

# REFLECTION

## UGB JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

Volume 1, Issue 1, December-2021,  
Malda (West Bengal)

Editor: JYOTSNA SAHA

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## A Note on Culture

*Sibnath Sarma*

In *Sheser Kabita*, written on the background of Shillong, Rabindranath Tagore has made a significant comment on the concept of culture. ‘Lotus-diamond stone is what is called learning and the light that radiates from it is called culture. The stone has weight, the light has glow.’ Culture and civilization come first in the list of things humans have created in the process of remaining alive and continuously making progress. The experience and conscience of the community, its hopes and dreams, customs and rituals, faith and forebodings – all are contained in a culture.

The term culture must have come from cultivation or continuous practice of something - as its use as suffix shows: like in agri-culture, pisci-culture, mind-culture etc. Continuously cultivating something is its culture. The sister word in Sanskrit also has almost the same connotation. It is *krshiti*, *samskrti*, etc which also have tones of *karshan*, *samskar* (purification) etc. Culture (*krshiti/samskrti*) and civilization (*sabhyata*) are used as synonyms. Civilization is understood as the reflection of the creative constructs of a nation in the field of social, physical, spiritual spheres. Culture too is described similarly. It is also accepted as the reflection of a nation’s experiences in the field of social, political, economic, artistic, intellectual enterprises. The question of continuity in time and refinement of experience is relevant. Tradition and custom, mores and beliefs, habits and tastes, which distinguish a race from another and give it a sort of identity is also there. The marks of cultural identity are art and literature, history, language, religion, philosophy and all other values that a society cherishes and upholds. Even though the relation between culture and civilization is deep and often these terms are indiscriminately used as synonyms, even though we utter these terms in the same breath, there must somehow be a line of differentiation between the two. Not having succeeded in finding any guidance from books, I have solved the problem for myself in the following manner. I submit it for your consideration.

If culture stands for the action, effort, dynamism, experiment – civilization stands for the reality, personality and character of a society. Culture is the process and civilization is the achievement, while both of them stand as marks of identification of a society. May be civilization points to the goal of a group of people and culture is the ceaseless effort towards it. May be it is through culture that a society is civilized. Effort is culture and success is civilization. Process is culture, aim is civilization. May be the long term average of culture is civilization. If the daily weather is culture, its

long term average or climate is civilization. There is no civilization or moving to civility without culture. The daily routine of civilization is culture. If culture is 100 meters dash or ODI, then civilization is marathon race or test match. Speaking in the language of history and geography, culture covers a small segment of time, civilization spans over centuries. Cultures are region-based, civilizations cover states or nationalities. That may be the reason why we call Assamese culture and Indian civilization. Though we can make a distinction like this between culture and civilization, still the relation between these is very flexible. We have already noted the synonymous nature of these terms. There is no distinction in significance and usage if we say Assamese civilization and Indian culture. No semantic error will take place.

Culture is made up of the essence of knowledge, experience, work, morality and values (aesthetic, scientific and spiritual) the fabric of culture is drawn from all areas. Culture in fact is a lasting state of mind. Nobody is prepared to abandon one's own culture easily. Though even culture is born, it grows, it changes, and sometimes it dies too; but when it is healthy and is going strong – it is in command of a society. The society runs according to the dictates culture. Members of society gather their identity from its culture. Therefore culture is so clear for its followers or possessors. Occasionally its followers might indulge in criticizing or assessing their culture. It is not resented. But if a non-member, a stranger to the culture, criticizes it, it is hardly accepted or tolerated.

Culture is indeed an abstract concept. It is abstracted from the activities, rites, rituals, customs, manners, tastes, habits, of the members of a society. The habitual adherence to these activities by a set of people in a particular geographical location for a long time is its fountainhead. We can designate this space and time of culture. The space aspect is its being localized in a region and the time aspect is the legacy in which form it moves from generation to generation. It is the reason why culture refuses to accept ultra-modern trends – for instance, language, dress, food, music, moral and religious behaviours. Wherever it might be celebrated, *bihu* is a part of Assamese culture. *Bihu* can be celebrated in Canada. By that it does not become Canadian. It remains Assamese. That is to say that culture has an inseparable relation with the people of a particular place. Even if the people of Canada like *bihu* very much and due to continuous practice make it a part of their culture, the historians of culture will always relate it to Assam. Similarly, if the Samba dance becomes popular in Assam and is integrated to its culture, it will be considered only as a gift of Brazil. Rabindrasangeet sung by anybody anywhere is only a part of Bengali culture. Wherever it might be eaten, 'pizza' is an Italian food. Therefore the place/space aspect of culture is very strong. And similar is the time aspect. Culture does not change frequently and rapidly, though it changes all right. It is bound by traditions. Every culture has its expanse and depth. If expanse is its developed form then its

foundation is the depth. There is a depth and originality of every culture which compels us to view it as unique. The life-style and customs of a people separates it from others. That is its culture in operation. Uniqueness of their culture unites a set of people. The essence of culture comes from this. Though porridge and *dosha* are totally different, these are however the same from the point of view of food. Similarly ballroom dance and *Kathakali* might be totally different, still these as dance-forms are expressions of cultures of people.

Culture is made up with the essence of life's experiences and values. Here life means collective life. From the cultural standpoint the society behaves as an individual. Culture lends cohesion to a society. The society is bound by its culture. We are not sure if culture is an evolute of society's struggle for existence or it is just the scintillating and most visible aspect of a society. The anthropologists and sociologists might assess it as only an aspect of struggle for existence or attempt to adjust with exigencies. Philosophers might, on the contrary, call it a resting place after life's struggles. While the expanse of culture is taken care of by the society at large, its depth usually depends on certain extra-ordinary individuals belonging to the culture. That actually encourages individuals to do their best in life. But this 'best' has to have a social dimension. That is how cultural icons emerge. That is why Shankaradeva is an inseparable part of the Assamese culture, or Rabindranath Tagore of the Bengali culture.

Does culture unite or divide the society? We sometimes see that the elements of culture pushed beyond a point become cause of division and dissension in society. Religion and language, in particular, sometimes become handy tools of social disharmony. It is difficult to have complete homogeneity of culture in a society. Society naturally reflects diversity. Apparently language, literature, religion, art etc. seem to unite a society; but insistence on any particular language or religion might be a cause of dissension too. We want our language to unite us. But even language has its various forms or dialects. However small a state may be it does not have just one form of language. The case of big countries is still very serious. Take the case of Assam. Standard and pure Assamese is spoken only in some districts of upper Assam. Elsewhere Kamrupia, Nalbaria, Barpetia, Goalparia etc dialects are spoken. Similarly there is a variety of Bengali language. Bengali dialects of Dhaka, Chitagong, Maimansing, Shilet, Kolkata, Birbhum are very different. The same is true of English, Hindi, French or Spanish. If people insist on one particular dialect as the bearer of their culture, they will stand starkly divided.

If seen in this light, language tends to divide society. And so do other elements of culture like religion, food, dress etc. And the power of religion to create disharmony is immense. This is applicable for all religions and all cultures of the

world. Whatever elements make a society, spread light in it, the society has to remain ready for being divided by the same elements.

The concepts of a lot of things are changing rapidly. The concept of culture cannot be free from this. Whatever I have said so far might be true or relevant from an idealistic standpoint. It might reflect my unconscious support to a set of beliefs basically religious and spiritualistic. While pondering over the cultural/civilizational states of affairs what Radhakrishnan had said about the time between the two World Wars appeals to me much; but all may not be similarly or equally impacted. That would bring to fore our commitments to different sets of ideals. He counts the symptoms of fall of civilizations. I shall quote him in extenso: "... The disappearance of tolerance and justice; the insensibility to suffering; love of ease and comfort; and selfishness of individuals and groups; the rise of strange cults which exploit not so much the stupidity of man as his unwillingness to use his intellectual powers ; the wanton segregation of man into groups based on blood and soil...Through sheer wickedness, by advocating disruptive forces, not cooperative measures, by allegiance to the ideals of power and profit, man is preparing to destroy even the little that his patient ingenuity has built up. Instead of progress in charity we have increase of hostilities. In order to live we seem to have lost the reason for living. World peace is a wild dream, and modern civilization is not worth saving if it continues on its present foundations." (*Eastern Religions and Western Thought*/256-7) What was true back then is still true with an added intensity. This is what I feel, speaking from a specific philosophical viewpoint to which, again, all may not subscribe.

That only means all along I have been speaking from a rather orthodox standpoint. The modernists would react sharply. They would see bias and motivation in it. Our deconstructionists, post-structuralists, feminists, queer-theorist friends would consider such views as dogmatic, incomplete, reactionary and even extremist. In the changed perspective of understanding, old values have deteriorated; intellectual curiosity and investigation has almost demolished the difference between living room and wash room. Because of total individual freedom nobody is happy with one meaning of any single concept.

While creating or subscribing to certain values in order to have an ideal society we sometimes close our eyes on or ignore some real and concrete aspects of our society. Critics of an ideal society tend to downplay our hopes and aspirations and brand them as elitist, capitalist, or bourgeois mentality. Industry, capital and politics have unmistakable control over culture. Only a small section of the population is satisfied with an idealistic and pure culture. The majority has completely different habits and tastes. Normally we like and appreciate publicly classical songs, Bharatnatyam, Satyajit Ray's films, Kalidasa's and Shakespeare's dramas, the Gita, the Bible, the Quran, etc. But as a matter of fact the maximum number of people like

and deeply enjoy cricket, football, and gather to witness these. Viewers of adult and blue-films, or readers of obscene and so-called porn literature are more than we know. We can multiply instances of such apparent exceptions. Now, if these are the habits of a majority of people, then they deserve to find a place in our concept of culture, for they are parts of a real society. Wait a little, there is more to it. We have to add to it the view of Queer theorists. Homosexuality, same-sex marriage is now a recognized fact. Concept of an ideal marriage, bordering on sacredness, stands challenged. 'Living together' is accepted. The educated youth calls any good thing 'cool', and protects its right as 'my space'. Doing or saying a bad thing from the classical view is just rationalized as 'chill out' (*chill mar!*) Can we conceive all these and pretend to think that nothing is happening? We also do not know what else is happening around due to the effect of politics, religion or media publicity. It has become very difficult to make out what is good and what after all is bad. Old concepts have changed their meanings or shed quite a bit of these. Culture too seems to have entered into the zone of uncertainty and relativity. Traditionalists are gradually pushed to the margin. Philosophers, moralists, sociologists, all are victims of indecision, due to the clamour of some of their own fraternity who are using to the hilt their right to freedom of thought and expression. Therefore, there is already in place a clash of standpoints, ideologies and philosophies. We seem to be standing at the cross-roads: Whether the ideals make culture or the ground realities do?

Apart from this, the fact that different groups, communities, races, subscribe to and abide by different cultures necessarily leads to a situation of conflict and antagonism. If tolerance diminishes in society then people will lose a huge amount of time and other resources in antagonizing others' cultures. That is exactly what is happening around us. The Hindus do not like the Muslims, the Muslims do not like the Christians, the Christians do not like the Jews, and so forth. Culture seems to be working against the society rather than promoting its well-being. Should we allow this to continue? Is there anything that we could do about this?

The solution, to my mind the only solution, of this problem is the right kind of education. The aim of education should have been the creation and preservation of perennial human values and the aim of culture too is the same. Education is the creator and carrier of culture and values. That is, positive, humanistic, idealistic, and pragmatic wisdom, quality, character need to be encouraged and spread. We have to accept social and cultural diversity and difference as also promote social harmony and friendly coexistence. Many a time we understand a society by its culture and a culture by its religion and assorted practices. Hence, such practices play a pivotal role in promoting or hindering social harmony. Though we say that religion has no link with terrorism; yet the worst type of terrorism and fundamentalism is only religious. And it is not limited to any specific religion. Every religion seems to encourage extremism.

It is easy to impact the religious sentiment of a people. Add to that some other things and you can easily destabilize the society. In spite of being a noble emotion religion often does harm to society. That is why many rationalists are against religion. They prefer to be atheists. But it is a knee-jerk and negative reaction. Just as the society cannot give up culture, similarly culture cannot give up religion. It is difficult to imagine a totally non-religious, completely rationalistic/scientific society. Even if it is in place, life in such a society will be so boring and monotonous. Religion encapsulates a deeper dimension of our existence. This aspect needs to be properly understood and made use of rather than denouncing the institution of religion itself. If a section of society is misusing the institution of religion, then it becomes the duty of the saner section to educate the society about the true nature of religion.

Not allowing culture to lapse into aberrations is the responsibility of all; but all will not and cannot rise up to this responsibility. We cannot expect that. The intellectuals and teachers are the leaders of society. They have to make people understand the diversity and difference in cultures. Like the different colours increase the beauty of the rainbow; like the different flowers add to the grace of the garden, similarly the diversity of culture only enriches a society. Whatever dissension spreads in the society in the name of culture is because of ignorance of the true nature of culture. Anything might happen if we continue to live without the knowledge of importance of culture. Corruption, dissension, hatred that spreads in society in the name of culture is because of our ignorance, wrong choice and wrong attitude. If we deliberately remain illiterate about the nobility of culture, completely blind of the fallout of such an approach, then only bad things will happen to the society. 'Comprehensive attitude' (*sammaditthi*) as Buddha would call it is what is needed. We have to spread love and compassion and completely shun violence and hatred. Good habits of love and fellow-feeling are to be inculcated. Old habits of violence and hatred have to go. This has to be an integral part of our culture. This, again, is possible only through education. There is no other way. Truth, beauty, goodness, happiness, holiness, peace, fellow-feeling, compassion, nonviolence, spiritualism, human dignity and equality, environment, etc all the positive values are to be taught and practiced. We can call such an education value-based education or culture education. It cannot be taught by simply including it in the syllabus. This type of education is to create a personality and character of the student. The process of giving education now is only giving fact based information to the children. It is not practical by the same token. It begins and ends with talk, or at the most thought, only. Arithmetic, physics, chemistry, economics, even ethics – end with mere talk. They do not descend to life. Theory is translated to action only by conscience - and not by a further theory. Conscience is a creature of action. Whatever subjects the teachers might be teaching the students have to be impacted only by the life-style of the

teachers. Ideals are learnt by seeing. A pathetically little portion might come *only* by hearing.

In order to have a refined and well-cultured society we must learn to accept diversity and variety first. Wherever there is a tendency towards conflict that has to be resolved through dialogue and discourse and not by creating chaos and fight. From the point of view of life and death, nothing is more important than an individual, neither society nor state. The state and the society should be such as nobody has to sacrifice himself for these. History is full of the sacrifices of the martyrs. But martyrdom cannot be the ideal of an individual's life. There are much better things to be done. To make tangible contribution to culture in accordance with one's merit is by far the best aim. Everyone has unique qualities. Reaching one's goal in life choosing a respectable ideal is worth trying for. Martyrdom does not figure in the priorities. A rotten and ready to rot society can finish any individual, in every respect, including physical. We have to stop this trend.

The ability to tolerate divergence and difference does not descend from heaven. We have to create it down here. Our institutions of learning are creating graduates and post-graduates, but they fail to create individuals with character. Hence, finally, the responsibility of creating individuals of character vests on the teachers. Only they can give knowledge of facts and wisdom of character and conscience. If these qualities reflect in their lives and actions, the students will emulate their way of living. They have to teach by living and doing.

You may say: Very fine to hear, very hard to do. And, this is all failed idealism only. In the imperfect world nothing succeeds like selfishness, lies and violence. You may be right. But I might very politely ask you: "Then what is your suggestion? Should we then fight to finish? In that case, if you die along with your opponent, who will enjoy the result of your so-called better culture?"

What was good for our forefathers might not be good for us. What is good for us may not be good for our progeny. Hence there should be an inbuilt mechanism of change and refinement in culture itself. That does not happen of itself. That has to be made to happen. Things happening to themselves might not suit us automatically. We have seen it in the case of culture itself. One *changing* and yet *deep* culture is required. We need a culture that possesses the perennial human values as also that change according to the need of the time. Science, philosophy, conscience, tolerance and of course character have to be included in a cohesive manner. That is one way of preserving humanity and civilization. Let us prepare ourselves to creatively contribute toward that.



## Philosophical Contributions of Bipin Chandra Pal (1858-1932)

Raghunath Ghosh

### Biographic Note

Bipin Chandra Pal (BCP), a famous name in Indian history, is associated with Indian Nationalist movement, a great literary critique, an original thinker, a revolutionary and a believer of subjective individualism and rationalism. In the history of Bengal Nationalist Movement the trio – *Lal-Bal-Pal* (i.e. Lala Lajpat Roy, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal) was remembered for a longer period of time. He was born on 7<sup>th</sup> November, 1858 in the Paili village of the Sylhet district now in Bangladesh. His father, Ram Chandra Pal, was a lawyer and mother, Narayani Devi, was a house-wife. When he was a student in Kolkata, he was in touch with leaders of Brāhma religion. He used to go to hear Keshava Chandra's lectures not being infatuated with Brāhma religion but to meet literary thirst from him. He was not in favour of those people who were guided by pure emotion and irrationalism. To such persons BCP emphatically told that the people who wanted magic (*indrajāla*) from him were given 'the net of reasoning' (*yuktijāla*). Such reasoning may seem to be tasteless or non-palatable to them who are emotionally fool and mentally agitated without any definite reason. In 1907 he was sent to imprisonment for non-co-operation with the Government in the trial concerning *Vande Mātaram*, which leads to save Sri Aurobindo from the conspiracy of the Government to make him responsible. BCP was a supporter of progressive mentality in social reformation like opposition of the child-marriage, supporting re-marriage of the widows etc. These apart, BCP had left an impressive contribution as a journalist in the journals like *Basumati*, *Bangadarshan*, *Sonar Bangla*, *Indian Mirror Daily*, *The Statesman Daily*, *Vande Mataram*, *The Modern Review*, *Hindu Review* etc. (2009: 7-10).

He was a great critique and appreciator of Raja Rammohun Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, Vaiṣṇava literature, political principles of ancient India as reflected in *Śukranīti*, *Manusamhitā*, *Yājñavalkyasmṛiti* etc., Bālagangādhara Tilak, the concept of Swaraj and Nationalism etc. BCP had appreciated Rabindranāth's theory which entails that in each and every object Self is manifested as endorsed in the Upaniṣadic mantra: '*sarvaṁ khalvidaṁ brahma*' (i.e., all this is nothing but Brahman) and '*tasya bhāṣā sarvavidāṁ vibhāti*' (i.e., His manifestation is found in all objects in this world). To him Rabindranāth, being a poet, had seen the beauty and truth of the external world with the help of his inner eye. Whatever he had seen was painted through the brush of language. He had enlightened the holistic truth- inner and outer,

where there was no question of alienation. If someone realizes the holistic nature of Brahman, Nature and Mankind, he does not feel any separation from them and this idea of non-alienation (2009: 35-45).

BCP was also a great critique of Brāhma religion also. He has carefully reviewed the interpretation of Brāhma religion given by Maharṣi Devendranāth Thākur, Keśava Candra etc. Ultimately it has been shown that if the injunction of the Śāstras and rituals are taken for granted in its true form, the protection of subjective individualism would be at stake.

BCP had philosophically commented on the theory of *Avatāra* as propagated by the Vaiṣṇavites who had proved the self-contradiction in *avatāra* theory. BCP liked the Vaiṣṇava view that an enlightened man is God, the essence of the Ultimate Reality (*gūḍhaṁ parabrahma manuṣyalingam*) (2009: 49). BCP also felt enchanted when he came across the enumeration of three types of *rasa* – *sakhya* (friendliness) *vātsalya* (affectionate nature) and *madhura* (loveliness) which has got two characteristics- liquidity and blissfulness (2009: 52). By virtue of being liquid it may easily be spread among all the devotees and by virtue of being blissful it also provides disinterested pleasure to all. Disinterested pleasure is called *rasa* (aesthetic pleasure), which has got liquidity or capable being flowing down as well as blissful having disinterested pleasure or non-pathological pleasure or pleasure arising from non-mundane reasons (2009: 52-53).

BCP had deviated himself from our tradition regarding the notion of politics. To him there are principles concerning royal duties (*rājadharmā*) and ethics (*nīti*). Our modern politics is the combination of the both. The *Mokṣa*-centricity of Indian morality is vehemently criticized by him after consulting the original texts like *Śukranīti*, *Kauṭilyanīti*, *Cāṇakyanīti* etc. He emphasizes that in Indian tradition there is four-fold end-in-view *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (economic stability), *kāma* (fulfillment of desire) and *Mokṣa* (emancipation). To BCP *Mokṣa* has got some sort of other-worldly benefit and hence it is not relevant in this-worldly business. To him *Mokṣa* remains as Śiva in a self-content man having other three values proportionately (2009: 89-96).

While discussing Nationalism in Indian context he has referred to Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya and his famous song-*vande mātaram*, which was taken as a seed of Nationalism by Bāla Gangādhara Tilak. The same idea has been developed by Sri Aurobindo in the chapter ‘Nation Soul’ of the *Life Divine*. The idea nourished by Sri Aurobindo that our self is everywhere i.e., all objects- animate and inanimate. Even the Nation is our soul which is prominent in expression-*deśātmabodha* (identity of country and self) (1973: 40-45). Such a self-identification is expressed in different languages like *Bhāratamātā*, *deśamātā*, Motherland etc. Indian Nationalism is

integral in nature which cannot see the Nation as divided manner in an undivided one as evidenced in- '*ekam sad viprāḥ bahudhā vadanti*' (i.e., the wise men describe One Reality as multiplied forms and ways), which is completely different from European Nationalism. BCP raised his voice against the use of European goods and advised to use our Indian goods (*swadeśī*) to protect our culture and integrity (1954: 216). It sounds the echo of what Krishna Chandra Bhattacharyya said in his '*Swaraj in Ideas*' which recommends protecting our own culture so that it becomes monarch in the reign of ideas. For this it may be compared with alien culture to highlight our own. It is also to be borne in mind that if there is any good things in the Western culture; it is to be accepted without neglecting our own (1928: XVV-3-4).

BCP is found more systematic and philosophical in his book entitled: '*India's Struggle for Swaraj*' where he has highlighted Socio-Religious Reforms and the National Awakening, Freedom and Partition, Rise and Growth of Communalism etc, containing his own perception and original thinking (1958: 71).

#### **On Nationalism and Swaraj**

Bipin Chandra was called the '*Prophet of Nationalism*' by Sri Aurobindo (1972: 749) on account of the fact that his speech generated a revolution in the feeling and opinion of the people during Swadeshi Movement in 1905. When the districts calm down and boycott comes to an end, it is Bipin Chandra who stirred up the matters with his good speech capable of attracting the audience towards him.

His lectures on the 'New Movement', 'The Gospel of Swaraj', 'Swaraja: Its ways and Means', 'Boycott or a passive resistance etc. gave a vivid account of the causes, consequences, methods and effectiveness of the Nationalist Movement. The speech on 'The New Movement' gave a short survey of the change of political scenario and its consequences. He had openly pointed out the reasons of loss of faith in the British Government and at the same time complete reliance on the 'genius of the Nation', in God and the eternal destiny of the people. Hence this movement was not only political or economic in nature but spiritual also. (1954: 149-179, 180-218, 219-249, 250-271, 272-274). He had shed a lot of light on the contribution of Islam to Indian Nationality (1958: 42-57).

In other lectures, BCP had provided a sketch on the notion of Swaraj which signifies the right of self, right of financial control and right of the people to import protective and prohibitive injunctions on foreign imports. Such a situation can enable the citizens to achieve the power of passive resistance and self-reliance. In this context the passive resistance means non-aggressive resistance, which is very much beneficial to receive the goal of Swaraj. BCP argues, "We cannot compel the Government to prevent the import the cheap articles into our market that kill by our unfair competition our own industries. But we can do one thing to the country. By our

own determination we can refuse to buy foreign articles, and by refusing to buy foreign articles, we can indirectly protect our own industries by this Boycott Movement” (1954: 230).

BCP had emphasized on the importance of National education for understanding the National destiny. It was told by him to the people that the introduction of English education was made by the English for their own benefit. He also believed that the new political movement might bring ‘mighty transformation in the thoughts and ideas of our countrymen in Indian continent (1954: 116). The main end-in-view of these lectures was to make the listeners to think and to act seriously.

BCP had adopted ‘analogy’ as a method of argumentation. These analogies have been adopted from the Hindu and Muslim scriptures in order to show his broader attitude towards religion. He had gratefully remembered the contributions of Muslim to Indian Nationality. To him there are maximum similarities between the Hindu and Muslim religions. In this context he narrated the story of Mahammad, his daughter and son-in-law, Ali (1958: 48). The story goes as follows. Ali achieved victory and received a considerable amount of gold which he, though poor, distributed it to the Fakirs (Ibid). BCP has successfully compared it with the Hindu Concept of *Vairāgya* or renunciation (1958: 48-49). In this context another interesting story had been narrated by him. Once Ali was injured in a battle and a broken spear pierced his flesh near knee. Nobody was allowed to touch the injured portion of his body due to the fear of pain in the body of Ali. Mahammad had advised his disciples to pull out the spear when he will be in prayer. Actually such incident occurred. As Ali was deeply absorbed in prayer, he was not in a position to feel the pain. This is also an instance of the Hindu concept of *Samādhi* (Ibid).

Secondly, he explained a political phenomenon in spiritual terms as done in case of Swaraj. To him, the concept of Swaraj is not possible unless we have an opposite concept *pararāṣṭra*. *Sva* is always in conflict with *para* i.e., self is not intelligible if there is non-self. (1958: 190). To him Swaraj is otherwise called ‘freedom’ which is not the absence of restraint, but self-restraint freedom. It is not the absence of regulation but self-regulation, not absence of determination but self-determination.

That BCP was deeply rooted in Indian soil is evidenced from the usages of Sanskrit words in speech. To him-“It is hypnotism. It is *Maya* and *Maya*...What we want is to prove this *Maya*, to dispel the illusion, to kill and destroy this hypnotism” (1958: 142). Being inhered in Indianity he said that the success of National movement depends on the determination of the people. For this faithfulness or devotion called *niṣṭhā* is to be cultivated (1958: 231).

### **Models of Civilization**

An attempt has been done by BCP to make a comparative estimate between two major civilizations – Hindu and European by delivering a considerable number of lectures on Hinduism in English. He had presented Sri Kṛṣṇa as the Soul of India, but not a sectarian one. To BCP Sri Kṛṣṇa stands for ‘the Principle and Personality’ (1911: 27-56). He viewed humanity as an organic whole but not mechanical. European Civilization was dominated by materialistic world-view is superior to other civilization. If a civilization is not European, it is not civilization in the true sense of the term, rather barbarism. Whatever is foreign due to the unfamiliar tongue, it cannot be called an inferior in the ethical sense.

BCP was impartial, objective and critical towards the dogmatic assertions about civilization. It is true that the human culture always tries to reach the ideal. That the culture remains outside the real is not acceptable. In all civilizations there are certain common affinities. One among these is found the human domination on Nature, which is common to European, American, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese etc. In Indian civilization there is no domination of human on Nature. Nature, to an Indian, is just like our child who is to be nourished with our affection and care. The Nature can never be dominated by human being due to the fact that plants, animals etc., which are the part of Nature have got their own right to be survived in this world as they have their own bodies and result of action (*karmaphala*). Hence, the theory of anthropocentrism cannot be applied in Indian Civilization (1911: 51-52).

To BCP the Hindu civilization lays emphasis on moral and spiritual while the Europeans had emphasized on physical and material development. He had criticized and shown that both these views are defective and incomplete in nature. BCP observed-“In the ideal civilization there would be no such partial gain, one department of life would not have to be advanced at the cost of another. The spiritual or material would each find its own proper place, function and fulfillment in a perfected and harmonious whole” (1911: 53). Regarding Man-Nature relation BCP was in favour of the view that proposes a ‘sense of belonging’ instead of a ‘sense of possession’. The former is adopted by the Hindus while the later is by the Europeans. He was not blind and obsessed towards any civilization. To him neither European nor Indian as such can represent the highest ideal of civilization. He thinks, “The ideal-end civilization is perfection of Man, not merely in his physical and material, but equally also in his moral and spiritual aspects. It is more; it is the perfection of man as a social unit, as a limb and organ of the social whole” (1911: 54).

It seems that BCP seems to subscribe the view that materialistic society of modern Europe has the fatal defect is its anti-social tendencies due to having its individualistic nature. He was also not satisfied with the neglect of materialistic value in India. Indians should not blindly support or imitate the West, but welcome with all

openness and critical reason the achievement of the West in Science. Hindu Civilization needs the recognition of material possession and activities leading to spiritual life. Eastern Civilization needs the similar recognition of the supremacy of the spiritual life over and above material possessions. From this a conclusion can be derived that to BCP find something good and acceptable in both the civilization as endorsed by Krishna Chandra Bhattacharyya in his *Swaraj in Ideas* (1928: XVV: 3-4).

The main characteristic in Hinduism as BCP felt is to realize ‘Man in God’ and ‘God in Man’. All inanimate and animate objects are integrally bound together and this is the oneness of cosmos (1911: 56). This idea might have got by him in the first *mantra* of *Īśopaniṣad*: “*Īśāvāsyamidam sarvaṃ yatkiñca jagatyam jagat/Tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā mā grdhaḥ kasyasvidddhanam*” That is, whatever is in the whole world is covered by Self. For this reason one should enjoy renunciation and not to be greedy with others property). All beings and things in this cosmos are intrinsically valuable and hence there no genuine conflict is found between Indian and Western Civilization.

### **Conclusion**

BCP’s contribution lies in the following points. First, he had completely denied the *Mokṣa*-centricity of Ethics as found in Hinduism on account of the fact that among the four- *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *Mokṣa* the three called *trivarga* is associated with our this-worldly matter. As *Mokṣa* is an other-worldly one, it has no relation with mundane world. He was more concerned with this-worldly problems like Nationalism, freedom and humanity as a whole, which has nothing to do with emancipation or *Mokṣa*, which goes against tenets of Hindu Ethics. Secondly, BCP had no fundamentalism and dogmatism towards a particular religion. That is why; whatever is good in other religion is to be accepted by us. He had taken many meditation or *Samādhi*- like statements from Muslim religion and shown an affinity between these two. Thirdly, he had made a significant remark when he discussed about Man-Nature relationship. In the Western Civilization between Man and Nature there is a sense of possession while in Indian Civilization there is a sense of belonging. The sense of belonging creates more attachment towards Nation than merely a sense of possession. Possession is possible for the material things like property, money, ornaments etc, but the sense of belonging is possible among the human beings like members of the family, members of the society etc, which is taken to be trans-material. Lastly, BCP had drawn our attention towards the unobjectivity of an entity that is not an impediment to the artistic creation, which I think, is the result of his own original and innovative thinking.

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## **Knowledge, Reason and Nature: In search of Normativity in Epistemology**

*Ramesh Chandra Pradhan*

The main problem that I propose to raise in this paper is concerning the normative character of epistemology as a second-order discipline. Epistemology as a theory of knowledge tends to provide a framework to explain how knowledge is possible<sup>1</sup>. It is the aim of epistemology to theorize about the universal and necessary conditions of the possibility of knowledge of the world. But this does not dissuade the epistemologists from undertaking a purely empirical approach to knowledge as distinguished from the transcendental approach undertaken by Kant<sup>2</sup>. From the transcendental standpoint the a priori conditions of knowledge are primary, while for the empiricists the a posteriori conditions matter the most. But in any case the investigation of the conditions of knowledge is the task of epistemology.

In this paper I will argue that epistemology is a normative enterprise and so it must resist the naturalist thesis that knowledge is a natural phenomenon<sup>3</sup> and that the conditions of its possibility are displayed within the domain of nature. I want to suggest that reason plays a constructive role in displaying those conditions of the possibility of knowledge and hence knowledge, which is basically a rational engagement of man with nature, must remain within the normative domain of epistemic rules and principles derived from reason.

Thus I argue that epistemology cannot be naturalized because the process of naturalization denies the very normative character which epistemology bears within itself intrinsically.

### **1. Knowledge as a natural phenomenon: The Naturalist hypothesis**

Hilary Kornblith, who defends a naturalist epistemology, believes that knowledge is a natural phenomenon and that it arises within the domain of nature as an occurrence that can be studied with the help of empirical tools. Kornblith writes:

Epistemology, according to naturalism, investigates a certain natural phenomenon, namely, knowledge, and the term 'knowledge' and other epistemic idioms gain their referencing much the same way that natural-kind terms do<sup>4</sup>.

Naturalist epistemology, for Kornblith, treats knowledge as a natural kind and therefore it is an empirical investigation into the nature of the natural phenomenon



called knowledge. This brings about a change in our attitude towards of knowledge from the a priori or transcendental approach in Kant to the naturalist one advocated by Quine<sup>5</sup> and other naturalists.

Let us enumerate some of the features of knowledge as a natural phenomenon, as outlined by Kornblith, which can be studied empirically:

- (a) Knowledge arises within nature as something engaged in by the human animals as part of the evolutionary biological processes.
- (b) Human knowledge is subject to the causal laws as they regulate the natural phenomenon within the cause-effect network.
- (c) Cognitive ethology studies empirically the way the cognitive competence is manifested by the human animals such that human knowledge is not very different from the animal knowledge and beliefs.

These features of knowledge, according to Kornblith, presuppose that knowledge is a unified phenomenon which can be studied empirically and experimentally such that we need not go into any a priori structure of knowledge other than the empirical features which together constitute knowledge. The so-called a priori intuitions which philosophers appeal to have no role to play in the study of knowledge<sup>6</sup>.

Naturalist epistemology broadly argues against the normative epistemologist's method of second-order analysis which dissolves knowledge into a non-natural normative phenomenon. The distance which the normative epistemologist maintains from nature through the instrumentality of reason is dissolved by the naturalists. Kornblith re-emphasizes the Quinean idea that epistemology as a first philosophy is dead<sup>7</sup>.

## **2. Reason and Nature: The Epistemic gap**

Normative epistemology as first philosophy demands an epistemic gap between reason and nature as evident on the ground that knowledge is possible only when we ground our experience of the world in the space of reasons as distinguished from the space of nature<sup>8</sup>. It is the space of nature which stands independent of reason because of the fact that nature can never be the home of knowledge. Knowledge as the field of normativity and reasons gets detached from the realm of nature as the latter is the domain of causes and what goes with the causal operations. Following Descartes, one can argue that nature and reason stand isolated for the sake of knowledge to emerge as a field of reasons and justifications. In Kant and Sellars one finds the same distance between the operations of nature and those of reason<sup>9</sup>.

It is in this context that one can argue from a transcendental point of view that reason is legislative over nature rather than a part of the latter for the reason that

reason is the faculty of spontaneity and provides rules and norms for making nature intelligible. McDowell, following Kant, argues that the space of reasons has sovereignty over nature, not the other way round. He writes:

The image of openness to reality is at our disposal because of how we place the reality that makes its impressions on a subject in experience. Although reality is independent of our thinking, it is not to be pictured as outside an outer boundary that encloses the conceptual sphere<sup>10</sup>.

It is suggested here that we can never place the realm of nature or reality outside the boundary of the conceptual or the rational precisely because such an outer boundary does not exist. This argument is the same as the Kantian argument that reason makes nature intelligible and that nature is answerable to reason.<sup>11</sup>

The gap between reason and nature is sustained in normative epistemology for the following reasons:

- (a) Reason is the faculty of spontaneity and the faculty of synthesis of the sense-experience under the categories for making knowledge possible.
- (b) Reason or the space of reasons, is the locus of the norms that determine the structure of knowledge as openness to the world.
- (c) The space of reasons, as shown by Sellars and McDowell, makes room for our experience of the world in which the conceptual capacities are already in operation.
- (d) No experience of the world is possible without being placed in the space of reasons; so experience cannot occur in the realm of nature because that will invite the Myth of the Given<sup>12</sup>.

The bifurcation between reason and nature is necessary because reason as part of nature cannot provide norms to our knowledge of nature. Knowledge is basically the way we the humans rationally encounter nature or the world. Our encounter is not just a causal encounter but a rational one involving our capacity for reasoning, inferring and systematizing our beliefs regarding nature. This rational encounter is not possible in the absence of the epistemic norms which guide us in achieving our cognitive goals such as truth.

The idea of truth which is intrinsic to knowledge accrues to beliefs only when they are found to be truth-maximizing and truth-tracking. In that sense truth is the primary goal of the epistemic inquiry and as such belongs to the very nature of our cognitive enterprise. Truth is the normative standard which all cognitive systems must care to follow. Konblith writes:

This provides a reason to care about the truth whatever we may otherwise care about. It also provides us with a reason to evaluate our cognitive systems by their conduciveness to truth. And this precisely what epistemic evaluation is all about. Truth plays a pre-eminent role here<sup>13</sup>.

This shows that truth must be part of the evaluation of the cognitive systems and so be normatively distanced from the operations of the cognitive systems themselves. That is to say, the more we deeply to go into the justification of our beliefs we have to bring in truth to adjudicate between truth-conducive systems and their negative counterparts. Therefore knowledge as being based on truth cannot be descriptive in nature as it is not a mere description of what the world is and how cognitive mechanisms function in the world. Truth and other norms are prescriptive and not descriptive<sup>14</sup>.

### **3. Prescriptive vs. Descriptive account of the World**

The gulf between the normative and the natural account of the world holds onto the distinction between the prescriptive and descriptive account of the world. Knowledge as it is conceived as truth-tracking cannot be a descriptive account of the world. A descriptive account is satisfied with the way the human beings like the animals get on with the world by appropriating as much as possible for their biological survival. This biological way of making knowledge an instrument of desire satisfaction goes to show that the descriptive account is severely limited for it is “of extraordinary instrumental value, for it allows us to achieve our biologically given goals, as well as our more idiosyncratic goals, whatever those goals may be”<sup>15</sup>. Thus knowledge is taken as a feature of the world it being a natural response on the part of the natural beings like the humans.

The account of knowledge given by Korblyth as a naturalist plays down the demands of the normativists for a categorical role for normativity in the production of knowledge. The naturalist rejection of the unconditional nature of the epistemic norms like truth is based on the ground that norms like truth are instrumental in nature and are hypothetical in character<sup>16</sup>. But this argument seems to suffer from the naturalistic fallacy<sup>17</sup> for the reason that it reduces the normative to the natural and thus makes the former an offshoot of what happens in the natural realm. Naturally we are driven by our desire to know by virtue of our desire to survive. Desires are the source of normativity for the natural epistemologists because in our desire for knowledge lies our preferring the most truth-conducive beliefs. Thus our truth-claims are dependent on what we are naturally and what we value for our natural life. Thus the divide between the natural and the normative is blurred to the extent that we have no autonomous domain for knowledge.

Naturalism has the reductive tendency to assimilate everything normative to the domain of the natural thus violating the basic category-distinction between the epistemic “ought” and the epistemic “is”. In that sense it goes to show that what is normative is what is actually natural. Kornblith says:

The category of knowledge is able to play its normative role precisely because it plays the causal role it does; it is valuable because it provides the means by which animals may satisfy their needs, as well as their desires. One and the same category may do the work of both prescription and description<sup>18</sup>.

Thus a conflation between the normative and the natural takes place much to the loss of the normative as we are denied the way to evaluate beliefs in terms of rational criteria. Reason is lost in the details of the natural and the biological.

#### **4. Retrieving the Normative: The space of Reason reinstated**

The locate normativity within nature as it has been done by Kornblith does not promise well for epistemology because such an effort is bound to fail for the reason that normativity cannot be reduced to the natural and that it demands a place of its own within the space of reasons. There are two reasons why normativity is a matter of reason and its activity in providing rules or norms for epistemizing our beliefs in terms of truth and justification: (i) normativity affects the validation of knowledge and (ii) normativity is concerning the way we measure our steps in doxastic ascent with the help of rules<sup>19</sup>. Both the reasons are paramount in a theory of knowledge which seeks to bring out the a priori conditions of knowledge. Both therefore can have a place only within the space of reasons.

Normative epistemology demands the unbounded character of the space of reasons because, following McDowell, it can be argued that nothing that our beliefs demand for being knowledge is possible without our reflective intervention in the process of knowledge-formation. Reflection is a part of the process of knowledge-formation and hence cannot be dispensed with as demanded by Kornblith<sup>20</sup>. Reflection holds the key to the operation of reason and the norms necessarily involved in the epistemic transformation of the beliefs. Both the foundationalists and coherentists among the epistemologists demand reflection as the key to the normativization of knowledge<sup>21</sup>. The appraisal of the belief-system needs the intervention of reason so that knowledge can be shown to truth-tracking.

The space of reasons as conceived by Sellars and McDowell is not isolated from nature because nature itself has to be placed within this space and that the latter is made enchanted<sup>22</sup> as harbouring the meanings and norms. In that sense nature is

rationalized to the extent it is made amenable to the functioning of reason and so the supremacy of the normative reasoning is established. It is not that the realm of the nature is denied independence, but the nature itself gets its significance from within the space of reasons. The question whether knowledge is completely cut off from the world does not arise because the world is still open to experience. However, our experience of the world is saturated with conceptual elements because of the fact that we experience the world as guided by the conceptual elements. McDowell writes:

Experiences are impressions made by the world on our senses, products of receptivity; but those impressions themselves already have conceptual content<sup>23</sup>.

He further elaborates on this thus:

It is essential to the picture I am recommending that experience has its content by virtue of drawing into operation, in sensibility, of capacities that are genuinely elements in a faculty of spontaneity<sup>24</sup>.

Thus a whole array of arguments are available to show that our experience itself is conceptualized and that minimal empiricism is still round the corner for making the world rationally accessible to us.

## 5. Nature de-natured

McDowell's way of de-naturing nature has its problems. One of the problems is: Are there two natures? If so, how do they affect normative epistemology? In fact, McDowell argues for two natures, the first nature as available in "bald naturalism"<sup>25</sup> and the second nature as found in "liberal naturalism". Such being the case, the second nature is brought to do the job of making nature normatively responsive it being the human nature as it is shaped by training and education or *bildung*<sup>26</sup>. The second nature is the normativized nature because of its being part of the space of reasons and norms.

But one can see that this is not enough as bald naturalism threatens to disrupt the space of reasons and tries to reduce the normative to the natural. Hence attempt must be made to show that the nature of bald naturalism also must be placed within the space of reasons. McDowell's liberal naturalism leaves the first nature out of the loop of normativity.

The de-naturing of the first nature needs to be attempted through the Kantian transcendental standpoint. McDowell's Aristotelian way of retrieving normativity is not enough; we must go beyond it to make the first nature de-natured. The transcendental standpoint makes it a matter of necessity that what we call nature is

really what we have contributed to it rationally and therefore we must get at the underlying rational principles which make knowledge of the world possible. These principles constitute the way we know the world and also the way the world appears to us<sup>27</sup>. So the natural world is already constituted by our normative reason. This point is more elaborately brought out by Husserl following the Kantian method of constitution of the world<sup>28</sup>. So there is a way to the world which is normatively laid down without denying the independent existence of the world. If this theory of constitution is legitimate, then the world or nature is already de-naturalized through the normative intervention of reason.

The idea of second nature is unavailable to Kant and Sellars because it is not necessary that we need a different kind of nature to assimilate it into the broad space of reason. The nature as it is understood generally is that which has to be placed within the space of reason as demanded by Hegel. This Hegelian move to make nature itself rational can meet the demands of normativity and rationality<sup>29</sup> because in this move only there is a strong reason why nature cannot remain disenchanted. Nature is fully saturated with normative meanings which we have been searching for from Aristotle to the present day.

Supposing we leave nature as it is in a Cartesian fashion without bridging the gap between mind and the world and there is no effort to make the world rationally accessible to us, then we will fall prey to skepticism because there is no reason why the world will not be lost<sup>30</sup> to our conceptual grasp it being the only conceptual system we have. Such a world as the Given in Sellars's sense can be beyond our rational control and hence beyond our epistemic engagement. This is what has been stoutly rejected by Wittgenstein, Sellars, Davidson and McDowell variously in their rejection of the Myth of the Given<sup>31</sup>. The Given as beyond our conceptual boundary is a Myth because there is no such boundary of our system of beliefs. The world is already within the space of reasons so as to fulfill all our epistemic demands. This appears to be a case of "domesticated Hegelianism"<sup>32</sup> as the world is more or less made rationally constituted.

## **6. The myth of the Given: Coherentism and its counterparts**

Following Sellars and McDowell, one can take the Kantian-Hegelian line to counter the Myth of the Given by demonstrating that the Given is really an empiricist dogma, i.e., part of the dogma of the scheme-content distinction<sup>33</sup> and this can be given up by showing that nothing is an experiential content without it being a part of the space of reasons, that is, without it being demonstrated to be rationally constituted. In that sense, the Given in the form of the experiential content is not there. This line of argument is successful in the sense that it retains everything that is in the world without losing rational grasp on it.

Davidson's coherentist account of knowledge<sup>34</sup> is a response to this requirement of making the world not affect the coherence of the beliefs we have and so there is no confrontation with the world for making the belief-system coherent. McDowell has construed this position as a denial of empiricism and so of making the coherent system of beliefs as completely cut off from the world<sup>35</sup>. But this need not be Davidson's intention in rejecting the scheme-content distinction. He of course allows the world to causally affect our beliefs, but that does not allow the Given to be rationally beyond our epistemic grasp. The world as the Given is not a mere chaos, but a coherent system of things and events that respond to our semantic engagement. Davidson is balancing the relation between our conceptual system and the world without making the world completely cut off from the thought and language. Emphasizing this, Davidson writes:

In giving up the dualism of scheme and world, we do not give up the world, but re-establish unmediated touch with the familiar objects whose antics make our sentences and opinions true or false<sup>36</sup>.

Thus in no case does Davidson jettison the world for the sake of the rejection of the distinction above mentioned. All that he claims is that our understanding of the world depends much on how we talk about it truly or falsely. There is no question of the world being lost to the relativist and the sceptic.

Davidson's theory of coherence of knowledge and truth is not directed at the world, but at our cognitive beliefs for their justification. Instead of justification in terms of the world he favours the justification through the interlinking of the beliefs within a doxastic system. Justification is not causal but rational and so we require a method of validating beliefs within the system. But truth requires the unmediated touch with reality. In this sense coherentism triumphs over foundationalism by delinking truth from justification and in making knowledge a matter of epistemic validation through internal resources rather than through external constraints.

Both Davidson and Rorty as coherentists do keep the causal relation with the world away from justification of knowledge for the reason that no amount of mind-world causal relation can add to the rationality of knowledge system<sup>37</sup>. The cognitive system is already rational because of the normative, if not the social, structure of our meaning giving activity. Rorty's aspiration to socially constitute normativity does not help, but his idea of normativity within the broad spectrum of human conversation<sup>38</sup> and interaction does help in making normativity entrenched within our conceptual scheme.

## **7. Normativity all the way down**

The fact that conceptual elements penetrate into the structure of experience shows that normativity cannot be isolated from the natural world. Normativity goes all the way down into the natural world where our experience takes place. That is saying that the natural happenings that are generally kept under the natural laws are now open to normative meanings. The normative meanings are dynamically immanent in the world of natural happenings. However, it is not the case that normativity itself is natural. By itself it is transcendental, but is immanent in the world because of the fact that the world is already in the space of reasons. The source of normativity is the reason itself and not the world<sup>39</sup>.

Now the question is: does normativity reside in the instrumental reason and not in the pure reason as Kant would have put it? That epistemic normativity derives from the instrumental reason for the supposed reason that it guides our actions for specific ends in life gets it support from the natural epistemologists. As James Maffie puts it:

...Naturalist epistemological realism preserves normativity of epistemology and so meets one of the leading objections against naturalizing epistemology. It does this by grounding normativity in instrumental reason together with contingent facts about ourselves (e.g. our ends, what it is for us to embrace an end), our environment, and how our actions affect our ability to obtain our ends<sup>40</sup>.

The argument of the above kind goes in for softly naturalizing normativity by placing in the instrumental reason which takes care of our actions, motivations, ends and also the environmental factors. But instrumental reason itself may depend on other epistemic norms such epistemic duties, intellectual virtues and so on and therefore cannot be the ultimate source of normativity. It can thus be argued that we must appeal to pure reason for normativity which epistemology cannot bargain away for contingent ends like fulfilment of the natural desires for biological survival.

Normativity is best secured when it is not contingent on the non-epistemic factors like our non-epistemic ends. It should be left to itself to get its own significance in epistemology. Nothing should be done to minimize normativity within epistemology.

## **8. Conclusion**

To conclude, normative epistemology is not parasitic on how human beings actually behave in terms of acquisition of cognitive beliefs but what they should do with those beliefs. Human beliefs need not be a class apart from the animal beliefs in terms of



acquisition, but they certainly differ from the latter for being assessed in terms of truth and falsity, rightness or wrongness and other evaluative standards. Beliefs being assessed yield higher-order beliefs thus making knowledge possible through the intervention of reason. Therefore normativity cannot be derived from any other source than the reason that undertakes the evaluative exercise. The ultimate source of normativity is reason itself in its pure evaluative aspect<sup>41</sup>.

### Notes and References

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4. Ibid. p. 23.
5. Cf. W. V. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized" in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1969).
6. See Kornblith, *Knowledge and Its Place in Nature*, Chapter 1.
7. Ibid.
8. See John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Harvard University Press, Harvard, Cambridge, Mass., 1994/1996), Lecture IV.
9. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, op.cit. See also Wifrid Sellars, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" in *Science, Perception and Reality* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1963).
10. McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 26.
11. Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, op.cit.
12. See McDowell, *Mind and World*, Lectures I and II.
13. Kornblith, *Knowledge and Its Place in Nature*, p. 158.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid. p. 160.
16. Ibid. p. 161.
17. Cf. G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1903).
18. Kornblith, *Knowledge and Its Place in Nature*, pp. 160-161.
19. E. Sosa, *Knowledge in Perspective: Selected Essays in Epistemology* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991/1995) Chapter 6.
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22. McDowell, *Mind and Nature*, op.cit.

23. Ibid. p. 46.
24. Ibid. pp. 46-47.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, op.cit. See also Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorion Cairns (Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1977).
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29. Cf. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977). See McDowell, *Mind and World*, p.44.
30. Richard Rorty, "The World Well Lost" in *Consequences of Pragmatism* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1982).
31. Cf. Sellars, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind", op.cit.
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35. McDowell, *Mind and World*, op.cit. Lecture I.
36. Ibid. p. 198.
37. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1979).
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39. C. Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996).
40. James Maffie, "Naturalism and the Normativity in Epistemology", *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (July. 1990), p. 348.
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## **Can Man Go Beyond Anthropocentrism? A Discourse from Indian Philosophical Perspective on Environment**

*Uma Chattopadhyay*

Our objective is not to discuss only the notion of environment and to understand philosophy of man. We rather want to know the relationship between them. We want to philosophize man and environment. Man as such or as a natural phenomenon exists in the environment. Environment without man is conceivable, but man without environment is not possible. Whether a baby or an old person, rich or poor, all are existing in the environment of their surroundings.

But the question is: what do we understand by word ‘environment’? In the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, environment is explained as “the aggregate of all the external conditions and influences affecting the life and development of an organism.”<sup>1</sup> But this analysis in terms of external conditions seems to be taken in a loose sense of the term. In our common understanding, other human beings as well as the mental conditions of man are taken under considerations and also “influences affecting the life and development of the human existence or any organism” are included by the denotation of the term environment.

To understand the relation between the two, different branches of science and social science have entered and given many ideas and solutions for the sustainable development of nature and environment. Philosophy as the mother subject cannot avoid the issue, rather environment became a very important issue in philosophy, particularly in Ethics and Moral Philosophy.

Over the years in Environmental Studies, man has been identified as the major disturber of his environment. Hence the notion has been developed against anthropocentrism and by extension of the logic another notion of biocentrism in favor of environment has been developed. Thus anthropocentrism and biocentrism have normally been projected as contradictory ideas as if one cannot exist with the other, or the two philosophies can never work together. We have tried to combine the two in order to answer the moot question of our discussion. Can man go beyond anthropocentrism? As man is the primary focus in anthropocentrism, how can man surpass it?

Now an important point to see is this—in the vast literature of Philosophy, Environmental Ethics as a branch of Applied Ethics is already present. So the question regarding the need for Applied Ethics and the need for Environmental Ethics generally does not arise. My question is why we, the Indians, were not so much

conscious about the problem relating to environment and how we became aware and started our discussion. The issue became important to us when the problem was thrown by the West. So my point here is to show what the possible reason behind this attitude of us is and why we are eager in having the awareness of environment at present. My objective is to show anthropocentrism in a particular sense from the Indian cultural perspective. This will finally show while man is the root cause of anthropocentrism, how man can surpass this in Indian context.

According to standard Encyclopedias, Environmental Ethics is the discipline that studies the moral relationship of human beings to environment and also the moral status of the environment and its non-human context. These non-human contents include both animal and plants, and also stones, water etc. Environmental Ethics received its independent status from the 1960s and 1970s. Almost simultaneously, United States, Australia and Norway -- these three countries -- started Environmental Ethics as a new independent branch of study. And immediately different branches of study, particularly History, Economics and Political Science, started to discuss on the issue. As a result, environmental issues became a central issue of science, social science and also of philosophy. Consequently, different new studies developed in relation to these Environmental Studies, e.g., Deep Ecology, Feminist Environmental Ethics, Ecology of Politics, Environmental Engineering etc. Different clubs are also founded for preservation of nature, e.g., Friend of the Earth, Environmental Defense Fund, Sierra Club etc.

The first point to explain is how and why this Environmental Ethics came in the West. In the long history of Ethics, we find Consequentialism of Bentham or Mill and Deontology of Immanuel Kant and also Virtue Ethics of Aristotle. All these theories are related to the human behavior. Ethics, roughly speaking, is in relation to man. If there was no human existence, there would have been no moral question, so no moral philosophy or Ethics. All these theories are relating to the moral values of human action. So they questioned whether a human action is valuable in terms of its consequence or in terms of its own intrinsic value or in some other way.

Most of the traditional Western thinkers accepted the human-centric or anthropocentric ethics. So to them an action is good either intrinsically or for producing good results. For example, according to Aristotle, "nature has made all things especially for the sake of man" (*Politics*, Book 1, Chapter 8). All non-humans are only instrumental to that. This anthropocentric ethics drew attention to a sense of crisis to some scientists and philosophers such as the famous writer Rachel Carson (*Silent Spring*, 1963) or the historian Lynn White Jr. ('The Historical Root of our Ecology Crisis', *Science*, 1967). To these thinkers the traditional ethics is the result of Judeo Christian thinking which states that the human existence is superior to all other existence of earth and the nature is created for the use of human. The central thesis

was provided by the Church and the Bible itself. In Genesis I:27-8, it has been stated that “God created man in his own image....”. The great philosopher Thomas Aquinas also argued that non-human animals are “ordered to man’s use.”(Summa Contra Gentiles, Book 3, Part-2, Chapter 12).The beliefs of the ordinary men were common to both the scientists and the philosophers. All of them thought that humans are created in the image of the transcendent supernatural God, who is absolutely different and also separate from nature and humans. Modern western science itself also, White argues, in this way “cast in the matrix of Christian theology.”(White Jr. 1967, 1207). White argues that the modern form of science and technology by the influence of Judeo Christianity provides the original deep-seated drive to unlimited exploitation of nature. Only some minority traditions within Christianity (e.g. the views of St. Francis) might provide an antidote to the “arrogance” of the mainstream tradition of anthropocentric ethics.

The call for a “basic change of values” in connection to environment reflected a need for the development of environmental ethics as a new sub-discipline of philosophy (a call that could be interpreted in terms of either instrumental or intrinsic values of nature). As a result the Australian philosopher Richard Routley (later Sylvan) (Routley and Routley, 1980) started to think that anthropocentrism is actually a conclusion drawn by the western view. The old theory of anthropocentrism also depends on blind class “loyalty” or “prejudice”. Christopher Stone (1972), another thinker, expressed that we need to come out of anthropocentrism in Ethics. He proposed that trees and other objects should have the same status standing with us. Christopher Stone was in favour of giving rights to the trees, forests and mountains.

In 1974, Joel Feinberg came forward for animal liberation, so it gave a strong moral status of animals. In 1999 Scandinavian Nils Farrlund started their deep ecology by the Himalayan Sherpa culture. They found that their Sherpa guides regarded certain mountains as sacred and accordingly they could not venture into them. So the protagonists of deep ecology in Environmental Ethics started to think that all living and non-living beings are alike. We have narrated the course of development in anthropocentrism and also shown how in the West non-anthropocentrism took its position in the context of Environmental Ethics.

But if we give a pause here and think on the issue, we can see that anthropocentric ethics honours human existence and we can arrange the nature according to our desire, but this view is self-destructive for the human being itself. On the other hand, if we make our ethics absolutely non- anthropocentric then also the existence of human being will be at stake. So neither of the two theories will favour our earth where human beings and non-human beings will stay together in a comfortable way. In giving a solution to this paradox, let us try to see our own nature

of existence. I am not going to the question whether there is any creator or not of this earth or the whole existence.

To begin with, think of an earth where everything (trees, plants, rivers, rocks, animals and human beings) existing for its intrinsic value and in its own nature. If everything grows in its own way, then the human existence will be at stake. Not only the human being, but the less powerful beings (in physical strength) will extinct. It is only the human being who is able to destroy the nature by exploitation and also can protect the nature, but at the same time he is able to enjoy the nature and can think for the sustainable development (which is meant for both human and non-human beings). But this he can do if he thinks twice. So if we need an Ethics for Environment, we need the human-centric Ethics, which will provide both sustainable development as well as the healthy existence of the human being with the nature. The vital question was whether we need to accept anthropocentrism or non- anthropocentrism in Ethics and in other theoretical disciplines.

As a result, the natural intellectual position that came to the West is this: a moral person is not only within the body and the skin but he is to go beyond and he is to make him an ecological self (which is something larger than body and consciousness). To respect my-self is to respect and to care for the natural environment which is actually part of me and which I should identify and should take care accordingly. This shows that anthropocentric ethics may be helpful for the time being but ultimately it leads to a negative atmosphere for the human beings. It is a result of self-destructive stand when we take our ethical stand in an anthropocentric way. On the other hand, if we make our ethics absolutely non- anthropocentric, then the question will be inevitable: Will human beings be able to exist on the earth in a meaningful way?

In giving the answer to this alternative question let us try to see nature of our own existence. I am not going to the question whether there is any creator or not of this earth or the whole existence. Let us see the very nature of our existence. Suppose in this world of our existence everything (trees, plants, rivers, rocks, animals and human beings) existing for in its own nature. If that is the case, then the human existence will be at stake. It is only the human being who is able to destroy the existence by exploitation and at the same time he is able to enjoy the nature and think for the sustainable development of nature if he thinks twice.

When we look to the human existence with the nature in the cultural background of India, we can see that there are ample examples where man is considered as a superior being for its rationality. All the sciences and philosophy are ultimately meant for human being. But guiding principles of all disciplines are such

that man is bound to respect nature. Once he learns to respect nature he will not be able to misuse the nature and environment.

There are ample examples from the Indian texts reflective on deep respect for nature. There is a culture in Indian tradition that in the early morning after getting up from the bed one is to touch the floor and to pray for the forgiveness from the mother earth as the one is to touch the earth by feet. And one is not able to avoid that. The standard hymn is the following:

*“Samudremekhaledeviparvatostanamandale I  
Visnupatni-namastubhyampadasparsamsamasva me II”*

After this, we need to utter the mantra, “namapriyadattaibhubenamah”: After uttering this mantra to seek forgiveness from mother earth, one is to place his right foot on the ground. The mantra itself shows us to respect our mother earth. It is only the human who can consciously and rationally respect the mother earth. It is true that without keeping our feet on the earth, we will not be able to exist, yet guided by our culture we become much conscious regarding the earth. This is true that in this tradition, one will not find much literature regarding environmental ethics but many mantras and slokas are there which make us aware about environment, advise us to take care of environment both for environment and human existence.

In the famous Upanisad *Isa*, the first mantra states, (*Isavasyamidam* etc.) there is the declaration- *Tyktenabhunjitha* which means “you enjoy by sacrificing”. It warns enjoyment should be with sacrifice. Naturally, it implies enjoyment must be limited. The mantra also warns “*Ma grdhakasyacitdhanam.*” It means ‘never be greedy regarding the property, the property may be yours or others’. We are to enjoy the property in a self-restrained way and that will take us to a better existence. This may give us the external confidence and inner purification and keep the situation better.

There are many such sentences in Indian literature. The sentences provide the moral principle to the human beings in relation to the nature and environment. In a sense, the ethical principles are anthropocentric in Indian tradition. But this anthropocentrism is in a better way. Actually the whole moral life of an individual is such that the individual is bound to take care of his/her environment.

We generally follow the Western culture and the western way of thinking and do not concentrate on our own culture with close reading. So we face the difficulty in solving the problem between man and environment. By performing the moral life, one is to transcend his/her given existence. This moral life as we know means the individual’s duty in relation to the other, same or super beings on the one hand, and all the natural existence on the other. It is the responsibility of the human

being to take care of the nature and not to misuse the natural property or existence as a whole. So the western concept of anthropocentrism or non- anthropocentrism is not at all needed in our Indian cultural tradition. So whether nature has its intrinsic value or nature is meant for human beings are not at all important. Sustainable development of nature (which includes both conscious and unconscious beings) depends on the rationality of the superior human intellect. In this sense, there is role of human being and so the importance of man is given. So I wish to say here that the superior kind of anthropocentrism in Indian cultural tradition accommodates both human existence and environment in a meaningful way. Accordingly, in the Indian cultural context the questions of anthropocentric, or non- anthropocentric or bio-centric ethics become only redundant. Instead of this, super rationality of human beings guided by some values provides a very meaningful ethical life. The important point to note is that these plants, trees and other natural objects have their right but no obligation, so no duty or moral duty. Human beings on the other hand, have right and also obligations: rights for enjoyment and obligations for everything. So only human beings can be the moral agent.

Ancient people were not suffering from the man-made environmental crisis. So we do not find such a book on Environmental Ethics. Particularly in the cultural background of India, a man is the only one in the whole creation. He is considered as a superior being for its rationality. As a result, he is doing science and Darsana. The guiding principles are such that man is bound to respect nature. Once he learns to respect nature, he will not be able to misuse the nature and environment.

In the later Sanskrit literature strong hatred for *pasuyaga* is depicted:

Brksamschitvatarunhatvakrtvarudhirkardamam I  
Yadyevamgam Yatesvargenarakamkenagamyate II (Pancatantra)

By cutting trees, killing plants and by creating mud of blood if a person obtains heaven, which are the means to obtain hell?

In the Indian culture, another important phenomenon that we find is known as *Pancamahayajna* (Sacrifices). These are mandatory for all family persons [In *Asvalayana Grhya Sutra* it is stated: *arthatahpancayajnahdevaya* II].

It is noted that sacrifice is not only meant for forefathers etc. but also for other human beings and also for all the material existences. The above mentioned mantras and the sentences are given as the moral principles for the human beings in relation to their nature and environment. The whole moral life of an individual is such that the conscious individual is bound to take care of his environment. In a sense, therefore, the ethical norms in our cultural context is anthropocentric but in a better or finer way. The moral life means the individual's duty in relation to the other, same or



super beings on the one hand and all the natural existence on the other. The reason for this is not the thought that God has created the world but the idea that one would do this for one's own transcendence. So in our culture, there is no question of superior or inferior, but as human being is rational being, it is the responsibility of human being to take care for the nature as a whole. Accordingly, the question of anthropocentric or non-anthropocentric ethics is not at all a question in this culture.

The point is that we are unaware about our culture and rich tradition and we take the issues from the West and start cultivating. The above mentioned mantras make the point clear that we need to respect nature, so the question is irrelevant whether nature has intrinsic value or not. Therefore, Indian culture provides a kind of anthropocentric view of Ethics which can be named Super or superior kind of anthropocentric ethics which accommodate both human existence and environment in a meaningful way. In Indian cultural context, therefore, anthropocentric or non-anthropocentric or bio-centric ethics become only redundant. Instead of this, super rationality of human beings guided by some values provides a very meaningful ethical life. The entire explanation is illustrative in the following mantra of SuklaYajurveda 36.17.

“Let there be balance in the Space!  
Let there be balance in the Sky!  
Let there be peace on the Earth!  
Let there be calmness in Water!  
Let there be growth in the Plants!  
Let there be grace in all Gods!  
Let there be bliss in the Brahman!  
Let there be balance in everything!  
Let there be peace and peace!  
Let such peace be with every one of us!”

Thus to sum up: Anthropocentrism in the narrow sense is destructive. Bio-centrism is ineffective or incomplete without the ethical or rational intervention of humans. Superior anthropocentrism takes care of both rational and ethical part of human being and also includes bio-centrism.

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## Remnants of Death

*Nirmalya Narayan Chakraborty*

Everyday people are dying. Still we all wish we were immortal. What a surprise! Exclaimed Yudhishthira. Cohabiting of inevitability and reluctance to accept the inevitable is nowhere as glaring as it is in death. Even when a person says “I want to die”, she actually wants to escape from the pain accompanying her life and not the life itself. The present paper is an attempt to decipher the reason behind our reluctance. Death is a kind of non-existence, but not all kinds of non-existence, like prenatal non-existence, are not non-desirable. Part of our reluctance might come from our lack of knowledge of what happens after death and precisely for this Socrates argues that our fear of death arises for we pretend to know what death is like when actually we don’t know anything about what death is like. What happens after death is a perennial question that has stirred the minds of people all over the world since time immemorial. When one dies, we lose her. The person is no more. Still we can talk about this person; we have so many reminiscences about her. We communicate our thoughts about the dead person to others. Language has this wonderful ability to refer to non-existent people. I would like to argue that in death what we lose is contemporaneity. When I die, I am not any longer contemporaneous with the world. I leave behind my loved ones. But contemporaneity does not imply end of everything. In order to account for our successful linguistic communication regarding the dead, some kind of post mortal existence is required. Otherwise talking about rabbit’s horn and talking about my mother who is no more would be at par. A notion of thin self is introduced to explain the posthumous existence.

If by death we mean end of our existence, then naturally the question arises whether it is a bad thing or not. Death becomes dreadful, some think, because in death we lose the most important thing that we possess viz. life. One could argue, following Socrates, that it is true that death is a loss, nonetheless it is an absolute blank and so it does not have any value, either positive or negative.

When all the friends of Socrates are trying to convince Socrates that he must do everything possible to prevent his death, including bribing the prison guards, Socrates tries to argue that “we are quite mistaken in supposing death to be an evil”<sup>1</sup>. In a typical spirit of discovering all the alternative answers to a question, Socrates holds that either death is annihilation and so is characterized by the absence of consciousness or it is a migration of the soul from this place to another. On the former understanding, death is like a dreamless sleep. And Socrates urges us to compare those nights when we have sound sleep not even interrupted by dream with the other

nights when we sleep, and we would certainly choose the former. In this case, death could be looked at as a wonderful night. On the latter alternative, if after death the soul moves to another place, and as we are told, this is the place where all the dead people are staying, then how wonderful it is to die. One can meet all her friends and relatives, all the famous people who died earlier. With a pinch of salt, Socrates comments that in the other world there may be judges who can do real justice unlike the present world. Those judges cannot put somebody to trial and sentence her to death, simply because the residents of that place are now immortal. If this is true of death, then Socrates is ready to die ten times.

Thus, for Socrates, fear of death arises due to our ignorance. He moves further and holds that people who are into philosophy are actually “preparing themselves for dying and death”<sup>2</sup>. So if philosophers all the time are preparing themselves to meet death, then why would philosophers be worried when the desired thing appears? The Socratic reasoning starts from the assumption that in death the soul and the body get separated from each other. But mere divorce of the soul from the body does not constitute death. Socrates by way of questioning elicits the answer from his interlocutor that it is not right for a philosopher to be attached to food, drink, sexual pleasures. A philosopher should not attach any importance to clothes and bodily ornaments etc. Notice, all these are associated to body and these are bodily pleasures. As a result of this, a philosopher always tries to free herself from the physical pleasures and tries to free his soul from the clutches of body. Many a times our senses deceive us, fail to give us knowledge. If soul, in collaboration with the senses, tries to give us knowledge, then the soul is likely to be at fault. So, Socrates argues, it is only in reflection that the soul can give us a proper knowledge. The knowledge of the real can be acquired by the soul only when it gets dissociated from the physical trappings. Dissociation of the soul from the body is a must for the philosopher. Thus if a philosopher constantly practices to set aside the bodily involvement, his soul gets separated from the body. If by death we mean separation of the soul from the body, then this is what the philosopher desires. Socrates goes further and claims that the task of a philosopher is precisely to live as close as possible to death. “True philosophers make dying their profession”<sup>3</sup>. So if one wants to get wisdom, and a philosopher aims at gaining wisdom, then dissociation of the soul from the body is required and in death this happens. Philosophy, in this sense, is a preparation of death. Death, instead of being scary and disappointing, becomes the most desirable for a philosopher.

However, in spite of Socrates’s argument that our fear of death arises out of ignorance, it is perhaps undeniable that we generally are scared of death. We certainly do not welcome death. Why is death considered an evil?<sup>4</sup> Let us explore this question. One could argue that death is an evil, because it deprives us of all the goods that life

bestows on us. Our thoughts, actions, plans, desires come to end with death. It is true that sometimes our thoughts, actions etc. might bring in more misery than good to us. But thoughts, actions, desires that a subject has are regarded as intrinsically valuable so much so that even if sometimes they bring in misery, they do not outweigh the value of the thoughts, actions etc. There are elements that, if added, make our life better. There are elements that, if added, make our life worse. If we subtract the worsening factors from the ennobling factors, then what remains is not just neutral; they have got positive value. Therefore, the argument runs, life itself is valuable and worth preserving even when there are plenty of miserable experiences around.

One must note here that mere organic survival does not seem to attach any value to life. If one is given the option of choosing either immediate death or immediate comma followed by death say after twenty years, there is hardly anything to choose. If something is good, then the more the better. And with time the amount increases. So if there is a discontinuity in time, then the total amount of good decreases. Between the two choices of death and the possibility of freezing followed by restart of life, people would be attracted to the latter simply because they regard it as a continuum of their present life. Continuous existence, and not mere survival, is valued. And this implies that if life is valuable in itself, then people would not have preferred the possibility of freezing followed by rejuvenation over death, for here life ceases in between. Thus if life is good, then it is good not because of the mere organic survival and continuity is an added attraction to life in spite of discontinuous existence.

Contrasting our idea of life being good, why do we think of death as something bad? Being alive, doing certain things, having certain experiences are considered good. And the more good one has, the better. If death is the loss of life, if it is bad, then it does not make any sense to claim the more death one has, the worse. Tagore had more good than Sukanta Bhattacharya in the sense that Tagore had more life than Sukanta. On the contrary, can we claim that Sukanta has got more evil than Tagore? If death is bad, then it does not seem that we can claim one has got more of the bad than the other.

What is interesting to note is that while our reaction to death is that it is a loss for us, we don't consider it a misfortune not to be born earlier. I did not exist before I was born and I shall not exist after my death. I lament for the latter and I do not lament for the former. One is considered bad, and the other is not. So, mere non-existence is not the issue here. One has to account for the distinction between pre-natal nonexistence and posthumous nonexistence. It is alleged that when we fail to try to imagine what it is like to be dead, we tend to think that death is something mysterious and a terrible state. It seems, on the contrary, that I can hardly imagine

what it is for me to be dead, although I could imagine how other people would react when I die. So if death is bad, it cannot be simply because I do not exist after death. Death cannot be bad because it has got some positive features. It is bad because it deprives us of something that is good to us, viz. life. Little later I shall talk about whether prenatal nonexistence deprives us of life. Let us see whether we can make sense of the deprivation aspect of death.

If something is bad for someone, then there must be someone whom the bad has befallen. The person concerned must be harmed. The person must suffer from the harm. In death there is no one to be harmed. The dead person does not exist anymore. The dead possibly cannot suffer from the harm that death brings to her. Notice that there is an important role of temporality in all this discussion. There are certain good and bad things that a person possesses in virtue of her condition at that time. This ascription of good or bad also requires having knowledge of the history of the person concerned. If a person from a rich aristocrat family becomes a beggar on the street, we regard his present condition as bad only because of his history. There are certain goods and evils that a person can be said to suffer only if one learns of them. If I do not know that my friend has betrayed me, can I be said to suffer from the evil of betrayal? When I come to know the betrayal, I feel sad, because it is bad to be betrayed.

What is important is to distinguish the subject of the misfortune from the circumstances that constitute the misfortune<sup>5</sup>. A person could very well be the subject of good or evil because his hopes and projects may or may not be fulfilled. If death is an evil, then death must be an evil to a person and this is here the problem arises. Of course, the circumstances that constitute the event called death might be unfortunate ones. Sometime back I read a news in a newspaper viz. while a dead body was being carried to the crematorium in a van, there was an accident and the accompanying persons got injured. Could we claim that the dead person was injured? We can pity the person who is dead now. It seems odd to claim that we pity the dead person for his injury. We can pity the person who is dead now and who is the subject of evil, but this does not imply that death is an evil to the person, simply because after death there is no person whom the evil befalls.

This also explains our asymmetrical attitude to prenatal nonexistence and posthumous nonexistence. It is true that there is infinite temporality both before birth and after death. But modality of the post mortal infinite temporality is different from that of pre-natal infinite temporality in the sense that after death the person is deprived of the time that he might have had he not died, which is not the case in pre-natal nonexistence. So, death deprives the person of having the time that he could have otherwise. In this sense, death has got depriving element. But by not being born before one is born, one is not deprived of anything, because anyone born earlier

would be a different person. The time before one is born is not the time when the subsequently born person was prevented from living. There is no loss to the person because of not being born earlier. If death is an evil because it deprives us of more life, then, by the same logic, not being born earlier also should deprive us of more life which it does not.

Let us talk about this deprivation aspect of death little more. Our asymmetric attitude to prenatal nonexistence and posthumous nonexistence poses a problem to viewing death as an evil, the view that death deprives us of the goods of life. The deprivation account of death seems unable to account for our asymmetric attitude. One could respond to this in various ways. One could suggest that deprivation account of death leads us to the conclusion that we should have symmetric attitude to both prenatal and posthumous nonexistence. And in that case we should regret for not being born earlier. It is worth noting that sometimes we do wish we were born earlier. I could say, for example, that I wish I was born earlier in Shantiniketan so that I could see and witness the activities of Tagore. There is a difference, however, between this wish and the regret about my prospect of being dead. The regret about prenatal nonexistence is typically a first person experience. I regret for myself alone for not being born earlier. When I regret death, I regret it not only in my case; I regret death of other persons as well. Regretting the two kinds of nonexistence are not at par. Secondly, Regretting prenatal nonexistence is directed towards something positive, a wish to have some valued experience. I certainly do not regret not being born as a soldier in the Second World War. Regretting posthumous nonexistence arises from a sense of loss. If life is good and this good life is the basis of other valued things like experience, projects and desires, death deprives us of both the basal good and its accompanying good things.

Alternatively, one could argue that deprivation account does not necessarily imply symmetric attitude to prenatal nonexistence and posthumous nonexistence. Prenatal nonexistence does not deprive one of anything, for the same person could not have been born earlier than when he was actually born. One could introduce a distinction between a “psychologically thick person and a “psychologically thin person”<sup>6</sup>. When death is said to deprive a person, this concern is about a person who has a particular history, desire, value, belief, personality traits etc. This is what Frederik Kaufman calls “thick person”. Thus in death when we talk of loss, we talk about loss of this historical person having a whole lot of experiences and events associated with her. The prenatal nonexistence does not concern a thick person in this sense. The presently born thick person could not regret for the possibly earlier born person, because the possible earlier born person does not possess any history, nor does he have any desire, belief etc. So asymmetric attitude is accounted for and deprivation account of death also remains intact. Thus while thick persons are

biographical persons, thin persons are “shorn of their thick traits such that all that remains in one’s metaphysical essence”<sup>7</sup>. It might be easier to explain this metaphysical essence in terms of empathy. When I empathize with somebody, I imaginatively put myself in the place of another. I try to become the other person; I imagine myself having the experiences, beliefs etc that the other person has. The I that sheds off its thick personhood and tries to gain a new thick personhood is the metaphysical essence viz. the thin person. Thus the thin person could exist earlier than the thick person with which the thin self happens to be associated now. But such is not the case with thick person. The biographies of prenatal thick person and presently existing thick person can never be identical. So the presently existing thick person could not be deprived of something by not being born earlier, because the prenatal thick person and the presently existing thick person are simply not identical. This is not the case with death. The subject of presently existing person and the corresponding dead person are identical. This is why deprivation account holds here in death. The presently existing thick self could not be a different thick self and so one cannot be deprived of not being a different person.

I would like to defend Kaufman’s idea of thin self from the perspective of linguistic behaviour. One could talk about varieties of nonexistence. The dead does not exist now. The person did exist at some earlier point in time. So this nonexistence is qualified by temporal modality. So when the person was alive, we did use name to refer to the person. After the person is dead, we continue to use the name to refer to that person. But the person is no more and the name does not refer to anything existent. If meaning is understood in terms of reference, and if a name does not refer to anything existent, then the name of a dead person seems to lose its meaning. But this goes against our commonsense understanding.

One could distinguish reference from referent of a name<sup>8</sup>. In the case of a dead person, the referent ceases to exist, but not the reference. The name still has got its function of referring and we can meaningfully communicate through a sentence containing such a name that does not have its referent. Borrowing the imagery of a toolbox from Wittgenstein, when a tool is broken, we try to use the other tools in the box to accomplish our desired work. Also notice that often with a broken tool we can perform some work other than what the tool is designed for. What this suggests is that as long as there are users and ways of using the tools including the broken ones, one can use the broken tool alongside others. Similarly there are legitimate uses of the name in our language even though the name lacks any referent. And when we use the name of the dead person, we talk about a person with a certain history; this is a biographical person, “thick self” in Kaufman’s words. Singular posthumous reference is admissible because the dead leaves behind his thick self. I would like to propose that in posthumous reference, the referential act is present now, though the thick



person that I am referring to now does not exist now. I am referring to something nonexistent now, although that thing did exist before. In order to account for this continuity in our referring to the presently non-existent and previously existent person, I propose to hold that the dead person exists now as a thin self, a self that is a remnant of the earlier thick self. Or else there is no guarantee that the name has got the same use during the life of the bearer and in her posthumous appearance.

So the dead exists now as a thin self. What has been lost in death is the dead person's contemporaneity. The dead is not with us anymore. Her beliefs, desires, wishes etc do not interact and mingle with our beliefs etc. This causes anxiety and sadness in us. We come up with conjectures where we could imagine making her contemporaneous. This is of course our third person reaction to death. Even in first person reaction to my own death, I fear this possibility of losing contemporaneity with my loved ones. Losing contemporaneity means losing the thick self. But if thick self is all that this there, linguistic practice would have prevented us from talking about the dead. But we do talk about dead person and the dead person exists. Death leaves behind its residue.

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## Ethical Principles of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*: Some Observations

Nirmal Kumar Roy

This paper is an attempt to show that ethical theory advocated in *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* is not deontological as rather it is an amalgamation of ethical egoism and ethical universalism which is popularly known as utilitarianism and virtue ethics. It starts with ethical egoism and passes through virtue ethics and ultimately reaches at utilitarianism.

There is a long controversy regarding whether *niṣkāma karma* is teleological or deontological or something else. The popular notion describes *niṣkāma karma* as deontological. This notion also proposes to identify *niṣkāma karma* with the deontological theory of Kant ‘duty for duty’s sake’. I think so long as the verse no 47; chapter II of *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* goes the observation of the above mentioned popular notion is quite justified. This verse runs as “*Karmaṇyevādhikāraste mā phaleṣu kadācana. Mā karmaphalaheturbhūrmā te sango’stvakarmani.*” This verse clearly says that one has his right upon his act only and not upon the fruits or consequences of one’s activity. So, there is no room for ambiguity that *niṣkāma karma* is deontological. But I cannot agree with this view. This popular view is the result of misunderstanding of the real sense of the above verse. This view considers the above verse in isolation from the context. But we know that the real sense of any statement can be understood only when it is seen in the light of the context in which it is used. We see that the verse no 47 mentioned above is preceded and succeeded by so many verses where Kṛṣṇa repeatedly assures Arjuna, the representative of all people living in society, of reaping the consequences of his activity. In the beginning of the second chapter Kṛṣṇa describes *ātmatattva*, the real nature of soul. Subsequently, he advises Arjuna to engage in fighting. Kṛṣṇa describes the battle of Kurukṣetra as *dharmayuddha*. Kṛṣṇa reminds Arjuna of his *svadharma*. As he is *kṣatriya* his *varṇa* – *dharma* i.e. *svadharma* is the discharge of the duty of fighting in the battle field. Nothing can be more beneficial to him other than performing his *svadharma*. (*Svadharme nidhanam śreyaḥ paradharmo bhayāvah 3/35*). In this context Kṛṣṇa takes the help of the verses 33 – 40 to convince Arjuna how he can be benefited if he discharges his noble duty meant for his own *varṇa*, i.e. *Kṣatriya*. These verses are given below:

“*Atha cettvamimam dharmyam saṁgrāmaṁ na kariṣyasi.*

*Tataḥ svadharmam kīrtim ca hitvā pāpamavāpsyasi.*” 2/33

It means if you abstain from fighting, you will gain sin and lose your fame for the non-performance of *svadharma*.

*“Akīrtiñcāpi bhūtāni kathayiṣyanti te ’vyayām.*

*Sambhāvitasya cākīrtīrmaraṇādatiricyate”.* 2/34

I.e., People will blame and criticise you. Death is superior to in fame.

*“Bhayādraṇāduparataṁ māṁsyante tvāṁ mahārathāḥ.*

*Yeṣāñca tvaṁ vahumato bhūtvā yāsyasi lāghavam”.* 2/35

i.e. The heroes, great fighters, will think that you are abstaining from fighting due to fear. So, you lose your respect from those who show deep respect to you today.

*“Avācyabādāṁśca vahūn vadiṣyanti tavāhitāḥ.*

*Nindantastava sāmārthyam tato duḥkhataram nu kim.”* 2/36

i.e. Your enemies also will pass so many heinous comments regarding you. What may be more suffering than this?

*“Hato vā prāpsyasi svargaṁ jtvā vā bhokṣyase mahīm. Tasmāduṭṭiṣṭha kounteya yuddhyā kṛtaniścayaḥ.”* 2/37

i.e. If you die in battle then you will go to heaven but if you win the same then you will enjoy the world. So, stand up and keep engage in fighting.

*“Sukhaduḥkhe same kṛtvā lābhālābhau jayājau. Tata yudhyāya yujyasva naivam pāpamavāpsyasi.”* 2/38

i.e. If you fight the battle thinking pleasure and pain, loss and gain, wining and defeat alike then you will no more be the subject of sin.

This verse is contradictory. Here one is advised to consider pleasure and pain, profit and loss etc. alike. But it is also said that if one does so then he will no more be the subject of sin. Abstaining from being the subject of sin is obviously a case of profit. So there is a sharp contradiction in this verse. If one has already in his mind the thinking of the profit of being free from sin then how can he consider the profit and loss alike?

*“Eṣā te ’bhihitā sāmṁkhye budhīryoge tvimāṁ śṛṇū.*

*Budhyā yukta yayā pārtha karmavandham prahāsyasi.”* 2/39

i.e., I have dealt with the knowledge of *Sāmṁkhyā* so far and now I am going to deal with the knowledge of Yoga. If you ascertain the same, you can make free yourself from the bindings of your *karma*.

*“Nehābhikramanāśo ’sti pratyavāyo na vidyate.*

*Svalpampasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt.”* 2/40

i.e.,..... even if someone follows this religious code to a little extend, he will be free from great fear.

All the verses mentioned above clearly imply that the ethical theory underlying *Gītā* at least up to verse 40 of chapter-II is teleological but not deontological at all. It is worthy to note that this teleological theory belongs to the category called ethical egoism simply because all above mentioned verses advice Arjuna to discharge his *svadharma* since it will promote his own greatest good. Here in order to substantiate our view we can cite what is said by W.K. Frankena “Teleologists differ on the question of whose good it is that one ought to try to promote. Ethical egoism holds that one is always to do what will promote his own greatest good”<sup>1</sup>.

Thus it is seen that the verses mentioned above advise Arjuna to perform *karma* for the sake of consequences of some sort or other. In verse no. 47 Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to discharge *niṣkāma karma*, “*Karmaṇye vādhikāraste mā phaleṣu kadācana. Mā karmaphalaheturbhūrmā te saṁgo ’stvakarmani*”. This verse goes up and transcends the desire of consequence. In the subsequent verses Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to uplift himself at the state of *Sthitaprajña* and thereby the ethics of *Gītā* turns into virtue ethics. In this context *Gītā* beautifully explains what should be the real properties of a person who is *sthitaprajña*. *Gītā* explains the same particularly in verse no 55 and 56. They run as follows:

“*Prajahāti yadā kāmān sarvān pārtha monagatān.*

*Ātmanyevātmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthitaprajñāstadocyate*”. 2/55

i.e., If a person gives up all sorts of desire and remains content in himself then that person is called *Sthitaprajña*.

“*Duḥkheṣvanudvignamanāḥ sukheṣu vigatasprhaḥ.*

*Vītarāgabhayakrodhaḥ sthitadhīrmunirucyate*.” 2/56

i.e., The person who remains calm, quite, restless and indifferent both in pain and pleasure, who gets rid of self interest, fear and anger is known as *Sthitaprajña*.

Thus it is seen that two verses advise Arjuna to be virtuous. Here someone may think that this type of observation cannot be accepted. How can one and the same *Gītā* propose two rival theories of utilitarianism and virtue ethics? But our close examination shows that in fact there is no contradiction between them, both of them can go hand in hand. They are complementary to each other. How can one perform good work without being good? Again one becomes good gradually through the performance of good work. Perhaps keeping this in view *Gītā* advises Arjuna to perform *niṣkāma karma* (good work) and to be a good and virtuous person otherwise called *Sthitaprajña*. Here one may think that so far as verses 47, 55 and 56 are concerned the ethical theory of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* can be considered as deontological. But I think problem comes when we come across verse no. 19 and 20 of chapter – III. In verse no. 19 Kṛṣṇa says “*Tasmādsaktaḥ satatam kāryam karma*

*samācara. Asakto hyācaran karma paramāpnati puruṣaḥ.*” Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to perform his action being detached from the desire of fruits and if he does so he will attain his ultimate goal. Again Kṛṣṇa in verse no. 20 says of *lokasamgraha*, “*karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhimāsthītā janakādayaḥ. Lokasamgrahamevāpi saṁpaśyaṇ kartumarhasi.*” Here Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to perform his action for the sake of promoting the wellbeing of society and thereby the ethical theory of the *Gītā* which was *niṣkāma* turns into ethical universalism which is popularly known as utilitarianism. To substantiate our view the definition of utilitarianism given by W.K.Frankena may be referred to. “*Ethical universalism, or what is usually called utilitarianism, takes the position that the ultimate end is the greatest general good that an act or rule of action is right if and only if it is, or probably is, conducive to at least as great a balance of good over evil in the universe as a whole as any alternative would be, wrong if it is not, and obligatory if it is or probably is conducive to the greatest possible balance of good over evil in the universe.*”<sup>2</sup> So, as long as this definition of utilitarianism goes it is very clear that *niṣkāma karma* suggested by the *Gītā* is a case of utilitarianism. How then the ethical theory underlying verse no. 47, 55 and 56 of chapter – III can be considered as deontological?

When we come across śloka no – 27 of chapter IX then again it appears that the ethical theory of the *Gītā* is de-ontological. This verse runs as, “*Yat karoṣi yadaśnāsi yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat. Yat tapasyasi kounteya tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam.*” Here Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to surrender whatever we do, whatever we eat etc. to God unconditionally. But problem reappears when we go to śloka no 64 – 66 of chapter – XVIII. In sloka no-64 Kṛṣṇa claims that now he is going to impart the highest teaching to Arjuna- “*sarvaguhyatamaṁ bhūyaḥ śṛṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ. Iṣṭo’asi me drḍḍhī tato vaksyāmi te hitam.*” In śloka no - 65 Kṛṣṇa says, “*Manmanā bhava madbhakto madyāji mām namaskuru. Māmeivaiśyasi satyaṁ te pratijāne priya’asi me.*” That means, keep your mind only upon me, be devoted to me, worship me, bow down your head upon my feet. I promise that you will attain me since you are my dearest one. Ultimately in śloka no 66 Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna, “*Sarvadharmān parityajya māmekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja. Ahaṁ tvām sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ.*” That is, surrender me giving up all religious teachings taught to you so far, I shall save you from all your sin, do not worry. So, even the ultimate and highest lesson of the *Gītā* is conditional. If Arjuna follows what is advised by Kṛṣṇa then he will save him from all sin. So, this clearly implies that the ethical teaching of the *Śrimadbhagavadgītā* is not de-ontological at all, rather it is utilitarian one.

But this view appears to be inconsistent with what is said by SriKṛṣṇa to Arjuna, “*karmanyevādhikaraste mā phaleshu kadācana*” (2/47). Teleological theory is necessarily consequential. But SriKṛṣṇa emphatically advises Arjuna to do his duty

ignoring of the consequences. Kṛṣṇa reminds him that his right is only upon action but not upon its fruits or consequences. So how can it be teleological?

But how can we deny the fact that when Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to perform *niṣkāma karma* for *lokasaṁgraha* then thereby he advises him to act with the desire to promote general welfare. If one performs his act for the sake of the satisfaction of the interest of the society (*lokasaṁgraha*) then how can this act be *niṣkāma* (disinterested)? In this case also one does have desire. Here the desire is the desire for the satisfaction of the interest of the society as a whole. So, in no way our action can be *niṣkāma* (disinterested).

If the moral theory of *niṣkāma karma* is utilitarian one then by the very definition *niṣkāma karma* does not remain as *niṣkāma*, it turns into *sakāma* since here one performs his act with the desire to promote the wellbeing of the society (*vahujanahitāya*, *vahujanasukhāya*). In this case the concept of *lokasaṁgraha* inevitably comes in conflict with the concept of *niṣkāma karma*. As long as one *karma* remains *niṣkāma*, it cannot be done with the desire to promote *lokasaṁgraha* and again as long as one performs an action with the desire to promote *lokasaṁgraha* that *karma* does not remain *niṣkāma* any more. How can this dilemma be resolved?

I think *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta*, a well known book written by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kabirāja can help us to resolve this dilemma. It says, “*Ātmendriya- prīti icchā tāre kahe kām kṛṣṇendriya- prīti icchā dhare prem nām.*” From this it is clearly understood that here the term *kāma* has been used in a technical sense. The moment we understand this problem is resolved.

So all sorts of desire are not called *kāma*. Desire is of two types – *Kāma* and *Prema*. *Kāma* stands for the egoistic desire, the desire for the satisfaction of one’s personal interest. But *Prema* stands for the altruistic desire, the desire for the satisfaction of the interest of the society. The first one is harmful both for individual and society and therefore not praiseworthy. But the second one is beneficial for both the individual and society and that is why it is praiseworthy.

So the act which is performed with a desire to promote *lokasaṁgraha* (social wellbeing) is not *sakāma*, rather it is *saprema* and for this reasons it is *niṣkāma*. Thus it is seen that there is no contradiction between *niṣkāma karma* and *lokasaṁgraha*. So, when Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to perform *niṣkāma karma* then thereby he advises him to do his activity not with the desire for the satisfaction of his personal interest but with the desire for the satisfaction of the interest of the society or for the satisfaction of God. So here the *niṣkāma karma* is not deontological, rather it is a clear case of teleological theory.

Here someone may raise question – the desire is either egoistic or altruistic but after all it is the same desire. Why then is one desire considered as praiseworthy and another not? I think the answer is simple. A knife, for example, in itself is neither good nor bad but it is the purpose to serve which the knife is used makes the knife good or bad. If the knife is used to cut vegetable then it is good but if the same knife is used to cut the belly of someone else then it is bad. And again our reflection shows that the act of cutting the belly with knife in itself is neither good nor bad, whether the act of cutting belly will be good or bad depends upon the purpose. When a murderer cuts belly of one to kill him then it is bad, but when a doctor does the same act of cutting the belly for operation to cure him then it becomes good and praiseworthy. Likewise the desire in itself is neither good nor bad, whether it will be good or bad purely depends upon the purpose it serves. In this way a number of examples may be cited. The hands of one in themselves are neither good nor bad, whether they will be good or bad purely depends upon the purpose they serve. If our hands are used for the nursing of patient then positively they are good if the same hands are used to kill someone then they are bad. If we take the help of the same to cross a river then obviously we get drawn, but if the same log of wood is made a boat then it will help us to cross the river. The *Sakāma Karma* is like a log of wood that drowns us in the river called *Vaitarani*, but *niṣkāma karma* as it is suggested by the *Gītā* is like a boat that helps us to cross the same river and reach to our ultimate destination.

If the matter is judged in a holistic outlook, i.e. if it is seen considering all things into account, it can be understood that when Sri Kṛiṣṇa advises Arjuna to do his duty ignoring of its consequences then He means that he should act not for the sake of the satisfaction of the interest of his own ego but for the sake of the satisfaction of the interest of society or others.

So far as the definitions of ethical egoism and utilitarianism are concerned it is very clear that *niṣkāma karma* belongs to the second category i.e. utilitarianism but not to the first one i.e. ethical egoism. *Niṣkāma karma* by the very definition is, in fact, an egoless activity. As long as one has the sense of ego or self interest, he cannot perform *niṣkāma karma*. One cannot expect to eat fruits of the trees of the garden of others but the same person expects to eat fruits of the trees of his own garden. This is so simply because he knows that he is the owner of that tree. Thus it is seen that unless and until the sense of ego goes, he cannot perform *niṣkāma karma*. Keeping this in view Tagore says that *dharma* is the self- denial for self realisation.

Here a dilemma comes. How can one be egoless? To be egoless is to be liberated. Ego is the hindrance on the way to be liberated. We all know that four *mārgas* have been proposed to attain *Mokṣa*, the *Summum Bonum*, of human life. Out of the four *mārgas karmayoga* or *niṣkāma karma* is one. Ego is the hindrance to be liberated and *niṣkāma karma* destroys our ego. Herein lies the dilemma. If there is

ego, there cannot be *niṣkāma karma* and if, on the other hand, there is *niṣkāma karma*, there cannot be ego. Then how can *niṣkāma karma* be proposed to make us egoless?

Our ego and *niṣkāma karma* cannot go hand in hand. Unless and until our ego is destroyed, *niṣkāma karma* cannot be taken place. And again unless and until *niṣkāma karma* is taken place, our ego cannot be destroyed.

The presence of one implies the absence of another. So, it is not intelligible how the *niṣkāma karma* can destroy our ego. Destruction of ego presupposes the presence of ego (*kāryam prāgabdhāvapratiyogi*) and presence of ego, in turn, again presupposes the absence of *niṣkāma karma*. So, if there is no *niṣkāma karma* prior as a means or cause of the destruction of ego then how the ego be destroyed? And again if the destruction of ego presupposes the presence of ego prior to *niṣkāma karma* then how can *niṣkāma karma* be taken place? So, dilemma is inevitable. How can this dilemma be overcome?

I think the hints to resolve this dilemma are available in *Bhagavadgītā* and in *Kathāmṛita*. Our ego, in fact, is at the root of all problems we face in our life. The desire for the satisfaction of our personal or selfish interest gives rise to all sorts of problems. Even here the battle of *kuruṣetra* was taken place for the same reason. Arjuna did not agree to share the kingdom with *Pāṇḍavas* due to his ego, for the satisfaction of his personal interest. So, our ego is the root cause of all the problems, social as well as individual. Sri Ramakṛṣṇadeva rightly says the death of ego leads to the solution of all problems (*Āmi mole ghuchive jañjāl*). Keeping this in view Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to kill his ego through the performance of *niṣkāma karma*. Apparently one may think that the solution is very easy. But we have already seen that the solution is not easy at all which has been pointed out citing of the dilemma in our aforesaid discussion. Again we can refer to Ramakṛṣṇadeva. He emphatically says that in no way our ego can be killed. He cites one beautiful example to explain the same. He says that if one cuts the trunk of an *Aśvathva trees* then we see that after some days another new tree takes its birth from the same root. I think the more relevant example here is the case of an immature banana tree. If an immature banana tree is cut out today then a new one will take its birth from the same root just tomorrow. In the like manner, if one goes through the different religious texts or attends the religious programmes then our ego sense may be reduced to a great extend. But after some days we forget everything and regain the same. So, what is the way out then? I think answer to this problem is available in *Gītā* as well as in the philosophy of Ramakṛṣṇa. Ramakṛṣṇa says that our ego has to be turned out into a slave of God (*Dās āmi*). Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna to fight with *Kaurava* offering its fruits to Him (Kṛṣṇa). He also advises Arjuna to give up the sense of agency to give up the sense that I am a real doer. A person who is not real doer and does not have the right to enjoy fruits of his action is nothing but a slave. A slave performs so many activities



but all activities are meant for the satisfaction of his master. So the action done by a slave necessarily is *niṣkāma*. Thus if we can consider ourselves to be slaves of God, all our actions will turn into *niṣkāma*. Keeping this in view Ramprasad says,

*“sakali tomāri ichā, ichāmoyī tārā tumi,  
tomār karma tumi kara mā loke bole kari āmi....  
Āmi yantra tumi yantri, amī ghar tumi gharaṇī  
‘āmi ratha tumi rathī yeman cālāo temni cali...”*

All this clearly shows that we are not real doer; we are instruments at the hands of God as the slaves are instruments at the hands of his master. So, I, the ego, may be of two forms – master ‘I’ and slave ‘I’. All problems are with master ‘I’. But the slave ‘I’ is also an ‘I’ as the sense of ego is also there in it but that ‘I’ does not possess any problem. We know that a poisonous snake may kill one if it bites. But if the poison issuing teeth are broken or pulled out from the mouth of the same snake then even it cannot kill anybody in spite of its biting. In the same way, if a dog bites one then he may be affected by the disease called *jalātanka*. But if same dog is injected then even if it bites no one will be affected by *jalātanka*. Master ‘I’ belongs to the first category of the snake and dog which are harmful but the slave-I belongs to the second category of snake and dog which are not harmful at all, rather they are helpful. Our master ‘I’ leads us to the bondage or hell but the ‘slave-I’ leads us to the state of *mokṣa* or heaven.

But I think, another problem may crop up. One may argue that if one is a real slave then it is natural that he will think him a slave. But actually we are not slave of God, why shall we consider ourselves to be slave? The house I live in is made by me with my own money. The land where my house is built up is purchased by me. All the things of my house, the T.V., the computer, the mobile, the almirrah, the refrigerator and the like are purchased by me. So, I am the owner of all the things. Then why shall I consider myself as a slave? If I do so then it will be contrary to the fact which cannot be encouraged by any religion or morality. But I think that if we have a close examination then we can understand that we are really slave of God. Let us examine the same. I think that I own a land where my house has been constructed. But the land I own has not been created by me. It is the very part and parcel of the world. So the real owner of my land is one who is the owner of the whole world, by whom the world has been created. God has created the world. So the real owner of the whole world including my land of house is God. The materials such as bricks, cements, rods and the like out of which my house has been constructed directly or indirectly are nothing but the creation or gift of God. All the things of my house like T.V. etc which have been purchased by me with the money I earn are not of my own in the ultimate sense. For earning money I had to spend my energy physical or intellectual. The energy comes from food. Food comes from lands, water, sunlight, and seed etc. all of

which are the gifts of God. Even the existence of my body depends upon food. The oxygen that I take in every moment through respiratory process is also the gift of God. Thus, in each and every step we depend upon God. So, in ultimate analysis I own nothing. I live on the grace of God. So, I am really a slave of God. So, I have no right upon the fruits of the activities I perform. Keeping this in view Kṛṣṇa rightly says to Arjuna, the representative of us- “you have the right only upon your action but not upon the fruit of action” (*Karmanyevādhikāraṣṭe mā phaleṣu kadācana*).

Here another problem arises so far as our discussion goes. We are slaves of God. We are the chariot and God is charioteer. In a word we are instrumental. Now if it is taken for granted that we are instrument at the hands of God then how can our activities be the subject matter of moral judgment? A murderer kills someone with knife which is nothing but an instrument. Here the real doer is the murderer, not the knife. So, here murderer is morally responsible for killing but not the knife. So, only murderer is punished. Similarly, if one is the slave and instrument at the hands of God then the activity of him subject matter of moral judgment. In this case a slave for his activity should neither be punished nor be rewarded. But we have already discussed that, if someone performs *niṣkāma karma* as it is advised by the Gītā and other *śāstras*, he must be rewarded with *mokṣa*, the *Summum Bonum* of human life. So, how can it be accounted for?

The above objection, no doubt, appears to be very sound. We all know that moral judgment presupposes some conditions and freedom of will is one of them. So, if this condition is not fulfilled then the question of moral judgment is pointless. It is very clear that so far as the above view is concerned the condition of the freedom of will is not fulfilled and consequently the activity of him cannot be the subject matter of moral judgment. But I think that here the condition of the freedom of will is fulfilled very much. Therefore the activities of the slaves of God can very well be the subject matter of moral judgment. The very term ‘freedom’ necessarily implies limitations. Limitless freedom is meaningless. Limitless freedom is not freedom at all. It is dictatorship. The presence of happiness inevitably implies the presence of sorrow, the presence of light must imply the presence of darkness. In fact, one term becomes meaningful in terms of another term. This is equally true in the case of freedom also. The freedom of one is always limited by the freedom of others. Let us suppose that one has freedom to enjoy the birthday party held at his home by dancing, singing and making hue and cry also. But at the same time the boy of the neighbouring house has the freedom to take preparation for his examination without being disturbed. Here the exercise of the unlimited freedom of the former hampers the freedom of the latter. Thus it is understood that freedom cannot be unlimited. This implies that freedom is meaningful within the territory of some restrictions. When a driver drives a car, some restrictions are imposed upon him in the form of rules etc.,

e.g. he has to drive following his side, and he has to drive within the speed-limit as per rule. But it does not mean that the driver does not have any freedom of his own. He has the freedom about whether he will overtake the car before him or not, he is free whether he will drive his car at the speed of 20 km or 70 km per hour. Likewise, a player of football or cricket also enjoys his freedom within certain restrictions. A football player, except goalkeeper, for example, does not have any freedom to play football by hands. But he is completely free about to whom he will pass his ball, with how much speed he will run etc. The same is equally true in the case of a slave or a devotee of God. A slave of God, for example, has no freedom to do any activity with the desire to fulfil his own personal interest, but he is free in which way he will serve society or God.

But someone may go further and raise the question - all the examples cited above i.e. the example of householders, the examples of the driver, the example of the player, are the examples of man who are free by definition. But how can the examples of chariot, musical instrument, the inanimate ones cited by Ramprasad earlier become intelligible. In reply, it can be said that we have to understand the very spirit i.e. the metaphoric or the suggested sense of the example cited. When one says that Ashutosh was the tiger of Bengal, he does not mean that Ashutosh had four legs and one tail like a tiger. Here the metaphoric sense says that so far as the braveness is concerned Ashutosh is like a tiger.

If we go through the hair-splitting analysis then we can understand that in the true sense of the term a slave of God enjoys more freedom than us. It is already stated that there are two types of 'I'. The one egoistic 'I' or master 'I' and another is egoless 'I' or slave 'I'. The former one is under the control of *Prakṛti* i.e. *sattva rajas* and *tamaḥ guṇa*. Here the term '*guṇa*' is very technical one. The rope is also called *guṇa*. The freedom of one can be robbed by binding him with a poll with the help of rope i.e. *guṇa*. Likewise, an egoistic person is tied up with this worldly life with the *guṇas* called *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamaḥ*. So, he cannot do anything he likes. He is always controlled by his passion like, fear, anger, hatred, the motive of profit and loss and so on. Therefore, as a matter of fact, he enjoys minimum amount of freedom. But a slave of God is an egoless person who transcends the kingdom of *Prakṛti* and goes beyond the control of *Prakṛti* or *guṇas*. He is not tied up by *guṇas* and thereby he goes beyond the control of passion. In this context it is important to note what is said by Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*,

“*Traguṇyaviṣayā veda niṣtraiguṇyo bhavārjuna.*

*Nirdvandvo nityasattvastho niryogakṣema ātmavān.*” 2/45

Here Kṛṣṇa appeals Arjuna to overcome the control of *guṇas* and become *nistraiguṇya*. He transforms into a *sthita-prajña* who is purely indifferent of his passions. So he can do whatever he likes. But an egoistic person, the master 'I' who is

under the control of *Prakṛti* cannot do whatever he likes. Therefore, Arjuna rightly says, “*Atha kena prayukto ’yaṁ pāpam carati puruṣaḥ./ Anicchannapi vārṣṇeya valādiva niyajitaḥ//.*” 3/36 Here Arjuna says to Kṛṣṇa that even if sometimes man is highly reluctant to commit a sin but he failed, as if someone from backside pushed him to do the same. If we look the same in our day to day life then we can understand that the observation of Arjuna is absolutely true. For example a thief knows very well that stealing is wrong but in spite of it he cannot resist himself from stealing. Does a smoker not know that smoking is the cause of cancer? But in spite of knowing all these they continue to do the same due to the influence of something else. That ‘something’ is nothing but the *guṇas* called *sattva*, *rajaḥ* and *tamaḥ* otherwise known as our passion, the greed, the anger and so on. So, in real sense we, the ignorant and the egoistic person, the master ‘I’ are slave.

Now let us go back to the other side of our story. We have already stated that in verse no. 47 of chapter II Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to perform *niṣkāma karma*. Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to act without the desire of its consequences. It is worthy to not that it has been stated above that here the term ‘desire’ has been used in a technical sense. To perform *niṣkāma karma* one need not give up all sorts of desire. He will give up only egoistic desire, but not the altruistic desire. But the problem comes when we see that Kṛṣṇa in verses 33-37 of chapter II already advises Arjuna to perform his *svadharma* with egoistic desire i.e. with the desire to fulfil his personal interest. So this is nothing but *sakāma karma* which directly contradicts the *niṣkāma karma* advised later on. If someone follows what is advised by Kṛṣṇa in verse no. 33-37, he cannot follow what is advised by him in verse no. 47 and the *vice-versa*. Why does Kṛṣṇa offer Arjuna, one and the same person, to follow two contrary advices? How can this dilemma be resolved? As far as my observation goes there is no real contradiction between these two advices we are talking about. The advice to perform *sakāma karma* is given an Arjuna to whom the later advice i.e. the advice to perform *niṣkāma karma* is offered is not one and the same. The former one is purely egoistic but the later one is non-egoistic. The former Arjuna is master ‘I’ but the later on Arjuna is slave ‘I’. The former one is selfish but the later one is unselfish. The former one is under the control of *guṇas* but the later on goes beyond the control of *guṇas*. If the former Arjuna is Ratnākara then obviously the later Arjuna is Vālmīki. If the former one is Siddhārtha then the later one positively is Gautama Buddha. Two persons are not the same. We know that birds are called *dvija*. Likewise we are also *dvija*. A bird takes birth twice- first in the form of egg and second in the form of baby-bird. Similarly, a man like Buddha also takes twice-born. First is the form in the womb of mother and second form in the womb of wisdom. This is the reason that a *sannyāsī* takes a new name rejecting the earlier one. He is also advised to disown all things of his earlier life. He is strictly prohibited to tell the name of his parents, he is prohibited to keep contact with his family. This is the reason that when Gautama

Buddha once went back to his kingdom Śuddhodana, his father bowed down his head on the feet of him since he (Śuddhadana) new very well that Buddha is no more his own son, he is a different person, an enlightened one. The same can be seen from a different perspective. We know that one and the same lesson is not taught to the students of all classes. It changes class to class. The whole *Gītā* is the embodiment of moral and religious teaching. We can see that Kṛṣṇa continues to change his lesson step by step in accordance with the upliftment of the level of the capacity of Arjuna. So, the two types of teachings *sakāma* and *niṣkāma* are meant for the two different levels of capacity of Arjuna. If we have a close look on *Gītā* then we can see that in many cases what Kṛṣṇa teaches Arjuna to follow in one level is completely replaced by different teaching in the subsequent state.

The same can be seen and interpreted from the angle of *caturāśrama*. We know that our *śāstra* compartmentalizes our life into four stations (stages *āśramas*) – *brahmacarya*, *gārhasthya*, *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*. Specific duties have been assigned to each and every station of life. Practice of celibacy has been offered for the station of life called *brahmacarya*. But the same has been rejected for the next station that is *gārhasthya* life. In the situation one has been advised to marry and enjoy marital life, and to have children. Again the same has been strictly prohibited in the next two stations of our life i.e. in *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*. Here one has to go to the forest and lead a solitary and restricted life leaving his home and family. Thus it is seen that the *Vidhi* for one station turns into *niṣedha* for another station. All these clearly imply that the lesson given in verse no. 33-40 of chapter- II i.e. *sakāma* is meant for the *gārhasthya* station of Arjuna and the lesson of verse no. 47 onwards that is *niṣkāma karma* is meant for the *sannyāsa* station of Arjuna. Thus it is seen that the above mentioned problem is easily resolved. Here Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to do action purely of contrary nature but yet there is no contradiction simply because He does not advise Arjuna to do the same in one and the same station of life. But, here one may say a student is taught a lesson meant for M.A. when he gets admitted in University. Similarly one should be imparted lesson for the *sannyās āśrama* when he centers into that *āśrama* but the lesson for *sannyās āśrama* i.e. *niṣkāma karma* is taught to Arjuna when he is in the battle field, not in the jungle away from society. So, how can the answer given above be accepted? In fact there is no problem at all. One can learn the lesson meant for M.A. taking admission in a University but another can learn the same from home also with the help of tutor without taking admission in any institution as Tagore did. Likewise one can be a *sannyāsī* going to jungle by leaving his home and family but another can be a *sannyāsī* within his home and family like king Janaka. *Bhagavadgītā* prefers the second one. This view can be substantiated at least by two arguments. First, *Gītā* repeatedly reminds Arjuna not to abstain from *karma*, but to renounce the result of *karma*. So, it implies that *Gītā* does not advocate *karma-sannyāsa*, it advocates only *phala-sannyāsa*. But, a *sannyāsa* life

in a jungle prefers renunciation of *karma*. Secondly, *Gītā* says that motive of *niṣkāma karma* is *lokasaṁgraha*. *Lokasaṁgraha* means social well-beings. How can a man who lives in a jungle far away from the society promote social well-beings? These two arguments show that *Gītā* advocates *sannyāsa* life within the home and society. In fact the phenomenon of renunciation is purely psychological. One may be a *sannyāsī* in spite of living in a kingdom. The classic example of it is king Janaka. Though king Janaka was living in the luxury of his kingdom, he did not have any attachment to it. But, a so called *sannyāsī* may live in a jungle and lead a beggar's life though he may be a *bhogī* if he does not renounce his desire for worldly life. In this context Rāmakṛṣṇa rightly says a real *sannyāsī* will be like *pāṅkāl* fish that lives in *mud* (*pāṅk*) but yet it gets rid of. A true *sannyāsī* may live in a family, lead a worldly life but yet he may be unaffected by it. Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to lead a worldly life being a *sannyāsī* or a *sthitaprajña* without being affected by worldly life.

In this context it is very worthy to note that the final teaching of the *Gītā* is the rejection of all teachings given so far in at least up to 17<sup>th</sup> chapter and acceptance of a new one that is to surrender to God (“*sarvadharmān parityajya māmekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja. Ahaṁ tvāṁ sarvapāpebhya mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*”18/66). The same truth has been rejected in *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*. Once Caitanyadeva happens to meet Roy Rāmānanda and wants to know from him about the ultimate goal of our life (*sādhya*). Here, also we see one lesson is replaced by another lesson in every higher level. The dialogue regarding this lesson held between them runs as follows

“*Prabhu kohe para śloke sādhyer nirṇay.*  
*Roy kohe svadharmācaraṇe Viṣṇubhakti hay.*  
*Prabhu kohe eho vāhya āge koha ār.*  
*Roy kohe Kṛṣṇe karmārpan sādhya sār.*  
*Prabhu kohe eho vāhya āge koha ār.*  
*Roy kohe svadharmatyāg bhakti sādhya sār*  
.....  
.....  
*Prabhu kohe ehottam āge kaha ār.*  
*Roy kohe kāntā prem sarvva sādhya sār.*”<sup>3</sup>

In this way the lesson given by Rāmānanda Roy reaches at culminating stage where he says that *kāntā prema* should be treated as the supreme goal of our life. I think the moral teaching offered by *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* is purely de-ontological and therefore superior to the moral teaching given by *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*.

**References**

<sup>1</sup> W.K. Frankena, *Ethics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Prentice – Hall of India Private Limited, New Delhi – 110001, 1993, P. 15

<sup>2</sup> W.K. Frankena, *Ethics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Prentice – Hall of India Private Limited, New Delhi – 110001, 1993, P. 15, 16

<sup>3</sup> *Caitanya Caritamṛta*, Kṛṣṇādas Kabiraj, chapter-VIII, pp. 206-210.

## On Niṣkāma-Karma: A Philosophical Reflection

Saroj Kanta Kar

### Introduction

Philosophical outlook is always at the service to elevate man towards achievement of a state of super-man-hood. *Niṣkāma-karma* or renunciation in action is one of such outlook propounded in the *ŚrīmadbhagavadGītā*. An individual actor happens to act in many a situation, which are events as per a cosmic order. The actor along with his actions, make up only a little part of a universal grand order of causes and conditions of many events. Even if so little, as a part, he contributes to a vast divine system, under which actions and their results are interwoven in form of event. This makes it clear that which is an action from actor's point of view is also an event from cosmic point of view, and that event is made up of many sub-events in the body and mind of the actor or between the actors and even environment. By understanding perspectives of alteration of action and event from individual and cosmic point of view, which is familiar in classical Indian literatures, man can try to attain a level of egoless state and selfish passions in actions, and thereby to surpass the ordinary craving in action or for its results for himself. He becomes devoted to the actions or to the divine system when he understands limitation of his individual agent-ship, limitation of his choices and his fate of being thrown in a situation. He renounces his agent-ship under a sublime universal super-agent-ship. By the way, it is argued here that man can elevate himself to a higher level through a philosophy of action or devotion. It promotes not only a dispassionate work-culture, but also solace to mind and heart of the actor. Philosophy offers this value to humanity through the concept of *niṣkāma-karma*.

### Karma or Action and Bhava or Event

Action or *karma* is ordinarily different from event or *bhava*. Action is generally understood as going together with intention of the actor. Actions are the deeds of the agent (*karma – puruṣa vyāpāratantra*). Events are intention-neutral and actions intention-specific. Events occur in a chain of causes and conditions, without waiting anybody's willingness or unwillingness, but actions are made by an agent, inasmuch as by his free will he chooses the action, and for this reason he becomes responsible for the action. This line of understanding the difference between action and event offers a good deal of expositions about actions and events. However, the distinction may seem to become weak in certain peculiar cases where one is responsible even for his unintentional and inadvertent action. In some of the cases the responsibility is put on the actor not for his actionless state, but for his being inadvertent, for not being able to avoid certain action, which is normally not expected from the actor, e.g., death of Śravaṇ Kumar in the arrow of Daśaratha in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In some other cases,



one has nothing to do or even expect to do or get, but becomes a hapless victim, like Belālasen in the *Mahābhārat*, or is rewarded in the course of events. This is the normal explanation of non-responsibility for action in the normal distinction of action and event.

The normal distinction of action and event, however, undergoes topsy-turvy in some other explanations, where a limited responsibility is assigned to the local actor and ultimate responsibility is assigned to the ultimate actor or cause of the action. Most of the religious explanations, particularly Christianity and Islam, go beyond ordinary understanding of the normal action and event. They posit the supernatural either God or Satan as the ultimate authority of man's actions and in this case, the same is action for the supernatural God or Satan and events for the individual person. For this supernatural factor and his cosmic settings in form of God's or Satan's inspiration man's every action is no less than an event only. Man would be a mere puppet in the hands of the divine or the Satan. However, the religious explanations enjoin a limited free will considering the power in man. This free-will makes man responsible, even if in a limited manner for his actions. Nonetheless, as the universe is conceived as a projection or creation of the supernatural, or as all the considerations and actions of man are only interactions between divine and other such powers, in such cases at his own level man is a part of an event. Man's actions as well as his responsibilities are accepted at one level, but the same are interpreted as events in another level, where the responsibility goes to the ultimate actor. A two-tier explanation of action and event, thus, is more illuminating.

The two-tier explanation of action and event with limited freedom of the agent is also accepted in the Indian context. Man is free to act, though not ultimately so. It is true that he has to act under many factors, viz., whatever is given, the nature, the occurrences both in outward nature as well as inside his own; he has also to be twisted under compulsions. Despite of this he has a little freedom making him responsible. For example, a cow has a limited freedom of grazing anywhere, though within the fence. Even then within the same fence different cows go in different directions with their different movements. Similarly, in same situation different actors also act differently. Why does it happen? It is because, different actors act according to their propensity, and the propensity is nothing but made up by series of their past actions. Thus, the doctrine of action is established with the understanding of one action leaving an impression on the personality and the personality is changed as per the accumulated impressions of actions. In the chain of actions and impressions man becomes a bundle or growing snowball of actions, impressions and their results. These slowly and steadily make up chain of action-impression-sensation which moulds man's power of reasoning, his sense of feeling and directions of his willing in

a given situation. All the three constitute the agent at a given moment, and for all the three constituents, man chooses his action. Thus, in a chain series of actions make an agent and agent makes actions. The local agent of the action, thus, has a little responsibility for his action, and the responsibility is not psychological, but factual, which constitutes the chain structure of definite actions and the agent. This is inevitable (under the explanation) under any given situation or event.

The little responsibility of the local agent again can be seen to be in the hand of global agent. It is explained above that the nature is manifested in different factors both outside as well as inside of man. Nature is manifested, inside as man's specific characteristics or *guṇa*, outside as the geographical as well as situations. Manifestation of definite *guṇa* or when a specific *guṇa* is worked out it makes his action or karma and the nexus of these makes man's propensity or *svabhāva*. *Guṇa*, *karma* and *svabhāva* qualify the actor they also cast man into a category. In the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, (henceforth *Gītā*), where the nature both outside as well as inside is figuratively bestowed with a divine authenticity, the divine is supposed to be a supreme or ultimate agent for the nature and man's nature and therefore his actions. This is boldly as well as figuratively understood in a context of Kṛṣṇa's declaration that all the four categories of people are created by me by the individual *guṇa*, *karma* and *svabhāva*.<sup>1</sup> Here the supreme agent is the divine author and all that are seen as man's, i.e., local agent's actions are ultimately the events for man and simultaneously are actions for the supreme agent in two-tier-level of understanding. Man, on the other hand, in his limited level, has the local responsibility as well as agent-ship for his action, because the agent-ship (*kartā*) is nothing but the blend of his actions-impressions-propensities. Thus, in the two-tier understanding man is the local agent for his actions, but simultaneously, in another level, both man and his actions are partially events as man is put with the given natural environment as well as is given with a particular manifestation of the original capacity in his nature. In this level, the event, i.e., man and his actions, are the acts of the supreme agent.

Both the action-impression-propensity nexus making man's local agent-ship does not seem to be inconsistent along with the supreme agent-ship. The philosophical systems that accept both the local and ultimate agent and action to event and event to actions, thereby expound a philosophy of action with heart-felt humility to the supreme agent. It develops a philosophy of action as well as philosophy of devotion. In this philosophy the local agent does not possess any ego or deposit the karmic effect, and this stops amassing of impression, propensity and in effect the local agent withers away. This is called *karma mukti* – by action, devotion and in *sanyāsa*, as stated in the *Gītā*, as *niṣkāma-karma* is depicted as renunciation in action.

### ***Niṣkāma-Karma***

As it is understood in the above, *karma* or action is made by the effort of at least one agent, and the local agent is defined as one who acts intentionally as well, as cannot refrain from happening to do something untoward. Intention, in its wider sense, includes desires and passions that are associated with action and is meant to be fulfilled by the action or happened to be in the course of desired action. These desires or passions stand for *kāma*.<sup>2</sup> *Niṣkāma*, therefore, means desire-less-ness. *Niṣkāma-karma*, in the same way, means action without desire or desire-less action or dispassionate action. The value-loaded term '*niṣkāma-karma*' has its specific meaning derived from the specific context. In its contextual import, *niṣkāma-karma* is *action without (egoistic) desire*. It is action without positing egoistic or individualistic craving for the results of the action or selfish benefit for the individual, but not that doing action without definite goal for fulfillment of the action itself. Thus, the concept has two aspects. One, wishes as well as the intentions for the action itself that promote the action; two, renunciation of actors' egoistic passions for the action or its result with the knowledge that it is his duty in the divine setting. The former leads to the successful completion of the action. The latter leads to result in the dispassionate solace to the agent, either in success or in failure. It also provides untroubled state of the mind,<sup>3</sup> which in turn, is essential for continuity as well as completion of the action.<sup>4</sup>

The concept of *niṣkāma-karma* and its contextual meaning are derived from the *Gītā*'s teaching. 'Alas! I have to kill dearer, relatives and respected ones in the battle? No, I cannot perform this horrifying action' - thinking thus, Arjuna dropped his bow and sat in anguish. Then and there, Śrī Kṛṣṇa advises him to act as a wise (*sthitaprajña*) by knowledge (*jñāna*) and renunciation (*tyāga/sanyāsa*). This is acting without delusion of ego of the actor and without egoistic craving or desire for the result of the action. Thus, *niṣkāma-karma* is a value, that is, of 'without egoistic delusion regarding agent of the action and without desire for the result' that any action is to be qualified with. Even, the egoistic desire or passion is dropped, yet Kṛṣṇa suggests to perform one's action dispassionately as the action is a duty, and one has to carry out the duty for the sake of collective social order, for the sake of well-being of the humanity (*lokasaṁgraha*).

### **Inevitability of Action (*karma*) and Preference to Dispassionate Action (*niṣkāma-karma*)**

One has to understand that having human life one cannot live without action, and hence cannot leave action by simply 'not doing'. By 'not doing one action' one 'chooses not to do it', which itself is an action of choosing. So, one is always acting either in a level or in a meta-level and cannot exist without action (*na hi kaśchit kṣaṇamapi jātu tiṣṭhati akarmakṛt*). It is only the case that one only prefers to do this

or that action in ordinary level, or if he is not doing either of the actions of the ordinary level, then that choosing not to act is a meta-level of action. This preference cannot properly be performed as far as the agent is not free from delusion and desire about the actor, action, its result and what the action can lead to. Hence, an elaborate discussion has been followed in the *Gītā* regarding the matter enlightening about *karma*, *vikarma*, *akarma* and *niṣkāma-karma*.

*Karma* or action in the *Gītā*, from the metaphysical point of view, is abiding on man. As man is the manifestation of Brahman, karma is latent in him in a chain system in the way that he is sustained by food, which in turn depends upon rain and rain on *yajña*, *yajña* upon karma and karma upon Brahman (3.14).<sup>5</sup> From another point of view, the Brahman itself is manifested as the individual being in the universe as mind and the organs, which are acted upon by the embedded Nature therein. Thus, man is naturally provoked to do. Further, the primordial nature of man always keeps him in activity (3.27) Man cannot remain without karma even for a moment, because karma is latent in his inner being, in the provocation of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* in man's nature (3.5). Hence, as one cannot, in principle, abandon actions at all, the *Gītā* suggests the best of the action by offering *niṣkāma-karma*.

From the ethical point of view, one may perform the best amongst different types of actions. One type of action is called *sāttvika karma*, which is without attachment, without desire and enmity and which is also without expectation for the result of the action. The other type of action is *rājasika karma*, where there is the expectation of the result of the action, and which is also done due to egotism and arrogance and which is also painful. Action of another type is called *tāmasika karma*, which is initiated with delusion without looking at the capability of the actor to perform it, and which is also associated with envy and bondage (18.23-25). Accordingly, the actor may be *sāttvika*, *rājasika* or *tāmasika kartā* (18.26-29). The latter two types of actions lead to bondage and suffering of their respective actors. Hence, man may not prefer them, but the best one, which is the *sāttvika karma*, because it avoids bondage and suffering, and the *sāttvika-karma*, which is without desire is *niṣkāma-karma*.

It is interesting as well as important to point out that the term *niṣkāma-karma*, in verbatim, is never found in the lines of verses in the *Gītā*; the word found is *niṣkarma*, which makes the context of *niṣkāma-karma*. However, the concept is clearly conveyed by the *Gītā*'s teachings regarding *karma*, *jñāna*, *bhakti*, *sanyāsa*, and *sthitaprajña*. Hence, one may understand the concept through these teachings.

### ***Niṣkāma-karma by Karma***

Ordinarily the agent may perceive himself as the agent, sole actor (*kartā*) as well as the enjoyer (*bhoktā*) of the result of the action. But, this is a delusion. One has to be free from the delusion that he is the sole cause of the action and by that knowledge, has to abandon any selfish desire for the result of the action. The delusion of course, breaks apart automatically, when one knows other factors for success of action. Actually, there are five factors associated with any action, namely, the locus of the action, the instruments (*karaṇa*), the actor, man's various efforts and the divine association or intervention.<sup>6</sup> Hence, one cannot be sure of the result of the action, because it does not entirely depend upon him; he is only one of the causes of the action and does not know about the other factors associated therein. Therefore, it is appropriately said that 'man may have the right only on the action, but not on the results thereof. For this reason, man must abandon the desire of the result of the action and act with dissociation'.<sup>7</sup> The action then will be only a *niṣkāma-karma*.

### ***Niṣkāma-Karma by Jñāna***

*Niṣkāma-karma* is attained by understanding of the metaphysical basis of action and its results, which give rise to an automatic spiritual renunciation of the desire of action. All karmas are due to the *prakṛti*, only the ignorant thinks that he is the doer in doing all these (3.27). He cannot renounce passions in the actions. However, who knows this, and also knows that the result of action inflicts the person, is the wise. He can, by his knowledge, be indifferent to the desire for the action or its result and thereby can eradicate the inflicting effect of the action. Further, when one is constantly aware of the fact that everything is Brahman, for him every action is endowed with the awareness of Brahman; and then in his actions he is truly associated with Brahman, rather than with actions. This results in dispassionate action (3.17, 3.18.). By his association with the Brahman he attains the Brahman, and thus he is not attached with the actions, does not also have any desire of action or the results of action (6.18). His karmas are burned in the flame of the knowledge and he has no wishful desire for actions (*kāmasaṃkalpa-varjitah*) (4.19). He leaves the association of action internally, renounces the results of the action, and in this sense, does not do anything, while simultaneously does all good actions externally (4.20). Thus, by knowledge, one is able to perform actions without delusion regarding the ego as the actor and without the desire of the result of action. This is *niṣkāma-karma*.

### ***Niṣkāma-Karma by Bhakti***

Some attain *niṣkāma-karma* by *bhakti* or devotion. Kṛṣṇā says to bestow all the actions onto Him in thought (18.56). When one is devoted to the God he is internally involved in the God-consciousness, his all actions and desires, then, rest on the God.

He has no inclination for the worldly action and for worldly desire for his own, and thereby his actions become *niṣkāma-karma*. It is because the devotee submits his mind, intellect and all his being and actions to the God (12.14). When one completely offers himself to the divine, no more he can have his ego and all his actions are no more his actions, and hence he has no hankering or bewilderment in the result of action. The submission is also spontaneous when one knows that everything is due to God. Man has neither any conception of stubborn agent-ship of his own nor also has any desire for his own. In that state of devoted submission, whatsoever the person does, must be for *loka saṁgraha* and nothing can be for self or of anything due to desire, is without his individual ego and without desire – this is *niṣkāma-karma*.

#### ***Niṣkāma-Karma by Renunciation***

There are ways of renouncing desire of actions. Action has its results. The result pertains to the person, because the person thinks that it is his action and expects the result of the action. The action and its results give rise to ego-consciousness and then affect man's propensity for further action. Gradually, man becomes bound by the action-result and propensity of ego-consciousness. All these are natural and due to *prakṛti*, the pristine principle (3.27). However, in order to free from the fetters of bondage, from the *prakṛti*, man has to renounce the desire for the results of action, though not the action itself. He cannot renounce all external and dutiful actions as such, because of inevitability of action. He may, then, renounce only the desire for the results of the action (18.11), or actions that are intended to fulfill his desire for enjoyment. Further, there are some actions, like *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapa* which should not be abandoned for their good and other supporting effects, but man can renounce the results thereof (18.3, 5.9). By which the results of these action become more auspicious.

*Sanyāsa* is said to be renouncing desires for action as well as renouncing results thereof.<sup>8</sup> 'By leaving all actions mentally one becomes *sanyāsin*. He lives in peace though he does work in the physical plane' (5.13). His actions are dispassionate in nature and here he has no sense of being as an actor nor also is associated with the results of the actions and sins thereof (5.14). This action of a *sanyāsin*, which is done with renunciation, is *niṣkāma karma*.

#### ***Niṣkāma-karma of Yogī***

Who has conquered attachment of sense-organs and has attended the purity of mind by *yogā* is *yogī*. He can see the true self of all the selves. For looking the self as the true actor in all actions, he is not associated in the actions (*na karma lipyate*), but in the self, even if he performs all actions like seeing, listening, etc. at every moment (5.7). By ascribing all activities upon the ultimate actor, the Brahman, he performs every action by body, mind, intellect, and sense-organs (5.8-11). Thereby he is not

associated by the actions, is not inflicted with the sins, and stay like lotus-leaf unblemished by water. By this, he renounces the results of action and thereby gets peace (5.12). This is called *niṣkāma-karma*.

### ***Niṣkāma-Karma of Sthitaprajña***

*Sthitaprajña*, is described as dwelling in the knowledge or state of realization of *Ātman* or *Brahman* (*brāhmī-sthiti*). One becomes a *sthitaprajña* by knowing the true nature of *ātman* and becomes satisfied only in himself by renouncing all the desires from his mind (2.55). He has no bewilderment by sorrow, no aspiration for happiness, and longing, fear and anger etc., being resolved in self and having stability of mind he is called *sthitadhi* or *muni* (2.56). This produces desire-less action or *niṣkāma-karma* in the *sthitaprajña*.

To summarise, as it has been seen, *niṣkāma-karma* is dispassionate action sans egoistic passion in the action and craving for result of the action. This becomes possible by the awareness that (a) there are different causes and conditions of action; (b) actions are due to *prakṛti*; (c) knowledge *Brahman*. Understanding the above, man performs *niṣkāma-karma* (a) by his internal dissociation (*asaktabuddhi*) (18.49) in *karma*; (b) by acting without expectation and with non-attachment (*anapekṣa* and *udāsīnavadāsina*) (12.16) in *karma mārga*; (c) by renouncing all wishes, for wishes gives rise to desire (*samkalpāprabhavākāmān*) (6.24) in *jñāna* and *sanyāsa*; (d) by knowing that he is not the actor and then resting all the actions on the God (18.56) in *jñāna* and *bhakti*.

The characteristics of a *niṣkāma-karmī* are probably reflected in the following way. The main characteristics of *niṣkāmakarmī* are that he develops non-attachment (*askta buddhi*), has no desire (*vigatasprha*) (18.49). He is internally dissociated with actions and its results and his actions become dispassionate (*udāsīnavadāsina*) (12.16, 14.23). He has lack of sense of ‘mine’ and ‘ego’ (*nirmamo nirahaṅkāra*) (12.13). Sorrow and happiness (*samāduḥkhasukha*) (12.13, 14.24), admiration and admonition, he takes them equally (*tulyanindātmastuti*) (14.24) (*mānāpamānāyostulya*) (14.25, 12.18). When all these characteristics adorn the *niṣkāma-karmī*, he is either a *sthitaprajña jñāni* or a (*karma*) *yogī* or a *bhakta* or all at once. That is to say, his *niṣkāma-karma* is due to any of the paths of *jñāna*, *karma* or *bhakti* or all of them.

**Niṣkāma-Karma vs. Naiṣkarmya**

It is interesting to note that *niṣkāma-karma* or action without desire is often contrasted with *naiṣkarmya* or inaction. *Niṣkāma-karma* by the term is not mentioned in the *Gītā*, but ‘*naiṣkarmya*’ is mentioned in *naiṣkarmyasiddhi* in the context of accomplishment of a renunciation (*sanyāśasiddhi*) in two places in the *Gītā*, in 3.4 and in 18.56. Scholars, like S. Radhakrishnan and M. Hiriyana translate *naiṣkarmya* as inaction and distinguish it from *niṣkāmakarma* or *niṣkāmatā* translating its disinterestedness.<sup>9</sup> C. D. Sharma rightly appreciates Hiriyana’s interpretation that *niṣkāma-karma* does not stand ‘for the renunciation of the action’, but ‘for renunciation in action’.<sup>10</sup> All may be appropriate at a level of understanding. In another level, despite the conceptual distinction between ‘renunciation in action’ and ‘renunciation of action’, the result is same as both makes non-agentship of the agent. This may well be understood in the following passages:

(A) One may observe that the *Gītā* teaches *naiṣkarmya siddhi* through *niṣkāma* or *niṣkāmatā*. That is to say, in a specific sense, the ultimate level is inaction (*naiṣkarmya*), which is attained through dispassionate action (*niṣkāma-karma*). This inaction is internal, but not external, because external inaction is never possible,<sup>11</sup> and therefore, is not advised. Instead, as it is learnt, internally the *bhakta* or devotee or the local actor submits everything to the God. (18.56). At the first level, one feels that he is doing the action but renounces the desire and ego, at the second stage he feels that he is doing nothing – instead, the God is doing (through him in ultimate sense of the term). He is acting in a level of inaction though he acts with his conviction and feeling. So, ultimately the local actor is not the real agent, but the God. With this understanding, the local actor remains in inaction through all actions that the God makes through him. In this sense, desire-less action (*niṣkāma-karma*) in devotion is understood to lead make inaction (*naiṣkarmya*) in external action.

(B) Further, the local actor is not the actor *per se*, because there are four other factors that are responsible for the prospect of the action (18.13, 15.7), and as actions are ultimately provoked by the nature in man (3.27), the nature is also the ultimate actor (*kartṛtva*). Having been unaware of this, the person posits his ego the desire in action for which he is the enjoyer (*bhoktṛtva*) of the action and pain and pleasure thereof. (13.21-24). However, truly speaking, man really does not do anything but the pristine nature that does through man, and hence ultimately he is not doing any action. When man becomes aware of it, he has no passion for the action. *Niṣkāma-karma* in this sense, are really his inaction (*naiṣkarmya*) in a higher level.

(C) Again, when man renounces attachment and only does dispassionately leaving any expectation for the result of the action, he accumulates no further propensity to act, and without propensity he may have been in absolute inaction. In



this way, of understanding, dispassionate action or *niṣkāma-karma* gives the sense of internal inaction *naiṣkarmya*.

*Naiṣkarmya*, which is internal achievement, is to be achieved through *niṣkāma-karma*, and *niṣkāma-karma* is giving up of desires and especially desire for result of action (*phalākāṃṣā*) and that giving up is one of the marks of renunciation or *sanyāsa*. Hence, *naiṣkarmya siddhi* or accomplishment of inaction is the fulfillment in *niṣkāma-karma* and this is one of the achievements to be made in *sanyāsa*. However, the *naiṣkarmya* can only be achieved when there is action, dispassionate action. *Gītā* says:

No accomplishment of inaction (*naiṣkarmya siddhi*) is possible without [internal] renunciation (*sanyāyāsa*) and inaction (*naiṣkarmya*) [which is internal] cannot be possible unless there is the [external] performance of action. (3.4) It is through *sannyāsa*, intelligence (i.e., mind) works without attachment, [i.e., when one become free from passions], one becomes self-conquered, become sans attachment and can attain the ultimate accomplishment of inaction (*naiṣkarmya siddhi*). (18.49).

Thus, it is comprehended that man has to do actions in physical plane of necessity, and while doing this through *niṣkāma-karma* he internally as well as spiritually achieves the inaction or *naiṣkarmya*.

#### **Need of *Niṣkāma-Karma***

The need of *niṣkāma-karma* has two-aspects: humanistic and spiritual. Action has to be performed for the cause of *lokasaṃgraha*, and the action being unselfish passion leads to spiritual betterment of the person himself. A person is naturally or dutifully assigned for certain action. Too much of attachment with the action or its result may ruin him and hence he has to practice detachment for the action while performing the action. By this, as it is stated in the above, he achieves a spiritual upliftment. He has to do the external action where he has been exerted. The person may have nothing to do, nothing to gain from any action, yet in that case, he may do it for the sake of duty, or even for higher order of duty, such as for the benefit of society, for the sake of justice and value. He puts down himself in dispassionate action only for the sake of mankind (*lokasaṃgraha*) as the action of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He says ‘nothing is beyond my reach, I require nothing, I have also no desire for anything, still I am working for the sake of humanity (*lokasaṃgraha*). It is my duty that I should do, which enlightens others so that they may follow me. If I do not act, thereby I deprive the others from learning the right ways of doing, and here I have laps of my duty of enlightening others. In this situation I will be responsible for whatever sin the unenlightened people may commit.’ (3.22 & 23; 4.14 & 15.). Similarly, a great person, who has no

aspirations for himself, also acts dispassionately as it is his duty to enlighten the others. Hence, one has to perform action, if not for himself, but for others, for *loka-saṁgraha*. In this context, doing dispassionate action or *niṣkāma-karma* is a duty and cannot be abandoned either for one's spiritual progress or for the sake of humanity.

One may argue that there are conceptual as well as practical difficulties regarding *niṣkāma-karma*. Difficulty may arise as we consciously practice or adopt *niṣkāma-karma*. We are passionately following a dispassionate action, and this itself stands as a passion – passion for dispassionate action. So, there seems to be a conceptual as well as practical difficulty that the practice contradicts the concept of *niṣkāma-karma*. Further, if one does not have any personal passion for result of the action but works for the *loka-saṁgraha*, then here the action is associated with a passion for *loka-saṁgraha*. This, in strict sense of the term, is not also dispassionate action.

The above-mentioned problems do not contradict the *niṣkāma-karma*. Instead the context establishes *niṣkāma-karma*. Suppose there is a passion for *niṣkāma-karma* and does the dispassionate action passionately, there he only performs the *niṣkāma-karma* and nothing else. Hence, at the first moment there is the passion, but since the passion is for the dispassion then in the second moment there is no passion and no passion means dispassion. The first moment of passion disappears or alters in the second moments of dispassion. Further, *niṣkāma-karma* in any normal sense only says for removal of egoistic-passion for the result of the action. It is because the result may depend upon many things apart from the actor and therefore being dispassionate for the result the actor may not be affected either by the undesired result or by his ego in the fulfillment of the desired result. This happens in any dispassionate action and in passion for the dispassionate action. Hence, passion (*kāma*) for dispassionate action (*niṣkāma-karma*) does not contradict *niṣkāma-karma* in practice.

Action for *loka-saṁgraha* or wellbeing, of course, preserves a passion or desire for *loka-saṁgraha*. However, this passion is not egoistic-passionate action. So, a passion for *loka-saṁgraha* does not contradict *niṣkāma-karma*.

Further, many times, it is felt that no action is possible without any expectant result thereof and hence, without planning and desire for the result of the action there is no possibility of action at all. However, this objection does not rise. The term *niṣkāma-karma* does not say anything about the surface level of the action, regarding planning, in materializing the plan and in expecting the result. In this sense, *niṣkāma-karma* does not speak about the phenomenal level, the external aspect of the action. Rather, it says about the spiritual level, the internal aspect of the action, so that in this level man must not be inflicted with so much of attachment for the result of the

action, though simultaneously man might have some goal and some expectation for the external performance of the action making possibility of action. This is the true import of the *niṣkāma-karma*.

### Conclusion

Man has to act because he is left by the nature in the sphere of action. He cannot leave the action, because (as it is understood in the above) it is logically impossible. Practically man cannot sustain without action. The actions that man performs are external and there may be an internal participation too. However, among the internal participation, too much of passionate and emotional participation in action may give rise to delusions and desires regarding action. These upraising delusion and desires, apart from troubling the local actor as well as damaging the action, may make a continuous shackle death and birth for the actor. Hence, there is a need of considerable amount of internal dissociation from the action and renunciation of the expectation of results of actions. This is *niṣkāma-karma*, which does not put any ordinary local actor in the circularity of action-disposition-action. Simultaneously, it also promotes actions as duty for the sake of duty as well as duty towards betterment of the humanity (*lokasaṁgraha*).

### References

1. ‘*Chaturvarṇyaṁ mayā śrīṣṭaṁ guṇakarma vibhāgaśah*’.... *Śrīmadbhāgavadgītā*, IV.13.
2. *Kāma*, in a wider context, means wishes or desire in general. It includes all types of worldly or other worldly wishes. To have wishes means it is associated with intention and in a sense, wishes or desires are also presented as intention. One has a wish means one has the same intention. In other words, one intends for the same.
3. It is just like to achieve the state of mind of no more worldly attachment. Cf. *Vitarāgaviṣayaṁ vā chittaṁ*. *Yogatra* of Patanjali, 1.37.
4. *Niṣkāma-karma* should not be taken to mean that action to be made without keeping any goal or planning for the action itself as well as working half hazardedly and without sincerity.
5. This and all the references given in the manner, within parenthesis in the body of the texts refer to the *Śrīmadbhāgavadgītā*. The former digit(s) before dot ‘.’ Indicate(s) chapter and the digit(s) succeeding the dot ‘.’ Indicate(s) the order of verse.
6. *Adhiṣṭhānaṁ tathā kartā karaṇaṁ cha prīthag-vidham vividhāśh cha prīthak cheṣṭā daivaṁ chaivātra pañchamam*. *Gītā* 18.14.
7. *karmaṇy-evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadāchana mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo ’stvakarmanī*. *Gītā* 2.47.
8. *Kāmānāṁ karmanāṁ nyāsaṁ, saṁnyāsaṁ kavyoyh viduh*,

*Sarva karmaphalatyāgaṃ prāhusytāgaṃ vichakṣaṇāḥ. Gītā. 18.2.*

9. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), Vol. 1. p. 568. M. Hiriyana, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, (-).

10. Chandradhar Sharma, *A Constructive Survey of Indian Philosophy*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1983), p. 35.

11. The reasons are stated in previous section – ‘Inevitability of action and preference to dispassionate action’.

## Advaitins' Account of the Mechanism of Illusion: A Question

Mainak Pal

### Introduction

The theory of illusion, advocated by the Advaita Vedāntins is named *Anirvacanīyakhyātivāda*, which says that the metaphysical status of the illusory silver in a shell-silver illusion is neither absolutely real – since it is sublated by a subsequent true perception of shell, nor is absolutely unreal – since it is appeared to us. It has a different degree of reality – uncategorizable or unspeakable either as 'real' or 'unreal' *per se*. Hence, it is *anirvacanīya*.<sup>1</sup> This in-between level of reality is named as *mithyā*.

The Advaitins' account of perception and illusion is based on their exclusive metaphysical and epistemological notions. They are as follows.

The Advaitins' metaphysics has four compartments:

- (i) The Absolute reality (*pāramārthika sattā*): It is real for all the time and never sublatable in triple stream of experience – waking state, dream and dreamless sleep. This Absolute is non-dual *Brahman* – The Pure Existence, Pure Consciousness and Pure Bliss in essence.
- (ii) The Empirical reality (*vyavahārika sattā*): It is sublatable only by the realization of the Absolute. The world of our common experience has such reality.
- (iii) The Ephemeral reality (*prātibhāsika sattā*): It is sublatable by the experience of the previous levels of reality. Illusory objects and dream-objects those exist only during the corresponding appearance have this degree of reality. They have non-categorizable (either as absolutely real or as absolutely unreal) ephemeral reality (*anirvacanīya prātibhāsika sattā*).
- (iv) The Absolute unreality (*tuccha sattā*): It never becomes an object of direct awareness like square-circle or the son of a barren mother.

We can try to explore in the light of our common-sense reasoning. Sublation is of two kinds – experiential and logical. After the illusion of silver in shell, when the true cognition of shell occurs, the silver vanishes. This is experiential sublation. Through experience we become sure of the non-existence of silver in front of us which was apparently present a moment ago. Now existence and non-existence are contradictory to each other and cannot co-exist in a real thing which is *nitya anuvartamāna*. Here the contradiction is realized at the experiential level. Now, it is

conceivable that a particular object having a particular form and spatio-temporal location may appear as having a different form and location. It is logically possible that the objects of our experience possess contradictory properties. There is no logical rule that an object, say, a pot 'must' remain the same for all the time. So this contradiction is realized at the level of logical possibility. Although the object, pot, is not experientially sublated yet, this logical possibility has made the object experientially sublatable or logically sublated. Now, the meaning of the term 'real' derived by the Advaitins is such that it would not allow even the possibility of any contradiction. Reality is *never-sublatable* entity. It is sublated neither experientially nor logically. Experientially sublated objects are *prātibhāṣika sat*, logically sublated objects are *vyavahārika sat* and which is sublated in no way is *pāramārthika sat*. However, *vyavahārika sat* is experientially sublated only by *Brahma*-intuition. From that perspective, this world-appearance is a cosmic illusion.

We can say that there are different degrees of reality; and cognitions of more real objects sublate cognitions of less real objects. The object of individual illusion (*prātibhāṣika vastu*) is less real than the object of cosmic illusion (*vyavahārika vastu*), which is still less real than the Absolute reality – *Brahman*. The Advaitins explain individual as well as cosmic illusion by the same principle – *Māyā* or *Avidyā*, which is a mysterious power having only an empirical reality.

The Advaitins are proponents of *Upaniṣadic nisprapañca Brahmatattva* according to which only non-dual *Brahman* is ultimately real which is the substratum of world illusion, just as the shell is the substratum of silver-illusion. The world of plurality is the product of *Māyā* or *Avidyā*, which is a magical power of creation residing in *Brahman*. Undifferentiated *Brahman* seems to be differentiated and plural being delimited (*avacchinna*) by the product of *Māyā*. *Māyā* has two aspects. The negative one is *āvarana* or veiling nature. *Māyā* hides the reality acting as a screen. The positive aspect is *vikṣepa* or projecting nature. *Māyā* projects or superimposes the world of plurality on the substratum of *Brahman*. *Suddha-Brahman* or Pure Consciousness is not knower. Internal organ is a product of *Māyā*. When the internal organ delimits Pure Consciousness entering into its being, it is called it is called *jīva* (*antaḥkaraṇāvacchinna caitanya*) who is considered to be the cognizing consciousness or *pramāṭṛcaitanya*. When the internal organ conditions Pure Consciousness without entering into its being, it is called *Sākṣī* or witness-consciousness (*antaḥkaraṇopahita caitanya*). The objects of our empirical cognition are neither Pure Consciousness nor simply the products of *Māyā*. They are the result of mutual superimposition (*paraspara tādātmyādhyāsa*) of Pure Consciousness and empirical objects. It is called *viśayāvacchinna caitanya*.

### ***Brahman***

Subscribing to any form of dualism or pluralism is philosophically problematic, because the relation between those ultimate real objects cannot be explained satisfactorily. In order to relate them there has to be a relation which must also be real. But the relation cannot relate two relata without itself being related to each of those relata. In that case, two other relations also have to be admitted. This way an infinite regress will set in. So, it is better to accept Monism which is free from this problem. The Advaitins hold that relation is ontologically unreal. It is needless too, since there is only one ultimate entity. This ultimate is the all-pervading *Brahman*.

There is no other thing which can limit or qualify *Brahman*, hence He is infinite and attributeless (*nirguṇa*). *Brahman* is formless (*nirākāra*), partless (*niravayava*), changeless or immutable (*aparināmī*) and free from all determinations (*nirviśeṣa*). Conceptually there is no other aspects which it lacks, hence *Brahman* is the Supreme, Perfect and Absolute. *Brahman* is essentially Pure Existence – Pure Consciousness – Pure Bliss (*sacchidānandasvarūpa*). *Sat*, *Cit* and *Ānanda* constitute the essence of *Brahman*. They are neither parts nor properties of *Brahman*. He is never sublatale, hence *Sat*; spiritual, hence *Cit*; knowledge-as-such and not a knower, hence *jñānasvarūpa*; unitary and all-embracing nature, hence *Ānanda* or Bliss. He is the foundation of all experiences as the internal principle (*Ātman*). So, it is never sublatale in tripartite experience of *jāgrata*, *svapna*, or *suṣupti*. Denial of it proves the existence of the denier. It is never sublatale in past-present-future (*trikālābhādhita*). Hence it is ever-present (*nitya-anuvartamāna* or *sat*). He is non-dual, hence devoid of homogeneous and heterogeneous differences (*sajātīya-vijātīya-bhedarahita*). He is partless and undifferentiated Pure Consciousness, hence free from internal distinctions (*svagata bhedarahita*).

*Brahman* transcends all phenomenon of plurality (*sarvaprapañcavivarjita*). But our faculty of intellect is discursive. First we categorise our object of knowledge into different compartments and then find out the relations between them. Duality or plurality is ingrained in the very constitution of our intellect through which we perceive this world. That is why our intellect cannot reveal the unified singularity in its essence. Hence, *Brahman* is beyond the reach of thought and words therefore indescribable (*avāṇmanasagocara*, *anirvacanīya*). However, the Vedāntins say that our intellect is impure and has only empirical reality. When the impurity of ignorance (*Ajñāna*, *Avidyā*) is washed away by the flood of the light of Truth, *Brahman* is realized. He is realized through a pure intellect (*suddhabuddhigocara*). Pure intellect is nothing but that undifferentiated Consciousness itself. To realize *Brahman* is to attain the non-difference with that unified Existence (*Brahmavid Brahmaiva bhavati*). So, *Brahman* is the self-shinning consciousness (*svaparakāśa*, *svayamjyotisvarūpa*) and *Brahman*-intuition is the ultimate immediate experience.

From the ontological point of view all the positive attributes are meaningless and cannot be taken seriously since He is attributeless. Even to call Him *Sat*, *Cit* and *Ānanda* is philosophically problematic. At most we can describe it negatively – ‘not this, not this’ (*neti neti*). But after realizing *Brahman* we perceive that he has become everything, rather He *is* everything.

Our ordinary reason says that only that thing is real (*sat*), which remains the same forever (*nitya-anuvartamāna*). What unaffectedly persists through this ever-changing world is Existence, which is the real ground (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of all the changeable forms. Its sublation is unthinkable. Pure Existence is Pure Consciousness also. Viewing internally we find that what is always present and never absent in triple mental states is Consciousness. So, Pure Consciousness is Pure Existence. *Ātman* is *Brahman*. Now, that which is conditional is dependent on ‘other’ things. Such limited things cannot pertain to reality since it is subject to destruction and change with the destruction or change of its condition. And if it is not *nitya-anuvartamāna*, it will not be worthy of the name ‘real’. Hence, reality is unconditional and the vice-versa (since only the unconditional or non-limited objects can be eternal and infinite). Our unconditional drive for happiness proves that bliss is the essence of reality. So, Pure Existence - Consciousness is Pure Bliss also. Pure Bliss is unconditional; hence infinite (*ananta*).

However, the question arises as to why and how this non-dual absolute appears to be the manifold of world and different empirical souls. The Advaitins answer this question bringing the notion of *Māyā* or *Avidyā* which is a magical power of creation belonging to *Brahman*.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Māyā or Avidyā***

Analysing the cases of illusion the Vedāntins conclude that during illusion, less real objects are imposed on more real objects and appear as real as the substratum. This is called *adhyāsa*. When we obtain the true cognition of the substratum (*adhiṣṭhāna*) we realize that the superimposed object is not real. This rule of empirical-ephemeral level is applicable to the empirical-transcendental level also. The eternally persistent substratum is non-dual *Brahman*, which is the only real thing. Due to our ignorance (*ajñāna*) about the nature of *Brahman* we take the superimposed world of plurality to be as real as the substratum – *Brahman*. *Brahman* is not transformed into the world of plurality since He is not subject to change. It appears differently remaining the same. There is no causal relation between *Brahman* and this world just as there is no causal relation between shell and illusory silver. Transformation (*parināma*) holds between two things having the same degree of reality.<sup>3</sup> But when the substratum possesses a different (higher) degree of reality from that of its evolutes, the process is called modification.<sup>4</sup> So, the world of plurality is a seeming modification (*vivarta*) of



*Brahman* since *Brahman* and the world have different degrees of reality. Since the world has no separate and independent existence than *Brahman*, it is not different from *Brahman*. And due to the difference of the degrees of reality, they are not identical either. This unique relation might be called as ‘non-difference’ or ‘inseparability’ (*ananya, tādātmya*). The relation is beyond our categories of intellect, as if there is a magical power of *Brahman* by virtue of which *Brahman* appears to be the world of plurality. The term ‘*Māyā*’ or magical power indicates the unbridgeable gulf between limited human intellect and unlimited *Brahman*. It is also called *Ajñāna* or *Avidyā* since the ignorance of *adhiṣṭhāna* is the root cause of illusion.

The Advaitins took the metaphor of magician (*māyāvī*) from *Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad* and explained how it is possible to create an illusion without being affected by it. Those who are ignorant of the trick of the magician think that the magician has a special mystical power. But those who know the trick and the magician himself know that there is no such power in reality. In the same way, the limited beings, to whom this manifold of world is appeared, ascribe a magical power of creation to *Brahman*. But those who have realized *Brahman* know that there is no *Māyā* from the transcendental point of view. *Māyā* is removable by the right knowledge of *Brahman* (*vijñānanirāśya*), hence it is not real. But, from the empirical point of view, the existence of such a creative power cannot be denied which is the source of this empirical world. So, *Māyā* is neither real nor unreal nor both, but indescribable or *mithyā* (*sadasadanirvācyā*).

*Māyā* has two aspects – positive and negative (*bhāvābhāvasvarūpa*). The negative aspect is *āvaraṇa* or the veiling nature. It is an absence of knowledge (*ajñāna*) of the real substratum of this world-illusion. *Māyā* hides the reality acting as a screen. The positive aspect is *vikṣepa* or the projection. *Māyā* projects or superimposes this world of plurality (*mithyā jagat*) on the substratum of *Brahman* which is real in the true sense. So *Māyā* is the cause of non-apprehension (of *Brahman*) as well as misapprehension (of this indescribable world). So, it is of the nature of error (*bhrānti*) since it imposes on one thing the character of other.

Since *Māyā* and this world have the same degree of reality, we can say that *Māyā* is the transformative material cause (*parināmopādānakāraṇa*) of this world.<sup>5</sup> It is the magical potency of *Brahman* and the seed of the world of names and forms (*nāmarūpabījāśaktirūpam*). The world of plurality lies latent in *Māyā* as unmanifested. The basic constituent elements (*guṇa*) of this world are *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Sattva* is of the nature of luminosity that causes happiness, *rajas* is of the nature of activity that causes suffering, *tamas* is of the nature of concealment that causes a hypnotic attachment. *Māyā* is composed of these three basic elements (*triguṇātmaka*). It is active and unconscious (*jaḍa*).<sup>6</sup>

### ***Jīva***

The non-dual Atman or *Brahman* is the universal self which appears to be individual empirical self (*jīva*) being limited or individuated by the internal organ. Internal organs are many in number, so are the *jīvas*. The internal organ is a product of *Māyā* or *Avidyā*. It is generated from the five subtle elements collectively, with the excess of *sattva*. That is why it is translucent having partial capacity of revelation. It has four functions and corresponding four names. When it performs the function of assimilation and discrimination it is called *manas*. The function of *buddhi* is determination. *Ahaṁkāra* produces a false sense of ego (*ahampratyaya*). The function of *citta* is recollection. These four forms of *antaḥkaraṇa* are the individuating principles of *jīva*. The unattached *Ātman* appears to be agent (*kartā*), enjoyer (*bhoktā*) and knower (*jñātā*, *pramātā*) being delimited or qualified by internal organ. It is an empirical entity (*mithyāviśaya*) which is the result of the superimposition (*adhyāsa*) of non-Self (*antaḥkaraṇa*) on the Self. *Jīva* is embodied Self. *Avidyā* or individual nescience is the source of *jīvatva*; hence it is the causal body (*kāraṇa śarīra*) of *jīva*. *Avidyā* produces the subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra*) of *jīva* composed of organs and vital forces. From the combination of five gross elements the gross body (*sthūla śarīra*) of *jīva* is produced. These threefold body is called *pañcakoṣa* or the five coverings of gross body, vital principles, psychical principle, intellect and causal body. Under these five kernels of body there remains the Self who is the unattached spectator in itself (*Sākṣī*).<sup>7</sup>

### ***Sākṣī***

Śaṅkara does not make any distinction between *Ātman* and *Sākṣī*. He regards the universal self in *jīva* (*Ātman*) as the witness of all cognitions (*sarvapratyayasākṣī*). Dharmarājadhvarīndra differentiates *Ātman*, *Sākṣī* and *jīva*. *Ātman* is unconditioned and unqualified Pure Consciousness. When the internal organ conditions it without entering into its being, it becomes the witness-self (*Sākṣī*). And when the internal organ delimits or qualifies it entering into its being, it becomes the empirical self (*jīva*). The internal organ or *antaḥkaraṇa* is a qualification (*viśeṣaṇa*) of *jīva*. It is inseparable from *jīva* since it enters as a constituent element into the individual self. But *antaḥkaraṇa* is separable from the witness-self since it merely is an adventitious condition (*upādhi*) of *Sākṣī*.<sup>8</sup> Qualification differentiates an object being associated with it. But condition differentiates an object remaining unattached with it.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Prameya and Pramātā***

In the cases of ordinary true cognition, a special relation is established between the knower (*pramātā*) and the known (*prameya* or *viśaya*). In our empirical cognition, the all-pervading undifferentiated single Pure Consciousness appears to be multiple

objects having specific shape and size like jar and clothes. Those objects are the products of *Māyā*; they have only empirical reality. But the eternal Consciousness always remains present behind everything as the fundamental principle or substratum. The Products of *Avidyā* are superimpositions on it. Although the relation between these superimposed objects and the substratum of superimposition is indescribable due to the difference in their degrees of reality, but we can metaphorically express it by the term ‘delimitation’ (*avaccheda*). Water has no shape of its own. It assumes the shape of its container and appears to have that shape. We say that water is delimited by the container. In the same way, the undifferentiated *Brahman* appears to be multiple objects of different forms owing to be delimited by those empirical products of *Māyā*. So, the empirical objects are the consciousness, limited by those empirical objects. Pure Consciousness manifests its nature of existence resorting to the products of *Māyā*. Since, the products of *Māyā* are limited beings, *Brahman* appears to be limited. And the existence part of *Brahman* is induced to those false objects. Hence, they appear to have ontological reality (*pāramārthika sattā*). So our empirical cognition of a pot is a result of mutual superimposition (*paraspara tādātmyādhyāsa*). So, the object of our empirical cognition is neither Pure Consciousness, nor simply a product of *Māyā*. From the empirical point of view, it is a combination of Truth and falsity<sup>10</sup> –The Truth, delimited by false objects. So, the object of empirical cognition is consciousness delimited by empirical object (*viṣayāvacchinna caitanya*).

The other pole of cognition is the cognizer (*pramātā*). The Universal Self cannot be the cognizer of something else since it is beyond the duality of knower and known. The subject of empirical cognition is the empirical self or *jīva*, which is a combination of Self (consciousness) and non-Self (the mental organ, which is a product of *Avidyā*). It is the consciousness delimited by mental organ (*antaḥkaraṇāvacchinna caitanya*). This is also called subject-consciousness or *Pramāṭṛcaitanya*.

### **Advaita Theory of Perception**

With the aforesaid basic concepts we can state the Advaita theory of perception. The Advaitins differentiate higher knowledge (*parāvidyā*) from lower knowledge (*aparāvidyā*). *Parāvidyā* is the *Brahman*-intuition which is a supra-intellectual integral and immediate experience (*sākṣāt aporokṣa*). It is perceptual in the sense that it is direct and immediate. While in *Brahman*-intuition there remains no distinction of cognition, cognized and cognizer. So, *Brahman*-intuition is nothing but merging with the Pure Consciousness. This ultimate identification or immediacy of the cognized and the cognizer amounts to the perceptuality of *parāvidyā*. In the cases of *aparāvidyā* or the ordinary knowledge, there always remains a knower – known bipolarity. So, it never involves the immediacy of ultimate identification. *Parāvidyā* is beyond the duality of truth and falsity; but our ordinary experience of this empirical

world is either true or false. The Advaitins define true empirical cognition (*pramā*) as the cognition of a real object which is not previously cognized and is not sublated (during the existence of this empirical world).<sup>11</sup> Such empirical cognition might be perceptual or non-perceptual. The Advaitins hold that in the cases of ordinary perceptual cognition also there remains some amount of immediacy which is the mark of perception. So, the Advaitins do not deviate from the definition of higher perception while defining ordinary true perception: True perception is consciousness.<sup>12</sup>

The Advaitins hold that during ordinary perception, the immediacy between the subject and the object is established through the instrumentality of *antaḥkaraṇa*. *Antaḥkaraṇa* resides in the human body pervading the whole body. When an appropriate sense-organ comes in contact with an object<sup>13</sup>, translucent *antaḥkaraṇa* moves out to the object through the channel of sense-organ and assume the form of the object occupying the same position in space with it. This modification of *antaḥkaraṇa* is called *vr̥tti*. The consciousness delimited by this *vr̥tti* is *vr̥tyavacchinna caitanya*. This *vr̥tti* or the consciousness delimited by *vr̥tti* is considered to be the instrument of perception (*pratyakṣa pramāṇa*), which establishes an immediacy between the perceiver and the percept.

• **The Nature of Pratyakṣa Pramā** – The delimiters differentiate consciousness in virtue of possessing different position in space. During perception, *vr̥tti* and *viśaya* occupy the same space-position and obtain an identity of locus. As a result, they cannot bring about any difference in the consciousness delimited by them. Thus *vr̥tyavacchinna caitanya* and *viśayāvacchinna caitanya* become identified. This immediacy or identification of *pramāṇacaitanya* and *viśayacaitanya* is the necessary means (*prayogika*) of *pratyakṣa pramā*. And the consciousness, identified in that way, is called perceptual cognition (*pratyakṣa pramā* or *pratyakṣa jñāna*).<sup>14</sup>

• **The Nature of Pratyakṣa Viśaya** – There is no real difference between the *antaḥkaraṇa* and its modification (*vr̥tti*). Hence, in the aforesaid means, *viśayāvacchinna caitanya* becomes identified with *antaḥkaraṇāvacchinna caitanya* or *pramāṇacaitanya*. This immediacy makes an object percept (*pratyakṣa viśaya*). However, the object must have the potentiality of being perceived (*yogyatā*) and it must be present there (*vartamānatva*).<sup>15</sup>

• **The Nature of this Lower-level Immediacy** – The aforesaid identification does not mean an absolute identity between the cognized and the cognizer. In the empirical perception in the form ‘I see this’ (*aham imam paśyāmi*) I-consciousness (subject or *kartā*) and this-consciousness (object or *karma*) are clearly distinguished. The intended meaning of the identification is that the being of the object (*viśayasattā*) is not independent of and separate from the being of cognizing consciousness

(*pramāṭṛcaitanyaśattā*). The object is superimposed on the object-consciousness. The being of a superimposed entity (*aropitasattā*) is not separate from the being of its substratum (*adhiṣṭhānasattā*). All the superimposed objects are *mithyā* having no existence on their own. They have being due to the virtue of the being of their substratum. So, *viśaya* has no existence over and above that *viśayacaitanya*, which is in turn identified with *pramāṭṛcaitanya*. So, *viśaya* has no independent and separate existence over and above *pramāṭṛcaitanya*.<sup>16</sup>

• **The Role of *Antaḥkaraṇa* in Perception** – *Antaḥkaraṇa* has a special role to play exclusively in the cases of perception. Each object remains covered by the veil of individual nescience. So far as they remain covered by the darkness of *ajñāna* they do not become the content of an existential assertion in the form ‘this object exists’ or ‘this object is perceived’. When the translucent *antaḥkaraṇa* is spatially unified with the object, it lifts only that individual derivative form of nescience. It can not remove the cosmic nescience of *Māyā* which hides the substratum-consciousness and projects the material objects. We can say that *Brahman* is doubly coated. It remains covered by the covering power of *Māyā*. On that covering, *Māyā* projects empirical objects that remain hidden by a second level covering of the darkness of individual nescience. *Vṛtti* dispels only that temporary darkness and manifests the projection of *Māyā*, i.e., the object.

However, this direct acquaintance is absent in the cases of non-perceptual mediate cognitions like inference, because the outgoing of *antaḥkaraṇa* is involved only in the case of perception. And until the *vṛttijñāna* is collocated with the correlative *ajñāna*, it cannot dispel the *ajñāna*. The removal of *ajñāna* causes the vividness (*spaṣṭatā*) of the percept which is lacking in the non-percepts.

• **The Role of *Sākṣīcaitanya* in Perception** – For the Vedāntins, cognition is a kind of revelation – being conscious about something. The internal organ or the modifications of internal organ are the products of *Avidyā*, hence they are unconscious (*jaḍa*). That which itself is unconscious cannot be conscious about something else. Therefore, the *vṛtti* itself cannot reveal the object of perception. Only the Pure Consciousness can have such faculty. It is the only spectator or revealer (*drk*); everything else is unconscious, hence are the objects of revelation (*drśya*). It is the substratum-consciousness which manifests everything. Remaining within this empirical world, we call it the *Sākṣīcaitanya* or the impartial witness consciousness. Now, although *vṛtti* is material (*jaḍa*), it is translucent and reflects light. During perception, the light of the witness consciousness is reflected on *vṛtti* and the form of the object is manifested. In this way the veil of individual nescience, which was suspending between the empirical object and the witness consciousness (or the *vṛtti*-consciousness), is lifted by the *vṛtti*. Then the object (as well as the *vṛtti*) is

illuminated by *Sākṣīcaitanya*. The illuminated or revealed object is called percept and the illuminated *vṛtti* is called perception.

• **The Importance of Vṛtti-centered Perceptual Mechanism** – In the Advaita account of perception, the most important element is the admission of *antaḥkaraṇa*. The Advaitins do not suppose that our sense-organs receive the fragmentary stimulations and the impression or affection is carried to the brain for organization. In such an account, there remains an unbridgeable gap between the psychological process and the cerebral process. In western psychology the relation between mind and body has been explained in different ways, but still now no satisfactory account has been found. Vedānta attempts to mitigate this uncompromising dualism with the hypothesis of *antaḥkaraṇa* as an intermediate reality. Although it is made up of subtle matter, it has some advantage over other gross objects. It can reflect the light of consciousness and appears to be conscious. It is active, although material. Hence, it might be the perfect meeting point of matter and consciousness.

Another important aspect is that, the account avoids the ‘atomic approach’, which holds that the fragmentary bits of stimulation are unified into a whole object by an internal process. But if that is the case then the unity of the external object does not impose any causal obligation on the unity of the internal content. Whether the internal unifying principle will follow or copy the external unification is merely a matter of chance. There will remain no necessary connection between the structure of the reality and our mental construction. Here the Advaitins suggests that *antaḥkaraṇa* itself moves outwards and grasps the object *in its totality*. This synthetic approach enjoys the theoretical advantage that the Gestalt psychologists enjoy over the Atomists.<sup>17</sup>

The active participation of the subject, even before the senses get activated in the process of perception, is a well-accepted view. It says that the perceptual process starts from the subject-end, rather than from the object-end, even when we are not consciously motivating us for perceiving. So, there must be something other than our volition which can start up this mechanism on our part. In Vedānta philosophy, translucent and active *antaḥkaraṇa* takes this lead.

The onward movement of *vṛtti* may seem to be unnecessary in the process of perception. *Antaḥkaraṇa* might assume the form of the percept remaining in its own place and the *Sākṣī* could illumine the percept which is present to the sense-organ with the aid of such a static *vṛtti*, since *Sākṣī* is capable of illuminating all objects – presented or non-presented (such as the object of inference) to it. And the instrumentality of sense organ would make the difference between a perceptual and non-perceptual cognition. But in the system of the Advaitins this suggestion will not be acceptable for two reasons.

1. The Advaitins hold that mind is not a sense organ. If perceptuality of cognition is determined by the instrumentality of sense-organ, then the internal states like pain and pleasure will not be perceived.
2. Some Vedāntins say that *Sākṣī* does not illumine the object in perception; rather the object-consciousness does it. Now, this object-consciousness itself is concealed by the veil of nescience, so it cannot illumine the object until the *vr̥tti* goes there and removes the veil. This removal causes the vividness (*spaṣṭatā*) of the percept which the lacking in the non-percepts.

This account successfully avoids representationalism which inevitably leads to one kind of skepticism regarding the nature of the external world. The Advaitins advocate a pure direct-acquaintance theory of perception where perception is defined in terms of identity or immediacy, established through *vr̥tti*. However, the account does not suffer from the problems of the direct theory of perception or that of the direct realism. These theories cannot even accommodate the possibility of illusion in their framework. Admitting the instant production of an ephemeral silver and the corresponding *avidyāvr̥tti*, the Advaitins solve the problem.

• **The Necessity for Admitting Avidyāvr̥tti** – *Antaḥkaraṇavr̥tti* cannot account for all kinds of perceptual cognition. There are some objects that remain ever-revealed and ever-connected to the witness-consciousness from the very moment of their origin. *Antaḥkaraṇa* itself, the properties of *antaḥkaraṇa* like pain and pleasure and the objects of illusion are such things. They do not have any unknown existence and therefore are never covered by the darkness of individual nescience. Therefore, for the perception of them, we need not admit the aid of any mental mode (*antaḥkaraṇavr̥tti*) for lifting the veil of ignorance. However, the witness-consciousness cannot reveal any specific object – internal or external, without referring to its specific form. It perceives a specific object reflecting on its form. Now, the object itself is not open to the witness-consciousness. So, it needs a mediation of something which has the form of the object and also which is open to the witness-consciousness. The Advaitins, hold that in such cases the individual nescience (*Avidyā*) itself is modified into the form of the mind, mental states and illusory objects. It is called *avidyāvr̥tti*.<sup>18</sup>

### The Mechanism of Illusion

According to the Advaitins, illusion is also perceptual in nature. In case of illusion of silver in shell, ephemeral silver is produced in the shell in front of the perceiver and a corresponding mode of nescience is produced in the perceiving agent. Both these things are sublated by the subsequent true perception of empirical shell. Hence, perceptual illusion is defined by the Advaitins as ‘the consciousness, delimited by a perceptible, present but empirically sublatable object that has no existence over and above the consciousness delimited by the nescience modified in the form of that

object'. In *Vedānta Paribhāṣa*, five different causes of the illusory objects are enlisted analysing the particular case of shell-silver illusion. –

1. The defective visual sense organ. The defect is such that it makes the organ over receptive of reflected light and non-receptive of the specific quality of the object (*kācakāmāladidoṣa*).
2. The contact of sense organ with the locus of silver, i.e., sense-contact with the shell (*saṁyoga*).
3. Evocation of previous effect of silver (*saṁskāra*).
4. *Avidyā* or nescience which is the transformative material cause of this world-evolution.
5. The nondiscrimination between shell and silver.<sup>19</sup>

The process goes on in the following way. When the defective visual sense organ of a person is connected to the shell lying beforehand, the internal organ flows out to the object and is modified into the form of 'this' having only the properties of 'thisness' and 'glitter'. Although the sense organ is connected to the shell and its specific property shellhood, it cannot receive them due to the defect. Hence, there cannot be any mental modification in the form of 'shellhood' or 'shell'. When the mental modifications in the forms of 'this', 'thisness' and 'glitter' (*idamākāra*, *idantvākāra* and *cākacikyākāra antaḥkaraṇavṛtti*) are equipositioned with the object in space, then the consciousness delimited by the object, *idam* is said to have no existence over and above the consciousness delimited by the mental modification. The mental modes are nothing beyond the mind itself. This way, identification is established among the mind, modes and object.

The corresponding mental modification destroys only the person's temporary ignorance about the glitter and thisness of the object 'this'. As a result an 'immediately present glittering object' is manifested by the witness-consciousness of the person. Now, silver is similar to the presented object, because both of them glitter. Being inspired by an attraction towards silver, the perception of similarity evokes the previous effect of silver (*rajatasamskāra*).

We know that empirical objects are nothing but the consciousness delimited by the productions of *Avidyā*. Now there are generic delimiters such as 'this' – which delimits consciousness in other occasions also; and there are specific delimiters also such as shell. In the case of the perception 'this is shell', the object-consciousness is a combination of 'this-consciousness' and 'shell-consciousness'. The former one is the generic portion and the latter one is the specific portion of the object 'shell'. Now *Avidyā* is defined in terms of its object and locus. It is held that consciousness is the locus as well as object of *Avidyā*. The locus (*aśraya* or *adhāra*) of the shell-producing



*Avidyā* is ‘this-consciousness’ and its object (*viṣaya* or *adhiṣṭhāna*) is ‘shell-consciousness’.

In case of shell-silver-illusion, the energized previous effect of silver agitates and perturbs the elements of this shell-producing-*Avidyā*, i.e., *śuktyavaccinnacaitanya-viṣayaka idamavachinnacaitanya-āśrita avidyā*. As a result, the said *Avidyā* is transformed into an ephemeral silver. On the other hand, the elements of the *Avidyā*, which is residing in the consciousness delimited by the mental mode – ‘this’ (*idamākāra antaḥkaraṇavṛtavyacchinna caitanya* or *pramāṇacaitanya*), are also agitated and modified into the form of silver (*rajatākāra vṛtti*). It is not a mental mode (*pramānavṛtti*) but a mode of ignorance having the form of silver (*rajatākāra avidyāvṛtti*).

However, the Advaitins say that the object of the illusion – ‘this is silver’, is a combination of ‘this’ and ‘silver’, which are superimposed on each other in the relation identity. It is neither purely empirical nor purely ephemeral but has an empirical-ephemeral existence. It is a combination of empirical truth and ephemeral falsity (*satyāsatya*). Due to the mutual superimposition the property of empirical ‘this’ (the property of being empirically present in front) is falsely ascribed or induced (*upacarita*) to the ephemeral silver and the property of silverhood is known in the empirical ‘this’. Taken separately, the object – ‘this’ is empirical in essence. But as being connected with the ephemeral silver, it is also considered as ephemeral. So we can call the whole combination – ‘silver-as-present-in-front’ is an ephemeral entity. On the other hand, at the level of cognition, there remain two different modes (*vṛtti*) – one is *idamākāra antaḥkaraṇavṛtti* and the other is *rajatākāra avidyāvṛtti*. Now, the content of *pramānavṛtti* is ‘*idam*’ and the content of *avidyāvṛtti* is ‘*rajatam*’. Due to the mutual superimposition, the object lying in front (*idam*) and silver (*rajat*) appears to be identical. Now, cognitions (*vṛtijiṇāna*) are qualified by their contents. Hence, the appearance of identity between the contents induces the appearance of identity between those *vṛttis*. Thus there occurs a single unified cognition in the form ‘*idam rajatam*’.<sup>20</sup>

### Origination of Ephemeral Silver

The most interesting part of the Advaita theory of illusion is the instant-origination of an ephemeral object before the eyes of the perceiver. This *prātibhāsikarajatapurovartitva* saves the account from the problems of direct realism on the one hand and that of constructivism on the other. However, regarding the mechanism of its origination, there are several views.

Some of the Advaita Vedāntins have accepted a level distinction in *Ajñāna*. Mahadevānanda Sarasvatī says that *ajñāna* is twofold – *Māyā* and *Avidyā*. The power

of projection (*vikṣepaśakti*) is predominant in *Māyā*, which is the adjunct of *Īśvara*. The power of veiling (*āvaraṇaśakti*) is predominant in *Avidyā*, which is the adjunct of *jīva*.

Sadānanda divides nescience (*ajñāna*) into collective (*samaṣṭi*) and individual (*vyāṣṭi*). The collective nescience is the adjunct of *Īśvara* and is the cause of cosmic illusion. The individual nescience is the adjunct of *jīva* and is the cause of individual illusion.

Vācaśpati and Vimuktātman recognize original or primal nescience (*Mulā avidyā*) and individual or modal nescience (*Tulā avidyā*).<sup>21</sup> *Mulā avidyā* is the adjunct of *Īśvara*. It is the beginningless positive root nescience which is the material cause of this empirical reality. The object and locus of *Mulā avidyā* is *Brahman* or the Pure Consciousness. *Tulā avidyā* is the adjunct of *jīva* and is the material cause of ephemeral reality. *Tulā avidyā* creates ephemeral entity only for that person. The object and locus of *Tulā avidyā* is conditional consciousness or *jīva*. Ephemeral reality is private whereas the empirical reality is equally perceivable by all. *Tulā avidyā* superimposes ephemeral objects on empirical objects. *Mulā avidyā* superimposes empirical reality on the *Brahman*. Only the cognition of the substratum can dispel illusion. Hence, the cognition of empirical object (*vṛttijñāna*) destroys *Tulā avidyā*, whereas, only *Brahman*-intuition can dispel *Mulā avidyā*. It dispels *Tulā avidyā* also since Pure *Brahman* is the substratum of everything. This difference explains the difference between empirical reality and ephemeral reality.

However, Dharmarājadhvarīndra has a different view. He does not admit kinds in *avidyā*.<sup>22</sup> He explains the difference between three degrees of reality differently and subsequently offers a new theory of the origination of ephemeral object. He says that Absolute reality has no origination (*ajanya*). Empirical reality is originated by the primal nescience which is considered to be a cosmic defect (*Avidyārūpadoṣajanya*) and superimposed on the Pure Consciousness. Ephemeral reality is originated by the same nescience, in association with some adventitious conditions like individual and occasional defects (*āgantukadoṣajanya*). The defect in visual organ is a necessary condition for the production of ephemeral silver and the corresponding *avidyāvṛtti*, in absence of which none of them is produced. But defect is an adventitious or occasional condition. It does not remain present in everybody. The person who does not have a defect in eye does not experience illusory silver. For him no ephemeral silver is produced. That is why the ephemeral silver is said to be private and occasional.<sup>23</sup> Vidyaraṇya holds that there is no real difference between *Mulā avidyā* and *Tulā avidyā*. What is called *Tulā avidyā* is nothing but a different functional state of *Mulā avidyā*. Vidyaraṇya calls it *Avasthā avidyā*.

The previous group argues that if ephemeral objects were produced out of the Pure Consciousness-residing primal nescience, then they would not be sublated without the true perception of the locus of that nescience, i.e. Pure Consciousness or *Brahman*.<sup>24</sup> But they are sublated by the ordinary empirical perception of empirical objects like shell. Therefore, the material cause of illusory objects is not primal nescience. It is individual modal nescience, residing each individual *jīvacaitanya*. The argument is applicable to the dream objects also.

Dharmarāja replies the objection taking recourse to the notion of *bādhā* and *nivṛtti* in both the cases of dream-objects and illusory objects. The absence of an effect even in the form of its cause is sublation or *bādhā*. Existence of an effect, no longer as an effect, but in the form of its cause is called termination or *nivṛtti*.

Dharmarāja holds that dream-objects are produced out of the primal nescience being associated with the defect of sleep. Since defect is one of the causal conditions for dream, dream-objects are considered as illusory and not as empirical objects (although the empirical objects also are produced by primal nescience). Dream is perceptual in nature and not mere recollection since we reflect on it afterwards saying, “I saw that object in dream”. Unlike the objects of illusion, dream-objects are wholly ephemeral. Even the space on which those objects are appeared to rest, the property of being present in front (*idantā*) and the property of being perceived (*indriyagrāhyatva*) are also ephemeral. Dream objects are superimposed on the substratum of Pure Consciousness or *Brahman*. Such objects are not sublated by the wakeful state. Sublation (*bādhā*) of a superimposed entity happens when the substratum of that imposition is perceived. So, only *Brahman*-intuition can destroy the primal nescience, which is the material cause of the dream-objects. However, dream-objects are terminated (*nivṛtti*) by a different empirical cognition of a different form. It is like breaking a pot into its constituent pieces. Although the illusory objects are superimposed on empirical objects and therefore are produced out of the individual *jīva* residing nescience, but there is no difference between that nescience and the primal nescience. Both of them are sublated only when *Brahman*-intuition occurs. Before that they are only terminated.

However, it is easier to explain the difference between empirical and ephemeral reality by positing different levels of *Avidyā*, than by taking resort to the notion of *nivṛtti*, which does not seem suitable in the context of ephemeral objects. Dream objects are not vanished in the way pots are broken into pieces. Those who hold that dream-objects and illusory objects are the products of modal nescience, hold that ephemeral objects are cancelled (*bādhā*) by empirical cognition.

### **An Objection against the Process of Unification and its Reply**

Now, against the Advaita mechanism of illusion one may object that it is not free from the problems of constructivism. The advantage of Advaita theory of perception was that it avoided atomic approach and rejected a constructivist account which inevitably leads to representationalism and skepticism. The success of the theory lies in the fact that no internal process of unification was allowed by the Advaitins. But the mechanism of illusion involves a unification of *antaḥkaraṇavṛtti* and *avidyāvṛtti*. The mechanism says that although two different *vṛttis* are produced in illusory situation, they are fused together and transformed into a single unified cognition. Now, obviously this fusion-process is an internal process. If so, then we have to say that the Advaitins are propounding some form of constructivism while explaining illusion.

The Advaitins meet this objection with quite boldness. They say that those two *vṛttis* are never fused together. The singularity of illusory cognition does not depend on the unification of *vṛtti*, since *vṛtti* itself is not cognition.<sup>25</sup> And the duality in *vṛtti* does not necessitate the duality in the produced perceptual illusory cognition. Because perception is defined as 'consciousness' (*caitanya*) and it is the same witness consciousness which is modified in the generic form of 'this' (with the aid of *pramāṇavṛtti*) on the one hand, and in the specific form of 'silver' (with the aid of *avidyāvṛtti*) on the other. The singularity of illusion depends on the fact that the same single *Sākṣīcaitanya* (Consciousness, conditioned by a single *antaḥkaraṇa*) is conjointly modified by the forms of those two *vṛttis*.

### **How Can Sākṣīcaitanya Reveal an Unconnected Object?**

It may again be objected that although the ephemeral silver is superimposed in the relation of identity on the consciousness delimited by empirical 'this' (*idamavacchinna caitanya*), but there is no direct connection between ephemeral silver and the witness consciousness since, the production of ephemeral silver and the production of *avidyāvṛtti* are parallel processing. Then how can silver be manifested by such an 'unconnected' witness-consciousness?

The Advaitins answer that while perceiving 'this', *idamavacchinna caitanya* becomes identified with the *antaḥkaraṇāvacchinna caitanya*, via an identification with *idamākāra antaḥkaraṇavṛtyavacchinna caitanya*. Now, *antaḥkaraṇāvacchinna caitanya* or *pramāṇīcaitanya* has no over and above existence than the *antaḥkaraṇopahita caitanya* or *Sākṣīcaitanya*. Hence, we can say that *idamavacchinna caitanya* is identified with the *Sākṣīcaitanya*. Now, silver is superimposed on *idamavacchinna caitanya* which is identified with *Sākṣīcaitanya*. Hence, we can say that silver is connected to *Sākṣīcaitanya* in the relation of

superimposition. Vedāntins do not define perception in terms of sense-object contact. Hence, no such connection between the illusory object and the person in illusion is necessary for the perceptuality of illusion. Here, equi-position of space defines everything, which is a form of immediacy.

However, such immediacy is not sufficient for the modification of witness-consciousness in the form of silver. A mode (*vṛtti*) in the form of silver is needed as an associate. But this *vṛtti* cannot be an *antaḥkaraṇavṛtti*. If so, then it will destroy the individual *Avidyā* and its ephemeral product. We have seen that the same silver-producing-conditions, working parallelly, produce a *rajatākāra-avidyāvṛtti*. With the aid of this *avidyāvṛtti*, the witness consciousness is modified in the form of silver and manifests the ephemeral silver.

#### **What if those Parallel Processes do not go Hand-in-hand?**

But, however, one may again object that there is no direct causal connection between the illusory object (*prātibhāsika rajat*) and the originated cognition in the part of illusion (*rajatākāra avidyāvṛtti*). Rather they are parallelly produced by two different *Avidyās*. *Prātibhāsika rajat* is produced out of the *Avidyā* which resides in the consciousness, delimited by *idam*; and *rajatākāra avidyāvṛtti* emerges out of the *Avidyā* which resides in the consciousness, delimited by *idantākāra antaḥkaraṇavṛtti*.

The Advaitins might say that both of these transformations happen due to the same set of causal conditions (*doṣa, saṃyoga, saṃskāra* etc.). But, the opponent would ask – is there any immediate relation between X and Y that are produced by the same causal condition Z? And if no such relation is there, then how can we say that X is *about* Y? The Advaitins answer that in the context of illusion no such immediate connection between *vṛtti* and *viśaya* is required. Both of them are inspired by the effect of silver (*rajatasamskāra*). Hence, the modification of *Avidyā* in the form of silver (*rajatākāra avidyāvṛtti*) is *about* silver (*rajataviśayaka*).

But the problem might be more serious than it appears. The account of parallel processing opens up a logical possibility that any one of those processes might be blocked in the midway by some external prohibiting factor, permitting the completion of the other process. Production of ephemeral silver without the silver-*vṛtti* is admissible. But if silver-*vṛtti* is produced without the corresponding ephemeral silver in front of the cognizer (*purovartirajata*), then one of the Advaitin's fundamental contentions would be hampered. The Advaitins consistently accommodated the possibility of illusion within their direct acquaintance theory of perception by saying that ephemeral silver (*anirvacanīya prātibhāsika rajata*) is produced in front of the perceiver during illusion. If the suggested mechanism of illusion cannot guard this contention against all odds, the consistency of the theory of

*Anirvacanīyakhyaṭi* will be questioned. Hence, the mechanism should not remain open to such a logical possibility.

### **The Metaphysical Objection**

Now, here is another important part of the previous objection. It is regarding the nature of what appears in illusion. The illusion of silver is sublated by the empirically true cognition in the form 'this is not silver' (*nedam rajatam*). The Advaitins say that the cognition indicates an absolute absence (*atyantābhāva*) of silver in shell. In the same voice they also say that an ephemeral silver is produced in that locus during illusion. This is a sheer contradiction. Here, the Advaitins rejoin that the correcting cognition indicates the absolute absence of empirical silver – not that of ephemeral silver. But the question arises, how can the cognition of the absence of *empirical* silver sublate the cognition of *ephemeral* silver? In reply, the Advaitins further rejoin that the content of the sublating cognition actually is the absence of 'ephemeral silver, as having empiricity' (*vyavahārikatvāvacchinna prātibhāsika rajat*). The said absence is called *vyādhikaraṇa-dharmāvacchinna abhāva* or the absence of an object as having such a property which never belongs to it, rather belongs to an altogether different object.<sup>26</sup> The cognition says that there is no ephemeral silver which is delimited by empiricity – in any division of time. The sublation of an object is meaningful when the object is sublated as it was appeared in the illusion. During the illusion, silver appeared as empirical silver; otherwise the person would not move towards it, because everyone knows that ephemeral silver is not subject to practical use. But the question would arise here, what is the ontological status of the empiricity (*vyavahārikatva*) manifest in the illusory cognition? Is it ephemeral and instantly produced during the illusion? The Advaitins answer, 'no'. Originally, that empiricity belongs to shell, not to the silver. In illusion, instantly-produced ephemeral silver is 'falsely known' as having empiricity.<sup>27</sup>

Jayanta Bhaṭṭa notices this account of misperception and announces that *Anirvacanīyakhyaṭi* is nothing but a variety of *Anyathākhyāṭi*, where the property of a different object (*vyādhikaraṇa-dharma*) is known in another object.

However, the Advaitins might have an answer to this objection. They may say that it is not the case that only the properties of empirical shell and ephemeral silver are mutually known in each other, but objectively – in the domain of reality – such connections are ephemerally produced. Empiricity of shell is *vyavāharika sat* and is ontologically present from before. But the *connection of empiricity in ephemeral silver* is instantly produced. It also is *prātibhāsika sat*. At the ephemeral level of reality, there happens a mutual induction of ephemeral silver and this ephemeral connection.

### Can the Concept of ‘Mutual Induction’ be Acceptable at the Level of Ontology?

The Advaitins took a good attempt to solve the age-old problem of direct realism (or the theory of direct perception) with the help of the hypothesis of parallelly originated ephemeral (*prātibhāsika*) objects that are real in some sense but sublata by knowledge. Parallel production of such objects saves direct realism. And the subsequent sublation of them accommodates the possibility of error in the theory. They have successfully avoided the problems of constructivism denying the fusion at the level of *vr̥tti*. However, in order to keep the accent of direct realism intact, they have admitted the fusion at the objective level (*arthādhyāsa*). For them, the world of illusion (individual or cosmic) is a fusion of different degrees of reality. This empirical world is the fusion of Pure Existence (Absolute Truth) with the empirical objects (empirical falsity). And the object of say, shell-silver illusion is a fusion of empirical ‘this’ (empirical truth) with ephemeral silver (ephemeral falsity). Since, the relation between two different degrees of reality is unintelligible in this empirical level of communication, Advaitins have explained it metaphorically. They have said that the empirical properties are induced (*upacarita*) to the ephemeral objects in the same way that the redness of hibiscus is induced to transparent crystal. But, in this analogy no one supposes that the redness is actually transferred to the crystal at the objective level. Everyone believes that the crystal appears to be red in our cognition. So, it is always a *jñānādhyāsa* and never an *arthādhyāsa*. The whole process is *in* us. Here, the reality has not changed parallelly with our cognition. So, this metaphor is too weak to take us to their conclusion. Metaphorical arguments try to explain a target domain with the help of a source domain in respect of some similar features and expect that the other properties of the source domain also will be transferred to the target domain. If the shown instance were the case of both *jñānādhyāsa* and *arthādhyāsa*, then we could say that the illusory situation also involves both of them since it is similar to the hibiscus-crystal case in the *jñānādhyāsa* aspect. But this is not the case. The Advaitins might say that the analogy is between *jñānādhyāsa* and *arthādhyāsa* themselves. Noticing a superimposition at the level of cognition, they are arguing for a corresponding fusion at the objective level. But this answer also is unacceptable because, the concept of superimposition itself presupposes that the superimposed property has *not* actually produced in the substratum. Hence, the concept of *fusion* is diametrically opposite to that of *superimposition*. Hence, the latter cannot be the ground of an analogical argument for the former. The Advaitins might say that what happens in the objective domain also is a kind of superimposition (*adhyāsa*). Here, the term ‘*adhyāsa*’ has been taken in an extended sense. The nature of the interaction between two different levels of reality cannot be expressed through the familiar terms. That phenomenon is remotely linked with superimposition which is a cognitive phenomenon. Here we may say that to call that interaction as *superimposition* or *adhyāsa* is merely a literary expression. It might be a metaphor but

cannot be a philosophical assertion. Here it seems that somehow the transparency of a philosophical account is lost in the mist of metaphor.

Now, the Vedāntins may say that without metaphor it is impossible for us to describe the Ultimate Reality, because we are in the empirical domain. What is the nature of reality and in what mysterious way this phenomenal world has sprung out, cannot be understood by discursive philosophical arguments. Although the empirical world follows certain logical, physical and psychological rules those can be known through discursive enterprise (conceptual or empirical). But, we can have only some hints about what is happening behind the stage of the world-show, through some specific portion of the stage-show. Illusion (*jñānādhyāsa*), dream and dreamless sleep are those hints. Only *Brahman*-intuition is a direct acquaintance with Truth but that awareness is non-communicable. Remaining within this empirical domain we can at most try to understand the reality through the hints or by metaphors. That is why, in Advaita Vedānta, we can see the predominance of metaphor. The nature of *Brahman*, the nature of *Māyā*, the process of evolution, delimitation of *Brahman* by empirical objects, *Prativimavāda*, *Avacchedavāda*,<sup>28</sup> the process of cognition – everything has been explained through metaphor.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *vimatam rūpyādi saccenna bādhyeta, asaccenna pratīyeta, bādhyate pratiyate'pi, tasmāt sadasadvilakṣaṇatādanirvacanīyam.* – *Advaitasiddhi, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, AS., p.630.*

<sup>2</sup> IP II., pp.495-502.

<sup>3</sup> *parināmo nāmopādāna-samasattāka-kāryotpattiḥ* – *Vedānta Paribhāṣā, Dharmārajadhvarīndra, VP., p.95.*

<sup>4</sup> *vivarto nāmopādāna -viśama-sattāka-kāryotpattiḥ* – *Vedānta Paribhāṣā, Dharmārajadhvarīndra, VP., p.96.*

<sup>5</sup> Brahman is the non-transformative material cause (*vivartopādānakāraṇa*) of the world.

<sup>6</sup> IP II., pp.524-531.

<sup>7</sup> IP II., pp.490-493.

<sup>8</sup> *tatra jivonāmahntaḥ karaṇāvacchinna-caitanyam . tatsākṣī tu antaḥ karaṇopahita-caitanyam.* – *Vedānta Paribhāṣā, Dharmārajadhvarīndra, VP., pp.76-77.*

<sup>9</sup> *viśeṣaṇāñca kāryānvayī vyāvartakam vartamānam. upādhiśca kāryānanvayī vyāvartako vartamanāśca.* – *Vedānta Paribhāṣā, Dharmārajadhvarīndra, VP., pp.78-79*

<sup>10</sup> *tathāpi anyonyasmin anyonyātmakatām anyonyadharmāmśca adhyasya itaretarāvivekena atyantaviviktayoḥ dharmmadharmmiṇoḥ mithyājñānanimittāḥ satyāñṛte mithunīkṛtya 'aham idam', 'mama idam' iti naisargikaḥ ayam*



- lokavyavahārah//2// - Brahmasutra-Sankarabhasya (Adhysanirupanam), Sankaracarya, VDBP., p.48.*
- <sup>11</sup> *pramātvam anadhigata abādhita arthaviśayaka jñānatvam . – Vedānta Paribhāṣā, Dharmārajadhvarīndra, VP., pp.7-9.*
- <sup>12</sup> *pratyakṣa pramā cātra caitanyameva. – Vedānta Paribhāṣā, Dharmārajadhvarīndra, VP., pp.15-16.*
- <sup>13</sup> The Advaitins hold that the visual and auditory sense organ reach out to the location of their corresponding objects but the objects of olfactory, gustatory and tactual sense-organs themselves come to the location of the corresponding sense-organs in order to be connected.
- <sup>14</sup> *ādye pramāṇa-caitanyasya viśayāvacchinna-caitanyābheda iti brūmaḥ. – Vedānta Paribhāṣā, Dharmārajadhvarīndra, VP., p.28.*
- <sup>15</sup> *ghaṭāder viśayasya pratyakṣam tu pramātra-bhinnatvam. – Vedānta Paribhāṣā, Dharmārajadhvarīndra, VP., p.48.*
- <sup>16</sup> *pramātrabhedo nāma na tāvadaikyam. kintu pramātr-sattātiriktasattābhāvaḥ. – Vedānta Paribhāṣā, Dharmārajadhvarīndra, VP., p.49.*
- <sup>17</sup> In ‘Six Ways of Knowing’, D.M. Datta has presented the Advaita model of perception as an identification of physical, physiological and psychical gestalt, SWK., pp.52-61.
- <sup>18</sup> VP., pp.56-61.
- <sup>19</sup> *tathāhi-kācādi-doṣa-duṣita-locanasya purovarti-dravya-samyogādidamākārā cākacikyākārā ca kācidantaḥkaraṇavṛttirudeti.....tataśca pramātr-caitanyābhinna-viśayacaitanya-niṣṭhā śūktitva prakārikā avidyā cākacikyādi-sādrśya-sandarśana-samudbodhita-rajata-saṁskāra-sadhrīcīna kācādi-doṣa-samavahitā rajatarūpārthakāreṇa rajata-jñānākāreṇa ca pariṇamate. – Vedānta Paribhāṣā, Dharmārajadhvarīndra, VP., pp.93-95.*
- <sup>20</sup> VP., pp.93-105.
- <sup>21</sup> *anirvācyāvidyādvitayasacibasya prabhavato/ vivarttā yasyaite viyadanilatejo 'vavanayaḥ// yataścābhūd viśvaṁ caramacaramuccāvacamidam/ namāmastadbrahma 'parimitasukhajñānamamṛtam//1// – Bhāmatī, Vācaspati Miśra, VDBP., pp.1; IP II., p.530.*
- <sup>22</sup> VP., pp.115-117.
- <sup>23</sup> The properties of *antaḥkaraṇa* like pain, pleasure etc., are perceived through individual *avidyāvṛtti* – hence they are also private and occasional. But since they are not produced by the adventitious condition, defect, they are not illusory objects. Those states are the direct products of the cosmic or primal ignorance or (*Māyā*). That is why they have empirical reality and the perception of such states is not illusory.

<sup>24</sup> *Brahman*-intuition is not possible during the existence of the empirical world. Hence ephemeral objects should not be sublated during the existence of the empirical world.

<sup>25</sup> *Vṛtti* itself is not knowledge because it is insentient. In Advaita philosophy, the consciousness, conditioned by *vṛtti*, is considered to be the knowledge.

<sup>26</sup> *Pañcapādikākāra* Padmapādācārya says that the cognition of ephemeral silver is not sublated by the cognition of the absence of ephemeral silver, rather by the cognition of the empirical shell in the form –‘this is shell’ (*idam śukti*). The cognition in the form ‘*nedam rajatam*’ comes afterwards as a repetition (*anuvāda*). So, illusion is sublated partially – only in the part of illusory content, and not in the part of ‘this’.

<sup>27</sup> VP., pp.118-121.

<sup>28</sup> These are the theories that explain the relation of *Jīva* and *Īśvara* with *Brahman*. *Prativimvavāda* says that *Īśvara* is the reflection of *Brahman* in beginningless primal nescience or *Avidyā* and the *Jīvas* are the reflections of *Brahman* in different *antaḥkaraṇas* or intellects, which are the products of *Avidyā*. *Avacchedavāda* says that *Īśvara* is *Brahman* delimited by *Māyā* or *Avidyā* and *Jīvas* are *Brahman* delimited by different *antaḥkaraṇas*.

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## **Humility as a Virtue: A Philosophical Critique**

*Becaremeo Nongtdu*

Once St. Augustine was asked “What is the most important quality in the Christian life? Augustine responded, “Humility”. The person then asked what would be the second and third most important quality for the same. Augustine responded, it is “humility” and “humility”.<sup>1</sup> Here it shows that humility is very essential in Christian life but in this work, it would be proper to elaborate it to the extent that humility is very important in every individual’s life in order to live a moral and ethical life.

A moral life or to live ethically we have to cultivate certain virtues, as Plato in his *Republic* inculcated cardinal virtues such as Wisdom or Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance. Such cardinal virtues enable an individual to live and cultivate a virtuous life. So it is proper to state that living a virtuous life would be more meaningful when we add humility as virtue in our life.

The word “Virtue” derived from the Latin word “Virtus” meaning “excellent” “capacity” or “ability”. In this sense to have virtue is to have the power or ability to achieve something.<sup>2</sup> Socrates defined virtue as “virtue is knowledge”. For Aristotle virtue denotes doing the right thing to the right person at the right time to the proper extent in the correct fashion and for the right reason. The goal of virtue is to be happy in Aristotelian sense of the term. Alasdair MacIntyre defined virtue as “an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Humility in Virtue Ethics**

The term “Virtue Ethics” was coined during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Virtue ethics is a sub-branch of ethics that falls under the Normative Ethics or Prescriptive Ethics. Virtue Ethics was born into being through the Great Thought of Great Philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle then followed by many more in this present generation. Most of the Virtue Ethicists believe and accept that virtue is very important not only for achieving moral well-being, but also happiness and inner harmony. Virtue ethics is to live a virtuous life by applying ethical and moral conduct in the life span of an individual to cope up with the society he or she live. Virtue ethics concentrate mainly on the right being over the right action in all perspective of life.

The study of virtue ethics will enable us to exercise the following tasks<sup>4</sup>

1. To understand morality.

2. To prescribe norms.
3. To justify norms.
4. To describe how they fit into our lives.

Understanding morality designates the willingness to learn it. We must accept that;

*I'm open to learning, since we don't know everything there is to know. Things always change. Admitting my own ignorance is the first step.*<sup>5</sup>

Accepting and acknowledging that we don't know everything there is to know is a sign of humility. Willingness is rooted in humility and humility is the only source of willingness, without which one cannot learn any morality and ethical conduct.

Learning virtues is what Aristotle equates with phronesis (practical wisdom) and eudaimonia (flourishing). Eudaimonia is the classical formulation of Virtue Ethics. Eudaimonia, as defined by Aristotle, is a state of complete bliss. Such a state of bliss facilitates reasoning and practical wisdom.

To be humble, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is to have a "low estimate of one's importance, worthiness, or merits".<sup>6</sup> John Stott says "Humility is not another word for hypocrisy; it is another word for honesty. Humility is not pretending to be other than what we are, but acknowledging the truth about what we are."<sup>7</sup> This is reflected in the very origin of the word humility, which is "Humus" meaning the earth or soil. The Latin root of the word humility is "humilitas" a noun related to the adjective "humilis" which means "humble". Humility is the quality of being humble. In religious context, humility is the realisation and the acceptance of an individual's imperfection and the willingness of submitting to God's in prayer and offering which can only help to re-unite with God and have strong and genuine relationship with God. Outside the religious context; humility is the willingness of the individual to restrain him-self or her-self from excessive vanity in spite of having the freedom to do it and posses a moral and ethical life for his/her own good as well as for the good of others in the society they live in.

Learning humility involves learning at the level that causes us to adjust our sense of who we are and what the world is really like.<sup>8</sup> It implies that learning humility is not only about limiting to the understanding of the concept of humility but to apply in our practical life and in our relation with fellow human being. It is in practice that makes the concept of humility more meaningful. Humility marks an absence of pride as well. In general, humility is the act of performing our daily activities in a simple manner through our meekness, attitude and behaviour.

The normative aspect of learning ‘virtues’ involves enculturation and inculcation of values at the personal and interpersonal levels. At the personal level, imbibing values like treating oneself as equal to everyone who are similarly placed requires an intrinsic concept of self-worth that cannot be tainted and distorted by other directed considerations. Normatively self-worth presented by an individual can act as the basis of a comparative worth in conjunction with others, who share a common space of life. Two important considerations might arise in the interpersonal context. One, whether one must ‘compete’ with others in order to achieve a level that is significant in a ‘societal’ perception, or one must carry a notion of self-worth based on mere self-assessment and self-evaluation. Decisions on these matters reflect a deeper normative commitment to a larger set of general values that can ultimately decide shape of a society. Prescriptively speaking, such a take on self-worth in the consistent with worth attributed by others and attributed to others as well. A prescriptive ideal such as being a humble moral saint who strive for a well-rounded moral life in a situation of being devoted to the wretched of the earth, the destitute and the terminally ill, who could be ‘valued’ in their existential situation and upholding such a value of care could be prescriptively a genuine expression of values like ‘fellow feeling’, ‘love’ and ‘selfless service’. What is also prescriptively important is to create a community of practitioners of virtues in public and private life that combines a degree of self-worth combined with commitments to other lives in the public domain.

In order to conceptualize the various dimensions of ‘virtue’ as a moral quality in terms of virtue ethical notion of virtue, MacIntyre, in his *After Virtue*, assumes three distinct stages of ‘logical development’ of the concept of virtue, namely, practice, narrative and a moral tradition. These stages of logical development identify *possession of those human qualities that enables us achieve ‘good’ as a goal that is ‘internal’ to the three stages*. MacIntyre further suggested that the relationship between certain virtuous practice and institutions that support such practices requires a clear set of virtues like justice, truthfulness, courage etc. without which ‘practices could not resist the corrupting power of institutions’. He contended that moral good can be achieved only under the condition that virtues remain essential to the logic of development of institutional forms that are supposed to nourish and flourish an idea of good life.

In the list of virtues given in a variety of traditions like Christian, Aristotelian and Pragmatic, there is no agreed form of virtue, but what each of these traditions espoused is an idea of virtue that is embedded, intrinsic, rational or instrumental, i.e, virtue as a means to an end. The question of virtue, as Linda Zagzebski puts it, is ‘the difference between good as a means and good as an end is the difference in the way we value things’. Such a difference leads to drawing a

distinction between intrinsic virtues and extrinsic virtues. For example, the Good Samaritan experiment: just because there is reason to help someone in distress does not imply that this reason is indefeasible. The fact that one is in a hurry can defeat the reason to help someone in distress, which treats good only as an end, while reasons for choice of a good means is based on extrinsic considerations in a situation. As far as intrinsic character of choice of means is concerned, naming the virtue of helping others could range from empathy to pity to compassion. The issue is, how do we characterize a central virtue that can mitigate the need of being rational and intrinsically oriented to central virtues in evolving a reliable human character or quality. Can we have a rich, multi-faceted construct of a central virtue, such as selflessness of the Good Samaritan that is sufficiently endowed with the capacity to do the best, acknowledging one's limitations in a possible description of the central virtue?

### **The Transactions of Humility**

In order to examine humility as a construct in diverse transactions of life, we can use some of the discussions from moral and empirical psychology on human qualities to what constitutes humility as a virtue. On the question whether a virtue is necessarily complete or not, one can identify *indispensible* part of humility as a virtue. According to Vera and Rodriguez-Lopez<sup>9</sup> (2004), the indispensable aspect of humility lies 'the mid-point between the two negative extremes of arrogance and lack of self-esteem' (p. 395). Apart from this self-assessment aspect of determining the middle point between extremities of human character, sensitivity and responsiveness to acknowledge limitations, and forgetting of self marks an attitude to integrate virtue with moral values pursued by an agent. Tangney (2002)<sup>10</sup> suggests that humility also involves:

- An accurate sense of one's abilities and achievements
- The ability to acknowledge one's mistakes, imperfections, gaps in knowledge, and limitations (often with reference to a Higher Power)
- Openness to new ideas, contradictory information, and advice, and
- An ability to keep one's abilities and accomplishments in perspective

Humility involves a "non defensive willingness to see the self accurately, including strengths and limitations" (p. 97), as suggested by Exline and Geyer<sup>11</sup> (2004) in their agreement with Tangney. When personal moral worth is based on reliable and stable self-knowledge and a regular pattern of choosing principles and strategies of thought and action, external factors like social approval, achievement and projecting oneself among others would not play a major role in developing virtuous character in the moral agent.

This debunking of external factors in determination of virtues gives rise to an embedded notion of moral psychology that recognizes those states of character that



are necessarily other-directed and only contingently first-person centric. Tangney argued that humility need to be separated from the characteristics of ‘weak-willed soul only too willing to yield to the wishes of others’, showing a sensibility to reasonableness of other’s demands and needs. Templeton<sup>12</sup> (1997) argued that ‘humility represents wisdom’ (p.72), but Tangney added ‘humility is knowing you are smart but not *all-knowing*’ (p.72). In other words, one cannot be an ethical chameleon to change colours from one situation to another to make adjustments and amend one’s ways. Rather, as Tangney argued, humility is a process of becoming unsolved that does not require enhancement and defense of all-important self at the expense of others (p.413).

Following MacIntyre at this point, one can understand that the main problem that one encounters while dealing with “Humility” is many such practical difficulties as discussed above. Such difficulties could be characterized as ‘changes’ that are required in individual moral character, which are yet to come through without substantive ethical interventions. Theoretical aspects of humility encounter many problems when one tries to put it into practice. In concepts humility should be taken and viewed as practical virtue, as MacIntyre contended. At present many have misunderstood and ignored humility as an important virtue because they don’t realize the importance of humility as part of a moral tradition that shapes the narrative of unity of virtue, knowledge and action in one’s life and in the society as a whole.

As a counter-argument, Nietzsche stated that humility is a tool used by the weak to assert their “Will to Power”.<sup>13</sup> Nietzsche did not conceive humility as a tool for those who dominate in society.<sup>14</sup> Aside from the question of what situational factors enable humility, the question of where it emanates from within the individual is an intriguing one. As a means of examining this question, the literatures related to several theoretical frameworks: *theory of self-concept*, *contingencies of self-worth*, and *core self evaluations*, are taken into account here for the additional depth they lend to understanding of the construct of humility and where humility might originate from as a manifestation of the self.

Taking from the realistic point of view humility involve the freedom of choice of an individual, whether weak or strong, we cannot simply assume that humility is an exclusive tools used by the weak to project their will-power. Weakness, being a state of both physical and mental, one can possess a strong mental character even if he or she may be physically weak and vice versa. In this sense one cannot categorize whether a person, exhibiting humility, is a weak or a strong person.

The case of Albert Einstein, who famously stated that a true genius admits that he or she does not know anything, deepens the problem of humility as an epistemic virtue. Einstein’s demonstrates how virtue of knowing need not be a projected in a

manner that it requires integration in the moral life of an individual, but can remain on its own as an epistemic virtue that does not require an assertion that one knows or one does not know. Einstein himself remained as an exemplar of a sense of humility in spite of his pioneering achievement in many fields, but still gave prominence to the importance of not showing a disposition of self-forming authority. It means that conflicting motives, feelings, perceptions and thoughts that resist integration into moral character need to be consciously shunned as part of an epistemology of self-examination and self-evaluation, which itself is a basic requirement of being humble. Further knowing that one possess a virtue called humility makes one desist from asserting a virtue. Hence humility remains an intrinsic part of one's character without showing itself off, but facilitating an agent to conduct herself in an ethically desirable or correct way. In these dispositions toward oneself, humility emerges as the most engaging virtue that can enhance creativity and sensitivity to a wide range of values. Humility is a universalizable concept in its scope and its relevance applies then for all humanity in terms of its propriety including those who are religious and those who are not religious. The universalizability of humility, nevertheless, leads us to some of the 'issues' as raised in the following:

1. Virtue-ethical framework, pace Philippa Foot, Alasdair MacIntyre and others who define humility as a cardinal virtue in opposition to vices like pride, excess or self-seeking behaviour provides a reasonable basis for practices of virtue. In this, humility plays an important role in Virtue ethics as the cardinal virtue. The question is, why one ought to be virtuous and why being virtuous involve humility as a cardinal virtue. One could draw upon an idea of moral imagination of humility and how this imagination draws its sustenance from individual emotional responsiveness and feelings towards others.
2. Whether being virtuous involves a commitment to faith-based practices to not needs to be examined. As a case, one needs to have an overview of how Christianity understands humility and how it affects personal life in showing respect towards others' life. This would also create a critical background to draw a distinction of role of humility in religious life as distinguishable from other aspects of practical life.
3. Does the scope of humility as a universal value impacting the life of an individual as well as society? The way people act and impact each other's lives by changing each other's notions of good give rise to a cycle of affect within which humility gets operationalized. This cycle of moral affect needs to be understood in order to situate humility as a universal virtue. This moral affect is besides the constraints of power-relations, existing norms and values, or even besides the commitment to already pre-ordained moral rules. Moral affect of humility gets embodied in identifiable ways.

4. The larger impact and use of humility as something which is not only meant to talk but also to walk i.e to practice what one preaches. The most obvious is, while caring about humility, one may face danger of losing a part of one's personal gains in order to pursue a larger good. In this way, an attempt would be made to construct a practical implication of humility on humanity as a whole.
5. The question of pride as a hurdle for any individual in living a life of humility needs to be examined. As human being is essentially a selfish being, pride- directly or indirectly, is seen to control and direct our life. How to overcome the forces of pride will be discussed in this paper. As Ezart Benson wrote, 'Pride is concerned with who is right. Humility is concerned with what is right', a conflict within an individual between pride and humility will be discussed.
6. A Post-modern conception of humility whereby humility is an essential criteria not only for an individual well being but also for maintaining ethical order in modern democratic institutions as well as for good governance needs to be discussed critically. In this Nietzschean critique of humility as virtue of the weak-willed could be juxtaposed and contrasted with a democratic notion of humility that establishes a harmony between conflicting social groups and political interests in a framework of social good, justice and rights. Especially how humility emerges as a source of shared reflexivity and an equilibrating element could be discussed in its role in the context of contemporary democratic negotiations.<sup>15</sup>

Such a generalized description of humility in virtue ethics produces a philosophical critique on the issue. The critique could explore how humility as a virtue contributes a successive study of virtue ethics, especially after Virtue ethicists have developed an idea of virtue in a diverse, plural and controversial corpus of thought. By adding humility as virtue, virtue ethics as a sub-branch of Ethics have already met the task to understand morality, to prescribe norms, to justify norms and to describe how they fit in our lives. The core issue is, whether virtue ethical formulation of humility as a relevant and proper virtue embedded in human character goes along with an idea of individual moral character or it introduces a transformative element in persons and in the 'collectives' to which they may belong.

#### **'Critical' Uses of Humility**

A good source of understanding 'humility' as a virtue is a theological exposition of the concept of humility in the *Sermon on the Mount* (Mathew 5-7) in the Bible. The concept of Beatitudes, implemented on the element of humility for its actions provide a good cause of surrender to the God, which affects the virtue of humility in the Christian context. In a secular context, Beatitudes to some extent can be equated with

Eudaimonia of Aristotle as a complete state of bliss. The humbleness of one's own life only will enable an individual to fulfill the beatitudes which has the practical, spiritual, ethical impact on their life as well as on others life. The beatitudes also has an element of eschatology in Christian faith, by practicing it will reward a blessed life. In this way beatitude as praxis of humility assumes dimensions of faith and bliss. An examination of Christian concept of humility as a pre-eminent doctrinal characteristic of being virtuous in a religious sense can explain whether humility can face vices like cruelty, despair, inability to deliver good and grace and other such situations within one's religious life-world.

Further how humility as a virtue can teach different religious groups respect each other's faith and facilitate a practice of understanding from each other's perspectives, which in effect, might create a fusion of horizons between practitioners of virtue. This could be gathered here as a larger impact of humility as a virtue in and out of Christianity. In matters like right to life and life with dignity of men and women, how humility can help accommodate different worldviews in a peaceful co-existence and mutual engagement of love and fraternity could be seen here as an outcome.

To understand the efficacy of humility, one can think of pride as a contrast to humility. This deals with these two qualities that usually conflict and confront within the being of an individual and provide decisive influence on character formation. It could be explored how pride and humility conflicts each other and yet become part of joys and sorrows, enthusiasm and failures, adventures and epiphanies more or less unique to one's experiential life.

One could remember what Psychologist Robert Furey concluded, 'Humility and pride compose a dialectic; each concept gives the other meaning. Without humility, pride becomes arrogance and conceit. Without pride (self-esteem) humility becomes passivity and complacency.' This would include particular goods that is given to one to be humble by one's own most dispositions and whether such a gift of individual moral character lead to a diversity rather than uniformity of forms of Humility in different persons and communities. How humility brings people together and hold them in a bond of mutual respect could be understood as a direct consequence of such grounding in humility.

As a further contrast to humility as a virtue, a Nietzschean post-modern concept of humility as a tool of the weak leads us to a philosophical account regarding Nietzsche's genealogical thesis on humility. Foucault pointed out that such genealogically embedded moral concepts create a moment of care for the self and not just a moral psychology of coping with adversity. Post-modern re-inscription of humility on the practice of ethical relativism and pluralism resolves much of

incommensurable virtues. Nietzsche's critical account on Christian traditional understanding of humility also provides a genealogical scrutiny of the concept of virtue as 'will to power' and 'will to truth'. His popular distinction between master morality and slave morality reexamines the potential affect of humility as a virtue. This will lead us to Foucauldian notion of care of the self that depends upon all the cardinal virtues of human being, within which, it goes without saying that humility plays a critical role.

Departing from both Nietzsche and Foucault's conception of humility as a paradoxical virtue, one could also situate humility as an operative virtue that allows for a greater reorganization of individual moral life in terms of recovery from long-standing neglect of virtues as cardinal. The Post-modern intervention of Nietzsche and Foucault supplements the existing concern for recovery of virtue as cardinal in virtue ethics by giving it a new twist toward a critique of power-relations and its attendant form of recovery of virtue within the individual and collective care for the self.

### **Institutions of Humility**

A Post-modern philosophical critique of traditional understanding of humility could be seen as a non-institutional virtue. Francesco Guala's institutional approach toward virtues as 'ameliorative' that creates a social ontology of participatory moral agents who reflexively arrive at a democratic negotiation of virtues in which humility sets up a threshold of commitment toward joint or collective causes. Guala argued that role of humility as a committed virtue within modern democratic institution makes morally equilibrating good governance possible. The usefulness of humility as opposed to mere practice of power-relations and self-preservation in an era of competitive individualism sets up new normal for a successful democratic agenda of recognition and redistribution that can withstand unjust outcomes as well. For a healthy democratic society, such a rooting for humility involves the belief that one is committed to humility as a virtue that ensures reflexive and interactive well-spring of humane moral endeavours in democracies. The humility to accept defeat by rivals and the humility to accommodate difference act as major source to the practical application of the virtue of humility in the pursuit of common good.

One can say that the relevance of Humility as a practical virtue is not limited only in religion but on the whole aspect of a democratically constituted human life and society. Humility as a universal concept needs to given an important consideration as the most important virtue of life, given its role in a democracy as a social and political system.

Given such diverse and yet useful descriptions and prescription on humility as a virtue, it could be conceived as a morally pragmatic virtue that helps resolving tensions in practical life. It could also be taken a great source of moral good that achieves several other correlated set of goods. The holistic and overall impact of humility as an inalienable virtue in a good and healthy human society ensures well-being in terms of shared interests, feelings and responses between constituents of a social order or system. It can further a reasonable goal of shared practical reasons in practical contexts of life, which otherwise would have very limited alternatives.

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## **Truth and Non-Violence: The Foundations of Gandhi's Socio-Political Philosophy**

*Sadek Ali*

### **Introduction**

Truth and non-violence play an important role in M. K. Gandhi's life. He used these two concepts as apparatus to serve the reformation of the inequality, blemish and corruption in the society. According to him, truth and non-violence is the main feature of a pious person and makes him as sympathetic and co-operative. He made several experiments with them with great keenness and applied them in original way practically in every aspect of human life especially in socio-political fields. He thinks that the social order should be dependent upon the concepts of truth and non-violence. Conflicts happen in the society, economic position of the society or political situations; the non-violence technique is one of the important techniques that help to solve all the societal as well as communal problems.

Truth is another important way as admitted by Gandhi that used not only to solve the national problems but it also helps to solve the international problems at all. Truth is identified with God in his thoughts. According to Gandhi, both are the highest reality or the ultimate reality. For him, the atheist can never be deprived of the power of Truth even if he refutes the existence of God. So, God is identified with Truth for Gandhi.

### **Objectives**

1. This paper is focusing on to make the relation between Truth and Non-Violence.
2. It would help us to know how these two principles are solving the social and political problems.
3. This paper also highlights that how Gandhiji influenced by Satyagraha.
4. This paper is emphasized on the identical concept of Truth and God.

It is true to say that Truth and Non-violence are the ideals that constitute Gandhi's socio-political philosophy. Gandhi thinks that Truth corresponds to 'reality'. Gandhi regards 'truth' as existence, consciousness and bliss (sat, cit and ānand). Earlier time Gandhi believed that God is Truth but later on his opinion was changed and started believing that Truth is God. So, according to Gandhi, Truth is God and 'satyāgraha' is 'āgraha' of holding the truth. Gandhi advocates that Satyagraha is not a weapon of the weak or the coward.

Once upon a time Gandhi thinks that God is Truth but later on he realizes by heart that Truth is God. As a student of philosophy we are generally think that 'truth' means the truth value of a proposition and we know that a proposition has a truth value that is either true or false. But Gandhi's view is distinct from this. For him, Truth means ultimate reality. God is an ultimate reality but everybody doesn't believe on it. An atheist does not admit the existence of God but he does not deny the existence of the Truth. So according to Gandhi, Truth is identical with God.

### **God and Truth**

As a student of philosophy, the concept of God being a metaphysical issue, we are not able to overlook the concept of God as stated in Gandhi's philosophy. Actually, Gandhi was not a philosopher but from his writings other philosophers finds so many philosophical insights like the concept of Truth and God and then he was treated as philosopher. Gandhi thinks that there is no distinction between pantheism and theism because both 'ism' are related for accepting the existence of God. Gandhi's theistic view was the Vaiṣṇava type. The believers of the Vaiṣṇava cult are always respected on the authorities of Vedas and the Upanishads and their thoughts and beliefs are different from Advaita Vedantin thought. Advaita Vedantin Saṅkara admits the reality of Nirguna Brahman and think that the world which apparently looked real but metaphysically merely an illusion created by the veil of ignorance of the individuals. Therefore, the Advaita Vedantin never felt the need of a creator or a God. According to the Advaita Vedanta school, if the reality is in essence one, if the perception of the many is a product of an illusion-producing ignorance, then both creation and the creator become unreal.

The vaiṣṇavas thinkers believed on God and they also admitted the reality of the world and believe in God as the creator and the preserver of the world. There is another difference between the Advaita Vedantin and the Vaiṣṇava thinker. According to the Advaita Vedantin reality is an attribute less, indeterminate Brahman, and therefore, salvation made possible in the knowledge of the reality. Reality, being Nirguṇa, cannot be approached in the devotional manner, because devotion presupposes inter-personal relations. Therefore, the only way that the Advaita Vedantin recommends for attaining liberation is the way towards knowledge of the Ultimate or the Brahman. Vaiṣṇavas thinkers believe in God in a theistic manner, so God becomes a personal God for them. He says, "...He is no God who merely satisfies the intellect, if He ever does. God to be God must rule the heart and transform it."<sup>1</sup> This is possible only when an inter-personal relationship is possible between the God and the individual. Gandhi's notion of personal God came into his mind from the holy books Bible and Quran because he was reading these books.



It is difficult matter to make the relation between God and Truth, but Gandhi thought that God and Truth is identical, even though Truth is an impersonal principle but God is conceived as personal as admitted by Gandhi. But a question is raised here-how can the two be identified with one another?

### **Truth is God**

We have to take into account what Gandhi understands by the dictum "Truth is God". Gandhi was aware that the path is not an easy one to accomplish, and often he made attempt to make his idea clear before others. He says that a thousand of names found in the Indian scriptures with regard to the gods were by no means exhaustive and Gandhi thinks that truth is another name of God. If one wants to give a comprehensive account of God and his complete description then he would come to the conclusion that God is Truth.<sup>2</sup>

Later on, instead of asserting the previous statement 'God is Truth', Gandhi states 'Truth is God', here the alteration may produce logical difficulties. For example, the statement 'all men are mortal', from this we cannot deduced the statement 'all mortals are men' and that occurred a difficulty or fallacy. Such predicaments can virtually be removed when the subject and predicate of a statement is identified with each other. He says, "But deep down in me I used to say that though God may be God, God is Truth above all...But two years ago I went a step further and said Truth is God. You will see the fine distinction between the two statements, viz. that God is Truth and Truth is God. And I came to the conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after Truth..."<sup>3</sup>

Gandhi gave an argument for converting the statement from 'God is Truth' to 'Truth is God'. He said that many people have different clarification regarding the existence of God. Someone believed on God in different ways and for believing on God he may be theistic, may be pantheistic, and may be polytheistic. So, according to Gandhi, for admitting the existence of God there is many arguments but to prove the existence of Truth there is no any argument given by one because Truth is clear in its significance. To deny the Truth it is self contradictory.

What is Truth? In the logical sense the word 'Truth' is considered to be a property of judgment, but, in the metaphysical sense Truth is conceived in a different way. It is conceived as right knowledge, as knowledge that corresponds to reality. In Indian metaphysics, at times, Truth is conceived as self-illuminating as revealing itself. Gandhi somehow combines all these implications of the word 'Truth' and then comes to identify Truth with God.

### **Ahimsā or Non-Violence**

Ahimsā is the core foundation of Gandhi's philosophy. Truth and Non-violence are interconnected and we cannot separate them, according to Gandhi. According to Gandhi, *ahimsā* or non-violence has two meanings; one is negative meaning and the other is positive meaning. Gandhi says that *Ahimsā* is the 'means' and Truth is the 'end'. *Ahimsā* is our highest virtue according to Gandhi. If we take care of the means while performing our actions, we will surely reach the end or final goal sooner or later.<sup>4</sup> The common import of *Ahimsā* is non-killing or non-injury. Sometimes we think that *himsā* is the opposite meaning of *Ahimsā*. According to Gandhi violence means causing pain or killing out of anger, from a selfish intention, or to make injury for fulfilling certain purpose. Gandhiji was also influenced by the Jaina philosophy. Jaina philosophy recommends the practice of *Ahimsā* not only in thought but at the same time in speech and action. So according to Jainism, you cannot think bad for other, you cannot use any slang language to other, if any one hurt by your language, speech and action then it is *himsā* and you can't do any action by which one can fall into troubles in his life. I think Gandhi was taking these concepts from Jaina philosophy as used for *himsā*. So refraining from all these are called *Ahimsā* as Gandhi said. But it is true to say that Gandhi's concept of *Ahimsā* is not rigid where as the concept of *Ahimsā* in Jaina philosophy is rigid. In certain cases Gandhi said *himsā* is unavoidable, for example-in the processes of eating, drinking, walking, breathing etc. it is impossible to sustain one's body without injuring other bodies. Sometimes Gandhiji recommended that under certain circumstances killing may be possible or permissible. He says, "Taking life may be a duty. We do destroy as much life as we think necessary for sustaining our body. Thus for food we take life, vegetable and other and for health we destroy mosquitoes and like by the use of disinfectants etc..."<sup>5</sup> Gandhi's concept of non-violence is flexible and not rigid and he opined that killing can be called an act of brutality under certain conditions produced by the vices of human beings. So according to Gandhi, the negative meaning of *Ahimsā* is 'non-killing or non-injury', in another sense non-violent act does not tolerate or promote any kind of hatred, anger, malice and the like.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, Gandhi also admits the positive aspect of *Ahimsā*. He thinks *Ahimsā* is the essential qualities of humankind. *Ahimsā* is natural to man. Man's true nature consists in his spiritual aspects. Man as spirit is essentially non-violent. Gandhi said that body or senses can be injured but the soul can never be injured. For him, *himsā* alien to man's nature. So to eradicate all types of *himsā* is called *Ahimsā*. The positive aspect of *Ahimsā* is love. Love is a feeling of oneness among many. According to Gandhi, *Ahimsā* implies a sincere endeavour to free our mind from such vices as anger, malice, hatred, jealousy etc., because all these create hurdles in the way of loving other beings. Love gives us a positive energy in Gandhi's view. By the concept of love Gandhi actually wants to make a peaceful society where

fraternity and friendship may be established among neighbours. By the attribute of love one can purify his inner life and uplift him, and such, love, comprehends such noble thoughts or approaches to life as benevolence, compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, sympathy etc.<sup>7</sup> So according to Gandhi, love as positive felling of *Ahimsā* is the pillar of Gandhi's social and political philosophy. He believed on the fearless love and it is the way to make a democratic and fearless society in the true sense.

Gandhian concept of Non-violence has some important characteristics and features which are as follows:

- Non-Violence is not the same as non-killing, it has broad sense but non-killing is a simple part of Ahimsa.
- Non-Violence is produced valour, not cowardice.
- Non-Violence implies love, the ability to resist injustice, courage, non-possession, truthfulness and brahmacharya.
- Gandhi defines non-violence as the Divine Law, and he is inspired by Ruskin, Tolstoy and The Bible as well in this regard. He says that man must earn his livelihood by labour.
- Non-Violence has universal application. Secondly, it enhances all other values without disrespecting others. Thirdly, it has boundless applications.<sup>8</sup>

Gandhi accepts a pantheistic conception of God in his life and philosophy. He argues that God pervades all beings. God unites all beings and this is possible only because of love and non-violence. Non-Violence eventually creates the bond of the Universe that originates from God or Truth. So, love is the main path by which we are able to reach the main goal or end as to establish the calm society.

Gandhi is aware that a theoretical emphasis on the value and importance of Truth and Non-Violence would lead us nowhere unless a way is shown for the practice of Ahimsā. That takes him to develop a technique of Ahimsā, to which he gives the name of satyāgraha, which is translated in English as- *Truth force or soul force or love-force*. The etymological meaning of Satyāgrahā is satya and āgrahā. Satya means truth so āgrahā means to hold the Truth fast. It, therefore, demands a deep sincerity and a vigorous love for Truth. According to Gandhi there are so many requirements of a satyāgrahi which are as follows:

- A satyāgrahi must be basically honest and sincere. Honesty and sincerity is an attribute of the satyāgrahi.
- A satyāgrahi must be open-minded. Open-minded person is fit for communication to all human being in the society.
- A satyāgrahi must be a disciplined individual, guided by Truth.
- A satyāgrahi should be courageous.

- A satyagrahi should always practice truthfulness and non-violence, in actions, thought and speech.<sup>9</sup>
- The satyāgrahi must also have tolerance in him. According to Gandhi, if he does not have the ability of tolerance, he will lose self control, and thus, will upset the way of Love and Ahimsā.
- The fundamental requirement of a satyāgrahi is that he must have a living faith in God. Gandhi thinks that the Divinity is present in every man. So to believe on God means to believe on man. This is the best thinking to make a good society.

So Gandhi's aim is to make a completely clean and distinct society by this ways. He emphasized on to make a corruption free society and peaceful society where one loves other.

### **Conclusion**

After the discussion of Gandhi's concept of Truth and Non-Violence, it is clear that Gandhiji used these two terms as weapons to mitigate any kind of social as well as political muddles or problems. Gandhi is known as the father of nation, so his aims is to introduce a new society which is free of corruption and any kind of inequality, caste division, rather he introduces the attitude of brotherhood and fraternity among the Indians and all the people of the world. Gandhi used truth and non-violence as social and political means for fighting against the evils and injustice of the society. Gandhi employed the moral weapons like truth and non-violence to destroy the domestic, social, political, economical, religious and cultural problems and conflicts and try to remove any kind of untouchability, communal harmony and gave solution of the unemployment and illiteracy. His ideals of truth and non-violence and his practice of these ideals through the entire life has been a great source of inspiration for us. Gandhian philosophy transcends the borders and makes a universal appeal to the people of the planet to realize the golden paths of peace and harmony.

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6. Ibid. p.110
7. Ibid. p. 111
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9. Ibid.

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## **Philosophy as Therapy of Conceptual Illnesses: Wittgenstein and Nietzsche**

*Purbayan Jha*

There is a tendency in the human beings to objectify everything in accordance with their likes and dislikes. What is wrong with this kind of objectification? One may answer that men are prone to respond in a certain manner which is related with their surroundings, their facticity, their pattern of living etc. We theorize almost everything – the events, people, government, history, literature and try to arrive at a certain point where we are at ease. While doing so, we face some inevitable illnesses, rather conceptual ones. These affect our practical life since we jeopardize ourselves with the confusions that come with the illnesses. In the pursuit of knowledge, we face other sorts of dilemmas or temptations like choosing among the universals and particulars, approaching a research a-historically or in terms of its historicity, so on and so forth. A large part of this quest belongs to the humanities and social sciences especially because of the nature of enquiry that these disciplines make. The construction of reality is one of the key concerns of these disciplines and relationship between language and human beings is a critical factor to understand the inquisitive nature of the humanities.

The predicament of understanding the reality in the way humanities do, is slothfulness in terms of progress unlike the scientific disciplines. In philosophy, for example, this crisis has been traced in the early part of the twentieth century when the logical positivists started their venture by judging the meaningfulness of any proposition on the basis of its connection with reality. Their position to a significant extent had been strengthened by Russell, Ayer, early Wittgenstein and the likes. A kind of revolution took place at that point of time which was dominated by language in nature – leading to the linguistic turn in philosophy. But this is not all about finding a sort of artificial language since a great amount of debate generated on the applicability of ideal or artificial language and the applicability of ordinary language which is used in our everyday affairs. This has, in a way turned philosophy into an activity oriented by language.

Language constructs reality in two ways as far as the philosophy of language is concerned. The meaningfulness of a proposition could be laid out by corresponding to the state-of-affairs in the reality. This has been propagated by the positivists and they have got ample support from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* in this regard. Secondly, the meaning of language is understood in terms of its use in community or form of life. This is a pragmatic approach which has been conceptualized to a great extent by Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations*. I would take later Wittgenstein's

approach as a key to understand the therapeutic role of philosophy. Rather than going into the analysis of his philosophy of language, my objective is to address the significance of Wittgenstein's method in understanding language and to see whether his method could be applied in the study of humanities.

Along with this, a brief study of the thoughts of Nietzsche is presented to address the relationship between the individual and the community. In spite of his emphasis on the individual, Nietzsche addresses the vast spectrum of life where the community also becomes an integral part. He takes us out of the comfort zone of living and presents a different world. However, Nietzsche emphasizes on the thinking capacity of human beings and the significance of humanity. These attributes may inspire us to re-evaluate and restore the values of studying humanities and set up 'thinking' in a broad canvas of life.

### **Philosophy as a therapeutic activity after Wittgenstein**

The therapeutic approach in philosophy is not always explicit in Wittgenstein's philosophy. In fact, his earlier philosophy focuses on the logical structure of language and reality especially in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (*TLP*). It had an enormous impact on twentieth-century analytic philosophy because of its logical precision and innovative language. There is a distinction between saying and showing in the *TLP* which set a benchmark for many philosophers to follow. In this book, Wittgenstein has established a picture theory of meaning where picture is taken as a model of reality. He has made a sharp distinction between what can be said and what cannot be said. Picture is a model of reality as far as *TLP* is concerned. In the last proposition of the *TLP* he claims that whatever one cannot speak of, it must be passed over in silence (*TLP* §7).

By and large, if anything could be called as therapeutic in Wittgenstein's philosophy then *TLP* is not counted in the same grade as his *Philosophical Investigations* (*PI*) does. Even his *Culture and Value* (*CV*) has many significant remarks which could be said to have therapeutic implication. Now the question is: In which sense we should focus on philosophy as therapy? We should also keep in mind that it is not necessary for philosophy to be therapeutic at all since it has an independent status as well. Therapy is required when there is illness, illness that corrupts us conceptually or philosophically when we stop thinking about the very being that we are. It involves our encounter with others, ways of communicating our thoughts. In this regard, *PI* is nearer to human beings because of its idea of ordinary language that is used and becomes meaningful in the forms of life. One can also assume that the last remark of *TLP* sets a goal for us to keep a boundary line between the sayable and the unsayable and it could also have some therapeutic implications. In *PI* Wittgenstein remarks, "The philosopher's treatment of a question is like the

treatment of an illness” (*PI* §255). What kind of illness Wittgenstein talks about here? He warns us against the prejudice that philosophy needs to solve problems that are mystical in nature. This is one conceptual disease which is addressed by Wittgenstein in some prophetic way in *PI*. He asks for a descriptive method and asserts that philosophy keeps everything open to view as there is actually nothing beyond the stage. His notion of language-game is a very significant part to understand philosophy as an activity. What type of indication we can get from this philosophy? We should note that Wittgenstein opposes the Cartesian legacy where mind and sensation get the front seat and we start to think that the human self is a mysterious entity. Whereas, Wittgenstein affirms that the human body is the best picture of the human soul (*PI* PART II, p. 178).

Taking a lesson from this, perhaps we need to keep our conceptual capacity intact, not to mystify the concepts in order to get a better picture. Wittgenstein’s arguments against the possibility of a private language basically situate our understanding as far as the relationship between language and communication is concerned. Another aspect is to observe the conceptualization of the self as envisaged by Wittgenstein. Human body is not disassociated from the human self and we have to understand that Wittgenstein emphasizes on the ability of self to express the thoughts in the multiple forms of life (Peterman, 1992: 56). Another cue we should take is that conceptual clarity actually begins at language. Wittgenstein does not treat language as something like house of being as Heidegger does, rather he makes grammar as the factor that reveals the nature of our sensation. He treats philosophy as a “battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language” (*PI* §109). It is this demystification of the conceptual state that I think marks Wittgenstein as a distinguished figure in the history of philosophy. The soul gets the scope to express its vocabularies and thoughts in human forms of life. This implies that the human beings evolve within and outside his cultures and the intra-cultural and inter-cultural facets only broaden the horizons. We can indeed consider this approach so far as the humanities are concerned since with such a broad horizon the cultural as well as ethical and aesthetic aspects of human beings could be discovered in a new light. Language helps us to address the nuances of the forms of life that we experience every day. I would say that it is also a kind of phenomenological project somewhat different from Husserl that endeavours to channelize our thoughts to a more holistic dimension of language and life, as language is taken as a tool for communication, as an institution which becomes meaningful by nothing else but practice. In a sense, it makes our life meaningful too.

One of the most familiar allegations against philosophy is that it is a domain beyond the reach of common sense and it is never really bothered about the practical aspects of human beings. Again we have to understand that philosophy has a status



independent of any market value or consumerist demands and humanities have to take this into account as well in order to find a space for learning. Now having said this, do the philosophers have to live peacefully or feel privileged? Perhaps there is an opportunity for the philosophers and the thinkers of humanities to appraise the situation again. We are in a juncture when it is time to ponder over our conceptual diseases. Therapeutic philosophy is not the same as psychotherapy, rather it makes us aware of asking the right questions, trying to solve, if not, to dissolve them. According to Wittgenstein, philosophy leaves everything as it is. In this respect, I think we need to distinguish between what we consider to be a problem having academic as well as practical interest, and pseudo-problem which has nothing to do with our life but which seems to be an academic problem. In the case of humanities also, there is a thin line between this “seemingly a problem” and a “genuine problem”. We could learn from Wittgenstein the distinction between “seems to be right” and “is right”. A spurious theory cannot be said to have any significance in our life, it might occur only as a result of taking our language on a holiday about which Wittgenstein warns us (*PI* §38). Wittgenstein’s later philosophical method could sometimes be accused as anti-scientific seeing his aversion against the outbreak of scientific and technological orientation in the civilization as well as in the intellectual exercises of men. In *CV* Wittgenstein remarks, “The philosopher is someone who has to cure many diseases of the understanding in himself, before he can arrive at the notions of common sense” (p. 50e). Apart from questioning the so-called fast progress of science and technology in *CV*, he questions the complacency of a philosopher also since it is the philosopher who might be mystifying too much to conceptualize something but might end in a no-man’s-land kind of situation. The disease is the disability to clarify the concepts and merge them into other concepts. In humanities as well, if we fail to develop a language-game that is comprehensible to others then conceptual diseases would occur and it would be difficult for it to sustain. Therefore, Wittgenstein’s later philosophy guides us to find space among innumerable language-games and forms of life. Let us not forget that without reading his *TLP* perhaps *PI* would be difficult to understand because of the methodological contrast between the two books. In *TLP* also, if not anything therapeutic, a logical foundation of conceptual analysis has been laid by Wittgenstein. The relationship between language and thought has been treated in two different ways in these two masterpieces.

We conjecture that there is something unique in everyone’s ability to think and to conceptualize the world, but this entire machinery is run by language. Therefore, one can even say that we think through language. The more we participate or get acculturated in the forms of life, our linguistic as well as conceptual capacity enhance. The ailing concepts cannot sustain for a long time but it does make the associated concepts ailing if not addressed properly. The vagueness comes when we think too much on something, be it a text, an event or anything we conceptualize.

Wittgenstein questions the Cartesian introspecting model which is dominated by mind and its matters. Instead, he takes language as a game which is followed by certain rules that are applicable to everyone. If the concept of private rule-following is accepted, then language would be jeopardized without any correct benchmark or criterion. The criterion lies in the public sphere. So, one has to take language meaningful in terms of the use in a society or form of life. Then much of the illness would be removed as Wittgenstein asks us to show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle. This metaphor is used to mean that there is no point in treating meaning as a mystic entity, something philosophers for centuries have been cherishing; rather we have to look outside for the meaning instead of thinking about it. Although Russell accuses this approach by affirming in his *My Philosophical Development* that Wittgenstein lacks the rigour of philosophical orientation in his later half by emphasizing on the applicability of ordinary language this way, we can nevertheless deny the fact that it has left a huge impression on the understanding of man, society, language and communication and many other fields of humanities.

We can, at least, take some sincere lessons from the teachings of later half of Wittgenstein in order to combat some serious conceptual difficulties that we face in philosophy particularly, and humanities in general. Allan Janik addresses the nature and importance of Wittgenstein's therapeutic philosophy which takes the philosopher into the riddle of language and then takes him out of it like the fly wants to get out of the fly-bottle. Janik says, "Like the mentally disturbed, the traditional metaphysician no longer takes what is obvious to all as such because he has a new and unusual point of view, a new grammar, according to which there must be something exotic and sublime about what people normally take to be obvious and uninteresting (Janik, 2001: 221)." The tendency to be clever and to think that there is always something beyond do not amount to profundity. Only a greater level of confusion and miscommunication could be achieved if we fail to demystify meaning. This is where Wittgenstein's concept of language-game has an enormous impact upon the understanding of multilayered dimensions of the human forms of life.

### **Individual and Community in Nietzsche**

In the previous section we could observe Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy which advocates that philosophy should not be taken as a mysterious activity, neither concepts are realized by going deep inside the mind, rather philosophy is an activity. Existentialism is another revolt against the predominant metaphysical trend of philosophy. What is striking about this philosophical movement is that it takes human beings in all its forms and features, be it good or bad. It questions the very essence that is known for a very long time since existentialism situates the human being in all its precarious manifestations. One of the biggest challenges for this movement is to assess the individual, whether he remains as a unique being questioning about his

very existence, or just as a member of a community incorporating its values like others.

Nietzsche is one of the most formidable thinkers in the history of western philosophy who poses some serious questions about the very nature of human beings. If the study of humanities involves the nature and duty of human beings, and the horizon of humanity, then we should revisit the ideas of Nietzsche. The kind of distress he gives us through his writings, actually help us tracing the locus of individual. We exist naturally, materially and morally. Nietzsche proclaims that human beings should transcend his given abilities, his natural being to reinstate the individual in him. Man faces many challenges in life. One of these is the execution or of power or succumbing to it which is a necessary fact. As far as Nietzsche is concerned, power is not epitomized by being other-directed or by brutalizing others. In a sense, it is a kind of self-deception. Rather, in the true sense power has to have the ability which makes a man transcending his given abilities and overcoming oneself in order to be an authentic individual. It brings a creative facet to the individual which is self-directed, which helps him to channelize his own desires to a higher level of life. One becomes a poet, a philosopher, an artist or a musician when he truly transcends his natural being (Aho, 2014: 93). Although he starts with a Dionysian view of life, he also talks about balancing the Dionysian passion with the Apollonian self-discipline. One can also interpret Nietzsche's philosophy as a restoration of values in the intrinsic nature of human beings as propagated by Socrates.

Understanding Nietzsche involves the understanding of making a difference in the ill-fated human society. Humans are not only biological beings, they have intellect also. They know what counts to be a human being, what counts to save the humanity; but very often they go on living as a dull being. Nietzsche wants us to get out of that dullness. Nietzsche even precribes that education would have to believe in miracles rather than believing in a God. Once our smugness gets rattled and we face the uncanny objects and events only then miracles can happen. He says, "Interest in education will gain great strength only at the moment when belief in a God and his loving care is given up, just as the art of healing could blossom only when belief in miraculous cures had ceased. But to date, all the world still believes in education as a miracle: one saw the most productive, mightiest men grow out of great disorder, confused goals, unfavorable circumstances: how could this happen (Nietzsche, 1994: 149, Passage: 242)?" One would have to admit that it is somehow difficult to always accept Nietzsche's emphasis on the 'individual' but we cannot deny that he gets to the skin of our thoughts which so far have been placing us in a comfort zone. The individual could pull out an immense amount of complacency out of his nature and bring about a new wave of thoughts. The originality of insight comes through the uses

of language and demystification of meaning as far as Wittgenstein is concerned. In Nietzsche, it comes through the agonies, the destructions and the disorders. So, if we are content with the rapid progress in terms of civilization as a result of scientific and industrial developments by leaps and bounds, if we feel like supermen by the invents of information technology, a day will come when we may become just like robots who can do many things without knowing about the basic tenet of a human being called 'thinking'. Man, at first, is recognized as a thinking being. The progresses do not come in isolation rather in reflecting on the different aspects of life.

In spite of the different approach than Wittgenstein, Nietzsche's philosophy could be seen as a melting point between the 'individual' and the 'community'. There is an inner life which continues to think behind the curtain or cave so to say, and the same being wants to come out of the closet to the outer realm. The experience of connectedness, Kathleen Higgins says in accordance with the thoughts of Nietzsche, "...is the basis of community at its best. It combines articulation of individuality and insight to the point that one finds kinship everywhere with the common quest for a more perfect humanity that transcends the distinction between individual and community (Higgins, 2015: 91)." Then it becomes a source of inspiration for the individual as well as the community to strive more and more towards perfection. Development does not remain a solitary project anymore, instead it becomes an inclusive endeavour.

However, existentialism also has its limits of understanding. One who cares for the individual has to care for the society as well. There is always a conflict between the 'individual' and the 'social' self of man, still he cares for others and aspires for his own freedom.

### **Conclusion**

So far we have tried to understand Wittgenstein's conception of "showing the fly the way out of the fly-bottle," which implies that meaning is not something mysterious rather it is very much in between us. Wittgenstein asserts that the philosopher's job is to treat the conceptual illnesses and leave everything as it is. In this regard, he believes that the everyday language through its multitude uses in different forms of life becomes meaningful and we should not be thinking about 'meaning', rather we should look for the uses. Otherwise there is no philosophical problems as such. In Nietzsche, the meaning of life reveals itself through the disorders and destructions. Despite his sheer emphasis on the individual insight, Nietzsche dreams of a perfect conception of humanity that transcends the discrimination between individual and community. Therefore, the task of humanities cannot stand in isolation of society. At the same time, the modern society and the policy makers have to understand that there is a vast area of knowledge which exists independently of its application. But that

does not rule out the possibility of the implementation of the noble and contrasting thoughts of these great thinkers as mentioned in this paper. We should reflect and think on the nuances of their insights to enrich our minds. Thinking through humanities and glancing through the lenses of philosophy could be a crucial juncture now, perhaps more than ever in the history of civilization.

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## Indeterminacy of Translation and Meaning

*Jhadeswar Ghosh*

Translation is known as the most effective method of interlinguistic communication. The purpose of translation is based on the assumption that all language has the same thought or meaning and that it can be expressed from language to language by the method of translation. It implies that there must be determinate meanings of languages. W. V. O. Quine disagrees with the notion of determinate meanings and thereby the idea of determinate translation. In *Word and Object*, Quine developed his fundamental principle of the indeterminacy of translation. He argues that we can set up more than one set of translation manual for the object language, each of which is compatible with the totality of the speech dispositions of the speaker of the object language, yet incompatible with each other. The observations of textual meaning are uncertain and thus that any translation of meaning is fundamentally unstable. The idea of “translation” belongs to the idiom of meaning which are obscure and ill understood. But his notion of the indeterminacy of translation has made a large amount of literature both for and against it. Many thinkers argue in favour of translation in order to defend about meaning, taking meaning to be what is preserved in good translation and holding that a sentence in one language is correctly translated by a sentence in another language. Quine’s naturalistic conception of language claim that there are no propositions, no attributes, no relations, no numbers, no synonymity, no facts, no analytic truths and the notion of meaning is highly suspect. The aim of this paper is to explain in what sense Quine’s claims are to be understood and how far these claims can be defended by highlighting his view on that our aim is from translation to meaning and not from meaning to translation. Jerrold Katz has raised objection against Quine’s indeterminacy of translation and argues that in order to establish indeterminacy one would have to show how indeterminacy results in what he calls ‘actual translation.’<sup>1</sup> It will be presented that objection evoked by Katz can be satisfactory responded.

In the preface to *Word and Object*, Quine says that language is a social art whose acquisition depends upon the available intersubjective reminds as to what one should say and when. Owing to this intersubjectivity, there exists no ground for collecting linguistic meanings except through the dispositions of men to react overtly to observable stimulations. Quine’s observation is that “an effect of recognizing this limitation is that the enterprise of translation is found to be involved in a certain systematic indeterminacy” (ix).<sup>\*</sup> The two dogmas Quine repudiates in “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” are analyticity/synthetic distinction and reductionism. In this article, Quine tried to undermine two main points of the fundamental distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions. Analytic propositions are the only ones on which

the production of objective knowledge can be founded. Since they lack empirical content, they are the only necessarily true assertions. In contrast, synthetic propositions are *a posteriori* and contingent assertions. The truth of propositions of the type depends on linguistic factors, on the reality on which they are based. Based on pragmatism, depending on the holistic conception of language and meaning, Quine's critique suggests that a clear distinction between these two logical orders is incapable of definition. He developed impressive claims about meaning in 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism', within empiricism, of the traditional notion of analyticity, which is bound up with the idea of sameness of meaning. Quine's rejection of the analytic-synthetic distinction can be traced to his rejection of the mythical notion of meaning. Many think that statements of logic and mathematics are necessary because they are analytic and true by virtue of the meaning of the terms. Quine denies this. In denying the analytic-synthetic distinction, Quine is not only saying that there is no clear, sharp distinction that "nothing is analytically true".<sup>2</sup> Quine's denial of the analytic-synthetic distinction rests primarily on the view that there are simply no analytic truths, and his main objection to propositions, meanings and intentional objects is that their proponents hold "bad empirical theories" (Ibid., 127). His attack on the analytic/synthetic distinction involved two arguments – one concerning epistemology and the scientific method, the other concerning semantics and ontology. The analytic/synthetic distinction presupposes the second dogma of empiricism, that is to say, "reductionism," the view that every meaningful statement is translatable into an account about the immediate experiences that confirm it. Reductionism would permit one to determine analytic statements as those which are confirmed come what experience may (Quine, 1953: 38, 41).

In "Two Dogmas" Quine realized the problem of explaining synonymy; in *Word and Object* and later writings he attempted to show that those problems were well established by defending his doctrine of the indeterminacy of translation. What is observable here is that many translations are possible for the same sentence, and the equivalence that is aimed at is a very loose one. The indeterminacy of translation does not constitute an evaluative claim about the translation enterprise or its result (the manuals). The indeterminacy thesis does not concern the correctness or rightness or truth of translation manuals taken individually. A single sentence of any language lacks meaning in isolation from the other sentences of the language.

In the translation, the meaning becomes more complex, and there seems an indeterminacy which is inherently demonstrate in the nature of language itself. Many thinkers have indicated that translation comprises in finding a sentence in one language as another sentence in another language. One cannot move without the background of a general scheme of translation. Without such a scheme, the notion of translation is indeterminate (Ibid., p.143). When we translate, for example, "'Aśva' is

translated as 'Horse'." This entails that the speaker expresses 'Ásva' imprecisely the same situation where I would utter 'Horse'. For in exactly the same situation 'Ásva' might be translated as 'horse part' or 'horse stage' or even the universal 'horseness'. From the behavioral accumulation of the speaker, it is hardly possible to uniquely determine any one of these translations. The difference in these different possible translational candidates consists in individuation, in how we slice the reality. And there is no evidence on the basis of which we can say that the speaker and we slice the reality in the same way. The stimulus conditions permit us to translate 'Ásva' in more than one way. Thus, we gate more than one semantic postulate for translating 'Ásva'. And, in so far as behavioral evidence is concerned, it does not enable me to prefer one translation to another. By observing the assent/dissent behavior of the speaker, we can determine a unique translation. But the problem persists the same, for in the presence of a horse when the speaker is assenting to my query 'Horse?' she might be assenting to something which can be translated as 'Horse-part' or 'horseness', etc. Indicating to a horse also postulates to indicate a 'horse-part' or 'horseness' Ostension does not help to fix the determinacy. It brings out the gist of Quine's indeterminacy thesis. Indeterminacy of translation takes to indeterminacy of language and meaning. Thus, it is clear that the indeterminacy of translation appeals to the inability to ever fully translate the meaning of a word from one language to another. Thus, we give up determinacy of meaning and we assume that there is no fact of the matter regarding unique translation. That is, there are no unique meanings or unique referents of native expressions beyond what can be established on behavioral evidence.

Quine's most famous example of translation and meaning is a thought experiment involving radical translation: the translation of a completely foreign language from an unknown language. Let us look at the strategy of radical translation with the help of Quine's example of the "Gavagai". On the one hand, we might have English and on the other some alien language called Jungle or the language of a Martian. A rabbit runs by, a native says, "Gavagai," and the linguist writes down, as a tentative translation of "Gavagai" the sentence "Rabbit." How can the linguist further examine his translation? Once he describes native expressions for assent and dissent, he can ask "Gavagai?" In other words, once native expressions for assent and dissent are available, the linguist is positioned to accumulate inductive evidence for translating "Gavagai" as "Rabbit." Quine says, "The general law for which... [the linguist] is assembling instances is roughly that the native will assent to "Gavagai" under just those stimulations under which we if asked, would assent to "Rabbit" (30); the linguist concludes that "Gavagai" and "Rabbit" have the same stimulus meaning. To pass the bounds of observation sentences and stimulus meaning, the linguist segment discovered utterances into inadequate recurrent parts and thus makes a list of native words. The stimulus synonymy of the one-word sentences "Gavagai" and "Rabbit" does not assure that the words "gavagai" and "rabbit" are coextensive



because stimulus meaning is inadequate to resolve among the possible translations of “gavagai” as “rabbit,” “rabbit stage,” “rabbithood,” and so on (51-61).

The curious way of the indeterminacy of translation is Quine does not begin by speaking generally about translating one language into another; rather, he takes the specific case of translating a *theory* from one language into another. The propose is to grasp the whole of the sentences of the language and not just the sentences that the native speaker happens to utter. In other words, to understand a language we have to understand the speech dispositions of the native speakers of that language, so that in any given situation we can predict and understand a native speaker’s utterance. In the different semantic postulates, the different linguistic systems correspond to the totality of speech dispositions of the speaker being understood. Though they are consistent with speech dispositions, they generate different translations for the same expression. Meaning is whatever we can extract from a speaker’s behavior. And a speaker’s linguistic behavior is amenable to more than one translation manual. Hence, meaning loses its uniqueness and becomes indeterminate. Quine is not offering a description of the actual experience and the process of translation. He is aware that, as a matter of fact, translators do not encounter a huge number of manuals of translation which are incompatible with one another. In order to understand how this can happen we need only examine an extreme case of such translation, which Quine calls radical translation. It is the translation between our language and currently untouched and unrelated language. The field linguist is out to move into this language without the assistance of a translator. The notion of indeterminacy of translation depicts that there are no norms of identity for meanings, and thus, our intuitive notion of meaning is meaningless.<sup>3</sup> He thinks it is mistake to believe that the notion of propositions as shared meanings adds any clarity to our understanding of the enterprise of translation. Quine’s view is that our travel is from translation to meaning and not from meaning to translation. Translation of natural language are indeterminate in the sense that natural languages are amenable to more than one translation manual, each of which is equally valid but incompatible with each other.

In “The Refutation of Indeterminacy”<sup>4</sup> Jerrold J. Katz says, “I examine the argument for indeterminacy from a new angle and find that it does not work”. In Quine’s earlier writings establishes his claim that the traditional intensionalist’s notions of sense, synonymy, and analyticity cannot be made objective sense of, and, consequently, must be abandoned in serious studies of language. Katz opposes that Quine’s argument against synonymy and accordingly his argument against translation is lacking a set up. He believes that there are good scientific definitions of synonymy, antonymy, and analyticity, if these intensional idioms are scientifically defensible, then translation can be determinate. He argues that in order to establish indeterminacy one would have to show how indeterminacy results in what he calls ‘actual

translation.' By 'actual translation' Katz means cases where, for example, we English speakers translate German to English or cases where one English speaker is translating another English speaker. Katz attempts to do this by arguing that certain independent controls exist in cases of actual translation that do not exist in radical translation. In order to assure these stand points, Katz argues for the notion of linguistically neutral meanings. His objection against Quine's argument that there are no such things as linguistically neutral meanings. But it appears to us that the philosophical point raised by Quine holds true of "actual translation' too. But the importance of radical translation can hardly be denied. Radical translation is not identical with 'actual translation'. Generally, in 'actual translation', we do not do this in order to make communication. In 'actual translation', both the speaker and the hearer assume that they are using the same sets of semantic postulates. The indeterminacy thesis does not have anything against it. Commenting on Katz's "The Refutation of Indeterminacy" Quine says, "the fact remains that lexicography lives, and is important. Translation is important, often right, and often wrong. The indeterminacy thesis denies none of this, but tells us that right translations can sharply diverge".<sup>5</sup> Due to the holistic structure of language, we will have to make necessary adjustments in other parts of the language. Thus, it is the totality of the sentences of the language and not the sentences that the native speaker goes on to express.

Thus, Quine took a very strong conclusions from the bare conception of radically different manuals of translation and the bare conception of radically different ontologies. Such conceptions will not concern the linguist working in the field. Further, Quine's familiar point that translation requires the exercise of judgment because there will always be a range of substitute yet in equal interpretations in one language of sentences from a language with various concepts and syntax. It may still appear that he is only stressing on the translating between relatively remote languages and cultures, in equivalent sentences of one language will often do equally well as rough translations. In the naturalistic standpoint Quine actually embraces indeterminacy of translation as a substantive doctrine. It spells out the broad outline of what a naturalistic and behavioristic theory of meaning. Thus, it seems that Quine would be willing to accept any argument for indeterminacy just as long that argument did not violate the behavioristic principle. Thus, the Quinean semantics provide a unique foundation to a theory of meaning and translation. The indeterminacy of translation is an uttermost thesis that refuses the option of determinate meanings in the traditional sense and prefers for indeterminate of meaning.

#### **Notes and References**

\* The page references presented parentheses in the paper are references to W. V. Quine's *Word and Object* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, and New York: Wiley, 1960).

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3. For a fuller discussion see Quine, *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, pp.89-90 and On a Suggestion of Katz, *Journal of Philosophy*, 1967, 64:52-4.
4. Jerrold J. Katz opposes Quine's scientific naturalism and argues that the constraints that naturalism imposes on the scientific theory of language, it imposes on theory construction in linguistics are inconsistent with the quest for the best scientific theory of language. For this discussion see "The Refutation of Indeterminacy" in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 85, No. 5, 1988, pp. 227-252.
5. Quine, "Reply to Harman", *Synthese*, p. 267 where Quine suggests that alternative translation might be distinguished from one another by their acceptability to the translator, and also see Barrett, R. B. and Gibson R. F. (Eds.) (1990) *Perspectives on Quine*, Basil Blackwell, p.198.

## Thought, Language and Communication: An Exploration

*Jyotsna Saha*

### I. Introduction

Language is the most mysterious outcome of the human mind. In language we have the record of articulate conceptual thinking. Animals on the other hand, are without speech. They communicate their desires, love through their own method but that cannot be regarded as language or speech. Human beings are animal creatures, with animal bodies, desires and appetites. In addition to these human beings are able to think which all other animals are supposed to lack. According to Descartes, non-human animals are devoid of mind or thought because they do not have the capacity of speech. It is a common belief that mind is a thinking substance. Mostly we all agree that thinking is the distinctive characteristic of man. It allows humans to make sense of, interpret or represent the world they experience and also to make predictions about the world. It is a common belief that mind is a thinking substance.

### II. Thought and Language

An important issue that has puzzled the philosophers, linguists and psychologists of all ages is the relation between thought and language. Does language serve as a vehicle of thought only? Don't we think in terms of language also? Descartes' discussion of mind in many ways marks the beginning of modern philosophy of mind. According to Descartes, human mind involved capacities and principles such as understanding and will, that are not realizable by even the most complex of automata. Thus it becomes necessary to postulate a second substance called mind. The mind is a substance distinct from the body. The essence of the substance called mind is that it thinks and the essence of the substance called body is that it is extended. "Thought", says Descartes "is a word that covers everything that exists in us in such a way that we are immediately conscious of it."<sup>1</sup> One person cannot be in a position for being immediately conscious of another person's thought.

"Man possess great variety of thoughts...yet they are all within our own breast, invisible and hidden from others, nor can of themselves be made to appear"<sup>2</sup> says John Locke. To make them visible we should find out some external signs through which ideas – the materials of thinking might be known to others. The external signs are words. Locke calls ideas materials of thinking and sensation as the source of most of our ideas. In his famous work *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* Locke says that language is essentially an instrument for the communication of thought which is invisible to others and the speaker uses words as

signs of his ideas. Communication between the speaker and the hearer is successful if the words excite the same ideas in the hearer as they were in the speaker. 'The same idea' in Locke's remark means 'similar idea'. Locke calls ideas "materials of thinking".

The concept of intentionality among other implications includes the relation of thought and language. According to intentionalist thesis, all thoughts are directed to toward an intended object or objects. By virtue of its intentionality, the mind is qualitatively different from non-mental, purely mechanical things. Intentionality has interesting implication on the relation between thought and language. Intentionality is an abstract relation between a mental state and the object that is thought about. Franz Brentano is the leading figure associated with the study of intentionality in recent philosophy. Brentano in his famous work *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* explains the intentionalist theory.<sup>3</sup> He said that intended objects are literally contained within the thoughts of that directed toward them such as in the mental state of love something is loved, in desire desired object and so on. For simplicity it may be said that intentionality means directedness of thought toward existent or non-existent transcendent objects.

This primacy of the intentional thesis has among its implications an answer to the problem of whether thought precedes language or language precedes thought. This question is examined by Roderick M. Chisholm and Wilfrid Sellars (1958) in an exchange of letters written in 1956.<sup>4</sup> The primacy of the intentional implies that thought precedes language and language is nothing but the vehicle of thought. Without intentionality, the words and sentences of a language lack meaning. According to Roderick M. Chisholm, language acquires intentionality derivatively from the intrinsic intentionality of thought. He has given a common sense reason in favour of his claim. If there were no thinkers, there would be no language, but if there were no language, there could still be thinkers who had no linguistic way of expressing their thoughts. According to Chisholm, whereas both thoughts and words have meaning, the meaning of the words is related to the meaning of the thoughts. Sellars, however, regards thought as a kind of inner or mental speech. This brings language as contemporaneous with thought if not prior to thought. It is true that we cannot say what we are thinking without using language but whether it is the nature of thought always to be intertwined with language remains the problem. Noam Chomsky in some sense supports Sellars' position.

Noam Chomsky's hypothesis of innate deep structure grammatical categories asserts that human brains are equipped with a predetermined linguistic skill. Chomsky reminds us Juan Huarte, a Spanish physician. Chomsky holds that mind thinks in terms of linguistic structures. Juan Huarte investigates the nature of human intelligence. The lowest level is the "docile wit" which satisfies the maxim

that there is nothing in the mind that is not transmitted to it by the senses. The next higher level is the normal human intelligence. Normal human intelligence is capable of generating new thoughts and capable of expressing these in a novel way without any training.<sup>5</sup> Noam Chomsky in his book *Syntactic Structures* (1957)<sup>6</sup> developed a view about language. In *Syntactic Structures* he states that our ability to speak and understand language depends on our possessing a complex grammar that consists of rules that we do not consciously know we have. He continues to maintain that every human is born with an innate universal grammar. Jerry Fodor's account of the private language of thought asserts that human beings are equipped with a predetermined linguistic capacity. It seems that he was influenced by Noam Chomsky in this regard. He explains thought in terms of language, rather than language in terms of thought. "...representation presupposes a medium of representation, and there is no symbolization without symbols. In particular, there is no internal representation without an internal language."<sup>7</sup> There is a language of thought.

Wittgenstein discusses the relation between thought and language in his *Philosophical Investigations*. Some passages from *Philosophical Investigations* may be mentioned for understanding the relation between thought and language, according to Wittgenstein. In Section 327 of he wrote: "'Can one think without speaking?'- And what is thinking? – Well, don't you ever think? Can't you observe yourself and see what is going on? It should be quite simple. You do not have to wait for it as for an astronomical event and then perhaps make your observation in a hurry."<sup>8</sup> In Section 329 of *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein make the following remark: When I think in language, there aren't 'meaning' going through my mind in addition to the verbal expressions: the language is itself the vehicle of thought.<sup>9</sup>

These remarks and many others are found throughout Wittgenstein's writings deals with the problem of relation of thought to the language which expresses it. Does Wittgenstein hold the view that thinking is essentially a linguistic activity? Or more precisely: Is thinking possible without language according to Wittgenstein? It is evident from the above remarks that he has rejected the concept that there is inner process of thinking running parallel to outward speech. The language is itself the vehicle of thought, not another one. The question of how someone knows that he is thinking this or that thought is simply nonsensical or meaningless.

Frege has made a remarkable contribution in his theory of thought. Frege identifies the structure of the thought with the structure of the sentence which expresses it. The grounds for this identification is that "...even a thought grasped...for the very first time can be put into a form of words which will be understand by someone to whom the thought is entirely new...So that the sentence serves as a model of the structure of the thought."<sup>10</sup> Frege held that we grasp thoughts via a use of language. The thought in itself is imperceptible. Thought gets dressed or

covered in the perceptible garment of a sentence. This perceptible garment of sentence enabled us to grasp the thought. The relation between thought and its expression is not an external but an internal relation, according to Frege, Wittgenstein. Genuine communication of thought would be impossible if thought and language were not internally related to one another, says Frege. According to Dummett, thought like pain or mental image is not essentially private. It is transferable i.e. one can convey what he is thinking to others. Thoughts are inter subjective and expressible which can be put into words.<sup>11</sup> Donald Davidson in his paper entitled “Thought and Talk” seem to offer an equal status to both thought and language. “The two are, indeed, linked in the sense that each requires the other in order to be understood.”<sup>12</sup>

In the Indian tradition Bhartṛhari extrapolates the modern theory of mind or consciousness. He opines that the contents of consciousness are linguistically structured. *Śphoṭa* is the linguistic entity that remains in the domain of consciousness. He gives highest status to language or *śabda*.<sup>13</sup> *Śabda*, according to Bhartṛhari, is the ultimate reality. He believes that human consciousness is intertwined with the word-principle. In *Vākyapadīyā* he states that there can be no awareness in this world without intertwined with language. Without association of word, awareness is no awareness at all. There is no *nirvikalpaka jñāna* as it cannot be expressed by words. According to Bhartṛhari, the word-thought relationship is given to us. This relationship is not created by a group of individuals or by God. It is eternal.

### III. Language and Communication

Language is the most effective mode of communication and understanding in the domain of human affair. We express and share our thoughts mostly through the medium of language. Language may be adequate or inadequate for doing this task. Communication is generally regarded as transference of information. It is the transference of information that is intended to affect the recipient’s belief system and is seen by the recipient of the information as so intended. The possibility of communication depends upon a number of factors, for example, there should be at least two normal persons both of whom understand the language in which the communication is being conveyed. Means of communication may be of different kind. Verbal and written languages are the most predominant among them.

At the centre of human cognitive system lies the study of language. According to some cognitive scientists, the instinct to learn, speak and understand language explains the remarkable communicative ability of human species. In the inner world of man, language is perhaps the most powerful machinery through which activities like giving information, making judgement or assertion, representation, hypothesizing reasoning can be carried out. Language is considered as a complex

network of activity involving the speaker's intention, hearer's understanding, context of speech, linguistic meaning, intended meaning and many more elements. If all these conditions are fulfilled the problem still remains whether language can serve as a solid bridge for communication of knowledge between the speaker and the hearer. Philosophers are diverted in this issue. I propose to discuss in this section: Is successful communication possible? Can there be knowledge which is not communicable? Can silence be a medium of communication?

Communication at the human level utilizes language as an infinitely subtle and flexible instrument to cope with a variety of relations and a diversity of facts. A speech act can potentially have multiple interpretations. So ambiguity becomes a virtue in many human communication settings. Rousseau believed that there is a connection between the size of a community and the possibility of communication. Within a small community immediate communication is possible through physical proximity. Derrida, however, disagrees with this. He thought that any successful communication always contains the alternative possibility of its own failure. No matter how much one appears to be in harmony with others, their exchange is marked by its containing the possibility of misconception between them. "One would always acknowledge, even in moments of high confidence, or optimism, the possibility of 'mis'...For Derrida this possibility of failure is the condition of any communication."<sup>14</sup> For the contemporary German philosopher Habermas, any attempt of communication or use of language and even any mode of action, presupposes a horizon of meanings shared with others. We could not speak or function otherwise. Habermas points out that inherent to our communication practices is the orientation towards universal and unconstrained consensuses – a kind of pre-understanding.<sup>15</sup> For him, the idea of mutual understanding is implied in day to day language, action and communication. The primary function of speech is to arrive at mutual understandings or conflict-free interaction. Communication has an underlying structure that makes understanding possible. Habermas is very much interested in the ways people use language. He developed a formal pragmatics – pragmatic use of language in context. J.L. Austin's *How to Do things with Words* can be treated as a founding text of the pragmatic linguistic philosophical tradition. His pragmatic insight of the "performative" is developed by John Searle in his *Speech Acts*. To Searle common ground of inter-subjectivity between the speaker and the hearer is their common language. So, according to him, common language is enough to explain the concept of communicability. But common language is not the sufficient condition of communicability because in certain cases the communication fails though the speaker and the hearer share a common language. Wittgenstein speaks of sharing the life of a communicator in order to be able to understand the language of the communicator. Here 'sharing' means sharing the mode of using linguistic expressions. What is involved in communication is a way of thinking, a form of life. Wittgenstein was



pointing out precisely that a language with its rules, conventions and agreements is a way of thinking, a form of life.

Communication in everyday life is based on the relationship between twin criteria (i) the reciprocity of language skills among the communicators and (ii) the mutuality of focus. In a linguistic interchange, the hearer's presumption that he has understood the speaker can never be definitely refuted or confirmed. Communication ultimately rests on faith. If communication is not to rest on faith it is necessary to maintain that any misunderstanding can come to light. In oral communication there is no guarantee that something uttered this way is identical with what is comprehended of it by the person communicated with. Apart from the physical noise involved in the process of communication, there are possibilities that (a) the hearer may fail to grasp the intention of the utterer and (b) the former may put his own interpretation into what he hears. In a Husserlian way one might say that in every utterer-hearer situation there is an element of identity intended by one but not actually perceived by the other. It is primarily, not necessary from the behaviour – physical, verbal etc. of the persons involved in a particular process of communication that one has to understand and decide whether the communication was successful or not.

The question arises: Can we know something about which we cannot speak in a sensible manner? This may well raise some further sets of questions. Can we communicate our most personal and intensely felt experiences e.g. love, hate, acute pain, angry etc. in language? Can the expression 'I am in pain' communicate exactly what it is that I feel? Are pure sensation or sense experiences effable? These are the most significant problems both in ancient and contemporary philosophy. Gorgias, the ancient sophist, asked how can an individual say in words what he says with his eyes and so communicate or transfer to others what is in fact merely his own subjective experience. "Gorgias argued in his treatise *On Non-being* or *On Nature*, that *logos* [speech] can never convey to a hearer the information a speaker may possess – in effect that intelligent verbal communication is impossible."<sup>16</sup> Here probably for the first time in the western tradition the subjective nature and relativity of knowledge was explicitly referred. Gorgias raised but did not solve the problem. In Indian philosophy also these problems have been discussed. Is there any pure empirical knowledge completely free from language and logical construction? The Buddhist replies "yes". According to the Buddhists, our most primitive sensation unadorned by conceptual fiction is free from language. Bhartṛhari replies "No". According to Bhartṛhari, all thought, all awareness is intertwined with language for there cannot be any manifestation of awareness unless it is illuminated by *śabda*. There are two levels of language or *śabda* – the implicit or the inner speech and the articulate noise. The former he called *sphoṭa* and the later *nāda*. If Bhartṛhari is right then it is proper to claim that the so called personal and subjective cognitive event is equivalent to the

occurrence of a verbal thought and if a thought is verbalized it becomes public property that is communicable. But what happens to one's private sensory experience or sensation? Bhartṛhari's tentative answer would be as far as the sensory reaction matures into sensory awareness it becomes pregnant with *śabda* because according to him the illuminated power of consciousness is necessarily intertwined with *vāg-rūpa*. This power is natural to awareness.

The Buddhists, the Naiyāyikas and the Mimāṃsakas did not approve this thesis of Bhartṛhari. According to them there are two types of perceptual awareness, *nirvikalpaka* and *savikalpaka*. The first is the sensory awareness where no language or word can appear while in the case of second words are essentially present. Bhartṛhari maintained the opposite view. He thought that even in the stage of *nirvikalpaka* perception, the awareness is interpenetrated with *śabda*. Modern philosophers of language also have pronounced a principle of expressability which is very similar to Bhartṛhari's thesis that there cannot be any awareness that is not 'interpenetrated' with words. However, this principle may not imply that whatever can be said can be understood by others. There are certain things which we can mean but cannot communicate properly.

Communication of knowledge about the physical world is relatively trouble free but it becomes an acute problem as far as correct communicability of inner or mental world is concerned i.e. when knowledge has no provably evident use value its communication becomes problematic. The world of feeling, because of its very nature is not perfectly communicable. This kind of communication may be called as weaker sort of communication and in practical life most of us live primarily by this.

One of the most important modes of communication is silence. Silence may be a part of language. There is an opinion that we cannot think without words. Plato remarked that thought is the 'inner dialogue of the soul', thinking is really silent speech. At times keeping silent we communicate. But can it be a medium or way of communication? Is silence communication as such? Silence may be an expression of knowledge as well as ignorance. As far as Buddha's silence about nirvana is concerned, it must not be ascribed to ignorance. Buddha's silence on the question of *nirvāṇa* is to be interpreted in terms of *nirvāṇa* its absolute indeterminateness. When Buddha decides to keep silent on the nature of *nirvāṇa*, he feels that the richness of experience of nirvana is such that words by their nature are incapable of expressing it. It is clear from Buddha's statement that on issues of self and liberation, the information or knowledge expressed by words are useless. Here the successful exchange or communication calls for a different approach, that is, through influences and examples. Sometimes silence also appears meaningful and communicative in

everyday matters. Silence may be the expression of ignorance also. The word 'silence' is mostly used in this sense. So without making reference to a definite context it should not be said that silence is a means of communication, that is, silence as such is not a medium of communication.

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