

# “ON DESIRE, FREEDOM AND MORAL LAW: AN ACCOUNT OF DAYA KRISHNA’S UNDERSTANDING OF PURUṢĀRTHA”

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## ABSTRACT:

In Indian context, among the four values *artha* (wealth) and *kāma* (desire) are agreed to the worldly matter and hence, can be considered as secular. Conversely, *dharma* (virtue) and *mokṣa* (liberation, self perfection) are admitted as spiritual. But Daya Krishna has discussed these all as secular or worldly values. Moreover, he discusses morality as a unitary concept of value, desire, freedom, reason and law. Here, Daya Krishna discusses the concept of *desire* and *freedom* in association with the creation (in morality also) of something new. Hence, morality is a unitary concept of desire and freedom. The proposed paper is an attempt to expose Daya Krishna’s conception of *Puruṣārtha* or value as unitary conception of desire, freedom, reason, law etc. Attempt also is made to show how the main intention of Daya Krishna was not exactly to free values from a presupposed value-content, rather to re-interpret the traditional values in terms of situation and how he does it.

## Key Words:

Puruṣārtha, Freedom, Living tradition, Secular, Situation ethics

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## PRELUDE

Daya Krishna (1924-2007) is prominent in Contemporary Indian Philosophical era for his re-interpretation of the Indian tradition of Philosophy. Notably, Daya Krishna himself does not establish a definite moral theory that provides an account of how to act properly or morally. Rather, he investigates how the concept of values influences the authenticity on account of its historical and cultural variations and how they build the condition of making relation to other and to one’s own human situation. The concept of value (*puruṣārtha*) in Indian Philosophy means as *a goal of life* or *what is desired by man* implies four in number. In Indian Philosophical tradition, these four *puruṣārthas* are higher values for self-reflection as opposed to other creatures in one hand and also regulator of man’s act of *ought* as opposed to what he *is* and determine what man ought to be. These four *puruṣārthas* are: *dharma* (virtue), *artha* (wealth), *kāma* (desire, *except the*

*desire to get rid of all desires*) and *mokṣa* (self-perfection or self knowledge). While *artha* (wealth) and *kāma* (desire) are taken as secular and worldly value, *dharma* and *mokṣa* are recognized as spiritual. *Dharma* literally means *what holds together* and organizes the basis of moral and social order and *mokṣa* means self realization and self-perfection. Daya Krishna observes that in Indian context *dharma* entails obligations to others, again transcendence of obligations of other is the matter of *mokṣa*. In this sense, *dharma* essentially involves some awareness of the *other* and others claims on oneself as well. From this point of view *mokṣa* does not belong to the domain of *dharma* (morality) rather it is a totally separate from or even opposite to *dharma*. Moreover, Daya Krishna asserts that *mokṣa* as the final end of human seeking was not the fulfillment of another three *purusarthas*, rather *mokṣa* is the denial of the previous three. He himself says that, “Mokṣa, in

most Indian systems, is either a denial or a transcendence of the world.” (Daya Krishna, 1991, p.43) Another three *puruṣārthas* except *mokṣa* are somewhat integrally related that means *artha* and *kāma* are to be pursued only in the purpose of fulfilling the conditions of *dharma*. *Artha* and *kāma* should be regulated by *dharma*.

Daya Krishna's effort here is to make the same justification of integration with *mokṣa* as well. He prefers to admit *mokṣa* which is translated as *liberation* or *freedom* (in Western context) not as transcendence of worldly matters, rather which is entirely interrelated with the context of morality. The foremost aim of this paper is not to show any drawback of the conception of *puruṣārtha* and not to criticize the value theory (*puruṣārtha*) of Indian Philosophy rather to highlight the Daya Krishna's interpretation of value. He discusses *value* in terms of the conceptions of rule, desire, freedom, reason, law etc. as the foundation of forming any society and civilization and how value plays the role for the successive society and civilization. He discusses the concept of desire and freedom as the grounding elements of any value system or in moral context. His understanding of morality also investigates the dilemma of *obligation towards other* and *subjectivity* of values including the notion of restriction, desire, freedom etc. Hence, the paper intends to highlight the value conception of Daya Krishna in terms of desire, freedom, reason etc.

## DAYA KRISHNA'S DISCOURSE ON PURUṢĀRTHA

Daya Krishna defines *puruṣārtha* that which can provide a sense of *significance* into man's life and experience. This *significance* does not only define any particular value which ought to be pursued, but also considers the human situation in search of values. Value indicates that what men seek is significant, values to be of utmost significance and importance of life. Hence, the search for values implies the search for importance or significance. He does not consider

value (*puruṣārtha*) as series of specific value content but *puruṣārtha* as a general value structure that enquires how are values organized and conceived. Values can be regarded as goals of human life that provide a sense of obligation as well. The studies on values require a consideration of their plurality and their variations in different realms of society, times and cultures. So, values are the subject of variability. A distinction is founded between an *ideality* of man's seeking and the actuality in relation to the idea of reality. It refers the distinction between reality and values. From this distinction two basic characteristics of values can be found in Daya Krishna's works, first- values are to be actualized by self reflecting and values are to be transformed or they transform reality itself.

There are various social, historical, cultural presuppositions that are underlying as particular value content. Here, the question arises that how values approve significance of one's life? Daya Krishna's interpretation towards this is not purely accompanied with ethical interpretation. Moreover, his investigation does not establish a moral theory that provides an account of how to act morally. Rather, his investigation is how the concept of values influences the authenticity on account of its historical and cultural variations and how they build the condition of making relation to other and to one's own human situation. Dayakrishna's re-interpretation, here, is in a way to comprehend the presuppositions of the moral and axiological theories and at the same time is to increase the sense of value beyond the limited scope of the moral realm.

## NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE RESPONSES TOWARDS VALUES

Daya Krishna seeks to ascertain values on the ground of historically or socially fixed theories since he does not absolutely deny the relevance of traditions and customs. But he claims that the relevance of tradition or customs has weight only by critically reintegrated by confrontation with

other traditions. There might be negative ending and positive response of the traditional values. If tradition is granted as absolute or rigid authority of values then it can be claimed as negative closure. Again, Positive response towards values means when the customary values are transformed and interpreted with new consciousness. According to Daya Krishna, values are not natural, but are symbolic. It is called as the *living tradition* that is expressed in the language of Daya Krishna as “If the civilization is alive, the images and concepts are *used* and they *continuously* reveal the dynamic creativity hidden in them.” (Daya Krishna, 1997, p.46) A living tradition therefore requires a shared commitment between tradition and relevance, legality and reason, time and context. The critical discussion on values entails *knowledge* of their content, knowledge of contexts and intention of their application. This knowledge is objectively and reflectively integrated which logically generates values from a particular cultural and historical set in accordance to a fixed theory.

Daya Krishna holds *desire* as the motivating power that is the motive of creation. Desire is the seeking of something *present absence* or *future presence*. In Indian Philosophy, it is called as *pravritti* which can be generalized as for the out-going movement of consciousness. It is the *seeking* or *thirst* for what-is-not. In the actualization of values *desire* stands as the dynamic force of the creation for both the individual and also for collective level. Natural objects are in a causal chain which provides information of the past from which they originated. Again, valuation hierarchy is intrinsically in-built with some purposes, meanings and values which are not natural, but are symbolic. There is the aspect of consciousness or knowledge which relates the symbolic character of transformation to the world of transcendent. For the actualization of values both these knowledge are necessary- first, knowledge of the causality and secondly, the knowledge of the building of technology for effecting the causal

knowledge. Daya Krishna explains, “Technology and value apprehension are closely related to each other, for without technology one cannot attempt to actualize any value whatsoever.” (Daya Krishna, 1997, p.21-22)

The Indian concept *silpa* stands for technology. Daya Krishna means by the term creation (value, *purusartha*) is the effective exercise of *freedom*. This creation of values is impossible without the constitutive principles (*silpa*). *Silpa* assumes some sort of knowledge of causality and the transformation of the causal knowledge into an effective instrument for the actualization of that knowledge. Daya Krishna has explained the role of the constitutive rule by the example of using constitutive rule in a game. Every game has some constitutive rules which make a game as specific and distinguishes it from the other games. The participants of that game have to accept, observe and mainly obey the rules of that game. They have to enjoy the freedom in the game by maintaining the rules, The game is not playfulness if there is no constraints or limitations with rule as “The acceptance of the ‘restriction’ by ‘freedom’ on itself, however, is voluntary or free in all such cases, as one may or may not play a particular game or even any game at all.” (Daya Krishna, 2007, p.3) Desire and freedom play the role to formulate values in situation within the frame of tradition. Daya Krishna’s re-interpretation, here, is in a way to interpret the presuppositions of the moral and axiological theories and at the same time is to increase the sense of value beyond the limited scope of the moral realm.

## THE PROBLEM OF UNIVERSALITY

The problem of value concerns the conflicts between apprehension and realization, ideal and actual and also questions the empirical conformation of universality. The difference between apprehension and realization implies the relation between ideality and reality. The problem of *universality* is common almost in all disciplines of knowledge, morals and aesthetics etc. which

encloses the idea of 'it is so'. Daya Krishna denies the so-called *universality* by mentioning that "*The so-called 'universality' is never really 'universal' and cannot be so in principle as there is no universal society or polity within which it may even aspire to be so.*" (Daya Krishna, Jan-Mar, 2006, p.149). But, he secures the concept of *universality* or *objectivity* when it overlooks its rigidity and makes it flexible through rationalization that can be attest in different countries, contexts, conditions and civilizations. So, the universality of 'it is so' should be justified with specific contexts and conditions.

But what will happen when there is no universality? Moral chaos definitely will occur because of the divergence of the apprehensions of values. For the validation of any value as right or wrong in any case require some standard. The apprehension of moral values demands their realization in the actual inter living in the life of man in family and society. Moreover, the effective realization and actualization of these diverse apprehensions of values in society require some objective formulations which are commonly regarded as *legal system* or *law*.

## THE ROLE OF LAW

Unlike the rigidity of law, Daya Krishna intends to formulate law as judgment of reason which can be transformed in demand of context. Law makes values publicly suitable throughout *reason*. Reason is that which guarantee *objectivity* and *fairness* in resolving disputes among apprehensions and conforms the validation of the actualization of values in terms of situation. In law, reason not only permits the claim as law, but it requires argument, counter argument, dispute. In Daya Krishna's terminology, "*the self-consciousness of norms implicit in these judgments regarding thinking and action and their explicit formulation raised the problem of their actualization and of the 'coherence' amongst the 'rules' that this attempt at actualization inevitably entailed.*" (Daya Krishna. Jan-Mar, 2006, p.147)

Hence, it seems that law reflects and connects reason and values in a way that they can settle the disputes and make them fair and reasonable in society.

In fact, the changing nature of apprehension of reason and even values cannot be denied as the values are the social needs on time and situation. Hence, law should be dynamic and changing. This changing nature of law may not appear to those who are actively occupied in it and it appears as given and static as they have to pursue it as such at a given time. But law has to compromise and cooperate when it seen as inadequate in time. Daya Krishna declares that law is, indeed a compromise between *morals* and *reason* by saying that "*It will also draw attention to the question regarding the actual use of 'reason' in the field of inter-subjective, inter-actional behavior of men and the attempt to make it 'rational' as far as possible.*" (Daya Krishna. Jan-Mar, 2006, p.168) Law actualizes the moral. In law, the judgment of morality is not remaining just as a claim but law demands an enforcement to legalize the moral judgment in practice. It is the task of *reason* to confer the subjective value apprehension as objective and to make relevant them in actual practice in particular context. Thus, reason has to investigate and make critical discussion on the particular presuppositions involves in the universal seeking.

## Freedom and Obligations towards Others

Daya Krishna, moreover, engages to crack the problem of obligations towards other and of self consciousness. The other-centered consciousness leads one's action as 'ought' or arouses the sense of obligation. In the social and political realm, otherness can be regarded as a restriction for one's individual freedom. Individual freedom discontinues when it come upon the freedom of the others. The conception of otherness is dominated to a law and to a socially defined value that should be socially practiced. Hence, the demand of the emergence of these laws



and values intrinsically depend on some socio-political power and forces. (This conception of otherness is known as *dharma* in Indian Philosophy). Daya Krishna declares absolute *freedom* as the liberation from this otherness. (In Indian philosophy it is called as *moksa*). Moreover, he adds that otherness is transitory, secondary and relative step and freedom has to overcome the otherness to reach the absolute. Freedom (*moksa*) means the transcendence from this other-centered consciousness from which the sense of obligation arises. In Daya Krishna's terminology, "Freedom, thus is limited by the freedom of others, many others, just as it limits their freedom in return. The relation between 'freedoms', however, need not be of just 'limitation' in the negative sense alone; it can also be positive in the sense that each person's freedom may enhance the 'freedom' of others and, in many cases, it actually does so." (Daya Krishna, Oct-Dec, 2006, p.136). Society and culture is that which gives worth to individual as human being. So, it is impossible and even to overlook the norms, the rules that are approved by society.

Daya Krishna intends to found another-centric concept of value which can be fitted in diverse situations, which has no limitations within any culture, or moral obligations. He tries to define a relation operating between I-consciousness and other-consciousness. In this relation both are necessarily connected to each other in a sense which implies a mutual transformation. Daya Krishna neither observes otherness as the limit of subjectivity nor tries to contradict the necessary conception of the other's subjectivity in the periphery of mine. Rather he tries to reveal the sense of obligations to others as a necessary impression of self consciousness itself.

### LEGALITY AND MORALITY

Otherness is an organizing category of values. The notion of otherness insists of the

demand of legality in political and social context. Legal or juridical notion exists in a civil society which presupposes some obligations of human action in respect to others concern. Moreover, these obligatory duties are ascertained intended for the maintenance and active functioning of oneself to do duty for other's concern. In civil society, law or legality has to keep everything together and to do so legality tag on some authority, just like political authority. This authority formulates or legislate *law* having the explicit power to regulate and operate the behaviors of the social system at its various levels. Legality conform the *universality* of law by implicating the judgment that claims *it is so*. In law, this judgment not only claims but demands enforcement for the universality of that judgment. So, it is seen that the main concern of constituting law or legality is the notion of otherness. Contrary to legality of otherness, morality is the self consciousness of individual. It is the personal sense of value realization. The I-consciousness or the personal realizations of values require freedom in some extent. Daya Krishna holds that to be treated as an individual is to be treated as one who is free and is responsible for what he does and also be praised or blamed what he has done. Hence, the subjective consciousness of morality involves the personal sense of judgment, purposive activity with freedom and will. Thus, Daya Krishna focuses the two dimensions of righteousness. One is the fulfillment of moral obligation prescribed by society as his survival as human being. This is the moral dimension considered as obligatory towards other human beings in a particular society. Another is the individual sense of moral dimension. It is the moral apprehension of the individual which makes one feel differently about what is granted as customary modes of conduct in a society and to make him feel what he considers to be more morally desirable. Here the conflict arises between the moral ideal as apprehension by an individual and what is granted as morally correct in the society he lives. Hence, Daya Krishna observes

that there is a need of continuous realization of the ideals of value equality, justice, law and freedom towards otherness and moral subjectivity.

## CONCLUSION

The expression of *secular* stands for that which is not associated with something timeless or religious or spiritual. Secular strictly indicates that knowledge which is purely associated with worldly matter. Free thought or reason is the foundation of the notion of secular. The concept of *secular* holds mainly the human reasoning faculties as well as free thought, speech and expression. Consequently, Secular ethics finds morality in terms of practical situation. It seems that Daya Krishna's conception of morality can be called as secular as he emphasizes on situation based moral values. Daya Krishna does not recognize morality as somewhat obligation to others by limiting one's own self and does not accept morality as something separate from freedom either. Rather morality should begin from self consciousness of duty, obligation, responsibility and one has to perform by concerning other with his own intention and freedom. He emphasizes on formulating of value structure in a particular situation in which the granted rule is reorganized by reason in conformation of situation. Hence, Daya Krishna does not wholly negate the traditionally granted morality but does not admit these rules as rigid that cannot modify as well. He argues that law should be determined by reason and hence is dynamic. It has to fulfill the moral demands of situation. It is the task of *reason* to confer the subjective value apprehension as objective and to make relevant them in actual practice in particular context. Reason has to investigate and make critical discussion on the particular presuppositions involved in the universal seeking.

Daya Krishna intends to understand the rules and obligations associated with other as outcome of moral subjectivity. He claims that the fact of self-consciousness provides the possibility

of the other being located in one's own consciousness. Daya Krishna was more interested in to the discussion on how the subjective concept of values influences the authenticity on account of its historical and cultural variations and how they build the condition of making relation to otherness and to one's own human situation. The effective realization and actualization of the diverse apprehensions of values in society require some objective formulations which Daya Krishna has regarded as *legal system* or *law*. Law makes values publicly suitable throughout reason. Daya Krishna's conversation on morality highlights the role of law and reason in value determination that how law remedy values and make them situation specific without giving up the demand of universality.

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