



‘Philosophy in India’ or ‘Indian Philosophy’: Some Post-Colonial Questions

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Abstract

Mode of philosophizing in post-colonial India is deeply influenced by two centuries of British rule (1757–1947), wherein a popular divide emerged between doing classical Indian philosophy and Western philosophy. However, a closer look reveals that the divide is not exclusive, since there are several criss-cross modes of philosophizing shaped by the forces of colonialism and nationalist consciousness. Contemporary challenges lie in raising new philosophical questions relevant to our time, keeping in view both what has been inherited and what has been imbibed in these centuries-old civilizational journeys. One needs to recognize India’s rich intellectual traditions based on cultural diversity, and at the same time raise fundamental questions that are transcendental in nature, yet historically rooted in our temporal presence. The challenge to articulate the nature of Indian philosophy (as *anviksiki* or *darsana*) has remained one of the daunting tasks for scholars of philosophy. Contemporariness of Indian philosophy is another issue to be deliberated. Contemporariness lies not only in raising new questions to classical Indian philosophies, but also in finding newness in old questions. It should further include engaging the classical philosophies with new methodological questions, be it Western philosophical methods or ones internally generated. Contemporariness will include narrating new stories driven by the dynamics of the present, where drive for questioning comes from the authentic philosophical issues of our time.

Keywords Colonialism · Anglophone · Nationalism · Trends of philosophizing · Cultural plurality · Temporal presence · Contemporariness

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Background

The titles ‘Philosophy in India’ and ‘Indian philosophy’ apparently carry two distinct themes that ought to be treated differently. While the former is expected to raise issues regarding the general state of philosophy in India, the latter hints at focusing on certain forms of philosophy in practice. But a closer look may reveal that there are certain distinct issues that do not quite fit in either of these titles exclusively taken. Hence, these questions! Let us begin with these questions: ‘How do we name the philosophies of K. C. Bhattacharyya and Daya Krishna—Indian or Western?’ ‘What will constitute Indian philosophy—whatever Indians do, or what is done in Sanskrit language, or only those works that are constituted of, or concerned with classical Indian philosophy?’ These questions are closely linked to the post-colonial experiences of the philosophy community in India and elsewhere. Let this be the point of departure from where the investigation begins.

A popular question one often faces in India when one gets initiated as a researcher in philosophy is ‘Indian or Western philosophy?’ Little would there be room for imagining that one could also do comparative philosophy or philosophize beyond the bounds of civilizational or cultural categories. It is not important, I believe, to ask if these are valid or invalid questions. What is important is the nature of the questioning. The civilizational or geographical divide has been a general practice in the study of non-Western societies, as if it were peculiar to the non-Western world. The question reveals a lot more than the initial curiosity involved in the query. As soon as colleges and universities were started in India by the British in the first half of the nineteenth century, and philosophy introduced in the curriculum, this divide between Indian and Western philosophy was forged in the mind of the Indian student and scholar alike. The training of Indian students and scholars in the kind of philosophy studied in Britain, as a consequence of the intervention of the British colonial rule in the field of education, influenced philosophizing in India in a marked, far reaching way. An interesting episode is that this author encountered a very well-known philosopher in India who got two PhD degrees, one from India first, followed by another from the University of London, who once advised, ‘We were influenced by British and Anglo-Saxon philosophy because of our colonial past. We were attracted to their philosophy. You should resist this attraction and study Continental philosophy.’ And the author obediently followed! In short, Europe and North America remain the yardstick of intellectual pursuit for the developing world. This is the plight of the receiving communities,¹ not quite easy to shed!

Another question is whether philosophizing in a particular way is an independent outcome of one’s free choice or a mere product of the time. Why is it that philosophers in India, say during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, raised particular sets of questions? Why did Aurobindo, Tagore, Gandhi, K. C. Bhattacharyya, Radhakrishnan, etc. philosophize in a particular way? For instance, why was Indianness in thinking so significant an issue? Philosophizing, as a matter of obviousness, is a conscious, deliberate act of a person.

¹ Receiving communities are those societies who conceive themselves as a ‘people’ in the face of ‘colonial forces’ onslaught. These communities as manifest are a product of colonialism with little choice of their own. It is through historical exigencies—of political, economic and cultural influences/impositions—that receiving communities start wearing the garb of a receiver of knowledge and values. See Oinam (2005).

It highlights a first person exercise of a very evolved order. Yet, a question in the collective is raised here with a purpose. It is true that 'thinking' as a philosophical exercise is singularly done. Even if two philosophers think together, influencing one another, the immediate outcome is a singular version of the thought. Conversely, even if it is granted that thinking is an individual exercise, it is worth investigating why a particular set of questions (even if singularly raised) were of importance to a group of philosophers at a given time. The way philosophy has been conceived in India since the British rule (to be precise, post Macaulay Act) is informed by several factors that are political, cultural, and psychological. One cannot philosophize independent of, or, completely divorced from the surroundings. Philosophizing is a singular exercise, but performed in a collective milieu. This collective milieu highlights the historicity through which scholars philosophize.

Often philosophers carry this illusion, more appropriately 'transcendental illusion',² of living in a world independent of the surroundings in which they are factually situated. Thus, questions about 'soul,' 'being,' 'becoming,' 'truth,' etc. are seen as transcendental in nature. It is well-known that concepts like *maya* and *moksha* made the orientalist claim that Indian philosophy is 'other worldly,' a term often used to identify classical Indian philosophy as not engaging with the existential aspect of life. A philosopher like Daya Krishna talks of *moksha*-centric and *atman*-centric ideas in classical Indian philosophy as taking the self to a transcendental plane (1989, pp. 179–85). While acknowledging such claims, it is also important to look at the socio-historical backdrop of how philosophy has been conceived and engaged in India by different philosophers. Such an exercise may not be philosophical but could be an important investigation in the sociology of knowledge. Without merely focusing on the subject matter of philosophy per se, we must also see the way in which these subject matters are identified and addressed by philosophers at different times. For instance, why was Adi Sankara posited against Bradley, or Bhartrihari against Derrida, or Buddhism against existentialism? The selection of questions and themes as well as modes of addressing specific philosophical issues is extremely important, and it is precisely here that the idea of historicity creeps in.

Colonialism as Marker

Since Lord Macaulay's supposedly controversial address³ in the British Parliament in 1835 and the subsequent education policy in India, the journey has been long but on the

² I am referring to the idea of 'transcendental illusion' articulated by Daya Krishna that all philosophical exercises ultimately culminate into a certain form of transcendentalism with a belief of certitude, which eventually turns out to be an illusion. See Daya Krishna (2012).

³ Lord Macaulay's supposed address in British Parliament (February 2, 1835) is worth highlighting, being floated for public consumption through two contrasting narratives. One harps on conspiracy theory—a British plan to subjugate the Indians who have high moral values and caliber, and need to conquer this country and break the backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage. (<http://historum.com/asian-history/26268-lord-macaulay-s-address-british-parliament-2-february-1835-a.html>. Accessed on January 21, 2018). The other narrative is of a contempt for the Indian and Arabic intellectual traditions because "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literatures of India and Arabia", thus showing the inherent/intrinsic superiority of the Western literature. (<http://home.iitk.ac.in/~hcoverma/Article/Macaulay-Minutes.pdf>. Accessed on January 21, 2018; (Bhushan and Garfield 2017, pp. 39–62) These two narratives are not only contradictory, but also sound ideologically biased irrespective of their authenticity. Interestingly, post-colonial experiences, in one way or the other, are linked with the politics of that time.

same route. Though there have been different findings on whether Macaulay really gave that speech in the British Parliament,⁴ fact remains that his interventions in education policy in India became a landmark that gave shape to the kind of education system that India has persisted with until today. The strong presence of English language in the intellectual exercise in India owes its origin to the English Education Act of 1835. Many in India believe that without English language, India would have never been integrated, quite obviously referring to what they take as the evident disparate and heterologous multitude of languages spoken in the country. But there is an equally strong counterpoint. At present, one witnesses a strong undercurrent pushing one back to one's own roots, to one's indigenous origin. These include studying one's own language, literature, culture, tradition, philosophy, etc. A statement by RSS chief Shri Mohan Bhagwat (NDTV January 4, 2013) about the distinction between India and Bharat reflects this divide.⁵ In a similar line, there are voices that articulate that if China can assert its intellectual exercise in Chinese, and not in the language of the erstwhile colonizer (English), why cannot India do the same? Then, will Sanskrit be the alternative? This is extremely important a question and perhaps requires a different forum for deliberation.

Preference for an English education was welcomed by the middle-class elites in India in the early nineteenth century—a socio-cultural fact, the imprint of which remains so vividly to this date. Acceptance of Anglophone gets extended to learning and internalizing of philosophical thoughts prevailing in the UK (and the countries around). This meant studying English literature and European philosophy as conceived by the British that traces its historical roots to the Greek philosophical tradition. Interestingly, such exercises were selective in nature. Overall, the trend of seeing Europe as the epitome of philosophical articulation is well accepted by the philosophical community in India (Bhattacharyya 1982, p. 173). This trend is not exclusive to India; in fact, it is part of a larger trend accepted in the entire global South. Starting from Socrates and Plato to medieval philosophers like St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, to the flag bearers of “modern” philosophy like Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Hume, Kant and Hegel—all became permanent markers of philosophy. Along with these philosophers, several key concepts central to Western philosophy, such as being, self, mind, consciousness, truth, knowledge, language, reference, meaning, judgement, goodness, justice, freedom, agency, etc. have become part of the day-to-day vocabulary in Indian academic discourses, not to mention their overarching presence in the core philosophy curriculum. Largely, the Indian philosophical fraternity has been engaged in studying and expounding one or the other philosophies of the great masters of Europe. While a large-scale appropriation of European and American philosophies has been witnessed, a very few Indians (such as J. N. Mohanty) have been able to make a mark in the mainstream Anglo-American and European philosophical fraternity. Other names could be Amartya Sen, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak who have made entry in the larger field of Western scholarship. There has been a general outlook of reverence towards the Western intellectual tradition.

⁴ There are new findings that Macaulay was in Calcutta during the time he was supposed to have addressed the British Parliament in 1835. This was found out in the recent works of Parimala Rao (2014).

⁵ Shri Mohan Bhagwat made a controversial remark that social evils take place in India (representing Westernized, urbanized part of the country), but not in Bharat (representing its rural and cultured part). This observation shows the continuity of the contestations visible in the ‘Macaulay narratives’.

An equally interesting phenomenon emerged in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. This was this voice of protest to the Western philosophical monolith. Sri Aurobindo was one of the torchbearers. Unlike Swami Vivekananda who wanted a blend of India's religion and spirituality with the scientific temper and rationality of the West, Sri Aurobindo highlighted the richness of Indian philosophy and cultural tradition as compared to the Western culture and worldviews. *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (1997/1998) is written in this spirit. His agenda was to show that Indian culture and its philosophical worldviews are not only rich but also much older (and richer) than those of the West. Though softer in tone, one finds the works of K. C. Bhattacharyya, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, and S. N. Dasgupta in the same line. K. C. Bhattacharyya's idea of the self is a re-articulation of Advaita Vedanta's unqualified and indescribable non-duality, using Western discursive discourse and language. He also makes a point of highlighting the richness of Indian transcendentalism. I think those who see Bhattacharyya as a Kantian have missed this point. In a similar fashion, Radhakrishnan and many of his contemporaries discovered Adi Sankara as a counterpoint to Bradley's subjective idealism. Radhakrishnan projected Sankara as an unqualified non-dualist and an idealist. These philosophers, in order to make a potent counterpoint to Western philosophy, have overemphasized spiritualism and transcendentalism, thus relegating to the margins any philosophy that privileges the body. Only Carvaka has been accepted as soft *purvapakshin* to be conceptually abused. After all, these philosophers were the product of India's nationalist struggle.

Emergence of nationalist ethos cannot be understood in isolation, but in context, as an offshoot of colonial rule. As much as poets, writers, and scholars⁶ worked for India's freedom struggle hand in hand with many other political activists, Indian philosophers did not lag behind. Many wrote on Indian philosophical traditions.⁷ For our purpose, it is best to focus on the twin phenomenal expressions of colonialism and nationalism—the two that shaped the mode of philosophizing in contemporary India.

Post-colonial Questions

British rule ended in India 70 years ago. But memories of this past are hard to erase. This can be best explained through what the phenomenologists have to say on the nature of human existence and identity. Let me briefly venture out and attempt to connect human predicament with national narratives. Heidegger's understanding of the human condition *here and now* is best understood through man's understanding of his present ('along with') in tune with his imagination of the future ('ahead-of') and memory of the past ('already-in'). What is seen as already-in-the-world as past impressions is made possible through one's futuristic aspirations. This is what Heidegger saw as the invincibility of the care structure (1962/1983, pp. 349–70). India's entanglement with colonialism is due to its continued presence in the projects it envisages. And the same revisits in the form of our memory of the past. Overcoming colonialism and successfully ending the British rule was the well-deserved outcome of

⁶ References are to Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Rabindranath Tagore, etc.

⁷ References are to K. C. Bhattacharyya, Kalidas Bhattacharyya, B. N. Seal, S. Radhakrishnan, S. N. Dasgupta, T. M. P. Mahadevan, M. Hiriyanna, etc.

a long, resolute, and persistent struggle. There were moments of success and moments of failure until the very end. The images of these successes and failures come in the form of memory, ingrained through future national projects. One can see this not only in Nehru's 'discovery of India' but also in Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's 'Hindutva' as a way of life.

When the English/British rule ended in India in 1947, a new nation was born, which asserted its nationhood through a communitarian ethos, opening its preamble with the pronouncement, 'We the people of India having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign, secular, republic' (Preamble of Indian Constitution). A state came into existence with modernist aspirations. Evidently, in many ways, the vocabulary and articulation of the new nation was carried out through a language that was quite not its own. English language—the language of the colonizer—became the medium of uniting the anti-colonial forces. We may make the same observation for the modernist project that too emanates from the colonizer. The memory of having been ruled is covertly retained through these acts.

What has been underlined in the above observation, is the paradox of post-colonial experience; not peculiar to India, but witnessed in many erstwhile colonies left by the European nations, be it in Asia, Africa, or Latin America. Language, vocabulary, and worldview of the colonizer become part of the colonized self. This paradox can be best explained through what Ashis Nandy (1983) shows as the paradox of the 'intimate enemy.' Nandy's discourse on the intimate enemy highlights the dilemma with which the colonial subject encounters himself/herself. To elaborate this point, he asserts that the nationalist struggle against the British rule was made successful through a strong mass mobilization of the educated middle class through the language of the enemy. In the fight to get rid of the enemy, another side of the enemy is already internalized, thus leading to a paradox. This paradox is inevitable part of the colonized self.

Philosophers in India are no exception. The writings of Sri Aurobindo against the British colonial rule were articulated through English language, the language of the colonizer. This applies to methodological issues as well. In recent times, D.P. Chattopadhyaya's multi-series volume with a generic title, *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization* is yet another attempt towards reinforcing the assertion of India's intellectual tradition vis-à-vis the West. What is interesting about the project is that scholars in India, in a large number, are mobilized to write the intellectual history of the country. Barring a few, most of the scholars have been trained in the methods employed in Western philosophy, social theory, and historiography.

Problem of articulating classical Indian philosophy through Western methodological perspectives is not of one kind, but many. While philosophers in India generally do not acknowledge them, Raghuramaraju makes a candid statement on the need to use Western theoretical framework to read Indian philosophy. While using the methodological tools from philosophers like Deleuze and Guattari, Raghuramaraju openly asserts the need to 'bend' these philosophers (use their philosophical methods) to explain different philosophical trajectories in India. He, however, cautiously uses the words 'need to bend, but not to break.'⁸ This is a precaution for ethical compliance, but highly problematic. A more submissive confession comes from Sudipta Kaviraj (2005)

⁸ See Raghuramaraju's paper "Bending Deleuze and Guattari for India: Re-examining the relation between Art and Politics in Europe, and India" in this volume.

for whom dependence on Western methodology lies in the failure of the Indian philosophers/intellectuals to discover or devise an independent Indian methodology. Still the question remains—do we need to study philosophy in India necessarily through the prism of Western methodologies? We may have to note that need for such an exercise does not come from one singular reason. At times, Indian contemporary philosophers raise questions within and about philosophy in a Western context, and, to an implied reader who is also Western. It may also happen that the same question is raised and addressed to the native scholars. When Sri Aurobindo wrote *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (1997/1998), his first audience were the native populations. It was with a view to generate nationalist feeling that such a text was written. When Raghuramaraju writes on classical Indian philosophy or contemporary Indian philosophy, his audience, too, is primarily Indian. But the two are not the same, as the latter under no circumstances is faced with the challenge to generate the feeling of nationalism. On the other hand, the writings of B. K. Matilal or Ganeri (2001) show that their audience is the West. They locate themselves within the philosophical framework of Western philosophy, within which Indian philosophical narratives are brought in as an exception! This is quite obviously clear when Ganeri in his book *Identity as Reasoned Choice* (2012) brings Indian theories in the larger framework of democratic discourses in the West. Though both the trends use Western philosophy as a yardstick, in the former it is the use of Western philosophical methodology that serves as the tool for conceptual articulation, whereas in the latter it is the use of Western philosophical framework as the larger discourse, wherein Indian narrative serves as the content. Indian philosophy seems to get a secondary place in both. This is the plight of the post-colonial intellectual enquiry where colonial rule continues to covertly haunt through collective memory. The West continues to remain the point of reference even for engaging in Indian philosophy!

Philosophy in India, Multiple Trajectories

Let me revisit my earlier paper titled 'Philosophy in India: An Agenda for an Alternative Mode of Philosophizing' (Oinam 2011, pp. 75–90). In this paper, I tried to articulate four broad trends of doing philosophy in India. Let me critically revisit those for further evaluation. The first is a clear-cut study of Western philosophy in India. Scholars who mostly got training in Western universities spearheaded this trend. One may like to mention scholars like J. L. Mehta, A. C. Mukherjee, Rasvihari Das, P. K. Sen, J. N. Mohanty, etc. who have contributed in influencing Indian scholars to engage with Western philosophical traditions and their methodologies. The second trend is initiated by those who were deeply influenced by nationalist freedom struggle against the British colonial rule—their methodology is constituted of comparative studies on few select themes between the West and the East (India). Sri Aurobindo, K. C. Bhattacharyya, S. Radhakrishnan, S. N. Dasgupta, G. R. Malkani, etc. may fall in the second category. This trend is much wider with a spillover effect. All those who fall in this trend need not necessarily be triggered by nationalist ethos, but certainly take a comparative stance between the West and the East (India). The trend is so strong that even today some political parties go back to the colonial past to rejuvenate their desire to

redraw nationalist aspirations, and thus grab political power. The third trend is of those who remain at the fringe of the philosophical fraternity, engaging philosophy in traditional style. This trend is found in traditional philosophizing as practiced in *matha*-s and in several religious institutions. Re-rendering of *sutras* and argumentations are done through *sampradaya* tradition. Few names in this trend are Swami Lakshman Joo, Pundit Gopinath Kaviraj, Dr. Sir Ganganath Jha, Umesh Mishra, Gauda Subramaniam Shastri, Badrinath Shukla, among several others. Orientation to philosophizing is done by reading of classical religious/philosophical texts, as has been taught and disseminated through generations, down the centuries. In contrast, those in the fourth trend freely use methodologies readily available in hand and employ the same to philosophize on different aspects of their collective lived experiences. This category may list philosophers like Daya Krishna, Ramchandra Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad, Mrinal Miri, etc.

The above trends, to my mind, were hurriedly construed and require closer study. There are nuanced sub-trends that overlap, and are difficult to be exclusively handled. For instance, A. C. Mukherjee and Ramchandra Gandhi may also be listed within the second trend showing that the list is not exclusive but overlapping. J. N. Mohanty is not only trained in phenomenological tradition and an expert in the field, but also tries to engage with Indian philosophy at the same time, often using phenomenological methodology. Even Daya Krishna is seen as ‘Western philosopher of Indian origin’! It is equally difficult to locate K. Satchidananda Murthy, R. Balasubramanian, D. P. Chattopadhyaya, G. C. Nayak, or Rajendra Prasad. Not only are there contestations, but also overlapping representations of philosophers.

While I acknowledge that there are difficulties in mapping these trends, this is not altogether an invalid exercise. Take for instance, the second trend, where many resort to study Indian philosophy. The underlying idea behind this trend is to employ a comparative perspective usually to make an ideological point. Often it is to show the superiority of Indian thought and culture—a part of nationalist agenda. As mentioned earlier, Radhakrishnan’s avowed position that Adi Sankara is a counter point to Bradley, situated in a far richer civilization, in late ancient time, and possessing much deeper philosophical rigor, is a position shaped by nationalist ideologies. Sankara was shown as an epitome of logical rigor and creative metaphysics. The idea of an unqualified non-dualism that encompasses within its fold all the multiplicity of human experience, and existence of the world, was highlighted.

All these trends have several connecting links. While many scholars are trained in traditional institutions, they shed off that past after an encounter with Western intellectual discourse, quite often embracing the Western methodological tools. There can be many reasons behind this sharp transformation. Modern university system has not yet opened enough to traditional scholarship. The methodological gap between Western and Indian systems could be one of the reasons for giving up one methodology for the other, rather than embracing both, since that may be deemed improbable. This is perhaps the reason why the *samvad* between these parties remains uninitiated. Interface of philosophical contents and methodologies are preconditions for a meaningful dialogue. Daya Krishna tried several times for intellectual *samvad* between the traditional *pundits* and university professors, including those outside of India. But this exercise has not been taken forward beyond a point, and till date the gap between the two has not narrowed down much.

What will Constitute Indian Philosophy?

If there are gaps between the *sampradaya* scholarship and the classical Indian philosophy taught in the universities in India, there are few issues that need to be addressed. Let me raise a broader question—What will constitute Indian philosophy? The answer to this question need not be restricted to the curriculum and pedagogy introduced in the university system. There are several traditional philosophical schools outside the bound of official discourses. For instance, different schools of Saivism are not usually taught in Indian universities. The general classification of classical Indian philosophy into six orthodox and three heterodox schools does not include Saivism. This cannot be an overlook. It seems to be a deliberate move to exclude certain schools of philosophical thought when 'official' boundary is drawn to decide what are to be considered as the main schools of Indian philosophy. It is often argued that mysticism and spirituality (that includes intuitive grasp) have to be excluded from philosophy. This division itself is based on the Western methodology of defining philosophy. It is well-known that this notion of philosophy in the West dates back to Plato, where philosophical exercise is equated to getting the right knowledge against mere belief (JTB thesis). The trend of studying Indian philosophy from Western methodological framework persists to date. In spite of K. Satchidananda Murty's *Philosophy in India: Traditions, Teaching, and Research* (1985), little change is visible in the university curriculum. Indian philosophy curriculum is yet to include all that is in practice in the classical *darsana* tradition. In a few departments, shockingly, Indian philosophy is under represented.

If the idea of Indian philosophy is to be conceived through the traditional notion of *darsana*, it is important to look at what constitutes the latter. The term '*darsana*' has been interpreted by authors of the second trend such as Swami Vivekananda, as a way to include an intuitive grasp of reality. According to them, *darsana* in the absolute sense may have to be understood as the state of being beyond the world of ordinary language and perception. This conception of *darsana* seems to be a wide one, and includes methods like argument, analysis, experience, intuition, etc. as understood both in India as well as in the West. A wider notion of 'experience' that includes spiritual and mystical experiences has also been considered. This could be the reason why many Indian scholars preferred to use the term '*anviksiki*' against '*darsana*' as most of these scholars were deeply influenced by the philosophical methodologies of the West.

The term '*anviksiki*' is supposed to be first used by Kautilya in *Arthashastra*. There is a common belief that *anviksiki* has been used very differently in different classical texts ranging from philosophy to politics and even agriculture and animal husbandry. According to Ramkrishna Bhattacharya, Kautilya used *anviksiki* as one among the four *vidyas*; the other three are *trayi*, *varta*, and *dandaniti*. *Anviksiki* is supposed to be employed in three studies, viz. Samkhya, Yoga, and Lokayata (Bhattacharya 2011, p. 131). By this reading, it is doubtful whether the term is also used for animal husbandry. But according to Vidyabhusana (1920), it carries different senses with considerable variations at different contexts. It could be quite possible that it is being used with varied senses in Samkhya, Yoga, and Lokayata. But, it is difficult to ascertain that *anviksiki* could be used for such a wide range of topics as mentioned earlier. The practice of using the same word for supposedly different activities may not be due to paucity of language. That would be a simplistic argument. There must be more important reasons for using the same term for seemingly different activities. The debate

is important for couple of reasons. It could be a case of ‘family resemblances’ (Wittgenstein 2001/1953) that we use *anviksiki* in different areas of philosophy, politics, literature, and agricultural practices, etc. for there could be some criss-cross similarities among these usages. Alternatively, we can understand a broad and loose meaning of the term that remains constant, to which could be added specific meanings peculiar to the context (of usages). According to Wilhelm Halbfass, Sanskrit meaning of *anviksiki* comes closest to the discipline of ‘philosophy’ as is understood in the West (Nicholson 2010, p. 217). If etymologically traced, *anviksiki* is the second of the three-layered epistemic stages: *iksa* (viewing or desiring to know), *anviksa* (reasoning about the way of viewing), and *pariksa* (evaluating the method through a third party).⁹ What Halbfass (1990) saw could have triggered Daya Krishna and others to prefer *anviksiki* to *darsana* to explain the nature of philosophy in the Indian sense. But the problem remains. While *anviksiki* approximates a particular idea of philosophy based on conceptual and methodological analysis, it may not, for instance, be able to capture the nature of descriptive ontology or speculative metaphysics.

From what Ramkrishna Bhattacharya (2011) explains about Kautilya’s take on *anviksiki*, it seems that the usage of the term cuts across the ‘official’ divide of *astika* (orthodox) and *nastika* (heterodox) schools of classical Indian philosophy. In other words, it encompasses both the Vedic and non-Vedic worldviews. This classification also seems to remain within the Sanskrit tradition.¹⁰ So, these yardsticks may not quite fit the description and elucidation of the philosophical thought of non-Sanskritic traditions as found in other parts of the sub-continent.

India’s vast expanse in terms of geography and cultural/linguistic multitude strengthens the above statement. Let me highlight two typologies representing two varying traditions in the country. Sangam (third century BC till third century AD) is an old classical tradition of South India, which is as rich as the Vedic tradition. Take for instance, the idea of esthetic sensibility conceived and understood in *Natyashastra* and Sangam literature.¹¹ They underline not only differences in content but also in the modes of performance through which the idea is conceived. Esthetic sensibility in Vedic tradition (*Natyashastra*) is conceived through theatrical performances (*natya*). The nine *rasas* (or kinds of emotive feelings) represent different forms of esthetic sensibility. In contrast, the conception of *thinai* in Sangam literature highlights the inseparable play of the inner and the outer (Ramanujan 1967), the former represented through inner feelings of the performer/actor and the outer represented through physical landscape (Rajagopal 2016). It is a unique way of articulating esthetic sensibility through internalization of the environmental landscape. This observation in no manner amounts to a presentation of the two traditions as opposed or contradictory, or as locked in a hierarchy of superiority/inferiority. Both need to be seen positively and uniquely, as parallel intellectual traditions of India.

⁹ This articulation is based on author’s discussion with the Buddhist scholar and Sanskritist S. R. Bhatt.

¹⁰ I am considering both *astika* and *nastika* philosophies within the larger fold of Sanskrit tradition. Even though Buddhism and Jainism are classified within the non-Vedic category, the close interface of the two with *astika* philosophies is well-known.

¹¹ This distinction also exemplifies other possible parallels between Sanskrit and non-Sanskrit traditions.

The other typology is in terms of highlighting the minor traditions of India.¹² There are several indigenous philosophical narratives among ethnic communities inhabiting the northeastern and central parts of India. Several rich narratives found in the orature¹³ of these indigenous communities are equally important; and must be mapped and shown as part of the Indian philosophical tradition. Narratives found in *Anoirol* and *Chainarol* (Manipuri), *Buronji* (Assamese), *Rajmala* (Tripuri), etc. carry philosophical insights in the form of songs, hymns, idioms, ancestral stories, etc. It is worth tracing philosophical drives in the traditional worldviews found in the indigenous text like *Anoirol* (Manipuri, compiled between 900 CE to 1500 CE), where life is equated with movement and stillness with death. Thus, music and dance (as performance) with songs (as poetry) signify joyful movement symbolizing life, as against fixity and death. There are also deep philosophical insights in the folk narratives of smaller indigenous communities. These works should not be ignored by merely considering them as myths and primitive ideas. In addition to these, there are Islamic philosophical works (Sufism) as well as protest philosophical narratives within Hinduism (Bhakti movement). Indian philosophy should not be merely equated with Hindu philosophy or philosophy of the majority. That will erase out several other traditions that do not belong to the religious worldviews of Hinduism or the majoritarian ways of life. India's vast geography and multitude of cultural traditions provide varied philosophical narratives, which call for concerned investigation with a great degree of openness.

This brings us back to the post-colonial question of what constitutes Indian philosophy. As stated earlier, the search for Indianness has been an integral part of India's nation narratives. It is important to mention how liberal, socialist, Marxist, and Hindutva forces struggled and contested among one another about their own idea of Indian nation, during the freedom struggle. One of the dilemmas of post-colonial India lies in addressing the question of Indianness. Philosophical narratives and goals of finding *that* which constitutes Indian philosophy, even if inadvertently, take one to addressing this question. In this context, it is worth narrating how J. N. Mohanty sees India's civilizational character. Taking up the historical site of Varanasi as a cultural and intellectual hub, Mohanty explains¹⁴ how proponents of different philosophical schools (*sampradaya*) in ancient time visited Varanasi to take part in different intellectual debates (*vakyartha sadas* and *tattvartha vicara*, etc.) challenging one another and exhibiting the superiority of their positions, but at the same time readily embracing the opponent's school if conceded defeat. The story of Adi Sankara and Mandana Mishra is a case in point. The ability to concede defeat in such philosophical debates was the greatest strength that India's intellectual tradition possessed. For Mohanty, it is

¹² I am borrowing this term from Yogendra Singh's articulation of those cultural practices that are not necessarily part of any grand narrative (1986).

¹³ Orature is a "term coined by the Kenyan novelist and playwright Ngugi wa Thiong'o to denote imaginative works of the oral tradition (...). The point of the coinage is to avoid suggesting that oral compositions belong to a lesser or derivative category", Oxford Reference. <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100252914> (Accessed 14 February 2018). Ngugi and other scholars are using this term to conceptualize an embedded literary practice that breaks the binary of literary and oral traditions. I am using this term to trace philosophical ideas found in the embedded literary narratives of the indigenous people in the country.

¹⁴ This was part of the keynote address delivered by J. N. Mohanty during an international seminar titled *Imagining India: Discourse of the Nation* organized by the Department of English, Benaras Hindu University during December 18–19, 2009.

not only the desire for argumentation ('argumentative Indian' as Amartya Sen observes), but also possession of an enormous moral strength of resilience and openness that defined this civilization. Continuing this argument, I see that the core of India's philosophical traditions lies in assimilating and integrating different points of views, and even accepting the difference where assimilation is not possible. The post-colonial challenge is about inculcating this spirit of resilience and openness, both in epistemic practice as well as in moral commitment.

Samvad may be seen as manifestation of this civilizational ethos. Daya Krishna's attempt to start *samvad* between the Anglophone scholars of philosophy and the traditional *pundits* could be seen as a post-colonial experiment to understand and capture India's intellectual tradition. India's philosophical tradition is not monotype, but multi-layered. Studying philosophy as practiced by the traditional *pundits* who remained at the periphery (the third trend) should undoubtedly be seen to represent what is called Indian philosophy. Contemporary scholarship must question the attitude and statements made against the *pundits* by Anglophone scholars. We must be open to the works of the traditional *pundits* and their methods of philosophizing. Differences in the modes of philosophizing have to be shared and sorted out. It is not in the exclusion, but in sharing, that philosophy as an activity could be strengthened and broadened.

Going by this, we must also take seriously those studies on classical philosophy that are undertaken through Western philosophical methodologies. As long as the study carries the content of classical Indian tradition, be it purely a text, or socio-political reality, those should be considered as part of the Indian philosophy. Works by K. C. Bhattacharyya, A. C. Mukherjee, Daya Krishna, J. N. Mohanty, Rajendra Prasad, G. C. Nayak, and several others cannot be brushed aside on the ground that they were all trained in Western philosophy and its methodologies.

There are also philosophical works of non-academic philosophers. Works of Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, M. K. Gandhi, M. N. Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, B. R. Ambedkar, etc. not only carry philosophical insights but also show a blend of their awareness of Western philosophical tradition with the classical Indian philosophy. It would be unfair if their works were not considered as part of Indian philosophy.

We must caution ourselves of two major lacunae. One, Indian philosophy is not Hindu philosophy, if the former is to be equated exclusively with Hindu religious worldview. Two, Indian philosophy is not to be seen as archaic, dead and gone, only to be found in the archives. It is only when we overcome such preconceived notions and prejudices about Indian philosophy that its strength as philosophical enterprise will start to be appreciated by the rest of the world. Colonialism is a psychological barrier in the post-colonial time. The story is not so gloomy as many Indologists and Indian philosophy scholars in the West perceive. The *Columbia Companion on Twentieth Century Philosophies* includes non-Western philosophy as a trend within which Indian philosophy finds a space.¹⁵ This is recognition by one, as much as an achievement for the other.

¹⁵ The article by Rohit Dalvi in the compendium *Columbia Companion to Twentieth Century Philosophies* (2007) is a good move towards recognition of contemporary Indian philosophy by the West.

Contemporariness of Indian Philosophy

The above statements, if taken seriously, raise significant challenges to redraw the map of contemporary Indian philosophy. It is important to examine if Indian philosophy has its contemporary 'presence'—alive and kicking! But, the problem lies in explicating what constitutes contemporariness. Will it be shaped merely by the kind of works done by the colonial and post-colonial philosophers? Should the contemporary reading of classical Indian philosophy be excluded from this genre? Perhaps, the term 'contemporary' needs to be seen as a distinct category rather than be paired with other terms, if it is to be equated with the idea of 'presence.' The division of 'classical, colonial and the post-colonial,' or 'ancient, medieval and modern,' or 'pre-modern, modern and post-modern,' are historically articulated classifications based on certain identifiable phenomenal landmarks. On the contrary, the term 'contemporary' always shows a sense of the presence (here and now) from whichever time the assertion is made. What was 'contemporary' for Sri Aurobindo and 'contemporary' for Ramchandra Gandhi are two temporal points brought together by the sense of 'presence.' This is not to suggest that those two points lie together, but only to highlight that there is commonality in the idea of presence used in both the points. Both, for instance, carry the sense of being inseparably 'here and now' with their own specific existences as well as being 'transcendental' at the same time. While a particular mode of philosophizing may emerge out of certain philosophical problems faced by a philosopher in his/her time, the philosophical narrative emerging/arising as a response may not remain confined only to the original point. The narrative may carry transcendental (or general) appeal beyond the specificity of time and space.

Raghuramaraju in his *Debates in Indian Philosophy* provides a sub-title *Classical, Colonial and Contemporary*, which makes a clearer division of the historical phases through which different philosophical genres were addressed at different times. Such an exercise at the conceptual level makes meaningful interventions to map the philosophical trajectories in India. But can we make a separation of these phases—either based on distinctiveness of philosophical questions or historical positioning of the life of a philosopher? Raghuramaraju himself states the overlapping nature of such a classification by asserting that 'contemporary India consists of a combination of the modern and the pre-modern—neither existing together nor insulated from each other' (Raghuramaraju 2006, p. 18). While he accepts simultaneous presence of the classical Indian philosophy and modern Indian philosophy, say during the twentieth century, he also sees no sign of any interaction happening between the two traditions. This is substantiated through the scathing remarks he quotes from scholars like S. N. Dasgupta (1982) and M. P. Rege on the 'ignorance and closeness' of the traditional scholars (Raghuramaraju 2006, p. 4). But these remarks themselves, on the contrary, show signs of some engagement towards a possible dialogue—at least an 'awareness' about the other. Let me present a counterpoint to problematize further. In the last few decades, some scholars have been using post-colonial themes to address classical Indian philosophy. The problem of gender has been a significant theme of our time, and scholars like Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (2012) and Kanchana Natarajan (2001) have critiqued the Samkhya philosophy for being gender biased. Although it is true that Samkhya philosophy does not talk of Prakriti and Purusha as embodied categories but as principles, it is equally true that the relationship of these principles when articulated

through Sanskrit language uses a highly gendered vocabulary. As a response, a Western scholar Jacobsen (2002) has defended Samkhya philosophy. Such new works are being initiated in university research programs.¹⁶ Though a dialogue already exists and is continuing, one may still raise the objection that it is incomplete without the response of the traditional *pundits*. But the incompleteness of a dialogue does not nullify the possibility of a dialogue. So what Raghuramaraju sees as an absence is in fact the contingent result of specific events. There is no structural lack that defines this absence. A dialogue may not happen until date; but, it may start in future! The possibility is inherently open.

Let me take this discussion to another, though a related plane, where Elise Coquereau makes a significant point highlighting Daya Krishna's assertion that 'classical Indian philosophy *is* already contemporary in its development, since among the traditional learned scholars (*pundits*) there are philosophers still debating on and contributing to the classical schools of Indian philosophy (usually in Sanskrit)' (Freschi, et al. 2017, p. 14). This raises serious questions on the way we freeze a tradition and make it dead. If a certain form of classical Indian philosophy is alive in terms of continued debates till date, could we call it contemporary? Or will it remain classical? The case mentioned above is not about a dialogue between the pre-modern and modern, but about a continued debate within the pre-modern, right at the face of the modern. And the two need not necessarily meet. But, there are also cases where the pre-modern and modern exist simultaneously, and efforts are constantly being made, at least by one, to engage with the other. If this is accepted, a compartmentalization of the classical, colonial, and contemporary will become redundant, since by 'contemporary,' we are trying to map the kinds of philosophizing done *today* on Indian philosophy. By this argument, both the classical as well as the colonial insofar as those become the subject matter of our time, are supposed to be contemporary. But there could be deeper problems. It may be problematic to call a study contemporary if that study is merely an exposition of a traditional debate between two schools of thought on a specific traditional problem.

From here, it may further follow that the idea of 'contemporariness' is not about an extension of a particular kind of philosophy, say of classical Indian philosophy as historically mapped, but about a certain mode of doing philosophy. Perhaps, this mode has to be captured through an explication of the conception of 'presence.' The idea of 'presence' in the ordinary sense conveys a meaning of being in the present tense. For instance, let us see these two statements: 'I am writing this paper with commitment to contemporary Indian philosophy,' and because of which 'I am not able to attend to any other social commitments.' Both these statements are in the present tense and explain my state of being here and now. Philosophically speaking, these statements convey a certain inalienable connection between the *time* in which I make these statements and the *surrounding* in which I make these statements. The inseparable link between time and space brings the sense of presence—my being *here and now*. It is not about 'I was

¹⁶ Let me refer to a recent PhD work of a young scholar, Shipra, at Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi) where the scholar engages with the works of Debiprasad Chattopadhyay and Kanchana Natarajan on use of Sanskrit words '*kshetra*' (field to be plowed), '*nartakivat*' (dancing girl), '*prasavdharmi*' (one who gives birth), etc. for Prakriti. These terms are highly gendered in valuation. This has been articulated in her PhD thesis titled 'Simone de Beauvoir and Samkhya Philosophy on Gender Differentiation: A Comparative Study' 2016.

writing' (which signifies disconnectedness), but about 'I am writing' (a present in continuity). Being here and now also highlights an additional aspect of this presence. My being here and now is not about an event where a declaration is made about a bodily presence. It also conveys, in addition to time and space, an activity—that 'I am writing.' It conveys an action, an activity that is an ongoing performance. My presence (as existence), in addition to an inseparable connection between the present tense 'now' and the space 'here' (in the discursive sense), is also inalienably connected through my performance 'in writing.' The inseparable connection of the three has to be the ground on which the idea of contemporariness is built and articulated.

I think, we still need to come closer to marking the contemporariness of Indian philosophy. Daya Krishna's articulation that classical Indian philosophy is contemporary in so far, as there exists lively debates today among the *pundits* looks a little hurriedly construed. It lacks further qualifiers to differentiate different forms of philosophizing. Without a qualifier, anything we do will become contemporary. Such a sweeping articulation will fail to capture the nuanced differentiations that exist in various modes of philosophizing. The idea of 'now' has to be linked to an activity that authenticates the 'temporal presence' of the subject (the researcher). I think that the idea of authentication is important. Our mode of raising philosophical questions and deliberation must come from the *need* of a temporal presence. For instance, in order to be a contemporary philosopher, a researcher engaging with Adi Sankara's metaphysics must raise new questions emerging from the researcher's temporal presence, and not only archaic questions frozen in the past. This is not to claim that the latter are bad philosophical problems/questions. It is just to maintain that those may not be considered as contemporary. If this is conceded, then it may become reasonable to raise the question, which I did in the beginning, namely to juxtapose 'philosophy in India' with 'Indian philosophy.' It is not easy to merge the two nor to exclude one from the other. The juxtaposition of the two lies in the contemporariness of our philosophical problems.

In this way, contemporary Indian philosophy should include raising new questions for classical philosophical theories from our temporal situatedness. If old questions find newness in our present concerns, these modes of philosophizing will carry a distinct contemporariness. Swami Vivekananda's articulations on Raja Yoga, for instance, may fall in this category. So does Daya Krishna's take on *moksha* and transcendence (Bhushan et al. 2011). There could also be fresh new questions raised on classical philosophy from modern methodologies. K. Satchidananda Murty's (1973) idea of the 'realm of between' and Ramchandra Gandhi's take on Advaita Vedanta could fall in this category. Or, take the case of Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya and Kanchana Natarajan's gendered reading of Samkhya philosophy (2012). All these modes carry contemporariness.

At the same time, there could also be complete newness in addressing philosophical issues coming out of direct socio-political needs, and addressing these issues through an engagement with the larger narratives found in the classical Indian philosophy. The long and consistent deliberation on the idea of *swaraj* by M. K. Gandhi in his *Hind Swaraj* shows newness in postulating the notion of political struggle through a rigorous metaphysics. Gandhi's claim that India's slavery was not due to the strength of the British but the internal weakness of the Indians themselves (Gandhi 1997/2004, pp. 39–40) comes from such metaphysics, one that propounds self-realization or internal dialogue.

Thus, contemporary Indian philosophy should be based on a philosophical engagement arising out of our temporal presence, be it ethical and social philosophy, or metaphysics and epistemology. Contemporariness cannot be based on archaic and frozen questions. If the primary task of philosophy is to make sense of one's own existence, questions about existence must emerge out of our presence—here and now. And, it is through philosophizing as an activity, through beautiful stories about our own existence that the presence is meaningfully laid out. It is through a ceaseless storytelling that our philosophical narratives gain space in the presence. It is through this authentically engaged presence as a way of doing philosophy that contemporariness of Indian philosophy can be sustained.

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