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by Surendranath Dasgupta

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nikhilam anujachittaM jñânasûtrair naverya@h
 sajabhiva kusumânâM kâlandhhrair vidhatte/
 sa laghum api mamaitaM prAchyavijñânatantuM
upah@rtamatibhaktyâ modatâM mai g@rhîtvâ//

May He, who links the minds of all people,
through the apertures of time, with new threads
of knowledge like a garland of flowers, be pleased
to accept this my thread of Eastern thought, offered,
though it be small, with the greatest devotion.

A HISTORY OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

SURENDRANATH DASGUPTA

VOLUME I

First Edition: Cambridge, 1922

DEDICATION

The work and ambition of a life-time is herein humbly

dedicated with supreme reverence to the great sages
of India, who, for the first time in history, formulated
the true principles of freedom and devoted themselves
to the holy quest of truth and the final assessment
and discovery of the ultimate spiritual essence of
man through their concrete lives, critical thought,
dominant will and self-denial.

NOTE ON THE PRONUNCIATION OF
TRANSLITERATED SANSKRIT
AND PÂLI WORDS

The vowels are pronounced almost in the same way
as in Italian, except that the sound of _a_ approaches
that of _o_ in _bond_ or _u_ in _but_, and _â_ that of _a_ as in _army_.
The consonants are as in English, except _c_, _ch_ in church;
_@t_, _@d_, _@n_ are cerebrals, to which English _t_, _d_, _n_ almost
correspond; _t_, _d_, _n_ are pure dentals; _kh_, _gh_, _ch_, _jh_,
_@th_, _@dh_, _th_, _dh_, _ph_, _bh_ are the simple sounds plus an
aspiration; _ñ_ is the French _gn_; _@r_ is usually pronounced
as _ri_, and _s'_, _@s_ as _sh_.

PREFACE

The old civilisation of India was a concrete unity of many-sided
developments in art, architecture, literature, religion, morals, and
science so far as it was understood in those days. But the most important
achievement of Indian thought was philosophy. It was regarded as the goal
of all the highest practical and theoretical activities, and it indicated
the point of unity amidst all the apparent diversities which the complex
growth of culture over a vast area inhabited by different peoples produced.

It is not in the history of foreign invasions, in the rise of independent
kingdoms at different times, in the empires of this or that great monarch
that the unity of India is to be sought. It is essentially one of
spiritual aspirations and obedience to the law of the spirit, which were
regarded as superior to everything else, and it has outlived all the
political changes through which India passed.

The Greeks, the Huns, the Scythians, the Pathans and the Moguls who
occupied the land and controlled the political machinery never ruled
the minds of the people, for these political events were like hurricanes
or the changes of season, mere phenomena of a natural or physical order
which never affected the spiritual integrity of Hindu culture. If after
a passivity of some centuries India is again going to become creative it
is mainly on account of this fundamental unity of her progress and
civilisation and not for anything that she may borrow from other
countries. It is therefore indispensably necessary for all those who
wish to appreciate the significance and potentialities of Indian culture
that they should properly understand the history of Indian philosophical
thought which is the nucleus round which all that is best and highest in
India has grown. Much harm has already been done by the circulation of
opinions that the culture and philosophy of India was dreamy and abstract.
It is therefore very necessary that Indians as well as other peoples
should become more and more acquainted with the true characteristics
of the past history of Indian thought and form a correct estimate of its

special features.

But it is not only for the sake of the right understanding of India

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that Indian philosophy should be read, or only as a record of the past thoughts of India. For most of the problems that are still debated in modern philosophical thought occurred in more or less divergent forms to the philosophers of India. Their discussions, difficulties and solutions when properly grasped in connection with the problems of our own times may throw light on the course of the process of the future reconstruction of modern thought. The discovery of the important features of Indian philosophical thought, and a due appreciation of their full significance, may turn out to be as important to modern philosophy as the discovery of Sanskrit has been to the investigation of modern philological researches. It is unfortunate that the task of re-interpretation and re-valuation of Indian thought has not yet been undertaken on a comprehensive scale. Sanskritists also with very few exceptions have neglected this important field of study, for most of these scholars have been interested more in mythology, philology, and history than in philosophy. Much work however has already been done in the way of the publication of a large number of important texts, and translations of some of them have also been attempted. But owing to the presence of many technical terms in advanced Sanskrit philosophical literature, the translations in most cases are hardly intelligible to those who are not familiar with the texts themselves.

A work containing some general account of the mutual relations of the chief systems is necessary for those who intend to pursue the study of a particular school. This is also necessary for lay readers interested in philosophy and students of Western philosophy who have no inclination or time to specialise in any Indian system, but who are at the same time interested to know what they can about Indian philosophy. In my two books _The Study of Patanjali_ and _Yoga Philosophy in relation to other Indian Systems of Thought_ I have attempted to interpret the Sämkhya and Yoga systems both from their inner point of view and from the point of view of their relation to other Indian systems. The present attempt deals with the important features of these as also of all the other systems and seeks to show some of their inner philosophical relations especially in regard to the history of their development. I have tried to be as faithful to the original texts as I could and have always given the Sanskrit or Pâli technical terms for the help of those who want to make this book a guide

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for further study. To understand something of these terms is indeed essential for anyone who wishes to be sure that he is following the actual course of the thoughts.

In Sanskrit treatises the style of argument and methods of treating the different topics are altogether different from what we find in any modern work of philosophy. Materials had therefore to be collected from a large number of works on each system and these have been knit together and given a shape which is likely to be more intelligible to people unacquainted with Sanskritic ways of thought. But at the same time I considered it quite undesirable to put any pressure on Indian thoughts in order to make them appear as European. This will explain much of what might appear quaint to a European reader. But while keeping all the thoughts and expressions of the Indian thinkers I have tried to arrange them in a systematic whole in a manner which appeared to me strictly

faithful to their clear indications and suggestions. It is only in very few places that I have translated some of the Indian terms by terms of English philosophy, and this I did because it appeared to me that those were approximately the nearest approach to the Indian sense of the term. In all other places I have tried to choose words which have not been made dangerous by the acquirement of technical senses. This however is difficult, for the words which are used in philosophy always acquire some sort of technical sense. I would therefore request my readers to take those words in an unsophisticated sense and associate them with such meanings as are justified by the passages and contexts in which they are used. Some of what will appear as obscure in any system may I hope be removed if it is re-read with care and attention, for unfamiliarity sometimes stands in the way of right comprehension. But I may have also missed giving the proper suggestive links in many places where condensation was inevitable and the systems themselves have also sometimes insoluble difficulties, for no system of philosophy is without its dark and uncomfortable corners.

Though I have begun my work from the Vedic and Brâhma@nic stage, my treatment of this period has been very slight. The beginnings of the evolution of philosophical thought, though they can be traced in the later Vedic hymns, are neither connected nor systematic.

More is found in the Brâhmanas, but I do not think it worth while to elaborate the broken shreds of thought of this epoch. I could have dealt with the Upani@sad period more fully, but many works on the subject have already been published in Europe and those who wish to go into details will certainly go to them. I have therefore limited myself to the dominant current flowing through the earlier Upani@sads. Notices of other currents of thought will be given in connection with the treatment of other systems in the second volume with which they are more intimately connected. It will be noticed that my treatment of early Buddhism is in some places of an inconclusive character. This is largely due to the inconclusive character of the texts which were put into writing long after Buddha in the form of dialogues and where the precision and directness required in philosophy were not contemplated. This has given rise to a number of theories about the interpretations of the philosophical problems of early Buddhism among modern Buddhist scholars and it is not always easy to decide one way or the other without running the risk of being dogmatic; and the scope of my work was also too limited to allow me to indulge in very elaborate discussions of textual difficulties. But still I also have in many places formed theories of my own, whether they are right or wrong it will be for scholars to judge. I had no space for entering into any polemic, but it will be found that my interpretations of the systems are different in some cases from those offered by some European scholars who have worked on them and I leave it to those who are acquainted with the literature of the subject to decide which of us may be in the right. I have not dealt elaborately with the new school of Logic (Navya-Nyâya) of Bengal, for the simple reason that most of the contributions of this school consist in the invention of technical expressions and the emphasis put on the necessity of strict exactitude and absolute preciseness of logical definitions and discussions and these are almost untranslatable in intelligible English. I have however incorporated what important differences of philosophical points of view I could find in it. Discussions of a purely technical character could not be very fruitful in a work like this. The bibliography given of the different Indian systems in the last six chapters is not exhaustive but consists mostly of books which have been actually studied or consulted in

the writing of those chapters. Exact references to the pages of the

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texts have generally been given in footnotes in those cases where a difference of interpretation was anticipated or where it was felt that a reference to the text would make the matter clearer, or where the opinions of modern writers have been incorporated.

It gives me the greatest pleasure to acknowledge my deepest gratefulness to the Hon'ble Maharaja Sir Manindrachandra Nundy, K.C.I.E. Kashimbazar, Bengal, who has kindly promised to bear the entire expense of the publication of both volumes of the present work.

The name of this noble man is almost a household word in Bengal for the magnanimous gifts that he has made to educational and other causes. Up till now he has made a total gift of about £300,000, of which those devoted to education come to about £200,000. But the man himself is far above the gifts he has made. His sterling character, universal sympathy and friendship, his kindness and amiability make him a veritable Bodhisattva--one of the noblest of men that I have ever seen. Like many other scholars of Bengal, I am deeply indebted to him for the encouragement that he has given me in the pursuit of my studies and researches, and my feelings of attachment and gratefulness for him are too deep for utterance.

I am much indebted to my esteemed friends Dr E.J. Thomas of the Cambridge University Library and Mr Douglas Ainslie for their kindly revising the proofs of this work, in the course of which they improved my English in many places. To the former I am also indebted for his attention to the transliteration of a large number of Sanskrit words, and also for the whole-hearted sympathy and great friendliness with which he assisted me with his advice on many points of detail, in particular the exposition of the Buddhist doctrine of the cause of rebirth owes something of its treatment to repeated discussions with him.

I also wish to express my gratefulness to my friend Mr N.K. Siddhanta, M.A., late of the Scottish Churches College, and Mademoiselle Paule Povie for the kind assistance they have rendered in preparing the index. My obligations are also due to the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press for the honour they have done me in publishing this work.

To scholars of Indian philosophy who may do me the honour of reading my book and who may be impressed with its inevitable

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shortcomings and defects, I can only pray in the words of Hemacandra:

  Pramâ@nasiddhântaviruddham atra
  Yatkiñciduktam matimândyado@sât
  Mâtsaryyam utsâryya tadâryyacittâ@h
  Prasâdam âdhâya vis'odhayantu. [Footnote ref 1]

S.D.

TRINITY COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE.

February, 1922.

[Footnote 1: May the noble-minded scholars instead of cherishing ill feeling kindly correct whatever errors have been here committed through the dullness of my intellect in the way of wrong interpretations and misstatements.]

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

The achievements of the ancient Indians in the field of philosophy are but very imperfectly known to the world at large, and it is unfortunate that the condition is no better even in India. There is a small body of Hindu scholars and ascetics living a retired life in solitude, who are well acquainted with the subject, but they do not know English and are not used to modern ways of thinking, and the idea that they ought to write books in vernaculars in order to popularize the subject does not appeal to them. Through the activity of various learned bodies and private individuals both in Europe and in India large numbers of philosophical works in Sanskrit and Pâli have been published, as well as translations of a few of them, but there has been as yet little systematic attempt on the part of scholars to study them and judge their value. There are hundreds of Sanskrit works on most of the systems of Indian thought and scarcely a hundredth part of them has been translated. Indian modes of expression, entailing difficult technical philosophical terms are so different from those of European thought, that they can hardly ever be accurately translated. It is therefore very difficult for a person unacquainted with Sanskrit to understand Indian philosophical thought in its true bearing from translations. Pâli is a much easier language than Sanskrit, but a knowledge of Pâli is helpful in understanding only the earliest school of Buddhism, when it was in its semi-philosophical stage. Sanskrit is generally regarded as a difficult language. But no one from an acquaintance with Vedic or ordinary literary Sanskrit can have any idea of the difficulty of the logical and abstruse parts of Sanskrit philosophical literature. A man who can easily understand the Vedas. the Upani@sads, the Purânas, the Law Books and the literary works, and is also well acquainted with European philosophical thought, may find it literally impossible to understand even small portions of a work of advanced Indian logic, or the dialectical Vedânta. This is due to two reasons, the use of technical terms and of great condensation in expression, and the hidden allusions to doctrines of other systems. The

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tendency to conceiving philosophical problems in a clear and unambiguous manner is an important feature of Sanskrit thought, but from the ninth century onwards, the habit of using clear, definite, and precise expressions, began to develop in a very striking manner, and as a result of that a large number of technical terms began to be invented. These terms are seldom properly explained, and it is presupposed that the reader who wants to read the works should have a knowledge of them. Any one in olden times who took to the study of any system of philosophy, had to do so with a teacher, who explained those terms to him. The teacher himself