

Embodying Being: Between Heidegger and *Kashmiri Shaivism*

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Abstract

This paper argues that the question of Being in Heidegger's philosophy should be interpreted through the finitude of Dasein. Heidegger interprets the Being in his later works through the poetic language. The poetic language takes the humans out of the representation mode and let the things be. *Gelassenheit* or letting be becomes the different mode of dwelling in the world. Present paper tries to explore the notion of letting-be through the body. The various meditation techniques in *Vijana Bhairav Tantra* opens up the possibility of transformation by becoming aware of the various possibilities of bodies than the cultural/codified embodiment. The phenomenological analysis of body in *Vijana Bhairav Tantra* shows the intertwining nature of the flesh which opens the way for the non- manipulative relationship with the world.

Keywords: Phenomenology, *Dasein*, Embodiment, Transcendence, Flesh.

Introduction

The question of Being is the central issue with which Heidegger's philosophy deals with from *Being and Time* to the later works on Poetry and Language. Heidegger attempts to think of Being through the finitude of humans. As humans exist in the temporal finitude, hence, the question of Being should be understood in relationship with the finitude of man. In continuity with the transcendental tradition of Kant (2003) wherein the epistemic finitude of humans becomes the 'condition of possibility' for accessing the world. Similarly, the 'transcendental Heidegger'(Crowell and Malpas 2007) delves into the fundamental ontology of Dasein. The analysis of ontology enables Heidegger to define the existence in terms of time. The temporal finitude as Care

makes the existence of Dasein both as the immanence (being-in-the world, being-with-others) as well as transcendence (being-ahead-of-oneself).

The primacy of future in the existence makes the existence an issue because it can never be settled down in the ontic way. The open-ness of future makes the existence uncanny as Heidegger shows in the analysis of anxiety in *Being and Time*. Dasein is fundamentally uncanny as nothing grounds its existence. In his later works, Heidegger (1971) turns towards the phenomena of poetic language. As Being always manifests itself in the historical epochs yet remains concealed; therefore, it calls for thinking. In the poetic thinking, the essence of humans expresses itself as the shepherd of Being (Heidegger 2008).

Question of Being

Heidegger's philosophy in its various phases remain conscious of the difference between Being and beings. Heidegger (1962) distinguishes between the Being and beings based on what he calls as the ontological difference. Heidegger argues that Being cannot be understood in the way we study the objects in the world. This he calls as the ontic-ontological difference, which has been forgotten by the western metaphysical tradition.¹⁰⁷ The philosophical problem with which Heidegger's thought deals with is how to think of Being without reducing it into the ontic entity. Western metaphysics succumbed to the temptation of interpreting being in terms of entity from Plato to Nietzsche as he establishes in his Nietzsche's lectures. According to Heidegger (1981), Being is understood as Idea, Form, God, Becoming, etc. by the western metaphysical tradition; but while doing so, it has forgotten the difference between the Being and beings. Being is not an entity hence it cannot be thought in terms of the entity.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ According to Heidegger, metaphysical tradition is marked by its obsession with the presence. Hence, it privileges the presence and interpret the Being in terms of the entity. Heidegger calls it as the forgetfulness of the ontological difference. For details see *Being and Time* (1962)

Heidegger (1962) distinguishes between the two ways in which the world is disclosed to us: present-at-hand (*vorhandensein*) and ready-to-hand (*zuhandensein*). According to Heidegger, the objects in the world are primarily experienced as tools rather than the objects by us. World is always pregnant with the pragmatic possibilities in which we orient ourselves. Heidegger defines this through the 'in-order-to' relation wherein *Dasein* always finds itself in what he calls as the equipmental context. The point is that there is no neutral gaze or 'view from nowhere' on the world and the objects are perceived fundamentally from the specific, practical context. Heidegger calls objects primarily as tools. This enables Heidegger to overcome the Cartesianism endorsing the subject/object dichotomy. While the transcendental tradition privileges the conceptual and judgment as the primary mode of knowledge for the self; Heidegger, on the other hand, argues that there is already an understanding of the world at the practical level before the conceptual level (Dreyfus 2014) Hence, for the Heidegger, our access to the world is mainly pre-reflective and therefore, phenomenological self has to be distinguished from the Cartesian self.

Heidegger (1962) argues that only *Dasein* can ask the question of Being. *Dasein* basically denotes the human being who is thrown into the world, which is referred as being-in-the-world. This is because for *Dasein*, his own existence is an issue. Unlike other entities, *Dasein exists* therefore, he asks the question that *what it means to be*. In order to elaborate this point, Heidegger distinguishes between the two modes of existence: Inauthentic and Authentic. When *Dasein* interprets itself in terms of the public roles only and escapes from the question of being, it exists inauthentically. Heidegger calls it as *Uneigentlichkeit*, when *Dasein*

¹⁰⁸ Heidegger calls the Nietzsche as the last metaphysician in the western tradition. Nietzsche repudiates Plato's category of Being and emphasizes on the becoming. However, for Heidegger, this is just the reversal of the metaphysics and the reversal of metaphysics remains metaphysics only. For details see *Nietzsche* (1981).

disowns itself. However, according to Heidegger, *Dasein* is also mortal, being-towards-death who realizes the uniqueness of its being in relationship to death as he cannot substitute his death with somebody else. This realization makes him conscious of his singularity and he, therefore, asks the question of Being. *Dasein* is defined through the temporal structure: facticity, being-thrown into the world (past), fallenness, being-with others (present), projection, being-ahead-of-oneself (future). This threefold structure is called as the Care structure by Heidegger wherein there is the primacy of future. As *Dasein* is ahead-of-itself, therefore it always transcends the thrown-ness towards its *minenenss*, towards its existence. Transcendence in Heidegger is therefore marked by certain excess which takes humans out of their inauthentic mode, which he calls as *Das Man*. By interpreting Being in terms of transcendence, Heidegger points towards the ontic-ontological difference which metaphysical tradition forgets. The relationship of Being with man turns existence into ek-sistence, which means man already stands out in the openness of Being.¹⁰⁹

Hence, the question of Being in Heidegger's philosophy is thought through the finitude of *Dasein*, its situatedness in the world. The opening towards the Being is possible only through the finitude of *Dasein*. In his later works, Heidegger (1971) explains transcendence through the poetic thought where the poetry gives us leeway to the non-representational, mystical nature of Being. Heidegger (1969) approaches Being through the negative theology of Meister Eckhart and defines Being in terms of *Gelassenheit*, letting-be. As such, Being becomes the silent call which takes humans out of the instrumental relationship with the things which he calls as the calculative thinking. Calculative thinking can be overcome by meditative thinking, which

¹⁰⁹ In his later works esp in *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger develops the relationship between the man and Being. In fact, he replaces the term *Dasein* with man and calls man not as the master of beings but as the shepherd of Being. For details see the Letter on Humanism in the *Basic Writings*.

establishes the relationship of letting-be. Dasein lets the things be and, in this process, develops the care for the things. This relationship with the things becomes non-manipulative and relaxed.

Thinking as „letting-be“

Heidegger (2008) shows that humans are the neighbor of Being and not the master of beings. In everyday practical absorption with the world, we remain engaged with beings and we interpret ourselves in terms of our everyday engagements. This interpretation is always done from a socio-cultural point of view. For example, in different ages the rivers are defined in different ways. In ancient age, we defined Rivers as Holy, as the bounty bestowed by Nature; afterwards, we comprehended rivers in terms as the natural resource, which provides hydropower; now, rivers are understood as the source of recreation where various water-sports activities like rafting can be done. Hence in different times, the objects in the world are perceived differently. There is no overarching, neutral observation of things which remains constant across the ages. According to Heidegger, our notion of the world is dominated by the age in which we live, which Heidegger (2002) calls as the —epochs of Being. Being manifests itself in the different epochs in different manner. However, it is not like Hegelian *Geist* manifesting itself in the world-history. There is no *telos* in Heidegger's scheme. According to him, Being manifests itself in the particular historical context which he calls as epoch. But these epochs do not exhaust Being. While manifesting itself, being also withdraws itself. As such, it cannot be represented in the metaphysical language which different epochs give.

Accordingly, a thoughtful look ahead into this realm can write Being only in the following way: Being (crossed out). The crossing out of this word initially has only a preventive role, namely, that of preventing the almost ineradicable habit of representing Being as something standing somewhere on its own that then on occasion first comes face-to-face with human beings (Heidegger 1998: 310).

Hence, Being can only be thought as the ‘crossed out’. It does not offer any ground but rather it is the suspension of the very act of grounding. As Heidegger (2008) says that Being is actually Nothing. However, the abyss of Nothingness lets the thinking emerge. Thinking (Heidegger 1976) binds us to Being and only with the relationship of Being, we come to realize our essence. Thinking is the event which gathers Being and man into mutual belongingness. In thinking only, man comes to its own essence, which is actually a thoughtful memory‘ of Being.

In his essence the human being is the thoughtful memory of [*Gedachtnis*] of Being, but of Being (crossed out). This means: the human essence also belongs to that which, in the crossing out of Being, takes thinking into the claim of a more originary call (Heidegger 1998:311).

Thinking therefore lets the essence of man emerge. Man cannot be thought in terms of the representational thinking. Man can only be thought in terms of its relationship with Being. Being ‘hollows out‘ Dasein from its familiarity with the world and understanding itself in the metaphysical terms. In the event of silencing, both Dasein and Being appropriates themselves. Thinking responds to this event by referring to the unthought‘ of the metaphysical tradition. This unthought is the relation of man and Being. Man becomes the shepherd of Being.‘

The event of thinking however, is not some mystical happening which cannot be shown. Thinking brings man and Being into the relationship with each other. In this relationship man develops the care‘ for Being. It cannot express Being in metaphysical language. Being can be expressed through the poetic thought as it responds to the unthought‘ and preserve the difference between the Being and beings.

The analysis of Being and man in terms of thinking shows that Being is not the entity which can be comprehended through the conceptual

analysis. Being grants us the understanding of the world. Heidegger's problem is to understand the nature of the Being without reducing it into the present-at-hand' entity by using the language which metaphysical tradition uses. According to Heidegger, the way to approach Being is through thinking'. Thinking enables us to think outside the metaphysical categories and preserve the truth of Being. When Dasein realizes that it is the shepherd of Being' and just like a shepherd has to take care of the Being with care and tenderness, it stops using the everyday chattering and take recourse to silence. This silence is productive and give rise to the poetic thought which lets the things be. Dasein now have the relaxed relationship with Being and does not try to capture the Being with the metaphysical categories. Heidegger (1968) calls this attitude as *Gelassenheit*. *Gelassenheit* or meditative thinking brings Dasein into the proximity of Being and he discovers the Freedom there. Freedom hence is not the property to accomplish some act but it is the attitude which Dasein develop when it come out of the calculative thinking. *Gelassenheit* is the attitude when it lets the things be.

Embodied Phenomenology in *Vijnana Bhairav Tantra*

The notion of body is conspicuous by its absence in *Being and Time* and remain as the perplexing feature of Heidegger's philosophy. Jeff Malpas (1999) and Kevin Aho (2019) argues that Heidegger downplays the embodiment in the favor of spatiality and does not elaborate it in the *Being and Time*. Still, we can churn out from *Daseinanalyse* that body is one of the important constituents of being-in-the- world. In fact, following Heidegger, we can say that embodiment does make the *worldling of the world possible*. Taking existential phenomenology as methodology, we can argue that the notion of body in Heidegger is *lived body*; not Cartesian which defines body as the present-at-hand entity. Therefore, we can think of transcendence also through the body. As an entity which is situated in the world, our existence is essentially

interwoven with embodiment. In this section, we will see that how Kashmiri Shaivism interprets body as the mode of transcendence. As such, it goes beyond the Heidegger's philosophy while using the Heideggerian insights.

Most of the works dealing with the idea of embodiment in Indian Philosophy are largely interpreted through the *categories* of Samkhya Yoga (Hausner 2012). *Samkhya* divides the existence into *Prakarti* and *Purusha*. *Prakarti* denotes the material aspects while *Purusha* is the consciousness principle. Liberation or *kaivalya* consists in separating consciousness from the material existence through discrimination called as *Vivekkhyati* (Hiriyanna 1993). The division of *Prakarti* and *Purusha* (Matter and Consciousness) also makes it somewhat like the Cartesian dualism. However, Samkhya tradition should not be equated with the Cartesian dualism because it considers mind, intellect, tendencies and ego as the manifestation of the inert (*jada*) *Prakarti*. In fact, all these four derives its consciousness through *Purusha*, which is beyond them. While in Cartesian tradition, mind is the seat of consciousness. Yoga and its practice is based on the Samkhya metaphysics which is primarily based on the thoughtful discrimination of *Purusha*, the conscious principle, from the *jada Prakarti* and its manifestation(s).

However, the various meditation practices in *Vijana Bhairav Tantra* (VBT) fundamentally differ in its approach towards the *Prakarati* in contrast to Samkhya philosophy as it sees the *Prakarti* as the creative principle which is inseparable from the absolute. It is true that VBT is not entirely the philosophical text needing exegesis. It is fundamentally an Agama text based on the dialogues between Shiva and Parvati where Shiva tells the various meditation techniques for self-realization. However, through the hermeneutical interpretation of the text and intertextuality with the philosophical texts of Trika philosophy, we can affirm that rather than excluding the *Prakarti* through the thoughtful discrimination; it uses the manifestations of *Prakarti* to attain the

supreme consciousness. Prakarti is not inert; rather it is creative in its nature, which *Pratyabhigya* Philosophy (PP) calls as Maya. In other words, VBT approach is phenomenological rather than Cartesian with regard to the self and world. Phenomenological approach of VBT can be gleaned through the various meditation techniques recommended for realizing one's essential Siva-hood.

As we have discussed earlier, the embodied phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1968) interprets the objective world phenomenologically as flesh where affirms the intertwining between the self and world at the ontological level. Through the notion of flesh, Merleau-Ponty challenges the established notions of subject/object dichotomy in philosophy. We cannot demarcate our existence from the world we inhabit. For example, when we touch some tree, we do not only get the experience of touching the wood but also get the experience of being touched by the wood. This is a kind of non-conceptual, phenomenological experience of the world at the fundamental level, which Merleau-Ponty establishes through the notion of flesh. Flesh stands for the kind of unity between the self and the world at the fundamental level while recognizing their difference at the same time. The ontological position regarding flesh in Merleau-Ponty marks its similarity between the doctrines of Kashmiri Shaivism. In Heideggerian terms, flesh worlds the world. VBT utilizes the practical comportment of being-in-the-world for transcending the limits imposed on the body.

The phenomenological approach of VBT can be attributed to the philosophy of Kashmiri Shaivism or *Pratyabhigya* philosophy (PP) which affirms the unity of Shiva and Shakti at the metaphysical level. Unlike Samkhya philosophy which is based on the strict dualism between the *Prakarti* and Purusha, PP does not distinguish between the Shiva and its material manifestations. The ultimate principle in this philosophical system is a single, real, self-illuminating, self-aware,

eternal, absolutely free, and blissful Consciousness/Self (Saṃvit/Cit/Śiva) which, with the help of its innumerable powers (Śakti-s) manifests the multiplicity of the world around us. In other words, the transcendental Self willingly and playfully reduces itself to the objects around us and also to an apparent, mundane self (individual) that is limited by time, place, and personhood and goes through happiness and sorrow.

The metaphysical notion of the union of *Shiva* and *Shakti*, matter and consciousness in Kashmiri Shaivism allows it to overcome the duality between the matter and consciousness envisaged by the Samkhya school. The creative power of Shiva pulsates in the entire creation one cannot discard it as the mere bondage. Rather than treating the Prakarti as the shackle it becomes the power of Shiva. Hence, for the Kashmiri Shaivism, Kriya-shakti is the essential nature of the Shiva through which it creates out of joy and abundance.

Therefore, the notion of world in Kashmiri Shaivism cannot be understood in the terms of subject/object, self/other, transcendental/phenomenal binaries. As the manifested world is not the inert matter but carries within itself the possibilities of transformation, therefore we can say that there is intertwining between the self and the world at the ontological level and it is only the abstract philosophy which creates the dichotomies (Merleau-Ponty, 2012). While the Husserlian phenomenology remain strictly within the paradigm of the descriptive science and does not explore the possibilities of transformation, Kashmiri Shaivism explores the possibility of bliss arising through the practices rather than just remaining at the intellectual level forever. Therefore, VBT emphasizes on the need of dissolving‘ these false dichotomies through the engaged embodied practices so that the true experience should overcome the limitations of the ego. As a matter of fact, the various embodied manifestations have been considered as the manifestation of Shiva or the absolute reality, therefore, the various embodied meditation techniques prescribed in VBT aims at realizing

the philosophical truth through experiencing the lived body. It utilizes the mundane manifestations of the body like breathing, hearing, excitement, touch, and taste as the modes to connect with the *Shiva*. Body has not been seen in terms of a present-at-hand entity which needs to be controlled or overcome through thoughtful meditation or through conceptual analysis. Rather the body has been analyzed in terms of the flesh which not only all the time touches the world but also gets touched by it. As Martin Heidegger speaks of our 'being-in-the-world, the manner in which we are already practically and purposely immersed in a meaningful context when we experience and relate to others. The pre-reflective understanding of the social, culture, body and others form the background on the basis of which our encounter with the world takes place. VBT asks us to become aware of these pre-reflective and use this awareness for transcendence. The ontology of the body in terms of flesh makes it possible for it to transcend the spatial body and get into touch with the flesh of the world. The finitude of the body becomes the site of transcendence which establishes a kind of non-instrumental relationship with the world in terms of letting-be (Heidegger 1969). The point is that the various embodied meditative techniques make us aware of the various sensations of the body and let them be. Experiencing these sensations itself becomes the transformative act, the way of transcendence according to VBT because these sensations exist as the flesh, as the intertwining between the self and the world. This intertwining, in-between position defies any attempt of categorization. This is what Heidegger aims to achieve through the notion of letting-be.

The phenomenological interpretation of *Kashmiri Shaivism* points out towards the ontology of the body in terms of immanence/transcendence. Being immanent to the world, it could be understood phenomenologically as being-in-the-world; while as an embodied being-in-the-world, it can transcend to the socio-cultural context. This aspect is highlighted by Heidegger when he defines Dasein as being-ahead-of-

itself. As any kind of embodied existence has to be aware of its situation and it projects its possibilities on the basis of the situation; yet, at the same time, it affects the world and also get affected by it, therefore it can always transcend the socio-historical milieu. This intertwining makes the embodied subject as the always, already‘ transcendence, certain excess or spilling over which reconfigures and rearranges itself with the new experiences. The relationship with the world‘ turns the body into the flesh, an opening through which it transforms itself and enters into an altogether new relationship with the world. The self-transformation is sought in VBT through affirming the finitude of the body and emphasizing on the fecundity of the body (Irigaray 2002).

Conclusion

Kashmiri Shaivism affirms the world in phenomenological manner and overcomes the self/world, inside/outside, immanence/transcendence binaries and explains transcendence through the existential finitude. It does not negate the everyday world but perceives the possibility of transcendence through it. The phenomenological awareness of everyday experience enables aspirants to overcome the conceptual binaries and to experience the non- conceptual nature of the Reality. As the Shiva consciousness in *Trika* philosophy consists in recognizing the essential Shiva-hood and its oneness with its creative power, hence VBT utilizes the embodied experiences to overcome the dualities between the body and consciousness, inside and outside. In the various *Upayas* or techniques delineated in VBT, we see that the fundamental bodily capacities like breathing, taste, sound and touch have been used as the way to imagine the void-ness or in-between states where one becomes free of the dualities. On the other hand, we see that emotional states like joy, sleep, sexual pleasure and peace have been used as the way to experience the void-ness. Here the focus is to get rid of the conceptual categories and relate to the world as it is revealed by the

experience. Therefore, it's quite similar to the phenomenological approach which relates to the world as it is. While Heidegger explores the possibility of transcendence through *thinking* which enables *Dasein* to experience itself as the shepherd of Being'. VBT, on the other hand, utilizes the everyday embodied experiences for transcending the dualisms.

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