

COURSES ON INDIAN PHILOSOPHY: AN EVALUATION

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Generally the courses on Indian Philosophy begin with the study of *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad-Gita* and a brief introduction about *Jainism* and *Buddhism*. In the second stage the six classical systems of *Nyaya*, *Vaishika*, *Sankhya Yoga*, *Mimamsa* and *Vedantic* philosophies are deeply discussed. At the final stage, some of the seminary studies go for contemporary Indian philosophy. Studies related to the philosophy of Radhakrishnan, Sri. Aurobindo, K.C. Bhattacharia, Mahatma Gandhi, etc. become parts of the syllabus.

In the history of Indian Philosophy, leaving aside the Indian admirers, we find good many foreigners who loved very much the ancient Indian wisdom. Some of them are Max Muller, Albert Sweitzer, Paul Deussen, Zaehner R.C., Eliade Mircea, and others. A few of them have spent their very good portion of lives in India, made deeper research for several years and brought out Indian wisdom known to the whole world. Their appreciation and admirations had gone beyond words, besides they aroused the cotemporary Indian thinkers to study Indian philosophy with greater enthusiasm and meaning. In the contemporary period Indian thinkers like Radhakrishnan, Vivekananda etc tried to clear the inconsistencies and difficulties proposed by some of the Europeans, and tried their best to give an universal acceptance.

Rationality & Plurality, as Real Foundations of Indian Philosophy

Of its own nature Indian philosophy was neither biased nor too narrow. It has proved itself to be rational and pluralistic in its outlook. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan and many others in spite of its deep-rooted ness in Indian religion and tradition, it remained as a pluralistic and rational Philosophy. To quote from Radhakrishnan, " Reason freely questions and criticizes the creeds in which men are born. That is why the heretic, the skeptic, the unbeliever, the rationalist and the free thinker, the materialist and the hedonist all flourished in the soil of India".¹ Again, "From the beginning Indian philosophers felt that truth was many sided

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and different views contained different aspects of truth which no one could fully express. He was therefore tolerant and respectful of other views. He was fearless in accepting even dangerous doctrines so long as they are backed up by logic".²

Carvaka, the materialistic school too had its own rationale. Its theory had a good deal to do with the repudiation of the old religion of custom and magic. Here too Dr. Radhakrishnan observed that, "Liberal efforts at improving existing institutions sanctioned by time and embodied in the habits of people will remain ineffectual if the indifference and superstition of the countries are not shaken up by an explosive force like the *charvaka* creed. The removal of dogmatism, which it helped to effect, was a necessary step to make room for the great constructive efforts of speculation".³ Going a step further, Radhakrishnan justified the atheistic tendency of the *Carvakas'* saying, "...the acceptance of Good God naturally goes with the moral government of the world. When suspicion of the nature of life on earth arises, the belief in God is weakened".⁴ *Buddhism* and *Jainism* deny the existence of an intelligent first cause; possess clergy practicing celibacy and think, it sinful to take the life of any creature for any cause. Adding the views of many other contemporaries we may conclude that rationality and pluralism of thoughts were the earlier special marks of Indian philosophy, it neither confined itself to a single monistic system nor extolled religious fundamentalism.

Pluralism, the real face of Hinduism

Religious pluralism has been part of India's life and history for millennia. Hinduism with all its subjects, *Buddhism*, and *Jainism* existed side by side in India for centuries. Only with the arrival of Islam the problem became more acute. Religious individuals tried to go beyond the particularities of Hindu sects and of Islam to establish groups open to all.⁵

Later, Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772 -1833), through a deep study of Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity, reached the conviction that monotheism was the basis of all religions. Monotheism is the source from which Islam and Christianity draw their unity, strength and social equality. He felt Hinduism in its earlier phases had one Supreme Being alone, idolatry and polytheism entered later on in Hinduism. In fact even a fundamentalist and revivalist like Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824 -83) believed that

monotheism was the basic teaching of the *Rig Veda Samhita*. Hence from a historical and critical point of view neither the contention of Ram Mohan Ray that the *Upanishads* teach monotheism nor the conviction of Dayananda Saraswati that the *Vedic Samhitas* are monotheistic in character can be sustained.⁶ But most of the educated Hindus of their time accepted this basic tenet of the two great reform movements because it put Hinduism on a par with the other two religions. Even later, some of these thinkers realized that for a healthy, moral, social, and religious life, monotheism was essential. Gandhi also came closer to this tradition. Although he did not write explicitly on monotheism, his basic belief was monotheistic.⁷

Otherwise, pluralism existed even with the Gods of Hinduism. Any name any shape that appeals to the worshipper can be taken as a representation or manifestation of divinity. Alain Danielou shared the same opinion; but at the same time, he felt, the narrow outlook was due to over emphasizing some monistic school of philosophy. Hence he observed, "In the general picture of later Hinduism an exaggerated importance has been attributed to some philosophical schools of monistic Hinduism which developed mainly under the impact of Islamic and Christian influences and which aim at interpreting *vedic* texts in a new light".⁸ He would add along with that, "However the tendency toward monism never had had in practice a deep influence on the forms of hindu worship, a simplified system could never accommodate the multi faced complex unity, that characterizes the hindu pantheon, when although every element can, from a certain point of view, be equated with every other, the whole can never brought back to numerical unity".⁹ It is to be sadly remarked that, while Hinduism is one among the world religions, known for its profound scriptures, its highly contemplative and spiritual traditions, its spirit of tolerance, its perennial values and philosophical insights, *hidutva* is a closed and exaggerated ideology.¹⁰ On the other hand for a student of philosophy, if the innumerable Gods and their assistance to human beings, respect for nature, coexistence with nature, some of these elements are emphasized it could have satisfied his rationality. The ideology of Trinitarian Gods (Brahman, Vishnu, Shiva) and their availability to human needs may be a matter of interest and relevance for clerical students. Thus a student will be able to relate, compare and

contrast his faith with his native land Gods. This may lead to an appreciation of his religion and respect for others faith.

Hindutva Ideology; a Non-pluralistic Frame

Vinayak Damodar Sevarkar (1883-1966) a Maharastrian *brahmin*, codified a social and political doctrine known as 'Hindutva' and published its essential ideas in the book "Hindutva: who is a Hindu?" 1923. He affirmed that hindus constitute a single nation and asked them to build up a Hindu- *Rashtra* in order to maintain, protect and promote the interests of the hindu race. An appreciation for and practice of all the customs and traditions of Hinduism, acceptance of India alone as ones fatherland and holy land and Sanskrit as the common language are some of the basic tenets of Hindustan. *Buddhism*, *Jainism* and *Sikhism* are to be treated as off shoots of Hinduism only. Birth and growth in Indian territory, are the marks of belonging to the Indian race.

In recent years the fanatic hindus have intensified their efforts to change our country into a monotheistic *hindutva* model. Their efforts have gone to the extent of committing innumerable atrocities, on *dalits*, tribals, Muslims & Christians. Such acts of violence and their ideology destroy the very democratic, secular and civilizational fabric of our society and erase the pluralism that undermines the unity of our nation. Quite fittingly it is noted that, 'the fundamentalists' treatment of Hinduism as a uniform and monolithic entity (which it is not and which it never has been) has led to a process of "semitization of Hinduism", threatening the culture of millennial religious pluralism and co-existence. It is this '*semitized*' Hinduism which is today locked in conflict with two semitic religions - Islam and Christianity".¹¹ Thus it is imperative for all philosophers who are concerned with the secular future of our nation to challenge these puzzlements. The above feeling is expressed as, "The challenge has been Hindutva ideology with much minorities especially Christians, have shown their disagreement. This ideology destroys the very foundation of our nation.... The country requires a philosophical reflection on the implication of Hindutva".¹²

Power Politics in Indian Philosophy

For some of the critics the authority of the *Vedas* is so crucial in Indian Philosophy that, *vedic* knowledge was given absolute status. *Vedas* are accepted as eternally heard, revealed truth and the most authentic one. This led to a non-theocentric division as *orthodox* and *heterodox*. Ritual power is another area of domination in the *vedic* literature. *Yajnas* were understood to have superior power than the deities worshipped in *vedic* hymns. Belief has gone to the extent that even the deities could be controlled and made to serve the purpose of *yajna* performers. In this context Hiriyanna observes, "It was rather to compel or coerce them (the deities) to do what the sacrificer wanted to be done".¹³ Hiriyanna gives clear evidence to the superiority of *yajnas*, which is for a political game in power struggle. As he says it, "... as a sign of the transfer of power from Gods to the priests"(Brahmins).¹⁴ As if supporting this, in course of later development, *Mimamsa* became the specialized discipline for upholding and interpreting the *vedic* mantras and *yajnas* as the only source of power and potentiality.

Here for our purpose, an important element to note is that the *vedic* society acknowledged *brahmacharya*, *grahastha*, *vanaprasta* and *sanyasa* as four stages of life. Among these, concepts like *sanyasa* and *brahmacharya* are typically Indian and clerically important but has absolutely no place in our philosophy syllabus. In *Bhagavad-Gita* and *Upanishads*, *sanyasa* has special meaning as the vow of renunciation.

Again, *Upanishads`* period is acknowledged by all as one of the most intensive periods of intellectual activity. Yet here too knowledge is brought in terms of power relations. *Upanishad* wisdom is highest knowledge. Consequently it separated the elite upper class from the lower simple people. As it is said by Hiriyanna, the word, "*Upanishad`* literally means 'secret teaching' (*rahasya*) or the teaching which was jealously guarded from the unworthy and was imparted in private, only to pupil of tried character"¹⁵ We have clear evidence of the above criterion when S. Radhakrishnan, the contemporary philosopher said, meditation, worship, ritual are intended for the lower class of aspirants who have no desire for earthly prosperity or heavenly job. Again according to him, people are sealed with distinction of upper and lower class even in the realization of *mukti*. That is the reason he went on saying, there are two kinds of release.

One is the result of *yajna* or wisdom, and the other is due to *upasana* or worship and prayer.

It is to be noted here that, Upanishad has a second meaning as sitting near the master and listening. The concept of 'guru', 'sishya' (to be trained), 'ashram', 'gurukula' etc have not yet found place in our syllabus.

Never undermining the Vedanta study, we appreciate the meta-theory of '*tat vam asi*'. It should be kept in mind that it is one of the philosophies, but certainly not the only philosophy. Monistic interpretation of *Vedanta* may go for singularity, rigidity and fundamentalism. If it is held too high, the spontaneity, rationality and the plural nature of Indian philosophy may be totally lost. It is true, during 20th century Vedanta started gaining the moment of militancy. The metaphors of *dharmayudha* of Bhagavadgita and Sakti (Kali) were added along with it and interpreted not merely to serve the freedom movement, but also to counter the Islamic concept of *jihad*, the holy war. It was taken up to revert the supposition that the Hindus were inert and passive. The post independence tendency of *Vedanta* is continuously to serve the purpose of the Hindu communalism against the Muslims and Christians. Recently the *hidutva* politicians transferred the otherwise polite figure of Rama into a militant one.¹⁶

In the later half of the 20th century Vedanta studies in the academic circles as well as reverted back to the orthodox positions dismissing the limited and liberal stances it apparently exhibited during the freedom movement. Rigorous translations and interpretations of *advaidic* texts insisting upon the pure or absolute form of *vedanta* came forefront. The head of Kanchi Sankaracharya mutt accused the liberal compromises of the Brahmins with the modern forms of life and called them back to the original orthodox way of living. Popular writers like Cho Ramasamy recited the same theme and criticized the liberalization and modernization of the *vedantic* elites.¹⁷ It is during the same period certain literary critics and creative writers condemning the popular culture as corrupt and defunct. These circumstances in the second half of the 20th century helped to rejuvenate the most orthodox forms of Vedanta. Revival of *Advaita* goes hand in hand with the program of making Hindu militancy of the communalists.

Interface between Knowledge & Power in the Formulation of Indian Thought

Ideology means not mere existence and establishment of certain ideas, but it is a kind of material force, which determines the social behaviour in general at certain periods. In a given society the dominant mode of meaning generation takes place within the dominant ideology. Thus knowledge itself gets turned into ideology, and ideology in turn supports power. In the Indian context, the *hindutva* ideology has been justifying the *Vedic* superiority and caste hierarchy. According to Dr. P.K. Pokkar, in one of his paper on "Role of power and knowledge in the formation of Hindutva says the decision to rule India by her own rules by warren Hastings was not a casual decision. Charles Wilkins began to study Sanskrit and then started translating the institutes of Manu. Wilkins also became the first person to translate Bhagavad-Gita. The intention of the Europeans was to ensure the favorable material and ideological condition required for their rule in India. For our observation, the dialectics of domination applied consciously and unconsciously influence Indian thought and its study curriculum.

The postmodern philosopher, Derrida has rightly pointed out that, an enquiry into the origin leads to metaphysics and evade the real problem. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Absolute Pure Brahman, the concept of 'thou art that' i.e.; 'thou art not thou', evaded some of the essential problems of the suffering Indians. As a result the world and human being are reduced to illusion and *maya*.

As regards knowledge, productive and practical knowledge were produced by the lower caste of people from their working conditions; whereas the *brahmins* appears to have produced only meta knowledge or meta discourse during their spiritual exercises. Thus it is said that, "It is significant to note that the lives of the great Brahmins of olden times, like Yajnavalkya, are associated with intellectual profundity and spiritual achievement while those of great *khatryas* represent an ethical magnanimity which has love for its guiding principle ...".¹⁸ As for the knowledge generated by the lower castes, it was rich in content but was expropriated as soon as the ruling caste identified such knowledge as useful. Actually the expropriation of the knowledge was made possible by means of employing a highly technical language called Sanskrit.

In order to retain the *braminical* order the ruling class wanted to convert everything that evolved within the geographical territory to the *brahminical* language. Gauthama Buddha, who preached against the *brahminic* order and caste, also was incorporated within Hinduism as one of the *avathara*. Buddha is branded as the ninth *avathar* of Vishnu, instead of being regarded as a political thinker and revolutionary of his times.¹⁹ *Buddhism* as a whole was converted into Sanskritized version. Actually the people who were addressed by Buddha, lost access to the philosophy of Buddha as early as it is converted into the so-called divine language. The text produced by Buddha in *Pali* language as well as many other texts related to folk medicine and folk arts were translated into Sanskrit not simply for exalting it but for disarming the people who produced it. What is funny in the Indian context is the recognition of Sanskrit and related culture as superior. With this operation the *non-brahminic* texts get branded as inferior and the very producers of the local knowledge gradually accept the dominant ideology pertaining to the real and higher knowledge. It is high time to realize the place occupied by all such local knowledge that has been marginalized for centuries.

The result is **alienation of the lower people**. The *sudras* were banned even from hearing the Vedas. As Manu says, "Let him not recite the texts indistinctively, nor in the presence of the Sudras".²⁰ Again and again it is insisted that the twice born (*dwija*) alone is entitled to read. Thus the majority of the people are kept away from the right to know. On the other hand their only duty is to obey the *brahmins*. Karl Marx expressed the same idea. For him, the working class gets alienated from their means of production by means of expropriating. Marx says, "The so-called the primitive accumulation, therefore nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production. It appears as primitive, because it forms the pre-historic stage of capital and of the mode of production corresponding with it".²¹

Need of Pluralistic Philosophy, the Contextual Need

At the venue of *Hidutva*, it is high time to recapture the pluralistic and rationalistic nature of the Indian thoughts. *Anekavada* in *Jainism* literally means that there are multiple realities and there is multiple understanding of realities. With this pluralistic understanding *anekandavada* has to be understood against the doctrine of *ekantavada*,

which came into existence in the context of especially with *vedantic* and Upanishad monistic philosophy.²² In this context Zimmer would say, "Jainism may be regarded as a specimen of the way in which Indian mind, outside the pale of Brahman orthodoxy, and according to the pattern of an archaic mode of thought rooted in Indian soil".²³ The *jaina* doctrine of six fundamental categories too speaks in favor of this. The first and foremost category of *Jainism*, *Jiva* or life is said to be a multiple principle.

The *jainas* consideration of famous six blind men portraying an elephant from their own experience indirectly refers to the six systems of Indian philosophy. This is a *syadvada* mentality. *Syadvada* stands as a **democratic** principle in philosophical and religious perspectives. Hence due importance needs to be given to counter balance the over emphasize of the monistic and *brahminic* thoughts. *Jainistic* concepts of nonviolence as the very basic life style, not only of monks but also indispensable of the lay, needs due consideration in our study, when the whole world and nations are alarmed with terrorism and violence. In short a systematic ethical philosophy of nonviolence is the need of the time.

If the percentage of the Indian *dalit* Christians is too high, and the inequalities of treatment to them are too much, the political philosophy needs to be revisited. *Dalit* means, "the oppressed", or "the broken" people.²⁴ It is to be noted that Buddha and Mahavira are the two *kashtrays*. Buddha stood high when he reversed the caste order and he said, "Caste is not by birth but by deeds", (inscribed at Bodgaya - when he first saw a Brahmin, after his enlightenment). The ruling power is to be attributed to the *kshatryas*. The caste order normally understood to have the foundation from the Rig Veda, regularized by Manu, today stands at the cross roads in the political philosophy of India. It goes to the conclusion that either the *vedic* foundation is wrong, or the Vedic commands are transgressed. (I mean the *kshatryas* are the authorized people to rule not the BJP & VHP *brahmins* as in Indian politics today). Thus the political philosophy could start from the power struggle background, pass through Buddhistic reformation, taking the guidance of Dr. Ambedkar, E.V.R. Periyar etc. Dr. Ambedkar after experiencing all caste cruelties felt that he was born in Hinduism by mistake but he would see that he would not die as a Hindu. That decision made him to embrace Buddhism and die as a budhist. It is true the Keralites requested

E.V.R.Periyar, to fight against the caste issue at Vaikam. Upruptedly leaving his speech in a meeting at Tiruchirapalli, he left to help the *ezhavas* of Kerala. The caste distinction in India, the rites dispute in the church, and the racial discrimination of the west awaits a solution through a reversed political philosophy.

The concept of '*Dharma*' as justice and righteousness has been given high priority in the thoughts of Buddha. The values of standing for justice, fighting every injustice, good character, protection of the people are the special marks of the *kshatryas*. The conflict over the ruling power between the Brahmins and *kshatryas*, was visible even at that time. It started with *brahminic* ritualism and *kshatryas* character. In this context it is said that, "The idea behind the neo-kshatriya movement cannot be known today in its full meaning, but it is possible to discern the lines of divergence between Brahmin and Kshatriya. That there was naturally a period of struggle between the cult of ritualism supported by the Brahmins, and the religion of love, represented by the *kshatryas*, is evident."²⁵ Critics like Daya Krishna and some of the Asian thinkers feel that the conflict between the *brahmins* and *kashtrays* for political power is the background of Mahabaratha and Bhagavad-Gita. Hence Bhagavad-Gita is not merely to be understood as three spiritual *margas* of *bhakti*, *jnana*, and *karma*, but as the possibility of a *kshatriya* philosophy, with a power struggle background. It is to be noted that, Bhagavad-Gita also plays a secondary game of divinely sanctioning caste inequality. (Bhagavad-Gita, XVIII, 42-44).

Search for an Alternative Practical Philosophy

Is philosophical knowledge a set of doctrine with out any practical goal or is it an activity directed towards saving man and mankind from maladies? Again could one think meaningfully? The controversy was already started by Wittgenstein who declared that philosophical activity is like curing a person from mental sickness, a sickness caused by puzzlements, confusions and bewilderments. Wittgenstein said that the old view of philosophy as a body of knowledge or system must be rejected and replaced by a new conception of philosophy as an activity. Hence in Tractatus he wrote, "Philosophy is not a body of doctrine, but an activity"²⁶ Again as the puzzlements are many and each calls for a

different kind of treatment. "There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods like different therapies". 27

One of the most practical philosophies of India is 'Yoga Philosophy'. The word Yoga means 'to join', 'to unity', 'to unite as one', to direct and concentrate one's attention etc. Literally it means "yoking" or "harnessing"- the harnessing or control of ones faculties.²⁸ Thus Yoga means the yoking of all powers of body and mind. This union is affected in and through several areas. This is summarized by Amaladas Brahmachari as union within oneself, union between man and man, union of man with nature and union with the creator.²⁹ Earlier the anxieties of the spiritualists were union with God. In later period we find integrity with one self and with others are important, which could be attained through yoga.

Indian philosophers genuine concerns were, how to free man from suffering. To the curious young philosopher student who finds nothing practical in philosophy, yoga is an answer. If Yoga is well understood, it is trying to offer a solution to the three types of sufferings of *Sankhya*, i.e., *adhyadmika*, *adhybaudika*, and *adhideivika*, proposed by *Sankhya*. It is quiet true all most all our problems could be categorized under these headings. While writing a foreword to B.S.K. Iyengar's book, Yehudi Menuhin says, "Each unfulfilled area of tissue and nerve, of brain or lung, is a challenge to our will and integrity, or otherwise a source of frustration and death".³⁰ It is a technique ideally suited to prevent physical and mental illness and to protect the body generally, developing an inevitable sense of self-reliance and assurance. By its very nature it is inextricably associated with universal laws, respect for life, drawing of a quite breath, calmness of mind and firmness of will.³¹

Recognizing the importance some of the universities have come forward to offer certificate, diploma and degree courses in yoga, and good many of the physicians rush to this study. Undoubtedly the meditative and spiritual value is great in yoga. In short, it calls for moral and ethical virtues (*yama*), cleanliness (*niyama*), physical exercises (*asana*), detachment (*pratyahara*) attention and concentration (*pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*), meditation (*dyana*) and peace of mind (*samadhi*). 'Peace' is an elusive boon for which many earn these days. This peace of mind is possible through Yoga. Some of the virtues and states of mind are

the fundamental requirements of clerics too. Hence Yogic studies needs to be given grater attention in our studies, at least it could be an ancillary subject to philosophy.

Subaltern Streams in Vedas, Revisited

It is a generally accepted fact that Indian philosophy takes its roots from *Vedas*. But the *vedangas* and *upavedas* need special consideration. There are six *vedangas* and six *upavedas*. The *upavedas* contains practical, relevant materials for all. *Aurveda*-medicine, *gandharvaveda* -music, *artha sastras*-politics & economics, *silpasastras*-architecture, *dhanurveda*-archery & war, are some of the *upavedas*. *Aurveda*, *Gandharvaveda* and *silpasastras* are very much useful for many especially for trainees in the clerical line. For example, the *vedic brahmines* were not only priests performing religious rites and ceremonies; they also were *vaidyas* (physicians of *Ayurveda*).³² It is clear that the physicians and surgeons of the time were the sages or seers, believed to be deeply devoted holy people, who saw health as an integral part of spiritual life. It is said that they received their training of *Aurveda* through direct cognition during meditation and intuition.

Professional careers like MBBS may be not be agreeable to priestly ministry but the basic Indian mode of alleviating human suffering is still expected from Indian clerics in the basic grass root villages. By doing this as combined program of healing, they prove not only as charismatic healers but also actual holistic healers, suited to their actual needs. Thus they will fulfill the guidance of the church given for formation. Advice is given as follows, "If formation is not suited to their actual needs, the problems would arise from their cultural perpectives".³³ The *vedic* sages took the passages from the *vedic* scripture relating to *Aurveda* and compiled separate books dealing only with *Aurveda*. The *Atreya Samhita* is the oldest medical book in the world.³⁴ (The *Arthava veda* lists eight divisions of *Aurveda*. They include, *kayachikitsa*-internal medicines, *balchikitsa*- pediatrics, *Grahachikista*-demonology, *urdhavanchikista*-ophthalmology, *salayaxchikista* - surgery, *drashta-vishchista*-toxicology, *jara-geronntology*-science of rejuvenation, *vrushya-vaijkaram*- sperm etc.)

Aurveda is translated as the art and science of living, a systematic approach, which utilizes all that nature, provides (food, spices, herbal

medicines, colors, metals, sound), not only to overcome sickness but also continually strengthen oneself. *Aurveda* has evolved in a *vedic* culture which understood the human condition to be limitless; the day to day implementation of *Aurvedic* principles create a strong body, clarity of mind and tranquility of spirit, thus the individual may move closer to realizing his true potential.

In the modern world, *Aurveda* is increasingly popular, because it speaks of the elementary concepts of contact with nature, holism and 'we are what we eat'. *Aurveda* forms an integral part of the daily regimen of hundreds of millions of people worldwide. Recently *The Week* magazine had its cover heading as 'Aurveda goes global'.³⁵ Its principles are utilized, not only to treat persons who are ill, but also to prepare a balanced meal and to construct a harmonious environment. *Aurveda* is the knowledge of what nature in her generosity provides.

Philosophical Implications of Sidha

The word *sidha* comes from *sidhi*, which means an object to be attained, or perfection of heavenly bliss. *Sidhi* generally refers to the *Ashta sidhi* i.e., the eight supernatural powers. Those who attained or achieved these powers are known as *sidhars*. The *sidhars* were a class of popular writers in Tamil in all branches of knowledge and many of their works were written in high Tamil. The poetry, in which medical and other scientific tracts have been expressed, is much admired by specialists of the same field. The *sidhars* were also great scientists. They were men of high culture, intellectual and spiritual faculties combined with supernatural powers.³⁶ The paramount aim and object of *sidha* science is to assure the full span of 100 years of healthy life, to enable man knowledge, cultivate good character and conduct, with which they could enjoy their legitimate worldly pleasures and ultimately attain salvation.

Man is said to be the microcosm and the universe is macrocosm. Because what exists in man, also exists in the universe. Man is nothing but the universe in miniature containing the fire elements and the various principles, which constitute the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms. The universe consists of two essential entities - matter and energy, which the *sidhars* call *Siva* and *Sakti*. The two co-exist and are inseparable. The universe consists of five elements and the various principles, which are

primordial elements (*pancha boothas*). All created or evolved matter in the world, whether it is animal, vegetable or mineral, falls under these categories. The human anatomy and psychology, the causative factor of disease the materials for the treatment and cure of diseases, the food for sustenance all fall with in the five elemental categories.

Sidha medical science has a wide range of application in medical and non-medical fields. Social forestry needs to be based on medical value of the plants. Even when water purification of modern methods has drastically failed to provide safe drinking water for the masses, herbal medicines like cleaning nut, herbal antibiotics are widely researched to find a viable alternative.³⁷ Thus the unique *sidha* medicine answers a number of incurable diseases when other medical systems fail.

Conclusion

It is true that in India, philosophy and religion are closely inter related. They can influence each other. Gradual movement of *hindutva* ideals with its monistic frame narrowed down the scope of Indian philosophy and used it also as a tool for domination. This can lead to one religion, one God and one nation ideology, where the minorities will not have any place. Hence the neglected philosophies need to be added along with the study course to balance the puzzling situations. Besides *ahimsa* of Jainism and ethical virtues (*dharma*) of Buddhism are the needs of the time.

Good many of the young philosopher students want philosophy to be practical. Let us bring back to the forefront the practical values of yoga, *aurveda*, *silpasastra*, *gandarvaveda*, *sidha* etc, so that a student may feel there is a mission of alleviating human suffering as a fruit of his philosophical studies. Here, once again we shall not wait for Max Muller and other foreigners to come and 'baptize' our traditional wisdom. Let us take the cautioning words of Fr.Mathew M. Vallipalam O.F.M. Cap. ("Priestly Formation in the Changing Society of Inda") as he says, "In order to get affiliation of western universities, Indian seminaries follow some of the methods, programs and policies of western institutions". He would add saying, "In the process, many of the Indian traditions, customs and spiritual insights are sacrificed". So it is high time to revisit our existing syllabus to set it right, keeping in mind the need of the time.

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