

CHARVAKA PHILOSOPHY

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INTRODUCTION TO CHARVAKA PHILOSOPHY

- Charvaka /Lokayat philosophy is a heterodox school of Indian philosophy.
- Do not believe in the authority of the Vedas.
- Founder of this school is shrouded in mystery.
- Brihaspati is also said to be the founder.
- Charvaka derives its name from its philosophy of Eat, Drink & Be merry.
- Materialistic philosopher- Charvaka accepts only materialism.

CONTD.

- Materialism accepts matter as the ultimate reality.
- It rejects the existence of other worldly entities like God, Soul, Heaven, Life before death or after death etc.
- Charvaka philosophy focuses mainly on these three issues:-
 1. Metaphysics
 2. Epistemology
 3. Ethics

CHARVAKA'S METAPHYSICS

- Metaphysics is the theory of reality.
- Matter is only reality, it alone is perceived.
- God, soul, heaven , life before death or after death and any unperceived law cannot be believed in, because they are all beyond perception.

The world is made of four elements.

- Ether(Akasa)
- Air(Vayu)
- Fire(Agni)
- Water(Jal)
- Earth(Ksiti)

CONTD.

- The Charvaka rejects ether, because its existence cannot be perceived.
- The material world is therefore is made of the four perceptible elements.
- Not only non-living material objects but also living organisms, like plants animal bodies, are composed of these four elements.

THERE IS NO SOUL

- Being materialistic, the Charvakas do not believe in the existence of an invisible, unchangeable & immortal soul.
- According to them, soul is a product of matter. It is the quality of the body & does not exist separately outside the body.
- We do not perceive any soul; we perceive only the body in a conscious state. A particular combination of the elements produces consciousness.
- The soul is nothing but the living body (Dehatmavad), with the quality of consciousness.
- If the existence of a soul apart from the body is not proved, there is no possibility of proving its immortality.

The Charvaka philosophers forward some arguments in favor of Dehatmavad. These are as follows-

- 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, conscious is also a bodily thing.
- When our body turns to be disordered or unwell, then our mental power or consciousness decreases. This proves that consciousness is caused by body.
- 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.

CRITICISM AGAINST CHARVAKA DEHATMAVADA

- Though charvaka philosophy severely criticized the existence of the soul besides the body, the charvaka theory of soul or Dehatmavada is also criticized by many philosophers of different schools of Indian philosophy. Some of these critical points are mentioned as follows-
- If consciousness is the specific quality of the body, it should exist even in deep sleep, swoon, and the like.
- 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.

CONTD.

- Consciousness or soul cannot be the quality of the body, because when a person dreams, consciousness remains active, although the body becomes inactive.
- 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.

OBJECTION RAISED ?

- Here naturally a question may be raised, how can a soul or a conscious being originate from inanimate objects?
- Charvaka replies that just as combination of betel leaf nut, and catechu produces body red colour, in the same way the fusion of these elements speaks of consciousness. According to Charvaka, body with consciousness is the soul. Behind and beyond the material body there is no soul.

THERE IS NO GOD

- There is no God, because Charvaka do not accept the existence of anything which cannot be perceived.
- The supposition of God as a creator is unnecessary. The world comes into existence by the spontaneous combination of material elements .
- The Charvaka, therefore prefer atheism.
- The Charvakas say that introducing the name of God, some hypocrites & cunning priests had exploited the ignorant & simple minded common people. To satisfy God, the common people perform worships, yagya, 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 priests.

OBJECTION RAISED ?

- Do we not require an efficient cause like God as a shaper and designer who turns the material elements into this wonderful world , like a potter shapes the pot with his efficiency.
- Charvaka's view : The material elements themselves have got each its fixed nature (Swabhav).It is by the natures & laws inherent in them that they combine together to form this world.

CONCLUSION

- Charvaka's philosophy refutes spiritualism and establishes its materialism to give its metaphysical theories. The main reason of the denial of this metaphysical issue is that 'Perception' is the only source of valid knowledge.