

# Rejection of Transcendental Realities by Carvaka Philosophy

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Carvaka /Lokayata philosophy is a heterodox school of Indian philosophy. They do not believe in the authority of the Vedas. Founder of this school is shrouded in mystery. Brihaspati is also said to be the founder of this school. Carvaka derives its name from its philosophy of Eat, Drink & Be Merry. Carvaka accepts materialism. Materialism accepts matter as the ultimate reality. It rejects the existence of transcendental entities like God, soul, heaven, life after death etc..

Carvaka philosophy focuses mainly on these three issues: -

1. Metaphysics
2. Epistemology
3. Ethics

Rejection of transcendental entities by Carvaka comes under their metaphysical discussion. Metaphysics is the theory of reality. Matter is only reality; it alone is perceived. God, soul, heaven, life after death and any unperceived law cannot be believed, according to them, because they are all beyond perception.

## Rejection of God

There is no God, because Carvaka do not accept the existence of anything which cannot be perceived. The supposition of God as a creator is unnecessary, according to Carvaka. The world comes into existence by the spontaneous combination of material elements. The Carvaka, therefore prefer atheism. The Carvakas say that introducing the name of God, some hypocrites & cunning priests had exploited the ignorant & simple-minded common people. To satisfy God, the common people perform worships, yagya, etc. They offer various valuable things in the name of God by the direction of the priests. Worships, Yagya etc. are only for the selfish fulfilment of the priests.

## Rejection of Soul

Being materialistic, the Carvakas do not believe in the existence of an invisible, unchangeable & immortal soul. According to them, soul is a product of matter. It is the quality of the body & does not exist separately outside the body. We do not perceive any soul; we perceive only the body in a conscious state. A particular combination of the elements produces consciousness. The soul is nothing but the living body (Dehatmavad), with the quality of consciousness. If the existence of a soul apart from the body is not proved, there is no possibility of proving its immortality. The Carvaka philosophers forward some arguments in favour of Dehatmavad. These are as follows-

i) When the body is nourished by foods, then the consciousness or intelligence is also nourished. The nutritious food and drinks make our bodies healthy; as a result, consciousness or soul is also nourished. Hence, conscious is also a bodily thing.

ii) When our body turns to be disordered or unwell, then our mental power or consciousness decreases. This proves that consciousness is caused by body.

iii) Our day-to-day activities, conducts also prove that consciousness is nothing but the body. When we utter 'I', actually this 'I' indicates the body and also the soul. Hence, the body is the soul or consciousness.

## Criticism Against Carvaka Dehatmavada

Though carvaka philosophy severely criticized the existence of the soul besides the body, the carvaka theory of soul or Dehatmavada is also criticized by many philosophers of different schools of Indian philosophy. Some of these critical points are mentioned as follows-

i) If consciousness is the specific quality of the body, it should exist even in deep sleep, swoon, and the like. Consciousness or soul cannot be the quality of the body, because when a person dreams, consciousness remains active, although the body becomes inactive.

ii) The fact that consciousness resides in the body does not necessarily make the former an attribute of the latter. The qualities of the body are perceptible by the external sense organs. But consciousness is not perceived by the sense organs. So, it is not a quality of the body.

Here naturally a question may be raised, how can a soul or a conscious being originate from inanimate objects?

Carvaka replies that just as combination of betel leaf nut, and catechu produces body red colour, in the same way the fusion of these elements speaks of consciousness. According to Carvaka, body with consciousness is the soul. Behind and beyond the material body there is no soul.

In conclusion it can be said that Carvaka's philosophy refutes spiritualism and establishes its materialism to give its metaphysical theories. The main reason of the denial of this metaphysical issue is that 'Perception' is the only source of valid knowledge.