The Purva-Mīmāṃsā Theory of God

The word 'Mīmāṃsā' literally means rational justification. The Vedas have two parts, namely (1) 'karma-kāṇḍa' and (2) 'jñāna-kāṇḍa'. Mīmāṃsā Philosophy attempts to find out the true meaning/interpretation of all the Vedic statements which are included in the above two parts of the Vedas.

Mīmāṃsā philosophy is divided into two kinds: (1) Purva Mīmāṃsā and (2) Uttara Mīmāṃsā. The great sage Jaimini is the advocate of the former and the renowned sage Badarayana is the propounder of the latter. Śabarasvāmi wrote a commentary on the Purva-Mīmāṃsā philosophy of Jaimini. Three different commentaries on it by Kūmarila Bhaṭṭa, Prabhākara Misra and Mūrāri Misra led to the foundation of three different subschools of this system.

Now, three interesting problems have been discussed in Purva-Mīmāṃsā, namely, (1) sacrificial rituals enjoined in the Vedas (yājñā) (2) religious offering of various things to deities (dravyāḥūti) and (3) anthropomorphic deity expressed through mantras (sābdāmāyī devatā). Other important rituals along with the main religious rites have also been discussed here. The principal purpose of the Purva-Mīmāṃsakas is to enquire into the nature and source of dharma, which is the result of the performance of religious rites. These rites cannot be performed properly unless we know the deities to whom the offerings should be made, what are the things to be offered to them, and the manner in which such offerings are to be made in the sacrificial fire. It should be pointed out here that in course of such discussions, the nature of some objects of knowledge (prameya) and the means of obtaining knowledge (pramāṇa) have also been discussed in this philosophy. In this respect, the Purva-Mīmāṃsakas were influenced to a certain extent by the Vaiśeṣikas. Like the Vaiśeṣikas, they have also accepted the existence of the categories like substance, quality, action, universal etc. The Vaiśeṣikas, however, differ from the Vaiśeṣikas in this respect. They have mentioned the individual self (jīvātmā) in the list of substances admitted by them, but they have not mentioned God in that list, nor have they tried to establish the existence of God. For this reason, it is generally
held that the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsakas did not believe in God. In Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā, rational justification of the rituals prescribed in the karma-kāṇḍa of the Vedas has been undertaken. So, many thinkers held the view that according to the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsakas, the vedic religion was based on atheism.

This, however, seems to be a hasty conclusion. The main subject matter of Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā philosophy is the analysis of the nature of the vedic rites and hence, it constitutes the centre of their attention. But from this, it does not follow that for the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsakas, God is of no importance. In the discussion of vedic rites, it is not absolutely necessary to establish the existence of God, and consequently, the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsakas kept quiet about God. Moreover, the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsakas believed in the authority of the Vedas. They considered the impersonal vedic sentences as intrinsically valid – they did not also accept any means of knowledge which is opposed to the Vedas. The Upaniṣads, which are genuine parts of the Vedas, contain discussions about God at many places. So, those who believe in the authority of the Vedas would not disrespect or dishonour God, who is also mentioned therein.

Further, it can be remarked here that the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsakas have accepted Lord Viṣṇu as the Head of the vedic rituals (yajña). Consequently, it is improper to say that they did not believe in the existence of God or that vedic rites are based on atheism.

A very pertinent question of course crops up here: if the Mīmāṃsakas really believed in God, then why they did not discuss anything about God? That is, why did they remain silent about God's existence?

An answer to this can be found out from the attitude of the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsakas towards the proofs for the existence of God given by the theistic thinkers. The theistic Indian philosophers have two main motives for proving the existence of God, namely, (1) to explain the doctrine of creation and (2) to establish the authority of the Vedas. Acārya Udayana was the foremost among these philosophers. He has offered nine inferences to establish the existence of God in his renowned book Nyāyakusumāṇjali. All these inferential arguments (that centre around the doctrine of creation) are cosmological. The western theistic philosophers put forward three main arguments to prove God's existence, namely, (1) cosmological, (2) teleological and (3) ontological. It may be remarked here that the argument given by the Indian philosophers may be termed as cosmo-teleological. These thinkers believe in the existence of an Omniscient, All-powerful
conscious God as the creator, destroyer and sustainer of this world. Like the modern scientists, they held that passive, material unconscious atoms are the material cause of this world. For creating this world, these separate atoms must be joined together by a conscious agent (konā). A conscious agent is one who has (1) a direct perceptual knowledge of the material cause of that effect, i.e., atoms, (2) the desire to act and (3) volition or conscious activity for making that effect. The 'konā' or creator of this world must have an idea of the effects to be produced, a direct perceptual knowledge of all the material causes, and the manner in which these effects should be made, i.e., He must be Omniscient. He also must be Omnipotent to create all these objects, and at the same time. He must be Omnipresent, so that he can create different objects at the same time. This Omnipresent, Omniscient and All-powerful conscious agent cannot be a jīva (ordinary creature or human being). At the beginning of the creation, dyads were not existent and so at that time, the question of the existence of ordinary human being (jīva) does not arise. In other words, the jīva cannot be admitted as the creator of dyads, because he has no direct knowledge of the atoms, nor has he the capability of forming dyads out of the atoms or triads out of dyads. So, it has to be admitted that in the case of the creation of the world, a creator, other than jīva must be admitted. Hence, an omnipresent, omniscient and All-powerful conscious agent must be admitted apart from the 'jīvas' (the individual self) and He is known as God. This, in outline, is the cosmological argument for the existence of God, and in this very argument, one can also find the ground of admitting God's Omniscience.

Another aim of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theists is to establish the authority of the Vedas. They believe that as God is the conscious agent of all worldly objects, similarly, He is the creator of the Vedas as well. The Vedas are regarded as authoritative by these theistic Indian philosophers, as they are considered as the oral teachings of God. In the Nyāya-sutras, it is stated:

"Mantrāyurvedavadacca tatprāmāṇyamāptaprāmāṇyāt".

Thus, these theistic Indian thinkers have accepted the existence of God mainly for explaining (1) the creation of the world and (2) the authority of the Vedas.

The Mīmāṃsakas, however, did not feel the necessity of accepting God for explaining the creation of the world or the authority of the Vedas. They regard the Vedas as impersonal.

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1. Nyāyasūtra, 2/1/68
(apauruseya). 'Mantra' and 'Brahmana' constitute the Vedas. The scholars take the Vedas as the collection of subtle words which float in the waves of sound. So, the great sages are not the creators or composers (karṣa) of the Vedas—they are only the perceivers of the Vedas (ṛṣayo mantradraśṭārāḥ). After hearing these subtle words, by the help of their superhuman powers, the great sages have handed them down to their disciples, who in their turn have taught these to their own disciples. Every vedic chant (mantra) has got a sage of its own.

The Mīmāṃsakas further believe that even Lord Brahmā cannot be regarded as the creator of the Vedas. It is held that when the three worlds were again created in 'partial creation' (khandā srṣṭi) after the previous 'partial destruction' (khandā pralaya) of these worlds, at that time the Vedas came out (were chanted) from the four mouths of Lord Brahmā. So Lord Brahma only recites from memory the Vedas, but He does not create them. To the Mīmāṃsakas, not only the vedic statements, but all the words also are eternal. The words are not created nor destroyed—only the different sounds manifesting those words are created and destroyed, and are considered as non-eternal. In fact, according to the Mīmāṃsakas, the words, their meanings and the relation to the meanings of the words are all eternal. This view is also accepted by the commentator Patañjali. All words—Vedic and laukika—are eternal and so, the Vedas are impersonal and eternal. For the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, however, the relation between a word and its meaning is established by the will of God (iśvarecchā).

Moreover, in the writings of a person, there are chances of invalidity, error or doubt. The Vedas, however, being impersonal, do not have these defects. The Mīmāṃsakas regard the impersonal vedic statements as intrinsically valid. For this reason, these thinkers did not feel the necessity of accepting the existence of God to prove the validity or authority of the Vedas. Hence, it may be said that though believers in God, the Mīmamsakas did not make any effort to prove His existence with the help of inferences.

Further, it is not also necessary for the Mīmāṃsakas to accept the existence of God for

2. mantrabṛāhmaṇapayor vedasūnyadhayam.
3. "na kascid vedakartāsti vedasmatiḥ catumukhāḥ", Parāśārasaṃhitā p 1-10
4. (a) "nitye sabdarthaśambandhe", See Mahābhāṣya on the Varttika on Pāṇiniśutra, 1/1/1
   (b) "autpattikastu śabdasyārthena sambandhah", Mīmāṃsa-sūtra, 1/1/5

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explaining the creation of the world. These thinkers have accepted 'khandapralaya' (partial destruction) and 'khandasrṣṭi' (partial creation) — but they have not accepted 'maha-pralaya' (total or absolute destruction) and 'maha-srṣṭi' (total or absolute creation). Gāgābhaṭṭa has remarked in the book called Bhattacintāmaṇi that there are certain statements of 'śruti' like "dhātā yathāpūrvamakalpayat" etc., which prove 'khandapralaya' etc. The Mimāṃsakas believe that there are no scriptural passages in support of 'maha-pralaya' (absolute destruction). According to them, it is 'adṛṣṭa', which is responsible for rebirth and the diversity of the produced worldly objects. For this reason, it is not necessary to accept the existence of God for explaining the production of the world.

Some may, however, argue that Mahārṣi Jaimini, the author of Mīmāṃsā-sūtras and Savarasmāti, the commentator, were not vocal about the existence of God. Thus, atheism was present in a latent form in the Mīmāṃsā-sutra itself, and at a later time, it became explicit. In order to explain the definition and 'pramāṇa' of Dharma, Mahārṣi Jaimini has said: 'codanālakṣaṇāḥ arthaḥ dharmah.' 'Codana' is the vedaic statements or injunction that is the characteristic and proof of dharma; the word 'eva', which is understood here, indicates certainty or emphasis. Now, since the word 'lakṣaṇa' may be used in two senses, the expression 'codanālakṣaṇa' also has two different meanings. 'Lakṣaṇa' may mean either evidence (pramāṇa), or definition. In the first sense, 'codanālakṣaṇa' means that codana itself is the source of knowledge (pramāṇa) of something else. In this sense, it indicates that vedaic statements or sentences are the means of knowing dharma. In the second sense, it means "that of which 'codana' is the definition or is itself the 'pramāṇa' (method of valid knowledge)". In this sense, it implies that vedaic sentences are authoritative (pramāṇa) and not unreliable (apramāṇa).

In the aphorism "satsamsprayoge puruṣasyendriyāṇāṁ" etc., Jaimini maintains that in

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6. "atra jaiminiyāṁ utkāmānumānaṁ dhātaḥ yathāpūrvamakalpayadi tyādādmantralīṅgena avāntaḥ parapralayasyātādvaśapi mātrāpraye nāstipramāṇam", Bhāṭṭacintāmaṇi, Tarkapāda, Codana-sūtra, p 47
7. Mimāṃsā-sūtra, 1.1.2
8. "yo dharmatrā ca codanaiva pramāṇamitye pratyakṣaṇumānabuddhaḥ yaśyādviśvātyavṛtyarthāḥ / yo dharmatrā ca codana pramāṇamevyāpāro naśtiśaḥ hitaśapramāṇamś aṇinīśaśaśrīthāḥ //"

Mimamsabalaprapaka, p. 4-5
In matters of Dharma, there are no other pramanas except the vedic sentences. On the other hand, that 'cōdaṇa' is the pramāna (means of valid knowledge) and not 'apramāna' (not means of a valid knowledge) has been mentioned by Jaimini in the aphorism "autpattikastu sābdasyārthena sambandhah" etc. Sabarsvāmi also has accepted this view. Again, it is not God, but 'Apūrva', which is regarded as the moral master in Mimāṃsā philosophy. The Mimāṃsakas believe that the act of sacrifice gives rise to some 'force' or 'potency', which exists continuously and functions until the ultimate result 'Heaven' is reached. So, this act by itself is not existent after it has been performed, since such an act is destructible. It is believed that it gives rise to such 'potency' known as 'Apūrva', which results in the fruition of actions. This fact is clearly explained in 'Apurvādhikarana'. Again, Ācārya Śaṅkara in his commentary on Brahmasūtra has also mentioned that according to Jaimini, it is 'Dharma', and not God, who is the moral arbitrator or dispenser of the results of our actions (karmaphala-dātā).

The non-acceptance of God as the creator of the universe, the author of the Vedas and the moral arbitrator is expressed strongly in the Slokavārttika of Kumārila Bhāṭṭa. In the sambandhākṣepapariśāra section of this work, Kumārila Bhāṭṭa has devoted more than a hundred verses for rejecting the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika view of God. He has raised some objections: where did the creator God exist before creation? Why did this God create the world suddenly? He does not have a body, and hence, the desire, will etc. to create the world could not be present in Him, since these qualities are present only in an embodied self. Again, in his commentary on Slokavārttika, Parthasarathi Misra has stated: if God is just and kind hearted, then how can the world which is His creation be full of pains and sufferings? Further, Kumārila states that God has no necessity for creating this world. Every action has got some purpose to fulfil - but God has no such purpose for creating this world, because He has nothing more to get, since He is supposed to have everything (aṭṭakāma). It is not also proper to say that God has created the world out of kindness and mercy. The perception of pains and sufferings in others gives rise to or produces...
kindness. But like the liberated self, the disembodied God cannot have any feeling of pain and misery. As a result, He cannot have any kindness or mercy.13

Kumarila Bhatta has not only regarded God as unnecessary for the creation of the world, but he has also pointed out some defects in the Nyāya inferences of Uddyotakara which prove the existence of God. The Naiyāyikas have proved the existence of God by inferences only, and not by scriptural 'pramāṇa', though they believed in the authority of the Vedas. Kumārila has discarded the inference which proves the existence of God in his analysis of the 'cudānī sūtra' in his renowned book 'Slokavārttika'. Not only that—Parthasarathī Misra, a follower of Kumarila Bhatta, has also refuted by many logical arguments in his Sastradīpikā the inference in favour of the creatorship of God. In the book named Māṇḍāneyodaya, Acārya Nārāyaṇa has shown that there are really no pramāṇas which can prove the existence of God.

Like the Bhattas, the Prabhakara Mimamsakas also made attempts to refute the agency (kārttva) of God. In his Brhatī and Laghvi commentaries on Śabara-bhāṣya, Prabhakara Misra kept quiet about God or was indifferent to God—but his follower Śālikanātha Misra tried to reveal the intentions of Prabhakara in this matter in his Prakaranapancika, by refuting the authority of God. So, a study of Mimāṃsā-Sūtra, Śabarahāṣya and other books of the Bhattas and the Prabhakaras seems to indicate that either their authors were indifferent to the discussion of God, or did not make any positive effort to establish the existence of God. This is somewhat confusing, as this leads many to conclude that the Mimamsakas were not believers in God and that this doctrine of 'karma' was based on atheism. It is even remarked that vedic religions which has been extensively analysed in Mimamsā philosophy was founded on atheism.

This, however, is not... A careful and critical study of Mimamsa philosophy and their effort at rejecting the proofs offered for God's existence will clearly and distinctly reveal that they were not really atheists, i.e., disbelievers in God. It is true that they did not exert themselves for establishing the existence of God, but then they did not have the necessity of taking this trouble. The main aim of the Mimamsā philosophy is to formulate clearly the rules for determining the significance or inner meaning of religious and non-religious sentences of the Vedas. So, the interpretation of injunctions regarding rituals etc., constituted the crux of the Mimamsā philosophy. To the Mimamsakas, karma was of great importance, and so they did not discuss any problem about God.
There is a rule — "yatparah sābdaḥ sa sābda-rthah", i.e. that which is designated by a word is verily its meaning. Accordingly, when a particular subject is given importance in a discipline, it does not imply that other subjects are unimportant. So, even though great importance has been given to religious rites (karma) in Mimamsā philosophy, it does not mean that other subjects are unimportant. In the context of karma, discussion about God is neither relevant nor necessary. Thus, the silence of Mimamsakas about God does not prove that they were atheists.

In Mimamsā-Sūtra or in its commentary, God has not been the subject-matter of discussion. But in the 'Devatadhikarana of Mimamsā-Sūtra it has been shown that the Mimamsakas accept the God or deity 'sun' (sūryadevata). To the Mimamsakas, this deity is 'sabdamayī' or 'mantramayī', to whom the sacrificial oblations are offered, and who is invoked or praised in the vedic chants. In other words, sacrifices or rituals are neither complete nor fulfilled if there is no God. One cannot enjoy the rewards or effects of a sacrifice unless the deity or God accepts the sacrificial substances in a proper manner. Of course, sacrifice and religious rites are of great importance as they constitute main subject matter; while offerings, God (deity) etc. are subsidiary to the sacrificial rites.

It may be pointed out here that the Mimamsakas have not always regarded deity or God as mantramayī, i.e., consisting of the vedic chants. It has been shown in many vedic hymns that there are idols of God. For example, certain vedic hymns clearly make references to the hand, neck, stomach etc. of Indra, which indicate that Indra must have a body. Sabarasvāmi in his commentary on Mimamsā-sūtra, however, did not accept the view that God had a body. To him, in certain hymns like 'vanaspatibhyah svāhā' etc. the unconscious deity that has been mentioned has no body. He further states that if God had a physical body, then every body would have perceived this God or deity present in the place of sacrificial rites. But such a God or

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13. Ibid, Verse No. 52
14. Mimamsa-Sutra, 9/1/6 - 10
15. "api vā sābda-puruvatvād yajñākarma pradhānam syād gunatve devatārūtyā", Mimamsa-Sutra, 9/1/9
16. "jagambhāte dakṣiṇāminda hastam", Śrī Veda, 10/47/1a, Sāma Veda, 1/317a
17. (a) Vajasaneyi Samhita, 22/28/29.
   (b) Taittiriya Sāṁhitā, 7/3/19/1.
18. (a) Vajasaneyi Samhita, 22/28
   (b) Taittiriya Sanhitā, 7/3/19/1.
deity is never perceived. At times, in a sacrifice, Lord Indra seated on the elephant Airāvata is invited to come and sit on small pot at the place of the sacrificial rite. But if it really happens, then the small pot will break into pieces. In view of these difficulties, the commentator Savarasvāmi did not admit the physical body of the God or deity in the 'Devatādhikarana-bhāṣya'19 of Mimamsa philosophy.

It may be mentioned here that in his commentary on the 'Devatādhikarana' of Brahmasūtra, Ācārya Saṅkara has accepted the view that God has physical body etc.20 Description of God's body is also given in 'mantra', 'arthavāda', 'itihāsa' and 'purāṇa'. For example, it is stated that at first a particular god is meditated upon, and then offering like clarified butter etc. are offered to him.21 If there were no idols of God or deity, then such meditation would have been impossible.

Again, it is said that Gods like Indra, possessing one body, can exhibit many bodies by super-normal yogic powers. For this reason, they could divide themselves into may parts and be present at different sacrificial rites at the same time.22 Ordinary people, of course, could not perceive God. But the yogins, by the help of their super-normal yogic power, could perceived God. It is stated in Yogasūtra that one can perceive one's desired God by chanting hymns (mantra japena).23 So, sruti, smṛti etc. prove that Gods have physical body. For this reason, Ācārya Saṅkara also admitted the same view.

Now, it can be stated that the Mimāṃsakas did not accept the concept of idols of God or deity because they suspected that the priests may start respecting God or deity too much, thus neglecting the vedic rites. As the servant should blindly obey the orders of his master, similarly the priests should strictly perform the religious rites as stated in the śastras. For this reason, the Mimāṃsakas have given utmost importance to the performance of the vedic rites.24 It is not the intention or the aim of Savarasvāmi to refute the view that god has a body etc. or to describe deity

19. Mirraṁsa-Sutra, 9/1/6 - 10, and Sabarabhāṣya thereon
21. "yasyai daivatayai havirgrhitam syāt, tāṁ dhyāyēt vaṣṭaṁkariyaṁ" Aiterya Brāhmaṇa, 2/1/8
24. "śiṣi va śaśapāpārvarvād yajñakarma pradāhānam .......... " Mimāṃsā-Sūtra, 9/1/1
or God as anthropomorphic, instead of describing him as having a physical body. This is clearly stated in the Sabaraabhāṣya in which the definition (laksana) of 'bādh' is explained. Really speaking, through whatever name, word or form the god or deity may be expressed or mentioned, the fact is that basically it is none other than 'Iśvara' — the Supreme Being. For this reason, it is remarked in the Rg Veda that one supreme God exists by manifesting or revealing Himself through many different gods — these different gods are, called, 'Agni' 'Sūrya', 'Indra' etc. and are worshipped by the priests (who perform sacrificial rites). Hence, it is not proper to say that the Mīmāṃsakas have developed or supported athiesm.

Many of the Mīmāṃsakas, in fact, offer prayers to Iśvara at the very beginning of their books. If they did not believe in Iśvara, then they would not have done this. Bhavanātha, the author of the book named Nayaviveka has paid obeisance to 'Siva' at the very beginning of his book, while Laukākṣibhāskara, at the very outset, of his book 'Arthasaṁgraha' has offered his warm regards to Vāsudeva. Not only that, at the end of the book, he has even stated that if sacrifical rites are performed with great respect to Iśvara (God), it is only then that the sacrificial rites lead to liberation. At the beginning of the Nyāyaratnakara commentary on Sloka-varttika, Parthasarathi Miśra has offered his prayer to 'Mahādeva'. Even Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, who has attempted to refute the inferences which seek to establish the existence of God, worshipped Lord 'Siva' at the beginning of his Sloka-varttika. If the Mīmāṃsakas were keen on rejecting the existence of God, then they would not themselves, at the very beginning of their works, worship God and pray for His blessings for the removal of all obstructions to the completion of their books.
It is thus not fair to brand the Mimamsakas as atheists. It is a fact that they do not accept ānumānika Isvara, i.e., the God as admitted on inferential grounds by the theistic Nyāya-Vaisesika thinkers, though they unhesitatingly, accept God as stated in the scriptures. In other words, 'srauta Īśvara' has not been rejected by any follower of the Mimamsā doctrine, since the acceptance of the doctrine of God as stated in 'Sruti' and 'Smṛti', does not collide with or oppose the philosophical conclusions of the Mimamsā system.

Moreover, though the Mimamsakas do not accept 'mahāpralaya' (absolute destruction), they definitely accept 'khanda pralaya' (partial dissolution) or, kalpa. At the end of 'khanda-pralaya' (partial dissolution) or 'kalpa', impersonal (apaurusya) and eternal (nitya) Vedas disappear—again at the beginning of another 'kalpa', God gives His teachings after remembering the Vedic sentences. This is accepted also by the Mimamsakas. In support of this view, Āpadeva, the author of Mimamsa-nyaya-prakāsa, has clearly pointed out: "Isvaro gatakalpiyam vedamasmin kalpe śmrṭva upadisati". This statement of Āpadeva proves that the Mimamsaksas definitely accept the authority and necessity of Isvara (God).

Bhavanatha, a follower of Prabhākara, has rejected the inference for proving the existence of God through many counter arguments in his book Nayaviveka, and at the end, he has remarked that the Mimamsakas have rejected the theistic Nyāya argument for the existence of God, but they have not rejected God as such. In fact, the Mimamsakas hesitate to accept inferential God as the creator of this world—but at the same time, they do not hesitate to accept 'scriptural God' as its creator. Āchārya Nandīsvara, another follower of Prabhākara school, has stated in his book called 'Prabhākara-vijaya' that the inferential God accepted by the Naiyāyikas has been rejected, but not God as such.

A relevant question, however, may crop up here: if the Bhāṭtas really accepted the existence of God (Īśvara), then wherein lies the difficulty in establishing the existence of God (Īśvara) by means of inference?

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31 Mimamsānyayapraṇāśa, p 7-8
32 "evan ce vare porokta manumānām nirastam, nesvaropī nirastataḥ", Nayaviveka, p 199
33 "jagati isvarakṣṣē pī na gurunayayivrodha iti prāguktaṃ tadbhyupetyaiva porokta manumānīkesvaranirāsaprayatnāḥ." - Commentary on Nayaviveka by Ravideva, p 199
34 "evan samanīkāvetvavardh arāṣya nirākrtaṃ, nesvaropī nirākrtaḥ," Prabhākara-vijaya, p 82
In answer, it may be stated that a careful analysis of the Mimamsa views will reveal that in order to prove the impersonality (apauruseyatva) of the Vedas beyond any doubt, the Mimamsakas were reluctant to establish God's existence through inference. If God is inferred as the creator of the world, then the Omniscient God may also be regarded as the author of the Vedas— as a result, the Vedas will become personal (pauruseya). The Mimamsakas, however, regard the Vedas as self-validated, and consequently, they consider the Vedas as impersonal (apauruseya). So, instead of establishing the existence of God (Isvara) by inference, they prefer to admit scriptural testimony for admitting God's existence.

Again, a question arises here: the Nyaya-Vaisesikas also accept the authority of the Vedas. In that case, why are they not eager to establish the existence of God by means of the vedic sentences? Why do they always try to prove God's existence by inference?

In reply to such questions, it may be remarked that the Nyaya-Vaisesikas regard the Vedas as personal (pauruseya). They regard the Vedic sentences as pramana (means of valid knowledge), because to them, the Vedas are the teachings of God. Now, if God's existence depends on the authority of the Vedic statements, and those Vedic statements, in their turn, are said to be God's teachings, then we argue in a circle, and thus commit a fallacy. To avoid this situation, the Nyaya thinkers establish the existence of God by inference, and once, God's existence is established, the authority of the Vedas is established on the basis of God's veracity. Since the Mimamsakas treat the Vedas as impersonal, they do not have to adopt this procedure.

Of course, it is not fair to say that the Nyaya-Vaisesikas were not keen in establishing God's existence by help of the scriptures. The well-known Neo-Naiyayika Gangesa in 'Isvaranumana-prakarana' of his book 'Tattvacintamani' has first established God's (Isvara) existence by inference and has then stated that certain sentences of Sruti are also regarded as 'pramana' for establishing God. So, it may be said that in order to maintain harmony between their different doctrines, the Nyaya-Vaisesika thinkers have accepted the existence of God by means of inference. Similarly to establish their novel view, the Mimamsakas established the existence of God by Sruti, and refrained from proving God's existence by means of inference.

Among the Mimamsakas Kumari Bhatta was specially eager to reject the inferences aimed at proving the existence of God, but at the same time, Madhavacarya's book 'Sankara-Digvijaya'
reveals that Kumarila was not a disbeliever in God's existence. In this book, Kumarila tells Sankara that in order to establish the self-validity (svatahpramanya) of the Vedas, he has kept God aside, who is well-known among men and who is in the sruti. This indicates that Kumarila had a special fascination for God. A careful examination of 'Sambandhakseparapihariaprakaara' of 'Slokavarttika' clearly shows that in order to establish the impersonality (apauruseyatva) of the Vedas, Kumarila has rejected inferential God— but not God as such. In the verse "sarvajnavanmysedhya nah" etc., the word 'sarvajnavat' testifies to this fact. Kumarila intends to say that as the omniscience of Buddha, when proved by inference or Buddhist texts lands up in circularity, similarly if God is proved by the Vedic sentences, composed by an inferential God, then it also involves a similar circularity of reasoning.

Moreover, at the end of Atmavada of 'Slokavarttika', Kumarila has mentioned about 'sravana', 'manana' and 'nididhyasana'. Further, in 'Vyakaranapaidhikara' and Grahaikatvadhidhikara, of his Tantravarttika, Kumarila has discussed the doctrine of God.

Like Kumarila, all his followers have attempted to reject only the Nyaya inference in favour of God's existence— but not the existence of God. Acarya Narayana, in the well-known book 'Manomeyodaya' has stated many defects in the inference which seeks to prove the existence of God, but at the end, he himself has remarked : "vaidikesvara paramakarunkah purasakamansuguna eva" i.e., the very kind God known thorough the scriptures is accepted by us, the Mimamsakas. In the book 'Bhata-cintamani', Gaagabhatta also has said the same thing. According to him, sruti is the only means of valid knowledge in matters of God. So, He cannot be established by any other means of valid cognition. Thus, instead of calling the Mimamsakas atheists, one should rather call them theists. The main task or aim of the Mimamsakas is to discuss the doctrine of Dharma. For this purpose, it was not necessary or relevant to establish God, and for this very reason, they were silent about this matter. But to remain silent or quiet about something often implies silent acceptance of that fact. That is why Sriharsa in his famous poetical

37 "nirasyamam srutikosiddham sruteh svato matvamudhahsaishyan," Sankaradigvijaya, 7/8
38. Stokavarttika, Sambandhakseparapihari, sloka 114
39. Tantravarttika on Sabara's commentary on Mimamsa-Sutra, 1/3/24-29
40. Ibid, 3/1/3-15
41. Manomeyodaya, 2/14, Vivriti, p. 72
42. "ato veda eva sarvasiddhim pramana nanyaditi dik", Bhatacintamani, Tarkapada, Isvaravada, p. 43
work 'Naiṣadha-carita' has said: just as the Mimāṁsā philosophy is silent about God, similarly Damayanti, after hearing all the qualifications of the king of Kanci, silently proceeded towards him. This silence of Damayanti is not an example of her non-acceptance or disrespect for the King of Kanci: on the contrary, her silence reveals her regard for the King of Kanci in a graceful manner. From this statement of Śrīharsa, who was also a great scholar of Nyāya, Vedānta, and Mimamsa, it can be surmised that the Mimāṁsakas accepted God. The Mimāṁsakas do not object to God's being the creator of the world—all they want to point out is that this creation of the world by God is not known by inference. The gist of the whole discussion is this: the Mimāṁsakas, in order to prove the self-validity of the Vedas, regard them as impersonal (apauruṣeya), and they did not want to endanger this position by accepting the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika doctrine about God.

The Mimāṁsā philosophy, which at present consists of twelve chapters, does not thus support atheism. Again, Mimāṁsā philosophy was popularly believed to have sixteen chapters—Pūrva-Mimāṁsā containing twelve chapters, and Uttara-Mimāṁsā consisting of four chapters. Apart from this, a book of Mimāṁsā system named 'samkarsakanda' consisting of four chapters was also written. So, the whole Mimāṁsā philosophy consisted of twenty chapters. Among these twenty chapters, Pūrva Mimāṁsā consisted of sixteen chapters and Uttara-Mimāṁsā had four chapters. It is mentioned in the 'Vṛtti' of Brahmasūtra. Though this Vṛtti is obsolete at present, the view of this Vṛtti-kāra has been mentioned by the ancient acāryas. In Sribhasya, Acarya Rāmānuja has said, quoting Vṛtti-kāra's view: "samhitametaccharirakam jaiminyena sodaśālakṣaṇeneti śastraikatvasiddhiḥ." This indicates that at the time of Rāmānuja, 'Samkarsakanda' was prevalent. This 'Samkarsakanda', consisting of four chapters, is also known as 'Devaśakanda'. In the commentary 'Vedāntakalpataru' on Vacaspati Misra's Bhāmati, Amalānanda Sarasvatī has named this book as "Devaśakanda". The sutras of 'Samkarsakanda'

43. "vedairvaco bhikshhīlaih kṣaṭkapitratme,
hetum vinaiva dhṛtvamāyaparārthatme/
mimāṁsasyeva bhagavatyampratīṣṭhūnau
tasmin mahābhujī tayānimitir na bhcjē//
Naiṣadha-carita, Sarpa 11, sloka 64.

44. Brahma-sūtra, 1/1/1, Vṛtti-book quoted in Sribhasya, p. 23

45. "devatākṣaṇḍādhiḥprabhavamāyaparārthasiddhāntavahabhi miśrānāmityātāma,nā kaṇḍa on
Brahma-Sūtra, p. 838
mentioned in different books undoubtedly express that the doctrine of God was discussed there. In his commentary on the 'Pradānādhikarana' of Brahmāsūtra, Acārya Śaṅkara has cited one 'Samkāraśūtra' from this work, which reads as "nāna va deva prthagjñanat". The existence of many deities have been mentioned in this 'Samkāraśūtra'. The subject matter of Śaṁkārakāṇḍa is the critical explanation of the nature of the remaining 'karmas' (rituals) of Purva-Mīmāṁśa, which consists of twelve chapters. So, discussion about the nature of God is not its subject, since the doctrine of God has not been discussed in the introduction and conclusion of 'Samkāra'. Even then, there are certain questions like whether there is any God in the sacrifice called Upāṁśu, whether the expressions 'samit' etc. employed in the description of the sacrifices called 'prayāja' etc., indicate pieces of wood or Gods etc. The solutions to these questions are given in 'Śaṁkārakāṇḍa'. So, even though 'Śaṁkāra' is an addition to Karma Mīmāṁśa, still it would not be unjust to remark that it has a lot of significance so far as admission of God is concerned. So, Appayādikṣita, in his commentary 'Kalpaśaru parimala' has described 'Śaṁkārakāṇḍa' as 'Devaśakāṇḍa'. At present, the whole of 'Devaśakāṇḍa' is not available — but a study of the book called 'Prapancaśrādaya' reveals that the significance of all the mantras have been shown in the doctrine of God, which is found in the first chapter of 'Śaṁkāra'. In its second chapter, God (devata), vedic injunctions (vidhi) and non-injunctive exhortations (arthavada) have been determined. In the third chapter, the nature of God and His capacity of adopting a body or image according to His own will, has been stated. In the last chapter, liberation as the ultimate result of the doctrine of God has been established. The 'Mantrabhāga' and the 'Brahmanabhāga' of the Vedas reveal that the doctrine of plurality of Gods has gradually resulted in the doctrine of one God. It is stated in the Rg Veda: "ekam sadvipra bahudha vadanti yagnim yamam matarisvanamahuh" That is, the sages describe the one, self same thing in many different ways — they call it Agni, Yama and Matarisva. So, the concept of the plurality of Gods or deities, which has been examined in the 'Śaṁkārakāṇḍa' or 'Devaśakāṇḍa' ultimately reasults in the concept of one God. Hence, in conclusion it may be said that a critical and careful study of Mīmāṁśa philosophy shows that the Mīmāṁsakas are not atheists.

47. "devatavicārabhūyastvād bhūṣaṇa śaṁkārakāṇḍasyaiva,
   devaśakāṇḍa ityapi vyavahāro" — stīti tasya tenopādānam, — Brahma - Sutra, 3/3/43, Parimal, p. 838, line 34.
48. Prapancaśrādaya, p. 41-42.
49. Rg. Veda, 1/148/36.