

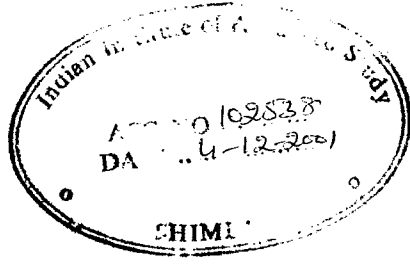
# HISTORY, CULTURE AND TRUTH

*Essays presented to D.P. Chattopadhyaya*



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## अभिनन्दन-चतुष्पदी

एतद्ग्रन्थाभिनन्द्यः स्मितलसितमुखाम्भोजभूयोऽवभासः  
किंस्विद् विस्पष्टहासो नवलशशिकलासारसौजन्यकाशः ।  
वाक्योवाक्यातिरेकोन्मथितसमुदितन्यायसिद्धान्तसिन्धु-  
श्चट्टोपाध्याय इज्यो वहति बहुधुरां प्राप्तदेवीप्रसादः ॥१॥

विवक्तविज्ञानविभावितो द्विजः  
स्मिताननो मन्दमितैकभाषणः ।  
गते तुरियेऽपि स बालवैभवा -  
ल्ललामभूतः सुधियां सुचेतसाम् ॥२॥

प्रज्ञा यस्य सती प्रभावजननी रोचिष्मती व्यापिनी  
सौजन्यामृतनिर्भरोऽतिसरलस्तर्ककलाकर्कशः ।  
वाद- ब्रह्म-समर्चनैक-परमः कल्किप्रकाशः परः  
जीव्याद् वर्षशतं सुखं स सुकृती देवीप्रसादः सुधीः ॥३॥

तत्त्वशास्त्रसमुद्रमन्थनचितै रत्नैरिवात्युज्ज्वलैः  
साराऽसारविचारचारुवचनैराह्लादयन् सज्जनान्  
अद्यानन्दमयीं समाप्य शरदां पञ्चोत्तरां षष्टिकाम्  
देवीदा ! किल पद्मभूषणश्रिया दिष्ट्या भवान् वर्धताम् ॥४॥

धर्मानन्दशर्मा

of guaranteed human rights, beyond those of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, which was legitimized by a number of amendments to the constitution, such as the First, related to the freedom of religion, of the press, of expression or the right of assembly, to the Thirteenth forbidding the practice of slavery.

<sup>4</sup> E. Roosevelt, "My day: February 6, 1947", cited in Philip Alston, "Making Space for New Human Rights", in *Human Rights Year Book*, vol. 1, 1988.

<sup>5</sup> See Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, (The First Presidential Fellow Lectures at the World Bank), 1996.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Tayler, "Human Rights: The legal culture in UNESCO", in *Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights*, 1986, and Karel Vasak, "Third Generation of Human Rights", in *The Rights of Solidarity*, International Institute of Human Rights, 1975.

<sup>7</sup> T. Stoltenberg, "Towards a World Development Strategy", in Louis Emmerij (ed.), *One World or Several*, OECD, Paris, 1989. Stoltenberg talked about Development contracts as comprehensive long-term commitment for development assistance by industrial countries for implementing long-term development plans for the Third World countries. This was taken up by others at the OECD Development Centre, suggesting the formation of a Development Commission to conduct continued dialogue between Developing and Industrial countries. The idea of Development Compacts is less ambitious and more linked to an understanding or an agreement between Developing countries undertaking programmes of adjustment and a group of Industrial countries assuring the provision of necessary assistance to implement the programme. The logic of reciprocal obligation was spelled out in the Report of the IMF's Group of 24 (1985): "The Functioning and Improvement of the International Monetary System", *IMF Survey*, September 1985, and developed by Arjun Sengupta (1991) in "Multilateral Compacts Supporting Economic Reforms" in the companion volume to the *Report of the South Commission* and in the *Human Development Report*, UNDP, New York, 1992.

## TIME, TRUTH AND TRANSCENDENCE

DAYA KRISHNA

Time has generally been seen as "enemy" of truth by most thinkers and D.P. Chattopadhyaya<sup>1</sup> seems to be no exception to this general rule. The reason for this lies in the fact that "the truth" is conceived to be "timeless", and if so, and if time is regarded as real, truth is bound to become impossible for man to grasp. But, then, "the truth" of time at least will have to be accepted, for if the "reality" of time itself were not to be true, then there will be left no reason to uphold that truth cannot be known.

The dilemma is simple enough and yet does not seem to have been squarely faced by thinkers who have concerned themselves with this problem, or been haunted by the "relativity" which seems to infect or claims to truth. It somehow seems evident to them that truth should not be relative, and that if everything is shown to be inevitably relative, then its claim to be "true" is bound to be spurious. Yet, one may easily add the clause indicating the "relativity" conditions of the statement claim to be true and then the statement would become non-relatively true.

This simple strategy to non-relativise all so-called relative statements claimed as true will appear as "trivial" to all those who uphold the essential relativity of all truth-claim made by man. The charge of "triviality", however, is only an expression of one's feeling that what is being said is unimportant or that it is tautological in character. In case, it is the former, it only conveys one's preference and hence it is "subjective" in the bad sense of the term. On the other hand, if it is used in the latter sense, it only contends that nothing "new" is being said through the statement as it is analytically true. The latter charge, however, will have to be established as, *prima facie*, there seems to be nothing analytical or tautological in the statement that if the

"relativity-conditions" are specified, there is little reason to suppose that the statement still remains only relatively true. But if the "relativity-conditions" are specified the statement cannot be regarded as relatively true.

The confusion seems to arise, perhaps, because "the truth" of statement is not being distinguished from the "fact" or "facts" which render the statement true. The continuous shift in all discussions of this nature from the problems arising from the objects or situation in respect of which once knowledge is being claimed as true and the knowledge claim itself embodied in the linguistic statement that specifically "refers" to them. This occurs in spite of the fact that Tarsky has pointed out long ago that, "truth" is a property of sentences or propositions, and not of facts. There is the other source of confusion arising from the fact that the statement itself is made by someone and hence is itself the expression of a "fact", which itself may be referred to by another statement. There can, of course, be statements about "statements" and if this is the case, then the statements about which something is being said will itself be the "fact". This regressive movement is ultimately made possible by the fact of self-consciousness which can make everything an "object" to itself, including even its own self to the extent that it can be objectified. The psychological-cum-epistemological-cum-linguistic situation in which man is necessarily involved gives rise to all these dimensions in the knowledge situation which, if not distinguished, are bound to give rise to confusions which are not easy to resolve.

The underline fact of "self-consciousness", or even consciousness which is presupposed by the knowledge situation has hardly been noticed by most thinkers who have discussed the subject. Behind the problem of "truth", however, lies the problem of "truthfulness" which is even more difficult to determine as it is neither a characteristic of sentences or of facts. It is more a characteristic of the self or consciousness that is aware of itself as the subject of experience. But even in its case, it is not so much a property which it may possess in the sense in which most properties are said to be "possessed" by the objects of which they are predicated. Instead it is more like something that one strives for, or rather something which one wants to be, and hence there is always an intrinsic ambiguity about it. It is an ideal which is never realised completely and is only striven for by one who can never answer truthfully the question whether one is "truthful" or not.

The difficulty in answering, however, arises not only because it is an ideal that one strives for, but also because it has more than one

dimension involved in it and hence is far more complex than may appear at first sight. There is, for example, the dimension arising from the object in respect of which one is supposed to be "truthful", a dimension which is usually conveyed by the term "truth", but which should perhaps be more correctly characterized as concern for "truth". It is a concern for being as truthful as possible regarding the nature of the object that one is referring to, or talking about. The other dimension arises from the side of "consciousness" itself which is usually signified by the term intention. A third dimension is introduced by the fact that one is normally communicating to someone else and is described by such characteristics as "being trustworthy". Both "truthfulness" and "trustworthiness" assure that one is not deliberately deceiving the other. There is, of course, the fact of deceiving oneself which is far more difficult to detect or avoid than the deliberate deception in respect of another.

Yet, though prima facie both "deceiving oneself" and "deceiving the other" may seem opposed to the ideal of "truthfulness", there are situations and occasions when this may not be so. In diplomacy, war and sports deceiving the other as they are deceiving oneself, is the heart of the matter, as it alone leads to victory. But "deceiving" the other need not always be done to score a victory over him but even for the purpose of achieving or ensuring the other's good. Thus, a doctor may "deceive" a patient into believing that he/she is far better than he or she "really" is, as such belief, even if falls, helps the patient in getting better. Beliefs have physical consequences as "psycho somatic illness" and "placebo" effects attest. As for "deceiving" oneself, it too may be helpful for in the case of auto-suggestion, or where one is sincerely trying to pursue an ideal. The relations between truth, truthfulness and trustworthiness are too complex and require a multi-dimensional analysis than has been done up till now.

The problem of truth has generally been explored only in connection with descriptive statements that referred to inert nature or the world of living beings which are not affected by the way one thinks about them. Even in respect of the "non-human" world, there seems to be a radical difference between living and non-living beings, as the former can be "deceived" by our behaviour and, even by the way we speak to them. "Wilful deception" is at the heart of man's exploitation of animals and other living creatures. Yet, even in the relationship with other living beings, there can be an element of truth which one engenders by one's speech, or behaviour. One may, of course, betray as one may do in respect of other human beings. As for "truth" that essentially concerns the human world, it is difficult

to see how it can ever be completely "descriptive", i.e., just be "pure description" and nothing else. It seems to be intrinsically impossible for the simple reason that the moment one attempts to do this, one reduces it to the way one behaves towards non-human living beings or even that of what we regard as inert matter. One can describe the movements of an athlete or a dancer in purely physical terms, but then they cease to be movements of a dancer or of an athlete. In fact, the terms "dancer" or "athlete" cannot be used in the context of any description of movement or motion which is described in physical terms. There is, thus, no purely descriptive language in respect of human reality with which the humanistic discipline deal with and hence the whole notion of truth in respect of these realism undergoes a radical transformation from the one that is encountered when one deals with the phenomena studied by the natural sciences.

The Semantic theory of truth so closely associated with the name of Tarski, therefore, suffers from an essential ambiguity as it ignores the radical differences in the nature of the "referents" to which the terms in a descriptive statement are supposed to refer to. The ambiguity is not generally apparent as the examples chosen refer to those objects which essentially belongs to the inert world of matter and whose essential characteristics can be described in physical terms and understood in terms of these *alone*. Thus, to take Tarski's famous example, the sentence "snow is white" is radically different from, say, such a sentence as "the Indian social system is unjust because it is essentially hierarchical in nature". The former sentence uses terms such as "snow" and "white" which belong to the world of inert nature and where no ideal values are involved. The later sentence, on the other hand, has terms like the "Indian Society", "unjust" and "hierarchy" which cannot be described or understood in terms of qualities or characteristics studied in the natural sciences. In fact, Tarski's own example suffers from a serious defect as the sentence "snow is white" cannot be regarded as a full sentence, as its truth or falsity cannot be determined unless the subject term, i.e., the "snow" is quantified. In other words, unless we know whether we are talking about each and every instance of snow or only of some, i.e., at least one piece of snow, we cannot find whether the sentence is true or false. This is so well known that it is surprising to find such an eminent logician as Tarski forgetting to state it explicitly.

But there is a problem with quantification which does not seem to have been paid sufficient attention by those who discuss the problem of truth in the cognitive enterprise of man. A universal statement cannot, in principle, be established as true even though its falsity can

easily be established. This is so, as everyone knows or is supposed to know, because of the simple reason that a universal statement is a conjunction of an infinite number of singular statements, each of which has to be true in order that it may be held to be true. But an "infinity" of singular statements can never be *exhaustively* completed and hence verified. Further more, if one takes both the future and the past instances into account, one can hardly be said to have any "definite" knowledge about them so that one could determine what *was* or *will be* the case. There is an obvious asymmetry between the past and the future as while one can be sure that the past instance had either the property predicated of it or did not have it, the same cannot be said about the future instances that have not yet taken place. This is the well-known problem of induction on the one hand, and the "future contingents" on the other. The usual way out by treating a universal statement as a probability statement and by "believing" that the future will resemble the past, does not solve the problem as it is not easy to determine the truth or falsity of a probability statement, at least at the theoretical level and ultimately the belief that the future resembles the past is only a belief whose truth cannot be certified except on the ground that it has so happened in the past. But, as everyone knows, many such beliefs about the future in the past were found to be false and it is difficult to say as to which of the beliefs one holds at present about the future will be found to be true.

If the problem with the universal quantifier is that a sentence so quantified can never be established as true, the problem with existential quantification is that a sentence so quantified can, in principle, be never known to be false. This again is for the simple reason that an existentially quantified statement is a disjunction of an "infinite" number of singular statements and a disjunctive statement is true even if only *one* of those singular statement is found to be true, while it is held to be false only if *all* the singular statements are found to be false. But as this "*all*" consists of an "infinite" number of singular statements which cannot be exhausted in principle, it can never be found whether the statement is false or not.

There is, thus, an essential asymmetry between "truth" and "falsity" in respect of sentences which are universally quantified and those which are existentially quantified in that the truth of the former can never be established in principle, while it is the falsity that can not be so established in the case of the latter. As normally, the discussion about truth in respect of knowledge assumes a symmetry between truth and falsity; it ignores the radical distinction we have pointed out

above and hence, does not see that there are statements whose truth or falsity can be established "conclusively" provided the truth is predicated *only* of existentially quantified statements and *falsity* of universally quantified ones. Ultimately, it appears that only the truth or falsity of a singular statement can be established, and that it is this situation, coupled with the indefinite "infinity" of instances which are logically included in both the universal and the existential statements combined through the logical connectives of conjunction and disjunction respectively, that makes the asymmetry between "truth" and "falsity" arise in respect of them.

One may, of course, deny the possibility of "truth" and "falsity" being established even in the case of singular statements, as one may hold either that one cannot exactly determine what a "singular" subject is or wherein the "singularity" of which something is predicated consists. The Buddhist who appeared to have raised this question ultimately ended up in the doctrine of "momentary particulars" which alone were "real" for them. This analysis, however, would be applicable only to those entities which are spatio-temporal in character, as it is not clear how a non-spatio-temporal subject can be said to have "momentariness" about it. Perhaps, the radical Buddhist would deny the possibility of any such entity and assert that they occur only as referents of episodic states of consciousness which alone may be regarded as "real". But, then, the Buddhist will have not only to distinguish between a momentary state and its referent, but also between the referents, especially between those that can possibly be regarded as spatio-temporal and those which can never be so regarded. It is not quite clear whether the Buddhists have discussed this issue, or what, according to them, is the subject of a momentary occurrence which alone is considered by them to be real. In other words, is the so-called momentary reality itself complex, that is, distinguishable between a subject and a predicate? And, if so, has the predicate itself to be also both singular and momentary?

There is another problem which also does not seem to have been noticed in the discussion of the subject. This relates to the question whether a singular subject can have a multiplicity of predicates at the same time and, if so, will not the multiplicity amongst the predicate introduce multiplicity in the subject also. In case, the "singularity" of the subject is supposed to be affected by the plurality of the predicates; then one will have to argue ultimately for a single, singular subject to have a single, singular predicate only, as otherwise the "singularity" of the subject would be so in "appearance" only for the simple reason that it would be affected by the multiplicity of its

predicates and thus become itself multiple in character. There would, however, then arise the difficulty regarding the distinction between the subject and the predicate, for what could be the possible reason for postulating a "subject" in such a situation except the linguistic one that a sentence, in most languages, has to have a subject and a predicate.

The difficulty has been sought to be met either by treating everything as predicate and postulating whatever is ultimately real as the sole subject of them. Alternatively, it has been suggested that the "ultimate subject" of all Atomic sentences may be designated as "this" which can be ostensibly pointed out. But neither of the solution seem to have paid any attention to the problem posed by the fact that one does not quite exactly understand what could possibly be meant by the atomic simplicity of the predicate, or that the so called predicate may itself have other predicates in relation to which it function as a subject. It is, of course, true that the Advaitin in the Indian tradition has asserted the illusory character of all predication and that the Nyayayik has asserted that a property cannot be said to have other properties belonging to it, but both these strategies seem arbitrary in nature.

Tarski's formulation, thus, does not only ignore the problems raised by the quantification of the subject term but also the one's relating to the predicate which is asserted to obtain in respect of the subject. In the sentence "snow is white", it is not clear whether Tarski would like to deny the character of "snowiness" to snow which has become muddy on the ground that it is not white. There are also problems in respect of the copula which joints the subject and the predicate in the sentence. Is the "is" of the sentence "snow is white" timeless in character or does it refer to the moment of utterance of the sentence "snow is white"? Timeless predication can perhaps be done only in case of subjects which are themselves non-spatio-temporal in character. In the case of all other subjects, it is bound to have the temporal reference unless the predicated property is suppose to be an essential property of the subject, thus, rendering the sentence necessarily true.

But, ultimately, "truth" is not a characteristic of sentences or prepositions, but a value or an ideal which men seek. Sentences do not hang in the air, or occur in a vacuum. They are spoken by someone and are intended to convey a meaning to someone to whom it is addressed. This is also true of the written sentence as it is not only written by somebody but also addressed to a possible audience which one has vaguely in mind. The problem of truth, thus, is imbedded in the larger problem of communication on the one hand and a human seeking for values and ideals on the other. The "communication" that

we are speaking of is human communication and hence is closely related to the problem of "truthfulness" about which we talked of earlier. The seeking for values or ideals is also a function of self-consciousness which, as far as we know is found only at the human level. The intrusion of self-consciousness makes the "facticity" of the object apprehended questionable as it finds it not to be as it "should" be. The distinction between "is" and "should be" is, thus, introduced by self-consciousness and hence an element of "ideality" is introduced into all that is apprehended as "object", including the self to the extent that it appears as "object".

The problem of truth, thus, has to be seen not only in terms of the community formed by the communication system, along with the context of the seeking that is both individual and collective in nature.

The collective dimension in the seeking of truth, as of other values, has been generally ignored and the fact that it is essentially intersubjective in character also played down. So also is the perspective introduced by the fact that the human community which seeks the truth is neither bound in space nor in time, as it extends over generations and whatever is "found" to be true or is "claimed" to be true is available to all others to corroborate or modify or develop, or even reject all together.

The extension of the community of seekers over successive generations introduces the notion of time into the seeking of truth, as in the "seeking" of all other values, and makes it an integral part of it. Time, thus, is not an "enemy" of truth. Nor is the fact that what is claimed as truth is subject to corroboration, revision or modification. Thus, neither "time" nor "revisability" are its enemy, even though both have been treated by thinkers as such. "Truth" may be timeless, but the "claim" of truth and the seeking for it is certainly in time. The "timeless" that is "sought" thus, can be sought only through time, and as the seeking is infinite it cannot be pursued by a single individual in his or her limited time-span of life, extending only over six or seven decades on an average. It is, of course, true that the human kind, however long it may be allowed to survive by the ecological conditions that permit it, has also a limited time-span and thus it may find at the end that it is as far from the ideals it seeks as others before it. But that is the relation between "time" and "timeless", that the former, however long it may be, can never reach the latter. Yet, it is this "unendingness" of seeking which makes both the individual human life and the life of the human species "meaningful". One may feel baffled by such a prospect, or even feel despair, but a backward glance at what human seeking in time has resulted in, would fill him once again with

hope and zest for the adventure that lies ahead. History, thus, is that backward glance which fills us both with wonder and despair as one cannot but be amazed at the creative achievements of man in all dimensions, a feeling that naturally arouse in every young person who visits a library or a museum or goes on a pilgrimage to the ancient monuments of the past—"monuments" of the unaging intellect, as Yeats called it, or perhaps better still, what are unaging monuments of man's seeking and imagination. But the wonder may give way to despair when one realizes that all this is terribly insufficient and that man has not been able to lessen evil or even mitigate cruelty to other human beings with whom he carries on this common enterprise. The wisdom of the past seems insufficient and so also all its achievements. But this also is a temporary feeling and belongs mostly to old age as when one again looks back one finds how one always struggles against evil in circumstances when every efforts seemed futile and bound to result in failure.

And, there are always younger people to take on the lead and carry the torch with renewed enthusiasm leaving the old to ruminate in their bloomy despair. In any case, the seeking for values, and "truth" is one of them, is always carried on from the point where the past generations had left it and it is both the inadequacy discovered in it and the incompleteness which is inherent in it, which makes at least some members of the "living" generations take on the task anew and press forward in the perennial exploration in the light that they have within them.

The temporal dimension which is implicit in all change and is ostensibly present in what is usually called "evolution" takes on a historical dimension in the context of human kind which actively preserves the memory of the past because of the fact of self-consciousness that it possesses and the inevitable dissatisfaction with it that propels it to think and strive for a future that will be better than the past, even though it is inevitably built on it. The historical consciousness, thus, is not only a link to the past but to the future also. What has been gained and what is yet to be gained form a continuum and the living generations is the link between the two.

The "human present", thus, is always something "in-between" between the past that stretches endlessly backwards into time and the future that appears to stretch endlessly forward into time. But as this "present" is essentially "self-conscious" in nature, it sees the past as leading into the present, challenging one to shape and build it into something more significant, meaningful and desirable to be handed over to the on-coming generations whose "building up" itself is seen

as a task, generally called "education", so that it may become capable of carrying on the same activity when it grows up and becomes self-conscious once again in the same way as its parents and teachers had been. The story is repeated from generation to generation and is primarily seen in the context of the family, the group or the nation or race to which one belongs. It is seldom seen in the context of the human kind as a whole and, in fact, is generally confined in the case of most individuals to the immediate past and future of their family alone. Thus, while almost everybody is aware of one's parents and grand parents and of one's children and tries to bequeath the best that one has received and do all that one can, to improve the lot of one's children, few are aware of it at the larger level where one's membership is not immediately evident. The history of various groups, and of various kinds tries to fill this gap and makes it possible for man to become aware of the unbelievable heritage he has received and the responsibility that he has to preserve, enlarge, modify and develop it further. "The heritage" need not always be good and, many a time, it may consist of something akin to what in the context of the body are known as dangerous diseases inherited from the parents. It is, of course, difficult to distinguish between what is an inheritance of this type in the context of culture and religion, for it tends to give that identity to a person which is difficult to disown. But it is the task of "self-consciousness" to become aware of everything, including the self and its cultural past as "object" and critically evaluate and scrutinize it so that it may modify or improve it at least to the extent it is possible.

The quest for truth shares all these characteristics and each generation is engaged in the task of testing at the bar of its own experience what it has inherited as the "received" and the "accepted" systems of belief, all claiming to be true. A claim to truth does not deny its "testability" or corroboration by others, or the "openness" to revision in the light of what others may discover in the process of testing it once more in their own experience. Truth is, thus, "relative" not only to evidence and argument on the basis of which it is claimed to be true, but also to the others' corroboration of it. These "others" do not form a finite closed class, but consist of an indefinite number of persons in the past, present and future. That the experience of those who lived in the past remains still relevant is evident in many areas of human experience. We find their statements worth attending to even when they conflict with our own experience in those very fields in respect of which the statements were made. This will also be true of the future generations with respect to whom we, who are in the present, will be in the past. It is, of course, true in respect of many

statements of fact. The knowledge of the past is superseded in the light of a more comprehensive evidence that the later generations have at their command. However, as everyone knows, this widely accepted view about knowledge concerning empirical matter of fact has been seriously questioned by Kuhn in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. One may not accept what Kuhn had said, but there can be little doubt that the so-called "empirical facts" are not all of one kind and that while Kuhn's contention may appear to be unwarranted with regard to some of them, it may not be so in respect of others. A closer differentiation amongst different types of empirical fact is needed and a relevant distinction required in respect of the truth claims made about them.

The question of truth has generally been discussed only in the context of empirical facts which can be denoted by simple declarative statements or a conjunction of them. Also, it has generally been discussed in the context of a two-valued logic where such sentences are treated as having necessarily one or the other value and not both. The discussion has been extended to probability claims, as everybody knows. But the moment one does this the situation gets more complicated. If one introduces much valued logic then the situation with respect to truth claims, of even such simple declarative statements, gets immensely more complicated. But the problem of truth is not confined to declarative statements alone, even though in most earlier treatments of logic, they alone were supposed to be capable of being "true" or "false". The developments in logic which deal with non-declarative sentences either require an extension of the notion of truth or the postulation of some other notion which may have truth in the usual sense as one of its instances. The notion of "satisfaction" has generally been chosen as a substitute but the change seems Pickwickian in character, for, ultimately, it has to be some sort of a "fit" or correspondence between what the statement says and what it is "about". Thus, whether it be the logic of imperative, epistemic logic, preference logic, interrogative logic or any other, they all have to accept that what is being conveyed through such statements may be "fulfilled" by the relevant situation referred to in the statement or not. Thus, the very notion of "truth" or satisfaction is relativised not only with respect to what is being referred to or talked about, and the evidence and the argument/s in support of it, but also with respect to the type of statement that is being made. In fact, if "propositional attitudes" are also taken into account, then the problem of truth would get even more complicated as the focus will shift from what is being said or how it is said to the attitude with which it is being said. The



"doubts", "beliefs", "suppositions", etc. may have a psychological component, but in the epistemological context they assume a different dimension and affect the claim to truths of the original sentence in a radical way, but it is not clear how one would go about tackling the question of their own truth. Normally, we assume that unless one specifically mentions some propositional attitude, the only one that is there is that of "assertion" or what Russell once had called the assertive "attitude", but, as Kant suggested long ago in his "Wager" argument that if one increases the possible loss to be suffered if one were proved to be wrong infinitely, then every one will begin to waver or hesitate in his or her certitude.

But, all these considerations become irrelevant to a large extent if one conceives of truths not in terms of correspondence or satisfaction but as the pursuit of an ideal value which humanity tries to realize in and through time. The notion of transcendence enters just at this point to make the human seeking in and through time for an ideal or value which can never in principle be actualized or realized in time, however long we may conceive it to be. The idea of "transcendence" gives this seeking a "unity" which it would never have because of the very nature of the "unendingness" of time on the one hand and of the "seeking" in it and through it, on the other. In fact, the problem as to what gives unity to succeeding moments of sensory apperception was raised by Kant and attempted to be solved ultimately by what he called the transcendental unity of an apperception. On the other hand, the ideas of Reason also attempted to provide a total, over-arching complete unity to *all that is* and *all that men seeks*. There is, of course, a radical distinction between the Ideas of Reason and the transcendental unity of apperception in Kant, but their basic function is the same, that is, to provide a unity to the manifold of whatever is experienced in time. The problem is faced in a different way by the Indian theoreticians as it arises for them primarily in the context of the unavoidable plurality of letters and words and sentences and the unity of meaning which is conveyed in and through them.

The discussion between Abhihitanyavada and Anvitavidhanavada on the one hand and Samsargatavada and Prakaratavada on the other, is old and complicated, and we need not go into it here. But it would be useful to remind us that the problem of unity occurs in different contexts and at many levels. Bhartrihari in his *Vakya-padiya* had, in fact, to postulate four levels of speech in order to account for the unity that pervades all articulate thought which is expressed in language. Language, thus, in order to be intelligible, according to him, has to postulate levels which are beyond the manifest language which alone we hear

or read. But the discussion on the subject, both in India and the West, has primarily been done in the context of knowledge and not, as far as I know, in the context of action. But men's seeking through action also demands a unity which can only be illusorily given by the specific ends or purposes, which one tries to realize through action. The specific ends or purposes which one tries to realize make sense only in terms of some larger purpose or ideal or value which is sought to be realized in and through them. This deeper and larger end or purpose seems to be almost as unmanifest as the unmanifest levels of language postulated by Bhartrihari. The Mimamsa thinker makes a distinction between *Krtvartha* and *Purūṣārtha* in the context of this discussion of Vedic *yajñaya*, but does not explore the notion of *purūṣārtha*, any further. Yet, the deeper problem relates to the issue as to what gives unity to the various, even conflicting *purūṣārthas* which are sought to be realized through the performance of the various Vedic *yajñayas*. This issue has not been raised either by the Mimamsa thinkers or by any one else who has thought about the problem of *Purūṣārtha*, in the Indian tradition. Nor has the problem been seen or tackled in the broader concept of men seeking values and ideals in general.

Thus, the "real" problem of "truth" relates not to the fact that it is "relative" to all the various factors, which we have mentioned, but its relationship to the other values and ideals which mankind also seeks to realize both individually and collectively. Once truth is seen as a value to be pursued and realised by man, and its inevitable relationship with other values is brought into the discussion, many of the problems that have plagued thinkers who have concerned themselves with it will disappear or assume forms which are "structural" in character as they emanate from the very conditions in which man finds himself along with the fact that the *param purūṣārtha* or the ultimate value which he seeks is hidden from him and, thus, though perhaps guiding all his determinate pursuits, is incapable of being apprehended by him. Like the *parā* of Bhartrihari, it will be the *parā-purūṣārtha* that lies behind all that one tries to seek and realise in the finite time, that is, his fate, both individually and collectively, for that is involved in the very "structure" of the notion of "seeking" or "realizing". Time is not only the *a priori* form of inner sensibility, but more ultimately the form of "seeking" which tries to realise values through action. Chattopadhyaya's worries about the claims of "relativism" and "absolutism" in respect of truth seems to be misplaced and his solution in terms of the distinction between "good" relativism and "bad" relativism is unhelpful as the problem will re-appear once again

in respect of the notion of "good" and "bad" respectively. Relativity is the inevitable condition of everything that man claims either in the realm of knowing, or of feeling, or of willing, but this relativism makes sense only if it is seen in the light of the pursuit of that which itself is non-relative or absolute as it transcends time. It is "transcendence" alone that gives meaning to all that is, pursued in time just as it is the idea, or the idea of *parā* or the notion of *eka-vākyatā*, which gives *unity* to all the separate relative, disparate "unities" of meaning which alone we know of in our life. The very notions of revision, discarding, rejecting, etc., without which neither the enterprise of truth-seeking makes any sense nor does the seeking of any other value, one implies the postulation of "something" that is, non-relative, but which alone gives "sense" to our activity even though we do not know what it is.

Time and transcendence both are intimately related not only to truth, but also to all other values which man seeks, and many of the problems arise because we forget the one or the other when we are thinking about them. Time and everything that is within time and involves time make no sense without transcendence, just as transcendence makes little sense, at least in the human context, unless it is related to time, as the two constitute the human world in their togetherness, providing it that "wholeness" which it would otherwise lack if thought of in terms of either one of them alone. Time itself, though known to us intimately, has an intrinsic, inner mystery about it, and that is the transcendence in which we live, even though we "know" generally only the "time-dimension" of it. Man's history, when seen in this way, will not foster the despair and dilemmas of relativism to which Professor Chattopadhyaya seems to have succumbed but will induce in one the sense of an un-ending adventure, rich in possibilities, and fill one with hope for the future.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> D.P. Chattopadhyaya, *Anthropology and Historiography of Science*, Ohio University Press, New York, 1990.

## A SHORT INTELLECTUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF D.P. CHATTOPADHYAYA

I cannot write my intellectual autobiography disowning my fleeting present and remaining indifferent to my indefinite future.

My ancestors are from Vikrampur, Dhaka. My two elder brothers were born there. I was born on November 5, 1931 at Barisal (now in Bangladesh) but my guardian who was responsible for my admission into the Pirozpur Government School in 1941 gave the wrong date, November 1, 1933. Because of the transferable nature of my father's service I was obliged to attend three schools at three different places, and matriculated in the first division from Patuakhali Jubilee English High School in 1947. My initial schooling had nothing very inspiring about it. After the partition of India in 1947, our family moved to Krishnagar (Nadia). I graduated from Krishnagar Government College with second class Honours in Philosophy in 1951. Established in 1844, this old college, older than the Calcutta University itself, had an excellent library. I feel that books had been my real teachers and are still my best friends. Rightly understood, the words of book are *not* cold print on dry papers bound in silence under two covers. Books are humans waiting to converse with the willing souls and learners from distant lands and times.

When I was a student of Intermediate Arts Class, a teacher, perhaps Chintaharan Chakraborty, told me that unless a student reads the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyana* he cannot hope to understand the civilization of India. Also he told me that unless I read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* I would not be able to understand the civilization of Europe. I do not know whether this advice was correct or incorrect but I followed it religiously. I read these four epics before I completed my twentieth year. I am convinced that these great books helped me immensely in my later understanding of India and Europe. But my