

EDITOR'S NOTE AND INTRODUCTION

by **Tamoghna Sarkar**

Philosophical trajectories of different cultures may very well differ, still as an intense intellectual practice and skill philosophy across the globe aims to nurture autonomous rational minds of free thinkers, not diluted with prejudice and bias. A philosophically trained rational mind is able to attend a conceptual terrain in which commitment to one's own tradition neither annihilates nor subjugates other perspectives or worldviews. In India, philosophy never lost its intimate ties to deepened forms of living even when it is engaged with abstract critical analysis. Both as *darśana* ('seeing' and not mere 'seeking' the truth) and *ānvīkṣikī* (a systematic enterprise of rigorous rational and critical thinking) Indian philosophy aims to generate the right knowledge of 'things' (in its broadest possible sense) which in turn destroys the process of transmigration and the consequent sufferings (*duḥkha*). Thus, the orientalist outlook towards Indian philosophy as an exclusive exercise of theology and mysticism is not only mistaken but non-philosophical also. 'Indian philosophy' is a designation of vast and varied facets of human inquiry and worldview. From the skeptics and destroyers of systematic philosophy to the supporters of the claim that all our awarenesses are true and self-revealing; from extreme idealism to robust metaphysical realism to hermeneutics; from materialism and naturalism to spiritualism and supernaturalism; from pluralism to monism (both metaphysical and linguistic), and almost everything in between, openness to human reflective inquiries is the key of doing Indian philosophies. Colonial and post-colonial Indian philosophical thinkers, writing mainly in English, apart from giving new dimensions and analyses to the traditional philosophical theories, often bring social and political philosophy to the center-stage. They also dealt with specific problems related to the nature of consciousness, human subject and its freedom, agency and identity, nature of philosophy, practical philosophy etc.

It is a privilege to be entrusted with the duty of Editor of the first exclusive issue of *Philosophy Pathways* on Indian philosophy. Articles selected obviously do not cover the entire domain of Indian philosophy. Still from the limited resources available I am able to present before readers articles covering fields of epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, social and political philosophy, and metaphysics of time and aesthetics.

Debalina Ghosh in her essay *The Nyāya and the Buddhist Logic on Perception: Revisiting the Controversy* shows how two diametrically opposed ontologies result in contrasting epistemologies of perception. On the possibility of determinate perception as against Buddhist claim that only non-conceptual perception is a true perception, Nyāya asserts that the world is not composed of bare particulars and we do not impose universals on propertyless (bare) real particulars. Rather we find stable, durable, relational wholes in reality that does not require any imposition or manipulation. So, conceptual or determinate perception does not involve distortion of reality; rather it presents things as they really are. On the other hand, Buddhist logicians by considering instantaneous momentary particulars (*svalakṣṇa*) as objects of perception and only nominal existence of universals, accept each event of so-called perceptual judgment involving concepts as a kind of inference.

In the article *Some Logical Inconsistencies in the term ‘Acintyabhedābheda’*: *A 20th Century Advaita Vedānta Appraisal* by Sudipta Munsī we get a glimpse of the fierce and fundamental debate regarding the nature of reality within the systems of *vedānta* — is it a mere non-difference or mere difference or qualified non-difference or difference-cum-non-difference or pure non-difference undefiled by *māyā* or inconceivable non-difference within difference? In the present article Mr. Munsī summarises the arguments of *Advaita Vedānta* against *Acintyabhedābheda* (inconceivable or supra-rational non-difference-in-difference) doctrine upheld by the Bengal *vaiṣṇavas* of Śrī Caitanya school, as found in the 4th part of a 20th century Bengali work, *Advaitamatatimirabhāskara* by Prof. Nirañjanasvarūpa Brahmācārī. After presenting three possible meanings of the term

‘*acintya*’ the author dismisses all of them by using *Navya-Nyāya* terminology and method of analysis. He further analyses the term and shows how *acintyabhedābheda*, if admitted at all, should ultimately be understood as meaning the same as term ‘*anirvacanīya*’ (inexplicability) of the *Advaita Vedānta* school. According to *Advaita*, appearances are false since they are inexplicable. Appearances are empirically but not absolutely real. Advaitins do not deny the perception of difference; but they say that it is an object of sublation. In difference, the difference from other than its own has to be stated; this will result in the contradiction of its own location or there will be an infinite regress. In difference, the character of difference, the character of an adjunct or the character of class has to be stated. There again, if difference has to be stated then, because of mutual dependence, its own location will result. Unity (*aikya*) is the non-difference which is the essential nature indicated by not being the locus of properties which do not exist in the Brahman. The nature of Brahman is such that it is never sublated and is non-dual.

Our third paper is from the field of Indian ethics (*dharmanīti*). Dinanath Ghatak’s article ***The Gītā: Teaching of Value and Dharma*** has three focal points: (i) to delineate the proper connotation of the term ‘*dharma*’, (ii) to distinguish, in the context of moral discourse presented in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, between instrumental value and intrinsic value, and (iii) to show that only a community of virtuous persons will make the world a better place to live. *Dharma* has its role in both the mundane and spiritual upliftments of individuals. *Dharma*, in one of its important senses, constitutes a set of moral principles which can be applied in various ways as appropriate to the level of spiritual attainment of those who follow them. *Dharma* in its objective sense means the duties and responsibilities of an individual. Division of duties or works in accordance with one’s natural abilities and inherent qualities is the key for maintaining social order and individual excellence, teaches *The Gītā*.

Susmita Bhattacharya’s excellent exposition of the metaphysics of time in Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy and its conceptual affinity with the interpretation of some forms

of the classical Indian art makes her paper *The Mysterious Paradox of Time: A Brief Study from Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy and Classical Indian Art* worth reading. Apparently paradoxical and irreconcilable concepts in our finite rational minds can harmoniously and consistently coexist in the infinite consciousness. In Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, time (*kāla*) is the self-extension of the Absolute Consciousness. With regard to the same eternity the Eternal consciousness can have three different states of its consciousness: the timeless eternity which is the static unmanifest status of the Absolute, the time eternity which is the dynamic manifest status of the same eternal, and, the time-movement which is a progressive movement of Consciousness-Force in which it searches itself. In line with this interpretation the age-old debate in the western philosophy of time between tensors and detensors can also be put to an end. Prof. Bhattacharya then proceeds to show how some traditional Indian art forms embody the idea that the static and dynamic aspects of the same eternity can be absorbed in the Absolute.

Pranay Deb's paper *What makes Gandhi a 'Mahātmā'* discusses the moral, socio-political and economic virtues and activities that mould Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi into 'a great soul'. Gandhian ideals of truth and non-violence find their socio-political and economical applications in his formulations of *satyāgraha*, *sarvodaya*, *swarāj* and trusteeship. Staying firm in the path of truth or 'soul-force', material and spiritual upliftment of all, equal right to participate and regulate the society are the three pillars of Gandhi's philosophy. Human dignity and honor, for Gandhi, is of utmost importance and that makes him to dream of a stateless democracy which will be based on the principle of self-reliance or self-sufficiency.

I hope that the esteemed readers of the *Philosophy Pathways* will find these essays interesting and thought-provoking.

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