



**Criterion of Truth in Epicureanism and Charvaka Philosophy  
(A Criticism on Charvaka)**

Recived date: 2020.9.23 Accepted date: 2020.12.14

PP.55-71

DOI: [10.22034/jpiut.2020.35002.2370](https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2020.35002.2370)

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**Abstract**

The main challenge of present paper is analytical comparing the “Criterion of Valid Cognition” from viewpoints of Epicureanism and Charvaka (*Lokayata*) philosophy, the largest exponent of Indian materialism. The new findings of the research show that the whole construction of ontology, ethics, and infidelity of Charvaka is logically based on its epistemology. In this philosophy, any intangible existence is denied, and the only knowledgeable subject-matter is assumed to be the material world. So here firstly, the acquisition of the truth is possible solely by sensory instruments, and secondly, every ‘should’ and ‘should not’ that is in contrary to the principle of material pleasure is negated. It can be said that the Charvaka’s philosophers consider Cognition as the ‘true and perceptible belief, but not reasonable one’, and they intensely questioned the validity of Inference, Testimony and Analogy. In contrast, the Epicurean philosophers seem to agree with the definition of Cognition as the ‘true and justifiable conviction’. In spite of believing in the originality of matter and regarding the ‘clarity of sensory perception’ as the criterion of truth, Epicureans consider also Inference, Preconceptions and Emotions as the resources of cognition. Epicureanism’s epistemology is entirely rational, but that of Charvaka is irrational, empirical, contradictory, sense-based and contrary to Reality.

**Keywords:** Charvaka, Epicureans, Valid Cognition, Materialism, Sensory Perception

## Introduction

The explanation of the masters of thoughts about the fundamental epistemic issues has a wide variety, ranging from skeptical, materialistic, and realistic interpretations up to idealistic and monistic paradigms. Apparently, the philosophies of India and Greece have been pioneers in the study of such issues. It is known that at a time in the ancient Greece, there was no specific trace of academic epistemology; however, with the onset of the period of ancient skepticism and along with increasing boom of the Sophists' doubts about the criterion of truth, Plato and Aristotle paid specific attention to the category of 'true cognition'. Likewise, Pyrrhonic skeptics' in their turn, reviewed epistemological issues more systematically and provided some proofs for their skeptical claims. They doubted in the existence of 'certainty' and 'conformity', and said: 'knowing Reality per se is not possible. (Moalemi, 2000: 51).

Epicurean philosophy, along with Stoic philosophy, was one of the most important philosophies of Hellenistic era, which would have criticized any traditional superstitious thoughts (Dawning, 1989: 6/263). The main purpose of Epicurus (271-341 B.C) was to demonstrate the path of reaching to inner calmness (Ataraxia) and delivering from the disturbing thoughts (Aponia). Due to the commitment to a kind of atomistic thought system, Epicurus has been counted in the first circle of materialist philosophers. Basically, he had adapted 'Atomism' from Democritus (460-370 B.C). The whole construction of Epicurus' theory of 'Cognition' is based on and proportional to his main theory of the 'originality of matter and atomism (Mahdavi, 1997: 81). In the 'Laws' section of his philosophy, Epicurus considers 'clarity' as the foundation of any kind of cognition, and believes that sensory certainty is the basis of all kind of valid cognitions. In his opinion, the clarity is, first of all, derived from senses and sensory perceptions, and the validity of other perceptions is due to the validity of sensory perception: "If you fight against all of your senses, there will be no scale to which you refer, and therefore, there will be no means for judgment, even about the very senses that you consider them false and misleading" (Copleston, 1983: 1/ 555).

In the history of Hindu thinkings, likewise, the realization of the truth and the meaning of valid knowledge (Prama) has always been a challenging concern. It was also in the Madhimayaka<sup>1</sup> philosophy of Buddhism that raised a lot of controversies about nature, kinds, validity, instruments and sources of cognition (Bhattacharya, 1953: 3/494). One of the earliest forms of non-academic, and of course, materialistic and skeptical epistemology, can also be found in the philosophy of Charvaka<sup>2</sup> or Lokayata, which is essentially neither Hindu nor Buddhist (Moen, 2012: 10). Charvaka philosophy was considered as one of the most prominent schools of Nastika in India, largely due to the denial of the divine authority of Vedic literature<sup>3</sup>, and, like the Epicureans, it accepts the 'principle of pleasure' as the motive and purpose of life. (See: Dehghanzadeh and Ahmadian, 1395). The origin of this

1 Or yyyyyyy Va;;; its mii n aaarctr is Nggrrjuaa, woo vvvaate tee 'Iaaa ff Cmmnic mntt iss s'.

2 It maa'' 'aatigg ddd ddddwwigg' aaa aao 'hrrmigg wr'.

3Including four Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads.

Hedonistic philosophy (around sixth century B.C.) is often attributed to a wise man called Brihaspathy (Bhattacharyya, 2013: 1). Among the main pivots of this philosophy is the discussion of 'criterion of truth'. Here in this school, the 'theory of knowledge' is so cardinal and important that even the 'theory of Reality' is formulated entirely according to it (Chatterjee, et. al, 2005: 180). Charvaka's insight on the sole reality of the corporeal world, the negation of metaphysical matters, the acceptance of sensory perception (Pratiasca) as the only reliable source of knowledge and negation of other sources, arose in the period when Brahmins usually used other famous cognitive sources, such as inference (Anumana), as well as testimony of sacred texts (Vedas) to justify their religious beliefs and practices (Damodaran, 1967: 106). The followers of Charvaka, by investigating the vagueness of revealed knowledge and seeing inefficiencies of rational methods in the field of transcendental affairs, arose against the thought system of Brahmins.

The present research, which is carried out by documentary and comparative-analytic approach, mainly focuses on the clarification of the criterion of truth and its related matters in the philosophy of Charvaka and Epicurean philosophy. It is therefore worth asking: 'What are the explanations of Charvaka and Epicureanism about the possibility and nature of true knowledge? What are the similarities and differences of these two philosophies in the discussion of 'valid cognition' and 'criteria of truth'? Fortunately, there are some effective papers<sup>1</sup> and thesis<sup>2</sup> on the philosophies of Charvaka and Epicurus, but it seems that none of them do any comparative investigation about the 'theory of knowledge' and, in particular, the argument of 'criterion of truth' in these two philosophies, to which the present paper is responsible. Researches of this kind are an over-emphasis on prevalence of skepticism and materialistic ideas in the history of human thought, and it is an attempt to discover and observe their structural and substantial affinities.

### **The Criterion of Truth in Epicurean Philosophy: Possibility and nature of cognition**

Despite the fact that Epicurus presents completely materialistic explanations about God, Man and the Universe, and considers all the three categories as composed of different types of atoms, his intellectual framework is based on both empirical and rational foundations. In his view, the object of knowledge is the Universe consisted of visible and invisible beings that inherently possess ontological validity. Here we can ask: 'From the perspective of Epicurus, can we know and recognize such a Universe? The followers of Epicurus believe in the possibility of

1 ). mmmiii yyyla, "The tmmss ff nnnnnmmmin mmmmmmmmmddd t. e lfflccce of cccuraan Tooggtt'", *The Old Treatise of Persian Literature*, First Year, No. 1, Pages 25-88, ;;;; B). Zkkirrr , Bmmmm, rrrrr r kka (Iiii an aa terialimm)", *Intellect Treatise of Hamshahri*, No. 22, Pages 48-00, ;;;; C). vvv ggrrr , Majid, AAFwwtggggtt s in the iii lyyyyyy yfff feri ddd ll aarrt'", *Mehr Magazine*, No. 9, 1311.

2 A). Ghii bi. VII i, "the relationship between pleasure and happiness from the viewpoint of Epicurus, Aristotle and Mulla Sadra", DDDDtsss is, ppprrvied yy aaaa mmdd lli shomali, Faculty of Theology and Islamic Sciences, Baqerul'lum University (2011); B). Nssr zaaani, aa liaa, "Epicur's view on Ethic", .. A tsss is' ppprrvied yy eeed Biii ta Motlagh, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Isfahan University, 2013.

real and true cognition, though both in possibility of cognition and meaning of it, have a completely atomistic approach. Epicurus himself, too, assumes the possibility of true knowledge, but he considers some limits to human knowledge. From his point of view, perceptions and feelings are the ultimate criteria and main judges of truth, and anything that is beyond sensory or meta-perceptual perception is uncertain (Copleston, 1987: 1/555).

So, 'what is Epicure's opinion of valid cognition and its semantic realm?' Based on Epicurus's epistemological views, we can claim that he defines cognition as 'true, tangible and justifiable conviction'. According to Epicurus, the true cognition must correspond with the Reality and the object of knowledge must be clearly revealed in such a way that the certainty surely attained and there be no doubt about the possibility of misunderstanding. He believes that the cognition that is so certain, cannot be found nowhere except in the senses and what is related to them (see: Durant, 1999: 1139). The basic principle of the Epicureans' logic is the principle of 'clarity' or 'lucidity' as the foundation of all kinds of knowledge (Bern, 2006, 41), though, not the rational clarity that Descartes put it as the basis of his scientific method, but sensory clarity that is meant by Epicurus. According to him, 'being manifest' is a characteristic of sense, and the sense itself is the source of any knowledge, because all of senses are independent from each other and one sense cannot refute another, because each one has a different sort of object; as even the Reason cannot violate any sense, because the Reason itself is dependent on senses (Hooman, 1385, 151). However, Sensation does not make any judgments about the world. It just apprehends what is present to it (Tim, 2010: 98)

### **Validity of cognitive sources**

Contrary to Aristotle and Plato, who accepted the principle of the ability of Reason to reach and understand Reality, and especially Plato, who considered rational perceptions and observation more valid than sensory perceptions (Moalemi, 2000: 51), Epicurus found the reliable source of the cognition in three parallel branches that altogether have sensory perception as their main core: A). Perceptions originating senses; B). Preconceptions; and C). feelings or Emotions (Laertius, 2008: 438).

### **Perceptions originating senses**

For Epicurus, ontologically, whatever is felt is real and true, and there is no difference between saying that 'the object is real' and the statement that 'the object exists' (Bern, 2006: 42). He asserts that even the figments experienced by dreamers and madmen are true (Tim, 2010: 117)

Therefore, epistemologically, the sole object of human knowledge is sensible things. The underlying index of truth is 'clarity originating from sensory perception', and sensory knowledge is considered to be the fundamental foundation of any other knowledge. Epicurus believed that all emotions were true and he did not accept any measures other than feelings and senses in judging of the truth. He considered the sensory perception as the most certain knowledge and recognized the judgment of reason only when it was based on the senses: 'If you fight against all the feelings, there will not be any criterion for your judgments, even to judge those feelings that

are considered false' (quoted from Gatlib, 2009: 403). As Epicurus himself has said, 'Logic teaches us that truth must be perceived from sensory perceptions and that all of our emotions are true, because there is no doubt about them' (Amire Helmi, 1998: 362). 'We cannot understand anything from the non-empirical world. The very Reason should also satisfy itself only with the experiences of the senses. If cognition does not come from the senses, then wherefrom it originated, and if our senses are not the ultimate judges of truth, then how can we search for a criterion for the Reason that its necessary data is taken from senses?' (Durant, 2003: 1139).

Another question that is posed here is this: 'from the viewpoint of Epicurus, what is the origin and nature of sensory perception?' According to Epicurus, 'sensory perception is obtained by collision of the soul atoms (spiritual atoms) and external atoms (physical atoms) (ibid: 41). The next question relates to the nature of imaginative perceptions: if the criterion of truth is sensation and sensory perception, then what are the fictional and illusory forms that sometimes human beings encounter them? It should be noted that the Epicureans put imaginative conceptions under the heading of 'sensory perceptions'. According to Epicurus, 'When images continuously flow from a single object and enter into our sensory organs, we percept in a more accurate sense, but when external images come in from the other vent ducts of body, as if, they are mixed and blended and fantasy imageries, like the image of 'Centaurus' are appeared. But in both cases, we have a perception, and since both types of images are derived from objective causes, then both types of perceptions are real' (Copleston, 1987: 1/556). Then, we have to ask: 'So, how the sensory error occurs?' Error occurs only as a result of a mistake in the judgment, not in sensory perception (Karam, 1936: 388); humans make mistakes, not senses. The error is not come from senses, but the decision issued by the reason became the source of the error (Brya, 1995, 2/96). 'If we look closely, we will come to the truth, and when we misinterpret our feelings or refer them wrongly to some objects, we make a mistake and become deprived of true knowledge' (Frost, 2009: 302).

According to Epicurus, there is no superior power to deny sensory perceptions or treat them as wrongdoers. The senses cannot deny one another; for example, a particular sense cannot reject another sense of the same kind, because both of them have equal forces, and we treat them equally. On the other hand, Intellect or Reason cannot deny the senses, because the Intellect itself is dependent on sensation, and all our rational conceptions emanate from the sensory experience. Thus, not only Reason cannot be a criterion for judgment about senses, but also the foundation of reasoning is based on senses, and these are the senses that form the undisputed basis of our cognitions (Werner, 1998: 178). Moreover, the reality and the objectivity of different sensory perceptions guarantee the authenticity of our senses; seeing and hearing is just as real as pain or suffering. Therefore, when we intend to deduce an unknown thing, we must begin with simple and clear facts, because all our ideas are emanate from sensory perceptions, either by a real contact, or by analogy, comparison and composition, or by very little aids on behalf of the Reason. Likewise, what is appeared to maniacs or to humans in sleep are real and true, because it produces influences and impressions; for example, it causes changes in mind; whereas, what it is not real, never results such effects (Laertius, 2008: 438).

Here, one might ask: do all feelings enjoy equal importance and credibility? Epicurus states: 'But some sensory impressions are clearer than others, and these are the perceptions that must be treated as criterion. For example, our visions and dreams of gods, as well as our uniform imagination of far-off materials are not enough to ground our decisive conclusions about the outside world on them, whereas some other impressions seem to be enough for this purpose. However, Epicurus did not have any definitive answer to the question of how we can recognize that a perception is so clear and lucid that we can rely on it. But his general rule here is: "The closer you are to a material, the more likely is to have reliable impressions" (Gatlip, 2005: 405).

### **Preconceptions**

For Epicurus, the second criterion of truth is the verity and the clarity of 'Preconceptions' or 'the priori conceptions'. He thinks that 'out of every material object emanates a stream of particles that contact with our senses, and since this is a continuous process, it creates the feeling of firmness and toughness of the objects in us. Due to the various emotions we receive from the same objects, we create 'images and general concepts' that allow for the identification of the forms and their characteristics (Ado, 2003: 167). Epicurus calls these preconceptions as 'the priori background', and his suggestion by such naming is that the emergency and clarity of preconceptions in the human mind is prior to any intellectual action. The 'priori background' is true and valid, because it is 'clear' and solely grounded on the basis of the senses (Werner, 1994: 178). Moreover, there is some evidence that common preconceptions may be relied upon to show objective existence. In the Letter to Menoecus, Epicurus demands that one must think of god just as is shown by the 'common notion' (Amis, 2009: 91).

According to him, 'preconception' is the memory of something that has come repeatedly to our sensory perception. When a sense or a feeling is repeated more and more and put some impressions in the memory, it is called 'preconception' (Ibid). For example, as soon as the word 'man' is enunciated, due to functioning of preconceptions in which the senses are pioneering, we think of the pre-existing form of human. Thus, the first thing that every word refers to is obvious and clear, and we should never begin an investigation unless we know what we are looking for (Laertius, 2008: 438). Also, we should not name something unless we first understand its form by means of preconceptions. The 'preconceptions' are clear and evident (Ibid), and because of their clarity and their reliance on senses, they are true. According to Epicurus, the preconceptions are always real and true, and only when we make beliefs or judgments by them, there arises the question of verity or falsehood. If a belief or judgment is related to the future, then it must be confirmed by experience, whereas if it is not related to secret and unempirical causes, it should not be contrary to the sensory experience (Coplstone, 1983, 1/557)

Nevertheless, Epicurus distinguished 'the priori background' from 'assumption'. He considers 'assumption' as a more or less desirable interpretation that we do it based on our sensory perception. The 'priori background' by itself does not add anything to sensory perception, and this principles, like the very sensory perception, is always in accordance with the truth, though the 'assumption' can be true or false.

However, the 'assumption' is very useful to obtain cognitions, and it is by means of the 'assumption' that we can go from the perceptible objects to attain to the foundation and principles of imperceptibles which are not lied under the sensory perception; and that is also the way to find a priori or general picture of the inner construction of Reality. (Werner, 1994: 179-178).

### Feelings and Emotions

According to Epicureanism, the third criterion of truth is the clarity arising feelings or inner emotions that are the indicators of our avoidances, choices and behaviors. For Epicurus, the feelings are the impressions that come from environment and all of them are true. He thinks feelings are summarized in two main types: the pleasure and the suffering (Tim, 2010: 85). These two feelings are found in every individual living, though the former is desirable and the latter is unfavorable. The feeling of pleasure is the criterion of choices, whereas the feeling of suffering is determinant of avoidances (Copelston, 1983: 1/557). Epicurus in a letter to Herodotus writes: 'O Herodotus . . . We must rely on our perceptions and emotions with our full desire, that is to say, we must rely solely on the existing feelings and affections, whether it is from the mind or from any other resources; and in the same way, we should rely on fulfilled and actual emotions, so that we can find a way to determine what needs to confirm and what is ambiguous' (Laertius, 2008: 440).

According to Epicurus, it is essentially by 'the clarity originating priori concepts' or 'sensory clarity' or 'clarity arising feelings that man attains to cognition. Other criteria are essentially based on or derived from 'feelings and senses'. Meanwhile, the perceptions and feelings complement each other and simultaneously always relate to the actual affairs and objects and have their own special clarity (Amis, 2009: 94). But to this preliminary and immediate clarity, we must add the cognition and knowledge that we have previously gained, and it is by this brief cognizance that we infer the nature of the invisible things by the signification of visible objects. In other words, what is present, is our guide and proof to know what is absent (Mahdavi, 1997: 81).

The feelings of pleasure and suffering have an impression in us that we interpret it as a memory. These memories may confirm or reject our current perceptions. That is why, by the insights that already has come to us, and by the subjective recordings and associations that we have, we can in comparison with the past constitute an insight and information about the present and future affairs. In result of the very kind of cognition, we are not surprised by the incidents. By the very analogy from the visible to the invisible, we can acquire knowledge about more important hidden things, such as the existence of emptiness and atom- the things that we cannot do know them otherwise (ibid: 82-81).

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The Hindu thinkers' view of the 'criterion of truth' has a wide scope. The category of 'true cognition' has also been the main concern of the Charvaka philosophers. Nevertheless, Charvaka's skepticism and guideline in identifying and explaining the categories of existence had such an efficacious position that led other Hindu philosophers to review and re-evaluate their epistemic foundations. It has been said that the effectiveness of the Charvaka's epistemology has been particularly

prominent in the sound reformulation of Hindu logic and rationality (Mostafakamal, 1998: 16). The definitive tenet of Charvaka School in the case of 'criterion of truth' is this: 'everything that is perceived by senses, it is acceptable and true, and anything that is not perceivable by senses, it is skeptical, invalid, and false. Charvaka's other nihilistic, hedonistic, and skeptical ideas can be inferred according to this general rule. In Charvaka school, contrast to Epicurean philosophy, analogy from the visible to the invisible, the inference of the cause by observation of the effect, the assumption of the authenticity of the general concepts, the assumption of the existence of unchangeable and stable relationships between the two phenomena and the causation principle, especially if they are related to the metaphysical areas, are absolutely failed and denied.

### **Possibility and nature of cognition**

Among the primal epistemological issues is the question of the possibility of cognition and if knowing is possible, is it confined or absolute? From the viewpoint of the Charvaka philosophers the answer to the first question is somehow positive. In spite of having different attitudes and perspectives, all of Charvakas consensually acknowledge the possibility of cognition and the human ability to recognize. But, like Epicureans, they consider certain limitations for human cognition. According to majority of them, our knowledge is confined to sensory perceptions (Gupta, 1981: 9/38), and the valid cognition is possible only through sense perception in the realm of sensibility or objective world (Chatterjee, 1997: 198). As a result, there is no possibility of knowing anything that goes beyond the physical and empirical experience (Dasgupta, 1922: 1/79). This negative approach was deepened to a point where some of the radical philosophers of Charvaka saw ineligible not only the instructions arising revelation, but also the rational cognition. These radical philosophers, further, accepted the validity and originality of sensory perception solely in the Present, not in the Future or the Past. In fact, the epistemological claim of this group of thinkers had both positive and negative dimensions: acceptance of sensory perception was the positive aspect of their claim, but the rejection of revelation and the rational cognition was its negative dimension. But as it has been said, they confirm the certainty of the sensory perception in the present time, but it is controversial among them that whether sensory perception in the past or in the future time also is reliable. However, in order to justify and avoid from contradictions or to repulse the entering criticisms, the moderate thinkers of Charvaka inevitably accepted the validity of rational cognition only in the sensory affairs and merely in the realm of the material world.

Now that knowledge is possible at least in physical realms, one can ask: how Charvakas define or explain 'Cognition'? The interpretations that are quoted of the Charvaka philosophers and found in the works of their Hindu and Buddhist critics lead us to conclude that according their viewpoint, 'certainty' (belief in), 'correspondence with the objectivity (true), and 'perceptible to common sense' are considered as the main components of real cognition. From Charvaka's point of view, certain knowledge must have such a certainty that nobody can doubt it. Such a knowledge can only be obtained through sensory perception (Ibid: 289), and its truthfulness is provable through 'common sense' of human beings. In other words,



the cognition obtained by the contact of the senses with the objects is the only possible cognition (Mostafakamal, 1998: 14), and the truth is only the result of sensory cognition. As a result, Charvaka's definition of valid cognition can be summarized in this expression: 'Truthful and tangible belief, but not reasonable one'. Here we can find out that the Charvaka theory of truthfulness of belief is compatible with and comprehensible by refer to the context of the Aristotelian meaning as 'the correspondence of subject and object', but not to mean 'internal consistency or in its pragmatist meaning.'

### **Validity of sensory perception**

Unlike to the majority of Indian philosophical schools that acknowledge the validity of almost all the sources of knowledge (Mittal, et al, 2007: 537), and contrary to the idealistic philosophies of Buddhism such as the Mādhyamika (Shunya-vada) and the Yoga-chara (Vijnana-vada) that respectively saw sensory perception as products of a universal illusion, or consider it as artifacts of the human mind, and therefore do not essentially give it an ontological credit (see: Shayegan, 2010: 2 / 446), Charvaka's thinkers recognize the sensory perception as the only resource of valid knowledge and the only criterion of truth (Warren Myers, 2001: 30). According to them, the sensory perception is the cognition that we derive it from the sensory organs by our encountering with the objects (Mostafakamal, 1998: 13). But the important point here is that, unlike the Epicureans, the notion of the Charvaka followers of 'sensory perception' as a source of cognition (Paramana) is, in principle, only the external senses like sight, hearing, smell, taste and tactile, and nothing else (Warren Myers, 2001: 31).

Nevertheless, some of the Charvaka philosophers accept the validity of sensory perception limited only in the present time, not in the past or the future. According to their argument, sensory perception must be created either by external sensory organs or by the internal sensory organs, i.e. the mind (Mosesfakamal, 1998: 13). The external sensory perception is gained by the contact of the five senses with visible, audible, touchable, testable and smelly objects, and the inner perception is developed by the contact of Mind with the mental states and processes (Chatterjee and others, 2005: 362). External sensory perception cannot be considered as a valid factor of cognition in all times, since it propose the current connection between senses, objects and cognition in particular affairs, but such a connection is true only in the present time, and there is no guarantee of its permanent truthfulness in the past or future (Acharya, 1882: 6). External sensory perception also cannot be useful for the recognition of general and supra-mental propositions (Kaviraj, 1968: 69).

According to them, inner sensory perception cannot, by definition, be a valid path to cognition in all times. Because this group of philosophers does not accept the Mind as an independent perceptive organ, and therefore they does not consider inner perception created by the mind as real and valid: 'You cannot prove that the mind contains any independent power over external activities, because everybody acknowledges that the mind is dependent on external senses' (Acharya, 1882: 6). Therefore, the logic of Charvakas epistemology is based on the acceptance of the validity of external sensory perception only in the present time, the rejection of the

validity of external sensory perception in past and future times, as well as invalidity and inaccuracy inner sense organs (Mind) at all times.

### **Refutation of inference and general propositions**

'Inference' is a process in which by sensory cognition of an object (effect) and by assumption of a constant connection between the two phenomena, we attain to the existence of effective (cause). From Charvaka's point of view, the inference is not a genuine source for knowledge, and its results can be only a suspicion, not certainty (King, 2000: 133). The correctness of the inference is based on the assumption of some general ratios, such as the constant assiduity between two phenomena, which never lie under the sensual experience (Sen, 1998: 16-17). The inference is merely like an arrow in darkness, and by this obscure means, we are going to the unknown, but there acquired no certitude or certainty for us (Course, 2011: 11). Although sometimes the inference is accidentally true and leads to beneficial consequences, it leads to mistake and error in some other times (Mostafakamal, 1998: 15). The truthfulness of the inference is only a matter of chance and accident, and there is no certainty about its constant truthfulness (Dasgupta, 1922: 1/79). For example, the case of 'the smoke resulted by fire', although it is likely to be true here and now, but the conclusion that wherever there is fire, smoke is there too, or vice versa, is not correct conclusion (Damodaran, 1967: 106).

Moreover, the inference can never be led to such a certainty that there is no doubt about it. When we infer the existence of fire by observing smoke on a mountain, we actually jump from the seen smoke to the unseen fire (Mostafakamal, 1998: 13). Existence of a constant relationship between smoke and fire is established only when we have a positive knowledge about it, whereas it is impossible to obtain this kind of certainty absolutely, because we cannot examine one by one, all cases of connection between smoke and fire. Furthermore, this kind of examining is impossible not only in the present moment in all over the world, but also in the past and future (Chatterjee et. al., 2005: 174). We can only through sensory perception find out that this special 'A' is in relationship with that particular 'B'. But we cannot go from this trivial sense knowledge to the unknown phenomena and assert categorically that all 'A's are related to all 'B's (Kavirja, 1968: 69). We cannot solely by seeing black clouds come to the conclusion that rain will come down, unless we have positive and concrete certainty that the blackness of clouds and rain are interconnected continuously, while there is no any certitude or certainty in this basis (Gupta, 1981: 9/39). Here, one might ask: 'can we acquire that positive knowledge about the existence of a constant connection between fire and smoke on the basis of a causal ratio? According to Charvake's thinkers, the very assumption of the causal connection between the two phenomena is an example of the same general connections and cannot be experienced or proved by sensory perception (Chatterchee and others, 2005: 177).

Inference is also invalid in the discovery and identification of general propositions, since the correctness of the inference of a general proposition must be proved on the basis of another inference, and then, there will emerge either a

concatenation or a fallacy. Therefore, since it is impossible to know the general propositions, it is impossible to prove the inference too (Acharya, 1882: 6).

### Verbal knowledge

The ‘verbal knowledge’ (Shabda) is a ‘knowledge acquired through words and sentences’ (Chatterjee, et. al., 2005: 401). According to the Charvakas, words and letters are perceived through the ears, and we can understand them. Since the knowledge about words is acquired by the way of senses, it is completely valid. But, as long as the words are associated to metaphysical or super-sensory matters or they have a meaning out of our senses, they are no longer empty of mistake and suspicion (ibid. 179-178).

As for the authenticity of the words of sacred texts, the Charvaka followers believe that they cannot be a definite source of valid knowledge: ‘The sacred Vedic literature contains of many absurd and obscure words. They are the perplexing perceptions of the wicked people, the bastards and the charlatans’ (Acharya, 1882: 7). The revealed Srtuti<sup>1</sup> texts and the interpretive Smrti<sup>2</sup> books are always in a clear conflict with one another, and their consistency may be possible only by the fallacious interpretations and by deceitfulness of the authoritarians. All that exist in the sacred books are nothing other than the instructions of priests to seducing of lay people, and the sources of Hindu mythology (Puranas) are nothing but pseudo myths and fictitious stories (Dasgupta, 1922: 3/551). Therefore, according to Charvakas, all that has come down in the Vedas, from sacrifices to funerals, eating meat, etc., is formulated by Brahmins as a means to livelihood and earning money and thus, their words and testimonies cannot be a valid source of cognition (Dasgupta, 1946: 80-81).

Here is the question: ‘shouldn’t our daily lives be disrupted, if we don’t accept the testimony of qualified individuals or don’t pay attention to experts’ advices?’ The answer of the Charvaka philosophers is that we have already accepted a certification of an authority by this suspicion that he is an authenticate source of knowledge. We have verified the truth of his words by inference, but not because he himself is truly a reliable source of knowledge (Chatterjee and others, 2005: 179). Our belief in the truthfulness of the speech of this so-called authenticated authority has been shaped in such a mental process: ‘We must accept this authority because it is credible and dependable, and all credible and reliable must be accepted.’ Therefore, the value of cognitions derived from the verbal certificate or the words of an authority has not epistemic value more than inference itself. In the case of the very inference, we often act according to a cognitive basis taken from an authority, along with the notion that this authority is valid and reliable. Our beliefs sometimes coincidentally lead to favorable and useful results but sometimes no. (ibid: 180).

Furthermore, the Charvaka School does not recognize analogy as a valid source of knowledge, because it believes that the matching of things cannot give any proper knowledge about a word referent (ibid. 301). Also, the existence of analogy relies on

1 A kkkkkkit wr m naass rrvvaal”””””

2 A kkkkkkit wr m naa””””” “intrpretativ”””””

verbal testimony or inferred evidence and thus it is inaccurate and invalid (King, 2000: 132).

### **Religious results of Charvaka epistemology**

The sense-based and materialistic epistemology of the Charvakas had a great influence on their attitudes to religion and its dimensions, though it flattened the path of faith for the modern Hindus. According to Charvakas, religion is based on supernatural affairs which are the only subject of inference or analogy. However, by rejecting inference and analogy in this school, it is evident that the root of belief in supernatural affairs has been struck. Thus, the Charvaka philosophers ridiculed all religious and philosophical beliefs and considered them as results of credulity of the lay people. According to them, 'religion is an aberration, an illness and a deceit. People convert to religion only because they have accustomed to it, and when the art and science reach to their maturity and so their religious faith be destroyed, they feel annoying absurdity' (Durant, 1999: 332).

Charvakas also remark that there is no soul; the 'metaphysic' and 'supernatural powers' are the meaningless words; vows and oblations are void of meanings; 'illumination' is nothing but a dream and delusion, because our cognition is limited to sense objects, and we are not able to passed beyond perceptible things and in addition that none of these hasn't been proven by sensory perception (Gupta, 2000: 1/13)

Moreover, they believed that 'There is no Heaven, no liberation and no soul which can be experienced by sensory perception. There are neither things that belong to another world, nor class system (Caste), nor any assignments (dharma) that are prone to any karmic moral effect' (Dasgupta, 1946: 79). What is real is this perceptible world; since nobody has seen the other world, then it does not exist (Vihari 1987: 401-402). One should not be afraid of death, because death and life are two aspects of a material phenomenon: life means the union of certain elements, and death is the disintegration of them (Maherin, 1963: 80).

Furthermore, among the philosophical schools of India, we can consider the philosophy of Charvaka as the first and most important philosophy that always denies the existence of God: 'If there is an All-wise, All-potent and All-compassionate Being, then why a very high number of men living in grief and suffering? If the only true being is God's existence, then how can we explain the cause of injustice, discrimination and oppression that are taking place against the poor in society? The existence of God cannot be proved, not only by sensory perception, but also by logical reason (Damodaran, 1967: 103). Nor can it be said that God is the judge of our good and bad deeds. If God brings us to the evil results of our gultied, he is our enemy; so it's better not to have a God than having an oppressive God. As for God, the only true and possible God is the earthly king, a ruler of a kingdom, and the judge of the right and wrong in the community (Radarishan, 1985: 1/134).

### Criticisms and comments

In Charvaka's philosophy, there are a lot of distortions and contradictions. Apparently, the views of this school are also in conflict with all that we know as Reality, and their irregular opinions put them in difficult situations.

The Charvaka philosophers mainly questioned the validity of the analogy, testimony and inference as the valid sources of knowledge, and considered the clarity of sensory perception as the only standard criterion of Truth. However, they themselves emphasized that the entire universe and all its beings are composed of elements of water, soil, air, fire, which cannot be recognized through sensory perception. Now, if these four elements cannot be experienced by sensory perception, then the important question here is: 'then, how and by which means they find out these four elements as the principles of Universe? Is it a way other than inference, analogy and testimony? Moreover, is the very idea that 'Inference is not a valid way of cognition' obtained through a means other than inference?

Besides, if the criterion of truth is only the external sensory perception, then how the sensory mistakes occur and can be explained? For, as long as we may have true and false inferences, we might talk about true and false sensory perception too. On the other hand, the belief in valid knowledge based on sensory perception only in the time of Present can lead to epistemic relativity, which is itself devastating to the epistemic basis of Charvakas. For the proposition that 'any sensory perception of the present time is true and valid' cannot be true at another time, that is, in the future. This statement further is also general, while Charvakas do not accept validity of general propositions. It is evident that the result of sensory knowledge is the recognition of detailed affairs, not general ones.

Another point in criticizing Charvaka's epistemic system is that looking for causality through mediate experience and sensory perception is like looking for fish in the desert. For, causality and our idea about the existence of inherent relationship between objects are essentially rational discussions and cannot be talked about in terms of sensory perception. Meanwhile, the existence of a sequence or fallacy in inference-based knowledge cannot be correct, because, according to proponents of inferential knowledge, all the inferences ultimately lead to a set of obvious confirmed principles that their validity and truthfulness are clear and evident.

The unquestionable principle, from the perspective of the Charvaka philosophers, is the falsehood of every intangible or imperceptible matter. The question here is, 'can the non-seeing and not-feeling of phenomena be evidences to non-existence of them?' The answer to this question is in terms of human common sense is 'negative'. If normally these logical Charvaka teachings were absolutely observed in everyday life, i.e. people deny anything that they did not perceived in some circumstances, would not the whole practical life be profoundly disturbed? In addition, if a person believes in the falsehood of inference, he or she has certainly to deny the fact that the everyday life of the human being is conducted and based on the inference. Such refutation by any one is null and void. Without the inference that the Charvakas are persistently managing to deny it, everyday life becomes impossible.

The followers of Charvaka also refuse the Reason as a source of cognition. But it is evident that the submission of any argument for proving ideas and opinions

requires performing rational works. Similarly, the submission of any argument for proving falseness of inference requires adducing logical demonstration and using of inference itself. When Charvaka philosophers questioned the validity of rational sources of cognition, how they can prove that the sensory perception is the only valid source of knowledge? For, proving this proposition also requires rational work. In this difficult situation, they should either accept the correctness of the inference as a valid resource of cognition, or waiver the recognizing of the validity of sensory perception as a valid way of knowledge.

In response to this difficult and inevitable circumstances, two groups of Charvakas lie in the opposite directions: in the first group, there are mediocre and sophisticated Charvakas like Pourandra, who accept the validity of limited form of inference in the experiential and sensual fields; and the second group, the skeptic Charvakas such as Jayarasi, who refuse any criterion of truth and even deny the validity of sensory perception itself (Bhattacharya 2013: 3/145). According to the first group, inference is sometimes related to the future, and sometimes to the past. The inference is likely to be correct when it is ascribed to the past, but when the inference is related to the future, as in the case of afterlife, it may be false, because it is still not experienced by senses (Damodaran, 1967: 106). But the second group which must be considered as the radical skewed branch of Charvakas, are distinguished from other Charvaka philosophers, who accept sensory perception as the only Pramana or who accept the limited form of inference (Mills, 2013: 144).

It seems likely that the underlying basis of Charvaka's skepticism is this wrong assumption that there are only material objects, and that every entity in the world is composed of Four Elements which are separated in the time of death (Sanskrit, 2011: 8). Nevertheless, the extreme approach of this school ultimately brought the conventional skepticism to absurdity. Jayarasi claims that there is no valid justification to accept the existence of four material elements, because if sensory perception is the only authentic way of cognition, how can a person be certain that sensory perception reveals the true nature of things? Sensory perception itself cannot be considered as a valid way to prove the correctness of sensory perception.

## **Comparison**

### ***Similarities***

- 1). Charvaka followers, like Epicureans, have materialistic attitudes in the fields of ontology and epistemology, and assume the material world as the only knowledgeable reality and truth.
- 2). In both schools, the epistemological issues have been raised in a special, irregular and implicit way, and therefore they should not be expected to have academic explanations about all of modern cognitive issues.
- 3). the philosophers of both schools accept the possibility of true cognition, but harmonically constrain human cognition.
- 4). According to the beliefs of the two schools, sensory perception is the most reliable source of cognition and also the clarity resulting from it is the most certain criterion of truth.
- 5). the epistemological purpose of both schools is the absorption of pleasure and the elimination of suffering and pain.

6). both schools have a similar logic about the origin and the nature of sensory perception; Charvakas say 'Sensory cognition is achieved through the contacting of sensory organs with exterior objects'; similarly Epicureans remark: 'it is obtained by through the collisions of the atoms of the human body with external objects.

7). The philosophy of Charvaka does not accept the credibility of Reason in obtaining the valid knowledge; in a same way, Epicurus did not accept Reason as an independent source of cognition, and believed that the Reason itself is dependent on the senses.

### Dissimilarities

1). Charvaka philosophers consider only the clarity of sensory perception as the criterion of truth and denied the validity of inference, analogy, and testimony. While, in addition to the acceptance of the basic validity of the sensory perception as the criterion of truth, the Epicureans accepted the prior concepts and impressions as the valid sources of knowledge, provided all of them were dependent on sensory perception.

2). There is a controversy between Charvaka philosophy and Epicureanism in terms of their image of form and nature of perceptual perception. The meaning of Charvakas by 'sensory perception' is only the apparent five senses, and these senses equally enjoy the same degree of importance and credibility. But Epicurus sees the inner feelings, like pleasure and suffering, imaginations and dreams and the data of the five senses under the title of sensory perception. He also considers some sensory findings as clearer than some other findings, and believes that these clearer findings should be the criterion of Truth or valid cognition.

3). Contrary to Charvakas -who believe that what is not perceptible by senses, doesn't exist- Epicurus believed that by means of the cognitions that have already been obtained for us, and through the visible affairs, we can also get some knowledge about invisible and hidden phenomena. Charvakas according to this argument deny God, spirit, the life after death, and all metaphysical affairs; whereas Epicurus considers any kind of perception to be correct and sees invisible things as consisting of subtle atoms.

4). the mistakes of senses, from the viewpoint of Epicurus is related to the position of subjective judgment, otherwise, the senses themselves don't mistake. In Charvaka's philosophy, there is not the slightest debate on the possibility of sensory mistakes.

5). apparently, the Charvaka philosophers defines cognition as 'true and perceptible belief coming from common sense but not reasonable one', while the Epicureans see the cognition as 'true and justifiable conviction'.

6). In the epistemic discussions, the philosophy of Charvaka is skeptical, anti-rational, contrary to Reality sense-based, contradictory -and further in its radical branch is anti-religious and nihilist; but all discussions of the Epicurean School are completely rational and anti-skeptical.

7). The entire construction of Charvaka's ontology and ethics is logically based on its epistemological approach; but in Epicureanism, ontology is source and basis of the theory of 'Cognition' The Epicurean theory of knowledge is founded on a

kind of ontology that is in itself, based on the 'originality of matter and the integral component (Atom)'.

### Conclusion

There are both similarities and dissimilarities in the epistemic issues that are raised in Charvaka and Epicurean philosophies. To have some completely materialist attitudes and to see the fact of clarity resulting from sensory perception as the most important criterion of truth, are among the similar items of these two philosophies. Epicurus sees the certainty and valid knowledge in vividness and remarks that the clarity is the criterion of vividness. According to him, other cognitive sources, including prior concepts and impressions, also gain their credibility and confidence from vividness of senses. Nevertheless, Epicurean epistemological discussions are completely rational, while the Charvaka's epistemic system is totally sense-based and anti-rational. The theory of cognition in both schools has influenced their religious attitudes. However, while trying to know truth has led the Charvakas to nihilism and skepticism in religious issues, the Epicureans believe that all emotions and conceptions about metaphysical affairs are truthful in empirical and material meaning.

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