CHAPTER- I

INTRODUCTION

Historical - Methodological Issues
Concerning Kant’s Enlightenment Rationality
and Habermas’s Critical Theory
The question of human emancipation has in recent years become the subject of debate in European social science, a debate which reveals the recent attempts to re-visit and re-examine modern Western social thought. The recent re-thinking has led to the crystallization of debates into two categories. On the one hand, the enlightenment heritage, or modernity, which in this context includes Kantianism and on the other hand, post-modernity (the view according to which the era of modernity, with its claims and promises is terminated) or post-Marxist thinking. This debate is of pre-eminent importance not only because of its subject matter, the fate of modernity, but also because of what it reveals about the assumptions implicit in modernity and the enlightenment tradition. It implies a perspective in which rationality is placed at the nucleus of social development and accordingly rationality has become the harbinger of emancipation.

Since the enlightenment project we have sought to use reason to facilitate and foster the process and structures that would control our lives and to guarantee our freedom, self-determination and independence. As Marx realized, the quest for a moral vision made it harder to come to terms with structured relations of inequality and dependency. Kant’s moral theory earlier had laid the foundations in defining a tradition which was formed in opposition
to the very power of tradition, habit and convention. People were to be given control over their lives through the freedom to use their own minds and solace in a vision which encouraged them to question every form of traditional authority.

For Habermas, the project of modernity is not completed and the political failings, theoretical and practical are an indication of the Enlightenment project- a project which needs to be fully realized.

In the light of the above mentioned background, my thesis proposes to discuss and examine Jürgen Habermas's (1929-to date) Critical Theory as a critique of the Enlightenment Rationality of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). It tries to articulate the attempts of critical social theory to understand the complexities and difficulties which are inherent in this concept.

The main focus in this chapter is to develop the historical methodological basis of Kantian enlightenment rationality. But in the early enlightenment there is a lack of sufficiently broad accurate, comprehensive and usable definition of the issues like rationalism, right, equality, freedom, justice, society, democracy, humanism, secularism etc. Therefore, in the early enlightenment phase we often come across contradictory positions on many these
issues. However, the reference of my thesis does not allow me to go into all issues of the early enlightenment period, though I would point out the definition of Kantian enlightenment.

Kant, the founder of German idealism has raised several issues concerning the possibility, validity and limits of epistemology, ontology and morality. Kant’s enlightenment rationality emerges out of his general epistemological framework. Habermas proposes a critique of Kant’s enlightenment rationality and it is in that process that Habermas develops his critical theory.

The second chapter entitled “The Enlightenment Rationality of Immanuel Kant: A Critical Exposition” aims to offer an examination of Kantian critical philosophy focusing on the motives implicit in the practice of the critique in the three major texts, namely, *Critique of Pure Reason, Critique of Practical Reason and Critique of Judgment*.

It is obviously impossible to do full justice to Kant’s principal critical writings in the course of a single chapter. Therefore I would consider the core issues only. This chapter traces the origin of Kant’s argument in the three *Critiques* which demonstrate the theoretical, practical and teleological philosophy in a critical manner. There is a certain inherent inconsistency in the composition of the three *Critiques*, for instance, *Critique of Pure
Reason begins with the dualism between phenomenon and noumenon without mediating the transition between the two. This is essentially an explanation based on certain presupposed dualism, but when one examines Kant's enlightenment rationality, one finds that it is absolutely emancipatory in its goal and tries to overcome dualism of all sorts like maturity, immaturity, freedom and bondage etc.

Habermas is aware of such type of contradictions in Kant and tries to resolve them in his own critical theory. Habermas also appreciates the attempts made by earlier critical theorists like Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse.

In order to proceed in this manner, firstly, issues concerning Kant's enlightenment rationality have been explained and analysed. In general, enlightenment is a cultural concept that originated, roughly in the eighteenth century in Western society as the modern spirit, as a spirit of revolt against medieval society, its institutions and conceptions, and as the self assertion of human reason in the field of thought and action. The work begun by the Renaissance philosophers was continued in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; the Reformation; the "Thirty Year's War"\(^1\) and the political and social revolution in England and in France were the

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symptoms of the change. The great continental system and English empiricism, along with their various offshoots, added fuel to the fire. In this world view, Immanuel Kant enunciated his philosophy of enlightenment rationality in an age of the possession of principles, full of confidence in the power of the human mind to solve its problems. The prevailing condition in the eighteenth century inspired Immanuel Kant to develop the concept of Enlightenment rationality.

Further, it shall be argued that the three Critiques of Immanuel Kant have certain cognitive, moral and aesthetic claims that have validity only there phenomenal world. In order to maintain clarity and precision, this chapter has been divided into three parts.

In section- I, a brief exposition of the basic issues of "Transcendental Aesthetic" "Transcendental Analytic" and "Transcendental Dialectics" would be examined. The main thrust of the three parts of the present chapter is to answer questions of preeminent importance such as – how is genuine knowledge is possible and to what extent? The answer is confined in the formulation of the *synthetic a priori* judgment. It has two implications. Firstly, pure reason in human beings is limited and the process of critique will establish its boundaries. Secondly if
metaphysics is to be put on the root to science; it must follow the model of mathematics and physics and dictate the nature rather than nature dictating reason. The critical project of Kant therefore, combines moments of both limitation and legislation. Throughout critical philosophy, Critique has a dual task, both to deduce the legitimacy of the claims of reason and to apply those claims in the appropriate realm. Thus, Kant enters the realm of the practical reason which is beyond the reach of understanding.

In the section – II of the second Chapter Kant’s views on morality – the practical reason have been discussed. Here, the three ideas of the reason: existence of God, freedom of will and immortality of the soul become the postulates of morality. The significance of these ideas is not theoretical but practical; practical in the sense that they (three ideas of reason) are regarded as the postulates or presuppositions of human conduct in the ethical realm. It seeks to influence the world directly.

This means that Critique is now operating in relation to a realm of reason which is beyond the reach of understanding and therefore is essentially unknowable. Kant responds to the question of the possibility of the moral law in the Groundworks for the Metaphysics of Morals and in the Critique of Practical Reason. In his treatment of practical reason, he echoes the distinction
introduced in the realm of theoretical reason between divine intellection and limited human cognition. Kant argues that there are two principles of casualty: the principle of transcendental freedom in which pure reason, in the shape of the moral law, is the motivating force; and the principle of natural causation. Because human will unlike the holy will, is open to sensuous influences, the moral law necessarily takes the form of an imperative, which strives to countermand such influences; this is termed as 'categorical imperative'. Thus, the critique of practical reason necessitates the deduction of the possibility of the categorical imperatives.

However, the moral law can never fully exist in the phenomenal realm other than as an obligation and a striving, a ground that cannot be understood, only pursued, and an end that can never be reached. The critique of practical reason makes the division between real and ideal more emphatic than in the critique of theoretical reason. However, neither the first nor the second Critique resolves the problem of how either theoretical or moral judgments are possible without raising a host of further questions. The Critique of Judgment, therefore, is introduced as a mediation between the powers of reason and the domains of theory and practice which they legislate and execute. Kant accepts it as a
‘mediating link between the understanding and reason’. Subsequent to this discussion, Kant’s view on beauty and sublime would be discussed in the third section of the present Chapter in the light of his *Critique of Judgment*.

In the *Critique of Judgment*, the principle of the faculty of judgment as such can be located through answering the question of how aesthetic judgments of taste are possible. In his critique of aesthetic judgment, Kant examines two kinds of judgments, judgment of beauty and the sublime. The outcome of the *Critique of Judgment* is not clear. Neither the possibility of such judgment is made clear nor the division between the faculties is successfully mediated. Instead, the *Critique of Judgment* confirms the vague origins of reason’s authority and ways in which it is limited both theoretically and practically.

In the three *Critiques*, the critique of the faculties is always a critique of itself in the same sense of displaying how critique can be legitimated and the extent of its power.

With this exposition and examination of Kant’s philosophy, the third Chapter-III entitled, ‘The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas: An Exposition’ would attempt to give detailed analysis of the critical theory in general and Habermas’s philosophy in particular.
Critical theory is a theoretical approach which emerged as an instrument of criticism and evaluation championed by intellectuals like Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas who formed Frankfurt School. In general, critical theory may be described as an attempt to understand practices of criticism, interpretation and historical understanding of social action and theory. Critical theory does not form a unity of thought, it does not mean the same thing to all its adherents. Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Marcuse, Jürgen Habermas are main proponents of critical theory.

In general it may be argued that the founders of critical theory preserved many of the concerns of German idealists (with the nature of reasons, truth, beauty) – but reformulated the way in which these had been previously understood. They placed history at the center of their approach to philosophy and society. Yet, the issues they addressed went beyond their focus of the past and embraced future possibilities. They were thus concerned with both interpretation and transformation. Each of the critical theorists maintained that although all knowledge is historically conditioned, truth claims can be rationally adjudicated, independent of immediate social (class) interests. The extension and development of the notion of critique, from a concern with the conditions and
limits of reason and knowledge (Kant), to a reflection on the emergence of spirit (Hegel), and then to focus on specific historical forms – capitalism, the exchange process (Marx) – was furthered in the work of the Frankfurt theorists and Jürgen Habermas. They sought to develop a critical perspective in the discussion of all social practices.

The work of the critical theorists revolves around a series of critical dialogues with important past and contemporary philosophers, social thinkers and social scientists. For Habermas, certain traditions of Anglo-American thoughts are also important, especially linguistic philosophy. While, there are differences in the way critical theorists formulate questions, however, they believe that a thorough examination of contemporary social and political issues could contribute to a critique of ideology and to the development of a non-authoritarian and non-bureaucratic politics.

Political events and revolutionary practices had not coincided with the expectations derived from the theories of that time. The following questions assumed pre-eminent importance: How could the relationship between theory and practice now be conceived? Could theory preserve hope for the future? In the changing historical circumstances, how could the revolutionary ideal be justified? In order to understand the response of the Frankfurt...
school and Habermas particularly, it is useful to briefly survey the expositions of these thinkers. Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, have been discussed. I would attempt a detailed analysis of Jürgen Habermas’s philosophy.

The Institute of Social Research founded in Germany in 1923, was home of the Frankfurt school. Max Horkheimer assumed Directorship of the institute in 1930. He sought to discuss the role of theory and social research in a more radically historical and theoretical mode. Horkheimer characterized social philosophy as an attempt to interpret the human beings in so far as, they are parts of a community and not mere individuals. Philosophical questions according to him were not abstract, divorced form history and social contact: instead these questions are related to reality by dialectical penetration and thus, forming the basis of the development of philosophical theory and the parix of individual scientific disciplines. The following themes dominated Horkheimer’s philosophy. The first suggests the necessity of re-specifying the ‘great philosophical questions’ in an interdisciplinary research program. The second theme, which becomes clearer in later essays, is a call for a rejection of orthodox Marxism and its substitution by a reconstructed understanding of Marx’s project. Thirdly, he emphasizes the necessity for social
theory to explicate the set of inter-connections that make possible the reproduction and transformation of society, economy, culture and consciousness. These issues have been discussed in the first section of the third chapter.

During the 1930s and early 1940s, despite the transfer of the institute – an outcome of the Nazis' rise to power – to Geneva (February 1933) and then to Columbia University in New York (1935), members of the institute continued to work in political - economy, philosophy, sociology, psychology and other disciplines. By the early 1940s, there was little in Horkheimer work to suggest the imminent emergence of needs compatible with universal moral principles. He concentrated on imminent criticism in the context of interdisciplinary research. Adorno, on the other hand, concentrated his effort on an examination of the way philosophy expresses the structure of society. This divergence, however, became less marked over the time, as did the differences between the two men's orientations. By the very early 1940's there was sufficient common ground for Dialectic of Enlightenment. Adorno's views developed through an immanent critique of philosophy. He contended that most philosophy failed to provide an adequate account of the relation between subject and object. Subject and object are constituted by one another but are irreducible to each other, i.e.,
neither can be wholly subsumed by the other. He was particularly anxious to expose the fallacies of subjectivism. This caused greater emphasis to be laid on the subject. In opposition to Kant and Hegel, Adorno and Horkheimer in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* argued that reality cannot be grasped from a single standpoint. Here he talks of negative dialectics, and says that negative dialectics can help to break the grip of all conceptual systems which would freeze the object and ignore its genesis. Negative dialectics depends on the internally related employment of the categories of subject and object, appearance and essence, particular and universal, the part and the whole.

Further, Marcuse’s notions of theory and practices have been discussed in order to have a better understanding of Habermas’s motives. According to Marcuse, critical theory is oriented towards the understanding of all forms of social practices and the factors which gives rise to self-consciousness and free development. He does not regard reason as the absolute ground or essence of what ‘is’ rather, he comprehends reason as the reason of concrete individuals in their specific situations. That is why Marcuse places greater emphasis on the writings of ‘Early Marx’.

These three critical theorists – Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse had an immense impact both in shaping the work of
Jürgen Habermas and on its continued evolution. Their real effect was not one of convincing alternative moral political vision, rather it brought prevailing interpretations of reason, progress, nature and subjectivity to a new level of explicit questioning. That is why it is worth discussing these thinkers before going into the detailed discussion of the critical theory of Jürgen Habermas.

The purpose of the section-III of the third chapter is to demonstrate Habermas's own conception of critical theory. The section falls into four parts. The first section will look at Habermas's account of a radicalized critique in the Knowledge and Human Interests and at the nature of the moderate critique developed in response to the weakness of his early texts. The aim of this part is to introduce the significance of his major works for ethics social theory and philosophy. In order to give his critical theory, Habermas has analyzed major schools of thought. In due process Max Weber's instrumental reason has been criticized by Habermas. According to Habermas, it is necessary to rethink the question of rationality and rationalization process. Habermas's attack on positivism is directed primarily against the claim that validity of science is independent of any normative commitment on the part of the scientists.
It is with this problem in mind that he criticized Auguste Compte and other positivists and began to work towards his theory of knowledge guiding or knowledge constitutive interests. But before that in the relevance of Marxist legacy, Habermas’s critical theory has been compared with ‘Early Marxian thought’. He distinguished three non-reducible ‘quasi-transcendental’ cognitive interests: the technical, the practical and the emancipatory interest. Each of these cognitive interests is itself rooted in a dimension of human social existence: work, interaction and power. After that Habermas’s conceptions of communicative action and communicative rationality, have been discussed in his seminal works the, *Theory of Communicative Action Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2*. In these works he grapples with issues that constitute a universalistic perspective on normative legitimacy, which is the core of this chapter. In *The Theory of Communicative Action* emphasis is placed on the hypothetical standing of the universal rules transcendentally deduced through formal pragmatic analysis. Habermas characterizes the rational internal structure of the communicative action in terms of “the three world relations of actors and the corresponding concepts of the objective, social and subjective worlds; (b) the validity claims of prepositional truth, normative rightness; and sincerity or authenticity: (c) the concept of a
rationally motivated agreement, that is, one based on the inter-subjective recognition of criticizable validity claims; and (d) the concept of reaching understanding as the cooperative negotiations of common definitions of the situation.²

In his enunciation of formal pragmatic he argues, that this internal structure is universally implicit in any discursive attempts to reach an understanding. The agreement is based on an analysis of speech drawing heavily on the Speech Act theory of Austin. He transforms the vocabulary of elocutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary into different validity claims. Three basic elements in Habermas's theory of communicative action are crucial, they are: first, there is the concept of communicative rationality or action, second, there is the identification of lifeworld as the realm of communicative rationality and system as the realm of instrumental rationality. Third, there is an evolutionary theory about the relations between these two concepts of rationality on the histories of life world and system.

According to Habermas in this mature articulation of his theory, the strong transcendentalism of earlier formulations has been overcome. Although, still acknowledging the significance of the Kantian philosophy in his work, Habermas sees himself as

having evaded its dangers. In the next chapter, these issues have been examined in the greater detail.

In the chapter- IV entitled, 'Habermas’s Communicative Rationality: A critique of Enlightenment Rationality of Immanuel Kant', not only similarities and dissimilarities between Kantian philosophy and Habermas’s critical theory have been discussed but I have endeavored to show how Kantian transcendental philosophy has influenced Habermas’s critical theory and former (Kant) has got sublated into the latter’s (Habermas) development of philosophy.

The ‘subjective’ orientation of reason as expounded by Kant and the ‘inter-subjective’ orientation in the theory of communicative action, essential to Habermas’s philosophy have also been discussed. While discussing the similarities between the two thinkers, the proposed thesis points to the fact that Kant accepted inter subjectivity since he recognized the concept of the ‘other’- the opposing party in one section of the first Critique entitled the ‘Discipline of Pure Reason’. The certainty of experience that has been ensured in the Critique of Pure Reason is intimately linked to an inter-subjective application of reason. Kant’s exposition of comprehensibility provided valuable inputs for
understudying Habermas's position on inter-subjective comprehensibility.

On the question of morality, Habermas feels the need to go through Kantian notion of practical reason. Habermas finds Kant's distinction between the intelligible and phenomenal realm problematic. Following the Kantian legacy, Habermas accepts that knowledge is necessarily defined both by the object of experience and by a priori categories. Habermas also recognizes these shortcomings but fully accepts the fact that Kant was the first philosopher who reconciled the gulf between rationalism and empiricism. But at the same time, Habermas criticizes Kant on the basis of his methodological solipsism. The other similarity between Kant and Habermas could be discerned from their expositions of reason and interests.

It is the dominant feature of Habermas's critical theory that he has not accepted any theory entirely. The same applies with the way Kant formulated his philosophy. Habermas has accepted certain aspects of Kantian philosophy on the one hand and on the other hand criticized other aspects. Though similarities can be found between the two but an important point of divergence has been the critique of the entire enlightenment project propounded by Kant.
Kant’s view on morality can only be discussed in the light of the epistemological and ontological concerns. The sphere of epistemology is confined to the sphere of phenomena. But the sphere of noumena transcends the validity of scientific knowledge. It constitutes the realm of the spiritual and hence manifests the aspects of idealism in Kant’s philosophy. In the same manner, Habermas makes distinction between ideas and interest. He is of the view that orders of life can be viewed in a two-fold manner. On the one hand, it regulates appropriation of goods that is the satisfaction of material and ideal interests: and on the other hand the actualization of issues and values.

If one studies Habermas’s philosophy with reference to Kantian philosophy, one could argue, the purpose of both the philosophers is similar in the sense that Habermas’s entire philosophy rests on the foundation of reaching to an understanding through validity claims. On the other hand, Kant’s goal is to achieve some universal principles which the entire humanity could follow. For instance, his exposition regarding the categorical imperatives is a case in point.

The basic argument of this thesis is that the Kantian critique constitutes a significant source in the formation of the social theory
of Habermas. In view of the above said, I would like to address the following questions in the course of my thesis:

1. Is there any relation between communicative rationality \textit{(reaching to an understating)} and Kantian enlightenment rationality \textit{(categorical imperatives as universal binding)}?

2. Can communicative competence of universal pragmatics be rationally reconstructed?

3. Would Habermas's theory of communicative action lead to real consensus model?

4. Is Habermas able to avoid the transcendental pitfalls and metaphysical connotation in Kantian critical philosophy?

5. Is emancipation possible for humanity?

6. Can there be universal values?