UNIT9: K.C. BHATTACHARYYA:CONCEPT OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 Learning Objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 Concept of philosophy

9.4 Grades of consciousness

9.5 Branches of philosophy

9.6 The subject and realization of its freedom

- 9.6.1 Bodily subjectivity
- 9.6.2 Psychic subjectivity
- 9.6.3 Spiritual subjectivity

9.7 Let us sum up

9.8 Further reading

9.9 Answers to check your progress

9.10 Model questions

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- explain K. C. Bhattacharyya's concept of philosophy
- discuss the branches of philosophy
- describe four Grades of theoretic consciousness
- discuss different stages of subjectivity
- explain the concept'Subject as freedom'.

9.2 INTRODUCTION

K.C Bhattacharyya (1875-1949) is one of the foremost philosophers of 20th century India. His analysis of philosophical issues, his employment of a method which resembles the method of the phenomenologists, his unique conception of consciousness – all these have bearings upon his conception of philosophy. He possesses an

acute analytic intellect with imagination and insights of a very high order. Although Bhattacharyya has a deep intellectual background, his explanation appears to be the expression of an original mind. His philosophical discussions are very analytical, but abstract. He has his roots in the ancient Indian philosophy particularly of the Advaita Vedanta, Sankhya, Yoga and Jaina philosophies but he also assimilates the Western thought particularly the philosophy of Kant and Whitehead in him. Though K.C. Bhattacharyya's writings are extremely few, it is difficult to understand for the ordinary reader due to his very concise and condense style of writings.

Bhattacharyya's philosophy isa living organism of thought into which new material is assimilated, never raw butdigested by interpretation, and in which the same form becomes ever different as itdevelops under the impetus of an intellectual vital force. Philosophy is theoretic thinking which is neither actual knowledge nor a literal thought. Philosophy deals with the self-subsistence of objects. It does not concern with facts which is an awareness of a content that is either perceived or imagined to be perceived. Philosophy deals with self-subsistent objects, the real subject and the truth being. The contents of philosophy are pure objective or contemplative thought, spiritual thought and transcendental thought. The contents of philosophy are not literally thinkable like empirical knowledge. The philosophical thought, therefore, is not literal but symbolical. Philosophy elaborates the symbolic thought, not the actual knowledge nor a literal thought. It is concerned only with contents that are contemplated as true with the faith that it would give the knowledge of the Absolute. To speak is to formulate a belief. The speakable does not have a meaning content, it is only believed. A square circle, sky lotus, son of a barren woman, horns of the hare, etc. are neither believed nor disbelieved. These do not have even a spoken content. Therefore, these do not come under the province of philosophical study.

9.3 CONCEPT OF PHILOSOPHY

In his philosophy, Bhattacharyya deals with pure self-subsistent object which has no spatio-temporal existence. For him, philosophy elaborates the concept of the self-subsistent object. In philosophy, the object hasnecessary reference to the subject which is not found in the case of science. For K.C.Bhattacharyya, philosophy is theoretic thinking. It does not deal with objectsas fact but as self-subsistent realities. It is not related with facts like science. Philosophy does not study facts or properties of object which are knowable or usable. Thus, for Bhattacharyya, the contents of philosophy are not literally thinkable. Philosophical thoughts are symbolic. Philosophy is the expression of theoretic consciousness or thoughts. Thus philosophical concepts are transcendental concepts which come from consciousness reflective attitude.

The subject matter of philosophy is systematic symbolism. The metaphysical reasoning depends on symbolism. It is an elaboration of symbolic concepts. K.C. Bhattacharyya states that, “Metaphysics or more generally, philosophy including logic and epistemology, is notonly not actual knowledge, but is not even literal thought; and yet its contents arecontemplated as true in the faith that it is only by such contemplation that absolute truthcan be known.”

9.4 GRADES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Both science and philosophy are expressions of theoretic consciousness. Theoretic consciousness has just a ‘believed content’ and not a ‘meant-content’. Bhattacharyya’s conception of philosophy is linked up with his idea of grades of consciousness. According to him philosophy is the expression of theoretic consciousness and theoretic consciousness is conceived apart from its expressions. All forms of theoretic consciousness are thought. According to Bhattacharyya there are four forms of thought and they are considered as four grades of theoretic consciousness. They are the following——

(a) **Empirical Thought:** Empirical thought is the realm of sciences. Philosophy does not study the empirical thought. Empirical thought has always a reference to the objective. The reference is the awareness of a content that is either perceived or imagined to be perceived. Science deals with facts, evolution, the results of scientific investigation etc. In science, the facts are studied, in which there is no reference to the subject or the 'speaking function'. But in philosophy everything is studied with reference to the subject.

(b) **Pure Objective Thought**: This grade of theoretic consciousness has pure objective thought as its content. Here we find contemplation which also refers to an object. But this object of contemplation has no necessary reference to sense-perception.

(c) **Spiritual Thought:** Thethird grade of theoretic consciousness has spiritual thought as its object. It does not have any content that is contemplated in the objective attitude, the content here is thought of or grasped in the subjective attitude, that is, in an enjoying consciousness. Here the objective attitude is completely absent. That attitude is replaced by a subjective of self-enjoying experience.

(d) **Transcendental Thought**: The fourth grade of theoretic consciousness has transcendental thought as its object. This consciousness has a reference neither to the subjective nor to the objective, it somehow transcends their distinction. Therefore the content of transcendental consciousness is transcendental and is called the Truth.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State whether the following statements are True or False

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(a). K.C Bhattacharyya's philosophy is deeply influenced by Advaita Vedanta system and also by the philosophy of Kant. (T/F)

(b) According to K.C. Bhattacharyya there are three grades of theoretic consciousness. (T/F)

(c) Bhattacharyya says that philosophy is concerned with first grade of theoretic consciousness namely empirical thought. (T/F)

Q.2 What is meant by pure objective thought?

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Q.3. Write is spiritual thought?

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9.5 BRANCHES OF PHILOSOPHY

Out of these four grades of thought, empirical thought is the realm of the sciences, whereas pure objective, spiritual and transcendental thought are the realms of philosophy. Accordingly we have three branches of philosophy; philosophy of the object, i.e. metaphysics and logic; philosophy of subject, i.e. epistemology; and philosophy of truth i.e. the consciousness of the transcendent.

(a) Philosophy of Object: -

Science deals with the object which is called fact in which there is no reference to the subject. The subject of philosophy is self - subsistent, it has a necessary reference to the subject. Metaphysics is the philosophy of object. Metaphysics investigates the nature of the object. The subject matter of logic is the forms of objects. Metaphysics deals with the self - subsistence of objects, that what is contemplated in the objective attitude. On the other hand logic deals with the forms of objects. Metaphysics and logic are mutually dependent on each other. Logical forms may have reference to some pure objects. These pure objects are supplemented by metaphysics, which are objective in nature.

Logic and metaphysics are two branches of philosophy of the objects. A comparison of the object with the subject is essential to understand object clearly. The subjective or spiritual level of consciousness gives us the actual knowledge of the object. Logic and metaphysics constitute the philosophy.

Metaphysics deals with the self-subsistent objects. There is, therefore, no metaphysics of the subject. The contents of objective, subjective and transcendental thoughts are self- subsistent. The so-called grades of thought are really grades of speaking. Fact in science is spokenof as information and understood without reference to the spoken form. It is what neednot be spoken to be believed. Speakability is a contingent character of the content of empirical thought, but it is a necessary character of the content of pure philosophicthought.

Pure thought is not intelligible except as spoken. Speakability is, therefore a necessary character of philosophical thought. But this does not imply that philosophy is a disease of speech, philosophical contents are self-evident and are independent of individual mind.

Philosophy does not study the objects objectively as science do. The object of philosophy is not factual; it is not a 'thing' to be known. It emphasizes the subjective experience of the objective. Fact of science is expressible in a judgment like 'A is thus related to B". But the form of philosophical judgment is like 'X is'. Fact is always a fact related to facts in proper judgments. The judgments of philosophy are approval judgments in the form of "I am" or 'the Absolute is". The judgment 'It is' asserts that X is self - subsistent, real and true. It also asserts that the subject presupposes thepredicate. The pure object is enjoyed in contemplation, which has necessary reference to the subject. So K.C. Bhattacharyya says, **"**Truth is only symbolically spoken, reality is literally spoken as symbolized and the self-subsistentis literally spoken as meant. None of these are spoken of as information, whilefact is spoken of as information."

(b) Philosophy of Spirit: -

Metaphysical reasoning is the systematic exposition of symbolic concepts in relation to the subject. Logic deals with pure forms, which constitute the subject matter of metaphysics. Thus logic presupposes metaphysics. Logic symbolizes the contents of metaphysics. Metaphysical concepts are self-subsistent. Thus, they can be symbols only of contents that are enjoying believed. The enjoyingly understood contents are the subject-matter of the philosophy of spirit.

This enjoying consciousness has always a reference to 'I'. The experience of the subject 'I' never comes to us in normal consciousness. The 'enjoying'understanding is introspection. It has three grades. At the initial stage, the self is experienced as-embodied. The second grade of experience is consciousness of the personal relation of the self with other selves. The third and the highest grade of experience is the consciousness of the over-personal self. As Bhattacharyya says, "The study of the contents of these three types of enjoyment is the philosophy of thespirit. The object in the first is conceived as a shadow or a symbol of 'I'; in the second, 'I' and the other person are contradictorily the symbol of the other; and in the third case,there is a consciousness of the over personal reality as symbolized by 'I'."The self negates its own existence in the successive stages of spiritual realization. In the last grade, what can be called, the religious form of spiritual, the self realizesidentification with the Absolute.

(c) Philosophy of Truth: -

There is a theoretic consciousness of "I am nought". The content of this consciousness is Truth. Though the Absolute is a positively believed entity, its positive character is expressible only by the negation of 'I'. The negation of the self implies the existence of the Absolute. Negatively the Absolute is understood as Truth. But the Absolute cannot be equated with Truth. The Absolute may be truth, may be freedom or it may be value. The Absolute is each of them. The consciousness of truth is neither subjective nor objective. It is transcendental consciousness.

Krishna Chandra Bhattacharyya says, the consciousness of truth is a subject of belief. It can be understood neither by objective nor by subjective attitude. It is a transcendental consciousness and describable by a symbolic way. The consciousness of truth is not literally speakable. Thus the Absolute as transcending the subjective and the objective - which is believed as self-revealing constitute the subject matter of the philosophy of truth.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: State whether the following statements are True or False

(a) According to Bhattacharyya there are two branches of Philosophy.(T/F)

(b) Philosophy of the object is concerned with metaphysics and logic. (T/F)

(c) Philosophy of the truth is related to the consciousness of the transcendent.(T/F)

Q5. What are the branches of philosophy, according to K.C.Bhattacharyya?

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9.6 THE SUBJECT AND REALIZATION OF ITS FREEDOM

Bhattacharyya conceives the self as the subject. The subject and object areinter-related and one presupposes the other. The subject is freeing from object, inevery stage of subjectivity by negating it. Subjectivity is an awarenessof thedistinction of the subject from the object. There are three stages of subjectivity. The stages of subjectivity are the bodily subjectivity, psychic subjectivity and spiritual subjectivity.

9.6.1 Bodily Subjectivity: -

The process of subjectivity starts in body-awareness. At the initial stage we consider the physical body as the subject. The body as a perceived object is taken to be the subject. The perception of one's own body is not done from outside, one is sensuously aware of it from within. With the realization of this the subject identifies himself with the body as internally felt. The 'felt body' cannot be distinguished from the 'perceived body' which can be distinguished from the 'felt body'. The 'felt body'is a detachment from the perceived object other than the perceived body. There is also a third stage in which there is no experience of the body. Subjectivity involves an awareness of its distinction from "perceived body" and 'felt body'. In this stage thesubject does not remain identified with the body as a present fact. It is a transitional stage, which is free from space but not from the present. K.C. Bhattacharyya says that the awareness of the felt body is the pre-condition of all spiritual activity.

9.6.2 Psychic Subjectivity: -

At this stage there is an awareness of psychic subjectivity. Psychic facts include images and thoughts and subject remains identified with the image or thought. In this stage, though the subject is quite detached from the body, the psychic facts somehow retain their relation with the object. And on the other hand the subjects as expressed in the spoken word 'I'cannot be identified with the psychic facts like images and thoughts.

9.6.3 Spiritual Subjectivity: -

The third is the spiritual stage of subjectivity. There are three spiritual stages.First,**is that in which the subject identifies with its feeling**.Thought is still presented as meaning, as the unobjective something about the object, beingcharacterisable only in reference to the object as what the

object is not. Feeling has an advantage over psychic facts because feeling is completely free fromthe meaning content. There is no reference to any object, but still has the awarenessthat it is unmeaning.

The second stage is subject's identification with its own introspection.Introspection is awareness of the subject through the spoken word 'I'. It does notunderstand the meaning of the word 'I', and free from object, it is the enjoying understanding of the subject 'I'. But subjectivity is complete uniqueness, so anyattempt to determine its nature will disturb its uniqueness. So the subject realizes itssubjectivity, for which it must transcends the level of spiritual introspection also.

In the last stage, the subject identifies with the stage beyondintrospection. **It is a stage in which self is realized not as self-evidencing to another but self-evident to itself**. Here the self is intuited by oneself. The possibility of self enjoying 'I' is intelligible when one is free from all subjective states. The absolute intuitable self is understood in a non-being state. For this, a spiritual discipline is necessary. Then, the subject begins to have a spiritual status in which it transcends the level of spiritual introspection. Here subject realizes it as itself. When the subject dissociates itself from the stages beyond introspection, it is a stage of eternal freedom.

Bhattacharyya enumerates the notion of subjectivity in three broad stages viz,the bodily subjectivity, the psychical subjectivity and the spiritual subjectivity. Thebodily subjectivity consists of:-

A).

1. The body as perceived.
2. The body as felt.
3. The absence of body known as a present fact.

B). The psychical stages have two broad following divisions:

4. The subject's identification with his image.
5. The subject's identification with his thought.

C). The spiritual stages of subject's identification are as follows: -

6. The subject identified with feeling.
7. The subject identified with introspection.
8. The subject identified with the stage beyond introspection.

The subject can comprehend fully its subjectivity or its freedom by realizingthe above stages. The subject has the first cognition of freedom when it negates toidentify himself with the gross physical body and maintains a distinction betweenhimself and body, K.C.Bhattacharyya makes a distinction between 'perceived body'and 'felt body'. In the process of realization of subjectivity the subject first makes freefrom the perceived body. In the next stage the subject separates it from the 'felt body'i.e. the body felt from within. The realization is the precondition of all spiritual activity. Freedom from the felt body is unavoidable for the subject to comprehend itsfull subjectivity. There is also a third stage in which the subject identifies itself withthe 'body as absent'. 'Body as absent' means the awareness of the body having thecapacity, to acquire 'knowledge of absence'. According to K.C. Bhattacharyya'knowledge of absence' can be of two kinds - knowledge of absence throughimaginative perception or through conscious non-perception. This leads to the secondstage of the subject, namely, the psychical stage. Conscious non-perception is atransitional stage. It is in between body feeling and imagination. Psychic fact beginsin this stage.The subject identifies itself with image or thought in the psychic fact andgradually tries to achieve freedom from them. The subject soon comes to realize thatimage is not completely distinct from the object. And on the other hand thoughtmaintains a distinction

between 'content' and 'consciousness'. The pure subjective isabove this distinction. The subject dissociates from psychic facts at a higher stage andenters into the realm of spiritual. There are three spiritual stages, according to K.C.Bhattacharyya. Identification with feeling is the first expression of spiritualsubjectivity. So in the process of self - realization the subject dissociates itself fromfeeling. This leads to the next stage, which is introspection. The process ofdissociation from the objective and from meaning content is complete when thesubject makes free himself from introspection and finally from its attachment beyondintrospection. In this stage of complete freedom the experience of freedom also lapses or disappears. Actually the 'I' is a symbol of the Absolute. There can be no relation ofthe self with the Absolute, nor can the self be distinguished from the Absolutebecause self does not exist. It is a stage in which all distinctions between I and all,subject and object, Atman and Brahman disappears. The knowledge of identificationbetween self and Brahman is attained. This identity of Atman and Brahman cannot beattained as a philosopher. But philosopher can come closer to the realization of moksaby considering philosophy as sadhana. Philosophy as a discipline of theoreticconsciousness cannot be directed towards the attainment of liberation. One canprocure and realize the identity of Atman and Brahman only through spiritualperformance.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: State whether the following statements are True or False

(a) According to Bhattacharyya there are three stages of subjectivity.(T/F)

(b) K.C. Bhattacharyya says that the awareness of the felt body is the pre-condition of all spiritual activity. (T/F)

Q.7: What are the three spiritual stages of spiritual subjectivity.

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ACTIVITY 9.1

a) What are the four grades of theoretic consciousness?

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(b) What is philosophy according to Bhattacharyya?

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9.7 LET US SUM UP

- Usually it is believed that philosophy is an attempt to construct a world-view. That means philosophy has to give a world view, it has to analyse the nature of the world in order to discover the real and unreal aspects of the world. But Bhattacharyya does not agree with this view fully. He maintains that it is not an essential function of philosophy to construct a synthetic view of the world. He feels that judgements of philosophy are not factual; they are not related to the facts in so far as they do not claim facticity like empirical judgements.
- K.C. Bhattacharyya's concept of philosophy cannot be understood by the accepted philosophical methods. There can be an approximate definition of his philosophy. In his philosophy, Bhattacharyya deals with pure self-subsistent object which has no spatio-temporal existence. For him, philosophy elaborates the concept of the self-subsistent object. In philosophy, the object has

necessary reference to the subject which is not found in the case of science.

- ForK.C.Bhattacharyya, philosophy is theoretic thinking. It does not deal with objectsas fact but as self-subsistent realities. It is not related with facts like science.Philosophy does not study facts or properties of object, which are knowable orusable. Thus, for Bhattacharyya, the contents of philosophy are not literallythinkable. Philosophical thoughts are symbolic. Philosophy is the expression oftheoretic consciousness or thoughts. Thus, philosophical concepts aretranscendental concepts, which come from consciousness reflective attitude.



9.8 FURTHER READING

1) Bhattacharyya, K.C., 1982, *'The Concept of Philosophy' in Contemporary Indian Philosophy,* ed. Radhakrishnan and J.H. Muirhead, S. Chand and Company ltd., New Delhi.

2) Datta, D.M, 1970, The Chief Currents of Contemporary Philosophy, Calcutta University Press, Calcutta.

3) Lal, B.K.,1973, Contemporary Indian Philosophy, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private limited, New Delhi.

4) Mahadevan, T.M.P & Saroja, G.V. 1981, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, Sterling Publishers Private Ltd, New Delhi.



9.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1:a) True b) False c) False

Ans to Q No 2: It is a grade of theoretic consciousness, which has pure objective thought as its content.

Ans to Q No 3: The third grade of theoretic consciousness is spiritual thought. It does not have any content that is contemplated in the objective attitude. It is contemplated only in the subjective attitude.

Ans to Q No 4: a) False b) True c) True

Ans to Q no 5: Philosophy of the object, philosophy of subject, philosophy of truth

Ans to Q No 6: a) True b) True

Ans to Q No 7: First, is that in which the subject identifies with its feeling.The second stage is subject's identification with its own introspection. Introspection is awareness of the subject through the spoken word 'I'.In the last stage, the subject identifies with the stage beyond introspection. It is a stage in which self is realized not as self-evidencing to another but self-evident to itself.



9.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very short questions

Q 1: What are the branches of philosophy according to Bhattacharyya?

Q 2: What are the four grades of theoretic consciousness?

Q 3: What is transcendental thought?

Q 4: What is spiritual thought?

Q 5: What is bodily subjectivity?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: Briefly discuss about philosophy of object.

Q 2: Explain spiritual subjectivity.

Q 3: What is philosophy of Truth?

Q 4: How is bodily subjectivity consists of?

C) Write short notes on (Answer in about 150 words)

Q.1. Subject as freedom

Q2. Bodily subjectivity

C) Long Questions (Answer in about 300-500 words)

Q.1 Explain Bhattacharyya's notion of Philosophy**.**

Q2. Explain the three stages of subjectivity.

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