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LOKĀYATA AND ITS DERIVATIVES
IN THE *SAD-DHARMA-PUṆḌARĪKA-SŪTRA*

Ramkrishna Bhattacharya

If one sets upon oneself the task of translating the *Sad-dharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* (*SDPS*), a first-century CE Sanskrit Mahāyānī Buddhist text, into a modern Indian language, one will face no problem with the word *lokāyata*. It is current in all and can be retained in translation without bothering to explain what *lokāyata* means.¹ But translating it into a European language would prove to be difficult, for the reader would not know the word and so some equivalent would have to be provided. But what would be the right equivalent in the context of the *SDPS*? The word *lokāyata* and its derivatives occur thrice in this work. Burnouf and Kern in their French and English translations respectively, somewhat differ in their understanding. Let us look at the passages one by one.

1. *anyeṣu sūtreṣu na kāci cintā lokāyatair anyataraiḥ ca sāstraiḥ | bālāna etādṛśa bhonti gocarās tāmstvaṃ vivarjīva prakāṣayer idam ||* (Tokyo ed., p. 94; Calcutta ed., p. 72; Darbhanga ed., p. 70; v.l. in line 1: *na kadāpi cintā*).
Burnouf (1852 : 142): «Il ne faut jamais penser à d'autres Sūtras, ni à d'autres livres d'une science vulgaire, car ce sont là des objets bons pour les ignorants, évite de tels livres et explique ce Sūtra».
Kern (1884: 96-97): «Never mind other Sūtras nor the books in which a profane philosophy is taught; such books are fit for the foolish, avoid them and preach this Sūtra».
2. *yadā ca mañjuśrīr bodhisattvo mahāsattvo [...] na ca lokāyataman-tradhārakān na lokāyatikān sevate na bhajate na paryupāste na ca taiḥ sārđhaṃ samstvavaṃ karoti |* (Tokyo ed., p. 236; Calcutta ed., pp. 180-81; Darbhanga ed., p. 166; v.l. in line 1: *lokāyatamantrapāragān*).
Burnouf (1852: 168): «[...] un Bodhisattva Mahāsattva [...] ne recherche pas les Lokāyatikas qui lisent les Tantras de leur secte. qu'il ne les honore pas, qu'il n'entratient aucun commerce avec eux [...]».
Kern (1884: 262-263): «A Bodhisattva Mahāsattva [...] is firm in his conduct and proper sphere [...] when he does not serve, nor court, nor wait upon [...] adepts at worldly spells, and votaries of a worldly philosophy, nor keep any intercourse with them [...]».

¹ I have seen only the Hindi and Nepali translations of the *SDPS*. Both retain *lokāyata* on all occasions.

3. [...] *na ca teṣām (kulaputrānām) lokāyate rucir bhaviṣyati na kāvyaprasrītāḥ sattvās teṣām abhirucitā bhaviṣyanti na nṛttakā na mallā nartakā na śauṇḍikaur [...]*
(Tokyo ed., p. 389; Calcutta ed., pp. 311-12; Darbhanga ed., pp. 266-67).
Burnouf (1852: 280): «Ils [*scil.* les fils ou les filles de familles qui retiendront le nom du Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Samantabhadra] n'éprouveront pas de plaisir, dans *la doctrine des Lokāyatas*; les hommes livrés à la poésie ne leur plairont pas; les danseurs, les musiciens, les lutteurs le vendeurs de viande [...].»
Kern (1884: 437-438): «They [*scil.* the young men of good family who shall cherish the name of the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Samantabhadra] will have no pleasure *in worldly philosophy*; no persons fondly addicted to poetry will please them; no dancers, athletes, vendors of meat [...].»

As regards 1., Burnouf takes *lokāyataiḥ śāstraiḥ* to mean «books of a vulgar (popular) science»; Kern, «books in which a profane philosophy is taught». Apparently neither of them attached any technical sense to the *lokāyataśāstra-s* (in plural), so the first occurrence of this word is not noted in their *Indexes*.

Regarding 2., however, Burnouf (1852: 409) in a note says that the Lokāyatikas refer to the followers of the «doctrine athéiste des Tchārvākas», that is, the atheistic doctrine of the Cārvākas. He adds that in Pali *lokāyata* signifies «histoire fabuleuse, roman» and cites Moggalāna's *Abhidhānappadīpikā* (as edited by Clough) as his source.

This drew a retort from Rhys Davids (1899.I: 169-170, note 4):

Burnouf (p. 168) reads *tantras* (instead of *mantras*), no doubt wrongly, and has a curious blunder in his note on the passage (p. 409). He says Lokāyata means in Pali «fabulous history, romance»; and quotes as its authority, the passage [...] from the *Abhidhāna Padīpikā* in which Lokāyatam is simply explained as *vitaṇḍasattham*. This last expression cannot possibly mean anything of that sort.

Rhys Davids is right. But Rev. Benjamin Clough is to be blamed for misleading Burnouf. Clough, in his notes on the line in the *Abhidhānappadīpikā* 112: (*vitaṇḍasattham viññeyam yan tam*) *lokāyatam (iti)*, glosses *lokāyatam* as «Fabulous Story» (marginal notes on p. 13). Burnouf did not notice that Clough and Tolfrey (who translated *Pali Grammar* and *Pali Vocabulary* in Clough, 1824), had mistaken «Fabulous Story» and elsewhere «Fabulous History» as English equivalents for *lokāyatam* (instead of *vitaṇḍasattham*, «science of disputation»), perhaps because *ākhyāyika* and *kathā* soon follow in the dictionary (*Abhidhānappadīpikā* 113ab). What is more to be regretted is that Burnouf, misled by Clough and Tolfrey, in his turn misled Böhtlingk and Roth who in their

Sanskrit Wörterbuch gave these two meanings of *lokāyata* (in Pali): «eine erfundene Geschichte, Roman» (rendered into German from Burnouf's French version).²

Burnouf proposed (1852: 409) that «les *Lokāyatikas* de notre *Lotus*» may suggest «les auteurs ou les lecteurs de pareils ouvrages, dans lesquels les passions et les affaires du monde forment le sujet principal». Apparently he had in his mind the wrong meaning given in Clough. Kern steered clear of Clough but called the *Lokāyatikas* «the Sadducees or Epicureans of India» (1884: 263, note 4; see also 438, note 1), equating them with the *Cārvākas* who appeared much later. D.D. Shastri (1981: 19) too glosses *lokāyata* as *cārvākaśāstra* although Moggalāna mentions nothing of this sort.

The fact is that in the Pali commentaries and dictionaries, *lokāyatam* is always glossed as *vitandāsattam*, the science of disputation. In other Buddhist Sanskrit works (e.g., the *Lankāvatārasūtra*), it means «points (or issues) of dispute».³ The Buddha, as is well-known, did not approve of the sophists. So it is no wonder that both in 2. and 3., the *Lokāyatikas* are looked down upon and viewed on a par with those who followed despicable professions (according to the Buddha). In all the three instances *lokāyataśāstra-s* and *lokāyatika-s* mean, respectively, books of logical disputation (*vitandā*) and masters of this art, not the *Bārhaspatya/Cārvāka/Lokāyata* philosophical system and its adherents. The ways Burnouf and Kern render these words are beside the mark.

But a crux still remains in case of 2. What could *lokāyatamantradhārakān* mean? Burnouf's rendering (*tantra* in place of *mantra*) is not supported by other manuscripts. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (1969: 110) strongly objected to Kern's rendering of *lokāyatamantra* as «worldly spells» as also to Rhys Davids's (1899.I: 169) rendering as «mystic verses». Vaidya (1960: 296) explains *lokāyata* as «a popular philosophy» which leaves the basic question unanswered: Is *lokāyata* to be taken to mean «the science of disputation» or a materialist philosophical system?

The *Abhidhanappadīpikā* places *lokāyatam* in the *Girāvaggo*, along with *vānī*, *vākya*, *amenditam*, *vedo*, *vedaṅgas*, *itihāso*, *nighaṇḍu*, *keṭubham*, *kathā*, *vuttanto*, *paṭivākya*, etc. Each of these words refers to a subject of study, not to any philosophical system. The *SDPS* creates another problem by placing the word °*mantra* after *lokāyata*° and separately mentioning *lokāyatikān* immediately after it. The word *mantra* is invariably associated with magic and religious practices (sacrificial or otherwise). On the other hand, *lokāyata*, whether taken

² For further details see Bhattacharya (2009: 187-200, chapters 16-18).

³ Jayatilleke (1980: 51-54) has discussed the matter in detail, pointing out Suzuki's error in translating *lokāyata* in the *Lankāvatārasūtra* as «materialism». It may also be mentioned that a modern dictionary of classical Sanskrit, the *Śabdakalpadruma*, glosses *lokāyatam*, besides *Cārvākaśāstram*, as *tarkabhedah*.

to mean *disputatio*, a subject of study, or materialism, is secular and has nothing to do with magic or religion.

How to solve this problem?

The word *lokāyata* both in Pali and Buddhist Sanskrit is generally used as substantive to mean *disputatio*. It is attested by the Suttas in the *Tipiṭaka* as well as the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadānasūtra* (in *Divyāvadāna*). The emendations made by Cowell and Neil, Mukhopadhyaya, and Vaidya in the latter text clearly show that in all cases of its occurrence *lokāyata* is to be taken as a Brahminical subject of study along with the Vedas, Upaniṣads, *vyākaraṇa*, *kaiṭabha*, *padamīmāṃsā*, *mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa*, *bhāṣyapravacana*, etc.⁴ Such lists of subjects both for Brahmins and princes are often mentioned in the Upaniṣads and Pali, Prakrit and Buddhist Sanskrit works.⁵ To cite one example in the *Divyāvadāna*: *chandasi vā vyākaraṇe vā lokāyate vā padamīmāṃsāyām vā* (Darbhanga ed., p. 330. Cf. also pp. 318, 319, 328).

In view of this, I think the only solution is to emend the text, not on the basis of further manuscript evidence but by such evidences as are found in other Pali and Buddhist Sanskrit texts. Since *lokāyatam* in all available sources stands for the science for disputation, there is no reason why it should mean something else in this instance. In the *Milindapañha* (Trenkner, 1880: 4), the king is described as «fond of wordy disputation and eager for discussion with casuists, sophists, and gentry of that sort» (*so rājā bhassappavādako lokāyata-vitaṇḍa-janasallāpavattakotūhalo*). Similarly, Milinda is (Trenkner, 1880: 10) «skilled alike in casuistry and in the knowledge of the bodily marks that foreshadow the greatness of a man» (*lokāyata-mahāpurisalakkhanesu anavayo ahoṣi*. As Rhys Davids (1890: 17, note 3) has noted: «The above are the stock phrases for the learning of a scholarly Brahman [...]).

What seems to have happened is this: the scribe has mistakenly written the word *lokāyatamantradhārakān* in place of *lokāyatayajñamantradhārakān* (or *°pāragān*), and without noticing his own error went on copying.⁶

What is the basis of this emendation? It is as follows: *lokayāta*, *yajñamantra*, and *mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa* are found mentioned in Buddhist literature while enumerating the curriculum for a Brahmin or a prince, as in the *Divyāvadāna* (*Śārdūlakarṇāvadānasūtra*): *lokāyate yajñamantrā mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇe niṣṇāto niṣkāṅkṣoḥ* (Darbhanga ed., p. 318), *lokāyatayajñamantramahāpuruṣalakṣaṇeṣu pāragaḥ* (*ibid.*, p. 319).

⁴ For a fuller discussion, see Bhattacharya (2009: 193-196, chapter 17).

⁵ For a comparison of the curriculums found in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* and the *Tipiṭaka*, see Jayatilke (1980: 47-48). See also Rhys Davids (1890.I: 7, note 1) that mentions other sources. For Jain works referring to such curriculums, see D.C. Dasgupta (1999: 5, 27, 67).

⁶ For a probable, alternative interpretation of the compound *lokāyatamantra*, see Del Toso (2010: 545-547).

In Pali too we have *hetu* and *manṭa* («causation» and «spells») side by side in the *Milindapañha* (Trenkner, 1880: 3) as well as *lokāyata* and *mahāpurisalakkhaṇa* similarly juxtaposed (Trenkner, 1880: 10). Neither Burnouf, nor Kern, nor Rhys Davids remembered all this at the time of studying the passage in the *SDPS* and readily accepted the association of °*mantra* with *lokāyata*°, apparently forgetting the stock formula, *lokāyata-yajñamantra-mahāpurisalakkhaṇa*. Unfortunately the copy that contained this faulty reading (omission of *yajñā*° before °*mantra*) was copied and recopied over and over again and thus the scribal error remained undetected, even unsuspected, and consequently the reading continued to confuse generations of scholars and readers.

The sentence in the *SDPS* under discussion would thus mean: «A Bodhisattva Mahāsattva [is firm in his conduct and proper sphere] when he does not serve, nor court, nor wait upon [...] [adepts at] *the science of disputation* (*lokāyata*) and those who retain in their memory the sacrificial spells [or incantations] (*yajñamantra*) as well as disputants (*lokāyatikān*) nor keep any intercourse with them». The *Lokāyatikas* are mentioned separately, presumably because they had not only studied the *Lokāyataśāstra* but used to practise it as well.

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