



Carvaka Metaphysics

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Abstract:

Carvaka philosophy is a non-vedic school of Indian philosophy. It does not believe in the authority of the vedas. This philosophy is called heterodox because it does not believe on the authenticity of the vedas and is anti-vedic. This is one kind of nastika philosophy. Carvaka philosophy is also known as a materialistic school of Indian philosophy. According to this philosophy matter is the only real in this world. All the things of the world are the originate from matter. Matter is the supreme essence. Carvaka philosophy has rejected all spiritual beings. Carvaka philosophy is based on its theory of epistemology and believe that perception is the only source of knowledge. This philosophy believes that whatever is perceptible that is real and whatever is not perceptible that is not real. So, Carvaka philosophy has denied the reality of all transcendental matter. To highlight the metaphysical concept of Carvaka philosophy would be the main focus of the paper.

Keywords: Carvaka, perception, matter, nastika, spiritual

Introduction:

Carvaka is one of the nastika systems of Indian philosophy. There is no definite founder of this philosophy. The exact origin of the word of 'Carvaka is not definitely known. According to some philosophers, the word Carva has been derived from 'caru and vak'. 'Caru' means sweet and 'vak' means word or speech i.e sweet word or speech. Carvaka philosophers propounded a doctrine which is very tractive to the common people. Some other philosophers have said that Brihaspati is the founder of this philosophy. According to some other 'Carvaka' was originally the name of a sage who propounded this philosophy. The common name 'Carvaka' is derived from the name of the founder. Some other philosophers says that the word carvaka is derived from the word 'carv' means eat or to chew, because the Carvakas preaches the doctrine of 'eat drink and be marry'.

Metaphysics is the study of reality or being. The word metaphysics has been derived from the Greek words 'Meta and 'Physika'. The word 'Meta' means 'after' and the word 'Physika' means 'physics. So, the word 'Metaphysics' literally means 'What comes after physics'. Metaphysics deals with the principles or essences behind the objects of the sensible world. The Carvaka theory of reality is based on the theory of epistemology. Carvaka philosophers have accepted perception is the only source of reliable and true knowledge. What is not perceptible is not real. The Carvaka philosophers have criticised the possibility of the other sources of knowledge. The Carvakas reject



inference (anumana), comparison (upamana) and testimony (sabda) as reliable or dependable source of knowledge. Therefore, Carvaka philosophy explains all metaphysical concepts on the basis of perception. Carvaka philosophy attempts to explain the world, the soul, God, causal relations etc. with the help of perception. According to Carvaka philosophy, the concepts such as God, soul, etc. do not have existence because these are not perceptible.

Carvaka philosophy is known as a materialistic school of Indian philosophy. Materialism is a doctrine of philosophy which believes that matter is the only reality. According to this doctrine human mind and consciousness are the product of matter. Matter is real because matter can be perceived. According to Carvaka theory except matter there is no reality of any transcendental or supernatural being. Materialism does not accept any spiritual explanation of the world. The materialism propounded by Carvaka philosophy is very attractive to the common people, so it is also known as lokayatamata i.e the view of common people.

Objectives:

1. To focus on the Carvakas concept of metaphysics
2. To highlight the concept of God, soul and the world of Carvaka philosophy.

Methodology of the study:

The present paper is based on the secondary data collected from the secondary sources i.e. published literature of the subject concern.

Discussion:

Carvaka theory of reality is based on the epistemological conclusion of this philosophy. According to this theory perception is the only reliable source of knowledge. So, it can say that according to Carvaka only perceptible objects are real, whatever is not perceptible is not real. Therefore, the concept of God, soul, rebirth, heaven and hell are not real, because they are all beyond perception. This theory asserts that only material objects are the real objects whose existence can be perceived and can be asserted its reality. So, Carvaka philosophy is known as a materialistic school of Indian philosophy.

(a) Concept of the world:

According to Carvaka philosophy, the world is a composed of material elements. Most of the Indian philosophers believed in five kinds of material objects i.e. earth (ksiti), water (apa), fire (agni), air (vayu) and ether (akasa). But Carvaka philosophy rejected ether, because the existence of ether can not be perceived. Therefore, according to Carvaka, this material world is the composition of four material objects. All the non-living material objects and living organism such as plants animals are composed of these four- material object. Carvaka philosophy does not accept the existence of any transcendental subject. Earth, water, fire and air are eternal and indestructible material elements. They combine with each other according to their respective qualities and nature to produce worldly things. So, this world is the origin from the material elements and not the creation of God.



All things in this world are related to cause and effect. In other words, according to the law of causation no action can happen without a cause. Cause is the unconditional and antecedent event of the effect. Carvaka do not think that there is a need to assume any causal relation to explain the events of this world. There is no need to assume a cause to explain the variety of things in the world. But Carvakas calls the causal relationship a contingent relationship. They do not believe any necessary relationship between cause and effect. The action follows the cause – this statement is not acceptable. Because their necessary relationship is not perceptible. According to Carvaka the material elements are naturally combine with each other to form various cosmic matter. The theory of Carvaka philosophy is also called naturalism for expressing this view.

(b) Concept of God:

Carvaka philosophy is an atheistic philosophy. This philosophy believes in perception as the only source of knowledge. Since God cannot be perceived, Carvaka philosophy does not believe in the existence of God. So, for them there is no God in this world. The Carvaka philosophy argues that believe in God is a meaningless imagination. Theistic philosophies accept God as the efficient cause of the creation of the universe, believing that the five elements of which the objects of the universe are made up cannot combine to create the universe by themselves. The five gross material elements are combined by God as the efficient cause and create the world. But according to Carvaka philosophy, the concept of God is an irrational concept made by the cunning priest for their own selfish ends. By creating the concept of God, some cunning priest created ideas of rites and prescribed worship of God to earn their own livelihood. Therefore, according to Carvaka philosophy the existence of God cannot be believed.

(c) Concept of Soul:

The Carvaka have adopted a materialistic view of the soul and have rejected spiritualism. According to them, the soul is simply the conscious living body. There is no such things as an extra soul apart from our physical body. So, there is no soul and the soul is never perceptible. The human body is made up of the four material elements (earth, water, fire and air). Consciousness is the quality of the human body. When the human body is produced by the combination of the four material elements, consciousness appears there. Just as betel, leaf, lime and tobacco are chewed together to produce red colour, so consciousness is produced when the human body is formed by the combination of earth, water, fire and air. When human body is destroyed, consciousness disappears. There is no soul beyond consciousness. After denying the existence of soul, the concept of immortality of the soul becomes false. According to Carvaka philosophy, death is the end of life and there is no life after death.

(d) Doctrine of Karma and Rebirth:

All Indian philosophical communities except Carvaka believe in rebirth. This doctrine is known as Karmavada when the law of cause and effect is applied to the moral world. Just as everything in the world has a cause, the happiness and sorrows people experience in daily life have a cause. The cause of happiness and sorrows in a person's present life is the action of a person in



the past life and the actions of a person in the present life will determine the happiness and sorrows of a person's future life. So, Carvaka philosophy does not believe in the law of karma and rebirth. According to this philosophy there is no necessary relation between cause and effect. It is illogical to say that the happiness and sorrow of a person's life are the result of his actions. According to this philosophy, happiness and sorrow of human life depend on environmental conditions, not predetermined; they come into personal life by chance and disappear by chance. So, Carvaka philosophy does not believe in the law of karma and rebirth. According to Carvaka philosophy, since there is no separate soul apart from the conscious body, there is nothing left after the destruction of this body made up of the four material elements. The concept of Karma and Rebirth are just concepts created by the cunning priest to earn a living like the concept of God.

(e) Concept about Moksho:

All other philosophical systems of Indian philosophy except Carvaka believed that the ultimate goal of human life is the attainment of Moksho or salvation. However philosophical systems disagree on the nature of salvation. But Carvaka philosophy strongly condemns the concept of salvation. Since this philosophy does not believe in the existence of a permanent soul other than the conscious body, it believes that the soul does not exist after the destruction of our present physical body. So, to this philosophy the concept of Msalvation is meaningless.

Conclusion:

From the above discussion it is clear that the Carvaka philosophy is a non-vedic, atheistic and materialistic school of Indian philosophy. Although other Indian philosophical systems have criticised Carvaka philosophy very harshly, it cannot be denied that it has some meaningful values that the critics want to avoid. Within the framework of Indian philosophy, Carvaka philosophy is the pioneer of independent thought. Superstition, reliance on oneness and lack of judgment are the main obstacles to philosophical thought. Carvaka philosophy is a strong step against metaphysical philosophies. The critical stance of this philosophy has protected other philosophies from becoming superstitious. Every Indian philosophical group has criticised Carvaka philosophy before establishing its own philosophy. But the theory of Carvaka philosophy cannot be ignored completely.



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