CHAPTER – 7

CONCLUSION

In this short concluding chapter, we shall sum up the views put forth in our previous chapters. The Gettier’s problem has fascinated us to envisage the ‘justified true belief’ as the definition of propositional knowledge which has been the focus of this research work. Our conclusion emerges from the discussion of ‘justified true belief’ as the so-called definition of knowledge, as a combination of the metaphysical, the psychological and the epistemological elements and as the target of attack by Gettier.

Gettier has shown that we can have a justified true belief without knowledge. Our example of the old lady who has lost her son, knows the fact, still does not believe it also devalidates the equivalence between a conjunction of justification, truth & belief and knowledge. Since it is possible to have a justified true belief without knowledge and knowledge without justified true belief, we have tried to highlight the view that there is no necessary connection between a justified true belief and knowledge although both of them are mostly found to be congruent giving an impression of their being identical, such that one can be defined in terms of other. We have justifiably put forward the view that a case of justified true belief and a case of knowledge are conceptually distinct. Truth is undoubtedly a necessary condition of knowledge, but not in the sense of a ‘necessary truth’.

Along with the above, keeping in view the manifold variety of
proposition, a very interesting conclusion follows. The co-existence of justified true belief with knowledge does not occur for all types of propositions. A justified true belief can at best be a knowledge claim which again is conceptually distinct from a knowledge situation. Knowledge situation has got an independent and unique status and does not demand a definition. A conglomerated account of propositions reveals the fact that it is a mistake to apply one and the same definition to the entire class of propositions. The various senses of knowledge still add complexity to the notion of knowledge. This complexity can be evaporated like a mist in the sunlight of the clarity of the concept of knowledge of a particular type of proposition. The issue before us is neither to present the final typology nor to identify the propositions to their respective types, but to point out the fact that since justified true belief is not a universally applicable definition of knowledge, the concept of propositional knowledge needs to be explicated with the help of the concept of truth, responsibility attained, depending upon the types of propositions.

A serious objection which might cripple our understanding of the concept of propositional knowledge could be from the philosophers who oppose a truth based epistemology and hold that a truth condition is redundant in any analysis of knowledge. The reasons could be either because they think that the description of truth as given by one who associates truth condition with knowledge is such that it is bound to be limited by human and social restrictions and hence can be found only in a disguised or distorted form, or because they think that the concept of truth is a formation of linguistic quibble.

We don’t take this objection lightly. Such philosophers repudiate
truth condition in the epistemic phenomenon because they have a very restrictive notion of truth rooted in Cartesian way of thought. They themselves have, in place of truth, a kind of accommodation of various beliefs and in fact, for certain areas of inquiry, what is available as the best is not more than the most strengthened beliefs. But the presence of belief as a psychological factor in the knowledge phenomenon does not rule out the importance of truth. After all, beliefs are not without grounds and have to be truth conducive.

On the other hand, those who take the concept of truth in the sense of a linguistic quibble regard knowledge as a product of language rather than that of truth. There is a need to realize that truth precedes language. Language is about the world. Our epistemic activities do not make the world with the help of language. World is there independently of our beliefs and language.

Our second chapter has taken up the explication of the constituent elements in the definition of propositional knowledge as ‘justified true belief’. The problem of knowledge raised by Plato has shaped the ideas of the contemporary philosophers. Since knowledge was to key to virtue and happiness, hence obtainable. It was sought to be searched by means of a definition since a definition was supposed to give an exact understanding of the essential nature of the object. His method for search of definition was dialectic and hypothetical. Plato, by means of Socrates, rejected all the proposed definitions of knowledge in terms of perception, in terms of opinion, in terms of true opinion and lastly, in terms of true opinion with an account. In point of fact, it has been unfortunate for the history of epistemology since 1963 that the abandoned thesis has become famous as ‘the classical definition’ of knowledge in the name of Plato.
Plato never gave a clear cut definition of knowledge and his *Theaetetus* seems to end inconclusively. Yet Platonic approach cannot be called negative because sometimes, by the method of elimination, one is enlightened to find the desired result. For Plato, knowledge is mere recollection. We know everything implicitly, but have to be reminded of it for knowledge to become explicit.

The earliest rejection of the ‘Justified True Belief’ analysis is found in Plato’s *Theaetetus* in the arguments 201(b–d). He presents it in the form of a dilemma. If knowledge requires having adequate justification, then, since justification must itself be framed in a belief, it is either a belief that does not yet amount to knowledge or else a belief that does amount to knowledge. If the former, there would be an endless regress of further and further justificatory beliefs, since knowledge could not ultimately be rooted in ignorance; if the later, since the known is now based on the known, we are landed in a circular account of knowledge.

The object of knowledge is another important issue to deal with while discussing Plato’s views. In his philosophy, knowledge covered both craft and mathematics. Knowledge was knowledge of objects which were stable and permanent – the Forms. We found that that Plato never talked about propositional knowledge as an object of knowledge as it is taken to be in recent times and objected by Gettier. Nor did he present a definition in terms of ‘necessary and sufficient conditions’. A.J. Ayer, in 1956 followed by R. Chisholm in 1957 explored the definitional aspect of propositional knowledge in terms of ‘necessary and sufficient conditions’. Both of these philosophers were questioned by E.L. Gettier in 1963. Plato, however, in our view, has been mistakenly taken to be
representing the tradition.

In order to survey the problem of knowledge we have taken up the notion of knowledge along with other concepts with which it has been intimately related, i.e., truth, belief and justification.

Truth is a presupposition for knowledge, for to know something is to know it to be true. A presupposition can also be understood in terms of being a necessary condition of knowledge. A brief survey of the various existing theories of truth viz., the correspondence theory, the coherence theory and the pragmatic theory, has brought the fact to the light that no single theory can satisfy the totality of propositions. A discovery of the presence of variety in propositions helps to apply different theories to their suitable type of propositions. At times, the areas of inquiry are overlapping in such a way that one is not able to distinguish between these varieties, yet a careful insight can lead one to the clarity of ideas.

Defining knowledge in terms of belief creates a paradox. Knowledge aims at the truth of a proposition. Belief presupposes a doubt and contains a negative element. This results in a contradiction. If truth is a necessary condition for knowledge, it means that knowledge implies the proposition; and if knowledge implies the proposition, it cannot imply belief. So, the entailment thesis fails. In this way, defining knowledge in terms of belief is self-defeating. In principle also, it is not possible to define knowledge in terms of belief because, according to the philosophers who define knowledge in terms of belief, belief is no longer present with knowledge, as it has already been transformed into knowledge. Consequently, the approach of defining knowledge by qualifying additions to the condition of belief is misguided.
The third condition or the justification condition is the most perplexing condition. The questions on the nature of justification lead to a vicious regress of justificatory propositions. Justification can never be complete. Although it is directed towards truth, but under human limited conditions, it does not always attain its goal. A justified belief is conceptually distinct from a knowledge situation because knowledge enjoys an independent status and is not subject to the same limitations as a justified belief. Defining knowledge in terms of a justified belief is equally misguided as definition of knowledge in terms of belief is. Knowledge is not a kind of justified belief because justification can be given only in the case of a claim where knowledge is externalized. Justified true belief may illustrate a case of a knowledge claim. Smith has a justified true belief and on the basis of it, he makes a claim, but does not have knowledge. 'Knowledgification' of justification is unjust.

The third chapter of this thesis has examined the problem raised by Gettier under the shadow of his self-assumed presupposition. Gettier challenged the 'justified true belief' analysis of knowledge and later epistemology was highly influenced by his attack on the traditional epistemology. The three conditions of truth, belief and justification are said to be necessarily related to knowledge and entailed by it. Gettier has no doubt about it. What is denied by Gettier is that the conjunction of the three conditions entails knowledge. That is to say. Gettier tried to show that there is a possibility of knowledge being absent even when a justified true belief is present. So, knowledge is distinct from justified true belief.

Gettier assumed the possibility of justification of a false proposition. An immediate reaction to Gettier was in the form of the
detection of falsity in his argument. It was false that Smith was not the
person who was going to get the job. It was also untrue that Jones owned
a Ford. The inclusion of an inference in the examples also misrepresented
the original justified true belief thesis. As a reaction of some of the post-
Gettier philosophers, it has been denied that one could have a true and
justified belief under these circumstances namely, by inferring the
proposition in question from a false basis. Gettier has been found to be
guilty of presenting the triune thesis in a distorted form.

Gettier's counterexamples are also questioned because of his self-
assumed principle of deducibility of justification which he presupposes
without presenting a justification in its support. This principle has been a
focus of discussion by Dretske, Margolis, Thaleberg and a few other
philosophers. But since it is possible to construct counter examples to the
disputed thesis without assuming this controversial principle, it cannot be
counted as a cause of the failure of Gettier examples.

The fourth chapter of this research work has attempted to examine
the views of philosophers who tried to evaluate Gettier's problem with an
understanding of his moral in their own way. These philosophers
constructed Gettier-Style examples to the definition of propositional
knowledge as justified true belief and came up with a repaired or a new
definition or protected the tradition itself.

The element of falsity, though first pointed out by Michael Clark
was developed by Chisholm. He tried to save the classical definition of
knowledge by showing that it could not be threatened by Gettier examples
because a belief cannot be completely justified by being deduced from a
false statement. It would not be evident but defectively evident. With the
help of articulated discussion and counterexamples, Chisholm tried to remove the ‘defectively evident’ from a case of ‘justified true belief’, such that it could become a case of knowledge.

The concept of indirect falsehood was enunciated by Lehrer and Paxon in terms of defeasibility. Any proposition which is responsible for a defective justification indirectly is called a defeating proposition. These philosophers admitted that the Gettier examples were genuinely constructed and there was, in fact, a need to repair the ‘justified true belief’ thesis. The search for indefeasibility as the fourth condition was the motive of the philosophers who tried to revise the thesis by restructuring it.

There is still another trend followed by some philosophers to reject the thesis by finding out new terms and conditions for knowledge. Armstrong and Goldman proposed to consider the reliability approach in which the reliability of the reasons is emphasized. Marshall Swain, however, not fully satisfied with the indefeasibility condition, was inspired by Goldman and supported the reliability and casual approach. For Swain, one of the counting factors of the reliability analysis is the presence of a casual connection. It must have a reason but not conclusive reasons.

The failure of Gettier examples has also been associated with the presence of accidentality. P. Klein, P. Unger, L. Zagzebski and a few other philosophers have highlighted the presence of the accidentality factor in the cases where accidentally true, justified beliefs are present. Such cases coincide with the knowledge cases only as a matter of luck. The absence of accident as the fourth condition is not suitable because of
the negative import of the concept.

The fourth chapter concludes with an understanding that although a number of restructured definitions of knowledge have been presented by various philosophers in the post-Gettier period, yet these definitions are not found to be sufficient and remain open to counterexamples in a similar manner as the original one. However, in the process of finding a new definition of propositional knowledge, the entire epistemological trend is changed, and the search for a definition of propositional knowledge is shifted to ‘Gettier-immuned’ definition.

Knowledge can be defined as justified true belief only if justification guarantees the truth. For the sake of argument, even if we accept the triune thesis, the three conditions have to be independent conditions. Linda Zagzebski emphasizes that if there is even the smallest degree of independence between the truth condition and the justification condition, Gettier cases can be constructed against it.

Our fifth chapter is a further amplified discussion of justification and belief and their relation to knowledge. The notion of justification, which is quite vague a concept, is idiosyncratized by Gettier in the sense of being justified in a subjective sense. As Gettier can be alleged for trapping the tradition, so Gettier style examples can also be blamed not to retain the sense of justification exposed by Gettier.

Pollock interprets subjective justification as one where a person’s belief is arrived at the basis of what he believes to be good reasons. On the other hand, one is objectively justified if one’s belief is justified on the basis of what are, in fact, good reasons. In the light of this distinction
also, Gettier can be found to be using the term ‘justification’ in a subjective sense. Accordingly, an epistemic agent can be justified in making a false claim. It is quite reasonable to suppose that a proposition which has been claimed to be known by a person, is supposedly regarded as true till it is proved to be false or is replaced by some contrary proposition, proved to be true. The reason for this is that justification is directed towards truth. But there is never a guarantee that it successfully meets the end, namely, the truth, which ultimately yields knowledge.

Without a truth condition, the system remains doxastic, that is, related to beliefs and cannot be called epistemic, that is, related to knowledge. A belief is present where one thinks that one knows, which is obviously distinct from a case of knowledge. Knowledge has got an independent status. There is no doubt that knowledge and a justified true belief are neighbouring concepts in the sense that in most of the cases, they are overlapping each other. But it is important to realize that they are conceptually distinct inspite of their coincidence. The fact of their coincidence has been ignored by previous philosophers, and the two have been treated as identical. The relation between a knowledge situation and a knowledge claim is also very close, but it is also true that one can know without claiming and one can claim to know without knowing. This chapter concludes with an attempt to exonerate the concepts of justification and belief from that of knowledge, although truth is inseparably attached to it.

In our everyday life, we claim to know many things which are not well calculated and not more than merely educated guesses. At an ordinary level, it is harmless to claim knowledge in such situations. But in a strict philosophical sense, i.e., in a formal situation, where a
knowledge situation is being analysed as in the Gettier case, we find that the search for the conditions of knowledge is shifted to the problem of truth. We discover that knowledge is sometimes claimed in yet another sense, which can be named as a 'scientific sense'. It is that sense where propositions are considered to be true or false on the basis of their coherence with the already existing 'supposed to be true' propositions of the system. Truth is taken in the sense of negotiated beliefs. Historians, for instance, reshape the concept of truth in a restricted sense where 'accepted propositions' can more appropriately be used in place of 'true propositions'. Interestingly, the pluralistic account of truth attempts to solve the problem to some extent. There are obvious differences between various types of knowledge depending upon the difference in various types of propositions. It would be misleading to include all types of propositions indiscriminately in the list of things we know. Our sixth chapter has dealt with the views of different philosophers on the nature of the concept of proposition as it is taken as an object of propositional knowledge.

In the history of philosophy, we find a few classifications of propositions on various bases. Some of them are: necessary and contingent propositions, a-priori and a-posteriori propositions and analytic and synthetic propositions. All these classifications are from different perspectives, yet the confusion of the philosophers rests on association of these types, resulting in a kind of category mistake. These misassociations have caused serious results. The categories of necessity, a-priority and analyticity are significantly distinct from each other. At the root of the confusion lies the mistaken assumption that these are approximately equivalent. If there is no state of affairs possible where a proposition could have a different truth value, it is a necessary
proposition. A priority has to do with the way we discover the truth value of the proposition. Analyticity depends upon the relation between the terms. We can observe that all analytic propositions are a-priori and are necessary. An a-priori proposition has to be necessary but not analytic. A necessary proposition need not be either a-priori or analytic.

These various classifications, though perplexing, inspire us to discover yet another classification based on the types of propositions which would cover almost the entire class of propositions. According to it, we can make a logical distinction between analytic and non-analytic propositions. A proposition can be called analytic if it can be understood from within, without a reference to the external world. From an epistemological point of view, we can make another distinction between basic and non-basic propositions. The propositions known to us directly, with the help of our sense organs or reason, can be known as basic propositions. Other propositions based on these basic ones can be called non-basic propositions. Taken in all, we can have (i) basic analytic propositions, (ii) basic non-analytic propositions, (iii) non-basic analytic propositions, and (iv) non-basic non-analytic propositions.

Our motive behind the presentation of this typology is to posit the view that once the multiplicity of propositions is conglomerated, the philosopher no more remains interested in being merely lexical so far as the problem of knowledge is concerned. Knowledge has got an independent status and the problem cannot be solved by replacing the term in another set of words. The pluralistic notion of truth embedded with the typology of propositions attempts to solve the epistemologist's problems to some extent.
We wish to make clear that the uniqueness and independent status of knowledge does not make it purely subjective in the sense of being not more than a personal opinion. In this sense, one can never talk of interpersonal sharing of knowledge. There is an important social aspect of knowledge which can never be ignored. Although individual epistemology is influenced by Descartes in that it focuses on the individual as a knower, yet the inter-personal context in the social pursuit of knowledge is not to be overlooked. In the social aspect of knowledge, agents remain individuals as knowers, but the sharing of knowledge contributes to the growth of knowledge in its social and institutional aspects. Justification being a social concept is an important factor in the societal knowledge sharable by more than one human beings.

Gettier has inspired us to examine the analysis of knowledge as justified true belief. It is his critique which has revealed that knowledge and justified true belief are not equivalent and that the former cannot be defined in terms of the latter. The concept of knowledge needs to be exonerated from the combination of these three conditions and to be looked at from an independent and novel perspective. The moral of Gettier problem does not demand a definition of knowledge.

We can sum up Gettier’s morals in three significant points which are shown by Gettier with the help of his counterexamples. These are, firstly that knowledge is more intimately related to truth than to justification and a case of justified true belief need not be a case of knowledge as well; secondly, a justified true belief which is generally expressed as a claim to know may not be equivalent to a knowledge situation; and thirdly, justification under human conditions cannot be complete. The entire epoch of Gettier problem has also unwrapped and
questioned the silent approval of 'Justified True Belief' thesis by earlier philosophers.

Still there is much more to work out in the problem of knowledge. The account of Gettier's critique of propositional knowledge given so far, however, despite its complexities, is not complete. It leaves open more insightful reflection into the types of propositions, their identification and handling the problem accordingly. K. Lehrer, in *Knowledge* describes philosophy as the residual pot of unsolved intellectual problems. In *The Problem of Philosophy*, B. Russell suggests us to study philosophy not for the sake of definite answers to its questions but rather for the questions themselves.