



Swaraj in doing Philosophy

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Abstract:

Philosophy cannot just be about conceptual analysis that is very profoundly determined by the West. Philosophy is not an exhaustive subject and therefore in this paper I try to justify other ways of doing philosophy. I take help of Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya's essay "Swaraj in Ideas" and try to show how the philosophy that is going on in India is very much valid as that of the West. My main focus point is the rejection of the word '*darshana*' and how it is replaced by the word '*ankviksiki*', because of its analytical connotation. I therefore try to justify the usage of the word '*darshana*' through my essay.

Keywords: Swaraj, Anviksiki, Conceptual, Non-Conceptual

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The title 'Swaraj in doing Philosophy' signifies the need to have some independence in doing philosophy because for a very long time now, it has been the western methodology and ideology which has been guiding the field of philosophy. Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya in "Swaraj in Ideas" is urging Indians to think through their 'Indianness' and wants us to stop being enslaved to the western ways of thinking, philosophizing. Language is used in such a way that the physicality of the world becomes secondary and the most important things are then the ideas and meanings, this is the point that Bhattacharya is trying to portray with his paper on 'Swaraj In Ideas'. He points out that the main problem of us is that we accept foreign theory in a very docile manner without even criticising it. We can have swaraj in ideas only when we accept ideas by translating them to our own culture and then if it fits, we should accept, it should not be the other way round.² Therefore, the most valuable freedom would be to think in our own language and what we are doing right now can be called slavery.

² Bhattacharya, K. C., 1954. Swaraj in Ideas. *Visvabharati Quarterly* 20, p108

Here, there is a cultural subjection pointed out by KCB, as we have begun a kind of soulless thinking. However, when a person can shake himself free from it, he can finally think in his own language. He experiences a rebirth and that is what is called Swaraj in Ideas. Through the point of view in swaraj in ideas, I will try to highlight some problems which the western methodology and thinking has posed on us.

Given the four broad ways of philosophizing namely history of ideas, comparative study, textual or studying a particular philosopher and lastly by picking up an issue and thinking about it in a deeper sense, I have tried to pick up an issue and then do a comparative work of that issue between Indian and Western philosophy.

Although there are different methods of philosophizing which gives us a sense of liberty to philosophize, one problem that arises in different ways of philosophical methods is that each philosopher thinks he is right and the other wrong³ more and more we find them describing it as nonsense, and therefore forming sects. It

³ Krishna, D. (1995). *The Nature of Philosophy*. Kolkata: Prachi Prakashan Calcutta, p130

ultimately results in mutual unintelligibility. For instance, analytical philosophers and those in the Vienna Circle often think that the job of philosophy is to analyse and verify philosophical sentences so as to make philosophical language a simpler one, and the sentences which are not empirically verifiable is often described as non-sensical, "*of the truth of these propositions there seems to be no doubt, but of their correct analysis there seems to be the gravest doubts*"⁴. Here Moore is making analysis of the sentence the pinnacle of philosophy. He is saying that if thinkers doubt "earth has existed for a million reasons" they are doing so because of subtle confusions in their thinking. However, he himself says that to what is the analysis of what we understand by such expression is entirely different from holding that we do not understand the expression. Moreover, it cannot be the only aspect of philosophy, Moore's a defence of common sense is itself fallen into the dichotomy of understanding and analysis and the confusion between understanding and understanding as

true. The philosophy put forward by these philosophers too begin with the metaphysical philosophy of others, they presuppose the metaphysical concepts of ages past and in their refutation their philosophy lies. Their philosophy is that of logic and language and therefore does not uphold that philosophy has no distinct subject matter of its own.

In Hegel's view, the beginnings of modern research and European domination over Asia mark the end of this search for India's mythical wisdom and "philosophy". India cannot teach the West; its tradition is a matter of the past; it has never reached the level of philosophy and science which is a genuinely and uniquely European achievement.⁵ Many thinkers of the West still are sceptical whether philosophy can be extended to non-European countries and their attitude towards mysticism and spiritualism has often considered other schools of thought like Buddhism to be not associated with philosophy. However, this is absolutely not correct, instead of popularizing one notion of philosophy

⁴ Taken from G.E Moore's 'A defense of Common Sense'

⁵ Halbfass, W. (1990). *India and Europe- An Essay in Philosophical Understanding* (1st ed.). Delhi: MOTILAL BANARSIDASS Publisher Pvt. Ltd, p2

i.e., conceptual analysis we should look for a more inclusive way of doing philosophy. This view is not only limited to Hegel but dates back to Plato and Aristotle, where philosophical exercise is equated to getting the right knowledge against mere belief (JTB) ⁶ This view is highly parochial and doesn't include many aspects of philosophy, especially Indian philosophy. Moreover, the thinkers of the west often think that the 'desire to know' is missing in Indian culture as they simply assume it and focus on liberation. However, if we look deeper, we can see that it wasn't just assumed but very carefully deciphered from many events, e.g., when Buddha saw the atrocities around him, he realized that the cause of suffering is desire, amongst others.

"Sri Aurobindo however tries to highlight the richness of Indian philosophy and cultural tradition as compared to the Western culture and worldviews. His agenda was to show that Indian culture and its

philosophical worldviews are not only rich but also much older (and richer) than those of the West." ⁷ But Western traditions instead of appreciating the vast cultural aspect of Indian philosophy, finds a problem with the term '*darsana*' which is considered to be the Indian equivalent of the term 'Philosophy'. The west states that the term '*darsana*' which means to see, insight, realization, does not capture the essence of philosophy, rather gives it a spiritual connotation.

Because of this reason many Indian thinkers too hold the same opinion and instead use the term '*anviksiki*' ⁸ as the equivalent term for philosophy. "If etymologically traced, *anviksiki* is the second of the three layered epistemic stages: *iksa* (viewing or desiring to know), *anviksa* (reasoning about the way of viewing), and *pariksa* (evaluating the method through a third party)" ⁹. The critical and methodological implications of *anviksiki*, to associate them with the ideas of critical, autonomous reasoning and "pure" theory which the European

⁶ Oinam, B. (2018). 'Philosophy in India' or 'Indian Philosophy': Some Post Colonial Questions.. Springer, p465

⁷ *Ibid*, p461

⁸ This term was first used by *Kautilya in Arthashastra*.

⁹ Oinam, B. (2018). 'Philosophy in India' or 'Indian Philosophy': Some Post Colonial Questions.. Springer, p466

historians of philosophy tended to regard as criteria of "real" philosophy, is the reason why anviksiki is preferred over darshana. The word darshana however has been used in Indian doxographic literature, the most significant ones- Haribhadra's *Saddarshanasamuccaya* and Madhva-Vidyarana's *Sarvadarshanasamghara*¹⁰. Given the historicity and cultural aspects of the word darshana, it is only logical to accept the term and not simply discard it.

While anviksiki approximates a particular idea of philosophy based on conceptual and methodological analysis, it may not, for instance, be able to capture the nature of descriptive ontology or speculative metaphysics. Philosophy cannot only be classified as conceptual or non-conceptual, there are other sub categories of it like the descriptive philosophy which is used by continental philosophers and is about telling an event, and not about analysing. This method is however not peculiar to non-European countries only but is practised in the west too, for example, by philosophers like Søren

Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard's philosophy portrays the domain of faith (more of leap of faith thereby presenting a transcendental realm) and how the religious stage of human life transcends the aesthetic and ethical stage. It is about describing and narrating certain stories within which one can find philosophical questions. In much similar sense we see different aspects of philosophizing in India, a large portion of our philosophy is moksha-centric, related to liberation and soul which are very much transcendental and valid like that of Kierkegaard. Haribhadra's use of the term *saddarshana* for Jina Mahavira, shows that he has true and complete insight, the right realization which puts him in the transcendental realm. This, however, has been categorized as mysticism or spiritualism and not part of philosophy, but as mentioned earlier philosophy isn't only deciphering what the sentence means, but it also ventures into its surrounding and take up matters from there.

Therefore, as the name of this paper suggests, instead of blindly following

¹⁰ Halbfass, W. (1990). *India and Europe- An Essay in Philosophical Understanding* (1st ed.). Delhi: MOTILAL BANARSIDASS Publisher Pvt. Ltd, 264

what the west has popularized about philosophy, we should inculcate Swaraj in our way of doing philosophy. Philosophizing doesn't necessarily mean making philosophical sentences clear of any discrepancies, but is a much wider field, it highlights a first-person exercise of a very evolved order. Moreover, one cannot philosophize independent of, or, completely divorced from the surroundings." Philosophizing is a singular exercise, but performed in a collective milieu. This collective milieu highlights the historicity through which scholars philosophize" ¹¹. Lastly, I would like to conclude this essay by quoting Wittgenstein "Letting the fly out of the bottle" but with a different interpretation- that instead of confining ourselves to one popularized version of philosophy we should venture into its different domains and try to find answers to questions which intrigues our mind.

¹¹ Oinam, B. (2018). 'Philosophy in India' or 'Indian Philosophy': Some Post Colonial Questions.. *Springer*, p459

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