

**Q. 4. "Perception is the only source of knowledge."—Discuss the view of Cārvāka.**

**Ans.** Though many pramanas (sources of valid knowledge) are accepted by many schools of Indian philosophy, the Cārvāka philosophy admits perception (Pratyaksa) as the only source of valid knowledge. For this purpose they forwarded perception as inevitable and rejected the other pramanas, like, anumāna, upamāna, sabda etc.

The Susiksita or refined Cārvākas, however, accept inference as a source of valid knowledge besides perception. If knowledge becomes dependent on sense-perception alone, then a man will have to remain satisfied with knowledge of a few limited things and as such he will have to face much inconvenience in practical life. In this view of Susiksita Cārvākas, inference with regard to perceptible or perceived objects can be admitted, but inference relating to unperceptible or transcendental objects like, God, Soul, Rebirth, Liberation etc. is not justified. One can infer fire from the perception of smoke, because both smoke and fire are perceptible objects. But God, Soul etc. are non-perceptible objects and their existence cannot be proved. Referring to Nyāya Manjari of Jayanta



Bhatta, Prof. M. Hiriyanna has pointed out that the Cārvākas "seem to have rejected only such reasoning as way ordinarily thought sufficient by others for establishing the existence of God, of a future life etc." They do not reject all sorts of inference. But in the exposition of the Cārvāka philosophy, there is no reference to the acceptance of inference by the Cārvākas.

Though all Indian thinkers are not in complete agreement about the number of possible sources of knowledge, all of them have regarded perceptions as the most important of all *pramāṇas*. It is the first and foremost of all sources of valid knowledge (*pramāṇa-jyestha*). The knowledge which results from this source is also known as *pratyaksa* or perception.

Perception or perceptual knowledge is valid knowledge which is produced by the contact (*sannikarsa*) of an object (*artha*) with a sense (*indriya*). Here 'sense' means external sense-organs like visual sense-organ (*chaksu*), auditory sense-organ (*karna*), olfactory sense-organ (*Nāsikā*), gustatory sense-organ (*rasanā*) and tactual sense-organ (*tvak*) and internal sense organ called *Manas* or mind. Object or *artha* signifies colours, sounds, smells, tastes, tactual qualities, chairs, tables and other external objects and qualities and mental processes like pleasure, sorrow, desire etc. *Sannikarsa* is a particular type or relation between a sense and an object which produces a valid perceptual knowledge of the object. For example, a man perceives the sweet fragrance of a rose with his nose. Here, the nose of the perceiver is the sense (*indriya*), sweet fragrance is the object (*artha*) and the contact of sweet fragrance with nose is the *sannikarsa* (here it assumes the form of *Samyukta-samavāya Sannikarsa*) which produces the perception of sweet fragrance.

The *Karana* or instrumental cause of perceptual knowledge is known as *Pratyaksa Pramāṇa*. *Karana* of an effect is its uncommon cause which has an operation of its own. In the instance of perception, sense-object contact or *Sannikarsa* which is caused by a sense-organ is the said operation. Being produced by a sense organ it, in its turn, produces the final effect of perception. As a sense organ, in a perception, is qualified by such operation, it is regarded as the *karāṇa* or instrumental cause of perceptual knowledge.

The Cārvākas will not accept any knowledge as valid other than knowledge acquired through sense-object contact, i.e., through senses. According to them, sense-organ is the only source of valid knowledge.



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For example, when I hear the sound of music with my ears, the instrumental cause of my auditory perception is the auditory sense-organ, ears. So, in auditory perception ears are to be treated as *pramāṇa*. Perceptual knowledge may be classified into two categories—external (*Vāhya*) and internal (*mānasa*). In case of external perception, we acquire knowledge of external objects through external senses like, eyes, ears, nose etc. Again, in case of internal perception, we perceive our internal processes like pleasure, sorrow etc. with our internal sense-organ, namely, mind. Eyes, etc. are *pramāṇas* in external perception, whereas mind is the *pramāṇa* of internal perception. As according to the *Cārvākas* perception is the only dependable *pramāṇa*, the contention of other philosophical systems that ultimate reality can be known by intuition is not accepted by the *Cārvākas*. To them the truth which is not testified by perception cannot be accepted.

'Perception is the only *pramāṇa*',— this view of the *Cārvākas* is not accepted by other Indian philosophers. According to them the *Cārvākas* prove the invalidity of inference as a source of knowledge with the help of another inference. Hiriyanna says, "It would then refute itself for what is rejected would be admitted in the very act of rejecting it." Besides, all perceptions are not authoritative and dependable, some perceptions are illusory. So, perception is undeniably the most important and most dependable source of valid knowledge, but it cannot be considered as the only source of valid knowledge.

**Q. 5. How does the *Cārvāka* reject inference as a source of valid knowledge? Is the view of the *Cārvāka* satisfactory?**

**Ans.** The *Cārvākas* do not recognise *anumāna* or inference as a means of valid knowledge. *Anumāna* has been accepted as the second important means of valid knowledge by all Indian philosophers other than the *Cārvākas*. The valid knowledge produced by *anumāna* or inference is known as *anumiti* or inferential knowledge. In case of inference, we arrive at the knowledge of the presence of fire at a distant hill from our perception of smoke in the hill and from our previous knowledge of the universal concomitance between smoke and fire. In this case, our knowledge is called *anumiti*. *Anumiti* depends on the fulfilment of two conditions—(a) the perception of smoke in the hill



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