



DARSHAN

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**Department of Philosophy
Tinsukia College**



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Editorial :

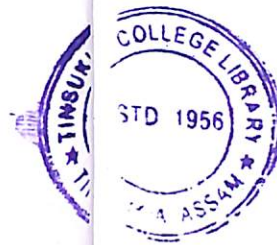
Though people or thinkers around the world tried to give the definition of philosophy in different ways, nobody was able to give a concrete and definite answer to it. Anyway one thing is clear in the answer that philosophy is concerned more or less with the notion of knowledge. As we all know that there is no boundary to knowledge and hence forth everything that comes under the purview of knowledge is the subject matter of Philosophy. Philosophy thus the study of knowledge of the world as a whole. Now one question comes to mind about the importance of studying philosophy. For some people academically philosophy cannot give us



livelihood like other subjects. Options and jobs are very limited; one feels. So, most of us go after other technical and vocational subjects, with the feeling that after completion of study one can easily get job and live a sound financial life. But this is not the reality. Engineers, Doctors, MBA's are also jobless in India. So, it is not true that apart from philosophy anything can give us livelihood, jobs, financial security etc. On the other hand in today's society we often tell about the moral degradation and refer to the need of value education. Philosophy is related to value education in real sense. But how many of us know this? Though we are living in this world most of us even do not have the knowledge of the worth of living. We care for material, not for mental peace. We care for money not for man. Trying to reduce philosophy to mere a subject of money earning would not help the society and it will affect negatively.

We should make philosophy a way of life but not the way of earnings. A broad outlook towards life only can make this possible. In this world one should try to become a good human and only a proper knowledge philosophy can make him so.

Editor



I

Philosophy is one of the most misunderstood terms. Different persons mean different things by it. Starting from carelessness in speech, dress and behaviour to very serious enquiries into deep experiences of life, philosophy can mean anything. Many consider philosophy as general, vague, loosely connected, abstract, needlessly argumentative, non-empirical, non-positive, obscure lump of thought. Paul Valery's comment comes to mind: '*Ce qu'on peut reprocher à la philosophie, c'est qu'elle ne sert à rien*' (i.e. Philosophy can be blamed for one thing, that it serves nothing.)

Leaving aside the whimsical and often derogatory concepts of philosophy, it has at least two solemn meanings: 1. The general perspective, motto, situation, aim, the *raison d'être* of anything and 2. The investigations into some deep problems, questions and experiences of life and the world. Out of the two, the latter, I feel, is the true meaning of philosophy. It also bothers constantly about itself. Much of a philosopher's energy is lost in trying to understand what philosophy is.

Philosophy is a thinking affair. Thought of and on philosophy is also some sort of a philosophy though thought of poem is no poem or thought of food is no food. Thought of philosophy is no philosophy 'proper' - there is a qualitative difference between thought of food and thought of poem on the one hand and thought of philosophy on the other. While thought of food is nowhere near food, thought of philosophy has an aspect of philosophy in it.

We can use the prefix 'meta' to denote any elaboration of a particular concept while not exactly doing the activity denoted by that concept, e.g., elaboration of the concept of linguistics as meta-linguistics or elaboration of the concept of ethics as meta-ethics, etc. In that case, we shall find that between 'meta-mathematics' and 'meta-philosophy', the former is entirely different from the subject under consideration, but the latter is not. That means,

Philosophy, Life and Values

❖ Dr. Sibnath Sarma

(Preamble: This essay is a loose lumping together of a few of my broodings some of which are already in print. The concepts being treated can be handled variously. It looks at the concepts of philosophy, life and values from the position of a student of philosophy delineating the nuances of the concepts in question and bringing to the fore certain lesser explored perspectives within a reasonable length. Also, the axiological foundation of society and its implication for the individuals would be explored)

whereas in some disciplines thinking about them is not doing those disciplines, in philosophy even thinking about philosophy is some kind of a philosophy. Another thing that comes parallel to it is 'poetry'. There can be a poem on poems, so that there is poetry of poetry (in line with philosophy of philosophy). Not many disciplines may have such a peculiarity.

In the same way, it is possible to have philosophy of history and philosophy of physics, but not physics of physics or physics of botany or botany of botany etc. At the same time, it must be understood with care that meta-philosophy is 'some' philosophy only and in a limited and shallow sense. Unless philosophy inquires into some deeper questions, it is not a 'complete philosophy'. Therefore, there still exists a difference between a 'philosophy of philosophy' (=meta-philosophy) and 'philosophy'. The same may be true of 'poetry of poetry'. Poetry of poetry is limited; but poetry is a vast area.

Philosophy is a seriously self-critical discipline. It continuously examines and re-examines itself. Very few things are final for it. Hence is the raging debate that has been continuing for centuries as to what is philosophy. To some non-philosophers it might appear to be a favourite pastime for some peculiar persons. But to the seriously inclined persons with intelligence and curiosity, even if their callings are non-philosophical, philosophy is an important and useful activity. They recognize the services rendered by the philosophers and they themselves lapse into philosophical mood ever so often.

The old concept of philosophy that it is love of wisdom is very instructive. Indeed, it is the desire to understand, to grasp, to comprehend what is around us, our experiences and understanding till date of the universe, is the basic urge that can be termed philosophical. All consciously conducted thoughts and investigations are philosophical in this sense. And science, which enjoys such a position of prestige in popular perception was only a 'natural

philosophy' till a century and a little time ago. All curiosities, questions, desire to comprehend are marks of a philosophical mood. Hence the unique and the essential mind-set that is philosophical and sets itself apart from others and distinguishes itself from others is 'curiosity' (Love of wisdom?). The answers that follow, by virtue of their own nature, fall in several compartments. There they are physics, chemistry, botany, economics etc. The first level of questioning may not be subject-specific. That may be a simple universal desire to know. As long as there is no specific marking on the question as to where it belongs, it might belong to general knowledge enquiry in the broadest sense. It might also be a matter of common sense. It might be anything. It is a nebulous state of wondering and desiring to know.

The second level of enquiry which starts with the answers to the first level enquiry determines the subject as we understand it. 'What is this?' It could be a general question. An answer to this question could be 'This is a stone' a general answer. 'Of what is it made?' again a general question. But the answer will no longer be general. 'It is made of sand, clay, quartz, monads etc.' There will be further enquiries and investigations. Successive stages will make the answers different and more specific. Answers will range from common sense to geology to chemistry to physics to philosophy to economics etc.

General inquisitiveness as philosophy will permeate all enquiries. But there will still remain a specific philosophical enquiry as well. That will be determined by the way the answers are reached and the answers themselves. There will be still further queries and still further answers. 'What is this?' 'This is a stone.' 'Does it completely reveal itself to our knowing mechanism?' Or, *what we know as stone is only our mental construct out of sensibilia received from outside? Is there a difference between appearance and reality? How to conduct our life in society?*

Such queries are philosophy-specific. Other disciplines also can raise such questions. But they will do that only as part-time philosophies.

Critique of language, linguistic analysis, existential enquiries, phenomenological investigation etc. are good concepts of philosophy. But the one concept that has always appealed to me is: *interpretation of experiences*. This is only a shade deeper than interpretation of language and meaning. While we interpret language, we have to share the field with lexicographers, linguists, grammarians and even psychologists. When we take up experiences as the raw material, we have the entire field to ourselves. It is true that fundamentally all intellectual pursuits might be interpretation of experiences. Physics interprets the experiences of atoms, particles, photons, quarks etc¹, chemistry interprets the experiences of molecules and their interactions. Management deals with the organizational experiences and so forth. This concept, i.e., interpretation of experiences, then, tends to be as wide as the 'love of wisdom' concept. There has to be some restriction to this. That is that philosophy interprets certain experiences which other intellectual enterprises do not include in their sphere of activity. That would give both the meaning and a relevance to philosophical enterprise. No other discipline is concerned with interpreting the experiences of knowledge, truth, beauty, goodness, holiness, causality, hypothesis, law etc. The list will be huge. And the experiences named - which are but samples - are such as no other discipline can and does analyze. Since human civilization will be poorer if these are, along with so many other equally important experiences, not interpreted - philosophy does that work for mankind.

The universe available to us in our experiences becomes meaningful through some broad concepts which in their turn might lapse into smaller and elementary concepts standing for experiences. For instance there are the concepts of science,

philosophy, history, art, etc. which stand for the ways of understanding and having certain attitudes. Accepting the efficiency of these concepts helps us in dealing with the world. In this sense these are very valuable. We are accustomed to using them. We speak, write and understand better through them. But, as pointed out, these are mere concepts and break down to further elementary concepts the meaning of which have been handed down to us through generations of use by the people. All meanings are fluid and shapeless and tend to enter regions of obscurity and cloudiness. Finally, it may be compared to the inside of an atom (which is itself a concept!) which, as our scientist friends tell us, is a very cloudy existence having the possibility of both particles and waves which are totally different things. Nearly in the same way meanings vary from race to race, age to age, and may be from person to person. A blind person's idea of darkness, a poet's, a thief's, a lover's, a child's, a miner's ... will dramatically vary from one another. Yet, they are using the same concept or name. What is meant, however, is not the same. This would be by and large true about all concepts. The intention of referring to this fluidity of meaningfulness is that if there is so much of it in ordinary ideas then the bigger ideas must suffer from this in a bigger way. In matters simple or complex, meaningfulness is always a complex affair.

Hence the words science and philosophy too must have a complex texture. In spite of a rapid growth in both, individual ideas of these are quite different and widely vary. Many use the concept of science in the Newtonian realistic fashion. Of course, on the basis of this, science has made so much of progress. But it has now been supplanted by new science which is qualitatively different as far as fundamental questions of experience are concerned. And the same is true for philosophy. The variety in the meanings of philosophy is bewildering. Many have quirky, theistic, mystical, obscurantist concept of philosophy not realizing that it is as serious a quest for truth as science is.

While both science and philosophy might claim precision in thought to be their motto, the truth of the matter, in the final analysis, is that both these words stand almost for the same thing: understanding and interpreting experience. While science adamantly sticks to 'experiment' and successful prediction as the final arbiter, philosophy accepts logic and inner coherence of discourse as the deciding factor. If so, philosophy is already the foundation of science, for science can ill deny inner descriptive consistency and coherence². It further demands a rigid experimental proof or evidence for something. Nobel prize is still eluding Stephen Hawking for the last demand in spite of his great theoretical contribution and singular fame. There is unique relationship between the philosophical and the scientific approaches to truth.

Truth in turn is itself a concept. It is something like the power or value or essence of knowledge. It is the very life of knowledge insofar as it makes knowledge what it is by acceptable description of what is known. In other words, it is the genuine representation of what is the case. This is the idealized nature of truth. It is up to those who are interested in truth to arrange ways and means to ascertain it. If a piece of belief represents facts and it is justified in being accepted as true in the given circumstance, the piece of belief graduates to knowledge. Knowledge and truth happen together simultaneously and in the same piece of belief. They rise or fall together. If it is true then it is knowledge, if it is tentative then it is belief. Hence truth and knowledge are virtually synonymous, so that there is no point in saying 'true knowledge' or 'false knowledge'. *True knowledge* is a superfluous expression: if it is knowledge, then it is ipso facto true. On the other hand, *false knowledge* is a self-contradictory expression: for if it is false, then it is ipso facto not knowledge. If it is blatantly false, then it is not even belief; for beliefs are unjustified or untested but probable pieces of information. May be they are borderline cases of

knowledge, pieces of information waiting for confirmation for promotion to knowledge via acquisition of truth-status or demotion to falsehood and removal even from the anteroom to knowledge, namely belief.

To carry the annotation on truth a little further: Truth is corroboration of thought with the real or what is. This innocent-looking statement itself is an expression of thought and in order to be true it has to abide by the meaning (which is stipulated here) that it conveys. The meaning it conveys cannot be a piece of thought – for then the same question will be asked and we shall be pushed to an endless quest for something. But in and through thought what can we get other than thought? We think that thought is a form of consciousness, we think that it reaches out to the objective world while 'meaning it' whereas it is never anything other than thought. All our enquiries and broodings are of this nature. Even when we feel that we are dealing with tangible and 'objective' something we are very much in our thought and are governed by the principles of logic and semantics. We do this through language. Language is the tool of understanding and communication. What it means might assure us of feigned objectivity, but a little brooding shows that objectivity is only a piece of thought as much as thought and subjectivity.

Science is a shade more precise than philosophy due to symbolizing concepts and using mathematical language. But even equations are thoughts purportedly expressed precisely. Mathematical and symbolic language is precise, true, but it too is language. It has to abide by rules that are either presupposed or framed by human mind. Also, if common words have a tendency to ambiguity, is there no such possibility in the case of symbols? Does not the final understanding take place in ordinary/popular language? For after all, words too are symbols for ideas and experiences. However, in favour of symbolism, a point must be conceded that it makes handling of ideas comparatively easy.

Both science and philosophy work through tentatively accepted principles. Logical analysis, dialectics, calculation, observation, experiment – all go and halt before the final representation of the world of phenomena. This is humanly ultimate. Scientists and philosophers explain various facets of it in various ways.

There is a hackneyed view, a legacy of linguistic analysis, that while science is a first order discipline, philosophy is a second order discipline: that science deals with 'objectively' given facts and philosophy deals only with the concepts. This distinction can be traced to old realism, common sense and Newtonian science. In the changed scenario of modern sciences, in the absence of the final statement of what the 'real' is in itself (cf. Kantian Noumenon, Heisenberg's Indeterminacy Principle and the Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics) and a consensus achieved that the truly objective is only a realm of the possibilities, that there is no one world, that in a way we create our own world, the first order claim of science is no longer tenable. At the same time, since any concept finally reaches an experience from which it has arisen, the subject-matter of philosophy, even as conceptual and logical analysis, is not entirely imaginary. The order-division imposed by some philosophers in the realm of philosophy and science is only a myth. In fact both philosophy and science do the same thing: they explain experiences through concepts with which are associated meanings. Meanings may be the constitutive elements of the world that is dealt with in science and philosophy. In spite of essential unity, there is a difference between philosophy and science. This difference is stipulated in philosophy and science is welcome to reject it. But science qua science cannot indulge in such a speculation. Well, the difference is: Science remains contented with gathering information and organizing those into a coherent picture of the world through, say, atoms, molecules, cells, neurons etc., philosophy remains contented in explaining

certain vital concepts like knowledge, truth, reality, propriety, beauty, holiness, peace, self, deity, etc. Also, there is the difference brought out by the concepts of theory and practice. Within science, apart from theory, there is practice for itself and practice for society. Practice for itself (science) means those activities that go to demonstrating its (science's) truth by experiment etc. Practice for society means the translation of scientific knowledge into building utility objects that make our life safe and comfortable. This aspect of science is better known as technology. It is the most visible face of science – with cars, airplanes, ships, submarines, rockets, satellites, TV's, telephones, computers, thousands of machines that help us do things fast and nicely and machines that produce consumer items and medicines and what not. People use these. Their idea of science is created by their experience of these items. This is the beneficial aspect of science, true. But using the same scientific knowledge atomic and chemical weapons of mass destruction are created. These have jeopardized world-peace. Heavy industrialization following technological advancement is at the root of environmental degradation threatening the very continuance of life on earth. Science qua science cannot say anything about this murderous aspect of technology which is derived from science. It is dumb and mute and insensitive about its own worth – good or bad. By raising the fundamental questions of survival, peace, progress, and other moral issues like love, justice, freedom, propriety, dignity of humanity, duty, we enter into a totally different domain, the domain of values, which is handled by philosophy. This is for philosophy what technology is for science. Technology is the cutting edge of science, so is morality of philosophy. After all, ethics is only theoretical: at the most, it is the policy-determinant. The real test of ethics is in the application of these policies in life. Prescriptive ethics aspires to serve that purpose. Prescriptive and applied ethics as also comparative religion constitute the philosophical window to society. Philosophy reaches out to life and society through this.



II

If we were to ponder over the significance of life we might as well begin by seriously believing that consciousness is the foundation of everything that is. It has to be a living consciousness in order to be meaningful to itself. Life was a necessity – as was needed the chemical way that life was possible. The physical way to support the chemical had to be in place. There must have been a huge cosmic logic governing the physical matter, chemical life, psychical thought and spiritual consciousness in order that the cosmos could reflect on itself.

Life as a fact and a phenomenon is hard to comprehend or assess. If life were not there consciousness would be too absent and incapable even to think of itself. This is the basic ontological necessity of life. But normally what we mean by life is the individual, the person, suffering an *angst*-ful existence that the poets, artists, scientists, philosophers speak of. If this aspect of life, the so-called human or existentialist aspect of life, is to be accommodated in the overall cosmic perspective, then it is part of a grand design where individual centres of consciousness are challenged and prepared for the unknown journey through the cosmos.

Again, life is created due to playfulness of our parents who pass on the spark of life to us. We come to this cosmos and acquaint ourselves with a lot of things and a lot of other centres of consciousness. Everything is a challenge and everything is a joy. A tremendous opportunity is let loose before us, but the inherited baggage of human stupidity, fallibility, frailty, meanness, makes life infinitely complex. At times we get lost in the labyrinth of existence. Ambition compounds this already complex affair. We keep on committing one blunder after another. Yet, in and through all this otherwise sordid sequence of events, there is the chance to rise up, look at and move to a goal only which act gives us the true

significance of life: love for humanity, standing up for truth, struggling for peace and non-violence, creating and appreciating values ... All these are possible because we are, we have a life. We exist. That is the importance of living and that is its significance too. Life is capable of radiating itself in a hundred ways - as wisdom, as goodness, as beauty, as holiness and above all happiness which is available only in spreading joy around. Well, though living itself is a great event and achievement, it can be with effort converted to a storehouse of joy by cultivating, creating and preserving perennial human values.

There has been a fantastic intellectual achievement. It is almost saturated. Over-reliance on intellect has made humans the custodian of knowledge of the cosmos. If science is the paradigm of understanding the world and our life in it, we have virtually come to the very boundary of our understanding. The instrument, the remarkable brain of ours, is not evolving. I do not know why. Nature wanted to think through the humans and that goal, perhaps, stands achieved. But the possibility of our using this remarkable instrument to 'good', 'absolutely good' of nature and humanity is yet to be achieved. There perhaps we stand where we were, or perhaps slipped one or two steps below. One reason for the status quo could be that the best is yet to come. If it does not come even after centuries of capacity-stagnation and failed realization of the goal, then perhaps nature will take a decision to overhaul the system. Till then, we have to work with whatever we have. But is it not true that whatever we have is enormous and even at the individual level we are using only a fraction of our capacity?

In this context there is a small point to consider: how do we measure the progress of humanity and civilization? I have a standpoint vis-à-vis the cosmos, humanity and I as a part of it. And there is the concept of what is called 'progress', which minimally means forward movement, upward ascension, development, increase in understanding, increase in satisfaction,

happiness, delight, joy, ecstasy, and the like. There is what is called material progress which is concrete, perceptible and quantifiable. This progress concerns humanity's material environment including the bodies, through which humans live and function. So having plenty of material things congenial for the protection, disease-free life, of the human bodies is a factor that naturally thrusts itself into the conditions of human progress. A condition of society where people do not have enough, *quantum sufficit*, of material things, 'food, clothes and shelter', is certainly an under-progressed humanity. This is what is meant when our forefathers put '*artha*' as one of the aims and acquisitions of successful living. This I would put at the bottom of human progress.. In the same way, the fulfillment of the next two *purusharthas*, namely *kama* and *dharma* too, is part of a progressed/developed humanity.

But the genuine, core and the differential factor in the concept and reality of human progress is the quantum of spiritual acquisition. I think, when I say *artha* and *kama*, there will be virtually full unanimity among many respondents to the question of progress. Coming to *dharma*, there will be half unanimity (if anything like that is possible). *Dharma* in the sense of morality is acceptable to all. *Dharma* in the sense of experience and belief in holiness and God is not acceptable to many. I take *dharma* in its wide sense, i.e., ethics, holiness as also belief in God. For me humanity bereft of faith in God over and above morality and propriety is a defiant and under-progressed humanity. Faith is a defining factor in the life of humanity.

I was talking about the quantum of spiritual acquisition. This begins with *dharma* and gets fulfilled in *moksha*. I do not take *moksha* as a future life in heaven. It is the life divine here and now. It is the play of spirituality in the life of humanity. It is the joyous expansion of an individuals existence. The more of this in thought and experience, the more progressed humanity is. For it will make humans civilized in the true sense of the term. There will be striving

for truth, beauty, goodness, happiness, peace, compassion, non-violence. Politically there will be faith in democracy. There will be minimum or even absence of conflicts of any kind. Conflicts would be resolved through dialogues. There will be no violence, no wars, no nuclear arsenal. People will live in dignity and achieve their individual potential without fear from anything whatever. I shall measure progress of humanity by the amount of actual faith in such an outlook toward life and world. The more of it, the more progress humanity has achieved. This in fact constitutes the axiological foundation of society. Our idea of a society involves a whole range of values that we have been talking about. Values are in a sense the ideal constituents, the warp and woof, of a society. Human individuals create, preserve and propagate values. We cannot have a civilized society unless it is thoroughly and habitually value-based. Education has a seminal role to play in this respect.

I have no intention of dwelling at length on the nature of values as such. The concrete world in front of us gets revealed to us through the instrumentality of our senses. No value as such is present in it. All the values are our reactions to and assessments of the experiences. Some animals might display crude aesthetic reactions; but values as we understand by the term are a unique human prerogative. Moreover, the value-world, an unavoidable aspect of civilization, falls in the domain of philosophy. This basically comprises of morality, aesthetics, spirituality, humanity, religion etc. Science is self-restrictive by its nature in this matter. It can enter into the domain of value-discourses only through philosophy. It is no longer science then. The extra in philosophy, over and above everything of science (except its terrifying aspect in certain respects), permits philosophy to be very vocal and poky. This makes philosophy, along with its concern for knowledge, concerned with wisdom while science is concerned only with knowledge.

III

While even a large area of philosophy too is concerned merely with gathering information and building a data-base regarding knowledge and reality where it works in tandem with science (i.e. it defines knowledge and science exemplifies that, it defines reality and science exemplifies that and explores into that too etc.) – philosophy expands itself into encompassing ‘all sorts of experience including the so-called value-experience’ which are deep and unavoidable experiences of humanity and civilization. A grand wealth of information from the sub-atomic to the cosmic world is gathered by science but the understanding of the lived world, human values, aspirations, duties and responsibilities remain virtually untouched by it. Only philosophy can guide us there.

Both science and philosophy are umbrella-concepts; that is they are abstractions from some specific but different activities and concerns going through them. For instance, science is the collective name of physics, chemistry, biology, botany, zoology, psychology etc. What physics studies is different from what chemistry studies and so on. These disciplines are united through their methodologies. In other respects they are quite different. In the same way, philosophy, as a broad umbrella, has under it activities like epistemology (study of knowledge), metaphysics (study of existence), ethics (study of morality), aesthetics (study of art and beauty), theology (study of religion), politics (study of statecraft) etc. These discrete and different activities are united through a methodology of study and attitude towards interpretation.

Yet, the subject-matter or the concerned raw materials of different sciences, particularly physics, chemistry, biology are such as one is susceptible to be understood in terms of the other which is more fundamental between the two. This means, given the circumstances, biology can be reduced to chemistry and chemistry to physics. And the frontier of physics is subatomic or nuclear

physics. And physics is now happily close to philosophy. It has so turned out that its results are amenable to different interpretations. Of these, the Copenhagen Interpretation (championed by Bohr, Heisenberg, Schrodinger et al) is the standard one. It keeps quiet about the popular and macro world. It concerns itself with the micro-world, the final shape and nature of which is quite indeterminate. It is, so they say, a cloud of possibilities. It might behave as particles or wave according as the experimenter chooses. Hence a huge subjective element has entered into it. The ancient concept of objectivity has vanished. Mind or consciousness has acquired enormous prominence. Max Planck says: ‘As a man who has devoted his whole life to the most clear headed science, to the study of matter, I can tell you as a result of my research about atoms this much: There is no matter as such. All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force which brings the particle of an atom to vibration and holds this most minute solar system of the atom together. We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent mind. This mind is the matrix of all matter.’³ Let us take it as the frontier of science today.

A few words about metaphysics: Metaphysics is that branch of philosophy which enquires into the nature of existence or reality. While epistemology enquires into the nature and scope of knowledge, metaphysics enquires into the nature of the known. Whether the known is as it is revealed in knowledge or it is only the known aspect of it while its real nature is out of the reaches of cognition? Hence metaphysics builds a system of ideas about things known or not yet known or never to be known. Epistemic compulsions which are tenable in physics as well compel us to believe that a substantial portion of the universe remains outside our cognition. This has created the gap between appearance and reality.⁴ All epistemic considerations are settled in metaphysics. Likewise, logical, moral, aesthetic, theological, in fact all

philosophical problems boil down to metaphysical problems. So that, it is tantamount to saying that metaphysics is the essence of philosophy exactly as physics is the foundation and essence of all sciences.

All the best systems and schools of philosophy produced anywhere in the world can be subsumed under certain labels like realism, idealism, monism, pluralism, phenomenology, absolutism, momentarism, eternalism etc. All these types of philosophy can be suitably rehabilitated in a school or system of thought that accidentally flourished in India (like quantum physics accidentally flourished in Europe). The accommodative and daring dialectic is known as non-dualism or *kevaladvaitavada* having its roots in what is called *Upanishadic* literature. It is basically a philosophy of mono-spiritism, the ultimate reality of a non-dual absolute consciousness beyond space-time and causality. It is the foundational principle of the universe both in its reality as also its cognition. This philosophy does not believe in the finality of plurality. It only believes in the ultimate reality of a timeless consciousness on which the experience of the universe/cosmos is somehow grafted. The universe of our day to day experience which is spatio-temporal and causal is empirical and phenomenal. It is real as long as it is experienced. Collapse of experience will collapse it. But from the point of view of human life and limited experience it is quite real, important and deserves to be treated respectfully.

Now the case presented by quantum physics: If the decisively final and the further non-analyzable subatomic world is only a world of possibilities from which the macro atomic, molecular, cellular etc. world of our experience emerges, then what brings into existence which was a mere possibility in the atom? The selection mechanism cannot be accidental. It is a choice, which only means that consciousness is at play here. Alternately, the play of the emergence of any one possibility, particle or wave (so far as we know, we do not know the whole thing), is enacted with

consciousness as its background. In any case, boundless fundamental consciousness has to be the first axiom of this frontier science vis-à-vis the empirical or the gross world. Without presupposing such a consciousness the universe cannot be explained.

Schrodinger says: 'It is the same elements that go to compose my mind and the world, in spite of the unfathomable abundance of 'cross-references' between them. The world is given to me only once, not one existing and one perceived. Subject and object are only one. The barrier between them cannot be said to have broken down as a result of recent experience in the physical sciences, for this barrier does not exist.'⁵ If this is true, then the difference between the best of physics and the best of metaphysics has vanished along with the crumbling down of the wall between subjectivity and objectivity. Ultimately there is no duality. It is oneness of existence that is substantive consciousness or spirit.

Where do we go from this final knowledge? What do we do with this? Science cannot say anything. A part of philosophy, of that too the prescriptive ethics, teaches us what next. Enlightened pragmatism is the way left. Essentially we are one with the universe. Upanishad says: *That thou art*. The same cosmos upholds everything and the plurality is a wrong observation from the eternal and absolute standpoint. But temporally, it is very much real. Then adopt a befitting policy for living. We can go the murderous way of selfishness, hatred, jealousy, conflict, killings, strife, unhappiness and destruction or we can also go the way of truth, love, fellow-feeling, inclusiveness, democracy, peace, freedom, non-violence and other cherished human values. The choice is entirely ours. There does not seem to be much scope for negotiation as far as the acceptability of these values is concerned. There might be some blemishes and provisos here and there in these also, for these are human too. But we have to grow in, with and through these.

A sizeable section of philosophy says go for an enlightened life. Socrates, Plato, Plotinus, Spinoza, Kant, Thoreau, Yajnavalkya, Buddha, Nagarjuna, Shankara, Vivekananda, Gandhi, Radhakrishnan – all stood up for this. Not necessarily idealists, but philosophers of all affiliations, sceptics (Russell), materialists (Marx, M.N.Roy), atheists and absurdists (Sartre), all espoused humanism. Not only great philosophers but great scientists and intellectuals were humanists. In that respect they were practising the same perennial philosophy of human values. Einstein, Linus Pauling, Toynbee, Tagore, Tolstoy, Chomsky, Ikeda and many known and unknown champions of human dignity, justice, goodness, peace, freedom, are all philosophers of human values. They plead for the importance of living, living peacefully, honestly and altruistically. While knowledge remains as the core-concern of pure philosophy and pure science, wisdom emerges as the core-concern of an extended and applied version of philosophy. And the essence of this wisdom which is enormously practical is humanism and human values.

This suitably brings out the central thing in the dialectics of existence. If we are trying to merely acquire knowledge or are also sensitive in the matter of its application is the question. Whether we are more theorists or practitioners too? For, for any successful practice or work a sound theoretical base is important. Without proper planning nothing of substance and fulfillment can be achieved. Hence arming ourselves with the knowledge of the world through theoretical philosophy and theoretical science we sit down to chart out a way of life for ourselves. The moment we do that, we pass from knowledge to wisdom. Wisdom is when knowledge spills over to society for the benefit of it. No one has to teach us selfishness. We are born selfish. But we are born neither from nor for selfishness. Transcending selfishness is the main concern of wisdom. Only that lends a new depth, a new horizon, a new meaning to life. A lot of good things can be done to society and

only that will bestow a new dimension of depth and meaningfulness to individual life. Otherwise as itself, in strife and sorrows, as also the unknowability of existence and reality, the entire drama of life is fraught with insignificance. Thus wisdom has to acquire a cutting edge. It cannot be a mere pious desire and resolution. It has to translate itself into action. Without such an application it is no wisdom. We can learn a lot of things from science and philosophy and by a judicious use of technology we can make our existence meaningful. □

References and notes:

1. Cf. 'Atoms are hypothetical entities constructed to make experimental observations intelligible. No one, not one person, has ever seen an atom. Yet we are so used to the idea that an atom is a thing that we forget that it is an idea. Now we are told that not only is an atom an idea, it is an idea that we cannot even picture.' – Gary Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, P. 119

2. Cf. 'It is wrong to think that the task of physics is to find out how nature is. Physics concerns what we can say about nature.' Niels Bohr, *Brainy Quotes in the Internet*.

3. *Brainy Quotes in the Internet*.

4 Think of noumena and phenomena, brahma and jagat, Plato's allegory of the cave, Schrodinger's thought experiment of the cat in the box.

5. Schrodinger, *What Is Life (containing Mind and Matter)*, P 127

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What is Philosophy ?

❖ Dr Jyotsna Bhattacharjee

What is Philosophy? Even for a professional philosopher this question is very difficult to answer. It makes the philosophers understand how peculiar their subject is. 'Philos' means 'love' and 'sophia' means 'wisdom'. So philosophy is love of knowledge or wisdom. But that is also the aim of all the sciences and the other subjects. They all want to obtain knowledge, yet it seems to have no special subject-matter. A Botanist studies plants, and astronomer studies solar system, a Geologist studies the geographical features. But what does Philosophy study? It is extremely difficult to find an answer to this question.

According to Prof. Ayer, a possible answer is that being a subject with so many branches, philosophy has not one, but many branches of study. So it may be said that metaphysics studies the structure of reality, ethics the rules of human conduct, logic the canons of valid thinking. The theory of knowledge attempts to discover what it is in our power to know. Ayer says that this answer is not wrong, but could be misleading. Ethics is indeed concerned with human conduct, but it is not descriptive of human conduct in the way psychology and sociology are. Ayer calls it prescriptive, but he says that its interest is rather in what lies behind prescriptions.

If the theory of knowledge discovers what it is in our power to know, it is not in the sense an encyclopaedia may be said to give us a comprehensive knowledge of various subjects. It aims rather at criteria of knowledge, the criteria which may possible set limits to what can be known. Logic is a special subject according to Prof. Ayer. As a formal science it ranks with mathematics, from which it is now hardly distinguishable. But as it goes closer to mathematics it become detached from philosophy. Philosophical question may be raised about logic, as they can be about mathematics. They are not however questions within a logical system, but questions about the status of logical propositions, the character of logical concepts, and the legitimacy of certain types of proof.

Western philosophy has a long history, conveniently divided into four eras- the Ancient, Medieval, Modern and Contemporary, the ancient philosophy is said to begin in the Greek cities of Western Asia. Thales of Ionia is regarded as the father of philosophy, who was active around 585B.C. he believed Reality to be water. His most notable students were Anaxagoras and Anaximander. Philosophers tried to discover the 'First Cause' to explain the universe. For Anaxagoras 'air' was the ultimate reality or the first cause and for Anaximander it was matter. Heraclitus took 'fire' as the ultimate reality. The Eleatics led by Parmenides and Zeno

believed in one reality and they declared change to be impossible. Thus every philosopher conceived a different thing as the ultimate reality. Socrates was the first philosopher who transformed greek philosophy into a united system. He wrote nothing. But inspired many disciplines with his dialogues. His most important student was Plato. He believed in forms or ideas to be reality. Plato expressed his thoughts in his famous book, "The Republic". His most outstanding student was Aristotle, perhaps the first truly systematic philosopher. Aristotelian logic was the first type of logic to categorize every valid syllogism.

Medieval philosophy was concerned with the nature of God and application of Aristotle's logic and thought to every area of life. Thomas Aquinas believed in an uncaused 'First cause' which was regarded as God and as the cause of all existence. Actually, since the time reflective thought emerged in man people have been curious about the origin and reality of the universe. Philosophy was a way to satisfy the curiosity of man and advance a rational theory. Western philosophy started in Greece. They wanted to discover the first cause which was the source of the origin of the universe. Initially their attitude was material. Gradually, the materialistic outlook changed to spiritualism. Socrates laid stress on spiritualism by asserting that self-knowledge is the best knowledge. He advised his followers to know their own selves (know thyself).

Indian Philosophy has been influenced by the Vedas and the Upanishads. The Upanishads state that the Brahman (Absolute) is the only reality. Sankaracharya of the Advaita Vedanta school emphasized Brahman to be the only reality. His reality is 'niguna' that is, Brahman is devoid of any quality. According to Sankaracharya if any quality is attributed to the Brahman, the reality will be limited. The whole world becomes an illusion (maya) in Sankara's philosophy. As we mistake a rope for a snake' in the same way we mistake the world for reality. Sankara's Advaita

philosophy is known as "Vivartavada". Maya arises due to ignorance. The liberated person realises that nothing is real except Brahman. His famous statement was "That thou art".

Jivatma' is identical with "Paramatma". Even God of religion is rejected by Sankara. For him 'nirguna Brahman' is the only reality. But in that case religion and morality would be impossible and all higher values of human beings would be lost. In religion the devotees need a God who can have communication with them. But a nirguna Brahman cannot have any communication with the devotees. Even morality becomes a kind of illusion. So Sankara's nirguna Brahman may be able to give intellectual satisfaction, but not emotional happiness. Hence, Ramanuja advocated 'Parinamavada', which stated the world is a real transformation of the 'Saguna Brahman' who is endowed with all excellent qualities. In Ramanuja's philosophy both God and the world become real and morality as well as religion become possible. The later Indian Philosophers, including Dr. Radhakrishnan, followed the Vedanta system.

Indian philosophy has so far advocated spiritualism as the basis of philosophy. For some of them Brahman is the only reality and the world is illusory. For some others the world is also real in the spiritual sense. □

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Relevance of the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita in the present day life.

❖ Dr Bondona Puzari

The Bhagavad Gita unlike the other scriptures of the World has attracted the best mind of the World for the reason that it presents a very forceful and fascinating synthesis of both theory and practice. The Gita not only deals with metaphysical subtleties but also discuss the ways by which they can be applied to life.

It is very significant that the Bhagavad Gita is a narration by Sanjaya to the blind king Dhritarashtra of what happened on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Most of us are like the blind king unable to see what is happening in the battle of life because of our close identification with the daily events. Again Sanjaya who narrated

the events to the blind king represent a perception which is absolutely objective and impersonal. On the battle of life most of us are confused as to the events that are taking place. This is because we are unable to dissociate ourselves from them. We, too, need a Sanjaya to give us objectivity in our perception. The Bhagavad Gita enables us to discover this Sanjaya within ourselves, for the central core of its message teaches us to look at the events of life with perfect objectivity. Such objectivity alone can reveal to man the real meaning of life.

The laws of spiritual life which Gita puts forward are indeed relevant and applicable to all mankind without any distinction of race, creed or religion. All men are alike and since man is fundamentally a spirit, the laws of spiritual life must apply to all. That is why the Gita should have attracted the attention of Emerson and of Edwin Arnold and many others. Though belonging to Christian persuasion they have all eloquently laid stress on its universal significance and meaning as a guide to human conduct. The Gita has exercised universal appeal on the human mind through the ages. Just because the spiritual values and ideals of life and conduct which it presents will never pale into insignificance but ever shine with their undiminished brilliance in as much as they will prove to be conducive to human welfare at both individual and collective levels for all times to come.

The Bhagavad Gita, it is said, is the profoundest wisdom because it represents the gist or the final wisdom of the Upanishads, which are as it were, the cows, Arjuna himself being the calf sucking the milk out of the udder of the cows and the Gita being the milk-nectar got out of them. Behind the popularity of the Bhagavad Gita there are various grounds. First of all the Bhagavad Gita presents to us a chart of life, a scheme or technique of living life in the best possible manner. Like other lower animals men have feelings, emotions and passions. But unlike the lower animals man's emotions are moderated by reason. Man's feeling, emotions and

passions mutually incompatible and exclusive as they are need to be organised and compatible have to submit to one single interest under whose inspiration and guidance they can co-operate for the welfare of man. Therefore man is not a victim to wild emotions and feelings but is always in need of an ideal, a rallying centre of his emotions and passions which may turn out to be conducive to the integration of his personality. It is his ideals, values and norms of life that furnish him with such rallying centres.

The ideal or norms of life which the Gita enjoins upon us to adopt is that it puts forward the ideal of performing one's actions or duties selflessly, Gita advises that peace and happiness are assured and guaranteed to man if he performs all his duties without thinking in the least results of their duties. One should think of performing one's duties instead of ruminating unnecessarily on the expected results. The Bhagavad Gita teaches that since reaping the fruits of actions is not within one's own hands and it is futile to carve for them and remain restless. The teaching of the selfless action is even socially beneficial because we are asked to serve society; we have inevitably to abandon the results of our actions. The more selflessly we perform our duties, the more we contribute to social welfare, since it is selfishness that stands in the way of the adjustment of the individual to society. The Bhagavad Gita must not by any means be looked upon as a science of liberation or Moksha-Sashtra. The Gita not only teaches how we can attain liberation but it also sets forth the ideals or principles for social progress and harmony. Gita tells us in the very beginning of its teachings that life itself has to be treated as a sacrifice together with which man was created in the very beginning and that therefore it is by co-operative living that men can seek prosperity and progress and find and fulfil whatever they desire.

The charm and appeal of the Gita is due to its presentation of a complete philosophy of man. It provides a part of life by means of which we can attain efficiency in action in our own personal life

as well as in his collective life as a member of society or state. The Gita therefore is as good a gospel of teachings concerning the attainment of perfection in the personal life of man as a treatise which deals with the duty, the individual has to perform in relation to the society or the state to which he belongs. It can be a safe guide as much to the statesman as to the common man and we have seen how it teaches us the lesson that the best way of attaining happiness and balance of mind is by doing actions with a detached frame of mind. In these days of the prevalence of mental tensions, anxiety and neuroses the Gita can be supposed to be a great text book on psycho-analysis and mental healings. Anyone who goes through the first chapter which describes most graphically and poetically the hesitancy of Arjuna is bound to feel how thousands of years before Freud was born, in India it was known how in order to attain peace and happiness the balance of mind has to be maintained which is possible only if the emotions and impulses are properly controlled. Therefore, though the Gita was composed thousands of years ago, it has modern appeal.

The new advances in science and technology have brought about an utter confusion of values in the life of men and woman living in the present day civilization. There is increasing stress on quantitative rather than qualitative values. Man's inner life is poor and he is striving to free himself from the thralldom of this poverty by acquiring more and more of the material things that science and technology have made available. Man is always seeking a physical solution to a problem which is fundamentally psychological. Man thinks that science being so powerful can solve all problems. But he forgets that while science can solve the problem of speed, it can give no guidance as to the direction that one must follow. The message of the Bhagavad Gita has a universal application. It is as fresh today as it was when given to Arjuna many centuries ago. In fact, modern man is in need of the message of the Bhagavad

Gita if he is to find freedom from the tensions and anxieties brought into his life by the scientific and technological development of today.

Now a days we have lost sight of the fact that while science can give us comfort, it cannot give happiness, since happiness consists not in the possession of things, but in freeing the mind of all its inhibitions, so that it is rendered pure and innocent. While the modern age has known the conquest over matter, it has yet to learn the secret of conquering the mind. Man may have gained in knowledge but he lacks wisdom. Unless man can transform knowledge into wisdom, his future and the future of the entire race is dark and dismal. In sort, present day man needs a right philosophy of life. Through its precious messages the Bhagavad Gita provides the right philosophy of life. It points to a way of life which will help the modern man to find a solution to the baffling problems of existence.

The teachings of the Gita have tremendous significance and value for the formulation of the laws of spiritual life which are valid and beneficial for men of all times. If it is true to say that the modern man is growing in the dark for want of an all comprehensive outlook on life, it is only the Gita that provides it. The greatest need of the present times is the determination to live in the spirit of co-operation, harmony and peace. In fine, we can say that the principles which the Gita lays down are the only hope for humanity at this critical juncture of our civilization. □

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Man and Society in Gandhian perspectives

❖ Debananda Bhattacharyya

Man constitute the most important and vital part in the society. It is man who is responsible for every form of misfortune befallen in the society. Gandhi is basically a man of religion and morality which are two important aspects of human society. He wages a war against social inconsistencies not because of dynamism in the involvement of social activities but primarily because he wants man to be practical and outright revolutionary against all odds and constraints standing on the way of ambivalence between man and society. He feels that without sacrifice on the part of man, the concept of an ideal society is impossible.

The vision of man as Gandhi clarifies in terms of society places man born as an independent and interdependent being. To Gandhi, "Man is not born to live in isolation but is essentially a social animal and independent. He feels that man must be self-sufficient and self-dependent. Man must find out his own worth out of honouring and utilizing indigenous resources for socialism and humanism. Thus he takes recourse of the Charkha or the spinning wheel. The using of charkha is the primary stage of the feeling of self-rule (Swaraj). Gandhi warns against doing out individuality. He believes that man is man because he is primarily an individual unique being and this uniqueness in well-direction, leads to the uniqueness of the society. He ensures the firm belief in man that man alone knows how to embrace and act for a universal brotherhood of mankind to translate the vision of a global society. Between man and machines, man is not a thing either for or against man.

Deeply rooted in Indian social tradition and culture, Gandhi's socialism is the socialism of humanity. His principle of socialism as set forth in this perspective of man allows harmony of relationship between man and state in a non-violent manner. In Harijan, Gandhi writes,

"...All lands belong to Gopal, where then is the boundary line? Man is the maker of that line and he can, therefore unmake it....". Gandhi introduces non-violence primarily because the 'man' in man is being slowly but alarmingly drifted towards devastation of whatever is true and good in himself as well as in the social environment.

As a social-religious visionary, Gandhi refers to the Indian concept of unison between man and society from the points of view of inner awakening and truth. His concern is how man can become himself trustworthy to himself in order to be trustworthy to the society. He ardently believes in the principle of Ahimsa (non-violence). He refers to the Ishopanishad and reminds us of the

path of righteousness by means of following the principle of non-violence.

As a great synchronizer between man and society, Gandhi has his initial lesson from Ruskin whose *Unto this Last* has baptized him with the truth that the good of the individual is the good of the society and vice-versa. Gandhi's vision of man and society as set forth above makes a definite point of departure from his contemporary social thinkers and reformers in allowing man to innovate and evolve his own. Again religion plays a vital role in Gandhi's thoughts. He defines religion in terms of man. Man, according to him, is religion—living, pulsating, empathic and prone to purity and poignance. He never thinks God apart from man and vice-versa. Also he never thinks God apart from the poor and the downtrodden. He says, "no religion is absolutely perfect". He is specially interested in religion because he wants to bring a radical change in the society by involving man in work which is worship. He wages war against casteism primarily from socio-religious points of view, and he wants to liberate man from the irreligions of casteism and superstition, untouchability and sectarianism. He says, "narrowness of religion develops in narrowness of mind which drags man down to destruction and doom".

Gandhi respects man as man embodied in God—naranarayana. Man—homo sapiens—who is the best creation of God, represents God in all His attributes. He reminds us that the person who is poor is also a mouthpiece of God—Daridranarayana. Again he places man as the exponent of religion to embrace and honour humanism in the best possible endeavour, he never isolates man from religion. He explicitly states that, to be true religion, man must surrender to the inner self, the self-serene, and there in lies the spirit of divine delight. Gandhi emphasizes on the service to mankind, that is the service to God.

Gandhi relates religion with morality. He feels that to be true to religion one must have to be moral. Religion has no meaning

until and unless it is backed by morality. Morality needs truthfulness, purity. Unless man relates and realises truth with his very being, he ceases to be a true follower of religion. Again he inspires man to learn fundamental religion which is equality and brotherhood of mankind.

Gandhi wants man to liberate man from orthodoxy and enrich him with the growing and living spirit of religion. He wants that man must prove himself worthy of religion. Keeping that in mind the concept of Ramrajya, he follows the invaluable teaching of religion as revealed in the Upanishads: Sarve sukhine bhavantu, sarve santu niramaya—let every one be happy, without any illness with an utilitarian way. □

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"You can't wake a person who is pretending to be asleep"

— Navajo Proverb.

"Philosophy is life's dry-nurse, who can take care of us- but not suckle us."

— Soren Kierkegard.

"Life has the name of life, but in reality it is death"

— Heraclitus.

Place of 'Dharma' in Indian Philosophy.

❖ **Pranjal Changkakati.**

Dharma is the greatest and most valuable concept of Indian Philosophy which is raised from Vedic thought. In the Vedic philosophy it is explained as an eternal law, truth and moral path and a way of life. Human being is rational as well as spiritual since it can never be material or animalistic. So there must be a definite way of life and in this regard Dharma is explained as so much excellently that it may say to be the way of life. We all know that the Indian philosophy is extensively practical and spiritual. It gives emphasizes on right work and moral duty (*karma* with *Dharma* or true path,

Swadharmā) which is clearly reflected in the concept of *Dharma*. The word '*Dharma*' comes from the root word *dh[*, which means "to hold, maintain, keep". It means that principle which sustains the universe. It indicates the true nature by which the world is moving. It orders that moral law and individual duty by which one can attain his supreme ideal of life and parallelly it may able to sustain the human society. Since the word has been used in various contexts to signify a prescribed course of conduct, duty, ordinance, law, usage, practice, custom, customary observances of castes, religion, piety, justice, equity, virtue, morality, nature, character and characteristic quality etc. Inspire of having a distinctive several meaning it has a harmony and common principle among them and this is the uniformity, spirituality, truth of universe and way of life. In the *Rig-Veda*, it is said that there is a law of universe and all objects of this universe follow an eternal law which is unchangeable and it acts according to this law which is termed as *Rta* in the *Rig-Veda*. In *Rig-Veda* it signifies the immanence of justice. The regularity of the movement of cosmos. And it also refers the will of supreme god, the law of morality and righteousness. The Indian philosophy is basically spiritual and the concept *Dharma* distinctly reflects it. At that time and later period if we analyse the Greek or any other western philosophy, it appears that the cosmological explanation is mainly based on material nature, e.g. the atoms and their creation. But the great philosopher Plato is distinct from them and he appeared to be a spiritualistic by his idealistic explanation, where he asserts that the ultimate truth is Supreme idea, the world former or God and thus in the conceptual explanation of *Dharma* and Platonic idea has a lot of similarity. But the explanation of *Dharma* is so excellent rather than Platonic idea. It is the higher metaphysical truth. The absolute is viewed as Self which in its nature and function is conceived as an objective and impersonal law. It is the ground of rationale of all that happens in the moral and physical aspects of cosmos. As essentially spiritual in nature, it imparts to these two realms order as well as

harmony. *Rita* manifests itself in physical universe as the ground of determination of various phenomena. In fact, the entire universe is founded on *Rita* and moves within its parameters.

Again in Indian philosophy *Dharma* is identified with the Truth. What is right, that is the *Dharma* of an individual or a society. In the Vedic period the sages mentions some discipline and duty on the basis of their spiritual knowledge. In fact, they are so valuable and practical for social good and social welfare and this spiritual and supreme knowledge is prescribed by God to them through their intuition or meditation. And, as an ideal it is accepted to be true and as a supreme being God is also termed as truth. For as much *Dharma* implies the righteousness, virtue since it can only be say to be truth. Because supreme law has to be pure rightness, where there is no conflict, no doubt. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, it is said that nothing is higher than *Dharma*. The weak overcomes the stronger by *Dharma*, as over a king. Truly that *Dharma* is the Truth (*Satya*); therefore, when a man speaks the Truth, they say, "He speaks the *Dharma*"; and if he speaks *Dharma*, they say, "He speaks the Truth!" For both is one.

The explanation of dharma is so excellent and suitable and equally justifiable that in this 21st century, where the science and technology plays the major role for making the human life and society, but rather it becomes fails to be an ideal of life. As a spiritual, rational and social being human life is so complex and it is never fulfilled it's individual and social destiny without a systematic way, *Dharma* is that way which is ethical and right, based on individual as well as social good or social wellbeing. The *Dharma* also reflects the individual right and freedom which is essential value of human society at present time. In Indian Philosophy dharma indicates the practical value by means of action, because the universe is being stay by the activity, it may either be physical or spiritual or mental. But what is the nature of action? It is said that truth and right is the nature of action and according to right and truth ideal what should be performed our duty, that is the *Dharma*. Thus *Dharma* is termed as action or

duty in the practical sense. In Indian philosophy Individual duty, obligation and way of life which is and known as *Varnadharmā* and *Ashramadharmā*. Literally 'Varna' means to choose or select. Every individual has his own essential inherent quality. And on the basis of quality and action there are four varnas—*Brahmins*, *Khetriyas*, *Vaisyas* and *Sudras*. A man belongs to one of those Varnas according to his essential quality. *Dharma* means the essential nature of a thing, e.g. the *dharma* of fire is to burn and thus a man's *dharma* depends on his essential quality. This is *Varna-dharma*. The duties of each *Varna* are as follows: *Brahmins*- They has sufficient control over mind and senses, purity of body and mind, practice austerity, forgiveness, wisdom, uprightness etc. Their specific duties are teaching of the Vedas, performance of scarifies, giving and accepting alms. *Khyetriya*- posses the qualities like courage, heroism, patience, not fleeing from a battle, generosity and leadership. The specific duties of a khyetriyas is to protect people from external aggression and internal disturbances as well as governing them with a view to peace and prosperity, chastising the wicked and charity. *Vaisyas*- the duties of Vaisyas are cultivation and trading. They are the business class of society. *Sudras*- their specific duties are to serve the other three classes.

This *Varna* system not only stands for one's own individual quality but it also refers the individual freedom and right. Thus the *Varna* system is extremely distinct from caste system. The *Varna* does not stand for the professions (vrittis) of life. When *Varna* is interpreted as professions and not as a propensity, the cast system (jati) comes in. But in fact the *Varna* means the abilities and talent. If we analyse the Indian great epics, it appears that the individual qualities are not only identified as *Varna dharma*, but it is given respect and freedom and get a social and individual freedom on one's own inherent quality and action. In Hindu epics it is explained that Parasuram, the son of Jamadagni, was a Brahmin as a cast, but he became a khyetriyas by his propensity. As like, the sage Visvamitra though born as a prince, but became a Brahmin rishi. We all come

to know that *Dharma* is meant in the sense of truth. In the Indian view, the earth alone is the field of actions (*Karmabhumi*) and it can stay only depending on actions. But if the activities and duties are not allowed by actual law, right inherent quality, it becomes bewildered to all. So *Varna dharma* indicates the right way, it is individual right, social right and also important for social mobility. Again *dharma* not only meant the right quality or duty, it greatly analyses the stage of life, which can able to fulfill the individual desires, ultimate end of life and social obligation, which is known as *Ashramadharmā*. *Ashrama* means stage of life, which is classified into four divisions. They are—*Brahmacharya*; the stage of teaching, *Grahashtya*; the period of householder, *Vanaprastha*; the stage of forest where one give importance on peace, wisdom and liberation and the fourth stage is *Sanyasa*, the stage of perfect renunciation. These are the *dharma* that one should perform at different stage of life and this is the perfect way of life which had been explained from the Vedic periods. Because all must be admitted that one have to sacrifice in every step of life, and for it we must have the real knowledge of life and since it is taken at the first step of life where one student had to go to the *Guru-ashram* or *Gurukul*. In the modern stage teaching is limited only in the theoretical process, but in the Indian philosophy the importance of human knowledge was so valuable due to its practical work. And it is accepted as the *dharma* of the student whereas they have to serve at the *Gurukula*. And in this way they could learn how to survive by hard working, also learn patience, obedience, simplicity, austerity etc. Thus it is seen that *Brahmacharya* is the symbol of value education and practical moral teaching that can lead towards the true life and to be a perfect being.

Again *dharma* reflects a valuable ideal of higher living being when it going to concern about the *sangsarik jivan* (worldly life or family life) where one can fulfill their own desire along with social welfare. It is the stage of householder known as *Grahashtya ashrama*. Here the *dampatti* (husband and wife) are regarded as the unity of society. It was the great intention of vedic periods that



the family is formed for saving the society along with the fulfillment of sexual desire. In the same manner as unit or member of society they are obliged for doing duty for the social good. Therefore honouring the guest, offering food to insects and animals, praying god for personal, family and social good are considered as a duty of every individual. In the Vedic period and epics, it is mentioned that when a great period or disaster will have to be forecasted, the Vedic sages (rishi) performed the special *yajna* to be saved from it. It is the great example of social responsibility which is referred as Dharma, means social responsibility.

Thus dharma is regarded as social duty, moral behaviour and also virtue and ideal path of life. In the purusartha it is explained that Dharma leads to attain the ultimate end of life, which means *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truth), *asteya* (non-stealing), *daya* (kindness), *dana* (gift), *indriya nigraha* (self-control), *khyama* (forgiveness), *jyana* (knowledge), *hudhi* (purity), *tapasya* (meditation) in the Vedas and Upanishads. So *Dharma* stands here for *Manava-Dharma*. Regarding this Manava-Dharma the great Contemporary Philosopher Vivekananda Says:

For the good of the village, man ought to give up his family;

For the good of the country he ought to give up his village;

For the good of humanity he should give up his country;

For the good of the world, everything.

So *Dharma* in the Vedic and later philosophical period plays an extreme role. It appears as a spiritual, moral and metaphysical truthfulness where an individual can find himself as a perfect being. Moreover the social community, peace and happiness is also reflected by the sign of *Manava-Dharma*.

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