

Who Are the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas*?

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Abstract The paper seeks to identify the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas* mentioned in the *Tipiṭaka* and concludes, after comparing a reference to the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇa* in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, that the word *lokāyatika* in both the contexts refers to an argumentative *brāhmaṇa*, not a materialist.

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1 Introduction

The Three Baskets (Tipiṭaka) is a grand portrait gallery, abounding with various characters, male and female, kings and commoners, philosophers and enquirers. Most of them are given local habitations and names. But some are introduced simply by some epithets or descriptions. The *lokāyatika brāhmaṇa* is a case in point. Altogether three such persons appear in the *Nikāyas*. There is a Lokāyatika-suttam (LS) in the SN [12.48 (1975-1999, 2, 77)] in which we meet one, and a Lokāyatika-brāhmaṇā-suttam (LBS) in the AN [9.4.7.1 (1979-1995, 4, 428)] in which we meet two of them. Their identity has always been somewhat problematic, the word *lokāyatika* in Pāli being rather obscure. Nevertheless, one point is certain: whatever it may mean, it *does not mean* materialism as it does in classical Sanskrit. *Lokāyata*, from which *lokāyatika* is derived, occurs, according to Tan (2010, 27), fourteen times in the *Tipiṭaka*:

Lokāyatika Sutta	<i>lokāyatika</i> (cosmologist?)	SN 12.48/2:77
Lokāyatika Brāhmaṇā Sutta	<i>lokāyikā brāhmaṇā</i>	AN 9.38/4:428
Mahāsīla list (to be avoided)	<i>lok'āyata...tiracchāna,vijjā</i> , etc	DN 1.26/1:11, 2.60/1:69 etc
Ambaṭṭha Māṇava	<i>lok'āyatamahāpurisalakkhaṇa</i>	DN 3.3/1:88
Soṇadaṇḍa Brāhmaṇa	<i>lok'āyatamahāpurisalakkhaṇa</i>	DN 4.5/1:114, 13/1:120,15/ 1:121, 20a/1:123

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Kūṭadanta Brāhmāṇa	<i>lokāyatamahāpurisalakkhaṇa</i>	DN 5.6/1:130
Purohita Brāhmaṇa	<i>lokāyatamahāpurisalakkhaṇa</i>	DN 5.14/1:138, 17b/1:141
Assalāyana Māṇava	<i>lokāyatamahāpurisalakkhaṇa</i>	MN 93.3/2:147
Āsava Sutta	<i>lokāyatamahāpurisalakkhaṇa</i>	AN 6.58/1:163
Dāru Kammika Sutta	<i>lokāyatamahāpurisalakkhaṇa</i>	AN 6.59/1:166
Doṇa Brāhmaṇa	<i>lokāyatamahāpurisalakkhaṇa</i>	AN 5.192/3:223
Sela Sutta	<i>lokāyatamahāpurisalakkhaṇa</i>	SN 3.7/105
Sippa Sutta	<i>lokāyata sippa</i>	Udāna 3.9/32 (' 2); UA 205
Vinaya	<i>lokāyate sāradaṣṣavī</i>	Cv 5.33.2 = V 2:139

The list is by no means exhaustive, for there are at least five more to be found in the *Tipiṭaka* that refer, directly or indirectly, to *lokāyata*. Chattopadhyaya (1975, 143) mentions the following:¹

Brahmajāla Sutta		DN 1.1
Sāmaññaphala Sutta		DN 1.47
Jāṇussoṇi Sutta		AN 3.59
Vinaya	Tiracchāna-vijjā	<i>Cullavagga</i> , 5.17
Vinaya	Chabaggiya-bhikkhuvatthu	<i>Pācittiya</i> , 5.18(1)

Lokāyata(-śāstra) is mentioned along with the Vedas, grammar, and the study of the marks of a superman (*mahāpurisalakkhaṇa*) in several *Suttas*.²

2 What Is Meant by *lokāyata*: Various Suggestions

It is now generally admitted that *lokāyata* along with the *mahāpurisalakkhaṇa* was a subject of study of the *Brāhmaṇas*, theoretically of all the three twice-born (*dvija*) *varṇas*. It is also agreed that *lokāyata* was not anti-Vedic; neither in the *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra* nor in the *Tipiṭaka* there is even the remotest hint of its being so. On the other hand, it was quite a respectable subject of study, along with *saṃkhya* and *yoga* (whatever they might mean in Kauṭīliya's times). Nevertheless, as yet there is no unanimity regarding which discipline *lokāyata* represents. Widely

¹ Chattopadhyaya (1975, 27-8), however, does not mention most of the sources noted by Tan (2010, 27). Tan too refers to some other Sūtras that have some bearing on the issue.

² Notably in MN (1958) 91. Brahmāyu-sutta (2.5.1), 93. Assalāyana-sutta (1958) (2.5.3), and 10, and Śārngārava-sutta (1958) (2.5.10). More examples are provided by Jayatilleke ([1963] 1980, 46-57, 69, etc.).

different conjectures have been and are still being made.³ Rudolf Otto Franke (cited in Rhys Davids, Stede, s.v. “lokāyata”) proposed “logisch beweisende Naturerklärung” (logically proven explanation of nature); T.W. Rhys Davids ([1921-25] 1975, s.v. “loko”) apparently approved of it. However, he thought ‘Nature-lore’ to be more appropriate.⁴ He and William Stede ([1921-25] 1975, s.v. “loko”) took this to be the first meaning, and ‘sophistry, casuistry,’ the second.⁵

Some other meanings proposed by the translators of various canonical and paracanonical texts are: ‘metaphysics’ (Hare 1935, 287), ‘world-lore’, ‘world-wisdom’ (C. Rhys Davids 1922, 53).⁶ Accordingly, a *lokāyatika* would mean ‘[one] skilled in metaphysics’ and ‘[one] wise in world-lore’ or ‘a world-wise [Brahmin]’ respectively (C. Rhys Davids 1922, 53). More recently two other meanings of *lokāyata* have been offered: ‘cosmology’

3 For all references see Rhys Davids, Stede, *Pāli English Dictionary*, s.v. “loko”. Jayatilleke ([1963] 1980, 49) is wrong in saying that “Prof. [T.W.] Rhys Davids and after him all the scholars who discuss the meaning of *lokāyata* – missed both passages in the Nikāyas which could have given some information about the subject-matter of *lokāyata* –, one occurring in the Saṃyutta Nikāya (II.77) and the other in the Aṅguttara Nikāya (IV.428)”. Rhys Davids for some strange reasons did miss both these in his pioneering study (1899). But he and William Stede did not subsequently ‘miss’ the first; although their interpretation leaves much to be desired. In the *Pāli-English Dictionary* they have dealt elaborately (as much as possible, or even perhaps more than is warranted or generally afforded within the scope of a lexicon) with the two meanings of *lokāyata*, namely, Nature-lore and sophistry. Jayatilleke ([1963] 1980, 50 note 1) further complains that Malalasekera (1971, s.v. “lokāyata”) has ignored the problem of the meaning of *lokāyata* altogether, despite the fact that he quotes from the SN in his article on *lokāyatikā brāhmaṇā* in his *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*. It is true that Malalasekera leaves the second source, LBS (AN IV.428), totally out of consideration, but that is a case of justifiable + omission. There is nothing on the surface in this Sutta to help us comprehend what *lokāyata* or *lokāyatika* stands for. Other translators and writers too have not fared better in Jayatilleke’s view.

4 Tan (2010, 29, note 17) has explained that ‘lore’ here stands for “traditional knowledge, usu[ally] one handed down from previous teachers or traditions”. K.C. Chattopadhyaya (1975, 152) endorses Rhys Davids’ interpretation. The word ‘Nature-lore’, however, has been misprinted in his essay as ‘mature lore’.

5 The entries of *lokāyata* and *lokāyatika* in this dictionary are reproduced below for ready reference:

[Lok]-**āyata** what pertains to the ordinary view (of the world) common or popular philosophy, or as Rhys Davids (*Dal.* I.171) puts it, “name of a branch of Brahman learning, probably *Nature-lore*”; later worked into a quāsi system of “casuistry, sophistry.” Franke, *Dīgha trs*^{1a} 19, trsl^s as “logisch beweisende Naturerklärung”

[Lok]-**āyatika** (Brāhmaṇa) one who holds the view of *lokāyata* or popular philosophy SII.77 (trslⁿ K.S. 53: a Brahmin “wise in world-lore”; Miln 178; J VI.486 (na seve lokayatikroaṃ; expl^d as “anatta-nissitaṃ... vitaṇḍa-sallāpaṃ lokāyatika-vādaṃ na seveyya,” thus more like “sophistry” or casuistry).

6 Misquoted by Jayatilleke ([1963] 1980, 50) as “worldly-lore”. Anyway ‘world-lore’ is merely a literal rendering of the two constituent words of the compound, *loka-* and *-āyata*, but it does not help us comprehend the sense intended by the author.

(Jayatilleke [1963] 1980, 51; Bhikkhu Bodhi 2000, 764 note 128; Thanissaro Bhikkhu 1999, SN 12.48) and speculation (Tan 2010, 28).⁷

Let us review the meanings one by one. As to 'Nature-lore', Tucci (1990, 389-90) pointed out long ago that *loka* in Pāli signifies the world, as in *devaloka* (the world of gods), *martyaloka* (the world of mortals), etc.; *loka*, he further points out, means the people, public, as in *lokayātrā* (way of the world), *lokaprasiddha* (accepted by all), *lokokti* (proverb), *lokavāda* (common opinion), *lokaviśruta* (famous in the world), etc. So neither Franke's nor T.W. Rhys Davids' rendering reflects the original sense of *lokāyata*.

Jayatilleke ([1963] 1980, 49) refers to Tucci's objection and proposes the meaning 'cosmos' instead of 'nature'. He is perhaps prompted by a passage in the 'Lokāyatika-sutta' with four points of debate called *lokāyata*, and by another passage in the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* (1923, 176-9) which deals with thirty one theses beginning with *sarvaṃ* (lit. all things or everything) (55).⁸ He thinks the *Nikāyas* also confirm this meaning (55, 60). More recently Franco (2011) rejects both 'Nature-lore' and 'cosmos', for cosmos "has a particular connotation of good order and orderly arrangement, which is absent in *loka*...." Therefore, Franco (2011) elects "to keep the neutral word 'world'". However, in his view, "*lokāyata* in the early sources such as the Buddhist canon, the *Arthaśāstra*, the *Mahābhārata*, and so forth refers to (a thesis about) the world as well as *the science that deals with such theses in a dialectical context*". (Emphasis added).

Lokāyata in the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* (1923, 176-9) was rendered in English as 'materialism' by Suzuki (1956, 152-5). Jayatilleke ([1963] 1980, 51-3) objected to this mistranslation. However, old understandings, or rather *saṃskāras*, die hard. As late as 1996 Golzio repeated the same blunder in his German translation of the same text (1996, 181-2) and for this reason has rightly been censured by Franco (2011).

So the two meanings of *lokāyata*, Nature-lore and materialism, can be safely dispensed with. It is now generally admitted that this *lokāyata* in the Buddhist canons has nothing to do with materialism (known since the eighth century as the *Cārvāka*), and although the contexts in which the word occurs in Buddhist, Jain and Brahmanical works "do not allow an exact determination of the word, the meaning of materialism or materialist is nowhere apparent" (Franco 2011); K.C. Chattopadhyaya (1975, 152-3),

7 I have the impression that Tan (2010) does not reject 'cosmology' altogether. Just because he considers 'cosmology' and 'cosmologist' for *lokāyata* and *lokāyatika* to be too technical in the given contexts, he proposes to render them as 'speculation' and 'speculator' instead.

8 The *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* passage is obviously derived from the "Lokāyatika-sutta" (SN 1959, 2, 77). The only difference between the two is that instead of only four *lokāyatas*, 'points of debate', mentioned in LS, the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* passage refers to no fewer than thirty ones.

probably following M. Winternitz, declares that *lokāyata* “was probably a precursor of the Vaiśeṣika system of thought. *It was not a system of atheism, of identification of the self with the body and of the denial of the authority of the Vedas, which are the basic tenets of the later lokāyata or Cārvāka systems*” (Emphasis added). Moreover, Tan (2010, 28), referring to Rhys Davids, says: “These early occurrences of *lokāyata* do not seem to reflect any reference to the materialistic philosophy of Cārvāka, which is apparently later”. In any case, in the whole of Pāli literature, the name for materialism is invariably *ucchedavāda*, ‘the doctrine of annihilation’, not *lokāyata* or anything else.

In spite of all this, *lokāyata* in the Common Era was the name of a materialist school which is noted, most probably for the first time, in the Tamil epic, *Maṇimēkalai* 27.78, 273 (composed between the fourth and the sixth/seventh century by the Buddhist scholar-poet Sīthalai Sāttanār). There was another materialist school current in south India (if not all over the subcontinent) called *bhūtavāda* (lit. elementalism, an exact rendering of ‘materialism’).⁹

On the basis of the available evidence only this much can be definitely said, i.e. that by the eighth century the word *lokāyata* has become synonymous with the Cārvāka. By that time this system was also called Bārhaspatya and Nāstika (for sources etc. see Bhattacharya 2013, 3-8). But long before the appearance of the Cārvākas there were at least two materialist schools in south India. These two had some differences between themselves, but neither of them can definitely be called a direct descendant of Ajita Kesakambala’s doctrine of annihilation: several centuries intervene between *ucchedavāda* on the one hand and *bhūtavāda* and *lokāyata* on the other. *Lokāyata* and its derivatives in Buddhist literature, whether in Pāli or in Sanskrit, have nothing to do with this later development. Whatever *lokāyata* may mean in early Buddhist canonical works, it is definitely *not* materialism.

It is, however, certain that the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas* in the Pāli Buddhist canons were fond of raising questions which the Buddha would dismiss as ‘unexplained’ or ‘undecided,’ *avyākata* (Sanskrit *avyākṛta*), as noted by Tucci. In the ‘Culamāluṅkya-sutta’ (MN 63) the Buddha had called such questions as ‘Is this world eternal?’ ‘Has the world an end?’ etc. *avyākata*. He only considered the Four Noble Truths to be properly explained. He urged the son of Māluṅkya to accept the unexplained as unexplained and the explained as explained. Perhaps this is why the Buddha did not approve

9 For *bhūtavāda* see Basham 1981, 200. *Maṇimēkalai* also mentions this name (27.264, 153). For a study of pre-Cārvāka materialism see Bhattacharya 2013, 1-12.

of idle talks and metaphysical speculations.¹⁰ And for this very reason he seems to have disliked those who indulged in futile speculations (see Appendix A below). Another passage in the same Sutta bears testimony to his disapproval, although the word *lokāyatika* has not been employed in either of the two instances.

3 *Lokāyata* in the Jain Tradition

So much for the Pāli tradition. Relying exclusively on Pāli sources, we may say that *lokāyata* originally had one and only one sense, namely, *disputatio*, the art and science of disputation (see Bhattacharya 2009, 187-92). Rhys Davids, who had proposed a different meaning first, viz., Nature-lore, and/or popular philosophy, also admitted this meaning in case of the *Milindapañha* in the PTS Dictionary (s.v. “lokāyata”). It has been shown that this meaning holds true for the two Mahāyānī Buddhist Sanskrit works, *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna-sūtra* (*Divyāvadāna*) and the *Sad-dharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* (See Bhattacharya 2009, 193-6 and 2012).

Now to other, non-Pāli sources. The first occurrence of *ānvīkṣikī* and *lokāyata* in Sanskrit is met with in the *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra* 1.2.1 and 10. *Ānvīkṣikī* is one of the subjects of learning, *vidyās*; and includes *sāṃkhya*, *yoga*, and *lokāyata* (1.2.10). There is no unanimity of opinion concerning the meaning of *ānvīkṣikī* in this particular context – the science of reasoning, philosophy, or logical philosophy or what (see note 3 above). Although later commentators wrongly identify this *lokāyata* with the Cārvāka/Lokāyata system, the earliest commentary in Malayalam glosses it as the *Nyāyaśāstra* propounded by Brahmagārgya (or Brahman and Gārgya), *lokāyatam nyāyaśastam brahmagārgyoktam* (adapted in KA, Ganapati Shastri 1924, 27). This evidently was a pre-Gautama system of logic. So the connection of *lokāyata* with arguments is presumable. *Lokāyata(-śāstra)* is mentioned along with the Vedas, grammar, and the study of the marks of a superman (*mahāpurisalakṣaṇa*) in several Suttas in the *Nikāyas* (see the chart above).

Very much like the Buddhist canonical and paracanonical works,¹¹ some Jain works too record more or less similar curricula of studies (for the

10 See the “Brahmajāla-sutta”, DN, 1.1.22: “...desultory chat, speculations about land and sea, [24] talk about being and non-being, [25] the ascetic Gotama refrains from such conversation.” ...*nānattakathaṃ lokakkhāyikaṃ samuddakkhāyikaṃ itibhavābhavakathaṃ. Iti vā itievarūpāya...paṭivirato samaṇo gotamo”ti.*

11 E.g. the “Brahmāyu-sutta” MN 2:41.1.1, 382; 41.2.9, 390; “Sela-sutta” 2:42.3, 397; “Assalāyana-sutta” 2:43.1.1, 403; “Caṅkī-sutta” (1958) 2:49.1.1.3, 429; “Saṅgārava-sutta” (1958) 2:50.1.1., 482 (all in the MN) and paracanonical works like MP *Milindapañho* (1986) 1.10, 1.23, 4.3, 4.26, and LV *Lalitavistara* (1877), ch. 12, 179.

Brāhmaṇas and/or the princes). They comprise, besides the three or four Vedas and their six ancillary texts called Vedāṅgas, and such secular subjects as arithmetic, music, poetry, drama and stories, a number of philosophical systems as well. In the *Vasudevahimḍī*, we read of Mīmāṃsā, Saṃkha (Sāṃkhya), Loyiya, Loyāyatiya, Saṭṭhitamta (Ṣaṣṭhitantra), etc. (Vasu 1987, 24).¹² The *Anuyogadvārasūtram* (Anu) (1999 ed. *sūtra* 49, 91) mentions Loyāyayaṃ. It also mentions Vaisesiyaṃ, Buddhavayaṇaṃ, Vesiyaṃ, Kāvilāṃ, Loyāyayaṃ, Saṭṭhitamtaṃ, Māḍharaṃ, etc. (Anu 1999; see also 1966 ed., 64; 1968 ed. *sūtra* 72, 29). *Nandi-sūttam* *sūtra* 67 too has a similar list of subjects under the head of *mithyāśruta* works, beginning with the Bhārata (*Mahābhārata*) and the *Rāmāyaṇa*: Kanakasaptatiḥ, Vaiśeṣika, Buddhavacanāṃ, Vaiśikaṃ, Kāpilāṃ, Lokāyatāṃ, Ṣaṣṭitantraṃ, Māṭharaṃ (Nos.10-17) (1924 ed. *sūtra* 42 f.193b; 1997 ed., 113).¹³

The position of Lokāyata in the syllabus may suggest that it stands for a system of philosophy, not *disputatio*, teaching the art and the science of disputation (*vitaṇḍā-vāda-śāstra*), as in the Pāli and Buddhist Sanskrit tradition. The haphazard manner in which the subjects of study are enumerated – philosophical systems along with various other subjects related to philosophy, set side by side – coupled with the uncertainty of reading¹⁴ renders the task of identifying their subjects and their contents doubly difficult, if not impossible, at the present state of our knowledge.

Secondly, comparison with Sanskrit texts, however, has led to happy results: for example, the syllabus for studies of Brāhmaṇa boys found in the Upaniṣads (particularly the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and the *Chāndogya*) has shed welcome light on the meaning of the Pāli word, *lokāyatāṃ* (Jayatilleke [1963] 1980, 47). The parallel columns of subjects found in the *Chāndogya* list, Śāṅkara's commentary thereon and the Pāli equivalents occurring in the *Dīgha Nikāya* are illuminating. It is almost certain that *lokāyatāṃ* was nothing but *vākovākyāṃ* (*Chāndogya*), explained by Śāṅkara as *tarkaśāstraṃ*.

Then why did some later commentators go against the older commentators who glossed *lokāyata* as *vitaṇḍa-(vāda)-sattha*? Jayatilleke

12 Jamkhedkar (1984, 78-9) writes 'Loyāyatiyavāda (*lokāyatikaāāda*)' [sic], instead of 'Loyāyatiya' as in the printed text (24). The *Vasu*, middle section (first part) [*majjhimakhanda* (*padamo bhāgo*)] contains more names, some of which are not easy to identify: *samikkhamtavāda*, *kaṇaga*, *sattari*, *māsurakkha-sikkha*, *vesisita*, *yovayoī*.... (24). For a general survey of the Jain system of education, see Dasgupta [1942] (1999) *passim*.

13 Attempts have been made to identify the names with little success. *Vaiśika*, for instance, has been explained as a book of erotics (*Kāmasāstra*). It has been called *strīveda* (Veda related to women) in the commentary on the (*Nandi* 1997 ed. "Bhūmika", 20).

14 For instance, the mss of the *Nandi*. mention several names to denote one subject: *Ābhītamāsurakṣaṃ*, *Haṃbhīmāsurukkaṃ*, *Bhībāsūkṣma* and *Bhībāsurutta* (1997 ed. "Bhūmika", 20). See also *Anu* 1999, 91 and *Nandi* 1968, 44.

([1963] 1980, 48) accounted for this misinterpretation as follows: “The fact that when Pāli commentaries came to be written *lokāyata*- exclusively meant Materialism is perhaps an added reason”.

4 The *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas* in the *Rāmāyaṇa*

What about the identity of the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas* then? Apart from the characteristics mentioned above (disputation for disputation’s sake) it can be asserted with certitude that they *did not* belong to the Buddha’s Order (Saṃgha). In the LBS, two *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas* were so impressed by the Buddha’s reply to their queries that they decided to join the Buddhist Order. In the LS too the lone *lokāyatika* requested the Buddha to consider him as a lay follower of his Order. In other words, the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas* obviously belonged to the Brahminical fold, as expected.

It so happens that there is a mention of the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas* in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Ayodhyākāṇḍa (critical ed. (1960-75) vol. 2, 94.32; vulgate (1983) 100.28), which throws light on the issue. John Muir (see *Cārvāka/Lokāyata* 1990, 354-8) and T.W. Rhys Davids (see *Cārvāka/Lokāyata* 1990, 372) and others had already noticed the passage, but no one paid it the attention it deserves. Chattopadhyaya (1975, 150-1) was convinced that the whole passage was an interpolation. In fact, the passage, although found in *all* recensions, is almost certainly a later addition.¹⁵ In spite of its dubious authenticity, two verses (crit. ed. 1960-75, 2, 94.32-33, vulgate 1983, 100.28-29), even though interpolated after the fourth century, still contain an indication of what the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas* meant in the early centuries of the Common Era, long after they were first mentioned in the Pāli Suttas. It may be noted that the word *lokāyatika* occurs only once, not just in the Ayodhyākāṇḍa, but in the whole of the *Rām*. The

15 While editing the Mbh, Sabhāparvan, Franklin Edgerton noted that Mbh 2.5.7ff had parallels in the *Rām* 2.100 in the Bombay ed. (= 2.109 in Gorresio 1844). “About 37 stanzas are parallel stanzas of our chap” (Mbh 1933-66, vol. 2489). On the basis of intrinsic evidence and other grounds P.L. Vaidya, editor of the *Rām*, Ayodhyākāṇḍa (crit. ed. 1962) too, comes to the same conclusion:

“To me, the entire set of stanzas beginning with [*kaścit*] except the first [94.4], is out of place. Compare, in this context, Mbh. 2.5.7-99. These questions there cover some 93 stanzas in the constituted text and about 100 or more in the Vulgate. Our Critical Text [of the *Rām*] contains just 56 stanzas against 73 in the Vulgate and a few less in Gorresio. Professor Edgerton has given a note in his Addenda et Corrigenda, to Sabhāparvan pp. 489-91. He says there that about 37 stanzas of *Rāmāyaṇa* have their parallels in the Mbh 2.5. I think there is clearly an imitation here of the Mbh., where the questions are justified on more than one ground, while there is a good deal of absurdity in them in the *Rāmāyaṇa* on emotional ground. We may have been justified in ignoring them altogether, but our MSS. authorities are uniform in keeping at least 56 of the stanzas”. (Note on *Rām*, crit. ed. 2.94 = vulgate 2.100, 702).

passage indicates another characteristic of the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas*: in addition to their fondness for disputation, they did not care for the religious law books, i.e., the *Gṛhya-sūtras* and the *Smṛti* texts.

Let us take a look at the context as found in the constituted text of the *Rām* When Bharata goes to the Citrakūṭa Mountain with the intention of bringing Rāma back to Ayodhyā, there is a report of the conversation between the two princes. Rāma advises Bharata:

Don't you serve the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇa* for they are experts in doing harm, are puerile and consider themselves to be learned (which they are not).

kaścinna lokāyatikān brāhmaṇāṃs tāta sevase |
anarthakuśalā hy ete bālāḥ paṇḍitamāninaḥ ||
(crit. ed.: 1960-75, 2, 94.32; vulgate: 1983, 100.28)

The other reason why the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas* are suspect is given in the next verse:

Even though there are principal religious law-books,
these dimwits having recourse to sophisticated intelligence talk fraud.

dharmaśāstreṣu mukhyeṣu vidyamāneṣu durbudhā |
buddhim ānvīkṣikīṃ prāpya nirarthaṃ pravādanti te ||
(crit. ed. (1960-75) vol. 2, 94.33, vulgate (1983) 100.29)

5 What Does *lokāyatika* Mean in the *Rāmāyaṇa*?

Commentators and translators of the *Rām* have taken the word *lokāyatika* in this passage (crit ed. (1960-75), 2, 94.32-33, vulgate (1983) 100.28-29) to mean:

1. A follower of the Cārvāka doctrine (Rāma, *Tilaka* comm. (1983))
2. The Cārvākas and the Buddhists, etc. (Śivasahāya, *Śiromaṇi* comm. (1983))
3. The *nāstikas*, that is, the Buddhists and the Cārvākas (Govindarāja, *Bhūṣaṇa* comm. (1983))
4. The followers of Cārvāka doctrine (Lokanātha Cakravartī, *Manoharā* comm. (1932-41))

5. Loquacious in (expounding) the science of Cārvāka, *cārvāka-sāstra-vāvadūka*¹⁶ (Śrīmādhavayogin, *Amṛtakataka* comm. (1965))
6. Atheist (Gorresio 1851, Dutt 1892, Makhanlal Sen 1976)
7. Materialist (Shastri 1976, Sheldon Pollock 1986)

All of them, I am afraid, missed the mark. Tarkavagisa (1989, 14-5) has demonstrated that *lokāyata* in ancient times meant Nyāya as well, and two kinds of *haitukas* (reasoners) are mentioned in orthodox brahmanical works: the first, those who adhered to the Veda (hence *āstika*), and the second, who did not (hence *nāstika*) (1989, 15-6). These *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas*, as Rāma describes them, are basically argumentative by nature and apparently disinterested in the ordinances laid down in the canonical law books (*dharmasāstras*), i.e. such *saṃhitās* as the *Code of Manu* and others ordained by other law-makers. But there is nothing to show that the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas* followed a well-formulated philosophical system with its own ontology and epistemology. In the Mbh too there are, as Hopkins ([1910] 1993, 86) puts it, “[a]ny number of these unbelievers who deny everything there is to deny”. Unlike Ajita Kesakambala, however, they had nothing to assert. Ajita at least declared quite unambiguously, “Nothing exists after death” (Sāmaññaphala-sutta DN 1958, 1:2.4.21-23, 48-9; *Ten Suttas* 1978, 83. Translation modified). This is why he is justly regarded as a proto-materialist (as Kosambi [1956] 1975, 164 brands him).

Moreover, the word *lokāyata* and its derivatives do not appear in Sanskrit before the sixth century (as in Vātsyāyana’s *Kāmasūtra*) to signify any anti-religious system of philosophy. Such a characteristic is first encountered in Bāṇa’s *Kādambarī* (sixth century).¹⁷ In the *Rām* and the Mbh, and the MN and AN Suttas mentioned above, as well as in the *Vasu*, we always come across the omnibus term *nāstika* (*natthika* or *nahiyavādī*) to mean such an outlook. But it is not associated with the *lokāyatas* or *laukāyatikas* before the sixth century, by the time when *lokāyata* had already appeared in South India as a rival materialist doctrine of *bhūtavāda* (as described in Nandakumar 1989, *Maṇimēkalai* 27.272-76). The word *nāstika* itself is

16 Cf. “The loquacious men, possessed of great learning, roam all over the earth....” *caranti vasudhām kṛtsnām vāvadūkā bahuśrutāḥ*. Mbh (1933-66) 12.19.24cd, in both crit. ed. and vulgate.

17 In Vātsyāyana’s fourth century *Kāmasūtra* (n.d.) six aphorisms, 1.2.25-30, are followed by the statement “So (said) the Laukāyatikas”, *iti laukāyatikāḥ*. However, the aphorisms are more in the nature of popular maxims, *laukika nyāyas*, or, as the *Jayamaṅgalā* commentary on the *Kāmasūtra* says, idioms well known (or established) in the world (or, among the people), *lokaprasiddhi* (see Bhattacharya 2009, 94-5). Bāṇabhaṭṭa (1950, 513) employs a simile in *Kādambarī* which, however, reflects on the heretical nature of the Lokāyatikas: “As the science of the Lokāyatika is to one who has no taste for religion...” ...*lokāyatikavidyayevā dharmaruceḥ*....

very old; Pāṇini refers to it in his *Aṣṭ* (1989) along with its antonym, *āstika*, and another word, *daiṣṭika*, a fatalist (*asti-nāsti-diṣṭam matiḥ*, 4.4.60).

6 *Lokāyata* in Pāli ≠ Materialism

Let us then review the question of the *lokāyatikas* in the light of what has been stated above. Many scholars of the last two centuries, not unlike the latter-day commentators and sub-commentators of the Pāli canonical works, seem to have been under the impression that the word *lokāyata*, whether in Pāli or in Prakrit or Sanskrit, could have one and only one meaning, viz., materialism. T.W. Rhys Davids (see *Cārvāka/Lokāyata* 1990, 369, 373), however, had shown as early as 1899 that *lokāyata* in Pāli stands for a respectable subject to be learnt by every prince and every Brāhmaṇa (Bhattacharya 2009, *Cārvāka/Lokāyata*, 369, 373). The same holds true for the *Kauṭīliya Arthasāstra*, 1.2.10 (see Bhattacharya 2009, 131-6). Jayatilke ([1963] 1980, 69) too had asserted this. More recently Eli Franco (2011) has reviewed the issue and rejected the view that *lokāyata* in the Pāli tradition could ever mean 'materialism'.

In spite of all this, eminent scholars have discovered materialism whenever and wherever there is reference to *lokāyata*, whether in Pāli or Prakrit or Sanskrit. However, others who agreed with Rhys Davids in refusing this wrong identification have failed to offer a commonly accepted rendering of *lokāyata* and *lokāyatika*. The other terms preferred by Pāli scholars today, 'cosmology' and 'cosmologist' (as used by Thanissaro Bhikkhu (1999) AN 9.38 in his translation of the AN) are not beyond question. The common factor found in all descriptions, both in Pāli and Sanskrit texts, viz., disputatiousness, is not reflected in any of the renderings, whether in the works of the PTS translators or in others. Rhys Davids and Stede ([1921-25] 1975, s.v. "lokāyata", "lokāyatika"), in spite of their first preference for 'common or popular philosophy', or 'Nature-lore', admit that in the *Milindapañha* ([1880] 1986, 178) and the Vidhura-pañḍita-jātaka (*Jātaka* 6.486) *lokāyata* is "more like 'sophistry' or 'casuistry'". The statement is true for the MP, but quite off the mark in relation to *Jātaka* 6.486, as we shall soon see.

What made some scholars to take the word *loka*, the first part of the compound *lokāyata*, to mean 'the world,' while others had taken it to mean 'the people' (hence understanding *lokāyata* as 'popular philosophy')? I think it was the four questions concerning *sabbam*, 'All' (or everything) raised by the *lokāyata brāhmaṇa* in the LS. As against this preoccupation with the All, we may counter pose the question put to the Buddha by the two *lokāyatika brahmanas* in the LBS. Their question has less to do with the world; on the contrary, it concerns the relative merits of two other teachers contemporaneous with the Buddha. Now, it is this propensity to ask odd questions, and engaging themselves in fruitless discussions and arguments

regarding inconsequential matters that the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas* came to be recognized as enemies of both Brahminical religion as also of the *saddharma*, Good Law. The *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas* mentioned by Rāma in his conversation with Bharata may very well be the free-thinkers of ancient times, unaffected by the books of religious law. But it will be wrong to call them 'materialists'. In the given context a *lokāyatika brāhmaṇa* can only mean a disputant pure and simple, often a person indulging in disputation for disputation's sake (as he is found to do in the commentaries on the Pāli canonical works). In short, borrowing from the title of Amartya K. Sen's collection of essays (2005), we may call the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇa* the prototype of the 'argumentative Indian'.

It is this second characteristic of the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas*, namely, their fondness for senseless disputation, which seems to preponderate over the sense of Nature-lore or cosmology or even speculation, if such meanings were ever current at all. Moreover, most of the Pāli dictionaries and commentaries and sub-commentaries take *lokāyata* to mean 'the art and science of disputation', *vitaṇḍa-(vāda)-satthaṃ*. It is therefore suggested that this should also be the meaning applicable in case of the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas* in the LS and the LBS as well. The questions they raised apparently sprang from their love of disputation. Hence, by applying Occam's razor, we may take the term *lokāyatika brāhmaṇa* in both Pāli and Sanskrit uniformly to represent a 'disputatious Brāhmaṇa'.

7 Meaning of *lokāyatika* in the *Jātaka*

There is another, non-technical, meaning of *lokāyatika* in the 'Vidhura-pañḍita-jātaka' (*Jātaka* 1896 XII.8, text vol. VI.486). It is not unrelated to the former (viz., disputatious); rather it reinforces the censorious attitude towards the *lokāyatika* found in other texts. It refers to a Brāhmaṇa who indulges in 'vain conversation' (as translated by Cowell 1973, 2, 139), or 'frivolous or captious discussion' (as given in the PTS Dictionary s.v. "vitaṇḍā", but not s.v. "lokāyata" or "lokāyatika", although both *lokāyata* and *vitaṇḍā* are admitted to be synonymous).

Rhys Davids (see *Cārvāka/Lokāyata*, 1990, 372) has made much of a passage in the text as also the commentary on the 'Vidhura-pañḍita-jātaka': *na seve lokāyatikam, n'etaṃ paññāyo vaddhanam*, which he translates as "Follow not the *lokāyata* [NB. the text has *lokāyatikam*, not *lokāyatam*] that works not for progress in merit". The commentary, however, says: *anattanissitaṃ...vitaṇḍa-sallāpaṃ lokāyatika-vādaṃ na seveyya*. The context does not warrant taking *lokāyatika* in a technical sense in this instance. The advice concerns the conduct of a righteous person: it has nothing to do with logic or philosophy. This is a model case of a trusting reader (in this instance, Rhys Davids) being misled by a careless commentator. The

commentator looked at the word *lokāyatikaṃ*, and, without bothering to consider the context, immediately displayed his knowledge concerning *lokāyatika* and *vitaṇḍā*, all out of context.

What is the context of this advice? King Puṇṇaka asks Vidhura-pañḍita four questions. The first is: "How shall be a prosperous life to him who lives as a householder in his own house" (*vasamā gahatthassa sakam gharam khemā vatti katham assa*)? To which Vidhura-pañḍita replies: "Let him not have a wife in common with another, let him not eat a dainty meal alone, let him not deal in *lokāyatikaṃ*, for this increases not wisdom" (*...na seve lokāyatikaṃ n'etaṃ paññāyo vaddhanam....*). The answer is an exhortation to the avoidance of adultery, selfishness, etc. *Lokāyatikaṃ* here can never mean casuistry or sophistry (an instance of tautology preferred by Rhys Davids) as noted in the PTS Dictionary s.v. "lokāyatika" in the *Milindapañha* ("thus more like 'sophistry' or 'casuistry'"). E.B. Cowell's (1973, 2, 139) rendering of *na seve lokāyatikaṃ*, "[L]et him not deal in *vain conversation*", suits the context much better.

It may be noted that the PTS Dictionary too provides a meaning of *vitaṇḍā* (but not of *lokāyatika*) as 'tricky disputation, frivolous, captious discussion'. And as to *vitaṇḍā*, we are advised to look up *lokāyata*, for they are for all practical purposes synonymous. Moreover, most of the Pāli dictionaries and commentaries and sub-commentaries take *lokāyata* to mean 'the art and science of disputation', *vitaṇḍa-(vāda)-sattham*. The passage in *Rāmāyaṇa* 2.93 speaks of the same characteristic of the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas*, viz. disputatiousness, their arguments being fraught with 'vain conversation', as does the 'Vidhura-pañḍita-jātaka'.

8 The Upshot

The upshot of the whole discussion is then: both *lokāyata* and *lokāyatika* refer to a subject of study, viz. disputation as well as a disputant. The other meaning given in the PTS dictionary, 'common or popular philosophy', or 'Nature-lore', and by applying Occam's razor the other ones employed by translators (metaphysics, speculation, cosmology, etc.) and their derivatives should be dispensed with. Once and for all it should be declared that 'disputatious' is the only meaning applicable in case of the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas*.

Why did Jayatilleke and Tan speak of cosmos/the cosmologist? Even Franco (2011) did not reject the meaning of 'world'. In his view, "lokāyata in the early sources such as the Buddhist canon, the *Arthaśāstra*, the *Mahābhārata* and so forth refers to (a thesis about) the world as well as the science that deals with such theses in a dialectical context". It is perhaps the repeated reference to *sabbaṃ* found in several canonical and para-canonical works that led them to this conclusion. However, the reference

to 'everything' is often coupled with examples of crude casuistry. While explaining *lokakkhāyikā*, Buddhagosa explains:

Foolish talk according to the *lokāyata*, that is the Vitaṇḍā [*lokāyata-vitaṇḍa-sallāpa-kathā*], such as: "By whom was this world created? By such a one. A crow is white from the whiteness of his own; cranes are red from the redness of their blood". (cited by Rhys Davids in *Cārvāka/Lokāyata*, 1990, 371)

In the *Saddanīti* too we have the same kind of juxtaposition:

Now the *lokāyata* is the book of the unbelievers full of such useless disputations as the following: "All is impure; all is not impure; the crow is white, the crane is black and for this reason or for that...". (cited by Rhys Davids in *Cārvāka/Lokāyata*, 371-72)

The issue or the point of dispute is not important; the *lokāyatika brāhmaṇas* were prepared to take any side, depending on the one taken by the opponent/other disputant. Even the questions they raised – whatever that might be, highly serious or utterly trivial – apparently sprang from their love of disputation. In my opinion, instead of casuistry and/or sophistry, the word disputation, disputatiousness and other derivatives from the root 'dispute' are to be preferred in translating *lokāyata* and its derivatives in Pāli. Hence, we may take *lokāyatika brāhmaṇa* in both Pāli and Sanskrit uniformly as meaning 'disputatious brāhmaṇa'.

Appendix A

A passage from the 'Brahmajālasutta' (DN) provides some examples of several points of disputes (called *lokāyata* in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*):

Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins remain addicted to disputation such as:

"You don't understand this doctrine and discipline - I do!"

"How could you understand this doctrine and discipline?"

"Your way is all wrong - mine is right!"

"I am consistent - you aren't!"

"You said last what you should have said first, and you said first what you should have said last!"

"What you took so long to think up has been refuted!"

"Your argument has been overthrown, you're defeated!"

"Go on, save your doctrine - get out of that if you can!"

The ascetic Gotama refrains from such disputation.
(Walshe 1987, 71)

Appendix B

Vitaṇḍā is one of the categories (*padārthas*) in the *Nyāyasūtra* (1.2.3, 4.2.50-51). *Nyāyasūtra* 1.2.3 states: "This (scil. *jalpa*, debating maneuver, mentioned in 1.2.2) becomes *vitaṇḍā* (destructive criticism) when the 'opponent has no care for establishing any thesis of his own'", 'sa pratipakṣa-sthāpanā-hīno vitaṇḍā.

Nyāyasūtra 4.2.50-51 says: "*jalpa* and *vitaṇḍā* are (to be employed) for protecting the ascertainment of truth, just as fences with thorny branches are constructed to protect the seedling coming out of the seed", *tattvādhyavasāya-saṃrakṣaṇārthaṃ jalpavitaṇḍe, bīja-praroha-saṃrakṣaṇārthaṃ kaṇṭaka-śākhāvaraṇavat.*

The last *sūtra* states: "One may start a debate 'by attacking' (the opponent) with the help of both (*jalpa* and *vitaṇḍā*)", *tābhyāṃ viḡrhya ka-thanam.*

The position of the *vaitaṇḍika* can be inferred from NS 2.1.8-11 which is refuted in 2.1.12-20, also in 5.1.18-20. Śrīharṣa (1914) throughout his book *Khaṇḍana-khaṇḍa-khādyā* refutes others' views without establishing his own, as does Jayarāsibhaṭṭa (1940) in his *Tattvopaplavasimha* (this feature is overlooked by some scholars who brand him as a Cārvāka of some other kind). These two works are the classic examples of *vitaṇḍā*.

However, other than the name *vitaṇḍā*, there seems to be nothing in

common between the use of the word in Buddhist Pāli and Sanskrit literature and the *Nyāyasūtra*. Any attempt to relate them would be tenuous and an exercise in wish-fulfilment.

It may be recalled that *jalpa* (debating maneuver) is ‘a kind of disputation (overbearing reply and disputed rejoinder)’ (*Nyāyasūtra* 1.2.2, etc.). It is a technical term but in common parlance, i.e., in a non-technical sense, it stands for ‘talk, speech, discourse...chatter, gossip,’ (Monier-Williams ([1899] 2000), s.v. “jalpa”), as does *lokāyata* in Pāli.

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