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MIMĀMSĀ VERSUS VAIŚEŚIKA
Parthasārathi 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 Parthasārathi Miśra’s commentary Nyāyatānākara on Kumārila Bhaṭṭa’s Ślokāvārttika, where the former, so he claims, summarises the views of Praśastapāda, author of the Padārthīdharmasāṅgraha, better known as Praśastapādabhāṣya. Parthasārathi’s passage occurs under verse 66 of the chapter called “Sambandhāṭṣepaparihāra”, and reads as follows:

vaśeśikās ev āhuḥ: anādir ayaṁ sṛṣṭipralayaapravāhah, brāhmamānena varṣaṣatānte bhagavato mahēśvarasya samastajagatsaṃhāreccā bhavati, tadacchāvadhṛtvarātamasanyogam paramāṇuṣu vibhāgakārmāny upadhyante, taś ca sarveṣu mitho vibhakteṣu yāvad dyaṇukam sarvāyuvaṇīṇāh paramāṇava eva kevalaḥ pārthivaprayatajasvāvyāvyāya vyomakāladiṣṭamamanāṁ caivaśiṣṭhaṁ, dharmādharmāṁ ca tāvan- tam kālam śvareccāḥpratibuddhah phalam aprayacchantaṁ teṣu teṣu ātmasya avatīṣṭhaṁ, punas tāvatī kāle gate tasyātva bhagavataḥ karmo- pabhogaśāyāṁ ātmano dṛṣṭvā anukampāparavaśasya sīrṣaṁ bhavati, tataḥ sīrṣāvadhṛtvarātamasanyogat paramāṇuṣu karmapatteṣ tavasaṁ mithaḥ sanyuktāṁ tair dyaṇukādkramena prīhyādaya ārāhanye, tatas tadacchāvadhṛt evaṃ pratibuddhah abhivyaktasamānarthyaḥ vi- vidhāṁ karmany vibhūhānekanaranapadadibhadhinnāṁ bhūtajātaṁ ārāhyante, tataḥ sa eva mahēśvaro dharmādharmapratipādayaḥ vedān srjati t tad evaṁ pratisargam anye ’nye ca vedāḥ, pravāhatac tu vedāḥ sṛṣṭipralayaḥ cānādayaḥ, kartā ca mahēśvaro ‘nādir eva, iha ca para- māṇūnāṁ upādānatvāṁ nānupādānatvāṁ srṣṭer iti

* I thank Gerti Gerschheimer for help and advice.

1 Nyā 5.15.66, pp. 465-466.
Parthasarathi does not say that he here summarises the views of Praśastapāda. It is however true that the *Padārthadharmsaṅgraha* contains a passage which in its contents is close to the above one. The relevant parts of it read:

ihedāntīn ca tatrām mahābhūtanāṃ sṛṣṭiṣamāhāravīdhār ucayate

... maheśvarasya saṃjñāhārasamākālām

śārīrendraya mahābhūtopānibhandhakānām sarvātmagatiṃ na adṛṣṭānāṃ

vṛttiṇirodhe sati maheśvaracakāmānānugājakarmabhyah

śārīrendrayaśārānudvihāgeḥvyas tatra maheśvarasvarūpānāraṃ parāmānyānāṃ

vaiśābhā brīhivyudakajalanaṇaṃmahābhūtanāṃ

anaiva kramaṇottaraśānaṃ uttaranśānāṃ pārvāya pārvāya vinaśāh

tatra prabhavahā prāpyaṃ vistiṣṭhaḥ dharmādharmasāṃkārānudvihāgeḥ
cātmānaṃ tāṇvam eva kālam tatra punah prāṇīnām bhogabhāgatyāe

mahābhūtaṃ śārīrendrayaśārānudvihāgeḥvyas tatra maheśvarasvarūpānāraṃ

pārvāya pārvāya vinaśāh pārvāya pārvāya vinaśāh
cātmānaṃ tāṇvam eva kālam tatra punah prāṇīnām bhogabhāgatyāe

There can be no doubt that Parthasarathi’s account contains much that is also found in the *Padārthadharmsaṅgraha*. It even looks as if Parthasarathi misinterpreted a compound used by Praśastapāda. The latter’s passage contains the ambiguous expression *maheśvaracakāmānānugājakarmabhyah.* The part *maheśvaracakāmānānugājaka* means, according to the commentators: “the desire of God and contact (or: the contacts) between the souls and the atoms”⁴. The whole expression *maheśvaracakāmānānugājakarma* must therefore mean: “movements arisen from the desire of God and contact between the souls and the atoms”. Parthasarathi’s passage, on the other hand, has the phrase *radīcচāvadāsvarātmanāsāmyogaḥ vihāgakarmāṃ upadyate:* “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 Vaiśeṣika. But it is conceivable that this position was ascribed to the Vaiśeṣika as a result of a careless reading of the ambiguous expression *maheśvaracakāmānānugaḥ.* Grammatically this could mean “contact between the desire of

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

Do we have to conclude from all this that Parthasarathi here summarises, i.e. reformulates in his own words, the passage from the *Padārthadharmsaṅgraha*? 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 Parthasarathi’s passage and the *Padārthadharmsaṅgraha*. It is known that the Vedāntin Śaṅkara was acquainted with a Vaiśeṣika account of the creation of the world different from that in the *Padārthadharmsaṅgraha*, and which most probably belonged to the earlier, but now lost, *Kaṭandit* of Rāvaṇa.⁵ Is it possible that Parthasarathi, too, used that text?

This possibility can be discarded. Rāvaṇa’s *Kaṭandit* 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, Śaṅkara criticises it for this very reason. Praśastapāda may have been the first Vaiśeṣika author to introduce the notion of a creator (and destroyer) God.

What about Praśastapāda’s *Tīka* on the *Kaṭandit*, which has not been preserved either? Is it possible that Parthasarathi used a Vaiśeṣika 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 *Padārthadharmsaṅgraha* to be explained as borrowings from Praśastapāda’s *Tīka*?

We will see that this too is highly improbable. Parthasarathi attributes to the Vaiśeṣikas 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 Vaiśeṣika position introduces a passage in the *Ślokaavārttika* 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 Parthasarathi introduces a verse of the *Ślokaavārttika* 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] says⁶. And

⁴ Bronkhorst 1996. For information about the *Kaṭandit*, see Bronkhorst 1993.
⁵ NyR p. 466, k. 21: yat nākṣom tivaveccaḥpratibhāvadhāvati karmāṇi na phalan ihtā, tatrāha.
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 follows:

pralaye 'pi pramāṇaṁ naḥ sarvacchedāmake na hi l
na ca pratyajanaṁ tena sāti prajāpatikarmanā l 68 l
na ca karmavatāṁ yuktā sātim tadbhogavarjitaṁ l
karmāntaraniruddhāṁ hi phalam na sāti kriyāntarāṁ l 69 l
sarveśaṁ tu phalāpetanā na sāhanam upapadyate l
na cāpy anupabhogo 'sau kasyacit karmanāḥ phalam l 70 l
aśeṣakarmanāṇe vā punaḥ śṛṣṭir na yuṣyate l

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 (karmavā) 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 read:

kari...anāṁ vāpy abhivyakataṁ kim nimittaṁ tadd bhavet l 71 l
tāvarecchāḥ yadātīyate saiva sāyā lokakāraṇam l
śivarecchaśvatāṁ hi nisphālā karmakalpanāṁ l 72 l
na cānānāṅyāyāṁ yuktāṁ utpattaṁ hiśivareccchayā l
yat vā tasyā nimittaṁ yat tad bhūtañāṁ bhāvīyatī l 73 l

71cd. Or if [you maintain that] activities manifest themselves [new 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 Vaiśeṣika (perhaps by Praśastapāda) 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 Vaiśeṣikas had tried to solve this problem differently. They had claimed that deeds and their retributions are linked through the

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6 Nyāya-P. 466, 1. 24-25: sarvackarmaṇāṁ tu phalam adadatāṁ śivarecchātaṁnāṁ pratibuddhāmnāṁ avasthānaṁ apramāṇakam iti.
7 ŚīV 5.15.68-71ab.
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 Padārthadharmasāṅgṛaha shows this:\footnote{WI p. 11, § 59: evam samutpanneṣu catuṣṭu mahābhāhiṣteṣu mahāevāryābhidyānamantarāt tajāsebhya 'nubhaya pṛthivaparamānusahitebhya (variants: pṛthivādiparamaṇusahitebhya) mahād aṣṭam ārābhaye (some editions read utpadyate) i laksmaṇa catuvadanaakamalām sarvalokākāmānaḥ brahmāṇam sakalabhumasatasmām utpadya prajāsārge viniyukte (variant: nityแท) sa ca mahēvareṇa viniyukto (variant: nityแท) brahmā 'ādāyājāna-vaṁyāsvaroṣampannaḥ prāṇān (variant: sarvaprajānān) karmavākāyaṁ vidīvā karmārūpajāhābhogiyahā sāstān prajāpati mānjātāṅ manudevajātāṅgrān (variant: maṁ déva) mukhābhūtupudāsān ca tatuvarāṁ anyānā coccāvācānā bhūtānī (variants: bhūtānī ca; anyānā coccāvācānā ca sṛṣṭā) sṛṣṭā, āśayārūpārāvāmaṇaṁvaṁyāsvaroṣaṁ samyogajāantarī II.}

When in this way the four composite elements have come into existence, a great egg (mahād aṣṭam ārābhya) is formed, caused solely by God’s (mahēvareṇa) mediation / volition (abhidyāna), out of atoms of fire with an admixture of atoms of earth\footnote{Atoms of fire with an admixture of atoms of earth constitute, in Viśeṣika, gold.} In it [God] creates Brahmā, with four faces like so many lotuses, the grandfather of all worlds (sarvalokākāmānaḥ brahmāṇam), and all worlds; he then enjoin 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 Prajāpati, his mind-created (mānasā) sons, with knowledge, experience and span of life in accordance with their [past] deeds; [he also creates] the Manus, Devas, Rūṣis and groups of Pitrīs (pitrīgaṇa), the four varṇas out of his mouth, arms, thighs and feet (mukhābhūtupudātāḥ) [respectively], and the other living beings, high and low (uccācāvācānā bhūtānī); he then connects them with Dharma,

knowledge, absence of passion and power in accordance with their residue of past deeds.

Other authors of the Nyāya and Viśeṣika 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 process\footnote{See Bronthorpe 2000.}

Unfortunately for the Mīmāṃsakas 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 Viśeṣikas 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 Viśeṣikas 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 Pārthaśārathi, 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” (dharmanārman ca ... śivacārpaśāraptādāh phalam aprayacchantaṁ tesaṁ tesaṁ ātmav avatiṣṭhante). 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 evāṇaṇāpāṇaṁ abhiḥvaṁyāsvaroṣaṁ evaṁkarmanmanyāraṁbhogiyahā sāstān prajāpati mānjātāṅ manudevajātāṅgrān (variant: maṁ déva) mukhābhūtupudāsān ca tatuvarāṁ anyānā coccāvācānā bhūtānī (variants: bhūtānī ca; anyānā coccāvācānā ca sṛṣṭā) sṛṣṭā, āśayārūpārāvāmaṇaṁvaṁyāsvaroṣaṁ samyogajāantarī II).

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 Viśeṣikas. The Mīmāṃsā 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 Pārthaśārathi made up the position he ascribes to the Viśeṣikas? The answer must be negative. Jayanta Bhaṭṭā’s Nyāyamaṇḍari (ca. 900 C.E.)\footnote{On the date of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, see Hacker 1951: 162 (112).} contains some passages that are of interest.
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 position:

\[ \text{atha brāhmaṇa māṇena samvatsaraśatanisthām adhititiḥati para-} \\
\text{meṣṭhini mahēsvarasya sanjīhayā āhyate | tayaḥ śrīnandivatāḥ śri-} \\
\text{bhasaktiṁ karmāṇi śambhavānti sampadyaṁ sakalabhavanapralayaḥ |} \\
\text{punāś ca tāvata eva nātirprāye kāle vyattte śīṣyāṁ bhavati bhagavataḥ |} \\
\text{tayaḥ śhīvyaśaśaktiṁ karmāṇi kāryam ardhante iti} \]

Then, when Brahman supervises the conclusion of hundred Brahman-years, a desire to destroy arises in the Supreme Lord. On account of that desire the activities (karma) 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 Nyāyamaṅgalya refers back to this passage and states:

\[ \text{na ca yugapad eva sakalajagatprayakaram anupapannam,} \]
\[ \text{avināśitāṁ karmāṇāṁ phalopahogapratiśamabhadham iti coditam} \]
\[ \text{na yuktam etat | śvācchātāpratibuddhanāṁ karmāṇaṁ stimita-} \]
\[ \text{śaktiṁ avasthānāṁ tadvicchānātāṁ karmāṇāṁ phalam ādattā} \]
\[ \text{tadvicchātāpratibuddhānāṁ ca tatrodāsate | kasmād evam iti cet} \]
\[ \text{acaitānāṁ cetanānāṁ hṛiśhūtanāṁ svakāryaṁ aranyupadhrāve} \]

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 (karma) which are indestructible. 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 Vaiśeṣika 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 Mimāṃsaka; viz, Pārthaśārathi, who turned the argument on its head. For him God interferes with the working of karma, and nothing else.

Not all Vaiśeṣikas looked upon God's role as that of interrupting the process of karmic retribution, Praśastapāda, as we have seen, states the opposite. And Udayana's Kriṇāvali, while commenting Praśastapāda's phrase "when the adṛṣṭa have stopped their activity" (adṛṣṭaṁ vṛttinirodhe sati), explains: praḷayatetunāḍṛṣṭena pratibandhe sati "when there is interruption [of the adṛṣṭa] 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 Pārthaśārathi himself describes, in his Śāstrapiṇḍikā, the Vaiśeṣika position in a way which does not differ so bluntly from the texts of that school. (It may here be recalled that the Śāstrapiṇḍikā was composed before the Nyāyaratnakara).

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13 NM p. 490/177.
14 NM p. 510/186.

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15 Ki p. 62, l. 6-7.
16 See Ramaswami Sastri 1937.
tryć ca jaruyāṇa-jodhāja-svedāja-hinnam ṣaṭirahadām tīvareccchakāraitasanyogaviśeṣāt paramāṇavā drabhante

For according to us Vaiśeṣikas, unlike the Śāṅkhyas, atoms do not dissolve in the dissolution of the world. Composite substances (kāryadṛavya), on the other hand, 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 (adṛṣṭa) 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.

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We can conclude that Pārthaśāratī in his Nyāyaratnakara (but not yet in his Śāstraṇīpikā) brings to light a fundamental difference in attitude between Māmāśa 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 Māmāśa 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 Pārthaśāratī 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ki</td>
<td>Praṣastāpādābhāṣya with the commentary Kīrāṇadvīpa of Udayana.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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