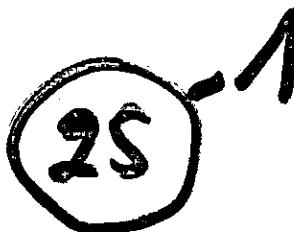


Emerging new approaches in the study of classical Indian philosophy

DAYA KRISHNA



Indian philosophy by and large has been treated up to now in an antiquarian spirit, something belonging to past history which has no relevance to current concerns of philosophical thought in the world. Further, it has readily been assumed that the past traditions of philosophical thought had already reached a dead end and that there were no living representatives of that thought in modern times or that those who existed were concerned primarily with the preservation and safe-guarding of past knowledge in these domains. The intellectual and cultural domination of the west as well as the establishment of educational institutions on western models, along with the training of students in western universities, ensured that the paradigmatic model about philosophy and what was to count as "philosophical" was determined by the west. Also, as English was the language of both national and international intellectual life, it automatically ensured that those who did not know the language or could not write or converse in it would become intellectually non-existent even in their own country. This resulted in a situation where only those persons were paid attention to even in the field of Indian philosophy who wrote in English or in other major European languages. If one only knew Sanskrit and wrote in it, one had very little chance of being treated as a serious scholar or thinker even in those areas of philosophy which specifically pertained to that which was exclusively contained in the Sanskrit texts themselves. The scholar who could not read, write or speak in English thus gradually became invisible in the philosophical scene during the course of this century in India.

There were other reasons for the gradual disappearance of the visibility of the traditional Indian philosopher from the scene of Indian philosophy in India. The institutional segregation, the economic discrimination, the differences in the style of living and the radical diversity in the intellectual and cultural ethos of the two groups led to a situation where the privileged moderns were almost unaware of the existence of the deprived traditionalists, while the latter developed all the attitudes which any underprivileged minority which is discriminated against does. The deeper reason, however, was the attitude to all non-western traditions of knowledge sedulously developed by historians of thought in the west and internalised by intellectuals of most other countries which had not only modelled their educational system on those of the West, but also used West-european languages as their medium of instruction and taught through text-books written by western authors in those languages. It thus came to be an accepted belief, unquestionably held by all

educated persons, that not only was the west the source of all knowledge but also that only that would be regarded as genuine knowledge which was written in a Western language, and that, too, by a western author. This alone may explain the strange fact that not only works written in various Indian languages are generally ignored by Indian intellectuals but even those which are written in English by Indians are hardly paid any attention by their colleagues in the same field of study. This has happened, surprisingly, even in such an area of study as Indian philosophy, where a large mass of significant material continues to be written in Sanskrit and other regional languages of the country.

The problem is further complicated by the fact that the model of what "philosophy" or any other cognitive discipline is supposed to be, is determined not only by the western paradigms but also by the west's own image of itself and that of other cultures which it would like everyone to accept unquestioningly. Thus, time and again, the question has been raised whether traditional Indian philosophy can be considered as "philosophy" in the western sense of the term. No one, of course, has asked if western philosophy can be regarded as "philosophy proper" that is, as "*Darśana*", or "*Ānavīkṣikī*", or "*Tattva-jñāna*", the Indian terms for what goes by the name of "philosophy" in the west. The very fact that such a question has not even occurred to minds engaged in the philosophical enterprise in modern India is a witness to the essential asymmetry in the cognitive status which is accorded to the two traditions not only in the west, but in India also.

The contrasting features ascribed to the two philosophical traditions usually are that, while the western philosophical tradition is primarily concerned with a rational consideration of things and believes in the primacy of reason, the Indian philosophical tradition believes in the primacy of the revealed word and the authority derived from it. It also sees philosophy as an ancillary activity to the achievement of a trans-philosophical end, that is, *mokṣa*. Besides these, there are a host of other alleged differences, such as being other-worldly, pessimistic, individualistic, etc.; but basically they are all derived from these. A questioning of these basic characterisations may be regarded as one of the chief features of the new way of looking at traditional Indian philosophy (Daya Krishna, 1965, 1966, 1984).¹ And, following from this, there has been the widespread feeling that in case this is true, classical Indian philosophical thought should have something to contribute to the discussion of contemporary philosophical problems as they are apprehended today.

One widely prevalent way of doing this formerly was to discover parallelisms in the Indian philosophical tradition to the problems and the patterns of their solution in the western tradition of philosophising. This, obviously, was not very intellectually exciting, either to the Indian or the Western philosopher, for the simple reason that if something had already been thought, it could hardly be of much interest to the active, independent thinker in the present, or even to a student of comparative philosophy. For, the only thing that could be of possible interest to a living thinker is the difference, either in what was apprehended as a problem or in the direction of its solution, rather than in the so-called similarities between the diverse traditions² (Daya Krishna, 1984b).

All cognitive traditions, whether in philosophy or in any other discipline, stake a

claim to universal validity. The fact that they have arisen at a particular place or time or grown in the confines of a specific cultural tradition does not in any way stand in the way of the claim being there, as it is intrinsic to the very nature of the enterprise itself. True, there are realms of knowledge which seem to show a certain cumulativeness of growth, at least over certain periods of discernible time, and where the later phase in the growth of knowledge seems definitely to supersede the former. But philosophy is certainly not such a field of knowledge along with many other disciplines belonging to the social sciences and the humanities. In many of these, the past thinkers are not superseded by those in the later times. Rather they continue to be perennially relevant in a sense in which they can hardly be so in any of the natural sciences or even in some of the disciplines belonging to other realms. The fact is well known, but somehow most western thinkers tend to accept this only for the Greeks and those others who, in their opinion, belong to the western tradition of thought in their subjects. That is one reason why, though Plato and Aristotle are accorded full honours in any contemporary discussion of philosophical problems, no such consideration is extended to even the greatest of thinkers outside the western tradition. And this in spite of the heroic attempts at translation of some of the best philosophers outside the western tradition into languages that are easily accessible to the bibliography-conscious western scholar. Perhaps the segregation of Indological and Sinic studies in Research Institutions of the west may have been partly responsible for this, as the study of philosophical traditions of India and China was relegated to their care and treated as their exclusive concern. But, then, this segregation itself was the result of the mental attitude which regarded the intellectual contributions of all non-western civilizations as being of no relevance to contemporary cognitive concerns and hence only of antiquarian interest.

Yet, whatever the justifications for this attitude on the part of western scholars, there could be none for the non-western ones. However, surprisingly enough, most scholars belonging to cultures other than the western one accepted this as the natural state of affairs and considered their own rich intellectual heritages as completely irrelevant to their cognitive enterprise, excepting, of course, the Greek Masters whom the western scholarship has already accepted.

It is this unconscious acceptance of the western way of looking at their own intellectual traditions which has come under increasing scrutiny of a significant number of Indian thinkers in general, and those belonging to the field of philosophy in particular. It has increasingly begun to be asked why philosophers in contemporary India do not bring the classical Indian philosophical thought to bear on the discussion of contemporary philosophical issues. One example of this agonising concern is the special issue of the *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* (Poona; Oct.-Dec., 1984b) devoted to this very problem entitled "Swaraj in Ideas", containing the responses of a large number of Indian intellectuals to an address delivered under this very title and later published by K.C. Bhattacharyya, the most outstanding Indian philosopher of the first half of this century, as early as 1929. Also, if classical Indian philosophical thought was really vibrant and alive at one time and had the strength in it, even in contemporary times, to respond critically and creatively to philosophical issues in contemporary philosophy then why should it not

be capable of independent growth and development on its own, even in modern times? Anything that is alive must be capable of modification, growth and development along new lines—a situation that can only be realised if the scholars who are deeply immersed in the traditional philosophy in the traditional way begin to look at it in a new way. And this can happen only if they begin to ask new questions, articulate their own dissatisfactions with the traditional philosophy as they apprehend it and suggest their own improvements in respect of the deficiencies they find in the traditional formulation of the problems or of their solutions.

But for all this to take place, there had to be a fairly large number of traditional practitioners of philosophy, adept in the classical way of philosophising in India. And assuming that they were there, they had to be located and discovered and some sort of contact established with them. Also, as most of them did not know English, the only language of serious intellectual discourse in India, the only way in which one could enter into a dialogue with them on philosophical or any other issues was to provide facilities for bilingual translation so that the participants in the philosophical interchange might express themselves freely in the language they could best express themselves in.

Professor M.P. Rege was perhaps the first person to realise the imperative necessity of providing such a facility to the participants if a meaningful dialogue between traditional and modern philosophers were to take place in contemporary India. He also was perhaps the first person to realise that if the dialogue was to be fruitful in the contemporary context, then it had to be about issues that were engaging the philosophical minds today. It was perhaps for this reason that he formulated some issues arising from Russell and Wittgenstein, got them translated into Sanskrit and circulated them to the traditional Pandits beforehand so that they may have some idea of the philosophical issues that were to be the subject of discussion between traditional and modern scholars in the field of philosophy later. He was also careful in choosing the scholars from both sides for the dialogue. The traditional Pandits invited for the dialogue were drawn not only from various disciplines, such as logic, grammar, linguistics, hermeneutics (Mīmāṃsā), which would be relevant to the subject under discussion, but also were of such outstanding authority in their respective fields that the very fact that they had consented to take part in such a dialogue made the experiment seem worthwhile to other Pandits. Professor Rege also met many of them personally and explained to them the purpose of the dialogue so that they had some idea of what was intended to be achieved through the dialogue and were favourably inclined towards it. Besides this, he took care to choose those amongst traditional scholars who had a relatively open mind about philosophical issues and were prepared to modify their positions in the light of counter-arguments or offer new arguments for holding to the old position. These qualities were pre-eminently embodied in such outstanding representatives of traditional scholarship as Pandit Badrinath Shukla, Pandit Srinivas Shastri and Pandit Laxman Shastri Joshi who throughout guided the discussion for one full week during which time the dialogue was held.

✓ Professor Rege was equally careful in choosing the University-based scholars trained primarily in the western tradition of philosophising for the dialogue. Most

of them had a fair knowledge of Sanskrit, knew Indian philosophy — particularly *Nyāya* — quite well, and had a firm foundation in Western philosophy. Some of them had even studied Indian philosophical texts from the traditional pandits in the traditional way. A few had an equally fluent command of both the traditions and spoke Sanskrit as well as English equally fluently. These provided the expertise for translation from English into Sanskrit and *vice versa*, thus providing the bridge between the two traditions and making the dialogue possible. The week-long dialogue revealed two things — first, the necessity of continuing it; and secondly, the immense difficulties of translating from one conceptual structure into another. The experience was intellectually so rich and rewarding that there was no doubt, at least amongst those who were steeped in the western tradition of philosophising, that the whole thing should be put on a continuing basis so that the momentum generated might not be lost. On the other hand, it was equally clear that successful translation, which was the necessary prerequisite for the dialogue, was not such an easy job as many of us had earlier imagined. It requires not only a facility in both the languages, but also a grasp of the two philosophical traditions in their specificity. This, in a sense, had been anticipated to some extent. What was new and baffling to discover, was to find that languages are not conceptually neutral as we had thought them to be. The Sanskrit term or terms through which translation from English was being attempted, we discovered, had already been pre-empted to do a technical job in the interest of the conceptual structures which the Indian philosophical tradition has elaborated over millennia. There were, so to speak, no philosophically uncommitted or neutral terms in Sanskrit which could serve as even rough equivalents of what was sought to be conveyed through the English terms. Yet the difficulty, though disconcerting in the beginning, was gradually overcome, at least to the extent that the dialogue could be kept going and the participants felt that they were getting closer to understanding what the other side was trying to say regarding the issues under consideration.

The Rege experiment at Poona (11–12 July 1983) led to a number of startling discoveries on the part of those philosophy teachers in India who had lost all contact with the practitioners of the classical traditions of philosophising in the country. The fact that there were scores of living representatives steeped in the traditional ways of philosophising with whom it was almost a way of living itself came as a surprise to everyone who had thought that the classical traditions of Indian philosophy were dead and gone and hence a subject of only historical and antiquarian interest to be satisfied by rummaging among the dusty shelves filled with ancient texts, difficult to interpret and understand. To find it all alive and kicking and knocking at one's door was to realise that the first task was to fathom its depth and diversity and extent, so that one may also begin to relate to it in a living manner. The preparation of a *Who's Who* of traditional scholarship seemed the first priority, and getting in touch with those who were there, the next. Both were undertaken almost immediately. And, as everything living tends to proliferate endlessly, one thing led to another and the enterprise diversified itself and branched out in many directions.

One of these was the discovery that traditional scholarship in certain areas of

philosophy such as *Nyāya*, *Mīmāṃsā* and Kashmir Shaivism was rapidly declining for a variety of reasons and that, if nothing was done to check the process, important texts would become unintelligible to modern students of the subject. It was decided, therefore, to convene meetings of outstanding scholars in these areas to allow them to interact with each other and discuss the future of their subject amongst themselves. The traditional scholars are not only scattered far and wide in different parts of the country, sometimes even in remote areas not usually associated with the presence of any man of learning there, but they have generally little occasion to meet each other in intellectual interchange. Many of them are old and retired and settled in their ancestral villages or in Mathas belonging to their own Saṁpradāya. To find their whereabouts and find funds for inviting them all to one place from all the four corners of India was a difficult and challenging enterprise indeed. But institutions such as the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, the Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, The Tibetan Institute of Higher Studies helped to realise what had seemed a difficult, if not impossible, undertaking at one stage.

The first meeting of such a kind, i.e. of *Nyāya* pandits from all over India, was held at Benaras, the home of Sanskrit learning in India for millennia. The meeting, held for a full five days was such a resounding success and aroused so much enthusiasm that it was felt by everybody involved in its organisation that such a meeting must also be repeated with traditional scholars specializing in other schools of Indian philosophy. Steps were therefore taken later to organise a meeting of *Mīmāṃsā* scholars at Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh, and of scholars in Kashmir Shaivism at Srinagar in Kashmir. One of the constant features of these meetings was the challenging question posed before the scholars of these traditions as to how they would further develop the thinking in these schools in modern times. Also, what was the doctrine or the position which the adherents of those schools could not give up without giving up their identity as belonging to a recognisable school, distinctly different from others. The more sensitive question, perhaps, concerned their own dissatisfaction with the traditional formulations—with their defects, incompletenesses, weaknesses—as without these there can be no such thing as the living growth of a system.

This, in a sense, seemed to go against the seeming spirit of the Indian tradition where the original formulation was supposed to have said everything that could possibly be said about the system and the task that remained for subsequent thinkers was only to elucidate and explain away the seeming inconsistencies and contradictions in the text. Yet, once the issue was framed in that way and the challenge thrown to them, at least some of them took it up and suggested possible directions in which the old issues could be developed in new ways. One of the most outstanding amongst them, in fact, propounded in a public lecture delivered at the conference a most radical thesis concerning the dispensability of the notion of *Ātman* or soul for the understanding of experience within the *Nyāya* framework of analysis. The postulation of mind along with body were sufficient in his view to account for experience, and there was no necessity for positing any extra entity like *Ātman* when these sufficed for the purpose. This contention of Pandit Badrinath

Shukla was objected to by many traditional scholars who were present on the occasion and one whole session of the conference was devoted to a discussion of what he had said in his lecture. Later, it was suggested that the text of Pandit Badrinath Shukla's lecture be circulated to Pandits, who might then send their objections to what he had said in writing so that he might give his considered reply to them.

Some Nyāya Pandits at the Sarnath Conference at Benaras also showed an interest in modern logic during a discussion when the divergent approaches between the two traditions, the Indian and the western, were presented towards certain logical issues. Arising from this, the idea took shape of providing opportunities for traditional logicians, trained in the Nyāya tradition, to become aware of the western tradition in this field, and was implemented later on when the Ford Foundation showed interest in the whole enterprise and also funded it to some extent. However, as there seemed to be a complementary interest on the part of the modern scholars trained in western logic, the Summer/Winter schools were organised in such a way that both groups had the opportunity to learn from each other's specialised knowledge of logic as it had developed in the two traditions, Indian and Western.

The meetings of traditional scholars in the field of *Mīmāṃsā* and Kashmir Shaivism were later organised at Tirupati and Srinagar, respectively. Though these meetings did not result in any new, interesting contributions on the part of the Pandits in these recognised fields of traditional philosophising, they gave an opportunity to the traditional scholars to interact amongst themselves and respond to the new issues formulated with respect to these fields of studies in the light of formulations of problems relating to these fields in contemporary philosophy. Along with this, there was the other advantage for those primarily trained in the western philosophical tradition to become aware of the distinctiveness of these traditions — particularly of Kashmir Shaivism — and to engage in a dialogue on the subtle and complex issues relating to the problems of interpretation, especially those arising out of the *Mīmāṃsā* discussion on the subject.

The meetings and the dialogues gradually broke the ice between the representatives of the two philosophical traditions in India and established a rapport between the two groups, resulting not only in a profound intellectual respect for each other, but also in the exhilarating discovery of philosophically exciting differences in the way problems were perceived, questions posed, answers attempted and solutions sought. A contrasting analysis which leads in a different direction and gradually builds an imposing structure of philosophical construction over millennia is something whose possibility one can not even conceive of if one is confined to one philosophical tradition alone, which one inevitably treats as the only possible tradition and hence as universally paradigmatic in character.

However, the discovery of a living, alternative philosophical tradition cannot long remain confined to the field of philosophy alone. It inevitably raises the issue of alternative cognitive traditions in other fields of knowledge, too. As philosophy itself is not an isolated cognitive activity, it is intimately related to all other fields of knowledge and is both affected by them and affects them in a substantive manner over a period of time. But in case this is even marginally true, one has to seek and

search for alternative cognitive traditions in other fields of knowledge in India and establish a dialogue with their living representatives, if any.

The story of this parallel search for alternative cognitive traditions in the field of political science, sociology and aesthetics has been told elsewhere (Daya Krishna, 1987).⁴ But, as everyone knows, the search is unending. To grasp the cognitive traditions in different fields of knowledge that have had a long history of more than two thousand years behind them and conceptually articulate them in modern times and use them in the contemporary context for gaining insights into the processes as they are occurring today, is a task that can only be accomplished, if at all, by a large number of persons over a long period of time. But that would not be possible unless a beginning *were made* and the first step taken towards the fulfilment of that objective.

The branching out in other fields of the Rege experiment at Poona was attempted in the field of linguistics at Bhubaneswar in Orissa with the involvement and cooperation of the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, and the Central Institute of English and Foreign languages, Hyderabad. Current issues in linguistics were framed for discussion by these two institutions jointly and then translated into Sanskrit and circulated to traditional scholars beforehand. The dialogue proved as fruitful and promising as the earlier ones at Poona and Delhi and revealed the need for such dialogues in other fields, too.

The successive encounters with the Indian cognitive traditions in different fields of knowledge brought home the realisation that, in order to be really effective and meaningful, such an enterprise cannot be a one-time affair. Rather, it has to be planned on a continuing basis and pursued in depth in such a way that the intellectual issues which arise in each encounter are explored in depth at the next meeting, leading not only to a clarification of the issues concerned but also to an awareness of the problems challenging both the traditional and modern scholars alike to find viable solutions to them.

The search for in-depth exploration of one philosophical problem which has dominated the contemporary philosophical scene for some time past and which had also engaged the attention of classical Indian philosophers for a long time, viz. the problem of meaning and reference, was taken up by the Adyar Library and Research Centre for study and exploration in a series of successive seminars on the subject. The Adyar complex is a well known centre of Sanskrit learning in Madras and the seminars were planned and directed by Professor Kunjunn Raja, the present Director of the Library and Research Centre there. The Centre proposes publishing the results of the seminar as soon as the editing is completed.

All these activities taken together have generated an atmosphere in which philosophers trained in the classical tradition have ceased to be strangers to those trained in the western tradition in India. The lessening of intellectual distances between the representatives of the two traditions has also resulted in a feeling that philosophical activity, at least in India, is to be a joint activity undertaken through some sort of a cooperative, though dialectical, interaction between the two traditions where each questions the other and, by questioning, forces the thought to take new directions. In fact, a number of younger persons in both the traditions have

started taking an interest in the other tradition after participating in these activities and the exposure to which they have been subjected in them.

Almost as a by-product of these encounters, philosophers educated in the western tradition in India have become aware not only of the traditional scholars in the field but also of the fact that many of them have been writing new philosophical works in the classical Indian tradition, unaffected by the western currents of which they have been completely unaware. This has not only completely demolished the widely held belief that philosophising in India stopped a long time ago, but also revealed the unbroken continuity of the philosophical tradition, as many of these scholars had vivid memories of their teachers and the intellectually exciting atmosphere in which they grew up. /

The intellectual history of the philosophical tradition in India within the last few hundred years has hardly been paid any attention as it has been assumed, under the influence of the new system of education, that it was all dead and gone long ago, or that what remained of it was just a dull, dreary repetition of the past. Only a few works in the regional languages such as Hindi or Bengali had tried to convey the flavour of the living tradition in these fields, but they were primarily anecdotal and biographical, without giving the real philosophical contribution these thinkers had made to the past philosophical traditions of this country. Yet, as they give the list of their published and unpublished works, they provide an opportunity for their critical evaluation, provided a number of competent persons could be interested in doing so¹⁵ (see Baldev Upadhyaya, 1983; see also Hemchandra Bhattacharya, 1977/1383). In fact, even the well-known philosophical works of the past have to be reassessed once again in the light of new questions that each generation tends to ask, if it is intellectually vibrant and alive.

The renewed interest in the classical schools of Indian philosophy, particularly Nyāya, is, to a certain extent, evidence of this. A number of scholars, both young and not so young, have begun to look at the classical texts from the *Sūtras* onwards with a new, questioning attitude which is not prepared to take the traditional way of looking at them for granted. They refuse to accept unreservedly the dictum that the founder philosophers of the system, or even those who were responsible for its later development, could not have been wrong or incoherent in their formulations. The very fact of their being so many *pūrvapakṣas* or counterpositions is an evidence, in their opinion, of there being a lively diversity of philosophical positions rather than the unquestioned finality of the one *siddhānta* or doctrine as propounded by some one person whose authority came to prevail in the tradition. The so-called self-image of the tradition as being uniform and unchanging from the *sūtradhāra* (author of the *sūtras*) onwards is, according to them, not only factually false but also almost fatal to the growth of Indian philosophy in modern times. The works of Pradyot Kumar Mukhopadhyaya (1984), Sukharanjan Saha (1987), Mrinal Kanti Gangopadhyaya (1982), B.K. Matilal (1986), Sibajiban Bhattacharyya (1987) amongst others, are an evidence of this. Professor Mukhopadhyaya, for example, writes "... I have in the main sought to reconstruct the views of the classical Indian realists" (Pradyot Kumar Mykhopadhyaya, 1984: p.iv). And, writes Sukharanjan Saha (1987: 11), "... the most sensible thing for us to do is to undertake a pro-

gramme of reinterpretation of our own philosophy in the light of what we have been able to learn about Western philosophy." And, writes Bimal Krishna Matilal (1986: 2). "The writer on classical Indian Philosophy today is generally pulled in two different directions, towards the historical reconstruction of some classical views, and towards the critical examination of similar modern view." But whether it be "construction" or "reinterpretation", the idea is the same; that is, to look at traditional Indian philosophy from the perspectives of problems as posed in contemporary western philosophy.

✓ The question has, of course, been raised why issues in contemporary philosophy alone should provide the basis for a dialogue with the tradition. Does it not create an asymmetry in the very foundations of the dialogue itself? Does it not prejudge in a certain way what shall be considered relevant or significant in the philosophical traditions of non-western cultures? And, can one really pick out arbitrarily certain aspects of the tradition and treat them alone as meaningful and significant, even when they are integrally related to other aspects which one is not prepared to accept.¹ And, at a still deeper level, is not the whole exercise of "reconstructing", "restructuring" or "reinterpreting" to do violence to the past, which ought to be understood in terms of itself, and accepted or rejected on its own grounds?

These are all valid questions and need to be answered if the enterprise is to serve the larger cognitive purposes for which it is primarily intended. It is true that in order to become relevant to contemporary philosophical discussion, the issues and the problems posed to traditional scholars have been taken from that context, but they need not be confined to that context alone. In fact, as the discussion proceeds new problems emerge and they also get discussed. And, though it was inevitable that in the initial stages problems had to be taken from the contemporary western context, the situation need not remain asymmetrical for long and the pandits trained in the classical philosophical traditions of India may raise counter-questions of their own with respect to the western formulations. In fact, such questions become inevitable in the course of the dialogue as the intelligibility of the problems posed itself depends on assumptions which, though widely accepted within the western tradition, are hardly accepted within the Indian one. And, once the hidden assumptions are brought into the open they themselves become the subject of discussion. Further, as the traditional Pandits become aware of the western philosophical tradition, they are bound to raise questions regarding it and, to some extent, they have already started doing so. In one of the summer/winter schools in modern logic for traditional *Nyāya* Pandits, held on their own request to acquaint them with modern logic, this has occurred to some extent. In fact, these schools are experiments of a new kind in the sense that while traditional scholars seek to be acquainted with modern logic, the modern students of the subject are simultaneously taught traditional logic, that is *Nyāya*, by the Pandits. As both the groups had specialised knowledge of that tradition of logic which the other wanted to learn, there was no distinction between teacher and taught, for each was a teacher in one respect and a student in another.

The charge of doing injustice to the tradition by arbitrarily picking up certain aspects, features or issues to the detriment or neglect of others and reinterpreting them to suit one's own purposes is, of course, far more serious and needs to be met

adequately. The first thing to note in this connection is that there is no such thing as one uniform tradition, but rather diverse traditions in conflict with each other. Further, each of these traditions consists of multiple strands which are not exactly in harmony with each other, and which seem to pull it in different directions. One reason for this is that each tradition has had a long history during which it has undergone profound changes for both internal and external reasons. No system is ever a complete coherent whole and the inner inconsistencies always provide the internal pressure for change within it. Besides this, there is the continuous challenge from other systems as well as new needs arising from experience requiring to be accommodated within the system. These provide the external stimulus for change within the system.

The so-called tradition, then, was never, during the period of its growth and development, averse to change. Nor did it resist modifications, when they were needed. And this it did to what, at that time, was "tradition" for it. Why then, is it expected today that the classical tradition in Indian philosophy be preserved in its pristine purity and presented only in that form in which it would be acceptable to the past practitioners of the tradition? But the past practitioners are dead and, even if they were not, why should their judgment be preferred over ours — particularly when they themselves did not always accept what the past practitioners in their own field had held about matters they differed about?

The issue ultimately depends on how one looks at the past and what one wants to do with it. If one treats it as living and one wants to carry it forward and play some role in developing it further, then one's approach would be different than if one treats it as dead and closed, a matter of only textual exegesis and historical understanding. The attitude of the Indologists, it is obvious, cannot but be the latter. Whether it will be the same for those who by their very location happen to be the inheritors of the tradition is difficult to tell, particularly in face of the fact that there are literally hundreds, if not thousands, of living practitioners of the tradition which is treated by others as dead and buried in the catacombs of history.

True, most of the living practitioners of the classical philosophical traditions of India view themselves as the preservers of the tradition, rather than its developers in new directions. But as one of its most perceptive members said "In times of danger, what else can one do but try to preserve and see that something which was carefully developed over millennia is not entirely lost". Also, both the tradition of commentaries and the way the tradition has been understood by most Indologists and accepted, under their influence, by many of the Indian scholars themselves has helped in perpetuating the false image of the past and influenced thereby the traditionalist scholars' attitude to what was the proper thing to do in the present. But, in spite of this, there have been exceptions like Pandit Badrinath Shukla whom we have mentioned earlier. There may be others whose work is still unknown to us. There is so little knowledge about traditional scholars and their work that hardly anything can be said with confidence about it. However, the more we have come to know about them and their works during the last few years, the more suspicious we have become about the stereotypes built up over the past century-and-a-half under the leadership of western Indologists.

The problem of the creation of a culture's image by those who belong to a politically dominant group with an alien culture of its own, belonging to a totally different milieu and tradition, is too complex a problem to be pursued here. But this much may be said with fair plausibility: that, given the opportunities for continuous interaction amongst themselves, as well as with scholars from other intellectual traditions relating to their own field of knowledge, along with a challenge to the self-image of the tradition fostered over a long period of time, it is extremely unlikely that some new trends would not emerge amongst the traditional thinkers in the field of philosophy in this country. Not only this, one may also expect some new thought-currents to emerge amongst the younger group of western-oriented philosophers because of this continuous exposure to the challenge emanating from a dialogue with the living philosophical tradition as embodied in the flesh-and-blood pandits representing the classical tradition of philosophising in India.

This enterprise of discovering the classical traditions of India in the field of philosophy and entering into a dialogue with it on contemporary philosophical issues has recently taken a new turn with the discovery of what may be called the classical West Asian tradition of philosophising as it was continued and developed in India over centuries. This is usually known as Islamic philosophy, but this is a misleading expression, for even though most of its practitioners happen to be Muslims, that does not make their thought necessarily Islamic in any relevant sense of the term. Further, it appears that these thinkers themselves distinguish between theology, which not only accepts the Quran as the final revelatory authority on all matters but is also concerned with its coherent exegetics, and philosophy, which is concerned with logical, epistemological and metaphysical issues and deals with them through reason, involving argumentation and discussion.

The existence of Arabic philosophy is fairly well known, though it is usually treated either as an appendage to Greek philosophy or as a transmitting channel through which Greek philosophy was introduced to Western Europe. Its existence in its own right has seldom been recognised, nor its own independent contribution to philosophical thought carefully assessed. Yet, even though it has never formed an integral part of the philosophical awareness of the Western countries or of those whose educational systems were substantially affected by their political and cultural domination, it still occupied some place in their awareness, however hazy and vague it might have been. The story of its transplantation into India and its independent development there is, however, hardly known to anybody. To have become aware of it, is itself an immense gain whose philosophical fruits can only be known in the future. But, like the discovery of the living tradition of the classical Indian philosophy amongst the pandits, it imposes on the philosophical intelligentsia of contemporary India the same tasks and duties with respect to it. And this is to become aware of it and to establish a living dialogue with it, so that it may transform both itself and us in the process.

The dialogue with West Asian philosophy as it has developed over centuries in India presents problems which are in part similar and in part different from those encountered in the dialogues with the classical Indian philosophical tradition as it developed over millennia in this country. First, its practitioners seem far fewer in

number than those representing the Sanskrit philosophical tradition in the country. Second, the language of the philosophical tradition, that is, Arabic, is known to far fewer persons at the present time in India than Sanskrit, and people who know both Arabic and English even far, far fewer than those who know both Sanskrit and English. Besides the linguistic difficulty, there is the additional problem of finding persons who are at home in both the philosophical traditions, as mere knowledge of languages hardly helps in translating thought from one language into another.

Yet, whatever the difficulties, one can generally get around them if one has the will to do so. And, at least these are not the sort of difficulties that can long stand in the way of a determined effort to get the dialogue going. One such effort has already been made under the auspices of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research by Professor Jamal Khwaja of the Aligarh Muslim University, and there is no reason why such attempts should not be continued in the future. In fact, the idea of a triangular dialogue between the Sanskrit Pandits, the Arabic Ulemas and the English-knowing philosophers of India around philosophical issues that are currently engaging the philosophical world (which, of course, is primarily western) or those which naturally arise from within the Sanskrit or the Arabic philosophical traditions is already engaging the minds of some people.

All this activity has emerged only within the last three or four years and pursued in a more or less systematic way. Each step has led to the apprehension of other relevant needs which demand to be fulfilled if the enterprise is to go forward. Up to now, there has been sufficient support, both financial and administrative, for the activity to go forward. The only substantive result, besides the new and radical formulation of the *Nyāya* position with regard to *Ātman* in Pandit Badrinath Shukla's lecture, and the publication of *India's Intellectual Traditions*, giving a tentative preliminary account of the attempt at conceptual reconstructions in the field of sociology, political science, aesthetics, and law, has been the change of awareness and atmosphere with regard to the urgency of establishing critical and creative linkages with the cognitive traditions of India. Whether any more substantive results will follow, only time can tell. But, at least, the first steps have been taken.

NOTE

1. This point was forcefully argued by Professor A.K. Saran, the well-known sociologist, in a recent discussion of the issue at Lucknow.

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