

Chapter-I

The Concept and Meaning of Suffering

1.1. Introduction

By nature all human beings are to wonder and curious about their own existence, ultimate destiny and sense of their lives and also capable of find out the reality of inevitable suffering and death. Human beings are the only creatures who do not accept their condition and have realized the ultimate truth of life that is death. Moreover, in the experience of suffering they recognize their own limitations and wonder about what has caused it. As a result, the question of the existence about God is raised. It is to be stated that all sentient beings have to face the disaster of death. We are born means one day we have to die. Neither human beings nor non- human beings can deny this ultimate truth of life. But, human beings try to understand the mystery of death and always try to search their limitations of not getting the answer. The inevitable experiences of suffering and evil encouraged people to find out the reasonable explanation and philosophers, theologians and thinkers have tried to solve and understand the problem of human suffering. They have tried to find out the answer of the questions, such as, ‘why do people need to suffer?’. Or, ‘what is the ultimate cause of human suffering?’.

The problem of suffering is one of the most difficult and complex human problems. There is no one who would not have been troubled by the question of suffering at some point of his or her life. If we look at the problem of suffering then we will find that suffering becomes more problematic from the believers perspective. Peter Kreeft says that suffering not in itself is a problem but it appears as a problem when God comes into play. However, the truth is that the problem of suffering pertains both to the believer

and non-believer. For the unbeliever, “the existence of suffering stands as a major obstacle of religious commitment, whilst for the former it sets up an acute internal tension to disturb his faith and to lay upon it a perpetual burden of doubt”¹. Even though, theoretically it is easier for an atheist to deal with the problem of suffering, but in reality the opposite to be true. The problem of suffering is an unsolvable issue for both the believer and unbeliever.

Human suffering is one of the most acute and difficult human problems. Everyone at one point or another in his or her life will have to face and struggle with it. It is already mentioned that it is a problem not only for those who believe in God but also for those who do not. It may be considered to be one of the most universal human problems. It is to be observed that “some reject God because of the physical or spiritual pain that they experience. Others, however, use it as a means of sanctification and purification”². The problem of suffering has never been successfully and effectively solved. Centuries and generations have passed and millions of books have been written but it seems that one has to start from the beginning over and over again and philosophers and thinkers have tried to solve this problem as well as all mainline religions. In this chapter, I discuss the general meaning of the concept of suffering as well as how does the problem of suffering plays a crucial role in different religions and also in philosophy.

1.2. General Meaning of the Concept of Suffering

Suffering is one of the most important features of the worldly life that can be regarded as universal, inseparable and subjective experience of human being. Suffering is one of the most important features of human life. It is a very common experience of our day today life. It can be said to be a universal phenomena that happens to everyone in this

imperfect world. We all suffered because it is a natural occurrence that is constantly happen in this momentary world which is sometimes avoidable and sometimes unavoidable. Generally, suffering is defined as pain in the sense of both mental and physical that arise from something loss or disturbance. Moreover, in a broad sense of the term, it can be identified with an experience of unpleasantness. The unpleasant situations or experiences produce two different kinds of sufferings, namely, physical and spiritual, which should be distinguished due to their essential differences. There are many similar phenomena of suffering, namely, pain, discomfort, distress, anguish and so on. But, "...pain...discomfort...all these phenomena are contend with body and are physical effect of nervous system. But suffering is a subjective notion of unlikable situation. So, due to its subjective feature one cannot resort to medicines and treatments to cure it"³.

1.2.1. Definition of suffering

The dictionary offers several definition of suffering, such as: to undergo hardship, to feel pain, to have a disease or condition, to endure or to undergo, or interesting enough, to allow etc. The etymology of the word 'suffer' is associated with two Latin words, '*sub*' means under and '*ferra*' means to carry or to bear. Therefore, suffering is something that someone carries or bears.

The definition that works best for the people who work in the field of medicine and medical ethics is given by Eric Cassell. He says, "suffering is the state of severe distress associated with events that threaten the intactness of a person"⁴. In Cassell's definition, we have seen that the key issue here is one's integrity, one's idea of self that extends both backward into the past and forward into the future. When this enactness and

integrity is threatened by an event in one's life, this can create severe distress and suffering.

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines the meaning of suffering as an experience of unpleasantness and aversion associated with harm or threat of harm in an individual⁵. It is to be noted here that there is contradiction regarding the concept of the meaning of suffering and pain. It is to be believed that suffering means pain. If it is so, then, can we say that pain is suffering? Or, is it correct to say that pain and suffering are the same. Or, are they identical? If we go to the general understanding of the words 'pain' and 'suffering', then it becomes clear that they are not identical. Pain can be present in one's body without suffering as for example, slight cut in a finger. On the contrary, one can suffer from anxiety or fear in the absence of pain. But, one cannot be understood without the other. The uses of these two words are different. There are different ways to use the words 'pain' and 'suffering'. One way is interchangeable and another way is contra-distinctional. According to the interchangeable way, pain and suffering are used to define each other. It can be stated that pain always refers to physical suffering and suffering refers to physical or mental pain. Now, the question of what physical and mental pain is raised.

1.2.2. Physical pain and mental pain

Generally, as we have seen that pain always refer to physical pain. It is not mental because physical pain is feeling only by our conscious mind which only involves certain emotions. Therefore, whenever we feel some kind of pain then our reaction always involves some kind of emotion. On the other hand, suffering is identified with both

physical and mental terms. It is not only physical but also mental. Mental suffering brings emotional feeling which is not pleasurable comes through our physical brain. It can be described as- “Physical pain or suffering, as a matter of fact, happens through conscious minds and involves emotional aspects, while mental pain or suffering happens through physical brains and, being an emotion, involves important physiological aspects”⁶. In the way of contradistinction, both pain and suffering are contradistinctionary to one another. It means if pain is physical then suffering is mental. Or if pain is inevitable, suffering is optional. It is already stated clearly that pain refers to physical and suffering refers to both physical and mental. The inevitability of suffering cannot be deniable. No one can avoid it. All beings having sensation have an experience of the inevitable pain. Therefore, pain is a common fact for every individual being. It is an objective truth for all. But, suffering is not an objective truth. The nature of suffering is varied from person to person. The thing which gives a person so much suffering may not give be the same suffering to another person. Moreover, it may give him pleasure. So, suffering is a subjective truth that differs from person to person. Most widely, it can be said that suffering is optional. We can avoid it in terms of pleasure.

1.2.3. Physical suffering and mental suffering

It is to be stated that suffering may be qualified as both physical and mental. Here a question of what physical and mental suffering is raised. Generally, physical suffering includes some basic necessities of our body and also involves some harm to the body from diseases or anything else. All sentient beings have an experience of this bodily pain. It does not matter even in our status of life. Such kind of physical suffering can be reduced by collaboration and development of our physical situation. For example,

medical technology that provides certain degree of relief though the cure may not be the ultimate. On the other hand, mental suffering includes disappointment, hatred, frustration, fear, anger and loneliness etc. Everybody experiences this mental suffering differently. For example, while watching the moon, someone feel peace and wonderful. At the same time, others may feel terrible, lonely or sorrowful.

1.3. The Nature of Suffering

It is to be noteworthy that suffering, being a mental state, is a personal experience. The statement that suffering is a personal experience can be understood in two senses. In one sense, it simply articulates the logical fact that the notion of mental state is such that it can be identified only with reference to that particular person whose state it is. Taken into another way, it is a specific statement about the notion of suffering that suffering is a selfish state means when we suffer we are full of ourselves and want other people to think of us with pity and kindness.

On the other hand, the second sense is that suffering is personal. It identifies a person's complex organic unity, afflictions which cannot be apart from the person's total experience. It can be said that, "Just as there is no error apart from wrong thinking, there is no misery apart from the kind of functioning of the organism which leads either to physical or to mental pain."⁷ Therefore, any specific case of suffering must be estimated in its relation to the total situation.

As we have seen that suffering is capable of fascinating the total edge of mind of a person. As a result, it gives a very concrete sense of reality besides which the world of comfortable pleasure may be appeared as mere illusion. In a state of anguish, man knows

with his whole being the terrible certainty of his own existence and the reality of the world that oppresses him. It is to be notified that the statement 'I suffer, therefore I exist' is more convincing than what Descartes said that 'I think, therefore I am'. Unamuno refers suffering as the path of consciousness by which human beings arrive at the possession of self-consciousness. He stated that to possess consciousness of oneself is to know oneself and to feel oneself as distinct from other beings. And this feeling of distinction is only reached through suffering.

We must be clear in our minds about the fact that suffering is always experienced by an individual organism, not by any species. The image of the totality of world-suffering in the animal creation is a product of human sentimentality. Even, it is not clear that we can ascribe suffering to particular animals. But human being, the most complex being of all creatures, have a quality called reason appears whereby he is enabled to predict his own pain which henceforth is go before with intense mental suffering. Animals lack the awareness that anticipates suffering and death. That means animals, even though they are capable of pain, but they do not have the problem of pain. It is only for man that the problem of suffering exists and tries to find out its root cause. For a better understanding of the nature of suffering, it is very necessary to give a clear description of the concept of suffering and pain.

1.3.1. Suffering and pain

When we have talked about pain and suffering then generally it comes to our mind that they are the same. But, they are not the same and it is important to recognize their distinction. We can bring out this distinction by way of criticism of a theory which seems

to equate the two. The theory is sometimes associated with Wittgenstein's philosophy that the notion of pain is such that one cannot sincerely say, "I am in pain", without necessarily having an attitude of dislike towards the pain. Here, pain is supposed to be different from any other sensations (that is most cases of visual sensations), or cases of sensations such as mild tingles or so on. In ordinary use of the notion of pain, one hardly ever makes the statement that 'I am in pain'. But in most cases, the statement 'I am in pain' has the function of seeking help, sympathy or pity from others. However, this theory makes the mistake of taking this function of 'I am in pain' as a universal feature of the notion of pain. If this were true it would follow one must logically have an attitude of dislike towards all pains. Even it may be true that many philosophers believe that there is a conceptual connection between the sensation of pain and an attitude of dislike towards pain. In other words, it can be stated that most cases of attitude of dislike towards pain or cases of depression which are the must be the cases of suffering but those may not necessarily involves painful sensations. It is altogether detachable from the sensation of pain. But the interesting point about the conceptual connection is that it does not exclude the general possibility, but excludes the occasional possibility which means that the sensation of pain exists apart from the attitude of dislike towards it.

When we are trying to make a distinction between the sensation of pain and the attitude of dislike towards it, then the another important distinction comes to our mind. That is the distinction between pain and suffering. Perhaps, it will be easily granted that all cases of suffering are not the cases of pain. For example, "The jealous lover's 'pain', suffering, is pain only metaphorically"⁸. On the other hand, most cases of depression which must be a case of suffering not necessarily involve any painful sensations.

But the question arises whether all the painful cases are also the cases of suffering. The answer is obviously 'no'. This kind of thinking is borne out by our ordinary thinking about pain and suffering. To say, I have a mild sensation of pain in my toe may be qualitatively different from saying that my tooth aches so much and I cannot sleep. This difference in quality may consist just in the latter's being a case of suffering, and former's not being so. It shows that the difference will be clearly brought out by assimilating those cases of pain which are also cases of suffering to emotions, while treating the others as mere cases of feelings or sensations.

As a mere sensation, pain is not about anything while suffering is always about something. A toothache has a cause but it is not about anything though it might be both a cause and an object of suffering. But suffering of any relatives' death is about the loss of someone. It can be said that suffering always has an object whether or not it has a cause as well.

The notion of suffering involves a particular belief towards its object, namely, the belief that the object of suffering ought not in some sense, to exist. From this it follows that,

- (a) Only self-conscious creature is capable of suffering. As a creature capable of suffering must be capable of forming a belief about the object of his suffering. For example, there is no difficulty in ascribing pain to animals, but there is a difficulty about ascribing suffering to them. And this is proportional to our difficulty of regarding animals as self-conscious, thinking, reasoning creatures.

(b) Suffering may be reasonable or unreasonable, because the belief involved in a particular case of suffering may be reasonable or unreasonable. Suffering may also be justified or unjustified, while pains are neither justifiable nor unjustifiable. The question is- what reasons could be given for or against a feeling of pain or for or against its 'inappropriateness' to situation? If someone says, 'I feel a pain in my toe', it would be meaningless to ask whether it is a reasonable or unreasonable pain.

The relation between pain and suffering is that the former normally gives rise to the latter. However, suffering is not simply our reaction to physical pain but also our reaction to many kinds of events and circumstances of which physical pain is only one and generally not the most dreadful. For example, we may suffer from fear, anxiety, remorse, envy, humiliation, the death of someone loved, personal estrangement, boredom etc. On the other hand, undoubtedly emotional sufferings quite connected with physical pain and grip us more inwardly and encroach more inexorably upon the centre of our personal being. Therefore it is less tolerable than physical pain. It is to be observed that even though there is vast difference between suffering and pain, but both are intimately associated. The physiologist Henry Head says that it is necessary to distinguish clearly between 'discomfort' and 'pain'. According to him, pain is a distinct sensory quality equivalent to heat and cold and its force can be generally marked according to the power expended in stimulation. On the other hand, discomfort is that feeling which is directly opposed to pleasure. Regarding the word 'pain', J. D. Hardy distinguishes between the 'pain sensation' and the 'pain experience'. He observes that pain experience includes the affective state of distress or suffering that is normally produced by physical pain⁹.

It is to be noteworthy that pain is a specific physical sensation. On the other hand, suffering is a mental state which may be as complex as human life itself. The endurance of pain is sometimes, but not always or even usually a factor of suffering. Suffering is said to be a function of sin. John Hick, states in this regard that our human experience can become an experience of suffering to us because we engage in it self- centredly. We all human beings always escape from our weakness, mortality etc. But they do not constitute situations from which we should violently wish to escape. John Hick viewed that “if we were fully conscious of God and His universal purpose of good we should be to accept our life as God’s gift and be free from anguish on account of it”¹⁰.

So, we have seen that suffering is most commonly associated with pain of the mental, physical or spiritual varieties. C. S. Lewis argues that pain is that experience of human being which signifies either physical or mental that a person does not like to have. For him, pain is an unpleasant sensation in its most common physical form. But, it is not possible to identify a direct correlation between pain and suffering, even though they are intimately related. As we know, the words pain and suffering appears as synonymous. It is because the intensification of pain commonly entails the intensification of suffering. But it is not the case that the intensification of pain necessarily entails the intensification of suffering. There are two reasons why it is not. First, it is derived from the recognition of the fact that a person’s degree of suffering does not always correspond directly to the intensity of his or her pain¹¹. That means there are many circumstances in which the intensity of pain is increased. But, that increased intensity of pain is inflicted on an individual which will not significantly add to their suffering. The second reason is that pain and suffering cannot be equated with one another because all pains do not result in

suffering. So, it is to be clarified that pain and suffering do not necessarily exist in direct and exclusive relationship with one another because pain is not the only cause of suffering. Rather, pain as both physical and psychological varieties stands alongside a push of other things such as mental anguish, despair etc. However, it can be said that not all pain inevitably lead to suffering.

At this juncture, it is noteworthy that although not all pain necessarily causes suffering and not all suffering is the result of pain, but remains one of a number of sensations that can cause suffering. Actually suffering is an extremely slippery concept. It is an experience confined to the individual and the individual determines whether or not they are suffering. It also represents that suffering to others and in doing so, gives meaning to their suffering.

It should be stated that suffering can either be self regarding or other regarding. This distinction is relevant to Christ suffering who was sinless, but suffered for the sake of others. In general, our human sufferings are self- regarding. We wish for our sake, but our situations were otherwise. On the other hand, Christ suffering is, “as when he wept in sorrow over Jerusalem- was another- regarding anguish, he grieved, not for himself, but on account of others”¹². We may not say that Christ as a God’s incarnate did not suffer. But we may say that He did not suffer egoistically as we do.

1.3.2. Suffering and evil

Meanwhile, suffering also differs from ‘evil’. Generally the word evil can be classified into three types, namely, natural evil, moral evil and metaphysical evil. But, all sorts of it cause inner impressions that cause sufferings to human kind. Earthquakes,

floods, death, poverty etc are the examples of natural evil. Secondly, moral evil implies the immoral acts such as injustice, cheating, stealing, pride etc which are necessarily to be regarded as unpleasant act. On the other hand, metaphysical evil implies the worldly life which is inescapable at any condition.

The evidence of the existence of evil is the fact that there is suffering in the world. The problem of evil arises from the combination of the existence of suffering in the world with specific assumptions about God's benevolent, omnipotent and omniscient character. Marilyn McCord Adams explains that "there is no explicit logical contradiction between the seemingly incompatible claims that, on the one hand 'God is benevolent' and 'God is omnipotent', and on the other that 'there is evil in the world' "¹³. As we have seen that the experience of suffering is only conceived as a problem (the problem of evil), but its meaning is sought in relation to an all- good, all- knowing and all- powerful God who is both capable of preventing it and ought to do so.

Many thinkers in the West and also in India who have regarded evil (both physical and mental) as misery or as a negation of what should be in a being and what is not. For them, evil is a negative term. It denotes the absence rather than the presence of something. It is the perceived privation of good, the shadow where the light ought to be. St Augustine was the one who regarded suffering as negative in nature. He rejected Manichaeism's conception of evil as an autonomous quality and considered evil to be a corruption or perversion of something good. For him, no evil exists in itself. Actually, suffering epitomizes something which is going to be wrong, but it is good in itself. So, in view of the fact that whatever exists is good has been created by God. Evil refers to nothing that exists, but merely to the absence of good. Hence He equates being with

goodness. God as the highest and the most intensely real being is the highest good. Actually, evil has come into the universe mainly because of the volitions created by the human beings. Augustine considered evils as consequences of the primeval fall of man which traces all evils directly or indirectly to a wicked misuse of creaturely freedom.

The thinkers who gave a negative account of suffering regard the possibility of evil and suffering as inherent in creation. Here, the question is 'why there is evil?'. In this regard, we refer Robindranath Tagore's view that to ask why there is evil is to ask why there is imperfection or why there is creation. We must take for granted that creation must be imperfect and gradual. Pain is not a fixture in our life; it is the feeling of our finiteness. Pain is what error is in our intellectual life and by its very nature it cannot be stationary. Similarly, the essence of evil is impermanent for it cannot be accorded with the whole. It has to pass on; it has to grow into good.

The concept of evil in its various forms has associated with human suffering. However just as the relationship between pain and suffering is not one of direct correlation, similarly, the relationship between suffering and evil is not as direct as it first appeared. Suffering is considered as an intrinsic evil by many thinkers. That means the very existence of suffering is itself evil for it which is the evidence of an imperfect world. However, there are two main problems associated with the understanding of evil that it is directly equated with suffering. Firstly, although some suffering is evil, but generally evil is not used in this sense. For example, "we do not designate as 'evil' the suffering of an individual's life ruined by the effects of mental illness. We say that it is unfortunate, a tragedy even, and we certainly acknowledge the undoubted suffering of the person experiencing it, but we do not generally say that their suffering is 'evil' " ¹⁴. The word

'evil' is reserved for a different type of experience. Second problem is the utility of the term evil. If the words suffering and evil are synonymous with each other, then why we use the term evil at all. Or, why not just say that an individual suffered. It is because the term 'evil' designates a particular type of experience, action or event that somehow stands beyond or outside of the realm of ordinary everyday suffering. Moreover the existence of suffering in the world does not by itself create the problem of suffering. Suffering becomes a problem of evil when it is attached to another narrative such as, pain, deprivation, desire or something else.

1.3.3. Suffering and frustration

Generally some people regard suffering as some kind of frustration. But like pain and evil, suffering is distinct from the frustration of desire also. Suffering is one kind of feeling and frustration is another. They do not always neatly coincide. Frustration is a feeling when some object of desire has been denied to us. For example, "a businessman who enjoys every blessing in life except a promotion that he is obsessively pursuing may feel intense frustration when the promotion does not materialize"¹⁵. So, we cannot say that suffering is pain, evil or frustration and so on. It is true that suffering includes all this but it does not mean that they are directly correlated.

1.4. Meaning of Suffering in Religion

The fact of suffering has always worried the religious mind and there is no religion that has not in some way or other tried to find a justification for it. Since, nearly all religions claim to possess the means of salvation for man. It can safely be said that the solution find out to the problem of suffering by the religions is one of the most crucial

things about it, for here it faces its greatest intellectual problem and meets its greatest practical challenge. Strictly speaking, it is in religion that the problem of suffering has its origin and achieves its most acute form. For all the religions, there is a world meaning, purpose and plan, there is a moral and spiritual order, there is a good God who governs the world and works out His purposes in it. This insistence has been the essence of religious thought and life. But maintain such a position is to face the inevitable question that why should there be suffering in a world of spiritual order governed by a perfect and good God.

The most obvious and noteworthy fact of all human existence is that suffering is a subjective truth which is devoid of all objective certainty. It is one of the most obvious facts of human existence and that is the common to a lot of all men and it is because suffering is a very common experience and every religion gives a place of central importance or consideration to suffering. It is often said that suffering is an important cause of religion. Since, the promises held out by religion represent a way in which men can feel reassured in the face of catastrophe of death.

Suffering is not something theoretical or an abstract idea. Because whatever theoretical construction may be built, the foundations are laid to the apparent realities of what it is like to be alive. To talk about suffering is to talk not of an academic problem but of the sheer agonies of existence of which all men are aware of and many have direct experience. All religions take account of this and some religions make it the basis of all they have to say. The important point is that what a religion has to say about suffering reveals what it believes the nature and purpose of existence to be. We cannot deny the existence of suffering and also have to face this inevitability of suffering.

All religions have tried to find out a path that has lead to a complete end of suffering. Here, the question is that how we can to find such a path or how we can find a path which has the capacity to lead us to complete elimination of suffering. Every religion shows a path for overcoming suffering. But the problem is, even though we find such a path which leads us to the end of suffering, but we cannot have certainty about the path which leads to the goal until we actually follow that path. That means in order to follow a path to its goals we must place complete trust in the efficacy of the path. There are different religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam etc that have forwarded different views in their treatment of suffering and also forwarded such path for overcoming suffering.

1.4.1. Buddhism

We are all familiar about the Buddhist philosophy and its four noble truths. The first one of which is “The Life is Full of Suffering”. Nobody can get away from it. Even happiness or pleasure is fraught with pain or suffering. Apart from this, different causes of suffering and the way to ceases suffering are also discussed in the other three noble truth of Buddhism. The four noble truth of Buddhism can be expressed as follows, “there is suffering, that suffering is caused (that means it is not imposed arbitrarily by an outside will), that removing the causes of suffering leads to the cessation of suffering, that the way to transcend and remove the causes of suffering is both known and attainable”¹⁶. We cannot deny the fact that suffering is an inalienable part of our life. Buddhism is a well known religion which is mainly concerned with all about suffering. The Buddha was always searching the answer for the question, ‘*What is the main cause of suffering?*’. According to him, our limitless desires are the cause of our suffering. The Buddha simply

said that suffering is brought by cravings. Our unlimited cravings and desires ruttet against the true nature of reality which are the causes of our pains.

In Buddhism, the word 'suffering' is articulated in terms of '*dukkha*'. It is a word of far greater depth and complexity than the word suffering. It is true that it has an ordinary reference to pain or misery. In that sense it is opposite of '*sukha*', means happiness. But it also refers to impermanence, emptiness, lack of wholeness or perfection. Thus, '*dukkha*' indicates more to the general nature of the universe (that is world is changeable and impermanent) than to particular instances of suffering. That understanding of '*dukkha*' makes it possible to express the Four Truths in a more general way without introducing the word 'suffering' at all in its actual sense.

Dukkha can be understood and qualified on three stages. First one is *dukkha dukkha*. It implies that there is some plain facts of suffering inherent in the life process that is- in birth, old age, sickness, death and all other accidents to which life is subject. Second one is *Anityatā-dukkha*. In this level, the conscious creatures were able to know the gap between what they desire and what they obtain and who are aware of the transitory nature of all things. In other words, it can be said that they are able to realize that happiness does not last forever and there is suffering involved in change. Third one is *Samskāra-dukkha*. Here, an individual is able to understand that suffering is inherent in human nature which is arising from the aggregates of existence. It is an existential incompleteness which is due to spiritual ignorance. As we have seen that these level of suffering are neither sequential nor exclusive. It is certain that everyone eventually comes to realize the reality of suffering on all those levels as a plain matter of experience.

One noteworthy point is that ultimately all problems can be reduced to the problem of suffering. Thus we need a way that will end this problem finally and completely. If we want to stop suffering then we have to stop it with its causes from where it begins. And to stop the causes, it requires a thorough knowledge of what they are and how they work. Buddha devotes himself to find out the truth of the origin of *dukkha*. According to him, the causes of suffering trace within ourselves, which can produce chaos in our minds and vitiate our relationships with others and with the world. This kind of mental state is called in *Pāli- Kilesās*. Usually, it can be translated as 'defilements'. It can be said that "the most basic defilements are, namely, the harmony of greed, aversion and delusion. Greed is a self- centered desire"¹⁷. It is the desire for pleasure and possessions and the urge to encourage the sense of ego with power, status and prestige. Aversion signifies the response of negation, such as, uttered as denial, frustration, blame, disgust, resentment and aggression. Delusion means mental darkness.

From these three roots emerge the various other defilements, such as, conceit, jealousy, ambition, arrogance etc. It can be said that "from all these defilements together the roots and branches comes *dukkha* in its different forms: as pain and sorrow, as fear and discontent, as the aimless drifting through the round of birth and death"¹⁸. Therefore, to get freedom from suffering, we have to eradicate these defilements. But to remove these defilements we have to proceed in a methodical way. Buddha teaches that there is one root cause or defilements which give rise to all others and that one is ignorance. Ignorance is not mere absence of knowledge. Rather it is a lack of knowing particular pieces of information. According to Buddha, ignorance as a main cause of suffering is the darkest part that covers our minds.

So it is to be clarified that in order to free ourselves from suffering completely, we have to eliminate the root of it and that is ignorance. But the question is, 'how does one go about eliminating ignorance?'. It is true that ignorance is a state of not knowing things as they are. So, we need knowledge of things as they are for eliminating ignorance. Knowledge does not merely mean conceptual knowledge, but also perceptual knowledge (means a knowing which is also seeing). This kind of knowing is called wisdom (*Prajñā*). Wisdom enables us to grasp things as they are in actuality which direct and immediately obtainable, which is free from the screen of ideas of our minds that is ordinarily set up between themselves and the real.

It is cleared that to eliminate ignorance we need wisdom. But, here another question arises, how wisdom is to be acquired. Buddha said that wisdom can be cultivated. It comes into being through a set of conditions. It is these conditions in which we have the power to develop. These conditions are actually mental factors and components of consciousness. And these mental factors and components of consciousness are fitting together into a systematic structure that can be called a path leading to the end of suffering and that is 'Eightfold Path'. The 'Eight fold Path' with its eight factors are, namely, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

Buddha regards this 'Eightfold Path' as the middle path. It is the middle way because it clarifies the two misguided attempts to get freedom from suffering. One is the extreme of indulgence in sense pleasure. It is the attempt to dissatisfaction by gratifying desire which gives pleasure, but it is transitory and devoid deep contentment. Gautama Buddha regarded indulgence as pleasure in the common and worldly sense which never

leads us to the goal. And another is the practice of self- mortification. It is the attempt to get liberation by troubling the body. They are taking body to be the cause of bondage. But the real source of trouble lies in the mind which is possessed by greed, aversion and delusion. Thus, Buddha describes this state as painful that does not lead to the goal. Buddha regards this eightfold path as a middle path not in the sense that it involves an agreement between the extremes. But it is in the sense that it transcends them both by avoiding the errors that each involves. This path avoids the extreme of sense indulgence. That is the middle way (the Noble Eightfold Path) which gives rise to knowledge and leads to peace, enlightenment or to *Nirvāna*. Here, it can be stated that, “The goal of *nirvāna*.....freedom from, i.e., the cessation of, this utterly unconditioned, essentially determined, existence- a breaking away from the prison- house- a goal which can only *metaphorically* be called ‘the unending happiness’ ”¹⁹.

1.4.2. Hinduism

On the other hand, Hinduism holds that suffering naturally follows from personal negative actions or behaviors in one’s present life or in a past life. Our past karmas or actions reflect in our present life. In present life whatever we feel pain or pleasure is the result of our past actions. According to Hinduism, one must accept suffering as a just consequence and also as an opportunity for spiritual progress. Thus, the soul (true self) which is free without end from any suffering can move towards to apparent itself in the person. And only then the soul achieves liberation. Self-denial from causing pain or harm to other beings is a main feature of Hinduism.

Hinduism is a religious tradition of Indian origin which clearly addresses pain and suffering and the concept of acceptance. It is to be stated that “Hindu religion encourage living with integrity, causing no harm and progressing further on a spiritual path by living according to dharma, stages of life- appropriate guidelines or ‘patterns of life’ or by one’s ‘sacred duty’”²⁰. The basic work of life is to become detached from over involvement in the world that is apparent to us. But, it is seen as illusory and temporary and turn toward the ultimate reality. These concepts are also found in other eastern religions also, for example, Buddhism.

In Hinduism it is to be stated that suffering (as both mental and physical) is a part of the unfolding karma. It is to be believed that it is the consequence of the ethical rule of the universe in response to the past negative behavior. Hindu tradition accepts suffering just as a consequence and stated that suffering is not random. Suffering is seen as part of living and it also a path for attaining *Moksha*. Until attaining this state of liberation, suffering is always present in our path of life. Hinduism also holds that we all are as a human being bound by the laws of our world and will experience physical pain. But, pain is truly felt in our physical bodies. While the body may be pain, the self or soul is not exaggerated or destructed. Arjuna, a seeker of wisdom is told in *Bhagavad Gītā*,

“The self embodied in the body of every being is indestructible” and “Weapons do not cut it, fire does not burn it, waters do not wet it, wind does not wither it. It cannot be cut or burned; it cannot be wet or withered; it is enduring, all pervasive, fixed, immovable, and timeless”²¹.

So, as we have seen that self is not affected by the temporary suffering. Sufferer may get comfort by viewing pain as only temporary condition that does not affect their inner self. Hinduism holds that all things are manifestations of God and everything including good and bad are encompassed by the Ultimate. Everything including pain and suffering is given by The Ultimate. To regard suffering as bad is to see only one side of it. It may be positive if it directs to grow on a spiritual pathway.

Here Hinduism also put forward the concepts of attachment and detachment. Attachment signifies over involvement in this world. It means having desires for things. On the other hand, detachment is a positive state of objectivity towards this world. In this state, one has no power over one's state of mind. Attachment is the main obstacle because of which we cannot achieve *Moksha*. When one achieves perfect detachment then no problem including pain can cause one to suffer. Here, it can be stated that, "contact with matter makes us feel heat and cold, pleasure and pain. Arjuna, you must learn to endure fleeting things- they come and go. When suffering and joy are equal for him and he has courage, he is fit for immortality"²². Here a question arises, '*how can we achieve this detachment?*'. It is to be stated that understanding the self as a part of The Ultimate Reality is not possible by the intellectual understanding. It is not pretending that suffering does not exist. Hinduism prescribes dharma as one of the path for achieving detachment. It also clarifies that one has to work without expecting any fruits of actions. Arjuna said, "Be intent on action, not on the fruits of action; avoid attraction to the fruits and attachment to inaction. Perform actions, firm in discipline, relinquishing attachment; be impartial to failure and success this equanimity is called discipline"²³.

Apart from dharma, Hindu tradition also includes meditation and yoga as a path for achieving detachment. These two tools teach the understanding and control of one's mind and seeing beyond one's mind to The Ultimate Reality. It also holds that we all have a capacity to achieve this. For that, Hinduism believes that God or The Ultimate Reality has always given spiritual assistance and support to us. We can know God through devotion or *bhakti*. *Bhakti* implies that God or The Ultimate Reality is accessible and knowable in personal terms²⁴. It is to be noteworthy that the followers of Hinduism pray God for the support in facing problems and believed that by doing that their suffering will be relieved and support will also be provided.

From the above discussion, it must be clear that according to Hinduism suffering is the consequence of past inappropriate acts. Suffering is also inherent in the cycles of living and rebirth.

1.4.3. Islam

In contrast to Buddhism, Islam treated suffering as it occurs in direct and simple terms, not as a theoretical problem. Like Judaism and Christianity, Islamic script Quran also starts with the actual facts of suffering. Suffering is a part of what it means to be alive. In *Quran*, it is clearly mentioned that the fact of suffering do create certain problems whereas in Christianity the problem is located in vindication. Here question arises, 'where is suffering located as a problem in the *Quran*?'. Or, 'how does suffering occur as a problem in the *Quran*?'. The answer is that suffering occurs as a problem in Islam because it is conflicted with the belief that God is omnipotent. On the other hand, whereas in Christianity, it occurs principally because it is conflicted with the assertion

that God is love. So, there is a difference in exact location of the problem of suffering in Islam and Christianity. In *Quran*, it is repeatedly asserted that suffering can only be understood by being contained within the omnipotence. *Quran* says, “Take the concept of omnipotence seriously: if your imagination of God is not too small, then suffering cannot be a problem, because the facts of suffering must necessarily be contained within the omnipotence of God”²⁵. It is to be stated that suffering occurs only within God’s creation. Thus, suffering may raise questions about the nature of God. But, it cannot occur as a problem if the omnipotence of God is already established or at least accepted on other grounds.

Regarding the idea of suffering, Sufi- Islamic mystics have put forward a reflective existentialist viewpoint that is the ‘human condition’. Hazarat Bayazid Bistami, a Persian Sufi mystic argues that “true self- knowledge is the antidote to suffering, for somebody who knows that the oil in his lamp is limited, will not moan after its extinction. One who knows that the lamp which he has lit is not safe from winds will not scream when it is blown out”²⁶.

Sufism accepts the inevitability of suffering as part of the most undeniable reality of our life. Therefore, we are obliged to accept the existence of suffering for our own mental and spiritual sanity. Existentially, suffering is beneficial if we know its redemptive claim and its transcendental purpose. Moreover, it is to be believed that pain and suffering instruct us so that we will be able to see a ‘higher value of life’. Actually, suffering enables us to realize the supreme power of God as well as makes us possible to trust and submit ourselves in front of God.

Furthermore, in Sufism it is stated that the intelligent people do not dread pain and suffering. Rather they always welcome them and learn from them. It is suffering that makes persons resolute, spiritually mature and holy. Life is characterized by the alternative engagements of ‘conflict and peace’ or ‘peace and conflict’ and so on. Islam believes that God designs this dynamic movement for the moral, mental and psycho-spiritual development of humans. As the *Quran* says “...Lo with hardship comes ease, hardship is followed with ease, and ease with hardship, so when you are relieved, still toil and strive to please your Lord”²⁷.

1.4.4. Judaism

Judaism is a monotheistic religion believing in one and only one God. It takes God as all- powerful and merciful and so it has to account for evil. According to it, sin is a rebellion against God. It is astraying from the path of God; it is alienation from God. It is illustrated in the Biblical story of the Original Sin committed by Adam. All natural evil and suffering is attributed to the sin committed by man. According to Judaism, suffering is nothing but a punishment of sin. Here, it can be stated that,

“Tell them, ‘Happy is the virtuous man, for he will feed on the fruit of his deeds; Woe to the wicked, evil is on him, He will be treated as his actions deserve’ ”²⁸.

Actually, such type of explanation is implicit in the very idea of Covenant. Covenant is one of promise and punishment, and therefore those breaking the promise are punished. According to Judaism, by inflicting suffering, God actually wants to measure the depth with which one has faith in him. Such suffering is implicit in the very story of Jewish people’s long suffering. The book of Job explains the innocent suffering of Job as a test

of his faithfulness. Suffering is like punishment of a loving father (God) whose ultimate aim is to reform and correct people. It is to be observed that, “For whom the Lord loves He chastens, as a father the son in whom he delights”²⁹.

In Judaism, evil or suffering is taken as a symbol of something better to come. This implies that every evil is good in disguise and therefore suffering is not to be treated as unqualified evil. According to Judaism, God has allowed evil to exist only for the ultimate good of human beings. God is all-powerful and he has granted freedom of will to man. Therefore, man is responsible for his own actions. However, he does not owe responsibility to himself, but he is responsible to the society where he lives. Judaism does not teach asceticism, rather it teaches an active social life of love, righteousness and justice. God is the judge of human actions and He punishes man for their sins. Judaism believes in the possibility of sin because man has been granted free will. There is no righteous man on earth whose deeds are good and who does not sin. However, with sincere repentance, man is forgiven.

1.4.5. Christianity

In Christianity, suffering is the most acute and difficult problem. According to Christianity, God is described as love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is known as trinity of Christianity. Human beings are free to reject God and can blame Him for all sins that happen in the world. In consequence, it becomes clear that the existence of suffering must have certain kind of rational justification, and that it must be one way or another reconciled with the existence of a loving God. How is it, a Christian may ask, that God who is infinite love, allows and tolerates suffering. Hence, from the perspective

of a Christian, the problem of human suffering may be expressed like this, *'if God is all good, loving, all powerful and omnipotent, why does He not lessen human sufferings?'*. 'How is it that a good God who is a supreme being keeps silence in the face of incredible suffering and pain?'

For Christianity, we suffer because of our sins. We are born with our sinful nature due to the 'original sin'. As a result we suffer in this world. But God as a loving father comes down to the world in a form of incarnation and show us a path for overcoming suffering. Jesus Christ is regarded as the incarnation of God in Christianity. Christianity argues that God has been actively involved in human history; even more, that God became man and suffered for us³⁰. Christianity also claims that to search only for rational and abstract explanations of suffering would be a mistake. As we know that in Christianity, God is love. But, the question is, *'how does God who is infinite love allows suffering to humans?'*. If God is all loving and powerful, then why He cannot lighten human suffering. But Christians believe that God as a loving father looks down on the earth from the heaven and do everything to alleviate suffering. God has been actively involved in the world and has been with humanity all along.

The more significant point is that Christ died on the cross for our sins. If the true God can take suffering for the sake of human beings then human suffering is elevated. But God suffers in God's self without reference to human suffering at all. In Christianity, we find the redemptive suffering. The existence of suffering in the world poses a very serious challenge to Christianity. Here suffering is understood in terms of the Grace of God. Christianity regarded suffering to be redemptive because we are the better Christians only when the more we suffer. Suffering is not an optional or something extra

for Christians. It naturally comes to all human beings that create some desire to earn their salvation. Christianity regarded God to be the love of God. Man by committing sins has to suffer in this world and God as loving father comes down to the earth to show the right path. By the grace of God, men get redemption from suffering.

The idea that suffering is an inevitable and inescapable aspect of worldly existence that can be escaped by a form of self-transcendence or an elevation of a higher mood can also be found in many of the great world religions including Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. In Christianity, Christ's suffering on the cross becomes an example case of positive suffering. It was this sacrifice that saved humankind from sin. Every Christian is called upon to participate in it by dedicating his or her own suffering by declaring his or her faith in its achievement. Thus, Christians believe that salvation is achieved through suffering.

From above discussions, if we look at the role of suffering in religion then we can say that most of religions are concerned with the relationship of people with God and the role of God in human suffering. It is the most familiar problem that why God allows good people to suffer.

But religions provide practices and interpretations which explore the idea of why suffering besets humanity. Moreover, it explores how we are to respond to suffering. Religions also help us to find meaning in our suffering and also help us to understand and to respond for our suffering and that of others.

1.5. Meaning of Suffering in Philosophy

The word suffering also has an important philosophical meaning. From the ancient time to modern age, philosophers tried to explain the concept of suffering and also tried to find out the problem of suffering. In philosophy, there are many theories such as hedonism, utilitarianism which tried to explain the meaning of suffering. Generally people tend to use the word suffering in two ways- one is in psychological sense and other is in objectivist sense. In the objectivist sense, suffering is used as synonymous of calamity or misfortune. But calamity or misfortune is unmistakable. For example, one is murdered, one loses one's job and it turned him into the street etc. Sometimes, suffering simply designates the experience of such objective calamities without referring to the psychological state of the people concerned. On the other hand, suffering also has a psychological meaning. It refers to how individuals feel. Roughly speaking, to suffer is to feel bad.

1.5.1. Ancient concept of suffering in philosophy

At the ancient times in the West, the concept of suffering has been closely associated with the concept of 'justice'. At this time, suffering is considered as the outcome of either from a human disobedience of the supernatural command or a divine reaction to such disobedience. But perhaps, the most ancient and immature response to suffering is to consider it as punishment. Cultures and religions of world are abounding with examples of the belief that suffering is a punishment exacted by the god. But it is already an anthropomorphic interpretation of a more prehistoric idea that suffering is something incredible that should not happen. It is something that inherently negative.

Suffering must be seen as a divine order. God who has emotions and desires like human beings and suffering is sent by God to punish human beings for their deeds. In this way suffering becomes a part of the divine order.

The primordial Greek thought was to have exceeded the anthropomorphic gods and replaced them with more theoretical idea, such as idea of justice. The idea of justice acquired content similar to that of destiny. It alluded to the cosmic order itself. In this regard, the ancient Greek philosopher Anaximander argues that “there is the notion of change as a constant flow into and out of existence in accordance with an overarching destiny... there is somewhat more complex idea that such change is somehow an offence to the divine order, therefore that reparation has to be made for the very contingency of the existence of things”³¹. Change is an offense to the eternal and changeless scheme of justice where justice involves that fated order in which everything is as it should be. In contrast to this divine order, changeable reality is an offense that calls for reparation. The penalty that needs to be paid is suffering. In this way a conceptual association is expressed and forged between suffering (that exist in this world) and punishment. Suffering in this world is inevitable, negative and necessary. But it was ordained by the supernatural order and therefore ultimately positive.

As Matilal points out that, “most philosophical schools of classical India generally agree that this world as it is nothing but suffering and pain, all our moments of pleasure being only pain in disguise”³². He continues to observe that the major Indian philosophers, particularly the Buddhist, invariably call the pain thesis a *Satya* which Matilal considers, a philosophical blend of both factual truth and evaluative exhortations, which he takes further to argue that *dukkha* originally is “a pervasive sense of

meaninglessness and absurdity and anxiety, (which) indicates the depth of man's estrangement from *SAT* (alienation from himself)"³³.

1.5.2. The moral significance of suffering

It is conventionally implied that suffering is bad and so because it should be eliminated. Generally, suffering is considered as a moral wrong which requires to be made right. When we come to the badness of suffering then it comes to our mind that we have 'prima facie' duty to prevent suffering. The claim that we have duty to relieve suffering can be seen as resting on three assertions. First, suffering is bad for the individual who experiences it. Second, suffering is bad for impersonal perspective. Third, the impersonal badness of suffering implies a prima facie duty on our part to prevent suffering³⁴.

Regarding the first claim that suffering is bad for the individual who experiences it, it is to be stated that suffering is an intrinsic bad for the individual who experiences it. This claim needs to be carefully distinguished from two other claims, both of them are true but neither of them is compatible with it. These two claims are- one is suffering can be instrumentally good and another is it can be instrumentally bad. Suffering is instrumentally good when it enables the sufferer to attain authentic good, such as, virtue or knowledge. In other way, it is instrumentally bad when it deprives the sufferer of a good or exposes him or her to a different sort of evil. For example, it is bad when it makes disable someone from achieving some valuable goal.

One very important thing is that suffering has an improving effect on us. It makes us morally wiser or more virtuous. But the question is that does all suffering make us better.

If it is so then how an abused child can be improved by her suffering. Actually, not all suffering makes us better, much suffering makes us worse. On the other hand, if sometimes suffering makes us better that do not disprove the claim that suffering is bad for us in itself. So, from this point of view we can claim that suffering helps us to reform ourselves.

There are two kinds of reformatory suffering which we can distinguish from each other. Educative suffering is that which makes us wiser or more virtuous. For example, a painful emotional crisis that makes us to reflect on our previous life, amends past faults, and alters our priorities. On the other hand, Redemptive suffering is that through which people have committed moral crime, but by giving a chance we can make them good persons. The theory is that, without this kind of suffering, the criminal cannot become good again. Literature is filled with examples of educative suffering. Both tragedy and comedy narrate the painful events with valuable lessons. Redemptive suffering, memorably discussed in the novels of Dostoevsky, is more mysterious. 'Why do we think that a criminal must suffer in order to become good again?'. One reason may be that such suffering is indispensable to the criminal's understanding of the nature of what he has done. Here, it is to be observed that, "one must understand the great wrong he has committed, and such understanding cannot be genuine unless it is accompanied by suffering by a certain self-loathing; by a certain anxiety, which feels it can never be allayed, to be restored to the condition of goodness; and by an overwhelming regret of what has occurred"³⁵. The criminal who can preserve equanimity in spite of what he has done is lacking in a kind of knowledge that he, above all people, ought to possess: the knowledge that he has done wrong. This explanation makes redemptive suffering closely

related to educative suffering. But there may be deeper, more metaphysical reasons for the redemptive power of suffering.

There is a value connected to both kinds of reformatory suffering, but this value does not reside in the suffering itself. In the case of educative suffering, it is derived from the close causal connection between suffering and the important goods of knowledge and virtue. Suffering can be the necessary means to valuable knowledge and enhanced virtue or an unavoidable consequence of whatever else produces those goods.

The claim that suffering is bad from an impersonal perspective means it is intrinsically bad, but may be instrumentally good. It may make good things possible. The prevention of suffering is an improvement, not just from the perspective of the individual whose suffering it is, but an improvement in the state of the world.

However, there may be doubts that suffering is an intrinsic evil which is impersonally viewed. These doubts need to be taken seriously. The strongest of these doubts are connected to common attitudes toward punishment. Most people think that it is right to punish criminals for the crimes they have committed, and punishment is normally thought to entail suffering. Belief in the appropriateness of punishment might seem to presuppose the view that the suffering of the criminal, in consequence of his crime, is a good thing from the impersonal point of view.

The third claim is that we have a prima facie duty to prevent suffering, because suffering is bad and ought not to occur. It is bad not only for the individual whom it afflicts, but bad from an impersonal point of view. Suffering ought not to occur that means we have prima facie duty to prevent it. The prevention of suffering is our way of honoring the pre-existing appeal for its cancellation. The appeal for the cancellation of

suffering is an appeal for whatever causal sequence will prevent it from happening. If we are instrumental in bringing about such a causal sequence, then it is right to say that we have (to that extent) fulfilled our *prima facie* duty to prevent suffering. One might say, it is better if we prevent suffering. But that would be incomplete. Here, the moral duty is missing. We need to say, we *should* prevent suffering. In the same way, it is incomplete to say that it is better if suffering does not occur. Again, the moral charge is missing here. Instead of it, we must say that suffering *ought* not to occur. Ultimately, the fact is that suffering ought not to occur and the *prima facie* duty to prevent suffering refers to the same moral phenomenon. They are the two sides of the same coin. On one side, suffering ought not to occur and on the other side, we do right by preventing its occurrence.

1.5.3. Views of different schools of philosophy on the concept of suffering

Some philosophers use the word happiness to understand the meaning of suffering. Aristotle, in 'Nicomachean Ethics', stated that the word happiness is sometimes equated with his understanding of '*eudaimonia*'. For him, the chief good for man is '*eudaimonia*' which is usually translated as 'happiness'. It is something that, "final and self-sufficient, and is the end of action"³⁶. By the word '*eudaimonia*', Aristotle means the expression of human excellence or virtue in action. Sometimes it is equated with success in the sense of achieving important life goals. But happiness is a psychological state which signifies the state of feeling of good.

1.5.3.1. Hedonism

Hedonism, a well known ethical theory clarified that good and bad ultimately consist in pleasure and pain. It is a theory which defines good as that which yields

pleasure or relief from suffering and evil as that which causes suffering. Many hedonists clarified that when we are seeking to avoid suffering, the greatest pleasure which lies in a dynamic state of profound harmony is free from the unwelcome consequences of momentary pleasures.

The theory of hedonism comes into two forms, namely, psychological and ethical. In its psychological version, it is a causal theory of motivation. According to it, “all intentional action is ultimately to be explained in terms of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain”³⁷. On the other hand, in its ethical version, hedonism is a theory of value in which pleasure is the sole of good and pain is the sole of evil. Historically, these two theories are historically closely associated very closely and also counted as hedonistic by virtue of assigning a fundamental role to pleasure and pain.

According to the school of value hedonism, there is only one intrinsic good and only one intrinsic evil. They are, respectively, happiness and suffering. It clarifies that good things are those who lead to happiness and reduce suffering. On the other hand, evil is that which leads to suffering and diminish happiness. Epicurus, Bentham and Sidgwick are the most prominent value hedonists. There are two kinds of value hedonism-one is Classical value hedonism and other is Negative value hedonism. According to these two kinds of hedonism, happiness is only intrinsically good and only suffering is intrinsically bad. Value hedonists has attracted by many critic. They assert that there are other intrinsic goods besides happiness such as, knowledge, liberty, virtue, friendship and life itself. According to the critics, the value of these goods cannot be reduced to their tendency to promote happiness or prevent suffering. The proof is that these goods often appear worth having, even if we must sacrifice some happiness in order

to attain them. So, it can be stated that, “we think that a life in pursuit of the truth can be worthwhile, even if it increases our suffering. We think that turbulent liberty can be better than comfortable slavery”³⁸.

But value hedonists argued that these criticisms are raised because of intellectual confusion. The first they tend to produce happiness. For example, we desire happiness and so we feel happy to get it. It also increases our power to obtain other ends. Similarly, liberty is generally a prerequisite of happiness because it enables us to pursue our chosen goals and protect us from harms caused by other people and so on. Thus, “we tend to form a close association between happiness and these other things in our minds. But, often this association falls beneath the level of consciousness. This leads us to ascribe an independent value to these other things”³⁹. On the other hand, if we reflect on it with sufficient care, they will make it possible for us to see that their value stemmed entirely from the happiness. Of course, these other things do not always cause happiness. Indeed sometimes they produce suffering. But, this can only show that mental associations can be very crude and fail to leave room for exceptions. Consciously or unconsciously, we associate these other things with happiness and, as a result this makes our mind to accept the value of other things which may not bring happiness.

Secondly, we may confuse with the moral requirements to seek knowledge, protect liberty, respect life and claim that these things are good in themselves. But in order to safeguard these things, the moral requirements are not necessarily derived from man’s nature of being intrinsically good. We can have a duty to seek knowledge because being armed with knowledge; we are able to help other people better. It can be said that, “we can have a duty not to invade someone’s liberty, simply because of the respect we

owe her as an autonomous being, or, to use an indirect consequentialist justification of the kind often favored by value hedonists, because the protection of liberty leads to the greater happiness of both the individual and society over the long term. But it is hard to distinguish the moral injunction to protect or secure something from the thought that it is intrinsically good”⁴⁰. It is so because we acknowledge duties to protect life, liberty, knowledge and other essential goods even when they do not lead directly to happiness. Rather we easily slip into the thought that these things are good and independent of their tendency to promote happiness.

It is to be mentioned that virtue is an intrinsic good whose value cannot be explained in hedonistic terms. When someone commits a terrible crime, it is hard to avoid the thought that something has gone dreadfully wrong in his life. We wonder whether it can be put back together. This has nothing to do with whatever guilt or punishment the criminal may subsequently suffer. Similarly, there is also the value of life. In hedonism, Classical value implies that “the prolongation of life is a benefit only if what is added contains a positive surplus of happiness over suffering”⁴¹. Moreover, negative value implies that even with such a surplus, additional life is harmful unless the ratio of happiness to suffering is sufficiently great. Yet, this seems to the value of life which makes possible the non- hedonistic goods of experiencing the world and acting in it. Reflection on the value of life doubly undermines value hedonism and value hedonism sometimes under represents the value of life. It is so because life includes other goods besides happiness.

As we have seen that happiness is not only the intrinsic value. Similarly, it is to be noteworthy that suffering is also not only the intrinsic value as the value hedonists

argued. It is to be convenient to say that most of us underrate the evilness of suffering. Most probably the reason is that collecting the real cause of suffering is a very difficult task. Even though we use numerous psychological mechanisms to escape from our consciousness where we can falsify or deny it, but we deny this without renouncing the word. It is to be observed that “the word comes to designate, in our minds, only a faint copy or superficial image of the real thing, but having forgotten what the original is, we mistake it in the copy”⁴². Rather, we describe suffering as evil in certain gravity. But it is slightly compared to what we would ascribe to suffering itself, if we could recall its true meaning.

1.5.3.2. Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is an ethical theory which judges all actions in terms of utility. The central aim of this theory is to promote the general happiness by preventing general pain. The very well known moral standard of this theory is that ‘*the greatest happiness of the greatest number*’. On the basis of this moral standard, many Utilitarian thinkers have put forward their views from their own standpoint. Among these, Jeremy Bentham and J.S. Mill were the most prominent. According to Bentham, in evaluating the merit of human actions, the consequences of these actions are to be count. And these types of consequences that matter for human action are just the achievement of pleasure and avoidance of pain. He suggested a procedure called hedonistic calculus for shaping how a large amount of pleasure and pain would result from any action. The most important aspect of Bentham’s theory is that pleasures and pains can be measured. Bentham assumes that “any particular pleasure or pain has a determinate value and can be traded off against other pleasures or decreases in pains and that will guide such trade- offs will

be a scale of measurement that attaches number to pleasures and pains”⁴³. Bentham argued that the value of every pleasure or pain depends only on its duration and intensity. So that, pain or pleasure can be measured. Bentham talks about quantities of pleasure. For him good is that which produces maximum amount of pleasure. But on the other hand, J.S. Mill talks about qualities of pleasure. For him, pleasure of a ‘pig’ and pleasure of all human beings are not the same. He identified happiness with pleasure. He also contrasts pleasures with pains or sets them alongside the ‘absence’ of pain. He sketches the greatest happiness principle that happiness or utility is to be maximized. According to Mill, pain is the experiences of painfulness and unpleasantness. J.S. Mill stated that “pleasure and freedom from pain, are the only things desirable as ends and... all desirable things....are desirable either for the pleasure inherent in themselves, or as means to the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of pain”⁴⁴.

Mill elegantly express and argues for utilitarianism. The main point of this doctrine is the principle of utility according to which actions are right in proportion as they tend to raise pleasure or happiness. The word ‘utility’ is not used in everyday meaning ‘usefulness’. For him, the utility of an action simply is its tendency to produce pleasure or happiness. The principle behind utility is also known as the ‘greatest happiness principle’ which tells us to promote the ‘greatest happiness of the greatest number.’ For him, pleasure or happiness is the only ultimate good, the only good thing in itself and pain is the only ultimate evil. Mill rejects the idea that actions are right only because God says so or because they have any inherent moral properties of their own.

1.5.3.3. Immanuel Kant and deontological theory

Immanuel Kant is one of the famous Deontologist thinkers according to whom morality is a matter of duty. Deontology indicates to a general category of ethical or moral theories that define right action in terms of duties and moral rules. Deontologists mainly give importance on the rightness of an act, not on what results from the act. Right action might finish up being pleasant or unpleasant for the agent. Whether an action is right or wrong does not depend on its consequences. Rather, an action is right or wrong in itself. Therefore, deontology is opposed to consequentialist or teleological theories in which the aim of moral behavior is the reaching of some good or beneficial status of affairs for oneself or for others. For deontologists, the ending stage of moral action is the very performance of it. On the other hand, for consequentialists, moral action is a means to some further end.

According to deontologists, we each have duties regarding our own actions. Actions are the results of choices. So, we must be understood our actions in terms of our choices. Choices are made for reasons and with a purpose in mind. These type of considerations determine what the action performed actually is. So deontologists argue that we do not know what type of action is regarded to be an action unless we know the intention. For that, we should first judge whether an action is right or wrong by agent's intention.

Immanuel Kant believed that whenever we make a decision, we act on a maxim. Maxims are Kant's version of intentions. They are the personal principles that guide our decisions. According to him, all our decisions have some maxim or other behind them.

He stated that morality is a set of values or principles that are the same for everyone and also apply to everyone. He always talks about our ability to build choices and decisions as 'the will'. He stated that our wills are coherent, that is we can construct choices on the basis of reasons. We can act on choice and we can consider what to choose using reasoning.

According to Kant, "to act in the morally right way one must act purely from duty begins with an argument that the highest good must be both good in itself and good without qualification"⁴⁵. Something is good in itself when it is intrinsically good. Kant argues that the things that are usually thought to be good, such as, intelligence, pleasure, not succeed to be either intrinsically good or good without qualification. For example, pleasure appears not to be good when people take pleasure in watching someone suffering. He concludes that there is only one thing that is truly good and that is the 'good will'. For Kant, the only thing unqualifiedly good is a good will⁴⁶.

Kant argues that the results of an act of willing cannot be used to decide that the person has a good will. Sometimes good consequences could arise by misfortune from an action that was provoked by a desire to cause hurt to an innocent person and bad consequences might occur from an action that was well- motivated. In this regard, he claims that a person has a good will when he/she acts out of respect for the moral law. It is possible only when people act in some way that they have a duty to do so. So, the only thing that is really good in itself is a good will and a good will is only good when the willer chooses to do something because it is the duty of that person. That is he should act out of respect for the law. Moreover, our happiness, sadness and suffering are also connected to that will.

Immanuel Kant in some places identifies happiness with the satisfaction of the sum of inclinations or desires. And in some other places he identifies it with pleasure, a mental state of contentment or satisfaction. These two views are puzzling because they are quite different. Actually sometimes we want something and at the time we get, we gain no pleasure. Rather we can have an unexpected pleasure for which we had no prior desire. Kant thinks that there is an important link between pleasure and the formation of inclinations. When we get something according to our desires then we think that we gain pleasure and want to continue the same. Kant's conception of the connection between pleasure and desire shows that we cannot make progress in satisfying some of our desires without gaining pleasure. Normally, it is impossible for us to fulfill all our desires without becoming contented, even though they are not desires for pleasure.

According to Kant, there is no great deal of difference between seeking pleasure and seeking the satisfaction of our desires. But they are not the same. Kant does not seem to be settled on a simple consistent conception of happiness. It is to be stated that happiness can be taken as the satisfaction of desires because these inclinations can be directed at anything, not merely the things that are connected with our life. For example, we can desire that we gain money or power, but we can also have inclinations that others do so too, or that they do not. In contemporary discussions, many philosophers accept desire satisfaction account of happiness, but only with certain restrictions on the ground that the satisfaction of only some of our desires contributes to our happiness, namely those that are in some way connected to our life⁴⁷. But, Kant's conception of happiness is not restricted in this way. Happiness is not merely a matter of things going well for us personally that we are happy when the world is the way that we want it to be, otherwise it

will become sad. Rather Kant believes that we can be completely happy by satisfying all our desires only if we are contented. Otherwise, it gives us pain.

1.5.3.4. Schopenhauer

Regarding the concept of suffering, the well-known German philosopher Schopenhauer described the misery of life as follows, “Having awakened to life from the night of unconsciousness the will finds itself as an individual in an infinite and endless world among innumerable individuals all striving, suffering, erring, and as though passing through a frightful dream, it hurries back to the unconsciousness. Until then, however, its wishes are unlimited, its claim inexhaustible, and every satisfied desire begets a new one”⁴⁸.

Life is deeply steeped in suffering and cannot escape it. Schopenhauer admits that suffering is present in animal kingdom, but it increases in proportion to the increase in consciousness and reaches its highest degree in man. The more intelligent the man, his phenomenal existence is a constant transition into death, a constant dying. He insisted that the twin realizations of transitoriness and the inevitability of death were the prime sources of those questions which a man may address to the world- its nature and his place in it. Suffering and misery in life were the occasions for metaphysical and ethical enquiry. Philosophic wonder springs in the individual not only by the higher development of the intellect but also by the knowledge of death, along with which, is the consideration of the suffering and misery of life, which provide a strong urge to philosophical reflection and metaphysical explanation of the world. It is to be stated that without suffering and pain, perhaps no one can raise question about the existence of the world.

Life is nothing but a pendulum swinging between pain and emptiness, desire and boredom. And ‘what is the end?’. ‘Can death stop this process and can make human beings from suffering?’. Obviously, nothing can stop this process. Even if the individual commits suicide he has not put an end to the general craving for life, because they hinder the assertion of the will to live, and he destroys his phenomenal existence in the final act of self-assertion. Schopenhauer rejects the notion that suicide is a crime, but at the same time he declares that ‘suicide is a mistake’. He argues that “suicide is a phenomenon of a strong assertion of the will; for the essence of negation lays in this, that the joys of life are shunned, not its sorrows. The suicide wills life, and is dissatisfied only with the conditions under which it has presented itself to him. He therefore by no means surrenders his will to live, but only life...”⁴⁹. When man wipes out his existence as an individual, he is not by any means demolishing his will to live. On the contrary, he would want to live if he could do so with contentment to himself; if he could assert his desire against the power of situation; but situation is too sturdy for him. Suicide can be considered as an experiment- a question which man situates to nature, trying to bound or force her to answer. The question is, ‘What kind of change will death bring in to man’s existence and in his insight into the nature of things?’. Nevertheless it is an awkward experiment to make which entails the demolition of the very consciousness which set the question and look forward to the answer.

According to Schopenhauer, true wisdom lies in the renunciation of life, in the denial of the will. The man, who really denies the will welcomes suffering, since it purifies him, confirms and increases his knowledge. It can be said that, “if the veil of *Maya*, the principle of individuation is lifted from the eyes of man to such an extent that

he no longer makes the egotistical distinction between his person and that of others, takes the suffering of other individuals as his own, and, therefore, is not only benevolent in the highest degree but is also ready to sacrifice his own individuality for the sake of others, then it clearly follows that such a man, who recognizes in all beings his own inmost true self, must also regard the infinite sufferings of all beings as his own and take on himself the pain of the whole world”⁵⁰. In this stage, no suffering is any longer strange to him. He comes to know the whole, understands its nature, and finds that it consists in a continuous fleeting away, futile striving, inner clash and silencing of all volition. The will now turns away from life. It shudders at the pleasures it recognizes in the assertion of life.

1.6. Overview

As we have seen in the above discussion that suffering is one of the most common and inescapable problems according to both religion and philosophy. Suffering exists at the heart of our faith and it is not only present in our lives but it also continues to transform our lives. Usually, suffering generates feelings of horror, abhorrence etc. that naturally arise. But the person who is in suffering can have much more ambiguous and mysterious experiences. Of course, it is always painful. Sometimes it appears as a fact of destruction of faith and leading eventually to atheism. But, for many people, pain and anguish can become an occasion for revelation. It is not uncommon or impossible for people to find out faith in God. Perhaps, they can approach their own death. But it is difficult to find out the reason why the experience of suffering can be destructive for some and revelatory for others.

Regarding the concept of suffering, the views of Christianity and Buddhism are not as much as different from each other. But, their ideas about the nature of suffering are quite different. In Christianity, Jesus Christ himself experienced suffering when he was crucified. If we look at his teachings then we come to know about the warm experience of unity with God.

However, regarding Jesus' experience of sin, when we look at upon him then we can see that he must die for the world's sake. Actually, Jesus never attributed sin to life itself. It is not the fault of our life that sin has arisen and has entered into the world. Rather, it is the result of the work of the Evil one. For Jesus, the true reality of evil is a personal character. It is to be observed that, "it arises from transpersonal and trans-cosmic forces gathered by this evil power with whom they collaborate"⁵¹. The world including all human beings is possessed by this evil power. The salvation to which Jesus shows himself as the way was therefore identical with liberation from this evil power. Therefore, if we try to realize the path shown by Jesus (that is Jesus' vicarious suffering, death and resurrection) then we can get rid of all suffering or evil.

In contrast, in Buddhism suffering does not lead to salvation. Rather, it is a reaction to the negation of having to suffer life and death for all eternity⁵². Therefore; Buddha's suffering cannot be seen as a parable to Jesus' suffering and death. For Buddha, experience of suffering and death is the condition of man including his own condition. No human soul can suffer and be reborn. It can be said that, "Buddha's teaching on atman (man's innermost core) is that it does not exist: an- at- man, no soul"⁵³. That means there is no soul and therefore no one can suffer. Actually suffering is the circumstances of living. But it is not bound up with reality. This is the 'Gospel' of Buddhism.

Thus, we have found different views of Buddhism and Christianity. Buddhism rejects the concept of transmigration of soul as found in Hinduism. According to it, Hindu's concept of the identification of Brahman and atman is a fiction. Buddhism has put forward the concept of nirvana which is a way to stopping this fiction by perceiving that it is an illusion. It rejects the transmigration of soul because there is no soul. Buddhism does not use the word 'transmigration'. Instead of it, they use the word enlightenment. It is a state where people realize that transmigration of the soul is the utmost suffering and thus the utmost illusion. Endless suffering is just a fiction than the many earthly suffering. Buddhism regards this type of suffering as an illusion. According to Buddhism, the person who realizes that the extreme illusion is the extreme suffering and vice-versa, has already passed over from something to nothing and can free from it. And free from an awareness of illusion is known as *Nirvāna*. The word nirvana means 'blow out the light'. In this regard, Buddhism used the word '*Nirvāna*' to mean liberation and on the other hand Hinduism used the word '*Samādhi*' for it.

As we have seen that Buddhism shows us a path of salvation from the illusion of transmigration. In this regard, Buddhism and Christianity stand together against Hinduism. Both of them agree that transmigration of soul is a mere fiction. It is like an illusion. According to Buddhism, we are suffering because of our ignorance or not gaining the right knowledge. When once the right knowledge is acquired then ignorance will be removed and suffering will end. So, suffering can be regarded to be an internal force that occurs due to our desire for true knowledge and it continues till not getting of the right knowledge. From this point of view we can refer suffering as a path or way for

gaining right knowledge. On the other hand, in Christianity we find that suffering leads to get right knowledge that remove illusion through which salvation can be attained.

In religion, as we know that the problem of suffering arises when God comes into play. As we have seen in most of religions, God is regarded as the ultimate truth and all knowing. In Islam, the problem of suffering arises because of the belief that 'God is omnipotent'. On the other hand in Christianity, the concept of suffering becomes as a problem when lovely God comes into play. The problem is that if 'God is omnipotent' or 'God is love', then why we human beings have to suffer. Most of religions show the deeper faith in God. With this deeper faith people can get over from suffering. But sometimes endless sufferings destroy people's faith in God. Because if God is all knowing powerful and full of love then why He gave us so much suffering. In Christianity, it is stated that God as loving father comes down to the world and also shows us a path for overcome suffering. We suffer because of our faults. And faith in God helps us to make complete end of this suffering.

As we move on to the philosophical discussion of suffering, as we have seen from the above discussion of the meaning of suffering in philosophy, we find that Mill's theory of hedonism maintains pleasure or happiness to be the only ultimate value. But there are many philosophical difficulties with this. Mill seems to use the terms of 'pleasure' and 'happiness' as interchangeable. They are identified with each other. But actually they are not so. It is possible to experience pleasure without being happy and vice-versa. For example, "the depressed person who takes to drink gains some transient pleasure from alcohol, but it is not happy by it"⁵⁴. It is also possible to feel happiness without there being any specific source of pleasure. This makes it clear that pleasure is tied more

specifically to some particular activity or feeling than that of happiness. Pleasure is always tied with sensations. But happiness does not attach to sensations. Many thinkers deny that happiness is a psychological state at all. Although we talk of 'feeling happy', such kind of feeling are more closely associated with pleasure. In this regard, what Aristotle called '*eudaimonia*' is often translated as happiness and it is the ultimate good for us. But actually it refers to "well being- an overall quality of human life rather than a type of feeling that occurs during life"⁵⁵.

According to the utilitarian doctrine, happiness is the only desirable value as an end. Apart from it, other things are desirable as a means to that end. It also stated that happiness means pleasure and unhappiness means pain or the deprivation of pleasure. Mill thought that only happiness is good in itself. Happiness is intended to pleasure and the absence of pain. Therefore, pleasure and absence of pain are good in themselves. According to Bentham and Mill, we desire nothing as an end in itself but happiness and the avoidance of suffering. But that cannot be a right description of our desires. We want other things also to gain knowledge, to have other people to think well for us, to secure the well being of friends and loved ones. Actually we desire these things for our own sake and not just as means of personal happiness. This proves that we are sometimes willing to sacrifice happiness in order to obtain these things.

Another point is that happiness is not the sole intrinsic object of our desire. We are happy to the extent that our desires are satisfied. But, we can have desires for the satisfaction of those which falls outside of our experience. And obviously, the satisfaction of such desires would not make us happier than before. So, we can say that happiness is correlated with the satisfaction of desires and this satisfaction must be experienced by us.

But, the point is that if we experience the satisfaction after coming to an end of our desires, then it is meaningless to link happiness with the satisfaction of a desire. It can be stated that, “there is one way to correlate happiness with desires and that is we have to experience the satisfaction when we possess the desire. Rather, we can say that happiness is correlated with the experienced satisfaction of existing desire”⁵⁶.

Nietzsche, the existentialist philosopher praises suffering as the means whereby a higher order of humanity will evolve. He strongly criticizes pleasure and comfort as goals of human life. He criticized utilitarianism and thought that it is a doctrine that only gave moral worth to the satisfaction of desire for its own sake. Rather he admired what he saw as the overcoming of our human natures by way of effort and striving. He admired that “commitment and dedication and the willingness to put up with hardship and pain in the pursuit of a noble goal and in particular, in the fulfillment of our existential quest for self-affirmation and self-assertion”⁵⁷. Actually he brought this quest for leading to a newer and better kind of human being. But, if we focus only on comfort and the avoidance of suffering, then these things would not emerge. According to him, “the avoidance of pain and amelioration of suffering were forces of decadence that led to the softening of the human spirit and a loss of focus upon the task of self-overcoming, which was essential to human advancement”⁵⁸. Moreover, it can be said that suffering is just like a melting pot in which a higher form of humanity could be made.

We have to face so many problems in our day today life which brings suffering. If we escape from our problems then that means we escape from suffering. That means we also escape from ourselves. But in this way, problems cannot be solved. To solve the problem, we have to face this problem. That means to solve the problem of suffering, we

have to face it. As Buddhism advised that we have to know the cause of suffering and then we can solve this problem. Buddhism also stated that ignorance is the cause of suffering. To overcome from ignorance, we have to acquire knowledge. So, Buddhism shows knowledge or wisdom as a path to solve the problem of suffering.

So, we have to take suffering positively. If we take it positively then it can give a meaning to our life. But negative attitude to suffering can destroy our life. Suffering can destroy people by undermining their confidence in themselves. Moreover, it is an experience confined to the individual and the individual determines whether or not they are suffering. It also represents the suffering to others. Our own suffering awakens us to what the other is going through and it creates in us a compassion through which relieving actions can be motivated. In this continuity of suffering, yet a meaning might be found for our own suffering. Perhaps, suffering that we have in our live can be regarded as meaningful as it teaches us to care for others.

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