

CĀRVĀKA ŚAṢṬĪ – AN APPRAISAL

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Abstract

The views of Lokāyata expressed in all the *darśanas* are from *pūrvapakṣa* (*prima facie*) view and were used for condemnation of this school. There has not been any text on Cārvāka school criticizing or giving fitting reply to other schools. Keeping this in mind Prof. Dakṣiṇarañjan Śāstri of Calcutta wrote an exclusive text in 1928 on Cārvāka school titled *Cārvākaśaṣṭī* (CṢ). The contents and special features of the text are presented here.

India's contribution in the field of philosophy, religion, arts and science is unmatched. The greatness of ancient Indians lay in the fact that they respected divergent views and were tolerant to varied customs. In the field of philosophy majority of thinkers accepted the authority of Vedas or *Śruti* as the valid *pramāṇa*. Nevertheless there arose quite a few systems which denied such authority to Vedas. The formers were classified as *āstika-darśanas* comprising of the six schools *viz.*, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta, while the latter were considered as *nāstika-darśanas*, to which were assigned Buddha, Jaina and Cārvāka schools.

It is surprising to note that while Buddhism and Jainism which arose two thousand years ago still continue to flourish in India and other countries with different branches, Cārvāka which came later had disappeared into oblivion. While hundreds of texts are still available on Buddhism and Jainism, Cārvāka is almost lost without any text. It is accepted by many scholars that unlike the other *darśanas* whose founder could be identified, the propounder of the

Cārvāka school cannot be ascertained. Scholars are divided whether Bṛhaspati was the founder of this school and if so who indeed was this personality.

Professor Max Muller believed that Cārvāka was the teacher of Lokāyata school who received the teachings from Bṛhaspati. Although Buddha's teachings were against some practices enjoined in the Vedas and against the Brāhmaṇa caste, Buddhism has been considered as religious and philosophical school while Cārvāka is neglected on this ground.¹

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and Prof. Macdonell hold the view that Cārvāka is the name of the founder of Lokāyata school². The popular view is that Cārvāka is not a historical person. The Lokāyata or materialists were called Cārvākas because they would only eat merrily (i.e. enjoy the pleasures of this world), since the term Cārvāka is derived from the root 'carv' to 'eat'³. But they would not accept any religious or moral responsibility. Some hold the view that Cārvākas were those who attracted common people with their sweet words (*cāru+vāk*).

It is to be noted that Kṛṣṇamiśra (11th century C.E.) says in his *Prabodha-candrodaya* (Act II. v.18-19) that the Cārvāka system propounded by *vācaspati* (*Bṛhaspati*) and handed over to Cārvāka spread all over the world through his *śiṣyaparamparā*

vācaspatināpraṇīyacārvākāyasamarpitam |
tenacaśiṣyopaśiṣya-hāreṇabāhvikṛtamattvam ||

The *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali mentions Bhāguri as one of the followers of Lokāyata school.⁴

While the views of this school are found in the treatises of other schools of philosophy, only one text, by name, *Tattvopaplavasimha* ('The Lion that Devours all the Principles') of Jayarāsi Bhaṭṭa (8th cent. C.E.) is considered to be a text belonging to Cārvāka school by some scholars. Some others deny it. But it does primarily contain the views of Cārvāka school.

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Even admitting that *Tattvopaplavasimha* was a text on Lokāyata school of philosophy, we are at a loss to explain the reason for non-availability of original texts on this school. The views of this school are found scattered in many other *darśanas* as well as other Śāstras like Nīti, Artha and Kāma and also some texts on Sāhitya. The views of Lokāyata expressed in all the *darśanas* are from the *pūrvapakṣa* (*prima facie*) view and were used for condemnation of this school.

There was no text available on Cārvāka school criticising or giving fitting reply to other schools, by the turn of the twentieth century. The *Tattvopaplavasimha* got published by the Baroda Oriental Institute only in 1940. Feeling the vacuum with regard to texts on Cārvāka philosophy, Prof. Dakṣiṇarañjan Śāstrī of Calcutta wrote an exclusive text in 1928 on Cārvāka school entitled *Cārvākaśaṣṭi* (CŚ)⁵.

As the title suggests this small text contains sixty verses. These are written in simple Anuṣubhmetre and the author has provided auto-commentary to each verse drawing instances from Vedas, Itihāsas, Purāṇas and Dharma Śāstras.

He starts the text criticising the performance of sacrifices enjoined in the Vedas. He questions the very authority of the Vedas as they contain statements contradictory to each other. Taking Bṛhaspati as the role model, he criticises the orthodox Vaidikas thus:

*agnihotramtrayotantramtridaṇḍambhasma-puṇḍrakam |
prajṣā-pauruṣa-nihsvānāmjīvojalpatijīvikā ||*⁶

There is a huge cry against caste system and racism from everywhere in the world now. This text also expresses the view of Cārvākas that caste system should be abandoned⁷.

atajātidharmānparihāyayadṛcchamācarata |

While advocating enjoyment of pleasure CṢ (6-8) says that there is nothing wrong if one has an affair with another's wife and the commentary explains it with illustrations.

The Śāstras proclaim, '*ahimsā-paramo-dharmaḥ!*' (non-injury is the highest *dharma*) says the author in his commentary on CṢ (10) and in "that case" he says, "O! Brahmins leave the performance of Aśvamedha and other sacrifices" where animals are killed. Śrī Dakṣiṇāraṣjan Śāstrī taking the position of Cārvāka criticises Manu, Vyāsa and others.

He mocks at those who endeavour for *apavarga* by pointing out that Pāṇini states that *apavarga* is for the third gender⁸. He draws support for this from *Amarakośa* too⁹.

Śāstrī goes on to criticize the views of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣka, Advaita and those who believe the existence of God, soul apart from the body, transmigration of the soul, meditation, Śāstras and so on.

He concludes by saying that the ultimate objective is to enjoy the pleasures of the world and one need not believe in hell (*naraka*), rebirth etc. He considers the Śrutis, Smṛtis and Purāṇas as the concoctions of the vile:¹⁰

śruti-smṛti-purāṇādayo-dhūrta-viracitāḥ-granthāḥ.

The author of this text has also given an Appendix where he has drawn information on the views of Lokāyata school from different shastraic sources including *sarvadarśana-saṅgraha*.

On the whole *Cārvākaśaṣṭi* is a miniscule treatise which deals with the salient features of Cārvāka school, drawing on the views of this school as obtained from the criticisms against it, in the treatises of the other schools of thought. It is a laudable effort on the part of Śrī Dakṣiṇāraṣjan Śāstrī to present the views of Cārvāka as a separate text in simple style with auto-commentary.

Notes :

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- ¹ Max Muller, *Six Systems of Philosophy*, pp.98-9. Longmans Green & Co., Calcutta 1919.
- ² *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 279, *A History of Sanskrit literature*, p. 450, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1900.
- ³ S.N. Das Gupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 79. Cambridge University Press, 1922.
- ⁴ *Mahābhāṣya*, VII.3.45 : 'varṇatobhāghurīlokāyatasya'
- ⁵ *Cārvākaśāṣṭi*, The Book Company Ltd, Calcutta, 1928.
- ⁶ CṢ.3
- ⁷ Com. on. CṢ. V.4
- ⁸ *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (II.3.6) : 'apavargetṛtīyā'
- ⁹ *Amarakoṣa* (II.7.39): 'ṛtīyāprakṛtiḥṣaṇḍhaḥklībaḥ'
- ¹⁰ Com. on. CṢ. 59.