

Remarking An Analisation A Reflection on Daya Krishna's View on Indian Philosophy

Abstract

Daya Krishna gives a new plea for a new history of philosophy in India which is expressed in his books- 'New Perspectives in Indian Philosophy, and 'Indian Philosophy: A Counter Perspectives'. In these works he dealt with the most commonly accepted ideas about Indian philosophy and tried to radically uproot them. Daya Krishna tried to show that Indian philosophy is no less philosophical than its Western counterpart. The reduction of Indian philosophy into a "spiritual" or *mokṣa* oriented endeavour simply not liked by him. He makes out a strong case against the claim that the central concern of Indian philosophy is spiritual liberation, pure and simple. According to him Indian philosophy is proclaimed to be dealing with the final and ultimate liberation of the spirit, which is known as *Moksa*, and it is in this perspective that Indian philosophy makes any sense at all. Daya Krishna's creative criticism of the prevalent traditionalist interpretation of classical Indian philosophy is analytically stated and evaluated. Daya Krishna thought that need for a new history of India cannot be denied. A long-term plan consisting of diverse strategies at various levels would for him will yield a better result for creation of history of Indian philosophy. A detail discussion about these facts were included in this article.

Keywords: *New Perspectives in Indian Philosophy, 'Indian Philosophy: A Counter Perspectives, Moksa, Indian Philosophy, Indian Schools, Spiritual, Western Philosophy*

Introduction

Daya Krishna's philosophy is not a mere corpus of concepts and theories. It is rather an outcome of philosophy's encounter with his own tradition. He liked to present his philosophy in Kant's way of interrogation of culture, which leads to cultural and intellectual pluralism. His philosophy had a deep commitment to freedom as value. Daya Krishna as a philosopher of depth and diversity traces and discover different levels of individual life and social reality. In Daya Krishna's philosophy we can also depict world view about the society and tradition. His writings also reflect about world view of value. His thought on biology, sociology, axiology and cosmology form a graded chain of being. He also has contributed on economy, sociology, literature political science and education. He had contributed quite a number of acutely argued papers on Indian philosophy, with ample predispositions, presuppositions and pretensions of Indian philosophers both classical as well as contemporary. Daya Krishna was not a believer either, aware as he was of the contradiction between the common beliefs about Vedic literature and what the Vedas themselves. He endeavoured to free Indian philosophy from the common idea that Indian philosophy is nothing but a spiritual quest and that philosophical themes in India are merely functional to religious ideals. Daya Krishna stated, vice versa, that religious goals were for Indian philosophers just an excuse to legitimate purely philosophical interests. Daya Krishna has written extensively on the relations between logic and empirical reality, the nature of philosophy and the art of philosophizing, the problem of freedom and its relation to value, analyzed issues in social and political philosophy, and put forward a new counter perspectives on Indian philosophy.

Aim of the Study

In this article attempt has been made to reveal Daya Krishna's findings about various aspects of Indian philosophy expressed in his two books 'New Perspectives in Indian Philosophy' and 'Indian Philosophy. A Counter Perspectives'

Sabitri Devi
Associate Professor,
Deptt.of Philosophy,
Cotton College,
Guwahati

Remarking An Analisation

Discussion

Daya Krishna is the first philosopher who uses analytical tools in the field of Indian philosophy unsparingly and relentlessly. Over the years Daya Krishna had been engaged in two great "philosophical battles." The first was against what he referred to as "myths" about Indian philosophy and primarily the so-called distinction, prevailing in many circles, between "Western philosophy" and "Eastern wisdom." Daya Krishna struggled to show that Indian philosophy is no less philosophical than its Western counterpart. At the same time, he highly respected and was immensely interested in Chinese and Japanese philosophies. The reduction of Indian philosophy in to a "spiritual" or *mokṣa*-centered endeavour simply enraged him. In this respect, in his famous article "Three Myths about Indian Philosophy" in his book *Indian Philosophy—A Counter Perspective* he says "The interests of Western Indological studies, combined with the search for a spiritual self-identity in the face of overwhelming Western superiority in all fields of knowledge," he wrote in his preface to this intriguing collection of articles, "seemed to have led to the creation of a certain picture of India's philosophical past, which has become fixed in the minds of successive generations both in India and abroad, through innumerable textbooks which render it almost impossible to question the picture or build a different one."¹ His demystifying task culminated in the revolutionary article "Three Myths about Indian Philosophy" and in the volumes which followed it, especially *New Perspectives in Indian Philosophy: Approach*, and *Indian Philosophy: A Counter Perspective*. In these works he dealt with the most commonly accepted ideas about Indian philosophy and tried to radically uproot them. An example, bearing far-reaching consequences, is Daya Krishna's criticism of the traditional scheme of six *darśanas* in Indian philosophy. One may argue, indeed, that this number is purely whimsical, for it includes Yoga, whose philosophical concerns are doubtful, and excludes Linguistic Philosophy, Jainism, Buddhism, Materialism, etc. Even Vedānta, whose philosophical status is not questioned by Daya Krishna, achieved according to him a distinct position only in the second millennium of our era.² Consequently, a projection of the six-fold classification of *darśanas* back to the first millennium or even before leads to major misinterpretations of the philosophical scene in India. More specifically, the hypothesis of a Vedānta *darśana* in the first millennium is a "retrospective illusion imposed by the historiography of Indian Philosophy."³ Moreover, exaggerating the importance of *darśanas* may lead to the undervaluation of cross influences between thinkers belonging to different schools: It is, therefore, imperative that we get out of the prison-house of systems and focus attention on the problems, issues and questions that troubled philosophers in India through the ages and the way they grappled with them and the arguments they gave for tentative answers and solution to them. Only through some such efforts will we be able to enter into their philosophical world and see the inner, motivative force

of the philosophical enterprise they were engaged in.⁴ Daya Krishna noticed in his article "The Mīmāṃsaka versus Yajñika : Some Further Problem in the Interpretation of Śruti in the Indian Tradition"⁵, how the actual performers of Vedic sacrifices (the *yajnikas*) neglected Mīmāṃsā interpretations, he questioned the actual status of this discipline in regard to the Veda, stressing the irrelevance of Mīmāṃsā speculations and hence the distance between Vedic praxis and the role of Mīmāṃsā as the allegedly official interpreter of the Veda. Furthermore, Daya Krishna, in his article "Is the Doctrine of *Arthavāda* Compatible with the Idea of Śruti?"⁶ say that today's Veda does not correspond to the Veda referred to by Mīmāṃsakas. Their Veda is eminently a prescriptive text, where descriptive statements have only an ancillary role. That this was not the commonly accepted device to interpret the Veda is shown by the very fact that the other branch of Mīmāṃsā, the Vedānta (or Uttara Mīmāṃsā), totally disagrees about it. Moreover, Daya Krishna showed in the article "*Śyena yāga*: The Achilles Heel of Śruti in Indian Tradition" that Mīmāṃsakas are further "picky", insofar as they maintain that statements regarding the *Śyena* (a sacrifice undertaken to harm others), though prescriptive, are not meant to be followed. The *Śyena* is a rather debated topic within Mīmāṃsā, since the Vedic prescriptions related to it seem to contradict the Vedic prescription forbidding harm to any living being (*na himsyāt*). Daya Krishna concludes that the Mīmāṃsā is not a consistent advocate of the validity of the Veda, and that even the Veda itself is not a univocally identifiable Textual Canon. In fact, as hinted above, the Mīmāṃsā somehow forces the Veda into a narrow precinct, that of a sum of prescriptions regarding sacrifice. Better, Mīmāṃsakas represent a hermeneutical current understanding the Veda as a prescriptive text. This allows them to strongly argue for the validity of such a restricted Veda. As for the *Śyena* sacrifice, Prābhākara Mīmāṃsakas maintain that the *Śyena* is not to be performed because of the prohibition to harm living beings. The presence of prescriptions regarding it in the Veda does not amount to its endorsement, because prescriptions are subordinated to the eligibility (*adhikāra*) for performing them, and in this case the eligibility requirement is to be "one who wants to harm one's own enemy", which implies a prohibited status. So, the *Śyena* is to be performed only by those who are already transgressing the prohibition to harm, and does not by itself enjoin such a transgression. Obviously, such an explanation would sound fully speculative to Daya Krishna, who would sharply criticize such a sophistical way out.

He Further Says in his book '*Indian Philosophy: A Counter Perspective*' that Indian philosophy in general, is to "reestablish a living continuity with India's philosophical past to make it relevant to the intellectual concerns of the present." The final objective of the book, he explains, "is to take a close look at the classical texts of the Indian philosophical traditions with unblinkered eyes." In some of his papers, in this book Daya Krishna comes

Remarking An Analisation

out with a sharp challenge to the current notions of Indian philosophy in general. Accordingly, in his "Three Conception of Indian Philosophy", he makes out a strong case against the claim that the central concern of Indian philosophy is spiritual liberation, pure and simple. According to him Indian philosophy is proclaimed to be dealing with the final and ultimate liberation of the spirit, which is known as *Moksa*, and it is in this perspective that Indian philosophy makes any sense at all. In this connection he examines the theses of Karl Potter and K.C. Bhattacharya, propounded by them in justification of the vast speculative enterprise of Indian philosophy which seems to mitigate against or to be irrelevant to its presumed primary and sole concern with *moksa*. Daya Krishna questions two common assumptions, viz. that Indian philosophy is "spiritual", and that it is chiefly concerned with *moksa*, "liberation". Of course much philosophizing was technical and not concerned with meditation and liberation. For instance, *Nyaya* philosophy has a lot to say on what philosophers call epistemology, i.e. the ways of knowing, but it has less to offer to those who are eager for liberation. The philosopher quotes a list of mundane works⁷ including treatises on painting and on eroticism, that start out with a promise that the knowledge provided here will lead to *moksa*. This was just a convention, a work that wanted to draw attention to it just had to announce itself as a way to liberation; and the reader should use his own discrimination to decide which books really deal with liberation.

Daya Krishna's creative criticism of the prevalent traditionalist interpretation of classical Indian philosophy is analytically stated and evaluated. His objections to classifying Indian philosophies into orthodox and heterodox systems, applying to a group of differing philosophies the common labels of *vedānta* or *vedāntic*, making these terms multi-referential, inappropriately titling some books as *Nyāyasūtra*, *Sāṅkhyakārikā*, etc., though they discuss a miscellany of themes, etc., are also discussed and assessed. His calling of these terms and some others of their like or the practice of using them, mythical is examined. It is shown that they may not be accurate but their use has not become disutile. In their prevailing usage, seemingly misleading characters have become sterile and therefore they have ceased to be misleading and continue functioning as convenient classificatory terms. Enjoying his calling of the concept of *puruṣārtha* and the theory of *puruṣārtha* too mythical, it has been shown that the concept is not because it means any object of anyone's and there are many such objects; the theory is not because it is historically an important component of classical Indian value theory. Daya Krishna analysis of the traditionalist claim is that Indian philosophy is spiritualist. Daya Krishna links it with Indian culture through the concept of *moksa*.

Daya Krishna continues this controversy in his article "Indian philosophy and *Moksa*: Revisiting an old controversy"⁸, in order to reply Potters allegation of Indian philosophy as religious oriented. Here Daya Krishna formulates three issues: "

1. Is Indian philosophy "spiritual" in a sense in which western philosophy cannot be characterised as such?
2. Is the concept of *moksa* distinctive of Indian philosophy in the sense that no analogous concept is to be found in the western philosophical tradition?
3. Even if such an analogous concept can be found in western philosophical tradition,

Is It a fact that it (*moksa*) occupies such a central pivotal place in the Indian philosophical tradition that the latter cannot make sense or even be possibly understood without reference to it?⁹ He arrives at the conclusion that students and historians of western philosophy never bothers about the question as

1. "is western philosophy essentially spiritual?"
2. or is it essentially concerns with man's liberation?"

Daya Krishna talks that the Vedas are *apauruṣheya*, "impersonal", i.e. of supernatural origin, but in *Indian Philosophy* he musters arguments why the Vedas are just human literature. Thus, the existence of different versions of the *Yajurveda* was consciously countenanced by the *Yajurvedic rishis*: "Obviously, they would not have regarded it as *apauruṣheya* or *revealed*"¹⁰. Repetition of Vedic verses is another key to the natural process of intertextuality: "It is not only that a very large number of Mantras from the *Rgveda* are repeated in the other Vedas, but that there are substantial repetitions in the *Rgveda* itself."¹¹ The *rishis* freely borrowed from each other, they could see far because they stood on the shoulders of giants: "But if this was the relation of one Vedic *ṛṣi* to another, how can that relation are understood either in terms of *apauruṣheyatva* or revelation, or even in terms of Vedic authority?"¹² The answer is cannot, i.e. it should not be understood as a divine revelation like what is claimed for the *Ten Commandments* or the *Quran*. It must be seen as just a collection of hymns to the gods by human poets. We know their names, their genealogies, their where abouts, roughly also their chronology, so we are very much dealing with a human composition. In traditionalist circles it would be sacrilege to say this, but: "In fact, the very large proliferation of the *shakhas* ['branches', channels of transmission], at least as mentioned in the tradition, testifies to the fact that the *Rishis* of those days treated their Vedic patrimony with a degree of freedom that seems sacrilegious when viewed in the perspective of attitudes with which the Vedas have been traditionally looked at for a long time. (...) the Vedas were regarded in a totally different way in Vedic times."¹³ In the "Vedic Corpus; Some Reflection" , Daya Krishna comes to the conclusion that *Sama Veda Samhita* is not a *Veda Samhita* at all; also that *Sukla* and *Kṛṣṇa Yajur-Veda Samhita* are two independent *Vedas* each in its own right and the *Sakhas* are in the nature of independent works of rather than variants of a common texts ; That the custodians of the different Vedas sometimes look down upon each other's *veda*; and that the *ṛṣi*'s would not have regarded it [Vedic Corpus] as

Remarking An Analisation

aparusaya or revealed, or viewed it in any such manner that it was only to be memorized passed on and nothing added to it altered¹⁴. In order to rescue them he thinks for new arrangement of the whole Vedic Corpus by 'a new *vyasa*'.¹⁵ Coming to the Upanishads, it is their classification that arouses unorthodox suspicions. According to Daya Krishna: "Most are not independent works, but selections made out of a pre-existing text",¹⁶ which raises questions, such as: who made the selection, and why? Thus, the *Aitareya Upanishad* forms the middle part of the *Aitareya Aranyaka*, the *Kena* forms the 10th chapter of the *Jaiminiya Upanishad-Brahmana*, the *Taittiriya* is the 7th to 9th chapter of *Taittiriya Aranyaka*, while the *Katha* is part of the *Taittiriya Brahmana*. Daya Krishna wisely avoids pronouncing on the difficult question of their absolute chronology, but he observes that in relative order, Upanishad is a genre stretching from the old Upanishads which are embedded in Vedic literature, through the middle ones to a host of late ones as recent as the Muslim period. Again, the fact that many clearly postdate the Vedic period (even by the large definition of "Vedic" current in India) casts doubt on their status of *apaurushyatva*. Here too, we know the situation and the story of Yajnavalkya, Satyakama Jabala, Uddalaka Aruni and others seers, as of any human writers. In his '*Upanishads-What are they?*' He argues that the bulk of the Upanishads are selections from pre existing texts made in an arbitrary and haphazard manner, and says that 'An alternative selection made on the basis of clearly formulated criteria which are also philosophically relevant from the contemporary point of view perhaps to meet the needs of those times'.¹⁷

Daya Krishna further mentions that, Samkara was responsible for the disappearance of Buddhism, as an active vibrant philosophical presence from the Indian scene where it is a matter of common knowledge that Nālanda flourished as an international centre of Buddhist studies till 1200 A.D., when it was destroyed by Bakhtiar Khiliji. He also feels that injustice has been done to Buddhism and Jainism by historians of Indian Philosophy. In the article "Where are the Vedas in the first Millanium A.D.?"¹⁸ he expressed that centrality of the Vedic stream for the philosophical traditions of India has been highly exaggerated at least period extending from the time of Mahavira and Buddha up to about 1200 A.D. The history and philosophy of India from 500 B.C. to 1000 A.D. has to be totally rewritten placing Buddhism in the centre and treating it as a chief protagonist. There is practically no Vedanta in the first millennium A.D. and the idea of its dominant presence, there is a superimposition by the historiography of Indian Philosophy, and two facts has been clearly mentioned by Daya Krishna in his article "Vedanta in the First Millennium A.D.: The case study of a Retrospective illusion Imposed by the Historiography of Indian Philosophy."¹⁹ says the texts like Vedic text, Vedic 'rituals', the oldest Brāhmana texts the *Nirkuta*, *Mimansa-sutras*, the *Brahma-sutras*, the Buddhist and Jaina Canonical texts etc are the 'sacred' texts which according to him needs to be

preserved, unaltered in every way and transmitted from generation to generation and carried to places off from where original was placed.²⁰

According to Daya Krishna' the very acceptance of the designations 'unorthodox', which are supposed to be translation of the term '*astika*' and '*nastika*' generally used by Indians to describe the systems, underwrites the perspectives in which Indian Philosophy is to be viewed and treats it by this strategy, as a natural objective or given classification".²¹ He also says that such a move treated the Vedas as central to the Philosophical enterprise and gave primary to those traditions which accepted in some sense or other the so-called authority of Vedas at the expense of those which explicitly denied it or refused to accept it. The story of crystallization of the diverse schools of Indian Philosophy around the first century A.D. is well known and their subsequent development during the first millennium A.D. is firstly well documented in the text devoted to that subject. However, by and large, the story of the development of these school is treated in relative isolation as if they have nothing to do with one another and had no influence either impact or interaction resulting in a modification of their positions under the influence of the criticisms they received from others. This, of course, is generally true only of the so called 'orthodox' schools of Indian Philosophy which are supposed to be derived from Vedic tradition, for Buddhism is generally treated as the adversary whose critical responses led to significant developments primarily in *Nyaya* and secondarily in some other schools of Indian philosophy.

He also describes about the ancient Hindu philosophies. Today's devout God-fearing Hindus, temple-goers and practitioners of a daily *pūja*, would not feel at home with the old-school Hindu philosophers, many of whom were functionally or even explicitly atheist. Daya Krishna cites Karl Potter with approval: "If, for example, one chooses the second century AD, one would discover that 'the major systems extant at that time – *Samkhya*, *Mimansa*, *Nyaya* and *Vaisesika*, *Jainism*, the several schools of *Buddhism*, and *Carvaka* – are none of them theistic'. But 'if one slices instead at, say, the fourteenth century A.D, one finds that *Nyaya-Vaisesika* has become pronouncedly theistic, that Buddhism and *Carvaka* had disappeared, and that several varieties of theistic Vedanta have come into prominence."²²

In his book "*New perspective in Indian Philosophy*" Daya Krishna thought that need for a new history of India cannot be denied. A long-term plan consisting of diverse strategies at various levels would for him will yield a better result for creation of history of Indian philosophy. The difference between Indian schools of philosophy lies not in their respective conceptions of *moksa*. They quarrel about metaphysical or epistemological issues, about how many fundamental building blocks the cosmos has, or about the status of the Vedas – but rarely about the need for, and even less about the way to liberation. *Moksa* was taken for granted, at least in the

Remarking An Analisation

age that concerns us here, after the introduction of alphabetic writing in India 300 BC. The way towards liberation was generically called *yoga*, and its *modus operandi* was left to teachers in confidential settings. In his 'Vedanta –Does it Really Mean Anything?'²³ He says 'the meaning of Vedanta leads nowhere. The more we try to grasp its meaning and hold it in our hands, more we find ourselves grasping and holding nothing. The most hailed term of Indian philosophical thought connotes nothing'. It needs, thus to be banished from the realm of thought, if we are serious about nothing."²⁴

Daya Krishna tried, struggled, and dedicated his life's work to changing reading habits and thinking patterns. Often he was frustrated to realize that his questions-queries, and counter-perspective remain ignored and suppressed and "automatically rejected" by fellow scholars. This frustration finds expression in his biting-titled article "Shock-proof, evident -proof, argument-proof world of *sampradāyika* scholarship in Indian philosophy,"²⁵ which ends with a personal statement: "I would like to add that in all intellectual matters one has to have what I have called "*nihsanga buddhi*," which is analogous to the *Gita's* "*niškāma karma*."²⁶ And I may add one thing more: that for a "real" *Advaitin* it should not be difficult, for his consciousness ultimately is not attached to any specific *nāma, rūpa*, or doctrine whatsoever."²⁷

Conclusion

Thus Daya Krishna considers about philosophy as a whole is spiritually oriented enterprise, and this character is also distinctive in Indian philosophy. He considers that a philosophy is usually characterized as spiritual or non-spiritual because of the way it conceives of the nature of reality and not because of the manner in which it conceives of the ultimate or highest ideal for man. He thinks that the present extent of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* which are usually regarded as authoritative *sruti* texts for the orthodox schools of Indian philosophy have certain extremely disturbing features about them which have not been noticed by those who have written on the subject. He also stands for collection and compilation of the texts with some rationale and which can be evaluated and discussed. Also that 'compilation' cannot claim the status of a '*sruti*', as it is not '*apauruseya*' in character. Further there can be a 'selection' from '*sruti*' as selection

implies that all part of the so called revelatory text are not equally important and that the totality of the message can be captured without reference to the left out parts and make them redundant. He also pointed out that the major *Upanishads* were a selection 'pre-existent' text, and that this fact was neither generally known nor taken into account by those who commented on them and written about them from him even the basic *Veda* should be regarded as '*sruti per excellence*'. Thus one can see that his articles on Indian philosophy summarize a new way of looking at Indian philosophy.

References

1. Daya Krishna, *Indian philosophy: A Counter Perspective*, preface to the new collection of articles Sri Satguru Publication, 2006
2. Daya Krishna, *New Perspectives in Indian Philosophy*, Rawat Publication, 2001, p-44-52.
3. *ibid*, p- 44
4. *ibid*, p- 21
5. *ibid*, p-82
6. *ibid*, p-115
7. *Indian Philosophy: A Counter Perspective*, p-33-34
8. *ibid*, p-66
9. *ibid* p-69
10. *ibid*, p-135
11. *ibid*, p-137
12. *ibid*, p-138
13. *ibid*, p-135
14. *ibid*, p-136
15. *ibid*, p-145
16. *ibid*, p.181
17. *ibid*, p-181
18. *New perspectives in Indian Philosophy*, p-33
19. *ibid*, p-44
20. *ibid*, "Towards the Field Theory of Indian Philosophy" p- 13
21. *ibid*, "Indian Philosophy First Millennium A.D. Facts and fiction" p-22
22. *ibid*, p-40
23. *Indian Philosophy: A Counter Perspective*, p-357
24. *ibid*, p-368
25. *New perspective in Indian Philosophy*, p-213
26. *ibid*, p-232
27. *ibid*, p-232