

Philosophy-tea

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Editorial

What is the issue of feminism? What are woman's rights? These questions seem to resonate our everyday life insistently in some form or the other, but they seem of no consequence to the Indian Philosophical Community. If academic journals are about giving space- to engage in an ongoing dialogue or about echoing the concern of a research community, we are sorry to say that there was no substantial commitment with regard to any issue concerning women. A search done in two of the journals (JICPR and IPQ) of the last ten years (1992-2002) revealed to us that there were only three articles published in JICPR and two in the IPQ (... leave aside that not all the articles directly relevant to women issues in Indian context). Which forced us to question the relevance the theme of feminism has in the Indian context and more specifically in the Indian Philosophical Community. It is as though the question of women's rights was never an issue.

Is it then only one of the many concepts that we have borrowed from the west? Or, does it have its own justification and logic in the present Indian milieu. And, can it demand its own space of discourse in the Indian philosophical circles.

We should confess that these questions never bothered us until we decided to write an article on Indian Women Philosophers. Our thorough search through these journals revealed that there was not a single philosophy article on any Indian women thinker. Does it then mean that women had no contribution to make

to Indian thought? We speculated that it could have meant the following possibilities:

- 1) Either there were no women philosophers (which is not true, offhand we can think of Gargi).
Or
- 2) The contribution of the women philosophers was very marginal.
- 3) Or else the indifference of the Indian philosophical community to treasure/write about our women philosophers.

This editorial is only an attempt at expressing our anguish and dismay over the lack of interest that 'issue of women' generates in the area of philosophical research; whereas we need not even mention the heated arguments generated at any point in our day to day life.

The article is written with misgivings, keeping in view that one cannot question the interest of any philosopher but the questions do arise. It is also not an attempt at pointing fingers but only to put across what we discovered. We do not know the reasons and we could only speculate on the reasons but still in ground reality this seems to be the fact: That there is hardly any article on any issue concerning women in Indian journals (philosophical journals published in India).

Philosophy-tea shares the anguish and proposes to bring forth the next issue on 'Women Philosophy'. We invite you to air you views.

Philosophical Hermeneutics of Gadamer

The term Hermeneutics has its etymological root in the Greek term '*hermes*', which means 'messenger', so hermeneutics works as a messenger from part to whole and whole to part. Hermeneutics was used in 18th, century to interpret religious texts.

It was Schliermarcher who used Hermeneutic method in theology and defined it as an art of avoiding misunderstanding, later on William Dilthey attempted to make Hermeneutics a method (*verstehen*) in social sciences. But Hans-Georg Gadamer holds that Hermeneutics is concerned with breaches of subjectivity. So, Hermeneutics can be viewed from two standpoints: one as 'philosophical method' and another as a 'feature of human existence'. Gadamer is mainly concerned with the latter.

Gadamer's main contribution to Hermeneutics lies in the notion of Hermeneutic circle and "Role of Tradition" in Hermeneutics. By Hermeneutic circle he holds that interpretation is circular one, involving a moment from 'part' to 'whole' and 'whole' to 'part'. Understanding is possible only through movement between the whole and the part. This dynamics of 'whole' to 'part' and 'part' to 'whole' is called Hermeneutic circle.

The aim of the Hermeneutics is to bridge the gap between the world in which we stand and the strange meaning that resists into the horizon of our world. Interpretation is not only concerned with meaning but also with truth (what it says). Gadamer holds that texts are never interpreted better or worse only differently. But while interpreting a text, one has to consider at least the following things.

The linguistic problem of translation
Language change
Space and time of author

Interpretation and understanding go together "understanding for Gadamer is the fusion of Horizons". Gadamer holds that to understand a work (text) does not mean that we understand the author's intention (which is in principle unachievable). The intention of

the author is an inadequate standard of interpretation because it is non-dialectical and Gadamer considers understanding as essentially dialectical.

Gadamer holds that all Hermeneutics is tradition bound and therefore historical. Tradition is inescapable facticity, belongingness to tradition is our primordial ontological condition for Hermeneutic exercise. Tradition for Gadamer is built out of the meetings between the reader and the text. Traditional Hermeneutic theory postulates a subject who aims to understand an object (text) 'as it is'. That means the interpreter should be open minded, unbiased, but Gadamer holds that "Prejudice" is necessary for Hermeneutics. There is never a point when we are free totally free from this productive prejudice. Prejudice in the sense of pre-understanding gives rise to our expectation and make understanding possible.

In Hermeneutics "Language" plays seminal role. Gadamer holds that, it is only language by which we have Hermeneutic understanding. Language has - as Gadamer puts it "disclosive power". What is spoken of in language, what is captured in our concepts in the common world in which we live, in fact language is universal medium for understanding, language discloses realities and assimilates them within itself.

In fact Gadamer's contribution to Hermeneutics is extremely significant.

- **Jaleel Ahsan Zargar**
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Responses to Articles

Dear Aman and Vegitha,

Thank you for your letter and Philosophy-tea, Vol.1, Issue 2. I went through the Philosophy-tea. Why didn't you insert the page numbers?

One should appreciate Bharath Kumar's initiation of a discussion on Nation and Nationalism, as this issue is unduly neglected by many of us. Kumar has not

said anything on Indian Nationalism. I think, we can gain more if he points out some distinguishing features of Indian Nation and Indian Nationalism. I would like to request to Kumar to explain the idea of a nationalism that makes no use of a principle borrowed or learnt from others, provided he agrees with me that

- a. We cannot survive as human beings if we don't follow somebody or some principles.
- b. It is wrong to kill a man if the reason behind my killing the man is that the man I dislike the most likes to save that man.
- c. We cannot abolish the concept of truth by telling lies.

Aurbindo's query on the relevance of philosophy is not only interesting but also quite appropriate in the Indian context today. Following Plato, one may say that we are more wise since we know what we want and those who are after money don't know what they want. But this is to say in a joke. Seriously speaking, if we do nothing but conserve the ideas of some great philosophers by reading, understanding, teaching, interpreting, translating and writing books/articles, we should be happy that the number of philosophy departments is greater than the number of archeology departments in India. It is undesirable that the number of special departments for the preservation of ideas in addition to library science departments should be more than that for the preservation of concrete valuable old things. This undesirable event takes place because people have not become too radical, They are quite slow in eliminating the useless. Other wise, many of us stand no where but in the dustbin. If you can ensure that an M.A. in philosophy is qualitatively better than an M.A. or M.Sc. in any other subject, than, none but a fool can become hesitant to take a course in philosophy. We should not blame on others but ourselves and self examine, we should become self-critical in order to improve ourselves. The ugly face of philosophy today can be changed only if we change ourselves.

**- Dr. Laxminarayan Lenka
NEHU, Shillong-22.**

Dear Aurbindo,

Your article, 'Politics of being neglected', has sparked off me to seek a space here, not to come down on you but to sing along with you. As you bombarded all those somewhat troubling questions, I was immediately reminded of one of Russell's famous remarks: 'The studying of these questions, if not the answering of them, is the business of philosophy'.

Instead there are many who due to their narrow attitude towards life have constantly questioned the value of philosophy. Popper has already warned us of such people when he wrote, "... I believe that only a revival of interest in these riddles (i.e. the world and of man's knowledge of the world) can save science and philosophy from an obscurantist faith in the expert's special skill and in his personal knowledge and authority". I too believe that 'specialization' of knowledge and using it as an excuse to remain indifferent to other disciplines whatsoever, is the result of having such an attitude, and it is they who are largely responsible for compounding the problems of today.

Life, for them starts and ends with money, as you rightly pointed out. Such people derive the meaning of their existence only from their physical interactions with the world. As such, they allow the external objects to regulate their thoughts and actions, to a great extent that even life's meaning and happiness are entirely determined from without. No wonder, so many people commit suicide when they are faced with problems and failures.

Philosophy offers different alternatives to those who are seeking the meaning of life. And for many a great philosopher, life is an end itself and therefore its meaning has to come from within. Don't you think it'll be too absurd to see Buddha, Gandhi or for that matter Jesus Christ, loaded with 'money' and spreading their teachings or rather teaching for material gain?!

Let us not stop questioning. In the meantime, let us also be bold enough to go a step further and ask ourselves and others if our questions are falsifiable (For e.g. Who

is superior, woman or man?') Let us not stop philosophizing. Long live Philosophy.

Venusa Tinyi
Research Scholar, Dept of Philosophy,
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Letters to the Editors

"Philosophy-Tea" is alright. Only I wish you had chosen a better name. In any case the idea is good and I wish you all success.

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May I suggest that you formulate some issue or issues for interdisciplinary dialogue and discussion so that students from other universities may write to you and take part in it? You have also to clearly indicate whether you would like the discussion only in English or you might have it in other languages also.

Wishing you success in your enterprise.

Prof. Daya Krishna
B-189/A, University Marg,
Bapu Nagar, Jaipur-302 015

Dear Aman,

Thank you very much for sending me a copy of *Philosophy-tea*. I am very happy that the second issue of your magazine has come out with many novel features. I am sure that you will continue to bring out this valuable magazine in the years to come and publish new philosophical ideas.

I wish you and Vegitha all success.

- Prof. R. C. Pradhan
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Call for Papers

"Constructing Identities: Local and Global"
The Fifth International Convention Forum on Contemporary Theory, Shillong 15th -18th December 2002. Last date for abstract submission: 1st August 2002. Contact Person: Kailash C. Baral CIEFL Shillong 14.
cieflrc@sancharnet.in

"Philosophical Foundations of Discourse of Science". Seventh National Workshop 29th - 31st October 2002. Abstract deadline: 15th August 2002. Contact- Prafulla C. Kar.
pck@satyam.net.in

Submissions

Philosophy-tea is published several times a year. Short articles, letters, notes & queries, provocations & reactions, half-baked ideas, reviews of papers/ articles/ books are solicited. Please send in your articles to The Editors, Philosophy-tea. The articles may be submitted through electronically to philosophytea@myrealbox.com and philosophytea@hotmail.com

Please keep the submissions to no more than one typed single spaced page. Editors need not agree with the authors on the issues. The copyright responsibility lies solely with the authors. The articles published here are the copyrights of the author or the editors if unattributed.

We

Aman is working on Epistemic Logics. He is the founding editor of Philosophy-tea.

Bharath is looking after the publicity and is research coordinator of Philosophy-tea. His area of interest is Philosophy of Science and Social-political Philosophy.

Vegitha is working on Non-monotonic Autoepistemic logic. She is the Chief Editor of this newsletter.

Venusa helps us in different aspects of Philosophy-tea.

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Articles are invited for the next issue of Philosophy-tea. The theme would be on feminist philosophy.

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India.