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Subjectivity in *Mahabharata*: In the Light of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*.

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The issue of subjectivity is of paramount importance in the literary and critical space. Self or subjectivity, as a critical term, has been interpreted by different theorists and scholars in various ways. The concept of subjectivity cannot be associated with a single theorist. Many theorists, thinkers, intellectuals and scholars have made their contribution to this ever growing horizon of concept of subjectivity. Nick Mansfield in his book *Subjectivity* has defined the term as follows:

“ ‘Subjectivity’ refers.... to an abstract or general principle that defies our separation into distinct selves and that encourages abstract or general us to imagine that, or simply helps us to understand why, our interior lives inevitably seem to involve other people, either as objects of need, desire and interest or as necessary sharers of common experience”.(3)

Rene Descartes through his famous formula *cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am) has in a way initiated the discussion on the idea of subjectivity. According to him it is a conscious process of observation, logic and analysis which aims at finding an objective truth. Descartes has given much importance to the conscious process thought. He states that conscious is a general awareness and works on two principles. Firstly as an image of self that works as a ground of knowledge and experience and secondly as a rational faculty used to order the world.

Rousseau in his works like *The Social Contract* and *Confessions* has tried to analyze the idea of self. According to Rousseau 'He' as an individual is most important and is in itself a complete and inclusive phenomenon. What matters most is uniqueness which is provided by massive and dynamic unity. Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* states that first and foremost of all things is simple observation. He opines that from simple observations we create representations through active involvement of mind. These representations become the things to think about. He further states that to perceive anything something must be there. 'I' at the heart of 'I Think' is always in all consciousness is one and the same. Since all experiences are connected to this thinking self, they all appear to us happening to a single being. So in all everything in the world must cross the threshold of thinking 'I'. In order to be in any contact with world we must have an awareness of our selves. "The self, then, is the feeling of connection or consistency between all your perceptions, the collection point of your thoughts". (19)

According to Heidegger, on the basis of interiority from the world no simple separation can be done. He says that existence is constituted by the fact that it is present in the world and belongs to it. Heidegger believes in the relationship of care where we are concerned about the world and our experiences conjoin us to the world. Subject is a philosophical category of thought that arose at a certain point in history and that will be supplanted by more convincing models of what the human experience of world is like.

Subject according to Sigmund Freud is produced in conjunction with specific set of familial and social relations dominant in culture. Freud has challenged the idea of subjectivity as a model of personal and spiritual life as a privileged essence. Subjects are not born into an undefined world rather the sphere we enter is already structured according to cultural traditions and civil a civil politics laden with significances and imperatives with which we must deal. Subjectivity consists of potentially violent energies and conflicts, where negative feelings do not merely lapse from conscious mind but where they are kept in place by a force against which they constantly struggle. Freud opines that all aspects of human behaviour are result of intense, plural and complex unconscious influences. But Julia Kristeva contradicts this view point and says that "unconscious material is not stored away, but hovers on the very fringes of the subject's self- definition. This definition in turn is not complete."(81)

Foucault defines subjectivity as a mode of social organization and administration. Relations of power and subordination are present everywhere in society. The normal and abnormal behaviours are derived from discourse of truth and knowledge. The individual is an effect of power. An anonymous and impersonal power operates the moments of our lives. Although power and knowledge works at the level of subject but at the same time it is at the level of subject that these two can be resisted.

The western schools of thought make a distinction between material body and soul/mind and regard them as completely different entities. On the other hand, the Yogic tradition has created a totally different kind of dualism where mind and soul are seen as distinct from each other. Edwin F. Bryant in his book *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, points out this difference:

Yoga differs from most comparable western schools of dualism by regarding not just the physical body but also the mind, ego, and all cognitive functions as belonging to the realm of inert matter.... The dualism fundamental to Platonic or Aristotelian thought, or to do Paul or Augustine, is not at all dualism of Yoga.... Perhaps Descartes most famously represents the generic Western notions of dualism between self and body in his *Meditations*: The self thinks and lacks extension, the body is unthinking and extended. In other words, there are two types of realities in classical western dualism: physical reality, which is extended in space and empirically perceivable and mental reality, which does not have spatial extension and is not empirically perceivable but private. (*xlvi-xlvi*)

Bryant further points out:

In the Yoga tradition, the dualism is not between the material body and the physical reality on one hand, and the mental reality characterized by the thought on the other, but between pure awareness and all objects of awareness ---whether these objects are physical and extended, or internal and nonextended. In other words, in Sankhya and Yoga, thought, feeling, emotion, memory, etc., are as material or physical as the visible ingredients of empirical world. (*xlvi*)S. Radhakrishnan in his book *Indian*

Philosophy has tried to highlight the Indian philosophical thought process. He points out that according to the Indian thought the subject does not change with the conditions. The truth of universal mobility is immobile being. Becoming is a lapse from being as ignorance is from the knowledge. Subject and object are just moments, they are conditions of concrete world, me is not only through the other but also a part of other and a other in itself.

Study of yoga has exerted influence over the spheres of philosophy and theology. Besides these two, it has also made a strong impact on psychology as well. The prime focus of *Yoga Sutras* is the realization of *Purusa* – a term used to refer to innermost self of an individual.

Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* discusses the techniques to achieve the state of *purusa*. The various stages of journey towards realization of *purusa* are also explained by Patanjali.

Patanjali states that mind is a different entity from soul, the former rests on seat of ignorance while the latter in its purest form is free, indifferent, a spectator and inactive. In *Mahabharata* many references have been made to differences between Sankhya and Yogic traditions. Sankhya tradition provides theoretical and also metaphysical ways to reach the stage of pure consciousness while Yoga provides techniques and practice for the realization of *purusa*. But to a great extent both share the same metaphysical presuppositions. In *Yoga Sutras*, Patanjali, while explaining the functioning of mind says that all kinds of activities performed and carried out by mind are in reality products of *prakriti* (matter) and are completely distinct from *purusa* (self). Both mind and body are unconscious and are useless without the presence of *purusa* which constitutes the true conscious or is a pure conscious in itself. In order to realize this state of pure consciousness “thought must be stilled and consciousness extracted from its embroilment with mind and its incessant thinking nature” (Bryant *liv*).

Mind itself is incapable of consciousness but due to its animated nature it misidentifies itself with consciousness. This misidentification is the source of ignorance and is an obstacle towards the realization of pure consciousness. Practice of yogic techniques aims at preventing the mind from getting entangled into web of ignorance, so that true self can be realized. The mind concentrates its faculties towards the

manifestations of the *prakriti*. Mind's ignorance is an outcome of imbalance in the ratio of the three *gunas*: *tamas*, *rajas*, *sattva*. Yoga meditation (eight limbs) aims at balancing the ratio of the *gunas*. Through meditation mind can reach maximum potential of its *prakritic* nature. When thoughts engulfed with traces of *tamas* and *rajas* are stilled, the ratio of *sattva guna* is maximized in proportion which helps the mind in attaining the state of intelligence which further helps it in proper identification of *purusa*. The nature of *sattva* is discriminating and is capable of defining the distinction between *purusa* and *prakriti* but distraction by other two *gunas* can hinder its identification capabilities.

The connection between *purusa* and *prakriti* is provided by mind. Mind creates illusions which veil the conscious. When directed towards some object mind generates five types of focuses: wondering, confused, distracted, concentrated, and restrained. Out of these five the last two i.e. concentration and restrain help in the attainment of *Samadhi* stage. At this stage thoughts are stilled and pure consciousness is revealed. Intelligence is a stage at which mind can reach by stilling of thoughts. Intelligence or *buddhi* in yogic terms is stage of mind's awareness and knowledge also constitutes the part of *buddhi*. Thus knowledge is faculty of mind and is not an aspect of soul or *purusa*. But pure consciousness can be revealed or realized only through advent of knowledge. The first interface between mind and soul is intelligence.

There are five types of *vrttis* (cognitive act performed by mind): right knowledge, error, imagination, sleep and memory. Mind's actual working is under the scope of these *vrttis*.

Parmana (right knowledge) is the foremost of the *vrttis*. It is a valid knowledge of the object and can be experienced through *pratyaska* sense perception. The second way of obtaining the valid knowledge is *anumana* (assumption). The objects of particular categories share similarity of qualities with the other objects in the same category. There is an invariable relation between the absolute and the inferred object. Thus this relationship helps in comprehending the valid knowledge. But even assumption is dependent on sensory organs. So the foremost for obtaining valid knowledge is sense perception.

Error is outcome of false knowledge. It stems out of incorrect apprehension of the object. It is superimposition of wrong knowledge. It also constitute the essential part of five *klesas*: ignorance, ego, attachment, aversion and clinging to life. The third *vrtti*:

vikalpa imagination forms an important aspect of Patanjali's concept of subjectivity. it is "metaphor, words or expressions that do not corresponds to any actual physical reality, but are understood in common parlance" (39). While referring to the difference between *Vikalpa* and previous two *vrttis* Bryant says: Right knowledge corresponds to accurate knowledge of an actual objective reality, recognized as such by others, and error corresponds to a misinterpretation or misunderstanding of something, and therefore it is perceived as an error by other people who can see the actual nature of the misunderstood object. *Vikalpa*, on the other hand, while, like error, referring to an object that lacks an actual objective physical reality, yet, unlike the *vrtti* of error but like the *vrtti* of right knowledge, is not based on an error of judgment and is intelligible to other people in practice, producing a *vrtti* impression in the mind of the listener without being perceived as an error or attracting any attention. It thus paradoxically represents a meaningful expression that yet has no actual in the real world (40).

The fourth *vrtti*: *Nidra* (sleep) refers to the conditions of mind during sleep. The three *gunas* have their impact on the mind in the sleep. According to their nature these *gunas* condition mind in the sleep and their impact can be felt on awakening. The fifth and last *vrtti* is *Smrithi* (memory). It is retention of object of experience. The object that is experienced forms a *samskara*, in the mind. Through sense organs, mind forms an expression of the object called a *pratyaya*. Memory is retrieval of these *pratyayas*. It is "reactivation of sense objects that one has experienced and recognized in the past" (Bryant 44)

To understand what *purusa* is ? it is important to know what *purusa* is not. It is often mistaken that consciousness is something possessed or owned by *purusa*. *Purusa* is consciousness. It is a state of pure consciousness. *Purusa* is not mind. Mind has its functions and can be recognized through its functioning. But with stilling of thought process mind's misidentification can be cured. When mind starts focusing on its own cognizing power, the awareness becomes aware of the mind and its capacity as an instrument of knowledge. When mind enters the complete state of inactivity it opens up the space for *purusa*'s self realization. "When there are no objects to detain its awareness *purusa* has no alternative but to be self aware" (72).

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