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CHARVAKA DARSHANA (INDIAN EMPIRICISM) AND LOGICAL POSITIVISM (WESTERN EMPIRICISM) IN PRESENT CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

There is phenomenal semblance in the empirical viewpoint put forth by Charvaka in 6th century B.C. in Indian philosophy and thought propounded by logical positivists in the 20th Century. The two schools of thought show similarity in many ways, though there is huge time gap. This paper proposes to make the comparative study of Charvaka Darshan and Logical Positivism and would take the review of the similarities, differences and relevance in present context in these schools of thought. Charvaka Darshan is the only Indian philosophical system which is entirely empirical in nature. Other Indian philosophical systems, one way or other, accept the ideas which are beyond sense perception or transcendental. In this sense, Charvaka Darshan occupies distinctively remarkable place in Indian philosophy. The empirical thought put forward by charvaka is similar to the 20th century logical positivist thinking. This paper tries to state that both the schools wanted to reconstruct the philosophical system by opposing metaphysics. It also tries to prove that the logical, intellectual thought is not the monopoly of a particular country or a particular era, it can reflect at any where and in any period. As the empiricist outlook is very important in our individual life, it has undoubtedly important place in the context of material progress. The empiricist attitude is useful in each and every aspect of our life. Certainly, the view propounded by Charvaka and Logical Positivists, though practically useful, it is necessary to take into account that its meticulous implementation in the field of religion, morality, emotion and value will not be deserved. On the contrary, it should be accepted as the limitation of logical, empirical viewpoint.

Keywords : Charvaka Darshana, Logical Positivism, Empricism, Materialistic Philosophy, Metaphysics

Charvaka Darsan is known by various names like Barhaspatya, Nastika, Lokayata etc. Brihaspati is supposed to be the originator of this darshan and therefore this darshan is known as 'Brihaspati Darshan'. As this system of philosophy does not accept the authority of the vedas, it is known as Nastikvadi (Atheist). The word 'Lokayata' has various meanings, Lok means ihalok i.e. this world. Ayat means based and therefore Lokayat means the opinion based on this world. Lok also mean common man so Lokayat can be said to be opinion acceptable to common man. Lok means sense object and therefore Lokayat is sometimes interpreted as the opinion which gives importance to sense objects.

Who was Charvaka and when did he happen to be

was historical question. Not only this but we cannot quite certain whether charvaka is the name of any individual. According to some scholars charvaka means charu + vak means sweet talker. The empirical view of this system is seen in different forms in various ancient vedic, buddhist and jain scriptures and mythologies. All other Indian philosophical systems have refuted this view and therefore for the purpose of refutation the Charvaka view is quoted in different Indian philosophical systems. But we cannot see the entire thought of the Charvaka Darshan at one place as a systematic organized philosophical system.

With reference to Indian philosophy, Charvaka Darshan is supposed to be the representative of

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forward the naturalism for the explanation of origin and the nature of the things. They believed that the origination is not due to any otherworldly and unseen power but it is natural. We can make the statement that fire is hot; water is cold, because it is their nature. According to Charvaka if somebody says that god is the originator of the world and he produces various qualities in the objects or things, then it is entirely wrong. In this way, the naturalism of Charvaka is consistent with their materialistic philosophy.

As Charvaka did not accept the experience which is beyond five senses, they rejected all transcendental ideas, like god, moksha, rebirth, soul etc. Just as Charvaka, logical positivists also attempted to reject metaphysics by launching forceful attack on speculative metaphysics. While rejecting metaphysics, they emphatically advocated the criterion of verifiability. With the help of this criterion, they tried to prove that all metaphysical statements are meaningless. By advocating scientific method and employing the method of logical analysis, they showed that metaphysical questions and metaphysical propositions are meaningless.

Logical positivists put forward the view that, in order to make philosophical thinking accurate, explicit and clear, it must be restated with the help of mathematical and logical method. For them, language and words used in expressing philosophical thought have various meanings and so-called metaphysical, philosophical questions arise due to confusing different meaning of the words at the same time. Probably they viewed that metaphysical questions and their answers both are non-sensual. According to Wittgenstein language of metaphysics is confusing and metaphysical problems are unreal. For Ayer, from the fundamental postulate of metaphysics 'that there is super phenomenal reality', itself explains the meaninglessness of metaphysics.

Ethics

Charvaka ethics was earthly and it was not otherworldly. Therefore they denied the soul distinct from body, its actions producing merits and demerits and accordingly soul's heavenly abode. To deny all these, they propounded that perception is the only valid source of

knowledge.

Once perception is accepted as the only valid source adopting worldly view Charvaka advocated Artha and Kama and rejected Dharma and Moksha. For them pursuing moksha or otherworldly happiness is wrong. Man should try to seek worldly pleasures. He should avoid pain, sufferings and seek pleasure.

Charvaka advocated hedonism, saying one should seek maximum happiness. But critics presented it with distortions. They gave rise to misunderstanding that Charvakas asked individual to seek his pleasure and while doing so not to care for happiness or suffering of others. One should seek only his pleasure and should not pay attention to merits and demerits, is the mistaken view about ethical standpoint of Charvaka. Charvaka advocated hedonism but they never said, not to think about mortality or immortality. On the contrary, sarvasiddhanta sangraha states that a wise man should choose the path of agriculture, cattle breeding, business, or serving in bureaucracy. By these seen and true ways, one can enjoy pleasures on earth. So Charvaka did not deny the discrimination between sat and asat or dharma and adharma. The way of life that Charvaka declared as natural is relevant today also. In short, Charvaka accepted certain ethical norms of behaviour.

Charvaka accepted king and kinship so that there should be order in the society and there should be no promiscuity, chaos, disorder, crime in society for practical purposes. They denied God or transcendental reality for that purpose.

According to logical positivism it is necessary to analyse language used in moral life. For the logical positivists, function of ethics is to analyse moral terms, explain moral statements and to state the nature of moral arguments. They rejected the ethics which is based on otherworldly concepts.

Charvaka and logical positivists have not taken into consideration that by denying religion, value system, emotionality etc. they are shaking the foundation of morality.

Charvaka and logical positivist view in the present context

Charvaka Darshan in Sarvadarsansangraha and

of truth.

Charvaka Darshan rejected inference (anuman) as the valid source of knowledge. Anumanam Apramnam, this charvaka sutra is enough to express their view on anuman. Inference is the way to guess on the basis of known to unknown. This system is of the opinion that while inferring we can't go directly from one particular thing to another particular thing. For this, inference needs vyapti i.e. invariable concomitance. According to Charvaka, knowledge of invariable concomitance is impossible. Charvaka objected Vyapti jnana. For them, the knowledge of invariable concomitance on which inference is based, is not possible. Another objection is that, knowledge of inference is not as clean as that of perception. It is dependent on previous perception. The subject of anuman is abstract and therefore charvaka takes the view that inference is not valid. Charvaka view of inference is criticized by other philosophical systems. According to them, if this view is accepted, day to day practical life would be impossible. If we try to verify each and every thing by experience we will come across many difficulties. To answer this criticism, Charvaka accept the lokprasiddha anuman i.e. inference based on empirical verification. But they don't accept the inference which cannot be empirically verified. For them inference regarding sense perception is valid and inference about transcendental things is not valid. They go further and say Lokprasiddha anuman which they accept is always limited and relative. The field of universal principle based on empirical evidence is always comprehensive, larger than perception and therefore the universal principle is always probable. A universal principle derived from particular examples can only be said as probable.

With reference to the drawbacks of perception and inference charvaka darshan has taken the support of probability theory. Any inference is to be taken as possibility because a general theory or principle cannot be given which may be applied at all times and all places. It is obstructed according to place, time and situation. Briefly, in practical life general principles are only the possibility. With this view, Charvaka gave peculiar rational method of logic. This logical method is applied in

the practical life as well as in the scientific study. This overtone is also seen in modern western logical positivistic thought. Charvaka's view regarding inference fairly matches with sceptical view of David Hume. Probably it may be said that modern western thought from Hume to Russell has not gone ahead of Charvaka. For Russell, the empiricism is the best school of thought to explain the act of human knowledge. Ayer, Schlick and Carnap opposed metaphysics and viewed that each and every metaphysical statement is meaningless. They take the help of the principle of verifiability to decide meaningfulness of the statement. The metaphysical statements are not verifiable and therefore meaningless.

In brief, just as Charvaka, the philosophers of logical positivist tradition with this movement wanted to destroy the transcendental philosophy which nourishes the otherworldly ideas like God, soul, immortality, heaven hell etc. and wanted to establish the scientific and secular view. The philosophers like Schlick, Carnap, Neurath, Russell, Ayer strived to propagate this standpoint.

Metaphysics

For explaining the metaphysical approach of any philosophical system, one has to consider the epistemology and therein the sources of knowledge, the system accepts. The answer to the question, which sources of knowledge acceptable to the system as valid, will decide the nature of ultimate reality for the system. The materialism of Charvaka was originated from their view regarding sources of knowledge. For them that which is perceived by five senses is true, not any other. As perception is the only source of valid knowledge, matter which alone cognized by senses is the only reality and ultimate principles are four elements earth, water, fire and air and ether for later Charvaka. Consciousness is the modification of these elements and will disappear when these elements are dissolved. So the origination and destruction are dependent on combination and dissolution of these basic material elements. The soul has no existence apart from the body. The soul is identified with the body.

Charvaka denied theism and theory of karma which explains the origination of the world and they put

collecting and organizing the Charvaka thoughts scattered elsewhere and unprejudiced, comprehensive and thorough contemplation on it, will make one aware that Charvaka Darshan is undoubtedly important even in the present context. The philosophical questions that Charvaka raised are relevant and important even today. Some of these questions are considered in western philosophy also. They should be given the due credit for refusing to accept intellectual slavery in those times. We have to note that logical positivists, in the 20th century launched attack on otherworldly ideas and rejected metaphysics; the same attempt was made by Charvaka at very early period in ancient India.

Nowadays, assuming Charvaka as modern scientists the attempt is made to reformulate the Charvaka thought. It is the recognition to their philosophical contribution. There are certain superstitions, and illogical, absurd notions deeply rooted in the present social system. Launching attack on them, Charvaka carried out the Herculean task two thousand years ago. We can easily imagine that how strenuous and troublesome task would it be in those days. They had a scientific attitude and Charvaka thoughts regarding nature and origin of world, god, soul etc. are demonstrative of their scientific vision. Their rational, intellectual, truth seeking viewpoint is undoubtedly significant in present context. It will not be untrue to say that the logical positivism is probably the revised edition of Charvaka in the 20th century. Logical positivism has great impact on modern philosophy. They endeavored to make our analysis exact, precise and accurate and any school of thought can accept this standpoint. Therefore in the present context also Charvaka and logical positivist viewpoint is scientific in nature, motivating force to our thought process and very useful.

Certainly we have to consider their limitations also.

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