

Topic: Epistemology and
Metaphysics (Indian)

Subject: Philosophy

Prepared by

**Department of Philosophy
Silchar College**

Q. critically explain Cārvāka theory of knowledge.

or
How does Cārvāka refute inference?

Do you agree with Cārvāka's view?

or

Give a critical estimate of Cārvāka epistemology.

Ans:— The philosophy of the Cārvākas is based on their theory of knowledge or epistemology. The Cārvākas hold that perception is the only pramāna or dependable source of knowledge. In order to establish this position, they

9
have criticised the possibility of the other sources of knowledge.

The Carvakas reject the validity of inference. Inference is said to be a mere leap in the dark. We proceed here from the known to the unknown and there is no certainty in this, though some inferences may ~~be~~ turn out to be accidentally true. A general proposition may be true in perceived cases, but there is no guarantee that it will hold true even in unperceived cases. Deductive inference is vitiated by the fallacy of petitio principii. It is merely an argument in a circle since the conclusion is already contained in the major premise the validity of which is not proved. Induction too is uncertain. Induction is based on a causal relationship which means invariable association or Vyāpti. Vyāpti is the nerve of all inference. But the Cārvāka regards it a

mere guess-work. Perception does not prove this Vyāpti. Nor can it be proved by inference, for inference itself is said to presuppose its validity. Testimony too cannot prove it, for, testimony itself is not a valid means of knowledge. Hence inference is cannot be regarded as a valid source of knowledge.

The Cārvāka position has been vehemently criticized by all systems of Indian philosophy. The points of criticisms are :-

1. To refuse the validity of inference from the empirical standpoint is to refuse to think and discuss. All thoughts, all discussions, all doctrines all affirmations & denials, all proofs and disproofs are made possible by inference. The Cārvāka position that perception is valid

and inference is invalid is itself a result of inference.

2. Perception itself which is regarded as valid by the Cārvāka is often found untrue : We perceive the earth as flat but it is almost round. We perceive the earth as static but it is moving round the sun.

Thus, the Cārvākas view that perception is only source of valid knowledge is not acceptable.