Ontology of Dialogic Inquisition: A Study in Relation to *Kena* and *Praśna* Upaniṣads, and *Bergsonism*

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The idea of inquisition is integral to dialogic intuition where the instinct of inquiry may emerge from logical reasoning or irrational logic, but in either of the cases, dialogical thinking is common. Dialogic engagement, basically, relies on logical inquiry, that, on the other level, serves to be an incessant source of processed knowledge. It can be witnessed in all the foundational texts— be it from Greek antiquity or Indian classical knowledge system. The primary texts of the Western philosophy are written in the form of dialogues where philosophical postulations are the responses to the sheer philosophical inquisitive interchanges. Plato's dialogues are written in the form of contentious discourse, based on question-answer methodology to elicit critical responses. The outstanding method in Plato's earlier dialogues, says Richard Robison,

> is the Socratic elenchus. 'Elenchus' in the wider sense means examining a person with regard to a statement he has made, by putting to him questions calling for further statements, in the hope that they will determine the meaning and the truth-value of his first statement. Most often the truth-value expected is falsehood; and so 'elenchus' in the narrower sense is a form of cross-examination or refutation. In this sense it is the most striking aspect of the behaviour of Socrates in Plato's early dialogues. He is always putting to somebody some general question, usually in the field of ethics. Having received an answer (let us call it the primary answer), he asks many more questions (78).

This method of dialogism is known as Socratic or elenchus method. It shows that inquiry purports to further the dialogues, and the content in the dialogic thinking is either a question or an answer to some question. Also, in the Vedic tradition of knowledge, it is well known that the Vedas sustained through the dialogic pedagogy, initially in the oral forms, and then later in the written scripts. The relation of processing

of knowledge in all possible forms is associated with dialogism that mainly relies on inquiry. This paper intends to explore and understand the being of inquisition through *Pra na* and *Kena* Upaniṣads, and certain Bergsonian concepts dealt by Gilles Deleuze in his *Bergsonism*. The *Kena* and the *Praśna* Upaniṣads illustrate certain basic principles of the Indian tradition of knowledge where it is laid down that the knowledge seekers must be exasperated and examined through a certain period of time, during which they must exhibit the real aspiration with austerity, chastity, faith and devotion towards learning, and the method to be adopted for teaching should be the question and answer method, means, disciples should be taught through explaining the answers to their questions. The questions should also be tested on the scale of being real and genuine for bringing into discussion the topic or the issue that may lead to the exaltation of life.

The very first aphorism itself of the Kenopaniṣad emphasises on the fact that the question doesn't lie beyond the periphery of its answer. A question arises from at least its primitive answer which gets shaped as per the suitability in the aftermath of the fully developed question. For the question to take its proper form, its answer is indispensable that exists somewhere in the background. A question is also seen as a further investigation for the clearer delineation of an existing fact that may be partially known or wrapped in complete ignorance. Let us consider the first question asked in the Kenopaniṣad, where the very first word of the first verse is '*kena*', an interrogative pronoun, which may mean 'by whom? with whom? by what? or with what?' This interrogative pronoun '*kena*' puts the phenomenal worldly activities to a question asking the factor or commanding force or the regulatory authority behind all this. It asks, "keneṣitaṁ patati preṣitaṁmanaḥ kenaprāṇaḥ prathamaḥ praitiyuktaḥ/ keneṣitāṁ vācamimāṁ vadanti cakṣuḥśrotraṁka u devo yunakti. 2.I.581." (By whom/by what the mind is set to motion? Who does couple the first life-breath to give a start to the life? By whom/by what does this speech move? who is that god who yokes the capacity to see and hear together?). The question that is asked is a fundamental question of philosophy that seeks to know the governing force behind all transactions of this world. The answer that is recorded to this question does satisfy the spirit of the immediate question, but raises further query in the same line. It says, 'That which is the ear of the ear (śrotrasya śrotram), the mind of the mind (manaso mano), the speech of the speech (vāco ha vācaṁ), the life-breath of the life-breath, is the eye of the eye, too. The constant pursuers transcend themselves from this world and attain immortality.[1] Here, the answer certainly satisfies the question asked, but simultaneously raises another question about the identity, existence and realm of that which is addressed as the ear of the ear and the eye of the eye. The answer continues, also addressing the indirect questions lying within the answer, explaining the inexplicable Being that lives there where neither goes the eye nor reaches the speech nor even the mind. It is that which we do not discern and we do not apprehend; it is beyond our cognizance. We do not know and cannot devise the way how to explain this Being. We heard from our predecessors that it is other than the discernible and beyond the undiscernible.[2] This

Upaniṣad puts forth the best example of dialogic inquisition where the conception of the dialogue or dialogic thinking progresses from a question that arises from the phenomenological facts perceptible to every eye, and seeks its relation to the ultimate reality of the world that is believed to be the governing force. But the response that comes forth as the answer professes many more inherent questions which further need answers, and thus continues the process of dialogic intuition on the foundation of contentious inquisition.

The relation of a question to its answer is very much poststructuralist in nature where the meaning of a code is another code and that of another is another one; this process of postponement of desired objective that is meaning in the case of deconstruction is loosely termed as *Différance*[3] by Derrida. So is the case of a question and answer; an answer to a question leads to further question, and similarly the process can go on furthering the dialogical responses. The Kenopaniṣads explains this argument more clearly with the appropriate examples, where all the answers/explanations being given to satisfy the query pertaining to the Being and existence of Brahman leads more to his inexplicable Being that is beyond measures and is unfathomable. We can also observe a particular pattern here in the answers; the argument in response to the question stimulates curiosity by putting forth many other questions which have the single common answer by the use of more than one pronoun to refer to a single noun. Let us examine the further responses to the very first question along with many other tutelary questions raised from the preceding answers. It says, 'That (yad) which is not revealed by speech but by which the speech is revealed, that truly is Brahman not the one that is worshipped here. That which is not conceived by mind but by which the mind is conceived, that truly is Brahman, not the one that is worshipped here. That which is not discerned by the eyes but by which the eyes are discerned, that truly is Brahman, not the one that is worshipped here.[4]' Further, we can notice here that the question is employed as an instrument to establish the greatness of the thing or person that remains in the centre of discussion.

In Gilles Deleuze's *Bergsonism*, we come across the similar theoretical propositions in respect of the Being of a 'question'. Deleuze, unlike the Kenopaniṣad, puts forth the theoretical notions of Bergson with regard to the various aspects of 'inquisition'. He, at the outset itself of the first chapter 'Intuition as Method', starts disinterring the existence of a question in terms of its validity. He, in place of evaluating the answer on the scale of true or false, argues to weigh the question. It's true that we never adjudge a question on the scale of its being true or false as we do in the case of an answer or a solution that never has its own independent existence disentangled from a question. The accuracy of an answer is more the matter of the level of the understanding/intelligence of the person who is attempting to satisfy the question; it always has an objective though sometimes poses to be an enigmatic entity, properly shaped in abstraction. Now, different persons attempt to achieve the goal of concretising the abstract shape that already exists overtly to those who are informed in the field, and covertly to those who attempt to answer it without having sufficient

ground in the area from where the question emerges. Deleuze, in this regard, writes,

> We are wrong to believe that the true and the false can only be brought to bear on solutions that they only begin with solutions. This prejudice is social (for society, and the language that transmits its order-words (mots d'ordre), "Set up" [donnent] readymade problems, as if they were drawn out of "the city's administration filing cabinets, and force us to "solve" them, leaving us only a thin margin of freedom) (15).

Deleuze sees the relation of raising a problem with the power of invention as it brings forth something that was not existing earlier, but the relation of the problem and its solution is very clearly mentioned in *Bergsonism* in the following words: ". . . the effort of invention consists most often in raising the problem, in creating the term in which it will be stated. The stating and solving of the problem are here very close to being equivalent. The truly great problems are set forth only when they are solved" (15-16). He, probing the validity and accuracy of an answer, keeps on exploring the unquestioned entity of a question that governs the answer by exercising control over its genesis. We can also see it otherwise that a question is evolved with its answer. Deleuze, citing Bergson, says, "Humanity only sets itself problems that it is capable of solving" (16). So, we can see that formulation of a question mere depends on its solution, first the solution is sought and understood whether it can be resolved or not, if the answer is affirmative then only the problem is posed. Deleuze, explaining Bergson's remark, says, "In neither example is it a case of saying that problems are like the shadow of pre-existing solutions (the whole context suggests the contrary). Nor is it a case of saying that only the problems count. On the contrary, it is the solution that counts, but the problem always has the solution it deserves, in terms of the way in which it is stated. " (16). Here, Deleuze's argument, stating the Bergsonian notions in the same context, is establishing novel approach to understand a situation in this world where prejudices dominate the minds. People, most of the time, think in a set predetermined fashion unknowingly and unintentionally, as the traditional way of thinking was instilled in the very beginning stage of the shaping the inquisitive mind. The inquisition that formulates the basics for searching for a solution considers problem to be infallible; its abstruseness and being unanswerable posit it as a stronger question. While as per Deleuze's argument, such questions themselves should be evaluated on the scale of being true or false, because the question decides its answer, and further, a lucid material of discussion/argument that is capable of being an answer to many questions serves to be the foundation of many questions consisting their answers in it. Deleuze's claim is not such that it can be validated only by Humanities, but he says that the whole history of mathematics supports the contention that Bergson ensues. If we approach this discourse from the point of view of a historicist who studies the history of humanities, we'll find that this human world has been rolling off doing two things– the first is of constructing a problem and the second is solving it investing the complete power in doing so.

The Kenopaniṣad brings into discussion a question that is very complex in nature, and the answer to this question, as per the text, is never complete; it always will be

partial, because one who claims to have known Brahman doesn't know Him. The third verse of the second section of the text says that the Brahman is known to him, who knows that he does not know Him, He is not known to the one, who claims to have known Him. He is not discerned by him who claims to have discerned Him, but he is understood by him who understands that he does not understand Him.[5] This verse shows the insufficiency of human mental capacity which can understand the worldly objects but not that is beyond. Here, the question being discussed brings into light a different sort of question that belongs to the core of philosophy i.e. mystic by nature. Here, the verse indicates towards the fact that when one is able to realise the fact that Brahman is not a material object that can be known with the help of sensory organs, and therefore, he cannot understand Him, is the answer to the question about knowing Brahman, contrary to it those who claim to understand Him, actually fail to answer the question as He is beyond comprehension. He is not to be understood instead to be felt being approachable only as intuitive experience.

The Kenopaniṣad, beginning with a question, moves forward with certain motives. It intends to establishing Brahman over all other Vedic Gods and Goddesses, that too, using question as an instrument for the purpose. It, in a very thorough manner, proves the point that posing question or asking someone to solve a problem may lead to the superiority of the questioner. In this Upaniṣad, the Brahman, who succeeds Vedic Gods proving His superiority over them not by fighting (as disharmony among the defeated can never lead to the victory that claims devotion) but by questioning the core of their superiority, makes them concede to His supremacy. He asks the Vedic Gods, who were having the established existence overcoming all sorts of problems crossing their ways, to solve some seemingly insignificant problems that even a common man can solve if posed by some other common man. But if the same problem is posed by someone who can invest his power/knowledge in it to make it tricky, it will be equally complex and difficult. Look at the following:

> tadabhyadra vat tamabhyavadat ko'sityagnirvāhmasmityabrav
> ījjātavedāvā ahamasmīti. 4.III.588.
> (He hurried towards Him and He asked him, "Who are you?"
> He answered, "I am Agni," "I am one who knows all that is begotten here.")
> tasmiṁstvayikiṁ vīryamityapīdaṁ sarvaṁ daheyaṁ yadidaṁ pṛthivyāmiti. 5. III.588.
> (He further asked, "What power do you have?" Agni answered, "I have power to burn anything on this earth.")
> tasmaitṛṇaṁ nidadhāvetaddaheti tadupapreyāya sarvajavenatanna a āka
> dagdhuṁsatataevanivavṛte naitada akaṁ vijñātu yadetadyakṣamiti. 6.III.588
> (Then He put a blade of grass in front of him and asked him to burn that; He went towards it with all his power but could not burn it, and then came back saying that he could not know what power it is (that defeated him).)

In the similar manner, Vāyu and Indra who like Agni had surpassed all other Vedic gods were put to solve some problems that finally they could not, and consequently,

were bound to accept the supremacy of Brahman. This section of the Kenopaniṣad very clearly shows that the difficulty or complexity of the problem more lies with the person who is posing/assigning it, when the problem is more associated with the superiority of the person who is posing it, the question should seem to be simple but more unsolvable while approached for solving. Here, Brahman to make Himself known with His superiority to the Vedic Gods and those of their devotees puts forth some problems of very common nature but with his implicit power which none of them could solve and indirectly lost their superiority to Him.

In Praśnopaniṣad, through certain references, it is emphatically laid down that to ask questions, one has to have greater concentration which one can attain by the austere practices, chastity, knowledge and faith. To make the sons of sages ready to receive the answers they were seeking and to equip them with more inquisitive minds, Sage Pippalāda asked them to stay with him for one more year with austerity, chastity, and faith as they were not found ready to receive the answers. Let us further understand the nature of questions through Praśnopaniṣad where the sons of the great sages ask questions, which sage Pippalāda considers to be transcendental. If we pay close attention to the questions that are asked by Kausalya–"Whence is this life born? How does it come into this body? How does it distribute itself and establish itself? In what way does it depart? How does it support what is external? How does it support what relates to the self?"[6], we can understand that the questions are very basic and are directly related to the topic of discussion i.e. 'life'. So, the questions asked are not transcendental; however, it is the answer of the question that makes it transcendental or mystical. And beyond this, if we observe, we'll come to know that the answers to the questions are ultimately and mainly concerning Brahman, who in the Upaniṣads is proposed to be greater than all the Vedic gods through the abstract powers he possessed. All the questions in the Pra nopaniṣad are mainly concerned with 'life' i.e. the principal object of discussion in this Upaniṣad but, we, eventually, find that all discussions lead only to the stronger affirmation of Brahman projecting 'life' i.e. the masculine element in the creation of a being, the principal agent making something alive synonymous with Brahman. When we look at the third question asked in the Prasnopaniṣad, we find that in his answer to the series of questions asked by Kausalya, the son of Asvala, revered Pippalāda brings a very significant point to the notice when he says, "atipra nān pṛcchasi, brahmiṣṭho'sīti tasmāt te'ham bravīmi" (2.III.658). (You are asking questions that are highly transcendental. Because (I think) you are the most devoted to the Brahman, I will tell you). Here, we can understand that to ask grave and true questions one has to be very well grounded in the subject, one has to have sound knowledge of the subject. A question is always a two way process and also it can be asked by both the person involved/engaged in conversation. The teacher also asks a question to test the knowledge of the students, to check that to what extent the students could learn what was taught by the teacher; there is no other method to test the outcome. Further, the questions are also asked by the students to explore the unrevealed sides of the subjects being discussed. As the question is of transcendental nature, the answer would

certainly be transcendental, complex; and to understand complex answer, one has to be ready before hand. This was the reason that sage Pippalāda asked all the Ṛṣi Kumars to stay with him for one more year to be tuned to the subject more thoroughly to reach the stage where easily they can understand the answer to their questions.

The answers given by Pippalāda to the questions of various Ṛṣi Kumars (sons of sages) explicate a very subtle relationship of a question with its answer. The question without its answer cannot be evaluated to be significant, crucial or completely meaningless as the answer bestows the status of being great or very significant to the question. This can very well be understood from any of the questions asked by the sons of sages. For instance, we can consider the question asked by Sukesa that was actually asked to him by the prince of the Kośala kingdom, "Bharadwāja, do you know the person with sixteen parts?" which sounds so common and seems that it can be answered in one word but when we look at the answer given by Pippalāda, we can understand the gravity of the question. He says, "Even here within the body, O dear, is that person in whom there sixteen parts arise . . . . He created life; from life, faith, ether, air, light, water, earth, sense organ, mind and food; from food, vital vigour, austerity, hymns, works, worlds and in the worlds name"[7] and then he keeps on adding to this, and eventually, he concludes with the final answer to all the six questions asked by different persons, "Only this far do I know of that supreme Brahman. There is naught higher than that"[8]. Thus, we see that the questions relating to Brahman which were of both direct and indirect nature, were answered in detailed manner to make the readers or listeners understand about Brahman, who finally gets established as controller of this world and also as the creator of living and non-living beings through dialogic inquiry.

If we look at things in general context, we'll find that life of a human being actually revolves around the problem and its solution. If solution to some problem emerges, we immediately raise some complex, and further more complex problems to spend the whole life in providing solution to it, and whole process is such that we are not aware of the fact that we are the only progenitors of these problems which require our whole life to solve them. Deleuze in this regard says, "The history of man, from the theoretical as much as from the practical point of view is that of the construction of the problems. It is here that humanity makes its own history, and becoming conscious of that activity is like the conquest of freedom" (16). Coming back to the point of discussion where the testimony of question was to be evaluated on the scale of true and false, we can easily understand that all the true problems arise from the solution while the false question disguised as a true question misleads the contestant for searching its answer which seems to be unprocurable while actually the contestant should understand the root of the question to question its validity for him. If we apply this formula in our day to day life, we'll find that we spend our lives in finding out the solutions to most of false questions which actually and finally don't lead to any substantial answers, but being ignorant of the fact that we also have the capacity to question the entity/testimony or validity of the question, we keep on searching for its non-substantial answers which at a point of time seem to have been procured but if we

actually try to consider these as substantial answers to the questions, we fail to satisfy the questions. This point can well be understood from the following instance from our own lives. The most prevalent problem in our lives is, "How can we be incessantly happy?" In finding out a solution to this problem, we spend our whole life, but if we ponder over the validity of the problem, we'll find that the question itself is false because "happiness" is a flickering state of mind that can never be constant as its existence itself rests in its opposite. In the words of Bharatamuni, 'happiness' is a 'transitory state of mind' vyabhicāri or sancāribhāva that comes and goes, we cannot make it stable by doing anything. So, in place of searching for the solution of such a problem, it would be better to evaluate this problem on the scale of true and false and realize its falsity. Deleuze finds prejudice as the main reason behind why we do not question the validity of a question. He writes, "Moreover, this prejudice goes back to childhood, to the classroom: It is the school teacher who "poses" the problems; the pupil's task is to discover the solutions. In this way we are kept in a slavery. True freedom lies in a power to decide, to constitute problems themselves. And this "semi-divine" power entails the disappearance of false problems as much as the creative upsurge of true one." (15). We hardly go against what is instilled in us from the beginning making us slavish not to question the master, one who dominates us, commands our mind and thus we refrain from questioning the question to reach its real solution. If the falsity of question is understood by the solver or the questioner himself then the majority of the hindrances in solving problems will automatically be removed from the way. It is the false question that appears to be true and engages the solver the most and finally leaves him with no solution and the solver finds himself deceived eventually. Deleuze, in this context, writes, "This is how many philosophers fall into circular arguments: conscious of the need to take the text of true and false beyond solutions into problems themselves, they are content to define the truth or falsity of a problem by the possibility or impossibility of its being solved." (16-17). This circular argument that Deleuze here is referring to doesn't allow anyone to go beyond its purview. It holds the power of being unquestionable due to long-existing prejudices, and keeps the person engaged with one after the other false questions which need to be questioned rather than making attempts to solve them.

Thus, we see that the processing of knowledge takes place through dialogic inquisition in all the systems of knowledge – be it Indian or Western. The paper surveys the nature of the being of inquisition or inquiry in the classics of both the traditions of knowledge, and shows clear similarity in the instrumentation of the question for the acquisition or dissemination of knowledge. In Plato's writings, the dialogic inquisition was the principal technique of bringing forth the philosophical postulations, and therefore, all his writings are known as 'dialogues'. Indian Knowledge system, from very beginning, sustained through dialogic method of processing and furthering of knowledge. Teacher and student remained important in this system as they were actually the agents of processing and furthering of existing and evolving knowledge through dialogic inquiry as we saw in the case of the Pra nopaniṣad. Deleuze, discussing

the Bergsonian idea of true and false problems, very closely works out what both the Upaniṣads followed in principle, and simultaneously relates it to the practical part of human life. This paper, essentially, sees the dialogic inquisition in the centre of the evolution of any agency of knowledge. Here, in the paper, it has very lucidly been argued that irrespective of the difference in the tradition of knowledge, the foundations or basics of knowledge whether ancient or modern are laid on the same principles. Significance of question as an indispensable instrument of knowledge processing is the same be it Vedas, Upaniṣads, Plato, Bergson, or Deleuze.

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Notes

[1] rotrasya rotraṁ manasomano yadvāco ha vācaṁsa u prāṇasyaprāṇaḥ cakṣuṣa cakṣuratimucyadhīrāḥ pretyāsmāllokādamṛtā bhavanti. 2.I.581.

[2] natatracakcurgacchatinavāggacchati no manaḥ/ navidmonavijānīmo yathaitadanu iṣyāt. Anyadevatadviditādathoaviditādadhi/ iti u rumapūrveṣāh ye nastad vyācacakṣire. 3.I.582.

[3] It does not function simply either as *différence* (difference) or as *différance* in the usual sense (deferral), and plays on both meanings at once. Translator's Introduction, *Writing and Difference.*

[4] Yadvācānabhyuditaṁyenavāgabhyudyate/ Tadeva brahma tvaṁ viddhinedaṁ yadidamupāsate. 5.I.582. Yanmana sānamanute yenāhurmano matam/ Tadeva brahma tvaṁ viddhinedaṁ yadidamupāsate. 6.I.583. Yaccakṣuṣā na pa yati yena cakṣūṁṣi pa yati/ Tadeva brahma tvaṁ viddhinedaṁ yadidamupāsate. 7.I.583.

[5] Yasyāmataṁ tasya mataṁ mataṁ yasya na veda saḥ/ Avijñātaṁ vijānatāṁ vijñātaṁ avijānataṁ. 3.II.585.

[6] Eṣa prāṇo jāyate kathamāyātyasmiñ arīra ātmānaṁ vā pravibhajya katham pratiṣṭhate kenotkramatekathaṁ bahyamabhidhate kathamadhyātmamiti.1.III.658.

[7] Ihaivāntaḥ arīre sobhyasa puruṣo yasminnatāḥ ṣoda akalāḥ prabhavantīti. 2-4.VI.667. Saprāṇamasṛjataprāṇācchraddhāṁkham vāyur jyotirāpaḥpṛthi vīndriyamanaḥ annaman nādvīryamtapomantrāḥ karmalok ālokeṣu ca nāma ca. 4.VI.667

[8] Tānhovācaitā vadevāha metatparam brahma veda | nātaḥ paramastīti. 7.VI.668.

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