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Relevance & impact of cārvāka philosophy in modern age

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Abstract

The history of Indian atheism is as primitive as spiritualism or idealism. At first, skepticism was found in the Vedas. The theories of Cārvāka philosophy depends on the thought of agnosticism, skepticism and atheism. According to them physical pleasure is the ultimate goal of human being. There is no place of hell, heaven, rebirth, rituals, god etc. in their philosophy. This philosophy is totally based on perception, sometimes perception based inference. It seems that, most people of modern age is living that kind of life which is full of materialistic pleasure. So, the present impact or relevance of Cārvāka philosophy in modern human thoughts should be realized. In this present research an attempt is taken to observe the impact and relevance of Cārvāka philosophy in the thoughts and life style of modern human being.

Key words: Cārvāka, pleasure, materialistic

Introduction

In Indian Philosophy, it is not possible to define a certain period of materialistic thought. Like Phoenix, it has been again and again resurrected itself and its existence has been felt through the ages. The existence and rise of materialistic thought in the vast premise of spiritualistic thought, can be compared with a revolution without any exaggeration.

We are all well acquainted with the word revolution. Revolution can emancipate society from its many impediments. This revolution is not an incoherent or parochial phenomenon. When exploitation, torture, immorality goes beyond the endurance limit, then longtime accumulately anger explodes like a canon. History proves that the exploited, humiliated, oppressed class has used revolution as the last weapon for their existence. They has participated in rebellion for their rights and freedom. We have seen how this revolution has different faces at different times, like – religious revolution, freedom revolution, language revolution, intellectual revolution. When religion becomes a weapon for fear and greed, Cārvāka objects to this immorality. Cārvāka, the rebellious voice who has risen above religious fear and greed, showed the courage to say ‘no’ to ‘no’. Being born as a living being, they focused on fulfilling the basic needs. They propagated the need to provide food, shelter, home above everything. They do not want to force anyone to hold on their heart’s desire and stomach’s hunger. Those who are fighting for their existence in sweat drowned body (sometimes blood smeared body), it is not possible to them to romanticize the full moon in an empty stomach, so it is not possible to be a real spiritualistic or idealistic in empty stomach. Materialism and spiritualism fight on this plain. Spiritualism leads you to think, but it doesn’t satiate your hunger, provides your foods; it talks about salvation after your life on earth; it does not advise you on earthly happiness; it advises you to refrain from earthly sensory experiences in this life to get happiness in next life. It is where the rebellious voice announces the revolution. Cārvāka is the pioneer of this revolution. Though, Budhdhists and Jainists contribute to it in a different way.

Relevance & impact of Cārvāka philosophy: Hearing the word Cārvāka a feelings arises in our mind like Sharadvata at the entrance of the palace of Dushyanta:

*“Abhyaktamiva snātaḥ śuciraśucimiva prabuddha iva suptaḥ.
Baddhamiva svairagatirjanamiha sukhasmṛginamavaimi.”*^[1]

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But here is the question, why this type of negative feeling is associated with Cārvāka philosophy? The etymological meaning of this word is 'to chew' or *chāru vāk* which means "delightful or sweet or wonderful" and "speech" separately. Hearing the word Cārvāka, the sentence, which arises in our mind, that is: "*Rñm kṛtvā ghrtaṃ pivet*" [2]. It seems that, at present, this sentence is the caption of Cārvāka philosophy. But this is very amazing and also surprising that, this is a misinterpretation of Cārvāka philosophy.

Some aspects of relevance of Cārvāka philosophy in modern thoughts:

It seems that, human being always feels and follows: "*Yāvajjīvet sukhaṃ jīvet*" [3], it means, how long we live, we should live with pleasure. As the most intelligent being, he always demands logic of any causal factor. His engagement or non-engagement depends on those subjects, which are proven with evidence. He engages himself in those activities which will produce pleasure as result. On the other hand, he abstains from the activities which may be painful in future. Modern medical science also advises to live with mental and physical pleasure. Some bio-chemical changes occur in our body by the feeling of happiness. This increases our life expectancy. So, it seems that, according to modern life-style the purpose of every person is to live happily. Now, the goal of most of the people is to satisfy the sense organs. It is also observed that, the main objective of modern science is to produce physical and mental pleasure and to eliminate human labour through various materials and machines.

It may also claim that modern people follow "*Rñm kṛtvā ghrtaṃ pivet*" [4] – this teaching of Cārvāka. Material pleasure depends on economical and physical support. It is known to all that health is wealth. Then every healthy person needs money to enjoy the material pleasure and to satisfy the sense organs. We may support this teaching of Cārvāka with the loan or EMI method, which is very popular in modern society. At present, who has a balanced financial condition or a sustainable financial future, he can claim for loan to any bank or any company. A lot of people follow this loan method to consume lots of things like house, shop, car etc. Many people follow EMI (Easy Monthly Installment) method to consume instantly any type of material object. So, it seems that, now a day, the huge popularity of loan or EMI supports the teaching of Cārvāka: "*Yāvajjīvet sukhaṃ jīvet, rñm kṛtvā ghrtaṃ pivet.*" [5].

Human body with consciousness is considered as Ātmā or soul in Cārvāka philosophy – "*Bhāsmībhūtasya dehasya punarāgamaṇaṃ kutaḥ?*" [6] So, the concept of the life after death (*paraloka*), rebirth (*punarjanma*) are not accepted by the Cārvākas. According to them- "When once this frame of ours the burn, how shall it ever again return?" [7]. So they teach to consume material objects to get pleasure, to be happy and to fulfill this one and only life. So, it may say that, everyone's busyness in search of materialistic pleasure and basic planning to secure this present life, reject the concepts of hell, heaven, rebirth etc. and support the concept of one life philosophy.

Then Cārvāka philosophy says,- "*Devaścedasti sarvajnaḥ karuṇavandhyavak. Tat kiṃ vāgavyayamatrāṇa kṛtarthayati nārthinaḥ*" [8] – it means, if the almighty god exists, why does he not release people from all the sorrows and pains with the use of his verbal words only?" So, it seems that this is not only the question of Cārvākas, but also this is the question of all the people who are suffering with grief, sorrow and pain. If the almighty god is the creator and lord of the universe, then why are there so much complexities, disease, violence,

hunger, pains, poverties, grief and sufferings? He can easily transform and make this world as beautiful, stable and peaceful as heaven with the help of his words only.

Then it seems that, lots of people consider that the less expensive things, which are available or ready to use are better than the more expensive things, which may be available in future. The Cārvākas say: "*varamadya kapotaḥ śvo mayurāt.*" [9] In this competitive socio-economic condition there are hardly any people who reject the available opportunities and go forward for better or best opportunity in future. As for an example, a huge number of unemployed youths of India, are struggling for a good job only, not for the best for him or her.

Conclusion

Therefore it may be said that, Cārvāka philosophy totally depends on human psychology. So this philosophy may be considered as the philosophy of the basic thoughts of human being. Not only human being, but also other living creatures automatically follow the principles of Cārvāka. So this philosophy is considered as Lokāyata philosophy. Lokāyata means popular among common people. Human being is born with some kind of desire and hunger. The principles of Cārvāka philosophy depend on the fulfillment of these desires. So, importance of the basic needs of human being is depicted in this philosophy.

That is why, against the huge logical forces of the theistic believers Cārvāka philosophy survives in modern era also. In this context, the great philosopher and composer of Sarvadarśanasamgraha, Madhavacharya unhesitatingly has said in 14th century, "The efforts of Cārvākas are too hard to uproot." ("*duruucchedaṃ hi Cārvākasya ceṣṭitaṃ*") [10]. But, at present, it seems that, their efforts are not too hard to uproot, but impossible. As instinctively human being always follows the Cārvāka propagated philosophy of life.

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