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## REVISITING BRENDA ALMOND'S VIEW OF HUMAN BONDS

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### Abstract

In the prehistoric time, there was an inclination of human beings to protect their existence by living in societies. They confine themselves in the society because of having their qualities of mutual love and amity. The general tendencies of human beings are to develop bonds. These bonds happen in various ways. Society cannot survive without bonds. Bonds have significance in philosophical discussion. In the history of contemporary philosophy, applied philosophy is one of the several other aspects. Applied philosophy deals with Human rights, Euthanasia, Feminism, Abortion, Animal rights, Bonds etc. Brenda Almond, a leading figure in applied philosophy, has offered arguments in favor of her viewpoint regarding the importance of human bonds. In this paper, Almond's view on the nature and significance of bond has been analyzed. However, bond has also been studied from ethical perspective in this paper. And finally, it is claimed that marriage and cosmopolitanism make bonds stronger.

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## Introduction

Our sympathy and love reveal through moral lessons and its practices as well as they confine us in a society. Morality not only consist of duties and obligations but also include friendship, brotherhood and love. Political personnel sometimes address like my beloved brothers and sisters. There is no blood connection in this greeting, however this addressing symbolizes one type of bonds. Human bonds have various forms. In addition, family plays a vital role for knitting human bonds. Almond discusses human bonds in her article named *Human Bonds*.<sup>1</sup> This article illustrates Almond's conception and provides arguments for retaining bonds in human life.

## Kinds of Bonds

Brenda Almond divided bonds into three categories, such as:

1. Biological and natural bonds
2. Legal and artificial bonds
3. Social and voluntary bonds

### 1. Biological and Natural Bonds

Biological and natural bonds describe the relationship among family members, for instance, children and parents and between siblings. Mainly, it discusses bonds from the standpoint of blood relations. As we can say that the relationship between children and parents is an essential one and it cannot be ignored and it does not depend on our inclination. According to Brenda Almond, "they are not only chosen, but they often run counter to inclination. In this way they provide a setting in which people accept a shared existence with people whose characteristics they neither admire nor like a situation which of course has both advantages and disadvantages. Secondly, they are inescapable, they cannot be dissolved. A person's sisters, cousins and aunts, narrow-

minded uncles, bad-tempered brother or handicapped son or daughter- is part of the baggage of life."<sup>2</sup> Almond reckons that biological bonds follow a natural process. No external influences work for electing this type of bonds. Furthermore, biological bonds are not such that can be judged by the senses of right and wrong, they, to say, are beyond any ethical judgment.

### 2. Legal and Artificial Bonds

Almond categorizes legal and artificial bonds from the point of view of sexual relationship between couple. Without physical orientations, bonds can be generated among the co-workers at workplaces like companies or organizations. These bonds are described as legal or artificial bonds by Almond. Family is the hub of human bonds. Families are divided into different categories, namely, nuclear family and joint family. Brenda Almond says, "The quintessential network of bonding is the family. And at the heart of that system the nuclear family."<sup>3</sup> Nuclear family doesn't establish through variety of family boundaries. Husband and wife stay as central persons in the family. Their network of bonding does not follow biological process. It entails from a legal and artificial process and creates bonds. Thus, these types of bonds are known as legal and artificial bonds. Marriage is a religious and social custom that is related to biological desire and it turns into an artificial bond in times. This is why Almond says, "it is a quasi-biological bond without a blood relationships."<sup>4</sup> He considers that legal and artificial bonds have no connection with biological bonds as it arises from external influences. In some cases, it is similar to voluntary and social bonds; however, it is, sometimes, much more that.

### 3. Social and Voluntary Bonds

Brenda Almond regards that social and voluntary bonds grow among friends or members of an organization and group. Friends, members or group play the main role for knitting social and voluntary bonds. Social bonds become significant by marriage or other rituals. Therefore, it can be considered as a way for establishing artificial bonds. She argues that although marriage is a prime example of creating bonds, it represents both biological and natural bonds as well as legal and artificial bonds through its practical aspects. Marriage is an ancient practice for constituting a family. This practice is formed by religious and social customs. Man and woman can build up a good intimacy through this practice.

Thus, marriage is a paradigm of forming family. Man and woman get legal recognition for living together in a society and then bonds generate between them. According to Social science, family and marriage are institutions. These institutions are cluster of norms, rules and regulations that control the manner and behavior of social mass. So, the words like marriage and family have recognized as an integral part of social institutions. Marriage is not only a contract between two persons but also a considerable relationship. That is why the significance of marriage is illustrated in several ways in modern society. This relation also indicates both physical and spiritual bonds between husband and wife. They become engaged in duties, responsibilities and commitments with each other. These types of bonds help to spawn generations. "The main purpose of bonds is to sustain a relationship and maintain a sound communication with each other. Besides, marital relationship can be built up among the family members as well as the relatives."<sup>5</sup> Thus, marriage creates bonds not only between two persons but among the groups.

According to Conrad Phillip Kottak "In nonindustrial societies although there can be romantic love, marriage is a group concern. People don't just take a spouse; they assume obligations to group in-laws."<sup>6</sup> One can engage in this relationship through love marriage. On the other hand, marriage may be arranged by the family members. However, marriage creates bonds. In spite of positive arguments on behalf of the marriage, we encounter some incidents like divorce, separation and so on. For this reason, someone may disagree about the importance of marriage. Almond argues that man desires for free life and love to live with proper freedom. When their freedom is vehemently disregarded or ignored, a man or woman wants to escape from the permanent relationship. For example, a married woman may not be happy with her married life. Additionally, we observe that "with more women working outside the home, economic dependence on the husband as breadwinner is weaker, which no doubt facilitates a decision to divorce when a marriage has major problems."<sup>7</sup> On the contrary, a man may not want to continue his married life with his wife. These can be cited as some causes of the intersection of marriage relationships.

In many cases, divorce or segregation can come in a married life when husband or wife fails to carry out their proper duties, responsibilities with each other or they become unable to continue a married life both physically and mentally. As law maintains that marriage assists to improve a strong bonding of friendship that gets more importance than husband-wife relationship. Almond accepts the possibility and reality of isolation in conjugal life and offers comments that marriage creates bonds in human life. Almond argues that "... the bond itself irrationally persisting when all external indications are absent, those who want to recognize its continuing efficacy may describe it as mystic and it is only to be expected that

people with a narrowly empiricist or positivist orientation will refuse to recognize it at all."<sup>8</sup> Almond recognizes that marriage bond is spiritual not just socially mutual bond. It may not be expressible in language or this bond is not merely empirical relation but it is beyond this. Criticizing positivism, he says that positivism does not recognize any spiritual bond. A positivist affirms only socially mutual bond. Almond thinks that the empiricist or positivist idea is important here as a positivist may like to develop bond without marriage between two partners. In addition, Almond argues that the positivist indicates to the adoption which creates bonds without marriage. Moreover, adoption is a legal device in our society and society provides harbor for it.

A new dimension adds to engender bonds though it is controversial to certain extent. Almond introduces "gay marriage" concept in this regard.<sup>9</sup> Gay marriage as we know it means a marriage or homosexual relationship between the same sexes. Gay men and lesbians are the examples of this idea. "gay marriage is also known as same-sex marriage."<sup>10</sup> It is critically acclaimed in our society. In twentieth century, the numbers of this type of marriage are increasing. We learnt that, "in 2001, Netherlands became the first country to establish same-sex marriage by law. After that, in October, 2017, same-sex marriage is legally recognized in Finland, Malta, Germany, Australia, United Kingdom, Northern Ireland, England."<sup>11</sup> Same-sex marriage is a debatable issue in recent time. According to American Anthropological Association, "a civilization or a society cannot survive based on opposite gender married couple."<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, some church inhibits gay marriage. Catholic Church is one of them. Catholic Church declared, "every human being is called to receive a gift of divine sonship, to become a child of God by grace. However, to receive this gift, we must reject sin, including

homosexual behavior."<sup>13</sup> Catholic Church holds that homosexuality aids to spread sin in human society. That is why it is regarded a sin. Different religions are the strongest opponents of this type of marriage.

Marriage between a man and a woman not only symbolizes a mere physical relationship but it manifests a superior realization. Physical relationship means sexual relationship. Besides physical relationship, a sense of moral responsibility can achieve a platform amongst them. Although several religions do not recognize homosexuality, it symbolizes a profound relationship and helps to create bond in human life. Therefore, same-sex marriage has been supported here. Almond refers to a drama in her paper, named 'The Normal Heart' written by Douglas Kramer.<sup>14</sup> Kramer has depicted love story of two male persons in his drama. At the end of the play, Kramer shows how relationships got recognition. Likewise this drama, there is an Indian movie named 'Fire' directed by Mira Nayar.<sup>15</sup> Mira portrayed a lesbian relationship between two women belonging to same family. She suggested that two women were destitute and casted-off by their husbands regarding sexual relationship. One woman's husband was unable to perform physical relation. Another woman's better half was addicted to multi-female feelings. Two women fall in love and affection to each other. One day, they came closer physically and mentally to each other and fulfilled their sexual demand. Thus, Mira Nayar showed two women's bonds in her movie.

Almond tried to discuss same-sex marriage from 'Utilitarian' point of view.<sup>16</sup> In this sense, Same-sex marriage can bring happiness for two persons; however, this happiness is not relevant from the point of moral conception. Furthermore, homosexual marriage is a negative aspect for the traditional society which does not accept this type of marriage as a legal

institution. In addition, religion does not support same-sex marriage as it hinders propagating future generation.

### Unbonding as a Philosophical ideal

Although bonding plays significant role in the advancement of mankind, there remains a contrast between bonding and unbonding. I will discuss unbonding here as a philosophical ideal. Almond has focus on stoic philosophy, existentialism and feminism as the prime examples of unbonding and explains these philosophical theories to show the hidden unbonding senses.

#### 1. Stoic Philosophy

Stoic philosophy is a branch of Hellenistic philosophy that flourished by Roman and Greek influence. At first, stoic philosophy has been introduced in the hand of Zeno in thirteen century BD. Subsequently, Seneca, Roman emperor, philosopher and poet Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius were the influential proponents of Hellenistic philosophy. Stoic philosophers hold indifferent attitude towards life and the world. This attitude reveals that they support unbonding in their life. According to the *Oxford Dictionary* of Blackburn, "It is an ethic of self-sufficient, benevolent calm, with the virtuous peace of the wise man rendering him indifferent to poverty, pain, and death, so resembling the spiritual peace of God. This fortitude and indifferent can sound sublime, but also sound like stark insensibility."<sup>17</sup> Stoic philosophers hold indifferent outlook to anything that seems good to them.

Stoic philosopher Zeno explains apathetic outlook in his philosophy which is a sign of unbonding in human life. He was indifferent to his family as well as he did not agree the bond that generates from any emotion. It is reflected more obviously in the conception of another stoic philosopher, Seneca. He took salvation from his mother on account of practicing philosophy.

In the time of his redemption, he wrote a letter to his mother and assured that isolated life was not painful to him and he accepted unbonding in his life.

Another Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius says that life is in a continuous change. By this conception of change, he denies permanent bonds and accepts unbonding. Likewise, Brenda Almond says, "Whenever you grow attached to something, do not act as though it were one of those things that cannot be taken away, but as though it were something like a jar or crystal goblet, so that when it breaks you will remember what it was like, and not be troubled."<sup>18</sup> Therefore, there are no permanent bonds among men because unstable man cannot create any permanent relationship.

#### 2. Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism maintains that a woman should acquire a man's characteristics for eradicating gender discrimination from the society. This type of feminism disavows all types of relationship with man. Liberal Feminists give emphasis on the abdication of woman's femininity for attaining a man's disposition. It disavows patriarchal rules and regulations for eradicating man's oppressive tendency from the society as well as wants to establish equal rights and opportunity for them. According to Marry Holmes, "Liberal feminism emerged as part of liberalism: a political and intellectual doctrine promoting the ideas of equality of opportunity and the notion that individuals had certain rights. These included the right to liberty, the right to some say in who ruled them, and the right to pursue their own interest to achieve happiness as long as this did not deliberately harm others."<sup>19</sup> They also declare that they do not want to retain relationship with man. Liberal feminist invites woman for taking the position of man in a society. Liberal feminism persists in the western culture's feminist conception. Marry Wollstonecraft is a liberal feminist who

argues about the equality of women with men. She declares, "women are fundamentally rational beings, like men, they should have the same opportunities and rights."<sup>20</sup> She claims that women have rationality and suggests that women should get education which will bring emancipation for them. Thus, liberal feminists want to detach relationship with men and achieve men's characteristics.

### 3. Radical Feminism

Radical feminism claims equal rights for women along with men. It deems a female with her femininity. Radical feminists consider patriarchal society's rules and regulations as oppressive for women. This type of feminism wants to change the patriarchal social behavior, their culture and invite every woman for establishing a new social atmosphere. They do not want any man in their new society. Only women will be the member of that society. Basically, radical feminist do not want to retain bonds with men. They want to uproot the existence of patriarchal society. Sulamith Firestone is a radical feminist thinker. She thinks that giving birth and rearing children are one kind of oppression for a woman. She remains physically unhealthy in her pregnancy period as well as she is to tolerate physical anguish. On the other hand, a mother's responsibility doesn't end after giving birth of a child. She is to sacrifice a lot for her children. However, a man does not suffer the anguish of child birth and he is not inevitably obliged to obey all responsibilities to his children. That is why, Firestone wants to release women from the conventional long term child birth process. She proposes new method namely reproductive technology. It would permit the avoidance of pregnancy and child birth, for instance, test-tube babies. According to Firestone, "therefore, women must rebel; women must control fertility. Women must own their babies and new technology. And women must control childbearing and rearing."<sup>21</sup>

Firestone wants to liberate women from the traditional way of maternity as well as from the responsibilities; a woman is to obey for rearing her children. I think, a weak point of Firestone's view is that we do not have any idea of how there will be bond between a baby and his parents. This is because the baby will take birth in an artificial way. She did not suggest any clear criterion about it. Finally, if we welcome Firestone's new technology in our society, family bonding will probably degenerate as well as moral obligations will face challenges. Begum Rokeya is a radical feminist in the history of Bengali literature. She is also the pioneer of women awakening. She illustrates in her famous book, *Stree Jatir Abanati* (The Degradation of Women), "we shall do whatever is necessary to gain equality with men. If earning an independent living now, is a path to freedom, then that will be our choice."<sup>22</sup> She wants to conscious women for establishing their rights in the society. She holds several writings for convincing women that they are not neglected; they have a self-entity.

### Existentialism

Existentialism, a component of contemporary philosophy, gives emphasis on the particular individual's existence. Some contemporary existentialist philosophers are Jean Paul Sartre, Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, Jaspers, and Nietzsche. Existentialism is a theory that discusses about the existence of particular individual, not the universal as well as not the individual of abstract world but the individual who exists in this world. Two main features of existentialism are existence and freedom. This existence means an individual's existence. On the other hand, freedom symbolizes that every individual is free to select and take decision for him. They relate freedom with individual existence. That means, they are not dependent on anybody, they are free. Thus, existentialism holds freedom as the basic concept and apparently disavows bonds with one



another. Furthermore, this freedom implies that every individual is not determined by anything or anybody. Jean Paul Sartre mentions in his book *Existentialism and Humanism* as "there is no determination—man is free, man has freedom."<sup>23</sup> Sartre has associated the word freedom with individual existence and declares that an individual essence is not determined by anything. That means, Sartre signifies that every individual is absolutely free. They are not bounded by any relation. Brenda Almond says, "It is the ideal of being yourself, or doing your own thing. It is the ideal of the self oriented free personality, independent of emotional ties beyond those of immediate inclination, and moving from relationship to relationship in a strong and ungrateful isolation."<sup>24</sup> Basically, existentialism emphasizes on the free existence of every individual. That's why, it does not recognize any emotional bonds. Thus, we can say that this theory inspires unbonding in individual life as well as it induces isolation and temporary relationship in human lives.

Almond upholds the significance of bonds from the perspective of sexuality, religion and feminism. Marriage is a custom of knitting artificial bonds that are originated from any former relationship. It is a genre of knitting bonds in our society; however, it is limited from one side. Gay marriage is not recognized by the society because it is not unanimously approved in all although there is a bond in it.

### Individual freedom and Bonds

Family bonding is permitted by religion, society as well as politics. Almond supports family for creating bonds. Marriage paves the way for making a family. Man and woman play vital role in a family. Gender discrimination has been arising through marriage and family from the ancient period where women are being exploited by men. Men have regarded

themselves as the leader of a family and they have created a superior position for them and made sure an inferior position for their counterparts. Women could not take part in social activities. Patriarchal social rules and regulations exploit women both physically and mentally. Feminist movement started its journey for freeing women from this exploitation. It portrays the picture of social, political and economic exploitation of women. Subsequently, feminist movement got success to a great extent. Women have become able to keep their role in several external sectors. Nowadays, women literacy rate are approximately similar to men in many countries. Women are trying to claim equal rights with men. In this sense, feminism is a very successful movement for women empowerment. However, the unrestricted individual freedom of women induces doubt regarding the stability of marriage and family. If we give a glance at our society, we can see that a woman is spending more time outside of her home like a man. In some families, women are claiming full authority. Additionally, they love to spend more time at their workplace than their family environment. Consequently children aren't getting proper care from their mothers. Thus, sometimes family bonding, is taking a negative form. Bond is an integral part for our survival. It confines human being in an invisible affinity. This is because it helps to raise a family and blood relationship. Thus, the sustainability and stability of relationships should come in our consideration.

### Conclusion

Almond regards bonds from ethical perspective. Axiology is one of the fundamental branches of philosophy. Ethics is a branch of axiology. "Ethics is a branch of philosophy; it is a moral philosophy or philosophical thinking about morality, moral problems, and moral judgments."<sup>25</sup> It deals with the evaluative discussion of right and wrong, ought and oughtn't,

duty, obligations etc. Almond thinks that bonds can be considered from the perspective of duty, obligations because when moral rules are disregarded or ignored, bonds can be a media of obeying duty and obligations properly. For example, parents have certain duty and obligations to their children and vice-versa. If they obey equal duty and obligations to one another, bonds will definitely be retained between them. Moreover, it is not only applicable to the family members but it is appropriate to every relationships. We can sustain bonds in this way. Bertrand Russell upholds ethical inspection differently in his book named *An Outline of Philosophy*. He tried to represent ethics differently from its traditional problems ought, oughtn't, duty and obligations. According to Russell, "If harmonious desires are what we should seek, love is better than hate, since, when two people love each other, both can be satisfied, whereas when they hate each other one at most can achieve the object of his desire."<sup>26</sup> Russell examines the term 'desire' from ethical perspective. This desire means a consistent desire which brings good for two people.

Russell includes love and affection to this harmonious desire. He reckons that this love and affection symbolizes intimacy. If there is no intimacy in love, it cannot bring satisfaction for anyone. Thus, if we can conduct our relationships with proper love and affection, we will be able to retain bonds in our lives. Russell also holds that we can fulfill our desire by keeping love and affection side by side. Because, when two persons love each other, they try to sacrifice and have a compromising mentality between themselves. On the other hand, friendship plays an indispensable role for retaining bonds. A sound relationship among peers can be a suitable way for maintaining bonds with moral rules and regulations. A sense of friendly behavior can also be applicable to husband and wife's relationship. If a couple can build up a good sense

of friendship between themselves, they will be more successful to retain bonds in their life.

Life cannot sustain without bonds. Bond is a way of knitting human being in one fabric. Everyman wants to retain bonds both with their blood-relatives and treasured persons. Either ways, man is confined with bonds. Biological bonds come from a natural process. We cannot disavow the relationship with our parents, brothers, sisters' i.e. family members. On the other hand, marriage creates legal and artificial bonds. It also creates a family which aids to flourish generation. In addition, everyman is a social being. We are to maintain relationships with our neighbors. Thus, social and voluntary bonds generate from the society. Likewise, there are several bonds in human life. Basically, bonds play a vital role in human life. Man cannot live alone. He is to create bonds for living a compendium life.

In the present world, cosmopolitanism is an ideology that forms relationship among the people of all nations. It retains relationship based on a community. These communities share political, economic and moral relationships which inspires a sense of mutual respect, in spite of their having different religious and political beliefs. People of different nations are called 'cosmopolitan' because people of several cultural and religious backgrounds live in one network. In fact, cosmopolitanism creates brotherhood that brings peace and harmony among nations.

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