

PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

IN INDIA¹

THE PHILOSOPHIES OF A CULTURE HAVE A COMMON GENIUS

There has been no uniform conception of philosophy in the West. The Greek conception differs very much from that of Kant, and Kant's philosophical thought is in turn altogether dissimilar from that of a man like Ayer. However, there are certain broad characteristics which distinguish the philosophy of European culture from philosophies of Hindu and Chinese cultures. Within the same culture, of course, there are a number of clear-cut directions. It may, for example, be pointed out that philosophy, as conceived in Germany, Spain, and Italy, differs very much from the philosophy that has evolved in Britain and Scandinavian countries. There are, certainly, exceptions. Britain has produced Bradley and Whitehead; and Denmark, Kierkegaard. Still we are not far wrong in thinking that there is something which distinguishes the philosophy of one tradition from that of another. This difference is inevitable because philosophical activity takes place not in a vacuum

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but within a historical setting. History is influenced by the geography of the country and the racio-cultural patterns that have been established. Again, foreign impacts produce currents of far-reaching change in habits of thought as well as action. To cite an instance, but for the German influence sweeping through Coleridge, the Cairds, and Green, Bradley or Bosanquet would be unexplainable. I will therefore assume that the philosophy of a tradition can be taken as a historic and continuous phenomenon with a special genius of its own and, perhaps, a destiny as well.

Whereas most of my remarks will apply to all the Indian philosophies, some are applicable to the philosophies of Hindu tradition only. By "Hindu tradition" I mean the civilization and culture that have been given rise to and formulated by the peoples of Mahenjedaro and Harappa, the Vedic Aryans, and the successive generations of their offspring. I will now go on to describe some of the characteristics that distinguish the philosophies of India from philosophies of other cultures.

SENSE OF INFINITY: THEORY OF CYCLES

Anybody who has grasped India imaginatively is struck first by the fact that it is a vast domain with varying climates—huge and sprawling, touching Soviet central Asia on one side and reaching off to Ceylon on another side. In the mountainous regions and the valleys one often comes across scenic grandeur of immense beauty, and in the jungles and deserts one feels the isolation and utter loneliness of man lost in nature. Terrific natural phenomena like earthquakes, torrential rains, and devastating floods are common in India. Beasts of magnificent power and reptiles secreting poisons for which no antidote is known are man's neighbors. In India, it might be said, nothing has limits. The light, the blaze of the tropical sun, is unlimited. He scorches, enervates, and yet sustains. The bright and limpid starry sky at night overwhelms the man in the plains. Living, thus, amid things which know no bounds, the Indian develops a sense of infinity. Nothing has an end—neither man nor nature, for unending seems to be the cyclic cosmic process. The life-giving spring, followed by the scorching summer, succeeded by the winter of cold breezes from Himalayan glaciers rotate in sequence. They fail not to come or to pass on. Order, *rita*, seems to be their essence. May not the same advent and disappearance, birth and death, be true as well of the world as a whole? The mighty world

compared to which man seems so tiny and helpless, looms immense and without a beginning point. And how can this glorious thing have an end? Subject to fast disintegration, but ever resurrecting itself through an inner law of its own, the world is infinite. This sense of infinity was responsible for the theory of the cyclic rotation of the creations and the dissolutions of the world. In mythology as well as in philosophy this belief is accepted. All Indian systems accept the world process as infinite. It is infinite in the sense that it begins, stops, and recommences—but always continues. Only one Indian philosophy, the Mimamsa, maintains that the world is eternal; it always was, as it is at present; it always will be as it is. The vindication of the Law, so the Mimamsa argues, demands nothing short of this. Unbreakable is the moral law, and equally so must be its counterpart, the physical law. The world, therefore, can only be eternal. Thus we see that the sense of infinity, which dawned in the racial consciousness of the cowherds of the Indus Valley, continues to be acceptable in the form of the theory of cycles in all Indian philosophies.

THE GLORY OF THE SOUL: HUMAN DIGNITY

Another peculiar trait of Hindu philosophy is its sense of human dignity. Man in Indian thought is, no doubt, a speck in the infinite universe, but his is a divine destiny and majesty. None is his creator, and a master he knows not. There is nothing greater than man; and this, says Mahabharata, is the great secret (“Guhyam Brahma tadidam bravini, na hi manushat sreshtataram hi kinchit”) (*Santi Parva*, 180.12). The creation of souls is an anathema to Indian philosophy. A created thing cannot be eternal, nor can a created thing be the maker of its own fate. All the Hindu systems of philosophy, therefore, maintain that souls are uncreated and eternal and that only matter, if anything, is shaped into the world of things. Some philosophies, like that of Sankhya, do not accept even that. According to Sankhya, primal matter evolved itself to provide a field for the cosmic drama. There is only one minor system of Hindu philosophy, never dominant and having no following now, which speculated that souls were also created. This is the Bhagavata school. None of the philosophies of the Christian tradition accepts the soul to be eternal. This great difference is one that ought to lead, and has led, to great differences in temperament. A philosophy which regards every soul as self-sufficient and eternal will necessarily regard the soul as all-important. It will become

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“self-reflective.” Meditation on the soul thus becomes the primary concern. Eternity of the soul together with its absolute independence results in regarding each soul as isolated. There is no co-operative community of souls, and, much less, a harmonious republic. The conception of the soul’s absolute independence leads to loose-knit social bonds and group cohesion and to the consideration of one’s spiritual progress as having paramount importance. The soul’s lack of a master and maker puts on it an immense responsibility. As a consequence, the soul is looked upon as receiving no help from the outside. It has to sustain itself, and, if it cannot, it will have to damn itself. No grace from a benevolent creator and no redemption from a sacrificing savior will avail it. The consequence of this will be to increase the sense of self-importance and the brooding on one’s responsibility. How can one remain pure? How can one retain or recover the purity and the bliss that are the natural prerogatives of the soul? This becomes the constant refrain of the Indian science of salvation. Great as it is, the conception of the soul as uncreated is a daring speculation, with implications which are tragic as well as grand. Even in the theistic systems such as the Nyaya and the Vedanta of Ramanuja souls are uncreated, are themselves responsible for their doing and undoing, and have to attain their own salvation. “Atman is the friend of Atman; Atman is the foe of the Atman.” In Indian theistic systems God only regulates the moral law. He does not interfere with souls and their destiny.

MORAL FREEDOM: “KARMA”

The problem of evil and inequality is one of the most vexed problems in all philosophy, but all Indian systems adopt a uniform solution. We have already seen that the Indian’s conception of the world as infinite will not allow him to think of creation *ex nihilo*. His sense of human dignity and of the worth and absoluteness of the human soul does not allow him to view it as created. The two combined lead to the theory of *ḥarma*. Everyone can see that the world is imperfect, that there are inequalities, and that there is much suffering. But, since these cannot be inflicted upon souls by an external force, they must be the results of the soul’s doing. Beginningless is the world; beginningless are the souls. What they are reaping now must have been sowed by them. No other power, divine or diabolical, can rule over the souls and inflict inequality and suffering upon them. The Hindu sages intuit the human soul as the grandest and the most mysterious thing in the world.

The iniquity and the misery which souls are now experiencing is indeed a boon to them, for in the enjoyment of it they are recovering themselves from the fall—fall from the dignity which is the soul's inherent right. In the tractless horizons of time is lost the answer to the question, When did the souls fall from their inherent majesty and purity? When souls have worked off the effects of their fall, they will once again become free, not only free from old taints of evil and misery, but also free to fall once again, if they so will. The souls in Hindu philosophy have absolute freedom to do as they will. They can go to the hell they like in the way they like; and, reawakened, they might stand up, cast away the coils of ignorance and misery, and fly back to the glory that eternally awaits them. This, in short, is the theory of *ḥarma* and of rebirth. Hindu philosophy tells us that nobody forced the souls to be born. They wanted to be born, and so they are born. Yearning to be born, to act, and to enjoy the fruits of actions possesses some of the souls, and down they descend into the world of mortality. They will continue to be here so long as they have not enjoyed the fruits of all they have done and willed in this and in past births and so long as they do not will to lift themselves up from mortality to immortality. This, clearly, is no philosophy of determinism but rather a philosophy of freedom.

TRAGIC SENSE

Philosophies of India are overshadowed by a tragic sense of life. Disease, old age, and death stalk across all the philosophical corridors of India, and one confronts these ghosts at every turn. Life was particularly tragic to the Indians around 600 B.C. In the *Veda* we find a simple naïveté and joy of life. "May we live for a hundred Autumns" is a frequent Vedic prayer. In Vedic times population was limited; sheep, oxen, and horses abounded; fertile wheat-growing areas stretched across thousands of acres of the Indo-Gangetic plains, and the life-giving juice of the soma plant was ever-ready. No wonder that for the Vedic peoples life was a poetic dream: the more of it, the better. Intertribal wars, the incoming of new tribes, famine, flood, and pestilence, and the tropical fecundity of people evaporated the optimism of India. Life became a battle. It was in such circumstances that the creative century, the century of the Upanishadic seers and Buddha, dawned. In the *Upanishads* we find some pessimism. People are fed up with the daily round of duties, the monotony of life, and the inevitable staring at the face of

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death. It was in such circumstances that what might be called the tragic philosophies of India emerged. Death is inevitable; does it avail us if we enjoy a sneaking pleasure or two? Time will in its irresistible sweep erase our footprints. What does it profit to achieve anything? Life, verily, is a vanity. This was the feeling of some of the reflective minds of the age. In Buddha, Jaina, and Sankara we find this tendency dominant. But even in these philosophies the problem is how to conquer suffering and death. Thus we see that the tragic sense of India was not a passive, helpless, tragic feeling. It was dynamic in that it did not remain content by declaring human life to be bleak and human destiny to be a Sahara. How shall we convert this seemingly insipid, monotonous mill of existence into a working and blissful song of the spirit? That was their problem. It is quite unlike what modern apostles like Heidegger say—that death is the only certainty for man and that, meanwhile, as he has the freedom to do something, he had better do it. This was not the sort of tragic feeling entertained by ancient Indians. They confronted death but wished to conquer it. Transcendence was what they aimed at. And the unmistakable answer of all Indian philosophies is that the tragic is not the whole of existence, for, according to Vedanta, Brahman is *ananda*, bliss.

THE IDEAL OF HINDU PHILOSOPHY: INTEGRAL MAN

According to the Hindu philosophy of life the complete man is he who has achieved the four ends of life—*dharma* (righteousness, virtue), *artha* (material possessions, prosperity), *kama* (pleasure, love), and *moksha* (liberation). According to Vatsyayana, *kama* is experience of objects through the senses in accordance with their capacity to gratify us (*vishayeshu anukulyatah pravruttiḥ kamah*). Corresponding to these ends are the four stages of life: (1) *brahmacharya* (the stage of austerity, chastity, and study, wherein one acquires knowledge and maturity); (2) *garhastya* (the stage of the married householder, wherein one attains pleasure and prosperity through the due discharge of his duties); (3) *vanaprasta* (the stage of retirement to a forest hermitage after signs of old age have appeared and after sons and daughters have been well established in life (in this stage one strives to attain poise, equanimity, and contentment unconcerned with worldly duties and ambitions); and, lastly, (4) *sannyasa* (the stage of renunciation, wherein one attains complete passionlessness, desirelessness, isolation from everything that pertains to the world, and integration within one's self). Fulfilled

in himself, disillusioned with the world, calmly abiding his time to free himself from the body, a man in the last stage has neither hatred nor attachment, fear nor desire. This is a stage, as Bhishma said, which one should pass into only after one has become very old, weak, and diseased. Classic Hindu tradition was opposed to the omission of any one of these stages. As the sage Devastana told King Yudhistira, these stages are like the steps of a ladder; anyone who tries to skip one of them is liable to fall. *Sannyasa* is not for children or youth; one cannot understand the truths about man, deity, and nature and attain *tattvajnana* (true knowledge) in one's teens. It was only the Buddhist tradition and later Sankara that gave excessive importance to monasticism and renunciation and tried to make them universal. On the contrary, classic Hindu tradition believed in the value and the necessity of the *trivarga*—the triple group, *dharma*, *artha*, and *kama*. While wisdom lies in realizing the transiency of all pleasure and prosperity and not becoming a slave unto them, it is folly to lead a dismal life of self-denying poverty and austerity. None of the great *rsis* (sages), Bharadwaja, Atri, Vasistha, or Vyasa, lived such a life. They lived a comfortable life in luxurious *ashramas*. Classic Hindu philosophies, no doubt, emphasized the tragedy and the pathos of life, but they never required that the aesthetic and the erotic must be suppressed, insisting only that these should not be the sole motivating power of one's existence. In fact, the sense of the tragic and the reflection that all pleasure is transient adds to the true Hindu's life and love a certain exquisite thrill. As the *Upanishads* enjoin, "Tena tyaktena bhunjidhah," that is, enjoy having renounced everything through the exclusion of attachment. As Bhishma has said (preliminary to the Angarishta-Kamandaka discourse), enjoyment of *trivarga* without the desire for fruits culminates in *moksha*.

TRADITIONALISM

Another important distinguishing feature of Hindu philosophies is that they are all "traditional." None of them starts *de novo*. All of them insist that they are rediscovering old truths. They have, therefore, a sense of "belonging to." None of them dares to be alien to the modes of thought and habit of the people. Even when new ideas are formulated, Hindu philosophers read them into the ancient texts. Nothing is ever presented as an innovation. There is, after all, something to be said for this way of philosophizing. Nothing absolutely original can

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ever be formulated; whether it is in science, music, or philosophy, the present builds on the past. The Hindu thinkers believed that new light would flash in the assimilation and rethinking of an old truth. In short, philosophy within the Hindu tradition was a superstructure like the medieval cathedral in Europe which was built, altered, rebuilt, and repainted by successive generations. Philosophy was conceived as a stupendous corporate effort. Individuals, no doubt, contribute, but they are like the innumerable mountain streams that join a river and remain anonymous but useful.

PHILOSOPHY, A POWER AND PRIVILEGE

A result of this traditionalism was to look upon philosophy as a precious heritage. Unlike in the West, philosophy was something to be cherished like gold, preserved with all care, and handed on to posterity. In the *Upanishads* we read innumerable stories of people acquiring philosophy with great trouble and effort, for those who had it passed it on to a chosen few only—confidants, their own sons, or long-standing disciples. In short, philosophy was a treasure and a power whereby man knows unto salvation. The ancient Greeks too had such a conception of philosophy. The Pythagoreans, the Neo-Platonists—not to speak of the Orphic and Eleusinian mystics—all had their esoteric groups. To outsiders they revealed nothing. This tendency is found in most of the Hindu philosophies. There is such a thing as *adhikāra*; one becomes entitled to receive a philosophy by one's birth and discipline.

PHILOSOPHY IS TO BE APPROPRIATED THROUGH FAITH

A consequence of this is the conception of philosophic discipline, which is so peculiar to Hindu systems. Philosophy in India is not often open; it is not something which whosoever likes may peep into, touch, and leave. On the gate of his Academy, Plato is said to have written that "none who knows no mathematics should enter here." In a similar way, in ancient India, philosophy was the crown of the sciences. One first mastered the other sciences like grammar, sacred lore, polity, the sciences of war, and then went in search of the highest science, *paravidya*. The famous sage Narada studied much and grew in years before he went to Sanatkumara for receiving the Word. The sage Svetaketu finished all his education before he received instruction in philosophy from his father. Philosophic discipline in India consisted not in logical criticism and analytical study of doctrines. With faith, one had to re-

ceive the precious teaching, appropriate it by meditation, examine it by questionings and discourse with co-students and teacher, and realize the truth of it. All logical disputation was only to confirm one's self in truth and remove the thorns of unbelief and ill-advised criticism. That is the conception of the use of logic as we find it in the ancient book of Gautama.

PHILOSOPHY, A FORCE FOR PRESERVATION OF CULTURE

As a result of this, philosophy in India has become a force for the preservation of culture and traditional modes of thought and living. In the West, philosophy has been a critique of previous thought and way of life, and philosophies often acted as the gadflies leading to progress in civilization. In India, however, criticism has been only of rival schools of thought and was never leveled against one's own school or against the assumptions on which the Hindu way of living was based. This had its disadvantages. Instead of opening up new horizons of thought and possible ways of living, philosophy became a sort of cold-storage apparatus for the preservation of current modes of thought. Over millenniums, beliefs like *ḥarma* and habits of life like *varnasrama* received no stringent criticism and much less defiance. They were, whenever gross abuses prevailed, sought to be reformed and adjusted. Thus, revolutions never occurred in Indian thought or in Indian life. It is easily intelligible how in India the pristine civilization continued unbroken, while in almost all the other countries ancient civilizations have disintegrated and crumbled. Today there are only vestiges of the Greek, the Roman, the Byzantine, and the Aztec civilizations. On the other hand, in India, if we read the descriptions of Indian life and customs in a book such as the *Ramayana*, the *Kadambari*, or the *Arthasastra*, we find that it did not differ in essentials from the life as led in the villages today. The only parallel to this kind of preservation of civilization is to be found in China, and communism has now, of course, disrupted it. Another reason for this continuity is that, in general, Indian thinkers violently criticized each other's schools but extended tolerance toward all theories. On the other hand, so long as one adhered to the *varnasrama* in practice, people were left in peace, but the slightest deviation from the established way of life was frowned upon and extinguished. This is to be contrasted with the temperament of Semitic cultures which were indifferent to practice but uncompromising in doctrinal matters.

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ALOOFNESS FROM EMPIRICAL SCIENCE

Another difference between philosophy in India and philosophy in the West is that Indian philosophy never had any intimate and fructifying contact with natural science. Ancient India had science even as ancient Greece. In mathematics, in astronomy, and even in medicine and surgery, Indians made remarkable achievements as far back as the second century A.D. Even when foreign travel had become common and settlements had been established by Indians in the Far East, they never sought to bring changes into their way of life; nor did they institute any sort of comparative studies of Indian religion with the religions of other countries. Like the Romans, who always believed in their own civilizing mission and considered others as barbarians, Indians felt and held themselves to be superior to every other nation on earth. Manu, for instance, says that all men in the world regulated their lives in accordance with the norms laid down by the upper castes of this country ("Etad desa prasutasva sakasat"). The famous Muslim scholar al-Beruni has written about this Indian trait, and in many Indian books we find the foreigners—Arabs, Persians, and so forth—referred to as the *mlecchas* and sometimes spoken of as comparable to animals. Similarly, though Indian astronomers like Aryabhata discovered the rotation of the earth and the real cause of eclipses, and medical books correctly described human anatomy and physiology, these made no impact on Indian philosophy. Unlike Bruno and Galileo, they produced no commotion in India. The reason might be that Indian philosophy and religion were never geocentred, nor was man regarded as the key to the universe. Therefore, when astronomers found that the earth revolved round the sun, none was shocked, and perhaps few believed. In consequence, such science as existed was paid no heed and was killed by indifference. This lack of contact with progressive science made Indian philosophy content itself with being an ally of religion. Some philosophies, no doubt, vigorously criticized theism of all sorts. But even they remained religious. In India philosophy always was a faith by which men lived; it was never a critique of faith. And in the few instances when it criticized an old faith, it created and substituted a new faith. Buddhist philosophy is an instance of this tendency.

PHILOSOPHY AS INTERPRETATION

Because of all these characteristics philosophy in India has been largely interpretation, whereas elsewhere it has been constructive. Philosophers

such as Aristotle or Kant, we find, have borrowed much from their predecessors. At the same time, they destroyed much that was contributed before them, and on the debris they have sought to erect, partly with old bricks, a new mansion. In all such attempts the architecture, however, is individual. The stamp of a particular philosopher's genius is unmistakably clear in his handiwork. In India there have appeared minds as great as in the West, but they have sought to bring out the inner core from what has been already said. The one fortunate thing has been that the texts which were taken as the standards are masterly works with a richness of content and a plasticity of thought which never fall below and sometimes excel Plato's dialogues. Philosophy understood as interpretation has one distinct advantage. It takes the thought bequeathed by the old masters as something which need neither be swallowed like pink pills nor brushed off as a heap of rubbish. The philosopher in India is made to meditate and enter into the spirit of an old text and express it once again in his own way. The malleability of experience and the poetic beauty of texts like the *Upanishads* and the *Gita* have enabled competent men to build up heterogeneous systems, all claiming to be based on those texts.

PHILOSOPHY AS SCIENCE OF SALVATION

Another characteristic of Indian philosophy is that it is practical. No philosophy in India has arisen as a result of intellectual turmoil. None of the Indian systems has been created to satisfy an aesthetic want. Indian philosophy has emerged out of the turbulence of spirit and the tribulations of the flesh. All the Indian systems promise to their followers full truth by the realization of which they can attain immortality, *amritatva*. In fact, an old Indian adage says that knowledge is that which is conducive to freedom ("Sa vidya ya vimukhtave.") In this context freedom means freedom from earthly existence so that one may never be reborn again. This practical concern of Indian philosophy has left its imprint on all schools. All Indian philosophies are sciences of salvation. A necessary consequence of this is that Indian philosophies seek to transform their adherents. A real philosopher is a reborn man; in him nothing of the "old" man with his mundane interests and self-seeking life in the world remains. Philosophy in India, therefore, has usually aligned itself with asceticism, with abnegation and disparagement of all progress in the world. There are, of course, very important and dominant tendencies in opposition to this. Such philosophy as we

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find in the *Veda*, in some of the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*, are joyous, activistic, and world-affirmative. We might, however, safely assert that all the systems, whether Hindu or non-Hindu, are practical in the sense that they are concerned with salvation and are scientific in the sense that they claim to impart the knowledge that saves. They are all *moksha sastras*.

PHILOSOPHY AS THE SCIENCE OF REVIEW

It is a curious thing that Sanskrit contains no word exactly corresponding to the word "philosophy." In Arabic this also seems to be the case, and, owing to the influence of Greek civilization, the Greek word itself seems to have been accepted by the Arabs, and "philosophia" is now an Arabic term. The two words in Sanskrit, which in some degree at least correspond to this word are *anvikshiki* and *darsana*. *Anvikshiki* literally means that which reviews. At first, logic seems to have appropriated this term; for in logic arguments are subjected to scrutiny, and judgment of validity or invalidity is pronounced. Logic enables one to analyze the propositions put forward by various schools and thinkers, reflect upon them, pass them all in review, and accept the best. It was in this sense that *anvikshiki* was in ancient days considered as the light of all knowledge, the means for achieving all results, and the foundation of all ethics (*arthasastra*). But critics of *anvikshiki* were not wanting, since persons trained in this discipline entered into endless disputations, criticized everything, and promoted skepticism. In some of the Hindu epics we find *anvikshiki* disparaged for these reasons, which is why this science, compulsory even for princes in Kautilya's day, fell into disuse.

PHILOSOPHY AS A POINT OF VIEW

The term which became a substitute for *anvikshiki* and has become popular is *darsana*. The European word closest to it is *Weltanschauung*. *Darsana* is a standpoint. *Darsana* is also the intuition of man, nature, and God. It was in this sense that Indians admitted the possibility of more than one *darsana*. Many of the more tolerant philosophers like Jayanta (of the Nyaya school), Siddhasena (of the Jaina school), and Abhinava Gupta (of Kashmiri Saivism) had a catholicity of outlook, which is surprising and sometimes bewildering. This translation of a *sloka* from Abhinava Gupta will serve as an example: "When imagining with their intellects, these say, 'This is truth and this is truth'—all that, indeed, is truth. From you [God] there is nothing which is differ-

ent. This disputation of the learned is only with reference to names.” We see in this hymn an effort to understand a multiplicity of views as descriptions of one and the same reality which correspond and do not contradict. The author is a non-dualist; but this attitude is not peculiar to him. The following is a *sloka* which has been quoted with approval by Gunaratna, a Jain: “The faith of the Buddha should be heard. The faith of the Jina should be practiced and the faith of the Veda should be adhered to, while the supreme Siva is to be meditated upon.” This is an attitude which is based upon a feeling that reality is numinous, that its great mystery cannot be fathomed by human intellect, and that no system could be self-sufficient or all-correct.

PHILOSOPHY, A QUEST FOR TRUTH

I have said that all Indian systems claim to seek and expound truth. The truth which Indian philosophy is in search of is not the scientific objective truth but the truth that is living, the one of which the Bible has spoken: “The truth shall free you.” The scientist is often spoken of as a seeker of truth, as if that were true of the majority of scientists. Truth must be distinguished from knowledge. Accumulation of facts is knowledge, whereas truth is not accumulation of anything. It is entering into contact with some aspect of reality. Apprehension of truth should change one’s whole life and attitude. We may say that truth turns a man upside down. A child who is learning his geography, for instance, learns by packing facts into his head. He takes in the names of countries, cities, and rivers. He is able to use them, recognize them on the map, talk of them, and so on. This increase in geographical knowledge does not change him. It does not churn his being. On the other hand, should a man return from a long journey and surprise his wife at her infidelity, it would change his attitude toward her, bring a hurricane into his life and transform his previous mode of living. He is related to an aspect of reality in a new way. This sort of commotion-producing power is what should be properly called “truth.” A cold scientific fact like “man evolved out of anthropoid apes” or “the earth spins around the sun” is not gripping enough to make man change his mode of life. On the other hand, a subjective experience such as that we have mentioned evokes a response from the innermost recesses of a man. This was the kind of truth which philosophy in India aimed at. When the Vedanta asks us to meditate and realize the self and when Buddhism exhorts us to meditate on the world and realize it as sorrow-

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ful and momentary, they expect us to view the world in an altogether novel way and enter into a sort of new life.

ORGANICISM

In most of the philosophies of other countries we see a schism between man and nature. In Indian philosophies there is no such bifurcation. Indian philosophy is organicism. Through the law of *ḥarma* and the law of *rta*, Indian philosophy finds a beautiful harmony running through the whole universe. Man is, as we have said, completely free and the maker of his own destiny. Nature provides only the field for his activity. It is a machine which is to be used by man, though some men make fools of themselves and become slaves of this great machine. Those who know are able to raise themselves above it and become spectators of all time and existence. Those who cannot cultivate this aloofness and escape from the grinding mill of existence become helpless. This organicist view of nature—a view which regards the whole cosmic drama as a not unmeaningful and chaotic play of opposing forces but as one which has a unity of theme and an aesthetic coherence—enables man to adapt himself and enter into an uncomplaining mood toward nature. The Hindu sees the appalling squalor, misery, and suffering in existence, but he is neither awed nor benumbed. He is not baffled by it and does not pronounce the universe to be absurd, as Sartre has done. A Hindu by himself may not be able to see the purpose clearly, but an unshakable subliminal faith, implanted by generations of ingrained habits of thought and deed, provides his life with a prop. The meek Hindu has been satirized by some in the West, but this meekness has enabled him to continue his existence through all his travail. It is, however, not rooted in forlornness but in a clinging faith that things will be all right in the end and that unreason and absurdity do not rule the world. An organicist way of thinking is conducive to group solidarity, to preservation of traditional norms of conduct, and to withstanding onslaughts of alien cultures by not putting up a Chinese wall but rather by assimilating. This explains the hydra-headedness of Hinduism, which took in all sorts of things and digested them. Habits of conduct also have not been able to shake off this organicism. The European impact has not changed the being of India. The civilization of the West and the habits of science have only pin-pricked the life of India. While she has taken in many things from the West, for her secret of happy living, *vivendi causae*, India resorts to her traditional philosophy. Thus, for warmth,

color, and vitality, for aspirations and ideals, India turns to her Vedanta, her Jainism, or whatever it is, while for outer living, so to say, she imitates the West. The holocaust that was produced in Western thought and life by science and industrial civilization in modern times has been unknown to India, just because of her organicist outlook.

INDIAN PHILOSOPHY HAS A GENIUS OF ITS OWN

The philosophies of a culture have always certain dominant traits which distinguish them from the philosophies of other cultures, though within a cultural tradition there will be many philosophies conflicting with each other and some, perhaps, not even having any basis of communication with the others. Still, there will be many fundamental ideas which they share in common. This might be called the general framework within which a number of philosophies function and which will not be disputed by any of them. For example, the conception of individual freedom and the recognition of man's duty to his fellow men are ideas which are common to all philosophies and which have influenced the stream of Greek and Hebrew thought. Similarly, the concepts of order and progress are unquestioned presuppositions of almost all modern Western philosophies. My contention is that we can isolate and describe some of the dominant traits of philosophical thought in India. Not all the traits are shared to the same extent by all philosophies. It is also possible that certain traits may be entirely absent in some philosophies, whereas these may in turn have traits which I have not mentioned. Despite these qualifications, we can take philosophy in India as an exemplification of a certain genius, as the spiritual expression of the urges of a people with certain distinguishable characteristics.