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# ANNALI

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71

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## INDICE

<b>Articoli</b>	<b>PAG.</b>
FRANCESCA BELLINO, Manoscritti e testimonianze orali del Nord Africa: la spedizione contro il re al-Ġiṭrīf nel Wādī al-Saysabān .....	1
KHALID SINDAWI, The Abbasid Vizier ‘Alī b. Yaḡfīn (124-182/741-798). The Man and His Role in Early Šī‘ite History .....	41
PELIN ŞAHİN TEKINALP, Mount Vesuvius in Ottoman Wall Paintings in the Context of Ottoman-Italian Relations .....	61
MARIA RITA CASTALDI, La valenza in accadico ed ebraico biblico: alternanza sintattica e derivazione causativa .....	69
GIANCARLO TOLONI, Ahiqar nel libro di Tobia .....	87
DORIS METH SRINIVASAN, Childbirth, Childhood and the Magico-Religious World of Transformations .....	115
ANNA MARIA QUAGLIOTTI, Siddhārtha’s Cutting of his Hair: Interpretations and its Meaning .....	137
GIULIA RAMPOLLA, Figli della globalizzazione: gli scrittori cinesi post-Ottanta tra web, seduzioni commerciali e aspirazioni letterarie .....	149
<b>Note e Discussioni</b>	
KRISHNA DEL TOSO, The Wolf’s Footprints: Indian Materialism in Perspective. An Annotated Conversation with Ramkrishna Bhattacharya .....	183
GIUSEPPE FERRARO, A proposito di una recente interpretazione di <i>Pramāṇasamuccaya</i> 5.46 .....	205
UBALDO IACCARINO, Le attività marittimo-commerciali di Cina e Giappone nei secoli XVI-XIX. A proposito di tre libri recenti .....	215

## Recensioni

Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, Angel Urbán (a c.), <i>Sacred text. Explorations in lexicography</i> (Riccardo Contini) .....	227
Fabian Käs, <i>Die Mineralien in der arabischen Pharmakognosie. Eine Konkordanz zur mineralischen Materia medica der klassischen arabischen Heilmittelkunde nebst überlieferungsgeschichtlichen Studien</i> (Francesca Bellino) .....	232
Werner Diem, <i>Arabische Briefe aus dem 10.-16. Jahrhundert</i> (Francesca Bellino) ...	234
Peter Behnsted, Manfred Woidich (eds.), <i>Wortatlas der arabischen Dialekte</i> . Band I: <i>Mensch, Natur, Fauna und Flora</i> . Band II: <i>Materielle Kultur</i> (Francesca Bellino)	235
Beatrice Gruendler with the Assistance of Michael Cooperson (ed.), <i>Classical Arabic Humanities in their Own Terms. Festschrift for Wolfhart Heinrichs on his 65th Birthday Presented by His Students and Colleagues</i> (Francesca Bellino) ...	237
Jérémie Schiettecatte, <i>D'Aden à Zafar. Villes d'Arabie du Sud Préislamique</i> (Romolo Loreto) .....	239
Nina Ergin (a c.), <i>Bathing Culture of Anatolian Civilizations: Architecture, History, and Imagination</i> (Valentina Laviola) .....	241
Rosa Maria Cimino, <i>Leggende e fasti della corte dei "Grandi re". Dipinti murali di Udaipur, Rajasthan</i> (Stefania Cavaliere) .....	244
Anne O'Keeffe, Michael McCarthy (eds.), <i>The Routledge Handbook of Corpus Linguistics</i> (Patrizia Zotti) .....	248

## Necrologi .....

253

*Giovanni Maria D'Erme* (Natalia L. Tornesello)

*Alessandro de Maigret* (Romolo Loreto)

*Luciano Petech* (Giacomella Orofino)

## Libri ricevuti .....

299

## NOTE E DISCUSSIONI

KRISHNA DEL TOSO

### **The Wolf's Footprints: Indian Materialism in Perspective. An Annotated Conversation with Ramkrishna Bhattacharya**

It was the 2009 when by chance I ran into a book just issued, whose author I already knew by name and reputation, since few years before – while I was studying the chapter devoted to the exposition of the Cārvāka/Lokāyata philosophy in Sayāna-Mādhava's *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* – I had the occasion of reading with much delight one of his excellent articles published on the *Journal of Indian Philosophy*. This paper gathered a new collection of the extant Cārvāka/Lokāyata fragments on Materialism, survived to the heedlessness of time and the – so to speak – forgetfulness of the partisans of the non-materialistic Indian philosophies. The author was Ramkrishna Bhattacharya. I remember that when his 2009 book, *Studies on the Cārvāka/Lokāyata*, was delivered by the postman at my home in September of the same year, I read it in one breath. Going through its pages, one of the things that I discovered was that Ramkrishna Bhattacharya has been the pupil, among others, of Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, the great Bengali scholar that devoted his life to the study of Indian Materialism and scientific thought, and of Mrinal Kanti Gangopadhyaya, colleague and collaborator of the former. The more my eyes ran the lines of the book, the more interest and curiosity grew in me for Bhattacharya's ideas and perspectives on the Cārvāka/Lokāyata, mainly for two reasons. Firstly, because all the acquaintance I had of this school of thought – still quite neglected in the West – at this time was based exactly on the works of Chattopadhyaya and Gangopadhyaya (which represented, before Bhattacharya's book, the fundamental and almost sole tools I had at my disposal for shedding a bit of light on some passages of Sayāna-Mādhava's text). Secondly, because my very first impression was that Bhattacharya's book deepened the study on and of Indian Materialism far beyond what his two mentors have been able to do in their essays, letting something new emerge from the ancient sources and the modern debate. Since almost every page of *Studies on the Cārvāka/Lokāyata* aroused in me lots of questions and interrogatives, at a certain point I felt the need to contact personally Ramkrishna Bhattacharya for discussing and trying to understand with his help this or that subject, matter or aspect of the Cārvāka/Lokāyata philosophy that I considered problematic or dubious. This was a lucky opportunity for me because, although we never met in person, I found in Ramkrishna Bhattacharya a gentle, willing man and a strict scholar, whose sincere intention was, and is, to outline and improve a horizon of shared knowledge.

Thus, day after day, email after email, since my first letter to him, our dialogue on the Cārvāka/Lokāyata has never stopped, and still continues.

In what follows, the reader will find nothing but an *aperçue* of my questions and Bhattacharya's answers that we exchanged during the year 2010.

\* \* \*

KRISHNA DEL TOSO: Dear Professor Bhattacharya,<sup>1</sup> let me begin by thanking you very much for having accepted this interview, to which I would like to give – if you agree – the structure of a conversation, and in which we will try to speak about some subjects contained in, or inspired by, your last book on Indian Materialism *Studies on the Cārvāka/Lokāyata* (Bhattacharya 2009b), recently published by the Società Editrice Fiorentina. *Studies on the Cārvāka/Lokāyata* is a collection of several articles that you have written during the last fourteen years, minimally re-adapted in order to be consistently put together in a single work. The arguments dealt with there are several: one can indeed read about the origins of Materialism in India, about the principal exponents of Cārvāka/Lokāyata and about some fundamental philosophical doctrines of this school. Moreover, many fragments of Cārvāka/Lokāyata works are accurately analyzed, and so on. But, when one goes through the book, one can find, as you say in the *Preface*, a precise «line of argument» (*ibid.*: 9). To understand the 'plot' of the work, could you explain to us in which way does this «line of argument» develop, and why have you opted for exactly this particular 'line'?

RAMKRISHNA BHATTACHARYA: The 'plot' of the work, as you put it, developed in course of time. I started with only one hypothesis: the Cārvākas/Lokāyatikas have been thoroughly misrepresented by almost all contributors to, or writers of, encyclopaedias and handbooks, and historians of Indian philosophy (not to speak of the authors of college and university text books and popularisers). The same has been the fate of Epicurus in Europe. Their Hedon-

<sup>1</sup> Ramkrishna Bhattacharya was born in Kolkata (Calcutta) in 1947. Educated at the Scottish Church Collegiate School, Vidyasagar College and the University of Calcutta. Graduated with Honours in English (1966); M.A. (1968) and Ph.D. (1986). Retired on 31.12.2007 as Reader, Department of English, Anandamohan College (Kolkata), and Guest Lecturer, Post-graduate Faculty of English, University of Calcutta. He acts as resource person in refresher courses on various disciplines (Bangla, English, Sanskrit, Political Science, etc.) organized by several universities. He is Emeritus Fellow in English (2009-2011), University Grants Commission, New Delhi, Fellow at Pavlov Institute of Kolkata and has been Visiting Professor of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research (2009-2010), New Delhi. Author of nineteen books and more than one hundred thirty research papers, he regularly participates in national seminars and international conferences, workshops and across-the-board discussions. He writes articles and reviews in both scholarly journals and other periodicals on literature (Indian and European), text-criticism (Bangla and Sanskrit), history of ideas, and philosophy (specially on the Cārvāka/Lokāyata system, Materialism and Rationalism). Among his recent books, see *References* (Bhattacharya 2005a; 2009a; 2010a; 2010b; 2010c; 2011a; 2011b; 2011c; 2012).

ism was not synonymous with 'eat, drink, and be merry' kind of philosophy of life. The few available extracts from the commentaries on the lost *Cārvākasūtras*, the basic text, convinced me that the Cārvākas preached a more serious view of life, for they took the epistemological and ontological issues very seriously. Then I found that there were several materialist approaches beside the Cārvāka/Lokāyata which did not embrace sensual enjoyment at all; on the other hand, Ajita Kesakambala, the earliest materialist in India known to us, had embraced an austere way of living. This emboldened me to controvert Erich Frauwallner's view regarding the courtly origin of Materialism in India (Frauwallner 1956). All this led to the 'line of argument' I went on developing. I took the Cārvāka/Lokāyata as a system of philosophy which grew, not unlike other orthodox (Vaidik) systems, having a basic work of aphorisms (the *mūla-text*) which in its turn generated a number of commentaries, independent of one another, differing on some matters of detail but adhering to the basic doctrine of the primacy of perception. *Saper vedere* («To know is to see»), as Leonardo Da Vinci said.

As you can understand, I do not agree with Sebastiano Timpanaro, the Italian Marxist philosopher, that Hedonism and pessimism are two basic ingredients of Materialism (Timpanaro 1975: 18 n. 1, 66). As to Hedonism, the Cārvāka/Lokāyata does advise *yāvaj jīvaṃ sukhaṃ jīvet* («Live happily as long as you live») but, as Jayantabhaṭṭa has rightly said, it is not a prescription since all humans follow this in practice. I have dealt with these matters in my book. To think of such expert logicians such as Purandara, Aviddhakarṇa and Udbhaṭabhaṭṭa as wallowing in purely sensual enjoyment boggles the mind. As Horace had slandered Epicurus in one of his Epistles,<sup>2</sup> so have the enemies of the Cārvāka/Lokāyata. Incidentally, as to Hedonism, what is more hedonistic than Kṛṣṇa's assurance to Arjuna in *Bhagavadgīta* 2.37: *hato vā prāpsyasi (prāpsyase) svargaṃ jītvā vā bhokṣyase mahīm*, «If slain, you attain heaven; if victorious, you enjoy the earth»? Nothing to lose either way.

KDT: And as far as pessimism is concerned?

RB: As to pessimism, the Cārvāka/Lokāyata does not betray any inclination to it, nor does it mention optimism. However, it considers life worth living, and living happily. So what Timpanaro says in connection with Giacomo Leopardi does not apply to the Cārvāka/Lokāyata.

Thus, this in brief is my 'line of argument'.

KDT: Now, a second preliminary question pertains of course to what exactly prompted you to undertake the study of Indian Materialism. Could you tell us what or who has been fundamental, on the one hand, for this decision and, on the other hand, for your 'step by step' deepening into the philosophy of Cārvāka/Lokāyata? This will also help us to understand the nature of your reference

<sup>2</sup> Epistle 1.4 (*ad Albiū Tibullum*), line 16. See Wilkins (1888: 12).



background, which you have moved from in order to develop your research.

RB: The answer will be somewhat autobiographical.

KDT: Yes, of course.

RB: I started studying Marxism-Leninism in my precocious adolescent days. I read a primer on Marxist philosophy in Bangla, my mother tongue, written by Saroja Āchārya (1987, first published in 1943). My first initiation to the Cārvāka/Lokāyata was from this work. Before that, all I knew about Cārvākas was that they had preached the doctrine of *ṛṇam kṛtvā ghṛtam pibet* («Eat *ghee*, clarified butter, even if you run into debts»). This was the sum and substance of the Cārvāka/Lokāyata known to almost all educated Indians. After reading Acharya's chapter on the Cārvāka/Lokāyata, I got interested in studying this system of philosophy in more details. Even prior to that I had read some small volumes in Bangla called *Jānbār Kathā* (Things to know), meant for schoolchildren, edited by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya. He had planned a sort of Book of Knowledge, one of which was on philosophy. Chattopadhyaya was later known as the author of *Lokāyata* and other works on the history of science and technology in India. However, he was a very persuasive writer in Bangla. He began his career as a poet and produced a number of fictions for young readers. The lucidity of his style must have stemmed from his earlier works of children's literature. Thus Chattopadhyaya and Acharya led me to the study of the Cārvāka/Lokāyata.

However, I did not pursue the matter till much later.

KDT: So when did your scientific work on Cārvāka/Lokāyata begin?

RB: I started studying the Cārvāka/Lokāyata in right earnest in 1980 when I had some leisure. First I wrote a few articles in Bangla which were received rather well. Then, I started corresponding with Eli Franco (more of him later), and encouraged by him I ventured to write for a wider readership, and so side by side began to publish in English. I was by then convinced that the Cārvāka/Lokāyata was a much misunderstood and hence unjustly maligned system of philosophy. It deserved to be shown, by employing the method of textual criticism, that the verse quoted by Sāyaṇa-Mādhava (Mādhavācārya) that spoke of eating *ghee* was a distortion of the original verse attributed to the Cārvākas. The paper appeared in 1996<sup>3</sup> and was appreciated by some scholars, not all of them sympathetic to Materialism.

I had continued to correspond with Franco, when he was in Australia and then in Europe (Austria and Germany). Though he had his own views about Jayarāśi with which I did not agree, we became sort of pen-friends (I haven't met him to date) and then I came to know his wife, Karin Preisendanz (I met her only twice when she visited Kolkata, my home city). Both of them are

<sup>3</sup> Bhattacharya (1996). Reprinted in Bhattacharya (2009b: 201-5).

scholars per excellence and helped me a lot to locate sources that are not easily available in Kolkata or India as a whole. Exchange of off-prints proved to be extremely useful.

This is how, from a budding Marxist materialist I became an ardent student of Indian Materialism. I was intrigued to find that there were more than one materialist view prevalent in India before we come to know of the aphorisms of the Cārvāka/Lokāyata. Hence I went on digging and unearthed several such examples.

KDT: Your last sentence lends itself to the following question. Taking into account the title of your book: *Studies on the Cārvāka/Lokāyata*, the presence of a slash (/) between the two words 'Cārvāka' and 'Lokāyata' led me to infer exactly that, within a same general framework, *i.e.*, within the general cultural horizon represented by Materialism, there exists at least one – but probably more than one – distinction between Cārvāka and Lokāyata. Could you explain to us in what does this difference in identity consist?

RB: In my opinion 'Cārvāka' would be the right name. I have explained the reason in the introductory part of *Cārvāka Fragments: A New Collection* in my book.<sup>4</sup> At the same time we have to keep in mind that a large number of ancient Indian philosophers and modern historians of philosophy, etc. refer to the same system as Lokāyata. In fact Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya and Mrinal Kanti Gangopadhyaya (both of them my mentors since 1980) had set the precedence by calling their work, *Cārvāka/Lokāyata: An Anthology of Source Materials and Some Recent Studies*.<sup>5</sup> But there is a snag. The word Lokāyata appears earlier than Cārvāka in Buddhist works (both Pāli and Sanskrit) but in a different sense: the science of disputation. Most probably Lokāyata in the *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra* also means the same.<sup>6</sup> Some scholars have failed to distinguish between the two meanings of Lokāyata and in the translation of Buddhist texts they translated Lokāyata as 'Materialism', which is wrong and misleading. Hence I prefer to write Cārvāka/Lokāyata.

KDT: You are pointing out that there exists at least a – so to speak – historical and/or grammatical difference between the two terms. What can we say about the history of the use of the two words 'Cārvāka' and 'Lokāyata'?

RB: As to the history of the use of the two words, Cārvāka as the name of a philosophical system first appears in Haribhadra's *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya*,<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See Bhattacharya (2009b: 76-77). This paper was originally published in Bhattacharya (2002a). Reprinted in Bhattacharya (2009b: 69-104).

<sup>5</sup> Chattopadhyaya, Gangopadhyaya (1990).

<sup>6</sup> Bhattacharya (2009b: 131-35).

<sup>7</sup> *Collection of Six Philosophies*.

verse 85d, and in Kamalaśīla's *Tattvasaṅgrahapañjikā*,<sup>8</sup> gloss on verse 1885, while Śāntarākṣita in his *Tattvasaṅgraha*, Ch. 22, calls it Lokāyata as does Śāṅkarācārya in his commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* and elsewhere. So you see both the names were current right from the eighth century AD. There are other names too: *dehātmanvāda*, *bhūtacaitanyavāda*, *bārhaspatyamata*, etc. More intriguingly, we have allusions to one *paurandaraṃ sūtraṃ* as also to a *paurandariya vitti* (*paurandarīyavṛtti*).<sup>9</sup> Of course Cārvāka is the name of a demon in the *Mahābhārata*.<sup>10</sup> It may be presumed that the Indian materialist philosophers adopted his name as a kind of nickname. Purandara, as quoted by Kamalaśīla, refers to the Cārvākas (*cārvākaiḥ*). You will find many such examples of using this name in several Brahminical, Buddhist, and Jain works.<sup>11</sup>

Thus both Cārvāka and Lokāyata became a sort of 'brand name', meaning Materialism in general. Franco once told me in a personal communication<sup>12</sup> that the *mūla* text of the Cārvākas «must have been composed before Dignāga's time (480-540)». I don't know whether he is right. The *Mañimēkalai*, a Tamil Buddhist work composed between the third century and the seventh century AD, mentions both Lokāyata and *bhūtavāda* side by side.<sup>13</sup> There had been materialist thinkers in India right from the Buddha's time – Ajita Kesakambala, for example – or even before. Dignāga might have known some such thinkers, not necessarily a Cārvāka. Kambalāśvatara (another nickname), Purandara and Aviddhakarṇa (yet another nickname) as well as some unnamed commentators are mentioned by Kamalaśīla and so they must have flourished in or before the eighth century. After them we have Udbhaṭa, an odd kind of commentator who uses the Cārvāka aphorisms as a peg to hang his own ideas on. Cakradhara mentions Bhāvivikta as a *cirantana cārvāka*, «old or traditional Cārvāka philosopher». <sup>14</sup> So he must have been a contemporary of Kambalāśvatara and others or might have flourished even earlier.

That is all I can say in brief about the history of the two words, Cārvāka and Lokāyata.

KDT: You have just underlined (and you explain very well this point in the first chapter of your book),<sup>15</sup> that the philosophy of Ajita Kesakambala is actually materialistic and not, as is generally supposed by the most part of

<sup>8</sup> *Notes on the Tattvasaṅgraha (Assemblage of Philosophical Principles)*.

<sup>9</sup> Bhattacharya (2009b: 109-11).

<sup>10</sup> See for instance *Śāntiparva* XXXIX.

<sup>11</sup> Bhattacharya (2009b: 80-83).

<sup>12</sup> Hamburg, 13.04.1997.

<sup>13</sup> Bhattacharya (2009b: 39).

<sup>14</sup> Bhattacharya (2009b: 81, 88).

<sup>15</sup> Bhattacharya (2009b: 27-29). This paper was originally published in Bhattacharya (1997). Reprinted as 'Origin of Materialism in India: Royal or Popular?', in Bhattacharya (2009b: 21-32).

scholars, nihilistic. On the other hand, you add also that a real nihilist was Jayarāśi, the author of the *Tattvopaplavasimha*. As is well-known, portions of this text has been translated and studied by Eli Franco, who upholds that Jayarāśi was, rather, a sceptic.<sup>16</sup> Now, in your book you say that you do not agree with this interpretation. On the basis of what should we consider Jayarāśi a nihilist rather than a sceptic?

RB: That Jayarāśi was a nihilist is amply clear from the last sentence of his book: *tad evam upapluteṣv eva tattveṣu avicāritaramaṇīyāḥ sarve vyavahārā ghaṭanta iti* («When all the principles are upset then all [human] practice are to be understood as happening without any judgement»). Unlike Nāgārjuna or Śrīharṣa, Jayarāśi had no system of philosophy either to establish or to uphold. In his case it was all refutation, and refutation for refutation's sake. The only principle he sets out to upset, is the validity of all known instruments of cognition, such as perception, inference, word, etc. Mrinal Kanti Gangopadhyaya (whom Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya always mentioned as 'my young friend and teacher') has shown, in his illuminating *Introduction* to a Bangla translation of the *Tattvopaplavasimha* (chapter 1) by Dilip Kumar Mohanta,<sup>17</sup> that Jayarāśi's position is diametrically opposite to Vātsyāyana's: the latter is intent on establishing the principle of four *prakāras*, namely *pramāṇa*, *pramātā*, *prameya* and *pramiti*. Once *pramāṇa* is established, the other three are automatically accepted (see Vātsyāyana's *Introduction* to his commentary on the *Nyāyasūtras*).<sup>18</sup> Jayarāśi, on the other hand, not only questions (as a sceptic does) but seeks to *upset* the very concept of *pramāṇa* itself. In this sense he was a nihilist per excellence. In fact Gangopadhyaya has rightly said that Jayarāśi was affiliated neither to the Cārvāka/Lokāyata nor to *śūnyavāda* or *māyāvāda*: he had a doctrine of his own, namely, *tattvopaplavavāda*. As there are *māyāvāda*, *vijñānavāda*, *śūnyavāda* etc., so is *tattvopaplavavāda*, a particular type of approach or philosophy. His Jain opponents mentioned this along with other *vādas*.

KDT: But a possible counterargument to your position could be that Jayarāśi in his text refers to Bṛhaspati, who is supposed to have been the compiler of the *Cārvākasūtras*, and calls him *bhagavān bṛhaspatiḥ*, that is, «Venerable Bṛhaspati». By relying to this reference, one could infer that Jayarāśi was a materialist.<sup>19</sup>

RB: Jayarāśi's reference to Bṛhaspati as *bhagavān* does not confirm his affiliation to Bṛhaspati's system. Śrīharṣa too uses the same term, *bhagavān*

<sup>16</sup> Franco (1994).

<sup>17</sup> Mohanta (1998: 1-16).

<sup>18</sup> Jhā (1999: 1-3).

<sup>19</sup> Franco (1994: 228).

*suraguru*. Would that make Śrīharṣa a Cārvāka?

I may also mention the fact that Jayarāṣi is prized more in Europe and Japan than in India. He has been criticized and presented everywhere in the Jain works as a *tattvopaplavavādin*, never as a Cārvāka. Those who have criticized him have also sought to refute the Cārvāka/Lokāyata. Erich Frauwallner too never considered the *Tattvopaplavasiṃha* to be a Cārvāka work.<sup>20</sup>

Franco's translation of, and notes on, the *Tattvopaplavasiṃha* are indeed excellent, but his view of Jayarāṣi as a kind of Lokāyatika and his polemics against Chattopadhyaya in the *Preface* to the second edition of his book *Perception, Knowledge and Disbelief* have not found favour even in the West.<sup>21</sup> Karel Werner in his review of this edition proposes to steer a middle way between Chattopadhyaya and Franco.<sup>22</sup> Earlier still, Walter Ruben and K.K. Dixit pointed out many a flaw in assuming Jayarāṣi as a Cārvāka. Their articles have been reprinted in *Cārvāka/Lokāyata*.<sup>23</sup> Chattopadhyaya was too modest to include his views on the *Tattvopaplavasiṃha* in this volume. He had in fact written two articles in Bangla in 1963, refuting the notion that *Tattvopaplavasiṃha* was a materialist philosophical text (as Arthur Llewellyn Basham had said in his *The Wonder That Was India*).<sup>24</sup> Chattopadhyaya reiterated his opposition to this misconception in his populariser *Indian Philosophy*<sup>25</sup> and *In Defence of Materialism in Ancient India*.<sup>26</sup> Franco was apparently unaware of Basham's claim and therefore unhesitatingly declared in the preface to the second edition of his *Perception, Knowledge and Disbelief* that «no one ever claimed that Jayarāṣi was a materialist».<sup>27</sup>

Basham was not alone in making this regrettable mistake. Those who work on the basis of secondary sources have all followed suit and represented the *Tattvopaplavasiṃha* as a Cārvāka materialist work. They even ignore the fact that Franco, along with Sanghvi and Parikh, labels him cautiously as representing «a minority (*ekadeśa*) within the Lokāyata school»<sup>28</sup> and admits that «Jayarāṣi rejected some of the traditional Lokāyata doctrines and interpreted some of the *sūtras* of Bṛhaspati as reflecting opinions which are not Bṛhaspati's own».<sup>29</sup> The very notion of a *non-materialist* Lokayata as pro-

<sup>20</sup> Frauwallner (1956: II, 257).

<sup>21</sup> The second edition: Delhi 1994.

<sup>22</sup> Werner (1995).

<sup>23</sup> Chattopadhyaya, Gangopadhyaya (1990: 505-19 [Ruben], 520-30 [Dixit]).

<sup>24</sup> Basham (1954: 297).

<sup>25</sup> Chattopadhyaya (1964: 22-23, n. 4).

<sup>26</sup> Chattopadhyaya (1989: 39-40).

<sup>27</sup> Franco (1994: XII-XIII).

<sup>28</sup> Franco (1994: 14).

<sup>29</sup> Franco (1994: 46).

posed by Sanghvi and others, is alien to the Indian philosophical scenario. The Cārvāka/Lokāyata has been referred to by all ancient and medieval philosophers in India as a materialist system, no one speaks of such a non-materialist school. Franco once told me in a letter<sup>30</sup> that if I can accept both Buddhist idealists and Buddhist realists, why can't I accept the sceptic Lokāyatikas and materialist Lokāyatikas? This is inference by analogy which is always doubtful.

In spite of so many dissenting voices, the false notion that the *Tattvopaplavasīṃha* is a Cārvāka work persists in the form that it is the only full-length book on Indian Materialism! Franco did not claim so, but who cares? In some universities the *Tattvopaplavasīṃha* is the prescribed text for studying the Cārvāka/Lokāyata system! Recently an Indian referee advised me to consult the *Tattvopaplavasīṃha* in connection with my paper on humanism and the Cārvāka/Lokāyata!<sup>31</sup> Can folly go any further?

KDT: Well, dear professor, on the basis of these arguments it is undoubtedly clear that the *Tattvopaplavasīṃha* is not to be considered a Cārvāka work. Taken this for granted, the elimination of the *Tattvopaplavasīṃha* from the list of the Cārvāka/Lokāyata texts makes us face up to the serious problem of the lack of direct sources of Indian Materialism. Indeed, the original *sūtras*, commentaries and other ancillary works written by the exponents of Cārvāka/Lokāyata schools unfortunately have not reached us. Or, the problem could be put in a more optimistic way – which I guess to be better in line with your views –, by saying that we do not still have found out manuscripts of these texts somewhere in temples or libraries or elsewhere. Anyway, all that we can make use of at present is some quotation reported in writings compiled by exponents of other philosophical traditions, such as Buddhists, Jains, Vaidikas, etc. Now, as regards this paucity of sources at our disposal, a first problem to be tackled concerns obviously to why and when the texts of Indian Materialism have stopped circulating. This issue acquires even more substance when we consider that the materialistic perspectives have been seriously discussed on and on in many philosophical works – some of which were written also after the, as it were, decline of Materialism – like for instance Sayāṇa-Mādhava's *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, Jayantabhaṭṭa's *Nyāyamañjari* or Vālidevasūri's *Syādvādaratnākara*, and so on.

RB: It is an interesting question. As for Sayāṇa-Mādhava you are right: the Cārvāka *mūla* text and its commentaries were not available to him, as all the Cārvāka/Lokāyata works were lost before the fourteenth century CE. But Kamalaśīla apparently possessed the commentaries of Purandara and Aviddhakarṇa and some unnamed commentators. Jayantabhaṭṭa, Cakradhara and Vālidevasūri must have had a copy of Udbhaṭṭa's commentary on

<sup>30</sup> Hamburg, 20.07.1997.

<sup>31</sup> 'Humanist Thought in Lokāyata' (in press).

the *Cārvākasūtras*, for they either quote or paraphrase longish extracts from it. Aviddhakarṇa's commentary was known to Karṇakagomin too. Our forefathers cultivated memorising to an amazing degree, but it was mostly confined to the Vedic texts. Philosophers must have resorted to the manuscripts of their opponents and quoted from them, not always from memory.

Materialism, as I have said before, always had a living presence in India right from the ancient times and have continued to be so in our own days. As Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya shows in his *Science and Society in Ancient India*,<sup>32</sup> the philosophical basis of the two old medical compilations, the *Carakasamhitā* and the *Suśrutasamhitā*, was out-and-out materialistic. Their Materialism, however, was not of the Cārvāka kind: they believed in five primordial elements instead of four. Space, *ākāśa* or *vyoma*, is not tangible to the senses yet it was admitted by them. Everything on earth, they believed, was composed of these five primordial elements. Later writers often use the term, *cārvākaikadeśin*, meaning «some sort of Cārvāka», that is, materialists other than a Cārvāka. Although the term is often employed to disguise the writers' ignorance of who are meant by the author of the original text, sometimes they are right. There *were* other materialists besides the Cārvākas. The source of such other proto-materialists can be traced back to the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*. In the very second verse of the work, *svabhāva* (own being) and *bhūtāni* (elements) are mentioned as rivals of the creator of the universe. There are several such references in the *Mahābhārata*, Jain canonical works and Buddhist Sanskrit works, and the Tamil epic *Maṇimēkalai*. The idea of *pañcabhūta* (five elements) has been current through the ages. Idealist and fideist philosophers had to reckon with materialist views even after the works of the Cārvākas were lost. Materialism is not only as old as philosophy but also *lokeṣu āyata*, extended among the people in this world!

KDT: Indeed, we meet with materialistic perspectives in texts belonging to quite different fields: Āyurveda, *Mahābhārata*, Upaniṣads... I would also add *Rgveda* and *Atharvaveda* just to stress the antiquity of Indian Materialism in general. In this respect, one of the aspects that first impressed me when I read your book, is the incredible number and variety of sources you have checked. The first time I skimmed through the vast bibliography of primary sources of your book I felt the need of reflecting upon what could be called a methodological sieve. In other terms, when one has to work on such an amount of sources, I think that the preliminary and essential consideration that s/he must keep in mind is to be deeply aware of the difference existing between real quotations and spurious quotations, namely, between fragments *of* Cārvāka/Lokāyata, and fragments *on* Cārvāka/Lokāyata. To make a simple example, the presence for instance of the Sanskrit particle *iti* after a quotation cannot be considered always discriminating: we cannot in fact be sure that when

<sup>32</sup> Chattopadhyaya (1977).

we come across an *iti* we are undoubtedly in front of an actual citation. Such an awareness is extremely important, since the real import of Cārvāka/Lokāyata philosophy can be restored or defined only or primarily on the basis of the fragments of Cārvāka/Lokāyata, because the fragments on Cārvāka/Lokāyata present the risk to be mixed up with interpretations that could occasionally be misleading. According to your experience, hence, which are the principal misunderstandings that we have or we have had on Indian Materialism? In other words, what am I asking you is to tell us, on the one hand, which are the aspects of the Cārvāka/Lokāyata philosophy that have been wrongly (intentionally or unintentionally) interpreted by Indian philosophers of the past and, on the other hand, which errors of evaluation in the modern understanding of Cārvāka/Lokāyata are due to a wrong or, better said, an inaccurate reading of these past misinterpretations.

RB: Two aspects of the Cārvāka/Lokāyata perspectives have been wrongly interpreted by Indian philosophers. First, the Cārvāka has been portrayed as *pramāṇaikavādin*, admitting one and only one instrument of cognition, namely, perception. This is not correct. One of the earliest commentators of the *Cārvākasūtras* known to us is Purandara. Like Bhāvivikta he too was apparently a *cirantana cārvāka*, adhering to the exact meaning of the words of the aphorisms. One Cārvāka aphorism says that perception indeed is the instrument of cognition. It is from his commentary, as quoted by Kamalaśīla, that we find him declaring that the Cārvākas *did not* consider *anumāna* (inference) as such to be invalid, but admitted only such inferences as were current in the world. Aviddhakarṇa and Udbhaṭabhaṭṭa followed suit in dividing inference into two categories: the first limited to the everyday world, the other following from the scriptures. Thus the Cārvākas with different inclinations and opinions in other respects were unanimous in accepting limited validity of inference, 'limited' in the sense that only such inferences as were based on, or verifiable by perception are to be admitted as an extension of perception. They drew the line there.

In this connection I would like to quote a few words from an article by Stephen H. Phillips that provides the background of the Indian philosophers' preoccupation with the issue of inference. Speaking of the Indian views of knowledge he says: «Buddhist and some others appear to be motivated to deny *pramāṇa* status to testimony because appeal to testimony is used to justify what they see as objectionable religious theses. Similarly, the Cārvāka materialist denies inference, apparently out of fear of its power to prove the existence of spiritual entities such as God or the soul».<sup>33</sup>

It may also be noted in passing that the position of the *Nyāyasūtras* is not different. Inference is to be preceded by perception.<sup>34</sup> Vātsyāyana smuggles

<sup>33</sup> *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1998: 280).

<sup>34</sup> *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.5. See Jhā (1999: 153).



scripture (*āgama*, the Vedas) in his commentary as something on a par with perception. He writes: «The inference that is not contradicted by perception and scripture is called *anvikṣā*».<sup>35</sup> Earlier too he states: «The inference which is contradicted by perception and scripture is pseudo-*nyāya*».<sup>36</sup> The inclusion of ‘scripture’ takes the bottom out of the Nyāya definition of perception and inference. At the same time, Vātsyāyana admits indirectly, there is such a thing called pseudo-*nyāya*. The Cārvākas wanted to guard their position by rejecting all such pseudo-*nyāyas* based on scripture and verbal testimony of any so-called authoritative person. Their position differs from Nyāya and others who admitted several instruments of cognition in that, unlike them, the Carvakas did not accept inference or word as an independent and primary instrument but as secondary, dependent on perception.

KDT: And as regards the second aspect?

RB: Well, the Cārvāka/Lokāyata is widely misrepresented as a philosophy of gross Hedonism. Hemacandra, Guṇaratna and others have maligned it in the worst conceivable manner. I have already spoken of a verse attributed to the Cārvākas: *yāvaj jīvaṃ sukhaṃ jīven ṛṇaṃ kṛtvā gr̥thaṃ pibet* («So long as you live, live happily; eat *ghee*, clarified butter, even by running into debts»). The original reading of the verse was quite different: *yāvaj jīvaṃ sukhaṃ jīven nāsti mṛtyor agocaraḥ* («So long as you live, live happily; nothing is beyond the ken of death»).<sup>37</sup> Sāyaṇa-Mādhava himself quotes the original verse at the beginning of his exposition of the Cārvāka but distorts the reading at the end of the same chapter. This made me curious and I started to locate all the occurrences of this verse in other works. I found that everyone except Sāyaṇa-Mādhava has cited the original reading or, even if some have rewritten it, they *have not* spoken of eating *ghee* or anything of that sort. Yet this distorted version is generally accepted as the quintessence of the Cārvāka/Lokāyata. Of course the Cārvākas, unlike the Buddhists, did not believe that the world is all sorrow. Nor did they believe that people can attain happiness only after being released from the cycle of rebirth, for they did not believe in after-life or rebirth. Sāyaṇa-Mādhava himself states that the Cārvākas were conscious of both pleasure and pain in life and they chose pleasure, not pain, as some ascetics intentionally do. This is the normal way of living and does not imply unbridled search for sensual pleasure.

Moreover, those who have charged the Cārvāka/Lokāyata on this ground never refer to any authentic aphorism. All references are to this verse only. Serious philosophers like Śāntarakṣita, Śāṅkarācārya and Prabhācandra controverted the Cārvāka/Lokāyata on purely epistemological grounds, never accus-

<sup>35</sup> *Bhāṣya* on *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.5. See Jhā (1999: 153-55).

<sup>36</sup> *Bhāṣya* on *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.1. See Jhā (1999: 43-50).

<sup>37</sup> See Bhattacharya (2009b: 201-5).

ing them on moral ones. Even Jayantabhaṭṭa, who had a very low opinion about the intelligence of the Cārvāka philosophers, dismissed the charge of Hedonism by saying that 'live happily' is not a prescription. I have mentioned it before in my book.

These are the two mistaken notions about the Cārvāka/Lokāyata that the students of Indian philosophy should be disabused of.

KDT: Now, after having shed light on the principal misconceptions concerning Indian Materialism, it is interesting to note that, notwithstanding the above-mentioned scarcity of fragments, from those very fragments the fundamental doctrines of this philosophy can, however, be drawn. Moreover, as you have said, we know also five or six names of exponents of Cārvāka/Lokāyata, like Aviddhakarṇa, Udbhaṭabhaṭṭa, Purandara, etc., and from your study it clearly emerges that the Cārvāka/Lokāyata philosophy was not a monolith, rather a dynamic perspective – as all other philosophies are or should be – with internal currents of thought and doctrinal differences. For instance, you have stressed the difference between 'ancient' Cārvākas, as Bhāvivikta, and 'recent' Cārvākas, as Udbhaṭa. Would it be possible, in your opinion, to summarize the main points of the Cārvāka philosophy, tracing them back to these five or six philosophers by taking into account also the fundamental differences among their perspectives?

RB: First of all, it must be made clear that the Cārvāka/Lokāyata is not the only materialist philosophy in India. There were more than one pre-Cārvāka materialist schools, as I have mentioned before.

KDT: Yes.

RB: In spite of other differences, some of the basic materialist tenets are common to all of them, such as: the world has no creator, it consists only of natural elements, there is no after-life (that is, heaven and hell), matter precedes consciousness which is but a special effect of a particular combination of the elements, there is no soul without the body, and, what is more relevant in the Indian context, there is no rebirth. The Cārvāka aphorisms that are quoted and re-quoted state these fundamentals quite unambiguously. Then there are aphorisms concerning epistemology which declare perception to be the only instrument of cognition, excluding thereby inference drawn from testimony and declaring inference itself as secondary, not on a par with perception. But right from the eighth century we read of difference of opinions: for example, is consciousness 'born' or 'manifested' out of the four elements forming the body? Udbhaṭabhaṭṭa proposed to interpret some Cārvāka aphorisms in so untraditional a way that Cakradhara had to contrast him with Bhāvivikta, the old commentator. So did Vādidēvasūri notice the novelty of Udbhaṭabhaṭṭa's interpretations. These differences are quite prominent and cannot be explained away. As to the non-Cārvāka materialists, the major dif-

ference lies in determining the number of natural elements, four or five.

In regard to the social philosophy of the Cārvākas, we have no primary source to go by. Kṛṣṇamiśra and Śrīharsa have made the Cārvākas appear as defenders of women's rights and opposed to caste distinction. But there is no aphorism to support such representation. But as we have to reconstruct the whole system solely on the basis of its representation by its opponents, we may very well accept this charge as reflecting the true view of the Cārvākas.

Aviddhakarṇa and Udbhaṭa introduced a number of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika terms in their commentaries. It is not improbable that they composed their commentaries from their own Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika point of view, without being converted to the Cārvāka/Lokāyata. Udbhaṭa in particular comes closer to idealism in his explanation of an aphorism. This is not altogether unexpected. In our own times Pandit Ananta Kumar Bhattacharyya wrote an exposition of the Cārvāka/Lokāyata in 1365 Bengali era (1958-59 CE). An English translation of his essay has been provided in the *Cārvāka/Lokāyata*.<sup>38</sup> More recently Acarya Badarinatha Sukla, former Vice-Chancellor of the Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Varanasi, has tried (in Sanskrit) to defend *dehātmavāda* by following the method of Nyāya.<sup>39</sup> He has extolled the Cārvāka/Lokāyata as an appropriate philosophy for contemporary life.

These developments are of course quite interesting but whether they signify any '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 right from the Buddha's time or even before. We need more hard facts. Exploration of Tibetan sources is a desideratum. I know that you are working in that field and would urge you and other scholars to search for new material that may throw more light on Indian Materialism through the ages.

KDT: Indeed, to make just an example, I know that some interesting material on Lokāyata can be found in Avalokitavrata's *Ṭīkā* on Bhāviveka's *Prājñāpradīpa*, which survives only in its Tibetan translation. But let us come back to the various subjects towards which you are directing our attention. Among all the topics mentioned here, I think that the most important and, in some way, the 'superordinated' one, is the non-acceptance of those inferences (*anumāna*) that are not supported by (or grounded on) perception. It is easy to understand, indeed, how also other materialistic theories like, for instance, the denial of the self (*ātman*), or of the other-world (*paraloka*), depend on this particular interpretation of *anumāna*. This, again, makes the Cārvāka/Lokāyata be more a sort of 'positivist' or 'scientific' perspective – in the sense of a philosophy open to a real verification-modality –, than a philosophy of extreme Hedonism, as some ancient thinkers loved to describe it (of course some he-

<sup>38</sup> See Ananta Kumar Bhattacharyya 'Cārvāka Darśanam', in Chattopadhyaya, Gangopadhyaya (1990: 452-73).

<sup>39</sup> Sukla (1984).

donistic fringe might also have existed among Cārvākas, as the *yāvaj jīvaṃ sukhaṃ jīven...* verse mentioned above seems in some way to hint at; in any case, hedonistic inclinations seem to have been implicitly accepted even in Vaidik traditions, as for instance the *Manusmṛti* passage *na māṃsabhakṣaṇe doṣo na madye na ca maithune | pravṛttireṣā bhūtānām*, «There is no sin in eating meat, in liquor and in sexual intercourse, for this is the natural way of creatures», bears witness to).<sup>40</sup> You have explained very well why Hedonism cannot be considered *in se* an inclination proper, or connatural, to the Cārvāka viewpoint. Now, in Chapter IV of your book<sup>41</sup> you deal with all these arguments but, exactly because this is a crucial point, and even if you have partially discussed this in a previous answer, I ask you if you can explain more in detail in what does the materialistic perspective on perception and inference consist and how the, as it were, 'positivist' attitude just referred can be described. To develop a bit further this subject will be useful for my next question.

RB: Well, Materialism is intrinsically inductive in spirit. Any universal proposition has to be arrived at from particular instances. The methods of agreement and difference are essential to formulate a universal proposition. Even then the truth-value will at best be probable, not certain. Idealist philosophers insist on generalisations made out of deduction from scriptures, religious law books like the *Manusmṛti*, etc. They wished for truths beyond time, true for the past, the present and the future. Purandara and Udbhaṭabhaṭṭa, even though he was a 'revisionist', insist on distinguishing between inference based on perception followed in everyday life and inference deduced from scripture. This I believe, is a contribution of the materialists to logic.

Was this the original position of the Cārvākas? Frauwallner says that they had to desert their original attitude and adopt foreign thoughts which led to «a regular activity and to a blossoming up of a literature richer than hitherto».<sup>42</sup> Franco is of the opinion that such a desertion happened in the wake of Dharmakīrti. He even goes to the extent of saying that Dharmakīrti's arguments «had to be urgently answered, or the Cārvāka would have been kicked out of the philosophical scene» (Franco told me that the article had been written much earlier).<sup>43</sup> I, on the other hand, believe that the Cārvākas right from the beginning accepted the limited validity of inference; they did not modify their position in face of Dharmakīrti. Some pre-Cārvāka materialists might have adhered to the naïve position that sensory perception alone was the only valid instrument of cognition. The Cārvākas came late and developed a more sophisticated epistemology and ontology. Karin Preisendanz has very recently

<sup>40</sup> *Manusmṛti* 5.56abc.

<sup>41</sup> 'Perception and Inference in the Cārvāka Philosophy', in Bhattacharya (2009b: 55-63).

<sup>42</sup> Frauwallner (1956: II, 225).

<sup>43</sup> Franco (1991: 159).

complained to me (in a personal communication) that my refusal to accept Frauwallner's and Franco's view «has the taste of anti-Buddhist sentiment often found in contemporary Indian writings on the history and development of Indian philosophy». All I can say is that, being a confirmed atheist and hence not an orthodox Hindu, I harbour no such anti-Buddhist sentiment. On the other hand, accepting the view of Franco would mean that the Cārvāka logicians were, as Vācaspatimiśra in his *Bhāmatī* ironically says,<sup>44</sup> indeed worse than the beasts because they could not infer anything even from everyday experience. What I have tried to show is that the Cārvāka materialists were expert logicians and had a cause to uphold. They were opposed to all religious practices and refused to believe in the infallibility of any religious text, whether the Vedas or the Buddhist canonical works. Since they denied both after-life and rebirth, they developed the concept of two different kinds of *pratītis*, *utpanna* and *utpādya*. The first is the kind of inference in case of which the inferential cognition can be acquired by oneself (which is acceptable) and the other in which the inferential cognition is to be acquired on somebody else's advice (which is not acceptable). There are two verses which bring out their position clearly:

*yattvātmeśvarasarvajñāparalokādigocaram |  
anumāṇam na tasyeṣṭam prāmāṇyam tattvadarśibhiḥ ||*

However, inferences that seek to prove a self, God, and omniscient being, the other-world and so on are not considered valid by those who know the real nature of things.

*rjūnām jāyate tasmāna tāvad anumeyadhīḥ |  
yāvat kuṭīlitaṃ ceto na teṣām viṭatārkikaiḥ ||*

Simple-minded people cannot derive the knowledge of probandum by such inferences, so long as their mind is not vitiated by cunning logicians.<sup>45</sup>

Being thoroughgoing rationalists the Cārvākas could not dispense with reasoning, which involves inference. That is why all fideists, religious teachers or law-givers such as Manu find fault with the *haitukas*, reasoners. The Cārvākas were of course non-believers, heretics, infidels or anything the believers might call them. But they were not fools, as Vācaspatimiśra, Jayantabhaṭṭa and Hemacandra superciliously brand them. They knew the technical terms of formal logic such as *sādhya*, *pakṣa*, *gamaka*, etc. and used them properly in their polemics. At the same time, they were against the 'cunning logicians' who by jugglery with words tried to convince people of the existence of such non-existent objects as God, omniscient being, after-life, etc.

KDT: Very well! Your argument is very clear and you could not conclude it in a better way, since your words allow me to introduce the question to

<sup>44</sup> *Bhāmatī* on *Brahmasūtra* 3.3.53. See Chattopadhyaya, Gangopadhyaya (1990: 243).

<sup>45</sup> See Bhattacharya (2009b: 92).

which I alluded before. Though the Cārvākas say that no means of knowledge can actually demonstrate the existence of the *ātman*, of an other-world, of karmic merits and demerits, etc., we find however that they do not deny – but how could they have done it? – the existence of a sort of *principium individuationis* (variously called *caitanya*, *puḍgala*, etc.). In addition to that, the fact that they were not at all devoted to extreme Hedonism suggests to me that they must have had a precise and unique idea of morality/ethics, which should be completely different from other ideas of morality/ethics founded on principles somehow spiritual (such as the Vaidikas' sacrifice or the Buddhists' *karman*, etc.). The question is: according to your opinion, which kind of morality/ethics did the Materialists develop, considering the fact that they lived without the assurance of the existence of a *summum bonum* (*niḥśreyasa*, *nirvāṇa*, etc.) as final aim of life? Furthermore, is it possible to gather the core aspects of this kind of morality/ethics? Can it be helpful, in order to unravel this point, to take into consideration those philosophies of ancient Greece that seem to be similar to Cārvāka/Lokāyata (I am thinking for instance to some aspects of the philosophies of Epicurus of Samos or of Zeno of Citium)?

RB: Unfortunately we have absolutely no evidence to answer your question properly. The fragments so far collected say practically nothing of the Cārvāka ethics. However, I have tried to show that the Cārvākas were as much maligned as Epicurus. Epicurus led an austere life yet the word 'epicure' in English (and may be in other modern European languages) is made to suggest unbridled enjoyment of food and drink, etc. It is possible that the Cārvāka ethics was akin to Epicurus' who in a letter to Menoeceus once said:

When, therefore, we say that pleasure is a chief good...we mean the freedom of the body from pain and of the soul from confusion. For it is not...continue drinking and revels...that make life pleasant but sober contemplations which examine into the reasoning for all choice and avoidance, and which put to flight the vain opinions from which greater part of the confusion arises which troubles the soul.<sup>46</sup>

It is probable that the Cārvākas too believed in this view of life and held the pursuit of the real nature of things (as mentioned in a verse quoted above) to be the supreme aim of life. Incidentally, Epicurus' words are reminiscent of the concept of *heya* (to be rejected) and *upādeya* (to be enjoyed) found in many Sanskrit works.

Franco once suggested perceptively: «...all the Lokāyatikas were fighting for... was ultimately to found social and political institutions independently of religious dogma...».<sup>47</sup> He might have had in his mind Frauwallner's view that Materialism in India was created for the Realpolitikers.<sup>48</sup> I do not think so, as I

<sup>46</sup> See Hicks (1925: 131-32).

<sup>47</sup> Franco (1991: 160).

<sup>48</sup> Frauwallner (1956: II, 216).

have shown in the first chapter of my book. I would, however, heartily agree with Franco's suggestion. The rationalism and secularism of the Cārvākas are relevant even today when irrationalism fostered by the postmodernists and fundamentalism fanned by reactionary politicians are so rife all over the world.

KDT: Good. You have shifted our argument to the present times. Let us continue on this direction. Today we are observing an increase of social frictions among the lower strata of the population, whereas the so-called intellectual *élites* (both religious and non-religious) are trying to find a common platform in order to develop a serious dialogue between cultures. This platform, of course, has to be based on the idea that the 'other than me' can represent more a richness for me, rather than a danger. And this richness of course should be handled without in any case losing one's own identity, otherwise it would not be an actual richness. This process should be in short described by making reference to our case: an Italian Doctor in Philosophy, me, is questioning an Indian Professor, you, on his last book on Cārvāka/Lokāyata; but this Indian Professor is also well versed in English literature and in ancient Greek philosophy, and this Italian Doctor is acquainted with the fundamental aspects of the doctrines and thoughts developed by ancient and medieval Indian thinkers. Our conversation is enriching me and, I hope, is enriching also you, without forcing the one or the other of us to abandon his own cultural identity. The point is that a real dialogue can exist only when the speakers involved in it are disposed to openly accept – of course with a proper criticism – the other's points of view and consequently to through doubt upon, or to reconsider, one's own ideas (without necessarily abandoning them!), when these ideas are with intelligence criticized by the other one. Of course, this is a difficult intellectual exercise, difficult to such an extent that rarely it has, or has had, a good application, and the case of Indian Materialism, which has been historically reduced to silence, is in my opinion a clear example of the failure of a philosophical dialogue. Nonetheless, I am convinced that the materialistic inclination towards life and knowledge in general could strongly contribute to the present ethical debate, by introducing new dialectical perspectives. Now, according to your opinion, in what way should one nowadays make the materialistic teachings of ancient and medieval India react with the other, mostly religious, ethical inclinations? Which are the aspects of Cārvāka/Lokāyata that can be considered still topical? Said in seriocomic words, I am giving you the possibility to 'avenge' what – at least from a Westerners perspective – seems to have been a sort of historical 'murder' of Indian Materialism.

RB: Well, Indian Materialism might have been 'murdered' elsewhere, but it has always been a living presence in India, at least in Bengal. This may be true for other parts of India too. Thanks to the late Janakiballabha Bhattacharya, Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, Dakshinaranjan Bhattacharya Shastri, Hemanta Kumar Gangopadhyaya (Ganguly) who wrote mostly in Bangla, and

others, Indian Materialism has never been absent from the philosophical scene here. Idealists of many hues, both religious and non-religious, had to reckon with Materialism both in classrooms and in their writings. I, in my own humble way, have contributed to the study of Materialism by writing more often in Bangla than in English. My Bangla book, *Cārvākacarcā*<sup>49</sup> is a collection of articles dealing with many issues not covered (or barely mentioned) in my *Studies on the Cārvāka/Lokāyata*. For example, a small work edited and translated by F.W. Thomas called *Bṛhaspati Sūtra* is no longer considered worth discussing in the West. But it has been taken more seriously in India due to the fact that scholars like Haraprasad Shastri and Dakshinaranjan Shastri referred to it. So I had to write something in Bangla to show that the work was full of self-contradictions and a forgery to boot. I have not written anything in English on the Jābāli episode in the *Rāmāyana* (Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa) although Jābāli definitely represents pre-Cārvāka Materialism. Paraśurāma (pseudonym of Rajsekhar Basu, a brilliant short story writer in Bangla), once wrote a classic story called *Jābāli* which is still enjoyed by all.<sup>50</sup> Thus Materialism has been made known to common readers as well. I, therefore, compared different re-visions of the *Rāmāyana*, more particularly the Gauḍīya version (it was first edited and translated into Italian by Gaspare Gorresio).<sup>51</sup> Similarly there is a late Sanskrit play, *Vidvanmodataranḡiṇī*, a kind of a digest of all philosophies known to its author, Cirañjīva Śarmā (Bhaṭṭācārya) (to the best of my knowledge and belief, no relation of mine!). The play is not read much outside Bengal. But it has been translated more than once, both into Bangla and English. So I had to reckon with this work with a view to demonstrating that its author had mixed up all *nāstikas* (the Buddhists, the Jains and the Cārvākas) in his representation of Materialism. This way the study of Indian Materialism has never been dead in India, at least in Bengal.

I should add that recently there has been a resurgence of the study of Indian Materialism in Japan and the West as well, because of the new fillip given to it by Dharmakīrti studies, thanks to the works brought from Tibet by that great Marxist scholar-traveller, Rāhula Sāṃkrtyāyana. It is absolutely necessary to know the views of those whom Dharmakīrti and his commentators refer to. One has to learn in greater detail the views of Indian materialists and others whom they sought to refute. Franco's monograph, *Dharmakīrti on Compassion and Rebirth* is a case in point.<sup>52</sup> One whole chapter in it, the fourth, is devoted to the Cārvāka/Lokāyata.

It is now impossible to forget all about Indian Materialism or dismiss it simply as a philosophy of reckless Hedonism.

<sup>49</sup> Bhattacharya (2010a).

<sup>50</sup> Basu (1981). 'Jābāli' was first published in 1927 AD.

<sup>51</sup> Gorresio (1843-58).

<sup>52</sup> Franco (1997).



KDT: What I find reassuring on this point is that, also and mostly thanks to your work, Cārvāka philosophy can now be reconsidered in a thorough manner. Now, and this is my concluding question, I would like to ask you if you are still working on Cārvāka/Lokāyata and, if yes, in which direction are moving your studies, and which are the subjects that you are investigating at the moment?

RB: I am at present engaged in studying various aspects of the doctrine of *svabhāva*, a ‘lost’ philosophy that can be traced back to the time of the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*. I have already published a few papers in some Indian journals and one in the Halbfass Memorial Volume.<sup>53</sup> They, I hope, will throw more light on the ‘prehistory’ of Indian Materialism. I would like to find how and from when *svabhāvavāda* and the Cārvāka/Lokāyata coalesced, how *svabhāva* came to mean both accidentalism and determinism. As usual, the amount of material is scanty, so one has to fill in the gaps with reasonable conjectures.

KDT: So, looking forward to reading your next book (why not a collection of essays on *svabhāva*?), I thank you again, dear professor, for this interesting conversation.

RB: Well, I do plan to prepare a book exactly on this subject in near future.

Dear Krishna, I too thank you for offering me an opportunity to talk about Indian Materialism and pay my homage to my predecessors. A line in the *Atharvaveda* runs as follows: *idam nama ṛṣibhyaḥ pūrvajēbhyaḥ pūrvebhyaḥ pathikṛdbhyaḥ* («This is paying obeisance to the former-born, the elder, the path-maker sages»)<sup>54</sup> I can do no better than quoting it for the benefit of all.

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<sup>53</sup> See Bhattacharya (2001, 2002b, 2005b, 2006, 2007).

<sup>54</sup> *Atharvaveda* 18.2.2cd.

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## SUMMARY

In this paper, which has the structure of an interview, Ramkrishna Bhattacharya answers questions on several aspects concerning the Cārvāka/Lokāyata philosophy. Taking Bhattacharya's 2009 book *Studies on the Cārvāka/Lokāyata* as a starting point, the discussion, beginning from Bhattacharya's personal experience in the field of the Cārvāka/Lokāyata studies, develops mainly through the ontology, epistemology and ethics of Indian materialists. Cārvāka/Lokāyata ontology accounts for only four elements (earth, water, fire and wind) as primary constituents of whatever exists; however, in later times a, so to speak, 'reformed' Materialism took place, according to which also other primary elements would be admitted, opening in this way the door – Bhattacharya argues – to some sort of idealism. The epistemology is of a perception-based kind: being perception the most reliable means of knowledge, inference is accordingly accepted only if and when supported by the senses (consequently, gods, the afterlife, destiny or fate are all to be denied from an epistemological point of view). Despite the criticism put forward by some ancient thinkers, according to whom the Cārvāka/Lokāyata would have professed an ethical view, rooted in an 'eat, drink and be merry' lifestyle, nowhere the attested primary sources at our disposal testify such a Hedonistic approach. Moreover, the problem of the paucity of direct and authentic Cārvāka/Lokāyata fragments is also dealt with, along with the explanation of why Jayarāṣi's *Tattvopaplavasīṃha* should not be considered a text on/of Materialism, as some scholar seems instead to suggest.

*Keywords:* Cārvāka, Lokāyata, Materialism, Ramkrishna Bhattacharya

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#### ARTICOLI

FRANCESCA BELLINO, Manoscritti e testimonianze orali del Nord Africa: la spedizione contro il re al-Ġitrīf nel Wādī al-Saysabān (1-39); KHALID SINDAWI, The Abbasid Vizier ‘Alī b. Yaḡḡīn (124-182/741-798). The Man and His Role in Early Šī‘ite History (41-59); PELIN ŞAHİN TEKİNALP, Mount Vesuvius in Ottoman Wall Paintings in the Context of Ottoman-Italian Relations (61-67); MARIA RITA CASTALDI, La valenza in accadico ed ebraico biblico: alternanza sintattica e derivazione causativa (69-86); GIANCARLO TOLONI, Ahiqar nel libro di Tobia (87-114); DORIS METH SRINIVASAN, Childbirth, Childhood and the Magico-Religious World of Transformations (115-135); ANNA MARIA QUAGLIOTTI, Siddhārtha’s Cutting of his Hair: Interpretations and its Meaning (137-147); GIULIA RAMPOLLA, Figli della globalizzazione: gli scrittori cinesi post-Ottanta tra web, seduzioni commerciali e aspirazioni letterarie (149-181).

#### NOTE E DISCUSSIONI

KRISHNA DEL TOSO, The Wolf’s Footprints: Indian Materialism in Perspective. An Annotated Conversation with Ramkrishna Bhattacharya (183-204); GIUSEPPE FERRARO, A proposito di una recente interpretazione di *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 5.46 (205-213); UBALDO IACCARINO, Le attività marittimo-commerciali di Cina e Giappone nei secoli XVI-XIX. A proposito di tre libri recenti (215-225).

#### RECENSIONI (227-252)

Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, Angel Urbán (a c.), *Sacred text. Explorations in lexicography* (Riccardo Contini); Fabian Käs, *Die Mineralien in der arabischen Pharmakognosie. Eine Konkordanz zur mineralischen Materia medica der klassischen arabischen Heilmittelkunde nebst überlieferungsgeschichtlichen Studien* (Francesca Bellino); Werner Diem, *Arabische Briefe aus dem 10.-16. Jahrhundert* (Francesca Bellino); Peter Behnsted, Manfred Woidich (eds.), *Wortatlas der arabischen Dialekte*. Band I: *Mensch, Natur, Fauna und Flora*. Band II: *Materielle Kultur* (Francesca Bellino); Beatrice Gruendler with the Assistance of Michael Cooperson (eds.), *Classical Arabic Humanities in their Own Terms. Festschrift for Wolfhart Heinrichs on his 65th Birthday Presented by His Students and Colleagues* (Francesca Bellino); Jérémie Schiettecatte, *D’Aden à Zafar. Villes d’Arabie du Sud Préislamique* (Romolo Loreto); Nina Ergin (a c.), *Bathing Culture of Anatolian Civilizations: Architecture, History, and Imagination* (Valentina Laviola); Rosa Maria Cimino, *Leggende e fasti della corte dei “Grandi re”. Dipinti murali di Udaipur, Rajasthan* (Stefania Cavaliere); Anne O’Keeffe, Michael McCarthy (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Corpus Linguistics* (Patrizia Zotti).

#### NECROLOGI (253-297)

*Giovanni Maria D’Erme* (Natalia L. Tornesello), *Alessandro de Maigret* (Romolo Loreto), *Luciano Petech* (Giacomella Orofino).