

REVIEW

Pandey, Sangamlal; *Whither Indian Philosophy : Essays on Indian and Western Epistemology*; Darshana Peeth, Allahabad, 1978; pp. 467; Price Rs. 200/-

The book is a collection of essays by the author, some already published, others appearing for the first time, arranged under four sections. There are seven essays in the first, five in the second, seven in the third and six in the last section. The essays are prefixed by a pointer to the perspective, namely *to uplift the status of Indian Philosophy*. We shall not comment essay by essay. Instead, we shall concentrate on the main sections under which they are grouped.

The first section, entitled "Exploring Indian Philosophy", seems to be addressed to the task of explaining why one should study Indian Philosophy. The author is right in holding that richness and variety of Indian philosophical thought are inviting. The author regrets that in spite of the fact that a number of persons are taking to study Indian philosophy "a complete history of Indian philosophy" has not come forth. But he avoids telling us the painful fact that the genuine raw material, depending on which a good history of Indian philosophy — leave alone a complete one—may come to be written has not been made available. Hence, what is rather regrettable is that the researchers in the field seem to lack the correct perspective about what they do as also about what they should do. Likewise, a proper way to do Indian philosophy does not seem to be through "opposition to western philosophy" as the author thinks but by dissociating the former from the latter, wherever and the extent to which this is possible and feasible. Secondly, granting the unmistakable importance of Dīnṅāga in Buddhist Logic in particular and Indian Logic in general, one does not quite understand the inconsistent characterization of Dīnṅāga's philosophical position at the hands of the author: logical idealism (p. 35), idealism based on critical realism (pp. 36, 46) and that it is an epistemological transcendentalism (p. 37). Similarly, one is perplexed to understand what exactly *naya* is : doctrine (p. 49), statement (p. 50), process (p. 51). Prof. Pandey's essay on Ravidāsa is perhaps intended to bring home to readers the idea that one should also study writings of saints in order to assess their philosophical worth and bring out their relevance, if any, to our contemporary problems — social, philosophical

or otherwise. The author, unfortunately, seems to fall a prey to the tendency pioneered by Dr. Radhakrishnan—viz. of religionizing philosophy.

The second section is of essays collected under : "comparative religion and philosophy". In this section the author, perhaps, wants to indicate the outcome of his research in Indian philosophy, namely comparative philosophy as also comparative religions. First, comparative religion. Many researchers in our country have been actively engaged in undertaking investigation in this area. But why should one study religions comparatively? Is it to strengthen and reinforce one's religious beliefs on the ground that such beliefs are shared by the followers of other religions? In such a case this exercise may be important for the believers; but then it would hardly be philosophical. Perhaps one studies religions comparatively because it is a fashion. But in fact one should study religions and religious phenomena in the searchlight of critical analysis and proper philosophical assessment. The author unfortunately nowhere gives a trace of anything of this kind in any of the three essays devoted to the subject.

Coming to comparative philosophy. Unfortunately, comparative philosophy has become a catch-word and an attraction in our country. Many sweat in this area of research without ever raising and attempting to answer some of the important questions : (a) Why do we need to do comparative philosophy? Is it with a view to glorifying our past? We have not yet understood that glorification of the past is a wrong mode of understanding past — philosophically a deception. (b) Have we reliable information about our philosophical past to be able to undertake a proper comparative philosophy? On this count, too, we are quite in the dark. And lastly (c) do we have the proper method and perspective of doing comparative philosophy? In their absence what kind of comparative philosophy do we intend to study? Our present task cannot be of doing comparative philosophy but of properly reinterpreting the philosophy of our predecessors and critically evaluating its worth. In the absence of this anything done under the name of comparative philosophy is likely to be a futile exercise.

In the third section, "the search for new ideas" seven essays are collected. Four of these are devoted to the discussion of such concepts as non-violence, sarvodaya, freedom and Gandhi's concepts of man and society. The author is quite well-acquainted

with Gandhian philosophy and many of the things he says on the topics deserves attention. Instead, we wish to comment on the remaining three essays in the section. In them the author brings forth three highly controversial problems and they cannot escape attention of any serious student of philosophy. We propose to discuss them in brief. (i) First, writing history of Western philosophy from Indian point of view. No doubt an attempt of this kind was made in our country by persons like R. D. Ranade and others and the author exhorts such an exercise. But the important point is : Why do we need to indulge in this sort of exercise? It is doubtful whether we want to write such a history because we have something new to say on the subject. But if it is only a retort to the misplaced comments of historians of philosophy like Frank Thilly about Indian philosophy then the whole exercise is futile and not worthy of doing it as a philosophical exercise. For, even in the western philosophical circles such historians are hardly ranked as important. If, on the contrary, it is because we have developed a new perspective of looking at philosophy then we better first write history of Indian philosophy from such a perspective than venture to do what the author commends us to do. (ii) Secondly, in which language should we do philosophy? According to the author English seems to be ill-suited for the purpose because it is a foreign language and it has not become part of our nature; and those who did philosophy in English "failed to capture creative spirit of Indian Philosophy" (p. 306). The author does not wish to hold, I presume, that this state of affairs arose because English is a bad language to do philosophy in! Nor would he accept that Indian philosophy lacks creative spirit. So the only alternative that remains is that we do not have sufficient grip of English. What is then the alternative? Sanskrit? Certainly not. For it is a dead language and "a philosophy...done in a dead language becomes repetitive, imitative, obscurant and antiquarian" (p. 305) and in consequence useless. So according to the author unless we do philosophy in our own language—national or vernacular—there is no hope of any illumination. Prima facie, this may be conceded. But, nevertheless, we must not lose sight of two points of great significance. First, mere shift of language does not automatically guarantee clarity in understanding. Secondly, for a clearer expression the language in which we do philosophy must be sufficiently rich. Otherwise our language cannot function as a tool of proper philo-

sophical communication. Something positive needs to be done in this regard for Hindi language. The author's exhortation to switch over to Hindi as a medium of proper philosophical expression and meaningful communication is likely to be a futile exercise if proper precaution is not taken in this direction. (iii) Thirdly, how to make philosophy socially relevant? The author's answer is: By doing philosophy from the Advaitic perspective. One can very well understand the author's love for and commitment to the philosophy of Advaita. But in saying that our philosophy will become socially relevant provided we philosophise through the perspective of Advaita Vedānta the author seems to make two questionable claims: (a) The philosophy of Advaita was and is socially relevant — this needs to be established rather than assumed, and (b) No philosophy done by us would be socially relevant unless it is done through the perspective of Advaita Vedānta. It is needless to comment on these points.

We now turn to the last section, "Investigations into Advaita" in which there are six essays. This section is given to the elaboration and defence of Advaita philosophy—especially Śaṅkara's philosophy. Granting that 'Śaṅkara's philosophy is dialectical—leaving aside the question what the dialectic is: discipline (p.360), Critique of Pure Reason (p. 370) etc.—one is unable to see how with the help of such a dialectic Indian mind to-day must be searching common truth between Euclidian and Non-Euclidian geometry (p. 374). One wonders whether 'Śaṅkara's Advaita is a Pandora's box in which solution to any problem are placed, no matter whether problem concerned is in ontology, epistemology, philosophy of science or logic of perceptual terms (see especially chapters 23-25).

To point out the short comings is not to minimise the value of Prof. Pandey's book. In fact Pandey is one of those very few people who feel the necessity of re-understanding our philosophy in some different way. Prof. Pandey, therefore, deserves our thanks for taking a step in this direction.

A minor but an important point needs to be stressed. The value of the book would have been enhanced if there were less number of printing mistakes. It would also have been better if by the high price of the book it were not kept, financially, beyond the reach of a common interested reader.

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