

Transcription of online discussion

The discussion was held on 2nd June on the topic “Spinoza vs. Indian Philosophy: Comparing Views on Life's Goals (Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha)”

Discussion Goal: To find paths to achieving a balanced and fulfilled life according to Western (Spinoza) and Indian philosophy.

Madhvi: First of all, let me introduce myself. So, I am Madhvi Prasad. So, currently, I am working as a lecturer of philosophy. Now, let me take you to this PhiloTreat. PhiloTreat was founded in 2019 with a simple goal to unite like-minded individuals in thought-provoking discussions on philosophy and current issues. So, since then we have hosted over 50 discussions that involve participants from both philosophy and non-philosophy backgrounds. Our objective is to ignite curiosity and a passion for learning which enable people to dive deep into philosophical subjects and enhance their lives. So, today we are working on this cause of humanities where we regularly spread messages of human cause through social media and personal interactions. So, I request you all to share our message and make a positive impact.

Now, let's quickly introduce to our esteemed speakers. First of all, let me introduce to Professor Daniel Del Monte. Welcome Professor Daniel Del Monte for being here. So, Professor has earned his doctorate in philosophy from Temple University in 2020 with a focus on Kant and human free will. He is currently a lecturer at Rowan University and Jefferson University where he shares his deep insights into moral philosophy and the complexities of human freedom. Professor Daniel is an enthusiastic and passionate individual. He actively shares his philosophical insights with others. His academic journey and unwavering commitment to exploring philosophical questions make him a very respected figure in this field. So, we welcome you Professor Daniel for being here with us and sharing your knowledge and wisdom with us.

Daniel: My pleasure. Thank you so much for this platform. Professor, thank you so much.

Madhvi: Let me introduce other participants here. ayesha, she is a PhD research scholar in the Department of Philosophy at Delhi University and she has been with us since 2019 and we are very delighted to have her here today. ayesha's knowledge and speaking skills inspire others to join our discussions and debates.

So, thank you ayesha for always being supportive. Now, let me quickly introduce to Shubham. Shubham is here and Sukhvinderji is also here.

So, let me first introduce to Dr. Sukhvinder. Dr. Sukhwinder Singh is a social activist from Haryana, India. He is a passionate non-academic student of philosophy. So, in 2021, he was awarded the honorary title of Doctorate in Gandhian Philosophy, Peace and Humanity by the Gandhian Peace Foundation in Nepal. Dr. Sukhwinder has contributed actively to our mission by participating in regular conversation. So, he has joined in our last discussion too and we are proud to have him as our esteemed speaker.

Now, let us move to Shubham. So, he was born and raised in Delhi and Shubham completed his engineering degree from Jamia Millia Islamia during 2019 to 2023. He has a deep appreciation for literature, particularly in Indian Urdu and he read works like poets of Ghalib, Mir, Khushro, Rumi, Bachchan and Gopaldas Neeraj. He is a well-travelled personality and he is passionate about music. So, welcome Shubham for being here. Now, let me take towards the concept of this entire discussion so we can maintain the flow of the discussion. Alright, so when we talk about a good life, first of all let me introduce you to the topic. So, topic is Spinoza versus Indian philosophy on living a fulfilling life. So, when we talk about a good life, the Indian philosophy of Purushartha gives us a clear message.

The concept of Purushartha as we all know is derived from Sanskrit which combines two words Purusha and Artha. Purusha means human being, soul or universal principle and Artha means wealth, value or purpose. So, in the past people prioritised the first three goals i.e. Dharma, Artha and Kama, and later on Moksha came up. So, this philosophy suggests that while life should be enjoyed in all its forms, certain pursuits like living righteously and seeking liberation are most important. So, Purushartha includes the four parts of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha where Dharma means moral uprightness, Artha means material wealth, Kama means sensual pleasure and Moksha means free from all sufferings. So, as we now move towards the modern life, it is crucial to discuss about the philosophers who have shaped our life through their valuable philosophy. So, now let us come to Baruch Spinoza, a Dutch philosopher. Spinoza stressed the significance of human rationality and the pursuit of genuine fulfilment. Spinoza believed that many people pursue fleeting goals like wealth and fame only to be disappointed when these temporary goods fail to satisfy them. So, he argued that only sometimes something like eternal and infinite could truly fulfil human desires and bring lasting satisfaction. So, with this, I would start our discussion. So, first question that comes up towards the discussion is what is good that is unique to human beings and how to achieve them? So, this question is open for all. Anybody could start. Professor Daniel, would you like to start?

Daniel: Could you repeat that one more time?

Madhvi: Yeah. What is the good that is unique to human beings and how to achieve them?

Daniel: What is our good? So, I would say we want to be free from agitation. We want to have peace. We want to have a liberation from the passions. We have anger. We have envy. We have sadness. And we want to somehow get out of this cycle where we're always upset over something and we're worried about something or we're guilty about something. We're trying to get out of this cycle of loss and the ups and downs of life. So, maybe it's peace that we want, tranquility.

Madhvi: Alright. Anybody would like to add to this? Dr. Sukhwinder?

Shubham: I would like to say, I guess, Shubham, yeah. Yeah. A moderate life. The golden mean, which Aristotle says and Buddha says, the Madhyamarg, that virtuous life, you know, the middle path is good and being responsible for all our acts.

Madhvi: Alright. So, to be good is to be virtuous. Is that what you mean? Yeah, the middle path.

Madhvi: You have a middle path. Yes. Alright. Okay. Anything related to Spinoza, what he talks about the good life?

Sukhwinder: As I think Daniel maybe said, Spinoza is saying, that through understanding, you can be free from passion. According to Spinoza, if you want to be free from all kinds of miserable conditions, you should learn understanding. Understanding means reason. According to Spinoza, everything is based on reason. Everything is based on causation. As I understand Spinoza, Spinoza describes his metaphysics based on reason. According to Spinoza, everything is based on causation. There is nothing that is not based on causation. According to Spinoza, when we go through reason, we will be free from emotion. Passion. Passion means things that are not reasonable. That is based on emotion. Sometimes we are sad. Sometimes we are happy. According to Spinoza, there is nothing happy and sad. There is nothing bad or good. Things are neutral. A human being makes a perception according to their mentality. As we have seen, when a lion is eating a deer, according to the lion, it's good. But according to the deer, it's bad. But according to nature, the deer is no good, no bad. It's nature. According to Spinoza, only the law of nature. No one can break the law of nature. Everything that is going to happen is natural. There is nothing that happens that is not natural. I know very little about Indian philosophy. Because I read very little. I don't know much about Western philosophy. It's my fortune that I read all the writings of Spinoza. Except for the letters. I

didn't read the letters. What I read is an emendation of intellect, theological, political theory, and ethics. Maybe twice or thrice. According to Spinoza, there is no free will. There is no free will. Someone can say, I eat twice. If I'm eating food, it's my choice. But it's not my choice. It's a biological need. Sometimes I get angry with someone. It's due to emotion. It's not my free will. In Indian philosophy, we are saying everything happens according to God. Spinoza is saying like that on a different basis. Spinoza is saying everything is going to happen according to causation. There is no free will. I'm thinking it's enough to say. Thank you.

Madhvi: Anyone has any questions? Dr. Sukbinder talks about the theory of causation. Spinoza mentioned in his theory that causation is important. I have a very important question. I was talking about causation. If there is causation, why there is no free will? That's my question. If we are saying that cause and effect is there, if we are saying that there is a cycle of continuation, then why we are rejecting free will? Why there is a rejection of free will? The most important thing I can see is that when Spinoza is mentioning in his theory that we have to follow reason, then again, why not free will? Yes, Professor Daniel.

Daniel: Thank you. That was a very good summary of some of Spinoza's thoughts. Thank you so much for that. The idea of free will. Spinoza says that we think of our freedom as though it were an empire within an empire. We think of our freedom as a separate empire. We have full control over what we do within a larger empire. But he says this is a false idea. We are actually just part of nature. That there is a sequence of causes of which we are a part. Our choices are not really self-determined. We are part of a larger sequence.

We are not in full control over what we do. We are not a separate empire. We are just part of a causal sequence going back to the single substance, which is God or nature. So this idea that we can determine our own destiny is an illusion. We don't fully understand what's truly causing our behavior.

Madhvi: You are saying that we are not understanding what is causing our behavior. But again, we are stuck in the part of reason. If we are reasonable enough, then we can understand our behavior. We can understand what is the cause that is leading us towards everything we see around. The affection that Spinoza calls it. So we are affected by the things going around us. And in that way, we take our decisions. We move accordingly as a species, as an entire species of the cycle, of life cycle we can see. So can you just explain a bit more on this?

Daniel: Yeah. So the idea is that as we become more rational, as we overcome our passions, we start to see the larger truth of things. So there's an idea. We see things under the aspect of eternity. There's a Latin phrase, *sub spatiae eternitatis*, under the aspect of eternity. And that means we're seeing things as God sees them. And when we have this vision, we realize that we're not really making our own decisions. We initially were ignorant. We thought that we're the cause. But actually we're just part of this unfolding fatalism. Like we realized that we're just a mode. We're just a small mode of God. And so that allows us to accept what is happening to us. We're not going to fight or struggle against what's happening because it's all inevitable. It's all part of this, like a geometry, like Spinoza applied the same methods of geometry to the human psychology. So think of geometry as being very rigorous, as these rigorous geometrical proofs where something is necessarily true. The nature of a triangle. It's necessarily true that it has 180 degrees of its angles. And the same thing applies to the human will. We're not some unknown, unpredictable entity. Think of like the existentialist. We can make ourselves the individualistic mentality. That's false according to Spinoza. We're just part of a much larger causal sequence. And when we become rational, we can see that. We see how we fit in in the grand scheme of things. And part of this is controversial because we kind of lose our responsibility. What am I responsible for if I'm just part of a larger sequence? That's fatalistic. There's no alternative to what is bound to happen. So it takes away my responsibility, my agency. So it's controversial. And for me personally, it's difficult to understand that. But that's how Spinoza thinks.

Madhvi: I think that makes very sense that what we are doing is being rational. We are trying to understand the things. But at the end of the day, we have to follow the system. We have to follow the geometric system and we have to follow the Riti and the Rit. That is well described in the Indian philosophy. Rit, that is the universal laws and order. Now, with this, again, we are into the same place that do we have to give position to the free will if everything is predetermined? So do we have to follow this free will, free choices? Or do we have to just go with the flow? Are we rational mind or not? So that is my question. Spinoza also says us to follow rationality, to follow the rational thought. But if we follow everything that is predetermined, then can we have that rational thought? Can we have that rational uniqueness with us? So that's my question. Anyone, if they like to answer, they can go through it.

Sukhvinder: Are you asking a question that there is a free will possible? Right?

Madhvi: I am not asking about the possibility of free will. As we know Spinoza has said that we have to follow our rationality. But if everything is predetermined, then why do we need to follow the rationality? Why there is a need? We will just follow the law, what is going on. Okay, raining we will just hide, we will not work because it's our nature, it's our

instinct that we have to protect ourselves from rain. But today we have to follow rationality. We are working day and night. If it is a disaster also, but still we are working, we are progressing. So we are progressive humans.

Shubham: If everything is predetermined, then everything is justified. Even all the crimes, including all crimes, everything is justified. Then why did he write ethics? Ethics is the code of conduct. Good question.

Shubham: Schopenhauer also says you cannot play with the will.

Sukhwinder: Okay, your question is actually ethics is not related to code of conduct. Ethics is his masterpiece. And sometimes if we examine ourselves, if we observe ourselves, we find what we think is not our free will. We are not thinking freely. Our thinking is based on something else. As Sigmund Freud is saying, when a person is a child, his behavior is based on his childish condition. How his mother treats his and her mother, giving treatment to his kids. That kind of thing creates the nature of a child, a child, a kid. And if we, in a very analytical way, observe our mind, we surely find there is no free will. Our life is based on a chain of causation. Chain of causation. We cannot be able to skip any causation. Then everything is really predetermined.

Madhvi: So Dr. Sukhwinder is saying that because of causation, everything is predetermined. And we don't have enough control over that. Right? Go ahead, please. Yeah, I think this is a very good question.

Daniel: And I think if I could rephrase what you're saying, that there seems to be a contradiction in Spinoza's ethics. Namely, if we are just part of a larger series of causes over which we have no control, then how can we possibly change that? If we have passions, then that's bound to happen as well. And so the very idea of ethics is that we have to conform to an ideal. But how can we have this idea of an ideal when everything is already predetermined? So it seems like everything is justified because everything is bound to happen. So how can we have any kind of ethical ideal in the system? Is that a good paraphrase of this question?

Madhvi: I think so. It's going well. What you said totally resonates with what Dr. Sukhwinder has said so far. If there are any changes, he could let us know.

Sukhwinder: If I ask you a question, your question is based on what I said already. Your question is not according to free will. Your question is based on what I already said. It's proved it's not free will. It makes some sense.

Madhvi: Ayesha, you want to say something?

Ayesha: Actually, it seems like there is some sort of a bind that how can we fit in free will in Spinoza's scheme of nature. Because he is saying there is this strict causality throughout nature. So how to adjust free will within that. So here I think we can bring in one concept from Spinoza's moral philosophy. He speaks about this ultimate goal that we have as human beings. And this ultimate goal, he equates it with the greatest good. So what is this greatest good according to Spinoza? So the thing is we have been talking about human passions and how we get swayed by human passions. And human passions arise in us because of external causes. So this is what leads to attachment. And because of this what we do, we are constantly directed towards things which are outwardly directed. So we are not focusing on our inward nature. So I think he is trying to say that when we try to seek or desire things that bring us joy and when we try to escape from things that bring us sorrow, that is when we are being dictated by our passions. And such a life, what it does, it leads to bondage. So he is speaking of a life of bondage. So if there is bondage then obviously it means there can be liberation. So I think this is where free will comes in, in Spinoza. Because as Professor Daniel was saying there is this empire within a grander scheme of things. So I think free will, we have that free choice within our own empire, over our own lives. Whether we are willing to be dictated by passions or whether we are willing, we choose to be dictated by knowledge or reason. So I think this is where free will comes in. Yeah, so we can be rational within our state.

Daniel: Yeah. Yeah, but so if we are part of a larger causal network, can we make that choice? Can we say I am going to be rational? I am not going to be passionate anymore. Doesn't this imply that if I am passionate, I must be passionate? I must be in bondage? Because it seems like we have no freedom. So we don't even have the freedom to embrace this idea of becoming rational. Seems like there is a tension in the whole philosophy.

Ayesha: Could somebody please summarize the question? I think I lost you there.

Daniel: Yeah. Should I? Just summarize the question. What I am saying is that he is saying we should choose to become free, to overcome our passions. Right. But at the same time, he is saying that we are fated, we are bound to be the way we are. So how can we make that choice? It seems like no matter what happens, we are going to be following fate. Yeah, we are bound to do. Yeah. So if we become rational, that's just simply following necessity. Yeah. And if we are controlled by passions, well, then we are just, that's part of necessity as well. So it seems like we are bound to be whatever the way we are. So the problem is that can we even make a choice to be different, given the idea that we are part of this larger scheme of nature? So is that making some sense?

Madhvi: We are saying that causation does mean that cause and effect. Some causes are leading to certain effects. But here, there is a trick. Do all causes lead to the same effect? Suppose an apple fall on the top of your head, does it will lead you to loss of my consciousness or it will lead me to the coming of an intelligent idea? Do all causes lead to the same effect or do we have the same choices in our effect also?

Shumbham: I guess the falling of the apple on our head is an external factor. And we can react like it depends on how we should react to it. Shall we be angry or like with the pain it caused? Or shall we just be calm and composed? So what like what stoicism talks about, right?

Madhvi: So that is what we can say that we have choices, don't we? We have choices of our actions and of our emotions. So in a way, Spinoza means that in causation also we can have our own choices. And that is what good life is all about. If we want to aim for a good life, then we have to make certain choices that will make us unique and distinct from other groups, other animal groups, if we can say. So humans have the rational choices to make rational decisions in their life, right? And if we are into that, then we can have something new to our life. We can have a new vision. We can lead ourselves from ordinary to extraordinary. Can we do that? Can you say that? Is it the means for a good life?

Daniel: Yeah, I like them. So I'm sorry. Your name was Shubham, right? Shubham. Yeah, that was a very good point about the internal and the external. So you have, and you mentioned stoicism, which is very appropriate, I think, because you have what's happening outside of you, you may not be able to control it. But you can control the way you react to it. And so you could have something, you know, like an apple falls on your head. Are you going to become angry about it? Or will you remain calm? So that would be where the freedom is, not in what happens to you, but in the way you handle it internally.

Madhvi: Okay, Shubham, are you satisfied with the answer Professor Daniel has given? Or do you want to ask him?

Shubham: Yeah, I guess he's right. Nature will do its, will follow its course. Okay, you see the pandemic. Okay, it will happen after like 100 or again after some time. Some other kind of pandemic will be there. So we have to accept it. This is the concept of Amor feti, which Nietzsche and all the stoics talk about. So we have to first accept the externals and then we have to adjust according to it. You can't change it. You can't change the will, like even Schopenhauer also talks about. You cannot change it. That is external. Right.

Madhvi: But again, my question goes to everyone. But if we cannot change any some part of things, then what we could change to lead a good life? Because here we are discussing. We can change ourselves, definitely. We can change ourselves. We can bring the internal changes as Professor Daniel talks about. The internal changes to the causes that is happening all around us. But if we summarize the good in Spinoza's terms, it is not riches. It is not wealth. It is not the things that you see around you. It is something more than that. Would anyone like to highlight that point? What does Spinoza mean by good? To lead a good life. What does it mean? Sukhwinderji, you wanted to tell us something?

Sukhvinder: Sorry, what is your question?

Madhvi: Yeah, I was talking about the good life. If we have to follow a good life according to Spinoza, then what does it mean? We don't have to follow the riches. We don't have to follow the wealth. And what we do to lead a good life? Good life.

Sukhvinder: Okay. According to Spinoza, when you're gaining, when you're getting a full understanding, and intuition, then nothing will change that is going to happen with your life. But when you're understanding everything, then if something bad is happening with you, you don't, sorry, you don't be sad. Because you understand something bad happens with you, then you understand it's a part of life. That thing surely happens. But you don't be sad. Because you're understanding it's due to some causes. It's the same as Spinoza. Spinoza is saying when you're getting an ultimate understanding, nothing will change. Life is going on before understanding. But your mentality changed. You never be sad. I am also trying to give the answer to one question asked before. He's saying there is going to happen a lot of bad things in society. But according to nature, nothing bad, nothing good. If I occupy the land of someone, another person, it's not good or bad. It's my natural right. If I am powerful, I can occupy the things of another person. It's a natural right. It's not good or bad. I think I try to give the answer of both questions, Shubham and Madhvi also.

Madhvi: Thank you. Then good or bad is subjective, you're saying? Actually, good or bad are perceptions of the human mind, humankind. Yeah, it is subjective.

Sukhvinder: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Good or bad are subjective only. According to nature, nothing good or bad.

Shubham: Then we have to develop the perception of the other person. We have to work upon it.

Sukhvinder: Yeah. If we're going to further analysis, if a person kills a person, it's due to a lot of things. It's not his free will. Maybe his mind condition. His mind condition is due to society. I am thinking you are understanding these kinds of things. A person is good due to a lot of things, not free will. A person is bad due to a lot of things. Maybe the society in which he takes work, in which he develops, etc, etc.

Madhvi: Dr. Sukwinder, just an additional point of Saima. She's saying that according to Biospinoza, he encourages the essence. Essence because essence is related to the God's essence. So where we see essence of each individual, then Ayesha, you could also add your point. Professor, can you talk about essence? Yeah, I was just agreeing with that comment. Let me, sorry. I forget the, yeah, I was agreeing with the comment about essences because the idea is having an adequate idea. So that's the language that Spinoza uses is going from an inadequate idea, where we have a partial view of things, to an adequate idea, to understanding them as God sees them. So we're conforming our minds to nature. And we can, in so doing, we can liberate ourselves from this bondage to passion. So inadequate ideas to adequate ideas.

Shubham: So is it what Plato, like, is it the same thing which Plato talks about? That all the things are distorted reflections of the reality?

Daniel: Yeah, yeah, that's because it's a kind of rationalism. So Plato would be a good comparison, because Plato believes that the senses give us this imperfect view of reality. And ultimate reality is perceived by reason. We perceive the ideas through reason. And Spinoza is very similar. He's a rationalist, where we see things as they are in God, the essence of the thing. And we have an adequate idea. And that way, we stop having these passions of jealousy, anger, sadness.

Madhvi: Yeah. Spinoza said one more thing about this anger and sadness. It is what we take from it. If we are being angry with the concept of anger, then obviously we are not making our life a good one. But if we are learning from the anger and just moving on from that anger part, and just reflecting on our side of the thing, then our life will be a good one. So anyone would like to add this part?

Sukhvinder: Can you rephrase it, please?

Madhvi: Right. So Spinoza says that whatever we take from the things around us, that same thing is reflected upon us. If we are taking something from anger, we are making ourselves angry. But if we are just leaving that anger thing aside, we are just reflecting on that. In a way, we call it we are meditating on anger. And we are just moving apart from all those things. Then we are leading ourselves to a good life.

Shubham: So it's the paradox of choice. What should we choose? What should we do?

Madhvi: Yeah, a kind of choice. ayesha, you were adding something on the part. Could you please?

Ayesha: Yeah, I was willing to respond to a particular comment that was made, I think, by Sukhwinderji, that good and evil are ultimately subjective, according to Spinoza. But the thing is, I would like to differ. I feel that Spinoza is not saying that good and evil are subjective for a rational person. Ultimately, the thing is that the greatest goal or our ultimate goal is to be rational beings, right? So in respect to that goal, good and evil cannot be subjective. So in respect to that goal, anything that is actually which maximizes, according to him, good is anything that kind of maximizes our power to activity or our force of existence. He has this concept, which is known as Conatus. So he's saying that good then is what we certainly know to be useful. Anything which is useful to us, which will promote our well-being, which will promote our well-being in a complete and essential manner, that is good. And evil is something which will prevent us from achieving that goal. And the goal is the attainment of highest knowledge, which is adequate ideas. He uses this term, adequate ideas, and also a deep understanding of nature. Nature is the ultimate reality. We are all modifications and also where we stand in nature, that we are part of nature and we are ultimately modifications of nature. So he's not saying that good and evil are subjective because he has given us this ideal. So in relation to that ideal, we need to evaluate our actions. So I wouldn't agree with that subjective comment.

Sukhvidner: I'm not saying it's subjective. I'm saying it's according to perception of humanity. It's different. Subjective and perception is a different thing. I'm saying, human being, when in my area, these days, very hot. According to me, it's not good. It's my perception. But according to nature, it's not good. Sorry, according to nature, it's not good or bad. If I am going to a forest area, if a lion attack on me and ate me, it's bad for me. But it's not bad for a lion. Then how can I say it's bad? How can a lion say it's good? According to nature, it's based on the law of nature. Law of nature allow a lion to attack on me. Human being make a perception good or bad according to his thinking. And as with due to this kind, there is diversity in thinking. Otherwise, nature is a uniform. Someone asked how can we live inside matter? Matter and substance is a different thing. Matter is not substance. Substance definition, there is only one substance. If someone read the philosophy of Baba Nanak, the philosophy of Baba Nanak very near to Spinoza, if we understand Sapinoja, we can understand the philosophy of Baba Nanak. I am seeing both are same. There is not much difference. I finish it.

Madhvi: All right. Anyone would like to add more on the definition of good? Because what we are talking about is more about the ordinary good. We are not talking about the extraordinary good, which Spinoza mostly deals with, which takes us to the part of meditation. So I would like to request you all to summarize what is ordinary good so that we can move towards the definition of extraordinary, according to Spinoza. Yeah, Professor Daniel.

Daniel: Yeah. So I want to go back to the idea that Spinoza was very controversial. So why was he banned from the Jewish community? This happened to him, right? He was banned from, ex-communicated from his Jewish community. Well, the idea is that he denies the transcendence of God. The idea that God is above nature, that God created nature from nothing. No, he says that God is identifiable with nature. So God and nature are one. So God did not create nature for a purpose. God is nature, and nature just flows in a necessary way. And so given that, given that God and nature are one, God did not create nature for a purpose, but simply out of necessity. God and nature are one, flowing according to geometrical necessity. Then I can see Dr. Sukvinder's point, that good and evil are kind of meaningless, because things are just, things have no purpose. It's just flowing according to necessity. The idea that there's some objective we're trying to achieve, it seems like maybe it's an illusion, or it's simply a false category. So it's this idea that God is not above nature, creating it for a purpose, but is identifiable with nature, and just things are just flowing according to necessity. And so good and evil, it seems like there's maybe no place for them, if things are just following these necessary laws.

Madhvi: Okay, so good and evil is just following the necessary laws. And it is not something which we can tell it is a permanent. It is something which is following the necessary laws. Right. So yes, with this concept of good and evil, anybody would have a general question regarding good, regarding the things we see around ourselves? Because I have a very interesting question about good. So if anybody doesn't have any question, I will just raise my question. So we were talking about good, we were talking about causation, we were talking about the free will. Now, do you think that this kind of goods are impermanent, and ultimately leads to disappointment? Because it is, as Professor Daniel says that it is following the natural laws. So does it mean that it is not going to suit everyone? Because everybody is not uniquely, everybody is not fit with the natural laws. Someone has a different ideas, different opinions. Does it mean that it is going to bring us disappointment?

Shubham: The good. Go ahead. Yes. Just asking the good.

Yes, yes. I am asking the good, you are saying that it brings disappointment. But then that disappointment will bring goodness. It will be a cycle, good and bad are opposites.

Madhvi: Yes, I mean to say that disappointment can come to any of us. Suppose a good life is going on with a well-brought-up person, he is very rich, he has a lot of money, he has a good parent, but he is not happy. He is very disappointed with his life cycle, with his natural life cycle. Now, how he can move away from, move apart from this disappointment? How he can lead a successful life, a happy life? Because all these things, the riches, the wealth, the good parenting is not satisfying him. The treasure of life is not giving him enough happiness. All the natural good is not bringing the happiness in him. And how he can achieve that goodness? Because this question is for everyone. This question is not just for me. In life, we are also disappointed at some point of time. Despite all the things with us. Now, how we can overcome this disappointment?

Sukhvinder: As I understand, you are asking what is a real good?

Madhvi: Yes, yes. What is real good? What is absolute good?

Sukhvinder: Which can bring happiness to us. Which can bring happiness. Actually, I want to say the philosophy of Sapinoja is some kind similar to the philosophy of Sankaracharya also, Vedanta also. As Vedanta says, everything is Brahma. Spinoza says everything is God because everything is made through substance. And it's a very good question. And as Spinoza in his first work, he's going to elaborate. In this planet, there are three kinds of ambition of every person. First is a sensual pleasure. A lot of people are going to follow the pleasure of sensual pleasure. But he's saying when someone getting sensual pleasure, he has very deep depression. A very deep anxiety. Then another is the collecting wealth. He's saying there are a lot of dangers in collecting wealth. There are some people who are killed due to wealth. Third kind of things is popularity, ambition. An ambition person's life is life according to people. Not his one-self ambition. If people like he speak on religion, he must speak on religion. As we see today, if people are like cow is good, cow urine and dung is very good thing. As we see later, must saying cow urine is good, dung is good. According to Spinoza, due to popularity, a person must live according to another. Another population. When person is follow the wish of another, he not will be happy. Then he's saying, I will try to find a real good. Real good. What is real good? Then he is going to say, he doing a lot of research, then he find real good is good. That is good for me. That is good for everyone. Here he elaborated not fully. He's indicated some mysterious. According to an American writer, Spinoza is mysterious also. He's not philosopher only. He's mysterious also. And he wrote in his book, he did meditation also. Meditation. And he wrote his work not for public. His work is only for his student. Only for student. And if we study his life, he is the person who live

according to his idea. He's not hypocrite. Lot of philosopher, I don't know his name, but he's philosopher. He's doing the business of slave. He's philosopher, but he did the business of slave. He's hypocrite. Spinoza is not hypocrite. As I understand, he's saying the thing that is indication in Indian philosophy. Trying to getting emancipation. As we say Moksha. He's indicated like this.

Shubham: Okay, so I would like to add, yeah. As Subhinder actually has said, like Spinoza wrote philosophy for himself and for his close-knit community. So I think that is happiness. Like we can involve ourselves in doing the things which we like. For example, music, art, painting, dance. And spending time with close-knit people of the same perception. How can we feel good by doing things which we like? Not all the things which are junk, like scrawling the reels and all these things which doesn't fill ourselves. Instead, they empty us. But by doing or by pursuing the things which adds value. Example, playing some instrument or listening to good music or painting, dancing. I guess this is, like these are the things which can make us happy. And which can add some value in us. Okay. Does it make sense?

Sukhvinder: You are saying what kind of things, what kind of life makes us happy, right? Actually, as I understand, when we are going on the path of Spinoza, there is no happy and sad. He's above happy and sad. Because when we live our life according to reason, then suppose something is going to happen bad with me. But if I understand the reason, I face that bad situation with fully understanding. I think then I will not be so sad as I will be when I don't understand. When we understand things is going to happen because bad things must happen, we cannot change them. When we have this kind of understanding, then I think we will not be so sad as we don't understand the cause of bad things. okay. Music, when we listen to music, if we're going to continue listening to music, firstly music makes us happy, but gradually it does not make us happy. Maybe after some time we're fed up with music, with all kinds of art. But understanding opens our mind. Understanding means not information. Understanding means intuition. When we make our intuition powerful through understanding, then we're really free from all all, sorry, I'm not finding the correct word, all good or bad feeling. Feeling means we can say change of life. We can say jail of life, bar of life. Because if you find some people in Delhi, they have no house, they have no property, they have no good clothes, they have no bathing system, they are sad, they are not sad. If they are sad, they surely did suicide. They have some happiness, some longing for life, that longing makes them alive. They have nothing, but they are not so sad. Another, if we see another side. If Ambani, Ambani have everything, but are he happy? If he happy, he surely live in a peace area. He's not happy. He's thinking he need to collect another thing, that thing may be happy,

but not possible. Spinoza is saying a person cannot live without love. If a person see there is no love in life, he surely do suicide. I think I will try to give answer. Thank you.

Madhvi: But that absolutely makes sense, that what kind of life we aim for is not something that is related on a rational understanding, but it is based on the understanding of, I will say the educated understanding, not just a rational understanding, if I would like to summarize you correctly. Okay. Now, let's just end our discussion because we are already ahead our time. So, with this, I would just like to ask one question with everyone, so that we can best summarize whatever happened in our meeting and we can put a proper end to discussion. So, one question to everyone, just to pay attention to it. So, how do you think that all these philosophical concepts that we have heard today could help us to improve our life and help us to apply it to our modern society? Again, I'm repeating, how do you think these philosophical concepts apply to modern society?

Sukhvinder: If you ask me, everything is going today, according to Causation. As I am a social activist, I see a lot of people giving good lectures, how society will be good. A lot of people are doing efforts, but they are useless. There is not much effect. These kinds of things prove that society is going its own way. No person can affect society. Society is, if I say in Hindi, Spinoza is saying, but we are human beings. As I observe my life, when I was a child, I wanted to be something else, but I don't go on that path, but I am today. I never want to be that. It's my life. If I'm saying, actually, we never predict the future. We have perception, we have a lot of ideas, but the future never happens as we think. Totally, some partially possible, but not totally. And these kinds of things, it shall prove life is going to, not according to our vision. It has its own way. It's going to Causation, chain of Causation

Madhvi: So, life has its own way and we have to go through our learning. That is what Dr. Sukhwinder says. Now, coming to Professor Daniel, what do you think about life and what do you think about this philosophy of concepts that we discussed today? How solid it is to apply to our modern society? Yeah, Professor Daniel.

Daniel: So, I think it has to do with the way we understand the self. Because if you see yourself as just an individual ego, then you're going to try to fight for your own pleasure, for your own wealth. But when you see yourself as part of a larger whole, you can become more at peace and understand things from a broader perspective. So, I think this is a corrective to a kind of individualism where we see ourselves as a private ego and we're fighting amongst ourselves very passionately. But we don't understand properly the causes of the structure of reality. So, I see it as this philosophy could be a corrective. To a selfish individualism that we see in the world today.

Madhvi: I think that's a very beautiful point. Professor Daniel has said we have to see the things from larger perspective, not just from our own perspective. And that is going to add meaning to our life. That is that is going to lead us toward a good life. Now, coming to ayesha, what do you what you would like to add to this point and how you see this question is?

Ayesha: What I can say is that if we need to find the relevance of Spinoza's philosophy in today's modern world, I think something similar to Spinoza's predeterminism is the modern concept of butterfly effect. So, the thing is, once we come to this realization that we are all interconnected and whatever things are happening around us and to us, there is this necessity attached to the things that are happening. So, once we realize this, we stop being anxious. We stop being sad. We accept what is coming our way and we also let things go. So, I think this sort of philosophy leads to tranquility, to a better, to a peaceful life, to a peaceful existence. So, I think, yeah, it gives us a new vision towards life and we start stop, you know, attaching ourselves to consequences and the results of actions like Bhagavad Gita. In Bhagavad Gita, there is this concept of Nishkama Karma. I think that is also very much relevant in today's world because the thing is, I think, you know, we suffer, right? We suffer when we are overthinking about the results of our actions and not concentrating on our actions. So, Bhagavad Gita is saying that something like this Bhagavad Gita says. So, the thing is, we need to follow our duties, our moral obligations. We need to do what we need to do and we shouldn't be, you know, attaching ourselves to the rewards, to the material, you know, yeah, the rewards that follow.

Shubham: But Bhagavad Gita, you are saying, it only says, It can be a good, like something good, a good deed or anything bad. I think Bhagavad Gita should have said.

Ayesha: No, actually, I think we also need to understand what Bhagavad Gita means by Karma. By Karma, Bhagavad Gita means, I think, when you act according to your Dharma and Dharma is nothing but righteousness.

Shubham: At that time, Dharma was fighting because it was written.

Ayesha: Yeah, it was fighting for the, you know, Kshatriyas.

Shubham: It was Dharma, you know, it was according to, it was fighting for a land because at that time, actually, anyway, I don't want to go into that.

Sukhvinder: Yeah, actually, Bhagavad Gita, the people who read Bhagavad Gita, are they follow totally? They don't follow totally. It's also proved there is no free will.

Ayesha: Okay. A lot of, I think, what I understood, free will is that how we, you know, how we can manipulate or we can control our reaction to a particular event which is external to us. How we can, to what extent we can control our passions and act rationally to whatever is coming our way. You know, we are human beings. So, you know, things happen to us. The thing is, we lose material things. The thing is, if we come to understand that the nature of material things is such that, that it's going to lead to deterioration. So, we are not supposed to feel so sad when we lose a particular, you know, material thing. So, in the same way, if we come to realize death is a, you know, biological necessity and so then we can, you know, stop feeling, you know, grief. The thing is, we can, you know, accept death in a more graceful manner. That's it. I think this is where free will, you know, comes in because certain things are beyond our control, like loss and like death, things like that.

Madhvi: Yeah, I think I agree with ayesha's point. Just to add on to her point, just relying on what is going on, what is the effect leads us to slavery and what is, that is what Spinoza talks about in his work called Conatus, that we have to desire for longevity, we have to desire for joy and perfection, not just for whatever is going on. Death is coming, we know that, but do we have to face the death or we have to make ourselves stronger enough to lead ourselves into a good life? Here, I think reason will come into the play because reason will help us to decide what is good and what is bad and really help us to understand the effect of our choices and help us to make a good life and good living. So, for Spinoza, if I will just say, freedom is all about the reason. If we are reasonable, if we are a rational individual, then we are living a free life, we are following the freedom. Now, I would like to request Shubham to add on his concluding remark. So, after getting all the conclusion, we can end this discussion. Shubham.

Shubham: Concluding remarks. I guess, I do not have much to say. Yeah.

Madhvi: What do you take from all this discussion? What do you think that good life is all about? And how you think that this concept could be applied towards the modern society? Because what we are doing today is not just for the sake of discussion. Whatever we are taking from this discussion, we are going to spread this to the world and so that they can learn from it. And that is the reason I am asking each of you to describe what we have done in discussion and how we can contribute all these things towards the society.

Shubham: Yeah, I agree with this concept of free will that we have to accept what is happening to us. We cannot control the externals, but we have to adjust ourselves to them. I agree with this point.

Madhvi: Yeah, that is it. All right. Karan, do you want to add something regarding the question that I asked? All right. Saima, do you have anything? Saima is also scholar and Karan is also scholar and IT professional. Saima, you would like to add on something? Okay. So, Professor Daniel, it was a very, you know, enlightening discussion and Dr. Sukunda was also there. But Professor Daniel has joined us first time. So, we would like to hear from Professor Daniel, that how he liked our discussion and what kind of feedback he would like to provide to us.

Daniel: Yeah, I think it was very stimulating. It was very fascinating and stimulating. I really enjoyed the discussion and I learned more about Spinoza. And I have to work, I have to wrestle more with his thought. Because I have some questions, I have some more questions and this conversation has inspired more questions in my mind. So, thank you so much for everyone who contributed.

Madhvi: All right. So, anyone else would like to add anything and then we would end the discussion? Ayesha?

Ayesha: No, actually, I want to thank everyone and, you know, especially Professor Daniel for joining us. Because this is, you know, the way he contributed to the discussion. He did it in a very systematic way. So, I got a very clear picture of Spinoza's model philosophy. So, thank you, Professor Daniel. Yeah, and everyone else too, Dr. Sukunda, Shubham, everyone. It was a, you know, thought-provoking, you know, discussion. It was stimulating. Thank you everyone for joining. All right.

Madhvi: So, thank you everyone for joining and make sure to continue with the discussion in our WhatsApp group and we would be meeting next time with more interesting and intellectual discussion. So, thank you so much. I would just be ending the meeting now. Thank you.