of evidence to support the view that the Cārvāka, the best known system of materialism, owed anything to Ajita, whose name is never mentioned in the Brahmanical works, and the Cārvāka belongs very much to the Brahmanical tradition. In all probability the Cārvāka doctrine emerged in or

¹² S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 1, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980 [reprint].

¹³ For a translation of the whole hymn see Basham (1954: 247–248), reproduced in Eliade (1979: 110–111) (M. Eliade, *From Primitive to Zen*, London: Collins, 1979).

¹⁴ W. D. Whitney, »Translation of the Kaṭha-Upaniṣad,« *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, Vol. 21, 1890, pp. 88–112.

¹⁵ The *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*, G. H. Bhatt, et al. (eds.), Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1960–1975 [critical edition].

¹⁶ R. Bhattacharya, »Reflections on the Jābali Episode in the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa (Ayodhyākāṇḍa)«, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, forthcoming.

¹⁷ W. Halbfass, *Tradition and Reflection: Explorations in Indian Thought*, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1992.

¹⁸ V. M. Bedekar, »The Doctrines of Svabhāva and Kāla in the Mahābhārata and Other Old Sanskrit Works,« *Journal of the University of Poona, Humanities Section*, No. 13, 1961.

¹⁹ R. Bhattacharya, »The First Cause: Rivals of God in Ancient Indian Thought,« *Indian Skeptic*, Vol. 14, No. 8, 2001, pp. 19–23.

around the eighth century CE de novo, borrowing nothing from Ajīta. Even the elementalism (*bhūtavāda*) and Lokāyata, two materialist systems mentioned in the Tamil epic, *Maṇimēkalai* (see below), each having its own distinct set of doctrines, were in some respects similar but not identical. The similarity between all these doctrines of both »old (pre-Cārvāka) materialism« and »new (Cārvāka) materialism« (before the eighth century CE and after) is only to be expected (see Bhattacharya 2013a: 1), for they all start from the same negative premises of denial of current religious and idealist views.²⁰ In other words, they emerged as representatives of anti-fideist, anti-spiritualist, and anti-idealist ways of thinking. However, the doctrinal aspects of these two communities were not simply revived as they had been before in the sixth century BCE, without any change. At every stage of reappearance, materialism adopted a new garb, retaining something of the past doctrines sublated (pace Hegel) in the new but having some novel elements added to the new incarnation. It will be rewarding to trace the growth and development of materialism in ancient India from this point of view.

3 Inventory of Sources for Studying Materialism in India

What are the sources for studying the course of development from proto-materialism to materialism proper? A philosophical system in India implies the existence of a base (*mūla*) text comprising a number of aphorisms (*sūtra*-s), and at least one commentary (also sub-commentaries, if any). Most of the systems, not just the orthodox six (*ṣaḍ-darśanāni*), conform to this. The sources for the study of materialism in India are as follows:

1. Proto-materialism in the Upaniṣads – Uddālaka Āruṇi in the *Chāndogya* (sixth century BCE)
2. Proto-materialism in *The Three Baskets* (Tipiṭaka) and other Buddhist semi-canonical works generally called »the doctrine of annihilation« (*ucchedavāda*), documented in the *Pāyāsi Sutta* and the *Sāmañña-phala Sutta*, both in the *Dīgha Nikāya* (fifth century BCE).
3. Proto-materialism in the Jain canonical works such as *The Sūtra-kṛtāṅga Sūtra* (fifth century BCE) and para-canonical texts

²⁰ R. Bhattacharya, »Development of Materialism in India: the Pre-Cārvākas and the Cārvākas,« *Esercizi Filosofici*, Vol. 8, 2013a, pp. 1–12.

such as *Nandī Sūtra* variously called *bhūtavāda*, *tajjīva-taccharīra-vāda*, etc.²¹

4. Proto-materialism in the two epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Book 2) and the *Mahābhārata* (Book 12 in particular), redacted between the fourth century BCE and the fourth century CE.

The second phase witnessed the birth of full-fledged materialist doctrines. The development is recorded in the following works:

5. Materialisms in the *Maṇimēkalai* (between the fourth century and the seventh century CE).²²

6. Materialisms in the non-philosophical texts: Vātsyāyana's work on erotics, the *Kāmasūtra* (sixth century CE), Bāṇabhaṭṭa's romance, the *Kādambarī* (sixth century CE), Śrīharṣa's secondary epic, *The Life of Naiṣadha* (thirteenth century CE), etc.

Finally, a unified system emerged that came to be known as Bārhaspatya, Nāstika, Lokāyata, and the Cārvāka. Right from the eighth century CE these names and a few more (such as *bhūta-caitanya-vāda*, *dehātmavāda*, etc.) came to be used interchangeably in the works of the opponents of materialism. The last known stage, which superseded all previous ones, offered:

7. The base text of the Cārvākas, the *Paurandara-sūtra* and (most probably) its auto-commentary, the *Paurandara-vṛtti* (in or around 700 CE). Both survive only in fragments (for details see Bhattacharya 2009/2011: 83, 90).²³

8. Commentary on some earlier base text by Kambalāśvatara, and other commentaries, besides Puranadara's own, on the *Paurandara-sūtra* by Bhāvivikta (known by name only), Aviddhakarṇa, and Udbhaṭa (from 600 to 900 CE), available only in fragments.

9. Doxographical and quasi-doxographical works, from *A Compendium of Six Philosophies* (*Ṣaḍ-darśana-samuccaya*) by Haribhadra (eighth century), *The Collection of Principles* (*Tattva-saṅgraha*)

²¹ Śīlāṅka, *Ācāraṅgasūtram and Sūtrakṛtāṅgasūtram with Nirukti of Ācārya Bhadravāhu Svāmī and the Commentary of Śīlāṅkācārya*, Ācārya Sarvānandajī Mahārāja (ed.), Re-ed. with Appendix by Muni Jambuvijayaṇi, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Indological Trust, 1978; *Nandī Sūtra with the Commentary of Śrīmanmalayagiri*, Mumbai: Srimati Agamadaya Samiti, 1924.

²² K. Aiyangar, *Manimekalai in Its Historical Settings*, London: Luzac & Co., 1928; A. Danielou, and T. V. Gopala Iyer (trans.), *Maṇimēkalai* (The Dancer with the Magic Bowl), New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1993; P. Nandakumar (trans.), *Maṇimēkalai*, Thanjavur: Tamil University, 1989.

²³ R. Bhattacharya, *Studies on the Cārvāka/Lokāyata*, Firenze: Società Editrice Fiorentina, 2009; London: Anthem Press, 2011.

by Śāntarakṣita (eighth century), et al. down to the *Collection of All Philosophies* (Sarva-darśana-saṃgraha) by Sāyaṇa-Mādhava, and other digests, all composed between the eighth century and the eighteenth century.²⁴

4 Materialist Ontology

The basic doctrines of materialism, particularly its epistemology, took time to develop. The first point we come across is, as stated above, the ontology, namely, its opposition to the concept of life after this life. It also implies the denial of rebirth, and of the doctrine of karma (karman). Thus the idea of reward and retribution in the form of attaining heaven or being consigned to hell, in accordance with one's deeds in this world (that is, during one's earthly existence), is also rejected. This is indeed something unique in the history of world philosophy. Philosophers, whether in Greece or in other lands, had always mulled over the origin of all phenomena as did some Indian philosophers too. There was no unanimity of opinion among them. Several such contending views are recorded in *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 1.2. But what happens after death, is a question that concerns belief in (a) the existence of extracorporeal soul, (b) heaven and hell as actual places, and (c) *adr̥ṣṭa* as also *karmaphala* (the results of one's deeds). These three are closely linked to religious beliefs, not necessarily theistic. Both Mīmāṃsā and Buddhism are atheistic, nevertheless their belief systems encompass the third item. Materialism, by denying all three, strips off the mystique of death, thereby making all these redundant. The materialist ontology hits at the root of all religious beliefs. Ri-

²⁴ I have consciously omitted several Buddhist, Jain and Brahmanical philosophical texts or commentaries thereon. They are mostly designed to refute, or rather denigrate materialism. The authors are not averse to misrepresent, and even distort the materialist doctrine in course of their exposition of the opponent's view (technically known as *pūrva-pakṣa*). For instances, see R. Bhattacharya, 'The Base Text and Its Commentaries: Problem of Representing and Understanding,' *Argument*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2013b, pp. 133–149. The same caution is to be taken in relation to the poems and plays that either fully or partly are 'philosophical' in nature, such as, Kṛṣṇamiśra's allegorical play, *Rise of Moon-like Intellect* (Prabodha-candrodaya), Haribhadra's *The Tale of Samarāditya* (Samaāricca kahā), Siddharṣi's *An Allegorical Tale of the World* (Upamiti-bhava-prapañca-kathā), and Jayantabhaṭṭa's closet play, *The Toxin of the Sacred Text* (Āgama-ḍambara), etc. Their accounts can be accepted only to a certain extent, but not in toto. With more than a pinch of salt, so to say.

tuals around post-mortem rites are considered to be a mere waste of energy and resources, and branded as utterly irrational (cf. Jābāli's speech in the *Rāmāyaṇa* 2.100 in Bhatt et al. 1960–1975, 2. 108 in vulgate) which corresponds to the views of both Pāyāsi and Ajita Kesakambala in the *Dīgha Nikāya*).

The first instance of rebutting proto-materialism is met with in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (composed in or before 600 BCE). Presumably the composition of this Upaniṣad was commissioned in order to stem the tide of skepticism concerning the immortality of the spirit. Who else but Yama, like Hades/Plutos, in Greco-Roman mythology, the lord of the city of the dead (*yamālaya*), could be a better choice to sermonize on the question of life after death? The structure of the Upaniṣad suggests definite closure at the end of Book I; the 'recital of benefits' (*phalaśruti*) stanzas (1.3.16–17) assure great merits to both the reader and the listener of the work. The whole of Book II has the appearance of being a later addition, although there is no manuscript support in favor of this conjecture yet.²⁵

5 Materialism in India Through the Ages

Materialism then is not a doctrine or a set of doctrines that appeared in the same garb both in India and Greece. The question of rebirth, although found in Plato (see *Phaedo* 71e, 1997: 62) and most prominently in Pythagoras, was never a mainstream doctrine in Greek philosophy.²⁶ Nor was it a part of the Greco-Roman religion. However, in the Indian context, materialism first appears as a denial of the idea of after-birth (*parañmanā*). This had both philosophical and religious implications. Not only the Vedists but also the Buddhists and the Jains (to name only the major religious sects) were firm believers in

²⁵ See Max Müller (1884: xxiii); Whitney (1890: 104). Müller however, observed: »I have little doubt, for instance, that the three verses 16–18, in the first Vallī of the Kaṭha-Upaniṣad are latter additions, but I should not therefore venture to remove them« (1884: xxv). F. Max Müller, *The Upanishads, In Two Parts*, Vol. XV, Part II, *The Sacred Books of the East, Translated by Various Oriental Scholars*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1884. Whitney endorses this observation as a »very plausible suggestion,« adducing further evidence: »The last pāda [quarter verse] of 18 is the same with 12d, above [...]« (note on 1.1.18, 1890: 96).

²⁶ Plato, *Complete Works*, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.

rebirth in one form or the other. It was a credo, an article of faith, with all of them. Thus materialism had to contend with all religious as well philosophical sects and groups, both theists and atheists (chiefly the Buddhists and the Jains, for instance). In other words, as a negativist doctrine as found in the exposition of Ajita Kesakambala's preaching, the deniers of the other-world and of rebirth were the main object of criticism and even the target of attack at every stage of philosophical battles.²⁷ The same is true of the Prakrit words *ñāhiyavādī* and *natthiyavāī* (*nāstikavādī* in Sanskrit) in *The Wanderings of Vasudeva* (1989 [1930–31]: 169.17 and 175.13 respectively).²⁸ In Jain works too *nāstika* in its various Prakrit forms is an umbrella term to designate all materialists, accidentalists and non-believers in ›true religion.‹

6 New Meanings of *āstika* and *nāstika*

The story of king Bena in the *Viṣṇu-Dharmottara-Mahāpurāṇa* (1.108) highlights the materialists' denial of the post-mortem existence of any extra-corporeal soul or spirit. Medhātithi glosses on the word *nāstika* in the book of religious law, *Manusmṛti* 4.30 and 11.65 as one who denies the Other World (*nasti paralokaḥ*) by referring to a line: ›There are no such things as given (in sacrifices), oblations, rites [...]‹ which is taken from the *Viṣṇudharmmotara Mahāpurāṇa* (1.108.19).²⁹

²⁷ To the Buddhist philosophers of the Common Era, materialism meant the doctrine of annihilation (*ucchedavāda*) as enunciated by Ajita (and Pāyāsi), which denies the other-world and rebirth. See the commentaries of Bhāvaivēka, Nāgārjuna (auto-commentary), Buddhapālita and Candrakīrti on Nāgārjuna's *Madhyamakaśāstra* 18.6–7 (Vol. 2, 1989: 63–64, 67). Lokāyata is mentioned separately in a different context (*ibid.* on 16.1, Vol. 2, 1989: 3, 153), most probably in the sense of *disputatio* (*The Madhyamakaśāstra of Nāgārjuna with Akutobhaya, An Auto-Commentary by Nāgārjuna, Madhyamakavṛtti by Buddhapālita, Prajñāpradīpa by Bhāvaivēka, and Prasannapadāvṛtti by Candrakīrti*, ed. and restored to Sanskrit, R. Pandeya, ed., Delhi: MLBD, Vols. 1–2, 1988–1989).

²⁸ *Sanghadāsagaṇi Vācaka, Vasudevahimḍī, Prathama Khaṇḍa*, Caturavijaya and Punyavijaya (eds.), Gandhinagar: Gujarat Sahitya Akademi, 1989 [1930–31].

²⁹ *Manusmṛti with Commentaries by Medhātithi and Others*, J. H. Dave (ed.), Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1972–1984; *Viṣṇudharmmotara Mahāpurāṇa*, Mumbai: Kshemaraja Srikrishnadasa, 1834 Śaka [1912–1913].

However, in some other cases (as in his glosses on *Manu* 2.11 and 4.163), Medhātithi and other commentators explain the word *nāstikya* (*nāstikahood* if you will), as disbelief in (the infallibility of) the Veda, or refusal to admit the status of the Veda as the ultimate verbal testimony, the word of words. Thus it is found that the old pair, *āstika* and *nāstika*, acquires in the course of time a new set of meanings, viz., the adherer to the Veda and the non-adherer. This turned out to be the widely accepted meanings of the pair in Brahmanical philosophical literature. In common parlance, however, the words later came to suggest the theist and the atheist. However, God, in Indian philosophies in general, never occupied an important place, at least not so importance as the Veda. Even though in earlier literature (in the *Maitrī Upaniṣad*, a later Upaniṣad, in particular) *avaidika* (7.10) and *nāstikya* (3.5) suggest the non-Vedic and the denier of the other-world and/or of the Veda respectively, it is only in the Brahmanical philosophical literature of the Common Era that *āstika* and *nāstika* came to signify respectively the believer in and the defiler of the Veda, and nothing else (*cf. Manu* 2.11: *nāstiko veda-nindakaḥ*).³⁰ In the writings of the Buddhists and the Jains, however, the earlier meaning (that is, the denier of the other-world) persisted, for denial of the authority of the Veda meant nothing to them, they themselves being opposed to the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Veda. The new meaning affected them in no way whatsoever. This new sense of *nāstika* in later times thus came to signify the materialists (more particularly the Cārvāka/Lokāyata) as well as the Buddhists and the Jains, for both of them were considered to be heretical and heterodox by the Brahmanical authorities.

This devotion to the Veda (*vedabhakti*) is indeed something unique in the world. The Christian's reverence for the *Bible*, ›the Book of Books,‹ or the Muslim's deference to the *Qu'ran* is hardly comparable to this fidelity. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya (Chatterjee), the well-known litterateur of nineteenth-century Bengal, was a devout Hindu in his own way. After a phase of atheism in his early years (roughly speaking, till the mid-1870s) he took a turn to become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa but never joined any of the numerous sects and

³⁰ I am indebted to Professor Mrinal Kanti Gangopadhyaya for drawing my attention to this matter. It should be noted in this connection that the *Smṛti*-s and *Purāṇa*-s mostly use the word *nāstika*, rarely Cārvāka or Lokāyata; only their commentators employ the latter names.

sub-sects of the Bengal Vaiṣṇava-s. Nevertheless, as in his irreverent youth so in his devout old age, he refused to accept the exalted position of the Veda (see 1973: 278, 1060 et sqq.).³¹ The status of this Holy Writ was above every other text or object, including God himself. In fact, one could deny the existence of God in India and go scot free, without suffering any punishment or social ostracism, but the denial of the infallibility of the Veda was viewed as a cardinal sin (For the view of the canonical law books concerning the *nāstika-s*, see Kane 1973: 15–16, 33–34).³² Thus two philosophical schools, Mīmāṃsā and Sāṃkhya, that denied the existence of God/gods were admitted as assenters or affirmativists (*āstika-s*), for they accepted the supreme authority of the Veda as much as such systems as Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Yoga did. On the other hand, the Cārvākas, along with the Buddhists and the Jains, stood condemned because of their refusal to fall in the line relating to the Veda.

This esteem for the Veda is another aspect of the Indian scenario that distinguishes it from all other philosophical systems and schools of the rest of the world.

7 Two Pre-Cārvāka Materialist Schools

The Tamil epic, *Maṇimēkalai* composed by Sethalai Sathanar, has already been mentioned (see above). It is a highly valuable document for the study of materialism, although it has rarely been utilized in the study of philosophies in India, neither at home nor abroad. It may be due to the fact that it is written in old Tamil, not in Sanskrit. There are, however, several English translations (at least three are known to me)³³ that provide a fascinating account of the philosophical systems current in South India during the early centuries of the Common Era. Exact dating of the epic is as yet not possible. All that can be said is that it was composed sometime between the fourth century and the seventh century CE. During her wanderings Princess Maṇimēkalai, the heroine of the epic, comes to meet the teachers of several philoso-

phical systems. They are: Lokāyata, Bauddha, Sāṃkhya, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, and Mīmāṃsā (27.78–80). All the names are evidently borrowed from Sanskrit with minor but easily recognizable phonetic variations.³⁴ Even without knowing Tamil one can read the passage transliterated in roman and identify the systems with ease. The names of the masters (*aciriyar* in Tamil, *ācārya* in Sanskrit) are also mentioned: Bṛhaspati, Jina (Buddha), Kapila, Akṣapāda, Kaṇāda, and Jaimini respectively (27.81–82). Here too all the names can be understood from the Tamil text, except perhaps Bṛhaspati who is called Pirekarpati (See Appendix). Here for the first time we also read of the instruments of cognition (*pramāṇa-s*) admitted by these schools (27.83–85). Thus we are here given a glimpse of a particular juncture when the proto-materialist and proto-idealist ideas have been redacted into fully organized systems, each having a name to distinguish it from others. The names mostly refer to the essence of the doctrines, not to the founders or the redactors, although their names are not forgotten altogether.

More interesting is the fact that the Tamil epic speaks of not one, but two materialist schools, namely, *bhūtavāda* (*pūta vāta* in Tamil) and Lokāyata. *Bhūtavāda*, which is an exact synonym of materialism in Sanskrit, is not altogether unknown, as it occurs in later times. Śīlāṅka (ninth century CE), the Jain commentator, mentions this name in his commentary on the *Sūtra-kṛtāṅga-sūtra* (see glosses on 1.1.7 1978: 10–11, also *ibid.*: 19, »five-elementalists and others,« *pañca-bhūta-vādyādyāḥ*).³⁵

The name of the second school, Lokāyata, is well-known as a namesake of Cārvāka, although in the Pali and Sanskrit Buddhist tradition, Lokāyata invariably stands for *disputatio*, the science and art of disputation, not a philosophical system (see Bhattacharya 2009/11: 189, 195–196; Franco 2011: 632–663).³⁶ Yet right from the sixth cen-

³¹ B. Chattopadhyaya, *Baṅkim Racanāsaṃgraha*, Pravandha Khaṇḍa prthama o śeṣa aṃśa, Kalikata: Saksharata Prakashan, 1973.

³² P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. 4, Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1973.

³³ Aiyangar (1928); Danielou, and Gopala Iyer (1993); Nandakumar (1989).

³⁴ Some technical terms however are in Tamil while others retain their original Sanskrit forms. See Appendix. The Tamil text (http://www.projectmadurai.org/pm_etexts/pdf/pm0141.pdf, last accessed on 18 August 2015) and the English translations mentioned above are worth consulting.

³⁵ Rahula Sankrityayana, it may be recalled, translated the term »scientific materialism« as *vaijñānika bhautikavāda*. It is the title of one of his works written during his incarceration at Hazaribag Jail for taking part in the anti-imperialist movement. See R. Sankrityayana, *Vaijñānika Bhautikavāda*, Lokabharati Prakashan (on behalf of Adhunik Pustak Bhavan), 1974 [1942?].

³⁶ E. Franco, »Lokāyata,« in *Brill Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, Vol. 17, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2011, pp. 629–642.

tury CE Lokāyata also means materialism in the Brahmanical tradition, as found in the *Kāmasūtra*, *Kādambarī*, etc. (see Bhattacharya 2015).

The *bhūtavādin* in the *Maṇimēkalai* expounds the materialist doctrines he adheres to and distinguishes his views from the Lokāyata as follows:

When fig leaves are macerated with sugar and other substances fermentation takes place. This phenomenon is similar to consciousness and sensation which develop when certain elements are put together. Then, when these elements separate and return to their individual state, consciousness gradually vanishes, like the resonance of a drum that little by little fades, and dies away.

By combining together, the various categories of element in which consciousness is present give birth to living being, while inert elements, on combining together, produce the various forms of inanimate matter. These two categories work independently as regards their formation, duration, and disappearance. Each living being is animated by a consciousness to which its components give rise at the very moment of its coming into existence. Such is the natural course of things. The other aspects of our doctrine concerning the tattvas, the world's constituent parts, which I could expound, are identical to the concepts of the Lokayatas, the pure materialists.

Of the means of proof, only direct perception (*pratyaksha*) is acceptable. All other means of knowledge, including deduction (*anumana*), must be rejected. There exists no reality other than the one we perceive in the present and the enjoyments we derive from it.

It is absurd to believe in the existence of another life in which we would gather the fruits of our deeds in this one. Our existence as well as our joys and sorrows terminate with our life.

Thus before the arrival of the »new materialism« of the Cārvākas (in or around the eighth century CE) we have at least two pre-Cārvāka materialist schools with their own ontology and epistemology. The *Maṇimēkalai* forms the link between proto-materialism and »old materialism« on the one hand, and also between »old materialism« and »new materialism« on the other.³⁷ The significance of the Tamil epic in this respect cannot be overemphasized, although it is little known even in the Indological circles of North India, not to speak of the western students of non-western philosophy.

³⁷ The points of difference between the two have been discussed in Bhattacharya (2013a).

It is from the eighth century CE that we first come to hear the name, Cārvāka, often used in the plural. Apparently, *cārvākāḥ*, »the Cārvākas,« refer collectively to a new group of materialists. They were also the last of the materialists to appear in India. After the twelfth century or thereabouts, all materialists, whether they were Cārvākas or pre-Cārvākas, appear to have disappeared from the face of the earth. Yet as long as they were there, they were considered to be the chief antagonist to be fought tooth and nail by all idealists and fideists. Not only did the adherents of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Vedānta, and Mīmāṃsā but also the Buddhists and the Jains (branded by the Brahmanical philosophers as negativists as much as the materialists for their non-adherence to the Veda) took up their pens to combat the Cārvāka view. In course of their polemics they did not care to distinguish between the Cārvākas and the non-Cārvāka or the Pre-Cārvāka materialists (see Bhattacharya 2013b: 133–149). Right from the eighth century then the name Cārvāka became the generic name for all materialists, whether they were Cārvākas or not. While referring to the materialists who spoke of five elements instead of four (which the Cārvākas did and hence known as *bhūta-catustaya-vādins*), Guṇaratna (1500 CE) calls them »some sections of the Cārvākas« (*cārvākaikadeśīya* 1914: 300).³⁸ Most probably he drew all his views concerning the materialists, including the existence of five-elementalists (*bhūta-pañcaka-vādin-s*), side by side with the four-elementalists from Śīlāṅka (see above). In the great philosophical debates that raged in India from the eighth century to the twelfth century, the common enemy of all philosophical systems, whether orthodox (Vedist) or heterodox (anti-/non-Vedist) was the Cārvāka/Lokāyata. The signal contribution made by the Cārvākas was the partial recognition of inference as an instrument of cognition. The Pre-Cārvākas were staunch upholders of perception as the one and only instrument; all other instruments were ruled out. The Cārvāka, however, declared that inferences were based on perception and verifiable by perception. However, all inferential conclusions based on verbal testimony, such as the Vedas, and concerning preternatural objects such as God, heaven and hell, the omniscient person, etc., were denied by them since they follow from non-perceptible sources. Purandara made this clear in so many words (Kamalaśīla 1981: 528) and Udbhaṭa, another com-

³⁸ Guṇaratna, *Tarkarahasyadīpikā*, in Haribhadra, *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya*, L. Suali (ed.), Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1905–1914.

mentator on the base work, made a sharp distinction between the »probances well-established in the world« and those »established in the scriptures« (Vāidevasūri 1988: 265).³⁹

8 Summing up

To sum up: materialism in India developed in a way quite different from that of its western counterpart. The basic difference lies in the general background: rebirth was never a part of the world picture (I borrow this term from E. M. W. Tillyard's *The Elizabethan World Picture*)⁴⁰ of the ancient Greeks whereas it was the very plank of all idealist systems and religious bodies in India, not only of the Brahmanical ones and religious sects but of the »heretical« and heterodox Buddhist and Jain systems as well. Coupled with the doctrine of karma, it formed an essential part of the world picture inherited from the religious texts of these three communities, right from the sixth century BCE and continues to be held by the largest part of the Indian population. This is why in India both proto-materialism and its modified and fuller form, the Cārvāka/Lokāyata, took a shape quite distinct from its Greek counterparts. In a different context P. V. Kane observed: »The theory of karma and the theory of transmigration of souls (of pre-existence and post-existence) are inextricably mixed up in Indian thought from at least the ancient times of the Upaniṣads« (1973:39).⁴¹ This also reveals how the world of notions and beliefs held by a community continues to affect the human mind even after the world of myths is no longer in operation.

³⁹ Kamalaśīla, *Tattvasaṅgrahapañjikā* in *Śāntarakṣita, Tattvasaṅgraha*, D. Shastri (ed.), Banaras: Bauddha Bharati Varanasi, 1981 [reprint]; Vāidevasūri, *Syādvādaratnākara*, Delhi: Bharatiya Book Corporation, 1988.

⁴⁰ E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963 [1943].

⁴¹ P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. 4, Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1973.

Appendix

Mañimēkalai 27.78–82. Interlinear translation:

āṅkuṛum	ulōkāyatamē	pauttam
Systematic	Lokāyatam	Bauddham

cāṅkiyam	naiyāyikam	vaicēṭikam
Sāṅkhyam	Nyāyam	Vaiśeṣikam

mīmāṇcakam	ām camaya	āciriyaṛ
Mimāṃsām	systems	founders

tām pirukarpati	ciṇaṇē	kapilaṇ
Respectively	Bṛhaspati	Jina Kapila

akkapāṭaṇ	kaṇāṭaṇ	caimiṇi
Aksapāṭha	Kanādan	Jaimini

Literal Translation:

These are the systems that accept logic:

Lokāyata, Buddhism, the Sāṅkhya.

Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsā.

The teachers of these six: Bṛhaspati,

Buddha, Kapila and Akṣapāda,

Kaṇāda and Jaimini

(Prema Nandakumar 1989: 149; diacritical marks added).⁴²

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