

Materialist Philosophy in Ancient India – Part II

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The Samkhya System

The *Samkhya* ideas were very old and their influence quite extensive. It is believed to be as old as the *Vedas*, may be even older than them. The epic *Mahabharata*, the medical treatise *Charaka-Samhita*, the law-book *Manusmriti* and the mythological Puranas, in so far as they touched upon philosophical topics at all, were as Garbe says, 'saturated with the doctrines of the *Samkhya*' [1]. Like *Lokayata* the original treatise of the *Adi Samkhya* is believed to be lost. For example, a certain ancient treatise on the system called the *Sasthitantra* is believed to have once existed. We have found reference of this treatise in *Isvarkrishna's Samkhya Karika*. But it is lost to us.

Tradition attributed it to *Kapila*, but made the case quite confounding by also attributing to him a wide range of conflicting myths. Nevertheless this system is often termed as *Kapila's darsana*. As I have already mentioned, the older version of it is not available now. What we are concretely left with are only two treatises claiming to expound the *Samkhya* views. These are the *Samkhya Karika* and *Samkhya Sutra*. The former was attributed to a certain *Isvarkrishna* who Garbe thinks probably lived around 500 AD. The latter was spuriously attributed to *Kapila* himself, because the actual date of this work is considered to be somewhere around AD 1400. Yet the *Samkhya* as we have just said must have

been very old. It was declared by the *Mahabharata* itself to be eternal. Garbe and H.P. Sastri argue that it must have been before Buddha [2,3]. But it is doubtful how far the philosophy was preserved in its original form in the *Samkhya-Sutra* and even in *Samkhya karika*. In the *Samkhya-Sutra* as Garbe rightly points out, 'The *Samkhya* doctrine no longer appeared in its original unadulterated form; for they (i.e., the *Sutras*) seek to explain away the discrepancy between themselves on the one hand and the teachings of *Upanishads* and the *Vedanta* on the other.' [4] The writers of the later period made it an idealist philosophy.

But deeper study of the fragmentary materials available on *Samkhya* and the information brought out from '*Purvapaksha*' by other schools of philosophy clearly showed that originally it was a consistently materialist philosophy.

We may begin with some idea of the philosophy. It not only rejected the *Brahman* (the consciousness), the only valid truth according to the *Vedanta*, but emphatically denied the existence of God. The method of study was quite rationalistic. As the *karika* said, the cause of the world was to be inferred from the nature of the effect. Accordingly an effort was made to understand the nature of causality and make it the starting point of the philosophy. This view of causality was called the *Satkarya-vada* or *Parinama-vada* i.e., the doctrine that the effect was only a modification of the cause. What was found in the effect was contained

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in the cause. Such a view of causality was argued evidently on the basis of everyday observations. If the effect was something entirely new and not what was already contained in the cause, then anything could be produced from anything—e.g., the *Sali* crop could be produced from the *Vrihi*-seeds and the *Vrihi*-crops from the *Sali*-seeds. But since the *Sali* seeds can produce only the *Sali* crops it had to be admitted that these were already contained in the *Sali* seeds. Besides if the effect was really non-existent before being produced, then it could never have arisen at all, for how could the non-existent ever come to being? Of course, as pre-existing in the cause, the effect was only potential, nevertheless the two were essentially the same in the sense of being the implicit and explicit states of the same thing.

It followed therefore that the essential character of the effect contained the clue to the essential character of the cause. What then was the essential character of the world, whose cause was sought to be established? Since, argued the *Samkhya* philosophers, the world was essentially material, its cause too must have been so. The cause thus inferred was called *Prakriti* or *Pradhana*, the primeval matter. It was not matter in its gross or explicit forms, i.e., the form in which the world was perceived. But it was matter in its subtle and potential form which, because of its subtlety, could not be directly perceived, but the essential materiality of which was clearly inferred. The *Samkhya* terminology for this primeval matter in its original state, i.e., in the state prior to its being evolved into the visible material world, was *avyakta* or the un-manifest, conceived as formless and undifferentiated, limitless and ubiquitous.

How was the composition of this primeval matter to be understood? The *Samkhya* answer was that it was to be understood exactly in the manner in which its exis-

tence had been inferred. In the *Samkhya* view everything in the material world was an unstable composition of three kinds of substances or reals, technically called the *gunas*, though in the composition of the different objects of the world, one or other of the *gunas* predominated. These three were called (1) *Sattva*, exhibiting qualities of lightness, illumination and joy, (2) *rajas*, exhibiting qualities of movement, excitation and pain and (3) *tamas*, exhibiting qualities of heaviness, obstruction and sloth. The primeval matter was accordingly conceived as composed of these three constituents. This conception of three *gunas* may not definitely conform to our modern ideas. This much is certain, however, that as constituents of primeval matter these were essentially material. *Sattva* was that aspect of the primeval matter which contained the potential for intelligence, *rajas* for energy and *tamas* for mass or inertia. In the *avyakta* state of the *Prakriti*, these formed a stable equilibrium. A loss of this equilibrium was somehow conceived as the starting point of the evolution of the world from the *avyakta*; but it is not quite clear how exactly the cause of this loss of equilibrium was conceived. As a result of disturbance of this condition of equilibrium the material universe is evolved. We had, at any rate, in the *Samkhya* a systematic effort to understand this process of evolution. 'This system', says the eminent 18th century scholar Brajendra Nath Seal, 'possesses a unique interest in the history of thought as embodying the earliest clear and comprehensive account of the process of cosmic evolution.' [5]

In the *Samkhya* terminology the process of evolution was as follows: From the disturbed equilibrium of the *avyakta* first arose the *mahat* or *buddhi*. *Mahat* meant the great, *buddhi*, the intelligence. From that, the *mahatahamkara*—the sense of the ego. From *ahamkara* arose (1) the

manas or mind, (2) the five *jnanendriyas* or sense organs, (3) the five *karmendriyas* or motor-organs, and (4) the five *tanmatras* or subtle elements which, in the *Samkhya* view, were conceived as ultimately giving rise to the five well known gross elements or *mahabhutas*, namely earth, water, fire, air, and *akasa* or the empty space.

The detailed description of the process of evolution had created some confusion and controversies. It appears to be particularly odd that *ahamkara*, ordinarily understood as the ego-consciousness, should be given such a position in this scheme of evolution. One naturally feels like asking, did it actually mean the same thing in the original *Samkhya* as it does today? Some of the modern scholars give us the impression of quietly accepting the entire scheme without raising any question about the details; others discover in the details outstanding contributions to scientific thought. Whatever may be the decisive importance of *Samkhya* was the conception of matter in eternal motion. Upholding the materialist explanation of evolution by *Samkhya*, the famous Russian Indologist Stcherbatsky said, "the idea of an eternal Matter which is never at rest, always evolving from one form to another, is a very strong point of the system and it does credit to the philosophers of that school, that they at so early a date in the history of human thought so clearly formulated an idea of eternal Matter which is never at rest." [6] "This Matter", says Stcherbarsky, "embraces not only the human body, but all our mental state as well, they are given a materialistic origin and essence." [6] The *Samkhya* also made *sattva* or the intelligence potential as one of the constituents of the *prakriti* and conceived *buddhi*, *manas* and the *ahamkara* as the products of this primeval matter. Here we have found a concept, which makes matter primary and spirit secondary. Understood from this point of view, the *Samkhya* contained seri-

ous potential for a materialistic philosophy. It was no wonder therefore that *Samkara*, one of the main proponents of idealism in our country, persistently characterized it as but *achetankarana-vada*, the doctrine of unconscious first cause; and looked upon it as his main philosophical rival, the *pradhana-malla*.

At the same time, there is a difficulty related to this philosophy. At least from the *Samkhya-karika* onwards, the philosophy admitted over and above the *Prakriti*, a multiplicity or what were called the *purusas*, generally understood as the souls. This made it vulnerable to easy criticism, i.e., here lies a scope for slipping to idealism. But a critical study of the earlier version of this philosophy shows that this concept was incorporated at a later period. Not only that the concept of *Purusas*, as it is understood today clearly shows that its role is secondary, i.e., *apradhana*. The main (i.e., *pradhana*) cause is *Prakriti*. So the *Brahma-Sutra* understood *Samkhya* as *pradhana-vada* or as *pradhana-karan-vada* i.e., the doctrine of the principal matter being the first cause. Many writers believe that the concept of *Purusas* was not present in the ancient version of *Samkhya*. As Prof. Dasgupta pointed out the concept of *Samkhya* present in *Charaka-Samhita* represents the older version, which tells that the *Purusas* were originated from the *prakriti* itself i.e., the conscious matter originated from the unconscious matter. [7]

Lastly, let us see how did idealists view *Samkhya*. There is no doubt that the earliest of our idealists viewed the *Samkhya* as being the strongest of their philosophical rivals and they did this clearly because they were apprehensive of its materialist implications. The first systematic expression of this was made in the *Brahma-sutras*. No less than sixty aphorisms in it were clearly designed to refute the *Samkhya*, whereas forty three in all were directed against the

other rival philosophies. After elaborately refuting the *Samkhya* doctrine, the author claimed that therefore all other rival theories were virtually refuted. Shankara explained it thus: 'that by the conquest of the most dangerous adversary (*Pradhanamalla*, literally, the chief opposing wrestler) the conquest of the minor enemies is already virtually accomplished.' But why did the *Brahma-sutra* look upon the *Samkhya* as the most important challenge to the *Vedanta*? The answer is clear. It understood the *Samkhya* as *Pradhanavada* or *pradhana-karanavada*, i.e., the doctrine of the primeval matter being the first cause, while the *Vedanta* was *brahmavada* or *brahma-karanavada* i.e., the doctrine of *Brahman*, as something essentially conscious, being the first cause. It was thus, above all, a controversy between *acetanavada* and *Cetanavada* i.e., between the doctrine of the first cause being the unconscious matter and the doctrine of the first cause being spirit or consciousness. That was why, after explaining in the first four *sutras* certain fundamental points about the nature of the *Brahman* and that of the *Vedanta* texts, the author of the *Brahma-sutra* immediately hastened to explain in course of the next seven *sutras* that this *Brahman* was a principle of consciousness or an intelligent principle and as such was to be clearly distinguished from the *pradhana* of the *Samkhya*, which, being unconscious or material, could not be the cause of the world.

Judging from the evidences cited above can there be any doubt of the materialist leaning of the older version of *Samkhya*? However, under the influence of the Vedantic Philosophy, the Vedantic commentators of the *Samkhya* like Goudapada and Vacaspati Misra had tried to make it spiritualistic in the later period.

The Nyaya-Vaisesika

From their earliest phases, the *Nyaya* and *Vaisesika* systems were closely related and in course of time the two were actually amalgamated. Hence the two are usually treated under the joint name of *Nyaya-Vaisesika*.

The source books of these systems, viz. the *Nyaya-Sutra* and the *Vaisesika-Sutra* were attributed to Gotama (Goutama) and Kanada respectively. Nothing historical is known of either and the periods of writing of these *Sutras* are conjectural. According to the Indologist Jacobi, these could have been redacted between 200 A.D. and 400 A.D. But unlike the *Samkhya* and *Mimamsa*, the actual origin of these two philosophies need not be traced to any great antiquity, for there is no tradition like that. On the contrary, the distinctive features of these two systems were quite new in the Indian philosophical tradition and presumably both took shape sometime around 300 or 200 B.C.

The system starts with the postulate that all knowledge by its very nature points to an object beyond it and independent of it. In defence of this position the *Nyaya-Vaisesikas*, beginning with Gotama, had to wage a relentless war against philosophical idealism. Moreover, since, the idealist's position amounted to the assertion that all knowledge—or at any rate, all empirical knowledge—was inherently false, the *Nyaya-Vaisesikas*, along with the *Mimamsakas* had to take a determined stand against this position. Already, the *Nyaya-Sutra* refuted the view that valid knowledge (*prama*) was an impossibility and the later exponents of the system took up the task of building up a positive theory of validity and invalidity of knowledge. They developed the theory of extrinsic validity and extrinsic invalidity (*paratahpramanya* and *paratahpramanya*). According to this,

knowledge by itself is neither true or false; both its validity and invalidity depend upon and are determined by conditions different from those that produced the knowledge itself. Thus, a knowledge became valid not because of the conditions that produced the knowledge itself, but because of the additional condition called 'excellence' or *gunas*. Similarly, it could be invalid because of the additional condition called defect or *dosha*. How far these positions could be maintained with regard to all forms of knowledge was of course a different question. With regard to the knowledge derived from verbal testimony the position was quite clear, because the validity of such a knowledge could be dependent upon the additional factor called the trustworthiness of such a person. But that the same was not so obviously true with regard to the perceptual and inferential knowledge could not be so easily pointed out. In spite of this difficulty, however, there is no doubt that the *Nyaya-Vaisesikas* developed a really revolutionary theory with regard to the question of the assertion, i.e., the criterion of determining the truth or falsity of a knowledge.

How was one to get knowledge? How was one to know that a particular knowledge was true or false? What was the test of the truth? The *Nyaya-Vaisesikas* answered that there was only one such test and that was practice. A knowledge could be ascertained to be true or false only after putting it to the test of practical life. If in practice it led to a successful result, it was to be accepted as true. If, on the other hand, it failed to lead a practical success, it was to be discarded as false. Thus, e.g., the knowledge of water in a mirage was false because it could not lead one to quench thirst; the knowledge of water in a pool was true because it could actually lead to the quenching of thirst. This was one of the most significant ideas developed in our philosophy and it closely resembled the

modern scientific idea of practice being the criterion of truth.

With their fundamental postulate of the essentially objective and real existence of the world, the *Nyaya-Vaisesikas* proceeded to develop a rational explanation of it. This led them to their theory of *padarthas*. A *padartha* was defined as a knowable or valid and cognizable thing. The scheme of the *padarthas* thus represented an effort to arrive at a satisfactory classification of all knowable and namable things. Kanada himself mentioned six *padarthas* or broad categories under which everything known could be classified. These were (1) substance (*dravya*), (2) quality (*guna*), (3) activity (*karma*), (4) universal (*samanya*), (5) particularity (*visesa*), (6) the relation of inherence (*samavaya*). Later the *Nyaya-Vaisesikas*, however, added a seventh to this list and called it *abhava*, or non-existence.

Of these the most important was substance or *dravya*. Substances were conceived as nine in number, viz. (1) earth (*prithvi*), (2) water (*ap*), (3) fire (*teja*), (4) air (*vayu*), (5) sky (*akasa*), (6) time (*kala*), (7) space (*dik*), (8) self (*atman*), (9) mind (*manas*). The first five were called *bhutas*, i.e., substances having some specific quality that could be perceived by one or other of the external senses. These sensory qualities were odour, flavour, colour, touch and sound. It was further maintained that of these qualities the earth possessed the first four, water the second, third and fourth; fire the third and fourth; air the fourth only; akasa only the fifth. But the first four of these *bhutas* differed from the fifth in an important respect. We may understand this better if we begin with the conception of *akasa*. It was arrived at by trying to solve the problem of sound. Sound is neither a substance nor an action. As such it was a quality. But if it was a quality, it had to be the quality of some

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substance. This substance was *akasa*. It was partless and all pervasive. But the first four *bhutas* i.e., earth etc., were conceived in two varieties, called eternal and non-eternal. By the eternal variety of earth etc. was meant their atoms while by the non-eternal variety the products of these atoms. Thus in the Nyaya-Vaisesika view all the atoms were not homogenous in quality: the earth atoms were qualitatively different from water atom, etc., the water atom from earth atoms, etc., and so on.

Thus the *Nyaya-Vaisesikas* believed in the theory of atomism. Concretely, the conception was as follows. The mote in the sunbeam, i.e., the smallest among the perceptible-sized particles was called the *tryanuka*, i.e., the triad. It was so called because it was conceived to be made of three parts, each of which was called a *dvanuka* or dyad. The *dvanuka* were conceived as two and each of these called a *paramanu* or atom. But a *dvanuka* itself was not perceptible; therefore its component parts, i.e., the *paramanus*, were not conceived as made of parts.

Somehow or other, the *Nyaya-Vaisesikas* understood the production of an effect only in terms of the combination of parts. Therefore, the *paramanus* which were not made of parts could not be produced. Again, only things that were produced were conceived to have an end. But the *paramanus*, which were not produced, did not have any end. In short, the atoms were eternal, i.e., both beginningless and endless.

Here, we should mention the difference between the atomism of the *Nyaya-Vaisesikas* and that of Democritus. The most serious of this was connected with the movement of the atoms. What was reason for the atoms to take on the multiform combinations and produce the wealth of the organic and the inorganic worlds? Democritus finds it in the nature of the atoms themselves, to which the vacuum affords

rooms for their alternate conjunctions and disjunctions. The atoms variously heavy, and afloat in empty space, impinge on each other. There arises thus a wider and wider expanding movement throughout the general mass and in consequence of this movement, there takes place the various complexions, like shaped atoms grouping themselves with like shaped. These complexions, however, by very nature, always resolve themselves again; and hence the transitoriness of worldly things. But this explanation of the formation of the world explains in effect nothing: it exhibits only the quite abstract idea of an infinite causal series, but no sufficient ground for all the phenomena of becoming and mutation. As the last ground there remained only absolute predestination or necessity (*ananke*), which is in contrast to the final causes of Anaxagoras, who is said to have named it *tyche*, chance.

It is true that this conception of *ananke* had a mythological pre-history. In the system of Democritus, however, 'The idea of *ananke* has shaken off its mythical associations and became an abstract idea like the modern scientific concept of natural law.' [8]

The atomism of Democritus led him to a deterministic view of the universe in which there was no place for the God or the Creator or Destroyer. He had completely relied upon the combination of atoms for production of everything. The *Nyaya-Vaisesika* atomism, however developed in a somewhat opposite direction.

The fatal weakness of the *Nyaya-Vaisesika* atomism was its failure to conceive the atoms as either anti-dynamic or being moved by the natural laws. Although Kanada himself did not mention God, and in all presumption he was an atheist, the later philosophers of the system not only believed in god, but even became the foremost advocates of the proofs for his

existence. Why did atomism fall to this peculiar fate in this philosophy? Due to the inherent weakness mentioned above it suffered this setback. The production of the composite objects was conceived as essentially a matter of joining; then there must be a joiner. This was how God came into the system to fill up the gap of the atomistic hypothesis.

Buddhism

Buddha himself saw all the miseries of his time, which was the result of the transformation of pre-class society into class-society. But what was to be done? He was too realistic to believe in God, prayers and sacrifices which could not, he knew, bring any effective remedy to the miseries he saw all around. He did not ask people to pray and sacrifice. He asked his disciples to turn away from 'opinions concerning the beginning and hereafter of things.' [9] For it was no use behaving like a fool who, with an arrow plunged into his flank, wasted time speculating on the origin, maker etc., of the arrow instead pulling it off outright. Therefore, when asked metaphysical questions that he considered being unprofitable, he simply remained silent. In short, the problem that oppressed him most was essentially a practical one. It was the bewildering mass of sufferings he saw around. And he wanted to have an essentially practical solution for this. But how, under the condition in which he lived, such a solution could at all be evolved?

There was no question, of course, of really removing the real miseries from this world. That meant skipping over stages of historical development. This is because the transformation from pre-class society to class society, which resulted in miseries and blood-shed, was a natural historical process. It was not possible for anybody

to alter this process of development. So he had tried to take refuge in the class-less society. But it was not possible to create such a situation in the then existing society. So he developed the *Sanghas* on the basis of the principles of classless society. He asked people to take the *prabbajja* and *upasampada* ordinations, i.e., to 'go out' of the actual society and 'to arrive at' the life of the *sanghas*, or the order of the monks. For within the sanghas, things were different. Modelled consciously on the recollections of tribal society—without private property and with full equality among the brethren—these alone could offer the real scope to practice the 'simple moral grandeur or the ancient gentile society', [10] for which Buddha was really pleading. Thus the *sanghas*, as classless societies within the bosom of the class-society, could become the heart of a heartless world, the spirit of a spiritless situation.

In search of the cause of the suffering, early Buddhism started with a general theory of natural causation, known as the doctrine of *Pratitya-samutpada*. It meant, 'that being present, this becomes', from the arising of that, this arises. Physical corollaries of real importance were drawn in early Buddhism from this doctrine of *pratitya-samutpada*. These were the doctrines of universal impermanence and of the denial of the soul as a substance. The exact reason with which these corollaries were drawn from the doctrine of *pratitya-samutpada* is not quite clear. But it is clear the doctrines of universal impermanence and of the denial of the permanent soul were somehow or other connected in early Buddhism with the doctrine of *pratitya-samutpada* and there is no doubt that these doctrines were of real philosophical significance.

Both these doctrines arose as reactions against the *Upanishadic* thought according to which the soul was a pure substance

that transcended all changes. This soul being the ultimate reality, all the concrete mental states were after all unreal. With early Buddhism it was just the reverse. The transient sensations and thoughts, along with the physical frame with which these were associated, are real and the idea of any soul over and above these was just a superstition. The personality was thus viewed as just an aggregate (*samghata*) of the mental states and the body.

The aggregate is sometimes described as *nama-rupa*, utilizing an old Upanisadic phrase, though its meaning is here very much modified. By the first term *nama*, is meant not 'name' as in the *upanisads*, but the physical factors constituting the aggregate, and by the second, *rupa*, the physical body so that the compound signifies the psycho-physical organism and may be taken as roughly equivalent to 'mind and body'. That is, Buddha took as the reality the very things that were explained away as not ultimate in the *Upanishad* and denied the substratum which alone according to them is truly real.

A more detailed description of the personality in early Buddhism was that it consisted of five *skandhas* or factors, *vizrupa*, *vijnana*, *vedana*, *sainjna* and *samaskaras*, of which the *rupaskandha* meant the physical the other *skandhas* being psychological.

Material things, too, like the self, were considered as just aggregates of the quality perceived, and according to early Buddhism, none of the aggregates could persist even in two successive moments.

Two symbols are generally used to illustrate this conception—the stream of water and 'the self producing and self consuming' flame. It will be seen thus that everyone of our so called things is only a series (*vithi*)—a succession of similar things or happenings, and the notions of fixity which we have of them is wholly fictitious'.

Philosophically speaking, this conception

of everything having its being only in an eternal flux was by far the most significant contribution of early Buddhism and it is not a little surprising to note that precisely the same view, along with the same illustration of the fire, was proclaimed about a couple of generations later by Heraclitus in ancient Greece, and further, is being reinstated, though of course with an incomparably richer content, by modern science.

What Heraclitus or early Greek Philosophy did was also done by the Buddhists or early Indian Philosophy. It was all the more significant that this conception of change of becoming was presumably arrived at by synthesis of the conceptions of being and non-being. 'This world', said the Buddha, 'generally proceeds on a duality, of the 'it is' and 'it is not'. [11] We had here perhaps the first instance of dialectical thinking in Indian Philosophy.

Later Schools of Buddhism

The later schools of Buddhism, however, reflected an extravagant world-denying idealist outlook that proved inimical to science and sympathetic only to sundry superstitions. In the context of Buddha's own opinion against metaphysical speculations and his pronounced atheism, this line of subsequent development of the Buddhist philosophy may appear somewhat strange. However the clue to it is to be found in the withdrawal of the philosophical-monks from the labour of production. Subsisting wholly on the gifts of the merchants and kings, they were of course relieved of the worries of their own material existence.

This created conditions for a kind of philosophical specialization—the possibility of being exclusively concerned with learning and thinking, the discourse and debate—the conditions, in short for raising Indian philosophy to a new level of development. This explains the positive aspects

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of their contribution to philosophy. At the same time, their exclusive concern for theory or mental labour—i.e., their aloofness from material or manual labour—deprived them of a living contact with the world and the spirit of interrogating nature to gain a better insight into natural laws. This gradually led to the development of a sense of delusional omnipotence of thought itself, so much so, that it came to be believed that thought dictated terms to reality and as such was the only reality. The physical world, consequently, became only a phantom of imagination, dream or a fabrication of ignorance. In short, the development of idealism among the later Buddhists was no more a mystery than the birth of idealism.

Outside Buddhism among the *Upanishadic* or *Vedantic* philosophers, basically the same process of development took place and they were led to evolve substantially the same idealistic outlook. As such, there is little to wonder at the free exchange of philosophical ideas between the Vedantists and the later Buddhists, notwithstanding all their mutual religious animosities.

With this background in mind, we may now turn to the history of later schools of the Buddhist philosophy. It is perhaps best introduced with the story of Buddhist councils. Immediately after the death of Buddha, a council of the Buddhist monks was convened at Rajagriha to draw out the canonical texts and creed in its purity. This was the First Council and its main achievement was to settle the *Dharma* and the *Vinaya*. There was as yet no mention of *Abhidharma*. This is significant, for the *Abhidharma* mainly embodies the metaphysical speculations of the later Buddhists, while the *Dharma* and particularly *Vinaya* were chiefly concerned with the codes of conduct. Apparently the monks at the First Council were still too close to the Master to have drifted far away from his original emphasis.

However, some kind of resistance to the codes of conduct was not long to grow among the monks. We hear that after about a century a Second Council had to be convened at Vaisali specifically to consider the question. A large number of monks regarded some of the orthodox codes of conduct to be no more useful and demanded their relaxation. This happened due to the impact of the society which was built on the basis of the private property. Although Buddha had tried to build up his *Sanghas* in seclusion and in strict pursuance of the ethics of classless society, the situation had gradually changed after his death. However, the Second Council decided against any such relaxation as was demanded by a section of monks. But these monks refused to surrender. So they were thrown out or expelled. These monks convened a separate Council of their own, in which ten thousand were said to have congregated. 'Indeed, it was a great congregation of monks (*maha-samgiti*) from which they were called the *Mahasanghikas*, as distinguished from the orthodox monks, the *Thera-vadins* (*Sthavira-vadins*).

The *Mahasamghikas* modified the rules of conduct, redrafted the canonical literature and introduced certain ideological innovations into the Buddhistic standpoints. Two of these innovations deserve special mention. First, the *Mahasamghikas* originated the theory of *Lokattara* Buddha. The Buddha was no longer conceived as ordinary human being, who, moved by the miseries of his fellow beings, preached the doctrine of the cessation of sufferings; he was viewed as a supernatural or supermundane being, a veritable deity. This theory was developed further by the later *Mahayana* Buddhists in whose view the Buddha became virtually the god receiving a highly ceremonial form of worship from the devotees. We have moreover faint glimpses of some metaphysical assertions

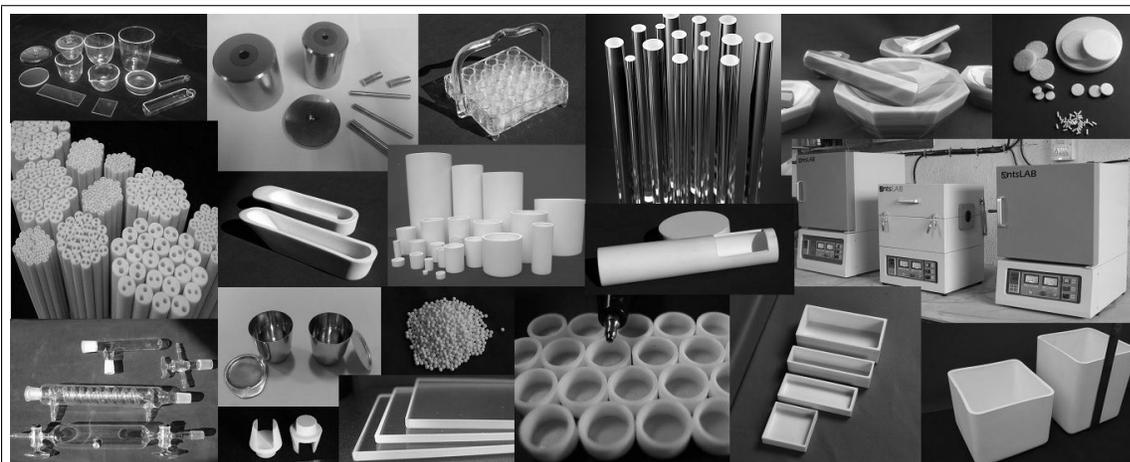
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of the *Mahasamghikas* that may be taken as foreshadowing the idealistic philosophy of later *Mahayana*.

Thus a philosophy, which was started with a strong atheist stand transformed itself into an idealist one. And it was an irony that a philosophy which was developed by opposing *Upanisadic* tradition, gave shelter to that very *Upanisadic* idealism.

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