

## TRADITIONAL AND MODERN SOCIETY: AN ANALYTICAL EXPLORATION

**Mudasir Ahmad Tantray\***

Lecturer at Dept. of Philosophy, Govt. Boys College Sopore  
Email: muddurocks.tantray34@gmail.com

**Hilal Ahmad Mir\***

Lecturer at Dept. of Sociology, Govt. Boys College Baramulla  
Email: mirhilal784@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

This paper clarifies the significance of philosophy for traditional societies and modern societies and their evolution. In this paper ethics is the mainstream philosophy which studies and analyses the values of both the traditional societies and modern ones. This paper is only the ethical study of the traditional values and modern values. There are three ways to philosophize societies as traditional and modern: Ethical perspective, economical and theological, but this paper deals only with the ethical approach. Philosophers from ancient to modern era played an important part in the transformation of traditional into modern. Morality and religion changed the mind of the nations towards development and ethical progress. In this article ancient philosophy, medieval philosophy, modern philosophy and others religious philosophies of India, china, and Muslim philosophies exercised key attempts to study traditional societies and modern societies. This paper highlights the factors that are responsible for the vices in traditional societies and also the elements that are productive for the promotion of modern societies.

**Keywords:** traditional society; modern society; ethical exploration; society; philosophy

---

Received 15 August 2021, Accepted 20 August 2021, Published 26 August 2021

\* Correspondence Author: Mudasir Ahmad Tantray.

### INTRODUCTION

Philosophy is the subject which gives every subject matter a rational and dialectic outlook. As the mother of all subjects, it values to our existence, society and nature. Philosophers analyse everything in a deep level and identifies whether it is valid or invalid. Now the question is; Does philosophers have any religion? And the answer is; yes they have religion and their religion is philosophy and ethics. There is no difference between the theist philosophers who believes in the faith of monotheism, deism, polytheism, and henotheism and the atheist philosophers who abides with the faith of nature and reason. The only difference is their art of philosophising of things and what distinguishes and separates their category as philosophers is their vision of understanding and rationalistic approach. It is the fact that the origin and the source of western and the Indian philosophy has its root in religious texts; western philosophy from Bible, old testament and new testament, Indian philosophy from Vedas and Upanishads.<sup>1</sup>As we know that there is hot

controversy between the people of faith and the people of reason, neither faith can be proved on the rational grounds nor the intellect can provide sufficient knowledge to study faith. Nevertheless religious personalities should develop rationalistic approach whenever they need it to make it their authority. They also be critical and analytical rather dialectical during religious dialogue. The founder of the 'school of vitality and flux' called as Heraclitus insisted on change or becoming. He said in his aphorism "one can't step into same river twice" everything changes even bodily streams and mental steams. It means that our mental set up and bodily movements are responsible for changing our societies. Social values differ from society to society. Things that has value in one society becomes the vice in another society like polygamy, pornography, sexism, stem cell research, euthanasia, the death of penalty, racism, homosexuality, animal rights and environmental issues, media ethical issues etc. While in Muslim societies polygamy is permitted and in Sanatan societies, it is not permitted. Morris Ginsberg in his work 'on the diversity of morals' argued that there are no societies without rules of conduct, backed by the general approval of the members. Although, modern world is a global world, and this global society concentrate on global ethics. Moralists today try to research on those moral issues of both the traditional societies and modern societies that are universal and can be accepted globally. Ethical philosophers, religious philosophers and theologians are creating a platform of dialogue on moral concepts that are beneficial for modern societies. It is by what Raimon Panikkar calls it a "diatopical" exchange which means a dialogue between cultures in which societies can learn from one another, challenge each other and grow together, without being obliged to model themselves on one allegedly "higher" level of intellectual development.<sup>2</sup> Ethics as the branch of philosophy is concerned with the study of social influences on human morals, customs, values and behaviour. Or we can define ethics as the area of philosophy which investigates the principles governing human actions in terms of their goodness, badness, rightness, wrongness, duties and obligations. Although Greeks and Islamic philosophers had formulated ethical and rational ideas about societies. Social ethics and rationality was largely born out of the great intellectual and social upheavals that destroyed the medieval European world, inspired by the great scientific discoveries of Copernicus and Newton, whose methods had been introduced to social thought by Bacon, Descartes and Hobbes, the intellectual culture of early modern Europe raised the ideas of rationality, morality and humanism that were at the heart of enlightenment thought. Ethics refer to the rules that define what types of behaviour are appropriate and what types of behaviour are inappropriate.<sup>3</sup> one thing which is important in ethics that is poverty is not the condition for traditional societies because most of great philosophers and scientists belong to poor families. If we ascertain two societies one society is poor, practicing rituals, living honestly and peacefully, obeys God's decree to save his life, others and environment. Another society is wealthy, destructed its environment by polluting water and air and life. Now which society we would call modern, former or later. The philosophies of idealism, realism, rationalism, empiricism, criticism, positivism and pragmatism have changed the whole scenario of the European world towards scientific development and moral development. These philosophies opened the vision of the man towards knowledge and wisdom and shunned ignorance. Societies instead of practicing rituals and fighting battles got engaged in learning and philosophical activities.<sup>4</sup>

## OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this research paper are as follows:

1. To describe the moral issues of both the traditional societies and modern societies.
2. To explore the relativistic values of different societies.
3. This paper defines the philosophical approach to study social problems and its remedies and also promotes the philosophical background for the diverse societies.
4. It analyses and critically evaluates the philosophical contribution in developing traditional societies into modern societies

### Traditional societies and Modern societies

The term 'traditional society' refers to a community that is deeply rooted in the past and often engaged in ritualistic and customary practices. It is commonly accepted today that people's actions and characters are shaped by the societies in which they live. It is accepted that the attitudes and outlooks of the inhabitants of the various countries of the world differ, and this is widely understood to be a result of the varying social institutions and histories of the societies. Philosophers and their philosophies have played an important role to develop modern societies from traditional ones and also in constructing the ideal societies. Socrates 'dialectic method', Plato's 'Academy' and Aristotle's 'Lyceum' played a key role in changing the traditional bent of the mind of the people in Greek. Kant said that his concept "kingdom of ends" is the ideal society having high moral standards. Traditional societies faced an extreme form of conflicts in the shape of customs, rituals, myths, caste, creed, colour, poverty, hierarchy, moral vices, and exploitation. All these defects are due to their ignorance towards these concepts. In traditional societies ignorance is the root cause of the barbarianism. Their ethics codes and moral standards are not universal and holistic that is why they are neither hedonistic nor intuition. Common people are doing what they are recommended and permitted by the authorities and that times ignorant kings and priests were authorities not the philosophers or learned thinkers. societies the way of desire to become modern, because the people in these societies don't know what life is? What morality is? What progress is?, what knowledge, virtue, vice and justice are.

Modern societies are evolving and well developing societies. All honour goes to philosophers and great philosophies of the world whose ideas moulded the thoughts of the people to generate modern societies, today modern societies which we are valuing whether it is the societies of Greeks, societies of Romans, societies in America, Sweden, Vienna, china, Arabian societies and Indian metro Politian societies. In all societies philosophical vision has given once a sufficient start. Everywhere in the modern societies there lies behind them a great role of philosophy that has revolutionised these societies in the form of religious philosophy, ethics, pragmatism, and hermeneutics. Emile Durkheim developed a complex theory of social order based on an understanding of rules, functions, the division of labour, social evolution, society as organic whole and religion<sup>5</sup>. Philosophers and philosophies has changed the whole scenario of all those modern societies which were once traditional and dogmatic, believes in myths and illusions. In ancient period Greek societies great values are their power, war, oracles, myth and patriarch. Only one religious and philosopher Socrates (the master) who believes in the morality of virtue and knowledge changed the

minds of the people of Greek towards light and that light is philosophy. So he developed and improved the first civilization to Rationalistic, and dialectical mode. Not only Socrates but also other great philosophers of Greek explored their philosophy in developing the traditional societies into modern like, Thales concept of nature and mathematics, Anaximander theory of cosmology and geography, Parmenides concept of logic and being, Heraclitus concept of change, sophists concept of relativism, Pythagoras theory of numbers and mysticism, Plato's 'philosopher king' and Aristotle's nature of society and its importance for human being (man is social animal) led the societies of Greek to improve them towards rationality. Due to these contributions Greek societies are credited today as modern societies.<sup>6</sup>

In medieval period, society emphasis on the value of administration of the church and revealed knowledge, priests of the church decides what is good for the society and what is not. What is legitimate knowledge and what is illegitimate, what is permeable and what is prohibited. The hierarchy of powers is controlled by these priests. Society in this era is under the dichotomy of religious authorities. Medieval philosophy emerges after the decline of ancient Greece and Rome, when new cultures begin to produce works of philosophy that are at once inspired by that ancient legacy and yet responsive to new cultural and religious circumstances. Medieval philosophers like St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, had cleared the faith and reason for the people to come out from the dogmatic domains of the medieval social evils.<sup>7</sup> Prophets in Islamic history, as great philosophers also improved their societies in their period of as messengers. At the time of these prophets adultery, atheism, gambling, ignorance, hypocrisy, genocide, cruelty and corruption were common in the traditional societies. Prophets imparted knowledge, virtue and wisdom in the development of these societies. They took them to the light and removed their ignorance. One example is that at the time of prophet Muhammad (PBH), Societies were so ignorant that they treated their inborn girls as vice and buried them alive. This is only that the Arabians people couldn't want to become the in-laws. Prophet Muhammad removed these types of vices. If we really want any kind of change in our societies then we should bring change in ourselves and it is our duty to take responsibility and accountability of our society. It is a well saying that "modification in the behaviours of the people is the modification of the society".<sup>8</sup> Indian philosophies like- Nayaya - Vaseiska, Sankhya-Yoga, Mimansa-Vedanta, Charvaka, Jainism and Buddhism enlightened the traditional societies with their interpretation of concepts of the Ethics and Epistemology. These Philosophies insisted on character development, listening, pondering, understanding, spirituality and love for the nature and knowledge. Charvaka philosophers stress on perception, Nayaya on realism, Sankya and yoga on evolution of the man and environment, Jainism on conduct and Buddhism on the cessation of suffering. Not only this these philosophers imparted universal brotherhood, integrity, peace and wisdom. Gandhi's concept of ahimsa, Iqbal's ideal of self and patriotism, Vivekanand's idea of universal religion, Aurbindo's concept of Spiritual evolution, Ambedker's principle of annihilation of the caste, produced oceans of knowledge and wisdom in order to modify and rectify the traditional minds into rationalistic vision.<sup>9</sup>

Actually what makes the society traditional and modern is a question of debate. The moral code of conduct and rationality (reason) makes the society traditional and modern. Suppose a society is violating the moral laws and what it is doing in its cultures is against humanity or rationality then we called this type of society traditional society. While the society which has high and ideal moral codes and accepts a provision of reason and empirical calculus in its domain is known as modern society. Every society has its own norms

and social customs and how these societies reflect to this, is their normative approach. According to normative ethics, the standard of the society makes it traditional or modern. The normative questions of the society are; what are the moral issues of the tradition and modern society. The moral issues, beliefs, customs, rituals and practices of society are derived from theological or rational wisdom. The ethical standards of traditional societies are different from the standard of modern societies. Traditional societies value to dress code, doctrines, racism, myths, castes creeds and colour while modern society values to rationality, wealth, production, education and development.<sup>10</sup> Traditional societies are those societies in which the authorities of their social standards and morals are derived from their ancestors in a thread shape and from the past, with a dogmatic role for moral codes. Such societies or elements of society that are small scale, are derived from indigenous and often ancient cultural practices. While modern societies are those societies in which the authority of their social principles and morals are derived from rationality. Those societies are of having an empirical role for social institutions and for moral standards. Modern refers to those practices that relate to the industrial mode of production or the development of large scale often colonial societies. Although in most of the conditions ethical perspective is different from economical view. In philosophical sense modern societies are not the societies of having the culture of value to fashion, technology, caste, beauty, wealth, health, and desires<sup>11</sup>. These societies are lacking morality, humanity and rationality. The only thing before them is their ego and wealth. They crave for sense enjoyment. Still some modern societies are traditional, traditional in the sense that these societies do not have good moral standards which can be accepted universally and which can be calculated in a holistic manner. In ethics and especially for social ethics the concept of modern society is the society which may be less developed in culture, material progress and production but which can be high in moral standards and moral progress. Although these societies are very disciplined and honest for its norms and laws. Moral conduct and values for modern society is a touchstone to become a rational and progressive society. There are many characteristic features and principles that are beneficial for societies to grade it as modern. Philosophers are the lovers of wisdom and knowledge, they mentioned some of them are as:

- (i) Rationality
- (ii) Education/learning
- (iii) Humanity
- (iv) Morality/religion
- (v) Will power

These principles are only ethical principle. There are also other principles like economy, technology and health that are sufficient for societies to make them modern.

### **Response from Philosophy of Religion**

Religious philosophies exert its main role in modifying the traditional societies. Traditional society lays emphasis on religion. As Descartes and Locke rightly said that 'morality is derived from religion' Every religion has its own philosophy. In modern times man is less concerned with deities and metaphysical assumptions but more faithful to societal norms like virtue, health, integrity, honesty, and ethical relativism<sup>12</sup>. Religious consciousness and acceptance is necessary for evolution. Religion<sup>13</sup> in its real sense

is study of principles and laws to maintain harmony and peace in the world. Religion is responsible for the society for its traditionalism and modernism. Religion is obedience to God's will. If people are engaged in corruption, that is not religion, if they are harmful to environment, nature and self, that is not religion. Religion recognises humans as the centre of the creation. Everything is to subsidiary to him. Religion is the essence of human beings and their societies. Religious people are morally sound only when they are ready to face criticism on religious doctrines and not to attack his opponent. Every religion more or less insists on ethics. Religion is what you prefer for yourself, prefer it for your friend, i.e for your society, environment and nature. All world religions has some common elements on which everyone should have faith like, truth, non-violence, humility, tolerance, religious consciousness, humanity, peace, religious dialogue, freedom of speech and the major religions of the world prohibits the moral vices<sup>14</sup> of the society like, intoxication, pornography, gambling, violence, and genocide. Religion is the expression of society itself.<sup>15</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Human being is the element of the society. There is a close intimacy between human being and society, interdependent on each other, any kind of deficiency in one of them creates deficiency in another. Ethics plays a crucial role to maintain order and relation between them. Ethics deals with 'what ought to do' and deals with 'will' of the human beings. In ethical matters we are free to choose. There is no law and order, no punishment, no action, no investigation that would command to stop us in doing ethos of the society. Ethics studies only the volitional part of the human behaviour. There is no law that could stop beggars from begging and charitable organizations from paying charity. It is only morality that distinguishes traditional societies from modern societies as moral concepts are not scientific in nature which can be defined by observational outlook and empirical domains. Moral concepts and issues lays only a standard of 'what is good' and 'what is bad' and every custom in societies ought to be calculated on the basis of this standard. Standard acts as the touchstone for societies. Both the traditional and modern societies have their own standards. In some modern societies, capital, production, Fashion technology is the standard of morality before them and the violation of other laws and customs like abortion, generosity, chastity, are not moral standards. In some societies religious doctrines and testimony is the standard of morality. What is good or bad before Theo-centric societies is commanded for them by the will of God. So religion and ethics are the two sides of the coin and the coin is society. Moral theory has the same relation to ethical decision making that the study of grammar has the ability to study language. A person can speak a language without ever having studied its grammar, and a person can also make ethical decisions without ever studied moral theory. Thus applied ethics has escalated a global revolution to societies in the fields of medicine, environment, international relations, business, media and social ethics. Traditional societies ought to obey universal moral standards of modern societies which is accepted universally and recommend by the analysts of moral theory while as modern societies ought to avoid those vices in the society that are against moral law i.e. sexism, abortion, and homosexuality.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Aleaz, K. P. (1993). *Harmony of Religions: The Relevance of Swami Vivekananda*. Calcutta: Sankar Bhattacharya Punthi Pushtak.
- [2] Barsky, A. E. (2010). *Ethics and Values in Social Work: An integrated approach for a comprehensive curriculum*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. P.2
- [3] Chatterji, S. D. (1960). *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Calcutta: Calcutta University Press.
- [4] De Boer, T. J. (2006). *The History of Philosophy in Islam*. Oxon: Routledge Curzon
- [5] Diamond, J. M. (2013). *The world until yesterday: What can we learn from traditional societies?*. Penguin.
- [6] Gilman, C .P. (2004). *Social Ethics: Sociology and the future of society*. United states of America:Green Wood Publishing Group.
- [7] Hinman, L. M. (2016). *Contemporary Moral Issues: Divinity and Consensus*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxon: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- [8] Huber, T., & Pedersen, P. (1997). Meteorological knowledge and environmental ideas in traditional and modern societies: the case of Tibet. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 577-597.
- [9] Khan, T. R. & Tantray, M A. (2019). *Ethics in Religious Teaching: An Analytical Approach*. Milestone Educational Review. 10 (1,2), 4-9.
- [10] Khan, Tariq Rafeeq & Tantray, Mudasir A. (2018). Impact of Religious Pluralism on the World: An Analytical Approach. *Lokayata: Journal of Positive Philosophy*. Vol. VIII, No. 02.
- [11] Khan, Tariq Rafeeq & Tantray, Mudasir A. (2018). LalDedh's Contribution to Philosophy. *Lokayata: Journal of Positive Philosophy*. Vol. VIII, No. 02.
- [12] Lerner, D. (1958). *The passing of traditional society: Modernizing the Middle East*.
- [13] Lillie, W. (1964). *An Introduction to Ethics*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd
- [14] *Logic Depth Grammar of rationality*, Patrick K Bastable: Gill and Macmillan Limited Dublin, 1975.
- [15] Lu, L., & Kao, S. F. (2002). Traditional and modern characteristics across the generations: Similarities and discrepancies. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 142(1), 45-59.
- [16] Maercker, A., Mohiyeddini, C., Müller, M., Xie, W., Yang, Z. H., Wang, J., & Müller, J. (2009). Traditional versus modern values, self-perceived interpersonal factors, and posttraumatic stress in Chinese and German crime victims. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, 82(2), 219-232.
- [17] Moore, B. Noel and Bruder. K. (2008). *Philosophy: Power of Ideas*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. New Delhi: Tata Mcgrah Hill.
- [18] Moral relativism is a thesis which holds that what is good or bad depends on individual, groups or cultures.
- [19] Pasnav, R, Dyke, C. V. (2009). *The Cambridge of Medieval Philosophy*. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P.1.
- [20] Pasnav, R, Dyke, C. V. (2009). *The Cambridge of Medieval Philosophy*. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- [21] Philosophical Analysis, Urmson, J. O, New York: Oxford University Press.
- [22] Philosophical Reconstruction, Nikunja Vihari Banerjee: Arnold- Heinemann, India, New Delhi, 1973.
- [23] Philosophy of Science, Okasha, Samir, New York. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- [24] Philosophy: Power of Ideas, Moore, B. Noel and Bruder. K, 6th ed. New Delhi: Tata Mcgra-Hill, 2007.
- [25] Religion is derived from the Latin re-ligare, which to reconnect or bind or hold again by Tom Harpur and Joseph Campbell.
- [26] Scott, J. (2012). Sociological theory: Contemporary debates. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. United Kingdom: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited P.1.
- [27] Smith, J. E. (1965). Philosophy of Religion. New York: The Macmillan Company.
- [28] Stace, W. T. (1920): A Critical History of Greek Philosophy, London: Macmillan Press Ltd. PP. 6-13.
- [29] Tantray, M. A., Khan, T. R., & ud din Rather, I. M. (2020). Nature of Analytical Philosophy. *Ravenshaw Journal of Philosophy*, 6.
- [30] Tantray, M. A., Rafeeq, T., & Rather, I. M. (2018). Concept of Manifestation Process in Kashmir Shaivism. *Dialog*, 33(33).
- [31] Tantray, Mudasir A. (2017). *A critical relation between mind and logic in the philosophy of Wittgenstein: An Analytical Study*. Lokayata Journal of Postive Philosophy, 7(2).
- [32] Tantray, Mudasir A & Khan, Tariq Rafeeq. (2019). Language and Education: A critical approach to Gandhi and Wittgenstein, *Lokayata journal of positive philosophy*. Vol. X, (02), 68-74.
- [33] Tantray, Mudasir A. & Dar, Atequllah. (2016). Nature of Philosophy. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*. 4 (12).
- [34] Tantray, Mudasir A. & Khan, Tariq Rafeeq. (2018). How mind, logic and language, have evolved from medieval philosophy to early modern philosophy: A Critical Study. *Worldwide Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 4(5): 222-229.
- [35] Tantray, Mudasir A. (2016). A study on proposition and sentence in English grammar. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*. Issue 2, PP-20-25.
- [36] Tantray, Mudasir A. (2016). Proposition: The Foundation of Logic”, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*. Vol-3, Issue-2, PP-1841-1844.
- [37] Tantray, Mudasir A. (2017). A critical relation between Mind and Logic in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein: An Analytical study, *Lokayata Journal of Positive Philosophy*. Vol. 4, (2), 45-57.
- [38] Tantray, Mudasir A. (2018). A Critical Relation Between deduction and family resemblances in Wittgenstein’s Philosophy. *Journal of Emerging Technologies & Innovative Research* 5 (11), 344-351,
- [39] Tantray, Mudasir A. (2018). Hegel’s Idealistic approach to philosophy of history, *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 6 (1), 102-106.
- [40] Tantray, Mudasir A. (2018). Reason, authority and consciousness: An analytical approach to Religious pluralism, *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 6 (1), 832-834.
- [41] Tantray, Mudasir A. (2018). Wittgenstein on critique of language, *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 6 (1), 5-9.

- [42] Udy Jr, S. H. (1970). Work in traditional and modern society.
- [43] Vices are called moral defects that is not recommend by the society and may be regarded as either from inner or from outer side as flaws of character or as assuming in evil deeds.
- [44] Weimann, G., Tustin, D. H., Van Vuuren, D., & Joubert, J. P. R. (2007). Looking for opinion leaders: Traditional vs. modern measures in traditional societies. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 19(2), 173-190.