


University of Jaffna



Professor
Scmasundaram Krishnarajah
Memorial Oration

**Understanding Hermeneutics and
Postmodernism from Indian Perspective**

Dr. S. Panneerselvam

Editor, Journal of the Madras University - Humanities,
Chairperson, School of Philosophy & Religious Thought,
University of Madras

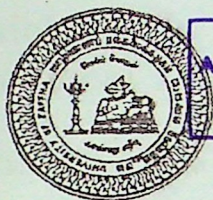
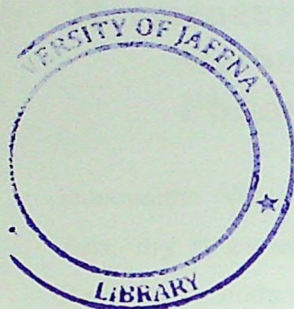
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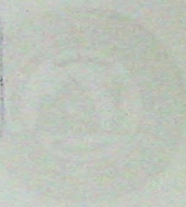
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Professor
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Understanding Karmacharya and
Karmacharya from Indian Perspective

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Hermeneutical and Deconstructive Methodologies in Indian Philosophical Tradition

Honourable Vice-Chancellor, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, my esteemed Colleagues of the Department of Philosophy, Students and friends,

I have great pleasure in delivering this prestigious memorial lecture organized in honour of late Professor Somasundram Krishnarajah, former Dean, Faculty of Arts of this University. The Jaffna University has contributed immensely for the development of philosophy both Indian and Western contexts. Professor Krishnarajah, had always impressed me by his scholarship, sound knowledge and analytical skill in examining the philosophical issues. I had the privilege of discussing many of the philosophical problems whenever he visited me at the University of Madras in Chennai and I deem it as a great honour to deliver this memorial lecture. Since Professor Krishnarajah was always interested in a dialogue and discourse, I have applied his

methodology to discuss the philosophical themes from both Indian and Western perspectives.

My lecture falls under two sections: (1) Analytical and Hermeneutic Method of H.G. Gadamer and $\boxtimes a \uparrow$ kara and (2) Deconstructive Approach of Derrida and $N \odot g \odot r$ juna. In these two sections, I shall try to argue how in Indian Philosophical traditions, we have applied the method of analysis, hermeneutics and deconstruction. This means that these methodologies are not alien in Indian Philosophical traditions. Though philosophers have been differentiated by historicity, culture and time, there are certain parallels which one can draw between Eastern and Western traditions.

I

Analytical and Hermeneutic Method of H.G. Gadamer and $\boxtimes a \uparrow$ kara

Understanding a tradition... undoubtedly an historical horizon. ...the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present than there are historical horizons. Understanding, rather, is always the fusion of horizons we imagine to exist by themselves.

H.G.Gadamer

Hermeneutics has been used in the eighteenth century to refer to the interpretation of texts. Though initially it was used in religious writings, later it was extended to philosophical texts. It was Schleiermacher who used hermeneutical method in theology and defined it as the art of avoiding misunderstanding. Savigny, Boeckh, Steinthal and Dilthey developed the method of Schleiermacher. Dilthey, who was an historian and a biographer of Schleiermacher, stressed that there is no presuppositionless understanding. Understanding is the foundation of human science, according to him. Heidegger also explained the need for all interpretation to rise from a previous understanding. He openly refuted the idea that understanding can be presuppositionless. "All interpretation is grounded in a fore-sight, and a fore-conception," says Heidegger. His work, *Being and Time* gives a broader approach to the hermeneutical movement. But it was Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), who has made the movement more popular by the publication of the book, *Truth and Method*. Hermeneutical method is universal, because

understanding is the fundamental way in which human beings participate in the world.

Gadamer, the exponent of philosophical hermeneutics, has offered new modes of interpretation. He gave a twist to Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity by reinterpreting it. Born in Marburg, Germany, in 1900, he studied philosophy and classical philology in 1920s' at Marburg and Freiburg, under teachers like Paul Natorp, Heidegger and Paul Friedlander. When Heidegger was given rectorship of Freiburg University in 1933 and became the supporter of National Socialism, Gadamer broke off his relation with Heidegger. He renewed his relation with Heidegger in the late 1930's, after Heidegger had given up the rectorship and political life. This relation continued until Heidegger's death in 1976. Heidegger invited Gadamer to write an introduction for the publication of the second edition of the essay, "Origin of the Work of Art" in 1960. Till then, Gadamer did not write anything on Heidegger directly. The book *Truth and Method* was published in 1960, but in 1950 itself Heidegger requested him to write a substantial book. But Gadamer says that he always felt that Heidegger was

"looking over his shoulder". *Truth and Method* was written when Gadamer was at the age of sixty. Gadamer in his lifetime, has written three books. (1) *Plato's Dialectical Ethics*. This book is on Gadamer's habilitation in 1931 on Plato's *Philebus*, (2) *Truth and Method* and (3) *The Idea of Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*. All other writings of Gadamer are the collection of essays by him on various occasions. Some of his other important works include: *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, (1976) *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*, (1980) *Reason in the Age of Science*, (1981) *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, (1982) *Philosophical Apprenticeship*, (1985) *The relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, (1986), *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter, Heidegger's Ways*, (1994) *Literature and Philosophy in Dialogue* (1994) and *The Beginning of Philosophy* (1998).

Gadamer's teacher Paul Natorp gave him a manuscript from Heidegger to read. It was about an introduction to Aristotle from the phenomenological side. Gadamer read Heidegger's essay on Aristotle, which hit

him like "a charge of electricity." This essay made Gadamer to join under Heidegger. In Freiburg, he attended lectures by Heidegger on Aristotle, Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and Lectures on "The Hermeneutics of Facticity", which is a lecture on ontology. Both for Heidegger and Gadamer, understanding is the original form of the realization of our existence. Every interpretation presupposes understanding because every interpretation is guided by anticipations. For Heidegger, the understanding is mainly to know one's way around, to be up to a task, whereas for Gadamer it is to agree on the thing itself. Moreover, for Heidegger, the pre-structure of understanding consists of an anticipation of existence in fore-sight, pre-acquisition and pre-conceptuality, whereas for Gadamer, it is prejudice. The perspective of *Truth and Method* is the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics. Gadamer says how his "revival" of hermeneutics is different from the earlier hermeneutics. "If there is any practical consequence of the present investigation, it certainly has nothing to do with an unscientific 'commitment'; instead, it is concerned with the 'scientific' integrity of

acknowledging the commitment involved in all understanding. My real concern was and is philosophic: not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and over our wanting and doing."(Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. xvi)

Hermeneutics of facticity

Heidegger's work, *Being and Time* starts with an examination of the analysis of Dasein. For him, Dasein exists factically. What is the nature of human existence? This is an important question for Heidegger. According to him, the important characteristic of human existence comes from expressions like "I am here" or "I am in this world". In other words, my existence is my own existence. My facticity is a part of the disclosure of ontological anxiety, which presents Dasein to itself as an isolated possibility thrown into the world. Thus facticity is characterized by individuality. Gadamer questions the hermeneutics of facticity of Heidegger by saying that it is paradoxical in nature. He says as follows: "The slogan that the young Heidegger proclaimed was itself

paradoxical enough, and it was critical of all factions." To speak of a hermeneutics of facticity is to speak of something like "wooden iron". "Facticity", contends Gadamer, "means precisely the unshakable resistance that the factual puts up against all grasping and understanding, and in the special phrasing in which Heidegger couched the concept of facticity, it meant the fundamental determination of human Dasein".

From Husserl's phenomenology, Heidegger has shifted to "hermeneutics of facticity". The transcendental phenomenology, which was developed by Dilthey and Husserl mainly attempts to elucidate the essential meaning of objects of experience through an investigation of the mode of their appearance. This investigation was to be conducted in a manner free from all presuppositions including presuppositions concerning the existence of material objects. But the epistemological problems, which preoccupy Dilthey and Husserl, were replaced by Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology. This is because of the main reason that though both of them attacked positivism, they have accepted the Kantian epistemology. But Heidegger transcends this by saying

that before any object is posited for a subject, the subject and object terms are bound together by a fundamental relation of belonging to a world. Thus for Heidegger, what is more important is the ontological inquiry into the nature of that being which is capable of such activities, *i.e.*, into the nature of "Dasein". He says that Dasein is an entity, which does not just occur among other entities. It is peculiar to this entity that with and through its Being, this Being is disclosed to it. Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's Being. Heidegger tries to formulate a "hermeneutics of facticity" or what is known as "existential analytics." He draws a distinction between "factuality" and "facticity". Factuality is that which concerns non-human things. The distinction between these two is explained in this way. Dasein is not its factuality, and hence it is not what it is factually. But it should be known that Dasein is understanding and understanding involves projection into concrete "current world". Gadamer asks the question namely, "Is Heidegger's 'hermeneutic of facticity' really only an answer to a transcendental limiting problematic"? (Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 169).

Gadamer feels that Heidegger's project in *Being and Time* does not completely overcome the sphere of the problematic of transcendental reflection. He believes that under the name of a "hermeneutic facticity" Heidegger confronted Husserl's phenomenology, together with the distinction between a fact and essence on which it depended, with a paradoxical demand. Gadamer explains the difficulties with regard to facticity in the following way: "The facticity of there-being, existence, which cannot be based on or derived from anything else and not the pure cogito as the essential constitution of typical universality, should represent the ontological basis of the phenomenological position -- a bold idea, but difficult to carry through," says Gadamer.

In his essay, "The Phenomenological Movement", Gadamer examines the role played by Husserl and Heidegger on the movement. Here, Gadamer explains the errors in Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity as conceived by Husserl. Also Gadamer explains how these errors are rectified by Husserl. He says as follows: "... it seems to me, those in Husserl's eyes it is a question of the difficulties he had perceived long ago in the self-

referential character of phenomenology, namely that the phenomenological basis of all philosophy in apodictic certainty must itself have application on this basis too. And it is his conviction that these difficulties had led to fateful errors in Heidegger's 'hermeneutic of facticity'. "Gadamer says the *Crisis* makes an attempt to remove such errors by giving an answer to *Being and Time*. No doubt, *Being and Time* had influenced Gadamer in his theory of interpretation. But in *Truth and Method*, Gadamer clearly says that though there are inadequacies of Heidegger's language, he accepts the development throughout Heidegger's thinking. But he explains how differs from Heidegger. He says: "Our thoughts on the significance of tradition in historical consciousness took off from Heidegger's analysis of the hermeneutics of facticity and sought to apply it to a hermeneutics of the human sciences." In the hermeneutical theory, the role of ontological significance is something very important. The uniqueness of Gadamer is that he had worked out the implications, which Heidegger had provided as the starting point. For example, it can be said that Heidegger talks about Dasein as thrown projection. This is the

starting point for Gadamer. Understanding is always related to the future into which Dasein continually projects itself. "Understanding is thrown, that is, situated by the past as a heritage of founded meanings that Dasein takes over from its community." This definitely implies that Heidegger's understanding of facticity had influenced Gadamer to a great extent in the theory of interpretation.

Tradition

Gadamer in *Truth and Method* attempts to refound the notions of tradition and heritage, to discover its real nature and foundation. For Gadamer, hermeneutics is centered on a theory of interpretation, of the transmission of the stored up riches of the tradition, of the dynamics of that transmission. Tradition is the finite unfolding of an infinite content, a history of finite actualization of an essentially inexhaustible, or infinite, truth. Gadamer does not see the tradition as a given and an "inescapable facticity". He puts the history of philosophy by means of "tradition" back on a more modest, human limit, built up out of meetings between the text and the reader. The idea of the tradition can no more be found in Gadamer

than can the idea of conversation. For him, a word exists only in a conversation, similarly the tradition stands only in the telling of it. Every re-telling of it is a renewal of the tradition. By emphasizing our belongingness to tradition as our primordial ontological condition, he distances himself from the position of Habermas who emphasizes our ability to break free from the belongingness of tradition through critical reason. Caputo in his book, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project* remarks that Gadamer's thinking is "historical but not epochal". He attacks Gadamer for breaking away from Heidegger's hermeneutics. But it must be kept in mind that in some respects Gadamer goes beyond Heidegger. Our participation in the tradition is not eminently epochal, as it is for Heidegger. We participate in the tradition, which carries the values when we read particular texts. Thus it is not epochal, but historical according to Gadamer. Tradition is built out of meetings between the reader and the texts. There is also another place where Gadamer goes beyond Heidegger. Tradition, for Heidegger is a fixed canon of names or a stabilized cast of characters.

But for Gadamer, tradition is the play of conversation with others. This generates meanings and it is how tradition becomes an ongoing process. By virtue of the openness and inclusion of conversation, all those who appreciate it retain tradition. The famous Habermas-Gadamer debate also explains the position of Gadamer in a more clear way. Though Habermas criticizes Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, he has drawn his theory of communication from hermeneutics of Gadamer. Habermas in his theory of communication maintains that the primary aim of knowledge is to reach understanding, which is intersubjective. "Reaching understanding is the inherent telos of human speech," says Habermas. Gadamer's notion of understanding and agreement has helped Habermas to draw his theory of communication. Through critical reason, Habermas emphasizes the need to break from the belongingness of tradition, but for Gadamer our belongingness to tradition is our primordial ontological condition.

One of the important aspects that Gadamer emphasizes is the revival of tradition. For him, one can understand the value and importance of tradition and

heritage by living with other persons. Life develops with others in culture, time, and place. Man's life, knowledge and understanding are connected with the tradition and heritage. Knowledge and experience of one tradition is carried over to the other by history. The historian is concerned with the whole of historical tradition, which he has to combine with his own present existence, if he wants to understand it and which in this way, he keeps it open for the future. The cumulative result of the extended process of learning and testing constitutes tradition. Tradition is the locus of understanding. It helps us to correct the mistakes of the present. We are shaped by our past in various ways and this has a tremendous influence on our understanding. The past and the present are related and become a continuous process through the tradition. For Habermas, tradition is right only if it can be judged reflectively to be right. But for Gadamer, tradition is always right, because it is traditional. In *Truth and Method*, he is concerned with fundamental condition involved in understanding. He explains how in three spheres of art, history and language, it operates. In art, the subject seizes us, captures our interest even long

before we pass a critical judgment on it. Similarly, in history, we are already in tradition even before we are conscious of it. History does not belong to man, but man belongs to history. Thus history is effective or operative history, according to Gadamer.

Gadamer differentiates himself from his predecessors like Schleiermacher, Dilthey and others by emerging as a critique of the tradition practiced earlier and its methodological conception of understanding. Habermas charges Gadamer for this and argues that communicative action plays a significant role in understanding. The three cognitive interests, namely, the control, communicative action and emancipation are important for Habermas. This is replaced by tradition in Gadamer, for he believes that it is tradition, which plays a role in understanding. Gadamer understands hermeneutics as the manifestation and restoration of meaning addressed to the reader in the manner of a message.

Understanding and Interpretation

For Gadamer two questions are of primary importance: (1) what is the structure of understanding, and (2) how to reach it? The hermeneutical process explains what happens in understanding. Scholars like David E. Linge argue that Gadamer's hermeneutics does not offer new canon of interpretation, but seeks to describe what actually takes place in every event of understanding. (Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. xxvi)

To get an overall view of Gadamer's notion of understanding, one may look at Dilthey. He says that understanding is essentially a self-transposition or imaginative projection whereby the knower negates the temporal distance that separates him from his object and becomes contemporaneous with it. Thus for Dilthey, the present situation, becomes a negative value to the knower. The interpreter has to transcend all these. Historical understanding, according to the above view of Dilthey, is the action of subjectivity purged of all prejudices, and it is achieved in direct proportion to the

knower's ability to set aside his own horizons by means of an effective historical method. The interpreter negates his own present as a vital extension of the past. Gadamer objects to this. It is because in the above contention of Dilthey, the knower is separated from his own historicity. It is not mere accidental or subjective condition, but an ontological one. In other words, our prejudices do not cut us off from the past, but initially open it up to us. For Gadamer, prejudice does not mean the narrow mindedness of bias but the fundamental and orienting pre-understanding that the understanding brings to bear whenever there is anything to be understood. There is never a point when we are totally free from this productive prejudice, but that is precisely what pushes the tradition forward in an ongoing process productive of novelty and innovation. This led him to say that all understanding is interpretation. Understanding includes always an element of application. Understanding, interpretation and application is a triunity, and hence is inseparable, says Gadamer. Ultimately, understanding and interpretation are the same.

For Gadamer, interpretation is always open-ended which means no interpretation is ever final, thus allowing always a new interpretation. This means understanding is always application. Here, one must be little careful in understanding the term, "application", because for Gadamer, the term does not mean applying something to something. By application, he means that we see a text or a situation as already significant. Our understanding grows out of a particular context and when the context changes, the need for re-interpretation arises. But Gadamer claims that re-interpretation may lead to changes in our situation, but we cannot free ourselves completely from our given tradition and situation. Here the role of the interpreter is important. Schleiermacher believed that an interpreter could identify himself with the author. The interpreter must place himself on the same level as that of the reader, by deepening his knowledge, of the language and the customs of the reader's time. Identification with the reader, for Schleiermacher means identification with the author. Thus the interpreter can reach an understanding with that of the author through the reader. But Gadamer has a

difficulty in accepting the Schleiermacherean point. For Schleiermacher, interpretation is guided by understanding, whereas for Gadamer, understanding is guided by hermeneutic consciousness. But for both, understanding is interpretation. Gadamer is against the idea that to understand a work is to understand what the author has intended. The intention of the author, holds Gadamer, is an inadequate standard of interpretation because it is non-dialectical. He considers understanding, as essentially dialectical. This means that new meaning is born in the interplay that takes place continuously between the past and the present. In every interpretation, the text gives new meaning. In *Truth and Method*, he says: "The meaning of the text surpasses its author not occasionally, but always. Thus understanding is not a reproductive procedure, but rather always a productive one... It suffices to say that one understands differently when one understands at all."

It is not necessary, says Gadamer, to discover the intention of the author. Gadamer is of the view that the author is in a weaker position than others are. The interpreter has greater authority than the author does. The

author has no privilege as an interpreter of his work. In interpretation of the text, no doubt, the intention of the author plays an important role. This definitely has some advantages; for example, the meaning will remain the same at all times. But the main difficulty in such a position is that it will lead to stagnation in meaning. Tradition always takes the meaning beyond the intention of the author and the intention of the author is not a necessary condition for understanding.

Understanding and interpretation are indivisible. "Understanding and interpretation are indissolubly bound up with each other", says Gadamer. Understanding is not outside tradition, and it always belongs to tradition because it involves self-application. All understanding of tradition is self-application. Understanding makes the tradition, of which it is made. It is understanding that makes history, according to Gadamer. Thus he reverts the position of Hegel according to which, history belongs to understanding. Gadamer has taken this position because understanding contributes to and belongs to the ongoing course of history. Also Gadamer rejects the Hegelian projection of a universal history and supports the

fragmentary character of history. In his reply to the critics he writes: "The experience of history is not the experience of meaning, plan and reason, and the claim to grasp reason in history could be raised only under the externalizing view of the philosopher of absolute knowledge. In truth, the experiences of history return the hermeneutic task to its own place. It always has to decipher the meaning of fragments of history anew, fragments that are limited by, and shipwreck on, the dark contingency of the factual and, above all, on the twilight into which for each present consciousness the future disappears." (George Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason*, p. 123)

Language and Interpretation

For Gadamer, the notion of hermeneutics can be better understood in terms of the relationship between language and interpretation. Habermas correctly says that with Gadamer, language acquires a third dimension. The unity of language, which disappeared in the pluralism of language-games, is dialectically restored in the context of tradition. Language exists only as something traditional,

for tradition mirrors language. Language is said to be the medium of hermeneutical experience. Hermeneutical problem is not one of the correct mastery of language but the proper understanding of that which takes place through the medium of language. Language is the middle ground in which understanding and agreement concerning the object takes place between two people. All knowledge of ourselves as well as of the world comes to us through language. For Gadamer, language is not a mere tool we use, but something which precedes us and whose play we submit to. We can only think in language, and just this residing of our thinking in a language is the profound enigma that language presents to thought. Gadamer uses analogy of conversation and play here. Understanding, he holds, is like a game with back and forth movements of questions and answers with no definite ending. We do not know where the game will lead to and what is the end process. It does not allow us to know in advance. The game can only be interpreted and resumed after. It cannot end. Understanding is similar to that of a game. Understanding is always on the way to truth. In a game, the player does not stand outside

the game. Instead, he involves himself in the game. The real subject of playing is not the player, or in being played, but instead it is the game itself. What is important in the game is the back and forth movement involved by the player. The game exists in a particular place and time and its movements are in no way directly involved in the world outside it. His following statements are interesting. "Understanding ... shows the universality of human linguisticity as a limitless medium that carries everything, not only the culture that has been handed down through language, but absolutely everything, because everything is incorporated into the realm of understandability in which we interact."

Gadamer gives special importance to conversation. For him, it is the essence of what he had been working on over the past thirty years. Thus conversation occupies a prominent place in his writings. This is because of the main reason that Gadamer feels that dialogue is not a just a means of passing the time, but an intense, restless and unending quest for truth. The uniqueness of this is that Gadamer like Socrates tried to strengthen the other person's argument thus trying to see the point from the

other person's side also. There is also another reason for Gadamer to consider conversation as something important. Gadamer is of the view in that in the encounter with the other person, especially from the other region or country, it is an encounter with another horizon. In this encounter with the another horizon, Gadamer appreciates the otherness of the other's horizon of understanding. This means for Gadamer, the otherness of the other person's horizon serves to enrich one's own horizon. The most important thing that is important in conversation is that when we are in conversation with a text, the text also speaks to us as another person speaks. Gadamer says that it is *within a linguistic horizon* that an encounter with artwork or text takes place. He presents the philosophy of conversation in Part Three of *Truth and Method* and also in later writings to emphasize this above point.

Habermas analyses how Gadamer uses the image of the horizon to capture the fundamental hermeneutic character of every concrete language. He says: "Each of the partners between whom communication must be established, however, lives within a horizon." This point

of Habermas is very significant and it explains how Gadamer represents the hermeneutic process of coming to an understanding with the image of a fusion of horizons. But Gadamer is careful in saying that the past and the present as separate horizons that are not closed off from each other. He emphasizes that when we understand the past, we are expanding our horizon, and not stepping out of our horizon into the other horizon.

It is said that Gadamerian notion of the recognition of authority in tradition is that it undermines both our freedom and creativity. But this objection is not a valid one because Gadamer's intention is not merely to emphasize the authority of tradition but to explain how it shapes our thinking in the process of understanding. Tradition is what is transmitted and handed down from the past and remains as a possible source of truth. Tradition does not tie us down. It is something we carry forward in a modified form. Also it must be kept in mind that he was not against questioning the tradition. In fact, he saw this questioning to be a matter of mind or of understanding. Another objection, which is related to this

point also, comes from Habermas. The term 'prejudice' is used by Gadamer in a purely non-pejorative sense. "What is necessary is a fundamental rehabilitation of the concept of prejudice and a recognition of the fact that there are legitimate prejudices, if we want to do justice to man's finite, historical mode of being", says Gadamer. The word 'prejudice' simply means a necessary condition for understanding as such. 'Prejudice' in the sense of pre-understanding, gives rise to our expectations and makes understanding possible. But for Habermas, interests are important than prejudices. For him, it is interests that shape our life. His belief is that a dialogue and communication can remove misunderstanding. In other words, the critique is more important than the tradition. No doubt, the attempt made by Habermas in understanding is very important. In fact for both, understanding is important and both are against dogmatic acceptance of the text. But both Gadamer and Habermas reach understanding, through tradition and critique respectively. Gadamer, who allows a critique of tradition, is always in favour of renewal and reinterpretation of tradition and thus tradition becomes a truly living vision.

There is no intrinsic opposition between reason and tradition. Gadamer says: "Genuine authority rests on recognition and hence an act or reason itself which, aware of its own limitations, accepts that others have better understanding. Authority in this sense, properly understood, has nothing to do with blind obedience... but rather with knowledge."

Gadamer is against Habermasian position where tradition is replaced by emancipation. His following views are note-worthy: "The unavoidable consequence to which all these observation lead is that the basically emancipatory consciousness must have in mind the dissolution of all authority, all obedience. This means that unconsciously, the ultimate guiding image of emancipatory reflection in the social science must be an anarchistic utopia. Such an image, however, seems to me to reflect a hermeneutically false consciousness."

In Gadamer's hermeneutical understanding, there is triunity of understanding, interpretation and application. This is something unique because, it was maintained in

the exegetical hermeneutics, that these are separated. Two of his critics, Betti and Hirsch charge him for this tri-unity. But Gadamer explains that how the inter-relation exist among them. He says that all understanding is interpretation and all understanding includes an element of application. "All reading involves application, so that a person reading a text is himself part of the meaning he apprehends. He belongs to the text that he is reading," says Gadamer. Ultimately, all understanding is self-understanding. He explains the need for the tri-unity as follows: "...what is truly common to all forms of hermeneutics the fact that the sense to be understood finds its concrete and perfect form only in interpretation, but that this interpretative work is wholly committed to the meaning of the text. Neither jurist theologian regards the work of application as making free with the text."

Advaita and Analysis

The relation between language and thought is a fundamental problem in linguistic philosophy. Patañjali says that the expression of thought is the sole purpose

that is served by the use of words. (*Mahābhāṣya* under *Vṛ*, 15. Pṛiṇi, 3.1.7). "We can only think in language, and just this residing of our thinking in a language is the profound enigma that language presents to thought", says Gadamer. (H.G. Gadamer, "Man and Language" in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, pp.61-62)

The Upaniṣads say that thought and speech are interchangeable. It is said that mind finds itself fully expressed in speech and speech has its seat in the mind. Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* says that speech (*vāk*) is the product of the mind. The linguistic analysis of Indian thought can be traced from the Vedic times. Linguistic issues such as the origin of language, different forms of speech, etc., were discussed in the Vedic literature. Speech (*vāk*) is regarded as the creation of Gods which they have put everywhere. Sometimes, *vāk* is known by other names as *iṣṭi*, *sarasvatī* and *bhṛatī*. *Vāk* in its ultimate sense is the same as Brahman. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* says: "*vāk vai brahmeti*", "speech truly, is Brahman". A study into the philosophy of language in the Indian tradition would reveal the fact that the science of

semantics in India is a harmonizing force between sensuous and suprasensuous experience. The Indian philosophy of language has two dimensions, says H.G. Coward. (H.G. Coward, *↳phota Theory of Language*, p.3). The phenomenal and metaphysical are these two dimensions. J.G. Arapura__also says that Indian philosophers have carefully avoided the "two reductionistic mistakes". (J.G. Arapura, "Some Perspectives on Indian Philosophy of Language" in H.G. Coward and K. Sivaraman (ed.) *Revelation in Indian Thought*, p.20). They neither reduce language to being a merely human convention having only scientific or factual referents nor fall into the error of metaphysical reductionism which devalues the meanings of human words that language ends up as obscure mysticism.

Analysis is a way of grouping together heterogeneous philosophies interested in analyzing linguistic or conceptual units. The language analysis in the West and the East have grown and developed independently of each other. In spite of this, we find certain similarities between the two. Both contemporary

analytical philosophy and the classical Indian philosophy are interested in the problems of knowledge, the varieties of meaning and reference etc. Many essays comparing Western theories and Indian classical theories of meaning and reference have appeared. The analysis of knowledge in its various aspects has been a favorite subject for the Indian thinkers of ancient times. In Śaṅkara's writings, especially in his commentary on the *Bṛhas̥tras*, we find a very good analysis of language and problems connected with it. Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara is generally considered to be the crowning achievement of the philosophical speculations of ancient Hindu India. He stands out as a heroic figure of the first rank of religious thinkers of India. His *bhāṣyas*, particularly those on the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bṛhas̥tra* are important not only because they are the most detailed and thoroughgoing in character, but also because they develop a doctrine which, in the words of George Thibaut, is characterized by incomparable "boldness, depth and subtlety of speculation".

Analysis: Two Indian models

Now let us see some of the models that are important in understanding Indian philosophy by the method of analysis. Prof. Sibajiban Bhattacharyya's usage of mathematical logic to represent Navya-Nyāya, B. K. Matilal's application of analytical philosophy to understand Nyāya realism, J.N. Mohanty's application of Husserlian concept of phenomenology to Indian philosophical problems, Ganeswar Mishra's linguistic and analytic trends to interpret Advaita, R. Balasubramanian's phenomenological model for understanding Advaita are all creative methods which have approached Indian philosophy from analytical and phenomenological stand point. Taking into consideration all these approaches, I would like to see them as two important models on analysis. They are: (i) the reductionistic model and, (ii) the comparative-analytical model. For example, Prof. Ganeswar Mishra approaches Śaṅkara's philosophy from analytical standpoint of Wittgenstein. Ganeswar Mishra applies western model to Indian philosophy especially to Advaita and argues that linguistic analysis is the only aim of Śaṅkara. He

maintains the view that according to $\boxtimes a \uparrow$ kara, $\oplus abda$ $\textcircled{Q} a$ means a critique of the structure and function of language. No doubt, this is reductionistic approach, because, though analysis plays a very important role in $\boxtimes a \uparrow$ kara, one cannot reduce everything in $\boxtimes a \uparrow$ kara to the linguistic analysis. Ganeswar Mishra definitely has some insights. $\boxtimes a \uparrow$ kara's doctrine of *ady @sa* for example, according to Mishra preaches a philosophy of language and not an account of the illusory character of the world in which we live, move and have our being. He says: "Metaphysics even in the days of $\boxtimes a \uparrow$ kara was openly and avowedly concerned with linguistic and logical analysis--analysis of logical concepts or mapping out the conceptual framework and nothing else". His two important books in this direction, namely, *Analytical Studies in Indian Philosophical Problems* and *The Advaita conception of Philosophy: its method, scope and limits* throw enough light to approach Advaita from analytical perspective. In this new approach Mishra tries to see $\boxtimes a \uparrow$ kara's philosophy of language in the background of western tradition. This model tries to give enough arguments to prove that Indian tradition does not

lack the analytical approach. The traditional Indian philosophers of the past were actually doing the same thing, which the contemporary western philosophers are at present doing in the name of philosophy, says Mishra. He further contends: "Dakṣa's logic corroborates and confirms the findings of this philosophy of language. His theory of meaning and his theory of propositions show that all descriptive language is incomplete in sense and that identification propositions alone are self-complete in meaning".

Prof. B.K. Matilal is another important thinker in this direction who has made an attempt to understand the various systems of Indian philosophy including Advaita through analysis and comparative method. This model is a "comparative-analytical model". His observations on Indian philosophy of language and analysis are seen in *Logic, Language and Reality*, *Analytical Philosophy in Comparative Perspective* (edited with J. L. Shaw) and *The Word and the World*. According to him what we call the philosophy of language in India has always formed a part of the classical philosophers' general epistemological

inquiry, part of the *pramāṇa śāstra*, the theory of 'evidence' for belief and knowledge. The question was: how does a linguistic utterance, through the communications of its meaning impart knowledge to the hearer? He classifies the issues discussed under the Indian philosophy of language as follows:

.... Analysis of sentences and words into significant components, the relationship between word and meaning, classification of words according to semantic contribution, division of words with reference to the division of ontological categories, logical and psychological factors in knowing the meaning of a sentence, philosophical significance of grammatical analysis, and principles of linguistics--all these have been repeatedly discussed by the philosophers in India over the centuries.

This comparative-analytical method of Matilal has certain advantages. First of all, it has not reduced everything to analysis and hence the fallacy of reductionism is avoided. Secondly, it allows us to think and apply the western methodology to Indian philosophical problems and ponder over the question "why very similar puzzles evoke different responses from different people".

The above brief study of the two different models show that analysis is not alien to Indian tradition. It is also to be noted that the term "analysis" is used in Indian tradition in a broader perspective and special importance is given to reasoning and valid argumentation. It is often said that Indian philosophy is analytical on its own independent footing and in certain cases the analytical rigour presented by classical Indian thinkers seem to more profound in nature.

Hermeneutical and Analytical method of Śaṅkara

It must be noted that Śaṅkara in his interpretation of the *prasthāna* adopts the hermeneutic-analytical method. The *prasthāna* is the source for Advaita, which rests on *śruti*, *smṛti*, and *tarka*. The *Upaniṣads* represent *śruti-prasthāna*, the *Brahmasūtra* represents *tarka-prasthāna* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* represents *smṛti-prasthāna*. The texts are connected with the commentaries or interpretation. The texts are expository and they are to be commented. The role of interpreter starts here. The commentaries are as important as the texts. In fact, the commentaries do much work than the texts, because sometimes the texts are not only brief, but

also elliptical in nature. The interpreter, as a way of his commentary, explicitly analyses what the text says and interprets according to the need and the historical conditions. Thus it is not a mere interpretation but an interpretation mingled with historicity. It is inevitable for the interpreter or commentator to take into account of his historical conditions and others factors. Thus the text when it is written may have one goal or intention, but the commentator has to interpret the text taking into consideration various factors. Actually speaking these factors which play a dominant role in interpretation, are implicit in interpretation. The interpreter need not wait or search for the historicity to operate on him, while interpreting a text. It is automatic. It is because historicity simply operates on and the interpreter simply exists in it. The interpreter not only understands the texts, but also presents in a different way so that more people can have easy access to it. The text written by the author is not always elaborate and hence cannot pass the message to the reader; whereas the interpreter, who has a better understanding of the text, interprets and presents in a better way than that of the author. Thus the interpreter

has a more important role to play than the author does. Here the author is transcended but not the text. In other words, the text becomes more meaningful in the hands of the interpreter.

It is through proper understanding and interpretation that one can know the nature of Brahman. This is what is implied in the hermeneutical understanding of Advaita. The identity of Brahman with the individual self can be known if one knows the correct understanding of the *mahāvākyas*. Śaṅkara's way of doing philosophy emerges out of a definite presupposition of Being or Brahman which may be taken to be either *a priori* or a matter of inner experiential truth, and from this presupposition, he deduces the nature and significance of human existence and the world. The interpreter makes use of *lakṣaṇavṛtti* for interpreting the scripture. It is the intention of the sentence rather than the logical connection of the words that necessitates implication. The *Vedāntaparibhāṣā* states that the root of implication, however, is the frustration of intention alone, and not that of logical connection (of the words). The interpreter has to transcend all the apparent

contradictions while interpreting the scriptures. This has been defined in a characteristic way. There are six marks (Ṛa ṣli Ṣga) of the purport: (1) the harmony of the initial and concluding passages (*upakrama-upasa Ṣh Ṣra*), (2) repetition (*abhy Ṣsa*), (3) novelty (*ap Ṣrvat Ṣ*), (4) fruitfulness (*phala*), (5) glorification by eulogistic passages or condemnation by deprecatory passages (*arthav Ṣda*), and (6) intelligibility in the light of reasoning (*upapatti*). Brahman is defined as motionless and at the same time speedier than the mind, in the Ṣ Ṣ Ṣ Upani Ṛad. This may appear to be a contradiction in terms, but Ṣa Ṣkara says that the two descriptions become perfectly intelligible when understood to apply to Brahman in its unconditioned and conditioned aspects. (Ṣa Ṣkara's Commentary on *IU*, 4)

Brahman and Language

We use language to refer to empirical things. A word denotes an object or a thing that has some physical existence in the empirical reality. But how are to understand the word "Brahman"? What meaning should we assign to this word? It is neither an object not a thing

which can be pointed out by means of language. The Mīmāṃsā school says that when a word "heaven" is uttered, at first nobody knows the meaning of the word. We guess the meaning of the word from the context in which it occurs. Similarly when we first hear the word, "Brahman", we assume it to have some meaning or other. The meaning of the word becomes clearer when we see the syntactical connection of this word with other familiar words in the Vedic sentences. Etymology and grammar also comes our aid. The Upaniṣadic text says: "Reality, knowledge, and infinity is Brahman". The *Brahmasūtra* says: "Then, therefore, the desire to know Brahman." Here we cannot understand the meaning of the word "Brahman" unless we take it to mean that it is a real thing, which is to be known because it is the highest end. Etymologically, the word "Brahman" is derived from the root which signifies "greatness" and unsurpassed greatness, because no other words or topic limit that sense. So we further know that Brahman is free from the limitations of space, time and things. How can the ordinary sentences have as their object, Brahman, which is said to be eternal? Śaṅkara answers this

question by saying that the *Upaniṣads* do not indicate Brahman as the "this" or "that"--an object to be known by us. According to the *Upaniṣads*, Brahman is not an object (*aviṣaya*), because it is the inner self (*pratyagḌtmḌ*). VḌcaspati says that if a man who knows words, meanings, and the principles of testimony, studies the *Upaniṣads*, then he knows Brahman as the Self, on account of the capacity of scriptural testimony to give such knowledge. If the principles of testimony and the meanings of the words are not known, then Brahman is not known even though Upaniṣadic sentences are studied.

⊗aḌkara in all his commentaries tries to drive home the point that Brahman can never be *described*, but can only be *shown* somehow approximately (*adḌraviprakarḌeḌa*). At least two methods are suggested for this purpose. (1) the method of *adhyḌropa* and *apavḌda* and (2) the method of *lakḌaḌa*. In the commentary to the *Bhagavad-gḌtḌ*, ⊗aḌkara says: "Brahman is not said to be "sat" or "asat". Brahman cannot be described by the word "is" or by the word "is not", for, it is not the object of knowledge in the form of

"is" or "is not". An object of knowledge is known through the means of knowledge and is defined as "such and such". But Brahman cannot be described by any word, not even by the word, "sat" for a word can denote a thing if that object is associated with a genus (*j@ti*) or an act (*kriy@*) or a quality (*gu&a*) or relation (*sambandha*). For example, cow and horse imply genera, cook and teacher imply acts, white and black imply qualities, wealthy and cattle-owner imply possession. But Brahman belongs to no genus and cannot be denoted by such words as "sat". Being devoid of attributes, it possesses no qualities. If it were possessed of qualities, then it could be denoted by a word, implying a quality. Being actionless, it cannot be indicated by a word implying an act. It is not related to anything else; for it is one. It is one without a second. It is no object (of any sense). It is the very Self. Therefore, it is but right to say that it cannot be denoted by any word at all. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* says: "Whence (*i.e.* away from Brahman, unable to approach Brahman), all words along with the mind return."

Since Brahman is beyond everything, it cannot be described by words. It is through superimposition (*ady@ropa*) and the subsequent negation of it (*apav@da*), Brahman is elucidated in the texts. The text says, for example, "Brahman has hands, legs, eyes, heads, faces, and ears on all sides; encompassing all, it stands", and immediately this is rejected. If Brahman is described as "it moves", then immediately it is negated in the very next sentence. For example, the ⑤ϕ① *Upaniṣad* says, "That moves, That does not move; That is far off, That is very near; That is inside all, and That is outside all". ⊗aḥkara explains that sentences such as "though it has no eyes and ears, it sees and hears," are to be understood in the way in which sentences such as, "the blind one saw the gem" are to be understood. Because Brahman is devoid of the senses, it is unattached, devoid of all attachments. Words used for describing Brahman are not to be understood univocally; the usual mode of linguistic expression will not help us in understanding the ultimate reality.

By the method of *lakṣaṇa*, Brahman is defined both by *taṣṭha-lakṣaṇa* as well as *svar@pa-*

lakṣaṇa. The definition of Brahman from the *taṣṭha-lakṣaṇa* is from the relative standpoint and the definition by *svarōpa-lakṣaṇa* is from the absolute standpoint. In the definition, Brahman is *satyam*, *jñānam* and *anantam*, the words are used not in the qualifying sense. Here words, are used in the secondary sense. The word, “*satyam*” differentiates Brahman from things unreal (*anāta*), the word, “*jñānam*” from non-intelligent things (*jaṅga*), and the word, “*anantam*” from finite things (*paricchinna*). So the text conveys the knowledge of Brahman only indirectly by negating the unreal, non-intelligent and the limited from it. These words which are in co-ordinate relation cannot convey the intended meaning if each of them is construed in the primary sense. Śaṅkara’s commentary on the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* says:

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The sentence *satyam jñānam anantam brahma*---Brahman is truth, knowledge, infinite---is meant as a definition of Brahman. For the three words beginning with *satya* are meant to distinguish Brahman, which is substantive. And from the fact that Brahman is the thing intended to be known, it follows that Brahman is the substantive. Since Brahman is sought to be represented as the chief object of knowledge---the knowable must be the substantive. And just because (Brahman and *satya* etc.) are related as the substantive and its attributives, the

words beginning with *satya* have the same case ending, and they stand in opposition. (TU, 11,i,1)

Thus, ☒aḥkara makes it clear that the three words beginning with *satyam* should not be understood in terms of substantive-attribute relation (*vi φe κana-vi φe κya*).

Analysis of sentences in Indian tradition is unique. Generally sentences are classified into: (1) those which signify a relational meaning (*sa ḡsarg Ḍvag Ḍhi*) and (2) those which signify a non-relational meaning (*sa ḡsarg Ḍnavag Ḍhi* or *akhaḡ * Ḍrthaka*). A sentence like "Rose is red" conveys substantive-adjective relation (*vi φe κya-vise κaḡa-sambandha*). A sentence expresses a relation (*sa ḡsarga*) between a substantive and an adjective. The import of the sentence, "The cow exists" (*gau Ḍ asti*), is characterised by existence" (*astitvav Ḍn gau Ḍ*). Advaitins are of the view that sentences which signify a non-relational meaning like propositions expressing true identity, which lie outside a definition or description explain the importance of a unique relation between language and Brahman. According to ☒aḥkara, judgments of identity like, "That thou art"

and "I am Brahman" should be understood in the same way as we understand the non-relational statements like "This is that Devadatta". Here the substrate alone in "this" and "that" is taken to be the purport; part of the meaning of the word "this" and "that", which is Devadatta, alone is taken as the purport of the expression and the sense of place and time is relinquished. Similarly in the text, "*tat tvam asi*", the individual consciousness is identified with universal consciousness. The *mahāvākyas* convey unitary impartite sense (*akhaṅga *Dṛtha bodhaka*) free from all distinctions.

In his analysis, Śaṅkara adopts the referential model of meaning in a special way. For example, the sentence "This pot is blue" refers to a particular pot, which is blue in colour. The meaning of the sentence thus implies a reference. For all practical purpose, according to Śaṅkara, words must be related to some objective referents. This makes language possible. What is important is that Śaṅkara does not stop with this. He uses the word "reference" in a broader sense of the term. He says that a sentence like "This cow is white" also indirectly refers to Brahman. According to Advaita, all

perceptual knowledge gives us the knowledge of pure being or existence (*sanm @tram*). Every object, whatever it may be, is cognized as existent and not as non-existent. The existent (*sat*) which is cognized in perception is Brahman. The real (*satya*) is the existent (*sat*) and the existent alone is the real. This means that when we say on the basis of perception that a pot is existent, what is existent is Brahman alone, and it is the existence of Brahman that is apprehended in every act of perception. It is being or *sat* which comes to be endowed with various characteristics, general as well as specific, in our day to day experience. If we abstract all the characteristics one after the other what remains at the end is the *sat*. This being or *sat* which is uniformly present in all the objects of cognition is no other than Brahman. According to Advaita, five characteristics are discernible in every object of experience: (1) existence (*asti*), manifestation (*bh @ti*) (3) lovability (*priyam*), name (*n @ma*) and form (*r @pa*). Of these, the last two differ from object to object. They are stuff of the world and are unreal. The first three constitute the essential nature of Brahman, which is existence-intelligence-bliss. We speak

of the elements and the elements as existing (*asti*) as manifest (*bhṛti*) and as being attractive (*priyam*). These characteristics which are common to all products really belong to Brahman. The words, which denote objects like pot etc., which are only illusory, have their purport in Brahman-Atman, which is the substratum. So every word that we use for the purpose of denoting some object or other has its purport only in Brahman, though superficially speaking, we may say that each word signifies this or that object.

According to the Advaitins, the *br̥hmaṅga* part of the *Veda* is divided into: (1) *vidhi*, (2) *arthavṛda* and (3) *vedānta-vṛkyas*. The *arthavṛdas* are divided into three kinds: *guna vṛda*, *anuvṛda* and *bhṛtīrthavṛda*. A *guna vṛda* is a sentence, which contradicts what is known from the other *pramāṅgas*. For example, the sentence, "The sacrificial post is the sun" is a *gunavṛda*. An *anuvṛda* is something already known through other *pramāṅgas* as e.g., "Fire is the antidote for cold". A *bhṛtīrthavṛda* states something, which is neither contradicted, nor confirmed by other *pramāṅgas* eg., "Indra raised his weapon against Vātra". The

Mīmāṃsākas argue that the purport of the *Vedas* lies in action. The sentences of the *Veda* are classified into two groups--those which are injunctive (*vidhi-ślokyas*) and those which are informative about the existent object (*siddhārthabodhaka-ślokyas*). While the sentences of the former group enjoin some action to be performed, those of the latter group convey the knowledge of objects already exist. The *Prabhākaras* maintain that only injunctive sentences of the *Veda* have validity and informative sentences which occur in the *Veda* such as "*satyam jñānam anantam brahma*" which describe the nature of Brahman are not valid on their own, since they are not injunctive. But these texts form part of the *Veda* and hence cannot be ignored either. They have to be accommodated by making them subsidiary to the injunctive texts, which are principal. The *arthavādas* in order to be valid, must be construed as subsidiary to the injunctive texts (*vidhi-śloka*). A secular sentence like, "There are fruits (in the tress) on the river bank" which is existential has to depend on another *pramāṇa* or means of valid knowledge for what it conveys and hence has no validity. If a sentence is injunctive, what it enjoins cannot

be within the range of another *pramāṇa*; and hence it will have independent validity. Applying the same principle to the *śruti* texts, which are existential, the *Mīmāṃsākas* argue that they should be treated as injunctive or construed with injunctive texts for preserving their independent validity. Thus for the *Mīmāṃsākas*, all *arthavādas* are not authoritative in themselves and they serve as auxiliaries to injunctive statements (*vidhi-vākyas*). This view is not acceptable to the Advaitins for two reasons: (i) It should be noted that dependence on another *pramāṇa* is not due to a sentence being existential, because there is such dependence even in the injunctive sentence like "Bring a cow" The reason for dependence on another *pramāṇa* is elsewhere. A sentence uttered by a human being will have to depend on another *pramāṇa* for what it conveys, of whether it is existential or injunctive. Only sentences of human origin have this dependent nature. In the case of *śruti* texts like, "That thou art", there is no difficulty since they are *apauruṣeya*. If the *Mīmāṃsākas* say that the *arthavādas* do not have any independent validity (because according to them they are

dependent on another *pramāṇa*), and hence should be treated as subsidiary to injunctive texts, then the injunctive texts (*vidhi-vākya*) can also be rejected on the same basis. (2) Knowledge has intrinsic validity (*svataḥpramāṇya*) both in respect of its origin (*utpattu*) and ascertainment (*jñāptau*). First of all, the very conditions under which it arise account for its validity. Secondly, even as it arises, it is believed to be valid without requiring verification by some other knowledge. It means that all knowledge is presumably valid, whatever be the *pramāṇa* from which it arises. If so, then the Mīmāṃsaka's contention that all informative sentences which occur in the *Veda* are not valid on their own and hence must be construed as subsidiary to injunctive texts is not correct. All sentences are meaningful and valid by themselves and need not be construed to other sentences. Thus the Advaitins argue that all the *vedānta-vākya*s are purportful because the identity of Brahman and the individual self is realised from them. These sentences are not subsidiaries to any ritualistic actions as conceived by the Mīmāṃsaka.

When the identity is realised, then there is no necessity for us to practice the ritualistic actions.

⊗ aḥkara says that *anuvṛddas* and *gundavṛddas* are not *pramāṇas* because a *pramāṇa* according to him, should be capable of giving valid knowledge. But neither *anuvṛddas* nor *gunavṛddas* are capable of giving valid knowledge and hence are not *pramāṇas*. ⊗ aḥkara argues that the *bhṛtṛthavṛddas* are *pramāṇas* because they are capable of giving both valid and uncontradicted knowledge. For example, the *bhṛtṛthavṛddas* sentence like, "Indra became a wolf and killed Medhātithi, the son of Kaśva" gives valid knowledge and is independently authoritative. From this passage we learn that gods such as Indra are embodied persons, who are able to assume whatever form they like by virtue of their wondrous power.

Analytical understanding of the Vedānta Vākya

The *vedānta vākya*s are classified into: (1) those sentences which are concerned with the ascertainment of the nature of the supreme Self and (2) those sentences which are concerned with teaching the identity of the

supreme Self and the individual Self. The first kind of sentences are divided into (a) essential (*svaṛṇpa*) non-relational definitions of Brahman, and (b) accidental (*taṽastha*) definitions of Brahman based on some false attribution. The second kind of sentences are further divided into four types: (i) that declaring the "Thou" to be identical with Brahman (*tat tvam asi*), (ii) that declaring the "I" to be Brahman (*aham brahmṀsmi*), (iii) that which proclaims the identity of "Self" and Brahman (*ayam Ṁtma brahma*) and (iv) that which declares that Consciousness is Brahman (*prajṀṅnam brahma*). The first *mahṀvṀkyā*, *prajṀṅnam brahma* is a definition (*lakṀaṽavṀkyā*), the second one, *ayam Ṁtma brahma* is an expression of experience (*anubhavavṀkyā*) and third one, *tat tvam asi*, is a sentence of instruction (*upadeṽavṀkyā*) and the fourth one, *aham brahmṀsmi* is a sentence of practice (*anusandhṀnavṀkyā*) free from all distinctions.

The *mahṀvṀkyās* come under the category of coordinate relation or *sṀmṀnṀdhikaraṽyā*. It speaks of the grammatical coordinate relation that exists between words. It is the application to one thing, of

several words having the same case, for the application of each of which there is different reason. In the *sṌmṌnṌdhikarāṌya*, (1) the words used are in the same case, (2) they are not synonyms, (3) they refer to the one and the same entity and (4) there is a reason for the use of each word. There are four types of *sṌmṌnṌdhikarāṌya*

(1) *bṌdhṌyṌṌ*
sṌmṌnṌdhikarāṌya (2) *adyṌsa*
sṌmṌnṌdhikarāṌya (3) *viṌeṌana-viṌeṌya*
sṌmṌnṌdhikarāṌya and (4) *aikya*
sṌmṌnṌdhikarāṌya.

(1) *BṌdhṌyṌṌ sṌmṌnṌdhikarāṌya* is of two kinds: the *mukhya* and *bṌdhṌyṌṌ*. In the former, the objects denoted by the words of a sentence will have equal ontological status, will be identical in nature, and will not be really different from each other. For example, when we say, "*ghaṌṌkṌsa mahṌkṌṌa eva*" (The pot-ether is but the great-ether) the words *ghaṌṌkṌsa* and *mahṌkṌṌa* are in *mukhya sṌmṌnṌdhikarāṌya*. The pot-enclosed ether and the ether outside it have the same ontological status, *i.e.*, both are empirically real. Also

both of them have the same nature and are not different from each other.

If the words of a sentence, which have the same case-ending, denote objects which have different ontological status, and if they purport to convey only one idea, then they are in *bḍdhḍyḍḍ sḍmḍnḍdhikarāḍya*. For example, when we say, "ayaḍ sthḍḍuḍ puruḍāḍ (This post is a man), the objects denoted by the words "sthḍḍuḍ" and *puruḍāḍ*" have different ontological status. Since what exists really is a man and not a post, "man" is empirically real, whereas "post" is apparently real. A person due to distance and other factors, first of all perceives a man as a post, but subsequently corrects the mistake when he knows that the object seen by him is not a post, but a man, and utters: "The post is a man". It is absurd to say on the basis of a superficial reading of the sentence that he identifies the post and the man. What he intends to convey by this sentence is that the object which he cognized as a post is, indeed, a man. Here, the subsequent cognition of the object as a man sublates the earlier cognition of it as a post; and it does not take place

without canceling the earlier cognition, which is erroneous. The object referred to by the sentence is only one; and the sentence achieves its objective through the sublation of one cognition by another cognition. The *mahāvākya*, "I am Brahman" (*aham brahmāsmi*), can be interpreted in the same way in which the sentence "This post is a man" has been interpreted. When a person realises that he is Brahman as a result of the hearing of the *śruti* text, the right cognition which he has attained sublated the wrong cognition he had earlier, *i. e.*, cognition such as "I am a man" "I am blind" etc. Thus the *mahāvākya* (*aham brahmāsmi*) can be interpreted by using the *bodhyō sōmōnōdhikarāya*.

(2) *Adyōsa sōmōnōdhikarāya*: This is a co-ordinate relation involving error and it is of two kinds: *doṣakātam* and *adoṣakātam*. In the case of *adoṣakātam*, a rope is mistaken for a snake. Due to the absence of light, a rope is perceived as a snake. In the case of *doṣakātam*, the *adyōsa* or superimposition is from that of *upōsanō* enjoined by scripture. In meditation, (*upōsanō*) one object is cognized as another

as enjoined by the scripture. For example, the *Upaniṣad* says: This (earth) is verily the *ṅg*, the fire is the *SṠman*". Here the *ṅg* should be viewed as the earth and the *SṠman* as fire for the purpose of meditation on the authority of scripture. Unlike the rope-snake example, where a person, not knowing the object in front as a rope, cognizes it as a snake, here the mediator knowing the *ṅg*, as what it is nevertheless cognizes it as the earth not because of ignorance but because of scriptural injunction. So in the case of *doṅakṂtam*, it is *adyṠsa* caused by ignorance and in the case of *adoṅakṂtam* it is *adyṠsa* which one deliberately practices due to scriptural injunction.

Both these *adyṠsa* cannot be used to interpret the *mahṠvṠkya*, because they do not allow any kind of superimposition in them.

(3) *ViṠeṅana-viṠeṅya sṠmṠnṠdhikaraṠya*: This is a co-ordinate relation involving substance-attributes, for example, in the sentence, "*nṠlamutpalam*" the two words, "*nṠlam*" and "*utpalam*" convey different meanings--the former signifies a colour characterised by

the quality of blueness (*nīlatva*) while the latter, a substance possessing the property of lotusness (*utpalatva*). The relation between the two words is as *viśeṣāna* and *viśeṣya*, i.e., as qualification and the qualified. This type of *sāmānādhikarāyā* cannot be used to interpret the *mahāvākya* like "*tat tvam asi*" because the words "*tat*" and "*tvam*" do not involve any *viśeṣāna* and *viśeṣya* relation.

(4) *Aikya-sāmānādhikarāyā*: This is a co-ordinate relation involving identity. The statement, "This is that Devadatta" refers to the identity (*aikya*) of the individual in spite of the differences in respect of time and place. Similarly, the *mahāvākya* "*tat tvam asi*" speaks about the identity of the individual self with the supreme Self.

It is clear that from the above discussion that Indian philosophy, especially, Advaita has analytical approach with a special distinction. For the Advaitins, language has two dimensions. Though language is analyzed for the sake of explaining the empirical facts and experiences, language is also used to say something about the nature of Brahman directly. It is true that

language has its limitations and cannot communicate the nature of Brahman. But it is only through language at least something can be said of Brahman. Prof. K. Satchidananda Murty aptly says: "While no description is possible of Brahman, the task of the Vedānta is to teach about it, and so logically speaking it is an impropriety; but only in this way can the Vedānta emphasize the mystery of Brahman, which eludes all objective language; yet it can be dealt with only in that way if Brahman has to be talked about intelligibly". This aspect of Indian philosophy is defined as the creativity by Prof. H.G. Coward: "The ability of language to deal with ordinary human things and yet at the same time to be metaphysically grounded is... evidenced in the distinctive Indian notion of creativity... Indian approach shows itself to be more encompassing and insightful than the bifurcated and too narrow view of many of the western schools". Similarly, J. G. Arapura also while commenting on the nature of the mystery of language, says that in the tradition of Vedānta, what language was plugged into was consciousness *per se* rather than

understanding of man. "Language is the means by which we can plunge into the depth of our own consciousness".

II

Deconstructive Approach of Derrida and N᳚g᳚rjuna

...the search for a non-philosophical site does not bespeak an anti-philosophical attitude. My central question is: from what site or non-site (non-lieu) can philosophy as such appear to itself as other than itself, so that it can interrogate and reflect upon itself in an original manner.

-Derrida

Disassembling the Existing Structures of Philosophy

Derrida (1930-2004), one of the original thinkers of contemporary philosophy is the modern father of deconstruction and the exponent of "textual activity". He is against the logocentric prejudice and the traditional notions of thinking. He appreciates the free play of language as an endless *différance* of meaning. His

analysis is beyond all philosophical categories and his influence on literary criticism, sociology, politics, psychology, anthropology etc., is remarkable. The structuralist-poststructuralist debate is prominent in his writings. The term "deconstruction" is almost synonymous with his name. Some of his works like, *An Introduction to Husserl's Origin of Geometry*, *Speech and Phenomena*, *Of Grammatology*, *Dissemination*, *Writing and Difference*, *Margins of Philosophy*, *Glas*, *The Post Card*, *Positions*, *The Truth in Painting*, *Acts of Literature*, *Given Time*, *Memories of the Blind*, *The Gift of Death* exhibit how he is against the traditional metaphysical categories of subjectivity. As a critical thinker and a deconstructionalist, he is responsible for transformations in many fields. He aims at disassembling any discourse standing as a construction. This means that he works for deconstructing the existing structures. Philosophy, from the time of Plato onwards is built on structures. Every system of thought has constructed its own structures, as a result of which it claims its validity thereby trying to reject the other dimensions of truth. Thus, various forms of philosophizing are questioned by

him. Every philosophical structure has some basic presuppositions, which is prioritized over the other. This implies that there is a celebration of one concept over the other. This biased outlook has not allowed the philosophers to see the different dimensions of reality. The search for identity has done enough damage to the different forms of philosophizing.

Deconstruction as a method of transcending the available forms of philosophizing, is a type of intervention, destabilizing the structural priorities of each particular construction. Here one may be tempted to ask the question, namely, why destabilization, rather than consolidation? Derrida would answer this by saying that all philosophical construction depends on oppositional pairs. No doubt, Derrida is aware of the role of philosophizing. Philosophical response, according to him, is important for understanding a problem. He extends his methodology to social as well as political problems. For example, in one of his interviews, commenting on September 9/11 events, he says as follows: "Such an 'event' surely calls for a philosophical response. Better, a response that calls into question,

at their most fundamental level, the most deep-seated conceptual presuppositions in philosophical discourse. The concepts with which this 'event' has most often been described, named, categorized, are the products of a 'dogmatic slumber' from which only a new philosophical reflection can awaken us, a reflection can awaken us, a reflection *on* philosophy, most notably on political philosophy and its heritage."(Gioranna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with J. Habermas and J. Derrida*, p. 100)

But Derrida is in search of a non-site or a non-philosophical site, from which to question philosophy. He believes that the crisis in philosophy is that we are attached to one particular form of philosophizing or other. Derrida not only questions a particular form of philosophizing or philosophical position, but the concept of philosophy itself. Philosophy has been constructed in a particular way in the past. This understanding definitely adores the beauty of its method but rejects the other forms of philosophizing. The forms of philosophizing are either metaphysical or epistemological. Of these,

metaphysical form of philosophizing has been broadly accepted and acknowledged both in the East and the West. Derrida who sees the metaphysics of presence in the philosophical tradition, is not attempting to offer an alternative kind of metaphysics, because it would lead to another type of metaphysics of presence; on the other hand Derrida wants to abandon metaphysics altogether. This is possible if we understand that there is no one reading of text. Derrida simply dismantles the existing philosophical structure; he is not constructing something new in its place, because this would lead to another structure. Thus he aims at non-metaphysical attitude to philosophy. The primary aim of Derrida is to deconstruct the very structure of language. His concepts like, intertextuality, undecidability, and trace -- help him to emphasize the instability of meaning. He is trying to transcend the fixed a priori transcendental meaning.

Derridean Methodology

In his two works, *An Introduction to Husserl's Origin of Geometry* and *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida gives a deconstructive reading of Husserl's philosophy of

signification. He argues that phenomenology as a quest for radical origins and beginnings contains within itself the seeds of its own undoing -- the possibility of its own self-overcoming. In short, there is the "logocentric spell" in Husserl and Heidegger, according to Derrida. The history of western thinking always centres its understanding on notions of "presence" (*logos*), says Derrida. He explains how, for example, in Heideggerian understanding, there is metaphysics of presence. While commenting on the history of metaphysics in *Writing and Difference*, and by defining it as a narrative of the "determinations of being as presence in all the senses of the word", Derrida attacks the logocentric basis of Heideggerian methodology. By showing the difference between Heidegger and Nietzsche, he argues as follows: "Nietzsche has *written what* he has written. He has written that writing-- and first of all of his own--is not originarily subordinate has *come into being* during the epoch whose meaning we must deconstruct. Now in this direction, Heideggerian thought would reinstate rather than destroy the instance of the *logos* and the truth of

being as *primum signatum*.(Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 352).

He argues that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the centre have designated the constant of a presence - *eidōs*, *archē*, *telos*, *energeia*, *ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject) *aletheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man and so forth. Derrida, who is against this logocentrism, argues that through deconstruction it can be shown that there is no such "centre." "The center is the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its center elsewhere. "The center is not the center", says Derrida. He has challenged the structuralist dream of producing scientific accounts of culture by discovering its underlying sign systems. These accounts are based on the assumption that there are stable points of reference outside the systems themselves -- a centre, a transcendental signified-- which secure their intelligibility. According to Derrida these points of reference are fictions. Even if they exist, they would not be reliable. He questions the view that certain texts,

scientific, philosophical or historical, are more reputable than stories and fictions. All texts, according to him, are equally questionable because all texts inevitably provide subjective, partial and a fragmentary version of reality. No text, however, objective it may be, depicts the world as it is. Deconstructing a text consists of recognizing and highlighting its internal incongruities. Derrida is asking us not to pull texts apart but actually inviting us to identify ways in which texts dismantle themselves through their own inconsistencies, ambiguities, paradoxes, silences and gaps. Deconstruction is not something one does to a text, but something, which the text has always already done to itself. For Derrida and other poststructuralists theorists, everything is a text. Any set of signs can be explored and interpreted as an organization of language. Thus he says that *there is nothing outside the text*. Texts do not exist independently of how they are interpreted. In fact, they are not immutable objects and do not yield immutable messages. They rather function as *pretexts* for an incalculably large number of readings. Derrida explains the need for interpretation of interpretation. His claim is as follows:

“There are thus two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of play. The one seeks to decipher dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign, and which lives the necessity of interpretation as an exile. The other, which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name of man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of metaphysics or of ontotheology -- in other words, throughout his entire history - has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of play.”(Ibid., p. 292)

Derrida's poststructuralist and postmodern writings prove itself as an attempt to deconstruct the western metaphysics of identity, of the presence of the self to itself in consciousness. According to him, the philosophical tradition, has been privileged the concept of the same; the aim of philosophical thought has been to reveal the essential characteristics that two things hold in common. The discovery of such essences depends on a movement of consciousness through the experience of

multiplicity to the recognition of the underlying unity. This movement depends on the suppression of differences in favour of similarities and on the ontological designation of similarities and essences as "more real" than apparent differences. Derrida maintains the view that we cannot have access to something that is outside philosophy, its absolute other or absolute negation. From the beginning, philosophy has been obsessed with its other. Derrida wants deconstruction, *différance*, and play to subvert and unsettle traditional forms of thought from within.

Logocentrism as a form of Philosophizing

Logocentrism, according to Derrida, is phonocentrism. In western philosophy, the logocentric prejudice actually operates through the priority to speech (*Phone*) over writing (*Gramme*). One can see this in the writings of Plato. Writing was treated with great suspicion by Plato. It has been argued that in "writing", there is a possibility of other interpretations quite different to those originally intended. Plato in *Phaedrus*

says that speech is the only authentic medium of language and writing is merely a debased and derivative function, substituting lifeless signs for the ideal self-present unity of thought and speech. The priority to speech over writing degrades writing as "parasitical on speech," a secondary medium of arbitrary signs, deprived of the authenticating "presence" vested in spoken language. Plato feels that once speeches have been written down, they are tumbled about anywhere among those who may or may not understand them, and know not to whom they should reply, to whom not: and if they are maltreated or abused, they have no parent to protect them, and they cannot protect or defend themselves.

Derrida challenges many conventional assumptions of the Western thought. It undermines the humanist notion that identity is a natural and unitary and instead advocates the idea of a plural and culturally constructed subject. It rejects the principle of *mimesis*, i.e., the principle that texts are capable of faithfully reflecting reality, by stressing that reality is always an effect of how it is represented interpreted and distorted. When we think we are looking at a faithful reflection of reality, we are

actually dealing with an interpretation--more or less biased--of reality. Hence Derrida says: "We need to interpret interpretations more than to interpret things." For example, he says that the idea of history is quite different from actual events and processes. Thus in the field of historiography, reality is distorted and yet presented as an objective chain of facts. Derrida claims that the idea of history is quite different from actual events and processes. It is because real occurrences are shaped, in their recording by dominant systems of values that foreground certain elements and marginalise or repress others. Derrida says: "There is no one single history, but rather histories."

For Derrida, writing takes on an extended significance beyond its customary sense. Derrida's "proto-writing" (*archi-écriture*) is that which precedes and places in question the entire structure of assumption which governs traditional thought. The idea of speech as self-presence goes along with a belief in the ability of thought to arrive at an authentic knowledge beyond reach of doubt because it is transparently open to inward self-scrutiny. Derrida in his work, *Of Grammatology*, has

shown how this "phonocentric" bias operates across the widest divergences of western philosophic thought by taking numerous examples from Plato to Saussure and Husserl. The western metaphysics relies upon a series of oppositions, i.e., between mind and body, the intelligible and the sensible, culture and nature, male and female, signifier and signified, writing and speech, parole and langue, diachrony and synchrony, in which one pole is elevated above the other, but can only be so prioritized through degenerations of its dependence on its contrary, which generates a fundamental incoherence. Here, the opposites are not maintained in dynamic tension, but are placed in a hierarchical order, which gives the first priority. Derrida says that at the point at which the concept of *différance* intervenes all these metaphysical oppositions become non-pertinent. Thus he deconstructs the binary opposition between the original and the copy that conventionally accords superiority to the original. He shows how the word "original" has a meaning only insofar as we can expect the original to become a non-original, namely simulation. The uniqueness of Derrida is that he deconstructs the very notion of the stable

structures of language. His key notions like intertextuality, undecidability, differance, show their implications in transcending the different forms of philosophizing.

Derrida's Critique of Phenomenology and Linguistic Philosophy

Writing, according to Derrida, has dual functions to play. He uses the term "différance" to denote the dual function of writing as both a *differing* (where each sign differing from the other) and a *deferring* (the endless chain of signs postpones any termination of the chain in some original signified). The functioning of difference *within* speech is the "arche-writing", according to Derrida. Arche-writing is a sort of writing before writing and it cannot be objectively defined. It cannot be reduced to the form of presence. It is a non-logocentric linguistics, i.e., "grammatology." Derrida views how phenomenology as a method of philosophizing is both a critique of metaphysics and also a participant in metaphysical enterprise. Husserl explains this relationship in his *Cartesian Meditations* by saying that phenomenology is indeed metaphysical in so far as the

term implies the deepest knowledge of being. Husserl himself is a metaphysical thinker. His criticisms of metaphysics are really attacks on its degradation or perversion and they arise precisely from a desire to create a purer or more authentic version of metaphysics. Derrida is not simply claiming that there are metaphysical residues still clinging to Husserl's thought but rather metaphysical presuppositions of a dogmatic and speculative nature constitute phenomenology at its deepest level. Commenting on Western philosophy, Derrida says: "Incapable of respecting the Being and meaning of the other, Phenomenology and Ontology would be philosophies of violence. Through them, the entire philosophical tradition,"

Derrida altogether rejects the centre, a transcendental signified as stable points of reference. His detailed discussion on the signifier-signified relation shows how it has to be transcended. He writes: For the signification, 'sign' has always been understood and determined, in its meaning, as sign-of, signifier different from its signified. If one erases the radical difference between signifier and signified, it is the word 'signifier'

itself which must be abandoned as a metaphysical concept. They are fictions, according to Derrida; they do not exist; they are not reliable. Derrida further says that all texts, whether they are historical, philosophical or scientific, are questionable since all of them represent a partial subjective dimension or representation of the reality. What Derrida aims at is to identify methods in which texts dismantle themselves through their own inconsistencies, gaps and ambiguities. Thus deconstruction is not a negative method; but a positive one. Derrida could challenge the existing forms of philosophizing and many conventional assumption, which are common to Western philosophical thinking. (This is equally applicable to Indian philosophical tradition, which is also based on some fundamental assumptions) In different forms of philosophizing, philosophers are in search of identity and unity. These forms of philosophizing never takes into account the plurality and differences. Though there has been paradigm shifts in philosophy, the paradigm could not be abolished. Once a paradigm is created, philosophers stick on to it. The problem with philosophy of identity and

unity is that identity never allows interpretation. Interpretation exhibits the different dimension of reality, which are hidden by different forms of philosophizing. This made Derrida to say, "We need to interpret interpretations more than to interpret things".

Derrida challenges the metaphysics of modernity because of its assumptions, which not only influences philosophical thinking but also other social sciences. In the meeting between Gadamer and Derrida that took place in April 1981 at the Gothe Institute, Paris, Derrida questions the Gadamerian method of hermeneutics as a method of philosophizing. Viewing this encounter, John D. Caputo explains how deconstruction carries out a radical disruption of essentialism, which has its roots in metaphysical tradition from Plato to Hegel. Further he says how deconstruction poses disturbing questions rather than trusting what is being handed down. In *Spurs*, Derrida teaches how truth is plural. Commenting on Nietzsche's text, "these are only--my truths", he says, "The very fact that 'my truths' is so underlined, that they are multiple, variegated, contradictory even, can only imply that there are not *truths*. There is then no such as a

truth in itself, but only a surfeit of it; even about myself, truth is plural." (Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, , p. 103).

What is important is that Derrida questions philosophy itself as it was traditionally conceived and practised. He not only questions the methods of philosophizing practiced in philosophy. The existing structures in philosophy for the first time have been challenged by him because of its biased and limitational approach. Derrida replaces the concept of identity by his concept of otherness and *différance*. What he is trying to show is that reality is to be understood only in the context of difference and not in the background of self-identity or eternal presence. This should be understood as total abandonment of metaphysics. He is not offering an alternate metaphysics. He is trying to transcend metaphysics. Derrida explains how a philosophical text has to be studied. It has to be studied in its formal structure, in its models of exposition and production. He extends the boundaries of philosophy by including literature. In fact he goes beyond to include all human intellectual activity in it. Thus, the distinction between

philosophy and literature is no more important for Derrida. Thus the boundaries laid down by "traditional philosophy" or philosophizing is transcended in his approach. He observes: "A philosophical, or journalistic, or scientific discourse can be read in 'nontranscendent' fashion. 'Transcend here means going beyond interest from the signifier, the forms, the language referent. One can do a nontranscendent reading of any text whatever'".

Does Deconstruction aim at Nothingness as a form of Philosophizing?

According to Derrida, language finds its source in "différance" as the linguist Saussure had claimed. The arbitrary nature of linguistic signs and their constitution through difference, are the chief notions by means of which Saussure attempted to explain *langue* as a system. The idea of difference completes the insulation of *langue* as a self-contained system. "In language, there are only differences" says Saussure. Though Derrida accepts Saussurean contribution to the inseparability of the signifier from signified, the signified is a determinate "idea" or a "meaning" fixed by the conjunction of word and thought. This would lead to the view that the

signified could exist as the "pure concept" or "pure thought" independent of the signifier. Meaning, says Derrida, is created only by the play of *différance* in the process of signification. Writing, for him, does not refer to a script as such, but to the spacing inherent in the notion of *différance*. *Différance* permits all thought, speech and writing, and make possible the opposition between the signifier and the signified. *Différance* presumes a "spatial" dimension, which is also a "temporal" one. Space is "in" time: is time's pure living-itself, it is the "outside-itself" as the self-relation of time, says Derrida. *Différance* indicates that it involves an integration of the "spatial" and the "temporal". Derrida by breaking away from the Saussurean distinction between synchrony and diachrony, argues that once this distinction is abandoned, difference is recognized to exist only within the temporal process of deferring, continual loss of present to future and to past. Signification only operates through *différance* or "trace". It is "origin of all repetition, origin of ideality,... is no more ideal than real, no more intelligible than sensible, no more transparent signification than an opaque energy and no concept of

metaphysics can describe it." All signs and all texts include traces of others. Language, for Derrida, is the active force for differentiation present in trace form in all consciousness.

Sometimes, it is argued that deconstruction is nihilism because it criticizes the idea that there is a centre fixed point. If there is no such fixed point, then it follows that there is no fixed and final meaning to a text. If there is no ultimate meaning, than any interpretation is as good as any other. But this criticism is not proper. Derrida, in one of his interviews, makes it clear that this is nothing but misinterpretation of his deconstruction. He says: "I regret that I have been misinterpreted in this way... people who wish to avoid questioning and discussion present deconstruction as a sort of gratuitous chess game with a combination of signs, closed up in language as in a cave. I totally refuse that label of nihilism, which has been ascribed to me. Deconstruction is not an enclosure in nothingness, but openness towards the other. (Richard Kearney, *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers*, p. 124).

For Derrida, no term is the bearer of a self-evident meaning. Thus meaning must be instituted through a further term or text, and the meaning of this in turn by a further term or text, in a process which Derrida names the "logic of supplementary." Meaning is a textual activity, for Derrida. It has been argued by Peter Dews in *Logics of Disintegration* that Derrida's philosophy of *différance* is no real advance on a philosophy of identity. This would mean that the process or method of deconstruction is nothing but an empty reversal of the domination of identity over difference. Even this criticism is not proper because for Derrida, identity is not something given, something simple, but rather it is a product of both *differing* and *deferring*. Both are included in "difference." Hence, deconstruction is not an empty reversal of the domination of identity over difference.

N᳚g᳚rjuna's Methodology

Dialectic is another name for refutation. There is dialectic when you are being aware of the fundamental presuppositions of others, and so it is universal. Unless the refutation is universal, it cannot be dialectic.

-- T. R. V. Murti

The approach of the M@dhyamikas is the critic of experience. For them, dialectic or criticism itself is philosophy. By rejecting all the different standpoints, they argue that there is nothing to be known. In the words of T.R.V. Murti, the M@dhyamika philosophy is the complete and consistent formulation of the skeptical attitude that was born with Buddhism. M@dhyamika dialectic is the most consistent and complete formulation of the critical analysis. Their dialectic is the rejection of all views. It is free from all philosophical positions or commitments. Thus in M@dhyamika, we can see a movement from the ontological to the epistemological which is maintained by the evaluation of all other schools.

N@g@rjuna's M@dhyamika represents the philosophical Buddhism par excellence. N@g@rjuna's does not offer any speculative theory. He only offers a criticism of other theories. The criticism of other theories cannot be a theory at all. He does not take any philosophical position. He only records all the philosophical positions. He is aware of all the philosophical standpoints without taking one.

Nāgārjuna, like Derrida, deconstructs the existing philosophical theories. T. R.V. Murti contends that Nāgārjuna's "no view about reality" should not be taken as "a no-reality view". This lecture attempts to discuss the distinction between the distinction between "No-view about reality" and "A no-reality view" in the context of *śūnyatā* or emptiness. The *śūnyatā* is the reflective awareness of the dialectical play of reason. It claims that all things are devoid of definite nature, characteristics and function. This means that all the speculative theories are unintelligible and hence should be refuted. By saying that all words and names are empty, we conclude that there is no legitimate meaning of concepts, ideas and words. But the critics argue that to say that all things are empty of their self-essence is tantamount to saying that all terms are meaningless, including those in Nāgārjuna's assertion itself. We are reminded of Liar's paradox here. While answering the critics, Nāgārjuna says that things like cart or pot etc., though they are empty of their self-essence because they are dependently produced, they serve their functions. Similarly, though words have no self-essence, they work

conventionally. Hence the criticism that if there is no self-essence, then the word, "no self-essence" is also impossible, is not acceptable.

The M@dhyamika school founded by N@g@rjuna is considered to be the philosophical Buddhism par excellence. N@g@rjuna was an interpreter rather than innovator. He accepted the early texts and criticized the interpretations of the Abhidharma saying that such interpreters do not understand the teachings of the Buddha. He reinterpreted and restated them in a clear and intelligent way. The works generally agreed to be N@g@rjuna are ten in number and the work, *M@lamadhyamak@Drik@* (The Basic Treatise on the Middle Way) is said to be a basic one. The works of N@g@rjuna had their origin in the teachings of the Buddha and in the early Buddhist tradition. The early scriptures speak of the Buddha's statement about emptiness (*∅@nyat@*), of the famous fourteen unanswerable questions, and of "theory of no theory". The uniqueness of this school is that it did not hold any view of its own and it evaluates the metaphysical views of other schools and refutes them by showing the

absurdities and inconsistencies. The main philosophical concepts discussed in this school are as follows: (1) emptiness), (2) the middle way, (3) the twofold truth, and (4) the refutation of erroneous views as the illumination of right views.

First we shall discuss the middle way and the refutation of the erroneous views as the illumination of the right view to understand the great vision of Nāgārjuna.

The Middle way: The term, "middle way" in Pāli is known as *Majjhimāpatipadā*. It is held to be fundamental to all Buddhist thought. Nāgārjuna applied this to all problems of epistemology and ontology and hence his philosophical school is known as the Mādhyamika philosophy. It represents a characteristic attitude, rooted in a certain set of individual and social concerns, which shapes the motivation for one's actions in the world, and it is indication of a particular sort of deconstructive philosophy. Buddha preaches the middle way to the five mendicants at the Deer Park outside Varanasi.

“Mendicants, there are two extremes which should not be practiced by any person who has left society to find salvation. What are these extremes? On the one hand, there is the realm of desire and pursuit of pleasure which is in accord with desire-- it is a base pursuit, boorish, profane, crude and without profit. On the other hand, there is the pursuit of self-mortification, which is sheer misery, as well as crude and without profit. Mendicants, passing through these two extremes and avoiding them both, is the Middle way.” The middle way is considered to be soteriological device, just as a raft is used to cross over to the other shore of a river, so also the Dharmas (here it means the Middle way) is used to cross the ocean of birth and death and reach the other shore, i.e., *nirvāṇa*. According to Nāgārjuna, the middle way signifies the avoidance of both concepts of being and non-being. While the abstract concepts as being unprofitable, he looks at the Eightfold Path as representing the skillful means. The Dependent Origination is the Middle way, for it endeavours to explain that one should avoid adherence to the philosophical standpoints of extreme realism and

nihilism. Buddha says: "... everyday experience relies on the duality of "it is" and "it is not". But for one who relies on the Dharma and on wisdom, and thereby directly perceives how the things of the world arise and pass away, for him, there is no "it is" and "it is not". "Everything exists" is one extreme, and "nothing exists" is the other extreme. The Tathag@ta relies on neither of these two extremes; he teaches the dharma as a Middle Way". The M@dhyamikas use the middle way to discard all views, whether positive or negative, whether right or wrong. In the M@dhyamika perspective, even the teachings of the Buddha, viewing from the absolute angle are considered to be as empty as are the empirical truths. N@g@rjuna says: "The Buddhas have indicated that there is a self, they taught that there is no self, and they also taught that there is neither any self nor any no-self. (MK, XVIII, 6).

The alternatives of the existence and non-existence of self cannot be true. If one is wrong, the other too, must be wrong, for both stand at opposite poles to each other and each of them is considered to be one-sided view. Whatever be the nature of the conventional view, it

is always subject to contradictions, for it is in the nature of thought to contradict itself by itself. To avoid these contradictions, the Mṍdhyamikas support neither to a positive nor to a negative view, neither to right view nor erroneous view. Thus discarding all the views, they do not offer any view of their own, knowing well that if they had one, they too will suffer from the same contradictions from which other views suffer. Hence, Nṍgṍrjuna says: "If I had any proposition, then this defect would be mine. I have, however, no proposition. Therefore, there is no defect that is mine." Nṍgṍrjuna equates the middle way with two important concepts, namely, dependent origination and emptiness. He says: "Whatever is dependent designation (is what) we call "emptiness". That (again) is (called) dependent origination (and) that is alone the middle way. (MK, XXIV, 18). Chandrakirti explains that Nṍgṍrjuna here established the following equation, Dependent origination =emptiness =dependent designation =middle way, meaning thereby that all these terms in Mṍdhyamika philosophy speak of the something, and are therefore interchangeable.

The M@dhyamikas apply the method of *reductio ad absurdum*, which is a kind of negative dialectic to expose the inherent contradictions and absurdities in the opponent's position. The M@dhyamikas disprove the opponents view, and they themselves do not prove or present any view of their own instead. They feel that the refutation of erroneous views is the same as the illumination of the right views. A right view is not a view in itself, rather the absence of views. N@g@rjuna uses tetralemma (*catu@koti*) to criticize other views. There are four possible views: (1) affirmation, (2) negation, (3) both affirmation and negation and (4) neither affirmation nor negation. N@g@rjuna uses the tetralemma to examine the opponent's views to show that anything as existence, as non-existence, as both existence and non-existence or as neither existence nor non-existence, is untenable and should be eliminated.

N@g@rjuna and his followers were condemned to be nihilists because their opponents misunderstood the meaning of “@nyat@” and its purpose. The term is understood as “voidness”, “emptiness” , “devoidity” or “nothingness”. N@g@rjuna is of the view that the term

should not be taken in the literal sense (MK, XXIV, 77). He says that nothing could be asserted to be $\text{☉} \text{☉} \text{nya}$, $a \text{☉} \text{☉} \text{nya}$, both $\text{☉} \text{☉} \text{nya}$, and $a \text{☉} \text{☉} \text{nya}$, and neither $\text{☉} \text{☉} \text{nya}$ nor $a \text{☉} \text{☉} \text{nya}$. They are asserted only for the purpose of provisional understanding. For him, $\text{☉} \text{☉} \text{nyat} \text{①}$ should be treated in three perspectives: (1) $\text{☉} \text{☉} \text{nyat} \text{①}$ is identical with Dependent Origination, (2) $\text{☉} \text{☉} \text{nyat} \text{①}$ should be considered together with the twofold path, and (3) $\text{☉} \text{☉} \text{nyat} \text{①}$ is a therapeutic device or a corrective instrument.

Let us see how Nṅrjuna considers $\text{☉} \text{☉} \text{nyat} \text{①}$ as identical with Dependent Origination. In the *Kṛika* as well as in different verses of *Vigrahavyāvartan**, he talks about the identity of these two concepts. *Prat*ityasamudpḍa* is *niḍsvabhḍvatḍ* or being devoid of the intrinsic nature and *niḍsvabhḍvatḍ* in turn is *Madhyamapḍridpad* which can never be equated with the extremes of eternalism or nihilism. Nṅrjuna has emphasized this in all his writings. Only the opponents call him $\text{☉} \text{☉} \text{nyadin}$. In the second point, $\text{☉} \text{☉} \text{nyat} \text{①}$ should be considered together with the twofold path. Whosoever considered $\text{☉} \text{☉} \text{nyat} \text{①}$ to be

nothingness or non-existence does not grasp the significance of the distinction between worldly and transcendental truths. N᳚g᳚rjuna says that at the worldly level, everything seems to have an existence apart from its perceiver. In this standpoint, we classify objects such as jar, car, table, etc. When viewed from the transcendental standpoint, it is devoid of determinate, fixed and self-existing essence. Notwithstanding, to say that nothing is absolutely real, does not mean that nothing exists. It does not nullify anything in the world. It does not deny the universe either. The dialectical criticism is logical and grammatical but not ontological. As suggested by Li Cheng in his book, *Empty Logic*, N᳚g᳚rjuna avoids making an essential differentiation and metaphysical speculation about it. The purpose of ᳚᳚nyat ᳚ is to bring language back to the worldly level. Moreover, N᳚g᳚rjuna's negation is absolute, for it does not have any counter position, whereas a nihilist's negation is relative to the thesis, which is being negated. N᳚g᳚rjuna's negation is based on the truth of looking at everything in its proper way, whereas the nihilist's negation is blind and untrue. The ᳚᳚nyat ᳚ of the

M᠐dhyamika does not prohibit functionality. The opponents criticized that if all things are empty, they could not arise nor cease and accordingly there should be no four noble truths. It is indeed in the worldly experiences that everything functions, and emptiness is the interdependent arising. Where the emptiness is possible, there everything is possible, and wherever the interdependent arising is possible, there it must logically follow that the four noble truths must exist, for the interdependent arising bring about suffering, without it suffering could not arise. Since suffering is dependent on interdependent arising, it is essenceless and empty. If suffering causally exists, then the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering is possible. Therefore, the understanding of suffering, the abandonment of the cause, the realization of cessation and meditation on the path too are possible. If the fruits exist, then those who abide in the fruits are possible, and if those who abide in the fruits exist, then those who enter them become possible. Where there exist those who and abide in the fruits, there the Sangha is possible. If the noble truth exists, then the true Dharma is also possible. When the

true Dharma and the true Sanhga exist, then the Buddha is also possible. All the distinct understandings of all things, both worldly and transcendental, are also possible. Dharma, non-dharma, and their results, as well as worldly terminology become possible. On the contrary, if all things are not empty and have their fixed and determinate nature, “anyone who is not a Buddha cannot attain the enlightenment even by otherwise rigorous effort or by the practice of the Bodhisatta’s way. (MK, XXIV, 32). Freedom would also be impossible. It is only when all things are empty that everything including the teachings of the Buddha is possible. And then those who committed sin can become good ones, and the unenlightened can attain *nirvāṇa*. Therefore, the Mādhyamika is not nihilist, for his concept of *śūnyatā* is given to save or to account for empirical phenomena and practical values.

The third point is that *śūnyatā* should be regarded as a therapeutic device or a corrective instrument like the teachings for the Buddha such as the four noble truths, the five aggregates, the six internal sense-fields, the six external sense-fields, the eightfold

path etc., are all in the aspect treated as practical device given by a doctor, i.e., the Buddha to a sick person, i.e., human being in order to eradicate his sickness, rather than as embodying the highest philosophical truth. Just as a man is struck by an arrow and bleeding to death it is only practical and proper, at that instant, to pull the arrow out and administer medical care rather than look for the culprit to punish him or even teach him a lesson. In this way of treatment, Nāgārjuna's philosophy can never be a nihilism.

Can we say that Nāgārjuna's Philosophy is Absolutism?

There are some scholars who associate Nāgārjuna's philosophy with absolutism. This tendency may be due to the influence of Stcherbatsky's monistic interpretation of *śūnyatā* as well as by Upanisadic and Vedāntic approaches. For them, *śūnyatā* is an absolute, which is transcendent to thought, and it does really exist. Radhakrishnan says that Nāgārjuna's absolute seems to be immobile in its absoluteness. In this sense, it seems like Nirguna Brahman of Advaita Vedānta, which is beyond thought and language and cannot be related to the

relative and phenomenal. Scholars like C.D. Sharma are of the view that $\phi @nyat @$ has two aspects, phenomenal and transcendental, the latter is the Absolute or Reality itself. C.D Sharma says as follows: “ $\phi @nyat @$, in its second aspect, is therefore the Reality itself wherein all plurality is emerged, all categories of intellect are transcended.” David J. Kalupahana in his book, *Buddhist Philosophy: A Philosophical Analysis* also subscribes to this above view. He says: “By adopting this dialectic approach, the M@dhyamika were able to uphold the sole reality of the Absolute which they term variously, Dharmak@ya, Tattva or Satya”. (p.138). But later there is a shift in the author’s position. (See his book, *M@lamadhyamakakarika of N@g@rjuna*) wherein he moves from absolutistic interpretation to empiricist position. A great scholar, T.R.V. Murti in his study of M@dhyamika, applies a Kantian, Hegelian approach to claim that the M@dhyamika philosophy is Absolutism in character and not nihilism. He offers the following points in order to support his position. They are as follows:

1. Murti views that M@dhyamika philosophy as a part of revolution in Buddhist philosophy. By

following the Buston's classification of Buddhism into three phases, namely, pluralism, absolutism and idealism, Murti says that in metaphysics it was revolution from a radical pluralism to radical absolutism. This change was from a plurality of discrete ultimate entities to the essential unity underlying them (See T.R.V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, p.5).

2. By comparing Mādhyamika philosophy with that of Kant, Murti says that Nāgārjuna has made a Copernican revolution in Indian philosophy. He further says that Nāgārjuna's criticism emerges from the conflict between Upanisadic *Ātma* and Buddhistic *nair-Ātma* views. The Mādhyamika did not stop at the reason, for after eliminating all views, the philosophical consciousness reaches intuition. This intuition itself is *Prajna* (non-dual knowledge). *Prajna* as the dissolution of conceptualization is nothing but Freedom, and *Prajna* as the Absolute is identical with the Tathāgata, the Tathāgata is a free phenomenal manifestation of ϕ *Ānyatā* (*Prajna*). Strictly

speaking, *Prajna*, and freedom (*nirvana*) are the Absolute. *Ibid.* p. 301).

3. Murti considers that the M \odot dhyamika negation to be not an end itself. It is a means which opens to absolutism. Negation itself is significant because there is an underlying reality the subjacent ground. If there were no transcendent ground, how could any view be condemned as false? A view is false, because it falsifies the real, makes the thing appear other than what it is in itself (p. 234-5).
4. For Murti, *Prajn \odot -p \odot ramit \odot* of M \odot dhyamika is absolute itself and thus he designates the Absolute as \nexists *nyā*, for it is devoid of all predicates such as existence, unity, selfhood, goodness etc.. The Absolute is incommensurable and inexpressible. It is extremely transcendent to thought. It is universal, impersonal reality of the world.
5. Murti argues that the M \odot dhyamika philosophy is religion in the sense that it has the consciousness of the super mundane presence immanent in

things, whereas early Buddhism lacks this character. The Buddha is considered to be not a historical person but the essence of all Beings. Religion in this sense, therefore, is the revolution from positivism to an absolutistic pantheism (p.6). On this basis, Murti believes that M@dhyamika philosophy can serve as a basis of world culture.

How far the above interpretation is right?

Buddhist philosophy as a system stood against the Brahmanical essentialism has a uniqueness of its own. The terms, "monism" or "absolutism" have no real significance in its system. From the first verses of his treatise, *M@lamadhyamakak @rik @*, N@g@rjuna denies any ontological or metaphysical approach. Mostly scholars who give an absolutistic interpretation of N@g@rjuna's philosophy quote, *MK*, XVII, 9, which seems to indicate the *Tattva* in ontological sense. However, a careful scrutiny would show that no such thing could be found there. According to N@g@rjuna, *Tattva*, the real nature of things is interdependent taught by the Buddha. It is explained in eight negative senses in

the dedicatory verses of the *Karika* that it is “non-ceasing and non-arising, non-annihilation and non-eternity, neither one nor many, neither coming in nor going out.” (*MK*, Dedicatory Verses). *Tattva* is said to be “realized within oneself, peaceful, free from thought-constructions, without discrimination and having a variety of meaning”. (*MK*, XVIII, 9). This verse does not indicate *Tattva* as an Absolute transcending thought as those scholars believed. It is, in fact, solely the explication of state of affairs when one realized the essencelessness of all things including ideas and concepts.

The term $\text{☉nyat} \text{①}$ also does not refer to any existent entity, nor does it stand outside of the conventional system. It should not be given any meaning than the meaning it has in connection with the view for which it is offered as corrective. If we understand it metaphysically then, we miss the real sense of it and equate to treat it outside the context it offers. This means that it should not be treated as a metaphysical concept involving a theory of its own. N $\text{①}g\text{①}rjuna$ says: “If there is a thing that is not empty, then there must be something,

which is empty. Since nothing is non-empty, how can there be an empty thing"? (MK, XIII,7) In fact, $\phi \textcircled{nyat} \textcircled{1}$ is for eradicating, all concepts and theories either nihilistic or absolutistic; $\phi \textcircled{nyat} \textcircled{1}$ being understood in its metaphysical sense serves negative purpose. N $\textcircled{1}$ g $\textcircled{1}$ rjuna further says: "Just as a snake caught in a wrong manner by a dull-witted folk only causes death to him or as a magic wrongly employed destroys the magician, so also $\phi \textcircled{nyat} \textcircled{1}$ wrongly seen and understood only ruins the person concerned". (MK, XXIV, 11) $\phi \textcircled{nyat} \textcircled{1}$ is meant to provide an insight into *Tattva* of all things as discussed above and helps to eliminate our mental and emotional attachment to phenomenal realities. When the ultimate truth is realized, $\phi \textcircled{nyat} \textcircled{1}$ must not be viewed as a separate viewpoint. Murti comes close to this point when he asserted that N $\textcircled{1}$ g $\textcircled{1}$ rjuna had not attempted to offer any speculative theory or an ontological position. He says: "Philosophy for the M $\textcircled{1}$ dhyamika, is not an explanation of things through conceptual patterns. That is the way of dogmatic speculation (d \wedge $\textcircled{1}$ $\textcircled{1}$ i); but this does not give us the truth. The Dialectic is intended as an effective antidote for this

dogmatic procedure of reason; it is the criticism of theories. Criticism of theories is not another theory; $\phi \textcircled{\text{nyat}} \textcircled{\text{D}}$ of $d \wedge \textcircled{\text{I}}$ is not one more $d \wedge \textcircled{\text{I}}$, but is prajna-tjeir reflective awareness". (TRV Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, p. 209) $N \textcircled{\text{g}} \textcircled{\text{rjuna}}$ also says: "The Victorious one proclaimed the emptiness of all views. But those who take "emptiness" to be a view, are called "incurable persons". Candrakirti also says that if $\phi \textcircled{\text{nyat}} \textcircled{\text{D}}$ is taken by anyone as anything positive or *Bh \textcircled{\text{var}} \textcircled{\text{pa}}*, he is completely destroyed".

Negation, to $N \textcircled{\text{g}} \textcircled{\text{rjuna}}$, is absolute in itself, it does not imply any transcendent reality as the absolutists asserted, he does not point to a position beyond linguistic expression; he simply shows that there is devoid of its own essence. His negation is aimed at destroying all views and highlighting the essencelessness of all things. If any one believes that his negation is similar to that of Upanisadic via negativa method, he is misleading others. The major difference is that $N \textcircled{\text{g}} \textcircled{\text{rjuna}}$'s negative dialectic aims at *anatman*, whereas the Upanisadic *neti-neti*, ultimately aims at *atman*. In other words, the purpose of $N \textcircled{\text{g}} \textcircled{\text{rjuna}}$'s negation is not to describe via

negativa an absolute, which cannot be expressed, but to deny the illusion that such a self-existent reality exists. Commenting on this, Candrakirti says as follows: "If a man goes to the shop to buy something, but the shop-keeper tells him, "look, there is nothing to sell, so I can give you *nothing*", and if that man says, "All right, then please give me that nothing". Emptiness is not a theory or a view; rather it is an empty of all views. The concept of emptiness is never about a thing or a nothing, rather it is an empty of a thing or nothing. That all things are empty implies that concepts or categories through which we constitute our experiences are unintelligible. Emptiness is of the highest value and most profound truth. By itself, the term has no definite import but acquires various meaning on different circumstances. It is normally used to mean the devoidness of something. According to M@dhyamikas, all things are empty for they are devoid of definite nature, characteristic and function. N@g@rjuna says:

"All things are empty. Why?

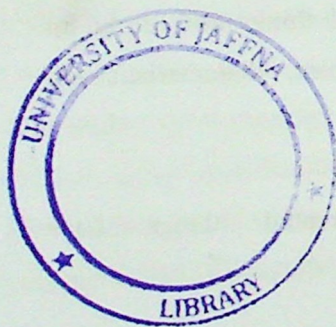
Neither created nor non-created things have characteristics.

Since they have no characteristics, they are empty.”

Nāgārjuna considers emptiness under the following aspects: (1) emptiness as an antidote for metaphysical disease, (2) emptiness as soteriological device, and (3) emptiness as a key term to understand the nature of language.

Thus we see certain parallels between Indian and Western philosophical traditions. Some of the modern ways of philosophizing like, analysis, hermeneutics and deconstruction find a place in Indian Philosophy.

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The first part of the paper discusses the general theory of the subject, and the second part discusses the special case of the subject. The first part is divided into two sections, the first of which discusses the general theory and the second of which discusses the special case. The second part is divided into two sections, the first of which discusses the general theory and the second of which discusses the special case.

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