Philosophy in India: An agenda towards an alternate philosophising

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MAPPING THE ISSUE

Thinking differently is what great philosophers commonly do. Where Plato questions the Sophists, or Heidegger critiques Husserl, or Adi Sankara debates Mandana Misra, each of those encounters highlights an alternate way of thinking (to philosophise) than what the predecessor or the opponent did. Of course, there could be meeting points as well as points of departure. One of the obvious questions then is: do they device new methods of philosophising for the sake of doing so, or do they find limitations in the existing forms of philosophising? May be that the answers could be "yes" to both the possibilities. However, I would not take the former seriously enough for the simple reason that claims for philosophising differently, merely for the sake of showing *being different,* is only adventurism without having serious content to the alternate thought.

I would tend to take the latter little more seriously. That there are contexts within which philosophers think in particular ways, and also there are possibilities of disenchantment with the existing trends – these themselves are sufficient enough to raise fresh questions for alternate answers. In other words, I would tend to see that we raise new philosophical questions, often driven by discrepancies over the existing trend(s) of philosophising. This demands understanding the contexts within which the discrepancies arise.

Here, I propose to study the trends of philosophising that is being practised in India in contemporary time, particularly keeping in view the post-colonial experiences, and also taking into account strong undercurrents of external forces that have invaded and influenced the country and its people. This is within the backdrop that changes in the philosophical outlook and engaging of philosophy as a practice have never been so drastic as witnessed from the time of British colonial rule and its interventions in the field of education. Philosophy as an activity, and also as a way of life, cannot be expected to be unfazed by these forces. Colonialism as one of the external forces is

what India encountered ever since it gained a new tag called "India" running over a vast land and people, politically and linguistically less connected. When colonial administration brought about a sea change into the social and political lives of the people in the sub-continent, philosophy as an intellectual reflection on the way of life of the people also got affected. With this backdrop it is, I believe, important to locate philosophical ideas and mode of philosophising in the historical and temporal contexts.

It is with the emergence of India as a nation-state(?),[1] an imagined "people," that further trends of philosophising took shape in the country. The forces of nationalism driven by nationalist imagination went along side-by-side with colonialism as the other force. The two forces have immensely influenced the mode of philosophising in the country that the existing trends of philosophising almost look inevitable as these have emerged. But with the passage of time, discrepancies are noticed, and hence a need for an alternate philosophising. The scope of this paper, however, is not to study the levels of determination these forces play in shaping the nature and mode of philosophising, but to merely explore the dynamics of the changes in philosophising in the sub-continent.

THREE TRENDS OF PHILOSOPHISING

India has witnessed few trends of philosophising ever since Lord Macaulay's classic address[2] in the British Parliament in 1835 and the subsequent education policies. These

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[1] I raise this question mark, as it is still a point of contention whether India is a nation-state or a multi-nation state. On the other hand, sociologist like T.K. Oomen uses the term India as "multi-national" state. I believe that such new terminologies are coined not to dilute the sense of unity envisaged by the nationalist leaders while conceiving India as a political project. Such a guarded articulation is not uncommon among Indian academia. But there is need for much openness when one studies the evolution and projection of India to bear a national identity.

[2] Lord Macaulay's statement in British Parliament (1835) is worth highlighting. It not only shows colonial project in India, but also predicts the future mindset of the country. Part of the text stands as follows: "I have traveled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief. Such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such calibre, that I do not think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage, and, therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native self-culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation." Subsequently, while nationalist feelings in the people were built on the idea of "nation" as Macaulay already saw in the country called India, the medium of protest and assertion against British colonialism was inseparably linked to using English as lingua franca; this means inseparable bond to British (or European) sensibility.

trends are distinct and guided by certain *weltanchaung* as was clearly visible in Macaulay's address. As much the English education was welcomed by the middle class elites in India, acceptance of English as the new "Sanskrit" carrying the power and hegemony was correspondingly witnessed. Macaulay's statements were more like a premonition. Bengal renaissance[3] emerged out of the acceptance of British language and education as a trend. Acceptance of English language gets extended to learning and internalisation of philosophical thoughts prevailing in the United Kingdom (and also the countries around). This meant studying English literature and European philosophy as accepted by the British – tracing the historical root to the Greek philosophical traditions. Interestingly, it also excluded, at the same time, few rich philosophical traditions of Europe. Overall, the trend of seeing Europe as the epitome of philosophical articulation is well accepted by the philosophy community in the country. This trend is not exclusive of India; in fact, it is part of a larger trend accepted in the entire Global South. Starting from Socrates and Plato to medieval philosophers like St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, to the flag bearers of "modern" philosophy like Rene Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Hume, Kant and Hegel – all remain permanent markers of philosophy.

The trend still continues today with the overarching supremacy of Anglo-Saxon philosophy in the globe. Much more than the ancient Greek philosophy, contemporary Anglo-Saxon philosophy[4] continues to occupy the main trend of philosophical reflection in the academic curriculum of the country. While the trend of reading the Anglo-Saxon philosophers still continues in India, significant influence and reading of Continental philosophy,[5] too, is witnessed.

Along with these philosophers and their philosophies, several key concepts of western philosophy – such as Being, Self, Mind, Consciousness, Truth, Knowledge, Language, Reference, Meaning, Judgement, Goodness, Justice, Freedom, Agency, etc. have become day-to-day vocabulary in Indian academic discourses, not to mention their overarching presence in core philosophy curriculum.

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[3] I am refereeing to Brahmo Samaj, Young Bengal Movement, etc., including Asiatic Society.
[4] Anglo-Saxon philosophy of Bertrand Russell, Rudolph Carnap, Karl Popper, A.J. Ayer, J.L. Austin, G. Frege, G.E. Moore, F.H. Bradley, Ludwig Wittgenstein, P.F. Strawson, Derek Perfit, Galen Strawson, David Charmers and many more still dominate the academic scenario in the country.
[5] For instance, influence of Jean Paul Sartre, Simon de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Jasper, Michael Foucault, etc. over Indian academia was witnessed from later part of 1960s, and hermeneutics and post-modern philosophies of Paul Ricœur, Jacques Lacan and Jacque Derrida continue to influence the country as much as these philosophical trends swept the world of scholarship.

India has embraced most of the European intellectual legacy. Largely, the Indian philosophical fraternity has been engaged in studying and expounding one or the other philosophies of these great masters of Europe. While complete appropriation of European and American philosophies have been witnessed, a very few Indians have been able to make mark to these group of "western" philosophers. A few names like, J.N. Mohanty, J.L. Mehta, Richard Sorabjee, etc. may be mentioned. Within the country, host of philosophers either trained in the western universities or within the country have carved their own places in India's philosophy map. In fact, academic interest and pursuits of most of the philosophers in the Indian universities fall within this trend.

The second trend of philosophising comes from a group of philosophers driven by the nationalist ethos. These philosophers are mix of English education and worldviews on one hand, and nationalist aspiration driven by India's freedom struggle on the other. Though sounds paradoxical, they embrace the methodological framework of the western philosophy, yet draw a counterpoint to western philosophy and the philosophers. Often projection is made about Indian philosophy as a rich philosophical tradition as against western philosophy and civilization. Sri Aurobindo's philosophical insights and projection, S.N. Dasgupta's range of highlighting the vastness of Indian philosophy through eight main schools of thought, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's highlight of Indian spiritualism and monism – all were made through a comparative perspective. In each, the point of reference, obviously, is the West. The comparison is made between Indian philosophical traditions with the western philosophy. This was, in a way, a response to Macaulay's another contradicting statement that all the wisdoms of India and Arabia are of the standard elementary schools of Europe. The other philosopher who can also be considered propounder of comparative philosophy is T.M.P. Mahadevan. In recent times, the works of B.K. Matilal, R. Balasubramanian, (even Arindam Chakravarty), and several others reflect the trend.

The underlying idea behind this trend of engaging philosophy through comparative perspective is not merely about highlighting similarities and differences between two philosophical traditions, but more so about making an ideological point.

Often the tendency is to show supremacy of Indian thought and culture. This is done through a two-layered projection. One, that India, too, has (had) *what* the West

has (had); and two, that India had *it* much earlier or much richer than what the West has (had). Take for instance, Sri Aurobindo's *Aspects of Indian Culture*,[6] where he shows that Indian culture and its philosophical worldviews are not only rich but also much older (and even richer) than the West. That is how Radhakrishnan and many of his contemporaries discovered Adi Sankara as counter point of Bradley – much older in civilizational location in time, and much richer in philosophical rigour. Unlike Bradley, who was supposed to be a disguised imitator of German romanticism, Sankara was shown as epitome of logical rigour and creative metaphysics. The idea of an unqualified monism that encompasses within its fold all multiplicity of human experiences, and existence of the world, is highlighted by the Indian philosopher. Adi Sankara's Advaita Vedanta is shown to rescue the Indian culture and tradition from the garb of a receiving community.[7] The projection is of centuries-old philosophical tradition that shows its richness when the modern Europe was yet to be culturally and politically conceived.

This trend of comparison is found still in the contemporary time. The examples are of finding Buddhism as comparable to existentialism, and Bhartrihari to Derrida. The Buddhist notion of "non-soul" and "momentariness" of reality is well compared to existentialist notion of "becoming."[8] Comparisons are seen between Bhartrihari's *sabdatattva* and Derrida's *differance* in spoken and inscribed languages. One would not be surprised if, today, Syadvada of Jainism were compared as parallel to post-structuralism. It is a different issue whether Syadvada implies lack of structure or propounds multiple structures. The two positions are fairly distinct to the extent that the latter, if analyzed further, may turn out to be another form of hardened structuralism.

Though this trend of philosophising is still prevalent today, their number has certainly dwindled down. It could be because, today, India has, by and large, secured

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[6] See Aurobindo's preface in his *Aspects of Indian Culture,* Pondicherry.

[7] For further details on the nature of receiving communities, see Bhagat Oinam, "Receiving Communities: Encounter with Modernity," *Eastern Quarterly,* Vol. 3, Issue II, July–Sept. 2005.

[8] I can even recollect in one of my interviews for the post of Lecturer in a university in Rajasthan, where one expert candidly asked about the name of the Indian philosophy that propounded existentialism before it emerged in the West. The underlying presumption in the question is that India had it all before the rest of the world had one. This comes out of a deep-rooted psyche that refuses to accept plurality and concrete historical realities.

itself as a multi-nation state,[9] and also claims to become an economic and military super power. India seems to have gained confidence as a politically stable country. And the multi-nation state has been able to successfully project to the world, in the last hundred years or so, its rich intellectual tradition. So the tone of assertion has definitely softened. In more recent time, D.P. Chattopadhyaya's multi-series volume with a generic title *History of Indian Science, Philosophy and Culture* is yet another attempt towards reinforcing the assertion of India's intellectual tradition vis-à-vis the West. What is interesting about the project is that almost all the well-known and not-so-well-known scholars of philosophy in the country, and a few from other disciplines, have been mobilised to write intellectual history of the country in the above mentioned themes/disciplines. The platform is already set in a comparative mould. And barring a few, most of the scholars have been trained in the methods employed in western philosophy.

However, my take on comparative philosophy is different from the one I have so far highlighted as a trend. The comparative philosophy has its strong significance so far as such a study highlights the presence or absence of certain philosophical questions in the understanding of the world and ourselves. This may help in understanding the ideological inclination, or belief in a worldview, of a person, community or civilization. For instance, the Chinese travellers to India (Fa-Hien, Hiuen Tsang, etc.) could never conceive the idea of *sunya* beyond the world of perception. The Chinese minds are said to be culturally trained to reflect on the concrete, and not on the abstract. So, when these travellers are said to have passed through the vast empty deserts on their way to India, the visual was thought by these Chinese to be representation of what the Indians thought as *sunya*.[10] This raises important topics of study in comparative philosophy – of understanding other's culture, of translation, etc.

The absence or the presence of a philosophical question, and corresponding grounds that shaped in raising or not raising a question, suggests that there is much more to be seen beyond the contour of the content of philosophising. It highlights the position that philosophy is not to be merely seen in the *content* of philosophising but

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[9] The idea of multi-nation is to suggest towards the idea of simultaneous existence of many nation narratives within the state of India, that there exist in the country several national strands, while India remains a political entity.

[10] This example is taken from the narrative by Lokesh Chandra, the Buddhist scholar.

also in the *mode* (or package) of philosophising. The two are significantly distinct, and I would prefer to highlight the priority of the latter to the former. The latter comprehends the trends and dynamics of a philosophical discourse in totality, where the former is limited to the steps of philosophising alone. Merely adhering to the former will be like telling a story without knowing the basis of telling so.

A very significant move witnessed in the last couple of decades driven by the comparative mould is to rename and change the discourse of philosophising in the country. It is about renaming the Indian vocabulary of philosophy from *darshana* to *anviksiki.* This would mean not merely a change in the name or vocabulary, but also a major shift in the intellectual mapping of philosophy in the country. Though this has not succeeded much in terms of getting official acceptance, but the debate has not completely died down.

But I am afraid; this is a dangerous move. Reducing the mode of philosophising to *anviksiki* (meaning reasoning or analysis) is yet again to compare and equate the mode of philosophising in the country to those practised in the western intellectual world. It is, I believe, relevant to raise this issue, for preference of the term *anviksiki* is to either narrow down or broaden the horizon of philosophy in the country in the light of what is being done as philosophy elsewhere. It is important to note that the concept of *darshana* carries the larger goal or vision of philosophy as capturing of wisdom or insight of life. To this extent, the concept is quite in tune with intellectual tradition of the country, where the knowledge about the world is seen ultimately to aim towards understanding or realizing a final reality or truth. Even if one may not be a Sankara Vedantin, even to the extent of refuting the idea of ultimate unqualified monism, what one may find in the Buddhist, Jain or Samkhya-Yoga traditions are of realising the ultimate worldly wisdom. It could be about realising the ultimate truth in Buddhism that pain (*jara*) and death (*mara*) are integral part of human life, and that one ought not psychologically get depressed by these facts of life. The greatest wisdom then lies in happily embracing life and death as inseparable ontic reality. Or one may look at Jaina wisdom that there is life everywhere and it ought to be respected and preserved. And that meaningful human life lies in peaceful co-existence of various forms of life; this is the greatest wisdom one can think of. So, a change in terminology might mean loss of some insightful philosophical ideas altogether from the existing

philosophical discourse. Indian philosophical tradition is much more than mere analysis of concepts.

There is yet a third trend of philosophising, which have remained at the periphery. These are the traditional schools of philosophising taught in *math* and several religious institutions. Re-rendering of *sutra*-s is done through *sampradaya.* Orientation to philosophising is done by reading of old religious/philosophy texts, as has been taught and shared through generations down the centuries. This form of philosophising is also practised in Sanskrit studies within the university system.

Often criticism is meted out to such institutions and the mode of training with statements that these lack philosophical rigour. Further, these are seen as stereotype repetitions of the religious texts handed down by the predecessors to subsequent generations without critical reflections. Considering of *sruti* or *shastra* as *pramana* has also been criticised. While there might be certain truths in the criticism, I have doubts in the very nature in which such criticisms are made. It could be that these criticisms are but outcome of a particular type of stereotyping of the traditional knowledge systems. Even the Sanskrit studies centres in the universities are victims of such stereotypes coming from the other camp.

There is a serious need to understand the nature of the criticism meted out to the traditional knowledge systems. For this, it is important to distinguish and delineate the flaw/deficiency in philosophising between *structural deficiency* in rigour vis-à-vis *instances of deficiency*. The *instances of deficiency* refer to those cases of shortcomings that are variables – may be marked by individual weaknesses, or even a generation of poor training. On the other hand, *structural deficiency* is entirely different from this, it being marked by certain inherent weaknesses that are bound to produce deficient knowledge. Deficient knowledge is brought out because of an inherent structural flaw in the mode of intellectual discourse. It is important to ask the critics of the traditional schools whether the deficiency found in this trend (of traditional philosophising) is a case of structural deficiency or mere instances of deficiency.

If the answer is structural deficiency, then there are sufficient reasons to doubt the integrity of these critics and their criticisms. For these critics have to explain the

genius of the ancient classical Indian philosophers[11] and the qualities of debate that took place amongst the philosophical schools/sects. Therefore, deficiencies witnessed today have to be seen as criticisms of specific cases. These instances of deficiency are historical and contextual. And there would be reasons that explain the particular instances of deficiency. It will not be out of context here to raise the issue of selective state sponsorship of encouraging and privileging one form of philosophising over another.

<center>THE NEW EMERGING TREND</center>

The post-colonial[12] political India has experienced, close to the heels of the first and the second trends, few philosophers emerge who are blend of the West and the East. I have deliberately put the West over the East, for these philosophers are also, mostly by training, rooted in the western intellectual discourses and the methodologies. But unlike their predecessors, they are not so pronounced in comparative mould of the colonial period mindset, nor deeply nationalistic in overcoming inferiority complexes (driven by slavery). But their handling of philosophical issues is not limited by their training either. They take up themes across traditions, and also at times, relevant to the society or the prevailing intellectual environment. Often they come out with concepts rooted in tradition but handle those with the philosophical skills they possess. Most often these are the same scholars who had either been engaged in the first trend (of having trained and worked on western philosophy) or the second (that highlights the strength and significance of Indian philosophy vis-à-vis the West). The overlapping characterisation of these scholars shows that the distinctions are to be made in terms of the trend of philosophising rather than on the identity of the scholars per se.

A prominent philosophical theme in this trend is Daya Krishna's idea of "philosophy as *samvad*." Or his taking the idea of "alienation" beyond the matrix of Marxism, based on the ontological foundation of internal estrangement. The term "*samvad*" itself is rooted in Sanskrit vocabulary signifying the idea of "dialogue." Defining philosophy as *samvad* highlights several aspects of the Indian philosophical

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[11] These critics have to debunk the philosophical richness of the ancient Indian philosophers like Adi Sankara, Mandana Misra, Kapila, Prabhakara, Meitryi, and a host of other philosophers.

[12] I am using the term "post-colonial" in a very limited sense. Though there are many who uses the term "neo colonial" to refer to the present form of state structure and performance, I am using "post-colonial" to the aftermath of a foreign rule that nakedly deprived the people their right to form a political life.

traditions. Philosophising in Indian tradition is always in the mould of an inherent debate. That one has to constantly be aware of a prior existent counter point outside of one's own position or school. That other's point of view is already there, refuting which one consolidates one's philosophical position. In other words, the presence of a counter point (*purva paksha*) is to be historically acknowledged, in the sense that the Sanskritic tradition of philosophising in India begins with a debating spirit. There is always an alternate point of view before one, as one stands out. And that is from where philosophical argumentation takes off. A *khandan* of a counter philosophical position that is opposed to one's own position is to be the beginning point.

Interestingly, there is also a normative framework where one is expected to present the counter point as fairly as possible. Or, if I may say so, "a *just* representation of the other's point of view." What is significant here is that the other is not physically present for a *samvad,* rather the other's position as is already known is presented with utmost care, representing it as closely as possible to the true spirit. Now, in a debate where two opposite camps are to argue, and only one party is presenting both the views – other's point of view as well as one's own point of view – it is quite likely that other's point of view is not presented in true spirit. The issue here is not whether one *can truly represent* other's point of view, it is about one *ought to truly represent* other's point of view. The significance of a normative framework here is about guidance and assurance, to work as a watchdog.

While an argument draws its strength from the debate with a counter point, we are also informed of one of the basic trends of Indian philosophical traditions – that of accepting multiple points of views. This shows the plural ethos of the country – a country that has sustained differences of linguistic, religious, ethnic and cultural identities. Though one may not have much arguments for asserting, nonetheless, one can still speculate that acceptance of multiple philosophical foundations (of our knowledge about the world) could be the basis of co-existence and sustenance. This is in spite of the turmoil and disgruntled voices around the country. The cultural foundation of resilience based on epistemic pluralism is perhaps what sustains the country.

The idea of *samvad* could also be taken on a plane of abstraction, where the debate is taken from the prior-presence of a concrete counter point to that of an

ideational and structural counter point. This is to see the discourse beyond the realm of the concrete (or a possible concrete). If this distinction can be conceded, then there should be possibility of locating the counter point within one's own self. That is, one sees the other in oneself. The other conceived within oneself is neither a concrete other nor a possible concrete other, but merely a point of view. This is different from the *purvapaksa* as understood in traditional Indian philosophy. That one can dialogue with oneself positing a counter point. It is to conceive the dual role played by the self to be a first person as well as a third person in a dialogic mould.

The dialogue between the first person and third person perspectives is highlighted more prominently in the two classic articles by Rajendra Prasad on man's unending dialogue with God that appeared in *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*.[13] The articles show the analytical rigour with which a perennial human problem is being discussed. The dialogue takes an interesting turn when the content of the discussion takes the readers to different levels of discussion – say (i) between a sceptic stance and given set of belief (as knowledge), or (ii) between a non-believer and a believer, or (iii) between reason and faith. The layers still could be more.

One can also witness in Prasad's treatment of ethical concepts and theories in Indian tradition, his employing of intense logical and analytic rigour, which is a blend of his training in both the western and the Indian traditions. But the comparative mould or the assimilative tendency does not seem to be driven by the tendency of privileging one over the other. Even one witnesses covertly the mode of phenomenological enquiry in the conceiving of *Three Lived Worlds* in R. Balasubramanian's understanding of Indian Life-world. This is more pronounced in the philosophising of J.N. Mohanty where he reads Indian philosophy from a phenomenological perspective.

Mrinal Miri's take on the philosophy of education is neither located in traditional Indian philosophical theories nor fully based on western theories of education alone. Theorising is done based on categories of philosophising in the West, yet located in the experiences of Indian life world and ethos. This is a case of an integrated approach, without at the same time being influenced by comparative mould or ideology.

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[13] See his two articles that appeared in *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* twice.

However, one aspect common to all these philosophers is their training in western philosophy that compartmentalises the discipline of philosophy into sub-disciplines – metaphysics/ontology, epistemology and ethics. One may still add logic and aesthetics into the list. While division and compartmentalisation enable us to understand philosophical problems with sufficient clarity, the same, too, carry several limitations. For instance, while investigating reality, one ends up knowing one aspect of the reality without being able to comprehend the total reality. Further more, when one concentrates on the theory of knowledge, say, to understand the nature of self – what gets often left out is the ontology of the Self. One may tactfully respond by saying that his/her job is to look at the epistemological side of the investigation; but this only shows the limiting aspect of the exercise.

The above argument to critique compartmentalisation may not have many takers; yet this has its strengths and limitations. The division of philosophy into metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, etc. and handling philosophical problem from one of these methodological prism certainly limits our understanding of reality. Further, it falls short of capturing what is known as worldly wisdom and insights, which the idea of *darshana* envisages.

CAN ONE STILL ENVISAGE AN ALTERNATE WAY?

The above argument is not to suggest that philosophy is to be only known as *darshana,* as understood in Indian Sanskritic tradition. Let philosophy be also known by conceptual analysis. That is how Vienna Circle attempted to define philosophy as. The only problem, here, is that while each of these schools/traditions think (and talk) differently, each claims that theirs is the only way of defining philosophy. I believe that it would enrich the discipline if there were more than one definite definition of the subject. This will not only show the complexity and richness of philosophy as a discipline, but also provide avenues where the conception of the subject continues to evolve or develop. It will make philosophy young and alive in spite of being the oldest subject, ensuring that it does not become a finished subject (discipline). The distinctive feature of philosophy is that it does not have a defined area of study, a scope or a subject matter. Its ideational nature, and reflective mould, makes it ever moving, ever redefining itself. So, a multiple understanding of the nature of philosophy will not only free itself from the civilizational and political hegemony which many subjects suffer

from, but would be able to compare, contrast, assimilate and negotiate its own nature and identity by cutting across traditions and beliefs.

To experiment this possibility, there is need to transcend the methodological divide. This, of course, is not a new concern in the history of philosophy. The idea of onto-theology[14] is an already existing concept. But one need not go to the genealogy of this concept as can be traced in the modern Continental philosophy. There is, on the contrary, need to see the philosophical insights found in the traditional organic life-worlds in which one belong. Then only can one think of a difference.

Let me begin with one of my beliefs: the belief that it is still relevant to ask how one can do philosophy through poetry, story telling or a dance. This is not altogether a new method; I am revisiting the approach long seem to have forgotten by human civilizations. Mankind seems to have forgotten that all the civilizations and cultures of the world began their civilizational journey by singing songs and telling stories. Through story, poetry and dance, tales of representing the universe, existential anxiety and worldly wisdom were shared from one generation to another. This can also be seen as a tradition of constantly telling story to oneself. It is like a narcissist engagement towards one's own self and the life. Without love for oneself and the life, one does not exist. Existence will not just make sense. One loves and thinks about oneself; that is how existence becomes meaningful. It is in self-reflection that one realizes one's existence. More than doubting, it is about care and concerns for the life that human existence becomes meaningful. It is through telling stories, singing songs, and dancing through the body that one constantly reassures one's existence. Philosophising is another name for this reassurance.

The self, most often, is in the collective – philosophy need not merely talk about a single "I," but of a collective "We." This is not about a metaphysical Brahman in *paramarthik satta* that overarchingly encompasses all selves (*jivas*), yet remain an unqualified singular substance. I am keen to understand the dynamics where a collective together talks of a singular self, not at a transcendent plane but at a pragmatic social plane. It is of a case where the voice of the constituting self is similar, if not identical, with that of the collective. One can find a detailed discussion of such a

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[14] Heidegger's idea of onto-theology is aimed at understanding the idea of principal ontology that does not make a distinction between ontology, theology and epistemology. It is an integrated approach to comprehend the meaning of (human) life.

phenomenon in the political movement as studied by Jean Paul Sartre,[15] but that is only a limited view of a larger phenomena witnessed all over the civilizations. One can go beyond the matrix of a philosopher or a philosophical tradition. So a multiple take and approaches to study the nature of self will widen the philosophical reading of the self, for instance.

Ceasing to tell story is end road of a culture or a civilization. And with the end of a culture or a civilzation, philosophizing comes to a halt. In other words, philosophy ought to be seen as a form of self-expression that has many ways, modes and moods. So, there is need to come out of an idea of an abstract analysis. Conceptual analysis is only a tool that may perhaps be involved in the telling of those stories. Since each community and civilization tells its own story, philosophy ought to be but culture specific.

As much as philosophising in the country has gone through phases influenced by nationalist struggle, or it has been influenced by particular religious faith about their God and creation, still new ways could be explored of philosophising. That philosophising has been accepted through civilizational location and differences (say, of the Greek, the Indian and the Chinese), it should also be possible to conceive of small culture-specific philosophising. Accepting the former and denouncing the latter could be seen as distinction marked by politics of power – of hegemonising and privileging of one scheme of categorization over another. To this way, it should be possible to explore the possibility of ethnic philosophy, closer to what the African philosophers call "ethno-philosophy." Yet what I am hinting is about philosophising that need not be necessarily from modernist or western paradigm.

One such way of philosophising is to capture the mode of belief in creation myths, cosmogony, folklore, practical wisdom, etc. Or capture the mode of architecture,[16] music, poetry,[17] drama,[18] or several forms of artifacts. Or, capture the contours of bodily movement in a dance. In short, the plea is to have a space for philosophising not necessarily determined and governed by reasoning or rationalising.

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[15] Sartre discussed about constitutive and constituted praxis in understanding social and political movement citing cases of European political experiences. But this is a general way in which collective function vis-à-vis the individual. It is equally pronounced in cultural identity formation of any society. For specific case of political mobilization, see his *Critique of Dialectical Reason.*

[16] I am referring to the emergence of post-modernism.

[17] Creation of Ananda Vardhan's Dhwanaloka is an example.

[18] Creation of Natya Shastra is yet another form of philosophising based on performance.

If this is permitted, philosophical insights can be captured from the life-world of the communities (irrespective of size and power one have). Philosophising, then, will not be confined to *reasoning* but to *self-expression*. And what more profound way one can think of than capturing the modes and contents of self-expression of the communities at the margins. This effort could be a novel way of relooking at modes of philosophising. This would be all about "hallowing the profane."[19]

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[19] I have taken this phrase from Martin Buber.