On Śālikanātha's Critique of Īśvara and the Notions of God

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Abstract The arguments against the existence of Īśvara that are advanced by Śālikanātha's *Prakaraṇapañcikā* are quite peculiar and cryptic, due to both the idiosyncratic nature and opaque style of Śālikanātha's writing. This has contributed to the difficulty in identifying the actual nature of the views that Śālikanātha opposes. This article analyses the framework by which Śālikanātha interrogates the concept of Īśvara and discusses the possible sources of his arguments. It shows, contrary to the conclusions of past scholarship, that considerations of both Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika sources are certainly apparent in Śālikanātha's formulation of his critique of Īśvara. This paper also discusses the possible sources from which Śālikanātha derives the notion of Īśvara as the creator of the Vedas. It concludes that rather than any Nyāya or Vaiśeṣika sources, it is most likely that Śālikanātha derives this notion of Īśvara from Kumārila, who potentially has Yoga opponent in mind.

Keywords Śālikanātha · Mīmāṃsā · Kumārila · Īśvara · Jayanta Bhaṭṭa · Nyāya

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Introduction

The *Vimalāñjana* chapter of one of the most celebrated Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā treatises, the *Prakaraṇapañcikā* (PrP)[1], is chiefly concerned with the fundamental Mīmāṃsā doctrine on the relation between word and its meaning. Tangentially, it also contains a number of arguments by which Śālikanātha rejects the existence of Īśvara.[2] In these arguments, Śālikanātha builds up his rejection of Īśvara on the ground that it is impossible for Īśvara to have the metaphysical attributes that he allegedly possesses. It is well known that many classical Indian philosophers who are hostile to the concept of Īśvara focus on rejecting his existence by pointing out that the inference aimed to establish the existence of Īśvara contains multiple violations of inductive rules.[3] Śālikanātha's arguments, however, are more concerned with the metaphysical question as to whether Īśvara can actually hold those alleged properties, rather than with the inferential question as to whether any means of knowledge can establish the existence of Īśvara. Therefore, the aim of Śālikanātha is to discredit the plausibility of Īśvara's existence by arguing that these properties of Īśvara cannot lead to the powers that he allegedly harbours.

However, to fully grasp the logic and conclusions of Śālikanātha's arguments is not an easy task, especially since there are no quotations in the *Vimalāñjana* chapter and he does not attribute the views he is attacking to any particular philosophers or schools. Whether Śālikanātha has multiple opponents in mind does not have a consensus in the past scholarship. In the most well-received edition of the PrP, the editor A. Subrahmanyam Sastri (1961, pp. 306–308) classified Śālikanātha's criticism of Īśvara into two sections, namely, *īśvaranirākaraṇa* ("refutation of Īśvara") and *vaiśeṣikābhimateśvaranirāsa* ("rejection of Īśvara with regard to the Vaiśeṣika thoughts"). Sastri did not, however, provide us with any notes explaining why this division is made, nor did he suggest who the opponents in

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[1] It is perhaps worth mentioning that it remains unclear whether the *Prakaraṇapañcikā* is an independent work composed by Śālikanātha or the collection of the chapters were compiled by later Mīmāṃsākas. Another facet of the problem is that there seems to be some chapters of the PrP that are no longer extant. These issues were discussed in Yoshimizu (1994, p. 34, n.13). As well put in Kyuma (2010, p. 248, n.2), it is important to always remember this textual reality "when we attempt to determine the consistency of Śālikanātha's ideas throughout the individual sections, or possible stages in the development of his thought".

[2] It seems that modern scholarship on Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā, has barely appreciated the arguments employed by Prābhākaras to refute the concept of omniscient divine being. Although the *Vimalāñjana* chapter of the *Prakaraṇapañcikā* was summarised in Jhā's (1978, pp. 85–88) then-comprehensive guide to Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā and the chapter was translated freely by Pāṇḍuraṅgi (2004, pp. 268–275), there appears to be no detailed textual analysis available in contemporary research.

[3] Most notably, Buddhist philosophers focus on advocating that Naiyāyikas' way of employing inferential arguments to prove the existence of God is essentially illegitimate, because there is a violation of inductive rules when Naiyāyikas make analogy between an ordinary agent and the alleged creator of the world. Following the *pramāṇa* tradition of Dharmakīrti, later Buddhists such as Śāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla, and Ratnakīrti all aim to argue that Naiyāyikas' inference to prove the existence of God violates the scope of induction. The basic idea is that the invariable concomitance between ordinary objects and ordinary makers may not be extended to support the inference of a supreme creator of the world. In the PrP, Śālikanātha seems to be less interested in entering the debate over the legitimacy of the inferences employed by Naiyāyikas. For a neat and lucid account of Buddhists' refutation of Īśvara, see Dasti (2011, pp. 1–22) and Patil (2009).

the *īśvaranirākaraṇa* section might be.[4] When Pāṇḍuraṅgi (2004, pp. 268–275) presented an English summary of the *Vimalāñjana* chapter in his monograph, he only identified the opponents as Vaiśeṣikas, presumably following the verdict reached by Sastri. On the other hand, Gaṅgānātha Jhā (1978, pp. 85–88) assumed that the opponents were Naiyāyikas.[5] The common problem with these speculations, however, is that none of these scholars provided clues showing how they reached their conclusions.[6]

It seems to me that the diversity of the opinions on this issue is a result of the fact that Śālikanātha's critique of Īśvara contains motley elements whose origins are difficult to readily ascertain. In this article, I will argue that both Naiyāyikas and Vaiśeṣikas conceptions of Īśvara are present in the PrP. Moreover, I will point to the fact that there are features of Śālikanātha's arguments that cannot be sufficiently explained when we only consider Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika sources. This paper starts with my presentation of some arguments of Śālikanātha that consist of two deceptively similar but essentially different versions of Īśvara: one is a God endowed with eternal intelligence (*nityabuddhi*), the other is a God endowed with the power of wish (*icchā*). Next, I will show that early Naiyāyikas such as Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara are only willing to endorse the concept of eternal intelligence, while the concept of Īśvara's wish can only be found in Vaiśeṣika literature. This paper then moves on to examine one specific characteristic of Īśvara that is mentioned by Śālikanātha, namely, Īśvara as the creator of the Vedas, and I will argue that it is difficult to attribute this notion of Īśvara in Śālikanātha's writing to any Nyāya or Vaiśeṣika sources based on my analysis of the chronology. The aim is to illustrate that there are elements in Śālikanātha's refutation of Īśvara that are beyond the scope of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika sources. Finally, I will argue that Śālikanātha likely derives this notion of Īśvara from Kumārila, whose work Śālikanātha follows closely insofar as the issue of Īśvara is concerned.

The Metaphysics of Īśvara in the PrP

As explained in the introduction section, Śālikanātha's framework for discrediting the plausibility of Īśvara's existence focuses on how the concept of Īśvara does not make metaphysical sense. For instance, according to Śālikanātha, it is impossible that Īśvara has an intelligence (*buddhi*) that is eternal; nor is it possible that Īśvara can initiate the movement of atoms simply by his wish (*icchā*). In this section I will

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[4] Given that Sastri (1961, p. ix) concluded that Śālikanātha's active date was around 780 to 825 A.D. — nowadays a quite questionable claim (see details the later sections of this paper) — I would suggest that his credibility in ascertaining the identity of Śālikanātha's opponent has rather receded.

[5] Gaṅgānātha Jhā describes the opponents as "logicians", which is the term he uses whenever he wishes to refer to the Naiyāyikas in his translation work. Jhā also mentioned that the major source from which he summarised the opinions of Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā was Śālikanātha's *Prakaraṇapañcikā*. See Jhā (1978, p. 85).

[6] One is therefore led to believe that such conclusions may have been drawn merely based on the impressions given by some superficial characteristics of Śālikanātha's writing. For instance, a passage might have been identified as belonging to Vaiśeṣika school simply because the term "atom" (*paramaṇu*) occurs, yet specific Vaiśeṣika texts were not consulted to support that conclusion.

examine two arguments put forward by Śālikanātha that are concerned with the *buddhi* of Īśvara and the *icchā* of Īśvara respectively.

Śālikanātha opens his argument by pointing out that it is impossible for Īśvara, as an entity that is external to the individual selves that are superintended, to be able to cognise the merits and demerits of these individual selves. Śālikanātha emphasises that any possible superintending must consist in the agent having the cognition of whatever he is superintending, and in this case of Īśvara, we clearly cannot find any plausible cognition of such kind. In the subsequent passages, Śālikanātha first refutes that intelligence cannot be accounted for as the causing factor for God to cognise merits and demerits, because it is never observed that intelligence can have such a function. Next, Śālikanātha also objects to the concept of an eternal intelligence, as he writes:

> [Objection:] Now, the eternality of intelligence should be accepted even though it is imperceptible
> [Answer:] Then why do you not accept that this is not superintended by a conscious agent?
> [Objection:] Here, once the agency is established, then the knowledge [of merits and demerits], too, can be postulated.
> [Answer:] This is not logical. For, being the superintendent who is not causally connected with the knowledge [of merits and demerits] and so on cannot be inferred when the existence of such cognition is rejected due to the absence of its cause. Therefore, we should rely on this concomitance (*vyāptir āśrayaṇīyā*): an insentient thing that is possible to be cognised is superintended by a sentient being, because it is so observed. For, people such as carpenters are seen handling instruments such as an axe and the like which they are able to understand, not others.[7]

Here, the opponent seems to suggest that the existence of a superintending agent can be established without difficulty as long as the concept of an eternal intelligence is accepted. The intention of the opponent here is rather obscure, but it is not too difficult to make sense of the opponent's proposal given the context. In the previous passage, Śālikanātha is focused on revealing that it is impossible for God to have the cognition of merits and demerits of the individual selves, on the ground that there cannot be any plausible causal factor for God to do so. Now, the opponent here seems to suggest that such cognitions can be postulated after the agency is independently inferred. In response to this fresh proposal, Śālikanātha argues that the concept of being an agent necessarily entails the knowledge of what is superintended. According to Śālikanātha, once the cognition of what is superintended is rejected, the agency in question is also automatically denied. Then, based on his previous argument that God cannot possibly have any cognition of the merits

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[7] PrP Vimalāñjana 307: *athādṛṣṭam api buddher nityatvam aṅgīkriyate, tadā cetanānadhiṣṭhitatvam eva kim iti nāṅgīkriyate. atha siddhe 'dhiṣṭhātṛtve jñānam api kalpyata iti. tad ayuktam, jñānādyananubaddhasyā- dhiṣṭhātṛtvasya kāraṇābhāvāt pratikṣipte jñāne saty anumātum aśakteḥ. tena śakyajñānam evācetanaṃ cetanādhiṣṭhitam iti vyāptir āśrayaṇīyā, tathādarśanāt. takṣādayo hi śakyajñānāny eva vāsyādīny adhitiṣṭhanto dṛśyante, nānyāni.* The number after the chapter name refers to the page number in Sastri (1961).

and demerits, Śālikanātha points out that the existence of the agent cannot be established at all. In the end, Śālikanātha concludes that the essential condition for any entities to be eligible to be superintended is that the entity in question must be viable to be cognised. The implication of this axiom is that since God cannot have any cognition of the merits and demerits, under no circumstance can God be plausibly conceived as the superintending agent.

A few lines of arguments later, Śālikanātha switches his focus to Īśvara's power of wish (icchā) and argues that this icchā that is assumed for Īśvara also does not make metaphysical sense. Specifically, the major dispute between Śālikanātha and his opponent is whether the wish of Īśvara can account for the movement of atoms. Śālikanātha suggests that since we never observe that any entities can proceed to act simply by the power of wish, it is problematic to assume that the superintending power of God consists in what is never observed elsewhere. Following the presentation of his position, Śālikanātha allows the opponent to put forward an explanation to prove the plausibility of God's superintendence. The opponent proposes a solution to the problem by arguing that such superintending can be observed in the body (śarīre). Śālikanātha then contends that such an analogy is not feasible because atoms cannot be held by Īśvara who does not have merits and demerits at all, in contrast to individual selves who do have merits and demerits to constitute bodies. This debate is presented as follows:

> Moreover, also the view, as some people say, that the atoms proceed to act just by the power of the wish (icchā) of God, is not logical, because we never see superintendence of such kind anywhere any time. If it is argued that such superintendence is observed in the body, [our response is] it is not so, because body is held by the merits and demerits of each individual self, and atoms are not held by the merits and demerits of God (as he has none). It is also not true that his activity is merely due to his wish but on account of his efforts. And, it is not the case that there is a cause also for the wish, nor is the wish eternal, because if so, it would ensue that activity [of the atoms] is eternal.[8]

In summary, in response to the suggestion that atoms can be moved just by means of Īśvara's wish, Śālikanātha first points out that we never observe any superintending merely due to the power of wish, before allowing the opponent to suggest that God's superintending can be similar to how we control our material bodies in that they are both invisible in the body. Śālikanātha's final stance is that these two cases cannot equate, because Īśvara, as one who does not have any merits and demerits, cannot hold anything to be his body.

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[8] PrP Vimalāñjana 308: *yad api kecid āhuḥ, paramāṇava eveśvarecchāvaśena pravartanta iti. tad api na yuktam. kvacit tathāvidhasyādhiṣṭhānasyādarśanāt. śarīre tathādarśanam iti cet. na. tasya kṣetrajñad-harmādharma- parigṛhītatvāt. na paramāṇava eveśvaradharmādharmaparigṛhītāḥ. na ca tasyecchāmātreṇa pravṛttiḥ, kintu prayatnavaśāt. na cecchāyām api hetur asti. na ca nityaivecchā, nityaṃ pravṛttiprasaṅgāt.*

The Vaiśeṣika God, and the Nyāya God

Before we seek to speculate the nature of the opponents addressed by Śālikanātha, it will help to revisit the development of the concepts of Īśvara in Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika system.[9] The problem at stake here is that early Vaiśeṣikas and Naiyāyikas in fact have very different opinions on what constitutes the primary power of Īśvara. While early Vaiśeṣikas such as Praśastapāda emphasises the power of *icchā* when advocating for the role of Īśvara, the concept of *icchā* is conspicuously absent in early Naiyāyikas' accounts as neither Vātsyāyana nor Uddyotakara mentioned the power of *icchā* in their works; instead, Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara contends that it is the eternal intelligence that makes Īśvara distinct from ordinary selves.

It is well known that the *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* bears no traces of any discussion of a supreme divine being. The earliest account of Īśvara available to us in the Vaiśeṣika school remains to be Praśastapāda's commentary on the *Vaiśeṣikasūtra*. In the *Padārthadharmasaṃgraha*, Praśastapāda clearly takes the wish of Īśvara to be accountable for the creation and dissolution of the world.[10] Throughout Praśastapāda's explaination, there is no mentioning of eternal intelligence as Īśvara's power. Even in the writings of very late Vaiśeṣika philosopher such as Vyomaśiva, the primary power of Īśvara remains to be his wish and nothing else. Vaiśeṣika's emphasis on the power of wish seems to have a strong root in early Pāśupata cult. As demonstrated by Bronkhorst (1996) and Balcerowicz (2010), it is reasonable to believe that the sources of the Vaiśeṣika notion of Īśvara mainly come from the Pāśupatas. Both scholars cited the testimony from the *Yuktidīpikā* that corroborates with the speculation on early Vaiśeṣika's theistic affinity with Pāśupatas. It is remarkable that the author of the *Yuktidīpikā* even expresses the view that Vaiśeṣika theory of Īśvara is not worth discussing since they just borrow their ideas entirely from Pāśupatas. Indeed, the Vaiśeṣika account of Īśvara shares the same framework with the description of Īśvara as a desirer (*kāmī*) in the Pāśupata texts. In the *Pañcārthabhāṣya*, Kauṇḍinya use the word *icchā* to define the fundamental term *kāma*:

> Here by the term "desirer", a triad is considered by us, namely, the desirer, the desire, and the desired. Īśvara is the desirer there, desire is his wish, [and] the desired is the effect such as *vidyā*. He produces the desired according to his will either by succession or not by succession. Why? Because of his property of being a desirer.[11]

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[9] The basic understanding of how Naiyāyikas and Vaiśeṣikas present their theistic stances is owed to a number of outstanding scholars. The analyses of Balcerowicz (2010), Bronkhorst (1996), Bulcke (1968), and Halbfass (1993) are particularly lucid and insightful.

[10] See Bronkhorst (1996, pp. 281–282).

[11] PañBh 2.6: *kāmika ity atrāpi nas trikaṃ cintyate — kāmī kāmaḥ kāmyam iti ca. tatra kāmī īśvaraḥ, kāmo 'syecchā, kāmyaṃ vidyādi kāryam. tad akrameṇa kramaśo vā yatheṣṭam utpādayati. kasmāt. kāmitvāt.*

Early Naiyāyikas, however, seems to be less influenced by the Pāśupata concept of Īśvara. Naiyāyikas' theology is chiefly characterised by emaphsising the eternal intelligence of Īśvara. Following Vātsyāyana, Uddyotakara presents an encyclopaedic introduction of the characteristics of Īśvara. Uddyotakara's famous argument for the necessity of Īśvara's existence already shows his emphasis on the power of *buddhi*, rather than *icchā*:

> Primordial matter, atoms, and karma act [as they are] superintended by the cause endowed with intelligence prior to their activity, because they are unconscious like an axe and so on. Just in which way the axe and so on, being unconscious, act [when they] are superintended by a conscious woodcutter, in the same way primordial matter, atoms, and karma, being themselves unconscious, act [when they are superintended by a conscious agent]. Therefore, these are also superintended by the cause which is endowed with intelligence (*buddhimatkāraṇa*).[12]

As mentioned before, there is no mentioning of the concept of *icchā* throughout Uddyotakara's discussion on Īśvara, nor did Vātsyāyana allude to such an idea. Uddyotakara explains that Īśvara's power for creation lies in his sovereign power (*aiśvarya*). This sovereign power is then defined by his eternal intelligence. Uddyotakara unambiguously claims that the superiority of Īśvara consists in his eternal intelligence.[13] This intelligence is the distinct quality that makes Īśvara different than other selves.[14]

I hope it has thus been clear that early Naiyāyikas are not disposed at all to the concept of *icchā* while upholding the existence of Īśvara.[15] Given the evidences presented above, I think that it is reasonable to conclude that both Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya concepts of Īśvara are present in Śālikanātha's refutations. Therefore, the conclusions of Pāṇḍuraṅgi (2004) and Gangānatha Jhā (1978) that Śālikanātha only has one school in mind are misleading. However, when we confine our scope of

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[12] NV 4.1.21: *pradhānaparamāṇukarmāṇi prāk pravṛtter buddhimatkāraṇādhiṣṭhitāni pravartante, acetanatvād vāsyādivad iti, yathā vāsyādi buddhimatā takṣṇā adhiṣṭitam acetanatvāt pravartate, tathā pradhānaparamāṇukarmāny acetanāni pravartante, tasmāt tāny api buddhimatkāraṇādhiṣṭitānīti.*

[13] Cf. NV 4.1.21: *atiśayas tu buddhinityatvaṃ guṇabhedaḥ. tatra nityā buddhiḥ… athāsya buddhinityatve kim pramāṇam iti nanv idam eva. buddhimatkāraṇādhiṣṭhitāḥ paramāṇavo pravartanta iti buddhimattāyām etad sādhanaṃ sā punar nityety etat kutaḥ pratyarthaniyamāsambhavāt.*

[14] Cf. NV 4.1.21: *tatsvabhāvānavadhāraṇāt sandehaḥ, īśvaraḥ kiṃ dravyam āho guṇādīnām anyatama iti. dravyaṃ buddhiguṇatvād dravyāntaravad iti. buddhiguṇatvāt tarhi ātmāntaram iti. nātmāntaraṃ guṇabhedāt. yathā guṇabhede sati pṛthivyādayo nātmānaḥ, tathā guṇabhinnaḥ īśvaraḥ. tasmād asav api nātmāntaram.*

[15] Another issue of Īśvara that reflects early Naiyāyikas keeping a distance from other theistic stances such as Pāśupata is concerned with the purpose of Īśvara's creation. Uddyotakara argues that the purpose of creation is not because God wanted it for his own amusement or wanted to show off his power, but because he harbours the nature of creation. Of course, early Śaivism texts are not the only sources from which we can find the concept of a playful God looking for entertainment. However, it is not unplausible that Uddyotakara's elaboration on the purpose of Īśvara's creation indicates his disagreement with the Pāśupatas, alongside his refusal of incorporating the concept of *icchā* into the Nyāya theology. Cf. NV 4.1.21: *kimarthaṃ tarhi karoti. tatsvābhāvyāt pravartate ity aduṣṭam. yathā bhūmyādīni bhūtāni dhāraṇādikriyām tatsvābhāvyāt kurvanti, tatheśvaro 'pi tatsvābhāvyāt pravartate.*

investigation only to Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika sources, there are elements in Śālikanātha's arguments that remains difficult to explain. I would like to draw readers' attention to a specific characteristic of Īśvara mentioned by Śālikanātha that I think is worth scrutiny, namely, Īśvara as the creator of the Vedas.

Īśvara as the Creator of the Vedas

In the opening verse of the chapter, Śālikanātha claims that the validity of the Vedic texts can only be established if the relation between the word and its meaning is without human origin (*apauruṣeya*). Śālikanātha argues that if the word-meaning relation were to be of human origin, there would be undesired consequence that the object imparted by the Vedas, i.e. the Unprecedented (*apūrva*), which by definition could not fall into the scope of any other means of knowledge, can be obtained by convention. Śālikanātha stresses that understanding the word-meaning relation as natural and fixed is essential for upholding the authority of the Vedas.[16] After explaining his apologetic intention, Śālikanātha moves on to present a view of the opponent that the validity of the Vedas comes from the authority of Īśvara, who is the creator of the world. The opponent says the following:

> Furthermore, because God is established by the strength of arguments as mentioned previously as the one who is skilled at creating the whole world and as the direct perceiver of merits and demerits, even the validity of the Vedas, with respect to things that are unprecedented (i.e., not known by any other means), is established on the ground that they (i.e., the Vedas) are created by God.[17]

According to Sastri (1961) and Pāṇḍuraṅgi (2004), the opponent here is a Vaiśeṣika philosopher. Such a conclusion is drawn presumably based on the fact that in the preceding passages Śālikanātha is found to discuss how the "atoms" (*paramāṇu*) are combined in the process of creation, which seems to be in accordance with a Vaiśeṣika narration. However, this speculation seems quite arbitrary and problematic. Śālikanātha may have indeed incorporated some Vaiśeṣika elements when presenting the opposite view, but it takes a leap of faith to attribute the concept of Īśvara as the creator of the Vedas simply to Vaiśeṣika. The most straightforward objection would be that we cannot find any Vaiśeṣika sources that would be available to Śālikanātha that ever alludes to such a notion of Īśvara. While the Vaiśeṣika philosophers around Śālikanātha's time, such as Vyomaśiva, exhibit

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[16] PrP Vimalāñjana 301: *yadi pauruṣeya eva śabdānām arthais saha sambandho bhavet, tadā pramāṇāntaragocareṣv evārtheṣu puruṣāṇāṃ saṅketakaraṇaśakteḥ, apūrvakāryātmani ca vedārthe pramāṇāntarāṇām avakāśābhāvena tatra saṅketābhāvāt, asaṅketite cāvācakatvābhyupagamād durlabham eva vedavākyānāṃ prāmāṇyam āpadyate iti, arthavān evāyam apauruṣeyaśabdārthasambandhapratipādanayatnaḥ.*

[17] PrP Vimalāñjana 304: *kiñ ca yathoditapramāṇabalasiddhe bhagavati sakalajagannirmāṇaikapravīṇe dharmādharmayos sākṣātkartari, tatkartṛkatvenāpi sidhyati vedānām apūrve 'rthe prāmāṇyam iti.*

increasing inclinations towards theistic themes, and though Vyomaśiva even goes as far as to argue that the relation between word and meaning must have been firstly obtained by people who has supernatural sense faculties, it is never claimed by these Vaiśeṣikas that Īśvara has any role on the matter of the authorship of the Vedic texts.[18] Therefore, it does not seem plausible that Śālikanātha derive this notion of Īśvara from Vaiśeṣika sources.

What about Nyāya sources? At first glance, one could assume that Śālikanātha derives this understanding of Īśvara from Naiyāyikas, who are known to advocate that Īśvara creates the word-meaning relation and should be regarded as the author of the Vedas. However, the complication of this issue is brought out when we consider the possible date of Śālikanātha together with the chronology of Nyāya philosophers. On the one hand, recent scholarship has forged a consensus that it seems quite unlikely that Śālikanātha was Prabhākara Miśra's direct disciple and that Śālikanātha should be placed at least at the end of the ninth century.[19] On the other hand, upon closer inspection on the history of Nyāya, it is rather clear that early Naiyāyikas never expressly endorse such a notion of Īśvara as the creator of word-meaning relation or the creator of the Vedas. Thus, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa's claim that Īśvara should be regarded as the author of the Vedas as well as the one who settles the word-meaning relation is perhaps the earliest account of Īśvara endowed with such powers that is available to us. Prior to Jayanta, the topic of God and the issue of the validity of the Vedas are two separate issues in the treatments of Naiyāyikas, as is clearly demonstrated in Chemparathy (1983). Oberhammer (1974, p. 54) also

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[18] In Potter (1977, p. 447), V. Varadachari summarises the relevant passages in the Vyomavatī as "Therefore we must presuppose a beginning which must have been their composition by an intelligent person… it has already been proved that such a person has immediate perception of supersensible things, and indeed that he is none other than God. Being the composition of such a Supreme Person, the Vedas are valid extrinsically". However, it is important to note that Vyomaśiva never claims that it is Īśvara who is responsible for the validity of the Vedic texts. Although Vyomaśiva is not exactly explicit about what kind of person he has in mind who can guarantee the authority of the Vedas, the context suggests that he likely takes the ancient seers to be the candidates, a strategy that is similar to Naiyāyikas before Jayanta.

[19] For a chronology of Mīmāṃsā philosophers, see Kataoka (2011, p. 18). In the past, Subrahmanyam Sastri (1961, pp. viii–ix) was famous for advocating that Śālikanātha must have been one of Prabhākara Miśra's students and hence that Śālikanātha's date cannot have been later than the early ninth century. Sastri attempted to establish Śālikanātha's direct studentship of Prabhākara Miśra by observing that Śālikanātha invoked Prabhākara Miśra as his guru and that Śālikanātha never deviated from Prabhākara Miśra's tenets. However, such an understanding of Sastri was then already opposed to by other scholars, such as Bhattacharya and Schmithausen, who held that Śālikanātha is likely to be a senior contemporary of Vācaspati Miśra. See Thrasher (1993, p. 157, n.41). As many previous speculations on Śālikanātha's date have relied on Vācaspati Miśra's comments on Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā (most notably his demarcation of *jaratprābhākara* versus *navyaprābhākara*), one important thing to note here is that we are now able to establish the date of Vācaspati Miśra more accurately. Firstly, Acharya (2006, p. xxii) in his editorial work has convincingly argued that Vācaspati's flourishing date should be around 950 to 1000 CE, contrary to many previous speculations that have placed Vācaspati before 900 CE. More recent scholarships such as Muroya (2005, pp. 358–359) and Kataoka (2015, pp. 461–462) also help determine the date of Vācaspati Miśra with greater precision. Therefore, given that Vācaspati is closer to the end of the tenth century—rather than being active in the beginning of the tenth century or even late ninth century —it seems to me that Vācaspati's testimony about the chronology of earlier Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā should be dealt with more caution.

reports that he did not find any texts suggesting that Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara have inclinations toward introducing Īśvara insofar as the issue of the authority of the Vedas is concerned.[20] For Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara, the validity of Vedic texts consists in the trustworthiness of reliable person (*āpta*). The candidates as reliable person Vāstyāyana and Uddyotakara have in mind are some people such as ancient seers who are believed to be able to directly perceive what the Vedic Scripture describes.[21] Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara only introduce the concept of Īśvara within discussions about the cause of the world.

Jayanta proposes an innovative solution to the issue of the validity of the Vedas by involving Īśvara. Jayanta first observes that according to Nyāya doctrines, the validity of verbal testimony lies in the reliability of its speaker. Then, he observes that Īśvara, the omniscient and omnipotent God, would be without question the best candidate to be the author of the Vedas, since Īśvara would be the most reliable person, given his power. Finally, given that Jayanta proves the existence of Īśvara, he concludes that the authority of the Vedic scriptures is guaranteed. As mentioned in Kataoka (2006, pp. 57–58), it is important to note that Jayanta only assigns God to be the author of the Vedas after he establishes the very existence of God; that is to say, the existence of God is not due to him being the authority of the sacred text, but can be proved independently by logic. It seems that Īśvara's relationship to the authorship of the Vedas marks a distinctive difference between Vaiśeṣika philosophers and early Naiyāyikas (Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara) as one group, and later Naiyāyikas (Jayanta, Vācaspati and Udayana) as the other group. While the former group of philosophers treat the issue of existence of Īśvara as one thing and the validity of the Vedas as another matter, the latter group connects these two topics together, following the innovation introduced by Jayanta.

Given this chronology, to speculate that Śālikanātha derive this specific notion of Īśvara from Nyāya source would be almost equivalent to think that Śālikanātha is aware of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa's innovation. While it is tempting to embrace this possibility, I think it is more likely than not that Śālikanātha did not know Jayanta Bhaṭṭa and vice versa. On the one hand, it has been rather clear that Jayanta was not aware of Śālikanātha's writings.[22] It is also worth noting that there is a distinct absence of engagement with Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā thought when Jayanta deals with the objections against Īśvara. Instead, Jayanta primarily deals with the objections of Kumārila and Dharmakīrti.[23] On the other hand, the suggestion that Śālikanātha knows Jayanta does not go well with the fact that there is no other evidence elsewhere in Śālikanātha's works that indicates his awareness of Jayanta. At this point, I suggest that we need to investigate beyond the scope of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika philosophers, which is exactly what past scholars confined themselves to.

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[20] Oberhammer mentions that in Vātsyāyana's work, "Auch hier fehlt Gott als möglicher Verkünder der Überlieferung". In the footnote, Oberhammer observes that "Tatsächlich scheint sich der Verscu, Gott (*īśvaraḥ*) als den die Autorität der Überlieferung begründenden „Vertrauenswürdigen" einzuführen, auch noch bei dem viel späteren Uddyotakara nicht zu finden".

[21] See Biardeau (1964, pp. 117–127) and Freschi and Graheli (2011, pp. 287–323)

[22] As far as the topic on Īśvara is concerned, it seems the case that we still have no evidence found in Jayanta's writings that can prove his knowledge of Śālikanātha. See Freschi and Kataoka (2012, p. 8).

[23] See Kataoka (2006, pp. 57–59).

When it comes to the concept of Īśvara as the creator of the Vedas, it should be noted that Jayanta is not the only philosopher we can resort to, because there is another philosopher, whom we know for certain that Śālikanātha knows, that also mentions the notion of Īśvara being the creator of the Vedas and the word-meaning relation. That philosopher is Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, Śālikanātha's rival Mīmāṃsā predecessor.[24]

Śālikanātha and Kumārila on Refuting the Existence of Īśvara

If Śālikanātha's depiction of Īśvara as the creator of the Vedas and the word-meaning relation is unlikely to be derived from the Nyāya sources available to him, then where could be the possible sources from which Śālikanātha learns this particular attribute of Īśvara? In order to solve this mystery, I suggest that we should take the works of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa into consideration. For those who are familiar with the debate over the existence of Īśvara in classical Indian philosophy, it is not difficult to discern that Śālikanātha's arguments share considerable similarities with the strategies of Kumārila. It is fair to say that Śālikanātha's strategies of refuting Īśvara essentially inherits the metaphysical spirit that is also found in Kumārila's refutations against Īśvara. Kumārila covers a wide range of issues that he finds problematic in terms of Īśvara, such as the power of will, the purpose of creation, the body of Īśvara and so on. Many of these issues are similarly covered by Śālikanātha. Most notably, in the *Ślokavārttika* we find that Kumārila also deals with the claim that hold Īśvara as the creator of word-meaning relation. Kumārila's criticism of the concept of Īśvara is found in the *Sambandhākṣepaparihāra* chapter of the *Ślokavārttika*. The primary objective of this chapter is to prove that the relation between a word and its meaning is original (*autpattika*), i.e. this relation is *a priori* fixed (*nitya*). Kumārila introduces Īśvara into the debate by the following verse:

> For, if in the beginning there was someone who, after creating the world, would activate merits and demerits together with their fruits, set forward the word-meaning relation, and the Vedas for the sake of the world, then there is nothing wrong with that. [25]

What Kumārila seems to suggest is that there are people who hold that whoever is able to create the world should be a perfect candidate to establish the relation between word and its meaning. If so, the implication would be that it is Īśvara who created the Vedas. In next verse, Kumārila contends that the existence of such being is impossible to prove and refers back to his earlier objection to the existence of

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[24] It is worth mentioning that Sastri (1961, p. 40) did refer to the *Saṃbandhākṣepaparihāra* chapter of the *Ślokavārttika* in his Sanskrit introduction when explaining the *Vimalāñjana* chapter of the PrP, though it was not an elaboration.

[25] ŚV ad *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.5 *sambandhākṣepaparihāra* 43–44ab:
yadi tv ādau jagat sṛṣṭvā dharmādharmau sasādhanau |
yathā śabdārthasambandhān vedān kaś cit pravartayet ||
jagaddhitāya vedasya tathā kiṃ cin na duṣyati |

omniscient beings. After that, Kumārila puts forward various arguments to refute the existence of Īśvara. Readers may have already noticed that the structure of reasonings in Śālikanātha's writing bears remarkable resemblance with how the issue of Īśvara is introduced in the *Ślokavārttika*. Indeed, Kumārila's arguments against Īśvara has been so influential that his most fierce Buddhist opponent, namely, Dharmakīrti, even decides to borrow some strategies from the *Ślokavārt-tika*.[26] I think it is reasonable to conclude that Śālikanātha's mentioning of Īśvara being the creator of the Vedas and the word-meaning relation is more likely a result of his following the strategy of Kumārila, given a number of levels of similarities between these two philosophers.

This proposal, however, gives rise to an urging question as to where Kumārila acquires this notion of Īśvara. As I have demonstrated in the previous section, such a notion of Īśvara cannot be found in early Nyāya nor Vaiśeṣika sources. That is to say, it should be practically impossible for Kumārila to derive such an understanding of Īśvara from any Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika sources. The fact that Kumārila was centuries earlier than Jayanta makes the sense of anachronism reflected in this issue even more glaring.[27] The most plausible candidate, given the chronology of Indian philosophy, would go to Yoga school. However, Kumārila's characterisation of this attribute of Īśvara would amount to a misconstruing since according to the *Yogabhāṣya*, it was never expressed that Īśvara created such a linguistic convention; rather, Īśvara's role is only to reveal this linguistic convention to our ancestors.[28] Again, the disparity between the original Yoga account of Īśvara and the description in the *Ślokavārttika* could suggest that Kumārila's opponent in mind was not Yoga at all. In terms of Sāṃkhya, it is suggested in Bronkhorst (1996) that the author of the *Yuktidīpikā* might have proposed to regard Kapila, the legendary founder of Sāṃkhya school, as an incarnation of Īśvara. Bronkhorst holds the view that this position in the *Yuktidīpikā* would be similar to the concept of Īśvara held by Yoga philosophers, i.e. Īśvara is a special *puruṣa* and is a passive observer. However, I agree with Kimball (2013) that if that indeed was the intention of the author of the *Yuktidīpikā*, then he would have made it more explicit. Therefore, it seems that Kumārila is less likely to be addressing Sāṃkhya opponents when he presents the notion of Īśvara as the creator of word-meaning relation.

Last but not least, another possibility that is worth considering here is that Kumārila might be referring to some older Mīmāṃsakas who would embrace the idea that an omniscient god is ultimately responsible for the word-meaning relation. What we could say with confidence is that there definitely were some Mīmāṃsā philosophers who held different views from Śabara on various issues. Jayanta

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[26] Krasser (1999, pp. 215–222) has convincingly demonstrated this point.

[27] Another question that is worth thinking, though not directly pertinent to our discussion, is why Kumārila decides to present his refutations of Īśvara under the section where he discusses the word-meaning relation, a topic that is central to the Mīmāṃsā enterprise. It is not unreasonable to think, as Kataoka (2006, p. 365) pointed out, that it might just have been the case that Kumārila find it difficult to incorporates these arguments to elsewhere in his work.

[28] For more details about the concept of Īśvara in Yoga system, see Feuerstein (1987) and Łucyszyna (2017).

Bhaṭṭa informs us of these old Mīmāṃsakas in contrast with Śabara and Prabhākara.[29] However, given the limited information about these old Mīmāṃsakas, this alternative interpretation on Kumārila's likely opponent would remain to be a distant possibility.

Conclusion

The writings of Śālikanātha reflect a special period of theistic development within Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools, during which new innovations are brought out and the image of God becomes more complicated. The point of gathering together the scattered conceptions of Īśvara that existed at that time, as I expressed in the beginning of this article, is to hopefully shed some light on the nature of the opponents that Śālikanātha attends to. By revisiting the history of the theistic themes in Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya school, I have showed that the two versions of Īśvara depicted in Śālikanātha's arguments—one with the power of will and the other with the power of eternal intelligence—are two distinctive features of Īśvara that originate from Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya school, respectively. In the last two sections I have also discussed in detail a particular attribute of Īśvara mentioned by Śālikanātha, namely, Īśvara as the creator of the Vedas and the word-meaning relation. What I aim to demonstrate is that Śālikanātha's mentioning of this specific characteristic of Īśvara should not be attributed to Vaiśeṣika or Nyāya sources, in that the earliest Naiyāyika who endorsed such a notion of Īśvara, i.e. Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, is mostly likely unbeknownst to Śālikanātha. Instead, I suggest that it is more likely that Śālikanātha derives this notion of Īśvara as a result of his following Kumārila's arguments for the same topic. While this paper is unable to reach a definite conclusion as to whom Kumārila attends to when he formulates his arguments against Īśvara being the creator of word-meaning relation, my suggestion is that Kumārila likely had Yoga opponents in mind.

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[29] For more information, see Krasser (2012, pp. 565–568).

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