RAVENSHAW JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

Volume VIII
November 2022

Department of Philosophy
Ravenshaw University
Cuttack-753003, Odisha, India

Editorial Advisory Board

ISSN: 2395-3209

Printed at Maa Printers, Cuttack and Published by Department of Philosophy Ravenshaw University, Cuttack-753 003

Contents

Ravenshaw Journal of Philosophy, Vol. VIII
November 2022 5-21
ISSN: 2395-3209

Descartes, Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty and Scepticism

Laxminarayan Lenka and B. Ananda Sagar
Department of Philosophy, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad- 500046

Abstract:

This is primarily an expositional work made to put together in one place the fundamental ideas of Descartes, Moore and Wittgenstein on certainty and scepticism, Section I, II and III will include discussion on those fundamental ideas of Descartes, Moore and Wittgenstein, respectively. In the section IV, we put forth our observation on the three approaches to certainty and scepticism.

Keywords: *Scepticism, Certainty, Dream Argument, Demon Argument, Cogito ergo sum, Knowledge, Contingent Propositions, Hinge Propositions.*

I

Introduction

In Descartes' methodological scepticism doubt has been used as a tool to arrive at certainty. The opposition between doubt and certainty has been so well recognised in Cartesian scepticism that they are kept exclusive of each other. That is, a state of doubt excludes a state of certainty and vice versa. This certainty is such that any belief with certainty must be a belief without doubt. If to doubt is to invite the mental state of uncertainty, Descartes seeks to remove this mental state of uncertainty and strives to arrive at a state of certainty.

Descartes uses doubt as an instrument to obtain truths which are not doubtable. He is surprised by the large number of false beliefs he accepted in his childhood and by the highly doubtful nature of the whole edifice built on those false beliefs. He realises that it is very necessary to 'demolish everything completely and start again right from the foundations.'[1] As a foundationalist he has wanted to make foundational basic beliefs to be certain so that the whole edifice would be strong enough to be counted as genuine knowledge. If the foundation is fallible, the superstructure built on the foundation is no less fallible. As a foundationalist, Descartes has assumed that it is a task of a philosopher that she finds the foundational universal truths which must be undoubtedly true.

That the sense organs do deceive us on some occasions is established on the ground that sometimes we experrince perceptual illusions. Descartes asserts that sometimes 'senses deceive, and it is prudent never to trust completely those who have deceived us even once.'[2] Secondly he observes that the occasional deceptions do not warrant the conclusion that every belief based on sense perception is a false or doubtable belief. To establish that conclusion one needs a sceptical argument which is more general in nature and hence more threatening to the foundations of empirical knowledge. This more general argument is well known as the dream argument which may be briefly explained as follows. [3]

What we see in dreams need not be true at all. Accordingly, the truth of the beliefs made in the dream is always doubtable. As Descartes puts it, "How often asleep at night, am I convinced of just such familiar events- that I am here in my dressing-gown, sitting by the fire- when in fact I am lying undressed in bed."[4] There is no guarantee that what I am seeing, smelling, touching, hearing and so on in my dream are actually taking place in reality outside the dream. However the senses experience the same both in the waking state and the dreaming state. For example, I can see an apple both in my dream as well as outside my dream; I can hear the church bell ringing in my waking state and the same ringing of the bell can be heard in my dreams. There is no marked difference between the waking state and the dreaming state. As a result, the epistemic status of beliefs in dream states cannot be distinguished from that of beliefs in waking states. To the extent that beliefs in dreams are doubtable so also the beliefs in waking states. In other words, every belief based on sense experience in the waking state is equally doubtable as every belief in the dream is doubtable.

Judgements based on sense experience are very different in nature from those of arithmetic and geometry. Certainty associated with geometrical and arithmetical judgements cannot be successfully challenged by dream argument. Even in dreams, mathematical judgement remains true. As Descartes points out, "For whether I am awake or asleep, two and three added together are five and a square has no more than four sides. It seems impossible that such transparent truths should incur any suspicion

of being false."[5] Descartes introduces the demon argument in order to challenge the certainty of arithmetical and geometrical judgements. He says, "…some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to deceive me."[6] If it can deceive one and make one think that 2+2=4, it may also deceive one into thinking about the physical objects. Thus Descartes' demon argument is an effective argument that really challenges the validity of all knowledge, both empirical and non-empirical.

Doubting is a form of thinking as much as believing, asserting, dreaming, desiring, etc. are different forms of thinking. All these forms of thinking, including doubting, are species of the same genus, thinking. Consequently, to doubt is to think (in a particular form called, 'doubt'). If I doubt that I am thinking then I must be thinking. I cannot genuinely doubt that I am thinking in the sense that it is self-defeating to assert that I doubt that I am thinking. Thus 'I think' is certain. Moreover, if I am thinking then I must be existing. The certainty of 'I think' leads to the certainty of 'I exist'. It is a kind of contradiction to say 'I think but I do not exist'. Descartes considers these two truths - 'I think' and 'I exist'- as clear and distinct which can never be doubted.

As neither 'I think' nor 'I exist' is a tautology, neither of these two is a logical truth. So also, neither the denial of 'I think' nor the denial of 'I exist' is self-contradictory. Consequently, none of the two- 'I think' and 'I exist' is analytic. From this, it is clear that the certainty of 'I think' and 'I exist' is different from the certainty of logical truths and analytic truths. Then what sort of certainty is attached to 'I think' and 'I exist'? If we look into the nature of these propositions each of them is counted as an empirical proposition, not a logical proposition. Yet they are treated to be certain in the sense that these truths cannot be genuinely doubted. They are certain *qua* indubitable. If we faithfully follow Descartes the said certainty is grounded on intuition and treated par with the certainty of self-evident truth. In Descartes' words, "when someone says 'I am thinking, therefore I am, or I exist… Recognizes it as self-evident by a simple intuition of the mind"[7]

For Descartes, the 'Cogito' principle (I think, therefore, I am) successfully overcomes the difficulty raised by the demon argument. It does not make sense to say that somehow I can doubt that I am thinking. Hence, even if the demon deceives me to its highest capability it does not succeed to get me to doubt that I am thinking. To deceive is to get a subject to believe something to be true which is actually false. The demon cannot get me to believe that I am not thinking when actually I am thinking. If he succeeds and I believe that I am not thinking when I am actually thinking, then, the fact that I am believing something does guarantee that I am thinking. As his success presupposes that I am thinking, he won't try to get me without thinking. When I am incapable of thinking, I am incapable of believing, hence, incapable of being deceived.

In the Sixth Meditation (entitled "The existence of material things, and the real distinction between mind and body"), Descartes rejects the dream argument and the demon argument. Although in the first meditation (entitled "What can be called into doubt") when he has formulated the dream argument he has not distinguished between being asleep and being awake, he distinguishes the two in sixth meditations. He says, when I distinctly see where things come from and where and when they come to me… when I can connect my perceptions of them with the whole of the rest of my life without a break, then I am quite certain that when I encounter these things I am not asleep but awake."[8] In stating this, Descartes has recognized that one of the premises of his dream argument is false. That is, it is false that there are no certain marks to distinguish the waking states from the sleeping states. We can have a criterion to make a distinction between the two states.

Thus we may claim that Descartes has created and refuted a scepticism. He has created it through his dream argument and demon argument. He has successfully refuted it to the extent he has succeeded in refuting the two arguments.

II

At the beginning of the paper "Certainty", Moore makes seven assertions which he counts as examples of some contingent propositions known with absolute certainty. Those assertions are: 'I am at present in a room', 'I am standing up', 'I have clothes on', 'I am speaking in a fairly loud voice', 'I have in my hand some sheets of paper with writing on them', 'There are a good many other people in the same room', 'There are windows in that wall'.[9] These propositions do differ from each other (the first five are about the speaker, the last two are not; the state of affairs described by each is different from the other, hence, the information conveyed through each is different from the others). Yet, according to Moore, they do have four common characteristics. They are all contingent propositions (in the sense that, though they were in fact true, they 'might have been false'); secondly, each of them implies the existence of an external world ('a world external to my mind') in the sense that each of them stands true irrespective of the subject's mental states, conditions or abilities, hence, they are not by any means about the mind or internal world of the subject. Third, each of the propositions is 'at least partly *based* on' the evidence of the subject's senses (though the senses may not provide conclusive evidence). Fourth, each of those propositions is known with absolute certainty.

The sense of absolute certainty should not be mistaken as to be equated with a necessity of a logical truth or that of an a priori truth. That, for Moore, the concept of certainty is not presupposing the concept of necessary truth or a priori truth becomes clear from the fact that he counts some contingent propositions (hence, not logical

truths) based on sense experience (hence, not known a priori) to be certain. Moreover, he talks about four different uses of 'certain' (as it is being used in the four different forms: "I feel certain that…,' 'I am certain that…,' 'I know for certain that…,' and 'It is certain that…,'). Interestingly, none of the four demands that a proposition expressing a logical truth or an a priori truth be placed after 'that'. On the contrary, the first sense of certainty (as in 'I feel certain that…') allows false propositions to be certain to the extent that a subject is allowed to feel certain that a proposition is true, even if the proposition is false. The second sense too does not require that the proposition must be true. The first and second differ in the way 'sure' and 'quite sure' differ. That is, 'I feel certain that…' and "I am certain that…' can be replaced by 'I am sure of that…' and 'I am quite sure of…'. The third and fourth senses of certainty require a true proposition, yet it need not be a logical or a priori truth. The third, 'I know for certain that …' needs a true proposition following 'that'; because the truth condition (If S knows that p then it is true that p) is a necessary condition of knowledge. Although the fourth, 'It is certain that…', is without 'I' and appears to be impersonal, it is not so impersonal that it becomes certain without being known. Something may be true and nobody may know it to be true; but the same does not go with 'it is certain that…'. For Moore, 'Somebody knows that p' is a necessary condition for 'It is certain that p'.

Moore asserts that contingent propositions can be known and known with certainty. Even if 'I am standing up', for example, is contingent and hence, its denial is not self-contradiction, it does not imply that 'I am standing up' cannot be known with certainty. 'It is certain that p' does not imply that it is logically, a priori or analytically true that p. Undoubtedly, contingent propositions can be known. From the fact that p is contingent, it does not follow that p cannot be known. Had it been so, the conjunction of 'p is contingent' and 'p is known' would result in a self-contradiction. But the said conjunction is not a self contradiction. As Moore argues, "the conjunctive proposition 'I know that I am at present standing up, and yet the proposition that I am is contingent' is certainly not itself self-contradictory, even if it is false. Is it not obvious that if I say 'I know that I am at present standing up, although the proposition that I am is contingent', I am certainly not contradicting myself, even if I *am* saying something which is false?"[10]

If certainty (S is certain that p) is a necessary condition of knowledge (S knows that p), it is clear that known contingent propositions can be treated as to be certain. As knowledge (S knows that p) and contingency (p is coningent) are compatible, so also, (It is certain that p) certainty and contingency (p is contingent) are compatible, because certainty is a necessary condition of knowledge. In Moore's words, "Thus if I do know now that I am standing up, it follows that I can say with truth 'it is absolutely certain that I am standing up'. Since, therefore, the fact that this proposition is contingent is compatible with its being true that I know that I am standing up, it follows that it must also be compatible with its being true that it is absolutely certain that I am standing

up."[11] Symbolizing 'It is certain that p' as Cp, 'S knows that p' as Kp, and 'It is contingent that p' which is equivalent to 'It is not logically necessary that p' as ~Np, we may formulate the above argument as

1. It is possible that (~Np & Kp)
2. Kp implies Cp

   Therefore, It is possible that (~Np & Cp)

   This conclusion does not follow from 1 and

3. It is possible that Kp and Cp.

Similar to the fact that we do not conclude 'Some men are women' from 'Some men are rich' and 'Some women are rich', we do not conclude 'Some contingent propositions are certain' from 'Some contingent propositions are known' and 'Some known propositions are certain'.

Is the certainty of known contingent propositions different in kind from the certainty of known necessary propositions? Similarly, is the knowledge of contingent propositions different in kind from the knowledge of necessary propositions? There is a sense in which we can answer "Yes" to both of the questions and talk about two different senses of certainty and that of knowledge. But that does not really weaken the argument Moore makes for the existence of external things. Recognising the two senses of certainty as well as knowledge Moore says, "it may be the case that, if I say, 'I know that' or 'It is certain that' 'it is not the case that there are any triangular figures which are not trilateral', or 'I know that' or 'it is certain that it is not the case that there are any human beings who are daughters and yet are not female', I am using 'know that' and 'it is certain that' in a different sense from that in which I use them if I say 'I know that' or 'it is certain that 'I have some clothes on'; and it may be the case that only necessary truths can be known or be certain in the former sense."[12] We cannot outrightly reject the sense of 'know' and 'certain' associated with the contingents as much as we do not do so with respect to the other sense of 'know' and 'certain' associated with the propositions expressing necessary truths (logical truths, a priori truths or analytic truths). In both the senses, 'certain' and 'know' are used properly. For sure, it does not follow from 'p is contingent' that 'p is not known and is not certain'. The idea that it does follow is a mistaken idea. For Moore, each of his seven cited contingents is known and certain.

The difference between the knowledge (or certainty) of necessary propositions and the certainty (or knowledge) of contingent propositions does not affect the epistemic validity of certainty of contingent propositions. It only expresses that the object of certainty varies, not that the nature of certainty varies. Secondly, certainty is not dependent on the mental status of a subject. In Moore's words "that I was then inside a

room is something which might have been true, even if at the time I had been asleep and in a dreamless sleep."[13] For him, certainty is objective, not subjective. Therefore even if a subject is more convinced of a necessary truth than that of a contingent truth the certainty of a necessary truth does not become higher than the certainty of the contingent truths. As a result, the use of the certainty of contingent propositions in the proof of the existence of the external world does not weaken Moore's argument. Moreover, insofar as we accept the truth of Moore's cited contingent propositions as to be certain, we accept that external things do exist. Because the truth of those propositions presupposes the existence of the external world.

Moore does recognise and give credit to Kant for the idea that there is a need for a proof for the existence of things outside of us and that we should not accept their existence merely on faith. He also acknowledges that Kant has provided rigorous proof for 'the objective reality of outer intuition' and the said proof may be used for 'the existence of things outside of us'.[14] However, Moore observes that Kant has not given due importance to the distinction between things 'presented in space' and things to be 'met in space'. It is easy to find examples of things which are 'presented in space', but not to be 'met within space'. For example, an after-image or after-sensation is 'presented in space' without being 'met within space'. It is so fundamentally because the after image is somehow akin to a private sensation. The private sensations of two different persons cannot have numerically the same after-image. This is not so for publicly perceived things. Because, we must have seen it 'if it was a visible object, have felt it, if it was a tangible one, have heard it, if it was a sound, have smelt it, if it was a smell.'[15]

Moore does not count after-images, double-images, and pains to be external things. These things get the status in the waking state equivalent to the status of the objects seen in the dream[16] (in the sleeping state). A toothache is subjective and private as much as someone's dreaming of meeting the prime minister. Neither the toothache nor the prime minister in one's dream is an external thing. According to Moore, external things (for example a human hand, a set of papers, a shoe, a cat, a dog, a tree etc.) are 'met within space' whereas private things (pain, after- image, dream, etc.) are not 'met within space' although both are presented in space. The two kinds of things are qualitatively different from each other. If the existence of one of the things with the quality of 'being meetable within space' is proved then the existence of the things outside of us is proved. As Moore says, "Obviously, then there are thousands of different things such that if, at any time, I can prove any one of them, I shall have proved the existence of things outside of us."[17] To prove the existence of the external world we cannot depend on things which cannot be met within the space but just have the quality of being presented in space. The following may be quoted from Moore in connection to his proof of the external world. "I can prove now, for instance, that two human hands exist. How? By holding up my two hands and saying, as I make a certain gesture with the right, "Here

is one hand," and adding, as I make a certain gesture with the left, "and here is another". And if, by doing this I have proved *ipso facto* the existence of external things, you will also see that I can also do it now in a number of other ways: there is no need to multiply examples."[18]

To show the rigorousness of the above proof Moore points out that the proof satisfies the three conditions of rigorous proof. For him, a proof is rigorous if and only if

(1) the premises adduced as proof of the conclusion are different from the conclusion,

(2) the adduced premises are something which is known to be the case, not merely believed to be the case and

(3) the conclusion does really follow from the premises.[19]

Of course, a sceptic may not be convinced by Moore's proof since the truth of the very premises ('this is my left hand' and 'this is my right hand') has not been proved. This sceptic may say that Moore is dreaming that he has got a left hand and a right hand. But there is no proof that he is not dreaming. Moore does recognise this problem and aptly answers that we need not always prove what we do know. A subject knows certain truths without being able to prove those truths. In his words, "I can know things, which I cannot prove; and among things, which I certainly did know, even if (as I think) I could not prove them, were the premisses of my two proofs."[20] 'Knowing that p' is different from 'proving that p'.

In connection to the Cartesian dream argument, we can safely state that Moore has succeeded in weakening, if not refuting, the argument. Although by deployment of the dream argument the existence of the external world might be counted as a possible illusion, it cannot be proved to be an illusion. On the basis of common sense, we may conclude that it is real, not an illusion. Given the possible two alternatives, namely, that no one can know that external things exist and that most of us know that external things exist, Moore finds the second alternative acceptable on the ground of common sense.[21]

In addition to the above argument for the existence of the external world, he argues that the dream argument does not establish the falsity of every belief based on sense experience, it only establishes uncertainty. In his words, "from the hypothesis that I am dreaming, it certainly would not follow that I am *not* standing up; for it is certainly logically possible that a man should be fast asleep and dreaming, while he is standing up and not lying down. It is therefore logically possible that I should both be standing up and also at the same time dreaming that I am; just as the story, about a well-known Duke of Devonshire, that he once dreamt that he was speaking in the House of

Lords and, when he woke up, found that he *was* speaking in the House of Lords, is certainly logically possible."[22]

Along with the weakening of the dream argument, Moore has tried to refute it on the grounds of the inconsistency of the sceptic's beliefs. The sceptic believes that dreams have occurred and at the same time believes that he does not know that he is not dreaming. In Moore's words "All the philosophers I have ever met or heard of certainly did know that dreams have occurred: we all know that dreams *have* occurred. But can he consistently combine this proposition that he knows that dreams have occurred, with his conclusion that he does not know that he is not dreaming? Can anybody possibly know that dreams have occurred, if, at the time, he does not himself know that he is not dreaming?"[23]

We can count our dream as a dream only if we know that we are not dreaming. Of course, this argument of Moore may not be acceptable because once we grant the possibility of dreams inside dreams there is no incoherence in believing that dreams have occurred and the subject does not know that he is not dreaming. As a subject can dream that he or she is not dreaming there is no certainty in his or her belief that he or she is not dreaming.

Another attempt to refute the sceptic has been worked out by Moore by means of turning the table on the sceptic. He asks the sceptic to prove that the sceptic has the better reasoning in his argument ('since you don't know that you're not dreaming, it follows that you don't know that you're standing up.') than Moore's argument ('since, I do know that I'm standing up, it follows that I do know that I'm not dreaming'.). According to Moore, his argument is as good as the sceptic's argument, unless the sceptic 'can give better reasons for asserting that Moore does not know that Moore is not dreaming than Moore can give asserting that he does know that he is standing up.[24]

Thus we may assert that Moore has responded to Descartes' dream argument and thereby to scepticism about the existence of the external world by making use of a sense of certainty and knowledge that goes together with certain contingent propositions.

III

We depend on Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* for an understanding of his epistemology, particularly for the understanding of his point of view on certainty and scepticism. The propositions that we believe with certainty are also the propositions we believe without doubt. In other words, certainty and indubitability are interchangeable terms even in the epistemology of Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein refers to those propositions which are counted as to be certain by different names- 'hinge propositions': 'bedrock

propositions', and 'framework propositions'. The examples of these propositions with certainty include the propositions like 'I am a human being, I have a brain'[25] there are physical objects,[26] the earth exists,[27] every human being has parents,[28] cats do not grow on trees,[29] here is one hand.[30] Such propositions are called hinge propositions because like the hinges of a door, they remain fixed, unmoved. Other propositions of the framework to which these propositions belong, do presuppose the truth of these hinge propositions. That's why they are known as framework propositions. For Wittgenstein, doubting ultimately presupposes certainty.[31] The hinge propositions are such propositions with certainty. If I want to turn the door on, the hinges must stay put.[32] The certainty of these propositions is not proved, on the basis of evidence or investigation, or logical deduction. Because they are not to be proven at all. This is one of the grounds on which we can distinguish Wittgenstein's propositions of certainty from that of both Descartes and Moore in so far as the latter two have attempted to prove the certainty of certain propositions (for example Descartes' 'I think therefore I am' and Moore's 'these are my two hands'). Descartes tries to prove the certainty of cogito ergo sum by intuition, if not by a logical deduction. Moore tries to prove the certainty of his cited empirical propositions by taking recourse to commonsense and he claims of the proof as to be rigorous proof. On the contrary, for Wittgenstein, certainty is a matter of practice, not of proof. For example, when I get up from a chair, I do not try to prove or verify that I have two feet. I am certain that I have two feet. Why is it so? "There is no why. I simply don't. this is how I act."[33]

Secondly, a proof is given to justify some beliefs and justification is given for a belief to become knowledge. For Wittgenstein knowledge and certainty belong to two different *categories*.[34] This is one more ground on which we can distinguish Wittgenstein's approach to certainty from that of Descartes and Moore. Both Descartes and Moore accept that certainty is a necessary condition for knowledge. For them, if a subject S knows that p then S must be certain that p. On the contrary, for Wittgenstein, if a subject S knows that p then S is not certain that p; also, if S is certain that p then S does not know that p. In other words, the concept of certainty and knowledge cannot be applied to the same belief or proposition. For example, if I am certain that I am a human being then I do not know that I am a human being. I do not know it because I cannot justify that I am a human being, since there is no requirement of a justification here. However justification is a necessary condition of knowledge, it distinguishes knowledge from mere true beliefs. Let us take another example. I am certain that I am in pain in the sense that I cannot doubt that I am in pain. It makes no sense on my part to say that I am in pain but I doubt that I am in pain. For Wittgenstein, if the concept of doubt is inapplicable to the truth of the proposition p, then the concept of knowledge is equally inapplicable to the same truth. Where doubt is inapplicable, knowledge is equally

inapplicable. Wittgenstein says that the use of 'I know' in 'I know that I am in pain' makes no sense ('except perhaps as a joke').[35] In the same way he argues that I 'know' in Moore's 'I know that these are my two hands' is not a legitimate view of 'I know'; because it is certain that I have two hands; and knowledge and certainty belong to two different categories.[36]

After all, every normal doubt is expressible in the form of a question that requires an answer or a justification for a belief to be acceptable as a known truth. Similarly every justification of belief can be treated as an answer to the doubt raised against the truth of the belief. In other words, if p is knowable, p is doubtable; if p is doubtable, p is knowable. "Where there is no doubt there is no knowledge either."[37] Not only that Moore's use of 'I know' is illegitimate when he uses it in relation to statements of certainty, but also the said use does not help Moore to refute scepticism. Because there is a difference between 'I know' and 'I say or believe that I know'. In Wittgenstein's words, "Moore does not know what he asserts he knows."[38] Just an assertion that I know that p does not ensure or justify that I know that p. One can assert, believe and even be quite confident that she/he knows that p without actually knowing that p. Accordingly, Moore's saying of 'I know' in 'I know that I have two hands' may at best prove that Moore is confident and convinced to believe that he has got two hands, it does not stand as an evidence or justification for his knowing that he has two hands. In fact, for Wittgenstein, Moore does not know that he has two hands. "Moore treats the sentence ''I know so & so" like the sentence 'I have pain'. The criterion that he knows so & so will be that he *says* that he does."[39] The 'I know' may signify the mental state in which Moore was confidently believing that he got two hands. But for Wittgenstein, neither knowledge nor understanding is established by a subject's mental state. One may give a wrong answer with as much confidence as he has when he gives the right answer.[40]

Although Wittgenstein does not subscribe to the idea that knowledge must be indubitable and certain, he does not reject the importance of certainty for knowledge. For him, the very possibility of making judgments is dependent on the hinge propositions. Before one actually makes judgments, one must have already learnt how to make judgements. How can one learn it without being taught? And, nobody ever teaches us these propositions by saying, "Perhaps, she is your mum", "Perhaps, it is an apple", "Perhaps, these are my two hands" and so on. If it would have been taught to us in this manner, we could never have learnt how to make judgements.

IV

Descartes refuted scepticism by means of the certainty of *cogito ergo sum* which was arrived at through the method of doubt in which the dream argument and the evil genius argument (demon argument) played a major role. Moore refuted scepticism by means of the certainty of certain contingent propositions arrived at on the ground of common sense. Wittgenstein refuted scepticism by means of the certainty of hinge propositions arrived at on a logical or grammatical ground. What is common to the three approaches is that the certainty of certain propositions somehow ensures that we do know certain things in the world, hence scepticism is defeated. The differences among the three may be briefly stated as that the Wittgensteinian certainty is not a necessary condition of knowledge whereas both Descartes and Moore counted certainty to be the necessary condition of knowledge; Moore asserts that certainty is implied by knowledge but, unlike Descartes, he does not need a proof or justification to know almost everything he knows.

Of course we do not claim that Descartes has really succeeded in his refutation of scepticism, nor do we claim that he has succeeded in refuting the dream argument or the demon argument. We do not believe that he has succeeded mainly because of the fact that his refutation of the dream argument as well as of the demon argument depends on the validity of his Cogito principle. To see something 'clearly and distinctly' as to be a part of one's whole episodes of waking life can be used as a criterion to distinguish the waking state from sleeping state; but how well can we use it if we do not know what exactly is meant by 'clear and distinct perception'? Moreover, even if one explains it by finding the nature of the truth of Cogito ergo sum to be so; the explanation remains as much problematic as the certainty of Cogito ergo sum.

G. E. Moore is well known for his refutation of scepticism by means of his proof for the existence of the external world and thereby for the truth of beliefs about the empirical things which were challenged by Descartes's dream argument. Moore was certainly aware of the significance of the dream argument and had tried his level best to overcome the conclusion of the dream argument. In a sense, the whole of his epistemological enterprise may be treated as a response to Descartes' dream argument. However, we find that he has not succeeded in refuting Descartes' dream argumnt on a logical ground but on the ground of common sense. He too acknowledges that he cannot deny that 'it is logically possible that all the sensory experiences I am having now should be mere dream-images'.[41] The denial of that very logical possibility becomes a proper logical ground for the refutation of dream argument. Even Descartes has not directly addressed it. He has tried in a manner to do that for the demon argument and then, indirectly, taking recourse to the nature of a truth that cannot be denied at all (e.g.

the truth that I think or I exist), he attempts to explain that the empirical truths perceived clearly and distinctly are no less immune to their corrigibility than the truths of 'I think' or 'I exist'.

The cogito is supposed to overcome the demon argument, hence to overcome the vulnerability of logical truths too. The certainty of the cogito principle needs to protect the certainty of logical truths, not that the certainty of a logical truth warrants the certainty of the cogito principle. In other words, strictly speaking, the proper logical ground is not a doubtable logical principle; including the principle of noncontradiction: ~(p&~p). What is more in Descartes' refutation of the demon argument that convinces us of his refutation other than this principle of noncontradiction? Is there any reason for which the Demon cannot make me believe that I am not thinking (when I am actually thinking) other than that ~(I am thinking and I am not thinking)? If I am deceived by him and believe that I am thinking whereas actually I am not thinking, then, to the extent that I am believing something, I am actually thinking. From this argument, why should we infer that he does not deceive, and why not infer the conjunction that he deceives and I am thinking? Because, we subscribe to the principle of noncontradiction. Thus, although logical truths have not been counted as the propositions with certainty that overcomes the Demon, an application of a logical truth matters the most for the ground on which that Demon-defeating certainty has been proclaimed of the cogito principle. What is intuitively known is perhaps nothing more than the said application. What is counterintuitive on my part to assert that I think but I do not exist? We may answer that it is because of a kind of absurdity involved in getting myself to believe that I do not exist, if not the absurdity of an explicit self-contradiction. As Hintikka (1962) has rightly pointed out, one of the conditions of a successful assertion is that the speaker believes that the audience will believe what the speaker asserts; and no speaker can get her audience to believe that the speaker does not exist, even if the audience is the speaker herself. It is 'existentially inconsistent' for any one to utter 'I do not exist'. Thus there is a kind of absurdity in asserting 'I do not exist' parallel to the absurdity of an explicit self-contradiction of 'I exist and I do not exist'.

Wittgenstein has criticized Moore's refutation of scepticism on the ground that Moore has misused the words, 'know' and 'certainty'. But Moore claims that there are different ways in which we use 'know' and 'certainty'; and he has chosen a particular way which subscribes to the idea that knowledge must be certain and true, also, that knowledge follows from certainty. Wittgenstein has emphasized knowledge's justification condition and considers every known proposition a justified proposition, hence, not a certainty *qua* a proposition that needs no justification at all. Yet he finds a foundation for both knowledge and doubt. That foundation consists of those hinge propositions or bedrock propositions.[42] He says that the game of doubting presupposes certainty and, accordingly, the demon argument which stands for doubting almost

everything is almost doubting nothing. In Wittgenstein's words, "If you tried to doubt everything you would not get as far as doubting anything. The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty"[43]. The act of doubting must end somewhere. Another reply to the demon argument is, "A doubt without an end is not even a doubt"[44]. In a similar vein, we find Wittgenstein's response to the dream argument. In a sense, he counts this argument 'senseless' and argues that if we doubt even the certainties like "This is my foot" or "These are my two hands" on the ground that I may be dreaming, then, not only that this remark (that I am dreaming) might be just a dream but also the very meaning of the words could be taking place in dreams. In other words, if certainties can somehow be doubted, then, not only that very act of doubting but also the sense of the sentence expressing that doubt can be put into question. In Wittgenstein's words, "The argument "I may be dreaming" is senseless for this reason: if I am dreaming, this remark is being dreamed as well- and indeed it is also being dreamed that these words have any meaning"[45]. If every empirical fact could be a dream, so also, every linguistic fact as well as their corresponding thoughts could be in dreams.

We find that Wittgenstein, Moore and Descartes have not said that certainty must be a logical truth and that its denial is a contradiction, hence, nonsense. Each of them cited certainties which are not logical truths. Descartes' 'I think' is certain but not a logical truth, Moore's 'These are my two hands' is certain but not a logical truth, Wittgenstein's 'I am a human being' is certain but not a logical truth. Yet, they have argued that if the respective certainties are doubted then it leads to a kind of nonsense. It makes no sense on my part to doubt that I am thinking, because that doubt proves or reaffirms that I am thinking. There is no sense to doubt that I have two hands, because that defies common sense. It amounts to doubting every sensory experience. The doubting of every sensory experience is either 'inconsistent' (when one does recognize a sensory experience distinguished from its fake or dreamt experience) or 'be very likely self-contradictory' (when expressed as a conjunction of propositions of experience and the proposition that I am dreaming.)[46] There is no sense to doubt 'I am a human being' because this too amounts to a doubting of everything and, we have explained why Wittgenstein considers it (doubting of everything) senseless.

Thus we may assert that Descartes, Moore and Wittgenstein have different understandings of knowledge and certainty but each of them refuted philosophical scepticism. They did it by explaining more or less that the doubting of everything is a kind of nonsense and there are beliefs which cannot be doubted and accepted as certain.

Endnotes:

1. Descartes, *Meditations*, Tr & ed. John Cottingham, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p.12.
2. Ibid. p.12.
3. Lenka L. (2015) makes an exposition of dream argument's significance in scepticism.
4. Descartes, *Meditations,* p.13.
5. Ibid. p.14.
6. Ibid. p.15.
7. See second replies: CSM II I00, Descartes Meditations.
8. T*he Philosophical works of Descartes*, tr. and compiled by Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, Vol. 1, Descartes, Meditations, p.62.
9. G.E. Moore (1968b), p. 27.
10. Ibid. p. 32.
11. Ibid. p. 37.
12. Ibid. p. 38.
13. Ibid. p. 44.
14. See G.E. Moore (1965), p.69.
15. See Ibid. p. 72.
16. See Ibid. p. 75.
17. Ibid. p. 81.
18. Ibid. p. 81.
19. Ibid. p. 82.
20. Ibid. p. 84.
21. See these two alternatives in Ibid. p. 49.
22. Ibid. p. 47.
23. Ibid. p. 51.
24. See Ibid. p. 49.
25. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, tr. D. Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe, Blackwell, Oxford, 1969, Sec. 4. (OC)
26. Ibid. Sec.35.
27. Ibid. Sec. 84.
28. Ibid. Sec. 211.
29. Ibid. Sec. 282.

30. Ibid. Sec.1
31. Ibid. Sec. 115.
32. Ibid. Sec.343.
33. Ibid. Sec. 148.
34. See OC, Sec. 308.
35. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, tr.G.E.M. Anscombe, Blackwell, Oxford, 1986. Sec. 246.
36. OC, Sec.245, 247 and 308.
37. Ibid. Sec.121.
38. Ibid. Sec.151.
39. Malcolm. N, *Ludwig Wittgenstein A Memoir*, Oxford University Press, London, 1967, pp. 87-8.
40. See OC, Sec. 151 and PI, Sec. 154
41. Moore G.E. (1965b) p. 53.
42. We are not of the opinion that Wittgenstein is a foundationalist. Following Shiner R. A. (1978), we prefer to term Wittgenstein's epistemology as 'activist epistemology' rather than foundationalist or coherentist.
43. OC, Sec. 115.
44. OC, Sec. 625
45. OC, Sec. 383
46. Moore G.E. (1968b) p. 53

References:

Descartes R. (1996) *Meditations*, Tr & ed. John Cottingham, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.

Descartes R. (1978) *The Philosophical works of Descartes*, tr. and compiled by Elizabeth S.Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, Vol. 1, Cambridge University Press, 1978.

Hintikka J. (1962) "Cogito ergo sum: Inference or Performance?", *Philosophical Review*, LXXI, pp. 3-32. in Doney W. (Ed.) *Descartes*: *A Collection of Critical Essays*, Mc Millan, London, 1968, pp. 108-140.

Lenka L. (2015) "On Descartes' Dream Argument", *Keanean Journal of Arts*, Vol. 11, pp. 86-95.

Murphy E. (1968), " Moore's Defence of Common Sense", in *The Philosophy of G.E. Moore*, ed. By Paul Arthur Schilpp, The Library of Living Philosophers, London.1968.

Moore G.E. (1965), " Proof of An External World", in *Classics of Analytic Philosophy, Ed. R. Ammerman, Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1965.*

Moore G.E. (1968a), "A Reply to my Critics", in *The Philosophy of G.E.Moore*, ed. By Paul Arthur Schilpp, The Library of Living Philosophers, London, 1968.

Moore G.E. (1968b), "Certainty", in Doney W. (Ed.) *Descartes*: *A Collection of Critical Essays*, Mc Millan, London, 1968, pp. 27-53.

Malcolm N. (1967), *Ludwig Wittgenstein, A Memoir*, Oxford University Press, London, 1967.

Shiner R.A. (1978), "Wittgenstein and the foundations of knowledge", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,* Vol. 78, 1977-1978, pp. 102-124.

Wittgenstein L.W. (1953), *Philosophical Investigations*, tr.G.E.M. Anscombe, Blackwell, Oxford, 1953.

Wittgenstein L. W. (1969), *On Certainty*, tr. D. Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe, Blackwell, Oxford, 1969.

Ravenshaw Journal of Philosophy, Vol. VIII
November 2022 22-36
ISSN: 2395-3209

Environment and Individual Moral Responsibility

What is the use of a house *(home?)* if you haven't
got a tolerable planet to put it on? **- H.D. Thoreau**

Bhaskarjit Neog
Assistant Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Abstract

Environmental problems are usually discussed and debated by taking into consideration the activities of collectives and individuals. Both collectives and individuals are conventionally treated as thesubjects of our moral evaluation because of their ability to do things or leave things undone in a morally relevant way. However, the practice of attributing of moral responsibility to individual persons in most environmental contexts is not as easy as it often seems at first blush. The concept of individual moral responsibility which is at the heart of such a practice faces the problem of a glaring mismatch between the causal (in)efficacies of the unilateral actions of individuals on the one hand, and their due moral responsibility for doing the environmental damages on the other. This paper analytically raises and responds to this problem by making use of some of the latest moral philosophical literature on responsibility. It justifies the grounds of individual moral responsibility for climate change or environmental degradation by assessing the relevant individual actions or omissions against the backdrop of moral responsibility of groups or collectives to which the individual belongs. Diffusing the strict condition of causal (in)efficacy in the environmental context, the paper offers a better explanation of the moral status of individual actions with the help of a clause called feasible substitutes designed in line with the well-known principle of alternative possibility of moral responsibility.

Keywords: *Moral Responsibility, Climate Change, Environment-Friendly Actions, Feasible Substitutes, Principle of Alternative Possibility, Group Moral Responsibility, Moral Blameworthiness.*

The normative discourse of environment is riddled with many uncomfortable questions. The questions such as who should be held responsible for climate change and environmental harms, who should be blamed or punished for such disasters, who must rectify those wrongs and so on have dominated most of the discussions. Questions of this kind are usually raised and responded to by considering individuals as well as collectives as the main subject of responsibility. However, behind this commonsense understanding, there is a deep philosophical issue that creates quite a bit of challenge to our overall explanation of moral responsibility in environmental contexts. The issue that I wish to highlight here is the issue of the possibility of full-blooded moral responsibility of individual human persons for climate change. The questions that I raise here are: How are we to judiciously attribute moral responsibility to discrete or unilateral individual actions which contribute so little to the total cause of climate change or environmental problems? Given that moral responsibility is a matter of what one does or does not do to bring about a morally relevant change in the world, how do we strike a balance between the causal (in)efficacies of unilateral actions on the one hand and their rightful moral blameworthiness for climate change or environment pollution on the other?

In this paper, I analyse this problem from multiple directions before offering an appropriate response to it. In order to make sense of the moral significance of unilateral actions in the context of environment, I argue that the actions or omissions of the individual concerned need to be put against the backdrop of moral responsibility of groups or collectives for similar such harms. I suggest that the concept of individual moral responsibility would survive only when we introduce a clause of alternative option which I call feasible substitutes within the general scheme of things under which an individual is supposed to perform her actions and omission.The rationale of this clause can be thought through in line with Harry Frankfurt's articulation of the *principle of alternative possibility*. The principle suggests that "…a person is morally responsible for what he has done only if he could have done otherwise" (Frankfurt 1969). Using the essence of this principle in the context of moral responsibility for environment harms or wrongdoings, one can suggest that an individual moral agent can be blamed for environmental unfriendly actions or omissions provided that the agent concerned has the options before her to do other feasible substitute and yet she chose not to do that.[1] And the possibility of this substitute, depends on the manner in which the groups or collectives, to which the individual belongs, operate themselves to ameliorate environmental concerns.

The paper is in four sections. In the first section, I define the problem in a way that is relevant for both philosophical understanding of moral responsibility and our ordinary practice of morality in environmental or climate change contexts. The second section is devoted to clarifying the basic features of the concept of moral responsibility

and its conditions and constitution. The third section is on responsibility and environment where I deal with different dimensions of the problem raised in this paper. The fourth section offers an explanation of the clause in the context of individual agent's environment-unfriendly actions or omissions in line with Frankfurt's articulation of the principle of alternative possibilities. The final section concludes the discussion.

Defining the Problem

One of the most intuitive and uncontroversial assumptions about the concept of moral responsibility is that a subject of morally relevant actions or omissions is responsible or accountable only for those things which she herself does by causally contributing to it. You cannot apportion moral responsibility to someone when what the agent is responsible for is not something that is causally irrelevant to her. Causal relation of some form is the first condition that needs to be satisfied in an effective account of moral responsibility. If an agent is blamed for something to which she is not even remotely connected, then that attribution of moral blame would go against the basic principles of natural justice. The radar of moral responsibility, unlike other kind of responsibility, is extended only to the extent of one's voluntary actions or inactions. There must be thus some parity between what the agent voluntarily does or does not do in a situation of moral relevance and what she is morally accountable for.

This otherwise ordinary assumption about moral responsibility, however, faces some glaring difficulties when we apply it in the ethical context of our actions with implications to environment. For, the magnitude of most of our environmental concerns, such as air pollution, climate change, water pollution and the like, is so huge that the ordinary discrete individual actions, or for that matter certain small scale collective actions, look quite negligible given their alleged effects on the larger scheme of things. The causal connection or association between the outcome and the action concerned is so remote and miniscule that there is hardly any meaning to talk about accountability for those actions or omissions. Many who admit the impact of anthropogenic climate changes and recognize the severity of the harms done to both human and non-human entities, concede it quite upfront that individual actions or omissions can rarely make any difference to earn moral blameworthiness. They give examples that show how insignificant our individual actions or inactions are in the face of what we are morally complaining about. They ask how we are to hold an individual, who uses an old motor vehicle morally accountable for the phenomenon of climate change that occurs over a period of fifty years or so.For instance, Walter Sinnottt-Armstrong argues that when we talk about the causal relationship between climate change and individual emissions, "we cannot claim to know that it is morally wrong to drive a gas guzzle just for fun" (Sinnottt-Armstrong 2010, p. 343).[2] An individual action, in this sense, is just a cog in the machine of the colossal environmental problems that we are concerned about. In

fact, an entire lifetime of one or two person's environmentally unfriendly actions would be inconsequential on that count, one might say.

While such issues are quite problematic at the theoretical front, the flip side of this i.e., exempting from total moral responsibility for our actions or inactions would also be too lenient. Not only would it just be lenient from the point of view of the impact of the collections of such individual actions or omissions, but also it would be a matter of huge confusion insofar as our understanding of the basic facts of morality and desert are concerned. How can we not hold any one morally accountable at the time when scientific evidence is constantly telling us about the detrimental impact of the ever-increasing greenhouse gas emission? If we were to allow our discrete individual activities to go out of the moral hook, our explanation will have to resort to some sort of metaphorical diatribe—a diatribe the target of which would be nothing but a questionable metaphysical cause. Surely this is not what our reasonable understanding would be satisfied with.

Given this conundrum, one wonders how and in what sense, if at all, we should talk about moral responsibility at the individual level in the context of environment. Does this conundrum suggest that we should banish the idea of moral responsibility altogether and embrace something else in its place? How does one even think about going beyond it when the concept is so deeply ingrained in our cultural and social fabric of morals and morality? To get a better grasp of these issues, now let me explore the concept first.

Moral Responsibility: What it is and what it is not

Moral responsibility is a serious issue, both practically and theoretically.[3] It is the bedrock of the whole institution of morality which we share and participate in an intimate way. Responsibilities cannot be willy-nilly attributed to people. For, it is not a mere style of talking about some undesirable qualities of a human person or organization. Neither is it an expression of rebuking somebody publicly for some untraceable moral phenomena. It is a matter of passing a moral judgment on the basis of what the agent is and what she does or does not do within the bounds of the scheme of things that matter us morally. To be morally responsible for something is to be either praiseworthy or blameworthy for the action or omission in question. To put it more straightforwardly, in the words of Matthew Talbert "[b]lame is a response that may follow on the judgment that a person is morally responsible for behavior that is wrong or bad, and praise is a response that may follow on the judgment that a person is morally responsible for behavior that is right or good" (Talbert, 2019). While moral responsibility can have both a positive valuation and a negative valuation, in moral philosophical literature it is usually tilted towards the latter. Mostly in moral philosophical literature the term is equated with the notion of blameworthiness.

Although the origin of the idea can be traced back to Greek philosophical thoughts, especially in the thoughts of Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, its proper construal has been surprisingly new. The modern conceptualization of the idea has a history of less than hundred years or so. Paul Ricoeur has observed that the idea was not at an "all well-established within the philosophical tradition" (Ricoeur 2000, P. 11). Interestingly, the original philosophical use of it can be traced back to a political context. In the modern European intellectual tradition, the term got legitimacy only as late as in the later part of the eighteenth century. This is too within the context of the debates about what a representative government owes to its people. John Stuart Mill uses the term when he writes about the principles of representative government. Interestingly, the idea did not really get a reasonable shape in the writings of any major philosopher. It was sociologist Max Weber who at the end of the nineteenth century made a substantial use of this idea when he spoke about ethics of responsibility for political leaders (*Verantworthungsethik*).[4] Weber believed that the vocation of politics seeks a calm attention to the facts of situation on the one hand and consequences of action on the other.

With this background knowledge, we now need to know what this idea is and what it is not. As mentioned before, moral responsibility is not a matter of accusing somebody for something. It is definitely not a matter or doing or saying something to someone. Neither is it an excuse for fixing the blame on somebody so that we can get things going forward. It is, in my understanding, an occasion of being able to pass a judgment on somebody and on something on the basis of certain morally desirable values and norms. For this, you do not necessarily need any language. You can hold somebody morally responsible without even communicating anything verbally. So, put simply, moral responsibility is the location where we can fix our moral complaints about a person, action, organization and state of affairs with justified understanding of their situations.

Another important aspect of moral responsibility is its nature of ascriptivity.[5] We tend to think that moral responsibility or accountability is something that we only attribute to others for committing some moral mistake. It is an issue of making people aware of their moral failure. By holding an individual responsible for a negative action, we suggest that so and so is morally culpable for such-and-such crime. However, this is just one dimension of the picture. There is another dimension in which it makes perfect sense to hold oneself morally responsible for what one does or does not do. You may hold yourself morally accountable for doing something even if the matter does not come to the knowledge of the world. Moral responsibility in this sense has a self-acriptive nature. So, there are two kinds of ascriptivity— first, other-ascriptive and second, self-ascriptive. This twin dimension is important to note especially because this separates moral responsibility from legal responsibility which is essentially based

on other-ascriptivity. However, this does not mean that these two dimensions are always distinctly separable and there is no common ground where they meet. There are, of course, innumerable occasions where both legal and moral responsibility can come together. What needs to be kept in mind is that even if they often co-habit, that does not mean that they are co-extensive in nature.

While talking about the nature of moral responsibility, it is important to note that we can use the idea in two different senses- forward-looking sense and backward-looking sense.[6] Let me explain these two senses with the help of self-ascriptive nature of moral responsibility discussed as above. In the forward-looking sense, I feel or believe that I am morally responsible for the action that I intend to do, as my duty or obligation, but have not yet done it. These are normally tied with some roles like, for instance, my role as a teacher, or a student, or an environmentally sensitive citizen. Moral responsibility of this sense can also be called "prospective" responsibility. On the other hand, moral responsibilities in the backward-looking sense are those which I ascribe to myself as an agent after having done something morally insensitive. This can be called "retrospective" responsibility. I am retrospectively responsible for what I have done or failed to do in a given moral situation. For instance, I am retrospectively held responsible for littering a ground which is designated for, say, children's entertainment. Or, I am held accountable for plagiarizing something in my name whereas the original content is owned by somebody else.

Another important feature that needs to be highlighted before wrapping up this section is its deployability. To whom do we actually deploy this morally thick concept? Who do we think is the target of moral responsibility? This question is important because an answer to this will inform us not just about the nature of the concept but also about its limitations. An easy and uncomplicated answer to this would be- the human individual. Moral responsibility can be attributed to those adult human persons who are capable of introspecting what she does as a member of a moral community. However, in order to respond to this more effectively let me take the help of a prominent theory proposed by Peter Strawson in one of his most celebrated papers titled "Freedom and Resentment".[7] According to Strawson, to be morally responsible is to be an appropriate target of reactive attitudes such as resentment, gratitude, anger, forgiveness and love. Someone can be legitimately held morally accountable only when we realize that the person is our appropriate target of some of our emotional attitudes. We are subject to these reactive attitudes by virtue of our being participants in certain interpersonal relationships. To hold someone morally responsible is to be prone toward appropriate reactive attitudes towards him or her. Not just this, many believe that to be held morally accountable it is not only required that the agent be the target or object of others' reactive attitudes but that she also be the subject to such attitudes. That means to be held appropriately morally responsible is to be capable of experiencing certain emotional attitudes such as guilt,

remorse, shame, pride and the like.

To put it simply, moral responsibility is a concept that can be talked about only with reference to human persons or conglomeration of them who are a part of a proper moral community. But how and in what sense an individual person or group of persons can be held morally responsible is a question that needs proper analysis. Philosophers standardly talk about two fundamental conditions of moral responsibility. The origin of these two conditions lies in the works of Aristotle (Aristotle 2000), especially in the Book III of his magnum opus *Nicomachean Ethics*. The first is epistemic condition (also called knowledge, cognitive or mental condition) and the second control condition or freedom condition. The epistemic condition states that an action can be responsible only to the extent that its agent knows and is aware of what she is doing. The control condition suggests that a person can be morally responsible only for the things that are up to her. Let me explain why and how they are considered to be so crucial for our understanding of moral responsibility. The knowledge condition has to do with the agent's epistemic or cognitive state. It asks- whether the agent really knows what she does and what consequences it can have. It suggests that the agent concerned needs to be aware of the minimal implications of her action. The freedom condition asks whether the agent possessed adequate degree of control or freedom in performing the action. It asks- whether what the agent did was indeed under her control or not? If not, was she under some external pressure to do what she eventually did in her name? In simple the first condition asks "was the agent acting freely when she did A?" and the second condition prompts us to ask- "Was the agent aware of what she was doing and it's the implication of that doing?

Moral Responsibility and Environment

Now that we have a decent understanding of what moral responsibility is and what it is not, we need to inquire whether we could judiciously apply this concept to individual actions in the context of environmental pollution and global climate change. We started off our discussion by posing a problem before us– that is, the problem of attributing moral responsibility to unilateral actions which are considered to be causally inefficacious to the total effects of global climate change. As pointed out before, this is not just a theoretical problem but also a problem of our everyday moral life. It explains why most of us are so apathetic about environmental effects when it comes to our individual actions or omissions. It tells us the reason why our ordinary attitudinal states of environmentally relevant actions are not adequately motivated by our moral concerns. The root of this lies in the fact that there is a deep-seated belief that our individual actions can hardly make any difference in the larger scheme of things. Our individual actions or omissions are so miniscule in the face of colossal environmental concerns that they can hardy morally make any sense. Given this intuitive thought, one wonders

how are we to respond to this theoretically when it comes to explaining the moral depth of our environmentally unfriendly or insensitive actions? How do we locate moral status of unilateral individual actions so as to warrant a meaningful moral evaluation of recognizable form and contents?

One way of responding to this is to suggest that an environmentally unfriendly individual action or inaction taken singularly may not be morally blameworthy but when they are put in perspective in association with similar such acts, they will be substantially morally problematic. This means unilateral actions are amenable to moral evaluation only when they are taken in consonance with the similar acts or omissions by others. In point of fact, the total causal efficacy of several individual actions that are environmentally detrimental can explain why it is important to talk about the moral responsibility of environmentally insensitive individual actions. Take for instance, my being a part of the citizenry that has voted a monstrous autocratic individual to power. Here I am responsible for irresponsibly electing a dangerous person as my president of the country in consonance with many others like me who similarly voted for him without thinking much about the future of the country. In this case, my act is a joint collective act of choosing a wrong individual and thus I am responsible jointly with what others like me have done. My act of voting for a wrong person would not much sense, for I cannot alone vote and elect somebody. Similarly, my doing of environmentally unfriendly action may do not have a strong bearing on climate change. But when there are hundreds like me who do the same, there is definitely a tangible change in the world.

Let me explain this with the help of a problem called tragedy of the commons. The concept was originated in the work of a British economist called William Forster Lloyd. It was later reinterpreted and popularized by American biologist and philosopher Garrett Hardin.[8] The tragedy of the commons is a situation in a shared resource location where individual parties, acting unilaterally according to their own self-interest, behave contrary to the common good of all users by depleting the shared resource through the collective joint action. Take for instance, fishing in a waterbody which gives livelihood to, let's say, 100 people in a village. Suppose that there exits X number of fish and this X number produces YZ number of fish population every month. According to a calculation, in order to retain the existing population of fish for a longer period of time, there has to be a particular amount of fishing every month. This has been ascertained taking into account the birth, death and the time for the adulthood of the existing fish. On the basis of this count, let's say that no villager should catch more than 10 KG per month. So the total permissible amount of fishing cannot exceed more than 300 KG every month. Although this is normatively required, in reality every villager is tempted to catch as much fish as she can in order to make maximum profit. If we now allow everybody to do what he or she individually wants to, i.e., according to their temptation of catching many fish, we will end up committing a mistake which we will have

repercussion for everybody in the longer run. After a point we will all have to suffer because of our individual temptation. So the best thing for us to do, both collectively as well as individually, is to follow the prescription. One of the key features of the tragedy of the common is that it provides an opportunity for an individual to benefit himself or herself by spreading out the negative effects to the larger population. But in order to know how one should conduct the fishing act, first of all we need to know the calculation. We need to know how much fish that an average villager can actually catch, given that the stream contains a particular number of fish with the possibility of producing a particular amount of future fish. In the absence of such knowledge, the individual act of catching the maximum number of fish would appear to be quite innocuous, and also inconsequential. Without this knowledge, we would not be able to see why we ought to condemn the individual act of caching more than 15KG a month.

This explains why and how an apparently innocent action by an individual can actually inflict damage to the whole environment which is otherwise too big to be affected by it. This informs us about the significance of the epistemic condition that I have highlighted in the earlier section. An individual can be appropriately held morally accountable for doing something environmentally badly only when she has the accessibility to the relevant knowledge of the effects of her action. We can apportion blame on her only when the individual has a chance to know what his actions environmentally amounts to. To put it more perspicuously, our discussion of moral responsibility would make sense in the context of environment when the general people are made aware of what is happening at the global level.

Let's say, moral status of a poor farmer in a remote in an Indian village who is involved in an act of stubble burning. The poor illiterate farmer does not possibly know what he is doing and how dangerous it can become for the environment in the neighbouring states. As a farmer he is only concerned about his work and his poor malnourished family. He does not know what the science suggests because he is socially conditioned. In a situation like this, does it make sense to talk about the moral culpability of his apparently innocuous act of stubble burning? Definitely not. The knowledge of science is never at the disposal of any individual person. No individual can be said to have the capacity of knowing the relevant scientific facts about environmental pollution. This has to come from a community of people who has the authority over such fields. The responsibility of an individual is thus conditioned upon what a community knows of. It depends on how such a community generates and disseminates such knowledge to ordinary citizens. An individual must be given ample opportunity to come to know about the scientific facts about environment such as the effects of greenhouse gas emission, melting of icebergs in different parts of the worlds, ever-increasing deforesting in every nook and corner of the earth and the like. Without such an opportunity of knowledge there is no way we could talk about the moral responsibility of an individual

act of environmental degradation. So, what an individual should or should not do from the environment point of view is closely linked to what the collectives do or do not in relation to the community of which they are a part.

Responsibility and Feasible substitutes

So far I have tried to apply the knowledge or epistemic condition in our understanding of moral responsibility for unilateral actions in environmental context. Let us now turn our eyes to the other important condition mentioned earlier- the control condition. Control condition or freedom condition basically means having free will to do what one wants to do. This is an important condition and it is dominantly present in the discourse of law as well. It suggests that you cannot hold someone morally accountable for something if the person concerned did not have any control over what she was doing. In this paper, however, I will try to interpret this not merely as freedom or having control over one's action, but rather as having a feasible substitute to do otherwise. I suggest that moral responsibility for environmental problems can be justifiably apportioned to an individual only in the presence of alternative option to her. Let me try to explain this with the help of an example.

Take for instance, a poor single woman who lives with two of her specially-abled kids regularly dumps her garbage on her neighbourhood street. This is not a morally acceptable action by a citizen. For her a more environmentally friendly action would be to go to the nearest recycling station and dumps the thrash which will be later taken away by the municipality people. Suppose further the station is located in a faraway place. This means if she has to perform that environmentally friendly action, she will have to bear extra burden both in terms money and time. She will have to buy bus tickets to go to the station everyday, and hire a babysitter to look after her specially-abled kids. Now, given these conditions attached to her life, probably it would not be too unreasonable to suggest that her regular environmentally unfriendly action is far more reasonable and permissible compared to that standard environmentally friendly ethical action. Given her situation, she then does not have the obligation to do the environmentally required to do. So, how do we then evaluate her moral status?

I suggest that her moral responsibility of doing the environmental damage will make sense only when there is a feasible substitute for her do otherwise. This clause of feasible substitute basically means that there has to have an option for us to do otherwise. According to this, an individual can be blameworthy for the acts of contributing to the environmental problems only when there is an environmentally friendly substitute available to her. That means if there is a feasible substitute to act in a more environmentally friendly way then we can normatively suggest that the individual ought to go for that instead of going for the shorter path. This is mainly because when there are alternatives such as, a well-organized recycling system, public transport, and bicycle

opportunities then it is justifiable to demand what one should be doing in a given situation. Similarly if someone is well-off to bear the financial burden, it is morally reasonable for her to go and buy foods that are climate-friendly. But if an individual is poor and cannot afford to meet up the expenses of climate smart food or environmentally friendly actions then it is relatively unfair to hold her morally responsible for doing what she does.

This feasible substitute can be theoretically thought of something akin to what the principle of alternative possibility suggests. This principle was first articulated by Harry Frankfurt in a seminal paper called *Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility*, published in 1969.[9] According to this principle, a person is morally responsible for what she has done only if she could have done otherwise. Suppose you are going to confront some moral sanctions after apparently doing something wrong to somebody in a peculiar situation. Now, in an effort of rescue yourself, you start saying, "I had no choice", "I couldn't have done otherwise", "It was inevitable" and so on. In such a situation the moral sanctions will not be attributed to you because there was no reasonable alternative for you to have done otherwise. You were forced to do what you did, as it were. You were simple not free to do the morally blameworthy action. So, there is no way we could hold you morally responsible in a legitimate way. The principle thus suggests that moral responsibility must presuppose of there being at least one better alternative which the agent could have done but did not choose do and thus it makes sense to talk about her culpability. I think the case of the individual moral responsibility for environment changes is also no different. An agent can be held morally sensibly responsible for doing such a damage only in a situation when the agent can be believed to have some sort of freedom to do otherwise. If despite there being this alternative, she chose to what she eventually did, then she must be responsible for the action.

Besides, in judging the moral status of an individual in the context of environment we need to take note of the fact that every individual is different, and they exist in different socio-economic, political, and cultural situations. We need to note that there are structural and societal features that prevent many from acting in an environmentally friendly way. Thus, the answer cannot be that all individuals are responsible, or no individual are ever responsible. As discussed earlier, an individual needs to be excused from moral blameworthiness if she did not act voluntarily—or if she had acted under compulsion.

This is where perhaps we need to put focus on the role of the collectives in which we are a part. By collectives, I mean governments, corporations, international organizations, and the like.[10]

The clause of feasible substitute can be made sense of only when we have well-functioning collective entities in place. When these entities perform their duties in

a desired way, there is greater chance of there being alternative possibilities for people.[11] It is the forward-looking responsibility of these entities which ensure what we are morally required to do in the context of the environment. This means an individual's backward-looking sense of moral responsibility is intimately connected to collectives' forward-looking sense of moral responsibility. Collectives have always the power to make things easier and less expensive for individual citizens or customers to choose the environmentally friendly option (for instance, subsidizing organic food while taxing non-organic foods, constructing easily accessible recycling stations, constructing new lanes for bicycles, taxing those who violate environmental norms and so on). They can provide information which is easily accessible to private people. In point of fact, they have the obligation to make things easier for individuals to assume forward-looking responsibility. So, I suggest that the greater the extent to which these actors perform their duties, larger the scope of attributing moral responsibility to individual actors. The greater the extent to which institutional agents take their forward-looking responsibility, larger the extent to which it is reasonable to ascribe both backward-looking and forward-looking responsibility to individuals.

However, it would be too weak a suggestion if I say that individual moral responsibility is entirely a matter of derivation from group or collective responsibility in the context of environment. Individuals do have their own share of burden to act in environmentally friendly ways even if the collectives fail to do their desired duties. As a citizen, as a customer or as a concerned human person, everyone has obligation to do what they know and what they can within their capacity. Nevertheless, I would insist that given the our moral world is interconnectedly arranged, it would be too harsh to put the entire moral load on individuals alone. We need to make the collective entities work for the betterment of the environmentand the climate so that the individuals living in those collectives can have meaningful ways of shouldering their individual and interpersonal moral burdens.

Conclusion

Moral responsibility is a complex issue. Whether we talk about it in the context of individuals or collectives, it does not have an easy justification. In this paper, I have investigated and accordingly addressed the problem of attributing moral responsibility to individuals for their discrete environment unfriendly actions or omissions. I suggested that the practice of apportioning moral responsibility to unilateral actions of individuals or the concept of individual responsibility which makes this practice feasible, would become morally sensible provided that the individuals concerned have opportunities to do things in a environmentally sensitive society. To the extent that groups or collectives are held accountable for providing the basic infrastructure and opportunities for individual citizens to do things in an environmentally friendly way, they can and should

be held morally responsible in a full blooded sense. Having said, this does not,however, mean that there is no other way in which individual persons can be held responsible in the absence of group moral responsibility. On many occasions, we can justifiably talk about the moral responsibility of individuals for environmental harms without really referring to any group obligations. The point this paper has tried to make is that the presence of group moral obligation in certain areas gives us a robust rationale for justifying full-blooded moral responsibility of individuals. If there was any loose end for individuals to make excuses from shouldering moral burdens, the discharge of moral obligation by groups and collectives in that area of activities will automatically block such a possibility. This will be done by the groups by providing relevant feasible substitutes for individuals to do things in an environmentally friendly way as opposed to environmental unfriendly way.

Notes

[1] A similar suggestion is also made by Fahlquest (2009) and others to morally make sense of the actions of the individuals in the context of environment. Fahlquist's main concern is to deal with the appropriateness of the target of our blame. However, in this paper my aim is not just limited to the appropriateness of the target of our blame but also extendable to those cases where individuals tend to make excuse of doing the wrongful actions in the absence a substitute. Besides, my suggestion with regard to the clause is being couched in the language of Harry Frankfurt's articulation of the principle of alternative possibility.

[2] Sinnott-Armstrong's rejection is not related to any belief about the uncertainty about the phenomenon climate change. Rather it is about, according to him, the absence of the ground of a defensible moral principle.

[3] For a more informed discussion on moral responsibility see Fischer and Ravizza (1993), Fisher (1994), Talbert (1919).

[4] See Williams's entry on Responsibility in the Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy.

[5] For a discussion on attributability and accountability see Shoemaker (2011).

[6] See Richardson Goodin (1968), Talbert (2019) and others.

[7] See Strawson (1962).

[8] See Hardin (1968).

[9] The principle of alternative possibilities forms a part of an argument for the incompatibility of responsibility and causal determinism. Frankfurt (196) gives a set of counterexamples to this principle which show that an agent is morally responsible for an action even if the person concerned could not have done otherwise. The cases Frankfurt uses for falsifying the principle of alternative possibilities are now known as Frankfurt-style cases.

[10] For a more informed discussion on moral responsibility of collective see May and Hoffman (1991), Isaacs (2011), Graham (2001), and Neog (2019).

[11] See Jamieson (2001).

References

- Aristotle, (2000) *Nicomachean Ethics*, Translated by Roger Crisp, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fahlquist, J. N., (2009) "Moral Responsibility for Environmental Problems- Individual or Institutional?," *Journal of Agriculture and Environmental Ethics*, 22: 109-124.
- Fischer, J. M., (1994) *The Metaphysics of Free Will: An Essay on Control*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Frankfurt, H. G., (1969) "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 66(23): 829–839.
- Graham, K. (2001), "The Moral Significance of Collective Entities," *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, 44 (1): 21-41.
- Hardin, G., (1968) "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science*, 162: 1243–48.
- Isaacs, T. (2011) *Moral Responsibility in Collective Contexts*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jamieson, D., (2001) *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, Oxford: Blackwell 2001.
- May, L. and Stacy Hoffman (eds.), (1991) *Collective Responsibility: Five Decades of Debate in Theoretical and Applied Ethics*, Savage, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Neog, B., (2019) "Metaphysics of Group Moral Responsibility," *Journal of Human Values*, 26: 238-247.
- Ricoeur, P., (1992) "The Concept of Responsibility: An Essay in Semantic Analysis," in his *The Just*, trans David Pellauer, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Strawson, P., (1962) "Freedom and resentment," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 48, 1-25, reprinted in his *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays*, London: Methuen, 1974.
- Sinnott-Armstrong, W., (2005) "It's not my fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Oobligations", In W. Sinnott-Armstrong & R. B. Howarth (Eds.), *Perspectives on Climate Change: Science, Economics, Politics, Ethics*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Goodin, R. E., (1986) "Responsibilities," *Philosophical Quarterly*, 36: 50-56.
- Talbert, M. (2019) Moral Responsibility," in E.N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Link: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-responsibility/ (accessed on 12/03/2022/.
- Shoemaker, D., (2011) "Attributability, Answerability, and Accountability: Toward a Wider Theory of Moral Responsibility", *Ethics*, 121(3): 602–632.
- Fischer, J.M. and M. Ravizz (1993) *Perspectives on Moral Responsibility*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

- Williams, G., (Web-based) "Responsibility," *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Accessed- on 02/03/2022/
- Robb, D. (2020) "Moral Responsibility and the Principle of Alternative Possibilities," in Edward N. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. URL= <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/alternative-possibilities/>
- Talbert, M. (2019) "Moral Responisbility," in Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman (eds.) *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. URL=<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/moral-responsibility/>

Ravenshaw Journal of Philosophy, Vol. VIII
November 2022 37-47
ISSN: 2395-3209

Language, Meaning and Truth: A Study of Suvarchalā-Shvetaketu Saṁbād in the *Mahābhārata*

Anirban Bhattacharjee
Assistant Professor of English at Santipur College, University of Kalyani, India

Abstract:

The article attempts to understand and explore if/how linguistic communication depends on and consists in the mutual transmission of the 'intended purports' of the speaker and the hearer. It analyses along Bhartṛhari's notion of *sphota* that, in the communication process, it operates through a two-fold structure: the external aspect is the sound or the written word perceived by sense-organs, but it serves only to manifest the *sphota*'s inner aspect which resides in all being. Neither contact, containment or inherence (*samavāya*), nor causation is the alleged relation between word and meaning but some kind of an identity-in-difference is the relation asserted by Bhartṛhari's school of thought. In contrast to Bhartṛhari's, Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* speaks of a non-subjective orientation for sentencing. In Wittgenstein's rationale, the word derives its meaning in its use, only as a result of the 'rule' of the 'game' being played. In Bhartṛhari, the conceptualization of the 'real' does not exist independently of the real itself. Addressing these ontological problems concerning 'meaning', the article gets further into the verbal-battle between Suvarchala and Shvetaketu in the *Mahābhārata* text, thereby delving deep into question of the semantic programming of language, the problem of understanding and the nature of reality.

Keywords: *Sphota*, Self, Conventionalism, *Vākya*, *Rasa*, Meaning, Language-game

Introduction

The 'Word' is not revealed to everyone. The *Ṛg Veda* 10.71.4 says: *uta tvaḥ paśyan na dadarśa vācam uta tvaḥ śṛṇvan na śṛṇoty enām | uto tvasmai tanvaṃ vi sasre jāyeva patya uśatī suvāsāḥ.*[1] One who looked did not see the word. One who listened did

not hear it. The uninitiated has no access to it. Only to some *Vāk* reveals her true form as a fond well-dressed woman 'reveals' herself to her beloved husband. In the *Ṛg Veda*, *vāk* is conceived as the 'active power of the Brahman'[2]. It is identified with Him and is personified as a 'productive principle'[3]. *Vāk* is described as Parajapati's 'other self' in the matter of creating the universe: *Through me alone all eat the food that feeds them, each man who sees, brews, hears the word outspoken... I make the man I love exceeding mighty, make him a sage, a Rishi, and a Brāhman.* In the *Aitereya Brāhmaṇa* (10.1),*vāk* emanated from Prajapati while he was performing sacrifice and it was through *vāk* that Prajapati created all beings.[4]In the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* 6.1.9 the primeval waters are considered to have been created out of *Vāk*by *Prajapati*: "By his Mind (*manas*) he entered into union with Speech (*vāk*): he became pregnant. He created the All-gods: he placed them in the quarters".[5] In the *Upaniṣads* we find the identification of*vāk* and *Prajñā* with the phenomenal world. All speech/utterance is held together by *Aum* just as all leaves are held together by one leaf-stalk and *Aum* is the world-all. The *Maitri Upanishad* 6.4.3 states: "There are assuredly two forms of *Brahman*, the formed and the formless...he divided himself threefold [for *aum* consists of three letters]. By means of all this [world] is woven, warp and woof, across him."[6]

The most pertinent question that arises here is that are words anyway 'related' to their 'meanings'? Bhartṛihari (7th Century AD), the most famous Sanskrit grammarian-philosopher, belonging to Panini's line, stated in his famous *Vākyapadiya* 3.3.32—*shabdahkāranamarthasyasahitenopajayate*—"A word is the cause of its meaning; though the word itself is caused by the meant entity. Thus, the word is cognized due to the meant entity when later becomes an object of intellect".[7]Bimal Krishna Matilal in a dense critical article titled "The Word and the World: India's Contribution to the Study of Language" explicates that for Bhartṛhari, the *vāk-artha* duality is more a fiction than reality. It is *vikalpa*, a convenient fiction, but it lacks the ultimate truth-value."Thus it is that Bhartṛhari's holistic doctrine of language, of which the identity of *vācaka* and the *vācya* is also a part, requires us to give up the search for any independent "transcendent" meaning as the transnational constant, as the invariant in variable languages, and yet the same view allows that there could be situational meaning or *vācya* that would be correlated with different linguistic expressions or *vācakas* which would be deemed as intelligibly equivalent".[8]In his article "Awareness and Meaning in Navya-Nyāya"[9], Matilal explicates the propositional or qualificative awareness in the production of meaning. He underlines two fundamental principles, both interacting with each other, in producing the verbal knowledge derived from linguistic utterance:

a) Whenever an object *x* figures or floats (*abagāhate*) in my awareness, it figures there as something, i.e., under some guise or mode, distinguished in some way or other.

b) A precondition for having a clear and distinct, i.e., qualificative, awareness of the above kind is a further awareness of the qualifier or distinguishing element (*viśeṣana*).

The word 'pen', even when it is in a referential position in an expression, would not present the object directly—it would present the particular as qualified by the purported property, 'penhood'. For Matilal, the "purported property"is the qualifier, and the object *x* is the qualificand. Arindam Chakraborty has dealt with the problematic in his article "The 'glory' and impenetrability of the Peacock egg: Eternalism versus Conventionalism about the Word-Meaning Relationship" (2004) and has referred to Helaraja (10th Century AD), the most important commentator on Bhartṛhari, who had illustrated that linguistic communication depends on and consists in the mutual transmission of the intended purports of the speaker and the hearer. Chakraborty explains: "The mental meaning (*antahsthitamartham*) leaves its original form in which it is buried in the intellect of the speaker. The word carries it over and offers it to the hearer. The hearer, according to his own personal predilections, grasps the content as carved-up by the word-concepts."[10] Meanings then get identified with purports. Speaker's meaning-in-the intellect-utterance of word-sound-awareness is the hearer-grasped meaning in the hearer's intellect. What emerges here, as Chakraborty explains, although somewhat unclear and highly contestable, is that neither contact, containment or inherence (*samavāya*), nor causation is the alleged relation between word and meaning but some kind of an identity-in-difference or isomorphism verging on sameness is the relation asserted by Bhartṛhari's school of thought.[11]The debate surrounding the naturalness of sound-meaning connectivity or the complex compositionality of the linguistic system finds finest expression in Plato's dialogue, *Cratylus*. In *Cratylus*, Socrates' two primary interlocutors, Hermogenes and Cratylus represent two diametrically opposed perspectives on the question of "the correctness of names": whether they are natural or if they are found by convention; in other words, is language taught or grown?[12]The positions of Hermogenes and Cratylus have later come to be understood as 'conventionalism' and 'naturalism' respectively. An extreme linguistic conventionalist like Hermogenes holds that nothing but local or national convention determines which words are used to designate which objects. Cratylus, on the other hand, argues that names cannot be arbitrarily chosen in the way that conventionalism describes or advocates, because names belong *naturally* to their specific objects. In the Platonic oral formulaic technique, Socrates appears to examine both points of view in order to dis-cover the 'truth' inherent but it is established several times that he himself has not unlocked any doors. In fact at one point he concedes, "Indeed I believe that I myself did not know what I meant" (393b, 401e), and finally as the debate reaches its culmination he instructs Cratylus, "And when you have found the truth, come and tell me" (474d).[13]

Again, as we refer back to the concept of Bhartṛhari's *sphota*, a technical term he uses in *Vākyapadiya*, it talks of an internal entity (*antara*) that partakes of the nature of both word and its import (*sabdarthamayam*), indexing an anti-externalist and anti-empiricist framework of semantics in the Vedic hermeneutics that allow for an autonomous concept of 'meaning'. *Sphota* is an indivisible and changeless entity. In the communication process, however, it operates through a two-fold structure: the external aspect is the sound or the written word, which is perceived by sense-organs, but it serves only to manifest the *sphota*'s inner aspect—the inner aspect is the expressive word-meaning which resides in all being. More interestingly, for Bhartṛhari, the outside reality with which 'sphota' or the word-in-the-intellect is connected is not object, nor state of affairs, but *action*. Utterance is, in a certain way, performative coupled with pragmatism and coherence. Intuition, necessary for meaningful use of a word, invariably goes to produce a surplus. As Bhartṛhari has (logically) put, words are useful fictions; but they are fictions. Any fictitious entity cannot be related to objects which are empirically 'real'.[14] Addressing this ontological problem concerning 'meaning', I would now straightly move into the fascinating verbal-battle in the *Mahābhārata* text between Suvarchala, the daughter of Maharsi Devala and Shvetaketu, the son of the famous sage and teacher, Aruni Uddalaka on the question of the semantic programming of language, and more particularly on the problem of understanding and the nature of reality.

The story of Suvarchala unfolded in response to the question Yudhisthira put to the dying Bhisma during their long dialogue in the *Śanti-Parva* of the *Mahābhārata* that dealt, or to put more accurately, dabbled with some puzzling questions relating to the 'human condition'. Suvarchala was the daughter of the sage Devala, famous for his learning. Endowed with every happy attribute and the most alluring and faultless features of an unrivalled beauty, "she was neither too tall nor too short, neither fat nor too slim".[15] When she came of age, her father asked her what kind of man she would want for a husband. Suvarchala gave a tricky, dicey reply: 'Give me in marriage to a man who is blind and also not blind. Please keep in mind this wish of mine'. 'What crazy talk is this? This wish of yours is never going to be fulfilled; for such a man, who is both blind and not-blind is non-existent. I feel sad that you should say such a mad thing', the father replied. 'I am not mad. What I said was after much thought', Suvarchala said to her father.[16]

Suvarchala articulated her wish through metaphors; his father, being a scholar, literal-minded, took it literally, and completely missed what she really meant. Devala still dismissed what Suvarchala had said as a young woman's, particularly a daughter's, occasional crazy talk. But as the occasion demanded, Devala communicated to the eligible young Brahmanas far and wide that his daughter was now ready for marriage and would make her choice from among them. On the appointed day, several young

Brahmanas gathered at Devala's house, and he received them with great respect. The dazzling Suvarchala appeared, greeted the gathering most respectfully and said: "Should there be among you one who is blind and also not blind, I will take him as my husband".[17] The gathering, though greatly struck by her voluptuous figure, immediately broke up. The suitors thought her announcement was some kind of joke. They felt insulted and left, angry, but without saying a word to Devala, who felt highly embarrassed by what he thought was his daughter's mad behavior. But he did not say anything to her.

A few days thereafter, a young man, Shvetaketu by name, who had heard of the ideal man Suvarchala was seeking—'one who was blind and also not blind'—appeared at her doorstep. He was the son of the famous sage and teacher Aruni Uddalaka. Receiving him with all the ceremonies attached to the expression called *shraddhā*, Devala introduced Shvetaketu to Suvarchala in words of highest praise andsuggested that she would take him as her husband for, he thought, there could be no better match for her. Suvarchala looked at him somewhat skeptically, for she did not want to be disappointed again, if he too were to interpret her 'literally' and dismiss her talk as simply mad. Interpreting that look of hers rightly, Shvetaketu said to Suvarchala: "That I am blind, of that there is no doubt; that I am not blind, of that there is no doubt either. I am, thus, both blind and not blind. I am the man you are looking for. I have come for you."[18] And he explained himself further: "Since I am endowed with that which at all times enables one to see, hear, touch, smell, speak, taste, think, and reflect on the true substance of things, and constitutes in a true sense the 'eyes', I am not blind. But, excepting functionally, since I do not relate with the world that is sensed, seen, heard, touched, smelt, tasted, reflected upon, I am in that sense blind. Accept me".[19]

Since no living being cannot not-be-related to the world that is sensed and yet live, Shvetaketu, though saying it in figurative terms, dragged in a deeper problematic by adding the following: "It is only with a view to preserving *loka-saṁgraha*, the functional order of human life, I do the customary daily things of life; but I do not get involved in them, for I know what the *Self*, the *Ātman* is!"[20]

Indeed Shvetaketu's answer, just before the sacred ceremony of his marriage with Suvarchala, their *śāstrik* entry into the householder's stage, *gṛhāśram*, actually insinuates an epistemic tension as far as the Brahmanic hermeneutic is concerned. It teases out the most disturbing and disruptive question: can the married householder, a man-of-the-world, though getting entangled in the daily acts of life-in-family rise to a highly evolved state of being and attain *moksha*? Again, the act of 'seeing' as a certain form of 'cognition' is linked with the linguistic, the code and construction of reality. It is through Shvetaketu's non-related relation to the 'half-perceived' world, the exterior envelope, space and content merge in their coming-into-being through visible. This actually led Suvarchala, fascinated by Svetaketu's logical reasoning and also frustrated

by her own apprehension of getting involved in ordinary conflicts of life-in-family, move her conversation onto the seemingly pressing and complex question on the discursive nature of reality, asking: "What is word? And what is meaning? If there is meaning only when there is word, then what kind of relation exists between the two, if it does?"[21] In reply, Shvetaketu offered a long discourse on the essential instability of linguistic communication and the consequent perceptual multiplicities. For him, meaning slips and slides on word, "it is like that of water on a lotus leaf".[22] He further explained: "Just as the physical world cannot exist except in *ākāśa*, space, and there is no fixed permanent relation between the two, the same is the case with word and meaning."[23] Then, by contradicting himself, he proposed: "The relation between word and meaning is that of speech (*vāk*), and this relation is undoubtedly permanent. If there is a word, there has to be meaning in it, even if, as in some cases, the letters are arranged in reverse order and pronounced that way."[24]

In the rest of this paper I'll try to make sense of this absurd sounding claim that a word means what it does due to an inherent, intrinsic, eternal and necessary relationship. It is well to remember that Aristotle once glossed on his own remark in *De Interpretatione* (16a.20-28) that a name is a spoken sound which is meaningful by 'convention'. Aristotle defines words as symbols of "affections of the soul"[25] or psychic experiences. Aristotle has put it quite succinctly: "I say 'by convention' because no name is a name naturally but only when it has become a symbol. Even inarticulate noises (of beasts, for instance) do indeed reveal something, yet none of them is a name."[26]In *Cratylus*, as we remember, Socrates holds that there is a twofold criteria for names: they must be structurally similar to the referents in its constitution and must be externally agreed upon by convention.[27] Although the majority of the dialogue is focused on ascertaining a more natural understanding of the correctness of names, the ending, however, shifts toward exploring the relationship of names and knowledge. In contrast, Bhartṛhari's *sphotavāda* or *akandapaksha* gives primacy to *vākya* (sentence), which defines *sphota* as something beyond time, or rather is not sequenced in time, though it explodes as an expression or comprehension in time—"words along with their sounds come in succession and meaning is also comprehended in successive phases".[28] *Vākyapadiya*, 1/75 states: *Sphota* transforms itself into multiplicity, though it is *one*. Sphotavādins foreground that what the speaker utters and the listener hears is the sentence-as-a-whole, the *vākya-sphota;* the division of the sentence into words and the words into phonemes have no absolute reality, but are abstracted from the sentence in understanding the utterance.[29] This theory of indivisible speech-potential—the word, the awareness and the object three-in-one combination—can be understood along the lines of Arindam Chakravarty's logical explanation:

1. If *a* and *b* are distinct, it must be possible to cognize *a* independently of cognizing *b*.

2. It is not possible to cognize an object without cognizing the word for it (because the question 'what is that' is answered by putting forward the word for it)

3. Therefore, the word and the object are not distinct.[30]

Again as his first principle, Bhartṛhari rejects a doctrine on which the 'realism' of *Mīmāmsā* and *Nyāya* had been built—the view that there is a kind of perception that is non-conceptualized and that places persons in direct contact with things as they are. For Bhartṛhari this is not possible, for all knowledge is "penetrated" and thereby "illuminated" by words alone.[31] Knowledge is essentially linguistic; and the distinctions of objects are traceable and tractable through differences among words. In Bhartṛhari's formulation, that word as meaning-bearer has to be regarded as having no spatial or temporal dimension. It is indivisible, eternal and changeless. Distinguished from the *sphota* are the abstract sound-pattern (*prakritadhvani)* and the utterances (*vikritadhvani)*. In other words, Bhartṛhari held that the sentence is not a collection of words or an ordered series of them; rather, he defined, a word is an abstraction from a sentence, implying that the sentence-*sphota* is the primary unit of meaning. The meaning of a word is 'grasped' (as implied in the German word 'begriffe') as a unity by a rational, logical instant flash of insight (*pratibhā*). Bhartṛhari's theory of *sphota* which offers interesting analysis on the lexical and conceptual semantics and the nature of cognition as well was employed by the later grammarians to support their theory of *word-monism.*

Maṇdana Miśra (8th century AD), in his *Vidhiviveka*, referred to three varieties of this monism: *shabdadhyāsavada* or the doctrine of superimposition on the word; *shabdaparinamavada* or the doctrine of transformation of the word, and *shabdavivartavada* or the doctrine of unreal appearance of the word.[32] According to the first two, the phenomenal world is still real, though either falsely superimposed on words or a genuine transformation of the word-essence. The last, and perhaps most consistent, doctrine holds that the phenomenal differences are nothing but the unreal *appearances* of an immutable word-essence. Maṇdana basically attempted to integrate this linguistic philosophy with his own theory of *advaitism*, though later followers of Śankara did not accept the doctrine of *sphota*. Even Vācaspati Miśra (10th century AD) who, though conformed to many of Maṇdana's philosophical exegesis, rejected the theory of *sphota* and subscribed to the Śankarite's acceptance of the *Bhatta* epistemology. The *Navya-Nyāya* philosophers, however, explained the experience of common man's perception of a whole sentence (*purnovakya*) in terms of *jnana-lakshana-snnikarṣa*,[33] implying that when one hears the sounds as successively uttered, s/he remembers them in their order; this memory of the earlier sounds functions as a *sannikarṣa*, which together with the hearing of the final phoneme, produces the perception of the whole sentence.

In contrast to Bhartṛhari's, as we straddle along a circuitous route, Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) speaks of a non-subjective orientation for sentencing. Wittgenstein has explained that sentences would not stay shackled under speaker's illocutionary Ego, rather they would seek to free meaning from the web of personal desire. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* addresses the central problems of philosophy which deal with the world, thought and language, and presents a "solution" (as Wittgenstein terms it) of these problems which is grounded in logic and in the nature of representation. The world is represented by thought, which is a proposition with sense, since all of them—world, thought, and proposition—share the same logical form. Hence, the thought and the proposition can be 'pictures of the facts'.[34] Further explaining that "Only the proposition has sense; only in the context of a proposition has a name meaning" (TLP 3.3), he provides the reader with the two conditions for 'sensical' language: first, the structure of the proposition must conform to/with the constraints of logical form, and second, the elements of the proposition must have the reference (*bedeutung*).[35] In Wittgenstein's scheme, context or form of life is the semantic principle of individuation. Language is what it does and can do. Therefore, what a language can possibly do has to be gathered from what it actually does. When one speaks of possible uses of language it is to be understood/grasped within the appropriate context of the concerned uses of the language in question itself. Whereas Wittgenstein's rationale clearly refutes the role of the mental/psychic/inner/interior (*antara*) in the word-meaning fold, in Bhartṛhari the conceptualization of the 'real' does not exist independently of the real itself.

Going back to the *Mahābhārata* 10 episode is now a spree for free-play and steeping deeper into the epistemic knots. The Suvarchala discourse finally pokes up a troubling epistemological puzzle alluding to a *Śruti* text: "The word 'Aham' is always used to refer to the Self, the *Ātman*. At the same time, the Upaniṣads had concluded and pronounced that 'language cannot describe the *ātman*, for it has no reach there'. In that case, to use the word 'Aham' for 'Self' would be false and meaningless".[36]Expanding a little more on that, and going beyond the first enquiry Suvarchala had brought up—the relation between word and meaning, whether it is permanent and invariable or variable—Shvetaketu was now talking mainly of how language is incapable of comprehending and describing the ultimate reality, and yet, because the ultimate reality, the *Brahmaṇ* or the *paramātman*, the Greater Self, inheres in language as well, language must in some essential way appear related to it even though it is not. In *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.3.6*, there is the teaching: *athāto ādeśo neti neti na hyetasmaditi na iti anyat parama asti* (the *Brahmaṇ* is the negative of everything that is positively known).[37] The debate that insinuates the crippling contradiction, that language can 'say' nothing meaningful about the Ultimate reality, and yet this is 'said' in words, in language, leads one to re-think the construction of the *Brahmaṇ* as *āsvādya*, 'tastable', *rasa*, it is the

charmed trap. Suvarchala, however, quickly sensed the innate meaninglessness of saying what cannot be said without contradicting what is said at the very moment of saying it.

Wittgenstein's *spiel*, as language-game, the complex weaving, designing and textiling of the verbal, operates and moves through an apprehension of the drama-content, the *rasa*, giving access to the *yathārtha* 'real'—invoked in the 'yathārthamjnānam' definition of *pramā*—something neutral between knowledge-of-truth and apprehension of *rasa*.[38] Both Wittgenstein and Bhartṛhari use varying reality-criteria, which add up. Young Wittgenstein's criterion stresses truth which always carries its tolls of erasure. Latter Wittgenstein's seeks the complete *rasa* of actual action, i.e.,—"what cannot be appropriately said in a visualizable context cannot signify at all". Wittgenstein's rationale disavows the specific role of the *interior* in the word-meaning fold, the word, for him, derives its meaning 'in its use', only as a result of the 'rule' of the 'game' being played. Bhartṛhari counters the principles of compositionality in the determination of 'meaning' and proposes that the conceptualization of the 'real' does not exist independently of the real itself. An inquiry into the nature of the Self, as the *Mahābhārata* episode textually explores though being in a double-bind, is then like constant disrobing of something that is dressed-up; and the 'dress' is intrinsic to the very structure, that is, the bare body itself. The subject is always already entrapped, only corroborating with what is programmed. This discursive foreclosure foregrounds a vitally important question: does the subject chained within a phenomenologically determined structure only end up in dis-covering the very 'constructedness' and 'contingency' of the 'already-given'? This needs further speculation, and perhaps a strategic silence. Wittgenstein concluded his profoundest inquiry into language and meaning with a rather elegant and stirring proposition: 'whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent'.[39]

Notes and References

1 *Rg Veda* Query (in Sanskrit & English), http://meluhha.com/newrv/verse.pl?v=1.72.2&q=sarv&acc=no(=ved&stratum=all&show=yes

2 *Rg Veda* X-125, Quoted in *The Vākyapadiya*, Vol. 1, Translated by K. Raghavan Pillai, Motilal Vanarsidass, Delhi, 1971, pp.xi-xii.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid. *Aitareya Brāhmanam* (in Sanskrit), Maharishi University of Management, Vedic Litearture Collection, Translated by A. B. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, Matilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 2007

[5] The *Śatapatha-Brāhmana*, Translated by Julius Eggeling, Book 5,6 & 7, The Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XLI, Ed. by F. Max Muller, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1894, p.150-2.

[6] *Maitri Upaniṣad 6.4.3*, S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanisads*, Harper Collins publishers, India, 1998, p. 817.

[7] See for a detailed discussion: Arindam Chakravarty, "The 'glory' and impenetrability of the Peacock egg: Eternalism versus Conventionalism about the Word-Meaning Relationship", *Word and Sentence: Two Perspectives, Bhartṛhari and Wittgenstein*, Edited by Sibajiban Bhattacharyya, Sahitya Akademy, 2004, pp.45-54.

[8] Bimal Krishna Matilal, "The Word and the World: India's Contribution to the Study of Language", Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. vi-xxii.

[9] Bimal Krishna Matilal, "Awareness and Meaning in Navya-Nāyaya", in *Mind, Language and World: Philosophy, Culture and Religion*, Janardan Ganeri (ed.), New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 114-115.

[10] Arindam Chakravarty, "The 'glory' and impenetrability of the Peacock egg: Eternalism versus Conventionalism about the Word-Meaning Relationship", *Word and Sentence: Two Perspectives, Bhartṛhari and Wittgenstein*, Edited by Sibajiban Bhattacharyya, Sahitya Akademy, 2004, pp.45-54.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Plato, *Cratylus*, Tr. By C. D. C. Reeve, Cambridge/Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1998.

[13] Jeffrey Tinnin, "The Importance of Language in Plato's *Cratylus*", *Anthós* (1990-1996): Vol. 1 : No. 3, 1992, pp. 23-28.

[14] See for a detailed critical reading: K.A. Subrahmania Iyer, *Bhartṛihari: A Study of the Vākyapadiya in the light of the Ancient Commentaries*, Pune, Deccan College, 1969.

[15] All *Mahābhārata* references are to the Gorkhpur Edition of the *Mahābhārata* (Henceforth *MBh*) where none of the verses of the *Shanti-Parva* are numbered. *The Mahābhārata*, Vol.5. *Shanti-Parva*, Ch 220, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, India, p. 4988.

[16] Ibid. P.4990.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid. P. 4992.

[19] Ibid. P. 4993.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] See: Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, First Midland Book Edition, Association of American University Presses, 1994, p.113.

[26] See: Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, A New Aristotle Reader, Edited by J.L. Ackrill, Princeton University Press, 1989, pp.12-13.

[27] Rachel Barney, *Names and Nature in Plato's Cratylus*, Studies in Philosophy, London: Routledge, 2001, P. 130; Ronald Levinson, "Language, Plato, and Logic", *The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter*, January 1, 1955: 3.

[28] See: *The Vākyapadiya*, Vol. I, Translated by K. RaghavanPillai, MotilalVanarsidass, Delhi, 1971.

[29] Ibid, "Introduction", pp.xi-xxi.

[30] This argument that cryptically borrows major premises from Buddhistic logic has been provided by Arindam Chakravarty in his afore-mentioned article to understand if the word anyway 'inheres' meaning. See: Arindam Chakravarty, 'The 'glory' and impenetrability of the Peacock egg: Eternalism versus Conventionalism about the Word-Meaning Relationship', *Word and Sentence: Two Perspectives, Bhartṛhari and Wittgenstein*, Edited by Sibajiban Bhattacharyya, Sahitya Akademy, p. 53.

[31] Ibid.

[32] See: *Vidhiviveka of Śrī Mandana Miśra: with the commentary Nyāyakaṇikā of Vāchaspati Miśra*, Volume 8 of *Prāchyabhārtī* series, Edited by Mahaprabhu Lal Goswami, Tara Publications, 1978.

[33] Sibajiban Bhattacharyya has dealt with this idea in his essay, "Word and Sentence: Wittgenstein, Bhartṛihari and Jagadisa", *Word and Sentence: Two Perspectives, Bhartṛihari and Wittgenstein*, Edited by Sibajiban Bhattacharyya, Sahitya Akademy, pp. 35-38.

[34] See: Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), Translated by C. K Ogden, London: Kegan Paul, 2010, pp.28-30.

[35] See: *Introduction* by Bertrand Russell, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), Translated by C. K Ogden, London: Kegan Paul, 2010, pp. 7-19.

[36] *The Mahābhārata*, Vol.5. *Shanti-Parva*, Ch 220, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, India, p.4993.

[37] Now therefore there is the teaching, not this, not this, for there is nothing higher than this , that he is not this'. *Brihad-aranyakaUpanisad* (2.3.6), S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanisads*, Harper Collins publishers, India, 1998, p. 194. According to Śankara's exegesis, the *Upanisad,* through this famous passage, speaks to us of the absolute transcendent non-empirical Godhead. Rāmānuja (11th century AD), however, thinks that since there can be no object without qualities, this passage negates only some attributes and not all of them.

[38] Prabal Dasgupta in an article titled "The Sentence as Freedom" published in the afore-mentioned book edited by Sibajiban Bhattacharyya analyses the transmission of freedom—the undistorted flow of content from texts (detextual) and into texts (adtextual) in terms of the ancient 'rasa' theory.

[39] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), Translated by C. K Ogden, London: Kegan Paul, 2010, p.90.

Ravenshaw Journal of Philosophy, Vol. VIII
November 2022 48-61
ISSN: 2395-3209

Śaṅkara's Treatment of *Karmayoga* in the *Bhagavadgītābhāṣya*: An Examination in the Light of Tagore's Thoughts

Shubhra Jyoti Das
Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy and Comparative Religion
Visva – Bharati, Santiniketan – 731235

Abstract

According to Śaṅkara, *jñāna* i.e. knowledge is the only path to attain *mokṣa*. In his *Bhagavadgītābhāṣya*, he treats *karma* as a purifier of mind and gives it an inferior status to *jñāna*. On the contrary, Rabindranath Tagore treats *karma* as a means to connect directly with Brahman in his exposition on *karmayoga*, which he develops based on the *Upaniṣad*s. Therefore, the paper raises two precise questions - (a) Did Śaṅkara do justice to the spirit of the *prasthāna* texts, in general, while assigning superiority to the path of knowledge? (b) Was it a compulsion or logical necessity, entailed by his system of philosophy itself, to reject *karma* as an independent path, since *karma* functions only in a dualistic paradigm?

The paper looks for answer to both the questions from Tagore's perspective and maintains that Śaṅkara could possibly have dealt with *karma* in a better way than he did. It traces the appropriation of *saguṇa-bhakti* by a chronological study of the *Advaita* tradition; and, in the light of Tagore's thoughts, further argues that an analysis of Śaṅkara's definition of Brahman itself reveals possibility of *saguṇa-bhakti* as an independent way. On this basis, it finally claims that *karma* can also be treated as an independent path.

Keywords: *Jñāna*, *Karma*, *Bhakti*, Independence, Brahman.

Introduction

Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya* on the *Bhagavadgītā* is probably the most celebrated work, among all the commentaries written on the text. For him, bondage is continuity in the cycle of birth and death whereas liberation is freedom from the same. Since he argues for *jñāna* as the chief path[1] for attaining *mokṣa* i.e. liberation, his treatment of other paths[2] like *karma* and *bhakti*, enshrined in the text, deserves our careful attention. We shall confine ourselves chiefly to the discussion on *karmayoga*, though the other paths will of course come in the process. The analysis will be done from the perspective of Rabindranath Tagore; as he is one of the few philosophers who have advocated the possibility of emancipation through *karma*.

The Vedānta Philosophy is founded on the *prasthāna trayī*s i.e. the three canonical works viz. the *Upaniṣad*s known as *Śruti Prasthāna*, Bādarāyana's *Brahmasūtra*s named as *Nyāya Prasthāna* or*Tarka Prasthāna* and the *Bhagavadgītā* called as *Smṛti Prasthāna.* The concept of *karmayoga* has been primarily expounded in the *Bhagavadgītā*. However, Rabindranath Tagore draws his account of *karmayoga* mainly from the *Upaniṣad*s. But, in that case, how can one take Tagore's grounding on the *Upaniṣad*s as a vantage point?

There could be many reasons for such an approach. One of the prime justifications for grounding on the *Upaniṣad*s, could be that among the *prasthāna* canons, the *Upaniṣad*s are the oldest and the most basic or fundamental texts. The *Brahmasūtra*s are nothing but systematic exposition of the *Upaniṣadic* philosophy. In a similar way, the *Bhagavadgītā* is said to be application of the *Upaniṣadic* thoughts in a practical situation. Swami Vivekananda maintains, "The *Gītā* is a bouquet composed of the beautiful flowers of spiritual truths collected from the *Upaniṣad*s"[3]

Mapping the Issue

Śaṅkara's exposition on *karmayoga* can be read primarily in his commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*. Though it can also be found scattered across other works, e.g. *bhāṣya*s on the Upanisads etc., we shall confine ourselves mainly to the passages of the *Bhagavadgītā*; since the logical framework he uses to deal with *karma*, as a path, is same everywhere. It begins from the second chapter, *sāṅkhyayoga* itself. According to him, the second chapter of the text refers to two types of *buddhi*s i.e. intelligences as driving force behind either abstention from or involvement in activities.[4] They are *sāṁkhyabuddhi* and *yogabuddhi* respectively. In his view, it also sets *sannyāsa* as obligation for those endowed with *sāṁkhyabuddhi*; and in the final *śloka* also asserts that they achieve the *summum bonum* of human life.[5]

In his prelude to commentary on '*Karmayoga*', Śaṅkara notes that, in spite of the fact that Arjuna was asked to engage in action with detachment, Kṛṣṇa had not affirmed that *karma* would necessarily ensure the highest good. Therefore, Arjuna, being completely confused, asked as to why the Lord wants to engage him in dreadful actions, which is a source of innumerable evils; where the only path for a seeker of the highest good, as the discipline of *sāṁkhyayoga*, had already been introduced.

Therefore, Śaṅkara rejects any interpretation of the *Bhagavadgītā* as a proposal for *karma-jñāna-samuccya*. Had that been a possibility, then the means for attaining the supreme good would have been just one only. Thereby, Arjuna's question would not have been valid. But, since the discourse did not proceed in that direction; and Lord had declared the superiority of the *jñāna-marga* as compared to the *karmamarga,* Arjuna expressed his reservation. Therefore, *karma-jñāna-samuccya* is simply not possible; no matter whether the *karma* is prescribed by *śruti* or *smṛti*.[6]

Śaṅkara's refutation is founded on the exposition that *karma* and *jñāna* are rooted in two completely different types of *buddhi*s. In his *bhāṣya*, he notes, "The content of the text beginning from – 'Those who should not be grieved for' (2.11) and ending with 'And in view of the law of one's life' (2.31), where the Lord elucidates the eternal Truth of the Self – is the *Sāṁkhya*. This teaches that the Self, being free from six-fold transformation like birth and so on, is a non – agent. This knowledge, generated by the study of the relevant context (*prakaraṇa*) is the *Śāṁkhya* Knowledge. Those for whom this knowledge is appropriate are the *Śāṁkhya*s."[7]

On the contrary, "the state of yoga",[8] antecedent to the emergence of this knowledge, is distinguished by actions indirectly instrumental for emancipation. Such activities are based on the preference for righteousness; and are guided by the understanding that the Self is an agent and therefore it reaps the fruits of its actions, though it exists independently of the body. The people fit for such knowledge, known as yoga-knowledge, are called as *yogī*s by Śaṅkara.

One can't simultaneously prescribe both these disciplines to the same individual; since they are grounded on two different understandings, viz. the cognition of non -agency or agency of the Self, along with the perception of non-duality or duality of the external objects respectively. Further, with reference to *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*,[9] Śaṅkara reasserts the same position by means of the discourse on threefold wealth. Apart from that, he, in reference Arjuna's question like 'if in accordance with the Lord, *karma* is inferior to *jñāna*' etc.,reaffirms the same argument.

Additionally, in Śaṅkara's opinion, the very fact of Arjuna's raising a question like – which one, out of *jñāna* and *karma*, is better? (5.1) implies the fact that Kṛṣṇahad not prescribed any kind of combination. Rather, He went to assert that, in times of yore, two *niṣṭhā*s were pronounced by Him. (3.3) Thus Śaṅkara observes, "Therefore none

can possibly demonstrate that in the science of the *Gītā* there is the slightest proposal to combine knowledge of the Self with the action laid down by *śruti* or *smṛti*."[10]

In addition, Śaṅkara argues that it is illogical to think that *karma-jñāna-samuccya* is possible by means of subordinating *jñāna* to *karma* for the sake of emancipation. Could that have been done, Arjuna would not have pleaded for direction in one of the two. Śaṅkara further notes, "Surely He did not say earlier that He would speak only about one of the two disciplines of knowledge and works, and not about both of them. Were that the case, thinking that instruction on both was impossible, Arjuna might request instruction in one."[11]

In Śaṅkara's *Bhagavadgītā bhāṣya*, delusion and grief is depicted[12] as the main cause of the recurrence of rebirth. As a consequence of these defects man goes ahead to embraces *paradharma*. These twin defects again emerge from the anxiety of possible collapsing of affection resulting from unreal cognition like, "They are my own" or "I belong to them."[13] Moreover, those individuals who stick to their *svadharma* but with a crave for consequences springing from their ego carry the seed of rebirth forward.

This cause could be eradicated by *ātma-jñāna* preceded by giving up of *karma*s. One can't uproot it by performance of righteous works. In Śaṁkara's opinion, if one does not have Self – knowledge, he has to be repeatedly born bearing the collection of good and bad deeds. Therefore, Self-knowledge is passed on to everyone by making Arjuna a *nimitta* (occasion).

The *Bhagavadgītā* asserts that all living creatures are virtually forced to become agents of *karma*s at all moments by the very components of *prakṛti* viz. *tamas, sattva* and *rajas*. But Śaṁkara argues that the given assertion is applicable only to the ignorant. In reference, he points to the 23rd *śloka* of the *Guṇatrayavibhāga yoga* in the *Gītā*, which describes about "one who is not pushed about by the constituents."[14]

Śaṅkara stressed that, keeping the same reason in mind, *sāṁkhya*s have been intentionally separated; in the third verse of the '*Karmayoga*' in the *Bhagavadgītā*. However, he maintains that one who is ignorant of the Self but abstains from the *karma*s prescribed by the *śāstra*s, is in error. Moreover, one who externally controlling his organs of action, mentally dwell on their objects, commits sin.

Another important point emerges in Śaṅkara's commentary on the 46th verse of the *Mokṣasannyāsayoga*, which reads, "By worshiping Him from whom all beings come into being and by whom the whole universe is pervaded, through the performance of his natural duties, man attains the highest perfection."[15] (*Bhagavadgītā* 18.46) On this verse Śaṅkara elucidates "The inner controller, God, from whom all living beings have

originated and by whom all the world has been pervaded – by merely worshipping Him through the performance of each man's work according to his class, man wins perfection consisting in the eligibility for the discipline of knowledge."[16]

Therefore, for Śaṅkara, the *siddhi* mentioned in the *śloka*, attained by performance of *karma*s dedicated to *Īśvara* is not the final destination of human life. Here *siddhi* refers only to eligibility for the *jñānaniṣṭhā*, the higher discipline. The final liberation is set forth by Śaṅkara as the *naiṣkarmya siddhi* later in the 49[th]verseof the *Mokṣasannyāsayoga* which reads as, "He whose intellect is unattached to objects, whose self is disciplined, and from whom all desires have departed, wins the supreme perfection of worklessness by means of renunciation."[17]

Śaṁkara elucidates it as, "He whose intellect or inner sense is unattached to objects like children, wife and so forth which usually claim attachment, whose self i.e. the inner self, is disciplined, whose clinging to body, life and enjoyment has departed – such a Self-knower wins the status of a total renouncer, all of whose work have left him due to the knowledge of the quiescent Brahman.

This status is the perfection *Naiṣkarmya – siddhi* mentioned in this verse. Or, it may mean the emergence of the status of action-less self. This gain is different from the work – born perfection mentioned earlier. It is the same as instantaneous liberation, and won through renunciation – a right perception, leading to the giving up of all activities. This has been mentioned in 5.13."[18]

In a nutshell, one can clearly see that *karma* is not treated by Śaṅkara as an independent path for emancipation. As a matter of fact, it can't even be combined with *jñāna* for the sake of that end. It can only be utilized for *cittaśuddhi* or *sattvaśuddhi*; and once the mind becomes pure, the individual becomes eligible to tread the path of knowledge. Liberation can be achieved only by means of unaided system of knowledge. Therefore, *karmayoga* becomes secondary in his scheme.

This kind of a hierarchy created by Śaṅkara, between *karma* and *jñāna*, leads us to two important questions. Firstly, did he do justice to the spirit of the *prasthāna* texts, in general, while assigning superiority to the path of knowledge? Secondly, was it a compulsion or logical necessity, entailed by his system of philosophy itself, to reject *karma* as an independent path since *karma* functions only in a dualistic paradigm?

The First Question: A Response from Tagore's Perspective

Rabindranath in his article entitled '*Karmajog*' (in Bengali)[19] glorifies the composers of the *prasthāna* texts. Referring to those who, engaged in modern scientific studies, declare that they have understood Nature as a government of certain laws; he asserts that the seers of the *Upaniṣad*s had also realized the same Truth. Therefore they

declared – *bhīṣāsmādvātaḥ pavate*;[20] fearing Him, due to the harsh administration of His rules, wind is blowing. Even death which is meant to get rid of all bondage, which does not seem to be bound to anyone, is fearfully abiding by the eternal laws.

Tagore observes that *ṛṣi*s of the *Upaniṣad*s have declared Brahman as "*raso vai saḥ*" (*Taittirīya*),as full of *rasa.* The laws of nature do not appear to be limiting adjuncts to them. Therefore, virtually pointing to the *jñāna yogī*s, he argues that some people in our country treat *karma* as an impediment for attainment of emancipation; in the same way as some treat rules and regulations as a hindrance for joy or celebration.[21] They think that *karma* is gross and therefore it produces bondage for the soul.

Tagore highlights that *Upaniṣads* declare - *kurvannebeḥ karmāṇi jijīviṣet śataṁ samāḥ* (*Iśa*) i.e. one should aspire to live for hundred years by performing *karma.* He argues that those *ṛṣi*s who have experienced the bliss of the *ātman*, to the fullest extent, have said this. Those who have known the Self never declare, like the weak people, that life is full of pain and *karma* produces bondage only.[22]Here, Tagore not only becomes critical of Śaṅkara but also of the pessimistic attitude of Buddhism.

For Tagore, it is not at all fine to dissociate actions from the path of *dharma*; or to say that we can't enter the path of *sādhana* without giving up actions,[23] which is the prescription of Śaṅkara. The *Upaniṣad*s declare - *māhaṁ brahma nirākuryāṁ mā mā brahma nirākarot* (*Chāndogya*) - let neither Brahman abandon me nor do I abandon Brahman. Therefore, Brahman can be abandoned neither in the internal nor in the external world. Brahman is expansion on one hand and culmination on the other. If we attempt to give Brahman up in either of the ways, we will deprive ourselves.

Rabindranath argues that the *sādhana* of *dharma* or *satya* is to tune our actions to the eternal symphony; it is not abandonment of action. One has to follow the dictum - *yadyat karma prakurvīt tadbrahmaṇi samarpayet* - whatever action you perform, dedicate all of them to Brahman. For Tagore, this way of dedicating oneself to the infinite is the song of soul, it is the freedom of soul.[24] When each and every action becomes a means to connect ourselves to Brahman, then world itself becomes blissful.

Tagore raises a serious objection against those who have declared this world as *mithyā*.[25] He asserts that deception has contaminated the minds of those people. He asks - one who treats this world as unreal, does he really believe in the Supreme Reality? Those who opt for escapism, in order to find the Supreme, where and when will they find Him? He prays, so that God gives power to eliminate our imagination that entertains a baseless, unreal entity as *brahmānanda*; which is bereft of activities.

Replying to "who is best among the knowers of Brahman?" Rabindranath quotes Upaniṣad saying, "*ātmakriraḥātmaratiḥkriyābān eṣabrahmavidāṅ variṣṭhaḥ.*"[26] One who enjoys in the bliss of *paramātman*, who plays in *paramātman* and who is

active is the best among the knowers of Brahman; playing in *paramātman* is not passive, that play is action. How can a *brahmavid*, existing in the bliss of Brahman, survive without performing actions? He is bound to express his divine bliss through actions.

For Tagore, a *brahmajñāni* expresses the Infinite by means of all his tiny activities, by his truth, beauty, discipline and auspiciousness; in the same way as a poet does it through his poetry and artist through his art. Brahman also expresses His Bliss in the same way only. He is "*vahudhāśaktiyogāt varṇānanekān nihitārtho dadhāti*"[27] i. e. He meets the needs of various races through His inherent energy. He is working incessantly; otherwise how can He give Himself to others. Vedas call Brahman as "*ātmada valadā*"[28], it means that He has given similar energy to all of us so that we also can give ourselves for the welfare of others. This is where we are similar to Brahman.

Vedic *ṛṣi*s are therefore praying before Brahman - "*sa no budhyā śubhayā saṅyunaktu*"[29] - You connect us with auspicious intelligence. Again Tagore quotes *Upaniṣad* stating - "*vicaiti cānte visvamādau*"[30] - all the activities of the world are beginning and ending in Him; therefore, our activities are also leading us to Him only. He further quotes *Upaniṣad* describing Brahman as - "*svābhāvikī jñāna bala kriyā ca*"[31] - knowledge, energy and activity is natural to Him. Thus, for Tagore, Brahman's bliss is activity only; therefore *karma* can never be disassociated from Him.

In a nutshell, Rabindranath completely rejects Śaṅkara's prescription; according to which, renunciation is a precondition for the beginning of real *sādhanā*. In accordance with Tagore, *jñānayogī*ns in India treat *karma* as a bondage. A kind of passive state, freedom from that bondage, is liberation for them. They reject nature i.e. this world, as a creation of *māyā*. Tagore quotes *Upaniṣad* declaring- "*yato vā imāni bhutāni jāyante, yena jātāni jivanti, yat prayantyabhingsaviśanti, tadvijijñāsasva, tadbrahma*"[32] i.e. "Crave to know well that from which all these beings take birth, that by which they live after being born, that towards which they move and into which they merge. That is Brahman."[33]

Tagore observes that *brahmavādī*ns have declared in the above-quoted *mantra* that Brahman is the foundation of all activities. If that is the case, how could *karma* be a source of bondage? It cannot be so that *karma* is happening autonomously and Brahman is independently existing without having any link with each other. Similarly, *he asserts*, one can't say that *karma* has concealed Brahman like the web of a spider or shell of a snail. Therefore the *ṛṣi*s have pronounced,"*ānandādhyeva khalvimāni bhutāni jāyante ānandena jātāni jivanti ānandamprayantyabhingsaviśanti*" i.e. bliss is Brahman. Everything originates from, sustains on, and merges into bliss. Thus, *according to Rabindranath*, action is the essence of bliss. Bliss expresses itself through various acts. Therefore, *karma* is the only means to connect ourselves to blissful Brahman. He argues

that such activities which create a bridge between Brahman and us is called *karmayoga*[34] in the *Bhagadavgītā*.

Rabindranath rejects Śaṅkara's refutation of *karma-jñāna-samuccya*. He refers to the ninth verse of the *Īśa* Upaniṣad and says that those who are engaged only in *avidyā*, worldly activities, enter into darkness; but those who are absorbed only in *vidyā* i.e. *brahmajñāna*, enter into more intense darkness. In order to solve this riddle, he quotes the eleventh verse of the text which reads, "*andhaṁ tamaḥ praviśanti ye vidyāmupāsateavidyayā mṛtyum tiratvā vidyayāmṛtamaśnute*".

Swami Gambhirananda translates the eleventh *śloka* as, "He who knows these two, *vidyā* and *avidyā*, together, attains immortality through *vidyā*, by crossing over death by *avidyā*."[35] Thus according to Tagore, a combination both the *karma* and *brahmajñāna* are required. Since, *for him*, any *karma* which is devoid of Brahman is darkness and Brahman without *karma* is even more emptiness. We must note here that Śaṅkara has explained this *śloka* as a prescription of successive combination i.e. *karma* followed by *jñāna*. However, Tagore does not subscribe to his view and does not rule out the possibility of a simultaneous combination.

Tagore raises another question on Śaṅkara's position, by analyzing the nature of *Brahmajñāna*. He asks, "What is the meaning of attaining Brahman?"[36] Is it like achieving other worldly objects? Is Brahman another entity which we add to our wish-list, when we engage in *Brahmajijñāsa*? His reply to this question is negative. For him, Brahman is *nityohanityānam* i.e. one who is changeless within the changing phenomena and *rasānaṁ rasatamaḥ* i.e. the essential *rasa* within all *rasa*s.[37] Thus, Brahman is not known as something separate from this existence. Therefore, according to Tagore, *Īśa Upaniṣad* declares, "*īśāvāsyamidaṁ sarvaṁ yatkinca jagatyāṁ jagat*" - "whatever moves on the earth, should be covered by the Lord."[38] Tagore opines that by declaring Brahman as transcendental, Śaṅkara has virtually made Brahman 'other worldly'; which is not actually the case. In a nutshell, if one looks at Śaṅkara from Tagore's perspective; one would perhaps say that Śaṅkara has not done justice to the spirit of the *prasthāna* texts. Perhaps *Upaniṣad*s have given higher status to *karma* than what we perceive through Śaṅkara's interpretation.

The Second Question: A Further Analysis of Tagore's Position

The second question, regarding whether Śaṅkara's position was entailed by *Advaita Vedānta* itself or not, poses greater challenge in this context. It is difficult for the simple reason that perhaps Tagore was not a hardcore *advaita vedāntin*. Therefore Tagore's critique, however subtle it might be, will have to be treated as an external

critique only. Thus, one has to trace the treatment given to *karma*, as a path, by the other advaitians. I will try to track it by exploring the way they have treated *bhakti*; since, *prima facie*, as methods, both *karma* and *bhakti* function in a dualistic paradigm.

For this purpose, before looking into other advaitins, one has to first understand the treatment that Śaṅkara himself has given to *bhakti* as a path; which is found mainly in commentary on the '*Bhaktiyoga*' of the *Bhagavadgītā*. In his introductory remarks, to the *bhāṣya* on the chapter, he maintains that the *Bhagavadgītā* has described the Ultimate Reality in two forms. The first one is God attributed with yogic powers and qualified by *sāttvic* omniscience; while the second one is the Supreme Self or Brahman, free from limiting adjuncts.[39]

Consequently, devoteesare of two kinds. The first group worships the cosmic manifested form (*viśvarūpaṁ*) and the second one meditates, having abandoned all works and all cravings, on the imperishable (*akṣara*) Brahman. Śaṅkara reiterates, "This imperishable is other than the manifest and, further, is distinguished by the adjectives set forth in this context."[40] Subsequently, Arjuna inquires as regards which group of devotee is better than the other one.

The devotees who, by mental concentration, worship the cosmic manifested form of God, the Master of those who gained mastery over yoga, the omniscient who transcends all kinds of perceptions caused by attachment and aversion, are depicted to be the 'best integrated'.[41] They continuously contemplate on the manifested form and, on account of having 'absolute' faith, deserve to be known as the 'best integrated'. But what about the other group? Do they not deserve the same title i.e. 'best integrated'?

The other group of devotees, who meditate on the 'unmanifest', in fact contemplates on *akṣara* i.e. ineffable and imperishable.[42] It is ineffable, on account of being beyond the description of words; and is 'unmanifest', since there exists no *pramāna* to reveal it. They incessantly dedicate their minds to the contemplation on the 'formless', as per the prescription of the *śāstra*s, to know the Supreme Reality; in the same way as a stream of oil flows into a vessel filled with oil.

The devotee engaged in *akṣaropāsanā*, withdrawing the sense-organs from their objects, with equanimity towards pain and pleasure, attains the Supreme. They devote themselves for the sake of everyone's welfare. But here Śaṅkara declares, "However, no remark about them is called for. It has already been stated (*Bhagavadgītā* 7.18[43]) that the knower is verily My Self. Remarks about their level of integration are inappropriate; for they are entirely one with the Lord."[44]

What happens to the first group of devotees who surrender all actions to God and abandon every other thought except the one pertaining to *viśvarūpaṁ*? In simpler words, what do they gain out of the *saguṇa-upāsanā*, dedication to God with cosmic

form, they are engaged in? Śaṅkara puts the reply in first person as, "I, the Lord, shall deliver them who are solely engaged in worshipping Me. Deliver from what? - the sea of 'empirical life leading to death'. Being hard to cross, it is called a sea. Thence shall I deliver them. Not after a long time, but 'soon', indeed O Arjuna! for they have concentrated their thoughts on Me in my cosmic form."[45]

According to Śaṅkara, Lord asserts that the devotees engaged in *akṣaropāsanā* freely attain aloneness (*Bhagavadgītā*, 12.4); and for the other set of devotees, pursuing *saguṇa-upāsanā*, deliverance has to be done by God. The latter set is dependent on God, whereas the former is one with Him. Therefore, Śaṅkaramakes another remark as, "Also because the Lord, very much concerned with Arjuna's well being, instructs him only in *karma yoga*, that is unrelated to right perception but is entrenched in the perception of difference. None who has, through the right means of perception, known the Lord as his very Self, seeks to subordinate himself to anyone else or thing. That will be self–contradictory."[46]

Śaṅkara contends that the instruction on *saguṇa-upāsanā* assumes the differentiation, between *ātman* and *Īśvara*, which *akṣaropāsanā* does not. Therefore, he makes a very important observation, as an implication in this context, for the practitioners of *karmayoga* and notes,"In 12.11 (*Bhagavadgītā*) it is suggested that the worshipper of the Imperishable, who perceives no difference, cannot reasonably perform *karma yoga*, as this an offspring of nescience. Similarly the Lord shows the impropriety of a *karma-yogīn* betaking himself to the worship of the imperishable."[47]

From the above discussion, two points emerges with crystal-clarity - (1) Śaṅkara treats *jñānaniṣṭhā* and *akṣaropāsanā* at par with each other, and (2) For him, *karmayoga* and *saguṇa-upāsanā* are compatible, though their combination acts only as purifier of mind.[48] Therefore, from these two propositions one can draw that, in *Advaita Vedānta*, if a seeker can become One with Brahman by means of *saguṇa-upāsanā*, he can experience the same Reality by practicing *karma yoga* as well.

In order to explore this dimension in the *Advaita-paramparā*, we have to go beyond Śaṅkara to see how other *Advaita vedāntīns* have treated *saguṇa-bhakti*. Śaṅkara's *Bhagavadgītābhāṣya* is not the only commentary on the text in the tradition. There are many other advaitic commentaries which include *Gītābhāṣyavivecana* by Ānandagiri, *Gītārthaprakāśa* by Nīlakaṇṭha Suri, *Tātparyabodhinī* by Śaṁkarānanda, *Subodhinī by* Śrīdhara Swāmi, *Paiśācabhāṣya* or *Hanumadbhāṣya* by Piśāca or Hanumāna, *Bhāvaprakāśika* by Sadānanda Yogīndra, *Gitāśaya* by Rāmānanda and *Guḍhārthadīpika* by Madhusūdana Saraswatī. As a matter of fact, people have written sub-commentaries on Śaṅkara's *Bhagavadgītābhāṣya* itself; whereas, some others have written commentaries following his teachings. A few of them are *Paramārthaprapā* by Daivajña Paṇḍita Sūrya, *Bhagavadgītābhāṣyaṭippanī* by Anubhūti Swarūpācārya and *Bhagavadgītābhāṣyavyākhyā* by Rāmānanda.

Among these commentators, Ānandagiri and Śrīdhara Swāmi lived in the fourteenth century. Ānandagiri's *Gītābhāṣyavivecana*is simply elucidation of Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya*. Lord Narasiṁha was *iṣṭa devatā* of Śrīdhara.[49] His *Subodhinī* took note of both Ānandagiri's andŚaṅkara's explanations. He opined that *Puruṣottama*, the Lord in the *Bhagavadgītā*, is the owner of transcendental ecstasy and energy. *Akṣara* gives birth to creative evolution and multiple objects. In spite of providing a non-dualistic account of the Ultimate Reality (*Tattva*), he stood by *saguṇa-bhakti* as the path to *mokṣa*. By means of *bhakti* to Narasiṁha one can attain *ātmabodha* and subsequently attain *mokṣa*.

Chronologically, when someone proceeds from Śrīdhara Swāmito Madhusūdana Saraswatī (16th -17th century), reading other *bhāṣyakāra*s of the *advaita* tradition, a gradual appropriation of *saguṇa-bhakti* within the *paramparā* will be observed. Now, if *saguṇa-bhakti* could be accommodated within *advaita*, as has been noted and exemplified, *karmayoga* also can be certainly included in it; as an independent path for attaining liberation.

Now, let us analyse what Rabindranath has drawn from the very definition of Brahman given by Śaṅkara. He holds *bhakti* in a very high esteem, as a path, to realize the Ultimate Reality. It must be noted here that Śaṅkara did not reject *bhakti*, *per se*, as a way to realize Brahman. Rather, he created a hierarchy between *akṣaropāsanā* and *saguṇa-upāsanā*; rejecting the independence of *saguṇa-bhakti* for attaining liberation. But Tagore, refuting Śaṅkara's position, goes ahead to agree with other *Advaita vedāntin*s.

Tagore makes his position, in this regard, amply clear in his essay entitled '*Prem*' (in Bengali) i.e. 'Love'. He observes that the Vedas have declared Brahman as the source of both death and immortality. Actually Brahman harmonizes all the pairs of opposites in Himself,[50] that is why Brahman is the absolute Truth. He is the brightest light and purest darkness at the same time. He asks - Is the knowledge of Brahman only a pure knowledge? Is there no room for emotions (*hṛdayer jog*) in Brahman? Is there no *rasa* in the Ultimate Truth?

Tagore maintains that Brahman is not only an embodiment of opposite truths, but also assimilation of all *rasa*s. That is why, he argues, *Upaniṣad*s have declared Brahman not only as *satya* but also *rasasvarūpa i.e. rasa* in essence.[51] Brahman is fully known only when He is also known as full of *rasa*. He is absolute Truth and absolute *rasa* at the same time. This position implies that Brahman is an embodiment of Love. Since pairs of opposites get reconciled in Brahman, therefore both Knowledge and Love gets harmonized in Him; He is not devoid of either of them.

The most noteworthy point in Tagore's exposition is that, in agreement with Rāmānuja, he does not argue that Brahman is bereft of all the negative qualities;[52]since

Upaniṣads have called it nirguṇa. Rather, following the footsteps of the Śaṅkara, he maintains that Brahman is the source of everything;[53] and contradictory opposites get harmonized in Him. Thus, for Tagore, advaitic commentators have sufficient grounds to accommodate saguṇa-bhakti as a method; even without disturbing the basics of Advaita Vedānta's scheme.

Conclusion

As a concluding remark it may perhaps be claimed that, as it has become quite clear from the discussions undertaken in the previous sections, Śaṅkara could have possibly dealt with the path of *karma* in a better way. Neither from the perspective of the *prasthāna* texts nor from the standpoint of his own Philosophy, he appears to have done justice to *karma.* In this regard,Rabindranath Tagore provides with a clear frame work, based on the *Upaniṣad*s, to understand this fact. It is true that traditional advaitians did not deal directly with *karma*; but appropriation of *saguṇa-bhakti* itself, as an autonomous path, implies the validity of *karma* as an independent means.

One may not appreciate the chronological argument since there are many subtle differences among post-Śaṅkara vedāntins. Still, Rabindranath Tagore helps us to appreciate the fact that there is no logical contradiction, given the nature of Brahman that Śāṅkara Vedānta itself upholds, in entertaining *saguṇa-bhakti* as an independent path. If *jñāna* and *karma* are contradictory or if *jñāna* and *saguṇa-bhakti* are contradictory and subsequently Knowledge and Divine Love are opposed to each other; then Tagore shows that they all will get resolved, by its very definition, in Śaṅkara's Brahman. Therefore, by implication, *karma* can be held at par with *jñāna*.

Notes and References

1 Refer to Śaṅkara's commentary on "*na hi jñānena sadṛśaṁ pavitram iha vidyate/tat svayaṁ yogasaṁsiddhaḥ kālenātmani vindanti//*" (*Bhagavadgītā*, 4.37)

2 Scholars mention many other paths like *Rāja Yoga*, *Kundalinī Yoga*, *Laya Yoga* etc. as derivatives of the *Bhagavadgītā*; but the text does not include these terms directly.

3 Chinmayananda, Swami, 2000, *The Holy Geeta*, p.xiii. Also, "*srvopaniṣado gāvo dogdhā gopālanandana/pārthovatsa sudhīrbhoktāḥ dugdhaṁ gītāmṛtaṁ mahat//*"(*Gītā Dhyāna*- 4)

4 Warrier, A.G.K.(Tr.), 2000, *Srīmad Bhagavadgītā Bhāṣya of Śaṁkarācārya*, p.92

5 Ibid., p.92

6 This equally applies to both these two kinds of actions since they both involve the agency of the doer.

[7] Warrier, A.G.K.(Tr.), 2000, *Srīmad Bhagavadgītā Bhāṣya of Śaṁkarācārya*, p.21
[8] Ibid., p.21
[9] Ibid., pp.22-23
[10] Ibid., p.24
[11] Ibid., pp.100-101
[12] Ibid., p.19
[13] Ibid., p.19
[14] Ibid., p.106
[15] Goyandka, Jayadayal (Tr.), 2007, *TheBhagavad Gītā or The Song Divine* p.176
[16] Warrier, A.G.K.(Tr.), 2000, *Srīmad Bhagavadgītā Bhāṣya of Śaṁkarācārya*, p.590
[17] Ibid., p.597
[18] Ibid., p.598
[19] All the translations from original Bengali writings of Tagore are by the author.
[20] Thakur, Rabindranath, 2015, *Rabindra Rachanabali*, 'Karmajog', p.693
[21] Ibid., p.694
[22] Ibid., p.695
[23] Ibid., p.696
[24] Ibid., p.694
[25] Ibid., p.699
[26] Ibid., p.700
[27] Ibid., p.700
[28] Ibid., p.700
[29] Ibid., p.700
[30] Ibid., p.701
[31] Ibid., p.701
[32] Ibid.,'Karma', p.445
[33] Gambhirananda, Swami (Tr.), 1998, *Eight Upaniṣads*, Vol.1, p.391
[34] Thakur, Rabindranath, 2015, *Rabindra Rachanabali*,'Karma', p.446
[35] Gambhirananda, Swami (Tr.), 1998, *Eight Upaniṣads*, Vol.1, p.21
[36] Thakur, Rabindranath, 2015, *Rabindra Rachanabali*, 'Akhanda Pawa', p.543
[37] Ibid., p.543
[38] Gambhirananda, Swami (Tr.), 1998, *Eight Upaniṣads*, Vol.1, p.4
[39] Warrier,A.G.K.(Tr.), 2000, *Srīmad Bhagavadgītā Bhāṣya of Śaṁkarācārya*, p.384
[40] Ibid., p.385
[41] Ibid., p.386
[42] Ibid., p.387
[43] "*udārāḥ sarva evaite jñāni tvātmaiva me matam/ āsthitaḥ sa hi yuktātmā mām evānuttamāṁ gatim//*" (*Bhagavadgītā* 7.18)

[44] Warrier, A.G.K.(Tr.), 2000, *Srīmad Bhagavadgītābhāṣya of Śaṁkarācārya*, p.388

[45] Ibid., p.390

[46] Ibid., p.395

[47] Ibid., p.395

[48] Refer to Śaṅkara's commentary on - "*abhyāse 'pyasamartho 'si matkarmaparamo bhava/ madartham api karmāṇi kurvan siddhim avāpsyāsi//*" (*Bhagavadgītā*, 12.10)

[49] For details refer to Swami Vireswarananda's translation of 'Subodhini' (2008, R.K.Math)

[50] Thakur, Rabindranath, 2015, *Rabindra Rachanabali*, 'Prem', p.172

[51] Ibid., p.172

[52] Sharma, C. D., 2003, *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*, p.345

[53] "That omniscient and omnipotent from which occur the birth, continuance and dissolution of the universe." (Śaṅkar's Commentary to *Brahmasūtra* 1.1.2, translation by Swami Gambhirananda) One needs to note that these are opposite attributes, in order to appreciate Tagore's argument.

Chinmayananda, Swami, 2000, *The Holy Geeta*, Mumbai: Central Chinmaya Mission Trust.

Gambhirananda, Swami, (Translation), 1998, *Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya of Śaṅkarācārya*, Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama.

Gambhirananda, Swami (Translation), 1998, *Eight Upaniṣads with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama.

Goyandka, Jayadayal (Translation), 2007, *TheBhagavad Gītā or The Song Divine*, Gorakhpur: Gitapress

Sharma, C.D., 2003, *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Thakur, Rabindranath, 2015, *Rabindra Rachanabali*, (Vol.1-16), Kolkata: Pashchim Banga Bangla Academy.

Warrier, A.G.K.(Translation), 2000, *Srīmad Bhagavadgītā Bhāṣya of Śaṁkarācārya*, Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math

Ravenshaw Journal of Philosophy, Vol. VIII
November 2022 62-75
ISSN: 2395-3209

Understanding Derrridean Deconstruction and Ethics Today in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandamic

Audrick D'Mello
Ph.D. Scholar, School of Sanskrit, Philosophy & Indic Studies, Goa University, Goa
Sanjyot D. Pai Vernekar
Professor, School of Sanskrit, Philosophy & Indic Studies, Goa University, Goa

Abstract

The paper explores the relevance of Derrida's Deconstruction and Ethics in the world today. It begins by analyzing how Derrida came about with Deconstruction as his way of understanding reality around him. It then dissects his interpretation of Ethics in all its ambiguity, subjectivity, and contradiction to established thought of his time. It finally tries to comprehend the relevance of his style of thinking in today's world, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its onslaught and potential aftermath.

Keywords: Derrida, Deconstruction, Ethics, Morality, COVID-19, Pandemic

Introduction

"Amid increasing awareness of the malaise of rapid modernization and suspicion toward the prevalent forms of radicalism, postmodernism draws an audience seeking a new form of human emancipation and a new theoretical ground for social criticism..." Every aspect of today's society has seen a radical change: economic growth and industrialisation, urbanisation, democratisation, social disintegration, cultural transformation, etc. This has given rise to a situation in which tradition, modernity, and postmodernity have intertwined themselves in a unique hybrid amalgamation which in turn has led to the uncertainty of us having a common human aim and direction. The appeal of deconstruction in such a scenario can be seen even more, as an elegant way of

diagnosing the current pulse of society while charting a worthy course for the future. Postmodernism is a double-edged sword leading to both hope and despair while postmodern ethics is based on the scepticism of the traditional narratives about morality, rules, and a general ethical way of proceeding. This negates any possibility of a positive formulation of ethical principles in contemporary ethical discourse, opening the way to look at the *Other* from a completely different perspective. This other has always been marginalised and suppressed both in thought and practice. How does this come about? It comes from the assumption that idea and reality are inseparable. When we deny existence and reality to the other through our thinking, it automatically makes the jump to its marginalisation and suppression, often through violence in the real world.

In this regard, none cuts a more unique figure on the philosophical horizon than Jacques Derrida. He was one of the most famous, controversial, but also wise figures in not only recent French intellectual life, but also in philosophy of the 20th Century. He distanced the various philosophical movements frolicking in the fertile ground of French philosophical thought of the time, like phenomenology, existentialism, and structuralism. He suffered greatly from the antisemitism of Algeria's majority Muslim population and was deeply marked by the experience of having been in an inferior position at the nexus of three different religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – all claiming to speak the Truth without knowing how to treat the others with particular respect. He was a brilliant student, but in an odd position; highly privileged in terms of education, but utterly at the margins in Metropolitan France in his status as an Algerian Jew. It was from the late 1960s onwards that Derrida began to develop the ideas that made his name, through his abstruse and subtle writing style. Behind the high-flown vocabulary, he laid down some crucially important ideas.

Deconstruction – Derrida's Weapon of Choice

Derrida argues that Western philosophical tradition has focussed so much on meaning that it has worked extremely to appropriate and master the other by essentially reducing its plurality to some semblance of sameness. Deconstruction aims to look at the other from an outside perspective, a different way of looking at it that cannot be reduced to a kind of logocentric, philosophical conceptual singularity. Derrida makes it clear that he is not calling for philosophical irrationalism or relativism in the interpretation of philosophical discourse. He rejects the thinking that deconstruction tries to go against the grain of truth or stability of thought. We cannot just reject something and directly look at its opposite without analysing it with precision and rigor. We have to interrogate not just the idea under contention, but also the essence of reason. This is not reducible to technique or science and requires the type of thinking that goes beyond mere setting of goals, rational thought, technology, or even metaphysics.

Derrida founded deconstruction, probably the most famous of his terms, as a way of critiquing, literary and philosophical texts, and political institutions of the day, essentially of the Western philosophical tradition. He used it to describe the way he went about thinking, though when other people started using this term, he quite often felt they had misunderstood what he meant by it. Essentially, deconstruction means pulling apart any kind of excessive loyalty to a particular idea and working to see aspects of the truth that might be buried in its opposite. While deconstruction happens at both the literary and philosophical levels, the latter aspect concerned Derrida more. Philosophical thinking created an element of dualism, which in turn created a dichotomy, where one term of the dichotomy was usually given more importance than the other.

The most common way that deconstruction happens is via analyses of texts. The word 'text' here is anything that carries meaning. It can be an article, a book, a movie, a song, etc. This starts with looking at the literal meaning of a text, followed by its hidden meaning, and diving even further into alternative meanings. For Derrida, a deconstructive reading works best through comparison such that there is a clash of visions. This helps us with finding out different ways in which the texts are speaking to us. When we throw texts through this intellectual wormhole, they inadvertently end up doling out meaning in some form. This happens at once and also separately. Since Derrida held that ideas and reality are inseparable, and the other exists both conceptually and in reality, the goal of deconstruction is to find this point of *otherness*. Deconstruction does not exist in some sort of vacuum or nothingness; it is about an openness to the other. Also, the meaning of a text is not something that is constant, static, or stable. Unlike traditional philosophical thought, deconstruction does not lead to some sort of ultimate truth. It is merely a starting point for further interpretation, which then calls for more discussion, analysis and interpretation, and so on. The opening of the text to that search allows for more analysis, or else everything would be fixed and frozen. "A responsible reading should not be confined by the goal of unearthing the supposed intention of the authorial subject, but should instead take it as its responsibility to open up the otherness of the text. Reading is thus proposed as the locus where/in which the reading subject explores a relation to the other…"

Deconstruction seeks out the similarities and the differences. At first glance, we try to look at what the text says to us through its obvious themes. At the same time, we also try to keep an eye out for alternative and subtly hidden meanings, essentially what the text does not tell us directly. Derrida makes it clear that for this to happen, we need to go beyond the constraints of the syntaxes that conventional language makes us follow. We need to think outside the box, colour outside the lines a little, to get into the marrow of the text. We need to engage in the dualities of the text creatively, successfully swinging between what the text conveys to us directly, and what it does indirectly. Derrida's interpretations of texts make it difficult to pinpoint a clear demarcation between

the obvious meaning and the deconstruction. Derrida believed that deconstruction merely highlights what was already revealed in the text itself. The meaning is already there. We just have to discover it under syntactical and semantic debris.

Thus, it goes without saying that for Derrida the context becomes extremely important. We cannot abandon it even if we wanted to. Once we identify and analyse the context, we can get an idea of a sign that can be further interpreted and delved into. Derrida does stress that no context is entirely determinable, but he also says that this does not mean that it is absolutely indeterminable. But we must remember that even though deconstruction cannot be permanently fixed within a particular context, it is still absolutely responsible for that context. It takes the context's singularity into account and therefore cannot abandon its duty to the context's meaning. "Deconstruction, then, is not only constantly transformed as it becomes different in and through multiple and heterogeneous contexts, but it is also transformed in and by the same context."

Deconstruction contends that the process of writing is a fluid and dynamic one. The meaning of key terms is always changing depending upon the deconstructive process. This even applies to any attempts at trying to define deconstruction itself. It becomes a paradox ignoring even what Derrida himself believed deconstruction to be. The texts dole out meanings through patterns, proto myths, symbols, etc., enough for them to be open to interpretation. The context of the culture, society, group, and other parameters also aid the deconstructive process in its quest for meaning, as the text itself may not have the meaning outright. This, in turn, helps us investigate which things, in particular, were not said overtly in the text and why they were not said. The process tries to shed light on the hidden assumptions, what is the text not saying, why the context is the context in that regard, who it serves, etc. In other words, we not only read the lines but also read between them.

To deconstruct an idea is to show that it is confused and riddled with logical defects. We must keep this messiness constantly in mind. Derrida was criticising our tendency to imagine that behind every problem lies somewhere a good and neat solution. For him, being confused and uncertain about such concepts is not a sign of weakness, but an essential marker of a person's maturity. Confusion and doubt and not embarrassing dead ends in a Derridean worldview. They're simply evidence of the adulthood of the mind. Like many philosophers, Derrida can be valued as a person who opened our eyes to certain extreme attitudes of the time, through his fervent commitment to reason and precision of thought. Derrida didn't want to remove all hierarchies. He knew it was right that kindness should be privileged over cruelty, wit over dullness, and generosity over meanness. But he also understood how often we unwittingly dismiss things, people, and ideas when their opposites bask in what might be considered an arbitrary status. In the highest sense, Derrida can be seen as a voice of modesty and patience, making us aware of the value in ideas we may easily overlook. He urges us to imagine what it

might feel like to be, even if only for a little while, on the other side of any debate. For Derrida, deconstruction exemplifies our thinking so that the appropriation of thought by socio-economic political forces does not take place. Deconstruction is a means of subverting any group's claims to legitimacy because traditional thought is riddled with dominant institutions or practices based on unjustifiable assumptions set up as a gold standard by the power group of that community. Derrida's underlying claim for deconstruction is that history can no longer be given only from the perspective of the victor. There needs to be a healthy respect for the other. His conception of ethics focusses on opening a way for the victimised and marginalised to tell their side of history to us.

Derrida's Ethics – Ambiguous, Contradictory, and Subjective

Whether we believe it or not Derrida is, when all is said and done, an ethical thinker trying to push ethics to reflect on itself and others at a higher level. Funnily enough, he refused to be compartmentalised by the term "ethical" in the traditional sense, while still working to understand the ethical relations of his texts. This stance creates a sort of impasse confronting our need to seek understanding through analysing the dichotomy of reality. Using Derrida's trajectory as a compass, ethical relations can be analysed from a non-ethical viewpoint, which is not necessarily anti-ethical. His ethics are established through the duality of his deconstructive process, and so are usually not presented in a very systematic manner. His philosophy emerges from a discussion of texts by others, an interpretative approach. His style is to keep the original meaning and context on one side, and the ambiguities and contradictions on the other. The themes in Derrida's ethics are always shown to be impossibilities; his ethical thought posits that an absolute ethical position is not possible. Trying to put forth an absolute ethical position destroys the responsibility towards the other individual, and basing our ethics on our response to a particular individual renders the absolute position moot. He also believed that ethics can never not be present. A self will always exist in relation to an 'other'. Dualism will always be there. As long as the other exists, the self's relationship with it will exist, thereby confirming the existence of the self as well. The self cannot claim itself to be absolute because even when defining the self, it would mean recognising a primary relationship with something other than the self. Thus, as much as a contradiction is unavoidable, so is an infinite destructive ethical loop.

One of the most basic requirements in ethical thought is that we must be free and responsible for our actions and decisions. Derrida jumps right in by trying to understand what freedom is. On the one hand, freedom is following the rule. But occasions arise when in our quest for justice we have to rise above following rules. Following the law would be right, not just. In law, there is the letter of the law and the interpretation of it. For any judgement to provide justice, the judge has to interpret the letter of the law in the context of the judgement. In simple terms, the punishment should

not just fit the crime, but also take into account the perpetrator and the victim. The law is both conserved and destroyed simultaneously, because each decision is different, requiring a unique interpretation for which a precedent may or may not exist. For Derrida, this simultaneous upholding and destroying (reinterpretation) of the law is seen as a violent rebellion against already instituted laws, thereby making justice impossible.

Juxtaposed to any ethical decision, we must experience the uniqueness and singularity of each ethical decision we make, understanding that it does not fit the established rules. Therefore, a decision is impossible but still has to be made. We are not just oscillating between two oppositions. We are obligated to make the impossible decision while taking into account the general principles involved. That's what makes a decision prove its mettle. For Derrida, the decision has to go through this ordeal to be a free decision, but not necessarily just. If we follow the rules, we are not taking the context into account making the decision unjust. If we do not follow the rules, we are not using the proper foundation that general ethical principles provide. Derrida also puts forth another issue in making a decision. Since ethical decisions need to be made in a timely fashion, we would not be making an informed decision. We have access to only a limited amount of context and knowledge. The decision is made in a moment of non-knowledge and non-rule. Thus, we can never fully make a just decision, as we are constantly grappling with the deconstructive nature of the decision.

Derrida shows particular interest in the theme of ***responsibility to 'the other'***. This other person could be God or a person toward whom we have a responsibility in terms of a set of general principles and behaviour. While being responsible for the other person, we are also always responsible towards others in a very general sense, based on the similarities we share with them. Derrida believes that this accountability and responsibility in all aspects of life are often taken for granted. The difficulties involved in being responsible are much more complex than merely behaving dutifully. The common understanding of responsibility is that we behave according to a set of principles considered rational and valid by society, community, group, etc. Derrida believes that instead of the ethical demand for responsibility by society, the demands of the individual other should drive our sense of responsibility. Ethics tend to depend on general rules and norms binding on a group or community. This attitude is sacrificed constantly in an unconscious manner by us as a whole. We cannot have an attachment to anybody and equal compassion for everybody at the same time. We cannot look at our duties to others from a general principle of humanity that does not exclude anyone. We are always prioritising who the beneficiary of our responsibility will be in everything we do. So, the only way we can be responsible to any one person that needs our help is by failing in our general principle of responsibility to all others as a whole. Thus, we can only be responsible to any particular individual by being irresponsible to other people. We have to make peace with the fact that we may not be able to help everyone

because we just cannot do so.

Deconstruction works from a paradoxical angle. This paradox challenges the binary choice and decision-making ability of ethics while not rejecting it at the same time. Derrida calls this *'irresponsible'*; this constitutes the paradox of ethics. However, this general ethical paradox is brought to the foreground by illustrating it in individual cases of the paradox. The deconstructionist has a responsibility to illustrate these individual paradoxes called the *'absolute responsibility',* which is something inconceivable and unthinkable, involving the other, and making substitution and repetition an impossibility. When Derrida talks of singularity he means the uniqueness of the other. This does not mean a simple difference between the subject and the other, or between others. It is not something secret or private which can be known but is hidden. The uniqueness that Derrida refers to is that which is irreducible, unrepeatable, heterogeneous, and idiosyncratic. The '*general responsibility'*, on the other hand, is that which we have to the universal nature of ethics and law. This requires substitution and repetition for it to apply to others, and for them to be accountable for it. In other words, to be responsible to an individual other, we have to be irresponsible to the ethics in general applied as a blanket system. But this irresponsibility is not in opposition to ethics or even responsibility. It is very much a part of the binary of responsibility and irresponsibility. This paradox is not about the rejection of the system of universal ethics. "Rather what Derrida demonstrates is that the two equal and imperative duties to which we are required to respond, produce a tension: a paradox… not resolved by a simple decision or choice between the two… that exposes the… inherent violence of, every choice or decision." Thus, the moral is about morality itself. Morality and ethics are paradoxically constituted by the irresponsible, which is our absolute responsibility, and entails an inevitable and unjustifiable sacrifice. We must be irresponsible in order to be absolutely responsible.

While Derrida believes that ethical principles are transcendental, he also recognises the violence of this transcendence and the need to challenge it from an empirical standpoint. His focus is on a system of ethics of good as opposed to one of evil. Derrida is a tad ambiguous about how his system of ethics balances the Kantian ethical absolute and the infinite number of empirical variations based on the context of the ethical situations. Deconstruction is not some kind of alternative ethical system or theory. Derrida holds firm that the deconstructive experience is a responsibility in and of itself. The deconstructionist is able to question ethics, politics, and any other generalising and universalising system of thought, thereby showing not only a responsibility in itself but also making it possible to derive a more renewed understanding of ethics. Thus, we cannot posit deconstruction to be right or wrong from an ethical standpoint. What it does do however is questions the need, desire, and belief in a permanent truth, be it God, or any ethical system that can be believed in and followed

from a perspective of general rules and codes of conduct. There is a very real and plausible need for moral decisions followed by concrete action. But we have to agree and accept that deconstruction can only come about when we believe in the ultimate purity of moral standards, and the need to make such decisions and actions a reality in daily life, and then move on from there.

Derridean Relevance in Today's World

Derrida questions the very essence of morality. What is the ethical nature of ethics itself? What is its responsibility? What is the very question that we are questioning in the case of ethics? While these questions are urgent, they remain unanswered without a general response, other than one which is linked specifically to the answer that is being adhered to at that particular time by the system. What governs Derrida's writings and thoughts on this whole dichotomy of responsibility and irresponsibility is that an ethical relationship is unique and singular each time. We should not simply conform to the diktats of duty. We should be making these decisions uniquely in each singular instance.

For most postmodernists, ethics is viewed as doomed because they look at it as a branch of philosophy that inevitably focuses on logic, metaphysics, ontology, rules, categories, foundations, etc. These are all concepts that they want to deconstruct. But Derrida believes that understanding ethics and morality is essential to any deconstructive reading. Western philosophical tradition has usually been ontological in nature, which consists of reducing, and at times suppressing all forms of otherness so that they can be subsumed into a universal and general concept that is the same for all. This resistance of the other is conceived to be of an ethical nature as the other looks to keep its own unique identity. Postmodernist thinkers believe it to be ethical to resist the defining of the ethical in terms of an idealised system of norms, rules, and laws. There are no theoretical justifications for why these general ethical rules exist. Ethical decisions should be made without the articulation of pre-established criteria. The goal of ethical discourse is to help us understand our social reality as it exists around us, and plan for its future positively. Derrida argues that deconstruction is a quest for openness to the other, from the standpoint of the other as victims of history, in the realms of both social realities and thought.

Thus, when looking at the paradox of general responsibility and absolute responsibility, we have to decide the side we choose. Also, choosing either side will lead to violence against the other, no matter how uncertain or ambiguous the decision is. Derrida believes that we all function and operate in a kind of economy of this violence stemming from the choices guided by responsibility. What does this mean? It means that there can never be a non-violent ethics or responsibility. Choosing one means we

have to tear down the other, either in thought or action. Our decision and response cannot be calculated in advance. This leads to prefabrication, which is how the prescriptive and universalised systems gain applicability over time and across all contexts. Making unique ethical decisions means being accountable, and being absolutely responsible for our responses, something that generalised ethical systems cannot do. Thus, deconstruction is positive. This is its absolute responsibility. It is an ethical relationship with a difference.

Derridean ethics demands that we have something that is outside of us, within us. In this spirit, self-affirmation cannot happen without the affirmation of the other. Ethics cannot be absolute because when we move to that extreme, the hedonism undermines itself by adopting abstract principles. Ethics can function only if it allows the other to be distinct and different from the subject. This happens in a spirit of generosity. The other cannot thrive in an ethical relationship of indebtedness. The ethical act, the absolute responsibility, and the sacrifice does not require an equivalent in return. We have to follow concrete relations with the actual other in ethics. A mere theory does not make it right. Complete fulfilment is not possible without positivity toward the other through hospitality and friendship. Separation of the individuals for Derrida is the end of humanity because ethics is everywhere and moving forward is impossible without acknowledging that responsibility in both thought and action.

An important element to keep in mind when reading Derridean ethics is that his focus isn't on the rules. It isn't about a system of ethics. Derrida takes everyday concepts that affect human life like responsibility, justice, hospitality, friendship, forgiveness, etc., and analyses them through the rose-tinted glasses of deconstruction. The main focus is the relationship with the other. That relationship is studied and dissected through the myriad way in which we interact with our fellow humans, starting from a basic empathetic responsibility towards another person to the concept of mourning the death of a loved one. What is studied is whether or not an ethical relationship is possible. The very act of Derrida's deconstruction is done in the context of themes and aporias, that is, in relationship with the other. Rather than espousing another theory about the nature of the world, deconstruction distorts already existing narratives to reveal the underlying hierarchies and dichotomies. Derrida's entire premise for deconstruction is based on the principle that dualisms are dualisms and dichotomies are undoubtedly present in the works of various philosophers and writers. On its own, it does not stand alone. It always functions in the context of something else. The foundation is not a single unified self but one that is divisible between oneself and oneself as 'the Other'.

The relevance of the Derridean way of looking at things continues even to this day. His work, in its broadest context, pervades our understanding of our present intellectual, cultural, and political situations. It is rigorous and provocative, exact, and experimental. He is relevant to this movement because his work can be read in a way

that supports any central idea to be studied. It is very difficult to read Derrida in the same way his work was read at the height of his popularity. However, his work cannot be reduced to the postmodern relativism for which it has been taken in the past. It has in some way transcended the Husserlian way of looking at things. People have started to read him more and more carefully. His rigorous grounding in the French phenomenological tradition makes him an excellent candidate to teach us about the conflict between transcendentalism and historicism that is visible today, along with the widespread reading of his works through the eyes of relativism today.

Derrida endorses the interpretation of knowledge and understanding in the 21st Century from the viewpoint of the other, the subaltern way of looking at things. His "context" of philosophical and scientific knowledge lay emphasis on the history of human civilisation, without which we cannot exist. His writings have reshaped how many people think and see the world. Today's *'woke'* culture is very much an expression of the Derridean style of thinking. Derrida in the modern-day context could be seen as the conscience keeper of society in general. He is like the student in class who keeps asking questions that baffle even the most knowledgeable of teachers. His method of deconstruction can be viewed as a modern-day take on the Socratic Method. While Socrates aimed to get to the absolute truth by dissecting a topic, Derrida focuses on the person and the method. He looks at the answer as a by-product of his process. The aim of engaging in the Derridean style of philosophy is to peel back the way we look at things subjectively. With our lives in disarray from the pandemic, we are looking for answers. Derrida does not provide them, he merely supplies a method that reminds us that rather than looking within for the answer, we can find it by looking within ourselves, in relationship with the other. Our attempt at finding answers is like thinking out loud, or making a list of pros and cons when deciding on something.

Derrida's deconstruction becomes more focused depending on the topic being dissected. When we look at morality or ethics through his process, we could posit that for him the bigger picture could be achieved by focussing on the smaller one. A lot of the Derridean talk on ethics is focussed on the simultaneity and paradox of themes and not the system of ethics itself. We could claim that by being singular in our focus on doing the right thing concerning a single other, the positive effect of our action increases exponentially with regard to society in general. It is like that attitude of doing something good for a stranger in need, from a completely altruistic point of view, and then asking them to do the same to another person in need, and so forth. By denying that an absolute is possible, Derrida paves the way for it to naturally happen in small ways, having a greater impact. Thus, large absolute concepts like justice, equality, freedom, peace, etc., are never fully attainable. They are attainable when we look at them as singulars in the context of the other person. Each of these singular actions, via their success, leads to a plurality that then gets categorised. The same holds for ethics and morality. Thus,

we are building and destroying ethics at the same time, a task that will never be fully completed on a grand scale but is being achieved in individual cases. None present themselves as to particulars that would essentially communicate with the universal. Each can only be resolved by ignoring the example or the exemplarity of the example. It is a question of the ethics of that particular example, and not of ethics in general.

Derrida and the COVID-19 Pandemic

As we experience the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has been going on for over a year, we can deconstruct Derrida's ideas on a wide variety of topics. The management of the pandemic has seen tremendous success among groups, communities, and societies that have understood the context of responsibility of hospitality, law, and justice to the other. It is common in many Asian countries for people to wear masks when they are ill, especially when they have a common cold. So, people did not need to be coaxed or forced to wear masks or follow the protocols to slow the spread of the pandemic. Most Asians complied readily, early, and widely. Taiwan provided close monetary support to patients with Covid-19 and people with whom they had come into contact, making sure health recommendations were being followed. In New Zealand, Prime Minister Jacinda Arden exemplified empathetic and clear communication, which greatly increased the people's willingness to cooperate with the authorities thereby helping the country bring the pandemic under control very early. The Danish government made sure employees in private companies continued to be employed by compensating a large chunk of their salaries from its coffers. Finland focussed on its strong media literate policies to counter fake news, by partnering with social media influencers and using their reach to pass on important information. South Africa also introduced an alert public messaging system to help the government communicate effectively during lockdowns. The German Chancellor Angela Merkel also focussed on effective communication thereby showing patience and discipline in efficiently handling the pandemic.

However, the pandemic has also undermined the distinctions between individuals and the collective. The lines between walls, borders, limits, and individual autonomy have blurred. This can be a problem because these boundaries demarcate our personal responsibilities and freedoms. This crisis also becomes an excuse for the ideological and political discourses to carry out harmful activities such as vilifying certain groups as responsible for the pandemic or even clamping down on freedoms through laws passed without proper procedure, police brutality of vulnerable communities, etc. There appears to be a threat to what we thought we knew about our moral responsibilities to other people. This is not the same in every country. Those with

a deeper social welfare ethos have weathered the pandemic better. But we can detect unconscious demand for freedom along with our responsibility towards the other. Our dependence on others can be highlighted by the fact that our individual actions can make other people sick. The same individual actions can also help save lives, especially with regard to following the protocols put in place and taking the vaccine. Thus, there is all the more need to defend the insistence that we are each not only responsible to ourselves and autonomous but also obligated to do what is potentially good and life-saving for the other. Thus, deconstruction is exactly the analytical tool needed. For Derrida, the onus is on us to be absolutely responsible. We have to be careful by taking into account without relativism the unique, singular historical situation in which we find ourselves. It is at this moment that we can go beyond the interpretation of freedom, or lack thereof, as it is seen during this pandemic as defined by governments. The pandemic opens the door to a different interpretation of freedom, showing us a more plausible and real view of the world around us. Our responsibility is to decide how to strategically orient the deconstruction of the issues we are facing. This analysis makes us aspire to change things insofar as it exposes the excluded other. It also shows us how the interpretation has been naturalized, leaving the rest up to us.

The greater ideal of democracy and the concept of people as a unit has been deconstructed into decentralised units, with a focus on the local and individual contexts. This leads to a better understanding and handling of the situation in real time. Each person has been recognised as the individual unit that needs attention and focus, different from the other. While the laws and resolutions have been passed as generalisations, the implementation is left to interpretation based on the context of the situation. An oversimplification is that the person's need is prioritised and attended to, on a case-by-case basis, which gradually amounts to successful management of the situation as a whole. The same could be applied to any ethico-political movement at any given time at any given place, be it about climate change, people's right to protest, police brutality, draconian laws, etc. From Greta Thunberg's sit-out outside her country's parliament building to raise awareness on climate change, to the wall of shoes built by a Turkish artist to protest the rise in domestic violence deaths in Turkey, to the "A Rapist in Your Path" song, or pink pussy hats or The Handmaid's Tale-style scarlet cloaks to protest systemic violence against women – each of these is a context-based issue that is dealt with in an inherent Derridean style of questioning the absolute while building up to the tempo of a mass viral and global movement of gigantic proportion.

"A philosopher is always someone for whom philosophy is not given, someone who in essence must question the self about the essence and destination of philosophy. And who reinvents it." In a similar vein, Derrida attempts to show us how ambiguous ethics and morality are. He views deconstruction which is essentially an interrogation of philosophical texts and re-reading them to understand them more uniquely to be

ethical in nature. His works have been constantly challenged in their ability to explain the significance of ethical thought. This makes us wonder if Derrida's discourse on deconstruction possesses any ethical value. If it does, then in his own language, we can even appraise deconstruction itself from an ethical standpoint. Derrida's main apprehension about ethics has been a collective fervour and generalisation of the theme of ethics. This leads to the danger of ethics becoming a totalising system, an absolute, that vehemently demands adherence and fealty that turns something that is supposed to be a set of flexible guidelines for living our lives into dogma. This dogmatic approach forces all forms of ethical discourse to conform to the language of those in power, marginalising the other. Derrida's work is still misunderstood, misinterpreted, accused, critiqued, and reviled. It is also defended and revered. The beauty of his work is that it branches out into topics as diverse as law, architecture, painting, language, and literature apart from philosophy and ethics. In keeping with the political temper of the age, it is frequently used to support legitimate ideologies that cater to the needs of the oppressed against subversion by political and ideological agendas of both the left and right. "Jacques Derrida is not an "ethical" philosopher. Which is to say, he does not expound a theory of ethics with respect to articulating a "philosophy of action" or a way of being-in-the-world. And yet, Derrida has always been concerned with ethics as the responsibility we bear to recognize the difference of the other."

References

Anderson, Nicole, ***Derrida: Ethics Under Erasure*** **(London, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012).**

Colebrook, Claire, (Ed.), ***Jacques Derrida: Key Concepts*** **(London; New York, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2015).**

Derrida, Jacques, & Trifonas, Peter Pericles (Translated and Edited), ***Ethics, institutions and the Right to Philosophy*** **(Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2002).**

Derrida, Jacques, ***The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*** **(Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1992).**

Evans, J. Claude, ***Strategies of Deconstruction: Derrida and the Myth of the Voice*** **(Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1991).**

Gutting, Gary, ***French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*** **(New York, Cambridge University Press, 2001).**

Haddad, Samir, ***Derrida and the Inheritance of Democracy*** **(Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2013).**

Powell, Jason, *Derrida: A Biography* (London, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006).

Chang, Briankle G., Feng, Xuefeng, Gong, Yuan, Lankala, Srinivas, and Lu, Li, *Forum: COVID-19 Dispatches (Cultural Studies, Critical Methodologies, Vol. 21(1))* (Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 2020).

Fuh, Shyh-jen, *Derrida and the Problem of Ethics (Concentric: Studies in English Literature and Linguistics, 29.1)* (Taipei, National Taiwan Normal University, 2003).

Gaon, Stella, *Lies in the Time of COVID (Derrida Today 13.2)* (https://www.euppublishing.com/doi/abs/10.3366/drt.2020.0231).

Harris, Verne, and Westoby, Peter, *Community development 'yet-to-come' during and post the COVID-19 pandemic: from Derrida to Zuboff (Community Development Journal, Vol. 55, No. 4)* (Oxford, Oxford University Press and Community Development Journal, 2020).

Ryu, Honglim, *Ethics of Ambiguity and Irony: Jacques Derrida and Richard Rorty (Human Studies, Vol. 24, No. 1/2, Intertexts: Philosophy, Literature and the Human Sciences in Korea)* (New York, Springer, 2001). Online Sources

https://iep.utm.edu/derrida/ (Accessed on 10/04/2021)

https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/derrida/ (Accessed on 10/04/2021)

https://www.eurozine.com/contradiction-transcendence-and-subjectivity-in-derridas-ethics/ (Accessed on 10/04/2021)

https://www.wsj.com/articles/which-countries-have-responded-best-to-covid-19-11609516800 (Accessed on 10/04/2021)

Ravenshaw Journal of Philosophy, Vol. VIII
November 2022 76-84
ISSN: 2395-3209

The Role of Personal Pronouns and Proper Names in Hume's Theory of Self: A Critical Study

C. Anjaneyulu
Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy, University of Hyderabad

Abstract

Personal pronouns (*I, myself, ourself*, *my mind,* and so on) and proper names (*being, person*, *Hume,* and so on) play a significant role in our day-to-day communications. We could say that leading our life without using these sorts of terms is difficult. More importantly, these sorts of terms have a philosophical significance in dealing with the theories of self and personal identity. Many theories, for instance, Descartes' theory, use personal pronouns to indicate a simple and individual entity, namely, self. David Hume, on the one hand, explicitly rejected Descartes' view of self that promotes self as a simple and individual substance in which all perceptions inhere. On the other hand, he promotes a theory which holds that in our introspection we never find a simple and individual self except short-lived perceptions. That is to say, he promotes a no-self theory. On the other hand, he uses personal pronouns such as "I," "my mind," "myself," "our perceptions," and so on whenever he wants to describe the notion of self and related concepts. This sort of treatment would naturally create confusion in general readers' mind about his intention to use these terms in his theory of self. The paper examines Hume's actual intention of using proper names and personal pronouns in his theory of self.

Keywords: Personal pronouns, proper names, self, no-self theory, perceptions, simple and individual, I, my mind.

Introduction

Personal pronouns such as I, we, myself, ourselves, you, and so forth and proper names such as Being, Anjan, person, and so on play a significant role in human life. They help to indicate one's own or others' actions or any other related things. For example, a person often uses personal pronouns to express something about him/herself; for instance, "I am doing research work." We introduce our friends or colleagues while using their proper names. For instance, "he is Mr. Anjan." We use these sorts of linguistic terms with others in our day-to-day communication. We could say that the denial of using these terms is difficult. More importantly, these sorts of terms have a philosophical significance in dealing with the theories of self and personal identity.

It is generally considered that the concept of self is a very complicated subject. One can see various theories on this concept in Eastern as well as in Western philosophy. Many theories uphold the view that there is self that exists without any support and it is simple and individual. All our perceptions inhere in it. The best example of this sort of view is Rene Descartes theory of self. He argues that "I am" a thinking substance that is a simple and distinct entity from a body. For him, the body is an extended substance. Moreover, he argues, "my soul" makes "I am what I am" by reflecting, reasoning, understanding, judging, feeling, and so forth. It seems clear that Descartes used the terms "I" and "my soul" to refer to some entity. Following Descartes, philosophers like Locke and Leibniz also used those sorts of terms to refer to some entity that is simple, individual, and a thinking substance. These thinkers explicitly used the personal pronouns to refer to the underlying principle that holds all perceptions in it. To put it more clearly, the role of personal pronouns in understanding the notion of self and its related concepts is not less important. However, there are other sorts of theories. Some theories argue that we never get a Cartesian view of self in our introspection except short-lived perceptions. According to them, the notion of self is a "fictitious" entity. We recognize this when we introspect into "ourselves." The Humean and Buddhist views of self are the best examples of this sort of theory. The interesting point is that these theories openly make use of personal pronouns such as "I", "my mind", "myself", "ourselves" and so on while explicitly rejecting the idea of self. In particular, we can observe this kind of approach in Hume's theory of self that needs to be examined.

The principal objective of this paper is to understand the role of personal pronouns and proper names in Hume's philosophy of self. The road map of this paper is as follows: the first section discusses very briefly about Hume's arguments regarding the notion of self and general readers' confusion regarding his view of self; the second section deals with the role of "I" in Hume's predecessors' account of self; the third section presents three thinkers' objections to Hume's usage of personal pronouns as well as proper names in his theory of self; and the fourth section examines three prominent philosophers' counter arguments to the above sort of objection. Admitting the soundness

of the counter arguments, the paper concludes that Hume uses proper names and personal pronouns for only linguistic purpose.

1. David Hume on Self: A Brief Outline

David Hume, in many places of the book *A Treatise of Human Nature* (hereafter *Treatise*), explicitly makes the following observations. In the first book of the *Treatise,* he holds, "when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception … I never catch *myself* at any time without a perception" (Hume, 1978, p.252). In the second book of the *Treatise,* he writes, "this object is self, or that succession of related ideas and impressions, of which we have an intimate memory and consciousness" (ibid., p.277). In the *Appendix* to the *Treatise*, he claims, "When I turn my reflexion on *myself*, I never can perceive this *self* without some one or more perceptions" (ibid., p.634). Even in the book *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion,* Hume expresses the same kind of opinion regarding the notion of self. He holds, "What is the soul of man? A composition of various faculties, passions, sentiments, ideas; united, indeed, into oneself or person, but still distinct from each other" (Hume, 1849, p.246).

Even though Hume expressed the notion of self with different terminology, the clear crux of Hume's statements is very simple: that we have no idea of the self except momentary perceptions. The idea of the self we get in our memory and consciousness as an object of some perceptions. In other words, he promotes no-self theory that discards the notion of simple and individual self beyond our perceptions.

Confusion: Does Hume Really Discard the Self?

However, one could easily get confused from the aforementioned Humean treatment of certain terms. The reason for the confusion is that, on the one hand, Hume is insisting that we have no "idea or impression of the self" and, on the other hand, he is repeatedly using the terms—personal pronouns—such as "I," "myself," "ourselves," "us," "our," and the like. The confusion from these two points is what this "I" is then. What is his intention to use these sorts of terms if they are not referring to any substance like self? How could one understand these sorts of terms when one admits Hume's theory of self which holds that it is nothing but a bundle? How could one respond to people who understand these sorts of terms differently?

It is a fact that Hume's frequent usage of these terms to explain his theory of self gives a good scope to many thinkers to develop defending or offending arguments on this subject. However, before engaging with offending and defending arguments, a brief examination of Hume's predecessors' theories of self would help in understanding the role of personal pronouns in a better way.

2. A Brief Look at the Term "I" in Hume's Predecessors' Theories of Self

Rene Descartes, in the few passages from his classic book *Meditations*, clearly upholds the claim that man is an amalgamation of two substances, namely, mind (soul) and body. He further claims, "I am a thinking thing" and "it is certain that I [my soul by which I am what I am], is entirely and absolutely distinct from my body and can exist without it" (Descartes, 1911, p.190). We can assume a point from Descartes' view that the term "I" in the statement is clearly used as the metaphysical thinking substance.

Like Descartes, many thinkers such as John Locke, G.W. Leibniz consider the soul as a thinking substance. For instance, Locke argues that by having clear and distinct ideas of body and mind, "we have as much reason to be satisfied with our Notion of immaterial Spirit, as with our Notion of Body, and the existence of the one, as well as the other" (Locke, 1975, p.193) even though "the substance of the spirit is unknown to us; and so is the substance of Body, equally unknown to us" (ibid., 192-193). Also, Leibniz argues that the "sense of I proves moral or personal identity" (Leibniz, 1981, p.236) and it is possible "by preservation of the same soul" (ibid., p.233). From these two thinkers' views, we can assume that they use the terms "I" or "ourselves" to refer to a metaphysical substance which holds all perceptions in it.

Unlike these thinkers, Hume, as we have seen, argues that we have no idea of any substance that is simple and individual. We have only successive perceptions. This is what we get in our introspection. Therefore, he concludes, what we call "ourselves" is nothing but a bundle of perceptions.

Even though there are various noteworthy objections to Hume's theory of self, objections related to Hume's usage of the personal pronouns in his theory of self are very significant. We shall reflect over some of the objections in the following section.

3. Three Thinkers' Criticism: What is Hume's Intention to use Personal Pronouns/Proper Names in his Theory of Self?

Firstly, Thomas Reid's question on Hume's bundle theory is as follows: "If the mind be anything else than impressions and ideas, it must be a word without a meaning. The mind, therefore according to this philosopher, is a word which signifies a bundle of perceptions…. But who is the I that has this memory and consciousness of a succession of ideas and impressions?" (Reid, 1846, p.444). From this argument, Reid seems to argue that if Hume committed to bundle theory then his usage of the term "mind" is merely a word. If that is the case, he asks, who is this "I" that has the "memory and consciousness" of ideas and impressions?

Secondly, J. B. Merian asks Hume a significant and interesting question that, "What is the meaning in your mind and your mouth of these personal pronouns which you cannot prevent yourself from continually using, and without which you would not

know how either to think or express your thoughts *me, I, we*, etc.?" and moreover "You consider yourself then a person. And by what right do you assume this personality, phenomenon [perception] or bundle of phenomenon that you are?" (Laursen et al., 1997, p.190).

Thirdly, Terence Penelhum's objection to Hume is also noteworthy. His objection is related to Hume's usage of proper names. He proclaims that Hume's "diagnosis" relating to the notion of self and its perfect identity is wrong. The reason is that if we acknowledge Hume's view, then it implies a diminutive alteration is adequate to judge a person as exactly a different one. If that were the case, there would be a need to use a different "proper name" for every minute change that is observed in the object. It is nothing more than creating a threat to language usage. Additionally, he argues, a requirement takes place for an outright modification in "concepts and syntax of our language," which is bizarre to think about. This we could recognise with "a little effort of imagination" (Penelhum, 1966, p.224).

The above objections make the point very clear that if Hume could not admit the existence of the self and its continuity over time then his usage of personal pronouns and proper names implies nothing but his theory of self is a mistaken theory.

However, there are some noteworthy counter arguments to these sorts of objections. The arguments suggest that using terms such as me, I, ourselves, myself, Hume, and so forth are not a considerable objection to Hume. Regarding the objection to Hume's theory, the counter arguments of Nelson Pike, Galen Strawson, and James Giles are worth mentioning that we shall reflect over in the subsequent section.

4. Three Defending Views: Hume uses Personal Pronouns/Proper Names merely for a Practical Purpose not Referring for Metaphysical Substance

Firstly, Nelson Pike, in his article Hume's Bundle Theory: A Limited Defense, argues that make use of personal pronouns is not a considerable objection to Hume's theory of mind. According to Pike, when Hume uses of statements like "I see a chair", the statements are misunderstood by some people, for they have taken for granted that the intact intention of Hume's idea of mind is to identify the object referred to by the pronoun "I" in those kinds of statements. But, Pike argues that such an explanation is not an ample explanation. He argues, indeed, that Hume has nothing to say straightly about the meaning of the pronoun "I". Hume's intention to use the pronouns in the statements is nothing more than to analyze the mind. To put it more clearly, Hume, while using I statements, tries to explain what occurs in the mind at the present moment. Therefore, Pike states, we can reduce "I" statements like "I see a chair" into statements like the "visual perception" of the chair is taking place in "my mind" at this instant.

Moreover, Pike argues that expressions like "my mind" designate nothing more than a compilation of perceptions and the relations amongst them (Pike, 1967, p.162).

Secondly, Galen Strawson's defensive argument is also noteworthy. Just like Pike, Strawson, in the book *The Evident Connexion: Hume on Personal Identity,* argues that using personal pronouns while analyzing the mind would not be a problem to Hume's theory of self. According to Strawson (36), terms like "ourselves" or "our successive experiences" to interpret a "whole human being" for the practical purpose is nothing wrong. This sort of reading doesn't presuppose any long-lasting "inner subject"; rather it suggests a "persisting human being". More importantly, Strawson makes an effort to clarify the role of expressions like "our successive experiences" in Hume's theory of self. He argues that since Hume has dealt with the notion of personal identity through an empirical perspective, he makes use of the consecutive perceptions in that outstanding framework. In such specific cases, while "saying" what the expressions like "our successive experiences" could do; one can elucidate things more accurately. This means, in his view, that these sorts of expressions are used to explain how things come into view to the subject—a "short-lived" subject—of any experience. This "short-lived" subject itself has a strong feeling that it is a continuing self and "has and has had many successive experiences" (Strawson, 2013, p.36). We can clearly comprehend Strawson's argument with the following example that a subject S_1, having an experience at the time t_1, has a strong feeling that it's an enduring self and has several past experiences. In the same way, a subject S_2, having an experience at the time t_2, has a strong feeling that it's an enduring self and has several past experiences. Indeed, even though the two subjects are logically not dependent, they have the strong belief that they are one and the same subject. So to say, in Strawson's view, we can investigate things that are taking place in our mind more precisely by using expressions like "our successive" perceptions. On the grounds of these arguments, he suggests that using these sorts of phrases would not be a considerable objection to Hume's theory of self.

Lastly, James Giles's rejoinder to this sort of specific objection is worth mentioning. Interestingly, Giles makes an effort to support Hume's views while making use of the Buddhist way of using proper names and personal pronouns. We can have a look at his arguments in the article The No-self Theory: Hume, Buddhism, and Personal Identity. Giles (185) says that there are two kinds of discourses according to Buddhist works: the "discourse of direct meaning" and the "discourse of indirect meaning". The first-mentioned elucidates the words of which meaning is clear whereas, the "discourse of indirect meaning" explains relating to the meaning that would be inferred from the former. To put it more clearly, in the second kind of discourse, words such as "self", or "I", or "Person" are generally used to designate some enduring entities. Giles argues that according to Buddha the words used in the later kind of discourse are mere

expressions. The designations are generally used in the world for practical purpose. Although we may employ such a class of words, we should not assume they essentially designate something. In fact, they are mere "grammatical devices". These sorts of expressions are merely inferred from the "discourse of direct meaning." Moreover, Giles (186) argues that Buddhism believes two levels of truths: "conventional" and "ultimate". Accordingly, there are two kinds of speeches: "conventional" and "ultimate". The terms such as "being", "person", "Hume" and so on are used as "conventional" kind of speech whereas the terms such as "categories", "elements", and "sense-bases" are used as "ultimate" kind of speech. For that reason, Giles argues that words that are used by mutual agreement are "true" because of worldly conformity. Based on mutual agreement, the use of words like "self", or "I" or any proper name is true at the "conventional level". Considering the Buddhist view of proper names and personal pronouns, Giles argues that thinking of proper names or personal pronouns referring to something is merely a simple confusion. We are confounded by our use of language. More importantly, Giles tries to show how that Descartes has become confused by his own language. Giles' response regarding Descartes' usage of the term "I" in the claim "I think, therefore I am" is as follows. "Descartes has become led astray by his own language for there is no need for the "I" in "I think" or "I doubt" to refer to anything." Giles argues that Descartes is aware of only thinking but not conscious of "I" that is doing the thinking. Hume and Buddha are aware of thinking just like Descartes but additionally Descartes thinks that the "I" is a separate entity that we can be aware of. Descartes' deduction is mistaken. Therefore, Giles concludes, "Descartes might just as well have said (and should have said if his concern was with ultimate rather than conventional truth) that there is thinking, therefore, there are thoughts. And such a deduction, if we may call it, does not suffice to prove the existence of an I" (Giles, 1993, p.188).

More importantly, Giles (184) argues that our observation of minute or considerable changes in an object or a person does not necessarily create a problem for language usage. According to him, it is evident in Hume's *Treatise* that Hume (258) explicitly stated that we could call a recreated church the same as its former "without breaching the property of language," although our postulation that the recreated church is the same as its former is merely an outcome of our faculty of imagination. Additionally, Giles shows in Hume's statement in the *Treatise* (262) that our arguments concerning the identity of successive objects are "merely verbal" if not the relations among the successive objects would give rise to some "principle of union" which is indeed a fictitious principle. Based on these two evidential claims, Giles concludes that our observation of a minute or considerable change would not create any problem for language usage. Our arguments regarding whether or not a renovated object is the same

is merely a difference of opinion about how the word "same" is used in these sorts of specific situations. In particular, Giles (184) argues that we use the word "same" in these sorts of circumstances merely on a "verbal or conventional level."

The above three defending views more or less are claiming the same point that Hume uses these terms only for the practical purpose based on mutual agreement. As grammatical devices these terms would help us to analyze the mind in a more accurate way. However, this does not mean that there is something that exists beyond our perceptions.

Even though Hume's careless usage of personal pronouns and proper names in his theory of self and personal identity without clearly explaining the proper role of them would confuse us, we could argue that the above three defending arguments would help us to understand Hume's actual intention to use them.

Conclusion

The discussion so far makes a few points clear. It is a fact that Hume's usage of personal pronouns and proper names in his theory of self while discarding the existence of self without perceptions would naturally create confusion in us. The principal reason we could understand is that Hume's carelessness in the usage of personal pronouns and proper names in his theory of self and personal identity without explaining their role. We could argue that this is one of the principal causes of raising objection to Hume's theory of self. We have seen a similar sort of objection that was raised by Reid, Merian, and Penelhum to Hume that his intention to use these sorts of terms is not clear. Also, we have examined three defending arguments. As Pike and Strawson argued, Hume might use these terms to analyze accurately what occurs in the mind when we see some object or think about some object. However, as they said, the terms designate nothing more than a bundle of perceptions. More importantly, Giles' response, while bringing a Buddhist view of using personal pronouns and proper names, is noteworthy. We could say that compared with Pike and Strawson, Giles's in-depth investigation of the problem is more useful in understanding Hume's intention. As he said, Hume might use these terms as grammatical devices. Therefore, as he suggested, for conventional purposes we can use these terms without any problem, but we should not get confused that these terms are designating some existing thing called a simple and individual self, which holds all perceptions in it. Though Hume shows carelessness regarding the role of personal pronouns and proper names in his theory of self, the three defending arguments would help us to understand Hume's intentions to use these sorts of terms.

References

Descartes, R. (1911). *The Philosophical Works of Descartes: Volume 1* (G.R.T. Ross & E.S. Haldane, Eds. & Trans.). Cambridge University Press.

Giles, J. (1993). The No-Self Theory: Hume, Buddhism, and Personal Identity. *Philosophy East and West*, 43(2), 175-200. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1399612

Hume, D. (1978). *A Treatise of Human Nature* (2nd ed.). L.A. Selby-Bigge & P. H. Nidditch, (Eds.). Clarendon Press.

——(1849). *Essays and Treatises on Various Subjects: With a Brief Sketch of the Author's Life and Writings to Which are Added Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion.* J.P. Mendum, 35 Washington Street. http://books.google.co.in>books

John Christian Laursen, Richard H. Popkin & Peter Briscoe. (1997). Hume in the Prussian Academy: Jean Bernard Mérian's "On the Phenomenalism of David Hume". *Hume Studies,* 23(1), 153-191. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228918871

Leibniz, G.W. (1981). *New Essays on Human Understanding* (P. Remnant & J. Bennett, Eds. & Trans.). Cambridge University Press.

Locke, J. (1975). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* P. Phemister (Ed.). Oxford University Press.

Penelhum, T. (1966). Hume on Personal Identity. In V. C. Chappell (Ed.), *Modern Studies in Philosophy: Hume* (pp.213-237). Anchor Books Double day &Company, INC. Garden City.

Pike, N. (1967). Hume's Bundle Theory of the Self: A Limited Defense. *American Philosophical Quarterly,* 4(2), 159-165. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20009239

Reid, T. (1846). *The Works of Thomas Reid, D.D.: Now Fully Collected With Selections From His Unpublished Letters.* D. Stewart (Ed.). Longman.

https://books.google.co.in › books

Strawson, G. (2013). *The Evident Connexion: Hume on Personal Identity.* Oxford University Press.

Ravenshaw Journal of Philosophy, Vol. VIII
November 2022 85-100
ISSN: 2395-3209

Personal Identity in relation to Value Theory and Moral Responsibility

Ngaineilam Haokip
Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Presidency University, Kolkata

Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to analyze Derek Parfit's theory on the relation between 'Reductionist approach' on Personal Identity to Value Theory and Moral Responsibility. We will be critically discussing Derek Parfit's *Reasons and Persons* (1984) in order to have a better understanding about the relationship. Parfit's account on Personal Identity and its relation with value theory is a radical approach and deserve a thorough analysis on the implications of agreeing with him. We would like to point out the moral implications of following Parfit's metaphysical account.Parfit's theory present us with a new perspective which has a profound impact on the accepted norms of our society. We would like to find out the changes that will follow in our understanding of value theory and moral responsibility if we are to agree with Parfit's approach. Further, we would like to find out if Parfit's suggestion is able to help us solve some of the problems on Personal Identity by connecting it with Value Theory and Moral Responsibility as suggested by him.

Keywords: Personal Identity, Moral Responsibility, Derek Parfit, Metaphysics, Value Theory, Reductionism.

Introduction

Philosophers have drawn the connection between Morality and Identity in two different ways: 1. Metaphysical theories about personal identity, that is, about what makes one the same person overtime, have important consequences for what ought to matter to a rational agent. And, 2. Understanding the concrete identities of persons - the social context and personal commitments that give life substance and meaning. The above two points are essential if moral philosophy is to address real human concerns. Another important question is how are metaphysical questions about personal identity supposed to bear on morality? The thought is that, what unifies a series of experiences into a single life illuminates what we are, and what we are helps determine how we ought to live. More broadly, it is natural to seek coherence in our metaphysical and moral views about persons. This pursuit of a comprehensive account has its danger: *"perhaps we will tailor a metaphysical view to fit our moral prejudices, or distort moral philosophy and judgment to fit a false metaphysics. But the pursuit has its attraction too: perhaps we will come to understand what we are and how we ought to live, in a single package"*. [1]

For John Locke, *person* is an amalgam of the actions for which that person can take responsibility, as one cannot take responsibility for what one cannot remember. So, Locke's sense of the moral role of the concept of person shapes his metaphysical account of personal identity. In Derek Parfit's terminology, identity requires that there be no branching. According to him, even in ordinary cases, what matters in survival is not identity but the obtaining of the right psychological relation with some future person. So, the relationship between personal identity and morality in general and moral responsibility in particular is based on what we value most. That is, for Parfit personal identity consists in the psychological connectedness and continuity of a person, which he calls '*Relation R*'[2]with the right kind of cause, and it is used in the widest term possible. And there is no further 'fact' apart from these. As the connectedness and continuity is more valuable, its relation with moral responsibility or morality will be different from those who insist in the importance of physical continuity – which will be discussed in detail later.

However, Parfit's view has been criticized on two accounts. The more straightforward criticism is that personal identity does consist in the holding of some 'further fact', that is, the existence of an unchanging soul cannot be rejected. The subtler one agrees with Parfit that some form of reductionism is correct, but disagrees with his permissive attitude towards the cause of relation Rand with his exclusively psychological reductionism. Another theory called 'The Concrete Identity Thesis' which is the second broad approach to connecting issues of morality and identity holds that, in order to see morality clearly we must see people as wholes. Understanding our moral lives might

require that our attention move back and forth between general features of persons and persons in their particularity. So, we cannot concentrate on single aspect of a person as Parfit does, that is, concentrating on psychological connectedness and continuity alone.

The connection between theories of personal identity and value theory is extremely important and has recently been highlighted by Philosophers. It has been argued by some philosophers that, on the correct theory of personal identity it is not identity that matters but the preservation of psychological relations such as memory and character.[3] According to their views, psychological relations can hold between one earlier person and two or more later persons. They can also hold to varying degrees, for example, I can acquire a more or less different character over a period of time/years. This view of what matters has implications for certain theories of punishment. For example, a now reformed criminal may deserve less or no punishment for the crimes of their earlier criminal self. Let us now go on to the detailed views of Derek Parfit on personal identity and its relation to value theory.

Derek Parfit's view on Personal Identity and Value Theory

Derek Parfit, in his well-known work *Reasons and Persons*(1984), has listed the questions that have to be asked about the nature of persons and of personal identity over time. These are: 1) what is the nature of a person? 2) What is it that makes a person at two different times one and the same person? 3) What is necessarily involved in the continued existence of each person over time? He also introduces a moral or value aspect to the discussion by adding: 4) what is in fact involved in the continued existence of each person over time? Here, an answer to the third question would be only a part of the answer to the fourth, since what is necessarily involved in the continued existence of a person need not exhaust what is in fact involved in it. Thus, being optimistic, for instance, is not necessarily involved in our survival, but it may well be part of what is in fact involved. The introduction of the moral or value dimension also opens up the distinction between the objective aspects of identity, those that a person may possess because of his or her biological and social location, and the subjective aspects, those that he or she may value or identify with.[4]

Psychological connectedness and Personal Identity

Parfit has proposed a concept of psychological connectedness that is more complex than the simple notion of the memory of past experience put forth by John Locke. So, according to Parfit, strong connectedness itself cannot be the criterion of identity. It is rather psychological continuity which is the criterion of personal identity. Psychological continuity can be maintained in two different ways:-

- In the narrow sense, psychological continuity can only have a normal cause, that is, I seem to remember having an experience only after it was suggested to me that I had that experience; I did not actually remember it in the normal way. It means that my apparent memory is not causally dependent on my past experiences but rather on the suggestion that I had that experience. In the narrow interpretation there is no psychological continuity here.
- In the wider sense, not only normal causes but any reliable causes, or any cause, is considered acceptable for maintaining psychological continuity, and hence for establishing personal identity. So, it will make a lot of difference to our idea of personal identity in the interpretation of the psychological criterion that is being accepted.

On the moral implications of the question of personal identity, there are two broad approaches called the 'Reductionist' and the 'Non-Reductionist'. Cutting through that debate is Derek Parfit's radical suggestion that what really matters is not personal identity but psychological continuity with any kind of cause. According to the Reductionists, personal identity involves the continued physical existence of enough of the brain and/or psychological continuity with the right kind of cause. No other 'further fact' exists or is needed in personal identity. However, Non-Reductionist holds that personal identity cannot be reduced to certain facts about physical or psychological continuity. They insist that the identity of a person must involve a further fact. In other words, we can say, at the least, something beyond the sum total of elements comprising the body and the brain of the person. Here, Parfit accepts the Reductionist's account, but goes one step further by suggesting that, personal identity involves nothing apart from psychological connectedness and/or continuity, with any kind of cause.

Also, according to Parfit, no matter how we define physical and psychological continuity, the possibility to imagine situations in which personal identity will be indeterminate and undecidable remains according to the reductionist criteria. So, he concludes by saying that what matters is not personal identity but continuity of a person in some form, that is, the person's survival. For example, after a person is cloned, even if the original is destroyed, nothing would be lost. The reason being whether or not the person survives in his or her original body, the physical and psychological continuity would be maintained just as well in the cloned one. Parfit's suggestion has been considered too radical a proposal that goes against the grain of conventional assumptions. One of the objections is by Peter Unger[5], who asks us to imagine how he would feel if it was suggested to him that his wife Susan be replaced by an exact duplicate. He says that like most people he would refuse to accept any such proposal. He says, *"Evidently, I do not just care about the very many highly specific qualities my wife has…Quite beyond any of that, I care about the one particular person who is my wife; I care about Susan and, as well, I care about the continuance of my particular relationship with*

her."[6] Therefore, according to Unger, what matters in survival is not just physical and psychological continuity in some manner or form but the identity of the particular individual that we value and identify with.

Further, in the third chapter of *Reasons and Persons*, Parfit deals with the topic of personal identity. He describes two conceptions of persons[7]i.e., the natural and dominant conception and the alternative reductionist conception. In the natural and dominant conception, persons are 'separately existing entities' (for example, immaterial Cartesian Egos), only contingently linked to their physical bodies. Here, the identity over time of Egos is necessarily determinate. In the alternative Reductionist conception, the existence of a person 'just involves' the existence of a brain, body, and stream of mental and physical events, and the identity over time of a person can sometimes be vague or indeterminate. One of Parfit's central claims is that if we relinquish Cartesianism and embrace Reductionism, the identity and non-identity of persons will matter less. What matters will be surviving as some future person, through any kinds of cause. Meaning, if Reductionism is true, personal identity is not, in itself, an important relation.

Reductionism and Identity

Parfit goes on to say that, we are naturally disposed to accept a 'Non-Reductionist' account of personal identity. According to this account, persons are 'separately existing entities', whose existence is all-or-nothing and does not consist in the holding of certain relations among mental events and bodies, and whose identity is perfectly determinate. Unity of consciousness is explained in terms of 'ownership' of different experiences by such a separately existing entity. And it is the continued identity of the entity of this sort that 'matters', and this is the focus of the special concern one has for one's future existence and well-being. But while this is what we tend to believe, according to Parfit, it is not what we should believe.

Parfit champions a 'Reductionist' account according to which we are not such separately existing entities. Personal identity consists in facts that can be described 'impersonally', more specifically in terms of 'non-branching psychological continuity and connectedness.' We have psychological continuity when a person remembers his earlier deeds and experiences, or when an intention formed at one time is fulfilled at a later time, or when there is persistence of psychological traits over time. Psychological continuity consists in there being a chain of overlapping psychological connections. It is partly because psychological connectedness varies in degree that there can be cases in which personal identity is indeterminate.

In other words, what makes it rational for me to have a special concern for my well-being at a future time is the fact that my present states stand to my future states in the relations of psychological continuity and connectedness that are constitutive of

personal identity. But in so far as the holding of these relations justifies future concern, it would do so even when, because of 'branching', the relations do not constitute identity. Thus, if I split into two people (as in David Wiggins's[8] example in which the hemisphere of someone's brain are separated and transplanted into different bodies), and my present stage is equally connected with the future stages of both, I should have the same concern for their future well-being as I should have for my own in ordinary cases, even though strictly speaking I can be identical with neither. And even in cases in which the future person is myself, I can be justified in having less concern in some cases (for example when the future person-stage is temporally remote) because the degree of connectedness is less. This can justify treating different parts of a person's life as if they were different persons. Thus, Parfit thinks, *"'boundaries between persons' have less moral significance than they are usually suppose to have (and, Parfit thinks, than they would have if the Non-Reductionist view were true), or, on an extreme version of the view, none at all."*[9]

Parfit's Value Theory

Parfit argues that *"what matters to survival is not identity, and further, that the concept of identity does not apply to persons."*[10]That is, for him, it is not important to have personal identity for us to survive. It is the psychological continuity of a person that is important in the long run, even if there is no physical continuity to support it. This was shown by Parfit in the fission or branching example that he had given, in which he tried to prove that branching do not allow us to have any kinds of personal identity[11]. Another point that Parfit tries to put forth is that, if we try to cling to the idea that personal identity is important then we will not be able to have any theory of identity which will be able to withstand the re-duplication theory. It is the re-duplication argument that stands against any kinds of identity theory. [12]

Further, Parfit goes on to show the un-importance of personal identity by giving a thought-experiment of a 'split-brain' patients whose upper-hemisphere connections were cut-off to cure epilepsy.[13] Here, evidence from such patients suggests that consciousness divides into two independent streams, that is, a divided mind in a single body. This example moves on to a situation where *X's* brain is divided into two and each hemisphere is placed in two new bodies, say those of *Y* and *Z*. The result is that, both *Y* and *Z* are psychologically continuous with *X*, in other words, they have the same memories, beliefs, characters, etc., and partly physically continuous too. However, Parfit argues that, the above thought-experiment is unable to answer the question 'How does *X* survive?' To say '*X* survive as one of the two (i.e., *Y* or *Z*)', will give rise to another question 'which of the resulting person is *X* exactly?' which it fails to answer. On the other hand, to say '*X* survives as both' will mean that one person can have two minds and two bodies simultaneously. Thus, the most plausible answer appears to be: '*X* does not survive' as *X* is not identical to either *Y* or *Z*. Thus, this *"shows that it is not identity*

that matters, but what matters is Relation R: psychological connectedness and/or psychological continuity, with the right kind of cause."[14]So, in case of division, he regards the question 'how does *X* survive?' as an empty question. That is, these types of questions do not have any meaningful answers, and it does not matter even if there is no answer to it.

Thus, Parfit says, *"Which is the relation that is important? Is what matters personal identity, or relation R?...If we believe that we are separately existing entities, we could plausibly claim that identity is what matters…But we have sufficient evidence to reject this view. If we are Reductionists, we cannot plausibly claim that, of these two relations, it is identity that matters. On our view, the fact of personal identity just consists in the holding of relation R, when it takes a non-branching form. If personal identity just consists in this other relation, this other relation must be what matters."*[15]He agrees that it will be a bit difficult to accept his theory that, 'personal identity is not what matters' on its own. But, if we consider it with the case of division where a person's brain divide into two and transplanted to two different people, the problems disappear. Also, he considers the case of division to be better than death as division will enable him to do things which he cannot do as a single person or a dead person. For example, *"If I have two strong but incompatible ambitions, division provides a way of fulfilling both, in a way that would gladden each resulting person."*[16]

For Parfit, what we value in ourselves and others are not the continued existence of the same brain or body. But, we value the various relations between ourselves and others, whom we love, our commitments, emotions, memories, and other psychological features. So, if some later person is R-related to me as I am now, it does not matter whether this person has my present brain and body. It will not matter even if my brain was replaced with an exact duplicate. This will be as good as ordinary survival. For example, in the case of tele-transportation I know exactly what is going to happen. I am fully prepared for the transitions of the exact condition of my cells on Earth to my replica on, say, Mars. The scanner on Earth destroys my brain and body at the time of recording the exact condition, but I still survive as my replica. And this is as good as ordinary survival for Parfit.[17]

So, according to Parfit, we need not worry about whether our body will survive or not. Survival of our psychological continuity in any form is more valuable than having the same body or brain. If the future 'me' is psychologically continuous with me, then it will not matter whether she has the same body or brain as me or not. Against Bernard Williams claim that, 'loving a person is loving a particular body' is true even if it is misleading; Parfit argues that, if loving someone means loving a particular body, then *"on the death of one identical twin, this obsession could be transferred, without any grief, to the other twin's body."*[18] But this is not the case in our normal relationships. If two people are in love then they have shared histories which cannot be shared by any

third person, not even an identical twin. However, Parfit holds that his view is compatible with Nagel's imagined alternative to the actual world - in which people are replicated, but only in one-one form, where there are never two existing Replicas of one person. Just as Parfit's claim that Relation R never takes a branching form, so in Nagel's alternative world Relation R traces lines through many different bodies, but never takes a branching form. Thus, in such a world ordinary love would survive unchanged which is what fundamentally matters here.

Thus, according to Derek Parfit, what is most valuable for our survival in future is not our body or brain. The continuity of relation R of our psychological attributes is deemed as of utmost importance in order to have a continuous being in future. His view is different from those of other thinkers who had accepted the psychological continuity criterion of personal identity in many ways. Unlike most of the philosophers who accepts psychological continuity, Parfit holds that relation R with 'any cause' is acceptable as a criterion of psychological continuity. That is, he accepts both normal and abnormal causes, which is regarded as too wide and so not acceptable by most philosophers[19]. He also claims that, personal identity is not important at all. For, as our concept of identity is either based on bodily continuity, psychological continuity, or mixture of both, it cannot be the case that identity is as important as we think it to be. What is important, in truth, is the survival of ourselves in some form or the other, and that can be achieved only if we are continuous in relation R. We can ask - What kinds of consequences will this view has on Morality?

The Consequences of Parfit's view on Morality.

We have seen how Parfit gives a totally new perspective to the personal identity problem by suggesting that 'personal identity is not what matters at all'. By advocating a reductionist view about personal identity, a change of view in morality follows. With various concrete examples he tries to understand this relationship between his theory of personal identity and morality. For example, he takes the case of abortion. According to Non-Reductionist view, as existence is all-or-nothing, there must be a moment when one started to exist. But, it is not possible to claim that the moment when one started to exist as conception, or birth. So, abortion is morally wrong. However, on the Reductionist view, as existence does not mean existing at every moment, it can be denied that a fertilized ovum is a person or a human being. There is no sharp borderline to show at what moment the fertilized ovum becomes a human being. For the Reductionist, the fertilized ovum slowly becomes a human being, and then a person. So, *"the destruction of this organism is not at first but slowly becomes seriously wrong…As the organism becomes fully a human being, or a person, the minor wrong-doing changes into an act that would be seriously wrong."*[20] Parfit draws a distinction between a human being and a person following Locke;[21] as a result, for him human being becomes a person

only after becoming self-conscious. Thus, in his view, abortion is not wrong if it is done in the early part of pregnancy, but as more time elapse aborting it will become more wrong. So, the difference between Non-Reductionist view's and Parfit's standpoint can be seen here.

Parfit goes on to other moral questions such as responsibility (he called Desert). For the Non-Reductionist, as personal identity involves a deep further fact distinct from bodily and psychological continuity, only the existence of this fact will carry desert for past crime. And in the absence of this fact, there will be no desert. That is, even if a person who had committed a crime cannot remember, that person still needs to be punished because he/she has the same 'further fact or soul' as the one who committed the crime a long time ago. But Parfit holds that, if a *"convict is now less closely connected to himself at the time of his crime, he deserves less punishment. If the connections are very weak, he may deserve none…Suppose a man aged ninety, one of the few rightful holders of the Nobel Peace Prize, confesses that it was he who, at the age of twenty, injured a policeman in a drunken brawl. Though this was a serious crime, this man may not now deserve to be punished."*[22]

Thus, for the Non-Reductionist, degree of connectedness does not matter as long as they have the same soul. And the person should be punished so as to act as a deterrent for others. While for Parfit, the connectedness or continuity is the deciding factor whether and how much to punished.

Further, Parfit goes on to apply his view about the nature of personal identity on moral principle claims made by Utilitarianism. He holds that, Utilitarianism rejects boundaries between lives. There can be three possible reasons why they treat sets of lives as we treat single lives. The three suggestions highlighted by Parfit are as follows:[23]

- Their method of moral reasoning leads them to overlook these boundaries. Or,
- They believe that the boundaries are unimportant, because they think that sets of lives are like single lives. Or,
- They accept the Reductionist View about personal identity.

Regarding suggestion (1), Parfit goes on to say that, this suggestion was made by Rawls and it can be summarized as follows: when a Utilitarian ask himself 'what would be right or what would he prefer' to do to help in case of a problem in society, the person will identify with all the affected people as an impartial observer. By imagining that he/she would be all of the affected people, the person will ignore the fact that they are different people. As a result, he/she will ignore the claims of just distribution between these people. However, Parfit argues that the fact that one is an impartial observer cannot be the reason why one should ignore the principles of distributive justice. Also, approaching morality in this detached way will give rise to rejecting these principles,

because we will not be afraid to become one of the affected people. *"But this particular approach to moral questions does not sufficiently explain why these Utilitarians reject distributive principles."*[24]

Suggestion (2) has been made by Gauthier and others, and if this is to be accepted then Utilitarians must assume that mankind is a super-organism. But, Parfit argues that this cannot be the case because it is a mistake to ignore the fact that we live different lives. And it is also clear that mankind is not a super-organism. For example, a super-organism will not fight with itself as nations and even individuals do. And if mankind is a super-organism, then there will be no war and no killing either. So, this suggestion can be taken as an objection to the Utilitarian View, instead of taking it as an explanation of it. So, *"the suggestion may be that this view cannot be justified unless mankind is a super-organism, and that, since this is false, Utilitarians are wrong to reject distributive principles."*[25]

Parfit suggest (3), and on this suggestion Utilitarians reject distributive principles because they believe in the Reductionist View. It is possible that some Utilitarians can be both an observer and accept the Reductionist View. However, suggestion (2) and (3) conflicts and cannot both be held together. Here, we can further see the difference between (2) - in which groups of people are compared to a single person, and (3) where Reductionist compares a person's history with a nation or group of people. So, we can see that they are opposed to each other. But, one can hold both (1) and (3), as *"some Utilitarians may both be identifying observers, and accept the Reductionist View."*[26] Here, according to the Reductionist View, 'People are like Nation'. The existence of nation involves nothing apart from the existence of its citizens, who lives together in its territory, acting together in certain ways. Thus, Parfit argues that his view is the most acceptable one and should be accepted as the explanation of the Utilitarian views as well.

Parfit goes on to say that, the Reductionism believe that the existence of a person involves nothing apart from the occurrence of interrelated mental and physical events. The existence of a person is not denied, but regarded as thinkers and agents who can describe his/her thoughts and actions to others. A person is not different from the facts of physical and psychological continuity; his existence is not all-or-nothing, nor is a person's continued existences a deep further fact.[27] These beliefs support certain moral claims, that is, by accepting these believes, *"it becomes more plausible, when thinking morally, to focus less upon the person, the subject of experiences, and instead to focus more upon the experiences themselves. It becomes more plausible to claim that, just as we are right to ignore whether people come from the same or different nations, we are right to ignore whether experiences come within the same or different lives."*[28]

Thus, we can see that, by accepting the Reductionist View, we can also accept the Utilitarians View that there are no boundaries while regarding persons. But this is not due to the fact that the lives of a group of people are like those of a single person. Rather, it is due to the fact that persons are like nations where there are no water-tight compartments between the members. These kinds of view give rise to totally different outlook about the commonly accepted societal norms regarding moral responsibility.

Conclusion

After giving his view on personal identity and then on morality, Parfit goes on to say that even if one feels a bit uneasy in accepting his view, one ought to be a Reductionist. He describes the effect of accepting the Reductionist View as, *"it makes me less concerned about my own future, and my death, and more concerned about others. I welcome this widening in my concern."*[29] So, for Parfit as persons do not literally persists from one time to another, one need not worry about one's future or death. Because the important thing is not whether some future person will be identical with him/her or not, but whether one will survive or not. And the cause of one's survival need not necessarily be a normal cause, but any kind of cause is acceptable as sufficient for survival. Also, he is in favor of momentary morality,[30] meaning we need to be moral for the present and not worry about future consequences. There is no condition that bodily continuity and psychological continuity must be there for survival either. Parfit provides us with wide criterion of personal identity.

Further, accepting this kind of view in regards to personal identity will drastically change our outlook towards the issue of moral responsibility. For example, if I am not to worry about whether my present body will have to bear the punishment, but someone else who will be related to me somehow, will bear the punishment. This will influence my action differently than if I am to worry that my present body will bear the punishment if I do wrong. The consequence can be disastrous, because nobody will be afraid to do wrong then. Moral obligations such as, making promises and fulfilling it, making commitments and following it through, fulfilling one's responsibility, and many other will be neglected which will be dangerous for the society. Imagine a society where moral responsibility is not given importance, as people are not worried about the consequences anymore, for it will not be their present body that will bear the brunt…It will be a very different society from the one we live in now. And it will not be possible to accept it as a normal society in terms of what we understood as 'normal' in our society.

Parfit's idea of moral responsibility, therefore, cannot be a very acceptable one for us. And, this gives rise to whether we should accept his view on personal identity

too. By accepting Parfit's idea of personal identity, we may have a very different society from the present one. We will not have to worry about the consequences of our actions as we do now. As our survival depends on the continuity of relation R and not on continuity of our body, there will be less concern about who will be rewarded or punished due to my actions. This can result in the deterioration of morality in the society at large, as nobody will be afraid to do wrong actions anymore. At the same time, few people will bother to fulfill their obligations as they are not sure who will be rewarded for their good actions. If we are to apply Parfit's idea of the relation between personal identity and morality, we will get a very different scenario. Thus, we can say that it is very difficult to accept Parfit's interpretation of the relationship between personal identity and morality in general and moral responsibility in particular.

This is due to the fact that, morality in general and moral responsibility in particular is invented by human beings and is there for the benefit of human beings/ persons. This fact cannot be disputed, and so their relation to persons also cannot be questioned. If this is the case, then its relation to personal identity cannot be doubted either. The question that arises in our mind is: Without a person who will continue to exist to apply and fulfill these moral responsibilities? It will, infact, be useless to have the concept of moral responsibility itself. If a person ceases to worry whether he/she will be responsible for his/her actions, it will give rise to a situation where questions of morality will become irrelevant. Our very existence depends on the relation between personal identity and moral responsibility. And something as important as this seems to have been underplayed by Parfit. This does not mean that we have to worry about our death constantly, as Parfit does suggest[31], but we cannot ignore the importance of personal identity so as not to worry about our moral obligations. We cannot ignore the fact that there is a strong connection between one's identity and moral life.

Another problem with Parfit's account of personal identity is that, for him any kind of psychological connectedness or continuity is enough reason for some future person to be me. Here, if this is the case, then it will be possible for me to survive as say, my friend. For example, *"my apparent memory experience of an event witnessed by a very close friend, which she told me about in great detail so often when I was young that I began to think of it as an event that occurred to me, could be enough to make me psychologically continuous with my friend."*[32] But, how can I accept that I am not me but my friend? It is a bit confusing here, because, even though I can remember my friend's experience about the event, I am not my friend. The fact remains that, my body and my friend's body is different and we have different lives, we cannot say that my friend is living two lives either.

Another claim made by Parfit is that, *"in any situation in which I will have more than one Parfitian survivor, it cannot be rational for me to take a greater degree of interest in one survivor over another."*[33] For example, in case of tele-transportation, in entering a machine I can be transported to say, Mars, and my duplicate will be psychologically continuous with me. In such a case, if my original is not immediately destroyed after the transportation but eventually die of heart attack after sometime, then I will have two survivors for the time being. Now, according to Parfit, it will be wrong for me to have biased feelings and more concerns for either one of my survivors. If I am to have interest in either one of them, then it is more rational for me to be interested in my duplicate, as it will live longer than my original. But, it will be very difficult to be more interested in my duplicate; instead I will be very sad and worried about my original's impending death. I will consider the original's impending death as 'my' impending death and it will not be a comfort to know that my duplicate will live even after my original dies.

On the other hand, if I am told about my duplicate's impending death, it will sadden and upset me too, but not to the extent that I will consider it as my own death. This shows that Parfit's theory of personal identity being not what matters and *"his claim that our concern with our continued identity is only of derivative importance,"*[34] cannot be accepted as the truth about personal identity in general. Because, identity does matters, and both psychological continuity and physical continuity are necessary and sufficient condition for personal identity. Thus, *"one version of this is the view that human persons are psychological beings that are constituted by physical things, in something like the way in which a statue is constituted by the matter that makes it up, or a ring is constituted by gold...It may be, though, that while the particular lump of matter that constitutes a thing such as a statue or a ring may not be identical with it, it might also be that no statue or ring can exist without being constituted by some matter or other."*[35]

So, we can say that, Parfit's account of personal identity and value theory no doubt, provides us with an important new approach to the problem of personal identity. But, the theory cannot be accepted as it is not applicable in every situation. As philosophical theory goes, Parfit's account is being debated and discussed upon by philosophers extensively. There are philosophers who agree with him and others who are against his view. However, there seems to be some convincing arguments against his view, which cannot be ignored altogether. However, in-spite of the problem faced by Parfit's idea of the relation between personal identity and morality/moral responsibility, the fact remains that he is considered as the first philosopher to put forth the relation. No doubt, other thinkers had talked about problems of personal identity and problems of morality/moral responsibility. But, Parfit is the first thinker in recent

times to highlight the important connection between personal identity and morality/ moral responsibility. Also, he put forth the view of one's responsibility towards others, an important and new perspective in the relation between personal identity and morality/ moral responsibility. Thus, we can say that, Parfit's idea is indeed radical. Eventhough his theory as a whole is not acceptable to us; there is no doubt about the important changes brought in by the theory. It is rightly regarded as a 'classic' among philosophical writings.

Notes and References

[1] Routledge Encyclopedia (1998), vol.8.

[2] Parfit (1984), p-215.

[3] For example, Sydney Shoemaker (1963).

[4] Chatterjee (2002), p-117.

[5] See Chatterjee (2002), p-125.

[6] Quoted in Chatterjee (2002), p-126.

[7] See Garrett, (1992), p-338.

[8] See Shoemaker (1985), p-444.

[9] Quoted from Shoemaker (1985), p-444.

[10] Quoted from Macdonald (2005), p-168.

[11] Parfit (1984), p-245-280. One example is where a person's brain is divided into two hemispheres and transplanted into two different persons. We can ask – which one is continuous with the original one? And, the answer according to Parfit is 'neither of them.' So, any form of branching or fission does not provide personal identity.

[12] So, in order to avoid the re-duplication error, we must do away with the identity theory. Instead, we need to accept the reductionist's view.

[13] See Garret (1992), p-342.

[14] Parfit (1984), p-279.

[15] Ibid, p-262.

[16] Ibid, p-265

[17] Ibid, p-199. Here, in simple tele-transportation the scanner destroy the original brain and body after scanning. On the other hand, in complex tele-transportation the original also survives.

[18] Parfit (1984), p-297.

[19] The most prominent being John Locke, even though he accepts 'memory' as a criterion of personal identity, he puts a condition that the concerned person must be able to remember that he/she had experienced what he/she remember now.

[20] Parfit (1984), p-322.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid, p-326.

[23] Ibid, p-331.

[24] Ibid, p-332.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid, p-341.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid, p-347.

[30] Here, Parfit's view can be compared with the Buddhist's theory of momentariness. According to which there is no persistent substance or soul, our existence is a quick succession of moments. As a result, we do not have to worry about our future.

[31] Parfit (1984), p-347.

[32] Macdonald (2005), p-159.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid, p-161.

[35] Ibid, p-172.

Chatterjee, Partha,A Princely Imposter? (The Kumar of Bhawal and the Secret History of Indian Nationalism),, New Jersey 2002, Princeton University Press, chap. 8.

"Dualism and Mind", from the Routledge Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2006.

Garret, Brian,"Persons and Values", ,Philosophical Quarterly, Vol.42, No.168, (July, 1992), pp. 337-344.

Macdonald,Cynthia,Varieties of Things: Foundations of Contemporary Metaphysics, (2005), Blackwell Publishing, Chap. 4, pp. 135-180.

Parfit,Derek,Reasons and Persons, Oxford 1984, Oxford University Press, part-3, chapter 10-15, pp. 199-347.

Shoemaker, Sydney,Self – Knowledge and Self – Identity, Ithaca, New York 1963, Cornell University Press.

Shoemaker, Sydney &Richard Swinburne,Personal Identity, , (1984), Basil Blackwell.

Shoemaker, Sydney,Reasons and Persons, (review). Mind, New Series, Vol. 94, No. 375. (July 1985), pp. 443-453.

Strawson, P. F, Individuals,London 1959, Methuen& Co Ltd., pp. 1 – 58.

Unger, Peter, Persons, Consciousness & Value,New York 1992, Oxford University Press.

Williams, Bernard Problems of the Self,Cambridge 1973, Cambridge University Press.

Craig, Edward, (Ed.) Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Routledge: London & New York 1998, Volume 1-9.

Ravenshaw Journal of Philosophy, Vol. VIII
November 2022 101-112
ISSN: 2395-3209

Śabda and Kāla: The Grammarian Perspective

Prasanta Barman
Ph.D Scholar, Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata

Abstract:

Śabda or language is the main medium of human communication. The present paper is attempted to decipher Bhaṭṛhari's articulation of the different aspects of *śabda*, both as a *pramāṇa* and in its metaphysical mooring. *Kālaśakti* is an important manifestation of the ultimate reality called *Śabdabrahman*. The different strata of *kālaśakti* have been articulated following the commentary authored by Helārāja.

Keywords: *Śabda*, *Śabdaśakti*, *Kālaśakti*, *Śabdabrahman*, *Parā*, *Paśyanti*, *Madhyamā*, *Śābdavodha*, *Jyoti*, *Bhāvavikāra*, *avidyā*

I

The discussion about on languagehas exists already from the Vaidik time, like in the different *sukta, śikhyā, nirukta*, etc. the *vedāṅga śāstra*, even the *avaidika śāstra* also discussed about the *śābdik* concept (linguistic aspects). Thevarious implication of *śabda* which hasspreadmany ways in philosophy. The*śabda*(here *śabda* which is uttered by the human beings only)has its own meaning and it has a literal meaning.In the

Grammarians philosophy a single *śabda* which have many dimensions and on the other hand, etymologically every *śabda* it has own acceptance as well as unique significance. So, the Veda, *Vedāṅga*, *Vyākaraṇa* all of this *śāstra* dealing with the word, word meaning, language, and semantic aspects etc. Bhartṛhari (450 or 500 BC),he wrote the *Vākyapadīya*'s three *kāṇḍa*of'*Brahma-kāṇḍa*', '*vākya-kāṇḍa*', and '*prakṛīṇa-kāṇḍa*' and he has done such a very beautiful work.

Regarding Bhartrhari's philosophy and writings there is some serious discussion over on his writings like, Pt. Gaurinath Sastri, K. A. S. Iyeretc. they explain Bhartrhari's theory.In the whole Grammarians system *śabda*it has a special significance. Like it is used here as the '*jyotisāng jyoti*' or '*puṇyotamong jyoti*', '*apavargasya dvāra*', in the *śruti* where it is called as the *puṇyotamong jyoti* or pure light. The sun, the fire they express other objects of the darkness. In the same way *śabda* has work like to enlightening the multipurpose world. On the other hand, when we utter a *śabda* like a '*ghata*', so that *ghata* has an external existence in this external world and obviously there exits an object which can be refer like the '*ghata*'. The Grammarians holds that the *śabda* and with its *artha* (meaning) they related to each other as the identical relation.

Patanjali in his *Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya* where he has defined the *śabda*'s nature, the *vāk-tattva, artha,samvandha*etc. Maṇḍana Miśra in his *Sphoṭa-siddhi* who is the great pioneer of Pūrva-Mimāṁsāka school, he refused strongly the arguments of Kumarila Bhatta'son *sphoṭa tattva* and says we have no ground to refute the postulation of *sphoṭa* and the *sphoṭa* itis the spiritual entity. Nāgeśa Bhatta in his '*Parama-laghu-mañjūṣā*' he elaborated the eight types *sphoṭa*, and they are *varṇa-sphoṭa, pada-sphoṭa, vākya-sphoṭa, varṇa-jāti-sphoṭa,pada-jāti-sphoṭa, vākya-jāti-sphoṭa, akhaṇḍa-pada-sphoṭa, and akhaṇḍa-vākya-sphoṭa.*Here I am not going to enter this *sphota tattva*'s critical discussion. Gaurinath Sastriin his book '*A Study in The Dialectics of Sphoṭa*' where he explaineddifferent types of *sphoṭa* and the *sphoṭa tattva's* very deep interpretation and also the Mīmāṁsāka theory on *sphoṭa*, Śabara's theory and Jayanta Bhatta theory on *sphoṭa*. Sastri has discuss how the Grammarians has refuted the idea of the Jainas, the Naiyāyikas, the Mīmāṁsākas theory on *sphoṭa*.

Another book of Gaurinath Sastri '*The Philosophy of Word and Meaning*' where we find different perspective of Eternal Verbum or *śabdabrahman* as Bhartṛhari has point out in his *Vākyapadīya*. Gaurinath Sastri added the supreme reality, the supreme power, the functions of *kalās* etc. Another point is like the 'word' in which purpose Bhartṛhari has used in his writings and Gaurinath Sastri discussedthe *śabda's* various ways following Patanjali and others philosophers. K. A. S. Iyer in his book '*Bhartrhari: A Study of the Vākyapadīyain the light of the Ancient Commentaries*' where he discovered Bhartrahari's various ideas on philosophy as well as in philosophy of

Grammar.K. A. S. Iyer has discussed about the idea of Bhartrhari's *darśanas*, *pramāṇas*, the doctrine of *sphoṭa*, sentence meaning of Bhartṭhari, *guṇa*, *dik, kāla*, etc. Iyer has explain the Grammatical aspects of Bhartṛhari's philosophy, he says that it is a logical affair, that's why every letter and to the others letter has used as par as the rule of grammar, to following Pāṇini's grammar. '*Bhartṛhari: Language Thought and Reality*' this book is edited by Mithilesh Chaturvedi, in this book there are various issued has been discussed by various scholars or professors. Someone argued that is Bhartṛhari philosopher of Language or not? Regarding this question very strong argument has presented by P. K. Mukhopadhyay in his paper. Over all Bhartṛhari has a strong figure in philosophy and also in the Indian philosophy of languagein modern perspective.

II

In his *magnam opus Vākyapadīya (kārika no. 3 of Brahma-kanda)* Bhartṛhari introduces the idea of *kālaśakti*, which is the power of the Eternal Verbum(*Śabdabrahman*) For Bhartṛhari, this objective world is represented as the manifestation of the different powers of the Eternal Verbumor *Śabda*brahman. *Śabdabrahman* in other words in Grammarian perspective, here the first question is what the role played *śabdabrahman* in Bhartṛhari's philosophy? Why Bhartṛhari in his *Vākyapadīya* admits such kind of different *śaktis* or power like time (*kāla)*, space (*dik*), activity *(kriyā*), and instrumentality (*sādhana or kriyā*) etc. Mainly here we are going to discuss the importance of the *śabdatattva* and the *kālatattva*of the Vaiyākaraṇa darśana, but they are not use the *śabda* and the *kāla* in a single or a simple way. They introduce the *śabda* as a *śabdaśakti* and the kala as a *kālaśakti*., but the point is *śakti* is not same as the Naiyāyikas view point of *Śaktivāda*.

As our sense organs have its particular object, every sense organ like the ear's job is to hearing, nose's job is to getting the smell, and on the other hand, there is various kind of *samvanda*we have. As we know in this world every particular object is connected to each other and they all have a relation to each other. Like the*anādi samvanda* (eternal relation) is with the sense organs and to a particular objectas they have the relation from *anādi kāla*, like,our skin's job is to feel etc. In the same way the grammarians hold, there is an eternal relation exist with the *śabda* to its *artha* (meaning). And it is very interesting to find out for every philosopher, along with that it

is very debatable area in philosophy that how every particular *śabda* define only to a particular meaning of that *śabda*? Bhartṛhari in his *Vākyapadīya* mentioned that a particular *śabda* has convey a particular meaning of a *śabda* this *sāmartha* (ability) or *kāraṇata* (causality) is *śakti*. So, the *kāraṇata* of the *śabda* or '*anādivodhakāraṇattva*' is *śakti* for the Vaiyākaraṇa. On the other hand, the *śābdik* philosophers and the Naiyāyika regarding the issue of *saṅketa* or *īśvara icchā* as the *śakti* there is very big debate on that issue.

Bhartṛhari as a *Vivartavādi*, and in Indian philosophy monism goes in three ways or monism we find here in three schools, in Vedanta *Brahmavdaitavāda*, in Buddhism *Vijñānavdaitavāda*, and in Bhartṛhari's philosophy monism known as *Śabdadvaitavāda*. In the first *kārikā* of *Vākyapadīya* he introduced the multiplicities of the world is the effect of *śabdataṭṭva*, and added that all the diversities or varieties (*prapañcha*) is the effect of *śabdabrahman* or eternal verbum. The supreme reality in Sanskrit grammar is as eternal verbum, which is highly subtle it lies beyond time and space. And it is non- relational and featureless and eludes all descriptions by means of positive and negative predicates.

But here in which sense we say that, the Grammarian position about the eternal verbum is being or (existence) in essence? Here to deal with the question according to Bhartṛhari the eternal verbum is real and it has an authentic being. It has neither birth nor death, but it is never possible to discover its origin or essence and it lasts even after the dissolution of the world or universe. It is non-changeable and does not cease to be even when all that is associated with it ceases to exit, although it does not depend on anything else to preserve it in being. And it has a special character which is unchanging and unitary. Under which every object and in every being since it has no change, it is remains one and its own universal form. Here the main point is what we understand by the term of grammarian philosopher of permanent or eternal principle about supreme reality? Here to answer this question one must say that, this permanence is not permanence as continuity of flow (*pravāha-nityatā*) as maintained by the Buddhist but absolute permanence (*pāramārthika-nityatā*).

Eternal Verbum it has six types of *Bhāvavikāra*(*jāyate, asti, vipariṇamate, bardhate, apakṣīyate, vinaśyatīti)*. According to Bhartṛhari, because of these six types of *bhāvavikāra* all kinds of diversities and multiplicities occur in this world, along with its two kinds of power *pratibandha* and *abhyanujñā*. Here '*bhava*' or '*kriya*' or action are not produced (*sādhya)*, here the position of action which is going to be happen *(na siddhyasvāba)*. Now here I am going to shortly discusses about six kinds *bhāvavikāra,* according to *Vārṣyāyaṇi, bhāva* means what we have say to any objects that it must be exits (*bhāva*) in the world or which is work at any way or situation *(sat*). The six transformations of *sattā* mentioned by Yāska in his *Nirukta*. That position here which

are six type of a *bhāva* or thing *(sadbastu)*. In the simple way, we can explain like this method. At the first stage, a thing or *bastu* born *(jāyate),* after birth the thing is being to stay exits *(asti)*, in the third position it gets changeable *(vipariṇmate),* in a fourth place it is growing (*barddhate),* in the fifth position it is going older (*apakśīyate),* in the last stage it is destructed (*vinaśyatīti)*. Here the main point is when I say "*pachati*" it does not mean the dish is full ready. There are many process or method to ready a complete dish or cooking, before going to cook one must ready first the materials of a dish, then clean the vegetables etc. So, there is a process and it must take time whatever you want to cook. And when all the process is done and finally a time passed and the dishes is fulfilled ready. So, this are the cause for world or an object that we see the various diversities and multiplicities. So, '*bhāva*' or action is based here on the temporal sequence, in such cases we have admit the temporal sequence of the time otherwise we can't understand the essence or base of time or *kāla.*

Śabdabrahman closely associated with its character of unbounded or unrestricted independence of its omnipotence. In other words of Bhartṛhari it is unrestricted independence (*svātantrya Śakti*), and this independence is represented by grammarian calls *kālaśakti.* In *Vākyapadīya* first *kāṇḍa's Sopogyavṛtti* Bhartṛhari taking about three kinds of lights or *jyoti.* Firstly, the lights of the natural world's lights, like the sun, the moon, the fire etc. The *jyoti* with which the whole world is bounded. The second one is the inner light of the mind, and it is *ātmajyoti,* and its main work is to know the outer world or knowledge, when an object is properly connected with mind then we know or understand about that and next to others we talking of it. The third and best light or *jyoti* is eternal verbum or *śabdātattva.* On the other hand, in the*Vākyapadīya Brahma-kānda*, where Bhartṛhari usethe *śabdabrahman*in many different ways. *Śabdabrahman* which is '*Puṇyatamang Jyoti*', to calling the *śabda* as the *puṇyatamang jyoti* which is the *upadhi* here of *śabdabrahman,* on the other hand, in *Śruti*śāstra where the it is mentioned as the pure light (*puṇyatamang jyoti*), those who are blooming the objects of this world and express also himself, like the sun the fire etc. besides that the Ātmājyoti also suggest at the pure light.For Bhartṛharithe one and onlyundivided*Vāktattva* is actedin a different waywith the name of *Abhidhāna* and *Abhidheya. Paśyenti Vāk* known as *Madhyamā* and this *Paśyenti vāk* works the *varṇa-pada-vākya*, and not only that the *paśyanti vāk* reveal its meaning as the *Abhidhāya.*Through this process the subtle *vāktattva* with the name of *abhidhāna* and *abhidheya*, contain the *kārya* (all the particular objects has a name, which is also the *Vāktattva* or the modification of *kārya* is the result of *Vāktattva*) and *karaṇa tattva*but there is no difference between the *kārya* and the *karaṇa tattva*, because of they are the *vivarta rup* of the *vāk tattva.* As a *vivartavādi* Bhartṛhari, in the first *kārika* of *Brahma-kānda* where he explains clearly that the world is the *vivarta* of *Śabdabrahman.*

To talking about the *śabdabrahman* the Vaiyākaraṇa philosopher point out an interesting area on *śabda* and we know that *śabda* has used in the whole classical Indian philosophy (except *Cārvāka*) in an importance sense or as a *svatantra pramāṇa*. Besides this we know that, we are doing today's philosophy also with the various *śabda*. Wittgenstein has point out very interesting issues like the language game, picture theory etc. where he mentioned the importance of *śabda* or languageand his famous comments that the philosophical problem arises when we are not using our words in properly. Using of words is very much important for any philosopher idea,it has played a great role because of with this word he wanted to established his own theory. So,the words or *śabda* played a great position in doing philosophy. The point is that the *Cārvāka* don't admit *śabda* as a *pramāṇa*, it does not imply that they don't use *śabda* when they communicate to each other. Not only Bhartṛhari but in the whole Grammarians philosophy *śabda* has played a crucial role. But the *śabda* here used in different moods, and it has various name like *vāk, vāṇī, śabdabrahman* etc. If the speaker utters a *śabda* like '*aham gacchāmi*',on the other side hearing this *śabda* the listener has got the (*artha*) meaning. The context of *Śābdavodha* for the speaker and the hearer side are very important because the hearer after listening the *śabda* of the speaker and then he realized the *artha* of that particular *śabda*. As every *śabda* is directed to a particular *artha*, not only that the particular *artha* may be have another name or *śabda* and there is very relation with the *śabda artha* and *samvandha*.How can we know that the particular *śabda* has convey of a particular *artha*? Like if I say '*ghata*', and if I know the Bengali language then I understand that what does '*ghata*' mean. As somebody told me what is '*ghata*' direct to a particular object I also teach someone what is the '*ghata*', likes its shape, size materials etc. at this point I'm not point out the other object of this world. So, this is very crucial areas for the Naiyāyikas, the Mīmāṃsā and even the Vaiyākaraṇas. For *śābdavodha* the philosophers point out the idea of *Ākāṅkṣā, Joggotā* and *Āsaktti* and *Tātparya* but we are not going to discuss this point here but the Vaiyakaranas has some interesting point regarding the *Vāk tattva* or *Vani*. So, now we are going to analyse this topic.

The process of *Śābdavodha:*

Now we are going to talk about the *śābdavodha,*Bhartṛhari elaborate the*śābdavodha* in a very new point of view. In the whole classical Indian Philosophy where there no such terms or ideas we face like *vaikharī, madhyamā, paśyanti* and *parā*. If one asked what is *śabdatattva*? For Grammarians, the answer is, it is *sphoṭa*? Here the next question, what is *sphoṭa*? It is very tough to answer in a single sentence but the Grammarians says the *sphoṭo* is the *abhivyañjaka* of *dhvani*. The *dhvani* convey the *sphoṭa* tattva and its revel the *artha* of the *sphoṭa.* We are here not going to discuss this idea but now we are going to talk about another interesting and an important theory of

the Grammarians. The grammarians admit four types of *vākvāṇī, or tattva*. Bhartṛhari does not admits *para vāk* but the *navya naiyākaraṇa* Nāgeśa has admit the *paravāk*, and he explain the four stages of *vāk* or *vāṇī*. Nāgeśa also point out that in the *prakārantar* where Patanjali admits the four types of *vāṇī*. So, this clarification of *vāṇī* supports by Bhartṛhari and it is very disputable issue because of the different interpreter have explain in different way, some interpreters do not admit the para *vāṇi*, it is very subtle and invisible. Nāgeśa has explain two reason how Bhartṛhari admits the *parā vāk* as a stage of *sphoṭatattva.*

Now here we are discussing very shortly the idea of *parā, paśyanti, madhyamā* and the idea of *vaikhari.Parāvāṇī* is known as the very subtle it has no divisions (*niravayava*), and also it is inseparable (*anapayinī*). In the human body its place is in*mulādhāra*, and this *mulādhāra* is also known as the '*cit*' or '*ātma*'. The second one is the*Paśyanti* and the *paśyanti* known as the mind (*mana*). The Vaiyākaraṛa philosophers specially point out the place and position of all fourkind of *vāṇī's* nature and work. The*paśyanti* is the *savikalpakajñāna* of the *ṛṣis* because of the *prakṛiti* and *pratyayabheda jñāna* produce the *paśyanti vāṇī*. The third one is the *Madhyamā*, its place in our heart. The *parā vāṇī* moves up *nābhiprades* to the heart (ridaya) then its known as the *Madhyamā*.Nāgesh says that the *madhyamāvāṇī* is the *sphoṭa śabda* and it is the *vañjaka* of the *sphoṭa tattva*.The last one is the *Vaikhari*, in a simple sentence we can say about the *vaikhari*, it is the *śabda* or the sound what we hear from our opposite side speaker. From *madhyamā* the *vāṇī* when moves up its going to our mouth and mixed up with our teeth, tongue, palate etc. then finally the *śabda* is out from the mouth. So, the whole process to produce a *śabda* the Vaiyākaraṇa philosophers mention this various kind of stage about the *vāṇī*, not only that all of this term has impact very deeply on their philosophical ideas also.

To discussingthe idea of the Vaiyakaraṇa's, *śabda* or *sphoṭatattva* we need to understand the role of *dhvani* because of it is the *abhivañjaka* of the *sphoṭa tattva*. For Bhartṛhari the *sphoṭa śabda* is one and eternal, and it reveal by the *abhivañjaka nāda* or *dhvani*, and there is no sequence on *sphoṭa śabda* but in *dhvani* or *nāda*where the sequence exists although the sequence here is a *pratibhāsa*. To talking about the *sphoṭatattva* if I utter the word like '*pata*', here the word *pata* how can we understand the meaning of '*pata*'. The word *pata*, how can convey it meaning itself? Is the particular letter, 'p', or 'a', or 't', or 'a' convey the meaning of '*pata*' or if the only letter 'p' is convey the meaning of '*pata*', so, what about the other letter? On the other hand, if theall combination of the letter hasconvey the meaning of *pata* then what about the every particular letters significant? That's the reason for the Vaiyakarana to admit the idea of the *sphoṭatattva* and here, the *dhvani* is the *abhivañjaka* of the *sphoṭa*.

III

Bhartṛhari's thinks that *Śabdabrahman* is the fundamental source of all the various kinds of *śakti* and the most important of all the *śakti* is *kālaśakti* or *kāla*, *Kālaśakti* plays a vital role in the philosophy of Bhartṛhari. The*Kālaśakti* and Eternal Verbum can be viewed as the two moments or aspects of one and the same reality. The *Kālaśakti*, which is conceived as the supreme inherent power of the Eternal Verbum, is identical with the essence of Eternal Verbum.

Time is power, what does it mean? Helārāja the commentator of the *Vākyapadīya* explain this in his point of view. Through causal relation in all Indian philosophical school has a great role. But here the grammarian thinks, time is a causal power because of the help of this we realized the immediate effects and the effects goes to the end or destruction. Here for Helārāja, the emergence of the two ways activity of the causal energy it has functions and as well we realize it with because of its temporal succession or as a time order. We can't imagine time without its time order or sequence. Here the main point about *Kālaśakti* is in the first place, *kālaśakti* exercises a supreme control over the activities of all others powers known as *kalās*. Secondly, *kālaśakti* is represented in the phenomenal world in temporal succession.

In *kālasamuddeśe* Bhartṛhari concede that in our daily uses of *kāla*, any fact what is happened (past), now what the position or situation of a fact (present), the fact what is going to be happen (future), this all are the one fact (*kriya*), its happen in different time or *kāla*. And according to Bhartṛhari present, past and future this are the three powers of *kāla*, through *kāla* or time is one, uniform. The *śakti*of past and future they covered the objects or fact because of that we can't see the whole situation or the process in which the way an object is made at a time. In the words of Bhartśhari '*atīta*'(past), and *anāgata* (future) they are *ābharaka* (cover) of an object. Obviously here arises a question if *kālaśakti* is one and undivided why it have different views or positions? In this aspects Bhartṛhari's answer is that action or kriya is *'siddha'* that means already the fact is happen or passed and the other way of action is '*asiddhya*' that means it is the way that going to be happen, this is the two ways of action but both are '*sādhya'*. Here the *Sādhya* means it is the way to go be finish.

As we are defending the *Advaitavāda*, and the *kāla* is one and unique. There are various types of *svara*like the *hasva svara*it has one dimensions, the *dīghra svara* it has two dimensions and the *pluta svara* it has three or many dimensions but for Bhartṛhari actually there is no divisions on *hasva svara*, *dighra svara* and in the *plutasvara*. The divisions what has made here is not real they are in our imaginations. But it has some

exceptional cases like in the song, where the dimensions are very much important, we know that.

In this *kālasumudese* there have an interesting point, according to Bhartṛhari and also Helārāja deny the existence of present tense. For Bhartṛhari "*vuthavbhisantaumukta madhyan n bidhyate*"that means without past and future tense or *kāla* there is no midway of an action. An action is a unity of a temporal succession and also a minor unit of a *kṣṇa* or time. Helārāja called *kriya* as a *kṣṇapravāha* or*kṣṇasanthan*. If one *kṣṇa* is produce now at this time, the next *kṣṇa* it is produceat that time, in that case previous *kṣṇa* is past and the next *kṣṇa* is *bhāvī* or future. Here past situation of that *kṣṇa* or time is *siddhasvabhāva*. This *bhāva* or situation is *sat*because of the word *siddha* means which is already happen or proved but which is not happen until now this time we call *sādhya*. On the other hand, we can't imagine like a *kṣṇa* which is at the same time or situation it is *sat* and *asat* or past (*atīta*) and upcoming time (*anāgata*). An object with its mutual contradiction has not beenexist at a same place or time. So, an action it has only two form and that is past and future. Kaiyata comments also support the view that whatever is gone (*nispanna*) that is past (*atīta*), and the thing which is until not happen or done (*anispanna*) that is future (*bhāvī*), so within the *nispanna* and *anispanna* of the material objects there is no transformation we realize.

According to Patanjali, action or kriya is indirectperception (*parakṣa pratyakṣa*), an action is observed by its effects. Here if we take the word '*pacati*', what does it mean? It does not a particular work or action because *pacati* is a whole process of every single way or process to cook any dish. (gas, knife, pot, scoop presser cooker etc.) and also the cooking of any dish it is done by within in the time.

Here obviously arises a question what about present tense or present situation? So, for Bhartrhari present situation is when an action done with its *svasvabha*and with temporal sequence and changes into the form of an effects of that action. (Example: *pacati*)

Helārāja takes an exception and points out three position of time first, time is nothing but the order of sequence, time qua sequence should be held to be the 'determination' (*Upādhi*) of the entities concerned. It is regarded as the determination of the principle which is responsible for the emergence of the plurality of the phenomena. Secondly time is self which refers the autonomous consciousness. Through the unlimited reality is '*Paśyanti*' an indivisible unitary principle but the individual under the spell of ignorance (*avidyā*) sees the multiplicity in the place of unity of this phenomenon. And the third point is that, here time is regarded as a divinity, the self, individualized or any form is nothing in reality but the absolute consciousness. The source of time is in form absolute time qua power or time and power of the Brahman is

symbolized as divinity which engulfs the whole creation. This is the metaphysical status or truth of time.

Helāraja hold the viewpoint of Bhartrhari of *kāla*, for Bhartrhari *kāla* is *Svatantra sakti*of *brahman*. But the other interpreters of *Vākyapadīya* hold that *kāraṇa śakti* is the *kālaśakti* for Bhartrhari. There is another view point of *kāla* that many ones say, that*kāla* is a *ātma svarup*. For Helaraja, may be the *kāla* is the *kāraṇa śakti* for all the *kārya vastu* (as we know that, every cause has an effect and all the objects which is produced they have a cause) but *kāraṇa śakti* here is the secondary cause, actually theyhelp the *nimitya kāraṇa*. As we told that for any object when it is going to produce, the material also helping it to produce the *kārya vastu* (effect), but suddenly it does not happen. For every object when it produced it has a chronology or *krama*of time. So, taking the time under the *kāla* the object is produce and after taking the *krama* the particular object is produced. This *krama* is the attribute of action (*kriyādharma*), and also it is known as attribute of time (*kāla dharma*). For Bhartrhari this *krama* is the *kālaśakti*, and the varieties or multiplicity of this world happen because of this *krama śakti*. Halaraja comments that the multiplicity of the world would happen through the *krama śakti* but the *śakti* who is the cause of this creation, this *śakti* is the *svatantra śakti*(individual power).

The *kāla* as an*atma svarup*. Helārāja explain this point, the *Ātma, puraṣa* or the *jīva* is the name of *kāla* (*kāla nāmantara*). As we observe that to produce of a material object there is exist a sequence or *krama* alternatively for the human life there is also present the krama *śakti* because of that we are baby, adult, young, old etc.

Gaurinath Sastrihas present the *śabdabrahman* and *kālaśakti* it can be viewed as the two aspects of one and the same reality. The grammarians hold that the *kālaśakti* which is identical with the *śabdabrahman* in essence, and the *kālaśakti* is conceived the supreme inherent power of the *śabdabrahman*.

In the *Upaniṣad*where *'Om' – kār* treat as a source of this universe. The noteworthy discussion about the *'Om'* we see in the other*upaniṣad*, like *Chāndogya*, *Kaṭhopaniṣad* etc. What is the main source of this universe? To find out the solution the *ṛṣis* says, the *'Om'-kār dhvani* is the source of the world. The *'Om' kār* is also known the *'Praṇav'*, *'a'*, *'u'* and 'm' this three letters combination is *'Om- kar'* and from this vibration the universe has produced. The 'Om' is the creator and the creation. It is also the inner power of this universe; it works in animal life in various stage and different way. Beginning in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*where we find that the world what are seeing in front of us, and beyond of us if there anything all of its source is the *'Om' -akṣara*. What have the beauty or anything in any objects it is the *'Om akṣara'*. This universe is under

the three *kāla*, "..... *trikālatitang tat api omkāra eva*". The present, past and the future this three *kāla* is also *Om-kāra*, on the other hand, beyond this three *kāla* there has another endless *kāla*, which is*Ananta*, *asima*, etc. this is also the *Om*. So, all is the '*Om*'.

Bhartṛhari analyze *Pranav* as such kind of the*Vidya*in his *Vākyapadīya*. Vidya what does it mean for Bhartrhari? Is there any relation Vidya with the Pranav? Here the talking about *Vidya* he says it is '*satya*' (truth), '*visudhya*' (pure), and '*ekapadagam*'or the knowledge which is obtain by the '*Om -kar*' *pada*. Here the *brahmarupvidya* is *vācya* and the *pranav* or the *om* this *ekākṣrapada* is the *vācaka*. The *vācya vācaka samvandha* there is no *bheda* (difference), this relation is also one and eternal. So, the *Vidya* is the only *brahman* which is mentioned in the *Veda*, it has many *upādhi* like all time it is *ekarup* (one),*niyata* (constant), unchangeable, and finally it has no alternative.

In order to account for śābdabodha, in classical Indian context, Naiyāyikas and Mīmāṁsākatake recourse to different kinds of explanations. The Naiyāyikas talk about *ākāṅkṣā*, *yogyatā*, *sannidhi* and *tātparya*and the Mīmāṁsākas, on the other hand,talk about *abhihitānvayavāda* and *anvitābhidhānavāda*as the conditions of sentence-meaning. The Grammarian's outlook is totally different here. Whether the conditions put forward by the Naiyāyikas forśābdabodha are legitimate or not is the main point of discussion in the first section. In the second section the divergent views of the Naiyāyikas and the Grammarians with regard to *kāla*has been dealt with.

Notes

1 Sastri Gaurinath, *A Study in The Dialectics of Sphoṭa*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1980.

2 Sastri Gaurinath, *The Philosophy of Word and Meaning*, Sanskrit College, Kolkata, 1959.

3 Iyer K.A.S, *Bhartrhari: A Study of the Vākyapadīya in the light of the Ancient Commentaries*, Poona, 1969.

4 Chaturdedi Mithilesh, *Brhartṛhari:Language, Thought and Reality*,Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 2009.

5 Sastri Gaurinath, *The Philosophy of Word and Meaning*, Sanskrit College, Kolkata, 1959, PP- 1-24

6 Śharmā Raghunath, *Vākyapadīya, kārikā*- 3/3/29

7 BhattacharyaPanchanan, *Bhasapariccheda*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhander, 1337 (Bengali), KolKata -6, PP - 416-420

8 *Niruktam*, Edited ByBrahma Chari Medha Chaitanna, Adhyapith Valakashrama, Kolkata 1987, PP-48-59

[9] Śharmā Raghunath, *Vākyapadīya Brahma-kānda*, *kārikā*-12.

[10] Dahal Lokamani, *Paramalalaghumañjūṣā of Sri Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa*, Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakashan, Varanasi, 2013, PP-91-94.

[11] "*Nādasya kramajanmotat na purva na paraśca saḥ akrama kramarupuṇa bhedavāniva jāyate*" (kārikā 48), Śharmā Raghunātha, *Vākyapadīyam* (part one) *Brahma-Kāṇḍa*, P-95

[12] Śharmā Raghunātha, *Vākyapadīyam Tritiya kandam,* Vol – 2, Kālasamudese kārikā– 64, P-587

[13] Śharmā Raghunātha, *Vākyapadīyam Tritiya kandam, Vol – 2,Kālasamudese kārikā*- 85 Varanasi 2016, P-612

[14] PāṇiniSutra 3/2/123

[15] Śharmā Raghunātha, *Vākyapadīyam Tritiya kandam,* Vol – 2,*Kālasamudese karika* - 62 Varanasi 2016, P-584

[16] Sastri Gaurinath, *The Philosophy of Word and Meaning*, Sanskrit College, Kolkata PP-29-42

[17] *Māndukya Upanisada* -1

[18] Śharmā Raghunath, *Vākyapadīya brahma-kanda, Kārikā* - 9, Varanasi, 2016, P-23

Ravenshaw Journal of Philosophy, Vol. VIII
November 2022 113-126
ISSN: 2395-3209

Moral Concerns in the Pandemic Crisis: Evaluating the Scope and Relevance of Virtue Ethics

Ragesh A V
Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Philosophy,
University of Hyderabad, Gachibowli, Hyderabad-500046

Abstract

The present pandemic has triggered a noteworthy consideration conducting human life on nuanced grounds for various concerns. Ethical issues, especially virtue ethics, have been one of such considerations dealing with various pandemic problems.The imposition of restrictive measures by governments, which most of us think limiting freedom during the pandemic, called for practising virtue ethics to cooperate with the restrictions by consciously choosing to adhere to them. Instead of thinking freedom is the absence of constraints, the considerations of virtue ethics made aware of how an individual should behave during this pandemic with these restrictions.The crisis has taught us to cultivate an appropriate moral character to handle the spreading of the coronavirus by developing various virtues.Acting out of compassion, justice, courage, and honesty during this challenging time, therefore, has become significant virtues to deal with the pandemic issues. Since the pandemic is not an individual personal health problem and requires constant vigilance from all, it has made people caring not only for themselves but also for others. Though cultivating virtues is an appropriate response to the pandemic, they should be understood as mutually beneficial practices of people rather than primarily as the traits of individuals. It signifies the importance of virtue ethics from an entirely different perspective and understands unearthing its characteristic features is mandatory in the pandemic crisis. Therefore, this research work attempts to evaluate the scope and relevance of virtue ethics in the present pandemic outbreak as a necessary concern.

Keywords: Covid-19, pandemic, virtue ethics, moral character, freedom

Introduction

The current pandemic has spawned a significant discussion on how to conduct human life on various levels to handle its predicaments. One of the considerations in coping with numerous pandemic situations has been ethical practices, particularly virtue ethics.This research work, therefore, illustrates the scope and relevance of virtue ethics in dealing with the pandemic crisis. Endeavouring such an attempt, in the first section of our study, the moral concerns and human conditions in the pandemic are discussed. To illustrate them plausibly, it explains four conceptual themes such as the nature of the pandemic, government restrictions, freedom, and ethical necessity.By explaining the interrelation between these four conceptual themes, the significant features of ethical concerns in the pandemic are demonstrated. Finally, this section suggests virtue ethics could be the appropriate response to handling the pandemic issues. The second section, however, exemplifies the relevance and scope of virtue ethics in the pandemic outbreak by providing the answer to how practising virtue ethics is expedient to tackle the pandemic issues. To substantiate this claim, four major virtues, namely compassion, courage, honesty and justice are discussed further. By examining them, the paper finally suggests virtue ethics can be the appropriate reaction to managing Covid-19 issues since its significance has increased in the pandemic crisis. Let's examine each section as follows.

Pandemic and Human Conditions: Elucidating Ethical Concerns

The present pandemic has brought many significant issues to human life, which have, in many ways, as voiced by many people, limited human freedom up to a certain extent. Many have considered the pandemic a curse that resulted in human ignorance; some thought it as a human disaster paid for monumental mismanagement and carelessness; whereas for some, it is a deliberate conspiracy to destroy the economy. Whatever may be the cause, the pandemic, however, has not only created an emergency to be faced but also made a contrast between the restrictive measures imposed by governments and our freedom. The disparity between Covid restrictions and limiting freedom, nevertheless, invites moral responsibility on a different perspective because pandemic crisis made us rethink the concept of freedom on solid ground. This specific situation has triggered everyone to be an ethical being as an immediate response to solving the pandemic issues on various grounds since it has called complete vigilance and responsiveness for everyone. The primary reason for such concerns lies in the fact that *pandemic is not an individual health issue but a problem to be confronted by all*. It has, therefore, directed for maintaining the shared reaction and responsibility among people or mutual beneficial practices (Moulin-Sto¿ek, et al. 1), making everyone equally

responsible for overcoming the crisis.It consequently made people aware that dealing with pandemic issues as an instant response requires proper ethical behaviour.

Four conceptual clarifications have to be elucidated in our discussion to illustrate the nature of ethical concerns in the pandemic as our primary research objective: nature of the pandemic, government restrictions, freedom, and ethical necessity. To demonstrate the characteristic features of the pandemic, the primary aspect one has to notice, as I indicated above, is the involvement of all people as the unique health case. The spreading of the virus, unlike other diseases, has definite social relevance because pandemic is not an individual health issue.Since the pandemic has created a situation, which binds all of us together to deal with its issues, it cannot be seen as merely a health issue. Pandemic should be seen as a *social issue* rather than an*individual issue* because more than a health problem, it has become a "global issue" on various grounds.Elucidating the nature of pandemic, therefore, it is to be understood that the Covid patient is no longer an isolated health case because to stop the spreading of the virus has become the moral duty not only of the patient but also of all. For this very reason, the Covid patient has been given special care not only for recovering from the disease but also for preventing the spreading of the virus. It has created a peculiar social situation and the need for proper moral behaviour based on mutual concerns of people.

Generally, a health issue demands a specific discipline concerned only with the patients to cure the disease. For this reason, the patients are normally considered as the object of "medical scrutiny" as an individual case of medical truth and the subject of medical observations. However, the pandemic has necessitated a disciplinary procedure on everybody's life equally to prevent the spreading of the virus. This unique situation put everyone under a perpetual medical gaze to be measured, observed, and monitored. The imposed check over the practice of medicine in the name of investigation, supervision and recording treatments has directed a new medical configuration as it led to the dispersion of the "medical gaze" throughout society. It strengthened the medical administration to coordinate medicalisation of human life and wellbeing of the society directing the volatilization of disease in a corrected, organized, and ceaselessly supervised environment. As a result, instead of the negative recovery of health, medical practices in the pandemic were given a task of positive retaining of health and well-being.The pandemic, therefore, has enhanced disciplining not only Covid patients by gathering pandemic statistics and practising medical vigilance but also everyone by supervising their life and health conditions. It has demanded everyone to have a definite subjectivity with care and vigilance, enabling all to cope with the situation. In the pandemic crisis, in consequence, none of us is *isolated* but all are *related* in a significant manner because *taking care of each other has become a moral duty of all*. For this reason, the pandemic emergency made everyone*not onlythe object of medical practices but also a subject of ethical behaviour*. On these grounds, it is to be noted that the

medical care in the pandemic has to give moral status to everyone to handle the situation appropriately.

As I mentioned above, the pandemic cannot be seen merely as a health issue of an individual because it is a *social issueto be managed by everyone*. The involvement of the government, therefore, places a significant role in this context because overcoming the pandemic, many restrictions have been instructed by the government on various grounds. The primary constraint among them is the restriction of movement of people for mitigating the spreading of the virus. Quarantine and lockdown are the primary evident procedures of such kinds, but practising them by imposing government rules over our life should be seen as a moral duty of all. Whoever is quarantined is not only an isolated unit but also a link to others' well-being because being quarantined and following Covid rules are interlinked. Isolating someone by quarantine is also the isolation of others indirectly, especially family members, in the pandemic management. As a result, reporting the Covid cases and making sure the quarantine procedure has become the government's responsibility, along with the duty of the family and Covid patient. Similarly, lockdown demanded much more vigilance and awareness since the larger population to be monitored and observed immediately to stop the quick spreading of the virus. It has triggered to cultivate the moral behaviour of cooperative and mutual vigilance among people and government to tackle the dispersion of the Covid at the earliest.

Strictly speaking, government restrictions in the pandemic, which are imposed by various means, do not constrain human life as viewed by many. On the contrary, rather than taking these restrictions as constraining life, they have to be perceived as precautions to handle the crisis.[1]It demands a high amount of disciplinary behaviour among all people because a moral concern to regulate everyone has been necessitated by the consequence of the pandemic. On the one hand, it has enhanced self-discipline, whereas, on the other hand, a care for disciplining others. *It is in thismutual concern for each other that moral responsibility is grounded in the pandemic time*. For this reason, the government restrictions should be seen as meant for the well-being of the people as a whole rather than mere forced restraints. It does not mean that all government restrictions are justifiable, but since they are obliged to take precautions methods, the necessity of such requirements is imperative and tenable. The important exercises of such precautions are the practices of social distancing and wearing masks apart from quarantine and lockdown. Since close person-to-person interaction appears to be the primary source of the dispersion of viruses, these two precautionary practices function as the key way to mitigate the spreading. Importantly, the plausible practice of these two protections demands a moral responsibility not only from an individual but also from all. Not only has one to maintain social distance and wear masks, but also make sure others do the same. This moral concern, that is *the moral duty to oneself and*

others, practiced in terms of social distance and wearing masks, reduces the risk of exposure, and prevents the spreading of the virus.

However, practising the above mentioned precautions alone is not enough because tackling the pandemic demands *a moral duty to cultivate good health care* as well.It includes a constant awareness of one's health daily and taking care of surroundings clean and neat. Apart from other precautions such as washing hands, covering coughs and sneezes, avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces, getting vaccinated on time, preventing the pandemic requires a great amount of discipline. Though meant for individual practices, these precautions function plausibly only when all take a moral duty to themselves to practice them. In short, all pandemic restrictions, instructed through government procedures, function on twofold: from the perspective of an individual and from the viewpoint of the other. Importantly, solving the pandemic crisis calls for taking care of each other as an immediate responsibility because everyone, in this venturing task of tackling pandemic, has to become a volunteer to each other. It clearly shows that moral duty to each other is mandatory in the pandemic because the situation demands moral responsibility by everyone on mutual concerns to take care of each other. Individually, one has to be morally responsible for not being exposed to the virus; however, as a social being, it is the duty of an individual not to allow the other fellow men to do the same. Therefore, pandemic demands moral duty, teaching that the best approach to preclude disease is to avoid being exposed to the virus, not only from an individual but also from all.

Though pandemic restrictions imposed by governments are meant for preventing the spread of the virus, many worry that these constraints, from the perspective of moral concerns, are limiting freedom in many areas of social life. Though restrictions have been imposed in many areas of life, whether these constraints limit freedom or not has become the subject of debate for two reasons(Bellazzi and Boyneburgk 2). One view asserts that the pandemic crisis is in contrast to freedom both in principle and practice. Whereas, the contrary view claims that one should not misinterpret freedom as the absence of constraints (2). This debate poses many questions at the outset: how do we analyse the contrast between our freedom and pandemic restrictions; why should we cooperate with the impediments; how do we navigate this difficult time by focusing our actions; how do we cultivate the moral fabric in the pandemic time; on what grounds morality and freedom are related, do their relation is plausible in the pandemic (1-8). These questions, therefore, excavate how freedom and ethical concerns of the pandemic are compatible and on what grounds we can evaluate them.Nonetheless, answering these questions, the second view of morality, which says cooperating with current restrictions is morally justifiable, enables individuals to exercise ethical responsibility in the given pandemic crisis. Accepting the contrast between freedom and pandemic restrictions, which is the view of the former, is a false perception because freedom

should not be thought of as the absence of constraints (2). On the contrary, the pandemic has triggered high chances of being ethical as it directs the possibility of taking responsibility for actions to prevent the spreading of the virus. As a result, the government restriction should be viewed as the best *opportunity to be morally responsible*(4). The former, for this reason, can be discarded and substituted with proper ethical values and the freedom of will instead, as suggested by the latter view.The second view, therefore, proclaims the ethical possibility, defined in terms of taking responsibility for actions and cultivating appropriate moral subjects, enables people to cooperate with the current restrictions by consciously choosing them. This ethical possibility permits us to deal with the practical concerns about how an individual should behave during these pandemic restrictions.

We have seen so far the possibility of ethical concerns in the pandemic crisis; however, what sorts of ethical frameworks does it necessitate is yet to be explained. As I noted above, the pandemic obligated people to be morally responsible for their actions with caution and awareness because it put everyone under constant surveillance imposed by various government procedures. As a result, in the pandemic, a necessity of "disciplinary medical gaze", by which all are under constant observation, has emerged as an ethical obligation to all on solid moral grounds. Though the spreading of the virus cares neither about government procedures nor social differences among people, the present pandemic condition mandates everyone, with or without governments reactions, to act morally in actions and intentions with pertinent concerns. For that very reason, we should not take freedom as the absence of external restrictions; instead, we ought to ask whether we could cooperate with the impediments imposed by the government. In this context, considerations of virtue ethics will lead to an affirmative answer because the cultivated moral character on appropriate virtues can handle the pandemic crisis suitably. As I suggested earlier, since pandemic has triggered disciplinary actions with a moral duty to oneself and others, it has necessitated the cultivation of the subject with a moral character. Fostering an ethical character, in an odd context such as the pandemic, demands not only valuing the moral considerations of all but also developing the capacity to govern oneself. Cultivating virtues in this challenging time, therefore, provides an appropriate response because pandemic hasnecessitated a mutual concern for each other as a moral necessity. It makes people develop virtues for concentrating activities on coherence rather than division in the imposed restrictions of government to assist everyone navigating through the challenging time. Though fostering virtues generally seen as the traits of individuals as part of their self-governance, pandemic, however, has necessitated developing them in terms of *mutually beneficial practices of people*(Moulin-Sto¿ek, et al. 1-4). It makes the scope of virtue ethics an entirely different framework in the pandemic as *a relevant social concern*.

Examining The Scope of Virtue Ethics in The Pandemic Time

Before delving into the scope of virtue ethics in the pandemic time, it is essential to elucidate the characteristic features of it on solid ground. Virtue ethics gives prior importance to cultivating virtues by building an appropriate moral character to describe how we ought to act (Hursthouse and Pettigrove). It often contrasts with other two normative ethical approaches, namely deontology and consequentialism. Deontology emphasises on duties or rules we ought to live by; consequentialism, on the other hand, stresses the consequences of action as the basis of morality; whereas, virtue ethics maintains moral virtue as its central foundation (Hursthouse and Pettigrove). However, it does not mean that virtue ethics denies significance of the consequence of action and rules exclusively as suggested by consequentialism and deontology. Though each of these ethical approaches makes room for virtues, consequence, and rule, what distinguishes each other uniquely is the emphasis on their central principle.Virtue ethics claims that moral actions should establish the virtuous conduct of a person because he could exercise the appropriate virtue when suitable to the situations. To correctly exercise a virtue means to have a moral conduct because virtue ethics not only deals with the rightness or wrongness of individual actions but is also concerned with the whole of a person's life.It suggests the moral disposition, which is based on virtues, enables the moral agents to behave adequately to the given situation because a virtuous person not only possesses but also lives the virtues (Boyneburgk 1-8).According to Aristotle, virtues, however, are not gained by everyday habitual behaviours because they should be seen as conduct attributes or character traits (Aristotle 1097a30-34). Though virtue is the disposition that empowers one to perceive, feel, think, act appropriately in the given circumstances (Bellazzi and Boyneburgk 4), they are not naturally given but cultivated by exercising their desirable mean between two extremes, one of excess and the other of deficiency (Aristotle 1097a30-34).[2]It also suggests that virtues are ethically sound traits, but vices are ethically deficient qualities because the possessor of virtues makes one morally correct, whereas the holders of vices are morally wrong. In short, cultivating virtue as the foundation of moral character enables one to do the right action in the given circumstances because it is the appropriate engagement of "settled dispositions"one possesses (Aristotle 1097a30-34;Bellazzi and Boyneburgk 1-8;Hursthouse and Pettigrove).

One might ask how virtue ethics function as the appropriate response to the pandemic crisis. Generally, the significance of virtue ethics lies in cultivating the traits of individuals for ethical concerns as an individual case; however, in the pandemic, it is based on mutually beneficial practices among people though it does not reject the importance of fostering the traits of the individual. Therefore, the scope and relevance of virtue ethics can be evaluated on two grounds: firstly, explaining the necessity of cultivating virtues individually as the case of self-disciplining; secondly, examining the

prerequisite of mutual concern for fellow men as the case of moral responsibility. Though independently posited, these grounds are interlinked and complementary because the scope of virtue ethics in the pandemic is based on shared concerns of people along with individual self-governing.Since the pandemic has triggered a moral duty to oneself and others, its relevance is best understood by excavating the moral virtues one should cultivate in this crisis. Four such main virtues are explained here, namely, compassion, justice, courage, and honesty which not only explains moral duty to oneself but also shows the relevance of being responsible for others. Though these virtues are illustrated as essential moral qualities, many other virtues, for instance, generosity and temperance, are also associated with them. Association of other virtues, while individually explained, are not only interconnected but also have overlapping applications illustrating the central cardinal virtue mentioned above. In short, the cultivation of the four cardinal virtues indicated above shows the relevance of moral concerns to tackle the pandemic crisis.

Since a virtuous moral character comes with practice, the political and social fallout in the pandemic dealing with health care have provided a great chance to practice virtue ethics on solid ground. As we know, the pandemic has been enormously disruptive causing severe strains on both individual and social well-being because its impact is rapid and colossal in havocking people's basic concerns and needs. The intensifying risk we face in the pandemic and the widespread uncertainty and fear it has brought has made all of us more socially isolated than in ordinary times. It has brought a situation of stress and danger and, for the same token, a challenging time to regulate our emotions appropriately and respond to circumstances properly. It shows that healthy social connections and self-care are the two primary stress moderating ways to handle the situation. Cultivating virtues on these two grounds, which ought to be fully and adequately governed, therefore, should be seen as responsive to social roles and sensitive to the specific situation for facilitating the pursuit of valued aims making all live well.For this reason, moral actions, which are based on virtuous character,enable us to act in specific ways in the given specifics of the situation with the harmonious motivation and proper understanding of the social conditions by consciously cooperating with government restrictions. As a result, cultivating virtues, which is the settled disposition of the mean between two extremes, as the critical feature of improving people's lives in the pandemic could function in society as a whole.

Firstly, the features of compassion are described in our discussion because it is so salient during this pandemic. Compassion is the virtue that develops a bond with the sufferer because it is the ability to feel and understand the suffering of fellow men and try to alleviate that sorrow (Comte-Sponville 368).A compassionate man neither is indifferent to the grieving situation nor feels superior to the suffering individual (368). Compassion, therefore, is the core virtue in professions like health care and social work (Garlington and Collins). In the pandemic outbreak, these two professions have had

tremendous work to recognize the sufferings of people and take actions to alleviate them. They have to function mainly on two concerns: understanding people's worries, fears and anxieties on the one hand; shedding the sufferings of Covidpatients on the other hand.The pandemic crisis has demanded monumental management from these two professions by instructingcompassionate guidance to reduce and prevent human griefs. Reflecting compassion as a significant moral virtue cannot be reduced to these professions exclusively because many other pandemic policies also require a compassionate attitude. It includes volunteering Covid patients, preventing evictions, reducing the unemployment crisis, providing food aids to the poor, caring for domestic animals, and so forth (Garlington and Collins). Similarly, the government restrictions, continually monitoring and alleviating people's pain, should be based on a compassionate attitude. Nonetheless, some other virtues, namely, generosity, temperance, and patience, should also be developed, along with compassion. The virtue of generosity makes one share possessions (especially, wealth and resources) by helping others (Pakaluk 173); temperance, however, empowers one by being moderate and self-restraint to handle the stress, fear and disharmony (Green, et al. 769) that the pandemic crisishasbrought; whereas patience enables one to regulate emotions and understand the situation correctly by being tolerant, preserved and stable (Peirson 31). These three virtues and compassion are not only interrelated but also complementary to each other because their conjoint functionalities are significant in the current context of Covid-19 to alleviate people's emotional baggage.

Secondly, cultivating the virtue of justice is also a significant moral concern in the pandemic. Providing justice-oriented policies has been a central concern in the pandemic since many areas of human life have been severely affected by the Covid outbreak. The pandemic has shined inequity and injustice in various social areas such as low-income populations, people in nursing homes, homeless people and migrant labourers(Garlington and Collins).The requirement of justice-oriented policies is not merely grounded on these issues alone but also can be found in Covid testing, health equipment availability, and distribution of vaccines (Garlington and Collins).Fair distribution of resources and proper management of social arrangements, for this reason, have been an essential consideration of pandemic rescue procedures. Healthcare, pharmaceutical, and food supply workers, thus, were informed for modulating their special responsibility to maintain the usual work schedule promptly, sometimes rapidly (Garlington and Collins). Prioritizing health and safety and putting the care and security of others ahead of their own, the works of these professionals made us aware that justice-oriented policies are necessary for the pandemic's disproportionate health and economy. Cultivating justice, however, is not the job of these professionals solely but is the moral concern of all people because the emergency of the pandemic represents the interdependence of all people. For this reason, along with cultivating the virtue of justice, it is also relevant to foster some other virtues such as solidarity, friendliness and liberality

to handle the pandemic issues. Developing the virtue of solidarity in the pandemic makes one cope with the government restrictions and Covid protocol because it is the quality of assistance and cooperation for pertinent goals (Garlington and Collins; Galang, et al. e315-e316). Cultivating friendliness, which is the quality of being suited to particular needs and concerns by cultivating a proper social conduct (Sadler, "Friendliness";"Definition of Friendliness"), however, enables one to handle problematic issues such as communicating with the public about risk management and the need for a cooperative mentality. Fostering liberality, nevertheless, makes one manage wealth and possessions by cultivating the quality of giving or spending or owning them appropriately ("Nicomachean Ethics: Book IV") by being free from prejudice in the pandemic scarcity. Therefore, fostering justice, along with these virtues, is significant because fair treatment of people has been one of the main moral issues in the pandemic.

Cultivating courage is another significant virtue to be noted in solving pandemic issues. As we know, handling the fear and danger that the pandemic has brought has been an inevitable issue at the crisis time. On the one hand, the coronavirus' impact has increased unprecedented rates of psychological distress in terms of raised mortality rates, death of loved ones, unemployment issues, business crisis, food insecurity, and so forth (Fowers, et al. 937). On the other hand, public safety tools such as social distancing and quarantine also have extended uncertainty and misery among people (937).Finally, to make matters worse, the intensifying features of the risks we face and the reckoning threats that burst out unexpectedly in this pandemic are predominantly invisible (937).Considering these issues, regulating our emotions properly and taking suitable decisions have been the primary mitigating way to manage the pandemic crisis. Cultivating courage in this context seems to be a significant consideration because, as an immediate response to the pandemic outbreak, it is essential to face the danger of the pandemic and control our emotions and stress to regulate our mental balance at ease. Analysing the pandemic, one can note that the cowardice displayed by so many people during this pandemic prominently and consistently is disappointing and retrograding to tackling the pandemic predicaments. Similarly, the recklessness of many people has exacerbated and extended the pandemic distress, contributing to unwarranted miseries and perplexities.Therefore, cultivating courage, which makes one initiate an appropriate degree of risk-taking, should be seen as a mandatory requirement for everyone in this pandemic crisis(937). However, fostering courage should be differentiated from shrinking from bearing threats (cowardice) and plunging into unnecessary risks (recklessness) in the given ends at stake.Though taking good judgement about risk-taking by fostering courage is mandatory in the pandemic, it is also associated with other virtues such as fortitude and prudence, enabling one to take appropriate actions by developing the capacity to face the pandemic crisis. Cultivating fortitude, meant to have a strong will in the face of danger, makes one endure pain or adversity (Stedman

59; "Definition of Fortitude") faced by the pandemic crisis. However, fostering prudence, which is the ability to govern oneself with proper reason and avoid risks with shrewdness, makes one cautious about taking correct judgement ("Definition of Prudence"; "Catholic Encyclopedia: Prudence").These two virtues and courage are not only corresponding but also complementary to each other because cultivating them is significant to restrain the danger and fear the pandemic has brought.

Honesty, the quality of being truthful and sincere(Admin), is another worth considering virtue in analysing and handling pandemic issues. It is one of the most mandated moral qualities because revealing information regarding Covid details of patients and examining various documents of medical observations require honesty essentially to tackle the pandemic crisis (Fowers, et al. 937). Incorrect information of Covid, regarding its affected patients and areas, has created unnecessary panic and monumental mismanagement in the pandemic. To provide correct details of Covid, especially from government, media, and other health care professionals, honesty is required as the immediate moral concern. Being honest, however, is not merely the concern of these professionals solely, but of all. Since self-quarantine, social distancing, wearing masks, and lockdown protocol have to be honestly followed, revealing whether one is Covid affected or not is an essential moral duty of all in the pandemic. The interdependency and mutual concern for each other that the pandemic necessitated make us cultivate honesty to execute our moral duty to everyone as the essential requirement for handling the pandemic issues.Not only does moral duty for others require honesty, but it is also mandatory for self-care to manage one's health conditions and proper social relationships as the immediate moral concern. For this reason, apart from cultivating honesty, two other virtues are also to be fostered, such as truthfulness and fidelity. Cultivating truthfulness, the quality of telling the truth, makes one speak only correct statements about pandemic concerns, making him/her loyal to fellow men (Sadler, "Truthfulness"; "Nicomachean Ethics: Book IV"). Whereas, fostering fidelity makes us faithful to each other by being responsible and reliable to our relationship (Comte-Sponville 368) to understand the accurate conditions of the pandemic.Therefore, cultivating honesty with truthfulness and fidelity, which are interlinked and complementary, is essential to managing social security and updating correct Covid conditions during the pandemic crisis.

What we have seen is the scope of virtue ethics in the pandemic time, and our findings in the discussion have explained its significance elaborately on solid grounds. Though cultivating some cardinal virtues such as compassion, justice, courage and honesty are essential in the pandemic crisis as suggested by the research analysis, one might ask: is the scope and relevance of virtue ethics reducible to the present pandemic crisis. If one accepts that query, it raises two questions primarily: firstly, is the relevance of virtue ethics grounded on pandemic restrictions exclusively; secondly, is virtue ethics

the only moral framework applicable in the pandemic constraints. Answering the first question, one has to be aware that the scope of virtue ethics has always been present as far as human relations in societies are concerned, and therefore, its relevance should not be thought to be limited to the pandemic constraints. It is not the scope of virtue ethics that is reducible to the pandemic crisis, nor does it get relevance only in the pandemic outbreak. Instead of thinking virtue ethics is reducible to the pandemic restrictions, the government restrictions, on the contrary, should be seen as providing the *possibility or opportunity* to practice and enhance virtue ethics during this pandemic. It implies that the relevance of virtue ethics is not reduced to pandemic restrictions but reveals why the application of virtue ethics is necessary for the moral concerns in the pandemic.However, the second question illustrates that our discussion claimed other ethical frameworks do not have any relevance in the pandemic crisis. It is a false perception because our research work aims *only to explain* the scope and relevance of virtue ethics in the pandemic crisis, not defending it as the *only* ethical framework applicable in the pandemic outbreak. Other ethical frameworks might have relevance in handling the pandemic issues; however, such research questions should be independently analysed, and it has never been a concern in our discussion.Our research analysis does not claim that virtue ethics is the only moral framework applicable in the pandemic constraints but has intended to elucidate only its relevance and scope. It is not mandatory to reject other ethical frameworks exclusively to illustrate the applicability of virtue ethics in the pandemic outbreak. Therefore, the study suggests that it is essential to consider the significance of virtue ethics in dealing with various pandemic issues as an immediate response and necessity. To conclude, by understanding and practically applying the relevance and scope of virtue ethics in the pandemic crisis as suggested by this study, we can hope that we may overcome the predicament and hardship brought by the pandemic.

Conclusion

Excavating the human conditions analysed by the scope of virtue ethics in the pandemic is the central discussion in this research work. In the first section, evaluating the human state and life in the pandemic crisis, four conceptual themes are examined: nature of the pandemic, government restrictions, freedom and ethical necessity. By plausibly explaining them, the first section has found that the pandemic has triggered a moral duty to oneself and others significantly. By making mutual concerns for each other a necessity, the pandemic has demanded specific ethical behaviour to handle the situation. The second section, however, uncovered that though the pandemic activated an ethical necessity, virtue ethics could be the immediate response and enduring solution for handling pandemic issues. Four main cardinal virtues such as compassion, courage, honesty and justice, which are the most significant moral virtues to tackle pandemic

issues, are essentially evaluated in our conceptual examination to characterise the ethical behaviour in the pandemic. As a result, the study has understood practising virtue ethics in the given restrictions of government is compatible with the pandemic situation because it neither limits human freedom nor weakens rescue procedures. It suggests that the scope and relevance of virtue ethics in the pandemic have been increased, and practising it could handle the Covid predicaments as a primary ethical response.

Notes and References

[1] Though government restrictions, in prima facie, are meant for the well-being of society, how these restrictions are implemented can be a subject of debate.This research work does not venture to analyse such issues since they could go beyond the scope of our concern. It's worth noting that the restrictions in the pandemic should be viewed as a social need, nonetheless.

[2] For instance, courage is a virtue; but exercised in excess, it becomes recklessness and, in deficiency, cowardice.

[3] Though often used interchangeably, honesty and truthfulness are not the same. Honesty underlines that the individual is not only truthful but also sincere in his words and actions, whereas truthfulness is concerned and limited to telling the truth(Admin).

Admin. "Difference Between Honesty and Truthfulness." Compare the Difference Between Similar Terms, 12 Oct. 2018, www.differencebetween.com/difference-between-honesty-and-vs-truthfulness/. Accessed 10 Feb. 2022.

Anderson, Heather. "Using Virtue Ethics to Guide Actions During a Pandemic." Blogs, 29 June 2020, medicine.iu.edu/blogs/bioethics/using-virtue-ethics-to-guide-actions-during-a-pandemic.

Aristotle. The Nicomachean Ethics. Translated by W. D. Ross, Oxford University Press, 1966.

Bellazzi, Francesca, and Konrad V. Boyneburgk. "COVID-19 calls for virtue ethics." Journal of Law and the Biosciences, vol. 7, no. 1, 2020, pp. 1-8, doi:10.1093/jlb/lsaa056.

"The Catholic Encyclopedia: Prudence." New Advent, Robert Appleton Company, www.newadvent.org/cathen/12517b.htm. Accessed 10 Feb. 2022.

Comte-Sponville, André. A Small Treatise on the Great Virtues: The Uses of Philosophy in Everyday Life. Metropolitan Books, 2002.

"Definition of Fortitude." Dictionary by Merriam-Webster: America's Most-trusted Online Dictionary, 2 Apr. 2022, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fortitude. Accessed 7 Apr. 2022.

"Definition of Friendliness." Dictionary by Merriam-Webster: America's Most-trusted Online Dictionary, 8 May 2011, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/friendliness. Accessed 10 Feb. 2022.

"Definition of Prudence." Dictionary by Merriam-Webster: America's Most-trusted Online Dictionary, 19 July 2013, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/prudence. Accessed 6 Feb. 2022.

Fowers, Blaine J., et al. "Courage, Justice, and Practical Wisdom as Key Virtues in the Era of COVID-19." Frontiers in Psychology, vol. 12, 2021, doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2021.647912.

Galang, Joseph R., et al. "Solidarity as A Companion Virtue in Response to The COVID-19 Pandemic." Journal of Public Health, vol. 43, no. 2, 2021, pp. e315-e316.

Garlington, Sarah B., and Mary E. Collins. "3 Moral Virtues Necessary for an Ethical Pandemic Response and Reopening." The Conversation, 26 June 2020, theconversation.com/3-moral-virtues-necessary-for-an-ethical-pandemic-response-and-reopening-140688. Accessed 20 Feb. 2022.

Green, Joel B., et al. Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics. Baker Academic, 2011.

Hursthouse, Rosalind, and Glen Pettigrove. "Virtue Ethics (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2018 Edition)." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, edited by Edward N. Zalta, plato.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=ethics-virtue. Accessed 19 Feb. 2022.

Kraut, Richard. "Aristotle's Ethics (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy/Summer 2018 Edition)." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, edited by Edward N. Zalta, plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/. Accessed 20 Feb. 2022.

Moulin-Stożek, Daniel, et al. "Virtue as A Response to Pandemic and Crisis." Oxford Review of Education, 2021, pp. 1-14, doi:10.1080/03054985.2021.1973983.

"Nicomachean Ethics: Book IV." SparkNotes, www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/ethics/section4/. Accessed 12 Feb. 2022.

Pakaluk, Michael. Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: An Introduction. Cambridge UP, 2005.

Peirson, Abel L. Address on Temperance, Delivered in the South Meeting House, Salem, January 14, 1830. Harvard University, 1830.

Sadler, Gregory B. "The Virtue of Friendliness in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics - Philosophy Core Concepts." YouTube, 17 Dec. 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOxIFw9cL2U. Accessed 5 Feb. 2022.

—. "The Virtue of Truthfulness in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics - Philosophy Core Concepts." YouTube, 22 Dec. 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6DZ-SkXauE. Accessed 6 Feb. 2022.

Stedman, James M. "Aristotle's Cardinal Virtues: Their Application to Assessment of Psychopathology and Psychotherapy." Practical Philosophy, July 2010, pp. 57-64.

Ravenshaw Journal of Philosophy, Vol. VIII
November 2022 127-144
ISSN: 2395-3209

Revisiting Gandhi's Thoughts on Education for Tomorrow's World

Zabin Laishram
Ph.D Scholar, Department of Philosophy,
Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda College, Mylapore, Chennai

"Education must be of a new type for the sake of the creation of a new world."

- ***Mahatma Gandhi***

Abstract

More precisely, Gandhiji wanted the people of India to become not just literate but educated. Therefore, education to him meant drawing out the latent faculties in man, courage to resist the wrong and own the correct attitude, fearless, humility and the like. And also, he regards the value of learning by doing, and so he recommends that education should begin with the practical of learning. Its goal is to build up non-violence, no-exploiting social order in which the ideal of freedom, equality and brotherhood can be fully and universally realized. And also, he strongly believed that true education is not mere reading of books and true knowledge is not mere literacy. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to bring attention to the need for a sharper understanding on Gandhian philosophy of education as a way to attain sustainable development. In this essay, we shall attempt to emphasize consciously on Gandhiji concept of true education and true knowledge in order to promote education into a purposeful activity for spiritual, physical, intellectual, and economic development. Further, we also argue that the concept of Gandhian constructive notion of education is not only philosophical and theoretical but also experimental in today's and tomorrow's world.

Keywords: Education, freedom, non-violence, sustainable development, true education, and true knowledge

Introduction

Mohandas Karam Chand Gandhi is known as "Mahatma", a practical philosopher, social reformer, educationalist and unique thinker who wanted to establish a free and casteless society with no exploitation and racial discrimination.He, who has been compared with Gautam Buddha and Jesus Christ, was undoubtedly a great man who influenced not only the course of history but was also able to change the life of many persons who came in contact with him. He dominated the Indian political scene like a colossus for about a quarter of a century and helped India to get independence without bloodshed, with the help of non-violence.

His influence on history itself is unparalleled as he not only won freedom for India but was indirectly responsible for providing a fillip to many subjugated countries. And, being a unique thinker, he imagines life as an integrated whole. He was deeply influenced by many western thinkers, intellectuals and prophets. As he says: *"my view on ahimsa (non-violence) is the result of my western education."*[1]No doubt, his visions on education, economic and political problem coincide with John Ruskin view. Similar to Ruskin view, he also believed that 'man' is the central for all to bring a peaceful and harmonious civilization. In this context, I would like to quote Gandhiji words that, *"The individual is the one supreme consideration."*[2]It must be noted that he has given maximum importance to the need for the individual man to lead a dignified life, which is nothing other than a life with dignified labour. He was not only influenced by the western thinkers, rather he was also influenced by the teaching of his mother Putli, Lord Buddha, Lord Mahavir and also by ancient Hindu philosophy, especially *Bhagavad Gita*[3]. For him, whenever doubts hunted him, *Bhagavad Gita* was the relief for him. More precisely, Gandhiji was inspired by *Bhagavad Gita* to become a *Karma Yogi*.

On top of all that, understanding the meaning of education is an essential step towards making this discussion, so, in general, the term 'Education' is a dynamic process of training in the art of living. As Prof. Bouraidefines that,"*Education, enables a person to develop the total personality of man"*[4]Thus, education is conceived as a man-making process, making self-actualized person who can positively contribute to the welfare and progress of the society. It is like life putting all things in their order so that every function, interest or activity, which has a contribution to make the life good may find its appropriate place but it is not free from problems and issues. It is not an end in itself but only a means and that alone can be called education which makes us men of character. Clearly, it should be accompanied with truthfulness, firmness, patience and others good virtue.

In this article my focus shall be on Gandhiji contribution to educational principles and practices, and in that context, we shall try to portray that his educational

philosophy has given a great impact on the whole community. In developing this essay, we elaborate deeply onhis numerous letters, speeches and writings on the subject of education. The paper shall consist of threeparts. In the first part, we shall briefly outline the context, that played in giving birth to Gandhian educational thoughts, in the second section, we shall discuss the background of education as formulated by Gandhiji and shallbe focusing onwhy hecriticisethe modernity of educational, and in the last section, we shall try to delineate and understand the unique features of his system of education in the modern world and its relevance in the twenty-first century.

Background to Research

The educational theory propounded by Gandhiji, requires a clear picture of the educational system which was introduced during the British regime which has been in existence even up to the present day. The setting for such a system of education was the outcome of his wide and long experience in politics, social and economic life from India and the world. As we know that the educational theory of Gandhi is quite revolutionary.

The real greatness of Gandhi consist in the domain tendencies of education i.e. Naturalism, Idealism and Pragmatism. He synthesized the above three important philosophies in to a unity, on the basis of such basic ground, he gives the meaning of education. So, he defined as, "*By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man, body, mind and spirit."*[5]As such, education is a harmonious development of body, mind and soul. Additional, his words implicate that education becomes the basis of personality development in all dimensions that is morally, mentally and emotionally. Thus, we may say that his concept of education is unique as the objective of education to him is to cultivate man in form of awakening the innate potentialityi.e. mentally, morally and emotionally to act with genuineness.

In other words, Gandhiji education has been characterized as encompassing the head, the heart and the hands. It is a dynamic side of the philosophy of life. In this context, Bourai, in his book *Indian Theory of Education*says that,[6]

Man is neither mere intellect, nor gross animal body, nor the heart or soul alone. A proper and harmonious combination of all the three required for making of the whole man constitutes the true economics of education.

It clearly meant that the education of three H i.e. the head, heart and hand show the way for the creation of a new personality in the building of character which became for him, the end of all knowledge. Consequently, his purpose of education is to raise man to a higher moral and spiritual order through full development of the individual and the evolution of a 'new man', 'a satyagrahi', a non-violent' personality.[7]

Gandhiji realized at an early stage that education was the only important component to cure for all the ills and evils from the society and the nation as a whole. As he rightly said: *"Education is the most potent means to happiness in the modern age*."[8]Accordingly, a child can truly develop if we educate him or her properly and try to bring out the best in him or her. The object of education is not to be able to earn money, but to improve oneself and to serve the country. Therefore, Gandhiji used education as an instrument to establish a free and casteless society with no exploitation and racial discrimination.

In a nutshell, it is very clear that his basic philosophy revolves around truth and non-violence. He believed that there is no greater law than truth. In his early life he worked with the notion of 'God is truth', and he reversed it to 'Truth is God'. He writes that, *"God is truth, but God is many other things also. That is why I say truth is God"*.[9]But, there are certain interesting implications of Gandhi's statement about 'Truth is God'. So, his implications comprise of pragmatic values, ethical or moral values and religious values. The very significant implication of this statement is that the object of worship is not God but Truth. Hence, 'worship of Truth' is one thing that can bring person of every caste, creed and nation together. In this context, I would like to quote Gandhiji words as follow:[10]

"Ahimsa and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say, which is the obverse, and which the reverse? Ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so ahimsa is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later"

Let us first try to determine the Gandhian sense of the word 'Ahimsa'. In Gandhi the word Ahimsa has both a positive and a negative import. The positive aspect of its meaning is more fundamental for Gandhi, since it comprehends the negative aspect also and represents its essence.

Gandhiji theory of Truth necessarily takes us to the consideration of his view on the nature of Non-violence. Non-violence is the highest law which enters into the highest ethical formulations of Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. In the same manner, the positive aspect of Ahimsa according to Gandhian is nothing but Love. Therefore, Ahimsa demands a sincere effort to free mind from feelings like anger, malice, hatred, revenge, selfish, jealousy etc., since these create obstacle in the way of Love. In the words of Gandhi: *"Love is the energy that cleanses one's inner life and uplifts him, and as such, love comprehends such noble feelings as benevolence, compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, generosity, kindness, sympathy etc"*.[11]Accordingly, he rightly remarks that non-violence is meant for the strong and not for the weakness. He says, *"One who is practicing Ahimsa has the strength to overpower his adversary, and still he practices*

ahimsa because ahimsa is a conscious and deliberate restraint put upon one's desire for vengeance".[12]

Besides, we all know that Gandhi's philosophy of End and Means has a direct relation with his doctrine of Truth and Ahimsa. Truth is the ideal of life, it is the goal towards which we must strive. At this point of view, it must be noted that the practice of non-violence prompts an individual to participate in collective life, whether religious, social, political and economic not for any individual gain. Thus, the entire system of education for Gandhi's follows from his principle of truth and non-violence representing a combination of means and ends, individual good and social good. So, he reiterates that an education should be taught non-violence, truth, and it should automatically develop an ability in the child to distinguish between good and bad. Thus, for Gandhi's, the end of all knowledge should be the building up of moral and character.

Gandhiji's Educational Theory

Mahatma Gandhi considered education as a long-running process and does not limit it to formal schooling or acquiring degrees. In the words of Gandhiji,[13]

> *"Craft, art, health and education should all be integrated into one scheme. NaiTalim is a beautiful blend of all the four and covers the whole education of the individual from the time of conception to the moment of death… Instead of regarding craft and industry as different from education, I will regard the former as the medium for the latter."*

He believed in all round and integral development of a person by way of educating him on different levels. It encompassed the physical, intellectual and spiritual parts of the individual and their harmonious development. No doubt, one may be sure that his thought on education is objective rather than subjective, experimental rather than speculative.

In India, 'Basic Education'[14]wasfirst attempted to explore as a system of education by Gandhiji. Moreover, he takes education in a board perspective and brings forth its two basic objectives, acquisition of knowledge and a sense of freedom.As Gandhiji writes that, *"I have given many things to India. But this system of education together with its technique is, I feel, the best of them, I do not think, I will have anything better to offer the country."*[15]With these words he launched the "Basic Education" or "NaiTalim" in 1937, widely known as Wardha scheme.The main aim of Basic Education was to purify the heart and mind of all the people and create a society free from all exploitation and aggression view in this light. He also called his system of education as 'basic' because it stands for the art of living. He gave the principle of "Basic Education" in which academic subjects were to be taught through productive activities. Here, I

shall discuss some of the importantaspects of Gandhiji's theory of"Basic Education"in a detail manner:

A. Craft as the Centre of Education:

Gandhiji basic education is a step forward in the development of traditional and universal system of education. As a part of his system of education, he also wants to impart education through the medium of some craft that is all the subject should be taught around some craft. Thus, he holds the view that the real education should be started from childhood with the teaching of a useful craft to enable him or her to produce something right from the beginning of his or her study and training. Further, for him, education should be for life but not for a job. Briefly, we may understand that his system of education is to develop a man dedicated to truth and non-violence.Therefore, he interprets as education through handicrafts is a part of the truth. In this view, Gandhiji writes, *"The core of my suggestion is that handicrafts are not to be taught merely for productive work but for development the intellect of the pupils."*[16]From the above words, it is clear that the intellect of the child must be educated through the hand.Gandhiji also wanted the type of education that was craft as the centre of education. So, he believed that craft must be both a means and an end.

B. Self-Supporting Aspect of Education:

Gandhiji advocated knowledge through work. As a result, the use of craft at all levels and at all stages of education was his concept of '*Karma-Yoga'*[17]. This introduction of craft in education was an extension of his theory of 'Bread Labour'. So, to him, students should learn the principle of self-help, self-reliance and dignity of labour along with various academics. In Indian scenario, he believed that education in handicrafts teaches the dignity of labour and combines learning and doing. So, he desired that the medium of education should be craft-centered.Therefore, he has named his educational programme as 'NaiTalim' which implies new education under which education has become life-centered, instead of text book centered. He also believed that vocational education will be of great help to provide good economic development for all citizens and make them self-sufficient for their living. It was expected that the product of the craft must be economically paying. In the words of Gandhi, *"You have to start with the conviction that looking to the needs of the villages of India, our rural education ought to be made self supporting if it is to be compulsory"*.[18]He held the view that when the child completes his school education, he should be able to earn his livelihood in the society.If we examine the above points, we may assume that, according to his educational thought, all students should get exposure to learn skill and craft like knitting, weaving, agricultural activities, and also develop three field that are: Physical, Psychomotor and Cognitive.

C. The Medium of Instruction:

Gandhiji emphasised mother tongue to be the medium of instruction and the subject of study. As Gandhiji asserted that, *"All education should take place through the medium of mother tongue"*.[19]His concept was very clear that if learning be imparted through the medium of English, it will hinder the development of understanding and precision of thought or clarity of ideas. Referring to English medium, he again remarks, *"It has sapped the energy of the nation. It has shortened the lives of the pupils. It has estranged them from the masses. It has made education unnecessarily expensive"*.[20]Hence, he believed that a good knowledge of mother tongue is necessary and essential for development precision of thought. And also, mother tongue would enable the children to express themselves effectively, clearly and lucidly. Therefore, it can acquaint the child with his heritage, ethical and moral values.

D. Free and Compulsory Education:

Gandhi advocated that within the age group of 7 to 14, there should be free, compulsory and universal education, since, he believe that primary education is the minimum education that must be available to all. He also wanted to combine the primary and secondary education together. Further, he advocated that the state should shoulder the responsibility of school education and finance it. As Gandhi remarks that,[21]

"I am a firm believer in the principle of free and compulsory primary education for India. I also hold that we shall realize this only by teaching the children a useful vocation and utilizing it as a means for cultivating their mental, physical and spiritual faculties, Let no one consider these economic calculations in connection with education as sordid or out of place. There is nothing essentially sordid about economic calculations".

Gandhi firmly believed that educationfor which parents will not have to pay any fee and for which they must send their children to school.

As we fathom from the above focuses that the objectives of Gandhi's Basic Education was based on the golden principle of simplicity. In fact, simplicity was not just the foundation of his instructive thoughts yet in addition of his way of life. He wanted students should carry on with a simple life and take care of every one of their responsibilities without help from anyone else. The thrust of his views is simplicity in education by training the children in self-help and self-reliance. He considers the life of students to be akin to that of a *sanyasi* student, according to him, should follow the dictum of 'Simple living and high thinking'. He ought to getpleasure from his studies. For him there could not be a more prominent delight for a student than to walk from knowledge to more knowledge.

Moreover, for him, character building aspect of education is also an important objective of his concept of education. He firmly believed that character of a person was bound to have a considerable impact on the masses. Therefore, he wanted students as well as teachers to give more importance to character building, national progress was dependent on men of sterling character. This point is of utmost importance for a country like India, having groaned under the heels of colonialism for about two centuries. He considers schools and colleges as factories for making of character building.

He likewise laid stress on spiritual improvement of man through education. The ultimate objective of education, according him is self-realisation of the ultimate reality, knowledge of truth or God. Self-realisaton is the gather reward of life and education, however, for understanding this objective, he did not consider segregating education from life. As Gandhiji remarks:[22]

A nation cannot advance without the units of which it is composed advancing and conversely no individual can advance without the nation of which it is a part also advancing. He wanted education should aim at producing not only good individual but socially useful citizens who understand their social responsibilities as an integral element of society.

However 'individual' was the most ideal place for him at this point he was not careless of the social objective of education as individual can create to the fullest conceivable degree just in the general public.

To summarize we may said that Basic Education envisaged by Gandhiji pointed toward creating self-reliant and good citizens. It was centered round craft activity and production work in order to be useful for individual and society. It was additionally pointed toward interlinking the physical environment, social environment and craft work with the individual. This was particularly significant for country populace of India as Gandhi appropriately trusted that to makeeducation compulsory in village of India, it ought to be made self supporting. In addition craft work and manual labour in basic education could also inculcate in youths appropriate work-culture.

Gandhian critique of Modernity in Indian Education

Generally speaking, education is a systematic process though which a child acquires knowledge, skill experience, character and sound attitude. Every society gives importance to education because it is the key to solve the various problems and issues in life. Thus, education is one of the important to everyone life and moral values are essential for every individuals and society too. Nevertheless, in Gandhian thought, they almost are related. However, in present-day education system, all students must go to schools and colleges, to follow a syllabus which has been set for them. The teachers

prepare lesson based on the prescribed syllabus and convey to the pupils all the information they have gathered. Indeed, he is not in favour of the present-day system of education that is prevalent in India. So in this type of an education merely imparts instructions, or makes man literate, but literacy is not education. In this context, I would like to quote Gandhiji words: *"literacy is neither the beginning nor the end of education. This is the only a mean through which man or woman can be educated."*[23]Thus, in the history of Indian education system, we believed that he was the first man who advocated a scheme of education ("Wardha Scheme" or "NaiTalim") which is based upon the essential values of Indian culture and civilization. He believes that true education and true morality are inseparable bound up with each other. Thus, it is quite evident that his thought has an ethical orientation.As we can all realize that his concept regarding "Truth and Non-violence" becomes a very significant thought in education, as well as, it also enhancesethical values in education.As we have already mentioned that for him the aims of education is to raise man to a higher moral and spiritual order through full development of the individual and the evolution of a 'new man', 'a satyagrahi', a non-violent' personality.His theory is related to the universal value of truth and ahimsa[24]and directed towards the realization of God and a new humanity.

Basically, we may argued in this paper some of the central points in making Gandhiji views on education more relevant in today's world and to make clear why he criticise the modernity in Indian education system as well as to bring this perspective to the forefront for our improvement of today's education.

The reason behind Gandhi criticize modernity of education in India is because the way of education that was introduced by the British provided their end but is not appropriate to the needs of the youths of free India. While, we all believed that Gandhian thoughts of education is more practical than British system of education in India in view of the fact that Gandhiji views on education is something which makes one selfless, self-reliant and self-realization which is more necessary in Indian youths.In this context,Sandhya Chaudhri rightly remarks that:[25]

Today even after about half a century of India's independence, the country find itself faced with serious tensions, challenges of casteism, linguaism, provincialism, religionalism etc. Value oriented education can go a long way in curbing these fissiparous tendencies and inculcate the sentiments of unity and solidarity amongst various sections of the Indian Society.

Undoubtedly, his perspectives on instruction have made a progressive commitment to the instructive idea and qualifies him for be named as great educationalist. Being a man of action rather than a theorist, his theory of education is also overall goal and exploratory as opposed to emotional and speculative. In fact there is no divergence in theory and practice.

Gandhian find fault with the modern Indian education as this system of education focused mainly on science and technology rather than physical and spiritual. In short, Gandhiji believe the system of education in which both the science and technology growth must be harmonizedwith human values. As man today needs to stay sound physically and spiritual nature is over-looked today, yet man cannot be viewed as amazing being separated from his profound nature. So both physical and spiritual nature of man ought to be made sense of mutually. Assuming this status remains till the twenty-first hundred years, he appears to become creature the same even inspite of having the nature of rationality. In this circumstance his thought would necessitate in our tomorrow's world. Thus, his ideology provides a sense of awakening of spirituality in man, which is today absent from Indian educational curriculum. In this reagrd Gopal Krishna Sinha rightly remarks:[26]

All these developments of science and technology explain physical nature of human beings only and do not satisfy the goal of entire mankind. The main goal of entire mankind consists in spiritual perfection which can be realized only in end through the life of moral action.

In addition, there are places and occasions when Gandhian identifies religion and morality. This is clarified when Gandhiji says, "*there is no such thing as religion, oversiding morality, and there is no religion higher than Truth and Righteousness*".[27]Thus, his view has a significant position in the 20th century and people will think of morality and religion on rational basis, not only on devotional basis tomorrow, the 21st century.

Accordingly, today the procedure of the old extraordinary methods of philosophies of India are being restored in consonances with the cutting edge western underlining however Gandhian idea that far concerned it such a way of thinking that is appropriate for all ages since Gandhi acclimatizes present day India in thought, lives them in his day to day existence and gives them social and political shapes through his way of thinking. Therefore, if his thought on education is followed today, then Indian people will be in tune with nature and in complete harmony with his fellow-beings, living beings and non-living beings on earth in future. That is why Gandhi also called "Hindu evangelical and puritan".[28]

It is one of the important but neglected by modern Indian educationis the education for world peace. We also believed that the large part of the people conflict and tension of today can be solved if we regard the education on world peace. Today the choice before us is not between violence and non-violence but between non-existence and non-violence. So this is the utmost importance today.Also, it appears that humanity is always in tension and it is not possible to maintain peace and in the ever conflicting, warring, and struggling society. But Gandhiji believed that it is establish peace

permanently, if we go together with education of today and future. Thus, education is one of the areas which demand our concentrated attention. People should know how to live peacefully with their fellow being. The principle life, according Gandhian should be mutual help and cooperation. He advised whenever there is dispute, people should be ready to settle it by peaceful methods such as discussion, persuasion and arbitration.

Clearly, according to Gandhi non-violence is a life force and not a policy. So he ceaselessly worked for internal and external peace and hence his methods are more spiritual in nature. As G. Ramchandra asserts:[29]

The discovery of Satyagraha was the historic necessity of the 20th century if mankind was to survive at all. We must now admit the possibility of substituting non-violent collective action for militarism. Gandhi showed the way upto a point. We must now advance further from that point towards world-peace.

No doubt,we all learn several things form Gandhiji such as Truthfulness, Non-stealing, *Brahmacharya*, Non-possession, Body-Labour, and Fearlessness, etc. that is most vital in today's and tomorrow's generations. He advanced the problem of maintaining peace from many sides like social, legal, political, economic, culture, educational, religious and spiritual and further, he also thought to create a new India through his ethical principles.

Education for peace is more critical than ever before. "*Peace education is a lifelong learning process and it can succeed in an atmosphere of non-violence*".[30]Overall, peace education will have to adopt a multiprolonged strategy embracing the whole gamut of social life and involving a variety of agencies, channels and levels. Peace education must have personal level as well as structural level components. The strength of Gandhian strategy lies precisely in its ability to bridge the two levels around the organizing principles of training and no-violence.[31]

To sum up, Scientific and technological advancement have proved themselves incapable of answering fundamental questions regarding the genuine development of humanity. What man could be and should be in the 21st century?

This is where Gandhi comes in. He exhibits in his speeches and writings depth visions which have not been able to find in history. In the beginning of 21st century the humanity will face different problems, viz., over population, unemployment, famine, energy crisis and pollution of air, water, soil etc. It is in this context that Gandhian thought comes to our help. He dedicated his life to a number of existential causes grounded on absolute convictions and all he has solved by practical experiences.

Gandhiji envisaged a system of execution that affected and changed the lives of the downtrodden millions of India rather focus on a few who would take undue advantage at the cost of others. Education can have a hundred of definitions. But the

class room practice as going on today will be covered and justified by only a few of these. To him, in the world. Education should prove to be the best vehicle for the upliftment of the masses of India. Indian has not framed a suitable educational policy since India got freedom.Hence, today we find the degree holder youth piring for jobs.

To summarize, Scientific and mechanical progression have substantiated them unequipped for answering central inquiries in regards to the genuine improvement of humankind. What man could be and ought to be in the 21st century?

This is where Gandhi comes in. He displays in his addresses and works profundity dreams which have not been able to find in history. In the beginning of 21st century the humankind will deal with various issues, viz., over populace, joblessness, starvation, energy emergency and contamination of air, water, soil and so forth. It is in this setting that Gandhian idea comes to our help. He devoted his life to various existential causes grounded on outright convictions and all he has settled by practical experiences.

Gandhiji conceived an arrangement of execution that impacted and changed the existences of the discouraged millions of India rather focus on a few who might take unjustifiable benefit at the expense of others. Education can have 100 of definitions. Besides, the classroom practice as continuing today will be covered and supported by only a few of these. As far as he might be concerned, education should cater to the all-round development of the whole man body, mind and spirit. His basic educational system surpasses all other systems of education on the planet. Education ought to end up being the best vehicle for the upliftment of the majority of India. Indian has not outlined a reasonable instructive strategy since India got freedom. Hence, today we find the degree holder youth piring for occupations.

Unique Features of Gandhian Education– Its Relevance in Today's World

Certainly, there is need to know about the goal, aims or objectives of education. With determining the aim of education, it is not possible to understand the concept what true education is. In fact, today's education system has lack the understanding of what true education is? One of the ways to get rid of this issues and problems is that to make clear understanding the purpose and objectives of Gandhiji's Education.

No doubt, Gandhiji purposes of education are more comprehensive. His aims or purpose of education have been classified into two categories namely, immediate and ultimate aims.

A. Immediate Aims:

The immediate aims of Gandhi education are many as they are related to different aspects of life. Some of them are education for character building, cultural aim, vocational aim, liberation aim, social and individual aim, etc.

Character building was the fundamental thought in Gandhi's ideal school. He considers it as the most important aim of education. He also believed that development of personality was more significant than accumulation of intellectual tools and academic knowledge. In his words, *"Good education is that which draws out and stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties of children"*.[32]Hence, his concept of personality includes the cultivation of moral values such as truth, non-violence, courage, strength of mind, righteousness, self restraint, service of humanity, brahmacharya, non-stealing, fearlessness and renunciation.

Further, according to Gandhian, culture is the essential and main foundation of education. He does not ignore the culture aspect of education. As Gandhi's says,[33]

> *"I attach far more important to culture aspect of education than to the literary. Culture is the foundation, the primary thing which the girls out to get from here. It should show in the smallest detail of your conduct and personal behaviour, how you sit, how you walk, how you dress etc., so that anybody might be able to see at a glance that you are the product of this institution. Inner culture must be reflected in your speech, the way in which you treat visitors and guests and behave towards one another and your teachers, and class"*.

Thus, he laid much importance on cultural aim of education and also he recommended that *Gita* and *Ramayana* to be taught as a means of introducing student to their rich culture and spiritual heritage.

He also advocated education for self reliance and capacity to earn one's livelihood. He holds the view that each child is taught how to manipulate things by actually allowing him to do the things himself. He rightly says, *"You impart education and simultaneously cut at the root of unemployment"*.[34]No doubt, the purpose of education is to bring out such true inherent capacities or inborn tendency of every individual. Thus, he regards the value of learning by doing, and also he recommends that education should begin with the practical of learning. In other words, education must enable every individual to earn his living and stand on his own feet.

Moreover, he believed that education should liberate body, mind and soul. According to him, he meant two kind of liberation. One form of liberation consists in securing the freedom of the country from foreign rule by liberation of all kind of economic, social, political and mental slavery. Such way of freedom may prove short-lived. The second was the liberation for all time. That is attaining *moksha*, which we describe as our *paramadharma*, we should have freedom in worldly sense as well. If one would attain *moksha*, we would achieve the highest end of human effort. Thus, education should provide this spiritual freedom for self growth and realization of self.

No doubt, the purpose of education of Gandhi is both individual and social. He considers both individual and society dependent upon each other. So, he wanted individual perfection and a new social order based on "Truth" and "Non-violence". Certainly, he stands both for individual and social development. As he says, *"I am a humble servant of India and in trying to serve India, I serve humanity at large"*.[35]Thus, according to him, the individual and social developments are interdependent to each other. In simple words, individual growth is nothing but the growth of the society and nation, since, an individual learn many things from society, and likewise, society progresses because of individual grows continuously.

B. Ultimate Aims:

Gandhiji considered self-realization is the ultimate purpose of life as well as education. Gandhi has clearly declared that:[36]

"Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human being becomes a necessary part of the endeavour simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all."

Thus, he considers true education should be result from spiritual force not from material power. Accordingly, true education is that which helps us to understand the *Atman* or self, God and Truth. Though education, everyone understands their existence and its purpose about themselves and get answer to the universal question, who am I? It is the spiritual education which provides knowledge of self-realization and God. Therefore, we assume that according to his view, every pupil should develop into a divine human by realizing godliness in his self.

Undoubtedly, individual and social aims are also one of the important for Gandhi purpose of education, that is, he considers both individual and society are dependent upon each other and also as two side of the same coin, since an individual learn many things from culture, surrounding, society, and so on and in the same manner, society progressed because the individual grows continuously. Individual growth is nothing but the growth of the society and nation. He desires individual perfection and a new social order based on "Truth and Non-violence". Hence, we may not think of social good without the individual good and vice versa. Similarly, if the individuals are good, than the society is bound to be good. In this way, he synthesizes the individual and social aims of education.

As we know that his contribution to education is unique, so it is moreover, to points out some of his important contribution in this paper to see that Gandhian scheme

is in absolute important to the modern educational trend. Now, we may sum up his important contributions to education as follows:

- Gandhiji gave a very wide based concept of education describing it as all round development of human personality i.e., body, mind and spirit.
- He gave a practical scheme of education based on the principles of equity, social justice, truth, non-violence, economic well being and cultural self-respect.
- He advocated the large scale use of handicraft, not only as a productive work but as all rounds development of personality.
- He recommended immediate and ultimate aims of education which are of great help to Indian development of education system.
- He also emphasized on Women education, Adult Education, National Education, Teacher and Student.
- His education system was a practical solution for village unemployment. It provides the necessary economic self sufficiency and self reliance.
- His education system brings a great change to the city-life and village-life closer and thus eradicates the evil of class-difference.

He also highly recommended that mother tongue must be the medium of instruction for education. Certainly, mother tongue would enable the children to express themselves effectively and clearly, learn ethical and moral values and importance of national heritage.

Conclusion

To sum up it can be noted that education is the foundation stone on which depends India's political deliverance. Our country should be built not on bricks, but on brain, not by any material, but by enlightenment. In order to regain India's lost and glory and prestige, Gandhiji educational ideas based on value-orientation have to be reemphasized. The education curricula should be value laden as well as information oriented. Eradication of literacy and spread of education is the prime need of the hour so that the citizen of Twenty-first century can be alert and enlightened. Certainly, he contributed a great deal to the field of education. His educational philosophy was naturalistic and idealistic. He discussed the real problems behind people ignoring the importance of education. And also, he said that the main problem is that people look at education as just a means of earning livelihood in the modern age. Therefore, he suggested ideas to mould the education system in such a way that it ensured the all round development of an individual. It was basically the all round development of students. It must be clearly understood that the goal of education, according to him,

should be moral education or character-building and the cultivation of a conviction that one should forget everything selfish in working towards great aim. He also fought against many social evils like caste discrimination, untouchability, women education, etc. Certainly, by adopting his philosophy, our Indian education system will be useful to all people of the universe.

Notes and References

[1] Gandhi, M.K., *Hindu Dharma*. Orient Paperbacks, p. 199.

[2] *Young Indian*, 13th November 1924, p.378.

[3] According to Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy, the word *"Bhagavad Gita"* is an ancient poem forming the part of the Indian epic the *Mahabharat*, composed between the 5th century BC and the 2nd century AD, in which Krishna, as a charioteer, explains to Arjuna ('Everyman') the nature of human life and its purpose, and the way to achieve the good life.

[4] Bourai, H.H.A., *Indian Theory of Education*, Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, p. 6.

[5] Kumar Lal, Basant, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publisher, pp. 152-153. See also *Harijan*, 31-7-1937, p. 197, for a full account of Gandhi thought on the concept of education.

[6] *Op. cit*., Bourai, H.H.A., p. 137.

[7] In this study, the notion 'a new man', 'a satyagrahi', 'a non-violent' is related to the universal value of truth and ahimsa and directed towards the realization of God and a new humanity.

[8] Cf. *Indian Opinion*, 16th December 1905.

[9] *Op. cit*., Bourai, H.H.A., p. 129.

[10] Bose, N.K., *Selection from Gandhi*, Ahamadabad, Navajiwan Publishing House, p. 13

[11] Kumar Lal, Basant, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, p. 111.

[12] *Young Indian*, 12-8-1926.

[13] *Harijan*, 10-11-1946, p. 349.

[14] For a collection of Gandhi's articles and speech on 'Basic Education', see *Educational Reconstruction,* Wardha, Hindustan Talimi Sangh, 1938. See also Gandhi's speech at the Wardha Conference on 22 October 1937 in T.S. Avinashilingam.

[15] *Op. cit*., Bourai, H.H.A., p. 135.

[16] Samuel Ravi, S., *Philosophical and Sociological Bases of Education*, Delhi: PHI Learning Pvt., p.109.

[17] The word 'Karma' is derived from the Sanskrit Kri, to do; all action is karma. Technically, this word also means the effects of actions. In connection with metaphysics, it sometimes means the effects, of which our past actions were the causes. And the word 'Yoga' is defined as the group of physical, mental and spiritual practices. Therefore, 'Karma-yoga' is a system of ethics and religion intended to attain freedom through unselfishness and by good works.

[18] *Op. cit*., Bourai, H.H.A., p. 135.

[19] *Op. cit*., Samuel Ravi, S., p. 108.

[20] *Ibid*.,

[21] *Harijan*,9-10-1937, p. 292.

[22] *Young Indian*, 26-03-1931

[23] *Op. cit*.,Bose, N.K, p. 380.

[24] We are using "Ahimsa" and "Non-violence" synonymously.

[25] Sandhya Chaudhri, "*Gandhi's views on value education their relevance in twenty-first century*", Janardan Pandey (eds) *Gandhi and 21st Century*, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, p.219

[26] Gopal Krishna Sinha, "*Gandhian thought in the 21st century*", Janardan Pandey (eds) *Gandhi and 21st Century*, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, p.95

[27] N.K., Bose (ed.), *Selections from Gandhi*, Ahmedabad, Navjivan Publishing House, p. 223.

[28] Cf. Arnold Kruger (quoted), *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. XXII.No. 2. April 1995.

[29] Cf. Sreedharan Pillai, M.,"*Gandhian thought in the 21st century"*, Janardan Pandey (eds) *Gandhi and 21st Century*, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, p.241.

[30] John, M.S., *Gandhi Marg*, July 1990, p.201.

[31] *Ibid*.

[32] *Harijan, 4-9-1937.*

[33] *Ibid*.,, *p. 291.*

[34] *Op. cit*., Samuel Ravi, S., p. 103.

[35] Dash, B.N., *A New Approach to Teacher and Education in the Emerging Indian Society*, Hyderabad: Neelkamal Publication Pvt.Ltd., pp. 299-300.

[36] *Harijan*, 29-8-1936, p. 226.

- Bose, N.K., (ed.), *Selection from Gandhi*, Ahamadabad, Navajiwan Publishing House, 1967.
- Bourai, H.H.A., *Indian Theory of Education*, Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1993.
- Gandhi, M.K., *Hindu Dharma*. Orient Paperbacks, 1978.
- Janardan Pandey, (ed.), *Gandhi and 21st Century*, New Delhi, Concept Publishing House, 1998.
- John, M.S., *Gandhi Marg*, July 1990.
- Kumar Lal, Basant, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publisher, 1978.
- Ramjee Singh, *The Gandhi and the Modern World*, New Delhi, Classical Publishing Company, 1988.
- Samuel Ravi, S., *Philosophical and Sociological Bases of Education*, Delhi: PHI Learning Pvt., 2015.

Ravenshaw Journal of Philosophy, Vol. VIII
November 2022 145-153
ISSN: 2395-3209

Depth Epistemology – An Appraisal

Gopal Sahu
Department of Philosophy, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj – 211 002 (UP)

Abstract.

The phrase "depth epistemology", coined by S. L. Pandey (1929-2002), is one of the very innovative concepts in the contemporary Indian epistemology. It tries to look and understand the epistemological issues from the foundational and meta-epistemological point of view and offers a new perspective of the contemporary epistemological problems. However, despite its potential significance, there has not been any serious works to even characterize depth epistemology, let alone to map its assumptions and implications to epistemological issues and problems. S. L. Pandey himself has not elaborated Depth Epistemology except writing a small introduction on it and has not linked it to his other writings on epistemology. The paper attempts to elaborate four salient features of depth epistemology, such as, criterilogical, linguistic, intuitive and visionary. Further, the paper argues that Depth Epistemology so characterized deals with metaphysical issues rather than epistemological issue. Further, the paper argues that Pandey has not substantiated his claim that Indian philosophers have approached depth epistemology far better than western epistemologists. The paper concludes that the potentiality of the paper lies in developing the paper to solve some contemporary epistemological problems such as "Gettier problem", which Pandey seems to have suggested in the opening paragraphs of his writing.

Keywords: *Depth-epistemology, criteriology, intuition, linguistic knowledge, ontic vision, surface-epistemology, Gettier problem*

1. Introduction

Sangam Lal Pandey (1929-2002) was a professor of philosophy at University of Allahabad and is particularly known for his thoughts and writings on Advaita Vedānta. However, despite his Advaita predilection, Pandey has made significant contributions to all most all fields of philosophy. As a prolific writer, he has written several books and articles on all areas of philosophy, both in Indian and Western philosophy, in English and Hindi.[1] Pandey has also started some new trends of philosophy and philosophization. He has also invented some revolutionary thoughts and coined new concepts to describe them. One such concept is "Depth Epistemology" which he has introduced in his edited book by the same title published in 1987.[2] The book is an attempt to identify and develop a special type of epistemology which was growing as a new school of philosophy in Allahabad during 1923-53.[3] According to him, four philosophers, namely P. S. Burrell, R. D. Ranade, A. C. Mukharji and R. N. Kaul, who were professors of philosophy in Allahabad, through their articles published during 1923-1953[4], have presented an epistemological theory what he calls as depth epistemology. The book is the compilation of the four articles published by these philosophers along with a 16 pages *Introduction* to the anthology.[5] Depth epistemology is Pandey's own coinage[6] and none of these philosophers whom Pandey claims to have approved depth epistemology have used the word in their respective articles. Moreover, Pandey claims that though the concept of depth epistemology has been articulated in a very systematic way by some western philosophers[7], "Indian depth epistemology is older and richer than its western history" and "Indian epistemology has approached depth epistemology far better than western epistemology".[8] Pandey claims that the papers by these philosophers included in his anthology have advanced *de novo* and are to be considered as the specimen of depth epistemology in Indian tradition. Though Pandey has written a numbers of books on epistemology or related to epistemology[9], both after and before his 1987 book, he has not referred the word in any of them. Therefore, there is very little discussion on depth epistemology by Pandey himself and there are only few scholarly articles on depth epistemology in English[10] and most of them are in Hindi language.[11] Therefore, depth epistemology is not widely known outside philosophical circle of Allahabad.

The concept of "depth epistemology" is one of the very innovative concepts in the contemporary epistemology. It tries to look and understand the epistemological issues from the foundational and meta-epistemological point of view and offers a new perspective of the contemporary epistemological problems. The concept of depth epistemology raises many issues which have not been addressed systematically. Despite its potential significance, there has not been any serious works to even characterize depth epistemology, let alone to map its assumptions and implications to epistemological issues and problems. Pandey himself has not elaborated depth epistemology except

writing a small introduction on it and has not linked it to his other writings on epistemology. Besides there has not been any study to find out if the philosophers whom Pandey claims to be sympathizers of depth epistemology would have approved such a claim or not.

In what follow, section 2 will attempt to elaborate and discuss four salient features of depth epistemology, such as, criterilogical, definitional, intuitive and visionary. Section 3, will discuss two problems of depth epistemology. First, depth epistemology so characterized is more metaphysical than epistemological. Secondly, Prof. Pandey has not been able to substantiate the claim that depth epistemology has been developed by Indian philosophers using the concepts found in Indian philosophical traditions. The paper concludes that the potentiality of the paper lies in developing the paper to solve some contemporary epistemological problems such as "Gettier paradox", which Pandey seems to have suggested in the opening paragraphs of *Introduction* but remains silent throughout.

2. Characterizing Depth Epistemology

Epistemology or theory of knowledge, being one of the core braches of philosophy, is the philosophical study of the definition, nature, kinds, justification, and limitation etc. of knowledge. The philosophical study of knowledge uses reasoning in the form of arguments and counter-arguments to theorise about knowledge. The philosophical theorisation of knowledge consists in defining epistemic notions with necessary and sufficient condition, providing procedure for how we should acquire knowledge and formulating criteria for the evaluation of knowledge claims. Epistemology so characterized, makes it a normative study of knowledge. The normativity of epistemology keeps its autonomy in terms of both its methods and its subject matter, independent of the non-philosophical study of knowledge. Therefore, the philosophical questions epistemologists ask are: "what is knowledge?", "is knowledge even possible?" etc. is prior to and independent of the non-epistemological questions such as, how do you know X?, Is knowledge of X possible? The central question of epistemology is how to account for the normativity of epistemology.

A cursory reading of the *Introduction* is enough to see that Pandey has not defined epistemology or has not discussed any of these above problems and issues of epistemology in his depth epistemology. In fact, at times he considers these problems as insignificant for depth epistemology. However, he argues that the traditional definition of knowledge as "justified true belief" is inadequate as it is based on the assumption that knowledge is "compresense"[12] or objective only and ignores that knowledge as "inverted reflexion" or transcendental.[13] Pandey claims that depth epistemology deals with transcendental, *i.e.*, trans-objective and trans-subjective

knowledge. In the course of presentation, he discusses some features of depth epistemology, *vis-à-vis* surface epistemology—its inferior version. Here, we will try to organize the scattered characteristics of depth epistemology in to four categories.

First, depth epistemology is *criterilogical*. Depth epistemology deals with the criterion of truth, rather than the criterion of truth. According to Pandey, the basic questions of depth epistemology are: "What is a criterion? How is it related to truth? What is the distinction between criterion and truth? … on account of these problems it is generally identified with "criteriology" in some quarters".[14] The equivalent word for criterion is "lakcacGa" in Sanskrit; therefore, depth epistemology is also called "lakcacGa mimānsā". LakcacGa is different from pramāGa, which means truth and the theory of knowledge that deals with *pramāGa* is called *pramāGa mimānsā* or surface epistemology by Pandey. However, according to him, depth epistemology includes surface epistemology as the truth is dependent on criterion. Depth epistemology deals with the asesa pramāna, whereas surface epistemology deals with *sesa pramāGa* (one or all pramāGa s). Further Pandey differentiates criterion from meaning and symptom. Criterion is the defining characteristics of an object, which is the same as the svarupa lakcacGa concept of Vedāntic philosophy.

Secondly, depth epistemology is *intuitive*. According to Pandey vision means insight and some of the examples of vision, he cites, are: Berkeley's theory of notion, Spinoza's theory of intuition, Sankara's immediate experience.[15] According to Pandey, self-knowledge is the most significant knowledge in depth epistemology, for "there is no contradiction between self-knowledge and the knowledge of an object".[16] Further he argues, "as self is revealed in every act of knowing, the meaning of the statement, 'I know myself' is communicated by the meaning of the statement, 'I know this pen'."[17] It is gained immediately and trans-reflexively. The thrust of epistemology is towards integration of the various factors of knowledge situation under a perspective.

Thirdly, depth epistemology is *linguistic*. Depth epistemology provides the decisive and conclusive definition of an object. Definition is distinguished from meaning and symptom by Pandey. According to Pandey, the decisive and evidential value of the criterion is founded on a definition.[18] Defining something is providing the necessary and sufficient condition of that in language. Therefore, definition is a linguistic act. According to Pandey, depth epistemology is necessarily related to a philosophy of language. Depth epistemology uses various linguistic tools to define a concept to provide the criterion of an object. The linguistic nature of depth epistemology needs to be differentiated from the behavioral acts.

Fourthly, depth epistemology is *visionary*. No criterion of truth is possible without a theory of language, as cognition and verbalization are inseparable from each

other.[19] Depth epistemology reaches its final form, when it integrates the ultimate existence with the ultimate cognition and ultimate speech. Some of the practitioners of depth epistemology have argued that "absolute reality is completely manifested in the mutually independent forms of knowing, feeling and willing".[20] The vision of the unified knowledge is ontology and depth epistemology aim at the "ontic vision and tries to relate it with the visions of the ways."[21] Depth epistemology is the *tattvadarshan* (ontic vision) rather than *margadarshan* (source of vision).

3. Some Problems of Depth Epistemology

Depth epistemology, so characterized can be defined as a theory of knowledge that attempts to provide the criterion of truth through intuition and linguistic definition to have a complete ontic vision of reality. Depth epistemology, thus, is a very thick concept as it is contrasted, compared and juxtaposed with diverse concepts, theories and traditions. The concept of depth epistemology needs lot of clarification and exposition systematically; which Pandey has not done thoroughly in his small introduction of 16 pages. Moreover, Pandey has not discussed the concept of depth epistemology in any other works of his and has not linked the concept to his overall philosophy. Besides, there is no work as whether the philosophers whom Pandey claims to have propounded depth epistemology will support his claims. These are some of the problems of depth epistemology that need to be discussed thoroughly. In this paper we will only discuss two problems of depth epistemology.

First, Pandey's "depth epistemology" is more concerned with the metaphysical problems than the epistemological issues. By saying that depth epistemology is ultimately an ontic vision, Pandey seems to present the ontological status of the reality as the real subject matter of epistemology. Further, he has given more importance to source of intuition and direct experience over reason to know the reality. Therefore, the concept depth epistemology seems to be a form of metaphysical rather than epistemology since it is concerned more with metaphysical issues than that of epistemology.

Pandey claims that the history of Indian epistemology fares better than that of western epistemology since "Indian depth epistemology is older and richer than its western history."[22] Pandey has chosen four articles by philosophers from Allahabad as the representative cases of depth epistemology who have attempted to understand the issues of depth epistemology in their own respective ways and have attempted to discover the criterion of truth taking cues from lakcacGa mimānsā of Indian philosophical tradition. However, this claim remains unsubstantiated by Pandey. If we analyse the articles of these philosophers, we will find that they have used the concepts,

tools and methods of western philosophers to present their so called "criteriology". To take the example of P. S. Burrell's concept of criterion, he has borrowed and endorsed Socratic theory of knowledge to establish his criterion of truth and none from Indian tradition. Similarly, R. D. Ranade seems to have endorsed the concept of D. J. Marcier and L. Wittgenstein to establish his criterion, i.e., *anubhava.* The other two philosophers who are also considered as the propounder of depth epistemology such as A. C. Mukherji and R. N. Kaul have also borrowed and used a host of western philosophers to establish their criteria of truth. Therefore, we can tell that depth epistemology is incomplete as its main claim is unsubstantiated.

4. Conclusion

The concept of "depth epistemology" is one of the very innovative concepts in the contemporary epistemology. It tries to look and understand the epistemological issues from the foundational and meta-epistemological point of view and offers a new perspective of the contemporary epistemological problems. Pandey starts his discussion of depth epistemology with the challenge to the classical definition of knowledge posed by Gettier. Gettier has argued that the classical definition of knowledge is not logically complete because he argues through counter examples to show that there are cases where it fulfills all three conditions of knowledge such as belief, truth and justification, yet they are not considered to be cases of knowledge. The Gettier's problem leads to skepticism and knowledge impasse in epistemology. To get rid of the Gettier's problem, many philosophers have proposed new condition of knowledge which is known as fourth condition of knowledge. Pandey seems to be proposing depth epistemology as the fourth condition of knowledge. However, after this initial indication, there has been no discussion or even mention of Gettier's problem in the entire paper. The potentiality of the paper lies in developing the paper to solve some contemporary epistemological problems such as "Gettier paradox", which Pandey seems to have suggested in the opening paragraphs of his writing.[23].

Notes and References

[1]. For the complete list of published works along with a brief discussion of them, see, Jaswal, Neelu, 2018, Philosophy of Sangam Lal Pandy: A Critical Study (in Hindi), unpublished Ph. D. Thesis submitted to University of Allahabad, Prayagraj.

[2]. Pandey, S. L. (ed.), 1987, The Problem of Depth Epistemology (henceforth PDE), Ram Nath Kaul Library of Philosophy, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj. Besides, "Depth

Epistemology", Pandey has introduced such innovative concept as "Lokāyāna", "Samdarshan", "ananyatā prasthāna" etc. For a detailed discussion, see R. L. Singh et. al. (eds.), Philosophical Contributions of Professor S. L. Pandey, Ram Nath Kaul Library of Philosophy, University of Allahabad, Allahabad.

[3]. PDE, Preface, p. iii.

[4]. The four articles included in PDE are: The Criterion by P. S. Burrell (1927), The Foundation of Knowledge by A. C. Mukerji (1948) and Coherence Versus Dialectic by R. N. Kaul (1956). The publication details of these articles are not given by Pandey, however, all these three articles are originally published in University of Allahabad Studies. The last article, The Doctrine of Criterion by R. D. Ranade is selected from his 1970 book, Vedanta, the Culmination of Indian Thought, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, which was in turn delivered as "Basu Malik Vedanta Lecture" in Calcutta University in 1929.

[5]. Note that Kaul's article, Coherence Versus Dialectic, has been published in 1956, after the stipulated period of Depth Epistemology, i.e., 1923-53. Moreover, surprisingly, the anthology does not include the article, "Pramana: A Study in Indian Criteriology", published by another renowned professor from Allahabad S. S. Roy and published 1994 in the same journal University of Allahabad Studies, which fits to the criteria of Depth Epistemology outlined by Pandey.

[6]. Though much before the coinage of word "depth epistemology" by Pandey, the word "depth perception" and "depth psychology" were in currency. "Depth perception" was used in 1950's as a study of the visual ability to perceive the world in three dimensions and the distance of an object, where as "depth psychology" was coined by the psychologist Eugen Bleuler (1898-1927) as a study of unconscious mental processes and motives, especially in psychoanalytic theory and practices. How far Pandey was aware of these terms and whether he was influenced by them in coining "depth epistemology" is just a matter of guess.

[7]. Three western philosophers are considered to be pioneers depth epistemology (criteriology) by Pandey are: G. Vico (1668-1744), D. J. Mercier (1851-1926) and L. Wittgenstein (1889-1951). See PDE, p. 3.

[8]. PDE, p. 6.

[9]. Some of the important books on or related to epistemology published by Pandey are: (i) Pandey, S. L. (ed.), 1987, The Problem of Depth Epistemology, Ram Nath Kaul Library of Philosophy, University of Allahabad, Allahabad. (ii) Pandey, S. L., 1978, Whither Indian Philosophy: Essays on Indian and Western Epistemology, Darshan Peeth, Allahabad. (iii) S. L. Pandey, 1963, Jyana, Mulay aur Satya (in Hindi), Sahityavani, Allahabad.

[10]. The only scholarly article in English on depth epistemology is by Srivastava, J. S., 2004, "The Depth Epistemology of Prof. S. L. Pandey", in R. L. Singh et. al. (eds.), Philosophical Contributions of Professor S. L. Pandey, Ram Nath Kaul Library of Philosophy, University of Allahabad, Allahabad, pp. 49-54.

[11]. Some Hindi articles on depth epistemology are: Mishra, G., 1987, "Gahan Jnanamimamsa ka Sampradaya", Samdarshan, No. 13, pp. 85-94. Sharma, A. D., "Gahan- Jnanamimamsa ka Nihitartha", in R. L. Singh et. al. (eds), Philosophical Contributions of Professor S. L. Pandey, Ram Nath Kaul Library of Philosophy, University of Allahabad, Allahabad, pp.

205-211. See also, Jaswal, Neelu, 2018, Philosophy of Sangam Lal Pandy: A Critical Study (in Hindi), unpublished Ph. D. Thesis submitted to University of Allahabad, Prayagraj, Chapter 2, pp. 24-68.

[12]. PDE, p. 1.

[13]. PDE, p. 2.

[14]. PDE, p. 3.

[15]. PDE, p. 6.

[16]. PDE, p. 7.

[17]. PDE, p. 8.

[18]. PDE, p. 5.

[19]. PDE, p. 15.

[20]. PDE, p. 15.

[21]. PDE, p. 16.

[22]. PDE, p. 6.

[23]. An earlier version of the paper was presented in the National Seminar on, "Multi-dimensional Philosophy of Prof. Sangam Lal Pandey" Department of Philosophy, Iswar Saran PG College, Prayagraj, Nov. 29 – Dec. 1, 2019. The author is grateful to participants for their comments and questions.

Burrell, P. S., 1927, "The Criterion", University of Allahabad Studies, University of Allahabad, Allahabad, pp. 159-186.

Jaswal, Neelu, 2018, Philosophy of Sangam Lal Pandy: A Critical Study (in Hindi), unpublished Ph.D. Thesis submitted to University of Allahabad, Prayagraj.

Kaul, R. N., 1956, "Coherence versus Dialectic", University of Allahabad Studies, University of Allahabad, Allahabad

Mishra, G., 1987, "Gahan Jnanamimamsa ka Sampradaya", Samdarshan, No. 13, pp. 85-94.

Mukerji, A. C., 1948, "The Foundation of Knowledge", University of Allahabad Studies. University of Allahabad, Allahabad.

Pandey, S. L. (ed.), 1987, The Problem of Depth Epistemology, Ram Nath Kaul Library of Philosophy, University of Allahabad, Allahabad.

Pandey, S. L., 1963, Jyana, Mulay aur Sat (in Hindi), Sahityavani, Allahabad.

Pandey, S. L., 1978, Whither Indian Philosophy: Essays on Indian and Western Epistemology, Darshan Peeth, Allahabad.

R. L. Singh et. al. (eds.), 2004, Philosophical Contributions of Professor S. L. Pandey, Ram Nath Kaul Library of Philosophy, University of Allahabad, Allahabad.

Ranade, R. D., 1970, Vedanta, the Culmination of Indian Thought, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay.

Sharma, A. D., 2004, "Gahan- Jnanamimamsa ka Nihitartha", in R. L. Singh et. al. (eds), Philosophical Contributions of Professor S. L. Pandey, Ram Nath Kaul Library of Philosophy, University of Allahabad, Allahabad, pp. 205-211.

Srivastava, J. S., 2004, "The Depth Epistemology of Prof. S. L. Pandey", in R. L. Singh et. al. (eds.), Philosophical Contributions of Professor S. L. Pandey, Ram Nath Kaul Library of Philosophy, University of Allahabad, Allahabad, pp. 49-54.

Style Sheet & references to published works

Numbers : Use 'p.' for single page 'pp' for multiple pages. Use the minimum number of digits for page(s), e.g. pp.46-9, not pp.46-49, pp.232-283. For numbers between 10-19, follow the format 11-13, 15-18, not 11-13, 15-18. For dates use 1938-8, not 1934-1938.

***Reference* :** One may either use the in-text parenthetical referencing of End-note referencing but not both. Sources cited for reference must be according to the following formats [Take note that '<-->' indicates any variable, '-' indicates a space and in the following others should be understood as usually.]

For in-text parenthetical referencing : 1. Starting round bracket <author's name or surname>_< year of publication>:_<page number(s)> ending round bracket and full stop. Example : (John 2002:10-36).

If the last name is confusing take two words,e.g.(RAMA murti 1924:42). For consecutive repetition of any part of the same source mention 'ibid' in italics and povide other non-repeated parts, e.g.(ibid:30)

Multiple in text references are to be separated by semicolon for example,(Prasad 1995 :12-43; Mohanty 2008 :32). For more than two authored sources mention first two, or the Chief editor and write 'et al'.

2. If only one source is referred to throughout as in Book Reviews then only page number is sufficient within paraenthesis, but the first reference must be mention as usually.

3. For all in-text sources full bibilographic data should be provided at the end-note referring, but except mentioning the round brackets (see below).

4. One may use abbreviation of the sources throughout instead of author's name, but must define it with full bibilographic note at the end-not area.

For End-note Referencing :

For Books :<Author's initials followed by his/her last name>-< title of the source books in italics>-<starting round bracket>-< information regarding series or any such information if any>-< place of publication>:-publisher, collaborator,>,-< date of publication>-< ending round bracket>,-< page number(s). If a chapter name is to be mentioned then it must be mentioned within single inverted commas preceded by a comma just before the title of the source.

For sources from Jopurnals:<Author's initial followed by his/her last name >, '<title of the article in italics >,'-< name of journal>_ '('>_<year>, _< volume number >< ')' _<page number(s) >.

For consecutive occurences of the same sources or part of the same source write 'ibid' and then put the nonrepeated information.

RAVENSHAW JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

ISSN : PRINTED IN INDIA

Department of Philosophy, Ravenshaw University, Cuttack.

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

(Photocopy copy of the Form may be used)

Name : _____

Position : _____

Organisation : _____

Address : _____

_____

_____

Telephone : _____

Fax : _____

E-mail : _____

SUBSCRIPTION RATE :

Category	Life Membership(Rs.)	Annual (Rs.)	Single Copy (Rs.)
Institution	5000	550	550
Individual	3000	400	400
Students/ Research Scholars	2000	300	300

Subscrition Type : (Put a tick '√' Mark)

Life Membership	☐	Institution	☐
Annual Membership	☐	Individual	☐
Single Copy	☐	Student/Research Scholar	☐

The Subscriber can deposit the said amount in the name of **Ravenshaw Journal of Philosophy, Account No. 33811767224, IFC : SBIN0012040**
Or,
Bank Draft should be made in favour of **Ravenshaw Journal of Philosophy, Ravenshaw University,** payable at Cuttack, Odisha and the draft along with filled-in subscription form may be sent to :

HEAD, DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
RAVENSHAW UNIVERSITY, CUTTACK-753003, ODISHA, INDIA
E-mail : himansu@ravenshawuniversity.ac.in