PREFACE

The present thesis is a survey of two significant traditions that ever developed in the history of Western Philosophy, they are known as Rationalism and Empiricism. These two schools of thoughts oppose to each other in so far as their own metaphysical and epistemological standpoints are concerned. Moreover, the root of these two worldviews could be traced back to the pre-Socratic period in the certain sense wherein the philosophical concern was metaphysical. Metaphysical enquiry is based on the study of the underlying principle of the Reality as a whole. Man’s search for the underlying principle of the Reality (Nature), can be called Nature-centric, i.e., the Nature was at the center of the knowledge. And, the underlying principles or the essence of the Nature were the elements, namely, fire, water, air and also the numbers. Each element was considered significant according to the philosophical view of the thinkers The philosophical view was mostly speculative. The speculation of the essence of the Reality was defined as the principle from which everything has evolved and also everything can be reduced from them. Moreover we call it speculation because there was no proper methodological survey of the explanation of Reality.

This nature-centric worldview took a dramatic shift during the Socratic period. Socrates in his philosophical discourse questioned the epistemological subjectivity of the Sophists: and, made a serious attempt for an objectivity of knowledge and truth. His approach was mainly confined to the reflective mode of human thinking for the interpretation of the Nature as well as for the interpretation of human life. Understanding the reality of life, for Socrates, is to understand by analyzing various aspects of life, which retain to the nature. In this regard, studying the essence of nature of man was as important as studying the Reality. Thus, philosophical approach became man-centric, rather than Nature-centric. Moreover, this philosophical enquiry broadened the realm of metaphysics by giving birth to various other discipline of knowledge, such as, epistemology, ethics aesthetics, logic, etc. in relation to the human life.

However, philosophical analysis of the reality of Nature and Man was centered on, metaphysics and epistemology. Metaphysical issue raised the question that “What is Reality”? Whereas, Epistemology raised the question, “How to know the Reality”? Most
importantly, these two questions had a very significant influence on Modern philosophers. Both, the Rationalists Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz and the Empiricists Locke, Berkeley, Hume were very much consistent in explaining these questions in their own philosophical (methodological) discourses.

Furthermore, the rationalists and empiricists were deeply inspired by Renaissance. Each philosopher was critical in its spirit towards his predecessors. Their methodological survey was more scientifically oriented than just being speculative about the Nature of Reality. The mere speculation could be avoided through practice of inner self-criticism and the supremacy of reason. The supremacy of reason also indirectly helped in paving the way towards an understanding of non-dogmatic nature of religion.

On the other hand, Empiricists emphasized the experience as basic source of knowledge where intellect (reason) had a minimal role. The over emphasis on sense-experience as the ground of objectivity of knowledge claims denied the concept of necessity. In this regard, substance, as a necessarily constituting factor of the phenomena was initially defined through its qualities by Berkeley and later on Hume rejected the notion of substance. Moreover, the denial of the notion of necessity in Hume while defining causality is also another threat to science-or scientific laws.

However, Rationalists and Empiricists emphasized the clearness of knowledge. The concept of substance an essence of Reality was discussed thoroughly with reference to the primary and secondary qualities. Similarly, the certainty of knowledge of sense experience was also questioned in order to claim the objectivity. Thus, later on, Kant’s emphasis on reason led to the enquiries into the limit, nature and function of knowledge gives birth to a new philosophical analysis called critical thinking. In this regard, epistemology emerged as a special contribution of the modern philosophers, in rationalism and empiricism.