ENLIGHTENMENT: EAST AND WEST

Pointers in the Quest for India's Secular Identity

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CHAPTER TWELVE

DHARMAKĪRTI *Versus* VĀCHASPATI MIŚRA

A Chapter from India's Golden Age of Enlightenment

It is a truism to say that Hindu philosophy developed in dialectical tension with Buddhist philosophy. The Buddhists were the first to develop real philosophy and logic in India. Whether it is Sāṅkhya or Cārvāka, Nyāya or Vaiśeṣika, Vedānta or Advaita, every Hindu school of philosophy had to grow in dialogue with the even more numerous Buddhist schools—Sautrāntika, Vaibhāsika, Vijñānavāda, Yogāchāra, Sarvāstivāda, Madhyamaka, Prāsaṅgika, an so on.

The tragedy of the Indian philosophical thought since the twelfth century has been that this debate has been foreclosed or suppressed by the dominant Hindu community. Those who, like Raja Rammohun Roy and many other Indians, trained to be English, despise the seemingly abstract metaphysical questions of this debate, have not given themselves much of a chance to understand the debate before rejecting it as irrelevant.

We here embark on an exercise which is perhaps foredoomed to be frustrating. We want to see if Dignāga and Dharmakīrti of the Buddhist Dignāga school and Vāchaspati Miśra of the Hindu Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school were simply playing language games in their debate, or whether there is something in that debate that is of worth and value to our quest for India's identity as a nation, to the nature of enlightenment and the secular in the Indian context.

The present writer is driven mainly to translations and versions of this debate in English, referring back to the original Sanskrit when absolutely necessary. Scholars of Indian philosophy will find much here to question. Fortunately we have Theodore Stcherbatsky's two-volume classic on *Buddhist Logic*[1] which gives

[1]Theodore Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic*, Dover Publications, New York, 1962.

many of the Buddhist texts in an English version (not always to be relied upon), and D.N. Shastri's *The Philosophy of Nyāya Vaiśeṣika and Its Conflict with the Buddhist Dignāga School*[2] which gives many of the Hindu texts in the original. Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇa-Vārtika* (*Svārthānumāna-Parichchda*) is available in a Sanskrit text.[3]

Dignāga was a logical path-finder. His dates are difficult to establish with precision. He probably lived and wrote in the fifth century AD. His principal work, *Pramāṇa-Samuchaya* is an attempt to establish the basic principles of epistemology and logic. Like many outstanding Indian thinkers (Nāgārjuna, Dharmakīrti, Śaṅkara) he was a brahmin from south India, from the area around Kanchi. He became a Buddhist at a very early age; he joined the Vatsiputriya sect, left it, travelled north and was taught by no less a teacher than the great Vasubandhu, whom Buddhists call the Second Buddha. Dignāga took what was best in the traditional Abhidharma logic of Buddhism, looked at the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems' objections to it, and finally consolidated an epistemological position which we can call the best specimen of Indian secular thought.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsaka schools were the flourishing Hindu schools against which Dignāga contested. The later Vedānta school of Hindu philosophy was most likely an offshoot of this contest; the Upanishads are of course much earlier, though all of them show the influence of early Buddhist thought,[4] Even the *Brahmasūtra* of Bādāryana does not seem to be free from that influence.

The Nyāya school or the Naiyāyikas, were radical realists. They took everything as real—things, time, space, soul (*jivātman*), Supreme Soul (*paramātman*), particulars, universals, and even non-existence. Even notions, relations and qualities were regarded as objectively existing by the Naiyāyikas. This commonsense

[2]D.N. Shastri, *The Philosophy of Nyaya-Vaiseshika and Its Conflict with the Buddhist Dignaga School*, Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, Delhi, Varanasi, 1964; reprinted 1976.

[3]Dalsukhbhai Malvania (ed.), Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, 1959.

[4]See the cogent argument of Hajime Nakamura, the Japanese scholar, in *A History of Early Vedanta Philosophy*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1983, pp. 25ff.

realism happens to be also the prevailing view of our Western trained elite. Vātsyāyana (Pakṣilasvāmin), possibly a contemporary of Dignāga, was an exponent of this Naiyāyika common-sense realism. A more formidable and certainly more polemic Naiyāyika was Udydotakara, a brahmin who joined verbal battle with his fellow-brahmin Buddhist, Dignāga. Around this period arose the Vaiśeṣika philosopher Praśastapāda. The Naiyāyikas and the Vaiśeṣikas became allies in the battle against the Dignāga school. This led to the formation of a renewed and more consistent Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, which later (ninth century?) produced one of the most distinguished Indian brahmin philosophers, Vāchaspati Miśra (who in the area of philosophy is perhaps superior to Śaṅkara) and his follower Udayanāchārya (tenth century?), the last great thinker of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school.

It is in this context of the polemical debate between Buddhist philosophy on the one side, and the Hindu Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy, allied with the less rigorous Mīmaṃsaka philosophy on the other, that the Advaita-Vedānta of Śaṅkara originated.

If we return to that fifth to tenth century debate today, it is to do two things:

(i) to rediscover the wider wealth of the Indian philosophical heritage, of which Vedānta is only one of the schools that has survived and flourished to this day, and in that wider context to raise some basic philosophical questions, to which the Western answers seem unsatisfactory;

(ii) and to search in that debate a more Indian base for our so-called 'secular identity' as a nation, which fits our situation better than the imported base of the European Enlightenment and its liberalism.

The Fundamental Questions—Reality and Knowledge

We can start our brief discussion with the opening aphorism of Dharmakīrti's *Nyāyabindu*:

> All successful human action has
> to be preceded by right knowledge;
> hence this investigation.

The question that the West has often asked, and to which it has given such mutually contradictory answers (e.g., Descartes,

Hume, Kant, Hegel, Popper, Kuhn, Feyerabend) is the one that our cultured elite always fails to ask: 'how do we come by right knowledge?' It is possible to give an unexamined answer, and proceed to action. This is what we do most of the time. One of those unexamined answers, so current among our elite, is that scientific knowledge is right knowledge, and the scientific method is the only way to right knowledge. This was the answer of the European Enlightenment; but the West, or at least the more perceptive thinkers in the West, are no longer sure that scientific knowledge is proven knowledge, though it may be operationally successful. Even the assessment that scientific theories, though ultimately unproveable, have high probability value, is now being abandoned in the West. Listen to the late Prof. Imre Lakatos:

> Of course, replacing proof by probability was a major retreat for (scientific) justificationist thought. But even this retreat turned out to be insufficient. It was soon shown, mainly by Popper's persistent efforts, that under very general conditions all theories have zero probability, whatever the evidence; ***all theories are not only equally unprovable but also equally improbable***.[5] (emphasis in the original)

In our present incipient stage of working towards an Indian identity, it is fatal to ignore this preliminary question of the validity of knowledge, in the interests of a shallow pragmatism that seeks only the means to gain some arbitrarily chosen national ends. We must examine both our own and Western epistemology and ontology, to see how shaky some of the unexamined assumptions of our cultural elite are.

The *pramāṇas* or principles of our epistemological tradition have an axiological character. That means they are themselves not rationally proved, but treated as self-evident, and built upon. In the Indian tradition of *pramāṇa-vichāra* (thinking about first principles or standards of knowledge), we make the distinction between *prameya* (that which is to be measured), *pramātā* (the measurer or subject), *pramāṇa* (the measuring standard or epis-

[5]Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (eds.), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, Cambridge University Press, 1970; reptd. 1984, p. 95. Lakatos has developed this idea in his 'Changes in the Problem of Inductive Logic', in Lakatos, (ed.), *The Problem of Inductive Logic*, 1968, esp. pp. 353ff.

temological principle) and *pramiti* (the process of measuring or knowing).

Dignāga's basic contribution to Indian logic is the 'secular' affirmation that there are only two principles or *pramāṇas* which validate knowledge—direct sense-perception (*pratyakṣa*) and valid inference (*anumāna*), There are two worlds to be known—the external world, and the mental world. For these two *prameyas* (measurables, *cogitanda*), there are two corresponding *pramāṇas* (measuring standards). There are no other *pramēyas* and therefore no other *pramāṇas* are necessary. This is Humean simplicity centuries before Hume. Perceptive knowledge is direct knowledge of a material object (*vastu*) confronted by our senses. The *vastu* or object with its specific characteristics (*svabhāva* or *svalakṣaṇa*) is directly perceived by the senses. The object acts directly on our senses and produces sensations. The *vastu* is the subject of this action, not the perceiver. The essential function of the external object is the realisation of this sensation in us—*Sākṣātkaritva-vyāpāra*. Contrary to Kant, and more in accordance with Hume, Dignāga argued that direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) involved no element of a mental judgment, so long as it is a perception that is not empirically false (*abhrānta*). Sense-perception is non-constructive (*kalpanāpoḍha*), and goes wrong when the constructive judgment intervenes to produce an illusion. Kant agrees with Dignāga when he asserts that the senses cannot err. The mind is the source of error.

Inference (*anumāna*) is indirect knowledge, again as Hume contended. It is an activity of the mind, dependent, however, on the sense-perception of particular entities. The sense-impression alone is *pratyakṣa*. When a judgment is added to it, and one says 'this is a cow', that is *anumāna* or inference, a mental construction. The word or concept 'cow' does not belong to the *pratyakṣa*. Here Dignāga's logic is much more rigorous than that of Kant or Hume. In other words the sense-impression cannot be equated with the mental perception that this particular is a cow. When one does that, one has already moved from sense-perception to inference, from the particular to the universal. The particular that acted to give the sense-impression is *svalakṣaṇa*, having its own specific, here-and-now momentary reality. The judgment 'that is a cow', or a specific cow named, say Gosri, and

the words 'cow' or 'Gosri' do not attach themselves to the sense-experience or the external object. The mind or *anumāna* does that association. The sense-experience is a unique particular, distinct from everything else—*sarvato-vyāvṛtta*—and momentary (*kṣaṇika*), *svalakṣaṇa* or *sui generis*. It has neither extension nor duration; these are creations of the mind. It is a 'point-instant' without dimension, as Stcherbatsky calls it.

It is not unreal; in fact that point-instant alone is real. It is without determination (*vikalpa*) or *nirvikalpa-pratyakṣa*. Up to this point Dignāga and the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school would more or less agree. The latter would concede that this point-instant, though real, is without any mode of subject-object or subject-predicate. It is *viśeṣya-viśeṣaṇa-bhāvāvagāhī*, not subject to modes of qualified and qualification. Even consciousness is not aware of the point-instant as such, but the point-instant initiates in the mind a mental determination which could cause action, and the point-instant is therefore efficiently real. The determination as an object however is a creation of the mind in response to the point-instant. The concept is not an object. It is a mental determination.

Here Dignāga comes close to Kant, but does not say with Kant that the categories of the mind blend with the sense-impression as warp and woof. The determinate perception is a valid perception for the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. For Dignāga it is a mental creation, in so far as it is associated with generalised forms (e.g., cow) and differentiation of subject-predicate or subject-object. A determinate perception, therefore is not a real perception, but one derived from real perception. Dignāga draws the line of demarcation sharp and strong between the point-instant and the mental image or concept. The cognition that there is an 'external' object called the cow, and to that end projects the internal image to the external, is a pseudo-perception. What is measured or apprehended by the *pratyakṣa pramāṇa* and that which is projected by the *anumāna pramāṇa* belong to two different worlds. The so-called external object or the point-instant has already been apprehended by the *pratyakṣa-pramāṇa*. It cannot then be again apprehended by the *anumāna-pramāṇa*, since the point-instant has already been apprehended by sense-impression or *pratyakṣa*.

You may very well ask: if the cow apprehended by the determinate perception is only a thought-image, how can it be different from the cow in memory or the cow in a dream? There is a difference. The cow experienced in the former instance, though a mental construct, is consequent upon a sense-impression, while the cow conjured up in memory or dream is not so. We make a mistake, however, in the first case, in identifying the mental image and the external object. This false identification is *adhyavasāya*, a false judgment. 'This cow'—'this' here refers to the *pratyakṣa* and 'cow' to *anumāna*. The two are absolutely different, dissimilar, belonging to two different worlds. The first is an efficient real particular; the latter is a mental construct. The failure to grasp the difference (*bhedāgraha*) creates the problem.

The determinate perception of the cow is however not entirely unreal, in so far as that to which the mental construct is projected is in fact real, efficient. The mind does not grasp the 'this', the point-instant, it only projects a mental construct on to it and identifies the two. But the mental image is not a cow that gives milk. Only the point-instant is efficient at that level. The mental image helps however to locate the real efficient point-instant. One can grasp the determinate perception of water; though the perception grasped is not real water, but only a mental image, that mental image can lead you to the real water, and actually help you to grasp it, not by mind but by a vessel or your cupped hand.

Sometimes the association of the external object and mental object may be even a worse error. In the famous example of '*rajju-sarpa*' the point-instant of a rope (*rajju*) is associated with the mental construct of a snake (*sarpa*). The action caused in this *bhrānta* perception is caused, not by the point-instant of the rope, but by the (falsely) determined perception of a snake in the rope. It is the memory-image of the snake falsely associated with the sense-experience of a rope that causes the characteristic behaviour of fight or flight or fright.

But here Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Dignāga part company. For the former the particular is a composite entity, with its own substance and attributes. For the Dignāga school, the particular is a point-instant without dimension or substance or predicate; these latter are projected by the mind. For Dignāga, the universal 'cow' is not real. It is a mental construct. It has no correlate in the world measured by *pratyakṣa pramāṇa*. Dignāga, in European terms, is a 'nominalist' (one who regards universals as mere names), not a realist (in the sense of people who regard universals as real). For the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school the universal, or generalised forms like 'cow', 'tree'; 'river', etc., are not only real, but exist eternally, independently of mental activity, in the real world.

Dignāga is a rigorous secularist. He does not call upon any *śabda-pramāṇa* (which he does not believe exists) or adduce any scripture to prove his point. His starting point is purely rational, starting with the everyday experience of this world open to our senses. How one wishes that our intellectuals and our elite would pay more attention to this uniquely Indian starting point, free from all religious or theological colouration as a starting point for our own discussion about India's secular identity!

Let us now look at Vāchaspati Miśra's critique of the Dignāga view. Hindu philosophy took some four centuries to develop an adequate logical counter-argument to Dignāga. As we have, though very feebly, interpreted Dignāga's view, it seems obvious that rigorous logic is on the side of the Buddhist rather than on the side of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school. But it will be unwise to accept Dignāga logic till we have viewed the formidable critique of the greatest Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika logician, Vāchaspati Miśra.

If Dignāga is dated in the fifth century AD. and is pre-Śaṅkara, Vāchaspati Miśra is post-Śaṅkara, and his dates can be fixed in the first half of the ninth century. From the date given in his *Nyāya-sūchi-nibandha* (898 Vikrama era), we can fix the date of that work as AD. 841.[6] His masterpiece, *Nyāya-vārtika-tātparya-ṭīkā*, is the high point of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika realism. Encyclopaedic in learning and razor-sharp in logic, Vāchaspati Miśra has put all systems of Indian philosophy in his debt. His summary of our various schools of Indian thought is the fairest and most objective account of India's philosophical heritage. He interprets each school from the inside, as if he were a follower of it. This shows greatness of mind and broadness of sympathy, something rare these days in India. He was from Mithila.

What Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas cannot accept in the Dignāga view is the contention that only the *kṣaṇika* or momentary is real, and its corollary, that the mental is unreal. For Dignāga not only do universals have no existence, nothing mental has any real exis-

tence, since there is no correlate for it in the external world; only that which is presented to the senses is real. And external objects are not real, in so far as they are constituted by mental activity. We err in not recognising the difference between the mental and the real. The failure to grasp the *bhēda* (difference), i.e., *bhēdāgraha,* rather than the attribution of identity between the mental and the external (*abhēdāgraha*) or non-apprehension of difference rather than apprehension of non-difference, according to Dignāga, constitutes the problem of knowledge.

In his faithful summary of this Buddhist doctrine, Vāchaspati Miśra puts it this way:

> Externality of the thought-image consists in the non-comprehension of the difference of the external (from the internal) and not in the comprehension of the identity of the external (with the internal), because identity of the thought-image (appearing as internal) is not possible with the unique particular.[7]

As Śrīdhara (another great Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thinker) put it, we are too easily deceived into confusing the internal image and and the external object, not because we have any reason to believe they are the same, but because of a kind of lazy failure to perceive the difference between the mental world and the external world. What then is this difference? What is the nature of a universal? What do all cows have in common, which they do not share with others? Four legs, a body and a head? No, most mammals have these. The only thing common to all cows is their 'absence of non-cowness'—not a positive, but a negative factor. All the cows of the world are different from each other, yet they share this negative factor of absense of non-cowness. This universal 'cowness' does not exist as an external reality. It is a mental negation or exclusion of non-cowness. Such exclusion of a negation is called *atad-vyāvṛtti* or *apoha.*

In the judgment 'this is a cow' there are two errors: first, the failure to see the difference between a mental object and the

[6]D.N. Shastri, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

[7]*Bāhya-bhedāgrahāścāsya bāhyatvaṃ na punar bāhyabhedāgrahaḥ vikalpa-gocare bāhyastad-abhedāgrahasyāśakyatvāt. Nyāya-Vārtika-Tātparya-ṭīkā.* cited by Shastri, *op. cit.*, p. 351, note.

external point-instant; second, the illusion that there is something common to all cows that makes a cow a cow. The *svalakṣanas* or particular characteristics of various cows—colour, size, hump, shape, horns—are different. But we presume that all cows have some common *svalakṣaṇas* or characteristics.

What happens in determined perception is that the pure perception or sense-experience of a particular point-instant in the external world starts a chain-reaction in the mind—first, the recalling from memory of a name or class-name, which in turn evokes a generalised but not precise image. Words or names and thought-images are capable of invoking each other. But words do not touch the point-instant which creates the sensation. Where then does this false *adhyavasāya* originate? The Buddhist would say, from two sources: there is some sort of beginningless nescience or *anādi avidyā* (Śaṅkara would agree) or *anadi vāsanā.* It is this *vāsanā* that creates erroneous *adhyavasāya.* This externally reflected or object-reflecting (*artha-pratibimbaka*) image which appears in our determinate perception of the object is *apoha.* The universal (*sāmānya*) generates this *apoha,* this non-existent object image or class-name which is actually the absence of a negation (absence of non-cowness), and not anything real.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika attack on the Dignāga view was focussed on the alleged unreality of the mental, and on the *apoha* or negative view of all knowledge. The argument, most clearly advanced by Vāchaspati Miśra, and perhaps more precisely by Kumārila, goes like this: If the Buddhist says that the name cow means only exclusion of 'non-cowness' (*apoha*), then, how can 'non-cowness' be grasped without knowing what 'cowness' is? 'Non-cowness' is negation of 'cowness', and the negative cannot be grasped without grasping the positive. 'Cowness' and 'noncowness' are mutually dependent; without knowing the one the other cannot be known. On the other hand, once 'cowness' is grasped, the *apoha* or the exclusion of 'non-cowness' serves no purpose.

Vāchaspati Miśra's view is:

> *tasmājjātimatro vyaktayo*
> *vikalpānāṃ śabdānāṃ ca gocarāḥ*
> *tāsāṃ tadvṛttināṃ rūpam*

atajjātīyavyāvṛttamityarthaḥ.
atastadavagater na gāṃ badhāneti codito'-
śvādīn badhnāti.

So also universals subsisting in particulars are discernible to conception and through names, in the form of being distinguished from that which does not belong to its own class. So, someone asked to bind a cow does not bind a horse, etc.[8]

Where Dignāga insists that universals exist only in the mind, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika insists that it subsists in the particular, and not merely in mind or names as the Nominalists hold. Vāchaspati Miśra echoes Plato when he says that universals can both exist and not exist. They are eternal in nature, but manifest only through innumerable particulars. The universal is not dependent on the particular. It exists in relation to the particular now existent, but is nonexistent in relation to existents that are in the past or in the future.

What is the upshot of this debate? The logical issue cannot be settled because these are two separate sets of logical discourse, which have different starting points. The Dignāga view is a rigorous working out from his initial premise that there are only two *prameyas* (namely the real or external, and the mental or internal); that therefore we need only two *pramāṇas*, namely sense-perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*), to grasp these two dissimilar worlds; and that the *pramāṇa* for the external world cannot be used for the internal world and vice versa. Once you grant these initial premises, Dignāga's conclusions seem to follow. Vāchaspati Miśra would accept the two-*pramāṇa* and two-*prameya* view for argument's sake, but would not accept the heavy line of demarcation between the two worlds.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school came to a compromise view, a commonsense view which cannot be fitted into Dignāga's logic. Universals are not mere names that do not exist. They are eternal entities, but the particular cannot hold these universals exclusively, since the vessel (particular) has a beginning and an end, but the content (the universal) has no beginning or end, but comes to manifest itself through the temporal. The universal is not a negation of a negation or *apoha*. It both includes certain characteris-

[8]Sanskrit text from Shastri, *op. cit.*; English translation present author's.

tics and excludes others. It is both negating and affirming at the same time. The universal (say, horse) excludes or negates all nonhorses which do not belong to its class; but it also includes those characteristics which are exclusively of the horse. The affirmation, says Śāntarakṣita of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, is primary; the exclusion or negation is secondary. While Dignāga's logic could not accept this view, later Buddhists like Ratnakīrti affirmed that *apoha* has a positive aspect qualified by the negation of others.

The Buddhists and the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas also argued about relation: relation between subject and predicate (e.g., *ghaṭa* and *ghaṭatva*), relation between qualities of members of a class, etc; and came up with the concept of *samavāya* as that which holds the substance and its attributes together in an inseparable union between a material reality as substance and its qualities. This was the way Edmund Husserl took in the West in this century—to conceive the *noema* or mental object having correlation with the external object through *noesis*.

We would need a whole book to relate these classical Indian debates to our question about our Indian secular identity. We can only make two important points here. First, Rammohun Roy was wrong in despising the Indian heritage, which he knew only slightly. He was moved by his own class interests to espouse the bourgeois ideology of the European Enlightenment. This is in no way to detract from his greatness as a social reformer. But the commonness of view between him, Lord Macaulay and Prime Minister Nehru should give us pause. We have to come to terms with the values of the European Enlightenment. Macaulay chose those values for us with the agreement of our intellectual elite, like Raja Rammohun, during our period of colonial bondage. Nehru, himself a child of the European Enlightenment, imposed on our nation these values with the concurrence of our ruling class. To assess these values we need to work in two directions: (i) understand the nature of the European Enlightenment in the light of Europe's psyche, history and self-understanding; and (ii) appropriate for ourselves more of our own heritage which we have too lightly set aside as irrelevant. Our second job is to develop a sufficiently well-informed framework of the two cultures.

This book seeks to initiate some perspectives on the first, but cannot do justice to the second. But the suggestion can be made

that this is one of the principal tasks of institutions like the Indian Council of Philosophical Research and the Indian Institute of Advanced Study. It is a formidable task indeed. The best scholarship in the country and abroad will have to be enlisted in the project. It will also need foresightful leadership which can make the team come to life. It has to be a project, one aspect of which will be something like the *Great Books of the Western World* project of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. We need a *Great Books of India* project, but it has also to be accompanied by interpretative essays, since our minds are better tuned to Western categories than to our own. We need more, however. We have to generate an informed public debate on our national identity, in which ordinary people from all walks of life can participate; a debate which can be prepared and initiated by the best minds in India under the most competent leadership. It will examine our heritage in comparison with other heritages—Western, Chinese, Arabic and so on. Ultimately the debate should pervade our society as a whole: our politicians and our people, our academics and our students, our mediamen and the public exposed to the media, our civil servants and our masses, through all the regional languages.

We have to revive the Orientalist orientation initiated by the early Presidency College (Calcutta) tradition set by Sir William Jones and the 'Asiatick' Society, and actually practised by some of the great missionary teachers of our elite—Carey, Marshman and Ward, for example. It was this orientation which Raja Rammohun Roy despised as irrelevant and Macaulay suppressed, in favour of a straightforward introduction of English culture. In Indian higher education, it was the point of view of Alexander Duff that finally prevailed. For him English education was the dynamite that would explode the power of Indian culture to resist colonial conquest and missionary conversion and domination. Indian culture is much more massive and powerful than what English education can destroy in two centuries. We are now in a situation both nationally and internationally where it would be a catastrophe to abandon English education altogether. But we need to supplement the Macaulay-Roy-Nehru line with an equal emphasis on a freshly formulated non-elite, Orientalist line, if the Indian identity has to become authentic.

In pursuing that Orientalist line, we should not fall into the trap

that is developing—to interpret the Indian heritage in primarily Hindu or brahmin terms, regarding the Buddhist and the Jain traditions as merely subsidiary to it. Nor can the Indian heritage exclude the rich and positive elements that Europe and West Asia as well as Central Asia and America have poured into our treasuries throughout our history. The kind of Indology that has developed recently remains a scholarly specialisation, and largely a Hindu partisan interpretation of our heritage. To recover the Indian heritage in such a way that Indian Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains, and even tribals can say, 'this is our common heritage'—that has yet to happen. Our pioneering institutions like the ICPR and IIAS, the ICCR and ICSSR, and our universities have a big job cut out for them at this level.

Equally important is the need to re-start our so far frustrating Indian discussion on the secular. Can we have our own formulation of the concept of the secular, starting from, say the Buddhist-Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika debate of the fifth to tenth centuries? This will open our eyes to many things, of which the difference in fundamental assumptions and approach between the European secular and the Indian secular is one. Both of them generally rule out the authority of religion and depend upon the human perceiving-reasoning process as sufficient starting point for a human grasp of truth. In the European secular, religion becomes a casualty. In the Buddhist and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika schools this does not happen. On the contrary the deepest religious perceptions arise from the secular starting point.

The traditional *abhidharma* doctrine of the Buddhists is eminently secular; yet Buddhist 'religion' and 'spirituality' flourished for centuries within that doctrine. The reason was that the non-scriptural *abhidharma*, or the logic of a Nāgārjuna or a Dignāga or a Dharmakirti, was always held as an integral part of the *Tripiṭaka* and the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eight-fold Path, the Vinaya and the Saṅgha. The intellectual was never dissociated from community life, discipline, prayer and meditation.

This is where the Indian secular approach is in sharp contrast with the European secular. The Indian secular is an intensely religious, disciplined, meditation-generated intellectual effort. Draw portraits of a tight-lipped Voltaire, of a morose and intensely self-preoccupied Kant or Schopenhauer, of a Locke or a Hume, a Kier-

kegaard or a Wittgenstein, a Nietzsche, a Diderot, a Sartre. Keep these portraits on one side. Draw portraits of Buddha, Aśvaghoṣa, Nāgārjuna, Dharmakīrti, Chandrakīrti, Dignāga, Vāchaspati Miśra, Sridhara and keep them on the other side. The difference between European secularism and Indian secularism becomes immediately evident—in the personal lives and disciplines of the two sets of philosophers. The really great secular philosophers of India were all deeply religious men, shaped by an intense religious discipline of fasting and prayer, asceticism and religious training.

Ben-Ami Scharfstein, an Israeli philosopher at Tel-Aviv University, has done us a singular favour by trying to relate the thought of many of the Western philosophers to their personal lives. The picture that emerges is indeed fascinating: I cite a sample passage from the book:

> Therefore, when I think of the atomism of Hume, James, Russell and Wittgenstein, I conclude that it must have been their inward experience that made them receptive to the atomic disintegration of the self. To Russell, body and mind were only logical constructions, and the whole person only 'relations of the thoughts to each other and to the body.'
>
> ...Hume, James, Russell, and Wittgenstein underwent deep depressions, and all were tempted by suicide....[9]

As we follow Professor Scharfstein on a guided tour of the personal lives of the major Western philosophers, relating their life-experiences to their philosophical positions, one is impressed by the fact that very few of them had attained anything like the personal integration that we associate with our great Indian philosophers. The noble thought of India, with few exceptions like the *Cārvāka*, comes out of deep religious experience and personal integration, even when that thought appears to be secular as in the case of Buddhism and the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system.

This is what distinguishes the European Enlightenment from the Indian concept of enlightenment. Both develop rigorous forms of logical reasoning. In fact, compared to the rigour of Indian thought, European Enlightenment thinking seems extremely loose and nebulous. It is superior to Indian thought in its direct relation and relevance to contemporary socio-political issues and the interests of a particular class. Our thought has a logical consistency that achieved high levels, at least a millennium before the rise of European Enlightenment rationalism. But Indian rational thought was undergirded by a deeply religious and spiritually trained consciousness, which does not seem to be the case with the philosophers of the European Enlightenment.

[9]Ben-Ami Scharfstein, *The Philosophers—Their Lives and the Nature of Their Thought*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1980, pp. 76 and 78.

Indian secular thought is grounded in the religious; it neither excludes the religious from its domain of interest, nor does it use religious dogmas for its axioms. Starting from a 'secular' analysis of everyday experiênce, it arrives at startling conclusions which force us to revise our commonsense perceptions and draw our attention to the transcendent reality that manifests itself through the every-day world. Only this kind of spiritually grounded secularity, which can see meaning in the every-day life of ordinary mortals, but see that meaning through the transcendental experience of the philosopher and the community of sages can get close to our masses and overcome our alienation from our own heritage.

India must not betray her historic destiny by being a slavish imitator of the West. Even Marxists in the socialist countries expect from India a spiritual guidance other than that of Western liberalism and the European Enlightenment. Indian enlightenment is also an inner illumination, a seeing of light, a healing intuition that emancipates from the trammels of dogmatism and ritualism, that helps us experience the unity of the whole. It can use logic at its most rigorous best. But that logic, starting without any scriptural or religious authority (unlike in Śaṅkara), apparently secular, not assuming God or soul, leads relentlessly to the Supreme Insight, for that insight is powerfully present at the very inception of the path of secular logic, powering and guiding the journey along that path.

It should be noted that the Buddhist Enlightenment does not come at the end of the path of secular logic. It precedes the development of that logic, even though it does not start from any scripture or religious dogma.

ye dharmā hetuprabhavā hetum

teṣāṃ tathāgataḥ hyavadat
teṣāṃ ca yo nirodha
evaṃ vādī mahāśramaṇaḥ.

> The *Tathāgata* has explained how the elements which proceed from a cause originate. He has also taught how the process can be stopped. This is the great doctrine of the Mahāśramaṇa.

This is what the logic ultimately shows—the cause for the world appearing as it is and causing suffering or *duḥkha*, and how to eliminate that *duḥkha* from the world. But the logic which seems to proceed by its own syllogistic momentum, has always been in the mind of the sage as he writes, for that is the experience, the vision, the enlightenment that gives him integration and orientation.

This is perhaps difficult for a Western-trained mind to understand—how the conclusion of a particular logic can be presupposed even from its first premise. But logic by itself is not the path to truth and freedom. The true path is the combination of knowledge and wisdom with personal and communitarian integration and discipline. From that discipline of prayer, meditation, self-control and compassion comes the basic insight, which the logic then works out. An ordinary intelligent person cannot be a philosopher in our tradition, as he or she can in the West. Only a sage is a philosopher. Reality is beyond concept and reasoning. It is directly experienced. From that experience reason can always chalk out a path that leads to that experience, of which the rigorous logic is but one aspect. It can proceed only hand-in-hand with the *vinaya* (the discipline) and the spiritual *saṅgha* (the life in community). Without these two controlling elements, the path of logic leads, not to enlightenment, but to the wilderness, where one can perish. The groundedness in *vinaya* and in *saṅgha* is what makes the Buddhist Enlightenment clearly distinguishable from the European Enlightenment.

CONCLUSION

One has so far refrained from making too many comments on the shifts in the centres of the West in more recent times. The West now has three major centres—Western Europe, Eastern Europe and America. This diffusion of centres brings new and more interesting tensions, in the context of which alone India's quest for a national identity can proceed. The emergence of two additional centres—the United States of America since 1848, and the USSR since 1917, has reinforced Western Europe's bastion mentality; along with mild anti-Americanism and less mild anti-Sovietism, there is a desire to catch up with these two competitors for world domination and to emulate them in some respects. We in India are caught between these tensions.

I mention the date 1848 for America, because that is when America's ambitions for world power really began to be manifest. Once the Spanish were defeated and California and New Mexico were taken over from Mexican Spaniards, the 'Manifest Destiny' of America became clear—expansion and adventure. Western Europe was rocking under the influence of the 1848 riots in Paris, in Austria, in Italy and in Germany; monarchies were being overthrown and republics coming to power in almost every European state; even the semblance of feudal power was being wiped off, to be replaced by the symbol of bourgeois power, namely parliamentary democracy; European kings, such as existed, became symbols.

America, which had accomplished the republicanisation of government much earlier, was free to launch out on a campign for world domination, starting mainly from the Californian west coast which it had newly conquered and acquired. America had very little feudalism and no royalty to overcome. The bourgeois-liberal constitution had already been declared on September 17, 1787. In 60 years, the union of a dozen states along the Atlantic coast had spread to cover the continent. The Spanish-Portuguese empire had become weak, unlike the French, British and

Dutch. The USA was ready to take over the world, first from the Spanish, and later from the other West Europeans.

The Americans had so succeeded in annihilating the power of the native people (Amerindians) that the eighteenth-century West European Enlightenment values could be enforced in the USA without any substantial resistance. The Spaniards and the Portuguese were unable to muster the ruthless cruelty and methodical heartlessness necessary to eliminate all the non-Iberians on the continent. And their commitment to the Enlightenment liberalism was far less ardent compared to that of their fellow-Europeans to the north. They decided to live with the blacks, the creoles and the native Indians, of course keeping them in subordination to the European colonisers.

The USA got its independence from Britain quickly and with great determination, eliminating the native Americans and the blacks from any semblance of political power, managed to consolidate its power as the new leader of the West. Across the Atlantic, however, they had to compete with Britain and France. The Hispano-Americans, on the other hand, were slower in revolting against the Spanish and Portuguese crowns, and when they finally did, the Latin American states were unable to unite or wield world power.

The compromise of 1850 did not settle the problem of whether slavery was to be permitted in the new states of California and New Mexico. The Civil War and the problems connected with slavery and emancipation of slaves kept the USA preoccupied with internal problems. America emerged strong in spirit and vigorous from the Civil War. The nation which the European Enlightenment had built was now ready to flex its muscles. The transformation of the American economy from agricultural to industrial was swift and effective; in that process farming itself became industrialised. The acceleration of industrial development in the 1870s and 1880s—rich silver deposits in Nevada and Montana (the 1860s), the great increase in lead production (Missouri, Illinois, the 1870s), the development of aluminum, the wonder metal (1887), the dynamo, railways and the telegraph (1866), telephones, (1876) the typewriter (1873), electricity (1878), Portland cement (the 1870s), steel (1875)—made America the industrial leader of the world. Private enterprise grew to be

America's largest force, much more powerful than the government.

Europe's brazen imperialist sentiment (end of the eighteenth century—partitioning of Africa) found an echo among the Americans. By 1900 the depression was wearing away; the last major Spanish-American war had been fought and won in Cuba; Sousa's band had popularised *The Stars and Stripes Forever*; jingoism and expansionism were again in the air. America was now a world power, ready to compete with all European colonists. The manufacturing and trading forces wanted world markets and raw materials. In China, the biggest of world markets, the 'Open Door' policy, permitting Europeans and Americans to have equal access to the Asian markets and resources, was openly declared. Hawai and the Philippines were annexed to the American empire. In 1905 Teddy Roosevelt's America condescended to use its good offices in the Russo-Japanese war, in the Franco-German dispute about North African ports, in all problems of the Carribean and Central America, in the Panama Canal and in the taking over of the Canal Zone, thus ensuring American access to the Atlantic and the Pacific alike.

Meanwhile science and technology had developed at a frantic pace, and America was ahead in this field, thanks to large-scale German immigrations. By 1917, on the entering of America into World War I, Woodrow Wilson gave expression to the latest enunciation of Europe's self-understanding and of the European Enlightenment's doctrines:

> The right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts—for democracy, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations, and make the world itself as free. To such a task we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything that we are and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and

the peace which she has treasured. God help her, she can do no other.[1]

America thus became the new centre of Europe as 'adventure and expansion'. Were it not for the rise of Soviet power in the same year, 1917, when America announced its imperialist intentions in the most refined and most humanitarian language. Asia and Africa would have been completely at the mercy of this fast-growing super-power. As the Second World War ended, the Soviet Union was weak, as was Western Europe. Only America was strong. From 1945, America asserted herself, and became the leader of the neo-colonialist 'expansion and adventure' into the world, in competition with its competitor, i.e., expanding communism.

A new factor emerged steadily from 1945 onwards—the arms race and the arms trade, a factor directly affecting our Indian identity. As we have already seen, trade and war are the two essential expressions of the Western psyche. Now the two became amalgamated into a new strategy of combining trade and war into the 'war trade', and making this the major arm for capitalist world domination by the world bourgeoisie.

Without waging a world war, 150 wars have been fought since the Second World War. Scores of non-European, non-American countries have suffered from this war, paid for it out of their meagre resources, and only the armaments industry and the war trade have actually benefitted. Six countries account for 95 per cent of the overall volume of the main types of weapons transferred to other countries, according to a 1978 report of the UN Secretary General, confirmed by later research. These countries are the USA, the USSR, Britain, France, West Germany and China; two of them are socialist and four capitalist.

We in India are caught in the meshes of this grid of the arms trade and the arms race. We have our imaginary enemies—Pakistan and China next door, and many others further away. So our defence expenditure shoots up, our political structures become completely dependent on defence contracts for financial support,

[1]Cited in Allan Nevins and Henry Steele Commager, *America, The Story of a Free People*, third edition, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1942/1971, pp. 417-18.

and the people are unable to move things in the right direction. We fight other people's wars and pay for them while our people starve and die of ill-health and malnutrition. The more we spend on arms, the more manufacturers and traders in weapons become richer and the people themselves poorer.

One technique the West has perfected is that of provoking nations against each other. The Arab-Israeli conflict, Iraq-Iran war, Pakistani-Indian tensions, all these have the hand of armaments manufacturers and traders behind them. Even as recently as 1987 we saw the game, which now the American press has exposed, of pitting Libya against Sudan, trying to make them fight, so that Egyptian forces, with US help, can destroy the air power of Libya. Sometimes the trick works before it is exposed; the 'merchants of death' make fat profits; the poor of the world are further impoverished; the people have to go back and buy more weapons from the same merchants of death; if they do not have enough money to pay, there are Shylock-like bankers willing to finance the transaction; again the end result is both a heavy flow of resources from the poor to the rich, and the poor getting increasingly indebted to the rich.

To affirm and shape an authentic Indian identity while we are caught in this game, seems an unrealistic goal. Yet, in this historic moment of our existence, when our very national existence is threatened, we have to put out a gigantic effort for finding ourselves and our intrinsic creativity which is eclipsed by the mask of an alien secularism-liberalism. We need to face all three forms of the European Enlightenment now confronting us—Western Europe, the USA, and the socialist countries of Europe. History has thrown us into alliances and interactions with all three. Each has to be handled in its own way—Enlightenment liberalism, imperialist pragmatism, and socialist humanism. We have to learn from all three, but critically so. Which means we should have an identity of our own independent of these three, but in collaboration and interaction with them. This also means that we understand the the three forms of European-American values in some depth, and that we develop self-respect for our own tradition, both in thought and in the arts.

We have not gone to any length in treating the nature of socialist humanism, which is one of the more positive contribu-

tions of western thought to us. The better values of the European Enlightenment are embodied in socialism, but we need to deepen them by putting them on a more secure and more transcendent foundation. This, I believe we are capable of doing, and this I believe is the way forward not only for us in India, but for humanity as a whole. The strategy for this has to be both cultural and political-economic, both national and international.

This moment in history offers a profound challenge to the Indian spirit. We have the resources, hidden among our people, to meet that challenge. Whether the leading elite in this country will see the vision and respond to the challenge remains to be seen. The peoples of the world are waiting. Our own people are waiting for some new light that can quicken their creativity and give them hope. History itself seems to be waiting. This new light, however, cannot come from top down. Our present elite cannot generate that light; the masses of our people have to be involved in generating a new healing light which has its source in the experience, wisdom and aspiration of our people. The job of the elite (the civil service, the educational system, the intelligentsia and the political-economic leadership) would be, first of all, to enable the masses of our people to become their co-authors of a new enlightenment.

This calls for creating new institutions and new movements. The present heavy political machinery and indolent bureaucracy cannot cope with the task of mobilising our people. Both the political process and the bureaucracy have become not only alienated from the people, but parasitic and exploitative of the people. Education, regarded mainly as an investment in the economy to produce trained man-power for the existing system, hardly enables the people to perceive the most important dimensions of the reality around them.

The new institutions needed will have to be such as would:

(i) mobilise the people, giving them a sense of purposeful participation, and a vision that both fulfils their deepest aspirations and calls forth heroic expression of their human creativity;

(ii) be geared to the education of the masses (including literacy, but going far beyond) in the context of socio-economic activity to increase productivity, but with a social motivation (as opposed to personal gain and greedy acquisitiveness) to serve the whole people;

(iii) promote the cultural creativity of the people in a manner that is not alienated from socio-economic productivity in all realms, like better health services, better distribution of housing, transportation, water, electricty and other public services; a cultural creativity which would both be the expression of the richness of our Indian heritage, and a better acquaintance of all regions with the cultures of other regions.

It is in the context of such a mobile nation-wide socio-economic, educational and cultural progamme that a new concept of Indian national identity can be shaped and promoted, in the interaction between the intellectuals (including artistes) and the masses. In this process secularists and the adherents of various religions will be in continuous interactive cooperation and dialogue with each other. All religions will need to reform themselves to face the creative challenge of this new mobile programe. The religious leaders will have a major role in helping the adherents of the various religions to abandon their narrow communal perspectives and to commit themselves to a new national purpose and vision.

In this process the millions of adivasis and tribals in our country will have to be given special consideration. Adivasis should not have the culture of the mainstream imposed on them; neither should they keep away from the mainstream and seek to develop in splendid isolation. They should have sufficient autonomy to pursue their own cultural goals, and yet contribute to the total national effort.

These are indeed tall orders. The question is: who will bell the cat? The government cannot do it alone. Neither can the Congress party by itself, without the cooperation of other national political parties. The basic structure should provide for the participation of all—workers and peasants, students and teachers, professionals and non-professionals, armed forces and office personnel, intellectuals and artists, writers and political workers, religious leaders and secular ideologists.

Three factors will have to be kept in mind before launching such a programme. The first step will be to mobilise a manageable group representing all sectors of the population to work out

the basic scheme. These people, who should be limited to a few hundreds, will have a small group chosen from among them. It will be the responsibility of this latter group to draft the scheme and periodically provide opportunities for the large group to discuss and refine it. This should not, however, be done in the way, for example, that the New Education Policy was formulated, which seems to have failed to elicit a real national discussion of what kind of education is needed in our country. It was hastily rushed through production and approval; bureaucratic and political compromises took away the vitality of the policy before it came to public attention. Full participation by all sectors of the people will be necessary before the final formulation of the programme. This cannot be done by a government bureaucracy. There are enormous political problems connected with the choice of personnel for the commission to formulate the programme.

The second stage would be to train the core leadership of the programme itself. Such training would have to be done in the context of a few regional pilot programmes of social mobilisation in different parts of the country. Eventually, thousands of such core workers would have to be trained, who will later be deployed to carry out social mobilisation and training for leadership in each locality. During this second stage, the draft programme produced by the commission will be put to the test. Most of the commissioners themselves would be involved in training the leadership and carrying out pilot programmes. There will have to be a thorough revision of the programme during this second stage, in the light of the experience from the pilot programmes and the experience of the core leadership. Provisions will have to be made in the programme for facing regional and local variations in situations. Such revision may also be needed at subsequent stages of the programme and provision should be made for periodical reviews, both locally and centrally. The main thrust in this second stage will be two-fold—(i) training the leadership for the national programme, and, (ii) reformulating policy in the light of the experience of the pilot programmes,

The third point to be kept in mind is that the launching of such a social mobilisation programme will threaten many vested interests, and that they will either try to capture it for their own private ends or else thwart and hinder its implementation. There will have

to be strong leadership for the programme, endowed with sufficient power to fend off its detractors and distorters. The leadership will not use armed force against the critics and would-be detractors. They will have to pit intelligent and informed people's power or the power of organised and peacefully expressed public opinion against them.

The question of the nature of the Indian identity will always be at the centre of this programme at all stages: in the stage of formulation, in the stage of pilot programmes and leadership training and in the final stage of national implementation. No academic discussion in the cloisters of universities and institutes will settle that question finally, though academies, institutes and universities have major contributions to make to the public discussion.

The quest for the Indian identity can only be an unending one. For no identity can be static. The suggestions made here are meant only to initiate that quest. The central thrust of that quest will still be enlightenment, which would deal simultaneously with the world around us and the world in us. This dialectic linking of the double enlightenment calls for great creative ingenuity. What studies and writings can do to relate the two enlightenments to each other can serve only a limited function. The main motive force will have to come from groups of dedicated people seeking to live out the dialectical synthesis in their own private and group lives.

This entails the working out of personal and group disciplines for these dedicated pioneering groups and persons. Such a rule of life will give attention to forms and modes of study, of work and of common meditation and worship. These groups should by necessity be inter-religious and include also open-minded secularists. The persons for these pioneering groups should be chosen for their integrity of character, ability to listen to and work with others, and authenticity of commitment. Their basic quest will be the enlightenment of both dimensions of the human consciousness —the world-directed dimension and the other dimension seeking transcendent fulfilment. This calls for two levels of discipline—a personal discipline in which one seeks enlightenment in accordance with one's own religious or secular tradition (it is a condition that the religious tradition should not be totally other-worldly or this-world-denying), and a group discipline in which people of diverse religious perceptions and commitments can participate.

These pioneering groups will have a key role in formulating the programme and in training leadership for the programme as well as in its implementation. Their common group discipline will include productive and creative work, common study and common meditation. They will produce texts, tapes and other educational material for the training of the leadership. Much of this kind of work will have to be done on a voluntary basis rather than on a salaried or remunerative basis. It must attract people who are prepared to suffer and sacrifice for the good of the people.

In fact such a movement cannot be successful without a leadership of the highest calibre of dedication, discipline and commitment. We need not look for a reincarnation of Mahatma Gandhi. What we need really are teams of people whose common lives would be an expression of sanctity and compassion, discipline and devotion, sanity and sobriety. It is as a group that they will seek to excel in spiritual and cultural achievements, not as disparate individuals.

The life of these teams will entail more than a mere pooling of their varying talents and capacities. The important thing is how these talents and capacities are made to work together to create the good, without any individual member of the team needing to take any special credit. That will be a new kind of education—not focussing on individual or personal development, but looking to the social development of corporate wholes. It is only in such a corporate context where, on the one hand, there is strong personal discipline and dedication, and on the other, a capacity to shift the team members away from one's own personal development to the development of the corporate whole, that one can experiment with dialectically relating the two kinds of enlightenment—the rational and the spiritual, to use a kind of shorthand.

The pioneering will then begin with the formation and shaping of these teams of competent, dedicated people living and working together, without alienation from the daily life of the people of the locality and from their economic and cultural activities. Strangely enough, when the true enlightenment finally comes, combining the relation to the transcendent and the relation to the external world (including one's own body), it will not be in direct continuity with the team's effort or as an outcome of its plans. It will be a surprise, for where there is dedication, the transcendent itself breaks in to open up new levels of reality and to create new forms of the common good.