

Brief report

(A lecture on Eschatology by Dr. Shakuntala Gawde on 19/01/2019)

“अविधा वासवदत्ता। कुत्र वासवदत्ता ? चिरात् खलूपरता वासवदत्ता” - thus Udayana was reminded by the नृशंस विदूषक वसन्तक about the long dead Vasavdatta. Further, “प्रायाद् हन्त ! युधिष्ठिरो बुधवरो मीमांसको वैदिकः” and “अहो धन्या कल्पना चावला सा” - thus lamented the two in-syllabus obituaries by a contemporary Sanskrit poet.

Curiously, the MA Semester 1 Curriculum had quite a few references to the deaths of various eminent persons.

While reading the heart-wrenching announcements of deaths of such wonderful people, if ever I had had any questions about what happened to their souls after they died, all such doubts were coolly set to rest by the assurances provided by नास्तिकशिरोमणि चार्वाक that - “चैतन्यविशिष्टदेहैवात्मा”, “कण्टकादिजन्यं दुःखमेव नरकम्” etc.

However, while paying excessive attention to Charvaka, I had been neglecting the आस्तिक दर्शन's. And I was reminded of my short-sighted approach during a talk given by our योगदर्शन teacher today.

The occasion was a lecture on Eschatology delivered by our Dr. Shakuntala Gawde to over 200+ students of Jain Philosophy at Marathi Bhasha Bhawan , University of Mumbai, Kalina.

Charvaka incidentally, declares that “देहोच्छेदो मोक्षः” However, Eschatology begins where Charvaka philosophy literally, ends. For, eschatology deals with concepts of Death and beyond Death at an individual/micro level. It also deals with concepts of प्रलय at a macro/universe level.

Shakuntala ma'am explained to the audience comprising mainly of नास्तिक's (Jains), the basics of Eschatology from a Vedic / आस्तिक standpoint. I am giving below the key points covered by her :

Rigveda's 10th Mandala has suktas addressed to Yama, Mrityu and even to dead persons. Our ancients had a positive view of death. They believed that

Yama would take care of the dead and after exhausting their इष्टकर्म the dead souls would come back in a new birth.

Eschatology concepts were well developed in the Upanishads. They aver that the soul is eternal. Kathopanisad has the dialogue between Nachiketa and Yama which is the essence of Upanishadic eschatological views. Taittreya Upanishad describes how Bhrigu discovers the पंचकोश's within right upto आनन्दमय कोश.

We have seen the पंचकोश's in Vedanta Saar during the Advanced Diploma course.

Ma'am explained how the प्राण / इन्द्रिय's pack up at the time of death and follow the जीव right until it gets a new body.

Some souls may not get to stay in Heaven or Hell and may go through quick succession of painful births and deaths say, even as insects who have lifespans of a few days only.

It was here that ma'am talked of the कर्माशय concept covered in Yogasutras - क्लेशमूलः कर्माशयो दृष्टादृष्टजन्मवेदनीयः । And the shallowness of the Charvaka philosophy struck me !

While I was doing a मन्थन of my own दर्शन concepts, Shakuntala ma'am adroitly rounded off her lecture by giving a brief comparison of Vedic eschatology with Greek eschatological concepts.

There was a spate of questions from the audience. The coordinator of the Jainology course expressed her pleasure at how Shakuntala ma'am successfully managed to convey the abstruse Vedic eschatology concepts to the audience today.

Mr. Manoj Sood