Virtually all writing on Indian Philosophy follows a certain well-established, popular interpretation of the Indian Philosophical concepts, notions and systems despite the fact that such interpretation engenders numerous contradictions and inconsistencies. The adoption of this interpretation (which we shall call the traditional interpretation) for generations brooks no satisfactory explanation: It could not be due to an oversight of the contradictions involved as some of them are obvious enough to be revealed even upon a cursory glance. But, then, if the problems were not overlooked, why was not an attempt made to develop an interpretation that overcomes at least some of the most glaring inconsistencies? Probing into this question is by itself no mean task and is most definitely beyond the scope of the present work, our interest here being confined to developing a new framework of interpretation that resolves the major problems encountered by the traditional framework. Before embarking on this project of constructing a new framework it is necessary to have a look at some of the problems that the traditional interpretation encounters and which the new interpretation intends to resolve.

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1. Śruti-Pramāṇa:

The term "śruti" is held to refer to the Vedas and the Upaniṣads and the various philosophical schools are classified into the Āstika and the Nāstika categories on the basis of their accepting or rejecting the śruti as a pramāṇa or source of knowledge. All the Āstika schools with the exception of the Purva Mīmāṃsa suppose that the śruti is a source of knowledge regarding the question of the ultimate entities into which the Universe resolves, while the Mīmāṃsā alone maintains that it is a source of knowledge about the fruits of sacrificial rites. Now, the former group comprises of such avowedly, metaphysically divergent schools as the vaiśeṣika, the Sānkhya, the Advaita etc., that it would imply an internal inconsistency in the śruti. For, the Āstika-nature of these schools requires that the śruti uphold a plurality of ultimate entities (Vaiśeṣika), only a duality of ultimate entities (Sānkhya) and a single ultimate entity (Advaita) respectively. One may attempt to salvage the śruti from this pain of contradiction by arguing that the alleged inconsistency is not an intrinsic one, but rather an apparent one arising from the eager attempts of various schools to read their own metaphysical doctrines into these texts. However, the

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very plausibility of the latter implies either (i) that the texts contain contradictory statements supporting conflicting interpretations and contain no criterion that would enable us to choose one amongst them or (ii) that the ambiguous enough to lend themselves to incompa-
tible interpretations. In either case, however, the Sruti would certainly lose its credibility as an authentic source of knowledge of the ultimate entities. The charge of internal inconsistency, then, is a rather serious one that needs to be resolved if the Pramāṇa-status of Sruti is to be salvaged.

2. The Intuitive-experience:

All the Indian philosophical systems (exception: the carvaka) believe in an extraordinary, esoteric experience, generally referrable as "the intuitive-experience", which, according to the traditionalists, is thoroughly objective and infallible and reveals facts about the ultimate enti-
ties of the world. For the Āstika schools this would in effect mean that the intuitive-experience confirms the facts revealed by Sruti. Since the systems differ in their conceptions of the ultimate entities, the traditionalists proclaim corresponding differences in the intuitive-experi-
ences of subjects belonging to the different schools. Thus,

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for instance, to the Sāṅkhya the experience is such as to reveal the ultimate and absolute difference between the self (Puruṣa) & Nature (Prakṛti); to the advaitin the experience is said to reveal that Brahman is the only ultimate entity. However, such a view at once nullifies the objectivity of the intuitive-experience since what the experience reveals is then made to depend on the convictions that the experiencer has regarding the ultimate realities. Moreover, how can an experience be said to confirm a certain fact when the experience itself is determined by the experiencer's preconceived intellectual conviction regarding that fact?

3. Mokṣa:

Mokṣa has been understood to be a state which is characterised according to some by a total absence of pain, misery, sorrow, etc., and according to others by a complete mastery or control over nature. Jīvan-mukti, advocated by a vast majority of the schools, would accordingly be a state of worldly (embodied) existence with

(a) Complete absence of pain & misery and/or
(b) Complete control over nature

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A little deliberation will bring to the fore the inconsistency inherent in both these characterisations.

Mokṣa has been conceived by the traditionalists as freedom from the cycle of rebirths or repeated embodied existences, and such rebirth is said to be causally related to one's Karma or action via the law of Karma, the law which ensures that one experiences the fruits of one's actions. Birth of a being is seen as the beginning of the fructification of some Karma, and it is only logical that the particular embodied existence continues until the Karma that brought about its birth is fully fructified. In consistency with this the continued embodied existence of a muktā has been attributed to Prārabdha Karma, Karma that is already in the process of fructification. Now, fructification of Karma (of whatever kind) is essentially a matter of experience — experiencing the fruits of one's own actions, and hence one cannot deny that the fructification of prārabdha Karma involves experience of pleasure, pain etc., even in the case of a Jīvan-Mukta. This conflicts with case (a), the first of the above-mentioned characterisations of Jīvan Mukti.

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The difficulty (a) encounters is encountered by (b) too. If a mukta is granted complete mastery over nature he would be capable of manipulating nature so as to avert all pain-and misery-creating circumstances at least in the narrow sphere of his own life. But such a possibility militates against the law of Karma which requires that a person undergo experiences befitting his Karma that is under fructification.

Apart from such concepts common to various schools running into trouble, interpretations of systems or concepts specific to some system also run into rough weather when one takes a second look at them. Such, for instance, is the case with the interpretation of the Sānkhya system, the syādvāda of the Jains, Śaṅkara's Advaita, etc.,

4. The Sānkhya:

The Sānkhya Kārika of Īśvara kṛṣṇa, the oldest extant Sānkhyan work, propounds a system which, according to the traditional view, attributes all experience to matter or Prakṛti leaving the self or Puruṣa absolutely unchanging (being denied even the Change due to experience). Such an interpretation of the Kārika however meets with self-contradiction: numerous passages of the Kārika (SK 17, 21, Contd...7..
37.55 etc.,) unmistakably attribute "experience" or "bhoga" to the Puruṣa. Nay, in fact, SK 17 infers the self or "Puruṣa" on the ground that there must be someone to experience. The contradiction seems to have escaped the attention of the traditionalists - there seems to be neither an attempt at explaining away these passages nor reconciling them with the interpretation they give the Kārika as a whole.

5. The Syādvāda of the Jains:

The Syādvāda has been interpreted to contend that knowledge of any thing, relation, property etc., may be acquired from seven different stand-points, each stand-point yielding only a partial knowledge of the entity. Since the seven stand-points include the various possible conjunctions of stand-points and yet each of the seven stand points is said to yield only a partial knowledge of the entity, Syādvāda is said to deny the possibility of complete knowledge of anything. On this view the metaphysical theory of the ultimate entities formulated by the Jains themselves would be a partial view of the ultimate reality - but this is something which the Jains do not seem to concede anywhere.

Further, since according to the Syādvāda differing views about an entity could be true from different stand-
points, the truth or falsity of one view cannot serve to establish the truth value of another; so that the only way to establish the falsity of a view would be to demonstrate its falsity from all the seven stand-points. But the Jains do not resort to this method either in rebelling against the vedic-tradition or in refuting rival metaphysical theories. Such inconsistencies do call for a reunderstanding of Śyādvāda in the total context of Jainism unless, of course, one is presumptuous enough to charge Jainism of inconsistency without attempting to a consistent interpretation of that school.

6. Śaṅkara's Advaita:

According to the traditional interpretation, Śaṅkara believes in the reality of Brahmān alone discarding the empirical world as a mere illusion—or dream-object. One of the Chief arguments of Śaṅkara, as the traditionalists view him, is that since the object of the waking-perception is sublated (in Brahmānubhava) just as a dream-object is sublated (in the waking) the former must be unreal like the latter.

But, then, numerous passages like the following found Contd...9...
in Śaṅkara's works pose a problem: ".............the perceptions of the waking state cannot be classed with those in a dream ..........for waking and dream states are really different in nature. In what does the difference consist? we say that it consists in being subject to sublations or not. To a man arisen from sleep the object perceived in a dream becomes sublated.......... so also in the case of magic etc., adequate sublation takes place. But a thing seen in the waking state, a pillar for instance, is not thus sublated under any condition........" (BSB 2.2.29). Are not such passages a self-refutation if the traditional interpretation is accepted? Also, by the traditional interpretation, since the empirical world is unreal or imaginary, would not passages like the above be falsehoods uttered by Śaṅkara?

Aware of the difficult situation in which Śaṅkara is placed, the traditionalists seem to adduce the notion of "the different stand-points" from which assertions may be made in order to overcome the difficulty. They contend that while the reality of Brahman is asserted from a pāramārthika or transcendental point of view, the reality of the world is asserted from a Vyāvahārika or empirical point of view; or, in other words, the statement "Brahman alone is real" is True (T) from the pāramārthika stand-point, while the stateme

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"The world is real" is T from the Vyāvahārika Stand-point. And therefore, they argue, Śaṅkara's statements asserting or presupposing the reality of the world are not false.

In evaluating this solution proposed by the tradition- alists it is important to note that the two statements "Brahman alone is real" and "The world is real" cannot both be T at the same time though from a logical point of view, both may be F at the same time; that is, the two statements are contraries of each other. (Since according to the tradi- tional interpretation "Brahman alone is real" is always T, the traditionalist can never claim that the statement "The world is real", when it is true is also made at a time when the other contrary statement is F.) And so the two statements can never both be T from any one stand-point. From the pāra mārthika stand-point "Brahman alone is real" is T and "The world is real" is F and from the Vyāvahārika stand-point the latter statement is T while the former statement cannot be claimed to be T.

The basic contention of any theory of stand-points is that statements may be made from different stand-points. But two basic conditions that need to be fulfilled for the success of such a theory are: (1) all the stand-points

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should be considered equally significant and (2) the stand-points should not be mutually incompatible. If (1) is not fulfilled, the very edifice on which the notion of stand-points is built collapses; for, if there is any one stand-point that is more significant or important than the others, then all statements made from the other stand-points would be accepted or rejected on the basis of this one superior stand-point. This is virtually giving up the stand-points view. Similarly, the non-fulfilment of (2) would lead to a single stand-point theory; for, if the different stand-points are incompatible, then one is forced to recognise only one of them as 'the Stand-point' and reject the others.

The question now is: Do the pāramārthikā and Vyāvahārika stand-points advocated by the traditionalists fulfil these two conditions? The pāramārthika stand-point is one from which "Brahman alone is real" is T, and the Vyāvahārika stand point is one from which which "The world is real" is T. These two statements, as we have noted above, are contraries; the truths of both the statements is incompatible and therefore the two stand-points too would be incompatible. Again, the Traditionalists believe that Śaṅkara's position is that Brahman alone is real; or, in other words, the pāramārthika stand-point is the stand-point of Śaṅkara. Thus

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condition (1), which demands equal status to the different stand-points, too is unfulfilled. A theory of stand-points cannot be used in cases where one view or stand-point is held to be the only ultimately valid stand-point, as 'The' stand-point.

These are only some of the serious difficulties which arise upon accepting the traditional interpretations of Indian Philosophy and there is no satisfactory solution to any of them from within the accepted framework of interpretation.