

DAYAKRISHNA'S CONCEPTION OF PHILOSOPHY : SOME REFLECTIONS

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The unique excellence of philosophizing of Dayakrishna has been attracting and instigating the minds of scholars constantly since last more than four decades. The way he philosophises has led to the depolarisation of the traditional theory impregnated philosophies on the one hand and has emphasized the role of the freedom of minds and thoughts in philosophizing the problem for conception and clarification to the extent that traditional scholars of philosophy conceive him indigestive and contestant on the other hand. His conception of philosophy is very comprehensive in its range and accurate in its spirit. It escapes the distorting effects of dogmatic philosophy and competently differentiates the objects or subject-matter of philosophy from those of other disciplines of learning and, finally, presents it as a system of cognitive activity par excellence.

Here, in this paper, we propose to present an account of our exposition of the conception of philosophy as analysed by Dayakrishna particularly in his book entitled '*The Nature of Philosophy*' (1955). I have utilized, in related matters, the excellence of his critics and his reply to his critics edited by Bhuvanchandel and K. L. Sharma in a recent edition entitled '*The Philosophy of Dayakrishna*' (1996). A brief account of the issues to be discussed, here, in this paper, may be given as follows :

1. What does Dayakrishna mean by 'philosophy and 'philosophizing'?
2. Philosophy is simultaneously a name for the conceptual confusions that arise in thinking about any object and an attempt at the clarification of those confusions.
3. Philosophy is a cognitive activity par excellence.
4. Philosophy is concerned not so much with the problems raised by the specificities of this or that concept, but rather with the very

'conceptuality' of the concepts.

5. His conception of language as referring tool and its consistency with his conception of philosophy.
6. His conception of conceptual or theoretical problems as philosophical-being or as object-proper of philosophization and its consistency with his conception of philosophy.

Conclusively, I observe that it is not justified to estimate his philosophy as negative and that if one goes thoroughly through his philosophical reflections one cannot miss to appreciate the attraction of his analysis and his positive concern with philosophical problems as monumental work everdone during recent years for philosophical clarity, conception and rational satisfaction.

It is a unique feature of his philosophical enterprize of '*The Nature of Philosophy*' that it neither supports the philosophical conclusions of a philosopher or of a system, however venerable they might be, nor tries to establish a system of his own but fortifies his faithful attempts of analysing the philosophical confusions and problems involved in the very conceptuality of the concepts with a view to solving them and, during the course, his philosophy has got a shape of its own kind.

'*The Nature of Philosophy*', though written in the very early days of his youth, contains the boldness of his philosophical maturity to the extent that he, inspite of all his later creative ideas, himself claims that it possesses the basic out look of his philosophy constantly lying as a basic unity of what he has philosophised till date. Replying to his critics, he remarks

any attempt at an articulation of what philosophy is, tries at best to mirror what oneself doing that is to articulate what one does when one philosophizes and as this goes on changing as one grows (or declines) over a period of years, one's understanding of what philosophy is, may also change as time passes by. But I hope there has been continuity in my views of philosophy even if some new facets have been added to what was said before' (1996, p. 304).

If the said continuity, of what Dayakrishna has philosophized so far, is taken for granted then our task becomes easy. Our task, here in this paper, is confined to an exposition of his conception of philosophy and, in that light, to

view his conception of language and the philosophical-being.

1. The most general feature of philosophy, according to Dayakrishna is that *it is the result of philosophizing* which, for him, is a never ending process and its creativity is marked by the uncovering of the many faceted dimensions of an issue at hand. Philosophizing is a reflective activity and, hence, distinct from other activities of mind in which consciousness is object-consciousness. It is a reflective activity but different from subjective or objective mode of reflections suffering from psychologism and theory impregnation. It is a self-conscious reflection in which consciousness is self-conscious neither of this or that, spiritual or material, subjective or objective entities which are concerned with object-consciousness nor of the formation of their concepts but of the very conceptuality of concepts. On the basis of this feature of philosophical reflections he, on one hand, differentiates philosophy from other disciplines like religion, sociology, science etc. which have a concern with object-consciousness and differentiates different types of self-conscious activities and self-consciously misconceived activities from the self-conscious activities of philosophizing on the other hand.

Dayakrishna's concept of self-consciousness is different from the self-consciousness as conceived by metaphysicians or ontologists who accept that the self-consciousness cannot be the self-consciousness of the self-consciousness. He writes '*it reflects not merely on the objects that confronts but also on its reflections thereof*' (1955, p. 231). It is by taking this idea in view that he interprets that philosophy has the history of its own and not of the other i.e. Science, religion, history etc. The concept of philosophy, for him, is not identical with history of philosophy but, perhaps, is a *philosophy of philosophy*. By 'philosophy of philosophy' he does not mean a tracing of the generic development of philosophy from its crude beginning and by analysing together the different stages but that it has its own history distinct from the history of other subjects (1955, p. 182). It stands on a subtle level of reflective consciousness in which we confront ourselves with the theoretical problems involved in the conceptuality of the concepts, dig out them and lead to the principles and patterns of reason unravelled for analysing and removing them to the extent of clarity.

2. To be self-reflective is not a general but very unique character of

minds which confront with the confusions involved in the very formation of concepts and take those theoretical problems seriously as those to be solved by philosophization. Self-consciousness flows when the objective flow of mind is stopped and stops when the objective flow of the mind or the object-consciousness flows and, hence, philosophization is an occasional activity of occasional minds. It is, perhaps, this fact on the basis of which he conceives philosophy as disentangled from its close embrace with other disciplines on one hand and distinguishes philosophization as purposeful cognitive activity on the other hand. But why that occasional at all? If a machine is running smoothly without any hitch, we could not come to know how it works and what is the economy of its parts. Similarly, philosophy begins with inadequacy, confusions, incompatibilities, dissatisfaction, etc., sought to be involved in the formation of concepts regarding an issue and to remove them for clarity and conception. Emphasizing this view he defines '*philosophy as simultaneously a name for the conceptual confusions that arise in thinking about any subject and an attempt at the clarification of those confusions* (1955, p. 233). We confront with the conceptual confusions when we become self-conscious of the very formation of the concepts. The same issue or the objects of one and the same class are generalized differently by different thinkers according to their own experiences of different aggregates of attributes and activities to form different concepts of that issue and sometimes the supposed generalizations differ from one another to the extent that they cause theoretical problems which involve a thinker in a way that he analyses the problems and tries to resolve them in order to get clarity. These problems are theoretical and are not the problems for themselves, and, hence, can be resolved by philosophization.

These confusions and problems for Dayakrishna, constitute the whole realm of philosophical reflection. It is actually a very revolutionary and novel way of observing the subject-matter of philosophy accurately as confined to the realm of problems. In this context, it seems surprising to note as to why Indian scholars have eschewed the challenge and most of them are still involved in such misconceived activities which are not actually assigned to them as a philosopher. On Dayakrishna's conception of problems as the subject proper of philosophization, I will discuss elaborately in the last portion of this paper.

Dayakrishna is very bold in saying that *philosophy lives in the clarification of its own confusions, a clarification that is its own death* (1955,

pp. 229-30.) In Indian philosophical systems, it is said that the removal of ignorance leads to the absolute extinction of the flow of consciousness and that of the self-consciousness as well and, therefore, there is no possibility of any philosophical activity at that stage. That stage is the achievement of *summun-bonum* but of no philosophical importance as there is no possibility of any confrontation with theoretical confusions and problems of a realizer (*Jñānī*). On the other hand, the state of those who are ignorant to the extent of insensibility to those problems are incapable of enjoying self-conscious activities. But those who possess a unique intellectual sensibility always confront with such problems and involve in philosophizing till the issue at hand is clarified. It is, perhaps, this fact in the light of which Dayakrishna's meaning of the term 'death of Philosophy' be properly understood. He rightly observes

'the temper of a philosopher is such that he is hardly ever in a state in which he is not bothered by one confusion or the other. Even if certain problems get solved to his satisfaction, certain others are found to arise and engage his attention' (1955, p. 230).

The term 'Death of Philosophy' is relatively used for emphasizing the removal of confusions inviting and involving the philosophical reflexivity and, the moment they are clarified to the extent of his satisfaction, the flow of self-consciousness stops and the mind returns to its object-consciousness.

Philosophizing is not a bonded labour as mind enjoys full freedom from object-consciousness in philosophizing. It is not speculative or imaginative construction of mind but a state of awareness of rare minds in which they become self-reflexive to the problems which arise because of a supposed incompatible conceptuality that requires reformation of a concept or a renewed analysis of them or both (1955, p. 229).

3. The very specific feature of philosophy for Dayakrishna is that

it is not concerned so much with the problems raised by the specificities of this or that concept but with the very conceptuality of the concepts. This is one reason why philosophical problems arise during the course of reflection on any subject (1996, p. 301).

Philosophy is not exactly the conceptual analysis of the concepts but of the very conceptuality of the concepts, and, thus, it is a very subtle and deep

activity of mind marked by Dayakrishna as a self-conscious activity. Philosophization is self-reflexivity of self-consciousness and this reflexivity of self-consciousness is marked by him as a second order activity of mind in contrast with the first order activity of the mind in which it functions as object-consciousness -- the consciousness is consciousness of this or that object or concept with which disciplines like science, ontology, religion, history etc. other than philosophy are concerned. He makes the point clear when he says '*it is an activity where the reflexive consciousness is not exclusively dependent on the first level world of which the concepts are concepts of* (1996, p. 302). Religion, science and disciplines other than philosophy belong to the particular kind of consciousness in which concepts are concepts 'of and, as reflections on those concepts are possible, we have the philosophy of religion, philosophy of science etc. In more clear words, the formation or abstraction of concepts and their analysis belong to object-consciousness while the problems lying very deep into the structure of the supposed abstractions belong to the self-conscious activity of philosophizing. It is the ground that differentiates and distinguishes philosophy from other disciplines non-philosophical in nature and, as it is inevitably concerned with renewal and reformulation, distinguishes a better philosophy from other philosophies or misconceived philosophies on the other hand. Self-conscious activity, concerned with conceptuality of the concepts, is a cognitive activity and it functions independently of things-in-themselves of any sort (physiological, psychological or transcendental), independently of imaginative constructions of mind and independently of the subjective or objective mode of reflections and, hence, it does not claim certainty as epistemologists or ontologists claim but it leads to clarity, conception and rational - satisfaction. The empirical evidences and epistemological justifications on the basis of which they claim certainty are themselves based on certain rules and patterns of reason which are unravelled by philosophical reflections and not by evidences and justifications themselves. Now, if philosophy as concerned with conceptuality of the concepts is taken for granted then the theoretical problems of all sorts of rational branches-critical, creative, analytic, synthetic and other fall in the domain of philosophizing.

4. An other distinctive feature of philosophy according to Dayakrishna is that *it is a cognitive activity par excellence* (1955, p. 215.) Here the term 'cognitive' is not used in usual sense of experiencing particular objects or any

realm of objects or the whole of the objects or the facts or the propositions (1955, pp. 215-217). It concerns with concepts and the problems that arise there in, seem to arise from the conceptuality of the concepts and not from the things or even from the problems if they are some thing-things-in-themselves.

The generally accepted views of philosophy as cognitive activity considers cognition in relation with truth. Observing this view, Dayakrishna writes *the determination of truth and falsehood is so central to the cognitive enterprize that without that it can hardly be regarded as making any sense at all (philosophical theory and social reality p. 28)*. In fact, truth and falsehood based on verification, confirmation and falsification of a statement on the basis of experience, are related with the problem of drawing a demarcative line between the statements verifiable or otherwise and, are not concerned directly with the cognitive activity of self-consciousness which hardly demands such demarcative lines concerning language and its relation with experience as well. The problems regarding the concepts and the very formational incompatibility lie in abstracting them from the subject-matter of this cognitive activity and in such a cognitive activity compatibility, incompatibility, inadequacy-adequacy, dissatisfaction etc. are confronted and, this in turn, causes theoretical problems to be resolved by philosophization. Dayakrishna observes '*philosophical enterprize is cognitive in the sense that the problems regarding it are neither a matter of feelings or imagination nor of action but involves arguments and counter arguments concerning questions and problems that are primarily theoretical and arise mostly from the conceptuality of the concepts*' (1996, p. 303). It is acclaimed as knowledge not in the sense of experiencing and abstracting, their verification and confirmation but in the sense of awareness of the principles and laws lying in the very formation of concepts and in analysing the problems caused thereof which, in no way, belong to object-consciousness. It does not aim to verification and truth but clarity and wisdom and, thus, the cognitive character of philosophical activity is involved in the very structure of the self-consciousness and in the very nature of the problems it confronts as well.

It is clear from the aforementioned account that Dayakrishna has defined the realm of philosophy as the realm of awareness-an awareness with the cognitive problems independently of really reals or things-in-themselves which are outside the realm of philosophical reflexivity. This definition of philosophy

as self-conscious activity differentiates philosophy and philosophical problems well from other disciplines and the problems associated with them respectively. In philosophy, the problems are theoretical while they are ontic, or factual or imaginative in other disciplines. In philosophy, the problems form the subject-matter of it while the subject-matter itself gives rise to the problems in other disciplines. The problems in philosophy do not exist for themselves while they, in other disciplines, exist for themselves. There can be no problems by themselves. *All problems are problems for consciousness or better for self-consciousness* (1955, p. 217) and, thus, philosophical reflections are different from the subjective and objective mode of reflections based on consideration of the problems as problems-in-themselves. This very character of philosophical reflection differentiates philosophy from other disciplines on one hand and considers the philosophy of religion, philosophy of sociology, philosophy of Art, Philosophy of history, philosophy of science etc. distinctly as included in the realm of philosophy on the other hand.

5. Now, if philosophy is taken as self-conscious activity concerned with the concepts and the conceptuality of the concepts and if arguments and counter arguments are applicable within it and not outside the system how is discourse possible? How can we argue with and communicate and convince others to an activity acclaimed as cognitive? It can not be taken as a matter of rational taste and temperament. The situation may lead to religion if philosophy as a constant dialogue with the mind is accepted.¹ Over all, if concepts are abstractions-abstracted differently on the basis of different experiences of different attributes and functions and, hence, different to one-another, how can dialogue and communication be possible? How can one claim a better philosophy comprising full compatibility and adequacy? Can abstraction² without language be possible and even if possible, can it be of any philosophical significance without language? The problems raised above are concerned with one's view of language in a philosophical activity.

To begin with Dayakrishna's conception of language, it seems necessary to say, first, that on the concept of language he has not philosophized separately and we have to rely only upon some fractions on generally accepted view of language articulated in general way by him while reflecting on chapter 2nd and

chapter 4th of '*The Nature of Philosophy*'.

Language, according to Dayakrishna, is referential in character.

Its reference may range from the purely general to the uniquely particular
..... Language is able to express all and the success of the expression
on each occasion lies in the fact that we understand the referent (1955,
p. 39).

It is remarkable to note, here, that Dayakrishna does not deny other functions of language rather, he accepts them but considers the referential function as primary. he contends

'the idea that there are other functions of language besides the referential one, though correct, does not basically effect my contention as all of them can give rise to philosophical puzzle and as far as the cognitive issue is concerned, the referential mode even with respect to these, remains primary,

(quoted from the comments of Dayakrishna on an earlier draft of the paper (30.5.97). it is on the basis of relative stability or dynamic changing character of the referents of Language that he tries to solve the problem of cognition and communication of the facts - universal or particular in character (1955, p. 52). One may object to the aforesaid position of Dayakrishna by observing his interpretation as one sided. It can also be added that the problem of relation between language and the conceptuality of the concepts cannot be solved properly if the former is taken as void of and independently of the characters of the latter and that there is no sense in denying the universality or particularity of language but these all will give rise to philosophical puzzle in the context of Dayakrishna's view of language. However, as conceptual problems, for him, are concerned inevitably with arguments and counter arguments, the inevitable relation of language with the conceptuality of the concepts as their very esprit and the esprit of the self-conscious activity, is acceptable to him on the basis of which objectivity of cognition and the accomplishment of communication can be well explained in his trend. Overall, Dayakrishna comes to a more subtle and philosophically relevant conclusion when he says that the dependency on referents of empirical or transcendental world for truth and falsity is the intrusion of things-in-themselves in an activity which is conscious in nature and for which things-in-themselves stand outside the domain. Truth and falsity, according to

his philosophy, are after thought judgements just meant for the demarcation of statements empirically tested so and others outside the domain of such a test. This very idea is a natural corollary of the definition of philosophy as a cognitive activity par excellence. Although, he has not discussed this idea in any detail, one can derive important philosophical implications on the basis of the aforementioned idea, i.e. the distinction of cognition as such and the cognition by intrusion of things-in-themselves for truth and falsity. Philosophy is concerned with the former while the latter is concerned specifically with the empirical-evidences and epistemic-justifications in the pursuit of which referential mode of language stands primary.

6. Now coming to the subject-matter of philosophy, it can well be said that Dayakrishna's philosophical concern with philosophical-being of the problems is purely philosophical. The philosophical-being of the problems is emphasized by him as object proper of philosophy different from and independently of really-reals, factual, facinated or imaginary reals and others. Arguing against the traditional ontological thinking, Dayakrishna, writes

philosophy is neither the determinatin of really real (1955, p. 211) nor the presentation of the world view based on coherence in a system (1955, pp. 213-14) but a cognitive activity par excellence (1955, p. 215).

The most significant point to be noted, here, in this context, is that Dayakrishna has provided a very revolutionary and novel way of looking at the contents of philosophical reflections. The object of philosophy, for him, is neither really real nor any realm of spiritual, psychological or physiological objects concerning subjective or objective modes of thinking. It is concerned neither with actual nor with possible state of affairs or facts nor with the propositions. He writes

'It should be noted that neither the person who advances an argument nor the person who opposes him are concerned with the some actual or possible state of affairs. They are concerned with the argument of each other and not with the facts possible of verification. Of course they, generally, do bring in facts but only as subsidiary to the main argument (1955, p. 223).

Here, in the context, 'arguments' stand for the arguments concerning philosophical problems and not concerning facts in themselves. In order to know

the nature of the subject-proper of philosophy, we should observe as to how he defines a philosopher. A philosopher, according to him, is a philosopher only when he is philosophically concerned with philosophical problems (1955, p. 219). It is obvious from this definition that he considers the objects of philosophical activity as confined to the philosophical problems as the very subject-matter of philosophy. We have already clarified that these problems are philosophical in the sense that they are concerned with the conceptuality of the concepts or that they are theoretical problems-theoretical in the sense that they can be solved by no way than philosophical reflections. Dayakrishna rightly observes 'A problem exists only for self-consciousness and not for itself. 'These problems comprise the whole realm of philosophical objects. It is very significant to note, in this regard, that Dayakrishna, quite in tune with his conception of philosophy and the subject-matter of philosophy, accepts that the problems are neither empirical nor logical but stand in between the two and this mid region belongs neither to science nor to logic nor to any transcendental but to philosophy. The term 'mid way region' is used, by him, not in an ontological sense but in the cognitive sense or in the sense of the awareness character of the existence of the problems. The choice of 'philosophical' for describing an approach and subject-matter which is neither empirical nor logical nor transcendental seems fairly appropriate in as much as both the subject-matter and the approach refuse to be deduced to any subject or approach which has already a distinct name of itself (1955, p. 227). This is, perhaps, excellently an original contribution of Dayakrishna to the history of philosophy not only in the sense that it vindicates the fact that philosophical activities have been non-existent if the problems had not been there as problems but also in the sense of the philosophical orientation of the subject-matter of philosophy which views that *it is the problems themselves that form the subject-matter of philosophy and not a subject-matter that gives rise to any problem* (1955, p. 217). The idea of problems as the subject-matter of philosophy alienates philosophical activity from the garb of reality on one hand and distinguishes philosophy from other disciplines on the other hand. His conception of philosophy as self-conscious activity and of philosophical being i.e., conceptual problems as the object of reflections specify the proper way of doing philosophy against misconceptions misleading philosophical conclusions. His view of philosophical reflections as confined to philosophical being of theoretical problems ranks him as a

philosopher who observes not only the possibility of but the very fact of philosophizing independently of any thing-in-itself viz absolute, fact, proposition or even the problems if they are some thing in themselves. Concluding the whole discussion of the *Nature of Philosophy* Dayakrishna rightly observes

'here is a region, a realm, a set of problems. It only needs a name and we submit that the word philosophy' can adequately perform this function..... The philosopher should not don the false plumes of the shaman, the priest or the prophet. If he is ashamed of his job, he may as well leave it, rather than deceive the people with regard to a function which is not his own (p. 233).

Concluding the discussion, we are in a position to say that Dayakrishna has defined philosophy in such a distinct way that naturally specifies its function and subject-matter, respectively, as cognition activity and as the conceptual analysis and the clarification of the conceptual confusions and problems caused by them distinctly. It does not concern with really real of any sort but with the conceptual confusions and problems belonging to very conceptuality of the concepts and, thus, it is very comprehensive in its range. The conception of philosophy as a cognitive activity par excellence and that of the objects of philosophy as philosophical or cognitive being of the theoretical problems are real contributions of Dayakrishna to the history of philosophy and are highly relevant for the philosophical thinking of today. It is on the basis of these conceptions that he, observes in his *The Nature of Philosophy*, the following points in a cognitive purview - 1. the nature of philosophy as a science of awareness, 2. the subject-matter or field of philosophy as cognitive being of theoretical problems, 3. the method of philosophy as conceptual analysis and finally, 4. the aim of philosophy as the removal of conceptual-confusions concerned with the conceptuality of the concepts for clarity, wisdom and rational satisfaction.

NOTES

1. It is a statement applicable to those who define philosophy in view of mystical experiences. So far as Dayakrishna is concerned, he makes a difference between

philosophical reflections and such experiences by taking the former as a cognitive activity par excellence.

2. Due to lack of space my observation on Dayakrishna's conception of 'abstraction' is not fully elaborated here and in order to avoid any further confusion on this issue, it is proper to put his position here in his own words, 'Till the concepts are seen as abstractions, philosophical problems do not arise and one remains at the empirical level, where the 'reality' that the concepts refer to remains outside themselves. Philosophy arises only when the concepts assume a reality of their own and it is at this level that their conceptuality gives rise to philosophical problems''. Quoted from his comments on an earlier draft of the paper, dated 12th July 1997.

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