

A GANDHI AND A SOCRATIC GADFLY

In Memory of Two Indian Philosophers

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## Foreword



*Two great Indian philosophers - Ramchandra Gandhi and Daya Krishna, have passed away during the year 2007, leaving the philosophical world poorer in the sense that it would not be possible to hear them again. But in another respect they have left the philosophical world enriched with their seminal writings and have breathed fresh life into philosophical thinking in their own distinctive ways. Ramchandra Gandhi, inimitable in his creative philosophizing and Daya Krishna in iconoclastic thinking at the same time rendering available infinite possibilities for advancing thought movements, have left deep impact on upcoming philosophers.*

*The brief yet living sketches by Sri M.R. Venkatesh of these two philosophers would surely succeed in compelling the readers to learn more about them. Sri Venkatesh, though he left the University more than two decades before, still keeps in touch with philosophy with his usual deep concerns. Better acquaintance with the works of these two great philosophers of the contemporary Indian scene would turn out to be not only informative but also provoke readers for thinking afresh in new directions and enrich both their minds as well as the philosophical discourse.*

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December 2007

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## CHAPTER - I

### RAMCHANDRA GANDHI –AN EXEMPLAR OF 'ADVAITA' AND INDIAN AWAKENING

The pithy and simultaneous rainbow description, "One of Gandhi's grandsons", was just about cardinal, profound and dramatic enough for the international media to instantly run a New Delhi datelined story on the death of philosopher Ramchandra Gandhi on June 13, 2007, that shook many who knew him personally or even tangentially.



Barely hours after the News Agencies had moved the story, Prof. Gandhi's untimely demise- he was found dead in the room he had checked into a few days earlier at the India International Centre, a privileged club where diverse thought-currents meet and clash-, was all over the National and International media, from our own newspapers, to publications in far-away lands, not to speak of the broadcast media led by the BBC.

From the 'Dawn', the leading English Daily of Pakistan, to "The Chicago Tribune" and "The Seattle Times", almost every paper had an obituary on Prof.

Gandhi, a unique tribute to a complex and great thinker and teacher, who not only unceasingly asked himself the basic Socratic and 'Upanishadic' question, "Who Am I?", but also dared make the intuitive leap to unravel the ontological status of Man's collective consciousness.

This is no allegory or fiction. Ramchandra Gandhi (1937-2007) walked his talk all the way, till his last breath, and did not merely discuss academically questions like "Who Are We?", whether it was a balmy evening at the India International Centre or sitting under the huge Banyan tree at the Theosophical Society in Adyar, Chennai, at one of its annual conventions. For him, the search for Truth was the path, and love of wisdom, as Philosophy has been understood from ancient times, was its manifestation.

No wonder that being Gandhi's grandson was not only special but also sacred in the larger catholic discourse of modern humanity for the media, though Prof. Gandhi during his lifetime felt very uncomfortable to be given that exalted sobriquet. He no doubt took pride in his grandfather Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who led India's struggle for Independence, for having preserved her secular soul, but never saw in it a trademark or a coupon to encash in the hall of fame.

As the great philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein once said, after a point in life, "it is easy to be clever", but far more difficult to try and understand what is

good for us. We see in the late Prof. Gandhi one who truly lived that tortuous dictum, renouncing cleverness for that one light of Truth, without losing sight of larger societal concerns even for a day.

So much so, when one read in the newspapers that Ramchandra Gandhi was cremated the next day in Delhi's Lodhi road crematorium and that Leela, his daughter, performed his last rites in the presence of his wife Indu, sister Tara, his two very distinguished brothers, Rajmohan Gandhi, author and contemporary historian, Gopalkrishna Gandhi, the present Governor of West Bengal, and other close relatives and friends, it seemed - to vary one of his favourite cricket metaphors - a most exciting Mind series called 'Ramu Time' had returned to 'Brahman's Pavilion', with willows piled upon his 'Agni'.

A little read chapter in the history of post-Independent India's Philosophy had ended, possibly to only open up a new hermeneutics of Ramchandra Gandhi, the last thing he would want. "You know, a photograph is like a Platonic form. It has a reality of its own. It never dies," he once told this writer in a conversation. I could not help breaking down seeing the picture of Prof. Gandhi, transmitted by the Associated Press, after his death.

It was an extra-sensory experience almost, more of the intuitive type that flashed out from this 'Platonic form' rather than anything to do with the claims of a supra-normal faculty. That imagery on

hearing about the sudden death of Prof. Ramchandra Gandhi in his room could perhaps be best captured in the immortal words of poet Robert Lowell, "There once the penitents took off their shoes, And then walked barefoot the remaining mile."

Wearing a simple 'Khadi Kurta and Pyjama' most times with a cloth bag swinging round his shoulders and a tramp-like demeanour on an eternal philosophical penance like a modern 'Rishi', who travels round and round, touching many different ports but not sailing a fixed route, it was the truth of the 'Advaitin' that was Prof. Gandhi's flagship to the very end.

Even 'Swaraj' (Self-rule) had an 'Advaitin Shakti' for Prof. Ramchandra Gandhi, which became manifest "only in the post-Vivekananda and post-Ramana phase of Indian awakening". Social awareness then began to "acquire the catholic 'Advaitin Shakti' of 'Swaraj', Prof. Gandhi once wrote and went on to make a categorical declaration that "Aurobindo and Tilak and Gandhi are inconceivable before Ramana and Ramakrishna and without them (1)." Such was his power of conviction without dogma.

The 'Advaitin' in him was undaunted. A throw-back to a personal interlude with Prof. Gandhi long years ago confirmed this to me. It was a hazy winter morning way back in 1983. It was with a great amount of trepidation that I knocked at the door of the guest house room in the wonderfully sprawling

Rajasthan University campus in Jaipur, where Prof. Gandhi was staying as the guest of Prof. Daya Krishna, then heading the Philosophy department and also Director of the UGC Special Assistance Programme in Philosophy.

The hesitation on my part stemmed from two factors. It was my first-ever attempt to personally meet Prof. Gandhi, who had already made waves in the Indian Philosophical scene as an Oxford-returned don, having completed his D.Phil there under the guidance of one of the towering figures in Philosophy those days, Peter F. Strawson, after having done his Master's in Philosophy from the St. Stephen's College, Delhi.

Second was a naïve apprehension born of the fact that he had inherited a very unique and distinguished legacy as the grandson of both Mahatma Gandhi and Rajaji. That too weighed heavily on my mind.

Yet I mustered up some courage due to my yearning to meet Prof. Ramchandra Gandhi, a brilliant philosopher in his own right. The fire and ice process keeps any enthusiastic student of philosophy going, as they used to say those days. Today nobody wants to talk about Philosophy in such grand terms. But having put down some thoughts (written a few months earlier) on the problem of death and the Self, it was almost blind faith in me that said it should be shown to him.

Desperately clutching the paper in my hands, I was pleasantly surprised when Prof. Gandhi opened the door, led me in so unassumingly and quickly put this virtual non-entity to ease, asking for tea for both of us. I almost stammered, mentioning my desire to read out the paper to him. To my utter delight, Prof. Gandhi readily agreed.

After a studied, patient hearing – it took me about 15 minutes to slowly read out my paper - Prof. Gandhi gave me a very concerned look, the wrinkles of his Rajaji-like forehead indicating unease, if not downright anger. I sat before him, trembling like a child, for I had argued an idea in that ostensibly philosophical paper justifying suicides in some human contexts at one level.

It was then that one saw the fire, the passion and the commitment blazing forth in one sweep from Prof. Ramchandra Gandhi, as a Thinker and Teacher, rooted deeply in the Indian 'Upanishadic' spiritual tradition, notwithstanding a thorough grounding in the modern analytical school of linguistic Philosophy.

"I don't know what motivated you to write this, on pulling the trigger," was his first salvo. Nevertheless, he quickly set aside that bit of psychologism that lingers in any being, only to come up with a mixed response. With all his conceptual rigour and philosophical insight, Prof. Gandhi demolished my paper – which in a moment of fancy I pompously titled 'Meditation on Death', on the lines

of the French philosopher, Descartes' 'Meditations' on the nature of Knowledge - in just two minutes.

His well-meaning but devastating critique reminded me of one of 20th century's most insightful philosophers, Ludwig Wittgenstein's epigrammatic style: "If the Self is necessarily the body, then suicide is futile or redundant. If the Self is not necessarily the body, then suicide is impossible," Prof. Gandhi declared from a purely logical standpoint.

One had hardly heard such great reflective lines being spoken in an act of direct address. It was too stunning and at the same time a very humbling moment, a kind of 'satori' (the 'Zen' way of sudden enlightenment) for me as a student of philosophy. I profusely thanked him for his kindness and generosity and took leave of him, but Prof. Gandhi's gem of a philosophical response has been permanently committed to memory. In it is also a great message for India's youth.

That amazing couplet of his in the poetic mould of the Tiruvannamalai mountain saint in Tamil Nadu, Ramana Maharishi, danced back again on the evening of June 13, 2007, when I watched on television, sitting in Chennai, Prof. Gandhi's body wrapped in a white cloth and being taken out of the India International Centre in New Delhi, which he on and off made his home during his last days.

This immediately took me to our golden student days in the Philosophy Department of Madras

Christian College, when we ran behind another philosophical pied-piper in the Tambaram campus those days, K.P.Shankar Menon from Calicut. He along with another highly respected Philosophy teacher, Dr. H.R.T. Roberts and art critic Josef James, inspired scores of students to get into the noble world of philosophical ideas and yet was thoroughly critical of them. For it was 'KP', as he was widely known in campus, who once told us about one of Prof. Gandhi's early works, '*Availability of Religious Ideas*'.

Shankar, who now teaches Philosophy in St. Stephen's College, Delhi, though fiercely anti-religious those days, had some sneaking fascination for that book by 'Ramu' Gandhi as the latter was popularly known, possibly because, I guess, he was working for long years on a Ph.D. thesis on the topic, '*A Critique of the Marxist Critique of Religion*'. It was truly a stunning book, as marvelous as Prof. Gandhi's impromptu speeches to students and teachers at seminars or as he once tantalizingly addressed an annual session of the Theosophical Society in Chennai, holding his audience in thrall for over an hour. (Lord) Krishna was the "most magical of persons", he would declare, leaving one to blink and stare for days at any bluish statue with a flute.

In a style so brilliantly 'Ramu and only Ramu' – one again saw flashes of it when he used to write a freebooter's column for his elder brother Rajmohan Gandhi's revamped political weekly from Mumbai,

'The Himmat'-, Prof. Gandhi had delightfully romanced the notions of the 'Atman' or the 'Soul', besides certain other traditional religious conceptions like the ideas of the 'mystical' and the 'miraculous', notions that are part of any serious religious discourse even in an universally anthropological sense.

So, '*Availability of Religious Ideas*' became a rage in philosophical circles at one point of time, a near springboard to get back into religion if anyone wanted it, and more importantly making people wonder at Prof. Gandhi's freshness of approach to such old issues in the Philosophy of Religion.

At a time when money, technology and power were overriding most things in life, Prof. Gandhi in that work gave a new feel and push to the much forgotten and much abused notion of the 'Self', or the 'Soul', all too surprisingly from the perspective of the modern Philosophy of Language and 'Theory of Communication'.

Prof. Gandhi boldly and profoundly argued in that book that, "the notion of a Soul gets a foothold in our life, because in an act of addressing,- in an act of establishing communicative contact with another -, we have to imagine that our addressee is a unique but bare particular, we have to identify him non-referentially, non-predicatively." ... "Indeed, I cannot think the thought 'You' unless it amounts to regarding you as a Soul." (2).

However, as one tries to understand and contextualise Prof. Ramchandra Gandhi's contributions, it is his other early key work, "*Presuppositions of Human Communication*" (Oxford University Press, 1974), which is a scholarly class apart in the best Western analytical tradition, marked by rigour and conceptual precision. Yet 'Ramu' did not compromise the East's ancient philosophical intuitions at the altar of logical correctness.

Very importantly, in a review of that work in an 1977 issue of the Oxford Journal 'Mind', J Mason wrote: "Ramchandra Gandhi's '*Presuppositions of Human Communication*' is a useful and exploratory continuation of the work begun by Philosophers of Speech, particularly of H. P. Grice in his 1957 article on '*Speaker's Meaning*'".

"Grice's account of the 'speaker's meaning' is often confused, and seemingly incoherent, but there have been many who have thought that there is something important in Grice's work. Gandhi has sought, with a fair degree of success, to untangle the problems bequeathed to us by Grice, and in the process has many interesting things to say about the nature of communicative action. The virtue of Gandhi's work is that it shifts the emphasis of the investigation from meaning to communication," (3) wrote Mason.

Prof. Gandhi's contribution in that phase of his philosophical development was to emphasize that

unless one got an insight into the context, structure and intent of the human communicative action, not much progress was possible in one's understanding of meaning-related issues.

In analyzing Grice's theory of Meaning, Prof. Gandhi concluded in that work thus: "I think there is only one way out of the difficulty to which Strawson has drawn attention, and that consists in showing how a communicative action necessarily involves the fulfillment of an indefinitely large number of recognition-conditions, i.e. by showing that all acts of communication are also acts of addressing, and that an act of addressing, is a necessarily 'open' act (4)".

Very significantly, Shri. Arindam Chakrabarti, Professor of Philosophy, University of Hawaii, in a scintillating and moving tribute in 'The Telegraph' (Feb 21, 2006), on Prof. Peter Strawson, who had died earlier on Feb 13, 2006, underscored how the latter's student Ramchandra Gandhi, had gone beyond his own teacher. He articulated in his doctoral dissertation, a "brilliant and powerful idea of deeming 'Addressing' rather than 'Referring' to another human being the more fundamental speech-act" in human communication. Strawson was "particularly fond" of Ramchandra Gandhi, recalls Arindam. And 16 months later, when Prof. Gandhi himself died, Arindam despite being shocked and pained, burst forth with an amazing impromptu obit

on the Philosopher, again in 'The Telegraph'.

Nonetheless, Prof. Gandhi could hardly be pigeonholed as a thinker of such-and-such school, despite a basic 'Advaitic' flavour in whatever else he did later, on returning home and serving as Professor in several distinguished institutions including in Shantiniketan, the Central University, Hyderabad and as Emeritus Professor in Bangalore University.

Significantly, after Prof. Gandhi's death, a reader of 'The Hindu' from Hyderabad had recalled in a letter to the Editor, the philosopher's passionate commitment to ecology and the environment and how he had strongly objected to cutting some trees in the Hyderabad University campus to put up a new additional building. This was even after he stating in writing that the trees should not be cut and how he later quit the University.

The demolition of the 'Babri Masjid' in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992, pained Prof. Gandhi enormously and he was among the group of concerned citizens, artistes and intellectuals who rushed to the 'Rashtrapathi Bhavan' that very night of the barbaric incident, to appeal to the President of India to take firm steps to save India from the utter chaos and fanaticism of communal forces.

In the 1990s', as one noticed from far-away Chennai, Prof. Gandhi let his Philosophy of 'Advaita (non-duality)', and Non-violence flow in diverse

streams, not just confined to some outstanding academic works like 'I am Thou'.

'Sita's Kitchen: A Testimony of Faith and Enquiry', was Prof. Gandhi's stinging yet poetic counter to the emerging 'Hindutva' forces in the early 1990s', through a Buddhist allegory in the mode of semi-fiction. He also wrote and directed several plays on Indian sages like Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

Whether it was the violence against the Muslim Minorities in Gujarat after the 'Godhra' incident in 2002, or the repeated communal conflagrations in parts of North India, Ramchandra Gandhi always had a metaphysical perspective to explain such horrors, dipping into the great Epics like 'Mahabharata' or seeing in them an eerie theory of some 'Karmic curse' working its way. These at times sounded frightening propositions from a clear and rational thinker like Prof. Gandhi, but he used the rich elements of India's 'Puranic' and other literary traditions as a heuristic device to make people ponder deeply on eschatological issues. A shallow hedonism based on a curious 'Charuvaka' school type of unbridled materialism was not something Ramchandra Gandhi, for all his light-hearted moments, endorsed. The concept of 'Ananda' (bliss) was much deeper to him, related to the "Truth of Advaita" itself.

Prof. Gandhi's reflections on modern Indian painting came through in a later work entitled,

'Svaraj: A Journey with Tyeb Mehta's, 'Shantiniketan Tryptich'", published in 2003, after being so moved by that artist's painting. It depicted the 'Santhal' tribal festival 'Charak'. At the other end, Ramana Maharishi was the late philosopher's consuming passion and conviction during a substantial part of his intellectual pursuit in his later years.

Prof. Gandhi's preoccupation with Ramana's mode of being and the incredible way in which the boy-saint overcame the fear of death, was particularly reflected in another work of fiction, published in 2005, titled 'Muniya's Light: A Narrative of Truth and Myth'.

What we would usually call a preface, Prof. Gandhi enigmatically called 'Acknowledgements' while introducing the novel. "For many years, I have the desire to explore the significance of Hindu philosophical thought, especially Advaita Vedanta, fictionally and philosophically, with special focus on the status of the girl-child in the light of Advaita. Muniya's Light is an attempt to do some of these things, "(5), Prof. Gandhi wrote on that occasion.

'Muniya's Light' ends on a poignant note. One of its two protagonists, Ravi Srivastava, the philosopher, virtually Ramu Gandhi's alter-ego in the novel, (the other being Ananya Kulkarni, the young woman graduate to whom Ravi gave the name 'Muniya'), dies a lonely man with his seat-belt fastened, as his plane lands in Chennai airport.

".....And he was absorbed in Ramana. Aum Shanti, Shanti, Shantih", the novel ends. That seemed Prof. Ramchandra Gandhi's vision of 'Samadhi', as in the Indian spiritual tradition to completely dissolve one's 'Ego' or the sense of 'I' into the non-dual, pure consciousness devoid of any conflict or divisions, which 'Advaita' talked about and Ramana Maharishi's life showed.

This dramatic, yet very mystical ending which he had penned in that novel was two years before he got "absorbed in Ramana" himself, leaving one wondering whether he had presaged the metaphor to intuit his own last moments in this life.

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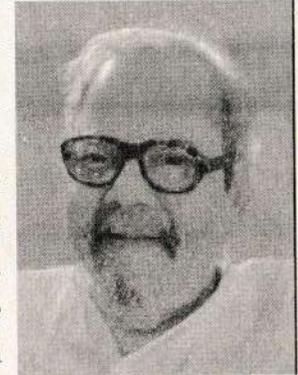
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- 6) Quotes not specifically ascribed to any work by Prof. Gandhi are from the author's personal notes.

## CHAPTER - II

### DAYA KRISHNA - A PHILOSOPHER'S PHILOSOPHER

Time has nibbled away even the fringes of one's thought-being.

As I gingerly peruse my yellowed, dog-eared, but still readable notes of Prof. Daya Krishna's lectures in the Philosophy Department of the University of Rajasthan, virtually his home for over three decades till he bid adieu on October 5, 2007, it seems all of a sudden that a grand curtain went up on the very horizon of philosophizing itself.



"An act of understanding has to go through slot after slot (in connection with the Kantian categories of twelve) although Judgments do not have all the categories in them. But an act of understanding will have to go through all the 12 slots. But objection to the above is this: What would be the criterion of correct use of a category? This will lead to further problems." Thus spake Dayaji, as he was affectionately known in academic circles, in one of his classes in early January 1984, words which at once bring out the great Teacher and Thinker that he was to his many students and fellow-colleagues.

Daya Krishna (1924-2007) would thus typically grasp a philosophical problem, put it on the table, go to its heart straightaway, pose a variety of questions around it, leaving at the end of the hour brilliant nuggets of his own reflexive mode of being. It may seem incredible that the drama of 'Thought movements' could unfold thus, but was truly felt by his students, teachers and other Philosophers who had worked with him.

He did not stop there and went gung-ho on Kant. To my limited observation as one of his students, Kant had always held a supreme fascination for Dayaji, a fulcrum of a piercing critique of logic, epistemology and ontology, besides last but not least ethics, all in one grand sweep if one may place them on a time scale of what Spinoza called "subspecies eternitatis". The Kantian dozen thus led to the "whole problem of the internal relation between the categories (of thought)," he mused.

The difference between the general "concept of category" itself and the 'specificity of categories' was another issue Dayaji had flagged that day. The eternal philosophical gadfly that he was, Dayaji's sharp and swift mind quickly unveiled another problematic area: "formal necessities imposed by the demands of communication and formal necessities imposed by Thought itself," as he put it then.

This takes one into a further problem of 'Deep Structure', which Dayaji humorously termed as

"nobody knows but everybody observes". Chomsky's incisive articulation of 'innate grammar', the capacity for language learning being innate to humans and related issues, he went on in that vein until he threw a bombshell from the works of Kalidas Bhattacharyya and his father Krishna Chandra Bhattacharyya.

"From the point of view of willing, Knowledge is only an instrument," emphasized Dayaji in a jiffy. "In a knowledge situation, object is accepted if it exists; in a feeling situation, you may be indifferent to the object. You may accept something as true, but in a willing situation, you may consciously reject it," declared Dayaji, not only urging his students to run that very minute to the works of the two great creative Bengal philosophers, but also in the same breath unpacking yet another dimension of the relationship between phenomenology of consciousness and any epistemic situation.

I have gone over in some detail one of Dayaji's lectures only to drive home that received information, knowledge and wisdom on the one hand, and being equally critical of them were like two precious eyes to him, the essence of his constant endeavour to give room to 'Creative Philosophizing' in Indian Universities in the larger educational context. One may start with a philosophical problem as expounded by Plato or Kant and then run into lanes and by-lanes of thought, visit the old parts of an ancient city as Ludwig Wittgenstein said in another context of the

philosophy of Language, only to be humbled that the problems of philosophy are much, much beyond individual thinkers themselves.

That was the value of doing Philosophy, students like us learnt from Dayaji, who as one of his colleagues who had worked with him in the Rajasthan University, Prof. K.L.Sharma, had described as walking on the "footsteps" of creative thinkers like Kalidas Bhattacharyya and K.C.Bhattacharyya, to chart out new domains of thought. He could equally be at ease with modern thinkers like Bertrand Russell, or meet the torrential flow of ideas from classical Indian philosophical texts like Ishwara Krishna's 'Samkhya Kaarika', in a sort of a 'transcendental method' that went beyond specific traditions.

"Deeply inspired by the love of Philosophy and freedom, Prof. Daya Krishna is one of the most active philosophers of the country today. One of his outstanding qualities is that he invariably encourages the younger generation to undertake academic adventures and has created a love in them for creative thinking," (1) wrote Prof. Sharma, co-editing a collection of essays in honour of Professor Daya Krishna, with Prof. R.S. Bhatnagar, former Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy, University of Rajasthan.

"Through his intellectual contributions in his lectures, writings and discussions, he has helped to

rehabilitate the leadership of Indian thought. Equally forceful has been his influence in purposefully moulding the policies of many academic institutions," adds Prof. Sharma (2), in his preface to that work to mark Daya Krishna's completion of 60 years then. Even 24 years later, when Dayaji died at the age of 84, it was still true of him.

It is very hard to capture the multifarious contributions of some one like Daya Krishna, not just in Philosophy but in diverse disciplines ranging from Sociology, Economics, Politics to Literature, more so by one of his former students out of the academic circles for long years now. But what has made even this humble tribute to him possible are the labour of love, grace and humaneness he left behind for many of us.

Looking at India's intellectual traditions critically is an enormously painful task for anyone imbued with western modes of training and sensibilities. The job gets even more dicey in a complex socio-cultural milieu where 'Our Traditions', whether they are religious or philosophical, are more revered than dispassionately examined.

But Prof. Daya Krishna, one of the astonishingly original thinkers in post-Independent India, quietly bore the cross, come what may be as it were, to defreeze a whole mass of knowledge and understanding. He dared to even puncture the

omnipresent 'Brahman', to let the free winds of thought blow.

"Kalidas Bhattacharyya is, undoubtedly one of the foremost of living philosophers in contemporary India. Along with K.C.Bhattacharyya (his father) and N.V.Banerjee, he may be said to have renewed the tradition of creative philosophizing in this Country which had perhaps been blocked by the historical necessity of coming to terms with an alien tradition in Philosophy, which was forced on our notice due to the imposition of British rule in India," wrote Daya Krishna as he began an article on the great Bengal thinker way back in 1976 (3). It later triggered a new philosophical initiative itself.

Daya Krishna had rued that "extraordinary books" like the *'Alternative Standpoints in Philosophy'* by Kalidas attracted little attention even among academia, leave alone most students of Philosophy who hardly went beyond standard texts in the subject which traced the main currents of Thought in East and West. "Some laws are constrictive, others add new freedom and it is the latter kind we are talking about," wrote James K. Feibleman (4). Dayaji, who strode like a colossus for over five decades the Indian academic philosophical scene since he took his Ph.D. from the Delhi University, could not have agreed more than in Feibleman's words, as he remained a passionate advocate of creative philosophizing in the best intellectual traditions of the country, even if what

we largely understand by philosophy today is an importation from ancient Greece.

A brief peep into Dayaji's academic career may be in order here. Born on September 17, 1924, he was educated at the University of Delhi and had held research Fellowships at the 'Hindu College', Delhi, the Indian Institute of Philosophy, Amalner and Delhi University. He was a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow at the East-West Centre, Hawaii (1960-61), besides holding various Professorial positions.

After moving over from the Sagaur University in Madhya Pradesh, where interestingly, 'Osho' Rajneesh, who was to later turn a controversial global 'Guru' was a research student when Daya Krishna was teaching there, to the Philosophy Department in the University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, Dayaji's new leadership in creative philosophizing became more manifest. He also held the Post of Pro-Vice Chancellor at the University of Rajasthan (1978-81), besides being Professor of Philosophy and Director of the UGC Special Assistance Programme in Philosophy, University of Rajasthan.

Those were trail-blazing days under Dayaji's captainship, when a new approach to philosophizing was crystallized, with the support of a wide circle of friends and well-wishers. A highly committed team of his department colleagues and other friends drawn from various disciplines-, ranging from the Physics Professor Lokanathan whose educational roots go

back to the P.S. High School in Mylapore of old Madras, Dr. Mukund Lath (Historian), Dr. Francine Krishna, Dayaji's gracious wife who taught English Literature at Rajasthan University and who predeceased him, to Dr. K.L. Sharma, Dr. R.S. Bhatnagar, Dr. Virendra Shekhawat and Dr. Sarla Kalla, who among others, injected fresh vigour into an activity that was otherwise derided as abstract, academic and arid.

Though Philosophy bakes no bread, Daya Krishna considerably changed students' perception of a noble subject and his classes or seminars were never for a moment dull. An entire afternoon every week, Dayaji had earmarked for 'Creative Philosophizing', when anyone could raise any issue, or present any paper which he thought was of philosophical interest. And then over plates of Jaipuri 'Kachori' and steaming hot cups of Rajasthani tea, an animated discussion would follow.

It was such small steps that triggered an exciting intellectual experiment, a new East-West Encounter in Jaipur. And several of the top Philosophers-intellectuals of the day, from the great Prof. Ramchandra Gandhi, Dr. Rajendra Prasad from IIT-Kanpur, Dr. S.S. Barlingay from University of Pune, Ms. Roop Rekha Verma, Prof. K.J. Shah, a student of Wittgenstein and then teaching at Karnatak University, Dharwar, Dr. S. Sunderarajan from the University of Pune, Ms. Bhuvan Chandel, to the

brilliant young star and Tendulkar of the Indian Philosophical scene then, Prof. Arindam Chakrabarti, were all invited for one seminar or the other.

However, the 'Jaipur Experiment', as Daya Krishna recalled later, aimed at critically re-articulating India's Intellectual traditions, began "losing momentum sometime after 1985," following the 'untimely death' of Prof. A M Ghosh, a close associate of Dayaji in his department. He was so fond of the thoroughly committed Prof. Ghosh that Dayaji in a lighter vein used to ask, "Oh! Where is our Locke expert?", after the English realist philosopher John Locke, if he could not sight Prof. Ghosh at a seminar or a lecture.

Stating that the idea of the 'Jaipur Experiment' emerged from a lecture by Prof. S.C. Dube, sometime in 1983, Daya Krishna writing about it once said, "the collective thinking on the subject by the interdisciplinary group at Jaipur as well as other convergent 'experiments' initiated by Prof M.P. Rege, resulted in the publication of 'Samvada'. Yet, it began to lose steam after some years as Dayaji acknowledged.

"Though occasional meetings of the group continued, we gradually began to realize that we could not proceed significantly beyond what had been achieved so far. I realized then that, ultimately, only 'individual' effort would enable us to take any further steps towards the goal that we had set

ourselves," reflected Dayaji on the turn the 'Jaipur Experiment' had taken (5).

With his passion for 'Philosophy of Logic' and his penchant for the Kantian transcendental argumentative mode (to dwell into the possibility of something), Daya Krishna was a master in juxtaposing perspectives, if only to keep the critical spirit going. His constant refrain, a memorable, magical self-strung couplet used to be, "Everyone has somewhere to go, the Philosopher has nowhere to go." The undertone of pathos in that truth was never lost.

"It is said that logic is related to reasoning. But how is it related? Is it only to do with the formal aspects of reasoning and if so how is it different from the actual psychological process of reasoning which human beings constantly engage in? If Logic is concerned with that abstract part of the process of reasoning, is it analogous to workings of a calculating machine which does not will or feel?" posed Dayaji once in an introductory lecture to students on the 'Philosophy of Logic' (6). Several of us in the student benches thought that Logic was basically a 'Truth-Table', a decision procedure, but he showed us it was more.

From raising such fundamental issues to the most mundane ones that affect our day-to-day lives, Daya Krishna used all the wit and charm at his command. If there was a serious discussion on any orthodox

Indian system, be it 'Advaita' or 'Samkhya', Dayaji used to pounce with a counter-argument from the Buddhist or Jaina traditions.

He would equally be at ease in deconstructing the Kantian categories and reversing them to show how that exalted Enlightenment age German thinker's position could be reduced to Jainism's 'Sayadvaad' (many-sidedness of Truth). That was comparative Philosophy at its very best, while Dayaji would at times throw a disarming couplet from the Sufi poet Galib, or a line of existential angst from the modern poet Dylan Thomas ("After the First death, there is no other," was one such gem), only to make us see a different point of view. Such was Daya Krishna's intellectual commitment which held no theoretical position as final or sacred.

Having made a mark very early in his academic life - Dayaji made waves even in the 1950s', being one of the few Indian thinkers of his times to be published by the prestigious Oxford Philosophy Journal, 'Mind' ('Law of Contradiction and Empirical Reality', 'Mind', England, April 1957)-, he also published a number of articles in other top professional journals as well, like "Three Myths about Indian Philosophy" ('Diogenes', Vol.53, Paris), to "Adhyasa - A Non-Advaitic Beginning in Sankara Vedanta", (Philosophy - East and West, USA).

Even as this prolific high-quality output continued- including in an honorary capacity- to the

very end of his life, one of Daya Krishna's outstanding contributions has been his long Editorship of the Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research (JICPR). And in that job, he never lost sight of the need for documenting the basic approach of great Indian thinkers of his time, even if they were not exactly his contemporaries.

A classic case in point is the story of the late Prof. C.T.K. Chari, an outstanding and original thinker and an unparalleled teacher of Philosophy for nearly four decades at the Madras Christian College in Tambaram near Chennai. Dr.Chari, at his suburban home that he symbolically called 'The Cloister', died virtually unknown and unsung on January 4, 1993 at the age of 83. Even the local newspapers did not report his death then.

But the moment Prof. Daya Krishna came to know about Dr.Chari's death in Chennai, he immediately wrote a letter to me as a former student, asking whether someone could write an obituary piece on the legendary Dr. Chari for publication in the JICPR. Such was Dayaji's concern for chronicling the lives of great Indian thinkers for posterity's benefit.

In fact, according to Prof. Bhatnagar, even on his last day, Dayaji was his usual, busy working self; writing to people and discussing issues with friends. Recently, Dayaji had completed a work on the 'Rig Veda', and was toying with some mathematically

exciting ideas triggered by the book entitled '*Pea and the Sun*'.

In his own inimitable way, Dayaji also catalyzed interactions between the practitioners and exponents of the Indian and Western philosophical/intellectual traditions. An offbeat case in point is when he got together a group of traditional Indian 'Sthapathis', rooted in 'Vaastu Shastra', including Shri.Ganapathy Sthapathy from Chennai to directly interact with modern Indian architects, at a seminar in Jaipur, to help uncover conceptual issues and structural divergences.

Close on the heels of the 'Jaipur Experiment', was another which Daya Krishna christened the 'Sarnath Experiment'. That brought together over a hundred traditional Indian logicians (Nayayikas) under the leadership of the late Pundit Badrinath Shukla, to discuss "some modern issues in respect of Nyaya". This was later continued with respect to certain other systems of Indian Thought like 'Mimamsa' and 'Kashmir Saivism'. These experiments helped to locate, "traditional Sanskritic scholars in various fields of knowledge all over India and the resultant publication of the 'Who's Who of Sanskrit Scholars in India' by the Sahitya Academy, New Delhi," he had noted (7).

Yet, Dayaji, never accepted the social trappings of the 'Brahminical' caste system and had been a virulent critic of the 'Varna system', even if he could

logically consider the four 'Purusharthas' ('kama', 'artha', 'dharma', and 'moksha' as the ends of human life) as part of a vaster teleology that makes civilizations. This is notwithstanding the fact that Dayaji had forcefully argued for "the necessity of building a new theory of the 'Purusharthas', which would take into account the diverse seekings of man and do justice to them (8)". It is in this backdrop that Daya Krishna's philosophical contributions cannot be detached or de-linked from his views on the nature of a modern society, freedom, politics and culture, as can be gleaned from several papers and books on an amazing inter-disciplinary range of areas from Sociology, Economics, Politics to Literature.

A member of the 'UNESCO' Project on Research Trends in Humanities and Social Sciences, some of Daya Krishna's important works in Philosophy and the Social Sciences include, "*Social Philosophy: Past and Future*", "*Considerations Towards a Theory of Social Change*", "*Political Development - A Critical Perspective*", "*Indian Philosophy - A Counter Perspective*" and the "*Development Debate (with Fred Riggs)*." His scintillating paper, "*The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy and the Nature of Society, (American Sociological Review, 1971)*", a critique of sociologist Robert K Merton's key concept is a near-classic. These testify to the wide spectrum of his interests.

Formerly National Fellow of ICPR and the Indian Council of Social Science Research, Daya Krishna was

also on the Editorial Boards of a unique project termed, "History of Indian Science, Philosophy and Culture". That occasioned him to dip into what he called, a "prolonged enquiry into the Problems relating to the historiography of Civilizations, which creatively uses the concepts derived from both Indian and the Western traditions to understand Man's most complex and enduring creation, that is, Civilization." His interest in 'Nyaya' resulted in a book.

Daya Krishna had his fair share of controversies as well in his long academic life. The more famous one was with the distinguished Philosopher, Karl H Potter, who had edited the '*Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*'. In a devastating critique Daya Krishna had a running battle with Karl Potter, unwaveringly questioning the "characterization of Indian Philosophy as spiritual and the contention that it is integrally related to Moksha," (9).

Revisiting this major controversy, Daya Krishna argued, "The term 'liberation' as a translation of 'Moksha', is systematically misleading as it suggests the essentially this-world-centred western secular ethos of the term. 'Moksha' in most Indian systems, is either a 'denial' or a 'transcendence' of the world. It is linked with the fourth 'Asrama', that is 'Sanyasa', in which one is supposed to be ritually dead to the obligations of society, i.e., the world. Hence, it would not be correct to say, as Potter does, that it is only in the perspective of 'Moksha', that 'the most adequate

understanding of anything worth understanding can occur" (9). That philosophical battle between the two never ended.

Going by William James' typology, Daya Krishna was no sentimental philosopher. His cogitations were of much sterner stuff. But one unforgettable piece of advice to all his students was what came to be known in academic circles as "Dayaji's Theory of the Holy Ghost". Quoting from the Bible, he once said at the end of a class lecture, 'You may repudiate the Father, You may repudiate the Son, but if you repudiate the Holy Ghost, there is no salvation.'

The poignant yet humorous message that is relevant even today amid increasing intolerance to alternate points of view in politics and public life in particular, was that Philosophy may do away with the Father and even eschew the Son (the heavy metaphysical parts), but if it banished the 'Holy Ghost',- the idea which he quite often explained as like-minded souls coming together to discuss something in a spirit of openness and which he also saw as being an 'Intellectual Yagna',- then there would be no Philosophy at all. Those oft-repeated lines were the muses which guided Dayaji even on his last terrestrial journey. If death is no limitation, then the ever-cheerful Daya Krishna may well go down in history as 'Daya Sagar', an ocean of compassion that crests a Non-Euclidian planet earth.

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### CHAPTER - III

## POSTSCRIPT

One-liners are rather rare in the history of Philosophy, but some of them have become so famous even outside it. The poetic phrase, "The starry Heavens above and the Moral Law within," is one such that defined one of Europe's great modern thinkers, Immanuel Kant. This post-script gives me an opportunity to behold it by way of a rather lengthy note of acknowledgements. I hope readers will bear this indulgence.

For the tributes to two of India's outstanding Philosophers in the post-Independent era one has attempted in the preceding pages in a sense squares with the Kantian one-liner. Shri. Daya Krishna's concerns were more focused on the 'starry Heavens above' as he saw the enterprise of Knowledge as dynamic movements on a vast cosmic canvas, while Shri. Ramchandra Gandhi's 'Advaitic' outlook drove him more towards the 'Moral Law within'. This is not in the least to suggest that they can be limited in this fashion.

But the Kantian conceptual shorthand helped me to bring out the complementarities of these two great thinkers of our times, both of whom died in the year 2007 within a span of four months. And what made this exercise possible – Kant was again primarily concerned with what made 'Knowledge' possible and

what made 'Moral Judgments' possible- is what this personal retrospect is all about.

The bridge builder was really Prof. Rajendra Swaroop Bhatnagar, a close associate of Dayaji and a former Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy, University of Rajasthan. But for his gentle prodding to reach a wider audience, this expression of gratitude to two great philosophy teachers, would not have been put to paper in this form.

There is also another reason for it. When the famous Feminist writer, Virginia Woolf asked, "Is the charwoman who has brought up eight children of less value to the world than the barrister who has made a hundred thousand pounds?" in her celebrated, 1929 classic essay 'A Room Of One's Own', she herself added nobody can answer such questions hinging on 'comparative values' that change from one age to another.

Such troubling, open-ended questions are the very stuff of Philosophy, and have been posed as much by philosophers as by those in literary and other fields of knowledge. The search for a Universal and timeless 'measuring rod' thus opens more questions than it answers, entwining teaching philosophy with the act of philosophizing itself.

One feels that kind of critical and yet humanizing teaching tradition, in the Humanities in particular, the tone for which was set several decades ago by great teachers like Sarvepalle Radhakrishnan, should be

revived. That also prompted some of us as former philosophy students, in all humility, to pay homage to both these philosophy teachers, purely with our voluntary contributions.

It was a stroke of good fortune for me to have been a research fellow at the University of Rajasthan, working under Dayaji during the academic year 1983-84, under the 'UGC Special Assistance Programme' that brought under its fold teachers and research students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

For instance, a very sharp and diligent teacher was Mustafa Kwaja Saab from the Government College in Srinagar. He was a good example of that academic trend, mirroring the composite culture of India. Thus this 'Shradaanjali' to these two thinkers is an inclusive thanksgiving in that sense.

Apart from my wife and other members of my large once-joint family, I am equally thankful to all my teachers from school, college to university, 'Gurus' and friends in Journalism over the past 20 years and more, starting from the unique teacher, Mrs. Y.G. Parthasarathy and my schoolmates, R.V. Srinivas, Javed Yusuf Merchant and P.K.Vishwanath, who unwittingly provoked me into taking up Philosophy.

It is not possible to mention every one of them here. However, as this is a work dedicated to two teachers, I would be failing in my duty if I do not

remember some of those remarkable people who have encouraged and guided me not only in my philosophy studies, but also in my present vocation which began as a 'Trainee Journalist' with the National News Agency, the 'Press Trust of India (PTI)'.

My sincere thanks are to Messrs. Bhaskar Menon and K.S.Venkatesan, both formerly of the PTI, Thyagaraj Sharma, formerly of the 'Economic Times', Swaminathan S Aiyar, E. Raghavan, Shaswathi Chakravarthi and V.Balasubramanian, all Senior Editors of 'The Economic Times', G.V.Krishnan, who retired from 'The Times of India' in Chennai, C. Raghavan and K. Raghunathan, former Bureau Chief and Deputy Bureau Chief of 'The Hindu' respectively, V. Jayanth, Senior Associate Editor, 'The Hindu', and the Newspaper's Editors, Messrs. N. Ram, N. Ravi and Malini Parthasarathy.

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I also thank the author and journalist Mrs. Ambujam Anantharaman, who was very kind enough to go through this manuscript and made very valuable suggestions.

Tears well up in the eyes at the thought of two others who also died all too suddenly during 2007. Shri. R. Gopalakrishnan of 'The Hindu' was friend, philosopher and guide to several of us in Journalism and my former senior colleague and friend in the Philosophy Department of Madras Christian College (MCC)-, Shri. C.Venkatrathnam, who succumbed all too inexplicably to cancer, was a light unto himself.

Venkatrathnam's sudden death came as a severe blow to some of us as he was one of the most outstanding students not only in MCC - when he

came there to study philosophy after giving up a lucrative MBA career-, but also later as a research scholar in the Philosophy Department of the University of Pune.

Venkatrathnam also taught philosophy at MCC briefly and interacting with him, as with other students including from other disciplines like Harish N. Khatri, Shankaran Nambiyar and Sumitra Kannan, to name a few, was an invaluable learning experience.

We also had a 'Tuesday Club' those days in MCC, a meeting place for students and teachers at the residence of Prof. H.R.T. Roberts to present papers followed by lively discussions, even as Commerce Professor late S.Swaminathan enthralled his packed lecture-theatre audiences with his insights on economic and political issues. Another researcher, Venkatesh Chakravarthy, won laurels for his work on Noam Chomsky.

Prof. Michael Lockwood of the Philosophy Department was another endearing presence in MCC. His exploratory 'Mamallapuram Studies' with Dr Gift Siromony of the Statistics Department, are still of great value. Another philosophy teacher, Prof. S. Pannerselvam (who later moved to the Radhakrishnan Institute of Advanced Studies in Philosophy at the Madras University) gave us an authentic feel of the great Tamil Saint-Poet Thiruvalluvar's 'Thirukkural'. I take this opportunity to remember all of them.

The political space one has been exposed to covering various political parties as a Reporter over the years has been a learning curve of a different kind. It included interactions with a spectrum of political leaders, from the DMK President, 'Kalaingar' M. Karunanidhi, the party's General Secretary, Prof. K. Anbazhagan, the AIADMK General Secretary, Ms. J. Jayalalithaa, Congress leaders, Messrs. P. Chidambaram, Mani Shankar Aiyar, E.V.K.S. Elangovan, K. S. Alagiri and A. Gopanna, MDMK leader, Mr. Vaiko, BJP Leader, Mr. M. Venkiah Naidu, Janata Party Chief, Dr. Subramanian Swamy, to the Left parties leaders, late P. Manickam, Messrs. R. Nallakannu, S. S. Thyagarajan, N. Varadarajan, A. K. Padmanabhan and G. Ramakrishnan. I take this opportunity to thank all of them.

One's remembrance of teachers would fall short without a mention of several other very learned people one got to know in the course of discharging one's professional responsibilities. Former Finance Secretary of Tamil Nadu and brilliant Economist late S. Guhan, Dr. M. Anandakrishnan, former Vice-Chancellor of the 'Anna University', Mr. M.S.S. Pandian, previously on the faculty of the Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS), besides market analysts, Dr. J. Venkatramana, Sp. Sivaprakasam and C. Ramamurthy, have all been part of my integral learning process as a journalist.

From the catastrophic December 2004 'Tsunami' that ravaged several parts of the South, one learnt that 'Prakirti' or 'Nature' is the Supreme Teacher to salute. 'Nature' is not just inert or dead matter as the 'Samkhya' system tells us, for 'She' is inconceivable without the 'Purusha' or the 'Self'.

On a slightly personal familial note, this effort also brings forth memories of my late grandfather, M.S.Krishnamachari, 'Vakil' of Srirangam, who my late father once said had left behind an unfinished commentary on the 'Bhagavat Gita' written in the former's last days. I also remember with gratitude my late uncle, M.Sitaram, who with strong roots in the 'Saivite' tradition was yet so broad-minded with an egalitarian outlook. Without his support I could not have even studied philosophy.

Last but not the least, my 'Pranams' to the Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt's late 'Paramacharya', Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathy, whose presence in a 'Platonic form' has been a constant source of solace and hope in moments of personal anxiety and crisis.

**M.R.Venkatesh**

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