

CHAPTER- I

INDIAN MATERIALISM AVAILABLE IN EPICS
AND
TEXT PRIOR TO CĀRVĀKA SYSTEM

Materialism is the name given to the metaphysical doctrine which holds the matter is the only reality. This doctrine tries to explain consciousness as the product of matter. Materialism in some form or other has always been present in India as occasional references of it are found in the Vedas, the Buddhist literature, the Epics like Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata as well as in the later philosophical works.

Apart from the arguments which are found in books like TattvopaplavaSimha of Jayarāsi and Śataśāstra of Āryadeva. Cārvāka is the word that generally stands for "materialist". According to one view, a sage called Cārvāka was the original founder of the Cārvāka school. According to another view the word "Cārvāka" is not a proper name but a common name given to a materialist, either because his words are nice, pleasant and attractive (carv-nice, vāk word) to

ears. According to some, Bṛhaspati a sage, is the founder of this school and it is, therefore, also known as the philosophy of Bṛhaspati. Whatever may be the original meaning of the word "Cārvāka" it has become synonymous with the materialist. Another synonym of Cārvāka is *Lokāyata*. The view is called *Lokāyata-mata* because it regards this world to be the only world and denies the existence of any other transcendental world. Just like other systems of Indian Philosophy questions raised by these Indian materialists also can be subdivided into epistemological, metaphysical and ethical problems. And it must be pointed out that the entire philosophy of the Cārvākas may be said to depend logically on their epistemology or theory of knowledge. The Cārvāka holds that perception is the only *pramāṇa* or valid source of knowledge and the metaphysics or the theory of reality held by the Carvaka School is also influenced by this epistemological conclusion. According to the Cārvāka, matter is the only reality because it alone can be perceived. Material objects are the only objects whose existence can be asserted. The Indian materialist or the Cārvākas, thus come to establish materialism or the theory that matter is the only

reality. And their ethics or the theory of morality is obviously in conformity with their metaphysical theories. Contrary to the view of all other philosophers, the materialist Cārvāka holds that liberation as freedom from all pain is an impossible ideal and pleasure, though mixed with pain, is the only possible good. The ethics of the Carvaka is only the logical outcome of his materialism.

This Indian materialism has drawn the attention of the thinkers belonging to the traditional Indian philosophy, particularly because it preaches against the view accepted traditionally. Every system of Indian thought tried to meet the Cārvāka objections and made the Cārvāka a touchstone of its theories. The Carvaka view thus compels indirectly other thinkers to give up dogmatism, and become critical and cautious in speculation as well as in statement of views. But like the Epicureans of Greece, the Cārvākas in India have been more hated than understood. "Cārvāka" in the mind of people at large is a term of reproach. And perhaps, for this reason an analytical discussion of the Cārvāka metaphysics and ethics have not been made so far. The present project is an attempt to analyze those arguments in

an unbiased way and to compare the Cārvāka view with western pragmatism and logical positivism. The goal of this analysis would be to find out whether the Indian materialism is a theory acceptable to an unbiased rational mind.

If we go through the two epics the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata written perhaps in the sixth century BC, we find that materialism was prevalent in that period. Regarding this period it has been told by Radhakrishnan that: *“It was the period of intellectual and philosophical development. It was an age of contrast ideas. There arose lack of mental balance and restraint of passion among the people. It was the era of the Cārvākas and the Buddhists. It was a period when intuition was giving place to inquiry, religion to philosophy. Differences of thoughts, unbelief, chaos and unsystematic attempts, made the epic period an eventful era in the history of Indian thought. Through the help of art, knowledge and morality there was an attempt to heal the sickly attitude of the people or there were among the people intoxication, ecstasy, bewilderment and madness. Many new systems were put forward in the age.”*¹

Perhaps free speculation and scepticism started during this period. Too much importance given to ceremonial religion and at the same time development of political crisis gradually made people rebellious to some extent. Some People were in search of a new way which would free them from the shackles of rituals and ceremonies. Ascetics, Trithānkāras or ford makers were founders of this new path. And Gautama or Siddhārtha and Vardhamāna were then found to be the most prominent social reformers. There were also other heretical teachers like Sanjaya, the sceptic, who limited his inquiries to the question of attainment of peace. During this period materialism came into existence.

It is found from the early texts that there was a saint called Ajita-Keśakambalin, the fatalist who held that man had no power over life and death. The Buddhists and the Jainas gave emphasis on the theistic sides of the Upaniṣads. But Buddhism and Jainism failed to satisfy the spiritual wants and emotions of the ordinary people. The spiritual thirst of the masses could not be satisfied by the Upaniṣads or the Vedas or the moral principles of

Jainas. There were preconstruction which made religion less formal less cold and more satisfying than the Upaniṣadic cult.

Materialism or the Sanskrit term 'Cārvāka darśana' is the first school of thought challenging the Vedic views. According to some, it was the name of the disciple to whom the doctrine was first taught by its founder. The word 'Cārvāka' means sweet tongued (cār-vāka) "Carv means" to eat. The Cārvākas were exponents of the doctrine of egoistic hedonism. Their views were attractive to the common people. Therefore they were called Lokāyatikas and their doctrine was called Lokāyata-mata. Materialistic philosophy which is known as the Lokāyata, the Cārvākas or the Bārhaspatya school is a very old school of thought. In the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, there were a number of views in which we find the doctrine that matter or the elements (bhutāni) is the ultimate principle. We find its reference even in Arthaśāstra of Kautilya where it is compared with Sāmkhya and yoga as a logical science (Lokeṣu āyatah lokāyata) Kautilya explained three systems viz., the Sāmkhya, yoga and the Lokāyata.

It was called Lokāyata because it was prevalent (āyatah) among the people (Lokeṣu). The name 'Lokāyata' is found in the writing of many scholars, both ancient and modern. H. P. Sastry has used the word Lokāyata to mean the worldly outlook of the people. S. N. Sengupta, in the Buddhist text, *Divyābadāna*, used the word Lokāyata to mean what was prevalent among the people. Gunaratna, the Jaina commentator of the 14th century A.D., in *Saddarśanasamuccaya* and Haribhadra in 8th century A. D, have stated "*Lokāyatikas are those common people who cannot show good judgement.*"²

Madhavāchārya is also of the same opinion why the materialistic view is called the Lokāyata view. He, like his guru Śankarāchārya, who lived in the 8th century A.D, in his commentary on *Brahmaśūtra*, has said that "*the followers of 'Lokāyata' are nothing but uncultured and uneducated people (prākṛtajanāh)*"³. Panchanan Tarkaratna said, "*This philosophy was called Lokāyata because it believed in the material world (Loka) only and denied everything beyond.*"⁴

Rajkrishna Mukhopadhyaya is of the opinion that "*Lokāyata has laid emphasis on the natural world.*"⁵ (Loka or iha-loka). Buddhaghosa, the Buddhist commentator of the 5th century A. D has said, "The word "āyatah" or "āyatana" means the foundation on which the material world (loka) rests."

Haribhadra says, "*Loka is the object of sense perception.*"⁶ Manibhadra says, "*Loka means "padārtha sārtha or padārtha samūha"*"⁷ which is the totality of the material existence. He says "Lokā" means materialistic philosophy. So, Lokāyata means not only the philosophy of the people but the philosophy of worldliness or materialism.

Radhakrishnan defines "*Lokāyata is directed to the world of sense. It is the Sanskrit word for materialism.*"⁸ Dasgupta is of the opinion that "Lokāyata (that which is found among people) is the name by which all the Cārvāka doctrines were generally known." Some are of the opinion that Lokāyata is the result of the breakdown of traditional authority. Some said Lokāyata was originally imported into India from ancient Sumeria. Others

said it originally formed part of the Indian priest craft.

It has been claimed by a number of thinkers that Lokāyata did not belong merely to the ancient times because it still survives in the country in the form of certain obscure and highly obscure cults. All these interpretations of Lokāyata are opposed to each other and its place being taken up by scepticism which says "*Lokāyata as a branch of ancient Indian philosophy never existed at all.*"⁹ These are the results of the confidence on Mādhava's views of the Lokāyata.

Radhakrishnan's opinion was that "*During the epic period, the ideas of the intellectuals were unsettled in 600 B.C to A.D 200. At that time, the faith of the people in the authority was diminishing. Under such circumstances, materialism was playing a historic role. People rejected traditional customs, religion and magic. They wanted spiritual independence.*"¹⁰

The Cārvāka philosophy made much effort to check the dogmatic attitude of the Indian philosophical system to a great extent. It encouraged the spirit of

free thinking among the philosophers belonging to other schools and asked them not to accept a theory merely out of reverence for the time honoured tradition unless it had satisfied their reason. It attempted to do a constructive work of speculation.

The Lokāyata denied the reality of inference, the authority of the Vedas, the reality of God, soul and rejected any value except the gross sensual pleasures. The traditional society, however, never accepted the Lokāyata view.

In the Rāmāyana, Lokāyatikas are blamed as “clever in useless things.” In Harṣcharita, the Lokāyatikas are classed by the Vedantists as heretics.

About 500 B.C, the word Lokāyata meant nature-lore-wise saying, riddles, rhymes and theories. In the 14th century, the great theologian Mādhava, is of the opinion that Lokāyatikas are the extreme forms of the “Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die”. This philosophy is the view of life. He said the Lokāyata was the lowest system of philosophy.

In ancient times there was only one word, Lokāyata alternatively called Cārvāka or Brhāspatya philosophy. Lokāyata meant the philosophy of the people and the philosophy of this worldliness or materialism. Lokāyata means not only the philosophy of the people but the philosophy of this worldliness or materialism.

Mādhava's account of Lokāyata is clear and consistent. The epistemology, metaphysics and ethics of the Lokāyatikas are presented by Mādhava in a neatly woven logical contradiction. The Lokāyatikas contend that perception is the only pramāṇa and denied other sources of knowledge. They do not admit the existence of any non-sensible transcendent spiritual reality like God and immaterial soul. Lokāyatikas denied all religious and moral values and cared only for sensual pleasures. Mādhava did not praise this Lokāyatika view. He said that materialism is the cult of those crude people who did not understand the higher values of human life. Modern scholars also are out of sympathy with the materialistic philosophy as Mādhava was. To the modern scholars however, Mādhava's account of the Lokāyata is a satisfactory

one. It has been claimed by them that Lokāyata did not belong merely to the ancient times because it survives in the country in the form of certain obscure cults.

In conclusion, the theory has the virtue of simplicity. The simplicity is the result of an over attachment to Mādhavā's views. The essence of the account of *Sarva-darśana-Saṅgraha* and *Sarva siddhānta-saṅgraha* are negative in character.

The Lokāyata denied the reality of inference and verbal testimony. They rejected moral values and accepted gross sensual pleasures. But it has played a historic role. It has given a deathblow to all traditional thoughts and values and thus created the need for rethinking and revaluation necessary for our ancestors to be free from the old religion of custom and magic in order to move forward to the great constructive efforts of speculation. And Lokāyata contributed to this emancipation.

The Lokāyata view as a matter of fact brought the freedom of speculation in ancient India by causing a breakdown of the ancient faith. It became possible

then for one to remain a Brahmin and yet go on preaching the Lokāyata views. For we find in the *Rāmāyana* that Jābali though a Brāhmin himself tried to persuade Ramāchandra to heretical ideas.

The Brāhmanical sources or Bṛhāspati from whom Lokāyata is called Bārhaspatya or Bārhaspatya-mata which means “nīti of Bṛhaspati.” We must not think that Lokāyata belonged to ancient India only for even today we can find Lokāyata sects in India from Bṛhaspati-śūtra and in the writings of Jaina commentator Guṇaratna who said that Lokāyatikas and Kāpālikas have close relation. According to Bṛhaspati, they are two distinct sects, but according to Guṇaratna they are identical. Kāpālikas still exist today.

Sastri is of the opinion *“that the impact of Lokāyatikas and Kāpāikas is still prevalent in India. There is a sect who believed deha or the material body should be cared for and their religious practices are concerned with the union of man and woman and their success (siddhi). These vary according to the duration of the union. These are Vaisnavas, but they do not believe in Vishnu or Krishna or his*

incarnation."¹¹ It might be mentioned in this context that there is a sect of the Buddhist from Mahāyāna; they are called Sahajiā in the last four centuries of its existence in India.

In the fourteenth century, the great theologian Sāyana Mādhāva is of the opinion that the Lokāyatikas are the extreme forms of the "*let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die*" of Pyrrhonism in philosophy and of atheism in theology. All the descriptions he has made are, however, from his imagination and his statements are based on certain worthless verses which cannot form the part of the Lokāyata views.

Mādhāva was himself a vedantist and did not hesitate to impose the vedāntic pattern of arguing on the Lokāyatikas. Arguments will be valid if these are subordinate to śrūti, according to vedantists. But the Lokāyatikas say these śrūtis are formed by lazy cheats. Lokāyatikas denied the authority of śrūti and smṛti which mocked the Brāhminical rituals and other world or heaven. The scholars are of the opinion that Lokāyatikas were ancient sophists and skeptics who were individual philosophers. But

Lokāyata did not mean a philosophy preached by a few individuals. It is a belief or practice which is deeply rooted in the lives of the people.

The view that the Lokāyatikas were against the Brāhminical rituals does not mean they were opposed to rituals. These rituals were actually rooted in the belief to which orthodox Brahminism was opposed.

Lokāyata was materialistic view in the sense that it gave importance to the material human body and the material universe around us. Lokāyata is an expression of this worldly attitude on one hand; on the other hand it is associated with certain types of rituals. This is evident from a passage found in the *Saddharma-pundarīka* in which the word Lokāyata mantra dhāraka and Lokāyatika are mentioned together.

In *Divyavādana* which is a Buddhist text, there is a phrase “Lokāyata yajana mantresu nisnatah”, which means expert in Lokāyata yajana (ritual) and mantra (spell).

According to the Asura view, there was a Cārvāka who was originally a rākṣasa or a demon; this Cārvāka was killed by the holy Brahmin. In the *Mahābhārata*, this Cārvāka was very powerful due to his mortification. He then started subduing the devas and the Gods.

The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* describes how the Great Deceiver Māyāmoha tempted the Daityas to do evil by accepting the two heretical views, the Bauddha and the Jaina. They explained the origin of the Lokāyata thus, the great deceiver beguiled the Daityas by means of heresy. These daityas abandoned the entire system founded on the ordinance of the triple Veda, some reviled the Veda, others the gods, some the ceremonial of sacrifices and some the Brāhmins. Muir has already convincingly argued that the view described here could only have the Lokāyata view. *Maitrāyaṇī Upaniṣad* mentioned the same view regarding the origin of the devilish, false and the non-Vedic views of the Lokāyatikas. *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa* describes demons as those persons who are hostile to the Brahmins and gods, who are slanderers of their preceptors and gods, who rebel against the authority of their spiritual guides,

who do not worship and offer sacrifices to gods, and who are devoid of virtue and mercy.

In the *Pāli canon* the materialistic view of Ajita-Keśakambalin is given. He maintains that a body is composed of earth, water, fire and air, which return to the respective elements on death, and that there is no survival after death. He denies virtue and vice, heaven and hell, and fruits of actions. Pāyāsi also identifies the soul with the body, and denies future life and rebirth. These views are similar to the Cārvāka materialism.

Lokāyata originally meant *“those obscure beliefs and practices which were broadly related to Tantrism.”*¹² Lokāyatikas argued in favour of the importance of agriculture. It is “loka” and “āyata”. The word “āyata” may be derived as atyat+ a; “a” means **a**, yat means to make effort. *“Loka is preceded by “u” and “u” may be a prefixed vowel “u-loka” is a dialectical form of “Loka” u-loka” is abridged form of uru-or-ava loka which means free or open space.”*¹³ *“The word ‘loka’ resembles the Latin word ‘lucas’ which means cleaning of a forest and to the Lithurian ‘Laukas’ means ‘a field.’*¹⁴

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In books like *Bṛhaspatīsūtra* and *Prabodhachandrodaya*, the *Lokāyatikas*, gave importance to 'vārtā' which meant agriculture. So *Vāmācāra* of Tantrism was the belief of the people who were engaged in agriculture. Therefore, identity of tantra and *Lokāyata* became legitimate. But Tantrism forced back to the modern ideas due to its hunting attitude towards sex. The problem of ancient *Lokāyata* thus became the problem of finding out its original significance. In the collection of Pāli passages by Rhys David, the word *Lokāyatikas* occurs. *Buddhaghoṣa* says, 'Lokāyata is a vitandā vādasattham.'

Vitandā means tricky disputation. According to *Nyāyasūtra*, *Vitandā* is tricky logical discussion which only criticizes the thesis of the opponents without establishing his own thesis. *Vāda* is, according to them, the logical discussion for the ascertainment of truth. So, *Vitandā* cannot be a *vāda*. Thus the words *vitandāvāda* would be self contradictory. *Buddhagoṣa* has given a few examples of *vitandā* in explaining the term 'Lokā khāyikā' which means 'popular story or popular philosophy'.

“So Lokāyata means a kind of tricky disputation, sophistry, which did not increase any knowledge but led astray from the path of Heaven and of release.” ¹⁵

Lokāyata is counted as a science among other sciences in Dighanikāya, in *Angutara* and also *Divyāvadāna*. It is regarded as a special branch of study which had a ‘bhṣya’ and a ‘pravacana’ (commentaries and annotations on it).

Lokāyata Śāstra existed as early as the time of Kātyāyana i.e, about 300 B.C. The author of the ‘*Vārttika Śūtra*’, Kātyāyana says, there was a book called the Lokāyata, and there was one commentary of it the date of which may be earlier than 150 B.C or even earlier than 300 B.C. There is a vārtika rule associated with ‘Varnaka-tantave upasamā khyanam’. The word ‘varnaka’ means a blanket or a wrapper (prāvaraṇa). Patanjali, about 150 B.C, while interpreting the *Vārttika sūtra*, says, *“the formation of the word Varnaka is only the sense of cotton or woollen wrapper.”* In the feminine form it would be Varnikā or Vāttikā (for eg, meaning Bhāguri commentary on the Lokāyata . (Lokāyata-Varnikā-

By the seventh century, the Lokāyata or the Cārvāka Sūtra had two commentaries which represented two different schools of interpretation. Several views are found in the commentaries of Kamalaśīla, Jayanta, Prabhācandra, Guṇaratna etc. from the seventh to the fourteenth century, these commentaries are ascribed to the Cārvāka and some to the Lokāyata and in the fourteenth century, Guṇaratna has attributed to Bṛhaspati. Kamalaśīla has made the division among Cārvākas as “Dhūrta Cārvāka” and “Suśikṣita Cārvāka”.. Prior to Patanjali and Kātyāyana there was at least one commentary on the Lokāyata and by the seventh century, the Lokāyata or the Cārvāka had at least two commentaries which showed two different schools having opponent ideas. The date of the science of sophistical school and its association with materialistic theories is quite unknown and how it was hated by Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism was not described. The art of disputation is formed in India in the first century A.D. In Cārvāka Samhitā and Agniveśa-Samhitā in the first or the second century A.D., such discussion

is formed which is only a revision of the earlier text. In Nyāya and Āyurveda, people learnt these sophisticated modes of dispute to defend themselves from their opponents.

In AśvamedhaParva of Mahābhārata we find such hetuvādins (sophists and logicians). For the art of disputation, the word Vokavākya is used in Chāndogya Upaniṣad. So this art of disputation is very old.

Now in *Manu*, we find that the Brahmin who through the knowledge of the science of logic (*Hetu-śāstra*) does not regard the authority of the Vedas and the smṛti are nāstikas who should be driven out by a good man. So the question arises, ‘who were these nāstikas?’ To Patanjali, ‘āstika’ is that person who thinks it exists and nāstika is a person who thinks it does not exist.

Jayaditya in his Kāśkaā commentary defines ‘nāstika’ “as a person who does not believe in the next world (para-loka) and ‘diṣṭika’ as one who believes only what can be logically exhibited.”

So far we have dealt with the view called Lokāyata or materialism as found in the epics and ancient texts. Lokāyatikas are different from the Buddhists. Just like Cārvāka thinkers Buddha also denied the existence of God. It is true that Buddhism is a religion without God. But Buddhism unlike Cārvāka materialism gave emphasis on practice of austeriority and Dhamma. The character of Sitā has got much importance in Buddhist philosophy; Cārvākas, however, totally ignored the importance of morality in human life. They only emphasized on worldly enjoyment. Their motto, as we have mentioned earlier, was '*eat, drink and enjoy.*'

Thus it can be concluded that Lokāyata view is another name for the Cārvāka view. In the next chapters, the Cārvāka view will be discussed in detail.

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