

## In Ads We Trust

By Satyanarayana Dasa

Long ago there lived a philosopher in India by the name of Charvak (lit., one whose speech is very enticing). Charvak propounded a philosophy akin to Epicureanism—that this is the only life and thus we should enjoy life as long as we live. He was opposed to the Vedic concepts of soul, rebirth, merit, demerit, heaven and hell, and did not believe in the concepts of sin or piety. In fact, he even found no wrong in people taking loans without the intent to repay, just so they could enjoy themselves. According to Charvak, not only was there no god, but the Vedas were only the babblings of clever *brahmanas* whose purpose was to deceive the innocent masses.

A similar phenomenon is happening in modern society, though in a disguised manner. TV media, in particular advertisements, promote ideas similar to Charvak's, while subtly undermining faith in scripture. They contain enticing catchy phrases along with accompanying titillating scenes. As it is said that a picture is worth a thousand words, unfortunately, the images on TV captivate the minds and hearts of an innocent audience. Although Charvak presented a logic within his philosophy that was quite appealing to those who were naïve, he did not have any ulterior motives, such as gaining economic profit from his followers. In contrast, the companies advertising on TV have the obvious primary motive of selling their product for the sake of profit.

In his day, Charvak did not have many followers, since he was vehemently opposed by Vedic philosophers wherever he went. Today, however, there is no such opposition to the TV ads, and people place their faith in them without much deliberation. This includes people who would have nothing to do with scripture, and who think that to have faith in scripture is dogmatic. By the same logic, how is putting faith in the words of TV not dogmatic? The persons who founded and propagated Vedic philosophy, such as Vedavyasa, Jaimini, and Gautama were austere, renounced, of high character, and interested in the welfare of humanity. Their interest certainly was not to gain economic profit by selling some product, as in the case of TV ads. It stands to reason that to blindly put faith in such ads is dogmatic. People would be wise not to call those who have faith in scriptures dogmatic; rather, they would be better off deliberating their own position and reviewing their own faith.