

REVIEWS

- (1) *The Philosophy of Shri Aurobindo* : Dr. Ram Nath Sharma : Kedarnath Ramnath Publishers, Meerut, 192 pages, Price Rs. 20/- only.
- (2) *Shri Aurobindo and The Theories of Evolution* : Dr. Rama Shankar Srivastava : The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Service Office, Varanasi : 464 pages Price Rs. 50/- only.

Both these books treat Shri Aurobindo as The Philosopher superlative. Shri Aurobindo, who combines a unique interpretation of the Vedanta with some radical thinking about Evolution, deserves to be ranked by the side of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhava etc. Yet, many philosophical thinkers of to-day are cold to him because their critical sense is hyperactivated by the fanatical writings on Shri Aurobindo. What Shri Aurobindo meant as a gospel, need not be treated as a gospel for the purpose of philosophical evaluation. An idolatrous tendency to raise Shri Aurobindo above the level of other philosophers, to the level of supramental and gnostic Beings (of whom Aurobindo spoke) is as sensible, perhaps, as worshipping Nietzsche as a superman.

Inspite of the running undertone of idolatry, Dr. Sharma manages to write a lucid exposition of Shri Aurobindo's philosophy. The perface promises "a critical evaluation of Shri Aurobindo's Philosophy" and Dr. Sharma, in the very short space of 192 pages, does this job remarkably well. Very neat gist of the thoughts of Aristotle, Śaṅkara, Hegel, Bradley, Green, Alexander, Bergson and Whitehead, are presented for the purpose of comparison and contrast with Integralism of Shri Aurobindo. Some of Dr. Sharma's comments are illuminating, e. g. "Philosophy must learn to understand the language of religion, the meaning of its visions and symbols." Thus his approach towards Aurobindo the seer, not the philosopher, is duly reverent. He gives a detailed analysis of Shri Aurobindo's views on Absolute and God, on Self and Individuality, on World and Creation, on Evolution, on the subconscious and the subliminal etc.

That Shri Aurobindo is guilty of proliferating the entities, e. g. 3 kinds of psychic entities, 7 types of ignorance, 3 divisions

in the unconscious, 3 stages in the transition from mind to super-mind, emerges very clearly from Sharma's analysis. Yet, Sharma finds all this very marvellous. His remark, "Shri Aurobindo's conception of superconscious is a great corrective to the one-sided Theory of the psycho-analysts" is uncalled for after Jung. Sharma refers to Trend and Adler in the critical vein, but simply mentions Jung in passing. The Jungian psycho-analysis establishes the sub-conscious, the super-conscious and the subliminal aspects of the unconscious, though the tripartite nomenclature must be acknowledged as the (not very fruitful) contribution of Shri Aurobindo. The confusing and complex nomenclature often inspires an Aurobindite like Dr. Sharma to add to the muddle. So, Dr. Sharma warns us that unless the unconscious is controlled through integral yoga, "The subliminal as opposed to subconscious, is a secret intraconscious or circumconscious" (whatever that may mean!)

Dr. Srivastava is an erudite scholar and notes that the elementary idea of evolution was present in the Vedas, later influencing the Sāṃkhya philosophy, the Bhagavadgītā and the Purāṇas. Yet the fanatical note creeps to his thought when he tries to derive the rationale of the theory of evolution from Shri Aurobindo's speculations. To quote, "Shri Aurobindo may be said to be the only philosopher who has successfully answered the question, why should there be any evolution at all? Neither Kapila nor Darwin nor Hegel nor Bergson could successfully answer this question." I am not so sure that the question is a valid one, about a natural process like evolution. Hence, Dr. Srivastava's remark, "this is perhaps the greatest contribution that has so far been made either in the East or in the West to the philosophy of evolution" is not so very well-founded.

Dr. Srivastava compares and contrasts a wide variety of thinkers Eastern and Western, Scientific and Philosophical, with Shri Aurobindo's view of integral and emergent evolution. Some notable omissions, e. g. that of Teilhard de Chardin, make this critical comparison incomplete. Dr. Srivastava also refuses to see the continuity of thinking from Hegel to Bergson to Shri Aurobindo. There is a stubborn claim that Shri Aurobindo refutes, transforms and nullifies all other theories on evolution. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that Shri Aurobindo's view integrates and transcends those theories.

Shri Aurobindo's Divine Evolutionism is the thesis that in the integral, all-pervasive Absolute, there exists a process of descent or involution, parallel to the process of ascent or evolution. This is based on his metaphysics of the integral Absolute who is a unity of 3 aspects, viz (1) the cosmic (2) the subjective and (3) the transcendental. In a spirit of Catholicity, Shri Aurobindo commets, "Advaita is true because the Many are only manifestations of the One. Visistadvaita is true because ideas are eternal and having manifested, must have manifested before and will manifest again — The Many are eternal in the One, only They are sometimes manifest and sometimes unmanifest."

To see reality as a whole, not in levels, nor in compartments, but as multiaspected, is the essence of religious experience, or "integral" experience. Shri Aurobindo also saw it as "multi-graded". Shri Aurobindo's grading of levels of consciousness, each level with its own mode of intuition and corresponding with a particular level (physical/vital/mental/psychic) of reality, does not assign superior reality to any level, as, for example, Advaita Vedanta does.

Shri Aurobindo also emphasises the physical and the positive role of bodily experiences. His integral yoga incorporates the yoga philosophy of Patanjali.

The philosophical contribution of Shri Aurobindo is 3-fold. His Integration is superior to any other system of Indian Philosophy, as J. N. Mohanty points out. Mohanty finds in Saivism and Shri Aurobindo, a fascinating analysis of the consciousness as truly transcendental and yet linked with the intentional. The second major contribution of Shri Aurobindo is in emphasising the thought of grades of subjectivity, so much on the surface in the Upaniṣads and in the literature of Yoga, and largely neglected by the major philosophical systems. Thirdly, the theory of Evolutionism and a complex of details elaborating the twin processes of evolution and involution, — remain a scintillating metaphysical attempt.

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- (3) *Broad's Theoretical Approach to Ethics* : Dr. G. N. Kundargi (Published by Dr. G. N. Kundaragi, 3 Coelho Quarters, Aquem Alto, Margao, Goa) 1980; Price Rs. 25, pp. VIII + 09.

The book under review is the doctoral dissertation on which the author worked during his stay at the Southern Illinois University between 1965 and 1968.

Broad's contribution to philosophy in general and to ethics in particular is not the exposition of any particular theory of his own. Nor has he dogmatically sided with any of the classical or contemporary positions within metaphysics, epistemology or ethics. In his numerous books and articles, produced during fifty years of his prolific writing (1914-1964), Broad mostly undertook the painstaking task of expounding and examining various important philosophical positions. Some of these had recently appeared on the philosophical horizons of his times and some were too deeply entrenched in the intellectual soil to be ignored. Broad always tried to present each position or theory he expounded with meticulous accuracy but in his critical analysis he was always unsparing. His success in both these tasks can be attributed to his masterly acumen in understanding the different positions, his vast knowledge of the history of thought, both philosophical and scientific, his critical ability, freedom from prejudices for or against any viewpoint and his non-committal approach vis-a-vis rival positions. His own status, therefore, in the history of philosophy can be more aptly described as one of a philosophical critic rather than that of a philosopher. Nevertheless, a careful reading of his works would surely reveal some of his sympathies for certain ways of thinking or philosophising which can be said to be methodological rather than substantive philosophical or ethical commitments. But here too, his suggestions always remain tentative. Thus, it is quite hazardous to pin him down, for example, to rationalism or empiricism or to cognitivism or emotivism when problems like analytic-synthetic distinction or the place of reason or emotion in moral judgements are raised.

Dr. Kundargi's work very lucidly brings out the characteristic features of Broad's writings though he mainly confines himself to the examination of (a) Broad's theoretical approach to ethics, and (b) Frankena's claim that after 1934 Broad turns from cogniti-

vism to emotivism (p. VII). As Prof. K. J. Shah has very succinctly put it in his Foreword, Dr. Kundargi pursues his investigations "(i) by putting Broad's work in the context of Broad's own life, academic; (ii) by considering Broad's work in the context of his other philosophical work; and (iii) by considering Broad's work in the context of the views of other philosophers like Moore and Ross" (P. V.).

As regards the author's former aim, i. e. to discuss Broad's theoretical approach to ethics, the author first tries to establish the almost obvious and undisputed view of Broad that "ethics may be described as the theoretical treatment of moral phenomena" (p. 46). Besides 'Some of the Main Problems of Ethics' where these lines occur, he also quotes from *Five Types of Ethical Theory* and "Conscience and Conscientious Action" to emphasize this point. For Broad's substantive ethical approach, the author has succeeded in showing that in normative theory Broad wavers between ethical neutralism and 'self-referential altruism' while in meta-ethics he tries to steer clear through the weaknesses of cognitivism and emotivism though by and large his sympathies have been more with the former than the latter. On the question of the relation between theoretical and practical discourse, Dr. Kundargi concludes (p. 60) that for Broad it is not *necessary* as Moore or Prichard would say but *contingent*. This of course draws Broad closer to men like Ayer and Stevenson unlike what Dr. Kundargi perhaps mistakenly believes.

In Chapter IV (The Right and the Good) the author has commendably presented various important views in the light of Broad's early and later writings. Specially, Dr. Kundargi's expositions of Broad's distinctions between empiricism of concepts and empiricism of judgements, between rationalism of concepts and rationalism of judgements, between the milder form Intuitionism about ethical concepts and the extreme form of Intuitionism about ethical concepts and, lastly, between the milder form of Intuitionism about ethical universal judgements and the extreme form of Intuitionism about ethical universal judgements are very helpful for a correct appreciation of Broad's analyses of different ethical issues and approaches.

One of the well-known concepts in ethical thought has been that of 'fittingness' which Broad developed with the help of the considerations of right/wrong — tending and good/bad-tending

characteristics which enabled him once again to avoid a commitment on the naturalism vs. non-naturalism controversy. Though here too, with his sympathies for the latter, he could not indict naturalism of all the villainy in ethical thinking. Both in his critical comments on Moore and in other writings, he was alive to the difficulties inherent in naturalism though at the same time he unfailingly expressed his dissatisfaction with naturalism. With the help of his concept of 'fittingness' Broad offered a rapprochement between naturalism and non-naturalism since it is neither analytic *a priori* nor synthetic *a posteriori*. By relating 'fittingness' in the context of the right and the good to right/good-tending characteristics as well as to desires and emotions, he has salvaged naturalism from the ill-repute into which it had fallen because of men like Moore and Prichard. But whereas the relation between the right and the fitting is quite clearly brought out by the author, that between the good and the fitting has not been so convincingly brought out.

The author rightly concludes that Frankena's suggested shift is Broad's position from cognitivism to emotivism is an over-simplification (p. 105). But so is author's own remarks attributing a plurastic theory of morality to Broad (p. 102). It has not been shown with adequate care what exactly is meant by the phrase 'pluralistic theory of morality'. If it is asserted merely on the basis of his remarks that for Broad separate 'logically independent' acts of rational intuitions enable one to know the rightness or wrongness of different types of action (p. 100), it is surely a Pickwickian sense in which 'pluralistic theory of morality' has been used. If such a view has to be ascribed to Broad, a more elaborate reconstruction is needed. Nevertheless, the book is indeed a welcome addition to Broad studies which are not too many.

- (4) *To Be Good* : S.P. Kanak, (Dev Samaj Publications, Chandigarh, 1980), pp. V + 154.

Dev Dharma represents a way of life founded on a 'secular' (i. e. non-religious) ethics. It is in the widest sense that it is sometimes referred to as a religion — a sense in which original Buddhism is also called a religion. The ethical teachings of Devatma, the founder of Dev Dharma and the originator of Dev Samaj, form

the warp and the woof of Professor Kanak's instructive book under review. A committed and dedicated follower of Devatma, it is Shri Kanak's mission of life to propagate the essential teaching of Dev Dharma. Preceded by the author's *Ethics of Dev Atma* which discussed the philosophical and psychological bases of Devatma's ethics, the present work is more modest in its aim. As the author puts it in the Preface, his aim is primarily to edify the readers and the addressee are the common educated men (p. V).

The book discusses the various modes of human behaviour within the category of good will which is the supreme virtue. The clearest manifestation of good will for Devatma, and so for the author, is the altruistic behaviour within which man realises himself and soars to the highest forms of nobility and righteousness of character. He sees the form of human life as essentially related to the different levels of existence. Human existence is an inalienable element within the cosmic order where every later evolute is intimately connected with the earlier stages. To understand each later stage, its antecedent sources have to be properly known and appreciated. The evolutionary spectrum of Devatma's account of the universe places human existence in the midst of various sorts of interrelations with all that exists — the mineral, the vegetative, the animal and the human worlds.

Thus, the author starts his account of what it means to be good from the basic premise that to be good is to feel related. And from this assertion follow a number of statements as practical implications or corollaries of his basic assumptions. These form the content of chapters 1-16. In the last chapter of the book "a very brief but literal summary of the concrete duties and attitudes in different relationships" as discussed in Devatma's *The Dev-shastra* has been appended. The book is written in Spinozistic style where each subsequent treatment is intimately connected with the preceding one.

From the ontological position that 'to be is to be related' follows the author's central point that 'to be good is to feel related'. For the author the fundamental mode of human existence is what some existentialists have called 'being with-others'. Man is definable in terms of his concrete situations which give meaning and significance to his existence. Human interaction and interrelations constitute not only his existence but also his essence. And thus to be good involves the regulation of one's behaviour towards

all with which one is related. Of course, human beings are at the top of the list of existences with whom man can be well-related or ill-related. But at the same time morality of human action is also manifestly involved in man's relationship with animal, vegetative and mineral kingdoms though the manifest character of moral actions may assume a decreasing trend with each one of these respectively. For example, the cruelty of human action is not only confined to man's cruelty towards his fellow *homo sapiens* but it also extends to his insensitivity to the avoidable harm or injury to animals or plants. There are infinite number of ways in which man can become inhuman or immoral. And these need not be inter-human relationship alone. One can degrade himself in his cruelties towards sub-human existence. However, from the realisation of one's being related to others the author derives the other precepts, viz. to be good is to feel concerned, to respect other existences, to accept others as persons, to wish well to others, to be affectionate, to have the feeling of gratitude, to have reverence, to do separation, to seek harmony, to cultivate altruistic feelings and to have commitment in interpersonal relationship.

The book is replete with insightful observations of human actions and situations and there are numerous narratives of and allusions to significant anecdotes and events from lives of noble souls — both well known and unknown people. Descriptions of various personal encounters give credibility and authenticity to the author's account of good life which also lucidly speaks of the kind and humane attitudes of the author himself. It will not be exaggeration if I say that a large part of the book is autobiographical — a noble soul goading and guiding others to tread on the path of virtue and righteousness.

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