

Reflection of Lokayata Philosophy in Ramayana

P. V. Pushpalatha

*Research Student, Deptt. of Sanskrit Sahitya,
Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, Ernakulam [Dist],
Kerala, India
Email : puthusserylatha@gmail.com*

Abstract

It is generally thought that materialism is strange to Indian ethos. Since the development of human potential for rational thought, man he has tried to learn and evaluate thenature in him and the Nature around him. Forhis survival man had to struggle against Nature, simplifying the diversities of nature, and elucidating theories out of them. Thus he began to philosophize, to form general theories about his existence in Nature- the forms and functions of diverse phenomena, forms of life, birth, death, social relation, economic systems, etc.

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‘Darśana’ is the word for philosophy in Indian language. In the *Vaiśecikasūtra* of Kanāda, written before the Buddha, the term meaning Tattvaśāstra, is seen first.¹ During the period of Cānakya, the word ‘Darśana’ meaning philosophy, was not popular. Instead in the *Arthaśāstra*, Cānakya used the term Anvikiki.² But after the 8th century, the word Darśana seems to have acquired its present meaning. Śrīānkara, Udayana and many others have used this word with the meaning ‘philosophy’.

The word Darśana has been derived from the root ‘Drś’. The real meaning of the word is ‘awareness’ derived from sight.³ But modern scholars consider Darśana not merely as knowledge derived through the power of sight, but as an inner urge, or an inner call. This urge is to know the absolute, i.e., the ‘Brahman’ - primary essence of the Being. Thus in the Indian conception, ‘darśana’ implies a particular knowledge – knowledge imparting ‘moksa’ or the final liberation. That is, the science that deals with Moksa is called Darśana or the sciences which are the instruments of knowledge leading to Moksa are called darśanas. Thus the word ‘Darśana’ means philosophy and also the instrument of philosophy. It stands for the direct, immediate and intuitive vision of reality, the actual perception of truth, and also includes the means leading to this realization. It goes without saying that this meaning is the paraphrase of idealists or, in particular of the Advaita Vedantins. To them nothing is eternal except the Brahman. Moksa means the liberation from the imprisonment of birth and death, i.e., release from worldly existence or transmigration of the soul to merge with the cosmic spirit.

If we consider the meaning of ‘Darśana’ in accordance with the above version, it appears that no science can become a Darśana unless it leads to Moksa. Then Cārvākas, who considers the instrument of knowledge in general, could not come anywhere near. But at the same time, traditionally in India, the thoughts of Cārvāka are acknowledged as darśana. Scholars like Kaumilya, Haribhadrasūri, Śāntarakṣita and Mādhavācārya have considered the thoughts of Cārvāka as a real ‘darśana’.

The commonly accepted meaning of darśana today is the search for knowledge,⁴ the irresistible thirst for knowledge. The study of Nature where human beings live and the cosmic phenomenon; the study of the place and objective humanity in nature; the analysis of the origin, development and the ruin of humanity – all these come under the circle of darśana. Darśana is, therefore, study of Nature of which human beings are a part; it is the analysis of the origin and evolutionary progress of all natural and social phenomena.

Lokāyatikas have discussed nothing else other than these general principles

of existence. So this modern meaning to the word 'darśana', Lokāyata can be seen a philosophic science of universal significance.

Lokāyata is actually the ideas propounded by Cārvāka which is the science of Lokāyatikas. Also a Lokāyata meant an atheist, a world by working man or a Cārvāka.⁵ That is, Lokāyata is the philosophy, the world view of the working class, and, therefore, the scholars called it Lokāyatam. That is why the scholars called it Lokāyatam.

Another idea of 'Cārvāka' which is a courage from 'cāru', meaning 'beautiful' and 'vak' meaning 'word', is that it is a philosophy propounded in beautiful words.

In his work *History of Philosophy*, Dakshinaranjan Bhattacharya says that B[haspati who lived during the Zgvedic period should be considered the exponent of Indian materialism. B[haspati considers matter to be primary reality. Denying the existence of god, B[haspati and his followers treated the ideas of eternal soul and life after death as mere figments of imagination. Imagination like eternal soul and life after death were refuted.⁶

As Lokāyata texts are lost, there is a missing chapter in the history of Indian philosophy. As a result, generally, the notion that Indian philosophy is nothing but spiritualism has got entrenched itself in academic circles in the East and West.

Cārvāka's analysis of the structure of Universe, Consciousness (Prajña) is quite materialistic. The universe, man and all beings originated from the four basic elements such as earth, water, air, and fire. According to them the body with soul is formed just as some non alcoholic things like quick lime, areca nut and betel leaf become reddish when they are mixed together.

To know the Universe, truth of the Pratyakca PramāGa they take resort to only the world of man, including Nature and human are available for or can be subjected to Pratyakca PramāGa. Therefore, only the empirical world is truth and the concepts of heaven and rebirth are without any basis as nobody can produce or procure any Pratyakca PramāGa about them.

Only recently Indian philosophy was scientifically divided into Idealism and Materialism. According to the Indian philosophic tradition, the classification was Vedic Darśana (Vaidika) and Non Vedic Darśana (Avaidika). Nyāyadarśana, Vaiśeṣikadarśana, Sankhyadarśana, Yogadarśana, Mimamsadarśana and Vedantadarśana are the six important Vedic philosophies. Buddhadarśana, Jainadarśana and Cārvākadarśana have been treated as the three streams of Non-Vedic philosophies.

If these nine Vedic and Non-Vedic Darśanas are divided on the basis of the theistic

or atheistic content in them, atheism and theism, we could find that representatives of traditional Indian Philosophies were mostly atheistic. They came to the conclusion that god's existence cannot be found out within the command of reasoning. In Indian philosophical tradition, except for a small minority, the god was not indispensable. Atheism is the natural theoretical generalization of a materialistic philosophical systems. It can be said that the entire atheistic philosophical streams in ancient India developed along the lines of materialism.

The idealistic philosophers who have analyzed the historical streams of Indian philosophy have mixed up religion and philosophy. Philosophy and religion are not the same. Any religion- whether it is Jainism or Buddhism, or Hinduism, in the final analysis is Idealism in practice. But, their philosophical streams need not be the same. Buddhist philosophy and Buddhism, for example, there could be no other philosophy which denied the presence of god. But, in Buddhism, even Buddha himself has been transformed into a god. Buddhist philosophy was transformed into a religion in the last phase of its deterioration. All religions have their philosophical roots in Idealism. But necessarily, all philosophies do not seek religious manifestation have a religious framework for all the philosophies. The mixing up of religion and philosophy persuade some learned Indians and foreigners to arrive at wrong conclusions about Indian religious and philosophic traditions. Some of them have maintains that Indians have no philosophy and that Indians are unrealistic. According to them are a defiant lazy lot, not in doing any work. Here there are some myths and mysticism and some religious doctrines thus go these misunderstandings.

However, the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata* the ancient Indian epics, are acclaimed as classic not only in India, but all over the world. They have with stood the test of time. Their literary value and the spiritual and ethical principles embodied in them are the eternal wealth of human culture.

The *Rāmāyana* considered to be the first poetic composition in the world, is called the *Ādikāvya*. It is an epic as it contains descriptions and references to ancient themes. Vālmiki is its author and hence Vālmiki is known as the *Ādikavi* also. Vālmiki and Rama visited were contemporaries. During his life in exile in the forest, Rama had visited Vālmiki's *Aśrama*. It was in the same *Aśrama* that Sita lived after being abandoned by Rama. The intimate connection and involvement of Vālmiki in the life Rama and his family was an incentive for him to write the *Rāmāyana*.

The epic is divided into seven *Kāndas* of five hundred chapters. The Seven *Kāndas* are the *Bālakānda*, *Ayodhya Kānda*, the *Āranya Kānda*, the *Kickinda Kānda*, the *Sundara Kānda*, the *Yuddha Kānda* and the *Uttara Kānda*.

In the Rāmāyana, statements on materialistic doctrines are few; when Bharata goes to the forest to bring Rama back to Ayodhya, Jābāli⁷ also follow him. Jābāli is a famous hermit, one of the seven spiritual advisers to king Daśaratha. Jābāli argues with Rama in several ways to persuade him return to Ayodhya. It is the advice given Jābāli to Rama is endowed with the philosophical concepts of Cārvāka are expressed.⁸

The Indian epics are acclaimed as the primeval poems or the basis of moral and ethical code. They are also the part of the ancient Indian Literature which was chiefly influenced by Lokāyata philosophy, the most ancient philosophical system in ancient India. The goal of Indian epic was not to discuss Lokāyata philosophy or its various branches. Hence one can not find a systematic treatise on Lokāyata Philosophy in the epic Rāmāyana. However one can formulate certain important concepts of Lokāyata philosophy from this work. They pertain to the theory of perception, the unity of soul and body, the denial of the concept of heaven and hell, the information of the soul, the meaninglessness of alms giving and offerings, the denial of the concept emancipation, promoting hedonism.

The theory of perception

It is said that the Lokāyatas approve only the theory of perception (प्रत्यक्षमेवप्रमाणम्) Some philosophers also assert that the Lokāyatas deny the theory of inference (नअनुमानंप्रमाणम्) Similar concepts and doctrines are seen in Both *RāmāyaGa* and *Mahābhārata*. It is said in *Rāmāyana*:

प्रत्यक्षंयत्तदातिष्ठपरोक्षंपृष्ठतः कुरु ।¹⁰

It is stated in *Mahābhārata*:k

प्रत्यक्षं ह्येतयोर्मूलं कृतान्तैतिहयारेरपि
प्रत्यक्षेणागमोभिन्नः कृतान्तोवानकिन्चन¹¹

Direct evidence is the basis of inference and the scientific scriptures. The scientific scriptures can be contradicted by direct evidence. As to inference its evidence is not much.

Both epics the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata agree that the theory of perception is a fundamental doctrine. RāmāyaGa asserts that indirect knowledge is important and *Mahābhārata* declared that the perception is the basis of inference and scientific knowledge. Moreover it is noteworthy that the *Mahābhārata* claims scriptural knowledge and inference can be refuted.

Futility of religious rituals

Lokāyatas proclaim that there is no life after death or a place like heaven and hell. Hence they consider the religious ceremonies like alms giving, offerings, Yajña and Sraddha to be meaningless practices.

नस्वर्गानापवर्गवानैवात्मापारलौकिकः ।
नैववर्णाश्रमादीनांकियाश्रफलदायिकाः ।¹²

There are numerous words in the Vedas which instruct men to observe various religious ceremonies. But Lokâyatas remark that those rules and regulations are later additions which the coward Brahmins interpolated in to the Puranic texts. In fact the motive of such interpretations was to earn a living for the riches and their posterity.

अनिहोत्रं त्रं वेदास्त्रिदण्डं भस्मदुष्णम्
बुद्धिपौरुषहीनानां जीविकाधातुनिर्मिता¹³

Similar admonitions are seen in the Râmâyana.

It is said in Râmâyana;

अष्टकापितृदैवत्यमित्यं प्रसृतो जनः ।
अन्नस्योपद्रवंपश्यमृतो हि किमशिष्यति¹⁴

People here have taken to Ārâddha and other (allied) rites under the belief that Ācma (a Ārâddha performed on the seventh, eighth and ninth days of the dark fortnights of the lunar months of Pauca, Mâgha and Phalguna respectively) and other Ārâddhas are calculated to gratify the manes. Look at the (wanton) waste of food (involved in these rites); for what will a dead man eat?

यदिभुक्तमिहान्देन देहमन्यस्य गच्छति ।
दद्यात्प्रवसतः श्राद्धं न तत्पथ्यशनं भवेत् ।¹⁵

If the food eaten by one man here reaches, the body of another (in the other world) one might (as well) offer Ārâddha to those travelling from home; no provisions for journey should be necessary for them.

दानसंवननाहयोतेग्रन्थामेधाविभिः कृताः ॥
यजस्व देहि दीक्षस्व तपस्यप्यस्ययंत्यज ॥¹⁶

Enjoining us to gods, make gifts, get ourselves consecrated for a sacrificial performance, practice austerities and renounce, our health and home, these books have been written by talented men with a view to exalting charity.

Mokca the Ultimate goal of Human life

It is said that most of the Indian philosophers were concerned about Mokca the ultimate goal of human life.⁶ Lokâyatas had never been worried about Mokca which meant 'death.' देहोच्छेदः मोक्षः ।

Lokâyatas believe that the goal of life is enjoyment and happiness.

यावज्जीवं सुखं जीवेन्नास्ति मृत्योरगोचरः ।
भस्मीभूतस्य देहस्य पुनरागमनं कुतः ।¹⁸

So they exclaim;

यावज्जीवेत्सुखं जीवेदृणंकृत्वाधृतंपिवेत् ।
भस्मीभूतस्य देहस्य पुनरागमनंकृतः ॥¹⁹

While life remains, let a man live happily, let him feed on ghee even though he runs in debt, when once the body becomes ashes, how can it even return again?

In the Rāmāyana too there are verses which extol hedonism.

राजभोगदाननुभवन्महार्हान्पार्थवात्मज ।
विहरत्वमयोध्यायां यथाशकस्त्रिविष्टपे ॥²⁰

O king's son, enjoying costly regal pleasures, do you sport in Ayodhya like Śāstra in the celestial regions. Hence one can find out, in Rāmāyana, many admonitions akin to lokāyata philosophy.

Conclusion

Indian materialism has contributed much to the intellectual development of the country. It has fought against superstitions and has encouraged people to think in scientifically. It has encouraged introverts to be active and optimistic rather than be desperate. Materialism has also exhorts people never to bend their heads before the priests but to face the realities courageously. It has also asked the people to strive life happy. In short materialism exhorts people never to seek or depend on the Supernatural powers but believe in human power.

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2. साङ्ख्ययोगोलोकायतंचेत्यान्वीक्षिकी Kautilya, *Arthaśāstra*, 1.1.
3. Srikanthswaram, *Sabdataravali*, National Book Stall, Kottayam, 1923, page 992.
4. C. Madhavan pilla, *English-English-Malayalam-Dictionary*, National Book Stall, Kottayam, 1985, page 1162.
5. Srikanthswaram, op.cit, page 116.
6. Quoted by Damodaran K, *Bharatiya Cinta*, Kerala Bhasha Institute, 1973, page 116.
7. Jabali is a sacrificing priest of Dasaratha (1,75). He came to Ayodhya when sent for by the king for performing the Aswamedha (1,8,6).
8. वाल्मीकीरामायणम्, अयोध्याकाण्डम्, 108, 1-18

9. The statement that the lokayatas approve only the theory of perception is not a right conclusion. Promoters of such statement want to despise Lokayata philosophers and their theories. A careful analytical study about the doctrines of Lokayata and the theory of Purandara who lived during the 7th century AD would make one realize that Lokayata doctrines approve not only the theory of perception but also appreciate the theory of inference. For details study and discussion refer Dr. Dharmaraj Adat, *Lokayatadarsanam*, Cintha Publishers, Tvm, 1990, page 57.
10. वाल्मीकीरामायणम्, अयोध्याकाण्डम्, 108, 17.
11. महाभारतम्, शान्तिपर्वम्, मोक्षपर्वम्, 218, 27.
12. माधवाचार्यः, सर्वदर्शनसंग्रहः, 1, 12.
13. ¹Ibid, 1, 12.
14. वाल्मीकीरामायणम्, अयोध्याकाण्डम्, जाबालीवचनम्
15. Ibid, 108, 15.
16. Ibid, 108, 16.
17. In his work *Lokayata Darsanam*, Dr. Dharmaraj Adat, says that the priests consider Moksa as the ultimate end of man. They say that when animal is killed for sacrifice it goes to heaven. If this statement is true, they should first kill their parents but they never do that. So we can realise that many rituals that the priests ask the people to fulfil are the means to earn living for themselves. For detailed study, see, *Lokayatadarsana*.
18. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says, 'The sun shines equally on the good and the evil. If nature has any quality, it is that of transcendent immorality. The majority of men, thanks to their weakness, believe that there are deities, protectors of innocence and averages of crime, who are open to persuasion and flattery. All this is due to lack of thinking. We do not see anywhere in the course of the natural phenomena when we trace them to gods and demons. It was impossible for those denying spirits to look upon nature as if it were a proof of a good God, to interpret history as if it were, revelation of a divine reason, to explain personal experiences as if they were the intimations of providence. To treat history as God's witness to injustice, or the events of the world as things planned by providence for the salvation of the soul, is nothing short of hypocrisy. Indian Philosophy, Oxford University, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, page 280-281.
19. माधवाचार्यः, सर्वदर्शनसंग्रहः, 1, 1.

20. Ibid, 1, 18.
21. वाल्मीकीरामायणम्, अयोध्याकाण्डम्, 219,6.

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