

## **Chapter – 5**

### **Conclusion**

#### **5.1. Ethics and the Critique of Reason**

Ethics as the possibility of reflective understanding of different moral claims and domains is the prime concern and premise of the study. As Karl Otto Apel says the delimitation of conventional morals is in their restriction to the small/narrow areas or space of concern: Conventional morals in all peoples and cultures are restricted to human relations in small groups or at the most, to the national role-playing. Hence, Apel appeals for a macro ethics as a stage qualitatively beyond the micro and meso ethics, ethics at the level of small groups and ethics at the national level respectively. Apel points out in his discussion the new macro level ethical issues like environmental hazards, developing countries/third world, the nature within human beings etc. He indicates the shape of the planetary macro ethics as follows: “What we need today is indeed a universally valid ethics for the whole of humankind; but this does not mean that we need an ethics that would prescribe a uniform style of the good life for all individuals or for all the different socio-cultural forms of life. To the contrary: we can accept and even oblige ourselves to protect the pluralism of individual forms of life as long as it is guaranteed (warranted) that a universally valid ethics of equal rights and of equal co-responsibility for the solving of the common problems of humankind is respected in each single form of life’<sup>1</sup>.

‘Reason has been defined as the application of logical principles to the available evidence. While the principles of reason / logic are certain, the

conclusions one obtains from them are only as certain as the underlying assumptions, which is why science is rarely, if ever, absolutely certain (though in many cases, its theories are certain to a very high degree of probability)<sup>2</sup>. The present study presumes that over and above this ‘modernity-specific’ concept of Reason, there was always an effort to equate Reason with Knowledge. Critique of Reason, as a result, assumes the present study, addresses the universal as well as the ultimate claims of knowledge, which however is culture specific.

Just as Ethics becomes a reflective exercise for recognizing contextual moralities, Reason becomes an effort to mediate local knowledge with its universal claim. Therefore, the prime concern of the study assumes a transference from ethics and critique of Reason to the Ethics of Critique of Reason. It, the study thinks that highlights ethics of critique of Reason in the sense assumed here foregrounds an ethical domain as that which presupposes Reason.

## **5.2. Ethics of Critique of Reason – The Path Traversed**

Firstly, the study discusses Nāgārjuna’s dialectical concept of *sūnyatā* that he attains in the nature of critique of metaphysics which shows that how *sūnyatā* as a method and tool of challenging metaphysical constructs of levels of reality behind the link between *prajñā* and *karuṇā*. It, thus, reconstruct the relation between *sūnyatā*, *prajñā* and *karuṇā* in Nāgārjuna’s thought in order to highlight that the critique of Reason leaves behind realm of a critiqued knowledge which acts as *Karuṇā*.

Secondly, the critique of Reason in Kant, makes it move from the critique of pure reason to the practical reason to create a horizon of meaning that

presupposes the moral domain along with the concept of God and freedom. In Kant, the critique of reason becomes the critique of a sphere beyond enlightenment. It paves the way for a critical trajectory to understand reason as a metaphysical tool of practical reason that which redeems the moral domain and releases the ethics of critique of reason.

Thirdly, discusses the critique of reason and its ethical foreground in Jürgen Habermas's theory by drawing the story of his critical theory and the way it overcomes the critical theories of Marxist orthodoxy and the Frankfurt School respectively. It draws attention to the dynamics of Habermas' critical theory and his Critique of Reason which presupposes a communicative ethics which houses decentred reason as communicative reason in its discourse theory of ethics and the post-metaphysical critique of Reason.

Fourthly, the study emphasizes the linking logic that aligns critiqued reason with decentred reason on the one side and critiqued *prajñā* as knowledge/ understanding, and *karuṇā* on the other. In other words, it associates the decentred concept of knowledge with understanding. It states that in Nāgārjuna, *prajñā* and *karuṇā* has been mediated with *sūnyatā*. Therefore, critiqued knowledge *prajñā*/consciousness becomes *sūnyatā* to highlight *karuṇā* as understanding and finally *karuṇā* as 'understanding knowledge or knowledge as understanding'. In Kant, critiqued pure reason becomes practical reason which engenders knowledge as morality and moral knowledge as understanding. Habermas' critical theory makes decentred communicative reason as knowledge which appraises communicative action, understanding.

### 5.3. Findings of the Study- Concluding Comments

The concluding hints of the study become more alive in the context of the concept of Interculturality, Intercultural and Cross-cultural hermeneutics of the relation between Ethics and Reason. Interculturality, Intercultural and Cross-cultural hermeneutics, in general defines it as evoking the interaction between cultures, where the agents of a particular culture recognize and accept the reciprocity of the other's culture. While the concept of “multiculturalism” means mainly a request for cultural identity and respect for cultural difference, “Interculturality” involves a communicative and ethical commitment to interact with and understand the other cultures to dialogically modify one’s own culture<sup>3</sup>.

Aligned with the above mentioned ideal of Interculturality, Intercultural and Cross-cultural hermeneutics, firstly, the Habermasian engagement of the critique of Reason conjoins in a commendable way with a reflective framework that suggests that the moral domain that activates the critique of reason in the thoughts of Nāgārjuna and Kant, which cuts across the ancient and the traditional to the modern and the contemporary to propose the nature of the synchronizing hermeneutics primarily intercultural.

Secondly, the schema that conceptualizes the poles of ‘*Prajñā-Karuṇā*’, ‘practical reason- morality’ and ‘knowledge-communicative ethics/the communicative moral domain’ bring to light a synchronizing hermeneutic of ‘*Prajñā- Knowledge*’ - ‘Critiqued *Prajñā-Sūnyatā*’ and ‘Understanding-Knowledge’- ‘Critiqued Understanding-Knowledge-*Karuṇā*’, opens an interpretative possibility of Reason as ‘Differentiating Forms Knowledge’, necessitated by Ethics as reflective recognition of contextual moralities.

## Notes and Reference

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<sup>1</sup> Karl-Otto Apel, ( 1991), “ A Planetary Macro-ethics for Humankind”, in Eliot Deutsch Ed., (1991), **Culture and Modernity**. pp. 269-70. Hawaii, University of Hawaii Press.

<sup>2</sup> This definition is taken from popular and common sources.

<sup>3</sup>Pius V Thomas, 2010; ‘Interculturality and Ethics’, in Assam University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol.1, No.10. pp. 34-35