

# The counsel for Heraclitus: Product of marvel and misrecognition.

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## Abstract

The Pre-Socratic philosopher named Heraclitus has been a major figure of his time primarily because of the amount of agony, awe, awakening that has been immensely available through his texts, I rightly call him a man who was a forward-looking and early for his time-period because of the set of ideas ranging from god to strive and the complexity instilled in his pieces that has earned him not so favourable curses from thinkers. Hatred towards humanity, someone who has nothing prudential to offer to humanity all sorts of dark spells cover his grave now. But the age-old tradition of philosophy which Plato exalted in his verbatim: philosophy is about wonder, one must wonder so as to why Heraclitus asserted what he said! Simply criticizing him because of lesser or very few availability of his fragments is not being critical.

Misrepresentation, misrecognition and misinterpretation reigns heavily over the philosophical texts and conceptual teachings propounded by Heraclitus. The effort must not go into vain for his ideas DO hold importance in this material-oriented-world. In the course of this research I endeavour to iron out certain possible criticisms that have been leveled against him which, I suppose, mist amount to grave error in comprehending his texts. This research paper focuses towards the comprehension of the unfiltered version of Heraclitus and bursting the myths surrounding his idea.

**Keywords:** Myth, Flux, Cosmos, Rationalism, Eudemonia, Plato

## 1. Introduction:

Heraclitus was born around 540 BCE in Ephesus. He was the son of Blosson or as some assert, of Heracon, was an Ephesian. He

belonged to an aristocratic family and was about to be the Emperor- the inherited king but he gave away this title and turned away his back at this profession involving people of high

rank profiles and this clearly tells us that he was not keenly interested in the material things or dwelling into the fiduciary and passionate transitory desires. He invested himself into pioneering the theory of flux.

He is called as the following:-

- The riddler
- The weeping philosopher
- The obscure

*QUOTATION:* "The content of your character is your choice. Day by day, what you choose, what you think and what you do is who you become" ~ Heraclitus

It is primarily because he was famous for constructing riddles and puzzles that were too intimidating, cumbersome and heavily tumultuous for holistically processing it and solving them.

Another common charge that has been leveled against Heraclitus, is that he was not interested in public in general and we get this from the incident when he grumbled the following:-

**Ηρακλειτο ς εγω τι μανω κατω ελκετ αμ ι ι; ημιν νυν, τι ς δε μ ε προισταμενος. εις ε μι ανθρωπ ς τρισμυρι ι, ι δ ανα ριθμ ι υδε ις. Ταυτ αυδω και παρ α Φερ Σε νηι.**

(Meaning: Why do you drag me up and down, uncultured boors? It was not for you that I laboured, but for those who understand me- he has a sense of authorship and is having a dislike for people)

The charge of misanthropy is commonly raised against him. But to what extent can this be appropriately justified in context to his philosophical work? What were the standards employed or were summoned to belittle him by calling him as "arrogant"- we need to understand this aspect. Additionally he is also considered to be an arrogant philosopher and clearly asserts the fact that his theories are not formulated for the ordinary minds but only for

those who can understand the delicate derivatives behind those fragments.

His share of "Ahamkara" (arrogance per say) could be efficiently sensed from the following verbatim:-

**πλυμαθη ν ν ειν υ διδα σκει Ησου ν γ αραν ε διδαδ και Πυθαγορα ς α υ τις τε !εν α νεα τε και Εκαται ν.** (Much learning does not teach wisdom, or else it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras and then again Xenophanes and Hecataeus- F:40)

**την τε ςμηρον εασκεν εν ε κ των αγωνων ε κάλλεσθαι και ραπ ιε- σθαι και Αρ ιλν μιως.** (Homer deserves to be chased from the [poetic] contests and beaten with a stick, and Archilochus too- fr: 42)

Although it is commonly understood that he was the most arrogant of all people, the same question has to be leveled here as well. To what extent was he an arrogant thinker- the abhorrent subjectivity in the terminology "arrogant" signifies what? (Nietzsche was too then, if we go by the general logic)

But a rather optimistic approach could be supplied with the fact that he was basically pointing to words the point that by the utilization of the desired prerequisite faculties profusely in order to comprehend the. But rather optimistic approach could suppliers with the fact that he was basically pointing to words the point that by the utilization of the desired prerequisite faculties profusely in order to comprehend the Heraclitian fragments- he first poses a challenge and a critique of the human minds and then indirectly encourages us to be one of the insightful philosopher to comprehend things into its right perspective and see things as they were i.e., in the state of constant change (flux/logos) Can we ascribe to

the fact that Heraclitus was by the virtue of relation can be considered as a naturalist philosopher like Thales or Parmenides is something we have to evaluate.

## 2. Objectives of the paper

I personally believe that, Heraclitus is not a man of answers but rather someone who can actually derive the quest to know anything by posing strong intellectual questions (not to be confused with scepticism of Hume) and this is the true way of understanding the core sentential in the exhilarating record in the conduct of life.

Now, before dwelling entirely into the topic of Heraclitus and his proposed theory it becomes an imperative task to raise the pertinent questions that are centred around Heraclitian dictum and in our further discourse, we endeavour to significantly supply answers to the same. The questions are as follows:-

1. Can we say that Heraclitus fragments are akin, in nature to the paradoxical crafted by Socrates that were these fragments and his whole theory at large was just a product of miasma generated out of contradiction {To what extent can we rely upon the arguments supplementary by "the big" i.e. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle- while we are on the Quest of finding the true meaning of fragments of Heraclitus and the real understanding of his main theory of logos}

2. What are the points placed for by Heraclitus to defend his position on relative permanence of entities in this world, could we assert that he had an uncompromised stand on the notion of momentariness?

3. Can we relate Hercules to the Indian concept of philosophical Outlook in a way that can be associated in terms of relation with the Bharitya Darshana so as to defend his own philosophical position?

4. Was the theory of flux propounded by Heraclitus- reflecting upon a haphazard, spontaneous, unregulated "Change" how far can this common Label of Criticism be levelled against Heraclitus?

5. Was the theory of logos and the concept of change of Heraclitus a mere bookish concept that is only abstract-metaphorically useful and seemingly lacks the strong practical holding in actual-reality of this world? (Even after levelling bitter criticism against the theory pioneered by Heraclitus, can we actually drive something out of his theory of change or is it totally a useless pursuit?)

Comprehending about the crucial theologies of Heraclitus is an important aspect to which we now turn to.

### 3. Heraclitus: theory of logos

The men presumes that there are few entities that we can ascribe relative permanence for instance the mountains Sun, River, candle, human beings in general, and any situation basically mostly everything in this world can be considered to have the element of partial permanent seated within its core but according to this philosopher the fashion of ascribing relative permanence to objects is basically an illusion and nothing else everything has a particular time frame and whether we talk about mountains or any other entity all of them are having a particular period and they do not remain as same or as it is even for a movement

primarily because of the fact that they are changing maybe at the micro level but things are changing there in a constant state of flux

The only permanent thing according to him was change for example **“No man ever stepped into the same river twice for it is not the same river and he’s not the same man”**

The aforementioned examples clearly speaks of the virtue that nothing is permanent because the water that was there within the river has been washed away from the shore the constituent particles of the river which is basically that specific water article has passed away and a novel entity has assumed the centre stage. An ignorant being would consider that the river is the same but an enlightened being- the omniscient, can clearly grapple the actual meaning of this efficiently- this phenomenon is decorated in the tactile-scientific-theories. It hints towards this fact that “nothing abides” and “everything-flows” i.e. All the insects and those mountains that we believe are having some sort of relative permanence are nothing but short fleeting entities guided by the logos only, the “charge of relative permanence” is unsolicited bashed against these entities because of the equivalent amount of inflow and outflow of material, but at large relative permanence is a mere myth only because the elements are changing from the very lowly-basic level. This holistically sums up the Theory of flux for us. Now let us look at yet another important aspect in Heraclitian theory i.e. unity of opposites and strive.

#### **4. Unity of opposites (in context to: Logos)**

Two entities i.e. hot and cold profusely unite to precipitate the material in this world. On the notion of soul the more the fire will be in the more the light i.e. fire and becoming and the

lesser the fire would be the lesser the light, more darkness surrounds i.e. not being and stagnation. He has placed a heavy amount of importance to the concept of strife because it is becoming and all evolutionary in nature. The *“Yin and Yang symbol”* is the classic example of it.

There is a compound of *“opposing entity”* in ourselves and the example we can refer to is the concept of Life and death, i.e. not being already present in being and they both are constituent units of *“BECOMING”* only. This is how we can relate the opposite pairs to the concept of Heraclitian theory of change. Jung conceived the idea of *“Enantiodromia”* from the Heraclitus notion of opposites.

#### **4.1 Concept of Fire: Arke (first principle of the universe)**

According to Heraclitus, fire is the ultimate source of the promulgation of this universe and all the things arise and descend from and in fire only. It takes equal amount of material and gives equivalent amount in return in the form of vapour and smoke, it is having perfect resemblance with the human life in general because just the way human life transforms and changes the same fashion is evidently visible in fire as well because steady flame is a sign of termination of the fire and so is the unchanging-jolted instance in human life signifies its subsequent termination.

A main point to be remembered here is that Heraclitus was not a “crude materialistic-naturalist” philosopher like his contemporaries in the pre-Socratic era because he stated that fire is “symbolizing” human life as it's perfectly similar in its character. Mutation happens in both fire and human life. But the Heraclitian-fire is not the *“normal-fire-material”* it is the

“primal fire” which never ends but is guided by the law of logos.

The discourse dealing with the theoretical aspect of the philosophical position held by Heraclitus is fairly dealt with and now let's proceed to answer certain pertinent remarks against his theory and reflect upon his work in a disinterested manner.

### 5. Major Exposition

Socrates who is the most prolific philosopher and unlike sophists never charged money. Plato called him a true philosopher who helped citizens by guiding them on the right path to live an ethical life. Philosophy of Socrates- “virtue is knowledge” birthed famous paradoxical “I am intelligent because I know that I know nothing”- serves our purpose here. But a major criticism levelled by Aristotle was that simply knowing virtue will not fall short of making a person live and act virtuously, it's basically fraught with errors. Heraclitian fragments like road up and down are the same- can we actually say that these are baseless contradicting verses? Can the upstream Path exist without having a downstream path- whether the path leading up words perpetuate independently without its way down? Heraclitus urges citizens to shun their “private understanding “ and use common sense to comprehend things into its right perspective but all this comes with a little hard work as he says “in order to find gold you need to dig deep” serves of great moral worth.

Addressing the other relief of resorting confidence in the pronouncements supplied by Plato, Aristotle and Socrates about Heraclitus is somewhat incorrect and inconsistent because in Raven and Kirk book, the pre-Socratic philosopher- they say that Plateau have been

generally misled specially by sophisticated exaggeration in his distortion of Heraclitus, Aristotle accepted the platonic flux interpretation and carried it still father while explaining the unity of opposites his assertion that the opposites are the same Aristotle is in misinterpretation is evidently visible here when he applies logical standards anachronistically because by “the same” he meant “not essentially different” and not “identical”. In the words of Roman Dilcher, “if we look round, no blatant contradiction is readily forthcoming Cratylus, an older contemporary of Plato developed a debased form of Heracliteanism by irrelevant Ephesian exaggerations. Diogenes and Socrates also failed in successfully comprehending Heraclitus' notion of change by calling it off as ambiguous. It signifies we cannot rely upon their verbatim to talk about Heraclitus. Listen not to me but to the logos is his point which clearly means that this “all-important rule” comprising the humans is something that is out there in the grey and can be understood if people conspicuously utilize the human reason and analytic mind-set rather than weaving their own personal mirage.

Theorist usually believe that Heraclitus fell short of defending his position for standing in non-affirmative of the concept of RELATIVE-PERMANENCE but this is a false argument raised by people who never really understood his argument, because Heraclitian flurxism is not like the crude or process flurxism primarily because for him < change > and <permanence> can go hand in hand but in a subtle way he escapes the onus of relying on relative permanence because he has talked about “changes” that are “visibly present” and this has an implicit clause regarding the “infra-visible” changes which cannot be seen with a naked eye. Imagine an atom, now it is

apparently clear and science has ably proved that atoms undergo transformation- but can you see {with naked eyes} an atom change? NO! Even the sea, he talks about is compositionally changing slowly and steadily, it does not remain static even for a moment- almost every second some change is taking place inside the human body- science proves this assertion! We have indirectly come to the point which Heraclitus mentioned, and it was that “logos-the universal principle of mutation is all-pervading, all-encompassing, and all-enveloping in nature”

Another dilemma which we confront ourselves with while reading theory of logos is that whether the change Heraclitus was talking about was ordered and systematic or was it haphazard and following a willy-nilly fashion? A number of writers on organizational change have drawn upon Heraclitus’s references to flux in arguing for more attention to be paid to procedural analysis of organizational change [Chia 1999; Langley et al. 2013; Van de Ven and Poole 2005]. It is clear that Heraclitus believed that world comprise of processes and not things they keeps on changing- this change maybe exponential and simultaneous but not aimlessly clumsy- it involves every entity and nothing is kept aloof but everything has to be viewed through a collective fashion in a holistic manner, even while change is taking place- it does not radically transforms the object, nothing cancels out but remain in a complementary fusion style. The change is structural and not haphazard in nature. Balancing opposite forces, mutation, change- all are important management procedures.

### 6. Important Aspect

In bhagwat-gita Sri Krishna emphatically asserts the following:

रुद्राणां शङ्करश्चास्मि वितेशो यक्षरक्षसाम्  
। पुरोधसां च मुख्यं मां विद्धि पार्थ  
बृहस्पतिम् । वेदानां सामवेदोऽस्मि  
देवानामस्मि वासवः ।

Now, can we say that these qualities which Shri Krishna goes on to explain are contradictory and cancelling out each other? How can krishna be shiv, kamdhenu, bhrigu, bhraspathi, airavat hathi- all at the same time? These are complementary qualities and subsequent roles not paradoxical roles that are opposite of each other. The harmony is maintained through “The Strive” just the way disease ends the weariness and makes a person healthy (fragment of Heraclitus) this contextual logic must be applied to his theory as well.

Buddha and Nagarjun’s philosophy of “SHANIKA-VADA” and “SHUNYA-VADA” where they talk about the momentariness and the fact that things, emotions, feelings, humans- all are changing and nothing remains static. “All is possible when emptiness is there and nothing is possible when emptiness is impossible” can we say this contradictory and pass it over as a mere paradoxical? No, it is talking about energy change and it is having its resemblance with the Heraclitus notion of change.

### 7. Conclusion

It is very easy to criticize a philosopher solely because of the scarcity of the material available or evaluating the philosopher by inconsistent theories based on half-baked knowledge which Plato called as “conjecture”. We must try to utilize our own mind, rationality, and not only solely rely on sense-perception to understand the theory of any propounder in general and

pre-Socratic in particular. Heraclitus has given all of us an opportunity to develop that “greater-eyesight” to see reality and live a life of total renunciation by consciously understanding the delicacies of his theory.

Simply studying about the material world and scientific advancements and to construct a greater knowledge about the “kosmos” and the world around you. Not to accept things as they are and view it through the lens of logos which is absolute, and impartial. Man, success, achievements, incidents, ideas, feelings and the world are just the product of its time- they keep on changing, paradigm shift happens significantly and to understand that these remain at least temporarily permanent is plain falsity because as “Iqbal” said: सितारों के आगे जहाँ और भी हैं! Everything is caught up in the endless cycle of change where things are transformationally equivalent components and not following them is a clear invitation to decimation and end, but Heraclitus tries to present a positive-philosophy through his conspicuously complexity-ridden expositions. In the words of Heraclitus: “To be even minded is the greatest virtue. Wisdom is to speak the truth and act in keeping with its nature.” Thereby, truly signifying that theory and practice is same for him as was the case with Gandhi and the whole of Indian philosophy.

#### 8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to heartily thank Hansraj College for providing the platform for this research. Former assistant professor Shivi for their valuable guidance. I would also like to acknowledge my maternal grand-mother, Late Mrs Kanchan Verma who encouraged me to

dive deep into complex topics like that of Heraclitus.

I would also like to thank Mr Manoj Kumar Mishra, Mrs Renu for the wisdom they have shared with me and the energy of discussion about permanence and mutation has proved to be a guidance in this course of paper research for me. I thank my peers Chahat Nassa (Conestoga College, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada), and Shresth Saxena (Shivaji College, University of Delhi) for their critical comments on this topic.

#### 9. Declaration of funding

No fund to declare.

#### 10. Conflict of interest

The authors hereby declare that there is no conflict of interest.

#### 11. Data availability statement

No data from outside sources has been used in this research work.

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