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**A HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM FOR EFFECTIVE
PEDAGOGY
Seminar Digest**

**THIRD REFRESHER COURSE ON
“A Roadmap to Enhance Core Teaching Competencies in Academic Landscape”
14.02.2020 to 27.02.2020**



**ACADEMIC STAFF COLLEGE
DIRECTORATE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP
KERALA VETERINARY AND ANIMAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY**

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INDIAN MATERIALISM – A MULTI PRONGED DISSENT

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“Deprivation of liberty cannot be compensated later.” This was the opinion recorded of Supreme Court Justice while he dissented with the majority opinion of Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justice Khanwilkar in the Bhima Koregon case where 4 prominent activists were arrested on allegedly being part to naxal conspiracy. While it will be imprudent to draw conclusions on the Bhima Koregaon case before investigation and trial is completed; there is no denying the fact that relevance of dissent in contemporary life is more than ever.

History has given us abundant examples of scientific, political and social revolutions that were only possible due to this special quality of homosapiens to question or to challenge and if needed change the status quo. Heliocentric theory, democracies across the world and banning social evils like Sati all commenced with lone voices of dissent against an established system.

Have all voices of dissent benefited us? Answer is obvious “No”. Dissent has often paved the way to violence and loss of lives of many just as it had transformed lives of many. Modern day terrorism, naxalism, communalism is all products of dissent one may argue. But here again I beg to differ. What is wrong here is not refusing to agree to another’s ideology but rather the abstinence to impose one’s own which in one way will lead to further dissent. Human beings will be truly worthy of calling themselves civilized when they are able to tolerate voices of dissent and agreeing to disagree without resorting to murdering someone for merely possessing an opinion, attitude or belief contrary to one’s own.

One doesn’t need another fellow being to dissent; at times one’s debate is with one self. People often change or question their perceptions or beliefs based on experiences and isn’t that the driving force behind human evolution. The unique ability of man to learn from his experiences is what enabled him to achieve fetes which his previous generations wouldn’t have considered a possibility in their wildest imagination.

So dissent is the driving force of human development and in the modern socio political sphere where whatsapp forwards and tweets have potential to lynch human beings, it is all the more important for all of us to imbibe the essentiality of accepting dissent. As famously apparently by Voltaire although some dissent to that possibility as well:-

I do not agree with what you have to say, but I’ll defend to the death your right to say it

Yet again isn’t it so ironic that today in the purported modern day of life dissent is facing such a strong backlash in India. It is ironic because if we look into the history of our philosophy, one will have to admit it would be impossible to find out any other philosophy or ideology that has accepted and even encouraged dissent to the extent Indian philosophy had in the past. The best example of this dissent can be seen in the Lokhayata philosophy which was a Nastik line of thought in Hindu philosophy. The word “Nastik” itself mean one who doesn’t believe in the infallibility of Vedas.

So this was a philosophy within Hinduism that commenced with outright rejection of Vedas, which was considered as the base of Hinduism at that point. Lokhayata also known as Charvak is so radical in its approach that It rejects the existence of other worldly entities such an immaterial soul or god and the after-life. Its primary philosophical import comes by way of a scientific and naturalistic approach to metaphysics. Thus, it rejects ethical systems that are grounded in super naturalistic cosmologies. The good, for the Indian materialist, is strictly associated with pleasure and the only ethical obligation forwarded by the system is the maximization of one's own pleasure.

The terms Lokāyata and Cārvāka have historically been used to denote the philosophical school of Indian Materialism. Literally, "Lokāyata" means philosophy of the people. The term was first used by the ancient Buddhists until around 500 B.C.E. to refer to both a common tribal philosophical view and a sort of this-worldly philosophy or nature lore. The term has evolved to signify a school of thought that has been scorned by religious leaders in India and remains on the periphery of Indian philosophical thought. After 500 B.C.E., the term acquired a more derogatory connotation and became synonymous with sophistry. It was not until between the 6th and 8th century C.E. that the term "Lokāyata" began to signify Materialist thought. Indian Materialism has also been named Cārvāka after one of the two founders of the school. Cārvāka and Ajita Kesakambalin are said to have established Indian Materialism as a formal philosophical system, but some still hold that Bṛahaspati was its original founder. Bṛahaspati allegedly authored the classic work on Indian Materialism, the Bṛahaspati Sūtra. There are some conflicting accounts of Bṛahaspati's life, but, at the least, he is regarded as the mythical authority on Indian Materialism and at most the actual author of the since-perished Bṛahaspati Sūtra. Indian Materialism has for this reason also been named "Bṛahaspatya."

Lokhayata upholds perception (Pratyaksha) as the only source of valid knowledge. That which is not perceivable is nonexistent. According to them there are two kinds of perception – Internal and External. Inference is not certain and no such universal relation can be ascertained.

- Causal relation is not ascertainable. Some inferences accidently turn out to be true.
- Testimony relating to unperceived objects is not reliable.
- As neither inference nor authority can be proved to be reliable, perception must be regarded as the only valid source of knowledge (pramana).

Metaphysics is the theory of reality. According to Charvaka matter is the only reality, because it alone is perceived. The world is made of Four Elements namely, air, fire, water and earth.

- There is no Soul.
- There is no God.
- Heaven is a myth and cannot be the goal of life.
- Liberation as freedom from all pain, is an impossible ideal.

Regarding the nature of the material world most other Indian thinkers hold that it is composed of five kinds of elements (panchbhuta), namely ether (akasha), air (vayu), fire (agni), water (ap) and earth (kshti). But Charvaka rejects ether, because its existence cannot be perceived; it has to be inferred. The material world is, therefore, held to be composed of the four perceptible elements. Not only non-living material objects but also living organisms, like plants and animal bodies, are composed of these four elements, by the combination of which they are produced and to which they

are reduced on death. The soul is nothing but the living body, with the quality of consciousness. If the existence of a soul apart from the body is not proved, then there is no possibility of immortality. Death of body means the end of the individual.

The supposition of God as creator is unnecessary. The world comes into existence by the spontaneous combination of material elements. Charvaka theory tries to explain the world only by nature, it is sometimes called as naturalism. But this theory as a whole called as positivism because it believes only in positive facts or observable phenomena.

We can go in deeper analysis of Charvak but the point to be noted here is how such a radical thought was envisioned during a period when Vedas was considered to philosophy that showed us to how live us as "divine rules". While Marx and Engels wrote about historical materialism in the 19th century, here we had people who had accepted materialism as a way of life 2000 years back rejecting theistic path followed by the majority around.

When it comes to philosophy, no one will and no one should qualify something as being absolutely right or wrong but rather should continually appreciate the relativity of thoughts. Human development from a psychological, scientific or philosophical perspective can only develop or progress through challenging of the status quo or through structured dissent. We as a society today need not follow Lokhayata or Charvaka thought process but at the same time we must draw inspiration from the reality that radical materialism coexisted with supernaturalism, and dissent is something natural and essential.