



The Carvaka : Materialist School of Indian Philosophy

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Abstract

The Carvaka, is an ancient school of Indian materialism. According to Carvaka perception is the only and proper source of knowledge. Carvaka rejected other means of valid knowledge, notion of karma, liberation, rebirth, the authority of the secret scriptures, the vedas, and the immortality of self. They believe that this world is an aggregate of four elements, earth, water, air and fire. Present life is most important, so people should enjoy pleasure in the world. There no chance to get next life or rebirth.

Keywords : Matter, Lokayata, Hedonism

1.Introduction

Philosophical Materialism states that everything that truly exists is matter; everything is material, thus all phenomena we see are a result of material interaction. Human being , both body and mind also made out of four gross elements.

Though Thales of Miletus , a Greek Philosopher(c. 580 bce) and some of the other pre-Socratic philosophers have some claims to being regarded as materialists, the materialist tradition in Western philosophy really begins with Leucippus and Democritus, Greek philosophers who were born in the 5th century bce. Materialism is a form of philosophical monism which holds matter to be the fundamental substance in nature, and all things, including mental states and consciousness, are results of material interactions.

2.Indian Materialism

It was a popular belief system in ancient India. Brihaspati, a philosopher, is traditionally referred to as the founder of Charvaka or Lokāyata philosophy, although some scholars dispute this. The concept of the term 'Carvaka' is not quite clear. Some say that it was the name of the disciple who was the founder of this system. Some say that name comes from 'sweet-tongued'(charu-vak), because they think that pleasure is the highest goal in human life, so eat delicious food, drink and be marry.

In its most generic sense, "Indian Materialism" refers to the school of thought within Indian philosophy that rejects supernaturalism. It is regarded as the most radical of the Indian philosophical systems. It rejects the existence of other worldly entities such an immaterial soul or god and the after-life. Its primary philosophical import comes by way of a scientific and naturalistic approach to metaphysics. Thus, it rejects ethical systems that are grounded in supernaturalistic cosmologies. The good, for the Indian materialist, is strictly associated with pleasure and the only ethical obligation forwarded by the system is the maximization of one's own pleasure.

3.Lokayata Philosophy

The terms Lokāyata and Cārvāka have historically been used to denote the philosophical school of Indian Materialism. Literally, "Lokāyata" means philosophy of the people. The term was first used by the ancient Buddhists until around 500 B.C.E. to refer to both a common tribal philosophical view and a sort of this-worldly philosophy or nature lore. The term has evolved to signify a school of thought that has been scorned by religious leaders in India and remains on the periphery of Indian philosophical thought. After 500 B.C.E., the term acquired a more derogatory connotation and became synonymous with sophistry. It was not until between the 6th and 8th century C.E. that the term "Lokāyata" began to signify Materialist thought. Indian Materialism has also been named Cārvāka after one of the two founders of the school. Cārvāka and Ajita Kesakambalin are said to have established Indian Materialism as a formal philosophical system, but some still hold that Bṛhaspati was its original founder. Bṛhaspati allegedly authored the classic work on Indian Materialism, the Bṛhaspati Sūtra. There are some conflicting accounts of Bṛhaspati's life, but, at the least, he is regarded as the mythical authority on Indian Materialism and at most the actual author of the since-perished Bṛhaspati Sūtra. Indian Materialism has for this reason also been named "Bṛhaspatya."

On the basis of such a theory of knowledge, the Charvakas defended a complete reductive materialism according to which the four elements of earth, water, fire, and air are the only original components of being and all other forms are products of their composition.

4. Similar thought in Western Philosophy

The philosophy of Aristippus of Cyrene is nearly identical to Charvaka in that he believed the noblest goal one could dedicate one's self to in life was the pursuit of pleasure. Aristippus believed in living for the moment and enjoying one's self as much as one could.

5. Charvaka ethics : Hedonism

Charvaka ethics was one of hedonism. They believed in sensual pleasures as the only true purpose of human existence and denied any obligations for an afterlife, or karma. There was, however, a sense of subjective moral principle of avoiding pain and suffering in the process of pleasure.

The Charvakas have emphasized that pleasure and pain are the central themes of life and it is not possible to separate life from all these. They have also claimed that virtue is nothing more than a delusion and enjoyment is the only reality. The Charvakas School of Thought believed that life is the end of life.

6. Conclusion

The Charvaka ethics is based on the assumption that the human beings get annihilated at the point of death. She or he begins life with birth and ends it with death. Charvakas do not believe in the theory of karma and accordingly they reject the notion of re-birth after death. In individual life also wants to live good, comfortable, happy life, so it's very much relevant to everyone.

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