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MĪMĀMSĀ VERSUS VAIŠESIKA Pārthasārathi and Kumārila on the Creation and Dissolution of the World*

In a recent publication Peri Sarveswara Sharma (1994: 60) draws attention to a passage in Pārthasārathi Miśra's commentary Nyāyaratnā-kara on Kumārila Bhaṭṭa's Ślokavārttika, where the former, so he claims, summarises the views of Praśastapāda, author of the Padārthadharma-sangraha, better known as Praśastapādabhāṣya. Pārthasārathi's passage occurs under verse 66 of the chapter called "Sambandhākṣepaparihāra", and reads as follows¹:

vaiśesikās w āhuh: anādir ayam srstipralayapravāhah, brāhmamānena varsaśatānte bhagavato maheśvarasya samastajagatsamhārecchā bhayati, tadicchāyadīśyarātmasamyogāt paramānusu vibhāgakarmāny utpadyante, taiś ca sarvesu mitho vibhaktesu yāvad dvyaņukam sarvāvayavināśād paramāṇava eva kevalāh pārthivāpyataijasavāyavīyā vyomakāladigātmamanāṃsi cāvatisthante, dharmādharmāś ca tāvantam kālam īśvarecchāpratibaddhāh phalam aprayacchantas tesu tesv ātmasv avatisthante, punas tāvati kāle gate tasyaiva bhagavatah karmopabhogaśūnyān ātmano drstvā anukampāparavaśasya sisrksā bhavati, tatah sisrksāvadīśvarātmasamyogāt paramānusu karmotpattes tadvaśān mithah samyuktais tair dvyanukādikramena pṛthivyādaya ārabhyante, tatas tadicchāvaśād evāpagatapratibandhair abhivyaktasāmarthyair vividhaih karmabhir vividhānekanarapaśvādibhedabhinnam bhūtajātam ārabhyate, tatah sa eva maheśvaro dharmādharmapratipādanāya vedān srjati l tad evam pratisargam anye 'nye ca vedāh, pravāhatas tu vedāh srstipralayāś cānādayah, kartā ca maheśvaro 'nādir eva, iha ca paramānūnām upādānatvān nānupādānatvam sṛṣter iti l

^{*} I thank Gerdi Gerschheimer for help and advice.

¹ NyR 5.15.66, pp. 465-466.

Pārthasārathi does not say that he here summarises the views of Prasastapada. It is however true that the Padarthadharmasangraha contains a passage which in its contents is close to the above one. The relevant parts of it read²:

ihedanīm caturnām mahābhūtānām srstisamhāravidhir ucyate \ brāhmeņa mānena varsasatānte [...] mahesvarasya samjihīrsāsamakālam śarīrendriyamahābhūtopanibandhakānām sarvātmagatānām adrstānām vrttinirodhe sati maheśvarecchātmānusamyogajakarmabhyah śarīrendriyakāranānuvibhāgebhyas tatsamyoganivrttau tesām āparamāņvanto vināśah | tathā prthivyudakajvalanapavanānām api mahābhūtānām anenaiva kramenottarasminn uttarasmin sati pūrvasya pūrvasya vināśah l tatah pravibhaktāh paramānavo 'vatisthante dharmādharmasamskārānuviddhās cātmānas tāvantam eva kālam I tatah punah prāninām bhogabhūtaye maheśvarasisrksānantaram sarvātmagatavrttilabdhādṛṣṭāpekṣebhyas tatsamyogebhyah pavanaparamānusu karmotpattau tesām parasparasamyogebhyo dvyanukādiprakramena mahān vāyuh samutpann[ah] etc.

There can be no doubt that Parthasarathi's account contains much that is also found in the Padarthadharmasangraha. It even looks as if Parthasārathi misinterpreted a compound used by Praśastapāda. The latter's passage contains the ambiguous expression maheśvarecchātmānusamyogajakarmabhyah. The part maheśvarecchātmānusamyoga means, according to the commentators: "the desire of God and contact (or: the contacts) between the souls and the atoms"3. The whole expression maheśvarecchātmānusamyogajakarma- must therefore mean: "movements arisen from the desire of God and contact between the souls and the atoms". Parthasārathi's passage, on the other hand, has the phrase tadicchāvadīśvarātmasamyogāt paramānusu vibhāgakarmāny utpadyante: "movements of separation arise in the atoms as a result of contact between God characterised by that desire on the one hand and the souls on the other". It is hard to imagine that such a position was ever held by a Vaisesika. But it is conceivable that this position was ascribed to the Vaisesikas as a result of a careless reading of the ambiguous expression maheśvarecchātmānusamyoga. Grammatically this could mean "contact between the desire of

² WI pp. 9-10, §§ 57-58.

God, the souls, and the atoms". As stated above, such an interpretation does not easily fit into Vaisesika doctrine.

Do we have to conclude from all this that Pārthasārathi here summarises, i.e. reformulates in his own words, the passage from the Padarthadharmasangraha? Or did he have another source, which he perhaps quotes verbatim? It is to be observed that, in spite of the similarities, there are also some important differences between Pārthasārathi's passage and the Padārthadharmasangraha. It is known that the Vedantin Sankara was acquainted with a Vaisesika account of the creation of the world different from that in the Padarthadharmasangraha, and which most probably belonged to the earlier, but now lost, Katandi of Rāvana⁴. Is it possible that Pārthasārathi, too, used that text?

This possibility can be discarded. Rāvana's Katandī did, to be sure, contain an account of the creation of the world (and probably one of its destruction), but one in which there was no place for a creator God. Indeed, Śankara criticises it for this very reason. Prasastapada may have been the first Vaisesika author to introduce the notion of a creator (and destroyer) God.

What about Prasastapada's Tīkā on the Katandī, which has not been preserved either? Is it possible that Pārthasārathi used a Vaiśesika account of the creation and destruction of the world which he found in that text? Are the elements recorded by Parthasarathi that have no parallels in the Padarthadharmasangraha to be explained as borrowings from Praśastapāda's Tīkā?

We will see that this too is highly improbable. Pārthasārathi attributes to the Vaisesikas an idea which they are unlikely to have held. It is the idea that God interrupts the workings of karmic retribution at the time of cosmic dissolution, and ends this interruption at the time of renewed creation. We will discuss this point below.

First we consider the following. Parthasarathi's presentation of the alleged Vaisesika position introduces a passage in the Ślokavārttika in which the notion of a creator God is criticised. It is therefore conceivable that it - or at least the parts that talk about God interrupting karmic retribution - has been composed to fit the verses of Kumārila's text. Soon after this account Pārthasārathi introduces a verse of the Ślokavārttika with the words: "Concerning what has been said to the extent that deeds do not bear fruit because they are interrupted by the desire of God, [Kumārila] says"⁵. And

³ Vy I p. 98, l. 3-4: maheśvarecchā nimittakāranam, ātmanām anubhih samyogaś ca asamavāyikāranam; Ki p. 62, l. 8: maheśvarecchayā sahitā ye ātmānusāmyogāh; Ny p. 136, 1. 9: maheśvarasyecchā cātmānusamyogāś ceti vigrahah.

⁴ Bronkhorst 1996. For information about the Katandī, see Bronkhorst 1993.

⁵ NyR p. 466, l. 21: yat tūktam īśvarecchāpratibaddhatvāt karmāni na phalantīti,

after that same verse he resumes: "But there is no proof that all deeds, without giving result, have been interrupted by the mere desire of God'."

May we conclude that already Kumārila ascribed to the Vaiśeṣikas the idea that God's mere desire interrupts the working of karma?

This is far from obvious. Kumārila does not mention God's desire, nor indeed anyone else's, in the context of the destruction of the world (which he does not accept). Quite on the contrary, he speaks of a deed (karman) of Prajāpati. The verses concerned read as follows⁷:

pralaye 'pi pramāṇaṃ naḥ sarvocchedātmake na hi | na ca prayojanaṃ tena syāt prajāpatikarmaṇā || 68 || na ca karmavatāṃ yuktā sthitis tadbhogavarjitā | karmāntaraniruddhaṃ hi phalaṃ na syāt kriyāntarāt || 69 || sarveṣāṃ tu phalāpetaṃ na sthānam upapadyate | na cāpy anupabhogo 'sau kasyacit karmaṇaḥ phalam || 70 || aśeṣakarmanāśe vā punaḥ ṣṛṣṭir na yujyate |

This means:

68. For we have no proof for a dissolution in the form of universal destruction. And that activity (*karman*) on the part of Prajāpati would serve no purpose.

69. Moreover, it is not possible that beings that have engaged in activity (karmavat) would stop without experiencing [the results of] those [activities]; for the fruit deriving from one action cannot be stopped by another activity (karman).

70. The coming to a stop of all [beings] without [experiencing] the fruits [of their activities] is not possible. And nor is that absence of experience itself the fruit of any activity (karman).

71ab. Alternatively, in case all activities (karman) have been destroyed, no new creation is possible.

This passage repeatedly uses the word karman, a notoriously difficult term to translate. It means primarily activity, but can also refer to the mechanism that brings about karmic retribution. In the case of Vaiśeṣika this means that dharma and adharma, or adṛṣṭa, might conceivably be referred to by this term. It certainly never refers to the desire of God, especially not if, as Pārthasārathi maintains, God's desire interferes with

the process of karmic retribution. Kumārila's text speaks about cosmic dissolution as an activity, most probably an activity of Prajāpati, and there is no reason whatsoever to assume that God's desire played a special role in this event.

This impression is confirmed by the fact that God's desire does enter the picture in Kumārila's then following account of renewed creation. God's desire is here presented, hypothetically, as the cause of karmic retribution, and is indeed contrasted with activity. The verses concerned read⁸:

karmanām vāpy abhivyaktau kim nimittam tadā bhavet || 71 || īśvarecchā yadīṣyate saiva syāl lokakāranam |
īśvarecchāvaśitve hi niṣphalā karmakalpanā || 72 || na cānimittayā yuktam utpattum hīśvarecchayā |
yad vā tasyā nimittam yat tad bhūtānām bhaviṣyati || 73 ||

71cd. Or if [you maintain that] activities manifest themselves [anew at the occasion of a new creation], what would cause this?

72. If you propose God's desire, then let that be the cause of the world. For it would be pointless to imagine [the efficacy of] actions (karman) if [the creation of the world] is controlled by God's desire.

73. Moreover, God's desire cannot come into existence without having itself a cause; or rather, the cause of that [desire] will be the cause [of the creation of] living beings.

God's desire, then, is introduced in the discussion of the creation of the world, but plays no role in its dissolution. Kumārila's opponents rather looked upon the destruction of the world as due to the activity of Prajāpati. There is nothing typically Vaiśeṣika in this part of the discussion.

Pārthasārathi, on the other hand, uses this passage as a pretext to ascribe a certain position to the Vaiśeṣikas. To understand what is at stake, some general reflections are called for.

The notion of a creator God had been introduced into Vaisesika (perhaps by Prasastapāda) for a special reason. It solved a problem which had occupied the thinkers of that school. It answered the question how deeds of living beings can bring about situations that punish or reward them. In other words, it helped to understand the mechanism of karmic retribution. Earlier Vaisesikas had tried to solve this problem differently. They had claimed that deeds and their retributions are linked through the

⁶ NyR p. 466, l. 24-25: sarvakarmanām tu phalam adadatām īśvarecchāmātreņa pratibaddhānām avasthānam apramānakam iti.
⁷ ŚIV 5.15.68-71ab.

⁸ ŚIV 5.15.71cd-73.

intermediary of two qualities of the soul, *dharma* and *adharma*. The soul of each living creature being omnipresent and eternal, these qualities could be thought of as acting at a distance, and at a moment of time far removed from the deed that had caused them. However, foresight and conscious design could not be attributed to these qualities. These were rather linked to other qualities of the soul – such as *buddhi* 'knowledge' – that are not involved in the mechanism of karmic retribution. How then can these unconscious qualities act as if guided by foresight and conscious design?

The answer proposed by Praśastapāda is simple. They are guided by foresight and conscious design. There is an all-powerful creator God who arranges things in such a way that dharma and adharma bring about the desired results. The following passage from the Padārthadharmasangraha shows this⁹:

When in this way the four composite elements have come into existence, a great egg (mahad andam) is formed, caused solely by God's (maheśvara) meditation / volition (abhidhyāna), out of atoms of fire with an admixture of atoms of earth¹⁰. In it [God] creates Brahmā, with four faces like so many lotuses, the grandfather of all worlds (sarvalokapitāmaham brahmānam), and all worlds; he then enjoins him with the duty of creating living things. That Brahmā, thus enjoined by God, and endowed with abundant knowledge, complete absence of passion and absolute power, knows the effects of the deeds of living beings; he creates the Prajāpatis, his mind-created (mānasa) sons, with knowledge, experience and span of life in accordance with their [past] deeds; [he also creates] the Manus, Devas, Rṣis and groups of Pitrs (pitrgana), the four varnas out of his mouth, arms, thighs and feet (mukhabāhūrupādatah) [respectively], and the other living beings, high and low (uccāvacāni bhūtāni); he then connects them with Dharma,

Other authors of the Nyāya and Vaisesika schools confirm the importance of this side of God's activity. They came to admit that they could not make sense of karmic retribution without assuming an omnipotent God supervising the process¹¹.

Unfortunately for the Mīmāmsakas this solution was not open to them. They were indissolubly linked to the idea that the Veda is without beginning (not uttered by God, as the Vaisesikas had it), having been continuously handed down in a world which, too, is without beginning, and without periodic destructions and recreations. They did however accept the principle of karmic retribution. But unlike the Vaisesikas they had to maintain that karmic retribution can work, and can be understood, without assuming that it is guided by foresight and conscious design.

We now understand why Pārthasārathi, instead of presenting the notion of God as a means to explain karmic retribution, depicts it as interfering with it. The period of dissolution of the world, in particular, is described as one in which "dharma and adharma, not producing an effect because interrupted by the desire of God, remain in their respective souls" (dharmādharmās ca ... īśvarecchāpratibaddhāh phalam aprayacchantas tesu tesv ātmasv avatisthante). And the subsequent renewed creation of living beings is made possible by the removal of those restraints: "Then many different living beings, such as humans, animals, etc., are produced by the various deeds (karman) whose potencies have become manifest once the interruptions have disappeared due to the power of [God's] desire [to create]" (tatas tadicchāvaśād evāpagatapratibandhair abhivvaktasāmarthyair vividhaih karmabhir vividhānekanarapasvādibhedabhinnam bhūtajātam ārabhyate). In other words, if only God did not interfere, karmic retribution would pursue its normal course, and there would be no destruction and new creation of the world. This position is attributed to the Vaisesikas. The Mīmāmsā position is closely related to this: There is no creator God who interferes, and karmic retribution does pursue its course, not interrupted by destructions and renewed creations of the world.

Do we have to conclude that Pārthasārathi made up the position he ascribes to the Vaiśeṣikas? The answer must be negative. Jayanta Bhaṭṭa's Nyāyamañjarī (ca. 900 C.E.)¹² contains some passages that are of interest.

⁹ WI p. 11, § 59: evam samutpanneşu caturşu mahābhūteşu maheśvarasyābhidhyānamātrāt taijasebhyo 'nubhyah pārthivaparamānusahitebhyo (variants: pārthivādiparamānusahitebhyo, pārthivānusahitebhyo) mahad andam ārabhyate (some editions read utpadyate) | tasmimś caturvadanakamalam sarvalokapitāmaham (variant: caturvadanakamalasakalalokapitāmaham) brahmānam sakalabhuvanasahitam utpādya prajāsarge viniyunkte (variant: niyunkte) | sa ca maheśvarena viniyukto (variant: niyukto) brahmā 'tiśayajñānavairāgyaiśvaryasampannah prāṇinām (variant: sarvaprāṇinām) karmavipākam viditvā karmānurūpajñānabhogāyuṣah sutān prajāpatīn mānasān manudevarṣipitṛganān (variant: manūn deva^o) mukhabāhūrupādataś caturo varnān anyāni coccāvacāni bhūtāni (variants: bhūtāni ca; anyāni coccāvacāni ca sṛṣṭvā) sṛṣṭvā, āśayānurūpair dharmajñānavairāgyaiśvaryaih samyojayatīti ||.

¹⁰ Atoms of fire with an admixture of atoms of earth constitute, in Vaisesika, gold.

¹¹ See Bronkhorst 2000.

¹² On the date of Jayanta Bhatta, see Hacker 1951: 162 (112).

First there is a passage that presents a view that is rejected by the critic of the idea of a creator God, and which may therefore represent Jayanta's own position¹³:

atha brāhmena mānena samvatsarasatanisthām adhitisthati paramesthini mahesvarasya samjihīrṣā jāyate | tayā tirohitasvaphalārambhasaktīni karmāni sambhavantīti sampadyate sakalabhuvanapralayaḥ | punas ca tāvaty eva rātriprāye kāle vyatīte sistkṣā bhavati bhagavataḥ | tayā 'bhivyaktasaktīni karmāṇi kāryam ārabhante iti |

Then, when Brahman supervises the conclusion of hundred Brahmanyears, a desire to destroy arises in the Supreme Lord. On account of that [desire] the activities (karman) loose the power to bring about their results, and so the dissolution of all worlds comes about. And again, when the same amount of time, which is like the night, has passed, a desire to create arises in the Lord. On account of that [desire to create] the power of the activities manifests itself, and the activities bring about their effect.

Later in the same discussion about God, the *Nyāyamañjarī* refers back to this passage and states ¹⁴:

nanu ca yugapad eva sakalajagatpralayakaraṇam anupapannam, avināśinām karmaṇām phalopabhogapratibandhāsambhavād iti coditam | na yuktam etat | īśvarecchāpratibaddhānām karmaṇām stimita-śaktīnām avasthānāt | tadicchāpreritāni karmāṇi phalam ādadhati | tadicchāpratibaddhāni ca tatrodāsate | kasmād evam iti cet | acetanānām cetanānadhiṣṭhitānām svakāryakaraṇānupalabdheḥ |

It has been objected that the simultaneous dissolution of the entire universe is not possible, because it is not possible to obstruct the experiences of their results of the activities (karman) which are undestructable. This is not correct. Because the activities are obstructed by God's desire, and their power [to bring about results] is paralysed. Activities that are impelled by His desire bring about results, and those that are obstructed by His desire remain inactive. If [you ask] why it is like this, [the answer is:] because it has never been observed that unconscious things, not supervised by someone conscious, bring about their effects.

The final argument – unconscious things, not supervised by someone conscious, cannot bring about their effects – is not new, as we have seen. To bring about their effects, activities have to be guided by a conscious being; in other words, they have to be impelled by His desire. This idea may be behind the very introduction of God in the Vaisesika system. The present passage expands the idea by adding that God's desire can also obstruct activities; this explains the simultaneous destruction of the entire universe. But this passage does not say that God only obstructs activities, and that without God's interference they would bring about their results just as well. The final remark "it has never been observed that unconscious things, not supervised by someone conscious, bring about their effects" proves the opposite. It had to be a Mīmāṃsaka; viz. Pārthasārathi, who turned the argument on its head. For him God interferes with the working of karma, and nothing else.

Not all Vaisesikas looked upon God's role as that of interrupting the process of karmic retribution. Prasastapāda, as we have seen, states the opposite. And Udayana's Kiranāvalī, while commenting Prasastapāda's phrase "when the adrṣṭas have stopped their activity" (adṛṣṭānāṃ vṛṭṭinirodhe sati), explains 15: pralayahetunādṛṣṭena pratibandhe sati "when there is interruption [of the adṛṣṭas] on account of the adṛṣṭa which is the cause of the destruction [of the world]". Adṛṣṭa, singular or plural, is synonymous with dharma and adharma, the two qualities that are responsible for karmic retribution. The destruction of the world itself, according to Udayana, is due to dharma and adharma, and not to the interruption of their activity caused by the desire of God.

But even Pārthasārathi himself describes, in his Śāstradīpikā, the Vaiśeṣika position in a way which does not differ so blatantly from the texts of that school. (It may here be recalled that the Śāstradīpikā was composed before the Nyāyaratnākara)¹⁶. We read here (p. 115):

na hi pralaye paramāṇūnāṃ pralayo 'smākam (i.e., vaiśeṣikānām) asti sāṃkhyādivat | kāryadravyāṇi tu dvyaṇukādīni sarvāṇy eveśvarecchayā viśliṣṭāvayavāni pralīyante, paramāṇavas tu mitho 'saṃyuktās tiṣṭhanti vyomādayaś ca kṣetrajñāś cātmīyadharmādharmayuktā evāvatiṣṭhante | sargakāle punar īśvarecchāṃ kṣetrajñādṛṣṭaṃ ca nimittam āsādya paramāṇuṣu karmāṇy utpadyante tadvaśāc ca mithaḥ saṃyuktāś catuṣṭaye 'pi paramāṇavo dvyaṇukādikrameṇa yathāsvaṃ pṛthivyādikam bhūtacatustayam ārabhante | nimittabhūtaksetrajñādrstavaici-

¹³ NM p. 490/177.

¹⁴ NM p. 510/186.

¹⁵ Ki p. 62, l. 6-7.

¹⁶ See Ramaswami Sastri 1937.

tryāc ca jarāyujāṇḍajodbhijjasvedajabhinnam sarīrabhedam īsvarec-chākāritasaṃyogaviśeṣāt paramāṇava ārabhante |

For according to us Vaisesikas, unlike the Sāmkhyas, atoms do not dissolve in the dissolution [of the world]. Composite substances (kāryadravya), on the other hand, that is to say all dyads and [larger objects], dissolve, their parts having been separated by God's desire; but the atoms, without mutual connection, remain, and so do [the omnipresent substances] such as ether, and the souls, the latter accompanied each by their own dharma and adharma. At the time of a new creation movements arise in the atoms, the cause of which is God's desire as well as the dharma and adharma (adrsta) of the souls; the four kinds of atoms, which by virtue of these [movements] are [now] joined together, form the four elements earth etc., each their own, in the sequence which begins with the dyad. And on account of the variety of dharma and adharma in the souls, which cause [the process], the atoms, because of the special connections brought about by God's desire, form a variety of bodies, viz. born from the womb, born from an egg, sprouting, and born from perspiration.

* * *

We can conclude that Pārthasārathi in his Nyāyaratnākara (but not yet in his Śāstradīpikā) brings to light a fundamental difference in attitude between Mīmāmsā and Vaiśeṣika with regard to the mechanism of karmic retribution. The Vaiśeṣikas had come to admit that this mechanism is hard to explain in non-teleological terms, and without assuming a conscious agent in the process. They introduced the notion of a creator God in order to avoid this difficulty. The Mīmāmsā thinkers were basically confronted with the same problem, but could not accept the Vaiśeṣika solution without fundamentally changing their system. All they could do was ignore the problem, and criticise the notion of a creator God on other grounds. This is what Kumārila does. His commentator Pārthasārathi goes one step further. He depicts the Vaiśeṣika system as not really needing the idea of a creator God. We have seen that in so doing he painted an incorrect picture of that system.

ABBREVIATIONS

Ki	Praśastapādabhāṣya with the commentary Kiraṇāvalī of Udayana.	
KlSchr	Kleine Schriften (in the series of the Glasenapp-Stiftung), Wiesb	aden,
	Stuttgart.	

MV	Nyāyamañjarī of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa.
Ny	Nyāyakandalī of Śrīdhara.
NyR	Nyāyaratnākara of Pārthasārathi Miśra (for the edition see ŚIV).
ŚIV	Ślokavārttika of Kumārila Bhatta, with the commentary Nyāyaratnākara of
	Pārthasārathi Miśra.
Vv	Vyomavatī of Vyomasiva.
WI	Word Index to the Prasastapādabhāṣya, see Bronkhorst and Ramseier 1994.

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