International Journal of Academic Research
ISSN: 2348-7666; Vol.9, Issue-5, May, 2022
Impact Factor: 6.023

THE CONTRIBUTION OF MODERN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY TO WORLD PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Janardhanarao Salla
Dept. of Philosophy
Andhra University
Visakhapatnam

Abstract: *To understand the present trends of philosophy in India and the contribution they can make to the fund of world philosophy, it is necessary to understand the ancient background of modern Indian thought. For many of the time-honoured ideas still have a firm hold on the general Indian mind, and they form a substantial part of even modern creative thought. There are different ways of realizing Him - through knowledge, through devotion, and through action without attachment. Any of these can be chosen, according to one's own fit- ness. The duties of all stations are equally sacred. There should be no conflict among different faiths or paths. With the advent of the British and the introduction of the Engl system of education through the different universities established the British model, European philosophy began to be studied in En lish under European teachers largely drawn from the clergy. Indi philosophy, being the philosophy of the conquered pagans and al being mostly confined then to original texts unintelligible to the for- eigne teachers, was naturally ignored or despised as too crude to studied at the modern seats of learning. The possibility and necessity of the divinization of man are testified to by all the great religions of the world. Any of these religions may be chosen by man, according to his temperament, for raising himself above ordinary mental consciousness to the supramental consciousness which would make him feel at one with the Divine, whose force has so long been unconsciously and semiconsciously pushing him from within to evolve higher and higher through the material, vital, and mental planes. Man is proud of his intellectual achievements.*
Key Words: *Philosophy, India, Culture, Radhakrishna, Education.*

This is an age of international understanding. Races and nations which dwelt and flourished apart are now coming into intimate contact and gradually tending to evolve a world of common ideas and beliefs. In Science such a common world of thought has already been achieved. In Philosophy the ideal, though not realized, is fast dawning upon the minds of thinkers. For the fulfilment of this ideal, for the evolution of a world-philosophy, what is best in every system, Eastern or Western, modern or ancient, requires to be gathered and added to the common stock. Anyone who has a casual acquaintance with Indian Philosophy knows what valuable contributions it can make towards this common fund.

These lines were written by the present writer in the preface to a comparative and critical study1 of Indian and Western theories of knowledge about eighteen years ago. Little did he know then that he would be asked one day to state what contribution India could make to world philosophy. Partly because of her internal struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi, and partly because of world forces precipitated by the last great war, India

got back her independence sooner than was expected. Political freedom is like the backbone of a nation. With the loss of it, for centuries, India could not bear the burden of her ancient culture and philosophy, nor stand erect before the world so as to be able to win any attention or admiration. With the return of it she is gradually trying to stand up again and is arousing interest. She is particularly glad to receive sympathetic attention from the United States, the wartime preserver and the postwar home of Western culture. Students of philosophy in India deeply appreciate the attempts made by the American Philosophical Association to establish friendly relations with them and by The Philosophical Review in throwing open its pages to Indian writers so that they may present their ideas to the Western world.

To understand the present trends of philosophy in India and the contribution they can make to the fund of world philosophy, it is necessary to understand the ancient background of modern Indian thought. For many of the time-honoured ideas still have a firm hold on the general Indian mind, and they form a substantial part of even modern creative thought. We propose, therefore, first to give a brief account of ancient Indian philosophy and then to discuss the views of the most prominent of India's modern philosophical thinkers, religious teachers, and socio-political leaders. We shall consider at the end the contribution India can make to world philosophy. By "modern" we shall mean roughly the present century.

THE ANCIENT BACKGROUND

The germs of philosophical thought can be traced in the earliest literature of India, the Vedas, which go back to at least 3,000 years before Christ.2 In the Rig-veda, along with apparent polytheism there is the underlying faith that the one Real is called by different gods' names (ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti). This monotheism is fur- ther expressed in the clear description of God as the Supreme Person (Purusa), pervading all beings as His parts and yet remaining be- yond them. In the Upanisads, the philosophical literature of the Vedic period, we have a further development of this monistic conception. Brahma, the absolute and ultimate Reality, is both immanent and transcendent; is not only that out of which the world emanates and by which it is sustained, but is also that into which the world dissolves. Brahma is at once Reality (sat), Consciousness (chit), and Bliss or Joy (ananda). Brahma is the Reality that underlies the self (atma) as well as the world. Realization of the Indwelling Self is the realization of God as well as immortality. Moral discipline (e.g., harmlessness, truthfulness, nonstealing, self-continence, and nonacceptance of un- necessary things), study, reasoning, and repeated contemplation of truth are regarded as constituting the method of realization by the Upanisads as well as by almost all subsequent schools of philosophy and religion.

This Upanisadic philosophy forms the basis of Vedanta which, in its various forms, dominates the life and culture of India even today. The most influential school of Vedanta, established by Sankara, em- phasizes the transcendent aspect of Brahma as the highest Reality, the world as an appearance, and the self as really absolutely identical with Brahma. The creative, personal, and immanent aspect of God is regarded as an inferior conception of Brahma. Worship of God is helpful as a step to the realization of the transcendent aspect. But it is knowledge of the identity of the self and Brahma

which brings about final salvation. The many other schools of Vedanta subsequently founded by Ramanuja, Madhva, Nimbarka, Vallabha, and others give theistic interpretations of the Upanisads, uphold the reality of the world and of the creatorship and personality of God, and maintain, to different degrees, a distinction between self and God, and advocate devotion as essential for liberation. These theistic religious schools of Vedanta, commonly known as Vaisnava schools, have a large number of followers in modern India, particularly among the religious laity, while the pure monistic Vedanta of Sankara is more prevalent among the intellectual and educated people.

Besides the Vedic literature, the theists attach great importance also to the many devotional epics. The most important among these is the Bhagavata (the Divine Book). It teaches the unity of the immanent and the transcendent, of the manifested incarnations of God and the unmanifested Absolute. It emphasizes the total conception of God and the possibility of realization through consummation of the different emotional attitudes toward God. God is conceived as the One Goal of all our best aspirations. God thus comes to be worshiped as Truth, as Master, as Friend, as Child, as Lover, and so on.

Another theistic development of the conception of Brahma is found in the Saiva and Tantra literature, where the Ultimate Reality is viewed in the dual aspects of the Quiescent Substratum and its dynamic creative energy, and worshiped respectively as the Father and the mother. Mention must be made here of the Bhagavad-Gita, popularly known as the Gita or Divine Song, which is universally regarded as one of the basic scriptures and held in high esteem by philosophers, theists, and ethical teachers both of ancient and of modern times. The Gita tries to synthesize and reconcile all views and all paths. It teaches that God, while transcending all, also manifests himself in all existence and in diverse forms. There are different ways of realizing Him - through knowledge, through devotion, and through action without attachment. Any of these can be chosen, according to one's own fit- ness. The duties of all stations are equally sacred. There should be no conflict among different faiths or paths. There are natural divisions among men in accordance with their intrinsic qualities and actions; their capacities and duties vary accordingly (and not according to hereditary castes). The teachings of the Gita have, therefore, been an inspiration to modern Indian social and religious reformers as well as to political leaders engaged in fighting artificial social inequalities, harmonizing as they do the different religions and replacing quietish and inactivism by the ideal of work without attachment.

The philosophical systems of India are divided, in the post Vedic period, into two major groups -the pro-Vedic and the anti-Vedic. The chief systems in the first category are Mimamsa, Vedanta, Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, and Vaisesika, and those in the second are the Jain, Buddha, and Charvaka (materialism). Of the pro-Vedic group, the first two establish themselves directly on the teachings of the Ve- das and the Upanisads respectively, whereas the last four are based on independent grounds, though not opposed to the Vedic culture. Mimamsa is a philosophical justification of Vedic rituals. But in-cidentally it enters into deep metaphysical and epistemological dis-cussions aiming to maintain a pluralistic and realistic position. The Vedanta, the

chief trends of which we have noted previously, also develops different types of metaphysical and epistemological theories in its various schools. Sankhya propounds a dualistic metaphysic of souls and Nature and the possibility of the liberation of the soul from its bondage to Nature by discrimination and detachment. Yoga, based on a similar metaphysic, goes deep into the psychology of attention and concentration and lays down a practical path to liberation by the gradual concentration of attention on the nature of the physical culture, moral discipline, and meditative exe and Vaisesika propound a realistic pluralism, emphasizing par- ticularly a realistic epistemology with an acute logical analysis of language and the different processes of thought, and developing an algebraic logical terminology for precision of statement. This terminology is adopted later on by all schools as the language of philo- sophical discussion, and it makes, therefore, like the symbolic logic of the modern West, the later philosophical literature of India a sealed book to the uninitiated. The special contributions of Jain philosophy, which is a kind of realistic pluralism, are its theory of reality as many-faced, its conception of truth as manifold, its sevenfold scheme of judgment representing different truths, and its strong advocacy of the duty of noninjury to life in any form. Buddhist philosophy is divided into four schools which may be referred to as those of indeterminism, subjective idealism, naive realism, and critical realism. The Charvaka school holds to an uncompromising theory of materialism and hedonism.

These different schools, running parallel for about 2,000 years and criticizing one another, develop a huge philosophical literature which, studied even with the critical eye of a Westerner, will be found to contain momentous contributions in epistemology, logic, and analytic psychology and general metaphysics. But whatever their later theoretical developments, the original and express motive of each system, except the materialist, is practical. It is to attain a state of perfection beyond suffering. The four cardinal teachings of Buddha - namely, there is suffering, there is a cause of it, there is cessation of suffering, and there is a path leading to this cessation - represent in a nutshell the basic common attitude of all these Indian systems. All of them show, in different ways, how philosophy can help man know the cause of suffering and how knowledge can help him terminate suffering and attain perfect peace. All of them, again, believe that true and effective knowledge cannot be attained by mere study. Moral and physical discipline must accompany study, reasoning, intense concentration on, and repeated meditation of, the philosophical truths so that every thought, speech, and action in life may reflect them.

With the advent of the British and the introduction of the Engl system of education through the different universities established the British model, European philosophy began to be studied in En lish under European teachers largely drawn from the clergy. Indi philosophy, being the philosophy of the conquered pagans and al being mostly confined then to original texts unintelligible to the for- eigne teachers, was naturally ignored or despised as too crude to studied at the modern seats of learning. Consequently, for about century, Indians studied with European teachers Greek, medieval, a modern European philosophy in all its branches and aspects, and nothing of their own systems. Meanwhile with the discovery of S skrit by

Europe and the translation of the less technical philosophy literature, particularly by German scholars like Max Mulle philosophy rose a little in the estimation of the British as the Anglicized administrators of the universities; and it be recognized in the universities during the first and the second of this century. But even at the present moment Indian ph does not form more than a fifth part of the courses in philosophy in many places it is only there as an alternative to some European philosophy.

But this arrangement proved a blessing in disguise. Kept in the dark as to the philosophical systems which lay behind their own culture, the more inquisitive and talented students and teachers of Euro- pean philosophy began to study all the more greedily the original texts with the help of the teachers at the indigenous Sanskrit academies. The more they read, the more they marvelled at the treasure that lay hidden there and that compared very favourably with the Western philosophy they learned at the universities. Comparative study of Indian and Western philosophy has thus become the main occupation of the more advanced Indian scholars. Facing two long and mighty currents of thought, of the East and of the West, they find it an extremely difficult task to make up their minds and contribute anything new through the understanding of both and through removing doubts coming from two different directions. Unlike their Western brethren Indians feel it their duty now to understand and assimilate the East- ern and the Western before making any new contribution. This is one of the reasons why India's original contribution has been so meagre in present times. The other great reason is, of course, the loss of confidence caused by long political subjugation.

Sir S. Radhakrishnan, the most renowned philosopher of modern India, is an advocate of the idealistic view of life.4 Though his idealism shows the influence of Sankara and Buddha, it also reckons with Western criticisms which deprecate such thinkers as abstract, vacuous, static, or negativistic. He reorientates the conceptions of the Absolute, God, and spirit in the light of Plato, Hegel, emergent evolution, the Bersanian conception of intuition, the criticism of the conception of substance by scientific philosophers like Whitehead, and the mysticism of the religious saints of different lands, like the Neoplatonists and the Sufis. Though his Absolute corresponds to the Brahma of Vedanta, he considers it dynamically as the spiritual ener- gy which evolves the world from nonbeing into being, from possibility to actuality, through the successive emergent levels of matter, life, consciousness, and self-consciousness. Unlike most Western idealists and theologians, but like Sankara, he holds, however, that though the Absolute is the logical prius of the world, creation is not necessary. "It is not necessary for the Absolute to express any of its possibilities. If this possibility is expressed, it is a free act of the Absolute." Following Sankara's distinction between Param Brahma and Isvara, Radhakrishnan also makes a distinction between the impersonal Absolute and the personal God, the creator of the world. But unlike Sankara and Bradley, and very much like the average Hegelian, he also holds that God is not an appearance of the Absolute. "Even as the world is a definite manifestation of one specific possibility of the Absolute, God with whom the worshipper stands in personal relation is the very Absolute in the world context and is not a mere appearance of the Absolute.

According to Radhakrishnan perfection is attained by religious intuition, where intellect, will, and emotion are fully integrated, and man is one with the spirit in him. He lays much stress on intuition in all his works and draws, in support of his view, upon mystics of the East and the West. But he holds, like Sankara and his followers, but unlike Bergson, that intuition is not opposed to the intellect but is the highest perfection of it. It can have absolute and immediate knowledge of reality. Every true religion is based on intuition. Following the wide outlook of the Gita, Radhakrishnan reverently searches the heart of all great religions to discover their inner intuitive bases7 and shows the remarkable agreement that is found among them. Absence of true religion, the degradation of traditional religions in the East and the West owing to their falling away from their original bases of direct experience, is the cause of the all-round unrest and crisis in the present world.

The dynamic idealism which we have just noticed in Radhakrishnan is not altogether absent in ancient Indian thought. Though in the Vedanta of Sankara and particularly of his followers change and multiplicity were emphatically denied, the early Vedanta in the Upanishads (and even some statements of Sankara himself) leave some room for change and multiplicity. In Ramanuja and most other later schools of Vedanta creation is taken as a real process; change and multiplicity are also regarded as absolutely real. In Saivism and some forms of Tantrism (the origins of which are traced by some to non-Vedic works existing since the beginning of the Christian era or there- abouts) we find a kind of monism which holds that the world is evolved by the one ultimate Reality (Brahma) which expresses itself in the two aspects, Siva (quiescent) and Sakti (the creative energy). Under the influence of the realistic and activistic ideas of modern Western philosophy and culture, there has been a general reaction in modern Indian thought against all kinds of a cosmic, idealistic, and static theories, which are also regarded as having been responsible for India's political downfall. As a result of this, some of the younger generation, unacquainted with the Indian systems, have adopted some form of Western realism, pragmatism, or Marxism. Among those who are acquainted with Indian thought the general tendency has been to search for, emphasize, and try to revive the realistic and dynamic trends in the ancient systems of their own. But even under these conditions the more prominent and maturer thinkers have preferred to choose some form of Vedantic idealism purged of acosmism and inactivism than to espouse a full realistic and pluralistic theory of the Nyaya-Vaisesika type.

In this connection we can mention the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. Educated in England, Aurobindo entered life as a college teacher, then became a revolutionary political leader in Bengal, and after some time retired from politics to the life of a recluse in Pondicherry, a French possession in South India. He has been living there for more than thirty years in perfect seclusion, in a hermitage which has grown into a large centre for spiritual culture, like the asramcas of the sages of ancient India. As a political worker he adopted the philosophy of the Gita, the philosophy of action without attachment and with self- surrender to the will of God. With it he has synthesized the idealism of the Vedas and the Upanishads and developed a dynamic philosophy closely resembling that of Saivism and Tantrism mentioned above. His views

have recently been published in three fat volumes, entitled The Life Divine, which has suddenly brought this unprofessional sage- philosopher within the notice of official philosophy. We find in his work an important integral approach to Reality based not only on intellectual apprehension, but on a long life of realization and a spiritual technique for the uplift of the human race.

His integral approach consists in holding (i) that while it is true that the finite is not the ultimate Reality (neti), it is also true that it is nothing but the expression of Reality (sarvam khalu idam brahmca); (2) that both materialism which denies the spirit and asceticism which denies, and withdraws from, the material world are equally one-sided and untenable; (3) that change and permanence, force and existence, (sakti and siva), are both real; (4) that Brahma enjoys self-manifestation and expresses itself in all forms - matter, life, mind - and it includes all. "Brahman is in this world to represent itself in the values of life. Life exists in Brahman in order to discover Brahman in itself.... To fullfil God in life is man's manhood."8 By the creative force of God the world has evolved gradually through the successive stages of matter, plant, animal, and man. Mental consciousness is the highest faculty the ordinary man has attained to. It makes him feel his existence as a separate entity and gives him partial knowl- edge of and control over his body, life, and mind. But evolution cannot stop until man rises higher to the intuitive and immediate knowledge of God.

God is the spirit that underlies his body, life, and mind and regulates them from within. Man is aware of the divine urge within him and, therefore, he tries to rise through religion to the Divine. The possibility and necessity of the divinization of man are testified to by all the great religions of the world. Any of these religions may be chosen by man, according to his temperament, for raising himself above ordinary mental consciousness to the supramental consciousness which would make him feel at one with the Divine, whose force has so long been unconsciously and semiconsciously pushing him from within to evolve higher and higher through the material, vital, and mental planes. Man is proud of his intellectual achievements. But these have not been able to give him peace and satisfaction; they have rather involved him in all kinds of crises which the present world has come to face. Through the intellect he has dimly and im-perfectly caught glimpses of the underlying unity and harmony of the world. But without an immediate intuitive identification of himself with the inner Reality underlying himself and the world, he cannot feel at one with the universe and harmonize his own interest com-politely with that of the rest of the world; he cannot fully get over his limited ego and adjust it to others.

With the attainment of his unity with the Lord seated in him and the universe, he can consciously share with the Lord the creative work of upward evolution. He can completely know, master, and guide his body, life, and mind, and also co-operate with God to hasten the evolution of other men to the level of supermen. This task of helping the human race to its inherent destiny is what Sri Aurobindo is said to be performing, though apparently his material body has remained confined, for decades, within a narrow space in his hermitage. This retreat has gradually been attracting a large number of persons of different religions, races, and professions, all of whom are struggling for the spiritual

uplift of themselves and the human race by the spiritual method very briefly and untechnical described above.

Aurobindo's conception of the evolution of man to the Divine will remind us of Samuel Alexander's view of emergent evolution leading to the Deity. But the great difference is that whereas Space-Time is the ultimate matrix for Alexander, God is so for Aurobindo; so that creation is really a process of the descent of God to ascend again - through matter, life, and mind - back to the conscious realization of His existence by man. Perfection is, therefore, attainable here, in this very body, and is not an ever-receding goal, as has been thought by most Western thinkers. Creation is the free self-diffusion of the Divine Energy which can be self-concentrated and thus creation ended, as has been held by all Indian theists. The most striking thought in Aurobindo is that of the duty of man to rise to the superhuman, divine level by cooperation with the creator and by the joint upward effort of the human race for the elevation of all its members. We may notice here a revival of the ideal of Bodhisattva which rejects the thought of individual liberation and strives for the liberation of all beings.

From this warm humanistic thought we may now turn our attention to a rare type of abstruse metaphysics, based on trenchant logical analysis, that we find in the very few but profound writings of Professor Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya.9 In spite of his penetrating grasp of the fundamentals of European and Indian systems and his great metaphysical powers, Bhattacharya has always avoided publicity and even self-expression; and his fame is confined chiefly to a limited circle of students who have had intimate personal contact with him. Of Western thinkers Kant has influenced him more than anyone else and can throw much new light on many of his abstruse theories. Of the Indians, the Upanishad teachers with their idea of different levels of consciousness leading to one Ultimate Reality, and the Jain thinkers with their theory of the manifoldness of truth, seem to have left an abiding impression on his thought.

Though the Indefinite thus eludes our grasp by refusing to be identified with any object of sensation or thought, it always hovers around all positive experience as its unknown background, and we are thus negatively conscious of a beyond. Every definite content of awareness implies an outlying indefinite of which it is the embodiment and specification. So, in a sense, the Indefinite is also immanent in the definite. The boundary between the definite and the indefinite, as well as between the subjective and the objective, is not fixed but shifting. How or why the Indefinite breaks forth into the definite and takes form as object of knowledge is more than we can say; we can only note objects as they appear and are given. Objects are known by turning positive attention to them; we cannot know the Indefinite in this way (just as we cannot discover the darkness behind a searchlight by turning the light on it). It is only by the withdrawal of such attention by self-denying, negative attention - that the Indefinite can be felt.

Corresponding to three stages of positive attention and one of nega- tive attention, there are four fundamentally different philosophical attitudes and schools. Positive attention which is fixed on objects alone breeds realism of the pan-objective kind; that which alternates between objects and the subject as determined by their contrast gives rise to dualism; that which simultaneously views the objects and the subject as a complex

system generates a philosophy of the Hegelian type. But when all determinates, objective and subjective, are negated and attention is withdrawn from them as illusory, there ensues a reversal of positive attention into the negative kind, and the Indefinite, transcending the subject and the object, is realized as the truth. Monistic Vedanta exhibits this last type. As truth is that which is not negated, and the theory of negation corresponds to the different kinds of attention, a different form of truth is revealed by each. Truth is thus found to be manifold, a view held by the Jain school. Differences among different schools of philosophy are, therefore, natural and inevitable. It is futile to try to reduce all to one type. The only legitimate criticism of a philosophical system is to examine its self- consistency with its basic standpoint.

The foregoing ideas of the indefinite, negation, and truth are found in some of his early papers, and Bhattacharya develops them more or less in the same way in a later work, The Subject as Freedom, and in his personal statement, "The Concept of Philosophy," in Contemporary Indian Philosophy. We can only briefly state his major conclusions here.

He distinguishes four grades of consciousness -empirical thought, pure objective thought, spiritual thought, and transcendental thought (taking thought in the widest sense of "awareness"). When we deny an empirical object revealed by sense-perception as being illusory, there arises the awareness of a pure or self-subsistent object (which is before the mind, though not existing in space). The denial of even the pure object leaves us with the self-enjoying awareness of the subject (spirit), and the denial of this last again (e.g., in the self- effacement of the devotee before God) leaves us with the transcendental awareness. The empirical objects come within the province of science, while the proper business of philosophy is the analysis of the contents of the last three grades of consciousness. Here Bhattacharya resembles Kant and the modern logical positivists. The work of con- structing a synthetic view of the world is really not the business of philosophy; such construction is a kind of poetic imagination and yields no knowledge. Philosophy analyses the contents which shine out in pure thought - the self-subsistent object, the enjoyed self, and the Absolute - and seeks to understand their meanings and inter-relate them in the form of judgments. These last are not, however, to be mistaken for existential judgments, since their contents do not claim existence like that of empirical objects. Here, again, we are reminded of Kant or Santayana.

With the advent of Christianity and the British in the seventeenth century there arose a fresh necessity for readjustment. The two most noteworthy indigenous religious movements which resulted from it are those of the Brahma Samaj and the Arya Samaj. The first of these was founded in I828 by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who was a great scholar and social and political reformer of indomitable energy. He studied, in the original, many of the basic scriptures of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and other faiths, and incorporated the best elements of all in his new faith, the main basis of which was a modernized and rationalized theistic form of the Upanishad religion, the worship of Brahma in His personal aspect. It was mainly confined to enlightened Indians who had received Western education in India and abroad. The Arya Samaj was founded by Swami Dayananda (I824- I883), a recluse of great natural scholarship and a dynamic

personality. On the one hand he opposed Islam and Christianity, and on the other idol worship, the caste system, and the Vedantic monism, Jain- ism, and Buddhism prevalent among the Hindus. He revived Vedic ritualism and monotheism, based on the philosophy of three funda- mental realities - God, soul, and nature. His movement spread far and wide in western and northern India, particularly among the non- Europeanized and backward classes, prevented the Hindus from con- version into other faiths and also reconverted some of the already converted, and gave birth to a network of educational institutions.

The account of modern religious currents of India would be in- complete without any mention of the work of Ramakrishna Parama- hansa (1834-I886) and his famous disciple Swami Vivekananda (i863-I902), who visited America and Europe and attracted great admiration from William James, Max Muller, Romain Rolland, and many others. Its special contribution is the revival, in life and in the service of humanity, of the philosophy of the monistic Vedanta of Sankara and the attempt to re-emphasize the unity of all religions. An illiterate temple priest, who had been initiated into the Tantric, Vaisnava, and Vedantic methods of spiritual discipline, Ramakrishna attained, by each, the desired goal as an orthodox Hindu. He then practiced with similar success the Islamic and Christian forms of wor- ship and realized ultimately that all paths lead unto God. He justified even the symbolic worship of God through an image as one of the possible methods. His plain but direct teachings arrested the attention of many educated persons whose doubts he would remove by very homely arguments and examples. Among them was Vivekananda, whose mind was assailed by agnostic and rationalistic doubts derived from his Western teachers. He accepted Ramakrishna as his master and devoted his life to the propagation of his ideas and the founding and the guiding of the Ramakrishna Mission for humanitarian service. He introduced into Hinduism the missionary zeal of Christianity, imparted to the monistic Vedanta a practical shape by emphasizing its positive aspect- that all is Brahma, and, therefore, that service of man as God (nara-narayan) is better than quiescent meditation. He has been a source of inspiration to the type of positive Vedanta which we find in philosophers like Radhakrishnan and Aurobindo, to the many religious orders and institutions now engaged in social service and propagation of Hindu ideas at home and abroad, and even to political workers like Aurobindo, Subhas Bose, and Mahatma Gandhi who made, in different ways, a religion of practical politics.

Rabindranath was temperamentally opposed to puritan cism, and impersonal absolutism. He rather chose to em the Vaisnava, those aspects of the Upanisads which tau finites were created by the Infinite out of its own en love, and they are, therefore, not illusory but real. Beau and man is nothing but the expression of the Spirit w hidden center of all attraction. "Beauty is his wooing of Art in its genuine form is also the self- expression of the sp which overflows the limitations of utility. All evils and marks of "want of adjustment of our individual self to self"; they should stimulate us to rise above narrow se find our unity with the Universal, the supreme perfect man is imbued with the spirit of the unity of his self w nature and of other men, he can realize it in action, in love, in art and religion. His life becomes joy and harmony in every sphere. This is the message of India's saints and seers to the universe, to

all "sons of Immortality," heirs to "Infinite Joy."

This message, repeated again and again by Vivekananda, Tagore, Radhakrishnan, Aurobindo, and others, would have remained a philosopher's Utopia or a poet's fancy but for its translation into practical politics by Mahatma (Great-souled) Gandhi (i869-I948), whose recent loss India has mourned with unprecedented sorrow and pride. Before he entered Indian politics (about I9I7), the struggle for political freedom was inspired by the examples of the French Revolution, American Independence, the Italian Republic, and the phenomenal rise of westernized Japan. The Indian examples of the military heroism of the Rajputs, the Marhattas, the Sikhs, and others added strength to these foreign ideals. India's downfall was regarded as a demonstration of the truth that high moral and philosophical ideals should not be allowed to meddle with practical politics. Constitutional agitation, terrorist organization, political assassination, and the like were, therefore, adopted as the only sane methods of liberation. But through Gandhi India's old philosophy reasserted itself. How little would India gain if she lost her soul to gain political freedom! "There is no wall of separation between means and end." "The bad means corrupt the end." "Violent means (in politics) will give violent swaraj (self-rule). That would be a menace to the world and to India herself." India should gain freedom by the same method which would take herself and the world nearer the spiritual goal of mankind - the unity of man with man and with the rest of existence, through love born of the love of God in whom all move and have their being.

In the light of this philosophy Mahatma Gandhi analysed the heart of subjugated India to find out the vices which tempted and perpetuated foreign rule. The chief vices were found to be want of communal harmony, backwardness of women and the depressed classes, economic dependence on foreign lands in respect of the basic needs of food and clothing, and the want of a system of education suited to the condition of the country. For the removal of all these, and connected vices found by self-analysis, Mahatma Gandhi started a number of organizations which he ran for about thirty years with the help of thousands of selfless workers. Along with social and economic work he also led successive nonviolent political campaigns, such as non- cooperation with the rulers, disobedience of morally unjustifiable laws, general strikes, etc. Though the struggle did not fully reach the ideal of moral purity demanded by him, yet it enabled millions of men and women to develop the nonviolent heroism of suffering persecution without anger and fear. It did not fail to melt and change even the hearts of the British rulers who quit India in I947.

The main trends of Indian thought which deserve special attention at this critical age of our planet are (i) its attempt to base philosophy on all aspects of experience and not simply on sense experience; (2) its practical insistence that philosophy is for life and must be lived in all its spheres, private, social, and international; (3) its emphasis on the necessity of controlling the body and mind, the necessity of moral purity and meditation, to make philosophical truths effective in life; (4) its recognition of the fundamental unity of all beings, particularly mankind, and the consequent consciousness that our moral or religious

duties are toward all, and not simply to the members of our own group, country, or race; (5) its conviction that the Ultimate Reality manifests itself, or can be conceived, in different ways, and consequently that there are divergent paths to perfection any one of which can be adopted in accordance with one's inner inclination; (6) its belief that political freedom and material progress are necessary, but only as means to ultimate spiritual peace and perfection, so that they should be attained in ways not detrimental to the latter; and lastly (7) its contention that the ultimate aim of every individual should be to perfect himself with a view to raising the world to perfection.

If it is felt that these ideas are not the monopoly of India but can be found also in the greatest teachers of all countries and times, it will only mean, what India has always believed, that there is a bedrock of human unity behind the superficial diversities of time and place, and that the greatest persons of many lands have often penetrated to it. It should be the duty of modern philosophers - persons with the widest outlook and the deepest insight - to discover this, our common human heritage, and try to Mold their own lives and thereby those of others around them in the light of these basic truths. It is only by this process that we can achieve one world based on the gradual progress of all humanity. Philosophy, of even the most catholic kind, if confined to mere intellectual discussion, will remain a helpless spectator of war, intrigue, and devastation repeatedly carried on by persons with narrow outlooks and uncontrolled passions.

Reference:

1. M. B. Chande, Indian Philosophy in Modern Times, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2000.
2. D. P. Chattophadyaya, Jitendranath Mohanty, Phenomenology and Indian Philosophy, State University of New York Press, Delhi, 1992.
3. Basant Kumar Lal, Contemporary Indian Philosophy, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1978.
4. Debidatta Aurobinda Mahapatra, The Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo: Indian Philosophy and Yoga in the Contemporary World, Bloomsbury Publishing, New Delhi, 2020.
5. Sarvepalli Radhakrishna, Indian Philosophy Volume – I, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2008.
6. Jessica Frazier, Categorisation in Indian Philosophy: Thinking Inside the Box, Taylor & Francis, New Delhi, 2016
7. Sharad Deshpande, Philosophy in Colonial India, Springer India, New Delhi, 2015.
8. Alexander P. Varghes, India: History, Religion, Vision and Contribution to the World Volume-I, Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2008.