Chapter 2
DEATH AND HUMAN CONDITION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The second chapter of our thesis attempts to consider the notions of suffering, evil, sin, *Avidya* and bondage as human conditions which are seeds of death, as these are said to nihilate man's quest for life. In fact, they can be called disvalues because individuals and societies aim at minimizing these evils as much as possible. The transitoriness of human life is vividly exemplified by various negations which is implied in death.

These are said to be 'values' which are not positively desirable but arouse a negative disposition to overcome them. Negative values are those aspects of life which are characterized by a deprival of desirable positive counterparts and by undesirable experience or apprehension which nihilates life relatively or absolutely. Suffering, fear, evil, sin etc. do it relatively. Death does it absolutely. Pain is considered to be the general character of them. Fear is also not pleasant. It is painful. The pain of fear is mental. It is the mental nihilation of existence. But death is the total nihilation of man's existence. They are also known as secular values as they are concerned with the physical and mental existence of man. But at the same time struggle with death in the name of eternal life is man's main task. Thus the death of the least and most miserable creature is unendurable and if it is irremediable, the
world cannot be accepted and justified. Therefore the apprehension of death is both painful and fearful to the homo sapiens.

Because negative values have some kind of characteristics and qualities, though they may be undesirable, therefore, each and every person wants to get rid of them. It can be understood either as necessary suffering that is involved in the very act of living and that falls to the lot of every man, or it can be viewed from the point of view of distribution of suffering among mankind. It is the unequal distribution of suffering that offends our sense of justice most. At the sight of undeserved and excruciating pain everyone at one time or the other has questioned the justifiability or desirability of such sufferings.

2.2 SIN AND EVIL

As a form of nihilation, sin and evil has been the focal-point in Judaeo-Christian tradition. It is very significant that in the story of the fall the Bible never call Adam’s act a sin. In Old Testament the view that man is endowed with ‘evil imaginings’ with a tendency for evil is prevalent. But it also believes in man’s inherent capacity towards good. It is true that the ‘evil drive’ is possible only in man because he has emerged from the original unity with nature and has acquired self awareness and imaginations. It follows that only man sins, can regress and can lose himself.
2.2.1 Jewish View

In the Jewish view, man is born with the capacity to sin, but he can return and find himself, and redeem himself by his own effort and without an act of grace from God. God in his declaration impressed upon the people that the fate of life and death rested with them, and he counselled them to choose life which is equated to good and not death which is equivalent to sin and evil. It is also found in the religious mythological consciousness of the great people that although the divine principle was immortal and the human mortal, man’s thought brought him into communion with the divine and enable him to rise up to it and acquire it. This was the teachings of the mysteries of the Orphic and of Plato’s Philosophy. In other words, the human soul contains a divine element but it must be freed from the power of matter. Only then will man become immortal. Accordingly to the Orphics myth, the soul descends into the sinful material world but must be freed from it and return to its spiritual home. That myth had a great influence upon Plato, as it was seen particularly from Phaedo, and is one of the most profound myths. It is indeed connected with the ancient doctrine of reincarnation - one of the few attempts to understand the destiny of the soul in its past and future.

As to the words which are mainly used in the Old Testament for sin, the most important term for ‘sin’ is ‘HATA’. The root of this word in biblical Hebrew is ‘to miss’ To sin is to miss (the road). Another word
for sin, ‘AVON’, meaning ‘inequity’, ‘guilt’ has a root which means ‘to err’ (from the road). Third term for sin is ‘PESHA’, usually translated as ‘transgression’ used in the sense of rebellion. Jewish commentators of the Bible have interpreted ‘HATA’ to mean inadvertent transgression; Avon as sin committed with premeditation and PESHA as sin committed in the spirit of rebellion.

The word HATA is the most important and the most frequently used term for sin (especially in a generic sense). It is more than ignorance or error, more than erroneous thought; it is wrong action, the will applied to a wrong aim. Yet to sin is human, almost unavoidable. The meaning of sin as missing the right road corresponds to the term ‘SHUV’, which is repent, meaning ‘to return’.

According to Bible, man must choose between the basic alternatives of life and death. In the verse, “See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil”¹, life is equated with good, and death with evil. Life is the highest norm for man. The fundamental choice for man is between growth which is life and decay which is death. To be alive is to grow, to develop and to respond; to be dead (even if one is alive biologically) means to stop growing, to fossilize and to become a thing.

According to Judaism, sin and evil, summarized in death are a consequence of man (Adam) alienating himself from God. Adam, by his
proud act, his insistence on ‘improving’ his wisdom and science by adding to it the knowledge of evil, inevitably lost the full experience of goodness that was freely given to him by God. But he lost more than an experience. He lost his immortality, his contemplation, his power over himself and finally even his status as son of God. Along with this, he lost his immunity from disordered passion, his freedom from ignorance and his incapacity to suffer. These deprivations were not merely the revenge of an irate god - they were inherent in the very attitude and act which constituted Adam’s sin. Accordingly, suffering became a punishment for sin. The classical response was to say that suffering was a punishment for wrong-doing. Rabbi Ammi said: “There is no death without sin and there is no suffering without sin.”

2.2.2 Christian View

In the Jewish and Christian tradition, there is connection between sin and death. Death is not something natural, willed by God as thought by the Greek Philosophers; it is rather something unnatural, abnormal and opposed to God. The Book of Genesis narrates that it came into the world only by the sin of man. Death is a curse, and the whole creation has become involved in this curse. The sin of man has necessitated the whole series of events which the Bible records and which we call the ‘story of redemption’. Death can be conquered only to the extent that sin is removed. For “death is the wages of sin”. It is not only the Genesis narrative which
speaks thus, but St. Paul also says the same thing in his epistles to Romans, and this is the view of death held by the whole of primitive Christianity. Just as sin is something opposed to God, so is its consequence so to say, death.

Nevertheless, death as such is the enemy of God. Adam lost his immortality, because for him, life consisted precisely in his union with God which was the source of life. Breaking the contact between his soul and the source of life, and left to his own contingency, Adam became his own source of life. But he was a deficient source that soon ran dry. For God is Life and the Creator of life. It is not by the will of God that there are withering and decay, dying and sickness which are the by-products of death working in our life. All these things, according to Christian and Jewish thinking, come from human sin. Therefore, every healing which Jesus accomplishes is not only a driving back of death, but also an invasion on the province of sin. Therefore, on every occasion Jesus says: "Your sins are forgiven." Not as though there were a corresponding sin for every individual sickness; but rather, like the presence of death, the fact that sickness exists at all is a consequence of the sinful condition of the whole of humanity. Every healing is partial resurrection, a partial victory of life over death. That is the Christian point of view. According to the Greek interpretation, on the contrary, bodily sickness is a corollary of the fact that the body is bad in itself and is ordained to destruction. For the Christian, an anticipation of the Resurrection can already become visible, even in the earthly body.
Sin in Christianity is the unfaithfulness of man towards the covenant of God. And it is separation of man from God. It is called a 'Sting of Death'. Man is absolved from its sting by reposing faith in Lord Jesus Christ. Sin enters man’s life ‘following the ways of this world’ and forgetting the ways of God. In that state man is called dead. And when he stands firm in his faith, he rise to a life which is eternal and where there is no more death.

Hence, “the problem of sin and evil is the problem of death. The victory over evil and sin is a victory over death. Evil is death; victory over evil is the resuscitation of life and hence rebirth to a new life. This is the victory of man’s God-hood over its last enemy, that is his victory over evil”³ The last enemy - death - has a positive meaning and significance. Death is a denial of eternity and therein lies its ontological evil, its hostility to existence, its striving to reduce creation to non-being. Death resists God’s creation of the world and is a return to the original non-being. Death wants to free the creature by bringing it back to primeval freedom that preceded the creation of the world. Thus death is a negative testimony to God’s power and to the divine meaning manifested in the meaningless world. For the life of race there is nothing tragic in death. The life of race always renews itself and continues, it finds compensation for itself. Looked at in this way “death appalls the most developed and individualized organism”⁴ that is man. The reason being that an acute sense of the loss of personality is associated with
death. In other words, death is the loss of selfhood in its narrow individualistic sense.

2.3 SUFFERING

The problem of suffering is a crucial and difficult problem of life. Thinking cannot easily succeed in finding a solution of it. The fact of suffering seems to be inevitable and insurmountable. Suffering finds confirmation in feeling and consciousness, and appears unconquerable. Hence many Western and Indian philosophies have endeavored to find satisfactory solution to the problem of suffering.

Suffering as a feature of life on the earth is too obvious and too familiar to need description. Suffering is all but universal. In the evolutionary process when a brain is developed, suffering is an unvarying element in experience.

When we pass from the physical suffering to that which is mental and moral, we are overwhelmed by the mass and magnitude of the agonies that the mankind experiences. From the sorrows of childhood to the stony griefs of age, there is a range of suffering beyond all enumerations and conceptions baffling the imagination and affronting the intelligence.

The worst feature of human suffering is the chaotic nature of its distribution. If the guilty alone suffer, we might have some kind of theodicy to fit the facts, but the innocent too suffer complicates the problem.
Suffering as an evil is generally accepted by many to be an obvious truth. Some philosophers make a distinction between morally justified and morally unjustified suffering. Therefore, it is also reasoned that the moral person ought to be happy and immoral unhappy because the happiness of the former and unhappiness of latter would be justified.

The claim that suffering is an evil may be taken in a qualified and cautious sense. Almost all religions consider suffering as an unqualified evil and that is the reason why they appeal to people. If any suffering is an unqualified evil, the implication is that no body should be let to suffer. It would be an evil if any one suffers. Every philosophy recognizes the unpleasant fact of suffering. The Western philosophers generally have tendered to become metaphysical and epistemological in their treatment of the notion of suffering. It is only some modern western philosophers particularly of the continent, like Schopenhauer, Micolal Hartmann etc. who emphasized suffering in their philosophical discourses but somehow they overemphasized it and concluded with an obsessive pessimism. The outcome of such philosophies is that recognition of suffering leads to an affirmation of it as the ultimate destiny of life. The search for the ultimate truth about suffering involves not only man’s intellect but his reason too. The fundamental difference (between the existentialists and the intellectualists philosophers) then, lies between knowing about the truth (of suffering) in some theoretical detached way and being grasped by the truth in a decisively personal manner. While the
objective standpoint gets as far as possible from the feelings, hopes or fears of the individual human being, the subjective point of view puts the individual in the very centre of the picture. But dealing with suffering with human existence as a problem springs from the fact that even when stated objectively the inquiry may have existential results affecting the living stance of the person who considers it.

The suffering that does not affect the man in his total being is not suffering in its real terms. In order to examine suffering and the pain involved in it, we must examine it existentially, that is, as something that involves us. That makes us see suffering as the mystery of man’s existence itself.

To suffer personally and inwardly is not the same as knowing about suffering. There are those who suffer and there are those who can theorize suffering as a fact of human existence. Suffering does not simply happen from the break with the immediate, but from the abyss within. That is why the mystics always welcome and often court pain and suffering. The mystics, again have a profound conviction that Creation, Becoming and Transcendence is a painful process at the best. Those who are Christians point to the ‘Passion of Christ’ as a proof that the ‘Cosmic Journey’ to perfection, the path of the ‘Eternal Wisdom’ follows of necessity the ‘Way of the Cross’. That law of the inner life - ‘No progress without Pain’ - asserts itself. It declares that birth pangs must be endured in the spiritual as
well as in the material world. Hence the mystics' quest of the Absolute

drives them to an eager and heroic union with the reality of suffering as well

as with the reality of joy.

2.3.1 Western Philosophy and the Problem of Suffering

The Western tendency in philosophy has generally been to try

and demonstrate the value of reality. The Greek thinkers regarded the world

as a complete work of art, an all-embracing harmony, and in this manner

endeavoured to rise above its obscurities and contradictions. Christian

thinkers like Augustine saw 'moral order' in reality which completely

obliterated the contrast between justice and love. In the opinion of modern

thinkers like Hegel (and Marx), the world is to be looked upon as a

progressive current of life, a continual growth of power, what at first seems

to be mere disorder and contradiction appears to justify itself as an incentive

and source of movement. In other words the chief problem for Western

'objective' philosophers before Schopenhauer is one of finding justification

for the existence of suffering is quite obvious. Suffering seems to imply an

apparent disharmony for them - a jarring element in the general order of

things. The problem for them is to show that the disharmony and

incoherence are only apparent, that in the total purpose of the universe

suffering has its rightful place.

Thus for Leibniz suffering is a reality because in the total order

of things it contributes necessarily to the best of all possible worlds. For
many others suffering is a fact because it is connected with the notion of man’s freedom and includes the possibility of freedom. It ennobles the least of mortals and raises him to the level of the greatest. There is a moment when the face of the sufferer is more beautiful and harmonious than it had been in life. Ugly and evil feelings disappear in the presence of suffering. Again some argue that the notion of suffering and evil is logically bound up with the notions of certain virtues. These virtues could not - logically could not - exist without the existence of suffering.

It is only the ‘subjective’ thinkers who feel the discordance of suffering from within as it were. The experience of suffering is so fundamental and central a feature of life that one can seek rational justification for it only at the expense of distorting the nature of the experience. For Nietzsche the question, “Why is there suffering in this world?” is a demand for justification of the phenomenon of suffering. As a demand for justification of the phenomenon, it receives the most paradoxical answer. The Christian attempts for a rational justification also have to be rejected on this account. Suffering as it were is the stuff of life; Its true justification lies in the opportunity that it gives to the will to power, which is the moving force of life and display its marvellous strength in accepting it as the true reality and affirming life despite all odds.

For Nietzsche, the most intense suffering coincides with the most intense joy. Suffering, Schopenhauer admits, is present in the animal
kingdom but it increases in proportion to the increase in consciousness and reaches its highest degree in man. Suffering and misery in life were the occasions for metaphysical and ethical inquiry. "The will being the source of all suffering Schopenhauer counselled men to quell its power either through aesthetic contemplation and altruistic acts or more radically and permanently through the ascetic attitude recommended by Hinduism and Christianity". Like the Buddhists he shows that life in this world is essentially suffering and he attributes suffering to the will to live which is equivalent to 'trishna' and which involves us in a delusion.

2.3.2 Christian Vision of Suffering

Almost all of us keep probing the subject of suffering. It has certainly been an intriguing question in human history. What we are looking for is some meaningful explanation of the suffering and pain that touch our lives. The book of Genesis struggles with the question of suffering in the persons of Adam and Eve and the sweat and toil suffering endured after their fall from grace. In the same book, there is the record of Cain killing his brother Abel. Also in the Old Testament, the Book of Job groans under the weight of this question: Why suffering? Jeremiah, who did not want to be a prophet in the first place could not understand why God called him to failure and rejection. "You have not made a prophet of me. You have made a fool of me".
The question of suffering is constantly being explored and discussed by thinking people. For believers and especially for the Christians, suffering is basically a faith question. It is noteworthy to state that at least a deep part of our preoccupation with suffering is an effort to reconcile the existence of suffering with the existence of a loving god.

When Job asked God to tell him the reasons for his sufferings, God’s reply was seemingly a strange one. It was not a doctrinal dissertation on the reasons for Job’s difficulties nor an explanation of the motives of God for allowing Job to be so tested. However, God’s response seems rather to take the form of a personal manifestation of God and his infiniteness that is overpowering. Having experienced God in this kind of overwhelming presence, Job says simply,

“I know that you are all powerful:
what you conceive, you can perform.
I am the man who obscured your designs
with my empty-headed words.
I have been holding forth on matters I cannot understand,
on marvels beyond me and my knowledge.
I know you then only by hearsay
but now, having seen you with my own eyes.
I retreat all I have said,
and in dust and ashes I repent”.

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No satisfying theological understanding of suffering can be achieved if one considers only this life which we know. The context of an endless, eternal life must be in the background of any Christian exploration of suffering. St. Paul consoles the church of Rome with this truth “I think that whatever we suffer in this life can never be compared to the glory, as yet unrevealed, which is waiting for us”.

A clearer and fairer understanding of the Christian vision of suffering undergirds the idea that suffering itself is a teacher to the person who suffers. The Christian vision also underlined the idea that, suffering in any of many forms, is very often underlining a failure to love: either ourselves, our neighbour or God. The Christian vision of suffering, again, is an invitation to life’s transformation and personal growth. As Jesus Christ said “Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple”? Therefore for a Christian, there is no other way to maturity, wisdom and the fullness life except through suffering.

2.3.3 Existential Philosophy and Anxiety of Death

The concern of Existentialism specifically arises out of man’s modern conditions. Among these conditions are the loss of the individual in mass culture and technology, the consequent alienation of the human person from himself as well as from his production and the loss of meaning in life through the divisions within the human spirit. The result of these conditions is what is frequently called the “existential experience”.

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"The existential experience usually arises in times of personal catastrophe. When the extraordinary, in the guise of disease or death, suddenly seizes the structure of our daily life, it unsettles the round of ordinary life, which was taken for granted, disturbing its routines. The life which had appeared till the last moment so interesting and colourful suddenly begins to fade, leading to become wearisome and bleak. The disorder threatens him. His "being is threatened by non-being". Thus it is not only the power of being but also the meaning of being which is at stake. Why is there any being at all, why not rather nothing? Even the natural and healthy self-love by which man's nature rejoiced in its own full realization could gain nothing by adding unreality to the real. On the contrary, he could only become less himself by being other than what he already was. In this awareness of the interdependence between death and meaninglessness, suffering enters our consciousness as the despair of despair. Suffering thus establishes an everchanging balance between death and the 'meaning moment'.

It was the business of Kierkegaard to draw attention of philosophers to this fact. "The existentialists, explore the far corners of human life, its horrors and perversions. In such a world as this, they maintain, it is hopeless to seek for rational and moral purpose".11

To the anxiety of death is added the anxiety of meaninglessness and emptiness. In "Sickness Unto Death" Kierkegaard advocates that our being
suffers a two-fold despair which may be defined as a despair of despair. In describing and analyzing the experience of despair, Kierkegaard finds this tension to be the result of the fact that man is a spiritual being, that he is a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal, the finite and the infinite. Man is a synthesis, but simply as synthesis, he is not a self. Despair arises because man is a synthesis over self itself. Despair reveals that simply as the given, the self is meaningless.

“It requires some concentration of mind to realize that suffering is an inwardness of our self. In the ordinary sense, for instance, when we say, I suffer from such and such a thing the “I” as the subject of suffering is presupposed as a being”. But in the despair of despair suffering is presupposed as the whole of our being, as the complete form of our self-consciousness. Suffering therefore is not only the centre of “I” but is also the source of all being.

Heidegger is the existential philosopher who has first brought out the significance of man’s encounter with death and all that it involves. He deals with the ancient problem of the nature of Being, but he deals with it in the setting of existential concern. He is sure that man can only apprehend Being truly as he passes from inauthentic to authentic self-hood, from the state in which he is lost among the mass of his feelings blinding himself to the nature of his plight, to a state in which he clearly understands what the future will bring and lives in the light of that undeceived acceptance. Now,
whatever else the future may or may not promise him, it certainly promises death; everyone is living to die. “The core of authentic self-hood consists therefore in calmly recognizing this fact and becoming at home with the ‘nothingness’ that looms largely ahead. Only when a person lives through this poignant experience is he able to grasp the otherwise obscure nature of Being, and to fulfill his true vocation”.¹³

According to Jean-Paul Sartre, a two-fold realization naturally comes when a thinker, free from the unrealistic yearning that the universe be kindlier than it is, faces the impermanence of all things and accepts life as inevitably advancing towards death and dissolution. First, he will be able to accept all that life reveals, including the sombre evils that are easy to ignore or gloss over when viewed through the eyes of a sentimental faith. All the tragic, hateful and revolting realities should be confronted in their full force, Sartre believes. One should be fully aware of the worst that men are capable of. Men can be wild, villainous, and sadistically cruel; they maim, torture, and slaughter other men. They display the ugliest, slimiest, and most loathsome behaviour.

The awareness of these dark abysses, however, need not plunge us into much despair or callous self-centeredness. Sartre is equally emphatic about the other half of the realization. Though life may appear brutal and nauseating, to face its absurdity in full awareness is a decisive step towards the acknowledgment of freedom and responsibility. Whatever each of us is, he
was made himself to be by his own choice. When he recognizes this fact clearly and unflinchingly, the process of free self-making will continue and won by renouncing all self-deception.

Sartre recognizes those categories of human existence such as accident, necessity, liberty, aloneness, and uselessness. The old faith that man has a destiny prescribed by fate has lost its currency; man is now free. But the freedom results in moral alienation from his fellow-men and the subsequent fear of life or pan-anxiety. We must choose what to do, but will never know whether our choice is the right one. Life then has no said pattern or providential design; it is meaningless and despair is therefore logical. Accordingly existentialist philosophers like “Kierkegaard and Marcel conceive of human existence not merely as temporal and finite, but as capable of becoming immortal and eternal in relation to God”.

Marcel, like Sartre, also accepts a world in which any imaginable wickedness can appear, but he has found in the world a freer and more hopeful relation to his fellows and a more serene relation to ultimate reality than Sartre could discover. Marcel asserts, “The fact that everyone of us knows himself destined to die may expose us to the temptation to be hypnotized by the ineluctable deadline and the thought of inevitable death may degenerate into an obsession”. And of this obsession takes hold of us it can make everything else seem meaningless and colourless. It is only through love and hope that a soul can be free from this obsession. Marcel disagrees
with the idea that suffering may be regarded as a good-in-itself. Rather he believed that human soul under favourable conditions can freely “transmute this suffering not exactly into something good but into a principle of radiating love, hope and charity”.\textsuperscript{16}

But Sartre opines, “I do not know whether world has a meaning that in beyond me. But I do know that I am unaware of this meaning and that, for the time being, it is impossible for me to know it. What can a meaning beyond my condition to me? I can understand in human terms”.\textsuperscript{17}

The philosophical concern of Existentialism as a philosophical movement is that through its illuminating emphasis on anxiety, anguish and dread, it shakes man out of his complacency and drives him on to the ontological mystery. In this sense, a person tortured by existential anxiety is spiritually more advanced than he who never suffers this anguish but feels happy and accepts the world with a cheerful “yes”. The pessimism of existentialism is regarded as an advance on the thoughtless and complacent optimism of what Heidegger calls “the coward crowd”.

Modern existential philosophers concludes with a similarly depressing pessimism. Eventually it asserts that man’s ‘Being-for-itself’ as an existent reality points to a supreme axiological reality but it does not enable man to find satisfactory content in life. Accordingly man’s life becomes a constant nihilation of existence. “Man goes on nihilating his existence without finding any affirmatory and enduring content of his being”.\textsuperscript{18}
2.3.4 Indian Philosophy

According to Hinduism, suffering is the relationship between the two conflicting principles of the Universe, the urge to life and the urge to death. In the Vedas suffering is seen as a part of the universal order expressed imaginatively, in personified forms, in the various aspects of the gods. There is a clear sense that at least a part of the right attitude to suffering is to see its relations to the whole.

The Vedas have a far more complete understanding of suffering than at first sight might have seemed to be the case. In personified form, the gods represent to receive occurrences of apparent suffering which cannot defend evil. It depends on how they are received and assimilated.

In Upanisads, there is central affirmation about suffering. To create duality is to create suffering. Suffering is a result of introducing duality into a non-dualistic situation. Existence is a unity. That is an aspect or manifestation of Being-Itself, Brahman. To break down that unity is to introduce tension and conflict which are causes of suffering.

The individual who has come out of ‘Avidya’ and has an adequate grasp of Brahman will find that suffering does not have any significance in his existence, since everything that happens is a manifestation of ‘Brahman’. It follows that true understanding arises when the accidents of time and space are seen to reveal Brahman.
Brahman pervades all things without being exhausted in any one of them; which means that suffering cannot be the final truth about existence. It follows that suffering, however agonizing or distressing it may be, is only relative. The realization of Brahman means that suffering immediately falls into place: “As water does not cling to the lotus leaf, so evil deed does not cling to one who knows it.”

The above line of thought obviates the necessity to consider suffering as a result of becoming attached to transient objects as though they are the final reality. Suffering, therefore, is a problem so long as under avidya it appears to be a final and inescapable truth. But when it is realized that the self is not bound for ever to the transient world of suffering, then suffering no longer is meaningful. “Suffering arises only when an individual attaches himself to limited or transient objects as though they are permanent”.

Suffering ceases to be a problem when it is realized that the individual self can transcend occurrences of suffering by finding its identity in Brahman.

The Upanisads do not try to assert that suffering is an illusion in the sense that it is not an actual experience. In fact, Upanisads realize that to be born is to come into contact with evil and suffering.

The material body is full of corruptions and potential conflict which is realized only when the self gives way to its desires and passions.
Upanisads regard suffering as a part of way the world has come to be but not as the final truth or reality. Suffering as (in the form of illness; old age and death) is a problem for those who cannot see it in the perspective of Brahman (due to \textit{Avidya}). Brahman is the underlying reality. One without a second where there can be no duality and hence no conflict; no becoming but only Being, and hence no strife. "He sorrows not, because he is not connected with the sources of sorrows".\textsuperscript{20}

\textit{2.3.5 Buddhist Philosophy}

The problem of suffering, without any pretense or deception about it, lies at the very root and foundation of Buddhism. Buddha’s insight on this problem is found in the Four Noble Truths. Of all religions, Buddhism is the one which concentrates most immediately and directly on suffering. Although the four noble truths can be expressed in detached terms, and are usually expressed with reference to suffering - that there is suffering; that suffering is caused (it is not imposed arbitrarily by an outside will), that removing the causes of suffering leads to the cessation of suffering, that the way to transcend and remove the cause of suffering is both known and attainable.

The word for suffering used in ‘Four Noble Truths’ is ‘\textit{Dukha}’. It is a word of far greater depth and complexity than is implied by the rather bold translation ‘suffering’. It is true that it has an ordering reference to pain,
or grief, or misery, and in that sense it is opposite of happiness or contentment, but it also refers to impermanence, emptiness, lack of wholeness or perfection.

‘Dukha’ refers more to the general nature of Universe than to the particular instances of suffering: change and impermanence are characteristic of the universe. That understanding of ‘dukha’ makes it possible to express the four truth in a more general way; a thing exists or an event occurs; that occurrence or that event depends on the existence of a particular cause or condition; if that cause or that condition cease to exist; then what is caused by it cannot be either.

‘Dukha’ can be understood - and experienced - on three levels: in the first place, there is the fact of suffering inherent in the life-process; in birth, old age, sickness, death, and all the other accidents to which life is subjected; In other words, the plain facts of suffering. Secondly, there is the suffering of sentient, conscious creatures who know the gap between what they desire and what they obtain, and who are aware of the transitory nature of all things - that is happiness does not last for ever, and there is suffering involved in change (Parinama - dukha). Thirdly, there is suffering which arises out of the actual nature and constitution of human beings - in other words, suffering that is inherent in human nature, and this is known as suffering arising from the aggregates of existence (Sambhara - dukha). These levels of suffering are neither sequential nor exclusive.
is certain is that everyone eventually comes to realize the reality of suffering on all these levels as a plain matter of experience.

The first two levels are particularly obvious and inescapable: ‘Change and decay in all around I see’. It is the context in which every individual lives out his life. But these, according to the Buddha, is not distinct from his context, that is to say, man himself is a part of this same change and decay order, and that one’s own self is not exempt from the process of change and decay.

2.4 AVIDYA AND BONDAGE

As do all Indian Philosophical systems (except for Carvakas) Advaita orients its entire approach around the quest for liberation (Moksa), the release from bondage. Liberation in Advaitic terms may be understood as the being, knowing, and experiencing of one’s true self. The process of rebirth is caused due to the nascience (avidya). In other words, avidya is the cause of birth, death and rebirth. Avidya itself is a sort of death. But what is the philosophical import of avidya?

Avidya may be regarded as an existential phenomenon as it is essentially consciousness confronting itself under the conditions of the assumption of absolute knowledge, without which it cannot be what it is. Understood in this way, it appears to be a positive phenomenon, or absence, which is the reverse side of absolute knowledge. "The positive character of
avidya, Madhusudana Sarasvati argues, is revealed by the intuitive knowledge of saksin, the witness self which is described as the pure consciousness reflected on the vrtti (mode) of avidya. The most striking feature of Vedanta's (as well as samkhya's and yoga's) treatment of avidya is to regard it as a real thing (Vastu Satattvam) in the sense of phenomenon at least and as a positive thing despite its being characterized by negation.

The Advaitic doctrine of avidya has three main aspects as pertaining respectively to what may be called metaphysics, theory of knowledge and spiritual life. Primarily, the word avidya is used in Advaita Vedanta as the negation of metaphysical gnosis (Jnana or Vidsa) as opposite or the absence of gnosis and as wrong knowledge. Metaphysics arises where there is a world to consider and beings like human want to know Brahman as well as themselves and the world. Hence metaphysics is always based on the world where ground is being sought.

Advaita does not assume that the sphere of cognition is independent of the metaphysical realm of knowledge. The dependence of the latter upon the former becomes evident through reflection upon the experience of non-cognition. Looked at in this way, the Advaitins teach the metaphysical truth that knowledge comes to us as what has already undergone a primordial division of itself from itself resulting in its boundless extensiveness. We must call this condition Avidya. In that case, we may conclude that something of knowledge which is other than the infinite

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extensiveness, namely a pointedness, still remains in *avidya* although in a concealed manner. It is this concealed pointedness that makes *avidya* an ever-forming structure.

The condition called *avidya* is however, one that potentiates the desire to know (*Jijnasa*). One may grasp this desire entirely within that condition with no apparent relation to the ultimate truth called Brahman. The desire to know is shown to be a valid beginning of philosophy only in so far as it is metamorphosed into the desire to know Brahman (*Athato Brahma Jijnasa*). The desire to know Brahman is no longer a mere desire to know; rather it is what re-structures and re-orientates the mere desire to know. It is thus that Brahman - knowledge is wrested out of *avidya*.

It follows that liberation requires a positive change in us. Liberation is not a product, it has no beginning or end; it has no degrees.

One must, therefore, identify a necessary condition for the workings of the mechanism of bondage. That condition, says Advaita, is ignorance (*Avidya*). *Avidya* is not something that requires action to destroy. It is destroyed by its natural opposite, perfect knowledge (*Vidya*). Knowing is not an act and so does not breed further *Karmic* residues. And perfect knowledge is held to be entirely within human capability to achieve, but under terms that it has itself set up. The achievement of this is the union with the Absolute which is in the words of *Saṅkara* "is the vision of the
ultimate truth wherein no distinction between knowledge, what is to be known and the knower". Considering the implications of what liberation is we can see what it is not; it is not the result of an action as understood generally.

Avidya, rendered into the language of Phenomenology, may be described as the existential fact of consciousness as it confronts itself. ‘Tattvam asi’ means, then that the transcendent essence of consciousness is Atman/Brahman, but whenever this truth is verbally expressed there will be a logical contravention of the essential fact of consciousness confronting itself. Thus the transcendent Brahman or the unison with the Absolute (Liberation) is to be understood as the dimension to which consciousness is structurally oriented. Therefore, the Vedantins’ standpoint may be understood in this way that consciousness is oriented as it is because its essence is the self (atman) that struggles to free itself from the bondage of phenomena. “Thus all evils turn back from it for the world of Brahman is free from evil.”

When Avidya is removed the residues that have been stored up but are not stated to reach fruition in this life lose their potency like burned seed they no longer have the power to produce sprouts. As for the actions still to be performed in this life, they no longer bind. Looked at from this way liberation is the realization that all distinctions are unreal, non existent from the highest standpoint.

The term Avidya and Bondage appears frequently in the older Upanisads. Further, the occurrences of the notion ‘Avidya’ in various
Upanisads show that it is used as a negative notion and is related to death. Thus the nihilating threat to a man's being is avidya and it expresses in the accentuation of consequent nihilating consciousness. It is the denying of man's inner being with all its content, significance, meaning and value.

2.5 FEAR

Fear is not exactly suffering but is akin to it. It is unpleasant and undesirable as suffering. Fear implies a subtler form of suffering. "Suffering or pain affects and damages a particular part of our being. But fear damages our whole being and diminishes it suddenly".24

Like suffering, fear involves the consciousness of it. "Fear may be temporary or sometimes more lasting. It is a common and empirical fact of life. It is wider in scope and significance than suffering".25 The negation implied in suffering is not always so wide. Often it is limited. But the negation implied in fear is wider as it pertains to the general existence of man. It is less than the negation of death which is total and final.

Fear is a negative experience of negation of being. "Fear like suffering is also a conscious phenomenon. It is not neutral like cognition. It is negative and has a minus value as it contracts or reduces the being of man by threatening it with real or imaginary danger".26 Man's normal being is a complex of unconscious, neutral-cognitive, negative-nihilating, positive-hedonic and blissful super-consciousness. The latter is the foundation of man's
existence which supports other modes of man's being. Fear emphasizes and
exaggerates the negative consciousness of nihilation of being and eclipse
other modes of being.

"Fear is an accentuation of negative nihilating consciousness
which implies a severe undoing of man's existence".27 That is to say that fear
is being afraid of something, a pain, a rejection by a person or a group, the
loss of something or somebody, the moment of dying etc. But in the
anticipation of the threat originating in these things, it is not the negativity or
the negative-nihilating consciousness which bring upon the subject that is
frightening but the anxiety about the possible implications of this negativity.
The outstanding example for this is the fear of dying. Looked at in this way,
fear negates man's self-affirmation and threatens him with a sense of
emptiness. Therefore fear is existential in the sense, that it belongs to man's
existence as such and not to an abnormal state of mind as in neurosis or in
psychosis.

2.6 CONCLUSION

The various human conditions nihilate human existence partially
can be called partial death and at the same time it is through them that we
know that we exist. We become centred in ourselves through these human
conditions of suffering, evil and sin. This centredness leads to the path of
consciousness. Man in different millennia has been contemplating some sort
of immortality or eternal life for himself in order to transcend these human conditions. Whether there is such a thing as immortality of men is a natural philosophical question? To make an in-depth understanding of this problem of 'death and immortality', the next chapter our thesis makes a thorough examination of it both by examining two important traditions in philosophy—'Phaedo' in Greek tradition and 'Kathopanisad' in the Indian tradition.
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