Charvaka Darshana and Ayurveda - A Comparative Overview

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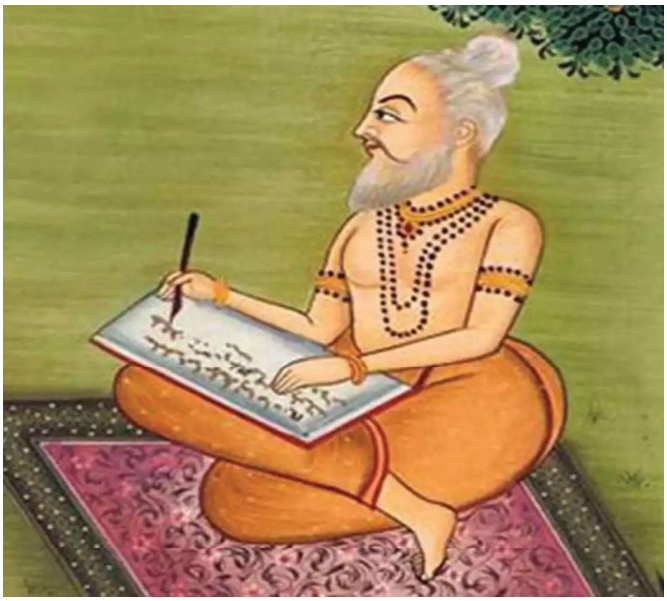
Abstract

The materialistic philosophy known as the Lokayata, Charvaka, or Barhaspathya is probably a very old school of thought. It is one among nastika /avaidika darshanas because it rejects the authority of Vedas. Historians inferred the existence of the collection of Charvaka aphorisms and more than one commentary on it. Believers of Vedic philosophy destroyed the followers of Charvaka darshana and their literature in the past. However, some of the original verses containing the basic doctrines of the Charvaka and verses from its commentaries are found to be scattered in various treatises. Charvaka denies soul, virtue, adharma, papa, punya, karma, and karmaphala while Ayurveda accepts all the aforesaid concepts. Even though Ayurveda does not accept major concepts of Charvaka, it's mentioned in various contexts of Ayurveda treatises. Ayurveda has made a beautiful synthesis of the nastika darshana which has also played a very important role in the development of the science of medicine.

Keywords

Charvaka, Swabhava, Yadricha, Lokayata



Introduction

The materialistic philosophy known as the Lokayata, Charvaka, or Barhaspathya is probably a very old school of thought. It is one among nastika /avaidika darshanas because it rejects the authority of Vedas. Brihaspathi is regarded as the founder of materialism. In India, the phenomenon of materialism though has always been present in some form or other, but we do not find any systematic work on it. However, some of the original verses containing the basic doctrines of the Charvaka and verses from its commentaries are found to be scattered in various treatises. References of Charvaka darshana principles are mentioned in Ayurveda treatises also. This article is intended for analyzing the reflectionsof Charvakadarshana principles in Ayurveda treatises and comparing both of them.

Materials and Methods

To obtain knowledge regarding the respective concepts, the related references have been collected from the following treatises:

- Sarva-darsana-sangraha of Madhavacharya
- A History of Indian philosophy by Surendranath Dasgupta.
- Studies on the Charvaka/ Lokayata by Ramkrishna Bhattacharya
- Charaka Samhita with Ayurveda Dipika commentary.
- Susrutha Samhita with Nibandha samgraha commentary.

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- Ashtangahridaya with Sarvanga sundara and Ayurvedarasayana commentaries.

The collected references have been systematically analyzed, contrasted, and represented.

Results and Discussion

Derivation of the term *'Charvaka'*

The word charu means attractive and vak means word. Since the arguments of the system are very pleasing or attractive, the philosophy is come to be known as Charvaka. It's also known as Lokayata darshana. The word loka means people and ayata means extensive. It's called so since it gained extensive popularity among the people.

History of *Charvaka darshana*

Brihaspathi is regarded as the founder of materialism. Therefore it's also termed Barhaspathya in some contexts. According to various scholars, the Charvaka darshana attained its final form before the eighth century CE and some continuity in its tradition can be observed up to the twelfth century. Historians inferred the existence of the collection of Charvaka aphorisms and more than one commentary on it. The believers of Vedic traditions destroyed the followers of Charvaka darshana and their literature in the past. Therefore original works of this philosophy are not available at present. However, some of the original verses containing the basic doctrines of the Charvaka and verses from its commentaries are found to be scattered in various treatises. The names of five known commentators of the Charvakasutra

include Aviddhakarna,Bhavivikta, Kambalasvatara,Purandara, and Udbhatabhatta. All of them seem to have flourished before the eighth century or thereabouts.

Principles of *Charvaka darshana* in brief

Materialism is the name given to the metaphysical doctrine which holds that matter is the only reality. Based on this doctrine, the mind and consciousness are said to be the products of matter. Generally, the doctrine of materialism seems to explain this higher phenomenon in the light of lower ones thus opposing the spiritual interpretations of the universe. The Charvaka ethics are based on the assumption that human beings get annihilated at the point of death. Pratyaksha is the only reliable source of knowledge. Thus whatever is known through it alone is real and matter becomes the only reality. They accepted 4 mahabhoota:prithvi,ap,tejas, and vayu.

They reject akasha because it's not an object of perception. They accept only 2 purushartha viz artha and kama. Among them, Streepurusha samyoga happens due to kama and it is termed as the reason for birth. There is no paraloka because there is no proof for people residing at paraloka. Also, Moksha (liberation) is Mrityu (death) which is the cessation of life-breath.

They believed that we have to live happily as long as we can. The literary meaning is to drink ghee even by borrowing money. i.e., to enjoy a good thing you can go even into debt. Once the body turns into ashes after death, it won't comeback. Purusha is kaya (body) with chaitanya.

Thus there is no need for a new tatva named Atma. According to them, religious rituals are the mechanisms of priests to exploit others and make a living out of them. Therefore they debunk all religious practices. False promises about a good future made by Priests to ordinary people are also a reason for their rejection. Agnihotra,three Vedas, tridanda, and application of bhasma are created by Brahma for those who lack buddhi and

pourusha as per Charvaka. According to them, the basic desire of every creature is to gain pleasure and avoid pain. Whatever action, which minimizes pain and maximizes pleasure, is considered as a good action.

Comparison between the principles of *Charvaka darshana* and *Ayurveda*

1. Concept of *Purushartha*

Dharma, artha, kama, and moksha are the four purushartha accepted by Ayurveda. These are possible only through good health.Of these four, Charvaka rejects

dharma and moksha, and accepts kama

and artha. They state that moksha can only be attained by death. Whereas kama and artha are the only rationales that a wise man will always prefer to achieve. In a true sense, kama is the only ultimate end and artha is only a means for its attainment.

2. Concept of *Mahabhuta*

As per Ayurveda treatises, Mahabhutas are of 5 in number viz prithvi, ap, tejas, vayu, and akasha. Whereas, Charvaka reject

akasha as a mahabhuta and accepted the remaining four. Not only the non-living material objects but also living organisms like plant and animal bodies are composed of these four mahabhutas, by the combination of which they are produced and to which they are reduced on death as per Charvaka darshana.

3. Concept of *Yadricha vada*

Yadricha vada (theory of accidence) is accepted by Nastika. It is quoted in Charaka Samhita. In the creed of Nasthika,

whose understanding is obscured by yadrichavada, there can be no pareeksha (examinations); no pareekshya (no data to be investigated), no agents, no causes, no Gods, no seers, no adepts, no action, no fruits of actions and of course no soul. As per Charaka, Nastika graha is considered the most sinful of all sins.

4. Concept of *Pramana*

Charaka Samhita accepted 4 pramanas for investigating Sat and Asat.Theyare Aptopadesha,Pratyaksha, Anumana, and Yukti.

According to Charvaka, pratyaksha is the only reliable source of knowledge and reality can be asserted only to perceptible objects. They have no belief in God, soul, heaven, rebirth, and any unperceived laws because they are all beyond perception. Material objects are the only objects whose existence can be perceived and whose reality can be asserted. However, Puranthara, a commentator of Charvaka aphorisms, admits the usefulness of anumana in determining the nature of all worldly things where perceptual experience is available. But anumana cannot be employed for establishing any principles regarding transcendental worlds, life after death, or the laws of karma which cannot be available to ordinary perceptual experience.

5. Concept of *Atma*

Except for Charvaka darshana, all the other darshanas stated that Atma is different from sharira. As Charvaka accepts pratyaksha pramana only and as Atma is not perceivable through Pratyaksha, Thus they did not accept Atma as a separate one. Denying this fact Charaka proved the existence of the soul beyond the body.

6 *Swabhava vada*

The term swabhava in Sanskrit can be translated to 'essence' or 'nature'. Brihaspathi used this term to indicate a school of thought that rejected supernaturalism and the ethical teachings that followed from supernaturalist ideologies. Brihaspati and his followers were scorned and ridiculed for not believing in the eternal nature of reality and for not revering the Gods and the truths they were supposed to be espoused. It is interesting to note that while other schools have incorporated swabhava as a doctrine of essences or continuity of soul, the use of this term by Brihaspathi was specifically meant to represent his association with philosophic naturalism. According to Dalhana, karana of sarvaprakriti is called swabhava. Examples of swabhava are scattered in various contexts of Brihattrayi. Some of them are quoted as follows:

1. aṅgapratyaṅganivṛtti svabhāvādeva jāyate | (Su Sa 3/36)

The origin of anga and pratyanga is said to be due to Swabhava.

2 svabhāvāllaghavo mudgaha tathā lāvakapiñjalāha | svabhāvāt guravo māṣā varāhamahiṣādayaha || (Ch Su 27/336)

Mudga, lava, kapinjala are laghu due to swabhava. Masha, varaha and mahisha are guru due to swabhava.

3. sanniveśaha śarīrāṇām dantānām pavanodbhavau | taleṣvasambhavau yaśca romṇāmetat svabhāvataha || (Su Sa 2/56)

Development of body, eruption, and falling of teeth, no growth of hairs in the palms and soles are due to swabhava.

Conclusion

Charvaka darshana is one among the nastika / avaidika darshanas because it rejects the authority of Vedas. Charvaka denies soul, virtue, adharma, papa, punya, karma, and karmaphala while Ayurveda accepts all the aforesaid concepts. However, Ayurveda has made a beautiful synthesis of the nastika darshana which has also played a very important role in the development of the science of medicine. Both Ayurveda and Charvaka give prime importance to sareera. Even though Ayurveda does not accept major concepts of Charvaka, it's mentioned in various contexts of Ayurveda treatises.

Charvaka darshana can be used as a tool for critical thinking in Ayurveda which can be decisive in meeting the standards of modern scientific reasoning.

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