

## Commentators on the *Cārvākasūtra*: A Critical Survey

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**Abstract** In spite of the fact that the *mūla*-text of the *Cārvākasūtra* is lost, we have some 30 fragments of the commentaries written by no fewer than four commentators, namely, Kambalāśvatara, Purandara, Aviddhakarṇa, and Udbhaṭa. The existence of other commentators too has been suggested, of whom only one name is mentioned: Bhāvivikta. Unfortunately no extract from his work is quoted anywhere. The position of the *Cārvākas* was nearer the Buddhists (who admitted both perception and inference) than any other philosophical system. But in order to brand the *Cārvākas* as *pramāṇaikavādins* they were made to appear as one with Bharṭṛhari. Even though the commentators of the *Cārvākasūtra* had some differences among themselves concerning the interpretation of some aphorisms, they seem to have been unanimous in regard to the number of *pramāṇas* to be admitted. It was perception *and inference based on perception*. Only in this sense they were *pramāṇaikavādins*. Unlike other systems of philosophy, the *Cārvāka/Lokāyata* did not accord equal value to perception and inference. Inference, they said, must be grounded on perception first, so it was of secondary kind (*gauṇa*). From the available evidence it is clear that the commentators were unanimous in one point, namely, primacy of perception which includes admittance of such *laukika* inference as is preceded and hence can be tested by repeated observations. In this respect both Aviddkarṇa and Udbhaṭa were in agreement with Purandara. Bhaṭṭodbhaṭa or Udbhaṭabhāṭa was known as a commentator who differed from the traditional *Cārvākas* and broke new grounds in explaining some of the aphorisms. His commentary is creative in its own way but at the same time unreliable in reconstructing the *original* *Cārvāka* position. Udbhaṭa seems to have digressed from the original, monist materialist position by taking a dualist position concerning the body-consciousness relation. Moreover, he seems to verge on the idealist side in his explication of an aphorism. In this sense he was a reformist or revisionist.

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Aviddhakarṇa, like Udbhaṭa, attempted to interpret the Cārvāka aphorisms from the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika point of view, perhaps without being converted to the Cārvāka. Since it is not possible at the present state of our knowledge to determine whether they were Cārvākas converted to Nyāya or Naiyāyikas converted to Lokāyata, the suggestion that they simply adopted the Cārvāka position while writing their commentaries without being converted to the Cārvāka, may be taken as a third alternative. In spite of the meagre material available, it is evident that (1) not unlike the other systems, there is a lack of uniformity in the commentary tradition of the *Cārvākasūtra*, (2) not all commentators were committed monistic materialists; at least one, namely, Udbhaṭa, was a dualist, and (3) in course of time Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika terminology, such as *gamyā*, *gamaka*, etc., quite foreign to the traditional Cārvāka, has been introduced into the Cārvāka system.

**Keywords** Cārvāka · Commentary · Inference · Lokāyata · Nyāya-vaiśeṣika terminology · Perception · *Pramāṇa*.

A recent essay by Karin Preisendanz (2008) set me thinking about the commentary tradition of the *Cārvākasūtra*. In spite of the fact that the *mūla*-text is lost, we have a number of fragments of the commentaries written by no fewer than four commentators, namely, Kambalāśvatara, Purandara, Aviddhakarṇa, and Udbhaṭa (Bhattacharya 2009, 65–68). The existence of other commentators too has been suggested (*TS* 22. 18568, II: 634), of whom only one name is mentioned elsewhere: Bhāvivikta (*GrBh* II: 257). Unfortunately no extract from his work is quoted anywhere. It is interesting to note that there is a reference to *Paurāṇdariya vittī* in addition to the *Paurāṇaraṇ sūtram* (Pupphadanta, 20. 18. 9). We also read of Purandara as an author of a work on the Cārvāka doctrine (a marginal note in a ms quod. in Gune 42).

From the thirty fragments so far collected we gather that Bhaṭṭodbhaṭa or Udbhaṭabhaṭa was known as a commentator who differed from the traditional Cārvākas and broke new grounds in explaining some of the aphorisms (*GrBh* I: 100; *SVR* 764). Purandara too is claimed to have deviated from his predecessor/s, for he admitted a particular kind of inference, such as is well-known in the world (or better still, well-established in the world, *lokaprasiddham anumānam*) (*TSP* II: 528). Kamalaśīla while quoting Purandara's words (apparently verbatim) adds a *tu*, "but" (or "however") before the reporting verb, thereby giving birth to an opinion that the Cārvākas before Purandara accepted only one instrument of cognition, namely, perception, while Purandara includes such inference as depended on perception and well known in everyday practice (Franco and Preisendanz 180 col. 1).

This is open to question, as will be shown later. At present suffice it to say that while some critics call the Cārvākas *pramāṇaikaivādins*, professing the validity of one and only one instrument of cognition (perception), they quote Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya*, 1.32–1.34 in support of their contention (Bhattacharya 2009, 117). This is downright absurd, for Bhartṛhari considered scripture, *āgama*, to be the only valid instrument of cognition whereas the Cārvākas had nothing to do with it. In the long history of Indian philosophy Bhartṛhari alone held a rigid one-*pramāṇa* position. All others admitted two, three or four *pramāṇas*. The position of the

Cārvākas was nearer the Buddhists (who admitted both perception and inference) than any other philosophical system. But in order to brand the Cārvākas as *pramāṇaikavādins* they were made to appear as one with Bhartṛhari. Even though the commentators of the *Cārvākasūtra* had some differences among themselves concerning the interpretation of some aphorisms, they seem to have been unanimous in regard to the number of *pramāṇas* to be admitted. It was perception *and inference based on perception*. Only in this sense they were *pramāṇaikavādins*. Here we have to grasp the *bhāva* rather than the literal meaning of *eka*.

How do we know that? This is where the passages (fragments) from the commentaries of Aviddhakarṇa (*PVSVT* 19) and Purandara (*TSP* II: 528) quoted by their opponents prove indispensable. Both of them interpret the aphorism, “Perception is the (only) instrument of cognition” (III.1) in this sense (For details see Bhattacharya 2009, 88–90, Comms. 3, 4, 18). Udbhaṭa too denied the status of inference as primary and defended the view of the *sūtrakāra* by adducing further reason (Comms. 11–13).

What is further to be noted is that, unlike other systems of philosophy, the Cārvāka/Lokāyata did not accord equal value to perception and inference. Inference, they said, must be grounded on perception first, so it was of secondary kind (*gauṇa*). The Nyāya school did not disagree with the view that inference is preceded by perception. However, they claimed that inference was nevertheless on a par with perception or word or comparison. The Cārvāka-s however claimed that perception was not only *pramāṇajyeṣṭha*, the foremost of the *pramāṇa*-s, but also the only primary means. Inference, etc. in order to be valid had to be based on perception first. Hence, they were secondary, or *pramāṇa* in the secondary sense of the word. This is the proper understanding of the Cārvāka position and is supported by many Jain writers (for details, see Bhattacharya 2009, 57–63, 114–117). Vācaspatimīśra disparages the Cārvākas by calling them worse than the beast, for they could not make inferential judgement on the basis of actual experience (*Bhām* on *BS* 3.3.53-4, 852). This is nothing but calumny, for the Cārvāka materialists accepted *laukika anumāna* as valid. This is found in the commentaries as well as admitted by some of their opponents (see Bhattacharya 2009, 57–58).

Let us turn to Udbhaṭa again. He was well-versed in Nyāya terminology and employed them profusely (*SVR* 265, 270, 764). But what is remarkable is that he had a penchant for explaining aphorisms in a radically novel way. His interpretation was based on the inbuilt ambiguity of certain words in the *sūtras*, such as *iti* and *tebhyaḥ* (*GrBh* I: 100, II: 257–258; *SVR* 1087). Consequently his glosses make the *Cārvākasūtra* appear as a kind of a parallel Nyāya text. Moreover some of his interpretations render the Cārvāka view as almost bordering on immaterialism, if not idealism proper (*GrBh* II: 257, 262). What has been said about S. H. Butcher’s *Aristotle’s Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* may very well apply to Udbhaṭa’s commentary: “[Butcher] uses Aristotle as a peg on which to hang rather vague and un-Aristotelian speculations.” (Hardy 8)

The question is: once we know, as Jayantabhaṭṭa, Vālidevasūri and Cakradhara also knew (*GrBh* I: 100, II: 257–258; *SVR* 1087), that Udbhaṭa was intent upon interpreting the Cārvāka in the light of his personal understanding, not following the original tradition, and even consciously going against it, how much credence is to be given to his work as a true exposition of the Cārvāka system? There is every reason

to believe that he had hammered out a philosophical system of his own but instead of writing a new *sūtra* work, with or without an auto-commentary, as Purandara (see above) presumably did, he had manipulated the Cārvāka aphorisms to represent his singularly distinct point of view. Should we classify his commentary as “creative” (Preisendanz, 609–611)?

It should be borne in mind that Jayantabhaṭṭa and Vādidēvasūri controvert the Cārvāka view accepting Udbhaṭa’s commentary as the exposition of materialism in India. Jayanta refers to Udbhaṭa sarcastically as “the well-learned Cārvākas” (honorific plural or meaning Udbhaṭa and his followers) (*NM* I: 52, II: 257). More derisively he calls him “the cunning Cārvāka” (*NM* I: 100). Thanks to Cakradhara we now know that instead of two different persons (as some scholars used to believe) Jayanta was referring to one and the same person, namely, Udbhaṭa, once calling him “the well-learned Cārvākas” and then “the cunning Cārvāka”. It is to be noted that in spite of his occasional deviations from the “orthodox” Cārvāka position, Udbhaṭa is still regarded by Jayanta and others as a Cārvāka.

However, there is an allusion to one unidentified ascetic (*tapasvin*) in *NM* I: 101, who may be Udbhaṭa or some other person. Is it also an instance of sarcasm, so typical of Jayanta’s style? The *suśikṣitatarāḥ* (*NM* I: 184), “the better-learned ones”, however, probably refer to some other materialists. The change in the degree of comparison may not be without significance. They may allude to those who adhered to the *Paurandariya-vritti* rather than the *Tattvaṭīkā*, the commentary written by Udbhaṭa.

Although Jayanta and Hemacandra, the Jain savant, do not hesitate to call the Cārvākas *varāka* ‘wretched’ (*NM* I: 9; *YS* 2.38), Vādidēvasūri, another Jain scholar, mentions Udbhaṭa as “the respectable veteran twice-born” (*SVR* 764). Vādidēvasūri was aware of both the traditional view about the Cārvāka/Lokāyata (of Bhāvivikta and others) as well as the unconventional view of Udbhaṭa (*SVR* 764). However, like Jayanta, Vādidēvasūri quotes extensively from Udbhaṭa’s commentary knowing full well that he was a maverick in the Cārvāka tradition.

Paucity of extracts from Udbhaṭa’s commentary and lack of evidence regarding his identity, particularly the time he flourished, compel us to stop at this point without offering any conclusion. Chattopadhyaya and Gangopadhyaya, following Gaurinatha Shastri, identify Udbhaṭa with the Sabhāpati of King Jayāpīḍa of Kashmir (regal years 779–813 CE), as mentioned in *The Rājatarāṅgiṇī* (5.495). That would make Udbhaṭa the philosopher identical with Udbhaṭa the rhetorician. However, there is absolutely no evidence, internal or external, to justify such a conclusion. The names ending in *-ṭa* (Mammaṭa, Rudraṭa, etc.) appear to suggest Kashmirian origin. But there is no harm in having three, or at least two Udbhaṭas instead of one. After all we hear of two more Udbhaṭas (*NCC* II: 341). In any case, one point is certain: Udbhaṭa *does not represent* the mainstream Cārvāka tradition. By taking him as the true representative of the materialist doctrine Jayanta has successfully left the traditional Cārvākas out of consideration, excepting once when he writes that “the Cārvākas say that there is only one kind of *pramāṇa*, which is perception” (*NM* I: 43). However, after a few pages he writes: “The well-learned Cārvākas say that it is really impossible to specifically state the number of *pramāṇa*” (*NM* I: 52). This goes flatly against the words of the *sūtra* (III.1) which

says: *pratyakṣam (ekam) eva pramāṇam*, “Perception indeed is the (only) means of right knowledge”.

Jayanta was aware of the ancient Cārvākas like Bhāvivikta and others (as was Cakradhara, his faithful commentator (*GrBh* II: 257)). Jayanta’s refutation of the Cārvāka, however, is by and large beside the point. He was controverting Udbhaṭa’s views, not the traditional views of the Cārvākas.

In this sense we may say that Udbhaṭa’s commentary was creative in its own way but at the same time unreliable in reconstructing the *original* Cārvāka position. Udbhaṭa is relevant only in relation to Jayanta and Vādidiveasūri but totally irrelevant in connection with the Cārvāka philosophy as such. Udbhaṭa is out and out a “revisionist” or more probably a Naiyāyika who wears a Cārvāka hat (as my friend, Prof. Prabal Kumar Sen suggests) and interprets the Cārvāka/Lokāyata in the most non-Cārvāka-like way conceivable (see *GrBh* II: 262). I would, however, avoid the expression, “progressive Cārvāka” used by Esther A. Solomon (1977–1978, 990), for Udbhaṭa seems to have digressed from the original, monist materialist position, taking a dualist position concerning the body-consciousness relation. Moreover, he seems to verge on the idealist side in his explication of an aphorism (see Bhattacharya 2009, 68, 88–90). In this sense he was a reformist or revisionist.

Objections may be raised at this point: was not the Cārvāka/Lokāyata, like Nyāya and Sāṃkhya, open to development, adopting itself to more advanced standards of philosophical reasoning and concepts? Why should it be considered absolutely monolithic over the centuries?

My answer is this: in case of Nyāya or Sāṃkhya we do have evidence of development made by their adherents, or at least those who claimed to be their adherents for the time being. In case of the Cārvāka/Lokāyata the case is different. Aviddhakarṇa and Udbhaṭa were basically Naiyāyikas. Even if they were converted to the Cārvāka/Lokāyata, they brought the whole baggage of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika terminology when they composed their commentaries on the *Cārvākasūtra*. Such instances are not uncommon even in modern times. Without accepting the Cārvāka/Lokāyata views as a whole, expositions, not altogether unsympathetic, have been written by traditional Sanskrit scholars. For instance, Pandit Ananta Kumar Bhattacharyya wrote such an exposition of the Cārvāka/Lokāyata in 1365 Bengali era (1958–1959 CE). An English translation of his essay has been provided by Chattopadhyaya and Gangopadhyaya (452–473). More recently, in 1984 Acarya Badarinatha Sukla, former Vice-Chancellor, Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Varanasi, defended *dehātmavāda*, following the method of Nyāya (121–134). He even extolled *dehātmavāda* as an appropriate philosophy for contemporary life.

These developments are of course quite interesting but whether they mark any significant “growth” is, I am afraid, a matter of opinion. They do not help us reconstruct the original Cārvāka/Lokāyata or any other materialist doctrine that had flourished in India right from the Buddha’s time or even before. That is what we need first. We need more hard facts. Exploration of Tibetan sources is a desideratum. Such new material alone can throw more, if not new, light on materialism in India through the ages.

Reverting to the other commentators on the *Cārvākasūtra*, it may be said that Aviddhakarṇa, like Udbhaṭa, attempted to interpret the Cārvāka aphorisms from the

Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika point of view, perhaps without being converted to the Cārvāka. Since it is not possible at the present state of our knowledge to determine whether they were Cārvākas converted to Nyāya or Naiyāyikas converted to Lokāyata, as Eli Franco (1997, 142) says, my suggestion—they simply adopted the Cārvāka position while writing their commentaries without being converted to the Cārvāka—may be taken as a third alternative.

In this connection Franco mentions (1997, 142) the name of Bhāvivikta along with Aviddhakarṇa, for both of them are known to have written Cārvāka and Nyāya works. However, there is nothing to show that Bhāvivikta, like Udbhaṭa, went for a novel line of interpreting the *Cārvākasūtra*. This is why Cakradhara calls him one of the ancient masters of the traditional Cārvākas, *cirantanacārvākācārya* (*GrBh* II: 257), following Jayanta's own description. Jayanta also notes the dualist position adopted by Udbhaṭa as against the traditional, monist one which did not believe in the independent existence of the spirit (*NM* II: 257).

If we care to notice the plural number employed by Kamalāśīla (*TSP* II: 633) as well as Cakradhara (*GrBh* II: 257) in regard to the *ṛttikāras* of the *Cārvākasūtra* (now lost), we may legitimately think of *more than five* commentators of the *mūla* text whose names so far are known to us. Apparently some followed the conventional approach and adhered to the mainstream tradition, while Udbhaṭa and his followers proposed to advance an alternative line of dualist materialism, as borne out by *GrBh*: II: 257–258, 262. All of them, however, stuck to the basic premise: inference cannot be accepted as an independent instrument of cognition, although such inferences as are verified and verifiable by perception may be admitted. Solomon does not accept Mahendra Kumar Jain's view that there were two Aviddhakarṇas, one a Naiyāyika and the other a Cārvāka (1971, 23). It is possible that, like Vācaspatiśīra, both Aviddhakarṇa and Bhāvivikta composed two separate commentaries on the *Cārvākasūtra* without being converted to the Cārvāka. Since there is no hard fact either for accepting or for denying such a hypothesis, both the possibilities—one Aviddhakarṇa and one Bhāvivikta or two Aviddhakarṇas and two Bhāviviktas—remain open. It is however worth noting that Aviddhakarṇa, like Udbhaṭa, is admitted as a Cārvāka in *NVV* II: 101, not merely as an author of a Nyāya text.

Solomon is of the view that both Aviddhakarṇa and Udbhaṭa belong to

a section of thinkers who while firmly adhering to the doctrines of the Nyāya school, saw some affinity of the school with the Lokāyata school inasmuch as nothing is said in the *Nyāya-sūtra* about God, creation of the world, heaven [,] hell, etc. They perhaps wrote commentaries on the *sūtras* of the Lokāyata interpreting them in a new light and making their views more cogent and acceptable, so that the Lokāyata could have a better philosophical status. Bhāvivikta, Udbhaṭa and perhaps even Aviddhakarṇa belonged to such a group and so were ridiculed as '*Cirantana Cārvāka*' or '*Par[a]malokāyatammanya*' perhaps by the Cārvākas, as also by Nyāya philosophers who marched with the times and admitted the reality of heaven, etc., in their own philosophical system. This also explains why their views are hardly given any importance in the orthodox line of thinkers of the Nyāya school, whereas the Buddhists respect their clearheadedness. Even if looking to the expressions used we consider



them as Cārvākas, we would have to admit that they tried to liberalise and re-interpret the orthodox Cārvāka doctrines, but remained faithful to the Nyāya doctrines in their commentaries on Nyāya works. I am inclined to regard them as primarily Nyāya thinkers (–they are referred to by Śāntaraṣita and others among them–) who tried to bring the Lokāyata concepts closer [to Nyāya?], and to make them a little more philosophical (1973, 4: 11–12).

While such a possibility cannot be ruled out, I have only one comment to offer: Cakradhara clearly contrasts Bhāvivikta with Udbhaṭa: the former alone is called a *cirantanacārvāka* while the latter’s innovative interpretation is noted both by Cakradhara (*GrBh* II: 257–258) and Vāḍidevasūri (*SVR* 764) as going against the tradition, *yathāśrutārtha* (*GrBh* I: 100). (In the last sentence quoted from Solomon, we must read Kamalaśīla instead of Śāntaraṣita, who alludes to Kambalāśvatara alone, while Kamalaśīla refers in addition to Aviddhakarṇa and Purandara (*TSP* 521, 528–529). Bhāvivikta is mentioned by Cakradhara only once (*GrBh* II: 257)); no passage has been quoted from his work.

It is also to be noted that the commentators always had their rival philosophical systems in mind which sought to find fault with such materialist premises as consciousness can be present when and only when there is a body. Kambalāśvatara, for example, explains that the word “body” here is to be taken as one endowed with the five breaths, Prāṇa, Apāna, etc. (*TS* 22. 1863, II: 635). In other words, cognition is produced from the body inhabited or governed by the five breaths, i.e., a living body, not a corpse. Such a clarification may have been necessitated by some opponent’s resorting to *jalpa*, or *chala*, or *viṭaṇḍā* in this context. Purandara and others too may have been constrained to explain their view of inference over and over again because of the same reason: to counteract the caricature so often resorted to by their opponents, such as Vācaspatimiśra (see above).

The term *parināmaviśeṣaḥ* is found in several sources (see Bhattacharya 2009, 182, n. 20) but it is not clear whether there was an aphorism to this effect. It is probable that while explicating aphorism I.4 (“Their combination (*sc.* of the four elements) is called the “body”, “sense” and “object””), some commentator used this term to disabuse all (specially anti-materialists) of the notion (or to guard against actual or possible misinterpretation?) that any combination of the elements could give rise to consciousness in a body. He pointed out that only “a specific kind of transformation” could do so.

Speaking of the dominance of the senses in the materialist system, Sukhlal Sanghavi elucidates that the statement that *pramāṇa* depends on the senses does not mean that the Cārvākas refuse such *pramāṇas* as inference or word which are used everyday and established everywhere; the Cārvāka calls itself *pratyaṅśamātravādin*—*indiryapratyaṅśamātravādin* in the sense that inference, word, etc. are not *laukika pramāṇas* since their validity is not ascertainable without the information provided by sense perception. If, however, some *jñānavyāpāra*, not contradicted by sense perception, is called *pramāṇa*, the Cārvāka has no objection to it (1941/1987, 13–14). He had spoken of this before too (1939, 4=1961, 4) and his opinion is corroborated by Vāḍidevasūri (*SVR* 265–266), Ratnaprabhā (*PNTA* 640), Guṇaratna (*TRD* 306) and the anonymous author of *SMS* (15). In short, acceptance

of *laukika anumāna* or *lokaprasiddha hetu* or *lokapratīti*, according to Sukhlalji, has been a part of the Cārvāka epistemology since its very inception. Purandara was not forced to introduce it in the wake of Dharmakīrti's appearance (as some modern scholars believe).

Objection may be raised again: How do you know that? The answer is simple: This has been the view of all materialists in ancient India, even before the Cārvākas appeared in the scene. A passage in the *Mbh* 12.211.26-27 (crit. ed.; 218.27-28 in vulgate) makes a materialist declare:

*pratyakṣaṃ hyetayor mūlaṃ kṛtāntaitihayor api/  
pratyakṣe hyāgamo 'bhinnah kṛtānto vā na kiṃcana//  
yatra tatrānumāne 'sti kṛtaṃ bhāvayate'pi vā/  
anyo jīvaḥ śarīrasya nāstikānāṃ mate smṛtaḥ//*

The conclusion based on inference and tradition—both are rooted in perception. Perception and testimony (what we are told to believe in) are identical; reasoned-out truth (=inference) too is nothing else but perception.

It is proved everywhere that the body exists. What the *āstikas* think—that there is a soul without the body—is not (proved).

The terminology is different: inference is called *kṛtānta*, perception, *kṛta*. The last line of the second verse is tricky: it does not mean what Nīlakaṇṭha and the early translators took it to be because of the faulty reading in the mss at their disposal. It should not be understood as “what the *nāstikas* think”, but as *āstikānām mate na smṛtaḥ* (Belvalkar has rightly shown this in his notes in the crit. ed.); otherwise the line would read like one of those proverbial *vyāsakūṭas*.

Extreme brevity of the *sūtras* badly requires elaboration and fixing the exact collocation of technical terms employed in the *mūla* text. This left a very wide scope for the commentators to fix the collocation of words as they understood them or chose to mean. Udbhaṭa in this respect surpasses all his predecessors. He anticipates Humpty-Dumpty: *iti* or *tebhyaḥ* should mean just what *he* would choose them to mean, “neither more nor less” (Carroll Ch. 6, 269): *iti* should be taken as illustrative, not denoting the end; *tebhyaḥ* (or *bhūtebhyaḥ*) should mean “for them”, not “from them” (Comms. 8–10, 16). Whether Aviddhakarṇa, Kambalāśvatara and Purandara also followed the same line is not known. On the contrary, Bhāvivikta and others seem to have followed the traditional track without twisting the familiar and obvious meanings of the words employed in the *sūtra*.

Jayanta and Vāḍidevasūri in their polemics against the Cārvāka sometimes target the mainstream views of the old Cārvākas and at other times, the unconventional interpretations of Udbhaṭa, not always caring to distinguish between the two. This again is not unprecedented. They wished to score points over the materialists by hook or by crook. As polemicists they have every right to do so. But we, as readers should be aware where they were targeting the *sūtrakāra* and where the *vṛttikāra*. Such shifting of target, however, works as a hindrance to the proper understanding of the original Cārvāka position.

From the available evidence it is clear that these commentators of the *Cārvākasūtra* were unanimous in one point, namely, primacy of perception which



includes admittance of such *laukika* inference as is preceded and hence can be tested by repeated observations. In this respect both Aviddhakarṇa and Udbhaṭa were in agreement with Purandara (*PVSVT* 19, *GrBh* 265–266). As is well-known, one of the differences between the Cārvāka and other philosophical systems, whether orthodox (*āstika*) or heterodox (*nāstika*), hinges on the following point: how many instruments of cognition are to be admitted as valid. The unanimity of the three commentators seems to point out that, in spite of other differences of opinion (for example, how many principles (*tattvas*) are to be admitted, etc. (*GrBh* I: 57–58, etc.), all three commentators, Purandara, Aviddhakarṇa and Udbhaṭa, were prepared to admit *lokaprasiddha anumāna* (inference well established in the world) (*TSP* II: 528. Cf. *PVSVT* 19, *SVR* 265–266) and distinguished between *utpannapratīti* (the kind of inference in which the inferential cognition can be acquired by oneself, such as fire from smoke) and *utpādyapratīti* (the kind of inference in case of which the inferential cognition is to be acquired [on somebody else’s advice], such as the self, God, an omniscient being, the other world, etc.) (*NM* I: 184). Sukhlal Sangahvi has very pertinently described the Cārvāka as belonging to *indriyādhipatya pakṣa* (1941/1987, 23), a system in which the sense organs are dominant and inference, etc. must pass the test of being verified through perception first. The word (*śabda* or *āptavākya*) would also be acceptable when and only when it is amenable to perceptual verification.

We should also note that one point of difference in the interpretation of a basic Cārvāka aphorism was already there even before Purandara and Udbhaṭa. While commenting on the aphorism, *tebhyaś caitanyam* there was already some difference of opinion: the one group supplied the missing verb (*adhyāhāra*) “is born” (*utpadyate/jāyate*), the other, “is manifested” (*abhivyajyate*) (*TS-TSP* II: 634–635). The former apparently stuck to the classical materialist position of monistic materialism: no matter, no consciousness. The second group, on the other hand, was dualist, assuming that consciousness inheres in matter but in an unmanifested state. Both groups, however, apparently admitted that *tebhyaḥ* is to mean ‘from them’, not ‘for them’, as Udbhaṭa claimed (*GrBh* I: 257).

Although Śāntaraṅgita mentioned only one Cārvāka philosopher by name, Kambalāśvātara (*TS* 22. 1863, II: 635), he was aware of these two schools of interpretation of the *Cārvākasūtra* as is evident from *TS* 22.1858 (II: 634). Kamalāśīla names two more commentators: Aviddhakarṇa and Purandara, and refers to the two aforesaid approaches by opaque words, “some commentators”, *kecit vṛttikārāḥ* and “some others”, *anye* (*TSP* II: 633–634). Unfortunately there is no way of knowing as yet whether he refers to two individual commentators or several ones belonging to two commentary traditions. Even though we know the views of Aviddhakarṇa and Udbhaṭa concerning other issues, no fragment relating to this particular aphorism has come down to us.

## Conclusion

In spite of the meagre material available, it is evident that (1) not unlike the other systems, there is a lack of uniformity in the commentary tradition of the *Cārvākasūtra*, (2) not all commentators were committed monistic materialists, at least

one, namely, Udbhaṭa, was a dualist, and (3) in course of time Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika terminology, such as *gamyā*, *gamaka*, etc., quite foreign to the traditional Cārvāka, has been introduced into the Cārvāka system.

The third observation requires some elucidation. After explaining *utpannapratīti* and *utpādyapratīti*, Jayanta makes the “better learned ones” (euphemism used ironically to suggest some Cārvākas) say:

Indeed, who will deny the validity of inference when one infers fire from smoke and so on; for even ordinary people ascertain the probandum by such inferences, though they may not be *pestered by the logicians*.

Simple minded people cannot derive the knowledge of the probandum by such inferences, so long as their mind is not *vitiated by cunning logicians* (NM I: 184. Emphasis added)

If “the better learned ones” refer to Udbhaṭa and his followers (as do the other two bantering terms, “the cunning Cārvāka” and “the well-learned Cārvākas”) we are faced with a problem. Udbhaṭa himself was prone to employ many technical terms of Nyāya logic. Yet he cavils against cunning logicians (*viṭatārkikas*)! Apparently Jayanta is not quoting verbatim from any commentary on the *Cārvākasūtra*. He is merely paraphrasing (in verse) the view of a section of the Cārvākas. This would mean that “the better learned ones” were opposed to the logic-chopping of other philosophical systems, presumably non-materialistic, who would admit all sorts of inference, *laukika* as well as *alaukika* (derived from scripture or *āpti*) as valid instruments of cognition, on a par with perception. Thus “the better learned ones”, I presume, should refer to some commentators other than Udbhaṭa or Aviddhakarṇa, most probably to Purandara who admitted limited validity of inference insofar as it was based directly on perception. The contrast made between the old Cārvākas and the new seems to have to do with the monistic and dualistic position regarding the existence of the spirit.

The dozen or so commentators of the *Brahmasūtra* were all intent on expounding their widely different systems of philosophy, both idealist and realist, monist and dualist, by using the same *mūla*-text. The Cārvāka commentators too held different opinions concerning the number of *tattvas* and *pramāṇas*, and the nature of consciousness (whether it inheres in the four elements or arises out of them), but all used the same *mūla*-text to further their views. Not unlike the Vedāntins, the latter too had to resort to weird and fanciful interpretations (*kaṣṭakalpanā*), preferring the far-fetched to the familiar, and made optimum exploitation of the brevity of the *sūtras*. It is a pity that the commentary of Bhāvivikta, the ancient (traditional) Cārvāka, is lost. In the absence of his work, the Cārvāka system is now understood in the light of the views of some late commentators who had blatantly deviated from the mainstream view in some, though not all, vital respects.

## Appendix

Esther A. Solomon writes: ‘Looking to the attractive names of the other ācāryas (e.g. Uddyotakara, Bhāsarvaṅja, Bhāvivikta and the like), one can confidently say

that “Aviddhakarṇa” is a nickname signifying “one whose ears are not pierced (or split)” (1970: 35). She proceeds to identify Aviddhakarṇa as a *kānphātā yogin*, a “junior contemporary and the direct disciple of Jālandharapā, and to have lived in the later part of the sixth century or in the early part of the seventh century” (1970: 38). In a subsequent article Solomon modified her view, for piercing the ears was not an exclusive rite of the Nātha community, it was a part of the religious ceremony for initiation among the Buddhists and the Jains too. She admits: “Muttering some select mantra in the ears of the disciple who is to be initiated is also a practice found in many religious sects” (1971: 24). Hence she concludes, “Aviddhakarṇa would thus mean one whose ears were not pierced, or assaulted with right and wrong words of any guru or philosopher; that is to say, a self-made man” (1971: 24). The alternative suggestion is intriguing, reminiscent of Diogenes Laertius’ interpretation of a saying of Heraclitus, *edizēsamēn emeōuton*, “I searched by myself” (Fr. 101 (Bywater, Diels)). Diogenes took it to mean: “He (*sc.* Heraclitus) studied under no one but searched, as he says, for himself, and he learned everything from himself” (quod. in Barnes xviii). This may not be what Heraclitus himself meant, but such an interpretation was current. Solomon, however, prefers the literal meaning of the name and asserts: “[S]ince our Aviddhakarṇa belongs to the Nyāya school we feel that he was one of the direct pupils of Jālandharapā who did not observe this practice of having the ears split” (1971: 24).

Such a hypothesis is strengthened by what is said of the Naiyāyika and the Vaiśeṣika by Guṇaratna: the former is a devotee of Śiva; the latter, a Pāśupata (*TRD* 51.5-6). One Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosopher, Bhāsarvajña (*fl.* 860–920) of Kashmir, was a member of the Pāśupata sect. D. R. Sarma informs us that the prefix *bhā-* is common to the names of the members of this sect (163–165). Bhāsarvajña is said to have held certain views “characteristic of the Pāśupata despite their evident divergence from Nyāya” (Potter 2: 399).

Frankly, I do not know what to make out of all this. The use of nicknames, not in creative writing but in philosophical literature, must be rare. Moreover it inevitably raises the question: why should philosophers themselves adopt nicknames? Yet several names related to light, beginning with *bhā-*, must have *some* significance. Then there is the name Kambalāśvatara, which makes no sense at all, as Franco (1997, 103) notes in despair. All of them cannot be real names such as Udayana, Kumārila, Śālikanātha, and the like.

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