

IN THE PURSUIT OF PEACE: RECONSIDERING EPISTEMOLOGY OF MORALS IN “THE RIGHT VIEW”

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Abstract

In the first part of the paper, an attempt has been made to conduct an epistemological analysis of the Right View as a critical awareness of all relative perspectives as *Diṭṭi* with a special reference to Nāgārjuna’s treatment of the critique of the views and its methodological analysis and theoretic implications. The second part of the paper is concerned with an attempt of the theorization of the moral obligations pertaining to the process of peace as an epistemological endeavor and its self-critique in the concept of *Bodhisattva*. The aim of the paper is to reconsider an epistemological investigation of the possibility of the Right View as problematized by Buddha and its practical implications presupposed by the ethics of Peace.

Keywords: Peace; Morals; Right View

Introduction

Suffering, as defines by T.R.V. Murti is the frustrated will. The frustrated will is the result from the grief of non-acquisition of something; the grief again results from the thirst/clinging that again results from the sense of eternity of the object of desire. The willing of any object of desire under, the wrong notion of the eternity of the existential nature of that object is a result of the confused subjectivity formed on account of the ‘wrong knowledge’ or illicit modifications of the consciousness. The subjectivity is the locus of the moral aspects of existence; it accounts for individual feeling and willing. The concept of the freedom of will is the attainment of the Aprathistita Nirvana in which the individual has nothing for her own and in harmony with the Suchness, Bhutatathatā, extends his modified layers of beings for the sake of the other. The self in confused subjectivity is samsara which leads to moral evil and the critique of the subjectivity is Nirvana.

The problem, concerning Samsāra and Freedom from Samsāra, according to T.R.V. Murthy as acclaimed by both Vedanta and Madhyamika, is one of ‘knowledge.’ the problem of knowledge is of much importance in the philosophical discourse when Philosophy is supposed to be a spiritual endeavour to the destruction of all the knots of the heart and puts the spirit in a state of contentment and compassion for the suffering un-emancipated. Prof. Murthy shares his view of knowledge and emancipation in the following words: “For both the Vedānta and the Mādhyamika the basic problem is one of knowledge. To know the real is at once to be free from samsara (Murti, 2006).” The state of actual contentment is the state of consciousness in an un-manifested form, unmodified, that dwells in the tranquility of the Absolute. It is the state of Prajñā, the immediate consciousness of the transcendently interdependent nature of the objects of the world. Peace is the state of that tranquility of consciousness, the un-manifested, the annihilation of all modifications and the self-sense. It is a state of Emptiness of thought. Prajna, which regulates the manifestation of consciousness through a self-less and compassionate determination of action is dialectical in nature and actually a lived concept (Murti, 2006). It stimulates epistemological curiosity not only on the question of the ‘right view’ as emptiness of all bhāvas, but also as reason’s critique of its own competence as a regulator of moral consciousness. As a transcendental negation of all theoretic possessions, the pursuit of Peace is an epistemological endeavour that problematizes the role of practical reason as a catalytic agent,

that formulates a critique of its own competence as a knower as well as a moral agent.

A Critical Analysis of Kaccāyana's Problem

A question related to the critical examination of thought and experience to be unbiased is necessarily an epistemological question. The critical examination of consciousness of its cognitive subjectivity is a spiritual effort. The sixty-two varieties of views prevalent at the time of the Buddha, one contradicting the other, create an aura of confused subjectivity. The problem of Kaccāyana is thus basically an epistemological problem that emphasizes on the structure of the Right View through the categories of both existence and non-existence.

The problem of Venerable Kaccāyana is basically regarding the meaning of existence and non-existence as objects of 'true cognition'. By 'true cognition' Kaccāyana not only means a cognition subservient to the practical means of emancipation but also a possible distinction with false cognition. Kaccāyana is actually confused about the plurality of views (prevalent at the time of Buddha) and their possible authenticity regarding the fruitfulness of disposition, both transcendental and empirical considered together.

“Thus I have heard: The Blessed one was once living at Sāvatti, in the monastery of Anāthapiṇḍika, in Jeta's Grove. At that time the venerable Kaccāyana of that clan came to visit him, and saluting him, sat down at one side. So seated, he questioned the Exalted one: “Sir [people] speak of 'right view', 'right view.' To what extent is there a right view?”

To this, though Buddha warns him not to conceive of the nature of existence and non-existence and other similar categories in a metaphysical manner, yet Buddha conceives them as an empirical fact so far as it assists a pragmatic realization of the virtues of humanity (Kalupahana, 1986). The status of such existential categories of experience would only be confined to a dependent organization of origination and cessation. Moreover, as the pragmatic worth of the theory of 'Dependent Origination' is realized with the scaffold of the spirit, it itself ceases to exist. Therefore the problem of venerable Kaccāyana is an epistemological one, as has been dealt by Buddha, and not metaphysical.

The Right View: An Epistemological Analysis

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan defines 'Definition' as such: "Definition states the essential nature (svarupa) of a thing so as to differentiate it from others. The function of a definition is to distinguish the thing defined from all things different from itself, with which it is likely to be confused (Radhakrishnan, 1999)."

Suffering results from samsāra; samsāra results from falling into the trap of fallacy (fallacious knowledge). Knowledge is the fundamental trait of the constitution of personality and which in turn gets reflected in the agency. To avoid falling into fallacies we need to have some means of 'right' knowledge and a crucial examination of the authenticity of these means. Right Knowledge of something is that characteristic mark that differentiates it from a wrong knowledge. to this Dr. Radhakrishnen again says:

"To secure this, we may start with the genus and subsequently narrow its definition by the express exclusion of superfluous objects, by the use of words like other than (itara), different from (bhinna). This is definition by genus and difference."

Freedom is a reflective awareness of consciousness of its formulated subjectivity. It is an immediate awareness of the sufferings. "Spiritual Life is born of the sharp contrast felt between what is and what should be." Freedom is a negative process of the annihilation of all desires (Sankalpas), modifications (vikalpas), and imaginations (kalpanā). Freedom is spiritual freedom and the only spiritual discipline that worth freedom of the spirit is the dawn of the true knowledge. In the words of Murti:

"Spiritual discipline is of the nature of purification or removal of the hindrances and defilements that cover up the real...the ills and defilements, however long-standing and great they may be, are accidental accretions of the spirit. They are capable of complete removal by Intuitional Knowledge (prajñā). The absolute power of the intellect over the will, the wrong exercise of which is the cause of suffering, is the basic implication of the Mādhyamika spiritual discipline for freedom. " (Murti, 2006)

The dawning of true knowledge actually means the critique of knowledge. Challenging knowledge in philosophy has thus become not only a methodological phenomenon for Sceptics, but at the same time conceptually claims a moral reappraisal in context of rational emancipation as ‘Freedom from Knowledge-as-an-isolated-domain’. The problem of emancipation thus calls for an urgency of a rational-sceptic venture as a challenge to knowledge in Indian Philosophical context (Bina Gupta, 1981). The spiritual motive of a skeptical move towards the possibility of knowledge is the attainment of the Right View that transcends all the theoretic constitutions of reason. The inducement of the Right View is spiritual in nature that initiates with an epistemological endeavor of questioning the possibility of knowledge in reason’s exaggerated competence on metaphysics.

If the purpose of epistemology is to distinguish right view from the wrong view, it can be argued that the Buddha’s purpose was primarily epistemological. It is the right view or the critique of knowledge (as the rationality of existence and non-existence), that postulates for all the moral and transcendental awakenings. The scope of the epistemological investigation in context of a right vision not only includes the realm of transcendental insight but also extends to empirical moral domain of human experiences. The moral purpose of epistemology (as a philosophical endeavor) is all about enquiring what makes Right Knowledge the practically purposive in context of the necessary conditions for the pursuit of Peace.

Varghese puts his words in the following manner to distinguish Buddha’s metaphysics of knowledge:

“...from the spirit of the discourse given in the *Brahmajālasūtra* and several other discourses like *Vacchagottasūtra* (MN, 71-73), we can see clearly that Buddha did not favour any speculative thought of any kind or did he try himself to answer any particular sort of philosophical question; he, on the other hand, introduced a method, to view the world, in a perspective that is valid with the human existence in the world. He wanted to open up the constraints of personal choices and prejudices under which most of the thinkers and philosophers articulate their viewpoint.” (Varghese, 2012)

The metaphysics of the Right View is the immediacy of reflective consciousness. Reflection is a form of regulation in disguise. Theoretic

consciousness is a regulatory concept. Consciousness as pure awareness possesses 'reason' as a manifested principle of reflection, in other words, reason is the reflective power of consciousness. Reflection also involves regulation of the objects of consciousness into forms of knowledge. The metaphysics of reflection in consciousness is guided by the regulative development of reason. Reason is a regulative principle that regulates and guides cognition into knowledge and knowledge to human conduct. Epistemology as reflective consciousness of the function of cognitive faculties for the acquisition of knowledge is actually a critique of the function of reason to know itself as an interpreter of meaning of the cognitive aspects and ethics is a critique of the function of reason to know itself as an interpreter of norms of actions. Knowledge and the occurrence of knowledge are actually identical in nature. Action is related to knowledge through this regulative principle of consciousness that reflects itself through reason.

1. Nāgārjuna's treatment of the Right View

Prof. Murti is of the contention that the representation of the Real as knowledge claims through a conceptual, constructive foundation brings into question a subject-object dichotomy as the root cause of Samsara. He writes:

“We cannot help being attracted to what we take to be real – our view – and reject others. A view, because of its restriction, determination, carries with it duality, the root of samsāra. Nāgārjuna states this dialectical predicament thus: when the self is posited, an other (para) confronts it; with the division of the self and the not-self, attachment and aversion result. Depending on these all vices spring up. Attachment begets the thirst for pleasure, and thirst hides all flaws (of the objects). Blinded by this, the thirsty man imagines qualities in things, and seizes up the means to achieve pleasure. Samsara is thus present as long as there is the attachment to the 'I'.” (Murti, 2006)

The middle path is through a thorough criticism of both the opponent and proponent views on the essential nature of the universe. Nāgārjuna, being a methodological heir of Buddha engages himself to the technical task of the critique of knowledge as a project for the persuasion of the right view as deliverance from all the dogmatic traps of metaphysical speculation. The method that Nāgārjuna obtains as a critique of the possibility of knowledge is skepticism. And the logic by which he supports his critique is *reductio-ad-*

absurdum method. As a thorough sceptic, Nāgārjuna contradicts all knowledge that resulted from a rational gagging of non-perceptual elements that attempted its best for the intellection of the ontology of the universe. The spirit of the Scepticism as brought by Nāgārjuna to enforcement is a thorough critique (negation) of all positions and claims to the possibility of knowledge as such. (Mohanta, 1999)

Nāgārjuna's argumentative framework is a deconstruction of the traditional epistemological framework propounded by cognitivists, rational metaphysicians and pramāṇa-theorists. Dukkha or suffering is inevitable as the reason collapses to false judgments and constructive considerations and the attachment that results thereafter; it doesn't matter whether the reason is at all aware or ignorant of it. It is the theoretic framework of knowledge proper that binds the reason into a conditional constructive paradigm, the release from which seems nearly impossible so far as the reason doesn't undergo a reflective awareness of its primordial ignorance.

The purpose of the negation of the fourfold alternative of thought by Nāgārjuna is to show that metaphysical questions regarding the problems of causality, reality and appearance, voidity or independence of own-being, survivability of the Buddha after death, identity and eternity of self-hood and their negations are predictably non-analyzable and thus categorically redundant. Critique of the fourfold alternative is an attempt on the part of Nāgārjuna to grapple the concept of Reality with reference to logic, (Ramendranath, 1987) instead of a metaphysical explanation of it. The Reality in its transcendental eminence cannot be grasped by any logico-linguistic patterns of categorical thinking. The Reality transcends all logical categorizations and therefore Nāgārjuna applies prasangapādanā to negate the fourfold logical categories of thought that try to instrumentalize the comprehension of the transcendental questions of metaphysical import which the Buddha has rejected as un-analyzable. Ramendranath Ghose, in his work "The Dialectics of Nagarjuna" [ch. 'The Negation of four-fold Alternatives (Catuṣkoti-Niṣedha)' p. 265] suggests with reference to Chandrakrti's gloss on the MMK that the Buddha emphasized on the correspondence to fact and logical consistency, among others as the tests for the verifiability of truth. The correspondence to transcendental truth as according to Nāgārjuna cannot be predicative, for a predicative statement is always a categorical statement. Categorization of Truth is untenable

when it come to the question of a transcendental of its kind, i.e. transcendental to all the predicative categories of understanding.

By the theory of non-identity Nāgārjuna shows that thing in their true nature do not correspond to their concepts. Moreover, the concepts which Nāgārjuna poses as predicatively non-analyzable are not ordinary concepts. They refer to transcendental existence that doesn't come under the scope of the use of ordinary logic and language. The kind of concepts our analytic judgment forms by the ordinary usage of logic and language are relative and don't correspond to the thing-in-themselves.

T.R.V. Murthy (2006) says:

“Rejection of all views is the rejection of the competence of Reason to comprehend reality. The Real is transcendent to thought. Rejection of view is not based on any positive grounds or the acceptance of another view; it is solely based on the inner contradiction implicit in each view. The function of the Mādhyamika dialectic, on the logical level, is purely negative, analytic.”

Nāgārjuna's position is not a position in the ordinary utility of the term. It is transcendental to all the positions. It is a 'review of all things' of all positions. The middle path is a dialectical stand of Buddha logically structured by Nāgārjuna that aims to rise above the conflict in Reason as a result of the awareness of that conflict. Dialectical Consciousness is the consciousness/awareness of the conflict in Reason. Ignorance is the state of unconscious attachment to things and of the nature of the pain (of the attachment). The Theory in Nāgārjuna as the 'Critique-of-theory-as-Drsti' is a dialectical necessity. It is a means and not a soul purpose (an end) in Nāgārjuna's dialectic. The theory as the 'Critique-of-theory-as-Drsti' is a transcendental of its kind. It does not form a position, rather a critique of the positions.

With reference to Buddha's consistent effort to stick to 'correspondence' as the verification of truth the problem of dogmatism follows from the construction of rational argument in favour of the standpoint which lies beyond the scope of predicative analysis of metaphysical concepts by the virtue of the problem of non-identity between the thing and the concept (matter and form) formed out of it. The problem of predicating the metaphysical problematic is

transcendental problem; to establish a (rational) relation between the matter and form is to transcend the original scope of the matter as well as the form. Thus transcendental illusion is nothing but the sense of relation between the matter and the form.

2. The Theoretic Implication

Logic postulates the theoretic relation between mind and nature. Radhakrishnan says: “Buddhism is essentially psychology, logic and ethics, and not metaphysics” (Radhakrishnan, 1996) Therefore, Sūnyatā is a logical tool that has been constructed by Nāgārjuna to drive through the mist of metaphysics the theoretic implications of the transcendental truth that belongs to the Mind of the Buddha. A logical intervention into the investigation of the forms of reality instrumentalizes the power of consciousness to transcend the views of faith to rational categories of examination of truth. The virtue of theoretic implication of the method of Nāgārjuna lies in the importance and efficiency of constructing a principle of knowledge that reveals in truer respect the competence of reason to interpret the objective world that it interacts with. The principle of knowledge thus deduced from the thorough investigation of the methodical use of argumentation presupposes a practical necessity of reason to comprehend. It is on the basis of this theoretic constitution that the consistency of the knowledge subservient to the practical, moral purpose is judged.

The question of the Right View that presupposes a moral standard is an epistemological problem as has been dealt by the Buddha. Buddha realized the insufficiency of the metaphysical views constructed by reason as an exaggeration of its competence over the application of the categories of knowledge on the imperceptibles. Knowledge as pure reason is impossible. Nāgārjuna developed the theory of Sūnyatā (even to negate the eternal existence of Pratityasamudpāda) in order to enumerate the theoretic difference between the phenomenal and transcendental truths. Phenomenal truths are the truths that unfold itself with a purposive link and ultimately roll up into the transcendental Suchness. The transcendental truth is the non-dual, unmodified state of the Absolute free from all effects of Ignorance.

Controversies among schools about the knowledge and error apart, knowledge actually happens to be in both transcendental and apparent setups. For these two forms in which knowledge appears to us are not exclusive of each other. Truth and error are relative, empirical and parts of the same Reality, the

Absolute. The Reality becomes different folds of knowledge only in its manifested and modified form. When to Criticism in Nāgārjuna's sense, properly, means and presupposes freedom from knowledge claims of manifested modifications, the knowledge of Nirvana as a lucrative post is equally non-transcendental and thus once again binds the soul to its primordial state of illusion. C.D. Sharma talks about Anirvachaniyakhyāti as the theory of error that belongs to both Mādhyamika and Advaitins. A theory of error is a methodological consequence of a sceptic endeavour for the quest of truth, and thus it not only presupposes the difference between knowledge and non-knowledge but also methodologically argues for the philosophical criteria for a critical approach towards knowledge. Questions on the reliability of knowledge proper problematize the difference between knowledge and non-knowledge or error. The problem of knowledge for Mahāyana is not whether knowledge is at all possible; rather, it is critical to the reliability of the source of knowledge or pramānas. (Matilal, 1986)

Error, both transcendent (universal) and subjective (Tathyasamvṛti and Mithyasamvṛti respectively in Mahāyana and Paramārha and Prātibhāsa respectively in Advaita) are the offsprings of the real and the unreal. Error, thus both as transcendental and subjective can be called neither as real nor as unreal, and thus Anirvachaniya (beyond attribution). It is neither real, nor unreal, pure contradiction being its only essence. The Reality, as pure Knowledge, belongs to pure non-contradiction. Thus C.D. Sharma again says: "Contradiction is the essence of all appearances, for non-contradiction belongs only to reality which is of the nature of pure knowledge (Sharma, 1987)." The Right View is a dialectical advance of the reflective consciousness that makes its way amidst of both contradiction and non-contradiction. The Bodhisattva is not sensitive to modified knowledge; he sees both the Samsāra and the Nirvāna as they actually are. He actually sees no difference in them.

Concept of Peace and an Epistemological Endeavour

Talking about the historical condition of the time that philosophically made the appearance of the Buddha most ripe, Radhakrishnan says:

"The six philosophical schools were not developed, though the spirit of speculation which made them possible was at work. Moral life suffered, since metaphysical subtleties and theological discussions

absorbed the energies of people... Great truths were hidden away in the fogs of misty metaphysics. It is those who do not see the truth that strike out in the paths of fiction. Buddha was struck by the clashing enthusiasms, the discordant systems, the ebb and flow of belief, and drew from it all his own lesson of the futility of metaphysical thinking.”

Again,

“The salvation of the soul does not depend on minute distinctions of metaphysical conceits, or the habit of restless questioning, or the refinement of reason by the subtle disputes of sects. The indecision of thought, though it may not be taxing to the intellect of man, was injurious to his ethical interests. Anarchy of thought was leading to anarchy of morals. Therefore Buddha wished to steer clear of profitless metaphysical discussions.” (Radhakrishnan,1996)

The condition of peace can be rightly connoted to the cessation of all the mental modifications, the fourfold alternatives of metaphysical questioning regarding existence. It is a deliverance from the rational intimacy of the skandhas. The theories of knowledge based on skandhas are categorical in nature that affects the moral life by binding the true nature of consciousness into the contingencies of sensationalism. Peace is the deliverance of consciousness from the theoretic obsession of the metaphysics of the eternal ego and the extension of the spirit to a rational subjectivity of selfless service to the humanity on the realization of the Dharma. It is to give up the selfish confinements of the conditioned ego of confused subjectivity, to live in the present. It is a contentment of the consciousness with whatever available to it without looking around to pile up the possession of virtue and merits to the ego. The pursuit of peace is subjective, and is based on an epistemological endeavor that presupposes the right vision as free of all dogmatic conditions.

The epistemology of the Right View consists in the admission of the existent (sat) to be real. “Whatever exists, is real, and by definition whatever is real cannot be otherwise” this implies that what is truth should exist always, but to the contrary, what is available to the sense perception is not available always. Thus Kalupahana concludes: “Hence it was assumed that what is true is something other than what is given in the sense experience, and that remains always (sāssata) and in everything (Kalupahana, 1986).” Suffering which is caused by the emergence of Samsara and is the result of ignorance depends

invariably on human personality and experience. The problem of emancipation is epistemologically significant in the sense that emancipation consists actually in the change in the experience of the reality. To see the Dhamma in its real form the veil that covers the real must be removed from the sources of knowledge. Contradiction in knowledge is created by reason's illegitimate venture in the domain of imperceptible. Reason in its speculative stereotype is mechanized to observe a fact under certain conditions and universalize it irrespective of the similar conditions. Contradiction in Reason results as a consequence. "Once we accept a fundamental pattern, reasoning can get underway; we can then and only then reject some other notions as inconsistent with or opposed to it. This merely means that if you accept an idea, you are necessarily committed to its implications, and not that you are committed to the idea itself...the adoption of any ideal pattern necessarily restricts our scope and narrows down our vision'. (Murti, 2006)

Right view leads to peace and freedom while wrong view leads to sufferings. Emancipation consists in the consciousness of sufferings and adoption of critical means for the treatment of knowledge. By radical criticism of all views in theoretic enumeration of the real (Dīṭṭi), Nāgārjuna, after Buddha re-establishes the supremacy of the unconditioned. In positive terms, Buddha describes the function of ignorance and the behavioral patterns that is prompted by it, while problematizes the emancipation in the negative terms by eliminating the contradiction in reason by the use of destructive dialectic. Peace is the preservation and conservation of Dhamma. It is to observe the Real in an unprejudiced, unrestricted manner. Contradiction in knowledge is the root cause of all sufferings, which is again a disturbance in the equilibrium of the Dharma brought about by confused subjective factors in the form of knowledge.

Sūnyatā: The Right View and Practical Implications

If pure reason cannot be depended upon for a synthetic knowledge of the material world, ethics cannot base itself on the shifting foundations of pure metaphysical and theological endowments and has to be founded on the 'rock of facts' (Radhakrishnan, 1996). The epistemological significance of Right View is practically purposive. "The system enunciated by Buddha is free from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification." The moral implication that endorses the Right View bridges the gap between theory and practice. A theory of knowledge, therefore, has to be devised that would provide a cognitive basis

for a conducive formulae on ethical foundation (Radhakrishnan, 1996). The practical significance of the Right View depends on the moral consequences of the knowledge of Sūnyatā that has been devised by Nāgārjuna to categorize the structure of truths through a methodological negation of all metaphysical views. The perfection of character thus presupposes the rise of knowledge of Sūnyatā, the theoretic non-eternity of things. The practical reason has to depend on this metaphysical foundation of Prajñā for all its moral purposiveness. The theoretic foundation of Prajñā postulates for the distinction between the degrees of truths that has a practical utility. Prajñā is the light of the cognitive foundation of self-culturing to live in the realization of the arising and ceasing of phenomena conditioned by various facts. The practicality of the knowledge of Sūnyatā is also conducive to the fact that according to Nāgārjuna, the theoretic foundation of Sūnyatā should also be dispersed in the same spirit of negation with which other metaphysical views were negated. It is only the virtue of practice that the theoretic structure of Sūnyata has been formulated by Nāgārjuna. The practical significance of the cognitive awareness of Prajñā, thus, is to be content with what is given in the present context without plunging into doubts and despair or without looking for something mysterious and metaphysical in the world of experience (Kalupahana, 1986).

Morality consists in the intellectual intuition of the truth of nature; “Ignorance of truth, according to Buddha, the cause of all misery .” A rational conduction of experience leads us to the knowledge of the moral law, the truth of nature, the Dhamma. And it is by the virtue of the instrumentalization of logic that puts the consciousness beyond Dhamma. Dhamma depends on the meditation of the knowledge of the truth, and on Dhamma depends the emancipation of the spirit. With the perfection of the spirit by the Pāramita disciplines, the mind dwells in the pure knowledge of the realization of the Dhamma. The Right View leads to the intellectual intuition of the Dharma and the realization of Dharma leads to the Right Aspiration and Right Effort. Karunā is the practical expression of Prajñā through the aspiration of the spirit that the Bodhisattva emerges with. The question of Right Aspiration and Right Effort is thus also necessarily contextualizes the importance of theory-praxis relation. The relation between Prajñā and Karunā is practically realized by the Right Aspiration leading to Right Effort that presupposes the pursuit of peace in its intellectual contingency. Right Aspiration is the ambition of reason to live in

harmony with the Dhamma. Thus, after Suttavibhaṅga and Vajradvaja sutta respectively, Radhakrishnan puts the following words:

“Right aspiration is the product of right vision. “It is the longing of renunciation; the hope to live in love with all, the aspiration of true humanity.” Giving up the idea of separateness, the aspirant works for the whole. The resolve must be a real one, according to Mahayana, making the aspirant say: “I must bear the burden of all creatures.”

The specialty of skepticism is that it admits a higher form of reality while challenging its rational cognitive aspects. The practical importance of skepticism is thus assumed from the challenge it puts of reason on knowledge. Radhakrishnan calls Avidyā the principle of relativity. The Absolute reflects itself through the world of human experience where they have their beings through feeling and willing. It is through the samvrti only that the Paramārtha is realized. The individuation as a result of the transcendental illusion is the locus of all normative aspects as well as its intellectual judgment. It is through the concurrence of the lower impulses of the subjectivity that reflects the emancipation of the self. The attribution of the existence or non-existence of the essential nature of the objective world leaves us in the isolated domains of dogmatic standpoints, while a practical engagement into the world of experience through a thorough criticism of all theoretic views (dīṭṭi) makes us one with the essence of humanity.

The Agent in Peace: The Ethical Turn

According to Fichte, emancipation is not an omission but a commission. Ethics investigates the rationale of the normative significance of human practical life-world. The subjectivity or individuation concerning moral implications is subject to methodological investigation in terms of its epistemological manifoldness. The question of agency has an inverse relation with that of cognitive contingencies. Kalupahana, in the introductory part of his commentary has made a reference to the distinction between right and wrong views that would result in subsequent acts of everyday life. The relation between prajñā and Karuṇā postulates human action to the ideal normative consideration where the will is free of all cognitive conditions and modifications. With the dawn of Prajñā the transcendental nature of the phenomenal world and the manifestation of the Absolute into the waves of modified consciousness is realized. To be in

Peace is to dwell in the Absolute Suchness, Bhutatathatā, yet to engage oneself to the self-less service of the human kind.

D.T. Suzuki (2000) puts the following words in context of the conditionality of the Absolute:

“Absolute transcendental suchness defying all means of characterization does not, as long as it so remains, have any direct significance in the phenomenal world and human life. When it does, it must become conditional Suchness as Gestzmässigkeit in nature and as ethical order in our practical life.”

The immediate apprehension of the Dhamma puts the subject into an emancipated state from where he can see with absolute clarity the phenomenal characteristics/dependent organization (Samsāra) of the Absolute (Sharma, 1987). When the Absolute limits itself and manifests itself before consciousness in its evolutionary waves of conditional existence, Bodhisattva, the enlightened subject, postulates her agency, quite out of compassion, to a selfless volition at the service of the human kind. Subjectivity, by virtue of transcendental Ignorance, as according to D.T. Suzuki, is inevitable. Individuation as an aspect of the spontaneous expression of the Suchness in the form of feeling, willing etc. is the subject of moral critique. Individuation is transcendental and the individual is a moral agent and a subject of criticism. Ignorance, in its evolutionary framework is transcendental and is the locus of the individuation (subjectivity) and evaluates of ethical significance – the will (Suzuki, 2000).

The individual is the subject of both knowing and willing. The intelligence and willing goes hand in hand. The subject in transcendental ignorance is a moral agent who possesses a free will to concentrate and meditate upon the four noble truths and the teachings of dependent origination. The transcendental ignorance forms the subjectivity and the subject as a moral agent is vulnerable of ethical judgment. The consistency of ethical justification of the moral agency lies in its consistent credibility to overcome the confused subjectivity under the influence of ignorance. With the virtue of the skandhas, the individual considers her to be a separate entity and stresses on the knowledge that is empirical in nature. The will of the subject within the empirical influence of the skandhas is egoistic and devoid of a truer secular engagement. Prajñā displaces the empirical knowledge with the eternal knowledge and the cultivation of moral practice (the Noble Paths) makes the

subject one with the universe and her purpose is transformed into the universal purpose. As the agent strives to free herself from the complexities of the vijñāna, she proceeds to the development of a truer insight, the knowledge of the emptiness and its moral purpose. “There is a steady growth from sense-cognition to true insight. The two are not independent, but the latter is an expansion of the earlier” (Radhakrishnan, 1996).

Suzuki says, “Ignorance is inherent in Buddhas as well as in all sentient beings. Every one of us cannot help perceiving an external world (viṣaya) and forming conceptions and reasoning and feeling and willing” (Suzuki, 2000). With the spiritual awakening, the individual as agent can steer clear his way between the dogmas of self-indulgence and penance. The emancipated individual is a synthesis of the transcendent and immanent being, who has put herself to the knowledge of the eternity and deserves freedom, yet finds herself in the empirical world of duty towards the fellow being untouched by passions and inclinations. “A distinction is usually made between upadhiṣeṣa and nirupadhiṣeṣa. Or pari-Nirvāna. The former is the total cessation of ignorance and of the passion, though the body and the mind continue to function but without passions” (Murti, 2006).

In this stage, the agency of the individual is not only confined to a transcendental realm, but the scope of her knowledge is also extended to the very mundane conditions of human experience. The society is an effect of a certain productive relation between socially conscious subjects. If the relation between social subjects insists to be a productive relation, production does not only reflect to be socio-economic and political, but also moral. An ideal relation between social subjects is based on the mutual consideration of freedom among the subjects. The recognition of mutual freedom takes place with the rise of prajñā.

Culmination in the Bodhisattva

In Bodhisattva, occur a critique of all ethical principles and the categories of knowledge that an individual is subject to by the virtue of his individuation. The Bodhisattva embodies and at the same time transcends ‘Peace’. ‘Peace’ in theory and practice is freedom of the spirit from any kind of obsession of confused subjectivity conditioned by contradiction in reason. The Bodhisattva transcends the theoretic aspects of Peace and conditions a newer form of practical morality that involves voluntary exertion of the spirit to help

others who are unable to emancipate themselves. The will of the bodhisattva is purely directed to a transcendental shift in which each of her engagement with the world and worldly activities would be transcendent to the constructive contingents to be real and its credits (Suzuki, 2000). The transcendental shift of the will is dialectical. And only in this dialectical transition or the shift, the will realizes freedom.

The Bodhisattva is thus a blend of transcendent and immanent being to whom the knowledge of the Absolute Stands clear in perfect conditions of the empirical world. Thus the Bodhisattva is a perfectly emancipated being who voluntarily postpones her pari-Nirvāna for the sake of the other. The Bodhisattva is a subject devoid of subjectivity. In the Bodhisattva, thus occurs a critique of theoretic and practical postulation of Peace i.e. the Bodhisattva defies all the theoretic conditions of peace as such and being enlightened of the metaphysics of the different degrees of the truth (samvṛti and pāramārtha) obsesses himself/herself with self-less service to humanity. A Bodhisattva is thus a synthetic character in whom all the categories of existence, non-existence, both and neither are swallowed up. “When a being attains to this stage of spiritual life, he is said to be in the Nirvana that has no abode.” (Suzuki, 2000).

Conclusion

Peace is a state of non-modified individuation. It postulates moral agency. Peace is a state of freedom from the rationality of mental modification (vikalpa) and imagination (Kalpanā). The principle of individuation makes the pursuit of peace a subjective phenomenon. It is a state of equilibrium of consciousness with that of Bhutatathātā (Suchness). There is always a question of individuation as a result of the transcendental Ignorance, that individuation is again a moral agency, a subject of true knowledge and action, as who is the base of all interpretative, expressive and volitional contributions to the world of existence. It is a state of freedom in disguise, the Nirvana as Aprathistita (without an abode). The concept of emancipated individuation thus renders itself as an ethical principle that postulates the judgment of the validity of the norms of action. Peace, is thus a state of Freedom from false knowledge or confused subjectivity expressed by the agency of the moral individuation as characterized by the Bodhisattva on the basis of the Right View.

The pursuit of peace in its principle of moral individuation which can again be intrinsically conserved in Nirvana is a dialectical state of freedom,

freedom from ‘wrong view’ or ‘confused subjectivity’. This makes the concept of freedom epistemologically significant. Nāgarjuna, by his skilled methodological usage of the tool of Sūnyatā contributes to put knowledge in its actual emancipated position by revealing the essential dependent structure of the phenomenal reality that theoretically distinguishes it from the Absolute. This subjective principle of the pursuit of peace is a practical implication of the Prajñā-Karunā relation that depends on the true knowledge of Sūnyatā. Thus the epistemological aspect of the Right View proves itself to be an ethical apriority for the judgment of the validity of moral norms in our day to day life.

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