

BOOK-REVIEW

Philosophical Reflections by G. C. Nayak, Indian Council of Philosophical Research, Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi, 1987. pp. VIII + 166; - Rs. 65/-.

The book under review is Prof. Nayak's collection of eighteen philosophical essays on a variety of themes. These essays can thematically be classified into (i) those concerning topics in Indian Philosophy, especially *Advaita Vedānta* and Buddhism and (ii) those concerning problems in religion, ethics and social philosophy. In spite of the diversity of the problems treated in the book, there is an underlying unity of approach in all these essays. This approach can broadly be characterized as the analytic approach which, however, goes "beyond the *strict* purview of the present-day analytic philosophy" (preface, vii).

The essays on *Advaita Vedānta*, notably "Illumination Through Analysis: A study in *Vedāntic* Conception *vis-a-vis* *Mādhyaṃika*", "*Māyā*: the Advaitin's Gordian Knot" and "Significance of Knowledge in Śaṅkara and Yājñavalkya," are refreshingly innovative in the interpretation of the central doctrines of the school. The *Advaita* philosophy is sought to be presented in a non-conventional light throwing sufficient focus on the analytic core of the concepts of *jñāna*, *mokṣa* and *māyā* and other related concepts. Prof. Nayak subscribes to the view that the *Advaita* system belongs to the tradition of "Illumination through Analysis" (pp. 1-8) which is not peculiar to the West alone. The analysis which results in illumination in the *Advaita* context is not necessarily the analysis of ordinary

language or any other scientific discourse; it is the analysis of the *Vedāntic* statements which hold the key to the knowledge of *Brahman* (pp. 57-88). Prof. Nayak is aware that such discourse-analysis of the concept of *Brahman* is bound to mislead the beginners into believing that the knowledge of *Brahman* is merely verbal. Therefore, he emphasizes that *brahmānubhava* is not verbal knowledge (pp. 5-7) nor the talk of *mokṣa* a pseudo-talk. The result of analysis is understanding and illumination as regards the nature of Reality, and not a mystic experience at that (pp. 7-8). The resulting *mokṣa* is no other than the *jñāna* itself that vouchsafes for the freedom of the mind from the ignorance of the non-dual character of Reality. Prof. Nayak goes further to show that *Advaita* holds a unique model of freedom in its concept of *mokṣa* which can have richer implications than are usually derived in the tradition. In this context, Prof. Nayak's interpretation of the concept of *nāyā* is also noteworthy. He suggests that *nāyā* which has received various interpretations in the tradition can be construed as the "ignorance of the non-duality" (p. 51) and "the fact everyone sees multiplicity where there is unity and is deceived by various linguistic forms which have only practical value (*Vyāvalārika*) ..." (*Ibid*). The merit of the suggestion lies in its implication that the theory of *nāyā* is not a theory of creation at all (p. 50).

Prof. Nayak interprets *Mādhyamika* Buddhism also from the analytic point of view with remarkable intensity and clarity. The results have been no less promising. The old controversy whether the *Śūnyatā* of the *Mādhyamika* stands for an Absolute Reality or for a pure emptiness has got a fresh life in the essay "The Philosophy of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti". Prof. Nayak has clinched the issue by arguing that *Śūnyatā* stands for essencelessness (*niḥsvabhāvatā*) rather than for a transcendental reality. The following passage is worth noting:

The concept of *śūnyata* in Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti is neither mystical nor religious; it points to the *niḥsvabhāvatā* or essencelessness which needs to be realized through philosophical analysis (*catuskoṭitarka*) and thus an insight or illumination is gained into the nature of things and concepts which constitutes *nirvāṇa* (*sarvakalpanā kṣaya-rūpa*) (p. 25).

The Buddhist zeal for analytic clarity and non-speculative understanding of human life, its sufferings and its aspirations for the ultimate freedom has been delineated by Prof. Nayak with utmost sensitivity.

Whether it be a Buddhist concept or a concept in the *Gītā* or a whole philosophical perspective as that of Śrī Aurobindo or Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana, Prof. Nayak has the instinct for bringing out its analytic best insofar as it is seen not as a dogma, nor as a mystic revelation, nor as an idea of remote speculative interest. His "Rationalism in the *Gītā*" is, for example, a noteworthy attempt at understanding the 'rational attitude' of the *Gītā* as represented in its concept of *buddhi śaśvataṁ* (p. 10). As Prof. Nayak presents it, the message of the *Gītā* is to shed all intellectual sloth and gain illumination through reasoning and patient intellectual probing.

The second group of essays, as noted earlier, comprise such an assortment of representative essays as "What is Living and What is Dead in Religion," "A Plea for Commonism," "Transcendental Secularism" and "Values: *Dharma* and *Mokṣa*." These essays, though less organized, do represent the author's own thinking on the problems of religion, values and social re-construction. Prof. Nayak warns us against the decadence of religion and points to the last saving grace of the religious mode

of living, i. e., the concern for the common man. If religion can solidly ground itself in humanism and can promote our feeling for the common man, then, according to the author, there is still the possibility of the survival of religion. Prof. Nayak codifies the humanistic core of religion in his newly-coined 'ism' "Commonism". "A Plea for Commonism" is a programmatic effort to highlight the contemporary man's call for a change of perspective on man, society and culture so that we can reassess our old values and our old-fashioned interpersonal relationships. What we need is the deepening of our links with the "common man" which have been weakened, if not sapped, in our present-day dehumanized culture. We need a revaluation of our values in the light of what we can still discover as of permanent worth in our value-system. What Prof. Nayak calls, though inaptly, "Transcendental Secularism" perhaps is an answer to the demand for the transvaluation of values which can result in conceding that freedom of mind or *mokṣa* is still of the highest importance for the new value-perspective. The freedom that he talks of is such that it unites each individual with the rest of of humanity in the bond of fellowship by the realization of the unity of existence. Such is the 'free man's worship' that Russell glorified and our ancient *ṛṣis* called upon us to practise as the ideal of *Jīvanmukti*.

Throughout the book Prof. Nayak is at pains to suggest that philosophy is not merely a pursuit of linguistic and conceptual clarity but also an awareness and pursuit of the ultimate freedom. On this goal philosophers are one whether they belong to the East or the West. This is a very significant and optimistic note that the author has made about the philosophical endeavour in general. One hardly would disagree with the author on this philosophical perspective. Of course, there can be point of disagreement on the method of doing philosophy as practised by the

author. But one can hardly miss the philosophical fervour which the author has shown to understand the basic issues concerning man and his destiny. One only wishes that Prof. Nayak had more scope in these pages to probe more thoroughly into those issues which can be considered more urgent from his own print of view. The book, being a serious attempt at doing philosophy, should deserve wider appreciation and critical understanding.

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pp. 144; Rs 85/-.
- Albert W. J. Harper; *Notes on Kant's Theory of Morals*,
Phelps Publishing Co., Ontario,
pp. 70; \$ 4.95 (Canadian)
- Subodh Kant Mohanty; *The Concept of Blik*, Anu Books,
Meerut, 1988;
pp. 280, Rs. 120/-.
- Ludo Rocher (ed.); *Studies in Indian Literature and Philosophy : Collected Articles of J. A. B. van Buitenen*,
Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1988,
pp. 339; Rs. 150/-.
- G. C. Nayak; *Philosophical Reflections*,
Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1987;
pp. 166, Rs. 65/-.
- Robit Mehta, *The Secret of Self-Transformation : A Synthesis of Tantra and Yoga*,
Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1987;
pp. 174; Rs. 90/- (Hard cover),
Rs. 60/- (Soft cover).
- Karan Singh and Daisaku Ikeda; *Humanity at the Crossroads : An Inter-cultural Dialogue*,
Oxford University Press, 1988;
pp. 132; Rs. 100/-.
- Arnold Toynbee and Daistu Ikeda; *Choose Life : A Dialogue*,
Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987;
pp. 348; Rs. 125/-.

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