Veritas: A Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities
ISSN: 3107-748X (Online)

CHARVAKA PHILOSOPHY BEYOND BORDERS: INFLUENCE OF INDIAN MATERIALISM IN THE WEST AND THE EAST

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Abstract

The School of Indian Materialism is among the oldest materialistic philosophical systems in the world. The school also known by the names of Charvaka and Lokayata focuses on the primacy of matter. It outrightly rejects anything that is beyond perception. Even though the school is heavily criticized, one can't deny its overall impact on Indian Philosophy. Indian Materialism in a way has been the forerunner to the promotion of rational and scientific thinking in India. The Charvaka method of empirical validation of truth became the foundation for scientific pursuits. It is a general misconception that the Indian School of Materialism lost its significance after the 12th century. But historical records and archives such as Akbarnama (the official record of Akbar's reign), reports of European expedition and Jesuit missionaries provide information on continuation of Charvaka influence during medieval India. This influence was not limited to the Indian borders. The Charvaka Ashram located within Victor's Way in Ireland justifies how far Charvaka Philosophy has travelled. Similarly, many might not know that the Charvaka philosophy in the form of Loakyata Philosophy made its way into Chinese society. Today, there is a widespread interest in the school of Indian Materialism among many Southeast Asian nations. The Paper therefore, has the objective of analysing the evolution of Charvaka school of Philosophy while exploring and reflecting on the influence of Charvaka Philosophy in Western and Eastern philosophical traditions.

Keywords: *Charvaka, Evolution, Lokayata, Materialism, Perception, Rationalistic*

Introduction

Materialism in India is neither new nor foreign. It has been an integral part of the Indian system of thought since ancient times. The school of Indian Materialism is also known as Charvaka, Lokayata, and Brhaspatya-darsana. Charvaka is regarded as one of the most radical systems of Indian Philosophy. It accepts matter as the only reality and rejects any other supernatural or immaterial entities. Perception is the only medium of knowledge. What is perceivable is true and real and things that are not perceivable are unreal. On this ground, Indian Materialism rejects the phenomena of the afterlife, heaven, hell, God, and soul. In a way, Indian materialism has a naturalistic and scientific approach to metaphysics. It held that the elements of earth, water, air, and fire are the constituting elements of this world. Everything that we perceive arises from these four elements. However, there is no necessity for any external creator agency. These four elements have an inherent quality by which they combine and give rise to this world. The fifth element ether is rejected because it is beyond perception. Brhaspati is regarded as the founder of this school of thought. However, according to another notion, the school is named after Charvaka, a disciple of Brhaspati. Philosophers like Brhaspati, Ajita Kesakambali, Kanada, and Jabali have propounded materialism in India. Samannaphala-sutta mentions some of the materialist thinkers of ancient India. This includes Purana Kassapa who denied any form of virtue and vice; Makkhali Gosala who rejected the possibility of moral effort due to lack of free will; Ajita

ISSN: 3107-748X (Online)

Kesakambali's theory of the material origin and Sanjaya Belatthiputta who neither affirmed nor denied anything. Jayarasi, the author of Tattvopaplavsimha who belonged to the 8th century AD is regarded as a Charvaka of extreme type in the way he points out drawbacks in all mediums of knowledge.

The school of Charvaka philosophy flourished in ancient India during the 6th-8th BCE. This was the time of pre-Buddhistic Indian society. Charvaka held that the world made up of the four elements is real and available for human perception and human ethics followed this fact. Charvaka questioned the rigid and unjust traditions that ruled the common men with fear of committing sins, being doomed to hell, and having a painful afterlife. Dr Dakshinaranjan Shastri in his work ''A Short History of Indian Materialism, Sensationalism, and Hedonism'', held that for Indian Materialists caste and hierarchy were out of the question which helped in ensuring the freedom of choice in social, economic, political, and religious matters.

During this period, the ruling class and upper class performed various rituals and ceremonies to dictate the lives of the common masses. The people had little freedom of choice. The school became a voice for the common people who were exploited by the ruling authority. The school didn't preach anything or impose anything externally rather it gave the freedom to the people to think and decide rationally and not allow fear and dogmatic principles to cloud their judgments. Because of this, the school of Indian Materialism came to be known by the name of Lokayata. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya in his work 'Lokayata: A Study in Ancient Indian Materialism' held that "Lokāyata means the philosophy of the people."

The school of Indian Materialism is often targeted for committing heresy and rejecting ethical values. A close examination of the Charvaka system reveals that it didn't reject ethics and values; rather its principle of ethics is focused on the present life and it is the actions of this life that matter the most. There is no such thing as heaven or hell. In the work of Vatsyayana, a distinction is given between the Crude and the Refined materialists. The Crude Materialists prioritized the Kama (pleasure) and Artha (wealth). Pleasure is life's highest objective, and money or wealth is a medium for pleasure. However, for the Refined Materialists, there has to be a uniform equilibrium between the values of Dharma, Artha, and Kama. Attainment of pleasure and happiness is an objective however complete elimination of pain is not possible. One should act in such a way that happiness is maximized and pain is minimized. The actions should be guided by the value of Dharma so that an individual doesn't overstep on the rights of another individual. In a way, this would ensure social harmony among all.

Emergence & Development of Indian Materialism

The development of Indian Materialism is traced in four steps. These four stages are discussed in the work of Dakshinaranjan Shastri's "The History of Indian Materialism, Sensationalism, and Hedonism". The first stage was of opposition where the school questioned all mediums of knowledge whether it was direct or indirect. The authority of Vedas was rejected. The school was known as Brhaspati at this stage. The second stage saw the recognition of perception as a medium of knowledge. It was at this stage that the school became a system of Indian philosophy. Ajita Kesakambali, Purana Kasayapa, and Kambalasvatara were famous materialists during this stage. In the third stage, controversies started to emerge with the principles and teachings of the school particularly the school's view on ethical values. The reaction was extreme towards the school's opinion 'Eat, drink and be

ISSN: 3107-748X (Online)

merry'. They received wide criticism, particularly from the orthodox schools and spiritual systems. This was the stage where the materialists considered the possibility of inference as a means of knowledge. This form of materialism was held by philosophers like Purandara. In the last stage, Indian Materialism along with the schools of Buddhism and Jainism raised strong opposition against the authority of Vedas. These schools got the name of Nastika i.e. one who condemns Vedas (nastiko vedanindakah).

The doctrines of Indian Materialism have been prevalent in the Indian Philosophical thought at large. The philosophy of Indian Materialism helped people realize that matter can have inherent value. It can be valued within itself without depending on any superficial source. Similarly, the human body and mind have huge potential within themselves to attain wonderful things without being dependent on any supernatural entity. This paved the way for the integration of scientific thinking into Indian society. Even though empirical evidence has little significance in ancient Indian society but gradually gained importance in modern thought and the roots of this systemic and vigilant process of knowledge can be traced back to the system of Indian Materialism. Amartya Sen in his work "An Argumentative Indian" mentioned the achievements of Indian mathematics and Indian science from the Gupta period onwards. The famous mathematician-astronomer of this period Aryabhata was a native of the Asmaka region of Deccan where the school of Charvaka Philosophy had a strong foundation. Aryabhata gave the world the value of 'Zero' much before numerical advancement in the West. His works on astronomy were heavily criticized by orthodox groups. His rationalist ideas often reflect the ideals of the Charvaka school and Indian materialism. Grigory M. Bongard Levin in his work, "Aryabhata and Lokayatas" held that such rational trends prevalent in ancient India had a huge impact on the evolution and development of Indian scientific thinking. The journey of India's scientific evolution benefited from the ideals of questioning and rational inquiry that owe its foundation to the school of Indian Materialism.

The common theory holds that Materialism disappeared in India after the 12th Century. However, contrary to the common notion, the impact of Indian Materialism continues even in the 21st century worldwide. The Centre for Global and Comparative History of Ideas states that the influence of the Charvaka philosophical school was strong even during the arrival of European colonial authorities. The Materialists were present in the courts of Mughal Emperors during the 15th -16th century. They're beyond any kind of prejudices and superstitious ideologies. This guided the authorities in inculcating just and fair governance and administrative policies. Abul Fazl in the third volume of Akbarnama mentioned the presence of Charvaka in Akbar's royal court. He further held that the Charvaka did not believe in any immaterial or supernatural entities. They admitted the faculty of thought and reason only. They held this to result from the assimilation of the four constitutional elements. Everything that is perceived by humans is the result of these elements and there is no need for any agency of creation. All these factors helped in building the knowledge of good governance and accountable administration.

Charvaka Philosophy in Jesuit Reports

The Jesuit missionaries who came to India in the late 16th century were fascinated by the religious tolerance and openness in Akbar's court. The Europeans were taken aback by the rational discussion in

ISSN: 3107-748X (Online)

Indian society. They prepared reports on this in French, German, and Latin. Roberto De Nobili in one of the Jesuit reports referred to Lokayatas as Logaidas who held the theory that the elements of water, air, earth, and fire themselves are god. Based on these Jesuit reports, Pierre De Jarric in Histoire (1610) mentioned the reflection of the Indian Materialism school of thought in Akbar's governance in prioritising reason and promoting the ideals of secularism and tolerance. The Jesuit reports were widely analyzed and examined by both protestant and catholic European countries. This resulted in the beginning of a focused study and research towards the mid-17th century on the schools of Indian philosophy including the Charvaka school of materialism. Four different sub-schools within Charvaka Philosophy were marked when Heinrich Roth translated the Vedantasara. Dhrutta and Sushikshita are two of these Charvaka sub-schools. Dhrutta's branch held that the body is composed of the foundational elements and rejected the concept of the soul. However, the other branch Sushikshita accepted the conception of the soul as distinct from the body. But the soul is not eternal and when the body is destroyed, the soul is also destroyed with it. Not much information is available on the branches of the Charvaka system due to a lack of original texts which are lost in the trail of time. Initially, it was difficult for European researchers and scholars to study Indian Materialism because of a lack of original sources. Sir Henry Thomas Colebrook during his research on Materialism in India mentioned the necessity of an original treatise on Charvaka philosophy. He was unable to find any sufficient doctrine. Later, the "Sarvadarsana Samgraha" of Madhavacharya from the 14th century AD was discovered. The Sarvadarsana Samgraha contains a summary of the Charvaka teaching in its first chapter. This provided insights into the materialist tradition of Charvaka prevalent in the Indian society in ancient times. Following this many European scholars and authors such as Cowell, Muri, Rhys Davids, and Max Muller among others published many works on their interpretation of Indian materialism and Lokayata Philosophy. Sources were also taken from early Buddhist texts that had excerpts from the Charvakas.

Buddhism and Jainism were the nastika schools of thought that developed alongside Charvaka who rejected the authority of Vedas. However, John M. Koller in his book "Asian Philosophies" (1998) observed that the Charvaka school of thought significantly differed from the other two. Charvaka is the only school in Indian philosophy that follows a completely materialistic tradition. When it comes to the three heterodox schools both Jainism and Buddhism accept a spiritual way of life but the Charvaka reject any form of supernatural phenomena. The School of Jainism propagates the way for liberation from the karmic bondage. It emphasizes the five vows: Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (not stealing), Aparigraha (non-acquisition) and Brahmacharya (chaste living). Buddhism similarly provides an understanding of the cause and nature of human suffering. It presents the noble eightfold path as a way for cessation of suffering and attainment of enlightenment. Charvaka system however rejects the idea of liberation, afterlife, and rebirth since it holds that the human body is made up of the four constitutional elements and an individual's existence ceases to exist with their death. There is no soul beyond the body. All that matters is this life that we have and the actions that we perform. One does not owe anyone or anything except themselves. They do not accrue any karmic debt because there is no such perceivable superficial system that measures one's action. Whatever one perceives in this life is all that there is to life. There is nothing beyond that. The rigid practices, rules,

ISSN: 3107-748X (Online)

and rituals are just a medium the ruling and powerful authority devised to enable their quest for pleasure and satisfaction.

Reflection of Charvaka Philosophy in the West

The influence of Charvaka's philosophy and concepts of Materialism was not limited to Indian Philosophical thought rather its reflection is observed in the theory of atheism of Critias in Athens (460-403 BCE), in the hedonistic system of Aristippus of Cyrene (435-356 BCE) and the work of Greek's Epicurean school of philosophy in the development of enlightened hedonism (341-270 BCE). These Western philosophers, thinkers, and their followers would go on to influence the utilitarian and empiricist philosophies of the 19th century and the existential movement of the 20th century. The Charvaka notion of rightness and wrongness of an action can be seen centuries later in the works of Utilitarians Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. A right action leads to maximum happiness and satisfaction whereas a wrong action results in the greatest quantity of pain. As it is seen, the school of Indian Materialism was way ahead of its time. Even though it did not directly impact these later systems but the foundation of these schools can be traced back to the principles of the Charvaka system of thought.

The concepts of Charvaka were developed independently later in the Western Philosophies. In ancient Greek philosophy, the Athenian philosopher Critias's work has similarities with the principles of Brhaspati's. Critias held religion is nothing but a medium by which the strong control the weak. The ones in power enhance themselves by preserving laws that operate for their benefit. Although Critias never developed a formal school of thought his notions however his ideologies show a resemblance to that of Charvaka which precedes the former by centuries.

In another instance from Cyrene, the philosophy of Aristippus has identical theories to that of the Charvaka school of thought. According to Aristippus the highest goal that one could dedicate oneself to in life is the pursuit of pleasure. He established the Cyrenaic School of Philosophy. His teachings held that people should not give up current pleasures for the sake of future pleasures. He maintained that one should adapt to the given circumstances to seek pleasure. His famous quote is "I possess; I am not possessed." He believed that one should have control over both prosperity and adversity.

Epicurus, a renowned philosopher from the Hellenistic period developed the Epicurean school of thought in the 3rd BCE. Even though there is a gap of centuries, the Epicureans reflect the influence of the Charvaka school of thought. Epicurus was the best-known hedonist of his time who held the pursuit of pleasure as the highest goal. The most striking similarity that can be noticed between these schools of philosophy is the principle of pursuing happiness and rejecting superficial practices and traditions. For Epicurus, pleasure should be pursued wholeheartedly and one can enjoy oneself completely without worrying about anything else. Pleasure results in happiness as long as it is enjoyed without any stress or worries. One should maintain moderation in all things so that they can live and enjoy as long as possible. However, Epicurean philosophy's fate was somewhat similar to that of the Charvaka school. Just like Charvaka, Epicureans also suffered constant vindication by the dominant religious authorities. Most of the works of Epicurus are lost today and the school lacks sufficient original sources to date.

ISSN: 3107-748X (Online)

Whether these thinkers and schools were influenced by the Charvaka school of thought or not is unknown. There is no available evidence to establish a direct connection. However, it is interesting to note the reflection of Charvaka concepts in many of the Western schools of thought and cultures. These thinkers laid the groundwork for the philosophers of later times. The Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) who worked in the area of Empiricism held that "if one were never told that God exists, one would find nothing in the world to suggest such an entity." The philosophy of Utilitarianism developed by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill has notable similarities to that of the Charvaka school of thought. Even in the works of existentialists, such as Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) a similarity to Charvaka's philosophy can be outlined.

When the 17th-century French Philosopher Francois Bernier visited India, he met Jayarama Nyayapancanana at Varanasi. Bernier noted that Jayarama's work "Garland of Principles about Reason" (1660) included an appendix by the late 15th-century philosopher Shankara Mishra who worked on atheist thinking and the school of Charvaka. There arises a possibility that David Hume who held the notion of atheism could have been familiar with Bernier's work directly or indirectly. This raises the question, "Could there be a connection between India's atheistic materialism and the later British empiricism of Bacon and Hume?" Hume's work on atheism has similarities to Charvaka's arguments.

Against the common notion of his time that the existence of God can be proved through a causal or design argument, Hume presented captivating criticism of theistic proofs. He maintained that the theories of origin and creation of famous religious beliefs were grounded in human psychology and not in any divine power or any rational argument. The major objective of Hume's critical examination of these popular notions was to separate philosophy from the clutches of religious authority. This would allow the domain of philosophy to pursue its own goal without psychological corruption or religious over-extension. The common view held that God had a significant part in the creation and enforcement of moral values. However, Hume in his ethical theory offered a completely secular moral theory that held that morality is grounded in useful and pleasing consequences which result from the actions of an individual. With this, he inducted the term 'utility' into the moral vocabulary. Hume's theory is seen as a forerunner to the Utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Adamson and Ganeri have compared the Charvaka to the "emergentism in the philosophy of mind," which is further traced back to John Stuart Mill.

The theory of Utilitarianism promotes action that maximizes the well-being and happiness of the highest number of people. This theory is a type of consequentialism. The evaluation of an action should be done based on its consequences and the result that it generates. If the action results in the happiness of a maximum number of people then the action is considered the right one irrespective of the means that it followed. Pleasure of the highest number of people is the objective of the utilitarian approach. For example, while deciding on a movie for the group to watch, a utilitarian would choose the one that can pleasure a maximum of people. However, a Charvaka would reject the utilitarian approach to pleasure. Contrary to the utilitarian approach of the highest pleasure for the greatest number of people, Charvaka would prioritize individual pleasure and happiness.

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In the West, the philosophical approach gradually progressed towards empiricism and materialism. At first, emerged the notion of empiricism among European thinkers i.e. that knowledge can only be derived through real experience. Later on, with the onset of the Age of Enlightenment and modern science and technology, the concept of naturalism and materialism came to the forefront. This popularised the notion that nature, the matter alone is the source of knowledge and there is no necessity of any supernature. The ideals of materialism helped Western society advance toward scientific and technological advancements. This reflects the doctrines of materialism in the Charvaka School of Philosophy, which had an impact on the progression of rational and scientific thinking on Indian soil. Charvaka's school of thought was thus way ahead of time and continued to influence the philosophical approach in the West whether through direct or indirect mediums.

Victor's Way: The Charvaka Ashram in Ireland

The Victor's Way in Ireland was founded by Berlin-born Irish Philosopher Victor Langheld. A Charvaka Ashram is located within it and receives visitors to date. As mentioned on the website of this Ashram, this is a contemplative space for adults. The place is notable for the black granite sculptures that were made with a collaboration effort between Victor Langheld himself and T. Baskaran, an Indian sculptor in the 80s. The Ashram regards Charvaka as ancient observers and scientists who used their everyday sense perception to achieve their real satisfaction and contentment. They valued personal perception over the perception of the alleged authorities. The notions of God, karma, soul, heaven, hell, and liberation are dogmas invented by people in power to enrich themselves. The smartest thing that the Charvaka held was the goal of increasing one's pleasure, satisfaction, and happiness. A Charvaka observes life independently and responds accordingly. In this way, they ensure their behaviour is natural and authentic. Further, they attempt to make the best survival possible in their limited world. The Charvaka has a pragmatic response that is guided by sense perception and controlled accordingly. Their observation holds that "life is short and death closes all." This directs them to make the best use of their lives, fulfil all their goals without holding their desires back, and maximize their happiness as much as possible.

There is a sculpture located in Victor's Way called "The Spilt" that represents the indecisive human. It shows the disoriented physical and mental states of a human who is unable to make a decision. The person is either unable or lacks the will to decide how to pursue the goal of their life thus limiting themselves from experiencing anything true. In failing to do so, the individual fails at increasing their survival capacity leading to unhappiness, dissatisfaction, and a state of depression. Had the person been able to achieve their goal, they would have increased their survival capacity along with happiness, pleasure, and satisfaction leading to a state of elation.

The institution holds the value of "Detached Observation" which maintains that within nature and any given environment, there are both winners and losers. Among them, the ones who are winners are mostly happy living a pleasant and comfortable life. When one is happy, their survival instincts increase. On the other hand, the losers are unhappy ones living a miserable and unpleasant life. When one is unhappy or in pain, their ability to survive decreases. In this scenario, opportunist individuals thrive on the misery and suffering of the losers. Various practices and processes are developed by these opportunist humans who make the ones in pain believe that these are for their benefit however in

ISSN: 3107-748X (Online)

reality these are mediums to keep them suppressed under control so that they serve the purpose of the ones in the upper end of hierarchy. The objective of a Charvaka therefore lies in removing this blanket of manipulation and behavioral bias to free the individual. Then only the individual would be able to exercise their freedom of choice and decide upon their survival needs and can ultimately achieve their happiness.

Moksha or the liberation occurs with the biological death i.e. when the physical animated body ceases to exist. Charvaka contends that the superficial notion of moksha beyond human existence is erroneous. The conception that holds liberation as freedom of an individual from the world of suffering and transition towards an infinite alternate reality; is intended to comfort people in pain and keep them ignorant and manipulated for the benefit of the rich and powerful. Charvaka contrary to the superficial notion of moksha held that moksha happens when the suffering is resolved which happens only with the achievement of pleasure and happiness. This can happen only when one improves their survival capacity in the actual world.

There are times when an individual behaves naturally that is true to themselves, true to their choices, and true to their identity; it is often seen as a contradiction to socially constructed ideologies and cultural norms. The later attempts at dictating the lives of individuals and keeping them bound under the social fabrication. And if an individual raises a concern against this or challenges it on the ground of rights violation then they are seen as wayward and are isolated from society. Charvaka has to overcome this impediment to be able to realise their complete natural identity and reality. For achieving this an individual has to leave their bias and come out of protective supernatural ideologies. The Charvaka mindset remains unaltered in the 21st century. However, the perception competence of an individual has evolved through enhanced data sensing and upgraded information and technology networks. Just like the Charvaka of ancient times, the modern Charvaka too has the instinct of questioning and examining the reality of life. The drive for understanding and analyzing the essential nature of truth, the objective of life, and ways to maximize happiness continues.

Reflection of Charvaka Philosophy in the East

The Charvaka/Lokayata Philosophy has its presence not only in the Western thought system but also in the East as well. The influence of Indian philosophy on neighbouring countries, as well as eastern and southeast Asian countries, has always been evident. China which shares a land border with India has also traces of Indian philosophy's influence in their Chinese society for centuries. The expansion of Buddhism from India to China is very well known today however many might not know that the Lokayata Philosophy had also made its way into Chinese society. According to the Annals of the Tang Dynasty in India, Lokayata expanded to China during the reign of Emperor Kao Tsung (650-680AD). Professor Huang Xinchuan, senior researcher at the China Academy of Social Science in 1978 published his work in Chinese titled, "Lokayata and Its Influence in China" which throws light on the relation between India and China in terms of materialist studies. He mentions the influence of the Indian Lokayata school of philosophy on ancient Chinese society. The lack of sufficient resources and original texts has made it difficult to have an effective study on the Indo-Chinese materialist connection. However, Professor Xinchuan through his research has found 62 classical texts in China that mention the Indian atheistic and materialist schools of thinking. This includes the Chinese

ISSN: 3107-748X (Online)

translation of the Brahmajala Sutra by Chien Chien from the Kingdom of Wu (225-253 AD), the translation of Sramana-phala-sutra during the Eastern Chin Dynasty, and the translation of the Brahmajala Sutra along with the addition of notes by Chi- Kuang (1528-1588) of Ming Dynasty. References to Lokayata philosophy are found in many Chinese translations of Buddhist commentaries and works during the period of the three kingdoms (265-280 AD) to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 AD). Rahik Vihari Joshi in "Lokayata in Ancient India and China" (1987) mentions classical Chinese Buddhist literature where Lokayata has been referred to as "Lu-ka-ya-tuo", "Lu-ge-ye-duo" and "Lu-ka-yi-duo". The term Lokayata was translated as Zhuo-bo-ka which in Sanskrit indicates the Charvaka. In the Chinese Buddhist Dictionary Yi-Qie-Jin-Yin-yi by Hui Lin, the Lokayatika are held as "Lu-ka-ye-ti-ka " i.e. the wicked doctrine. During Chin Dynasty, the Dasa-Bhumi-Vibhasa-sastra was translated into Chinese and has a mention of "Lu-kaye-jin" (Lokayata Sutra), which is nothing else than the Brhaspati Sutra. Similarly, during the Western Chin dynasty, Sardula-Karna-Sutra was translated as "She-Tou-Jain-Tai-Zi-Jin" which has reference to "Shi-li-Jin" (doctrine of this world). Yi-tsing in "Memories of the Emenents-Hinen Chao", mentioned a dialogue between Xuan Zhuang and a Lokayata at the Nalanda University. During the dialogue, the Lokayata was of the opinion that everything originates from the four foundational elements i.e., air, water, fire, and earth. But he was countered by Xuan Zhuang who held the theory of Mahayana Buddhism. During the Wei Dynasty, Bodhiruci translated the Lankavatara Sutra into Chinese. With regard to the influence of Lokayata on China's philosophical systems, it is observed that there are certain similarities in the fundamental concepts between Chinese Taoism and Indian Lokayata. Xinchuan in his work also elaborated on how Chinese Buddhist regard Lokayatika as a fellow of Confucian and Taoist schools of thought. They challenged the philosophy of Lokayata because of their materialistic views. During the period of the Northern and Southern dynasties and the Sui-Tsang Dynasty, Chinese Buddhist scholars held that the Lokayata school of thought was similar to that of Confucians and Taoists. Ji Zang (549-623) while forming the system of San-lun, held the theory of materialism of the schools of Confucianism, Taoism, and Lokayata in the same category.

Such references in Chinese texts show the understanding and impact of Lokayatika philosophy on ancient Chinese society. Lokayatika had a significant influence on the lives of people from lower sections and village communities in China. This included traders, peasants, and craftsmen among others. They found a sense of belongingness to the philosophy of Lokayata which asks them to question rigid and orthodox systems. Lokayata as the name suggests, had a wider following among the common people in China also just like ancient India. As seen Lokayata has expanded into the Chinese tradition of thought leaving an impact on their thought, art, and literature.

In modern times, there has been momentum in undertaking studies on Charvaka philosophy in Asian countries. Professor Yao Weiqun of Beijing University in the first volume of the Encyclopedia of India-China Cultural Contacts has contributed to Lokayata philosophy. Three pages are dedicated to the materialist ideology of Lokayata. Prof. Weiqun has held that Lokayata has received great importance in modern-day China. People are attracted to its concepts of atheism and materialism. The essence of Materialism has been on the rise in Chinese society.

ISSN: 3107-748X (Online)

Humanist Society, founded in 2010 is a registered society in Singapore for freethinkers, humanists, and like-minded people. It held a session on 2nd October 2021 on Charvaka Philosophy. The Society mentioned how unique Charvaka Philosophy is in its approach and why its doctrines are necessary to be studied and understood for the modern world. Charvaka philosophy emerged when ancient Indian society was dwelling on issues of class difference, oppression, ideological dogmas, and superficial practices. The school stood out as unique in the way it held the doctrines of atheism and materialism. The Charvaka ideas might seem controversial yet are interesting enough to ponder upon.

Indian philosophy and religion have expanded across Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia etc. There lies a possibility that the influence of the school of Indian Materialism: Charvaka/Lokayata Philosophy would also have been felt across these countries. Research and studies are needed to explore the extent of the Indian School of Materialism's impact in the East.

Conclusion

The beauty of Indian philosophy lies in the fact that it is an assimilation of a wide variety of thought systems. As held by Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, "the heretic, the sceptic, the unbeliever, the rationalist and the freethinker, the materialist, and the hedonist all flourish in the soil of India." Charvaka, the Indian school of materialism emerged in Indian land and its impact has continued to travel beyond borders. Whenever the discussion on the school of Indian Materialism arises today, one often wonders what relevance the materialist traditions of India have to the development of the modern world. But as seen above, the philosophy of Indian Materialism has its reflection in both Western and Eastern systems of thought. Contrary to the common notion that Charvaka philosophy lost its relevance post-emergence of Buddhism and Jainism, traces of Charvaka ideologies were found in medieval India and the works of ancient Western philosophical systems and European thinkers of the 19th-20th century. Not only in the West but also in Eastern philosophical traditions, Indian Materialism has left its imprint. The reflection of the Charvaka system of thought is evident in all parts of India's philosophies to date.

Despite these positive impacts on the Indian thought system, Charvaka Philosophy is still heavily criticized among orthodox groups for committing heresy against religious and spiritualistic schools of thought. Their views and principles don't go well for many religious sects and receive opposition from many social authorities. However, lately, the doctrine of materialism i.e. matter is the only reality has started to gain attention in the modern-day world amidst technological advancements. It can be said that the Charvaka Philosophy was way ahead of its time. The Victor's Way, an institution dedicated to the Charvaka Philosophy in Ireland is an example that the school has not lost its relevance. Further research can lead to finding more sources of expansion of Indian materialism beyond Indian borders. Charvaka as a materialistic system of philosophy is unique and substantial and has gained wide popularity and support among common people for which it has gained the name of Lokayata. Its reflection is observed in the works of philosophers and thinkers in the West and then as far as China in the East. The Charvaka/Lokayata school of thought continues to be a significant cultural and philosophical legacy of India that deserves further exploration, research, and study.

ISSN: 3107-748X (Online)

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