Cārvāka Philosophy

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Introduction

- Darśana- दर्शन- to see
- Outlook/ vision/ perspective
- Multiple perspectives of looking at the world
- Experiential knowledge
- Vedic literature has seeds of philosophical systems developed later
- Philosophical hymns in tenth mandala of Ṛgveda
- Upaniṣads are considered the basis of Indian Philosophy
Different schools

Āstika (orthodox) and Nāstika (Heterodox) darśanās

Āstika (Orthodox)
- Sāṃkhya
- Yoga
- Nyāya
- Vaiśeṣika
- Uttara-mimāṃsā

Nāstika (heterodox)
- Lokāyata
- Jainism
- Buddhism
Nastika – atheist/heterodox system

- Protest against the excessive monkdom of the Brāhmaṇa priests
- Admits pratyakṣa as only pramāṇa
- Denied the existence of soul, other world, liberation
- Denied scriptural authority or any other means of knowledge except perception
- Denied concept of God as creator or invisible power
- Denied the concept of merits and sins
- Denies ritualism done for attaining anything
- Denied the authority of Brahmin class
- Denied everything which is based on faith
Primary source Bṛhaspati Sūtras are missing

No original work of this school survived with the single exception of a much later work, Tattvoplasasimha of Jayarashi Bhatta, published by Oriental Institute Baroda in 1940.

Chief sources are therefore references into other works in order to refute materialism (chances are that their fundamentals are misinterpreted.)

Sarvadarśana Samgraha gives a summary of this school (14th CE)

Second act of Prabodhachandrodaya, teachings of this school are summarized

Buddhism, Jainism, Nyāya and Vedānta have mentioned their views in order to refute
Kauṭiliya says that king should learn four leaning faculties

- Vedas, Vārtā (agriculture and commerce), Daṇḍanīti (administration) and ānvikṣiki (philosophy)

Kauṭīlya mentions Sāṃkhya, yoga and Lokāyata s in philosophy

Lokāyata as ānvikṣiki - reason oriented inquiry

Gives their own system on logically based principles

Reason predominates rather than faith

Philosophical discipline which investigates strengths and weaknesses of different sciences by applying reason
Lokāyata must have developed as a rational approach towards philosophy
Disregarded scriptural authority either Vedic or non-vedic
Challenged scriptural testimony, soul, rebirth, other world, God
Rationalist philosophical movement which attempted to solve individual, social issues merely on empirical, rational and practical grounds without taking recourse to religion
Works on Charvaka philosophy

Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya-
- Secular approach, Marxist viewpoint, sympathetic towards Lokāyata s
- Chattopadhyaya reconstructed the image of Carvaka Darśana from the sources like Kautiliya Arthashastra and Tattvasamgrapanjika

Ramkrishna Bhattacharya-
- Collected and rearranged scattered references to Lokāyata
- Tried to restore Lokāyata aphorisms
- Reinterpreted this literature and strengthened the basic framework of Chattopadhyaya’s version.
- Sadashiv Athavale, Shubhada Joshi, Pradeep Gokhale
- Refuted views of Debiprasad Chattopadhyay
Lokāyāta

- Prevalent / spread (āyataḥ-spread) among the people (lokeṣu)
- (Viewpoint spread among people)
- Though suggests popularity may have derogatory sense
- One who believes in this world, directed toward this world / worldly
- Contrast to the other world (not alaukika or lokottara)
- Philosophy whose basis is in the material world
- Controlled or restrained (āyatam-controlled) or lokena (by people)
Lokāyata / Cārvaka / Bārhaspatya

- Lokāyata - earliest nomenclature
- It may be more like a movement rather than rigid system
- Cārvāka and Bārhaspatya Darśana was later identity
- Cārvāka or Bṛhaspati are also considered as founders
- Many Bṛhaspatis in tradition, Bṛhaspati was identified with Śukrāchārya
- Bṛhaspati may be mythical author
- Lokāyata Darśana, Cārvāka Darśana and Bārhaspatya Darśana may not be the names of a uniform single system but family systems or a family of philosophical trends
- Different schools of the same system are possible
Cārvaka

Cārvāka may be the proper name of its founder

It is etymologized in following ways-

- **Carva**- to eat
  i. a person who believes in eat, drink and be merry
  ii. a person who eats up his own words, or who eats up all moral and ethical considerations

  (चर्वमयन्ते पुण्यपापादिकं वस्तुजातमिति चावायका:) ।

- **Cāru vāk**- having sweet tongue (superficially attractive doctrine)
Three broad schools

- Sceptic Cārvāka Darśana
  - which denies all ways of knowing

- Extreme or narrow empiricist Cārvāka Darśana
  - which accepts perception as the only means of knowledge

- Sophisticated empiricist or broad empiricist
  - Accepts perception and also kind of special kind of inference as a means of knowledge
Time period

Radhakrishnan - Materialism as old- pre-buddhist era, germs found in Rgveda, arose during the epic period 600 BCE-200 BCE

Doctrines had numerous followers like today

Fundamental discussion over Cārvākas is found after 600 BCE

Bhattacharya - Cārvāka- several atheistic schools existed

Ajita Kesakambali - It was systematized by Cārvākas, though material schools existed before

Hopkins - contemporary to Jainism and Buddhism

Rhys Davids - came as scepticism in general without being organized as philosophical school in 500 BCE
Matter is the only Reality - *Dehātmavāda, Bhogavāda* (materialism, hedonism)

Whatever exists is the combination of four elements.

Consciousness is a mere product of matter. It is combined when the elements combine in certain proportion. Matter secrets mind due to process like fermentations

So called soul is nothing but this living body.
Epistemology

- *Pratyakṣa* (perception) is the only valid means of knowledge.
- Validity of (inference) *anumāna* is rejected as we proceed from known to unknown.
- *Vyāpti* is the very nerve of inference.
- Cārvākas challenge this relation of universal and invariable relation of concomitance.

- E.g: Mountain has a fire (*pratijñā*)
- Smoke – (*hetu*) cause
- wherever there is smoke, there is fire (*vyāpti*) Universal statement
- As in kitchen (*udāharanam*)
Vyāpti remain unproved

Inference is dependent on vyāpti (statement of universal relation)
How vyāpti can be proved?
vyāpti can be proved by pratyakṣa or anumāna?
If depends on pratyakṣa then how universal statement is possible?
If depends on anumāna then how it leads to prove anumāna?

- Anyonyashraya dosha
- Anavastha dosha
Cārvākas position on inference is vehemently criticized by other philosophical systems.
To refuse the validity of inference is to refuse thinking and reasoning process.
Thoughts being abstract can only be inferred.
We perceive the earth as flat but its round, earth as static but moving round the sun.
Verbal testimony - invalid

- Verbal testimony – cannot be authoritative
- Heard words- knowledge through perception is valid
- Knowledge of the unperceived words, objects is invalid
- Authority of the Vedas- work of some cunning priests

अग्निहोत्रं त्रयो वेदास्त्रिदण्डं भस्मगुणठनम् ।
बुध्दिपौरुषहीनानां जीवे केति बृहस्पति :॥
No Eschatology

There is no *paraloka* like heaven and hell or not rebirth.

*Naraka* is nothing but sorrow experienced in this very world. There is no god. A king who rules is the controller. You don’t have to strive for liberation because death itself is *mokṣa*.

If one goes to other world after death then why one can’t come to the family where he lived?
Criticism to rituals

- It's useless to perform *pretakarmans*. It's nothing but a technique of Brahmins to earn money.
- There is no point in performing duties ordained by particular *varṇa* and *āśrama*.
- *Śrāddha karmans* are done by foolish people.

न स्वर्गो नापवर्गो वा नैवात्मा पारलौकिकः ।
नैव वर्णाश्रमाधीनां क्रियाश्च फलदायिकः ॥

स्वर्गस्थिता यदा तृत्तिण्य गच्छेयुस्तत्र दानतः।
प्रासादस्योपरिस्थानात्त्र कस्मान्न दीयते ॥
Atheism

- God is not necessary to account for the world and cannot be perceived
- Materials elements give rise to the world—no creator
- No need of efficient cause
- Yadṛcchāvāda / svabhāvavāda
- No conscious purpose behind the world
- Mechanism of the world is automated
- Self-automated world
Sensual pleasure - *summun bonum* of life i.e. eat, drink and be merry.

Pleasure is mixed with pain but there is no reason why it should not be acquired.

Nobody casts away grain because of husk.

Out of *Dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*, only *kāma* (sensual pleasure) and *artha* (wealth) are accepted.

One should enjoy pleasure, keeping away sorrows

All values are mere phantoms created by diseased mind.
Downfall of Cārvāka

- Rejection of Authority and denouncement of the Brāhmaṇa priests, God
- Extreme hedonism
- Rejected values which make life worth living
- Questioning the soundness of popular notions and giving rise to new problems of philosophy
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