LOCATING KRISHNAMURTI IN THE CONTEMPORARY INDIAN SCENE

In this chapter, an attempt is made to show how Krishnamurti's philosophy, unlike other Contemporary Indian Philosophies, is, neither located within the Indian tradition nor is it a response to it. Swami Vivekananda, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi, Servapalli Radhakrishnan are philosophers who seem to find mention in any Contemporary Indian philosophy study or anthology. Similarly, Ramakrishna, Muhammad Iqbal, K.C. Bhattacharya are often included in the period and philosophies of Indian Renaissance. The essential characteristics of these philosophies (with the exception of K.C. Bhattacharya's academic writings) is that the 'dogmas' of Indian Philosophy are inherent in them. The elaboration of these dogmas and response of these philosophers to the western critiques has been the general feature of these philosophies. Attempts have been made by contemporary critiques of Indian Philosophy to 'shift' some essential features with a view of determining what is constant to such philosophizing. Radhakrishnan, for instance argued: "If we can abstract from the variety of opinion and observe the general spirit of Indian thought,
we shall find that it has a disposition to interpret life and nature in the way of monistic idealism".

But many other critics like Das Gupta recognize some fundamental concepts common to various systems as the essential features of Indian Philosophy. R. Puligandla for instance, observes moksha, atman, karma and dharma as distinguishing marks of Indian philosophy. Many contemporary historians of philosophy question such a characterization of Indian Philosophy. But the tradition of Renaissance thinkers seem to reinforce the understanding of Indian Philosophy in terms of dominant themes listed above.

Contemporary Indian Philosophers have attempted to appropriate some of the 'liberal' concepts of Western Christian thinkers, on the one hand and interpret Indian philosophical concepts on western lines, on the other. In brief, 'reacting' to western indologists 'aggressively' or 'defensively' has been the 'hall-mark' of the writings of philosophers of this period, particularly of Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan and Gandhi.

Indian Philosophy is seen by some contemporary interpreters as being at the cross-roads of tradition and modernity. Tradition, with its inner resilience, has to
undergo change when confronted by science and technology on the one hand, and, positivistic and utilitarian attitudes on the other. One may lament that the rich Indian tradition and philosophy suffered during the long periods of Mughal and British rules. But the most discerning feature of contemporary Indian philosophy is the individual and collective intellectual canvas of renaissance thinkers who not only learnt the Western European languages, but internalized the whole liberal tradition of the West. Contemporary Indian Philosophers have, consciously or otherwise, attempted an East-West synthesis, wherein, metaphysical elements of classical Indian philosophy are seen or interpreted on the lines of western religious dogmas. It is not surprising that, in terms of 'motives', both Indian scholars of Indian Philosophy, and western scholars of Indian Philosophy have attempted the same task. Western scholars such as Max Muller, Zimmer and others using their western liberal framework and Christian religious dogmas sought to clarify Indian concepts to western readers. Similarly, contemporary Indian (Renaissance) thinkers re-wrote classical Indian philosophy with 'refinements' (instead of going back to 'roots') in language and 'lore' so that Western minds could comprehend.

It is not surprising, therefore, that some critiques label contemporary Indian philosophy as 'interpretative' and not
creative. This criticism may be ill founded as there may not be any dividing line between the two. Besides, one may interpret 'creativity' as interpretation, and similarly, one may argue for 'creative' interpretation, whereby the concept of interpretation itself undergoes a radical shift. What is, however, pertinent for our discussion is that Contemporary Indian Philosophers (with the exception of J. Krishnamurti) had as their canvas the classical Indian philosophy and tradition (religion and culture) and consequently, the umbilical cord that binds one to tradition though often strained, was never snapped off to give rise to an entirely new philosophical framework.

Although the comparisons may seem inadequate in another context, for the present, one may point out that inspite of a strong presence of Christian dogma, the West gave rise to philosophies such as Positivism, Existentialism, Marxism and Analytic philosophy.

Historians, confronted by certain critiques tend to be apologetic about the nature and function of Contemporary Indian Philosophies. That a period in history did not produce thinkers with synoptic works, cannot belittle the contribution of such scholars. Eighteenth and Nineteenth century India may not have given rise to distinct systems
comparable to Samkhya and Mimamsa. But contemporary Indian philosophers like Vivekananda and Ramakrishna, Aurobindo and Tagore, Radhakrishnan and Iqbal, Gandhi and M.N. Roy have attempted a rational reconstruction of systems often devoid of rigorous logical analysis and essential social justifications. Vishwanath S. Naravne, noting the absence of synoptic thinkers among the Contemporary Indian Philosophers, sought praise of the thinkers by quoting Will Durant, Thoreau, and other western writers. The point of departure for the historians of Contemporary Indian Philosophies, however, should have been the extent of analysis of both arguments of the thinkers, the theoretical and social reconstruction provided and the study of the extent of influence on the succeeding generation of thinkers.

There are historians of philosophy who locate positivism in Democritus and Francis Bacon, existentialism in St. Augustine, Marxism in Prophet Amos and Analytic Philosophy in Thomas Aquinas. Such comparative studies though historically useful may not wholly explain the rise and growth of these new philosophies.

In contemporary Indian philosophy speculative in the sense of being meditative as American philosophy is pragmatic or French philosophy is rationalistic and so on and so forth,
classifying ideas and intellectual traditions is the task of historians of philosophy. A noted scholar had labeled K.C. Bhattacharya as an Idealist, M.N. Roy as an empiricist, Rabindranath Tagore as a neo Hindu Spiritualist, and so on. However such a labeling is not only unfair to the complexity of thought of the individual thinkers, but unimaginative in the absence of clarification regarding what constitutes such terms.

Most contemporary Indian Philosophers do not undermine the 'spiritual' element in their speculations. And this element is seen from their use of intuition as a method of understanding reality. The vision or darsana of reality, which is a common mode of speculation or 'meditative method' renders most of contemporary Indian philosophy spiritual or quasi-spiritual. This feature of the dominant philosophizing in the classical period, particularly Vedic and Upanishadic, seem to continue to dominate the modes of philosophizing of most of the contemporary Indian Philosophers, particularly Vivekananda, Tagore, Radhakrishnan and Gandhi. In other words, Contemporary Indian Philosophy shares with the classical period certain features that include both the method and the content of philosophizing. If one ventures to compare with Contemporary Western Philosophical trends, one could say that Contemporary Indian Philosophy concentrates on
rational justification of accepted truths of intuition. The logic employed, the critique developed and the rational demonstrations provided are all attempts to prove what is otherwise 'intuitively' or 'speculatively' known to be true. One is reminded of Medieval Western Philosophy, particularly under the influence of Thomas Aquinas, that looked upon philosophy as the 'hand-maid' of theology.

One, however, notices among contemporary Indian Philosophy certain tradition. For instance, unlike the classicist, the contemporary Indian philosophies are concerned with the tragic suffering of mankind (the existential aspects of reality). The present is not treated or deemed to be an illusion.

Radhakrishnan, Tagore and others recognize the fact of reality, both of ourselves and of the external world as important for spiritual growth. Besides, the world is never treated as unreal and the dignity of man is never undermined. This is prominently clear even in Aurobindo where inspite of advocating monism, the dignity of man and the reality of human freedom is upheld.

Contemporary Indian Philosophers seem to be in total agreement regarding their concern for man. A humanism underlying the writings of all these thinkers show an
unquestionable link between humanitarian and material pursuits, thereby differentiating them from the Western style of 'scientific humanism' based upon the development of science and technology. With the probable exception of M.N. Roy, Contemporary Indian philosophers could be labeled as 'spiritual humanists', whereby rendering synonymous 'humanism' and 'dharma', the 'process of bringing out that what is essential to man as man'.

As much as all Contemporary Indian Philosophers have a deep sense of appreciation of Indian tradition, they have in equal manner recognized and addressed themselves to the negative or 'darker' aspects of this tradition. Whether it is Ram Mohan Roy, Aurobindo, Gandhi, Tagore or Nehru, they all recognize the undesirable elements of continuity. They all functioned simultaneously as proponents of classical Indian philosophy and culture and critiques of the negative influences of this culture on the masses of Indian populace. It is in this second role that Contemporary Indian Philosophers are by and large social philosophers and activitists defending the classical tradition and at the same time attempting to purge it from the 'dehumanizing' elements. They, particularly Ram Mohan Roy, Tagore, Vivekananda and Gandhi paradoxically accepted and rejected tradition while reinterpreting and reassessing it in the light of their experience.
The difference between Indian Renaissance (18th and 19th century) and its Western counterpart (15th-16th century) is that Indian tradition and culture has continuity, assimilating new elements from the interacting cultures at the sametime retaining that what is deemed to be of eternal value i.e. spiritualism. The two dominant western cultural traditions (Islam and Christianity) which influenced Indian culture bringing about subtle changes in varied aspects of Indian thought in the 18th-19th century, absorbed the two currents of 'alien' civilization. The theistic humanistic religious outlook is the result of such amalgamation and can be recognized as a characteristic of the philosophers of the period. R.S. Srivastava while introducing Contemporary Indian Philosophers identified certain aspects as 'salient features' of the philosophy of the period. He claims that contemporary Indian philosophy is characterized by (i) positive attitude towards the world; (ii) having a cosmic and spiritualistic outlook; (iii) integral and synthetic; (iv) reconciling theism and absolutism; (v) monism of spirit and matter; (vi) self-activity and spiritual; (vii) accepting evolution of Superman or Gnostic Beings; (viii) recognizing new approaches to salvation; (ix) a system that is dynamic, open and universal; and (x) humanistic.

The first feature mentioned above can be deduced from the
fact that unlike Sankara, Contemporary Indian philosophers such as Vivekananda and Gandhi view the world as real (not illusory) and spiritual. The cosmic or collectivistic as against individualistic orientation of Sankhya, Nyaya, Mimamsa and Advaita, can be seen from the fact that salvation is perceived not as an individual effort but within a perfect environment and with the involvement of the whole of mankind. The writings of Radhakrishnan and Sri Aurobindo bring out clearly these elements. Further, the influence Western education has exercised on the minds of Radhakrishnan, Tagore, Aurobindo and others have resulted in a philosophy which is synthetic rather than exclusive and parochial. Again, these philosophers have reconciled an impersonal Brahman, that is looked upon as pure existence, truth and reality with a personal God, the merciful and just creator (recognized in writings of Western Christian writings).

The most important feature is the reconciliation of Monism of Spirit and Matter that is attempted in Aurobindo. What one notices is the fact that Contemporary Indian Philosophers seem to attempt to reconcile the 'irreconcilables' of classical Indian philosophy. In other words, uneasy with the logical dilemmas, Contemporary Indian Philosophers attempted to rid philosophy of the contradictions and antinomies highlighted by the Western
R.N. Sharma characterizes Contemporary Indian Philosophy as unity of metaphysics, cosmology and axiology. The tradition of Indian philosophy under the influence of western philosophy, science, social reforms, political consciousness expressed in literature, art and other humanistic writings has resulted in a Neo-Vedanta Metaphysics. And of the Vedantins, most Contemporary Indian Philosophies recognize Brahama as the Ultimate and Absolute Reality. The term 'neo' refers in different contexts to different aspects of Vedanta that were questioned or corrected. For instance, mayavada was questioned by Aurobindo and never accepted by Gandhi or Tagore. Although Vivekananda argued for Sanakara's mayavada at the metaphysical level, he never preached that world is an illusion. All emphasized that multiplicity is as much real as the unity.

The neo-Vedanta philosophy retains the basic facet of Vedanta, wherein the essential spiritual unity of Brahman is never questioned. Individuality and collectivity are merely expressions of this essential unity or divine power, and principles governing them are the same. Further, the principles governing the social relationships were entangled (!!) with the axiological principles such as Karma.
theory and the theory of Rebirth which led to the discrimination of and exploitation of the weak, and the resultant social indifference. Contemporary Indian Philosophers have addressed themselves to social problems because of which the metaphysical and cosmological elements of Vedanta were questioned. Mayavada, Karma theory, Moksha have all come under philosophical scrutiny as these concepts were seen as detrimental to a social philosophy that recognizes the intrinsic worth of every human being.

As a result, at the epistemological level, Vedanta philosophy negated worldly knowledge since they considered only one type of knowledge, namely, knowledge of phenomena.

The neo-vedanta philosophy advocated by Contemporary Indian Philosophers brought about a synthesis between vedantic individualism and modern collectivism, and permitted a socio-political philosophy that upheld freedom of the individual and made possible a socialistic, scientific, rationalistic, pluralistic philosophy with an integral understanding of world reality.

What seems to have been attempted by various scholars of contemporary Indian philosophy while trying to understand its nature is a Wittgenstenian exercise. The failure on the part of the writers to identify one or some features as common to all the contemporary Indian philosophers,
compelled them to give up essentialism. Instead they focussed on features that seem to have been shared by these philosophers. Besides, the metaphysically inclined among them (viz. Aurobindo, Vivekananda) among these have clearly admitted to one or many of the features discussed above. The social and political philosophers have implicit to their ideas such features, though not articulated in details.

Krishnamurti has been a loner among these contemporary thinkers for several reasons. It is not at all easy to put Krishnamurti into a system and for that matter even to try to assert that his holistic approach may be connected with a long tradition. Although Krishnamurti was brought up in the theosophical milieu, his teachings contain no residue of the same, neither does he make any positive or negative references to the system. Secondly, no attempt is made to defend, reflect, or critically evaluate the Vedic/Vedanta tradition. As a renowned 'non-guru' Krishnamurti differs fundamentally from most philosophers, repudiating any attempt to place his teachings under the term philosophy. He has resisted this tendency to weave his insights into a system - but in the final analysis, in the choice of some word to describe his approach of life, 'philosophy' comes nearest to what he has been trying to convey. Both Indian and Western thinkers have contributed to a greater or
lesser extent to the understanding of man's condition here on earth and this quest is divided between philosophy, psychology and social sciences. Many thinkers have stretched their thought to include all the three dimensions while a few have departed from this course of search in regions unexplored. It would be appropriate to qualify him, in a way, to this latter category.

As Krishnamurti was acknowledged to be an extra-ordinary personality right from his childhood, most of all his public utterances have been recorded with reliable authenticity around which a tremendous literature has grown in his name and much of which are primarily his own articulations. It is interesting to note that right across the wide spectrum of the ideas he tried to convey in his writings and in his talks, there are no references to any classical or later texts. Every series of Krishnamurti's talks may represent a complete exposition of his thesis though often any one of this talks aimed only at one particular theme or subject. The particularly distinct character of his talks and deliberations is the fact that he did not speak on a declared subject and no point of departure is set from the thoughts of any philosopher, whether Indian or Western. The reason for Krishnamurti's unorthodox methods lies in the fact that he does not seek to frame a theory or philosophy, or formulate a concept.
His approach is an exercise in self analysis. Therefore any attempt to present his teachings must be in an atmosphere of freedom from adherence to any particular philosophy, to any particular system of thought or to any particular ideological background. There is a transcultural dimension in his philosophy or to put it more accurately, there is a deliberate culture neutrality in his ideas.

Krishnamurti is not fanatic about spiritual authority or tradition. His way of expression is free from all the traditional terminology of the Indian philosophical genius and he addresses the contemporary mind in modern terms, not coloured by eastern or western cultural hues.

Krishnamurti's culture neutrality is clearly manifest in his thought that we have to 'free' ourselves from past knowledge. But this 'freedom from the known' is not to be interpreted within the traditional epistemological discussions. It may be stressed that one can never 'free himself' from all past experiences. In fact, all experiencing depends upon our conceptual framework, which has been created by our past experiences beginning with the formation of primitive concepts to immediate past experience. All present experiencing is due to, as well as dependent upon our past experiences. In other words it is
'past knowledge' that makes present experience possible.

However, past knowledge plays a negative role as well. It hinders the possibility of knowing objectively. Our understanding of reality is founded on our past experiences and furthermore, past experience underwrites every present experience. In brief, past experiences both contribute to the possibility of knowledge, making knowledge what it is, as well as restricting knowledge to only that knowledge made possible by the past i.e. it does not allow knowledge to go beyond the given structures of thought.

Often the critique of Krishnamurti has pointed out that it is impossible to follow his exhortation regarding 'freedom from the known'. It is also claimed that what Krishnamurti demands is both impossible to achieve and contradictory to any epismetic theory.

What Krishnamurti tries to convey here is the freedom from the limitations of consciousness, and, that can come about through the understanding of the significance of freedom, which lies in being choicelessly aware of the limitations of self consciousness. According to Krishnamurti, freedom is necessary for the discovery of truth, but freedom is not a means to a projected end. And as long as the mind is not free from the desire 'to be' the mind cannot be silent and
capable of total attention. What Krishnamurti stresses here is freedom from identification with idea or belief. Krishnamurti has a peculiar expression for this state: 'the emptying of the mind'. It is in this state of the mind that the limitations of truth can be found.

Hence, in essence, what Krishnamurti tries to articulate here is that it is only when the mind is free from seeking, from craving in its various forms, that it is capable of communing with the whole. When the mind looks at life partially as 'you' and 'me'; as the 'subject' and the 'object', then it is not capable to commune with the 'whole'.

Thus it is seen that an understanding of the language used and the context within which the 'exhortations' have been expressed will not be adequate to imply what Krishnamurti attempts to convey. Hence to critically evaluate the above 'exhortations on the basis of descriptive theory of language is a disservice to Krishnamurti's teachings. Krishnamurti has said time and again that agreeing or disagreeing with him is irrelevant. But understanding him is the important quotient. Luis S.R. Vas puts it succinctly: "One suddenly realises then that it is not a matter of judging Krishnamurti. For Krishnamurti never pretended to make you understand him. He merely hopes to
provoke you into understanding your self, into seeing through yourself. So there is no question of judging yourself either".

Anything that takes into account ordinary language analysis will accept that language is not only descriptive. Besides other functions it has a performative function. Krishnamurti's exhortations should not be seen in terms of universal versus particular statements, but in terms of the implicit/explicit objectives of the "exhortation". What probably Krishnamurti exhorts in 'freedom from the known' is related to those aspects whereby the possibility and advancement of knowledge is hindered. Even from a cursory glance at Krishnamurti's writings it is obvious that he was referring to those elements or aspects which hamper a personal growth and the revelation of a pure, non coloured mind.

The unique feature of Krishnamurti's philosophy is that it is both geographically and culturally neutral. Even Western philosophical movements such as existentialism and pragmatism have cultural and geographical moorings. Krishnamurti's philosophy seems to be different from contemporary Indian and Oriental philosophy. His exceptionally intuitive approach is not through a process of discursive reasoning but proceeds from a central
standard of truth. He does not propound any doctrines nor does he preach any dogma.

His teachings are free from dogmatism, and superstition; and truly universal and capable of appealing to the heart. He discovers truth afresh when confronted with a problem, in the way of creative thinking and clear perception and shows the way to freeing the mind from the limitations of self consciousness, leading to the fulfillment of the human being.
NOTES

1. There has been various ways in which the geographical and temporal limitation of Contemporary Indian Philosophies or Philosophers was attempted. For the present study the researcher has taken a broad definition that includes the Renaissance thinkers of 18th and 19th century, that saw social, political and intellectual revival in the sub-continent.

2. The term 'dogma' is used in the sense employed by Surendranath Das Gupta (Philosophical Essays, Delhi: Motilal Bararsidas, 1982). "Dogma" is treated as an article of faith, belief, as against reasoned philosophical conclusion, hence 'unproved' and of unknown origin. The arguments that are adduced in its support are at best 'trivial'.


14. L. Wittgenstein In *Philosophical Investigations* while attacking 'essentialism' claimed that objects or meanings cannot be explained in terms of one or set of characteristics. Instead, a set of features shared by a thing/concepts will explain why a single general name is applicable to it/them. The theory of 'family resemblances' may or may not explain 'meaning theory, - but in case of Contemporary Indian Philosophers, it surely gives us a better insight into their philosophies.

15. Krishnamurti says that the mind must be completely free from all conditioning so that a totally different kind of life can be lived. But to achieve this he says "there must be freedom to observe, not as a Christian, a Hindu, a Dutchman, a German ... " (Krishnamurti, *The Flight of the Eagle*, KFl, 1971, P.55). One cannot help at times feel the contradiction of this, when he is referred to as Hindu Brahmin a countless number of times, in most of the biographical data. A brahmin is one of the classes of social distinction into which the Hindus are divided according to the religious law of Brahmanism. One cannot but wonder if Krishnamurti thought of this categorization as oppressive to his universal views and ever attempted to arrest it. Or was he plainly indifferent to it?

16. In ordinary circumstances, the line dividing Spiritualism and Ritualism is narrow to the extent of contiguously linking both, resulting in ritualism detracting the focus from the search for fundamental Truth.

18. Krishnamurti Foundation set up schools in India as well as in England (Brockwood Park), California (U.S.A.), (Oak Groove) Canada (Wolf Lake School) and other countries, to create a milieu where the teachings of Krishnamurti could be communicated to the young minds. Although the schools are spread across the world, his universal ideas of 'learning to learn' are transported from continent to continent without the interference of cultural and geographical denominators (and with tremendous success!).

19. Although his philosophy is radically different from any oriental philosophy, his flashes of insight can be off-handedly likened to some of the best intuitive aphorism of Laotse as he speaks to the heart and comes 'closer to truth' than any philosopher other than Laotse has ever come to.