UNIT 6 : CĀRVĀKA : METAPHYSICS

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6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- write a short essay on Cārvāka Philosophy
- discuss what is Metaphysics and its scope
- explain Cārvāka Metaphysical Concepts
- discuss the Concept of Liberation in Cārvāka Philosophy
- describe Cārvāka View of Dehātmāvāda, Law of Causation, Cārvāka refutation of God's existence, Cārvāka view of karmāvada and Theory of Rebirth.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

Indian philosophy is generally spiritualistic. It believes in soul, God, law of Karma, Liberation etc. Indian philosophy consists of nine systems. These are– (i) Nyāya, (ii) Vaiśeṣika, (iii) Saṅkhya, (iv) Yoga, (v) Mīmāṁsā

(vi) Vedānta, (vii) Cārvāka (viii) Buddha (ix) Jaina. These are divided into two groups– (i) Āstika or Vedic (ii) Nāstika or Non-Vedic.

Āstika or Vedic systems of Indian philosophy are those which believe in the authority of the Vedas.

Again the Nāstika or Non-Vedic systems donot believe in the testimony of the Vedas. However, the word 'Āstika' literally means a believer in god and the word 'Nāstika' means the disbeliever in god. In brief, an Āstika is a theist, while a Nāstika is an atheist. But in Indian philosophy Āstikas are the Vedic schools, while Nāstikas are the non-Vedic schools. The Cārvāka philosophy is one of the Nāstika schools of Indian philosophy. It occupies a very important place in the history of Indian philosophy. The sage-Bṛhaspati is considered to be the founder of Cārvāka philosophy. The ancient Sūtras of Cārvāka philosophy are known as Bṛhaspati Sūtra. As a gross approach to the philosophy of life, the view of Cārvāka seems to be the earliest in the evolution of knowledge.

The word 'Cārvāka', is derived from the root 'Carva' which means 'to chew' or 'to eat'. This philosophy gives special emphasis on eating and drinking. Cārvāka schools is also named as 'Lokāyat school'; because it is widely popular among the common people. (Lokayat). Cārvāka system is more a philosophy of life than a theory of Ultimate Reality. This philosophy is concerned with man's eternal urge for pleasure. It has its novelty in challenging all the traditional values of Indian people. Cārvāka philosophical concept may be divided into three headings– epistemology, metaphysics and ethics. In metaphysics, ethics and epistemology, the Cārvāka philosophy stands in marked contrast to all other Indian philosophical system.

Being one of the Nāstika schools, Cārvākas donot believe in the testimony of the Vedas. As a matter of fact, all the Nāstika systems of Indian philosophy owe their origin to the reaction against Vedic traditions. It should be noted that the Buddha and Jaina schools donot criticize Vedic thought though they are Nāstika systems. But Cārvāka philosophers have openly abused the Vedas. They say that the Vedas are full of lies and repetitions; they are created by cunning priests who wanted to gain their means by misguiding the ignorant people.

Cārvāka philosophy is entirely materialistic. The school of materialism in India seems to be very old. References of it are found in the Epics and in the early Buddhistic literature. According to Materialism, matter is the ultimate element of the Universe. Cārvāka philosophy also upholds such a view. This philosophy maintains that everything which exists in the world is material. Anything which is not material cannot exist.

6.3 CĀRVĀKA : METAPHYSICS

Generally every school or system of philosophy is based on its epistemological foundation. Cārvāka Metaphysical doctrines are also based on its epistemology. The Cārvāka epistemological view is that Perception or Pratyakṣa is the only means of valid knowledge. It rejects all other sources of valid knowledge such as inference (Anumāna), comparison (Upamāna), Authority (Sabda) etc.

The Cārvākas donot believe in God, soul, the life after death, heaven, law of Karma etc. Because these cannot be perceived. Usually in Indian philosophy five physical elements are recognized as the original elements of the things & beings of the Universe, they are– earth, water, fire, air, and ether. But Cārvākas accept the existence of the first four elements. It rejects the fifth element, i.e. ether, because it is not perceived but inferred. According to the Cārvāka philosophy, everything which exists, including the mind, is due to a particular combination of these four elements. Cārvāka maintains that though these elements are eternal, their combinations undergo production and destruction.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1. Indian Philosophy consists of nine systems. What are these systems?

(Answer in about 10 words)

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Q.2. Write the Cārvāka view of Epistemology in one sentence. (Answer in about 15 words)

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Q.3. Fill in the blanks :

a) The word ..... means a believer in God.

b) Cārvāka is one of the ..... schools of Indian Philosophy.

c) Cārvākas donot believe in the ..... of the Vedas.

d) The word 'Metaphysics' comes from the Greek word .....

e) It was ..... who for the first time developed Metaphysics to be studied after physics.



ACTIVITY : 2.1

a) Is Cārvāka materialist? Discuss.

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b) Does Cārvāka go beyond experience? Discuss.

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6.4 CĀRVĀKA : CONCEPT OF SOUL AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Being materialistic, the Cārvākas donot believe in the existence of an invisible, unchangeable and immortal soul. According to them soul is a product of matter. It is the quality of the body and does not exist separately outside the body. The soul is simply the conscious living body. We donot perceive any soul; we perceive only the body in a conscious state. A particular combination of the elements produces consciousness, though

these elements donot separately possess it. The actions attributed to the soul are really the actions of the body. Consciousness is the result of an emergent and dialectical evolution. It is an epiphenomenon, a by product of matter. Here naturally a question may be raised, how can a soul or a conscious being originate from inanimate objects? Cārvāka replies that just as combination of betel leaf nut, lime and catechu produces red colour, in the same way the fusion of these elements speaks of consciousness. According to Cārvāka, body with consciousness is the soul. Behind and beyond the material body there is no eternal soul.

There are two types of Cārvākas– the Dhurta or cunning Cārvākas and the Susikshit or educated Cārvākas. The former considers the conscious body to be the soul. With that body the soul exists and with it the soul perishes. Consciousness can be experienced only in the body. So, consciousness has no separate existence of it own its outside the body.

On the other-hand, the educated Cārvākas maintain that the soul has eternal knowledge and perishes with the body. The soul does not migrate from one body to another. Thus, some of the Cārvākas are Dehātmāvādin, i.e. those who identify body and soul. Others are Indriyatmāvādin; they consider the senses to be the soul. There are some others known as Pranavadin, they regard the soul as nothing but the vital principle (Prana). Again, some other are Ātmāmanovādin, for whom there is no difference between mind and soul. On the whole according to Cārvāka philosophy, when the body is destroyed nothing is left. Therefore, there is no eternal, immortal soul beyond the body. The Cārvāka view of soul is known as 'Dehātmāvāda' or Bhūtachaitanyavāda.

6.5 CĀRVĀKA : ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF DEHATMAVADA

The Cārvāka philosophers forward some arguments in favour of Dehātmāvāda or Bhutachaitanyavāda. These are as follows–

1. When the body is nourished by foods, then the consciousness or intelligence is also nourished. The nutritious food and drinks make

our bodies healthy; as a result, consciousness or soul is also nourished. Hence, consciousness is also a bodily thing.

2. Human mental development and capabilities have grown according to bodily nervous system. To establish this fact the Cārvākas cite the example of sheep. Human celebral nervous system is more developed and complicated than that of the sheep. Accordingly, human intelligence is more developed than that of the sheep. From this example it is proved that intelligence is a product of bodily mechanism.
3. When our body turns to be disordered or unwell, then our mental power or consciousness decreases. This proves that consciousness is caused by body.
4. When man grows old, his body turns to be thin or light. Accordingly the intellectual capacity turns to be weak. Therefore, the body is the store of consciousness.
5. Our day-to-day activities, conducts also prove that consciousness is nothing but the body. When we utter 'I', actually this 'I' indicates the body and also the soul. Hence, the body is the soul or consciousness.

6.6 CRITICISM AGAINST CĀRVĀKA DEHATMAVADA

Though Cārvāka philosophy severely criticized the existence of the soul besides the body, the Cārvāka theory of soul or Dehātmāvāda is also criticized by many philosophers of different schools of Indian philosophy. Some of these critical points are mentioned as follows–

1. If consciousness is the specific quality of the body, it should exist even in deep sleep, swoon, and the like.
2. If consciousness is the quality of the body, why is it not perceived by other people? Other qualities are perceptible to others. Why is there an exception in the case of consciousness?
3. Recollection, etc., cannot be the function of the changeable body. Only an eternal and unchangeable soul can account for such actions.

4. Consciousness or soul cannot be the quality of the body, because when a person dreams, consciousness remains active, although the body becomes inactive.
5. Subject cannot be identified with object. The body is the subject and the soul is the object. So the soul has an existence separate from the body. Consciousness is the quality of the soul. In fact, it is identical with the soul.
6. The fact that consciousness resides in the body does not necessarily make the former an attribute of the latter. The qualities of the body are either perceptible by the external sense organs or imperceptible. But consciousness is neither perceived by the sense organs nor is imperceptible. So it is not a quality of the body.

The above mentioned critical points are supported by many Indian philosophers like, Vātsyāyana, Udayana, Jayanta Vijñāna Bhikashu, Shaṅkara and Vāchaspati Misra.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.4. What are the two types of Cārvākas?

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Q.5. What do you mean by the educated Cārvākas?(Answer in about 40 words)

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Q.6. What is Dehatmāvāda or Bhutachaitanyāvāda? (Answer in about 40 words)

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6.7 CĀRVĀKA : DENIAL OF GOD'S EXISTENCE

Cārvāka Metaphysics does not believe in the existence of God. It does not accept god as the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world.

Because Cārvākas donot accept the existence of anything which cannot be perceived. As God cannot be perceived, therefore, there can be no God. God as an omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent being is only an imagination. It is not necessary to believe in God as the creator of the world. The whole universe, animate as well as inanimate, is composed, according to Cārvāka Metaphysics, of the four basic elements-earth, water, fire and air. Living beings are born of them and they merge into them after death. The world is not moving towards any definite goal created by God.

The Cārvākas say that introducing the name of God, some hypocrates and cunning priests had exploited the ignorant and simple minded common people. To satisfy God, the common people performe worships, yajna, etc. They offer various valuable things in the name of God by the direction of the priests. Worships etc. are only for the selfish fulfillment of the wicked, priests according to Cārvākas. Therefore, it is completely meaningless to worship God, because He is non-existent and non-perceptible.

Moreover, the Cārvākas regard the king of a country to be the God. Because the qualities attributed to God are almost present in the king, who is also the all in all of the kingdom. The king is the judge, well wisher of the subjects. Common people try to make the king satisfied by all means. Only the fools try in vain to please God by uttering prayers etc. But the intelligent people earn wealth pleasing the king. 'Lokosiddho bhabet raja', the king is real, he is perceived. Hence, the king is the God.

6.8 CĀRVĀKA : SVABHĀBAVĀDA

The Cārvāka philosophy does not believe in the law of causation and its universality. Law of causation maintains that every effect must have a cause and the cause and the effects are necessarily related. This relation is invariable and it depends upon concomitance. Everything in the world is due to some cause. The things of the world are causally related to one other. But the Metaphysics of Cārvāka philosophy does not accept such a view. According to it, the causal relation is not necessary and invariable. The law of causation does not explain the diversity of the world. The relation

of cause and effect is not unconditional. The Cārvākas hold that every effect may not have a cause. The inherent nature of things is the cause of the diversity of the world. There is no cause of the inherent energy or nature of things. They maintain that it is not true that a definite effect always arises from a definite cause. Because we cannot perceive the incidents of future. So from a definite cause many effects may arise.

According to Cārvāka Metaphysics, the inherent nature or power of things is the ultimate cause of the universe. As we have already said, the things of the universe originate from the inherent power of the four basic elements. Therefore, the Cārvākas call them 'Bhūtachatuṣtaya', they are the Earth (Khiti), Water (Apa), Fire (Teja), and Air (Marut).

Therefore, the Cārvākas accept Naturalism instead of casuality to explain the diversity of the world. They use the word 'Svabhāva' or 'nature' (Ydriccha) to indicate the inherent energy of things. From this nature the diversity of the world originates, sustains and destroys. Again, they said that behind the causal relation there is no inherent necessity. According to nature of the things, all events occur on their own. Behind the hotness of fire, coolness of water, sharpness of thorns, there is no agent or cause. These happen according to their nature. Nature has no cause; it is the cause of itself.

6.9 CĀRVĀKA : DENIAL OF LAW OF KARMA AND THEORY OF REBIRTH

All schools of Indian philosophy accept the law of Karma and Rebirth except the Cārvāka philosophy. The Law of causation applied in the moral world is called the law of Karma. According to the law of Karma, pleasure, pain, sorrow, happiness, unhappiness of human life are related to their action. Good action results in good fruits. Every person has to undergo the fruits of his actions. If a person performs good action then he gets good fruits and, on the other-hand, bad action results in bad fruits; he cannot avoid the sufferings of his bad actions. Therefore, according to law of Karma one cannot escape from the fruits of his action. Everyone faces the

fruits or results of his own action either in this very life, or in the life after death. People take birth again and again because of the law of Karma.

The Law of Karma involves the concept of Rebirth also. But, in Cārvāka Metaphysics as well as philosophy, there is no place for the doctrine of the law of Karma and Rebirth. As Cārvāka philosophy does not accept the law of causation, so it rejects the doctrine of the law of Karma. According to the Cārvākas, there is no necessary relation between the action and its fruit. Therefore, for them there is no truth in the doctrine of Karma. There can be no fruit according to its action. It is just an imagination. Happiness, sorrow, pleasure, pain, reward, punishment etc. are not the results or fruits of one's action. These are not dependent on the actions performed by the people. On the othehand, they depend upon the environment and different conditions, surroundings under which the actions are done. Everything in this world is accidental. From the same action one may get sorrow, unhappiness; but from the same action another person may get happiness or pleasure. As Cārvāka philosophy rejects the law of Karma, so it naturally does not accept the doctrine of rebirth. It holds that man cannot take birth again after his death. There is no soul behind the material body. After death or the destruction of the body nothing is left. So, there can be no question of taking a new birth again. The life after death or rebirth, immortality of soul etc. all are some false ideas or imagination. Thus Cārvāka philosophy rejects both the doctrine of Karma and theory of rebirth.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.7. How many physical elements are accepted by Cārvākas Philosophy?

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Q.8. Which elements is not accepted by the Cārvākas?

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Q.9. What is Soul, according to Cārvāka philosophy? (Answer in about 15 words)

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Q.10. Does Cārvāka Philosophy believe in an eternal soul? (Answer in about 15 words)

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Q.11. Many Indian Philosophers criticize Cārvāka view of Soul. Give their names.

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Q.12. Cārvāka school is also known as Lokāyata School. Why is it so-called? (Answer in about 15 words)

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Q.13. Metaphysics is divided into five branches. What are these branches?

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Q.14. Cārvāka an Āstika school? If not why? (Answer in about 15 words)

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Q.15. State whether the following statements are true or false :

a) Cārvāka is an Āstika school. (True/False)

b) According to Cārvāka, 'Perception or Pratyaksa is the only reliable source of valid knowledge'. (True/False)

c) Consciousness is an epiphenomenon, according to Cārvāka. (True/False)

d) 'The soul can be perceived' according to Cārvākas. (True/False)

e) Cārvāka accepts ether as a physical element. Is it true? (True/False)

6.10 CĀRVĀKA : REACTION AGAINST LIBERATION

The concept of liberation is one of the most important issues in Indian philosophy. Except Cārvāka, all other schools of Indian philosophy believe that liberation or Mokṣa is the ultimate destiny of human life. They maintain different ways and views regarding the attainment of liberation or Mukti. They hold contrary view regarding liberation as the state of ultimate peace, the state of ultimate detachment, happiness etc.

There are two states of liberation (i) jivanmukti and (ii) Videhamukti. In the jivanmukti state the liberated soul or human being feels the ultimate peace, detachment to everything in this very life. Such a person lives only for others, having no selfish interest. Again, Videhamukti is the state of a liberated soul after the death of the person. In such a state, the soul becomes completely free from the worldly desires, attachment and bondage of life.

But Cārvāka philosophy says that liberation is not the detachment of the soul from the body. Being pure materialist it holds that there is no soul apart from the body. In such a situation, it does not believe in the state of liberation of the soul. After the destruction of the material body, everything is destroyed. The material world is the only world which can be perceived. Human life is full of pleasure, pain, sorrow, happiness etc. So there is no state called liberation which is the state of ultimate peace, happiness etc, where there is no pain, sorrow, grief. Thus, according to the Cārvākas if there is life, then there must be body; where there is body, there must be both pleasure and pain. Human life is a combination of pleasure and pain. Liberation is unreal, because it cannot be perceived.



6.11 LET US SUM UP

- The word ‘Cārvāka’, is derived from the root ‘Carva’ which means ‘to chew’ or ‘to eat’. This philosophy gives special emphasis on eating and drinking.
- Cārvāka school is also named as ‘Lokāyat school’; because it is widely popular among the common people. (Lokāyat).

- It explains all doctrines materialistically.
- Matter occupies the central place in epistemology, metaphysics and ethical view of Cārvāka philosophy. It is not interested in any spiritualistic interpretation.
- Cārvāka metaphysics is the inevitable consequence of its epistemological discussion.
- Cārvāka metaphysics is the inevitable consequence of its epistemological discussion.
- Cārvāka philosophy refutes spiritualism and establishes its materialism to give its metaphysical theories.
- Cārvāka rejects the existence of God, eternal soul, the possibility of future life, past life etc.
- The main reason of the denial of this metaphysical issue is that 'Perception is the only source of valid knowledge, according to Cārvāka'.
- We know four things only by five sense organs. These are Earth, Water, Fire and Air. These four physical elements are eternal and imperishable. These may be transformed but not destroyed.
- The Cārvākas believe in the four basic elements– The Earth (Khiti), Water (Apa), Fire (Teja), and Air (Marut). The Cārvākas cal them– 'Bhūtachatuṣtaya'.
- According to Cārvāka, the positive metaphysical doctrine is that 'There are four physical elements and these are eternal and imperishable'.
- The negative conclusion is that: There is no God, no immaterial soul, no heaven, no hell, no future life, no after life.



6.12 FURTHER READINGS

1) Chatterjee, S. C. & Dutta, D. M. (1968). *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*. University of Calcutta.
2) Hiriyanna, M. (1993). *Outlines of Indian philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd.