

CHAPTER TWO

ON DECONSTRUCTION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

This chapter is intended to consider Derrida's account of Deconstruction. He is one of the remarkable philosophers of the twentieth century. In deconstruction, he tries to dig out the meaning of meaning. He has been both reviled and revered for his anarchic play with the eccentric ingenuities of language. "A text, for instance, *Mahabharata* gives a meaning to us: we should fight, if injustice is done to us."⁴⁸ But this is not only the meaning of the text. There could be several other meanings of Mahabharata. Derrida's central theme is to go deep into the things as they appear to us. He thinks, the meaning which we are communicated might not be the meaning, always there is something hiding behind that which is present. He interested to find out in his deconstruction theory, how the meaning of texts can be plural and unstable than in fixing them to a rigid structure. Here the question is why Jacques Derrida writes or speaks about 'deconstruction' for a long time?

Deconstruction is applicable to art, literature, science, architecture, psychology, mathematics and philosophy. He himself stated that "my most constant interest, coming even before my philosophical interest I should say, if this is possible, has been directed towards literature, towards that writing which is called literary."⁴⁹ His text belongs to philosophy because of his questions, which he raised about language, thoughts, and identity and about some other longstanding themes of philosophical debates. He was very sensitive about the problem of marginality and centre. He mentioned that "The function of this centre was not only to orient, blance and organize the structure.... but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the play of the structure."⁵⁰ This idea of centre systemizes the functioning of an entity and restricts its freedom also. For him, always 'centre' freeze the play of binary opposites and it leads by the metaphysical absolutivity. Because 'centre' exists in the form of a fixed point, a Truth, an Origin, an Essence, an Ideal form, a God and Presence.

⁴⁸ S.L. Doshi, *Modernity Postmodernity and Neo-sociological Theory*, 2003, p 329

⁴⁹ Alan Montefiore, *Philosophy In France Today*, 1983, p 37.

⁵⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 2002, p 352.

According to Derrida, the term 'centre' is problematic as it always tries to attempt to exclude anything else other than itself. Thereby the 'centre' marginalized others. In doing so, binary opposites are formed. "The center that dominates acts in such a way that at times the existence of 'others' are totally excluded. Not even the presence of the suppressed entity comes to the fore. May be one centre would be substituted by another centre, as a linked chain of determinations of the center but there is no space for play. It is also not so easy to trace out the centre that marginalizes other. It may operate in a hidden form."⁵¹ At this juncture Derrida felt that the problem of centre comes into existence only because of language. For him, human minds are conditioned through codes, categories, and concepts. Therefore, it worked only on the basis of conceptual pairs which are constructed. According to Derrida "since philosophy exists in language, there is no escaping from language as the medium of philosophy. As the medium, it cannot just be like a pure transparency; it must condition philosophy; and that can only be shown by emphasizing the medium of philosophy."⁵² He traced that, 'metaphysics of presence' hunts every philosophical theory and it comes through language. It monopolized everything and catches them under its total control.

Another unique observation follows here; everything became discourse in the absence of an origin or centre. Thus, if there was no metaphysical conception then there was play. His attack on metaphysics was familiar in the philosophical history. However Derrida was influenced by a Nietzschean critique of metaphysics, Heideggerian destruction of ontology, of metaphysics, of the determination of Being as presence; he mentioned that in a kind of circle these all discourses and their analogues are trapped. This kind of circle described the form of the relation between the history of metaphysics and the destruction of that history of metaphysics. Derrida observed, when one will trapped into a centre, even if the effort to dissolve this, because there is no syntax, language, which was foreign to this history. But here Derrida finds, "language bears within itself the necessity of its own critique."⁵³ According to David Loy, Derrida wants to say that, "Philosophy always re-appropriates for itself the discourse that delimits it."⁵⁴

In the same style, he questioned the idea of stable centre which helps him to formulate the strategy called 'deconstruction'. Through his strategy, he performs a tactic of decentering

⁵¹ Devadasan. P. (*Parol*), 2008, p 65.

⁵² Barry Stocker, *Derrida on Deconstruction*, 2006, p 16.

⁵³ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 2002, p 358.

⁵⁴ Harold Coward and Toby Foshay, *Derrida and Negative Theology*, 1992, p 227.

(thinking of the structurality of the structure). It is a way of reading the text, first which gives us the awareness of the centrality of that central term. After that, he moved further and tried to unearth the paradox, a contradiction which lies within the same language. Then he tried to destroy the central term and replaced it with another term which was so far marginalized. Thus the marginalized term becomes the centre; therefore temporarily the hierarchy was overthrown. Here Derrida explained that the philosophical actions are not worked out to dismantle the dominant aspects of language. The reason was, after the inclusion of linguistics, philosophy has never been unbiased. So, it is necessary to start “.... beginnings of a step outside of philosophy”⁵⁵, which is very difficult.

Logocentrism is the main tone of his deconstructive strategy. His strategy ‘deconstruction’ shows to act upon the fundamental tendencies in western thought, for example, logocentrism was interested in theology, phonocentrism (gives the priority for sound over writing), geocentrism (the belief in a permanent self), phallogocentrism (superiority of one culture, and intellectual traditions over other). Derrida acts against logocentrism. It is a kind of universal system, believed to be taught directly by God, which is true, right and so on. According to George Ritzer “logocentrism has led to the closure not only of philosophy, but also of the human sciences. Derrida is interested in deconstructing or dismantling the sources of this suppression –thereby writing from the things that enslave it.”⁵⁶ So, it could be said that it’s the deconstruction of logocentrism. The Greek word *logos* means reason, it implies the assumption about some fixedness, foundational principle which can be uniquely named. For Derrida, it is phonocentrism because this logocentric bias of Western metaphysics operates the traditional priority which afforded ‘speech (*phone*) over writing (*gramme*). He claims, western metaphysical tradition always characterizes ‘writing’ as a ‘supplement’. It is a kind of unnecessary and accidental side effect of living speech. He calls ‘phonocentrism’ as a ‘heliocentrism’- the privileging of the spoken over writing. In *Of Grammatology* Derrida claims that “logocentrism: a discourse which holds that living discourse (*logos*) grounds sense or meaning: the sense of being as presence...logocentrism...[is the]...epoch of full speech.”⁵⁷ “logocentrism is, therefore, a term that Derrida uses to signify the metaphysics of phonetic writing...which was fundamentally- for enigmatic yet essential reasons that are inaccessible to a simple historical relativism- nothing but the most original and powerful

⁵⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 2002, p 359.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p 329

⁵⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 1976, p 43

ethnocentrism.”⁵⁸ Above all, it is clear that for Derrida ‘philosophical problem is the problem of language’. Derrida’s contention is that the metaphysical tradition which takes the living speech to be a defining feature of truth has dominated philosophical thought since its inception and has a lineage that can be traced from Plato to Hegel and even from the pre-Socratic thinkers to the work of Heidegger.

In deconstruction, Derrida discovered some terminologies, such as *différance*, *arché-writing*, erasure, trace, supplement, pharmakon, parergon, text and so on. Through all these terms Derrida approached philosophy beyond all philosophical categories, where he finds, all philosophical structure has got basic presuppositions.

Différance:

In 1968, the term *différance* originated at the *société française de philosophie*, at a seminar given by Derrida. He launched this *différance* to efface the hierarchy and presuppositions, which anchored in the tradition of Western philosophy. Especially, against the ‘metaphysics of presence’ he brought that term. It is neither a word nor a concept, neither active nor passive, at the same time it is neither thought nor image but actually “the possibility of conceptuality.”⁵⁹ To critically examine various philosophers and philosophies, Derrida deals with the French neologism *différance* in numerous texts and also various contexts. According to Derrida, within the playground of knowledge, this non-concept exhibits the dance of language. According to him, it indicates the middle voice, “it precedes and sets up the opposition between passivity and activity.”⁶⁰ It prefers to play in the middle, which means *différance* can be understood as signifying inequality and distinction both, identity and non-identity. *Différance* is Derrida’s way of referring to the trace of difference. *Différance* always addresses that which is nameless, for example, what is commonly understood to be ‘God’. Yet ‘God’, unlike *différance* signifies a metaphysical ground but *différance* is neither eternal nor sequential. For Derrida “it is the nonfull, nonsimple ‘origin’; it is the structured and differing origin of the differences.”⁶¹ It is what makes the meaning of words possible, through this, a phenomenon that is experienced as a present shows itself as a relation to both the past and to the future. According to Merleau-Ponty “in the certitude of the present, there is an

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p 4

⁵⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 1982, p 11.

⁶⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, 1973, p 130.

⁶¹ Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, 1973, p 131

intention which outruns the presentness of the present.”⁶² But according to Derrida “both the past and the future create a present that is hollow, a present in relation to what is not”.⁶³

Différance is typical of Derrida’s poetic excess. His term *différence* [with an ‘a’] is the difference that shatters the cult of identity and the dominance of self over others (means there is no origin). Here in this term, the word ‘a’ could not be heard but only seen in writing, it remains silent, like tomb (silence: that functions only within what is called phonetic writing). Derrida explained that *différance* has several meanings. It names the non-coincidence of meaning both as synchronically which means ‘differing’ and diachronically which means ‘deferring’. The term difference derived from the French verb ‘differer’ which means both ‘to differ’ - it is to be unlike and ‘to defer’ - means to delay and postpone, it is temporal. Not only Derrida refers *différance* to the state of being deferred but it also refers to the state of being different. Thus, in *différance* it expressed that the meaning of a subject was a play of difference which was always deferring. Here the verb ‘to differ’ (*differere*) indicates difference as a distinction or as inequality. Sometimes the different and the deferred correspond to this verb. This correlation is not only between act and object or cause and effect. In one case the verb ‘to differ’ signifies non-identity; in another case, it signifies the order of the same, there must be some common. It relates the two movements of differing to one another. This sameness, which is not identical, is called *différance*. *Différance* incorporates two significations ‘to differ’ and ‘to defer’.

Saussure highlighted two significant features of language: one is a differential character, which concerns the human ability to recognize letters, written in different ways but which understood for the same alphabetical letter. For Saussure “phonemes are not identified by having a particularly unique sound attached to them but rather are always differentiated by their distance and distinction from other phonemes.”⁶⁴ Here Saussure sums up this thought with notorious claim: “in language there are only differences without positive terms.”⁶⁵ In another word, he says that phonemes are marked out by a set of differences from one another. Derrida refers to it as ‘the differential character of the sign (language)’. And another significant feature of language is the arbitrary nature of linguistic signs. According to Derrida, there can be arbitrariness in the sounds, like dog, chien etc. because the system of signs is constituted by the differences in terms. So, both Derrida and Saussure concluded that

⁶² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 1962, p 44

⁶³ *Speech and Phenomena*, 1973, p 105

⁶⁴ Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 2000, p 462

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p 462

these two features are correlative; the arbitrariness of sign is possible only because of the differential character of language. Saussure's view about language and meaning is holistic, for him may be the differences between 'sofa', 'settee', and 'couch' expressed by comparing each with the other term. As Wittgenstein would say, "there is a family resemblance between these notions, rather than there being a set of fixed essences with essential characteristics."⁶⁶ According to Derrida "each concept is inscribed in a chain of concepts and they refer to each other by means of a play of differences."⁶⁷

Let us again go back to Derridean term *différance*. Derrida in most of his work such as; *Of Grammatology*, *Margins of Philosophy*, *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry An Introduction*, *Speech and Phenomena*, *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, and *Positions* discussed about *différance* in detail. In all these work he mentioned that to show the multiplicity of meaning this non-concept comes and then to exhibit the instability of meaning and the falsity of metaphysical. He never gave any definition about it but for him, it was a subtle argument.

Trace:

Derrida brings the idea about 'trace' along with the idea of defferance. For him, naturally, words refer to other words. Derrida advances the idea that writing cannot be a reproduction of spoken language; it is originary in the same way speech is, it is the articulation and inscription of the trace. The notion of the 'trace' was a concept borrowed from Sigmund Freud. For Freud, "the effect of a psychological trauma does not have to be fully present initially but can defer itself."⁶⁸ The concept of 'trace' occurs in Heidegger's essay. Derrida proposed that writing, a non-being precedes 'being', which comes from indebted to Heidegger's Writing. "Heidegger sees the forgetting of Being as belonging to Being itself and so the effacement of the trace also belongs to the trace."⁶⁹ But Derrida, like Levinas, takes the notion of 'trace' as something absent that has never existed, e.g. our nostalgia for Garden of Eden. Following Levinas Derrida mentioned that "a trace is not an effect since it does not actually have a cause. All signs are in effect traces. Indeed, the act of signifying itself can only be understood as a trace".⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p 463

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p 463

⁶⁸ *Jacques Derrida, Writing and difference, 1978, p 203*

⁶⁹ *Dermot Moran, Introduction to Phenomenology, 2000, p 469*

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 469

Trace itself does not exist. Roberto Rino Magliola, an Italian American philosopher explained it as “the Derridean trace is empty but ‘marked’.”⁷¹ A trace was something from which a sign differs and defers. In the presence of the sign, it is always absent. A sign leaves behind a trace through the act of difference. Derrida writes a trace “in presenting itself, it becomes effaced.”⁷² All signifiers which are present to be containing traces of absent (other) signifiers, where the signifier can be totally neither present nor absent. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida observed about trace that “it is the absolute origin of sense in general. The trace is the difference which opens appearance and signification...no concept of metaphysics can describe it.”⁷³ His basic argument is, whatever we see in the reality is through the sign (writing). There is always something hiding behind that which is present in the sign. So, Derrida introduces his new term ‘deconstruction’.

Supplement:

Like ‘logocentrism’ there was another important rigid conception called ‘supplement’ upon which western thinking was constructed. Derrida takes the word ‘supplement’ from Jean Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau defines ‘supplement’ as “an inessential extra added to something complete in itself.”⁷⁴ Derrida in his writings remarked that philosophers from the ancient period, the ‘logic of supplementation’ has been extended to spread out hierarchy. But for him, the ‘supplementary’ was two apparently contradictory ideas, therefore it suggests at the same time two things. In one perspective, it is something which is added on to make up the missing, as if there was a void space then to be filled up. And on the other perspective ‘supplementary’ serves to increase the presence of something which was considered already to be self-sufficient and complete.

At the end of *Grammatology*, Derrida observes the verb “to supplant [suppléer] or to compensate for”⁷⁵, defines the act of writing. Therefore, as with the notion of differing/deferring, there are two meanings and two translations within the same term and idea, which apparently marking that homogeneous and undifferentiated identity. ‘To supplement’ means to add something. On the other hand, it signifies a replacement for that which came before it. The supplement does not merely compensate for a lack but it supplants that which preceded it. With the structures of words such as the meaning of *différer* [French]

⁷¹ Robert Magliola, *On Deconstructing Life Worlds: Buddhism, Christianity, Culture*, 2000, p 140.

⁷² Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 1976, p 125.

⁷³ *Ibid*, p 65

⁷⁴ Devadasan. P. (*Parol*), 2008, p 75.

⁷⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 1976, see (*Forth chapter of part II*, p 280)

or supplement [English] is never simple. Derrida highlights the verb because it appears with the meaning of ‘to overcome’. At the structural and pre-subjective level of language, there is always the trace of some other meaning or some other identity. “Returning to the ‘living’ speech however, and to cite Gayatri Spivak in her ‘Translator’s Preface’ from *Of Grammatology*, speech, supposedly that living thing that ensures and bears in it presence, complete and self-sufficient identity present to itself, identity of the subject who speaks, ‘carries within itself the trace of a perennial alterity’.”⁷⁶ Thus what holds true for the structure of the sign also holds true of the structure of ‘psyche’. Alexander Cleave, a Novel’s narrator asks “what makes for presence if not absence? - I mean the presence of oneself as a remembered other. This structures that Derrida ‘gives the name “writing”’.”⁷⁷ Thus, speech is a manifestation of writing means for Spivak, “the sign, whether inscribed or spoken, is ‘always already inhabited by the trace of another sign that never appears as such’.”⁷⁸

According to some previous philosopher, writing was the supplement of speech. But Derrida questioned the western idea of this thought. For some western philosopher, a thing which has supplement cannot be truly itself complete. But Derrida does not agree with this. He argued that “...it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence...place is assigned in the structure by the mark of emptiness.”⁷⁹ For this reason, Derrida raised the question, “if it were complete without the supplement it should not yearn for the supplement. Hence, a thing needs to be added to some other thing to make it much more “present” or “whole”.”⁸⁰ It means, there was a hole and supplement fulfills that hole, which Derrida called an originary lack, and the metaphorical opening of ‘hole’ was named as ‘invagination’. Derrida mentioned that “The supplement is maddening, because it is neither presence nor absence.”⁸¹ Supplement does not enhance something’s presence but it underscored its absence.

We found the word ‘supplement’ in Derrida’s remarkable work *Of Grammatology*. Here one chapter was titled as “...That Dangerous Supplement...”⁸² In Rousseau’s work, this word was in quotation, but Derrida’s chapter on supplement itself becomes a supplement. The reason is, he supplied that title to the essay from the other text. Supplement is ghostly and haunts. It leaves a trace without itself being present or absent. By Derrida, it was spread to transform

⁷⁶ Julian Wolfreys, *Derrida: A Guide For the Perplexed*, 2007, p 66

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak, 1998, p xxxix

⁷⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 1976, p 144-5.

⁸⁰ Devadasan. P. (*Parol*), 2008, p 75

⁸¹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 1976, p 154.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p 141-64.

the terrain. This could be called ‘deconstruction’. According to him, before the logic of the supplement there was nothing. In *Of Grammatology* he said about this: “one wishes to go back from the supplement to the, source: one must recognize that there is a supplement at the source.”⁸³ For British philosopher Nicholas Royle, “all of Derrida’s work might be encapsulated within a notion of supply or substitute teaching, a teaching of the supplement.”⁸⁴

Pharmakon:

For Derrida, Deconstruction was not carried out as a discourse from the outside rather vividly within; such as: in Plato, Derrida’s study about *Pharmakon*. In *Studies in Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*, Professor R. Sundara Rajan commented that, in *Pharmakon*, writing was designated as to be inferior and supplementary. According to Derrida, it was a double-edged feature, which referred to the play between poison and cure. When Derrida studied Plato’s *Phaedrus* particularly the concept about writing, he takes the word *Pharmakon*. It was an ancient Greek word deployed by Plato. Here Plato condemns that writing was an inferior supplementary but Derrida picks up the word *Pharmakon* to decentre Plato’s assertion. *Pharmakon* has an undecidable meaning. So, it could be translated to mean anything like recipe, a drug, poison or medicine. Thus people think that the word *Pharmakon* would give a meaning according to that context in which it used. But Derrida mentioned that “...these two antithetical senses of the word are everywhere copresent in Plato’s text, defeating all attempts to choose one or the other according to context.”⁸⁵

In *Of Grammatology* Derrida will redefine the term ‘writing’- is not a secondary, it has an equal or even primordial role in the production of meaning, even in philosophical discourse. Derrida deconstructs Platonic metaphysics by demonstrating its some revered categories of timeless presence- *eidōs*, and *logos*. These are based on a ‘complicity of contrary values’. “Platonic metaphysics requires writing to preserve speech, to re-present its original presence in its very absence. As *pharmakon*, writing is therefore a play of irreconcilable opposites. For it alienates the invisible interiority of the soul-in-dialogue-with-itself by embodying it in visual markings and written signs outside of the soul and *at the same time* functions as a Salvatory power which can reawaken the soul to forgotten truths.”⁸⁶ But if the *pharmakon* is ambivalent Derrida, writes “it is because it constitutes the medium in which opposites are

⁸³ Ibid., p304.

⁸⁴ Nicholas Royle, *Jacques derrida*, 2006, p 51.

⁸⁵ Jacques Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy”, in *Dissemination*, 1972, p 61-71.

⁸⁶ Richard Kearney, *Modern Movements in European Philosophy*, 1986, p 119

opposed, the movement of the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other (soul/body, good/evil, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing)... The *pharmakon* is the production of difference. It is the *differance* of difference.”⁸⁷

Under Erasure:

‘Under Erasure’ was an immediate step which was performed by Jacques Derrida in his discussion about binary opposition. For him, in binary opposition (man/women, writing/speech) both terms are put ‘under erasure’ (in French *sous rature*). By drawing an ‘X’ he marks that the concepts are ‘under erasure’. This idea was borrowed from Martin Heidegger. Through this, Derrida tried to show in the oppositional pair both of the conceptions are inadequate to narrate the general play of differences which are common to both. But Derrida at the same time shows that none of these ideas are totally useless. They are highly inadequate; one could not do something without them simultaneously. Derrida calls this as the philosophy of ‘under erasure’.

Arché-Writing:

The next step to under erasure Derrida tried to show that spoken and writing are just two forms of the play of difference. Thus to demonstrate this, he introduced a form of writing, which is non-existent, called the *arché-writing*. It is the formation of writing that takes place in the sign. Thus writing is the most primordial activity of differentiation; it’s a pre-vocal process that operates to inaugurate language. According to Derrida *arché-writing* (a sort of writing before writing) is the notion of writing, which conceptualized in terms of difference. Here difference as temporalization is the trace or track of the written language in the spoken language, e.g. punctuations are supplemental to speech but not a reproduction of it. Derrida expresses that text cannot be explained by its origins, like the author, history, and context. For him repetition is the origin, the text is writing and writing is language. *Arché-writing* cannot be objectively defined. However, it is a kind of reading (what makes text and writing possible) that includes writing. According to Derrida, writing is characterized by textuality and it is at once the non-closure and closure of the text: “But one can conceive of the closure of that which is without end. Closure is the circular limit within which the repetition of

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

difference infinitely repeats itself. That is to say, closure is its *playing space*. This movement is the movement of the world as play....”⁸⁸

In the term *arché-writing*, Derrida deconstructs the vulgar concept about writing which was imposed by the ‘metaphysics of presence’. *Arché-writing* declares that writing was not a kind of form which was derived from speech. But in between written and non-written forms of language, it emphasized a condition of a play of difference. “In ‘*Of Grammatology*’ Derrida explicates that signification when analysed thoroughly is seen to be always referring to other signs. The fact is one can never reach a sign that refers only to itself.”⁸⁹ Derrida writes, “...writing is not a sign of a sign, except if one says it of all signs, which would be more profoundly true.”⁹⁰ Therefore, according to Derrida, writing is something, always in which an in-between prevails. Thus, whenever we write a word it introduced something which is in between what is intended to be conveyed and what actually conveyed. Derrida called this, *arché-writing*.

On Deconstruction:

Here we are presenting some interpretation about ‘deconstruction’:

A literary critic, Geoffrey Bennington in *Deconstruction is Not What You Think* (1989a) observed deconstruction as “not as a theory or a project. It does not prescribe a practice more or less faithful to it, nor project an image of a desirable state to be brought about.”⁹¹

Christopher Norris remarked that “deconstruction is the vigilant seeking-out of those ‘aporias’, blindspots or moments of self-contradiction where a text involuntarily betrays the tension between rhetoric and logic, between what it manifestly *means to say* and what it is nonetheless *constrained to mean*.”⁹² Thus, “it is the dismantling of conceptual oppositions, the taking apart of hierarchical system of thought which can then be *reinscribed* within a different order of textual significations.”⁹³

According to John D. Caputo, “the very meaning and mission of deconstruction is to show that things – texts, institutions, traditions, societies, beliefs, and practices of whatever size and sort you need -do not have definable meanings and determinable missions, that they are

⁸⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 1978, p 250

⁸⁹ Devadasan. P. (*Parol*), 2008, p 78-79.

⁹⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 1976, p 43.

⁹¹ Paul Cloke, and Marcus Doel, *Writing the Rural: Five Cultural Geographies*, 1994, p 140.

⁹² Christopher Norris, *Derrida*, 1987, p 19.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

always more than any mission would impose, that they exceed the boundaries they currently occupy. What is really going on in things, what is really happening, is always to come.A “meaning” or a “mission” is a way to contain and compact things, like a nutshell, gathering them into a unity, whereas deconstruction bends all its efforts to stretch beyond these boundaries, to transgress these confines, to interrupt and disjoin all such gathering..... Whenever deconstruction finds a nutshell- a secure axiom or a pithy maxim – the very idea is to crack it open and disturb this tranquillity....One might even say that cracking nutshells is what deconstruction *is*.”⁹⁴

Derrida’s central contribution to post-structuralism and postmodernism is ‘deconstruction’. He is interested mainly in one particular opposition between writing and speech. ‘Deconstruction’ shows that dualisms are always hierarchically ranked but not equivalent. Presence, truth, man, and good are privileged at the expense of the absence, lie, woman and evil. Derrida argues that writing is always opaque, there is something hiding behind that which is present and for him ‘deconstruction’ discovers hidden assumptions about the text. For Derrida, ‘deconstruction’ is a method of inquiry and it’s a play of presence and absence. The structure of the present is seen as being constituted by difference as well as deferent. Instead of simply concentrating on the presence and the focus in the study of a text is on the play of presence and absence. For him, meanings and texts can be plural and unstable. The text does never carry a basic single meaning. There are fragmentation, discontinuity, and plurality in the text. ‘Deconstruction’ means the critical reading of texts; it rejects the surface meaning and tries to find out the hidden meaning. ‘Deconstruction’ implies that there is a dismissal of all notions about truth in the interpretation of texts, there is nothing outside of the text that is why any attempt to arrive at truth must be carried out within textuality. A text gives several meanings; it transcends its author and points to its origin. But the meaning of a text is not exhausted by the author's intentions not even the particularity of the historical context. “Derrida suggests that the reader and analyst much approach the text with the awareness of the arbitrariness of sign and meaning. This implies that the search for a unified coherent meaning within the text must be given up. In fact, one should not see the text as a united single whole. Instead, the focus should be on the inconsistencies and contradictions of meaning in the text.”⁹⁵

⁹⁴ John. D. Caputo, *Deconstruction a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, 1997, p 32-31.

⁹⁵ S.L. Doshi, *Modernity Postmodernity and Neo-sociological Theories*, 2003, p 338

‘Deconstruction’ is concerned with something tantamount to a critique of the Western Philosophical tradition. It has two aspects. One is a literary aspect, concerns the textual interpretation (where the invention is essential to finding hidden alternative meanings in the text) and another is a philosophical aspect, concerns the main target of deconstruction, the ‘metaphysics of presence’. Derrida considers the classical opposition between literature and philosophy. The opposition is predicated on the belief that literature is concerned with aesthetic representation, style, and fiction whereas philosophy is the domain of truth. This binary opposition is one of the significant targets of his ‘deconstruction’. In the opposition between speech/writing, Derrida coined the term *arché-writing* (*arché-écriture*). In the case of literature, he sets up an opposition between notions of ‘book’ and ‘text’ to force a similar re-evaluation. “The ‘book’ is envisaged by Derrida as a fundamentally theological notion: Nature described as the Book of God in the Middle Ages.”⁹⁶ In this case “the Book is conceived as a totality, a meaningful whole, referring beyond itself to the real world, a volume heavy with meaning.”⁹⁷ Derrida argues that the idea of the book, which always refers to a natural totality, is profoundly alien to the meaning of writing.

Derrida applies his deconstructive reading to western metaphysics and also to his own phenomenological masters Husserl and Heidegger. He deconstructs the traditional concept of signification itself. “The primary lesson that Derrida gleaned from the ‘deconstructive’ tendencies of the late Husserl and Heidegger was the impossibility of discovering a radical beginning. It was, ironically, Husserl himself who sowed the seeds of doubt. By seeking so emphatically a pure intuition of presence beyond all presuppositions of language or history, Husserl’s ultimate failure to secure such an absolute beginning spelt the end of traditional metaphysics.”⁹⁸ Heidegger used the term ‘deconstruction’ in *Being and Time* as a hermeneutic tool recover the originary experience. In this critical project, he was guided from the outset by a resolve to overcome, which he called the ‘onto-theological’ bias of western metaphysics. This is a systematic prejudice against the temporal and historical character of our experience of Being. According to Derrida metaphysics is a metaphorical cover-up, but its metaphoricity can be metaphorically stated. For him, the founding concepts of western metaphysics like Theoria, Arche, Eidos, Eschaton, and Logos are all themselves metaphors. We cannot have a conceptual theory of metaphor. Therefore Derrida argues, there is no ‘logocentric’ principle for fixing metaphor, it is absolutely uncontrollable. “From

⁹⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, 1981, p 51

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p 51

⁹⁸ Richard Kearney, *Modern Movements in European Philosophy*, 1986, p 114

Heidegger's equation of metaphysics and metaphoricity, Derrida learned that 'language bears within itself the necessity of its own critique'.⁹⁹ Heidegger tried to deconstruct metaphysics by retracing the idea of being to the temporalizing process of signification, which precedes it, which calls a hermeneutic circle. He uses the language of metaphysics to overcome metaphysics by crossing out the word 'being', which Derrida learned from Heidegger. Heideggerian deconstruction has revealed the sign 'being' to be a trace, which indicates presence only in absence. Derrida refers this process to as supplementarity which means being as a trace supplements absence in the sense that both adding to and standing in for an absence.

According to Derrida "there is still in Heidegger, linked up with other things, a nostalgic desire to recover the proper name, the unique name of Being. To be fair, however, one can find several passages in which Heidegger is self-critical and renounces his nostalgia: his practice of canceling and erasing the term in his later texts is an example of such a critique. Heidegger's texts are still before us; they harbour a future of meaning which will ensure that they are read and reread for centuries. But while I owe a considerable debt to Heidegger's 'path of thought' (*chemin de pensée*), we differ in our employment of language, in our understanding of language. I write in another language - and I do not simply mean in French rather than in German - even though this 'otherness' cannot be explained in terms of philosophy itself. The difference resides outside of philosophy, in the non-philosophical site of language; it is what makes the poets and writers that interest me (Mallarmé, Blanchot, etc.) totally different from those that interest Heidegger (Hölderlin and Rilke). In this sense my profound rapport with Heidegger is also and at the same time a non-rapport."¹⁰⁰

In deconstruction, Derrida mentioned that *différance*, dissemination, trace, deconstruction-these are all basically 'non-concepts', 'undecidables'. But the question is what actually he means by the word 'non-concept'?

The notion of 'non-concept' does not have the logical generality which a philosophical concept claims to have in its independence from literary language. And according to Derrida the notion of 'différance' is 'non-concept' in the sense that it cannot be defined in terms of oppositional predicates. It is both the act of differing and of deferring. *Différance* as a determination of language developed, from which it is inseparable. There is no conceptual

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p 132,

¹⁰⁰ Richard Kearney, *Dialogues with contemporary Continental Thinkers*, 1984, p 110

realm beyond language. It is non-conceptual because it remains a trace of language. For Derrida “because it has no oppositional or predicative generality, which would identify it as *this* rather than *that*, the term ‘differance’ cannot be defined within a system of logic-Aristotelian or dialectical – that is, within the logocentric system of philosophy.”¹⁰¹

From the above discussion, it is possible to get an idea of Deconstruction. But the question is can we deconstruct the logocentric system of metaphysics? It is true that in a certain sense still ‘deconstruction’ is in metaphysics. But Derrida argues that “we must remember that if we are indeed *inside* metaphysics, we are not inside it as we might be *inside* a box or a milieu. We are still *in* metaphysics in the special sense that we are *in* a determinate language. Consequently, the idea that we might be able to get outside of metaphysics has always struck me as naive. So that when I refer to the ‘closure’ (*clôture*) of metaphysics, I insist that it is not a question of considering metaphysics as a circle with a limit or simple boundary. The notion of the limit and boundary (*bord*) of metaphysics is itself highly problematic”¹⁰². And Derrida’s reflections on this problematic always have attempted to show, the end of metaphysics is not circular in any indivisible sense. The end or limit boundary of metaphysics is divisible that the logical rapport between inside and outside is not simple, we cannot say, we are ‘locked into’ or ‘condemned to’ metaphysics (neither inside nor outside).

Characteristics of Deconstruction:

- We can say that deconstruction is a mode of writing, a way of reading and challenging all interpretations of texts based on conventional notions of the stability of the external world, human self, language, and meaning.
- Deconstruction is not a decomposition of an architectural structure; rather it is a question about the foundation, the relation between what is founded and foundation, about the whole structure of philosophy. It is run up against various obstacles.
- It is not a theory which is unified by any set of consistent procedures.
- It tries to display the operations of logocentrism in any text.
- According to deconstructionist there is no reality and no truth which stands behind or outside language.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p 111

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p 111

- Within the connections of the various terms deconstruction tries to reinstate language which have conventionally dominated Western thought; the connection between self and world, thought and reality, subject, and object.
- There are some seminal work sign, structure, and play, which exhibits some of the persistent concerns of that deconstruction and reveals both what he owes from structuralism and also from where he divergence.
- About binary: ultimately Derrida reveals that neither of them was superior to other, and with the participation of both members, the activation is possible.
- His aim was to start a free play. But there was a tension between play and presence. Play is the disruption of presence. It is always an element of absence and presence, and the presence was always a signifying and substitute reference which was inscribed in the system of difference and the movement of a chain. But play was not to be thought radically; rather it was conceived of before the alternative of absence and presence.

Therefore, in conclusion, it may be remarked that Derrida searched a non-philosophical site from which we questioned philosophy. For him, the crisis in philosophy was, when we are attached to a particular form of other or philosophizing position. He questioned the concept of philosophy. The writings of Derrida rest on re-reading philosophies and it carried out discussion on other works. About this thought Christopher Norris said that “Derrida’s writings demand the reader a considerable knowledge of the subject.”¹⁰³ “Deconstruction takes place; it is an event that does not await the deliberation, consciousness, or organization of a subject, or even of modernity. It deconstructs itself. It can be deconstructed.”¹⁰⁴

Any authoritarian, dogmatic and fixed reading could be deconstructed. So, after his deconstruction, there are neither marginal nor central configurations. It is not an attempt to attack or reject philosophy or the complete contributions of philosophers. Derrida in his essay *The Supplement of Copula: philosophy before linguistics (Margins of Philosophy)* clearly mentioned that as a field against any claim in linguistics he defending philosophy. This tactic (deconstruction) used to de-centre the dominant ideologies. However as an ‘intellectual terrorist’, he was criticized, where people said that, Derrida tries to dismiss previous all philosophy. Thus, he goes through enormous trouble to reconstruct the position of philosophical classics.

¹⁰³ Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice*, 2003, p 18.

¹⁰⁴ Jacques Derrida, *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, 1991, p 274.

In conclusion, it can be said that, for Derrida, deconstruction is a kind of inquiry; it's a play of presence and absence. Texts and meanings can be plural and unstable. And deconstruction rejects the surface meaning. It tries to find out the hidden meaning. The meaning of deconstruction is a critical reading of texts. Like any form of *graphé* or writing, grammar, a text gives several meanings. Another important thought is the twin strategies of postmodernism are reading of absences and the insertion of new meanings, which emphasize that knowledge is not a system of discovering truth; rather it is the field of free play. Derrida suggested that we should critically look at the assumptions, which embedded in widespread beliefs and dogmas. To understand present-day philosophy and sociology Derrida conveys a lot as a poststructuralist.

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