

ARE THE VAIŚEŚIKAS PĀŚUPATAS? (An Abstract)

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The present paper aims to explore and examine the religious affiliation of Vaiśeṣika school of Indian Philosophy with the Pāśupata sect of Hindu religion. The exposition will mainly be based on several evidences available in the internal sources of Vaiśeṣika as well as gathered from other texts of Indian philosophical tradition.

The first and probably the earliest reference to the religious inclination of Vaiśeṣika is found in the *Vāyupurāṇa* where Gautama, Kapila and Kaṇāda have been stated to be the followers of Pāśupata sect. The next evidence in this regard is provided by *Yuktidīpikā*, a commentary of *Sāṅkhyakārikā*, where it is clearly stated that the theistic tendency of Vaiśeṣika school is derived from the influence of Pāśupata sect. It is worth mentioning here that although there is a divergence of opinion among scholars about the theistic orientation of Kaṇāda, the propounder of Vaiśeṣika, yet we do find an explicit mention of Maheswara (this is one of the names of Śiva, while Pāśupati is also one of his names as the creator and destroyer of the universe), in Praśastapāda's *Padārthadharmasamgraha*. The theistic tendency of Vaiśeṣika was carried forward to its logical culmination by Udayanācārya, a commentator of Praśastapāda and the author of *Nyāyakusumāñjali*, a treatise exclusively focusing on theistic arguments.

However, it needs to be noted that we find at least three views regarding the religious affiliation of Vaiśeṣikas, such as follow:

(A) According to the first view, both the Naiyāyikas and Vaiśeṣikas were Śaiva; this is based upon the statement of Haribhadra Suri in his *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya* (13/59).

(B) The second view asserts that since there is scriptural difference in the nature of Śiva and Pāśupati, hence it is more logical to hold that the Naiyāyikas were Śaivas while the Vaiśeṣikas were Pāśupatas. This view is supported by the evidence of *Yuktidīpikā* referred above and also by the statement of Guṇaratna, a commentator of *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya*.

(C) The third view propounds that both the Naiyāyikas and the Vaiśeṣikas were followers of Pāśupata, as is also stated by Maṇibhadra, another commentator of *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya*.

On closer study, none of these three standpoints can be exclusively accepted because they are not substantiated from the internal sources of the school. Moreover, it may be said that it is difficult to decide whether the Vaiśeṣikas believed in any scriptural distinction between Śiva and Paśupati as suggested above, therefore it is also not possible to make a definite remark to the effect that the Vaiśeṣikas were either Śaivas or Pāśupatas.

To sum up, it would be more appropriate to say that the **Vaiśeṣikas were Māheswaras**; significantly the term connotes both- Śiva and Paśupati. In any case, the Vaiśeṣika system must have been closely connected with the Pāśupatas sect as well, because at least two writers of the school, namely, Vyomaśivācārya and Vādi Vāgīśwara, have been said to be the followers of Pāśupata sect.