

I know you won't believe me, but the highest form of Human Excellence is to question oneself and others  
— Socrates



To be is to be perceived.

George Berkeley

All power is within you; you can do anything and everything.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



"Believe nothing, No matter where you read it, Or who has said it, Not even if I have said it, Unless it agrees with your own reason And your own common sense."

GAUTAM BUDDHA

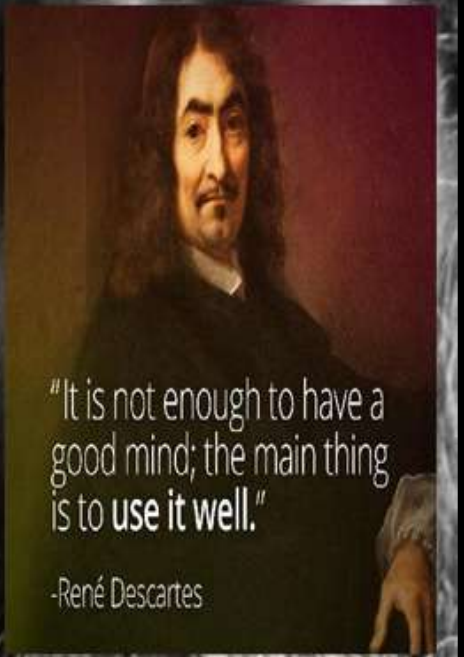
## RATIOCINATION

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

SHRI SHIKSHAYATAN COLLEGE

"It is not enough to have a good mind; the main thing is to use it well."

-René Descartes



There is no such thing as freedom of choice unless there is freedom to refuse.

DAVID HUME



You have your way. I have my way. As for the right way, the correct way, and the only way, it does not exist.

Friedrich Nietzsche  
Common Philosopher



"Faith is the bird which feels the light when the dawn is still dark."

RABINDRANATH TAGORE



## *From the Editors Desk* ✍️...

The pandemic has proved that the blessings of technology, especially in the academic arena has far outweighed its perceived pitfalls. So here we are with the online version of *RATIOCINATION* (Volume 6), the Academic Journal of the Department of Philosophy, Shri Shikshayatan College, Kolkata. A collective effort of the authors, students and departmental members has helped to bring out this journal from 2008 onwards in 5 volumes. The department continues to encourage and motivate students to engage and involve in departmental activities, give feedback and facilitates student-teacher communication. The **PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY**, a platform for sharing ideas and interactive sessions between students and academic staff members was proposed during the earlier NAAC Assessment. The program has been organized for the first time under the Departmental Headship of Dr. Madhurima Bhattacharya who strove hard to make it a reality. This particular program has since been observed by the department and looks forward to future sessions.

We would like to thank the Administration and the Principal **Dr. Aditi Dey** of Shri Shikshayatan College who created the opportunity for this kind of e-Journal issue and the department, who together made it happen.

**Dr. Debirupa Basu**  
**Dr. Sushobhona Pal**  
**Dr. Madhurima Bhattacharya**

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## Value of Struggle in Uncertainty

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### Abstract

Covid-19 has dismantled everything of our normal life. The severity of it has even come on the verge of changing the meaning of life altogether. Life has become globally uncertain, affecting stability. But is life really static, certain, predictable? To generate positivity in this emergency — this article, focuses on art-engagement — joining Indian treatise “Bhāgavad Gitā” — to overcome uncertainties.

**Keywords:** Existential crisis, Self-acceptance, Freedom, Re-creation, Resilience.

*“This is precisely the time when artists go to work. There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal.”*

*Toni Morrison*

Very little thing, or perhaps, nothing in the universe is certain and under our grips. Hence, a concrete fact is that uncertainty is a natural and unavoidable component of life – it is always there with us even in our normal days. However, uncertainty and insecurity are felt to a greater extent when a pandemic occurs in the world. Pandemic as a natural phenomenon does not bother about *geographical* boundaries and cultural divide. It suddenly emerges and potentially devastates everything in unimaginable ways on a global scale. Viruses do not attack us with weapons — no hidden or known enemy is dismantling our lives in the pandemic or causing destruction to our civil society and nothing is also imposed here on us by powerful leaders. Yet the magnitude of the pandemic is such that it brings a feeling of war in human-mind. At this time many things go outside our control and people try to cope up with difficult circumstances and face the unknown at every step.

The current Covid-19 pandemic is also not an exception, rather it has heightened more the uncertainty in our lives in a galloping way. This crisis is a wake-up call for all human-beings in every sphere. It is generating a kind of thinking, without sentiment and emotion about the challenges of the future. It has intensely elevated uncertainty over the finances, economy, relationships, mental and physical health and what not. It has placed the nature of humans and their works in huge crisis. We are now feeling enormous number of different griefs. We feel that world has started to alter in different ways – the erstwhile normalcy is seen to be uprooted everywhere, economic condition is severely deteriorating, we are now having loss of relationships due to loss of connectivity — loved ones are out of our grip by social distancing and a fear is that they could never ever perhaps be able to make a face-to-face contact. These are all threats of the present Corona crisis for which we are collectively grieving — which we are not used to feel and face previously. A sceptical thought is always peeping in our mind whether we will ever return to the normal.

Hence, we are now globally uncertain. The exact picture of our path ahead is quite hazy and depression, anxiety, stress, for that reason taking us to an absence of hope causing us to

doubt our existence in life or in relation to others around us. This displays that we are moving towards an “existential crisis”. “Existential crisis” enters in our life when we encounter unexpected changes, experience loss of normalcy or typicality and stability in our normal-day lives. If, however, uncertainty and change are inescapable ingredients of life, we may plan for a preparedness kit for some untoward circumstances to save us from them, but it is difficult to prepare such for every scenario — for instance, an unexpected scenario like the present pandemic. But now that the unsparing Corona pandemic made our lives paralytic, we have to look forward to diminishing this crisis. So, the question is how to get over from this Covid-19 crisis and look significantly into the uncertain situation?

First, we have to learn how to control an unknown, uncertain situation with a determined courage. To do this effectively we have to develop our tolerance power and move from mere worrying and pondering into some problem-solving. To tackle uncertain situations, unexpected changes in life means to rethink and reinterpret the life in a new positive way. Human life is often seen to be influenced by imaginations, ideas, stories fictions etc. Hence, one can expect that these influences even may work in such uncertain times with a renewed sense of ideas in order to deal with different contingencies. Dealing with uncertainties with courage is to accept change or transformation in the go of life which just happens, hence natural. Happenings are all path-breaking significant associations of our life and we cannot resist them from their coming into being.

Normally humans crave information about the days yet to come and obsessing look for habituated certainty. Human brains are used to deal with security and stability, and therefore fond of creating certainty. They take uncertainty or absurdity as a threat.

Pandemic situation can occur any time in our life as Covid-19 has occurred all on a sudden and disrupted our steady normal life, our plans and everything that were well-suited amongst us. Therefore, our focus now should be more on how to live with uncertainty in whatever way it comes. The feelings that we are facing through this current pandemic would be increased largely if we continue to resist the sufferings in this crisis. Hence at this moment our task is to invite “self-acceptance” which can help us to move towards contentment. Stress, anxiety, fear are all negative states of mind — responses to unacquainted situations like Covid-19 crisis which shows us the picture of change and creates a threat to our secured form of life. Thus Covid-19 has thrown unique challenges to our sense of self, identity and the way we perform or behave “within-the-world”. The “institutionalized routines” which helped us to go smoothly have been interrupted. Other-regarding actions for example, are reduced for social-distancing. Encounter with others now contribute to anxiety, for, social distancing needs to differentiate the self from others by taking safety measures. (Giddens 1991, 61)

However, in this current crisis context and isolation, the role of art becomes heavily central to our lives, whether we agree with this or not. It is true that we cannot concretely move around freely in a fictional or imaginary world, for, that is quite an impossible reality. But an art-world without concretizing could connect us to the foreign and the impossible. It also can connect us in our current crisis world where anything is possible. Existence displays that humans exist in the world with their special characteristics. They can select things freely; they know how their beings will relate to the world. Existence relates to freedom through an active participation in the world. Humans have the freedom and power of disclosing basic features of the world, they are means by which things are revealed with various and infinite relations. Hence, our free multiple acts are able to picture a new feature of the world.

It is, however, an artistic practice which is an important example and a perfect mode of disclosing or revealing human freedom, and what the world is about.

Human’s radical free activity is seen to be remarkably increased in the artistic creativity with which the world exposes itself in a novel manner.

Artist's presentation proposes to audience manners to live in the world, and intends to transform the world as well. Her imagination speaks of possible ways of engaging with freedom. An artwork affects the freedom both of creator's and observer's. Hence every artwork like those of novels, poems, paintings is a product of attraction, a revelation. Thus, artwork calls for human involvement in sharing and participation. Art allows us to look closely at what it means to be human, to speak and express and to bring people and ideas close together. Every crisis period demands humanity, expression and the communion which can be originated by the arts. It is art which creates wellness in our life by allowing us to come together collectively. Making of an art and viewing art allow us to process our experiences. Through art human beings feel deep emotions and are able to progress, experiences, seek out connections and form impact. To express through making art is in fact a life-changing program, for, art creates community by representing shared events, social message, to express our individual perspectives, to create oneself in a new way.

This critical moment is the perfect time for us to shake our hands with arts and value the arts. Arts surely can produce a new turn globally in this Covid-19 pandemic to give us comfort and strength. Both participating and viewing art makes us connected to a more universal human experience.

This crisis moment is now surrounded by quicksand quality. It has taken away the ground under us — it has shaken our habits, routines, the way we move — made our daily life uncertain and shapeless. Anxiety, uncertainty emerged in us through new panicky predictions and deaths. So, the best solution is to stay steadily in the quicksand with patience and rely on the arts to help us through difficult times. Art-engagement however also is a matter of practice in patience. Artists never sit idle even in these crisis times.

Throughout history artists and their works challenged all kinds of crisis period. We can indeed see the present Corona crisis in the light of critical work done by the past artists. For instance, Picasso's "Guernica" is a powerful painting showing how cruel a war can be. It shows sufferings of the innocent civilians. It forces the audience to feel the injustice and pain of a war. This painting helps the audience even to alter their minds. Artist's attempts are always towards imagining a future where world at large could come out from any suffering. Thus, one of the useful ways of liberating oneself from this pandemic and consequent uncertainty is to open up to art. In any artistic product, whether it be writing, painting, or any other artistic work, beauty serves as social transformation and as powerful instrument for the liberation of human beings.

It is the artist or writer who is an unconstrained person whose externalizations are the perfect demonstrations of free activity. Perhaps, a true creator never thinks and gazes into something unchangeable and thus has no fear of losing the normal, habitual or institutionalised world. In an art-world a creator's expression is always a style, perceived from a different new angle and a re-creation which has a provision again for re-interpretation. We however have to create our lives like the artists, see the world in a new way, and thinking or creating oneself in a new way makes one more disciplined, patient and sane. By accepting whatever comes in our way with care and patience means struggling with that which brings a new way to our life. This is called engaging in creation which makes us overcome the myths of life and perhaps helps us going towards happiness. It is a fact that life is devoid of any intrinsic meaning, but one may give it a meaning by embracing illusion. That's what we have to learn from a creator or an artist. Artists are always engaged in creating or inventing that give things the appearance of being beautiful, when they are in fact not. Implementing this to our lives, we can become master of ourselves. We may create ourselves in a different way by neither losing any hope in the face of any crisis moment, nor letting the harsh condition to destroy our lives. Instead, we may be the poets of our lives and go on creating and re-creating our lives infinitely to accept the new.

Apart from art, we may highlight, by following *Gītā*, the special process for building of psychological resilience which is also needed in this crisis. *Gītā* is more a philosophical treatise than a scriptural work. So even if there is a touch of spirituality in the work of *Bhāgavad Gītā*, that can be taken philosophically as well to serve our purpose.

*Bhāgavad Gītā* is a dialog between the Pāndava prince Arjuna and his spiritual mentor and guide Krishna in the Indian epic *Mahabharata*, a tale of Bharata dynasty composed by the sage poet Veda Vyas in the period 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. In this epic story Arjuna was having dilemma while waging a war. Even though it was a righteous war, yet he did not want to initiate war against his relatives Kauravas and the loved ones as well. He was filled with moral dilemma and absence of hope about the brutality the war will bring to his kith and kin. In this context Krishna tries to counsel him. In other words, Krishna delivered his teachings to Arjuna in the battlefield of *Mahabharata* when he refused to take initiative in the war. *Gita* points out that pain, loss, suffering, death is inescapable. Hoping to escape any anxiety or suffering is to go more towards that. So, one must observe the world clearly in order to act wisely in it, and this can lead to sense of inner freedom even in any sort of difficult situation.

Classical literary, philosophical or scriptural texts cannot teach us virology for this pandemic, but they can provide us with a power of observing how to perform more wisely, practically and patiently in a crisis situation in our life.

However, *Gītā* has shown four paths which can immensely help in developing resilience at all levels. Among the four paths we will be concerned particularly with the second path which is relevant here, and the rest mentioned briefly. The first path is the “path of knowledge”, which tries to liberate oneself from individual ego, and that gives emphasis on “I”, but do not regard for “We”. In *Gītā* Krishna points out the genuine “seer” is that person who sees oneself in others, and others in oneself. This kind of awareness however, is crucial in preventing the spread of Coronavirus. An obvious example is the use of masks.

The second path is the “path of action” (Fowler 2002, Chapter-2, 3, also pp. xliii-xliv). This step is all about taking action and going through action whatever the nature of action may be. As Arjuna did not want to enter into war, for, that will bring him to initiate something brutal, Krishna however reminds him that as a warrior it is his duty to fight for the larger good, despite having bad consequences.

In the situation of Covid-19, doctors may have to make difficult decisions concerning whose life to save and whose not to when only limited ventilators were available. So, the situation presented certain dilemmas for the doctors, like Arjuna had some such during the war. Krishna’s advice here would be, doctors in this context, without any dilemma should continue to perform their duties devoid of attachment. To make it clear, actions should be performed without attachment, personal interest and without thinking about one’s success and failure.

According to *Gītā* the key to inner freedom in an uncertain world is to change one’s focus when acting. While having dialog with Arjuna, Krishna advises him that one should not give stress on the fruits of an action, because it is only in action that one has a claim. Fruits of action never can be one’s motive. Attachment conjoined with action is nothing but inaction. Thus, since it is a fact that we cannot avoid performing actions in this world, we should not be obsessed about the fruits of action, rather, we should concentrate on the moral quality of the action. Hence, *Bhāgavad Gītā* in Chapter-2, Verse-47 talks about the *selfless action*. Doctors however, in the crisis of Covid-19 must need an evenness of mind, devoid of any disturbance while treating patients. This equanimity of mind develops the detachment with human sufferings — it keeps the mind steady in a crisis and helps to have a clear bird’s-eye with patience.

An action performed with detachment and without any desire for results is known as *selfless action* or *disinterested action*. Thus, *selfless action* means not being attached to both actions and its results. The action is done out of one's duty — it is supposed to be done. *Disinterested action* is nothing but a kind of *Yogā* (meditative technique and practice) according to *Gītā*. It means one should do what action one is supposed to do (Ganeri 2007, 67-69).

We may distinguish between a *detached action* from that of *action with attachment*. The latter means to act with personal interest or gain. To act out of this kind of action is to act with the expectation and motivation that good would come back to one's present life. Hence this kind of action welcomes the fruits of actions in life with motives of self-interest. Whereas, selfless action has been explained as "Duty for duty's sake" — it is an action without any hope. This action is detached from any involvement but also not to be taken as negative attitude or indifference in attitude, and if one may shift one's thought a little, one may observe that this action has an intrinsic value, can reduce stress and anxiety as well. It is, therefore, a balanced approach, required in any sort of context.

Another path is "spiritual approach" in the *Gita* which emphasizes *loving devotion* toward a higher power. And the fourth path is the "path of meditation". This is the royal path of obtaining self-realization. This also helps to make our life-style disciplined, and process our body and mind in realizing mindfulness. All the four paths or approaches are greatly relevant for reducing stress, anxiety, fear etc., and for building resilience in people confronted by Covid-19 related emotional problems and health problems.

The natural world however, develops gradually and naturally — it is dynamic, an evolving tapestry, and we are the part of that. We need wisdom to accept this dynamic nature of the world, that's what *Gītā* says. Wisdom helps us to change our perception of the world and our place in it. Change is inevitable — we have to accept change as a central principle of our existence. Everyone has to fight their own battles and go on fighting to lead a significant life and should get always ready for difficult times like today's crisis situation. Someday perhaps the tough time will pass away, maybe it will come back repeatedly, but it is important that we should learn with unbiased mind from them the interwoven tapestry that the world has, and continue with our actions. We should always struggle against any uncertainty and be persistent in our actions in order to welcome the new as well.

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## Contextualism in Knowledge Attributions

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In the history of epistemology, the skeptics have played a dominant role and their status is defined in terms of claims they make about our knowledge and justification. It is the philosophers rather than the epistemologists who are quite confident that we have reasons for knowing all sorts of things and have grounds for believing certain things than others. But at the same time, very often, people are quite certain about the 'truths' they knew which later turned out to be false. We can relativize skepticism to a specific subject matter. One may be sceptical about all kinds of scientific claims while at the same time be justified in believing about the common place truths about the size of the book rack in one's room under optimal conditions of perception.

We have the extreme sort of skepticism concerning knowledge where the claim is that we do not have any knowledge and cannot know truths of any sort, and claiming that we do not have any epistemic reason to believe any proposition (including presumably the proposition stating their skepticism). The issues are regarding our own justification to believe in propositions of the past, future, the physical world and other minds.<sup>1</sup>

Now philosophers have been obsessed with understanding and achieving propositional knowledge since Plato. If we delve into the history of epistemology before the twentieth century, we find that explicit reference to justification, reasons for believing, or probability was much rarer than it is today. Now what is so intriguing about knowledge? Plato's search for a condition that must be added to true belief in order to get knowledge suggests that we must at least believe in a true proposition. But belief itself would be too weak. For example, we go out of our way and say that we believe that the train is delayed due to fog, where we are informing another person in an informal manner and this case may not be knowledge proper.

In at least some contexts, we seem to require a kind of certainty i.e., subjective certainty in order to have knowledge, where this subjective certainty is a belief like state which is an absolutely firm conviction without any doubt. This knowledge state is called a factive state. Knowledge is expressed through a proposition. The noun clauses are used to complete any number of verbs describing psychological states. S can know that p, believe that p, perceive that p, regret that p, and remember that p and so on. Some of these descriptions of people can only be true if p is true. For example, we can believe that p, fear that p, desire that p, and hope that p whether or not p is the case. We cannot know that p unless p is true. There is also the case where one is absolutely convinced of some proposition which is not in fact true, even when the person does not know the proposition. The person is convinced that he is going to win the lottery and he does win but we cannot conclude that he knew it. So again, we are led to Plato's question in the *Theaetetus* that what in addition to being sure of a truth, do we need in order to possess knowledge. In the traditional analysis of knowledge, it was true conviction coupled with good enough evidence supporting the conviction.<sup>2</sup> We can see that

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<sup>1</sup>Ayer, A.J., *The Problem of Knowledge*, Penguin Books, 1957.

<sup>2</sup>Chisholm, R.M. *Theory of Knowledge*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Prentice Hall, 1989, p.90.

the philosophers who had this approach to understanding knowledge think that the concepts in terms of which we explain knowledge----- are trivially conceptually more fundamental than the concept of knowledge, and our understanding of knowledge is parasitic on our understanding of these other epistemic concepts.

We talk about reasons, evidence and probability and still wonder how much reason is needed in support of our acceptance of p in order to know that p. while attempting to answer this question we find that in at least some contexts, we seem to demand a very strong standard for knowledge. Descartes suggested that to know some proposition p, our epistemic status E would be such that it would eliminate any possibility of error. Later on, the Cartesian standards have been rejected on the grounds that such strong justification for knowledge would lead to the absurd conclusion that nearly all of our knowledge claims would be false. Sometimes we consciously or unconsciously make knowledge claims which are just exaggerations.

In recent times, the view which is becoming increasingly popular in solving sceptical problems is termed as Contextualism. It states that the knowledge claims vary from context to context. The adjective 'thin' seems to be relatively uncontroversial where the person being described as 'thin' in one context can be described as 'not so thin' in another context. There is no contradiction involved here as judgements about the dimension implicitly involve a reference class. One cannot be thin, or plump per se. One is thin or plump relative to some presupposed class in the context of other people. It has been seen that brilliant mathematicians have poor practical sense. So perhaps we have to understand knowledge claims against the background of some context of utterances.

There are contextualists who are Cartesians and would hold that in order to know, one must eliminate the possibility of error at least in the sense that one must be in a position to eliminate all relevant alternatives which falsify the claim to what one believes. If S claims to know that the husband has committed a murder, then S must also be in a position to eliminate all other suspects. The difference in the contextualist's account of knowledge is the emphasis on relevant alternatives. What counts as relevant alternatives varies from context to context.

*Keith De Rose gives an example: -*

Case A. Let us suppose that Mr. A and his wife are driving home on a Friday afternoon and have plans to stop at the bank to deposit their paychecks. But due to long ques Mr. A suggests that they visit the bank on Saturday. His wife opines that the bank will not be open on Saturday. Mr. A replies that as he was at the bank two weeks ago and it happened to be a Saturday, and hence the bank will be open.

Case B. The same conditions hold but the difference is that they have to deposit their paychecks as they have written a high value check and if they cannot deposit it on Friday, they have to deposit it on Saturday, otherwise the check is going to bounce. But his wife suggests that the banks change their hours frequently. So, there is a possibility that the bank may remain closed on Saturday. Mr. A not being sure that the bank will remain open on Saturday goes inside to make sure.

In both the cases, Mr. A claim to know that the bank will remain open on Saturday. But are both his claims justified? It seems that (1) when Mr. A claim to know that the bank will be open on Saturday in case A, he is saying something true, while (2) he is claiming to know that the bank will not remain open on Saturday in case B is also true. But he is not in a better position to know in case A than in case B. So, it would be quite natural to say that (3) if Mr. A knows that the bank will be open on Saturday in case A then he also knows that the bank will be open on Saturday in case B. Is there any contradiction in admitting all the three possibilities i.e., (1), (2) and (3)? De Rose is going to defend this position where she will try to argue that all these three positions are true without involving any contradiction. There is a fourth

alternative position i.e., (4) where if Mr. A claim to know that the bank will be open on Saturday is true, then what Mr. A claim to know in case B that the bank will not remain open on Saturday is false. But there is a difference between (3) and (4) and this difference is crucial in understanding Contextualism.

I will examine the contextualist's position regarding knowledge attribution and will attempt to solve some of the problems raised against their position. The theory states that the truth condition of sentences of the form 'S knows that p' or 'S does not know that p' depend in certain ways on the context in which the sentences are uttered. In the bank case, the (4) alternative will be certainly denied by the contextualists. What Mr. A says in case A in claiming to know that the bank will remain open on Saturday is true, then what is said in case B by Mr. A that the bank will not remain open on Saturday will be false. The contexts of Mr. A's utterances will make knowledge attribution to be true in case A than in case B.

There are three important contextual differences between the two cases which are relevant in attributing knowledge to Mr. A. The first condition is the truth condition where the proposition claimed has to be true. In case B, a lot depends on whether or not the bank is open on Saturday, while it is not so important for the proposition to be true in case A. The requirements for the knowledge attribution are raised as the stakes are high in case B. It is as if the net closes on the situation more tightly in case B than in case A.

Secondly it has been pointed out that the mentioning of a possibility of the bank changing the hours raises the stake of knowledge claim. Mr. A cannot claim to know that the bank will be open on Saturday unless he rules out this possibility as mentioned by his wife. But in case A there is no possibility to be ruled out as the possibility has not been suggested by anyone.

Thirdly this possibility has to be considered by Mr. A while claiming to know. Mr. A has to rule out the possibility in case B in order to make the knowledge claim about the bank being open on Saturday. In case A this possibility is not taken into consideration to make the knowledge claim about the bank being open on Saturday. But it must be true that the bank be open on Saturday to know that it will be.

Now there are philosophers who claim that the contextual factors cannot affect the truth conditions of knowledge attributions and they are known as 'invariantists'. The invariantists hold that the features of the utterance of knowledge attribution have no effect on the epistemic position of the putative knower for his attribution to be true. In the bank case, the invariantists will accept (4) and will either deny (1) or (2). The invariantists are bound to deny the 1st one. Peter Unger uses the term 'Invariantist' to denote the position that the high standards for knowledge attributions remain constant and very high. De Rose calls this position 'Skeptical Invariantism'—having the more general term 'invariantism' to denote any position according to which the truth-conditions for knowledge attribution do not vary in the way the contextualists claim they do, irrespective of very high standards. In contrast De Rose uses the term 'non-scepticalinvariantism' to a position where the standards are held to be constant yet relatively low. Referring to the bank cases, the scepticalinvariantist will deny (1) where she may admit that Mr. A is warranted in asserting that he knows, but would insist that what Mr. A says in claiming that he knows is strictly false. Similarly, the non-scepticalinvariantist would deny (2), as he may insist that Mr. A should not say that he knows in case B, as his wife mistakenly thinks that he must rule out the possibility that the bank has changed its hours of operation in order to know that the bank will remain open on Saturday. In uttering that Mr. A knows will lead her to believe that Mr. A has ruled out this possibility. But the wife is mistaken about this requirement and if Mr. A has to claim that he knows, he would be saying something which would be misleading but true. Hence it would be useful for Mr. A to assert that he does not know. But this assertion though useful would be false.

Now one should distinguish between the contexts of utterances from context of knowledge attributions. When the putative knower claims to know that p, it is the context of utterance, and when the attributor attributes knowledge to the knower, it becomes the context of attribution. In case of self-knowledge both the contexts are identical as the knower and the attributor happen to be the same person. It is worth examining how certain factors of context of utterances can affect the truth-conditions of the knowledge attributions. Secondly Contextualism has to be distinguished from another theory i.e., the relevant alternatives view of knowledge, popularly known as RA where RA can be in some sense a contextualist theory. This relevant alternative theory asserts that to know that p, is to make the claim within a framework of relevant alternatives which are incompatible with p. To know that p, is to be able to distinguish p from these relevant alternatives and to rule out these relevant alternatives to p, as the alternatives to p are not all relevant.

Fred Dretske<sup>3</sup> suggests that every knowledge claim has a lot of contrasting cases i.e., cases which are incompatible with the truth of the target proposition. In knowing that there is a table in front of me, and it is rectangular in shape entails that no evil demon is causing to believe that there is a table. Depending on the context in which a knowledge claim is made different contrasting cases are present and hence different kinds of evidences are needed to qualify the knowledge claim as knowledge. So whether someone is justified in believing that p depends on the context to which his assertion is a response.<sup>4</sup>Dretske makes a forceful claim that questions whether someone knows that p considered in isolation from the circumstances in which the questions about p arise, can never be answered.

According to the relevant alternative theory, one does not have to eliminate all possibilities in which one would be wrong with regard to p, but only the relevant alternatives in a given situation. Knowledge is considered to be an evidential state in which all relevant alternatives have to be eliminated. Dretske points out that as knowledge is not a gradational concept, hence each relevant alternative is context sensitive. To know that p means that one's reasons rule out the relevant alternatives to p. Let us consider the skeptical argument that we have no way of knowing that the skeptical hypothesis is false and hence do not know anything about the external world. This reasoning is based on the principle of closure under known entailment. If S knows that p, and S knows that p entails q, then S knows that q. The proposition that you are perceiving a table (p) logically implies the falsity of the skeptical counter-possibility that you are a brain in a vat (q). if one is aware of this implication, the closure principle implies that if you know that p, then you know q, and since you cannot eliminate the possibility that you are a brain in a vat, you do not know q. therefore you do not know that p—that you are perceiving the table. It implies that skepticism is true. Dretske holds that thesis closure principle is too restrictive to be convincing, since knowing that p requires the elimination of all possible alternatives to p, as implied by the closure principle, then it would not be possible to know anything about the external world. while a more convincing theory would be that knowledge requires the elimination of only relevant alternatives and these sort of skeptical alternatives are normally not relevant. Hence the closure principle fails to hold in these cases.

Consider a case where one perceives some striped animals in the zoo in a cage marked 'zebras'. One's evidence justifies one's belief that they are zebras. One knows that to be a zebra means not to be a painted mule. But one's evidence does not warrant us to know that these animals are not painted mules. Does this mean that one is not in a position to claim to know that they are zebras? According to Dretske, the answer is that one knows that they are zebras as the possibility of them being painted mules is not relevant in ordinary cases.

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<sup>3</sup>Dretske, Fred., Scepticism in Context, in *Reading Epistemology*, (ed.) Sven Bernecker, Blackwell Publishing, 2006, p.170.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid,p.170.

Thus, one can truthfully claim that they are zebras in spite of his inability to rule out the alternative. Skepticism becomes futile in undermining our everyday knowledge. But in some extraordinary circumstances, the possibility of there being painted mules instead of zebras may become a relevant alternative. Dretske holds that the theory of relevant alternatives simply claims that the skeptical arguments are not applicable to such cases and hence do not have to be eliminated for us to acquire knowledge of the empirical world.

What makes an alternative relevant or what standards do the alternatives raised by the skeptics fail to meet are some of the questions which are difficult to answer. Dretske distinguishes between the objective factors and the subjective factors of the concept of relevance. If there are fake zoos in the vicinity, then this could render it a relevant alternative that what looks like a zebra is in fact a painted mule. It does not matter whether one is aware of such a fake zoo. This is the objective reading of the concept of relevance. On the subjective reading, an alternative is relevant if the believer finds it to be probable. Here the believer's purposes, intentions assumptions have to be taken into account for the alternative to be relevant. Some philosophers hold that the relevance of an alternative is dependent on the conversational context of not only the epistemic knower but also the attributor who is describing the knower's epistemic situation. The difference between a relevant and an irrelevant alternative resides not in what we happen to regard as a real possibility, but in the kind of possibilities that actually exist in the objective situation.<sup>5</sup>

Alvin Goldman in his relevant alternative theory mentions various factors which are directly responsible for the range of alternatives. He has divided these factors into two groups—the 'subject factors' and the 'attributor factors'. A subject in an ordinary situation is truly said to know that what he sees up ahead is a barn even though he cannot eliminate the other alternative of there being a barn façade.<sup>6</sup> But

Goldman points out that if there happens to be a lot of fake barns in the putative knower's vicinity, then the possibility that what the subject is seeing is just a façade will turn out to be a relevant alternative and we cannot attribute knowledge to the person even if what he sees is an actual barn.

The attributor factors are the factors responsible for the speaker to attribute knowledge to the putative knower. The circumstances of the putative knower's account are not only responsible for the choice of alternatives, but the linguistic and the psychological context of the attributor have to be taken into account. So, Both Dretske and Goldman provide similar arguments in favour of contextualism. Goldman explains that if a relevant alternative theorist allows attributor factors to influence which alternatives are relevant, he is a contextualist. If an invariantist allows only subjective factors to influence which alternatives are relevant, then the invariantist is a relevant alternative theorist.

Let us consider a case C where Henry sees a barn where there are no barn facades or fake barns and another case D where Henry encounters a barn where there are plenty of barn facades. In Case C there are no fake barns around, while in case D, Henry looks at a real barn where the place is full of fake barns unknown to Henry. We cannot attribute knowledge to Henry in case D in the same sense as in case C. the invariantist can agree that a sentence attributing knowledge to Henry in case C can be true while attributing knowledge to Henry in case D would be false. Here the invariantist can use the idea of 'relevant alternatives' to explain the difference. Though most versions of Relevant Alternative theories allow only attributor factors to be relevant and hence are contextualist theories, a Relevant Alternative theorist need not necessarily be a contextualist.

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<sup>5</sup>Dretske, Fred., *Scepticism In Context in Reading Epistemology*, (ed.) Sven Bernecker, Blackwell Publishing, 2006, p.168.

<sup>6</sup>Goldman, Alvin., 'Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge' in *Journal of Philosophy*, 73: 771-791, 1976.

In the first-person present tense knowledge claims, where Henry makes the claim 'I know that there is a barn' he is both the putative knower and the attributor. In this situation the Relevant Alternative theorist will bring in the factors that attach to Henry the knower (the presence or lack of facades in his vicinity) to be responsible for his truth claim, while the contextualist will allow factors that affect Henry the attributor of knowledge (whether or not the issue of facades has cropped up in his conversation) to matter.

Keith de Rose claims that Goldman has not stressed the importance of this distinction in knowledge claims. But this distinction is important to Relevant Alternative theorists regarding the *meanings* of knowledge attributions.

Consider the example of the zebras in the zoo by Dretske. For S to know that it is a zebra while looking at the zebra enclosure must eliminate the relevant alternative that it is not a painted mule.<sup>7</sup> But as Gail Stine has remarked, this alternative is not relevant in ordinary circumstances. The notion of meaning is introduced into the discussion of knowledge and it is a semantic notion. So, what can one mean when one utters that John knows that the animal is a zebra, is that John knows it is a zebra as opposed to a gorilla or giraffe or antelope. But if there happens to be painted mules in the zoo then one would literally mean something different while uttering that John knows that it is a zebra. This alternative can be regarded as a relevant one where the putative knower's factors have changed. If the zoo has a shortage of zebras and have been using painted mules to look like zebras to fool the public, then this could be unknown to John. Then what would one mean when one utters that John knows that it is a zebra? This would have a different meaning from the first attribution and that something else might be false. It seems that it is very difficult to understand the meaning of 'meanings'. The meaning remains unaltered where the range of relevant alternatives has been changed only by the subject factors while the meaning is different if the range of alternatives has been changed by the attributor factors.<sup>8</sup>

Jason Stanley argues that contextualists have chosen to implement their claims semantically via the view that the verb 'to know' is indexical. It implies that one speaker may attribute knowledge to a subject while another speaker denies knowledge to that very subject without any contradiction. This lack of contradiction is the key to the sense in which knowledge attributor and the knowledge denier mean something different by 'know'. In Stewart Cohen's example we see that there are two people who think that they are in the same room but are in fact in different rooms talking to each other over the intercom and means something different by 'this room' when one claims that Frank is not in this room and the other insists that Frank is in 'this room', I can see him. There is a sense in which they mean the same thing by 'this room' but there is also a different sense expressed by the phrase. There is no contradiction involved here. This is explained by David Kaplan's character of the sentence being the same while the content of the sentence being different. If we apply Kaplan's distinction between content and character in the bank cases, we will see that Mr. A in the second case B admits that he does not know that the bank will be open on Saturday considering his wife's mentioning of a possibility. While in the earlier case A, he admits that he knows that the bank will be open on Saturday. In one sense he means the same thing when he says that he knows, and in another sense, he does not mean the same thing when he utters that he knows. 'Know' is being used with the same *character*, but not being used with the same *content*.<sup>9</sup> It seems that Cohen, DeRose, and Lewis all have implemented their contextualist claims via the

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<sup>7</sup>Dretske, Fred., 'The Pragmatic Dimension of Knowledge', *Philosophical Studies*, 40: 363-378, 1981.

<sup>8</sup> DeRose, Keith., 'Contextualism and Knowledge Attributions' in Linda Martin Alcoff (ed.) *Epistemology: The Big Questions*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998, p.114.

<sup>9</sup> Stanley, Jason., *Knowledge And Practical Interest*, Oxford University Press, 2005.

view that the verb 'know' is an indexical in Kaplan's sense, having different semantic values relative to different contexts.

Let us go back to Goldman's example where Henry is encountering a barn. In case C there are no fake barns and in D there are barn facades but Henry was lucky to look at a real barn. As an onlooker I may state that Henry knows that it is a barn and I would mean the same thing in both the cases. In case C my utterance will be true while in case D my utterance will be false. The presence of the barn facades has changed the truth-value but not the truth-conditions or the meaning (content) of my knowledge attribution. So, attributor factors affect the truth-values of knowledge attributions in a way different from the subject factors. Attributor factors working in a way that they affect the content of the attribution, but subject factors working in a different way that does not affect its content. These different ways can be summarized in the following manner. The attributive factors set a standard that the putative knower must live up to in order to make the knowledge attribution true. They affect how good an epistemic position the putative knower must be in order to count as knowing. They affect the truth-conditions or the content or the meaning of the attribution. Subject factors determine whether or not the putative subject lives up to the standards that have been set, and hence can affect the truth-value of the attribution without affecting its content. They affect how good an epistemic position the putative knower is in.<sup>10</sup>

The most frequent objection against contextualism is that the mentioning of a possibility becomes incompatible with what one claims to know. In the example of the zoo, one claims to know that there are zebras so long as there is no possibility of there being painted mules. But if one mentions such a possibility to the putative knower, he withdraws his claim. The objection that is raised here is that whether anyone can claim to know anything in the external world considering all the possibilities which would cancel one's claim to knowledge. The contextualist would reply that certain aspects of the context of an attribution or denial of knowledge attribution affect its content. Knowledge claims can be compared with other context-sensitive words such as 'here' and 'there'. The meaning of 'here', and 'there' are fixed by the relevant contextual factors, like the location of the utterance, and not the location at the time talked about. Similarly, the contextualist has to defend its position by saying that the possibility of the painted mules affects the conditions under which one can truly claim to know the animal to be a zebra and one needs to rule out such a possibility. But if such a possibility is not mentioned then the claim to knowledge is correct whether there are painted mules or not. Palle Yourgrau remarks that when someone poses a question regarding whether or not we really know that p obtains rather than some alternative to p, and if we are unable to reply satisfactorily, we conclude that my earlier knowledge claim was faulty. But Yourgrau suggests that we usually do not repeat ourselves to rectify our knowledge claims. Do we nullify our previous knowledge claims?<sup>11</sup>

Palle Yourgrau's objection suggests that knowledge has an absolute non-comparative character and is derived from the absoluteness, or conclusiveness of the justification required to know. Fred Dretske tries to show how this concept of knowledge despite its absoluteness remains sensitive to the shifting interests, concerns and factors influencing its everyday application.<sup>12</sup> Now if knowledge is regarded as an absolute concept, then there should be similar objections raised against its widespread application in everyday uses. Critical enquiries have revealed certain shortcomings in our knowledge claims and there are endless possibilities which tend to block our road to knowledge. But if knowledge is regarded as an

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<sup>10</sup> DeRose, Keith., 'Contextualism And Knowledge Attributions' in Linda Martin Alcoff (ed.) *Epistemology: The Big Questions*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998, p.115.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.119.

<sup>12</sup> Dretske, Fred., 'Scepticism in Context' in Sven Bernecker (ed.) *Reading Epistemology*, Blackwell Publishing, 2006, p.161.

absolute concept, then it requires the elimination of all contrasting alternatives, which is seldom the case, and hence we can never claim to know anything. This sceptical position is unpalatable to the epistemologists. Absolute concepts are devoid of content. There can be nothing of this sort of concept to be satisfied. Some contextualists are of the opinion that it is not so easy to raise the standards for knowledge, and a determined sceptic should not get away with raising them. To safeguard ordinary claims to know while at the same time explaining the persuasiveness of the sceptical arguments, the contextualist can assume a sceptic friendly version of contextualism leaving it an open question as to whether and under which conditions the sceptic actually succeeds in raising the standards.

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## **Applied Ethics: Some Burning Issues**

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In this modern age of globalization and Technological advancement human relation is caught in a vortex of conflicting socio-political cultural, religious forces, each trying to predominate. With a view to meeting this crisis, ethical discussion is very much necessary in our human type of life. In general, Ethics is a study which judges our conduct to be right or wrong, to be good or bad in the light of some moral ideals or principles. Ethics is the philosophical reflective study in formulating moral ideals of justice, peace, harmony, tolerance, equality. Morality and moral principles are necessary guidelines in our social life for human society can sustain only if a moral order prevails in society.

### **Applied Ethics**

Soon after the two world wars, the stress on the applicability of theoretical ethics became so prominent that Applied Ethics emerged as a separate discipline with some distinctive features. In theoretical Ethics the dominance of a deductive model is manifest; a moral argument may be constructed in the form of a syllogism where in the major premise a basic (theoretic) principle would be stated, in the minor premise there could be a description of the action being valued and the conclusion would necessarily follow in the form of an evaluation of the action concerned under the basic moral principle assigned at the top. This deductive top-down structure is now being questioned in the field of Applied Ethics. It is now being felt that there are no definite or fixed decision-procedures for moral-evaluation. Contextuality has now become an insignia of Applied Ethics.

Applied Ethics is that branch of ethics which is concerned with the application of the basic teachings of ethics on the concrete and living problems in our social life, e.g., gender discrimination, religious fanaticism, terrorism, child abuse, euthanasia, medical malpractices, infant mortality and social justice, environmental pollution, globalization and poverty in the third world, injustice towards disable persons. The issues are generally discussed in relation to a fundamental ethical theory that serves as a blueprint for the discussion. Applied ethics can help us explore the human significance of abstract, universal moral rules when those rules are embodied in concrete social relationships. Studies of applied and professional ethics break down the barriers separating specialized bodies of knowledge, and demonstrate the pertinence of ethical analysis to the practical problems and concerns of the larger society.

By using the conceptual tools of Metaethics and Normative ethics discussions in applied ethics try to resolve the controversial issues. The lines of distinction between Metaethics, Normative ethics and Applied ethics are often blurry. For example, the issue of abortion is an applied ethical topic since it involves a specific type of controversial behaviour. But it also depends on more general normative principles, such as the right of self-rule and the right to life, which are litmus tests for determining the morality of that procedure. The issue also rests on metaethical issues such as, 'where do rights come from?' and 'what kind of beings have rights?'

Applied Ethics has become an intellectual force to be reckoned with in the life of our society. Applied Philosophy is understood as the name for philosophical engagement with the many issues of practical life that hinge upon ethical considerations, and are capable of being illuminated by deeper conceptual understanding and by the critical analysis of the arguments they involve.

The modern world, including our society where we live in, is into serious problems of ethics applied to human life and society. In this article I will discuss some burning issues of Applied Ethics, namely, Euthanasia, the ethics of Abortion and Business ethics.

### **Euthanasia**

The word Euthanasia is pretty well-known to the world. Its practice have been common since ages when people used to terminate the lives of their parents when the latter showed no prospect of returning to a reasonable quality of life. But in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the question of moral justifiability of whether one has the right to die or whether one can be allowed to die or not becomes very pertinent.

The term “euthanasia” is derived from Greek, literally meaning “good death” .Taken in its common usage however, euthanasia refers to the termination of a person’s life, to end their suffering, usually from an incurable or terminal condition. It is for this reason that euthanasia was also coined the name “mercy killing”.

Moral conflict takes place between the proponents of Euthanasia and the opponents who vehemently protest against the same. The supporters of Euthanasia firmly believes that each person has a ‘right to die’ according to his or her choice when faced with terminal illness rather suffer through to the end. Opponents consider Euthanasia as equivalent to murder. This brings us to the distinction between Active and Passive Euthanasia and it is here that the question of moral justification is frequently discussed.

Euthanasia is killing a person to give relief from unbearable and insufferable pain and distress. The process tends to include two ways: Either an agent may alleviate pain by actively killing a distressed person, or else an agent may abstain from doing something which might otherwise preserve the life of the distressed, and thereby let him die. The former method is known as Active Euthanasia and the latter Passive Euthanasia respectively.

This distinction between Active and Passive Euthanasia is a blurry one for one may suspect that withholding treatment may be a mark of passivity, but withdrawing is not. The concept of withdrawing indicates the prior administration of a drug or a life-sustaining machine. Consequently, withdrawing them amounts to an activity of some sort----the act of stopping a medicine or making inactive function of a machine. So the kind of Euthanasia which involves withdrawal should be identified as Active Euthanasia.

Whatever may be the case, the moral debate encircling Euthanasia overlaps into law, medicine and public policy. An active intervention by anybody to terminate another person’s life should remain illegal. Euthanasia to me, is only ever justifiable at the request of the patient as no one but the patient is in a position to judge the worthwhileness of his life by giving consent to it.

### **Abortion**

Until 1967, a woman could obtain an abortion only if the pregnancy endangered her life, and in some states, if the pregnancy was the result of rape or if the baby would probably be deformed. But abortion was not allowed because the baby was unwanted.

But in 1973, the Supreme Court of the United States (Roe vs Wade case) declared that the laws prohibiting abortion were unconstitutional for forbidding a woman to have an abortion

violated her right to privacy. The court also ruled that fetuses were not “persons” or “human beings” and so they did not have a constitutionally protected right to life.

The ruling of the Supreme Court has opened up a controversy where we confront the two most extreme views on abortion:

- 1) **Conservative’s argument : Abortion in any circumstance is morally wrong**
- 2) **The Liberal view: There is nothing morally wrong with abortion.**

The conservative’s view is well expressed in the form of a syllogism:

It is morally wrong to kill an innocent human being.

A human fetus is an innocent human being.

Therefore, it is wrong to kill a human fetus. Anti-abortionists claim that a fetus is a human being and that it has a right to life. They even stress the similarities between the fetus and the infant, and urge that since the latter is clearly a human being, so the fetus should also be recognized as a human being with the same right to life as any other.

The Roman Catholic opposition to abortion follows from acceptance of the prohibition against killing innocent human beings and from the conviction that human life begins at conception. The Christian doctrine believes that since we are created by God, we are His property and to kill a human being is to usurp God’s right to decide when we shall live and when we shall die. Since a fetus is a human being, it is wrong to kill a fetus and thereby carry on Abortion.

There are some other anti-abortionists who claim that a fetus isn’t human life, but only a ‘Potential’ human life. i.e. the fetus has the potential for developing into an adult human being. So, we should treat it in the same way as we treat other persons.

But the Liberal view has refuted the conservative’s position and have raised some ethical questions.

According to the conservatives, the fetus is a ‘human being’. But the point is that the fetus is certainly ‘human’ as opposed to ‘being’ and thus they cannot be considered to be member of the human moral community and conferred with the kind of entitlements which fully fledged persons have. The fetuses are neither self-aware, nor have the sense of future and the capacity to relate to others. In reply to the view that fetuses are potential human beings, the liberals hold the fact that something has the potential to become ‘x’ is not a good reason for treating it now as if it were ‘x’.

An analogy is here discussed very often. Although every oak tree was once an acorn, it does not follow that acorns are oak trees, or that we should treat the loss of an acorn eaten by a squirrel as the same kind of loss as the death of an oak tree felled by a storm. Despite their developmental continuity, acorns and oak trees are different kinds of things. Thus the liberals hold that it is absolutely wrong to infer that ‘A has the rights of an ‘x’ from the premise ‘ A is a potential x’.

The issue of abortion is troublesome which probably can never be settled by discovery of new scientific facts. Instead we will have to make an ethical judgment about how fetuses are ought to be treated. For example, if we decide that fetuses have rights that ought to be protected, we will be in effect be deciding that fetuses have some status as moral agents within our moral community. Again, if we decide that fetuses can be killed at whim, we will be excluding them from our moral community. In either case we will be making an important decision about what it means to be a ‘moral agent’, what it means to be a ‘person’.

In this context a problem may be discussed about: we often find cases where an abortion would be necessary in order to save the life of the mother. Now, the question here is how is it possible to choose between the lives of mother and child if both have an equal 'right to life'. Some people might rely on the distinction between killing and letting die. Abortion involves killing the fetus, doing nothing is a matter of letting the mother die. If killing is always morally worse than letting die, abortion is not permissible in these cases.

But the feminist view is that rather than the right to life of the fetus having priority, the mother's right to determine what happens to her own body has priority. So, respect for a woman's sovereignty over her own body requires us to allow choosing an abortion. If abortion is equivalent to the death of the fetus then ----since the fetus has no intrinsic right to life---- respect for a woman's sovereignty over her own body requires us to allow woman to kill their fetuses. So, once the fetus can survive outside the woman's body, however, the connection between the woman's right to choose and the death of the fetus disappears.

Nonetheless, every pregnancy and every embryo is a treasure that calls for protection and shelter by society. In a society oriented to humanist values and to providing more freedom and development for all its members, legal coercion would be absolutely inappropriate against women with undesired pregnancies. In these cases protection of prenatal life can be accomplished only in relative terms, subject to the given conditions of socio-economic existence, the established way of life, and the individual values which all influence, but are in turn influenced by the woman's free decision. It is a challenge to society to develop living conditions, values and behaviours which discourage the termination of pregnancy.

## **Business Ethics**

Interest in business ethics accelerated dramatically during the 1980s and 1990s, both within major corporations and within academia. Business ethics is a broad field because there are so many different topics that fall under its umbrella. It can be studied from a variety of different angles, whether it's philosophically, scientifically, or legally. However, the law plays the biggest role in influencing business ethics by far. Business ethics is the study of how a business should act in the face of ethical dilemmas and controversial situations. This can include a number of different situations, including how a business is governed, how stocks are traded, a business' role in social issues, and more.

Business Ethics is a form of applied ethics or professional ethics that examines ethical principles and moral or ethical problems that arise in a business environment. . It applies to all aspects of business conduct and is relevant to the conduct of individuals and entire organizations. These ethics originate from individuals, organizational statements or the legal system. These norms, values, ethical, and unethical practices are the principles that guide a business. Business ethics refers to contemporary organizational standards, principles, sets of values and norms that govern the actions and behavior of an individual in the business organization. Business ethics carries significant influence in the corporate world. Not only does it change how businesses operate on a day-to-day- basis, but it also influences legislation around corporate regulation

Business ethics have two dimensions, normative business ethics or descriptive business ethics. As a corporate practice and a career specialization, the field is primarily normative. Academics attempting to understand business behavior employ descriptive methods. The range and quantity of business ethical issues reflects the interaction of profit-maximizing behavior with non-economic concerns.

There are various reasons why Business ethics is gaining importance in today's world. First and foremost, it keeps the business working within the boundaries of the law, ensuring that they aren't committing crimes against their employees, customers, consumers at large, or

other parties. However, the business also has a number of other advantages that will help them succeed if they are aware of business ethics.

The trust factor plays a key role in establishing a relation between the business and consumers. If consumers feel that a business can be trusted, they will be more likely to choose that business over its competitors. Some businesses choose to use certain aspects of business ethics as a marketing tool, particularly if they decide to highlight a popular social issue.

Following business ethics can also be beneficial for the business' employees and operations. Attracting top talent is significantly easier for ethical businesses. Employees not only appreciate a socially aware employer, but will also perceive them as the kind of business that will act in the best interest of their employees. This produces more dedicated employees and can also reduce recruitment costs.

Business ethics implies general ethical ideas to business behaviour. Ethical behaviour not only improves profitability but also fosters business relations and employees productivity. Business ethics is concerned with the behaviour of businessman in doing a business. Unethical practices create problems to businessman and business units. The growth of a business is dependent upon ethical practices performed by the businessman. Business custom differs from one business to another. If a custom is adopted and accepted by businessman and public, that custom will become an ethics.

Ethics in business is just as important as ethics in personal life. Business leaders have a unique role and a great responsibility in shaping the ethical culture of their businesses, and thereby influence their broader communities as well. Business leaders may not set out to define the ethical culture of their businesses but they inevitably do. Business leaders, and entrepreneurs especially, are under tremendous pressure and can face very significant ethical challenges.

## **Conclusion**

I have discussed three most burning issues of Applied Ethics. It is true that we are all encouraged to make ethical choices and apply ethics in all areas of our lives. We can think of ethics as the principles that guide our behavior toward making the best choices that contribute to the common good of all. Ethics is what guides us to tell the truth, keep our promises, or help someone in need. There is a framework of ethics underlying our lives on a daily basis, helping us make decisions that create positive impacts and steering us away from unjust outcomes. Ethics guides us to make the world a better place.

Ethics has influence over the decisions we make and the actions we take, from our personal lives to our professional careers, and beyond. We are all part of an interconnected global community. Our contributions to the common good, no matter how big or how small, can have a lasting impact. Choosing an ethical lifestyle will ensure our impact is positive. Bringing ethics into our mindset will help us approach situations in a more ethical way.

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# **Feminist Epistemology: A Philosophical Movement**

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## **The idea of feminism in General**

Feminism means a range of philosophical movements and social movements that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve equality of genders in every sphere of life. The discrimination between man and woman, regarding their social respect and opportunities is prominent and popular in the entire world. Feminism raises its voice against such discriminating attitude to establish mainly educational and professional opportunities for women that are equal to those for men. This approach is an outcome of a philosophical outlook which is ideological by nature and relies on the virtues like equality, humanity, compassion and care. Feminist movements have campaigned and continue to campaign for women's rights, in general, including the right to vote, to hold public office, to work to earn fair wages or equal pay, to own property, receive education, to enter contracts, to have equal rights within marriage, and in short, in all kinds of activities. Feminists have also worked to ensure access to legal abortions and social integration, and to protect women and girls from rape, sexual harassment, and domestic violence. Feminist aims are generally considered to be a main spirit behind major historical societal changes for women's right. Although feminist advocacy is, mainly focused on women's rights, some feminists argue for the inclusion of men's liberation within its aims because they believe that men are also harmed by traditional gender role. Feminist theory, which emerged from feminist movements, aims to understand the nature of gender inequality by examining women's social roles and lived experience; it has developed theories in a variety of disciplines in order to respond to issues concerning gender. In general, feminism brings out a wave of reforms and changes, not only in social and political order but in the line of thinking of the world. Naturally it has reflected in the realm of philosophical theories too and feminist thinkers initiate the reforms into the conventional philosophical thinking. They argue that the idea of feminism can radically change some of the fundamental pre-established ideas of Philosophy, in the field of Epistemology, ontology, logic and ethics. Here I would like to discuss about Feminist Epistemology and its significant outcome on ethics.

## **Feminist epistemology**

The idea of feminist epistemology is that knowledge, as we know it, is not neutral but biased from a particular perspective or other. The main focus of feminist philosophers is to explore how gender pre-set of our mind, conditions knowing subjects to a great extent. If we start from the standpoint of Plato where we find a clear epistemological view, we find that Plato distinguishes between Knowledge and Opinion. He distinguishes between true, eternal and universal knowledge in one hand and contingent, particular belief on the other. Since then we have got a habit of thinking of a vivid demarcation between reality and unreality, mere belief and well-founded true knowledge. Not only that the pursuit of true knowledge represents the undisputed goal of philosophers. A bondage between knowledge and certainty has been established, which we find also in the Cartesian thoughts, after centuries. In Cartesian philosophy we find that Descartes takes "cogito ergo sum" as the foundation of philosophical investigation, a knowledge that is acquired by intuition and sanctioned by criteria of truth, in terms of vividness and distinctness. Formulated in this way the task of philosopher has been established to overcome subjective prejudice and to subdue any flights of fancy by imposing the constraints of reason according to the canons of logic and in conformity to the demands of objectivity. We all believe that in order to know the world, which we consider as external to

ourselves and also independent for its existence, we need a flawless method for acquiring the accurate knowledge that depicts the real world. This Cartesian view is, indeed an outcome of Platonic distinction between Knowledge and Opinion, Reality and its imitation. The significance and necessity of such a distinction is felt by us as obvious. If we look at the series of theories, we will see that the dualism of Object and Subject is associated with a number of oppositions including that of Universality and Particularity, Necessity and Contingency and also between Fact and Value, Reason and Emotion and many others. Moreover, somehow, we hardly dishonour objectivity in favour of Subjectivity.

The question has been raised by the feminists regarding the actual implication and significance of the notion of objectivity. If we look at the Cartesian view, we find that the ideal knower means one who is self-reflected, impartial, unbiased and neutral. On the other hand, the ideal object of knowledge is assumed to be timeless, unchanging and a-historical. The very notion of subject has been considered to be accidental, irrelevant and contingent and not at all worthy to be the prime point of the epistemological discourse. Those who have rejected these presumptions of Epistemology as well as of Philosophy include Feminists.

Feminist epistemology is a re-examination of the subject matter and methods of epistemology. Feminist epistemology can be described as being concerned with the way in which gender influences our concept of knowledge and practices of inquiry and justification of epistemology along with its theories. Feminist epistemology emphasizes how important ethical and political values are in shaping epistemic practices, and interpretations of evidence. Feminist epistemology studies how gender influences our understanding of knowledge, justification and theory of knowledge. It describes how knowledge and justification, in traditional pattern of thought opens the way to disadvantage women. Thinkers of feminist epistemology claim that traditional ideas as well as practices of knowledge discriminate women by preventing them from taking part in theorising and also reinforce gender discrimination strategically.

The central idea of feminist epistemology is that knowledge reflects the particular perspectives of a theory. The main interest of feminist philosophers is how gender stereotypes define knowing subjects. They approach this interest from three different perspectives: feminist standpoint theory, feminist post-modernism and feminist empiricism. Standpoint theory defines a specific social perspective as epistemologically privileged. Feminist postmodernism emphasizes the instability of the social identity and challenges the essentialist approach and their objective point of view. Empiricism focuses on combining the main ideas of feminism and their observations to prove feministic theories through evidence. In this paper I intend to discuss feminist challenge regarding the notion of objectivity, which is one of the central notions of non-feminist epistemological discourse. They argue that even scientific knowledge which is considered to be the paradigm of objective thoughts is neither impartial nor objective but reflects the interests of the knower. They hold that differences of individuals, such as cultural and social differences must be accounted into the epistemological investigations. The reason is that subjects cannot be identical and their differences should not be ignored as superfluous to the similarity among them as rational agent. If we consider the particular position of the knower with importance then the total conventional enterprise must be included into consideration and be questioned. The fundamental concern of this paper is to illustrate how the notion of gender has been used by the feminists to challenge traditional notion of objectivity.

### **The Question of Objectivity**

Somehow traditional philosophy has convinced that objective knowledge is the goal of philosophy as well as of science. We all know that mathematics provides a model for Descartes. All the theories and researches employ the methods in such a way that they can rule out any kind of contingency, as it is taken for granted that contingency is the mark of

falsity or error. Any kind of discrimination has been ruled out from the epistemological concern, if we look at a knower or the subject in the realm of conventional epistemological theories. Subjectivity is eliminated from the discourse to reach the goal as objective. The incompatible relation between Fact and Value is an obvious outcome of this epistemic presupposition. Feminists raise the question that is this notion of objectivity full-proof? Harding<sup>2</sup> argues that objectivity as employed by the philosophers is not rigorous enough as a rule. He says, "The problem with the conventional conception of objectivity is not that it is too rigorous or too objectifying,.....but that it is not rigorous or objectifying enough; it is too weak to accomplish even the goals for which it has been designed "<sup>3</sup> This implies that the fundamental claim of feminism is that knowledge is socially situated and that socio-political position of women or marginalized and under privileged group of society can become the sites of epistemic privilege and productive starting point of epistemic enquiry. They also believe that this may result into more unbiased impartial theory of epistemology and we will be able to visualize the biased notions of traditional theories which were kept hidden under social infrastructure of thinking pattern. The central tenets of feminist standpoint theory include the idea that social and historical location of an agent contributes in understanding knowledge and its theories. They refuse to define an agent as an abstraction of her role and situation. The influence of social location in epistemic content as well as in epistemic capacity can be felt throughout all of our epistemic practices, not only regarding the way of understanding the world external to the agent but also to the way that the world is presented in our experience. They challenge the traditional idea of objectivity in epistemic discourse and claim that socially situated knowledge can be properly objective. We need to redefine the idea of objectivity.

### **Feminist reaction against the idea of Objectivity**

Feminist Epistemology is an examination which denies the so-called idea of objectivity and in terms of methodology of Philosophical thinking they offer the inclusion of socio-political position and experience of women in it. They claim that this is not to be understood as subjective approach that threatens objectivity. Sandra Harding, a feminist philosopher states that the goal of this theory is to show how a socio-political disadvantage can be turned into an epistemic, scientific and political advantage which is a mark of traditional concept of objectivity.

Let us recall Descartes' idea of *Cogito ergo sum*. Here the subject is not centred on '**I think**', or on 'I exist', or on doubt made prior to this knowledge but radically decentred by the alteration of the other. It is no longer the question of discovering **my** existence, **my** thinking but discovering **me** as having already been in relation to others, as same with others. Running towards the grip of universality, essentiality and objectivity we have lost our own identity. Deleuze says that '*I think*' is a very general representation of all the thinking faculties, such as, conceiving, judging, imagining, perceiving and more and the generalization has dropped the actual rigor of those faculties. The very notion of dualism which is the result of Cartesian epistemological foundation is a loophole of objectivity and that needs to be corrected. It is the pervasive model of binary opposition which is reflected in the social phenomenon of opposition between man and woman. In this way feminist ideas turn from descriptive analysis of traditional philosophical theories of knowledge to normative perspective in a great extent. They oppose to this model of thinking objectivity in terms of universality as the structure of theorizing.

In the Hobbesian theory of law and order, which is based on a dualist ontology and assumes that the function of political order consists of overseeing human affects and dispositions, the separation of two distinct planes is to be resisted by feminists, as Spinoza does. For Hobbes, culture and nature stands in two different planes. The state of nature is lawless. Human being, by nature, tends to be lawless and the relation among them degenerates into "war all against all". Hence the need of a contract which satisfies the interest



of all, imposed by a sovereign authority outside, sanctioned by God as transcendent, and becomes obvious. Spinoza, on the contrary, does not indulge nature as separated and does not admit the transcendence. He argues against the dualism between nature and culture or body and mind. Feminist like Gilles Deleuze also maintains that there can be no dualism between the two planes of “transcendent organisation and immanent consistence”. Deleuze finds some inspiring points in the theory of Monism of Spinoza, in this respect. Spinoza observes that there is one substance which is God and also Nature and human being is a mode of attributes of nature -- thought and extension. On Spinoza’s view human body is not particularly privileged over other bodies. Deleuze says, a body can be anything; it can be an animal, a body of sound, a mind or an idea, it can be a linguistic corpus, a social body, a collectivity. Human freedom, for Spinoza, is essentially a matter of selecting encounters that promote pleasure rather than sad affects. This view facilitates the rethinking of the role of sex and gender and also reconstructs human being as dynamic and interconnected whole rather than stereotyped rational entity, as Spinoza understands body as a nexus of variable interconnections.

If we come again to the point of objectivity as challenged by feminists, we can say that there is indeed a legitimate point against the conventional epistemological idea of objectivity. Not only have that feminists suggested to engage more women in researches of science and philosophy to sustain epistemological objectivity. Certainly, this will add a better clarity in the discourse of knowledge. Naturally this outlook has been strengthened and expanded into their ethical concern. According to feminist outlook reason may play a vital part in ethical decision making, but it is not and cannot be the sole authority of ethical concern. Here too, the role of gender and other relevant information about the person has been ignored in traditional thoughts. Consequently, the abstract idea of justice may not be adequate as the prime ethical ideal. If we assume that in the moral sphere rational agents are essentially or at least potentially identical to one another, and as knowing agents they are ideally impartial then the differences of social situation of knowing agents, such as gender roles can play no relevant part in different processes of reasoning that individuals may follow while responding to ethical problems. Therefore, the values we practice being the outcome of our epistemic presuppositions are questioned by feminists. They try to explore a new dimension of ethical thinking considering the ideal of womanhood as a central point of discussion which is going to be explored in the concluding part of my discussion.

Here I would like to mention again the thoughts and ideas of Sandra Harding who contributes a lot in reshaping the idea of objectivity and the entire epistemological enterprise. Harding argues that knowledge is socially situated. In other words, knowing agents affect what we can know. Specifically, Harding agrees with the outcome of **spontaneous feminist empiricist’s** experiments that there is dependency of research results to the social situation of the researchers. Harding defines the original *spontaneous feminist empiricism* as the ‘spontaneous consciousness’ of feminist researchers in biology and social sciences who were trying to explain what was and wasn’t different about their research process in comparison with the standard procedures in their field. Harding, not being ideologically aligned with the spontaneous feminist empiricist, claims that research done by spontaneous feminist empiricists was often able to produce less partial and distorted results than research done by males. Harding therefore argues that the knowledge that these feminist empiricists were able to produce was scientifically superior to that of their counterparts, precisely because of the feminist’s socially situated standpoint. Hence the feminist endeavour of spotting andocentric assumptions in the production of knowledge is simply “good science” and can help to alter the older idea of objectivity as well as to achieve maximum objectivity. Objectivity, for Harding, seems to be more attainable if people are aware of their own social situation. Harding criticizes the concept of neutral objectivity. She claims that the system within which female empiricists are operating is one that lacks space and methods for researchers to reflect on

their social situation, leaving them blind to their inherent biases. How then can people identify their own biases? Harding argues that marginalized groups have an advantage over others in spotting biases. She points out from standpoint epistemology in the production of knowledge to Marxism in politics with its production of goods by the marginalized workers. She argues that dominant groups are so engrossed in their dominance and power that they are blind to their own assumptions. For example, the Marx has seen the worker to be acutely aware of the owner's assumptions and biases. Similarly, according to Harding, feminist researchers would be similarly aware of biases in the scientific community since the scientific community has historically been dominated by men and andocentric assumptions. The matter is same in the sphere is philosophical presuppositions and theories. For Harding, having women in science is and philosophy is helpful to some extent, but ultimately not enough: for feminist standpoint epistemologists the system needs to be changed to incorporate the experiences and thoughts of marginalized groups.

Harding's approach radically differs from a traditional approach to epistemology and thinkers like Descartes who looked solely at the objects of inquiry rather than their own social situation. For Harding, both the researcher and the research subject should be critically examined, because for her a purely objective analysis of the universe by an impartial thinker is a myth. Descartes conceives that he could see the world objectively. Descartes attempted to use *a priori* reasoning to discover universal principles that were, for him, unrelated to any social situation or even the physical world. For Harding knowing self is always connected to own social situation and the physical world and cannot separate ourselves from them.

Harding argues for newer conception of objectivity, but she thinks we have too many biases to see reality as it really is. For Harding, standpoint theory can minimize our biases, though cannot eliminate them completely. The actual endeavour is to change the backdrop of our epistemological thoughts where the idea of objectivity has been the ideal. The newer idea of feminists involves a tune of normative thoughts which was unimaginable in traditional epistemological frame work. She claims that there was a gap between epistemic evidence and theory which is to be filled by our social unbiased outlook and positive values. Thus, the birth of feminist ethics takes place and has got merged in the epistemological theories.

### **Feminist Ethics**

Traditional ethics overrates culturally masculine traits like independence, autonomy, intellect, will, wariness, hierarchy, domination, culture, transcendence, product, asceticism, war, and death, while it underrates culturally feminine traits like interdependence, community, connection, sharing, emotion, body, trust, and absence of hierarchy, nature, immanence, process, joy, peace, and life. Feminist ethics aims to eliminate or at least ameliorate the oppression of any group of people, but most particularly women. The question may crop up that can there be different set of virtues for men and women? Feminists do not rely on traditional value system but nor they formulate any completely different ethical system, they rely on a single unitary moral system for both men and women, which values actual virtue of human life from unbiased outlook and without ignoring female experiences and emotions. Feminist ethics are usually contrasted with ethics of justice, such as Kantian and utilitarian moral theories, which has to be found its original root in the epistemic reformations. Instead of being a theory primarily focused on right action, an ethics of care seeks moral evaluations of relations between persons, and reinterprets both personal and political relations in light of the value of care. I would like to conclude by saying that the new era of civilization can come into reality if and only if the structure of thoughts in science and other observations get changed and gradually the idea of objectivity becomes an open idea to us. This needs to be done from the root. Hence a change in approach is needed, being flexible and open minded, being helpful and supportive rather than being authoritative and dominating can be the way to think and progress philosophically.

## Four Valid Sources of Nyaya Philosophy

### Instrument of Valid Knowledge (Pramana) In Nyāya Epistemology

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**Nyāya (Rule or Method or Logic)** philosophical system is one of the six orthodox (astika) schools of Hindu philosophy. They accept the Vedas as authoritative and the premise that ātman (soul, eternal self) exists. The Nyaya school is based on the Nyaya Sutras, written by Aksapada Gautama in the 2nd Century B.C. Vatsyayana (400 A.D.) closely followed Gautama in interpreting his aphorisms. Gangesa (1200 A.D.) was the founder of the modern Nyaya school known as Navya Nyaya. It is primarily concerned with epistemology and logic, and secondarily with ontology. The Nyaya epistemology deals with the nature of valid knowledge, its instruments, extrinsic validity and invalidity of knowledge, and the tests of truth. Knowledge is the manifestation or apprehension of objects. Valid knowledge is the apprehension of the real character of an object. Invalid knowledge is the apprehension of an object as it is not in its real character. Truth is correspondence of knowledge with reality.

The knower, the known object, the instrument of knowledge, and valid knowledge constitute the reality. The self is the knower, which knows objects through pramanas, acts upon them, and experiences fruits of its actions. Prameya is the object that is known. Pramana is the instrument by means of which the self knows an object. Prama is the valid knowledge of an object. Pramana is the collocation of conditions, which is the immediate antecedent of the production of valid knowledge. **There are four pramanas, viz., perception, inference, comparison and testimony, which generate different kinds of valid knowledge.** Obtaining valid knowledge through these four sources is the only means to gain release from suffering.

#### Perception

Gautama defines perception as the knowledge which is produced by the intercourse of an object with a sense-organ, un-definable, determinate, and in harmony with its object. It is the immediate knowledge produced by the contact of a present object with the external sense-organs, their conjunction with manas, and its conjunction with the self. Valid perception apprehends the real character of an object. Illusion does not apprehend the real nature of its object.

Auditory perception of sound is produced by its inherence in the auditory organ or ether enclosed in the ear-hole. Visual perception of the colour of a jar is produced by the conjunction of the visual organ with the jar in which colour inheres. It is due to united- inherence. The manas is an internal organ. Perception of pleasure, pain, desire, aversion, volition and cognition is produced by the manas in conjunction with the self.

There are two kinds of perception, viz., indeterminate and determinate. The former is un- definable and nameless. The latter is determinate and associated with a name. The ancient Nyaya regards the former as the apprehension of an object as qualified by a substance, quality, action and genus, but devoid of a name, and the latter as the apprehension of it as qualified by these qualifications but associated with a name. But the modern Nyaya regards the former as immediate, simple, non-relational apprehension of an object and its generic nature as unrelated to each other, and the latter as mediate, relational, synthetic apprehension of an object and its generic nature as related to each other. Indeterminate perception is the immediate apprehension of an object and its qualifications unrelated to each

other. It is devoid of subject-predicate-relation. It is inferred from determinate perception as its prior stage.

### **Inference**

Inference is mediate knowledge of an object (e. g., a fire) derived through the medium of the knowledge of a mark (e.g., a smoke) by virtue of the relation of invariable concomitance between them. Inference is based upon the knowledge of vyapti. Inference is called anumana because it is a kind of knowledge (mana) which we get after (anu) some other knowledge or perception. Inference is of two kinds: (i) Inference for oneself and (ii) Inference for others.

The first kind of inference is a psychological process which doesn't require the formal statement of its different members. A person knows the invariable concomitance of smoke with fire by repeated observation. He perceives smoke in a hill, and doubts that a fire may exist there. Then he remembers the invariable concomitance of smoke with fire: 'whatever is smoky is fiery'. From this he infers that 'the hill has a fire'.

The second kind of inference is intended for convincing others. It's a demonstrative inference which consists of the following five members (avayava):

- i. The hill is fiery (pratijna);
- ii. Because it is smoky (hetu);
- iii. Whatever is smoky is fiery, for example, a kitchen (udaharana);
- iv. The hill has smoke which is invariably accompanied by fire (upanaya);
- v. The hill is fiery (nigamana).

The exemplification is the universal proposition which shows the invariable concomitance between the reason and the inferable predicate supported by an example. The upanaya is the application of the universal proposition to a particular instance. The nigamana is the conclusion drawn from the preceding members. There are three terms in the demonstrative inference. The paksa is the subject in which the predicate or inferable object is doubted. The predicate is the object that is inferred in the subject. The hetu is the mark which indicates the presence of the inferable object or predicate. The paksa, the sadhya and the hetu correspond to the minor term, the major term and the middle term of the Aristotelian syllogism. In the example given above 'the hill' is the subject or minor term (paksa), 'fire' is the major term (sadhya) and 'smoke' is the middle term (hetu) or the reason for establishing a relation between the subject and the predicate. The reason is also called the pervaded (vyapya) because it is pervaded by the predicate. The middle term is pervaded by the major term.

### **Comparison**

The third kind of valid cognition is Upamiti and its means is called Upamana. Its knowledge derived from comparison and roughly corresponds to analogy. It has been defined as knowledge of the relation between a word and its denotation. It's produced by the knowledge of resemblance or similarity. For example, a man who has never seen a gavaya or wild cow and doesn't know what it is, is told by a person that a wild cow looks similar to a cow. If the man comes across a wild cow in a forest and recognised it as the wild cow, then his knowledge is due to upamana. The grounds of our knowledge in upamana are a given description of the objects to be known and a perception of their similarity, etc. to the familiar objects mentioned in the description. Upamana is produced by the knowledge of similarity since a man recognizes a wild cow as a 'gavaya' when he perceives its similarity to the cow and remembers the description that 'a gavaya is an animal like a cow.'

## Testimony

Gautama defines testimony as the instruction of a trustworthy person, who has immediate knowledge of the Moral Law, and who is competent to guide others in the performance of their duties and abstention from sins for the attainment of good and the avoidance of evil. Trustworthy persons are those who perceive objects as they exist in their real nature, and communicate their right knowledge to others for their benefit out of compassion for them. Testimony is due to the knowledge of a sentence or words, while perception is due to the sense-object-inter- course, inference, to the knowledge of vyapti, and comparison, to the knowledge of similarity.

Testimony is of two kinds, viz., testimony about perceptible objects and testimony about imperceptible objects. The former objects are found in this world. The latter are found in the next world, such as heaven, hell, transmigration and the like. The modern Naiyayikas divide testimony into two kinds, viz., secular testimony and scriptural testimony. The Vedas are not impersonal but personal compositions of God, the omniscient person, and are therefore valid. The secular testimony of trustworthy persons is valid, while that of untrustworthy persons is invalid. Testimony is expressed in a sentence, which is a combination of words conveying a meaning. Its comprehensibility depends upon certain conditions.

# Untouchability and Human Rights: An Exploration

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## Abstract

A human right is a conceptual device that prioritizes, promotes and protects for all human beings certain values, identities, and abilities necessary for an optimal human existence. Human rights belong to an each and every human being irrespective of his nationality, race, caste, creed, gender, or any other considerations. The system of human rights embodies the vision of a free, equitable and peaceful world. The principle that human rights must be defended has become one of the common phrases of our age. The very first Article of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) clearly mentions: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and right.' But after seventy years of Independence of India, the women usually treated as weaker sex and forced to play secondary role in the society and they often neglected, discriminated and oppressed in our male-dominated society. This scenario highly prominated in the Dalit women section, who are oppressed, exploited, dominated and tortured by the Dalit men as well as other upper caste men of the society. Despite the legislation that makes caste discrimination illegal; the practice of 'untouchability' is widespread and common and affects most of the day-to-day activities of Dalits.

The present paper tries to find out how the human rights of Dalit women are violated and how the physically and mentally tortured with some incidents which are reported by the different agencies. Finally, this paper also endeavours to give some suggestion and recommendations to overcome violations of human rights as well as crime against Dalit women.

**Key words:** human right, dignity, male-dominated society, untouchability, tortured.

## Introduction

Human right is a conceptual device that prioritizes, promotes and protects for all human beings certain values, identities, and abilities necessary for an optimal human existence. Human rights are grounded on the central moral claim that all human beings are born equal in dignity, and thus they belong to an individual simply because of his humanness. Human rights belong to each and every human being irrespective of his nationality, race, caste, creed, gender, or any other consideration. They are neither created by nor can be abrogated by any government. Human rights protect people against torture, undue constraints on their freedom, and guarantee certain liberties. The scope of human rights being wide, constitutions of countries enshrine those basic rights that are necessary for ensuring an adequate human existence. The system of human rights embodies the vision of a free, equitable, and peaceful world. It circumscribes minimum standards in the light oh which individuals and institutions everywhere should people.

The members of so-called downtrodden people are age-long sufferers of social injustice. They support our society with their manual labour but general people considered them as unclean and untouchable. Dalits are still the victims of separatism. This is an additional insult to the injury because they already suffer from poverty and illiteracy. Oppression and untouchability have become the part and parcel of these Dalit people. We may say that they are slaves in disguise and therefore face extreme humiliation. They have no right to enter a village and they are forced to live in the outskirts. Abolition of untouchability just a paper work. It cannot be translated into practice until and unless the so-called higher caste people discard their prejudices extending the hands of sympathy towards these lesser children

of God. India is secular only by name and not by action. We have gained political independence seventy years back but still the women community is considered as a less privileged class. We may call them second class citizen of the society. They are humiliated, separated from the main stream of the society and often subdued. This is very much true in case of the Dalit women who are the victims of exploitation, domination and oppression of both the Dalit men and the upper caste men of the society.

The present paper endeavours to draw out how the Dalit women face the violation of human rights every day and how they are molested in every aspect of their lives from different corners of the society. Some suggestions and recommendations to surpass this inhuman violation of human rights are offered here. The crimes against Dalit women should be taken action in another way because they have neither money nor education to go to the court by themselves.

Out of the three Sections dealt here the first Section concerns with a bird's eye view of the characteristics of untouchability, the development of the concept of human rights and the right connotation of the term 'Dalit'. Section II deals with the utter violation of human rights regarding the Dalit women along with some cases of molestation which are reported by different agencies. Section III consists of few suggestions and recommendations to end the violation of human rights in the form of crimes against Dalit women.

### **Section: I**

A bird's eye view of the characteristics of untouchability

The caste system which is the source of untouchability was severely fought by Babasaheb Ambedkar who himself was a Dalit. Varna system is the Indian rendering of the caste system. Four Varnas – Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishya and Shudras got the seal of recognition. The people of each Varna are associated with particular activities in the society. The Brahmin were generally priests, the Kshatriyas were responsible for protecting the country and conquering other countries. The Vaishyas were trades-men, but often they used to cultivate land also. The Shudras were physical labourers. There were more divisions of the untouchable community. These supposed to be lower caste and were considered to be impure and even the cause of social pollution. Ambedkar was the pioneer of the movement of the Dalits in protest of their humiliation. According to Ambedkar, "Untouchability is a notion of defilement, pollution, contamination and the ways and means of getting rid of that defilement."**[1]** Untouchability is a form of alienation grounded on the idea that the touch of their bodies would be a definite source of pollution which must be avoided at any cost.

In the age-old religious books there are innumerable allusions to the basic human rights. Though they took different name at that time. The origin of the notion was

Magna Carta in 1215. It was originally an appeal took prey to the king to concede rights to the specific sections of the people. But the contents had no universal application or direct reference to common people's fundamental freedom.

We heard the term 'human rights' in the United States Declaration of Independence in 1776, when the US Constitution held a Bill of Rights. The French Revolution was the source of the Declaration of Rights of Man Citizens in 1789. Again in 1929 Institute of International Law USA published a 'Declaration of Rights and Duties'. In 1945 a law was passed by the Inter-American Conference seeking the formation of an international forum for the development of human rights throughout the world. **[2]**

The inhuman oppression on political and ethnic minorities by the Axis throughout the Second World War resulted in the demand for a world order for the advancement of respect and observance of human rights and basic freedom for all human beings. The Charter of the

United Nations in its very Preamble declared: '...To achieve International Cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character and in promoting and encouraging respect for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion...'. In 1948 the United Nations proclaimed Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The word 'dalit' literally means poor and oppressed people. But it has acquired a new cultural context which implies 'those who have been broken down by those above them in a deliberate, systematic and active way.' [3] The term Dalit is a recent innovation. It refers to the underprivileged people. They generally considered being at the nadir of the Indian human society. They bear the insult of traditional untouchability century after century.

## **Section: II**

Women have been deliberately subdued throughout the ages. Deprivation of women community can be considered from the standpoint of the violation of human rights and the crime also. Every human being in this world is eligible to have basic rights irrespective of any gender bias, but in case of women and especially for Dalit women in particular this right is only a paper works, it is not translated into action. They are always considered as the second class citizens. Dalit women are supposed to be greater Dalit among Dalits. The condition of Dalit women is more vulnerable than non-dalit women. They are as if segregated from the main stream of the society. They are exposed to every mal-treatment. They are supposed to be not eligible to have equal rights to their male counterparts.

Now I am narrating some cases which reflect the burning problems that Dalit women have been facing every day.

CASE: 1 In Rajasthan, when a girl was working with her mother on field, she was dragged and then raped by a nearby villager. Though the victim's brother was nearby and he tried to save her, the accused manage to escape on bike. The disturbing part is, when the family went to police for filing complaint, police beat the girl and recorded the statement that the accuse did not raped her and she had sexual relationship with her brother. [4] These acts of police constantly raise questions in mind whether the law enforcement mechanism can be trusted.

Accorded to 2010 statistics, in every week, 21 Dalit women are being raped and 13 Dalits are murdered. The crime against Dalits is increasing since 2000 [5]. According to survey, in 2003, there were 1089 cases of Dalit women being raped by Dalit men while it increased to 1346 in 2009 [6]. The conviction rate in case of Dalit atrocity is just 5.3% in 2006 [7].

CASE: 2 Dalit woman sexually abused, cheated and burnt alive, in Bihar. The victim was sexually abused for a long period of time, then raped and burnt alive. The Indira AwasYojona funds allotted to a Dalit woman were taken away by a policeman as a loan, and when she demanded it back, what followed was a horrific series of atrocities. The victim was raped in front of her family and then burnt alive.

CASE: 3 In Gujrat, a Dalit woman has been elected in the Panchayat election as a member. From the date of elected member her journey was not so easy, because the Sarpanch and the upper Sarpanch of the village asked her not to come to the

Panchayat as she was a Dalit woman. She was abused in a public place in presence of all members as she raised the demand for the construction of road going towards the Dalit burial ground. GJ-02 has filed a complaint against the village head under the SC/ST POA act but the accused were arrested and released on bail after 24 hrs. The village head is yet not suspended for caste discrimination.



**CASE: 4** In Hariyana a Dalit girl was gang raped and threatened; a couple of days later, her mother gang raped and murdered.

**CASE: 5** In Odisha, a Dalit girl sexually abused, brutally attacked and left to die.

As per the report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the crime against Dalit women has been registered for three years.

| Year | No. of crimes | Increase | % of increase |
|------|---------------|----------|---------------|
| 2012 | 33,655        |          |               |
| 2013 | 39,408        | 5,753    | 17.1%         |
| 2014 | 47,064        | 7,656    | 19.5%         |

The table shows that crime against Dalit women has been increasing at a galloping rate.

Now I am cite a few lines from the research work of Vijoyalakshmi Mukherjee (in translation).

“From the ancient time torture upon the tribal has been going on, as if they have the only right in having oppression, exploitation and beggar like treatment. The so-called upper class people call them uncivilized and barbaric.

Hunger, poverty, pangs of womanhood of the tribals has major come to the limelight. They are tongue-tied due to the social pressure. The civilized society fixes their requirements. They are not allowed to express their opinion. They are denied of education, along with health and hygiene. They are not even given the chance of knowing the method of birth control because they supply manual labour to the upper class people. Their honour as human beings and self-respect are utterly neglected.” [8]

### **Section: III**

### **Conclusion**

The various legal provisions and laws were framed by the Government for the protection of Dalit women. Such as:

1. Article 14 of India’s constitution ensures by providing that: “The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.”
2. Article 15(1) provides that the “State shall not discriminate against any citizen only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.”
3. Article 16(1) and 16(2) prohibit discrimination in general, and gender discrimination in matter of public employment.
4. Article 15(3) provides that the state is free to make “any special provision for women and children.”

In spite of the above protection Articles in our constitution, the crime against Dalit women has been increased day to day and the accused has not been punished for their commitment of crime.

### **Suggestions and Recommendations**

However, on the account of the above discussion, I would like to offer some suggestions and recommendations which might help to halt the violation of human rights of Dalit women.

- (a) Conscious rising among the Dalit women.
- (b) Abolish 'labeling approach'—change the the mindset of the higher castes.
- (c) Implement the legal provisions without any fear or favour.
- (d) Coordination between the central and state governments while working out legal provisions.
- (e) States must be powerful and should not remain as an interventionist agency.
- (f) Penalize the village which observe social boycott against Dalit people.
- (g) Punish the people severely who use legal provisions to settle their personal scores, and
- (h) Sensitize the people to the norms and values of the human rights movement.

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# **Borderless World: A Myth or a Reality?**

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## **What is Borderless World?**

BORDERLESS World is nothing but a UNITED WORLD where people will be having some OPINIONS and MOTTO. They will not fight for anything and will be maintaining PEACE and HARMONY. From ancient time the borders were being made and which cannot be easily broken. It started with a HOUSE, VILLAGE, CITY, STATE, COUNTRY, CONTINENT and finally a WORLD. Earlier people used to live in JOINT FAMILY whereas now they prefer to live in a NUCLEAR FAMILY because they forgot the DICTIONARY MEANING of the so-called word COMPROMISE. BARTER SYSTEM started serving this World but couldn't last for long and hence was replaced by a term MONEY wherein APPROPRIATE MEASUREMENT could be done for the things which they were supposed to exchange. SOCIAL CLASS came into existence defining UPPER CLASS, MIDDLE CLASS and LOWER CLASS. CASTE, CREED and RELIGION came into existence discriminating people. Now, discrimination is also divided into parts NORTH-SOUTH-WEST-EAST whereas sub parts are divided into states and cities. POLITICIANS who are actually INSANE, takes major advantage and are held responsible for creating BORDER. BORDERLESS WORLD AS A REALITY: Borderless World will reduce the inequality. It will take humans to next level to achieve prosperity. It will have very big impact and many problems related with borders and wars between countries will be over by just removing all borders. If all humans unitedly work towards wellness of human species without wasting time in resolving meagre issues. Resources can be better utilised and available for betterment of humanity. All mobility restrictions should be removed because they are by definition, associated with inequality. If we think for humanity, peaceful life, togetherness, for our upcoming future, it will help us to get borderless World. If we want to be in this universe, we all need to come together and be like a family. This will save our money also because we do not need to spend our money for protection of border, don't need money to spend on armament. We can use these money for our better future, to get develop, to provide basic need to the people and many good things we can also do for the society.

## **Borderless World as a Myth**

If we think about our need, our freedom, our religion means if we only think for our benefit. It will not possible that we should get borderless World. Entry restrictions are created by states for many reasons, and one of them is to defend the privilege of citizens relative to those living in other countries. Europe has tried to remove entry restriction within countries of European union because people there have some economic status so it is possible. If they remove border, poor countries as well as whole population will enter their country and destroy the infrastructure that have developed over years. Australia has a social assistance program. By social assistance we mean pension programs, government helps, etc. If borders are removed then population density in developed countries will rise so much that it will impact their infrastructure which has been built for lesser population. It will also impact the food availability.

## **In my opinion: Yes, Borderless World Can be a Reality Not a Myth:**

Imagine the entire World under single power without any wars, no need to worry about political disputes, peace can flow everywhere, even if some evil-minded people dislikes, it is not going to be a problem because majority human beings need a World with peace, love, kindness without wars, disputes, poverty, evilness, terrorism, etc. If humans really believe in borderless World they should first come up with uniform law, education and social program standards across globe then only we can achieve the borderless World.

Therefore, When Can We Start Thinking of Creating a Borderless World?

- The day when people will start thinking of others leaving their selfishness behind.
- The day when every human being has only one single motto and opinion.
- The day when caste, creed and religion including racism comes to an end.
- The day when people in this World start teaching each other equally leaving their social class behind.
- The day when weapons will be disposed and the disposed and the terrorists will surrender.
- The day when corruption will be ended.
- Last but not the least, the day when you and I becomes we and yours and mine becomes ours.

*The End*

