

A GLIMPSE ON CĀRVĀKA MATERIALISM IN REFERENCE TO SCIENCE OF MATERIALISM

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[A philosophical glimpse on materialism reminds us of Cārvāka philosophy in the Indian Context. As Upanisads are considered as the fountain of Indian Philosophy, so Cārvāka Materialism which advocates that: 'matter is the ultimate reality', has never been properly understood by other Indian thinkers. Moreover the Cārvāka summum bonum of life acknowledging 'eat, drink and be merry' cannot give real solace to human life and existence. This paper is an attempt to understand Cārvāka Materialism which allows egoistic hedonism and an attempt will be taken to throw light to find out whether Cārvāka Materialism and egoistic hedonism have any place in the context of Science of Materialism. To ponder significant light on Science we can say that Science is progressive and constructive when true theories replace false beliefs. But tragically, when Science grooms itself against nature, it becomes that Science which encourages materialism and thus becomes destructive and contradictory.]

Introduction

The word Cārvāka comes from Cārvāk or sweet-tongued or carv, to eat. They are popularly called as Lokāyatikas and hence their doctrine is known as Lokāyatamata. Bṛhaspati is said to be the founder of the Cārvāka philosophy. Any original work on Cārvāka philosophy is shrouded in mystery but we find mention of certain verses about Cārvāka philosophy in Sarvadarśanasamgraha, written by Mādhavācārya. In Arthaśāstra we find a reference of the Lokāyatikas. Moreover certain references are also found in the two epics and as well as in Manusamhitā. In Rāmāyaṇa, Lokāyatikas are called 'fools who think themselves to be wise and who are experts in leading people to doom and ruin' (Rāmāyaṇa, Ayodhyākāṇḍa-100.) The Bhagavad Gītā considers Cārvāka

materialists as 'demons' because they have considered sensual pleasure as their highest end of life.

Garbe while unearthing a detail analysis on the trend of materialism in the Indian culture and civilization finds that the presence of materialism in some form is present even before Buddhism. To make it more emphatic in this context we can mention the philosophy of Ajita Kesa Kambalaas as found in the Pali canon. According to him the body is composed of earth, water, fire, and air. These four elements finally return to their respective state after the death of the body. Ajita too rejects life after death, any moral values of life and accountability of our own actions or which is popularly known as Law of Karma. This particular view comes very near to Cārvāka Materialism. Payasi too identifies the soul with the body. He moreover denies life after death and therefore rebirth. So to quote Garbe over here: 'Several vestiges show that even in the pre-Buddhistic India pro-claimers of purely materialistic doctrines appeared'.¹

Cārvāka system, one of the Non-Vedic schools of Indian Philosophy, developed as a vehement protest against the ritualism of Brahmanas priesthood and highest metaphysical exposition of the Upaniṣads. These dual characteristics (ritualism of Brahmanas priesthood and metaphysical exposition of the Upaniṣads) perhaps have created certain skeptical attitudes in the minds of the common people. At this juncture we find a rise in the growth of materialism in the Indian soil in the post- Upaniṣadic and pre-Buddhistic age. As a matter of fact, materialism is not a popular interpretation of life and its experiences in the Indian context and it can be well justified if we behold the etymological meaning of the word 'Darśana', i.e. 'To see thy Self'. Materialism as a metaphysical explanation of the ultimate reality, has never been whole heartedly appreciated by the Indian Seers and so born under certain discontentment, Cārvāka philosophy died within a very short span of time. But at the same time we have to accept that materialistic way of life which explains that enjoying the gross pleasures of life, as the ultimate reality, will surely last as long as mankind survives in the history of human civilization.

We find a brief account of Cārvāka epistemology and metaphysics in the allegorical play called Prabodhachandrodaya written by Kṛṣṇapati Mishra. He writes about Cārvāka Materialism

as thus: 'Lokāyata is the only Shastra; perception is the only authority; earth, water, fire and air are the only elements; enjoyment is the only end of human existence; mind is only a product of matter. There is no other world: death means liberation'.²

At the back drop of above cited opinion of Kṛṣṇapati Mishra, we can say that Cārvāka philosophy maintains a gross and naive realistic position in their epistemological interpretation of knowledge (it is perception alone which can yield valid knowledge). Again, Lokāyatikas have also rejected the validity of inference, validity of verbal testimony and have provided several grounds in support of their rejections.

(For eg. "Wherever there is smoke, there is fire	Major Premise
This mountain has smoke	Minor Premise
There is fire in the mountain	Conclusion"

Amongst the several objections cited by the Cārvākas regarding the impossibility of inference, the most fundamental of them is : 'in inference the major premise cannot be proved and therefore any inference is either impossible or unnecessary'. Inference in any case cannot yield truth. Many critics hold that the Cārvākas have anticipated the problems of inference like many European Sceptics. But this view of Cārvāka on the impossibility of inference has been objected by almost all the Indian schools of philosophy.

Lokāyata thinkers are called naturalists and accidentalists. These thinkers ultimately reject final causes and universality of causation. As a consequence Cārvāka philosophy advocates materialism as its metaphysical doctrine. Cārvāka system is furthermore considered as positivists, atheists and egoistic hedonistic thinkers. Their motto is thus concluded as: 'Eat, drink and be merry'. Here we find a vivid exposition of the denial of pre-existence of future life, law of Karma, heaven and hell, moral values of life, spiritualism, bondage and release and the existence of God.

Lokāyatamata and Scientists of Materialism are at a point share the tone of atheism, denial of life after death, denial of the accountability of our actions, etc., etc. So the clarity of reasoning

that may arise here is: Can we find any significant reference between Cārvāka Materialism and Science of Materialism?

The best cited social distress and agony for mankind is the darkest incident of September 11, 2001, United States New York City and Washington D.C. where 2996 people died instantly only because of the direct affect of those so called Scientists who maid science a hand-maid of human ego and selfishness. This inhuman mass destruction involving sophisticated technologies show case moral devaluation and inclination towards materialistic form of Science.

Though there has been much discussions and debate on this particular burning issue yet there is again an enormous scope to make brain-storm analysis to find out more research oriented solutions to the confusions and contradictions that always prevail while discussing any problem related with Cārvāka Materialism and Science of Materialism. Here we take an interest in our humble way to find certain strong references where the attitude of Cārvāka Materialism in epistemological, metaphysical and ethical conclusions are having significant relevance as well as certain subtle differences in context of Science of Materialism of this 21st century, globally.

Cārvāka Materialism and Science of Materialism

In this paper we will throw light on Cārvāka Materialism and Science of Materialism in a research oriented attitude and finally an attempt will be strived for to explore out the issues how pure science deviates from that science which encourages materialism. Moreover we will try to relate how both Cārvāka Materialism and Science of Materialism goes against human values and ultimately human conscience. Consequently vice and immorality becomes the law of nature as human ego and self vested interest rules over nature and human consciousness.

We all know that Cārvāka propounds the theory of materialism and it is the outcome of its epistemological doctrine of 'Pratyakṣaiva-pramāṇavādi'. The doctrine of 'Pratyakṣaiva-pramāṇavādi' made the Cārvāka to conclude that matter is the ultimate reality. Matter is accepted as the only reality from which all things of the sensible world have come to exist. All objects of

this physical world are produced by the process of accidentalism and mechanical combination of perceptible material elements. Consciousness is perceived because that which is not perceived is not real. There is no soul independent of human body. Consciousness therefore is accepted as the bye product of four material elements i.e. consciousness as the epiphenomenon of the body. The four material elements combine in a definite proportion in human body and give rise to a new quality called as consciousness. Accordingly the Lokāyatikas deny everything which is not material. Life is a product of material elements and as such it is a 'physico-chemical' machine. Mind is a product of matter and therefore Cārvāka denies all metaphysical truths of life. To quote the words of Cārvāka Philosophy:

'Accepting only perception as the valid source of knowledge, the Cārvākas reject the reality of God. No one has ever seen God and no one can see him.....They and the Vedas belong to the imagination of craft priests, who invented them to make a living out of them..... The only laws binding on man are the laws of the states, obedience to which brings rewards and disobedience of which brings punishment. And the science (śāstra) of the laws of state is the only science worth studying'.³ Again to quote we find as thus: 'Materialistic philosophy considers the self to be the same nature as material substance, not distinct from it in any way.....'⁴

Here we will talk on Science of Materialism but before doing so let us understand just in brief about Science which is sufficiently a broad domain and which is laid on the foundation of observation and experiment. If we trace the history of Science, we find that Science had been presented in a progressive narrative where true theories replace false beliefs.

The vision and findings of Aristotle, Galileo, Newton and many other thinkers form the basis of Modern Science which aimed at gaining more knowledge from nature and the universe and establish Science for a better cause. When there is Science there is inquisitiveness. And this inquisitiveness may lead to two paths, the one being constructive and the other being contradictory. There lies the deformity of Science which is the outcome of human desires and determined by human selfish ego. Perhaps there is a comprehensive relevance of Cārvāka Materialism in this form of Science of Materialism because herein we find de-valued Science.

Science of Materialism allows egoistic hedonism of 'sensual pleasure' only and thus undermines humanism, environmental ethics, socio-cultural unity and disparity in unity-in-diversity.

Truly speaking, ever since the human race became intelligent enough to answer their curiousness there has been a persistent question regarding their origin and evolution. The theories of Darwin (1809-1882), Lamarck (1744-1829) have helped us to understand these aspects of life. The works of Gregor Johann Mendel (1822-1884) and T. H. Morgan (1866-1945) are a step further and they emphasized on laws of inheritance and consequently genes as the bearer of heredity was established. Gottlieb Haberlandt (1854-1945) gave the concept of cellular totipotency (1902): 'Theoretically all plant cells are able to give rise to a complete plant' i.e. the inherent potential of every cell to give birth to an entire organism. This phenomenon gave birth to the concept of Tissue culture and cloning. Clones are exact replicas of the parent. Using the tissue culture technique, clones or replicas of enormous magnitude can be generated within a short span of time under conducive environmental conditions. The concept of cloning can immensely benefit us if we apply it in socio-ethical manner.

Along the other line of thought, we can say that Science of Materialism is synonymous to Scientific Materialism or Scientism. The most prominent thinkers, who are called by the coined name as "new atheists" are Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens. They propagate that religion is totally condemned because religion cannot withstand investigations of the methods deployed by modern science. This particular view has a resemblance with Cārvāka Materialism, condemning vehemently religion and all religious observations. Spirituality finds no place in human ordered life. To make this view more emphatically stated we quote over here: "Cārvāka condemns religion as priestcraft, and enjoins the pursuit of bodily pleasures. He denies the existence of all supersensible entities".⁵

But the view on devaluing religion is objected by the twentieth century philosophers like William James and Alfred North Whitehead.

Both James and Whitehead review that Scientific Materialism studies physical reality on the basis of natural sciences and it is all

that really has an existence and is accepted to be true. In this world-view, religion is directly condemned because religion involves faith which is unseen and however faith fails to emerge out of the empirically testable nature of the scientific investigations. Moreover there are larger areas of human endeavor that do not fit well into the scientific materialistic world view, including humanism.

Cārvāka Theory of Naturalism in reference to Law of Causation

Cārvāka appreciates the theory of Naturalism (Svabhāvavada) and this theory is accepted by all naturalist thinkers. For e.g., 'the colors of the birds are due to their very nature' or 'Fire is hot', the differences in the following characteristics of both birds and fire are due to their inherent natures. In the Upaniṣads we find reference of the theory of svabhāva or nature as the cause of this material world. According to Śankara, the Advaita thinker svabhāva is the natural power inherent in different things of nature. For e.g. 'Fire has the natural power to burn things'. Again Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad explains both the theories of accidentalism and naturalism separately.

The effect of Naturalism is acceptable both in Cārvāka Materialism and also in Science. But the weakness of Cārvāka Materialism beholds in the fact of their epistemological doctrine of 'Pratyakṣaivapramāṇavādī' and also its denial of the law of Causality and its nature of Universality. Interestingly enough we see the strength of Naturalism in Science because of its acceptance of inference as well as law of Causality and its nature of Universality.

To relate this issue regarding the strength of Naturalism as found in Science let us mention two prominent naturalist philosophers like Charles Darwin and Lamarck who propounded theories of Evolution in their own specific way. According to Darwin evolution is the result of natural selection of the survival of the fittest. Darwin's theory of evolution though has a naturalistic standpoint yet it is substantiated by valid scientific reasoning. Darwin has exemplified his theory of natural selection with the phenomenon of adaptation and modification that he observed in the 'Finches of Galapagos Island'. There are at least 13 species of Finches on the Island which evolved from one ancestral species.

This process of speciation where species evolve rapidly to fit themselves into the empty eco-space is referred to as adaptive radiation. The different Finch species have become adapted to different niches which is dependent on different dietary habits; seeds, flowers, leaves etc. *Here we see vividly, Darwin's methodical application of substantive reasoning follow the process of inference through the scientific observation of nature.* Perhaps the phase 'adaptive radiation' refers to the meaning of the effect of naturalism or 'svabhāva' in Darwin's theory of evolution. In Darwin's Naturalism we find that although every organism possesses inherent characters but those characters can be affected by certain external or environmental factors, for in case of Darwin's Finches all the 13 species acquired some inherent characters depending upon their dietary habits i.e. the source of food but in Cārvāka philosophy external or environmental factors play no role in their theory of Naturalism. Thus Cārvāka advocates the theory of Naturalism very grossly and naively.

Along this theory of evolution we find Lamarck's theory of inheritance of acquired characters from one generation to another but his findings lack scientific reasoning. Lamarck's theory of evolution has an application of 'conscious effort'. In this scientific theory, Lamarck states that: "The 'need' of an organ causes an organ to be produced. Thus, the need of horns to fight with and teeth to chew with would cause the growth of horns and teeth".⁶ According to Lamarck excessive use of an organ strengthen the organ while its disuse makes it a vestige in a long run. He cited the example of evolution of a race of giraffe-like animals where he concludes that excessive use of the neck caused its excessive development and here we find the application of the phase 'conscious effort'. All these characteristics that an organism acquires during his life time by his 'conscious effort' is automatically inherited by its progenies. Unlike Darwin, Lamarck's view is objected presently because the theory baffles scientific reasoning.

Perception can yield correct knowledge only when the characteristic or svabhāva of an object is within the capacity of the sensual perception but the effect of naturalism is not possible when the characteristic or svabhāva of an object is not within the capacity of sensual perception. This is the reason why ether (in Greek it

means 'Upper Air' or space filling substance) was rejected by the Cārvāka thinkers because the inherited quality or svabhāva of ether is the ability of transmission for propagation of sound or electromagnetic waves or gravitational forces is beyond the capacity of our sensual perception.

Conclusion

'Devaluing human consciousness along with moral responsibilities as the edifice of Cārvāka Materialism and Science of Materialism.'

The total acceptance of Cārvāka egoistic hedonism and Science of Materialism will lead us to discard literature, music and such fields of human endeavor which constitute fundamental areas of academic and formal discussions of any interdisciplinary approach of study. Such a conclusion is followed because of the non-acceptance of human value and its counterpart i.e. humanism. Humanism is at the cross road both at the hands of Lokāyatamata and Scientists of Materialism. Mere sensual pleasure cannot kindle the human existence and therefore cannot be a source of human contentment. That is why perhaps the concept of human cloning is under controversy at the international world order. The latent materialistic thoughts in the human mind in the practice of cloning can bring about corrupt and unethical consequences which will cause chaos in the social scenario. The most cited e.g. is: In the Hollywood science fiction, 'The Island' (2005, Directed by Michael Bay) the concept of human cloning has been nicely depicted wherein the brutal aspect of human mind regarding human cloning is conceptualized. Here clones are treated merely as source of organ transplant and are subjected as 'objects' only rather than living being. In this fictional film we can observe very keenly the devaluation of human existence and human consciousness when the clone is mercilessly killed when the owner is in need of any organ. Clones have objective existence and as such subjective existence is mercilessly killed and the owner takes no pain in taking any moral responsibilities of such an act of brutal vice. This view of not taking responsibility of any immoral activities comes very near to Cārvāka materialism because for them consciousness is only a product of four material elements. In this fictional film too consciousness represents the objective reality and thus the subjective consciousness is totally in a suicidal state. Thus we find

the significance of the tag line: 'Devaluing human consciousness along with moral responsibilities as the edifice of Cārvāka Materialism and Science of Materialism'. Let us stop here to speculate and ponder upon that: 'Can we allow to such devaluation in the name of growth and progress?' I suppose every conscious reader will say all together, 'No' to this statement because humanism and human existence is just lost. Man is never a machine alone and consequently human mind can never be a tool to mint only crimes and materialistic comforts of life. Man has a conscious-force and is thus not a royal maid of Science and matter.

References :

- 1 Chandradhar Sharma : A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy, p. 40
- 2 Chandradhar Sharma : A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy, p. 41
- 3 P. T. Raju : The Philosophical Traditions of India, pp. 90-91
- 4 Dr. R. N. Sharma : Indian Philosophy, p. 134
- 5 Jadunath Sinha : Indian Philosophy, Vol.1, p. 245
- 6 Gangulee, Das and Dutta : College Botany, Vol. 1, p. 823