

POLITICS OF PHILOSOPHY

“If some discussion is actually provoked by the book, that would be the best reward for the labour it entailed”. Preface, *What Is Living And What Is Dead In Indian Philosophy?*, Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya; People’s Publishing House, New Delhi; 1976.

Like the perceived continuum of waterfowl ranging from geese to swans, there is an unperceived continuum of Indian philosophers writing on Sanskrit darshan extending from *Lipsetian* Daya Krishna to *Leninist* Chattopadhyaya. If the variations in the continuum are due to the differences in the preferences for paradigms or frameworks to be grafted onto Sanskrit darshan from European philosophy, the coherence of the continuum is a consequence of its futility. Futility — that is the word, and that is the symptom. What else could attempt, to purloin a limpid phrase of Auden, to see the fate of Buddha in the face of Christ be! And contemporary Indian intellectuals are intrinsically incapable of living without inheritance; they are equally incapable of being unique — all the more so if they happen to be “professorial schoolmasters”. By happenstance they might be rightists or leftists or pink-thinkers with faculty positions at the JNU, being bourgeois they have two tremendous psychic necessities. These are, first, to invoke the three millenia old native tradition to delude themselves and others into the belief that they are very much in its sphere (at least somewhere on the fringe of its ever expanding edge), and, secondly, to deceive themselves and others into the conviction that the two millenia old European tradition intersects the native one precisely at the point where they stand. Their entire eschatological lucubration is about the point of intersection and their locus there. This is my succinct summary of the spiritual exegesis of contemporary Indian philosophers writing on their counterparts of a bygone age. However, on occasional but momentary return to normalcy these philosophers become aware

of their self-identity. That is how, by now, it has become a part of our conventional and collective wisdom that this sort of exegesis is symptomatic of our coolie-complex which we developed when we were "subjects". Now that we have become "citizens", *what is to be done?*

To this five word fundamental Leninian question Chattopadhyaya gives an answer in six hundred and seventy five pages. Dreary it might sound—dismally dreary it must have been to fill in all those pages—worse is that at the end of the torturous task of reading through this hard-bound and highly-priced triviality, the tired and bored reader is forced to repeat: Yes, what is to be done? Providence, it seems, has not ordained each instance of the Leninian question to go with the Leninist answer.

Having had inutile interaction with our unreflective scientists and irrelevant philosophers, I was almost in a state of despair when I noted Chattopadhyaya's earlier work, which seemed to me equally unreflective and irrelevant. Yet, as a born optimist with an inveterate belief in the growth of knowledge—individual and collective—, and being never sure of my convictions, I was tempted to open this volume, to realise, in due course, that a part of it—namely the fifth chapter—was known to me since 1970. It was written an year or two earlier than that and was to go into an ill-fated *festschrift* of which I happened to be the editor. That, I believe, is the pre-natal story of this book despite Chattopadhyaya's assertion that he construed it to meet Mohit Sen's demand for an ideological weapon, unless Sen launched his armament programme earlier than that and to meet the demand Chattopadhyaya kept his factory on production in 1968.

That chapter is central not only to Chattopadhyaya's global and protracted research programme, but also for an evaluation of it. Indeed, it is seminal to his programme as, the rest of the volume can be construed as supporting evidence (*not* analysis, as the author claims in his preface) to the thesis extended in the fifth chapter, and secondly it contains an assertion, about ancient philosophy, of Lenin

who never had pretentious claims for classical scholarship. Chattopadhyaya makes a mountain out of his mole-hill by turning it into a paradigm for surveying the whole of Sanskrit philosophical literature. This paradigm is embedded in a pithy remark of Lenin which Chattopadhyaya quotes on p. 212. "(T)he contending parties", it reads, "(in philosophy) are essentially... materialism and idealism. *The latter is merely a subtle, refined form of fideism...*" It is not clear whether the emphasis is Lenin's or Chattopadhyaya's. "What does Lenin mean by all this?" Chattopadhyaya asks and answers: "Fideism is the cult of faith. Fideists are those that deny knowledge in order to make room for faith. This, as Lenin says, is the tendency and the social function of philosophical idealism."

I am *not* at all disturbed by the fact that an evaluation of "*our* philosophical tradition" — the personal pronoun in possessive case is Chattopadhyaya's — had to be carried in "*their*" framework. But I am disappointed to note that Chattopadhyaya could not find out a suitable title for his thanatological evaluation on his own and without lifting it from the unpublished proceedings of the UGC seminar held at the Andhra University in 1975 (see f.n., p. 579).

In his preface dated the 31st of March 1976, Chattopadhyaya writes: "In these anxious days through which we are passing, an analysis of the Indian philosophical tradition is much more than a matter of antiquarian curiosity. Without it we are helpless pawns in the grim political game now going on". This is confusing, for someone else — I could not check whether he was an astrologer or a social scientist with a research grant from the ICSSR — told me that the period of anxiety came to an end soon after the 1975 summer solstice. It is easy to isolate truth from error, but it is impossible to discern it in a confusion. Perhaps Chattopadhyaya thinks that the anxiety started since then; if so, he ought to have paid attention to a diagnosis of it before prescribing his traditional tablets. He seems to take it for granted that the disease has been correctly identified, either by "us" or by "them". As a result a gullible reader like me

feels "like a helpless pawn in the grim political game" of Chattopadhyaya as he himself seems to feel in the game which he conjures to be the making of a neo-colonialist conspiracy.

There is a theme which constantly occurs in Marx from *Paris Manuscripts* onwards. It is that a great idea (event) appears (occurs) in history twice, once as a tragedy and again as a farce. That philosophy is the most powerful weapon in the arsenal of the class which is to be the vehicle of progressive social change is an extremely important idea of Marx. That, indeed, is the legacy of enlightenment whose last child, perhaps, was Marx. And what is meant by philosophy is *philosophie* in the sense in which the French used the term, that is — as Marx understood it — the ideology of the class in question and is appropriate to the tasks that class has set to itself. It is *not* a rehash of incondite, vague, and obscure ancient thought. That is why after his doctoral dissertation Marx did not return to classical philosophy. (This does not mean that mature Marx developed a distaste for classical philosophy. He fixed its relevance differently. Now that Marx studies have become a heavy industry I need not concern myself with it here.) It was he, more than anyone else, who contributed towards exploding the myth of historically invariant philosophical truth. I had to state this explicitly for, if Chattopadhyaya is to be believed, it is shocking to note that such a senior and seasoned marxist like Mohit Sen ought to have informally commissioned this volume with the intention of using it in his and Chotto-padhyaya's "ideological struggle *today*" (italics added). My issue is not either with or about Sen; he is quite capable of looking after his interests, and hence evaluate whether this volume is of any use to him in his struggle to realise his goals. But people with similar goals and endowed with inferior capabilities are likely to be duped into Chattopadhyaya's archaic trap to end up in the prison of inauthenticity, irrelevancy and non-contemporaneity.

"This book", Chattopadhyaya writes, "is intended to be an analysis of our philosophical tradition from the stand-

point of our present philosophical requirements. These requirements, as understood here are secularism, rationalism and science-orientation". True, these are our requirements, our immediate requirements. And as philosophers we are expected to be rooted in contemporary life and be its lucidities. So this professional demand should naturally lead us to reflect on to analyse, and articulate to legitimise, these concepts. All this is what Chattopadhyaya proclaims, and what he does *not* do. What he does is to take a dip in the tank of tradition and come out crying that it is a filthy pool. He does not even show an awareness that the three concepts at hand are not mutually independent, but constitute a nested triad. To be scientific entails to be rational, and to be rational in the realm of human affairs implies to be secular. Thus our greatest philosophical need boils down to an explication of the concept of science, and a legitimisation of its role in our life-style. Chattopadhyaya could have served the cause which he says he is serving with a single format leaflet consisting of such an analysis rather than by a sixty format semi-scripture on tradition. How could he do that in contemporary India where science is scarce and history abundant!

Tradition! whose tradition? The insidious pronoun in the passage quoted above is invidious. The "false philosophies" which dominate our academies, Chattopadhyaya seems to think, belong to *their* tradition. But why is it theirs and not ours? Is it because our location is not spatially contiguous with theirs? Then, is it not the case that our time and "our ancestors'" time are not simultaneous? It is at least possible to enter into a dialogue with persons at a different location; what prospect do we have of doing the same with those who flourished when the world was young! Genetic continuity of a stock of people does not guarantee cultural continuity. Even if does in the case of "our tradition", it should not be allowed to continue. That is precisely where the battle has to be waged. The sooner the intellectuals of this country today realise that they do not have any pride of pedigree, the better the prospect of credit-worthy

progeny. And if one is overburdened with tradition, one will have to either unburden oneself or be crushed. If tradition is, as Chattopadhyaya says it is, infringing our freedom, and impinging our progress, the choice left to us is clear. We are either to disown tradition or else sacrifice our freedom. The issue of remoulding it to suit our needs does not arise at all. A secularist will have to treat Sanatanists and Aryasamajists alike. But Chattopadhyaya thinks differently; so he indulges in the sisyphusian activity of re-interpreting tradition so as to make it meet "our present requirements". One cannot mend his torn trousers infinite number of times; some day he will have to go either for a new pair, or else without them. But, commonsense is not everybody's infirmity.

Chattopadhyaya digs up a whole mountain beneath which is buried "the general fund of traditional philosophy"; he does this with two aims, namely first to expose the myth that spiritualism (idealism) is "the quintessence of Indian wisdom", and secondly to show that entwined with, and entangled in, it are "ideas and attitudes at least with potentials of secularism, rationalism and science-orientation". First, I will attend to the first. I am not a methodomaniac; nor is Chattopadhyaya. From his writing it appears that as yet he has not internalised marxian methodology. Yet, I cannot take-in his declaration that he wants to carry out the holy task of demythologising by turning to facts. "Fact" is a loaded concept, and the concept of fact in the present context is an overloaded concept. So we have to be quite clear and careful about it. This is not a cartesian demand, as I believe with Pascal that complete clarity darkens not to mention that it can be achieved only at the cost of intelligibility. Yet, the facts which Chattopadhyaya is invoking are *not* of the type as those like Chattopadhyaya lives in Calcutta and Rao lives in Jaipur. They are, first, of the type to which facts like Calcutta is to the east of Jaipur belong. This is a fact within the context of a geographico-astronomical theory. Further the nature of facts in question — i.e. the socio-historical ones — is much more complex. For all these

hundred years since Marx we know that there are no bare, brute, and objective facts in the realm of human affairs, so that we may be able to pick up one set of those creatures to suit our taste. Like Chattopadhyaya I too believed in objective social facts until I seriously studied Marx. But then like Saul on his way to Damascus I was struck by the blinding light of Marx and started seeing differently. Each of us, I know now, with our respective given class roles have our respective aims and aspirations, such that each of us apprehend — *not* different set of facts, but — facts in a characterisation determined by that role, and choose among the facts so apprehended according to our respective roles. (To note how Marx is a bit of Kant and a bit of Hegel see below.) That is why, though there is nothing unknown in the material with which Chattopadhyaya has filled a ton of paper, Sanskrit darshanik tradition was seen differently, and evaluated variantly, by the “mystifiers” “with or without the patronage of the neo-colonialists”. This explains why Chattopadhyaya and Daya Krishna envision the effervescence of darshan differently. Their differences, however, do not tantamount to a contradiction, even if they do, the resultant contradiction is only secondary. At the primary level they are complementary, like two sides of a coin. One can have here a glimpse of the nature of ideology. Ideology *per se* is a bourgeois phenomenon. It is the most powerful weapon which they had appropriated from the progressive forces frustrating their hopes. Science could have proved to be a substitute; but the bourgeois have appropriated that too, and condemned the aspirants of universal progress and liberation to an eternal impotence. Prometheus, it seems, is chained for all times to come.

This brings me to Chattopadhyaya's second aim. I have, earlier, indicated the psychic necessities of a bourgeois intellectual. On the one hand he had to retain his traditional armour, and on the other he had to find a place for the newly acquired — nay, appropriated — ones. So there is a need to rearrange his armoury. Chattopadhyaya is giving here one of the several alternative plans, and Daya Krishna thinks that no radical rearrangement is needed. To fling

Chattopadhyaya's sentences on his own face, "people are urged" by Chattopadhyaya "to believe that" what he says constitutes "the quintessence of Indian wisdom". "This is a myth and it has to be exposed." Myths, however, are hard to explode; no single argument can knock them down. Long-drawn battles are needed for that. So, contented I should be by indicating how Chattopadhyaya is trying to mystify, how he is trying to pass off an internal need as an external compulsion, how he is inverting the subjective and the objective, and how he is trying to trade-in a particular for the universal.

If I am wrong, Chattopadhyaya would not have used important conceptual terms in the way he did use. He uses most of the philosophical terms *not* to convey something, but, as it appears, to make the readers behave in a way he intends them to behave, just as a tribal witch-doctor uses sounds to make the patient behave in a certain anticipated way. In this respect Chattopadhyaya is paving the way for new barbarism. He never tells us what he means by 'science-orientation', or 'rationalism', or 'secularism'. Who is science-oriented?—a doctor of science, a dialectical materialist with a subscription to the *Scientific American*, or who! And who is secular?—one who attends namaz on Fridays and mass on Sundays, or one who can treat a person as a person irrespective of his religious affiliations. I am not trying to find fault with Chattopadhyaya for not doing philosophy; after all, his is a work on, and in, traditional philosophy! But then there is no excuse for his not telling us what he means by rationalism. In not articulating his concept of rationalism he has failed to discharge his professional obligation to his readers. This is the duty of the author for he uses that term more frequently than any other, and he uses it in what he thinks to be knock-down arguments. By not discharging his duty Chattopadhyaya reduces readers like me to a state where they had to constantly worry, and continuously wonder, as to who this rationalist is. Is it:

- i. one who believes that "reason" alone has access to "reality", or
- ii. one who thinks that "reason" has privileged access to "reality", or
- iii. one who, like the ideal dialectical materialist, is committed to a fixed set of presumed-to-be-true principles, and goes on mechanically stipulating them like an IBM computer, or
- iv. one who believes that a phenomenon can be explained only with reference to that phenomenon (thus that physical phenomenon can be explained in terms of physical "entities", or that poverty can be explained in terms of socio-economic variables without resorting to the notion of *Karma* or positing a *Daridranarayana*).

Indeed one can write a book on: who a rationalist is? and another on: why be a rationalist? But Chattopadhyaya thinks that all this is immaterial, for what matters to him, it appears, is what is dead in Indian philosophy! As a result, for him, rationalism becomes a new *theos*, science another, and secularism a sacred cow. So his "quest for truth" is only an attempt at a new theology.

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So far I have been responding to Chattopadhyaya's strategy and design, now I turn to his execution. (English is a beguiling language, but my meaning ought to be clear to the reader.) It is formidable task to comment upon Chattopadhyaya's writing, not because he is a formidable scholar or a subtle thinker, but because his execution is *not* neat. Originality, sobriety, modesty, meticulousness, careful reasoning and the kindred virtues are not to be counted among Chattopadhyaya's forte. Being known as a vociferous and vocal defender of reason, he seems to have overcome the need to reason out his thesis. Argument by assertion — if not by insinuation — is for Chattopadhyaya a valid *pramāṇa*; and anecdotal material is sufficient to go as substantial evidence. I am not suggesting that the book is totally devoid of arguments which satisfy the professional

demands of a philosopher. There are many, in chapters three and four, and again in chapter seven. But these are in others' heads. After all, in a country where living is observing traditional rituals, thinking is bound to be a repetition of traditional arguments. Moreover these arguments and counter-arguments offered by the classical Indian thinkers are re-presented better by several other contemporary scholars of Sanskrit darshan writing in English.

To preclude the possibility of my evaluation of Chattopadhyaya's work being reflective of his way of dealing with extremely important matters, I will be highly selective. So I pick a micron from the range of his writing, which, nevertheless, is cardinal to his thesis; in fact he has expended much labour and time on it, namely that idealists despise reason, and that they defend faith against reason. The idealist defence of faith legitimises the law-givers' spreading superstition, which in turn provides them a powerful tool to oppress the "toiling masses" (= sudras; that is Chattopadhyaya's equation). The destiny of the fifth caste is as irrelevant to Chattopadhyaya as it has been to "his" intellectual ancestors; so it does not figure anywhere in the bulky volume of Chattopadhyaya. There is no need either to be shocked or surprised at this for if Śamkara is a sacred brahmin, Chattopadhyaya is a secular brahmin.

That apart, who are these idealists? I searched the entire text for an answer, but in vain. He keeps this term as vague and multivocal as he does with the other terms mentioned earlier. Chattopadhyaya seems to do this on purpose. By keeping his terms imprecise, he gains the freedom to use them according to the dictates of expediency. This methodological trick is commonplace. Let the crucial terms be vague, then any hypothesis can be confirmed, and any sort of evidence can be allowed to go to support a given thesis. One can even use them as terms of abuse. Perhaps, Chattopadhyaya thinks that we do understand what he means by his *terminus technicus*. As he is assuming zero-disturbance in the communication channel, let me pretend that I get his message, and not demand any clarification

even if I am not happy with his definition by enumeration and lumping. Thus from Chattopadhyaya's census register of idealists I select Śamkara the arch-priest. I am isolating him for the purpose at hand because Chattopadhyaya himself thinks that he is the *rustum-e-Hind* of idealists.

My charge against Śankara is that he performed the *śrāddha* of Indian Buddhism by appropriating its fundamental tenets, and there by provided the base required for Hindu revivalism. (I have other charges, but they are extraneous to the present context.) I consider this to be his crime, and, I hope, Chattopadhyaya would agree with me. He rejects the thesis that Samkara is a crypto-Buddhist, but what I am suggesting is not equivalent to that. However, my characterisation of Samkara as a criminal is *my* characterisation and evaluation of *his* act. Samkara himself was, I suspect, unaware of the consequences of his own action. Self-knowledge seems to have eluded the preacher of self-knowledge. Paradoxical, though, it is, it is precisely on this count I absolve him from any responsibility for what I characterised as his crime. He mystified because he *was* mystified; he spread superstition because he himself *was* superstitious. In short, Samkara is at most stupid. But Chattopadhyaya thinks that he is vicious. Here I want to differ with Chattopadhyaya, and differ radically. In my defence I appeal to human nature and commonsense. If Don Quixote *knew* that he was fighting windmills, he would not be quixotic. And I am tempted to believe that Samkara was a Don Quixote. Chattopadhyaya cannot entertain that possibility; he is the last person to give a benefit of doubt to an idealist.

This makes it obligatory for Chattopadhyaya to show that Samkara accepted the divinity of reason, but camouflaged it to appear as devil with the intention of keeping the masses scared of rational truth. But that is an impossible task as Samkara corpus goes against it. Then in order to show that Samkara is vicious, Chattopadhyaya is left with the only option of maintaining that Samkara belonged to the class to which the law-givers belong, and in

the division of labour which that class required to perpetuate its power, despising reason fell into his lot. Chattopadhyaya seems to be suggesting this when he writes on p. 202: "*Conscious of importance of superstitions for the purpose of controlling masses the law-givers do their best to condemn reason.*" Now, as a rejection of reason is difficult, and as "such a task is beyond the law-givers and can best be undertaken only by philosophers. But who among the philosophers can oblige the law-givers with a theoretical defence of faith against reason? Obviously only those for whom such a defence also suits their philosophical purposes . . . They are our idealists and idealists alone. *Driven by the basic need of their metaphysics, they are obliged to condemn reason . . .*" (italics added).

From the second of the two italicised passages here it can safely be assumed that according to Chattopadhyaya, Samkara despises reason for philosophical reasons. This means that it is his personal conviction and *not* a public posture which he has put up to keep the masses away from rational truth. If so his proscribing the masses to acquire rational truth tantamounts to stupidity and not viciousness, for he himself did not indulge in that acquisitive game. Then to show that he is vicious, Chattopadhyaya will have to harp on the fact that Samkara spread superstition. In so far as he is a fellow-traveller of the law-givers (cf. Manu) he is, on the strength of the first of the italicised passages above, conscious of the utility of superstition. So Samkara took superstition as venerable truth: Chattopadhyaya would agree. Further, Chattopadhyaya remarks that for the law-givers "these venerable truths" are ones that are "revealed in scriptures" (p. 184). Then in prohibiting the masses to come into contact with the scriptures Samkara did great service to them — unknowingly though! Thus if Samkara is to be accused, he is to be accused of being treacherous to his fellow-travellers, that is the law-givers. Samkara thus turned out to be too smart a convict for a poor prosecutor like Chattopadhyaya.

But Chattopadhyaya will not rest. In his untiring attempts to debunk the idealists he is like the Schoolmaster in Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*; so he comes out with another attack. I shall try to meet that. There is no specific name for this type of argument in the extant logical literature. Nonetheless it is a fallacy, and is typical of colonial intellectuals. It is too common at least in this country, which is, and which has been, a logical wilderness. To capture the formal structure of that argument relativising it to the present context, I may venture to state that it reads like: if *foreign* Plato could do it, *desi* Samkara must have done it. Plato did it, so Samkara did it. Did what?

In reply Chattopadhyaya points his finger towards Plato's "noble lie". I am not a Plato scholar, though being placed in a situation which is similar to the one described by Plato or his forger in the *Seventh Epistle*, for quite some time now I have been browsing through the Plato Corpus. And, though Greek, to me, is Greek, being sufficiently audacious, I would like to say that, perhaps, this "noble lie" is a scholarly error. There is no last word in Plato studies, just as there is no final argument in philosophy. So one cannot take the "noble lie" either as an axiom or else as a myth propagated by professors of philosophy to meet their promotional needs. Hannah Arendt (see her *Truth and Politics*) for instance, thinks that the belief that Plato invented the "noble lie" rested on a misunderstanding of a crucial passage (414) in the *Republic*, where Plato speaks of one of his myths — a 'Phoenician tale' — as a *pheidōs*. Since the same Greek word signifies "fiction", "error", and "lie" according to the context — if Plato wants to distinguish between error and lie, the Greek language forces him to speak "involuntary" and "voluntary" *pheidōs* — the text can be rendered with Cornford as "bold flight of invention" or be read with Eric Voegelin . . . as satirical in intention; under no circumstances can it be understood as a recommendation of lying as we understand it. Plato, of course, was permissive about occasional lies to deceive the enemy or insane people — *Republic*, 382; they

are "useful . . . in the way of medicine . . . to be handled by no one but a physician", and "the physician in the polis is the ruler (388)." I quoted at length not because I want to make a point in defence of Plato (a genius like him does not need that), but to show that Chattopadhyaya, without due regard for scholarly suspension of judgements, refers (p. 179) to a passage on the stephanus page about which Arendt is commenting to make Plato mean things which he needs in his low-down on Samkara. Thus Chattopadhyaya's premises is in doubt, so his conclusion will have to stand on its own.

This does not mean that Plato and Samkara do not have anything in common. They agree on several important points, and their respective roles have structural similarity, as Chattopadhyaya himself shows in chapter ten. He is absolutely right in holding that both of them are elitist, and propose to keep the masses away from what they consider to be important. But he misses their crucial difference. If Plato wanted to keep the masses in dark about rational truth, Samkara wanted to keep them ignorant of the scriptures. They also differ in their respective ways of defending themselves. Plato wanted to keep rational truth to himself as he was scared about the prospect of its being diluted into mere opinion when the ignorant masses get hold of it. (That is the message of Cave Allegory.) Thus Plato's defence is philosophical. Samkara on the other hand wanted to hold the scriptural truth in his own fist due to *dharmic* reasons. Hence his defence is unphilosophical. This goes to support my assessment of Samkara rather than the assessment of Chattopadhyaya.

There is, I am afraid, an in-built tension in Chattopadhyaya's attitude towards Samkara. This tension, however is not Chattopadhyaya's idiosyncrasy; it is the generic trait of comparative philosophers. What Tom did, they tell us, Ram did; that shows their inferiority complex. And what Tom did, they labour to establish, Ram did better; that indicates their compensatory superiority complex. Though Chattopadhyaya, on the count of sophistication,

gives A+ to Plato, D to Kautilya, and a poor F to Samkara, he had to admit that if Plato was uncharitable to the slaves, Samkara was inhuman to the sudras. But this is inessential either to his thesis or to my evaluation of it; yet, I would like to suggest that it would be better to measure Samkara in terms of his own context, rather than take either Plato or Isocrates as measuring rods. That brings me to Isocrates.

On the authority of Farrington, Chattopadhyaya brackets Isocrates with Plato. Why Farrington lumps Plato and Isocrates together is better known to him; I do not have any chance to check as Penguins must have by now pulped Farrington. However, I am certain of the importance of Isocrates to Chattopadhyaya as both of them are progressive thinkers. Isocrates was the first to question the elitist and utopian political attitude of Plato, and propagate, contra Plato, the idea of a moderately wide participation of the generalists in political decision-making. I am mentioning this to bring to Chattopadhyaya's notice the dangers involved in paperback scholarship.

As far as Chattopadhyaya is concerned all this is "much more than a matter of antiquarian curiosity", as, according to him, an understanding of the techniques adopted for controlling the masses *then* is a *sine qua non* for understanding the techniques that are being used in controlling the masses *now*. He may be right. But understanding *per se* requires an ability to see differences. Philosophers, I always thought, should — like the old King Lear call out: "Come, I will show thee differences". That is why it is disappointing to note that Chattopadhyaya does not even make an attempt to move in that direction. Oppression then may be structurally isomorphic with oppression now. Despite that, the nature of oppression is not historically invariant. Plato and Samkara obliged — that is Chattopadhyaya's term — the establishment in its hobby of oppressing the masses by keeping them away from rational truth and scriptural secret. Today the establishment is not scared of the masses getting hold of these species of truth. Today, as far as the establishment is concerned, rational

I.P.Q. . . 6

and scriptural truths are dumb, mute creatures. On the other hand it sees danger in numerical truths — statistical secrets. (Even in the USSR after the historic logic-debate of 1950-51 research in mathematical logic and non-dialectical philosophy of science have become tolerable pursuits.) But ask any government on this globe as to the number of persons which it has condemned to incarcerate without anybody else knowing what their crime was. Either replies will be withheld, or statistical lies will be put forth. Governments are giant power grids, so let us leave them to take a more familiar example. Ask any powerful professor in our universities about the *number* of sycophants he engages to gather information on, and spread scandals about, his junior colleagues who question him. You will know, the power of numbers and the bewitchment of statistics. Times have changed, and along with them techniques of tyranny. Chattopadhyaya ought to know; he ought to realise that what Manu said or what Samkara did and all that is there on a parchment. If we are capable of taking it into our cognisance without being affected by their thoughts and actions, let us cherish them; and if we are not mature enough to do that let us bundle them in a loin-cloth and consign the bundle to an attic.

Chattopadhyaya is so obsessed with tradition and is so sensitive about idealism, he does not see that oppression is not a monopoly of the idealists; materialists have a share in it — perhaps, lion's share. That is why I am induced to believe that through his writings Chattopadhyaya is not enlightening the masses; he is mystifying them. He is contriving a new myth. To use his own trick, this trick has been suggested by Plato himself — not at 414 *Republic*, but thirty two stephanus pages earlier. "We do not", he wrote there, "know the truth about the past but we can invent a fiction as like it as may be".

I wonder where Chattopadhyaya picked up those curious notions of dialectic as practised by the Greeks on the one hand, and Hegel and Marx on the other. As a consequence — as a disastrous consequence — of those notions

he comes to think that the style of philosophising we find in Sanskrit darshan is dialectical. Now this is so if coitus interruptus is coitus *per se*. As far as I know, in the Sanskrit philosophical treatises discussion is carried to end neither in an *impasse* (as in the elenctic dialogues of Plato), nor in *Aufhebung* (as in Hegel and Marx). The *uttarapaksha* does not “negate” the *poorvapaksha* in its bare individuality for being only a partial reality; the negation and rejection here is total. So the *uttarapaksha* does not “conserve” the essential being of the *poorvapaksha* and “elevate” it into the higher realm of whole reality. Without negation, conservation, *and* elevation there is not a thing anywhere to be called dialectic. All that needs to be said about Chattopadhyaya’s understanding of the Greek dialectic is that he thinks that *vakovakya*, that is “the art of debate by questions and answers” is something like the Greek dialectic! When it is nationalism, who can afford to lag in chauvinism! It is improbable that Chattopadhyaya does not know what “political-economy” is; he at least must have heard of Marx’s critique of it. Yet, he had to call code de Kautilya a treatise in political-economy.

Finally a word about Chattopadhyaya’s Marx scholarship. In spite of being a marxist, and a teacher of philosophy since 1943 (see the dust jacket), he seems to be totally ignorant of the immense contribution to Marx studies since then. “(I)n Indian philosophy”, Chattopadhyaya writes on p. 496, “the two (i.e., materialism and dialectic) remain disjoint and do not coalesce into materialist dialectic or dialectical materialism, as they do in *the philosophy of Marx and Engels*” (italics added). This Tweedledee-Tweedledom interpretation of Marx-Engles, which originated at Moscow, is too simplistic and naive to convince non-believing Marx scholars. It is now fairly well established that dialectical materialism is Engles’ folly, and not of Marx, who is philosophically too mature to commit such a blunder. He, being too familiar with German idealism, and being desirous of overcoming its limitations, could not afford to commit what he thought to be the mistake in Kant and Hegel. That is

why Marx refrains from the Hegelian mistake of tucking in reason (dialectic) with reality (material word) and the Kantian mistake of tagging it to individual human mind. Consequently dialectic had to be telescoped into social dynamics. This is how Marx — as it emerges from the current state of scholarship — tried to overcome the limitations of the Kantian duality of “the moral law within” and “the starry heavens high above”, and also the disastrous unity of reason and reality which Hegel projected. As a result Marx had to bridge the gulf between man and society on the one hand, and society and the physical world on the other. Most of his time and energy was spent on the first, and his attempts at the second leaves several loose ends. He never thought that he said the last word; nor did he believe that his was the last philosophy. On the other hand, as if he was anticipating Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, Marx in *German Ideology* holds that philosophy as an independent branch of knowledge loses its importance only when reality is depicted.

At any given time the possibility of such a depiction is to be measured in terms of the available scientific knowledge. The present state of scientific knowledge (I beg for a margin of a few years, for I do not have access to a good library) enables us to assert with confidence that brain is a material entity. But it does not enable us to affirm with equal confidence that there exists a description of the functioning of the ultimate material constituents of the brain, which is equivalent to a description of the functioning of the brain itself. That being so, unless I am absolutely out of date in my information and thoroughly faulty in my reasoning, in chapter eight Chattopadhyaya is indulging in gratuitous poppycock. To substitute Marx-Engles for science is not only to betray one’s belief, but also to show disrespect to all the three.

To wind up this essay in the politics of philosophy,

“When I have heard small talk about great men
I climb to bed; Light my two candles; then
Consider what was said; and put aside

What such-a-one remarked and someone-else replied.
They have spoken lightly of my deathless friends
(Lamps for my gloom, hands guiding where I stumble),
Quoting, for shallow conversational ends,
What Shelly shrilled, what Blake once wildly
muttered. . .
How can they use such names and be not humble?
I have sat silent; angry at what they uttered.
The dead bequeathed them life; the dead have said
What these can only memorise and mumble."

—Siegfried Sassoon

Jaipur-4

A. P. Rao

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MAO TSE TUNG: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF HIS THOUGHTS

The Chinese Revolution of 1949, like its precursor the October Revolution (1917), was a significant event. It led to the emergence of China as a great power, and tilted the balance of power not only in the Far East, but also in the World as a whole.

Mao was the principal architect of this Revolution. It is his ideas which dominated the Chinese scene for the last forty years and although the death of Mao is likely to change this position in the near future, his ideas would continue to play a significant role in China. His philosophy exercised some, though now declining, influence even in other countries where Maoist Groups have been formed leading to split in the Communist movement.

Since 1956-57 Maoists have been drifting away from the socialist and people's democratic camp and now they consider the Soviets as their main enemy and the Socialist countries and the Communist parties following Soviet Union, as also the communist leaders in China who differ from Maoists as 'revisionists' and 'capitalist roaders'.

In India two widely different schools of thought tend to accept Maoist Thoughts. The Naxalites, now split into over half a dozen groups, accept Maoist revolutionary philosophy of armed guerilla struggle. Similarly some Gandhians are attracted by Mao's emphasis on egalitarianism, decentralisation, moral incentives, and anti-bureaucratism.

It will therefore, be interesting to study Mao's thoughts. Mao's thoughts have been influenced by a number of factors such as the environment of the family and the country, history and tradition, Western thought, personal experience, and the Philosophy of Marxism-Leninism.

Coming from a poor peasant background in the province of Hunan, Mao had an understanding of the rural people among whom he had worked and whom he con-