The philosophical systems of India have been divided into two schools viz. āstika and nāstika. Nyāya, vaisesika, mimāmsā, syāmkhya, vedanta, and yoga are the six āstika systems which recognise the authority of the veda, cārvāka, jaina, bauddha and some other system are known as nāstika darśaṇas.

The beast symbol has been used by the philosophers of āstika and nāstika schools.

There is an amusing story of six blind men and an elephant in India which originated in the jaina source. In this story six blind men tried to know about an elephant. As they had no eyes, one of them touched the trunk of the elephant and declared that the elephant was like a snake. Another blind man touched the tail and described that the elephant was like a rope. The third blind man touched the legs of the animal, and said that the animal was like a pillar. Another touched its body, and said that the elephant was like a wall.

This is a story with a deep significance. The jainas suggest through this story that the six āstika darśaṇas cannot give a total and comprehensive idea of reality. They can know only a part of reality and not the whole. The jainas propagate the theory of anekantavāda through this story.
which is, in fact, a parable per excellence.

We have discussed the frog-symbol in an earlier context. In the Sāmkhyasāra, there is an excellent frog-symbol in a parable. A couple, on one occasion, moved by the said of a lake, while moving there, the lady suddenly felt the tendency to jump into the water, and she did it. But she suddenly became a frog in the water. The lady was originally a frog. But due to certain circumstances, she was converted into a woman. But when she reached the lake, her form changed into the original one.

The frog-symbol in this parable suggests that when a sādhaka reaches a great height during the course of his sādhana, he should avoid the situation, from where he rose to the spiritual height, because, in this situation he may feel the temptation to live the life of an ordinary person, and may fall from his high spiritual plane.

The symbol of the tortoise is always famous in Sanskrit literature. We have already discussed it in an earlier section of the present dissertation. The tortoise plays a significant part in a philosophical discussion of lord Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna in the second canto of the Gita where lord says-

"yada suhharate cauyan
kurmoaṅgāniva sarvasah.
indrianindriyarthebhyas
tasya pratisthita”.

The tortoise-symbol has been used by Kṛṣṇa in this sloka where
tells Arjuna that a man desiring for salvation must withdraw all his senses like a tortoise which withdraws all its limbs into its body in a difficult situation. Senses are the worst enemies of man. Senses are responsible for the attachment to the path of salvation.

The beast-symbols play a significant part in the grammatical philosophy also. Thus, Patanjali, in his *Mahābhāṣya* refers to a Vedic passage viz.

\[\text{"catvri śrīgā trayo asya pādā}\]
\[\text{dve śīrśe sapta hastāso asya" etc.}\]

Where a bull with two heads, three legs and seven hands loudly. The bull is tied in three different places simultaneously.

According to Patanjali, the bull is śabda-brahman. It has four horns in the form of four distinct classes of words viz *nāma* (noun or pronoun), *ākhyātu* (verb), upasarga (prefixes) and *nipāta* (particles). It is with these four hands the symbolical bull operates in this world. It means that sabda is reduced to meaningful sentences by using these four classes of words. The word or bull śabda has seven hands in the form of seven affixes. The bull has two heads which implies that it has an eternal and transformal form. The eternal form of śabda is sphota, which its ‘kārya’ form refers to memontary ‘vaikhāri vāk’ which disappears every moment as soon as it uttered. The expression ‘tridhā baddhaḥ’ in the third line refers to the three senses in which śabda is used.
Incidentally, the above poem reminds us of Manu’s bull in the *Satapathabrāhmaṇa* which created by a terror in the minds of demons who sacrificed it with the permission of Manu, but could not kill *sābdha* who is immortal and who finally resorted to the sacrificial mortar which produced the ‘*kuta-kuta*’ sound when it was used.

The bull-symbol is very popular in Sanskrit literature. ‘Dharma’ has been described as a bull in the *Mahābhārata*. In the ‘*Kāmākhyā Tantra*’ the captive human soul has been described as bull tied to the oil extracting machine all the time till it is release by its master.

The Buddhist philosophers of the *Vijñāvāda* school does not accept the external world as real. According to them, it is *Vāsanā* or an impression which creates the idea of this non-existing world. The *Vijñāvāda* describe that the world which appears to the view of the common people is unreal like a *marage* (*maricikā* or *mṛgatṛṣṇā*), a city in the sky (*gandharvamānagara*) or dream.

Now, a mirage which is called ‘*mṛgatṛṣṇā*’ or *maricikā* in Sanskrit refers to a false sheet or water which reflects in a desert in the summer season. There is absolutely no water there, but beast run towards it due to thirst and perish on the way. The concept of the unreality of the world has been accepted by Saṅkarācārya also in his *bhāṣya* on the *Brahmasūtra*. The symbol of a mirage has been accepted by this great vedantist also. But according to him, world is not absolutely unreal. It is unreal in its apparent
form only. It has been said in the ‘Suresvaravārtika’ as-

"mṛgatṛṣṇāṁbhāsī snātakhaḥ kṛṣṇapakṛtaśkharah.
asā bandhyāsuto yāti śāśaśṛngadhanurṛddharaḥ."

It is a mere appearance of Brāhmaṇa who is real, in another form and nothing else. While describing the world as unreal like a mirage, the Lamkāvatāra sūtra gives the following poem.

"mṛgatrśṇā yathā griśme
spandate cittamohani
mṛgāḥ grhṇvanti passeyam
vastu tasya na vidyate"

Here, the symbol of mṛga stands for the common people without the philosophical knowledge of the unreality of the world. The symbol of mṛga (deer or any animal) in the above poem incidentally reminds us of the symbolical story of Puraṅjana in the Bhāgavata where Puraṅjana remains constantly engaged in hunting deer. It is not actually a real hunting. But there is only a symbolical reference to mṛgatrśṇa in the story. It is mṛgatṛṣṇa of attachment to the enjoyment of worldly bhoga which is never stated. It is for this reason, the catastrophe fell upon Puraṅjana and Puraṅjanī in the end.
Reference note-

1. MG. Sloka no-58, Chapter-II


3. “manorha vāryabha āsa. tasminnasuraghni sapatnaghni vyākpraviṣṭāsa tasya ha sma śvasathādravathādasurarakṣasānī mṛḍyanāṇāni yanti te hāsurāḥ samūdire pāpaṁ bata naḥ ayamṛṣabhaḥ sacate katham nvimaṁdabhnuyāmeti kilātākulī iti dāsurabrahmāvāstuḥ”.

Sātaphathabrāhmaṇa-1.1.4/14

4. “vṛṣo hi bhagavān dharmo yastasya kurute hyalam vṛṣalam taṁ vidurdevātasmādharmaṁ vivardhayet.”

Sloka no-16 MB,Sāntiparvan Chapt-90, p.4657.

5. “kim śāktā vaisṇavāḥ kim vā saivā gāṇapatyakah. mahā-māyābṛtah surve taila-yantre vṛṣā iva.”

Kāmākhyā tantra,2 /13, p.213

6. “yathā māyā yathā svapno gandharvanagaram yathā. tathotpādastathā sthānam tathā bhaṇgo udāhṛtah”

“yathaiva gandharvacchātmaricikā tathaiva māyā supinām tathaiva”

(samādhi sutra) Saddarsanasamutccaya, p.74

7. “labheta sikatāsu tailamapi yatnataḥ pīdayan pibecca mr̥gaṭṛṣṇīkāsu salilāṁ pipāsārditaḥ. kadācidapi paryāṭaṁśāsavīśaḥ namāmāśādayen”
natu pratinivistamūrkhajanacittamārādhayet.”

Ns. p.8

8. “nāpi mṛgatrsnikāḥbhāsa pānāvagāhanādiprayojanam kriyata iti.”

Brahmasutraśāmkarabhāṣya (2/1/6/14) p.378