

**REVITALIZING VEDĀNTIC EPISTEMOLOGY - CONCEPTION OF
DEPTH EPISTEMOLOGY IN S. L. PANDEY, R. D. RANADE, AND A. C.
MUKERJI: ELEMENTS, TYPOLOGY AND SOME PROBLEMS**

A. Vershney

श्लाघास्पदं यद्यपि नेतरेषामियं कृतिः स्यात् उपहासयोग्या
तथापि शिष्यैर्गुरुगौरवेण परस्सहस्रैः समुपासनीया॥

Abstract

A dominant mark of many philosophers in contemporary India, has been an engagement with ŚāṅkaraVedānta. It was not uncommon, for thinkers, in the pre and early post-independence years, to have either been an interpreter of the Vedāntic tradition or to have developed one's philosophical ideas in a manner which brought them under the loose rubric of neo-Vedānta. The term 'depth epistemology' was coined by Prof. Sangam Lal Pandey, an academic philosopher of post-independent India and an unparalleledVedāntin, in an attempt to pinpoint the quintessential feature of Allahabad School of Philosophy. The conception as per him, is the differentia of a number of academic philosophers stationed at University of Allahabad, and thus could be seen as the differentia of what he terms as Allahabad School of Philosophy. However, in other writings of Pandey, and from the tenets stipulated by him for the notion of depth epistemology, it gets sufficiently clear that the conception could be located in a number of classical Indian and Western philosophical traditions; prominently in those who adhere to a strict dichotomy between subject and object of knowledge, such as ŚāṅkaraVedānta and Kant, to cite a few instances.

In the lines that follow I propose to do the following: (i) to re-read the literature of S. L. Pandey on his conception of depth epistemology, so as to make sense of the term, (ii) to re-assess the epistemic position of eminent philosopher and mystic R. D. Ranade, so as to understand his variant of depth epistemology, (iii) to re-read some of the writings of A. C. Mukerji - whose originality of synthesis between the idealist traditions of India and the West, demand a distinct slot in contemporary Indian philosophy – thus underscoring a different variant of depth epistemology, (iv) to stress depth

epistemology as an endeavour to revitalize the Vedāntic view of knowledge and (v) to register some problematic issues with the notion of depth epistemology.

Keywords: *depth epistemology, surface epistemology, transcendental knowledge, anubhava, aśeṣapramāṇa, transcendental analysis, coordinate view of knowledge, fallacy of transcendental dislocation, S. L. Pandey, R. D. Ranade, A. C. Mukerji*

1. Introduction: S. L. Pandey's conception of Depth Epistemology- What it is not and What it is?

The notion of Depth Epistemology, was so formulated by Prof. Sangam Lal Pandey (1929-2002) in an anthology, entitled, *Problems of Depth Epistemology*¹, in the year 1987. Prof. Pandey, designates the term coined by him, Depth Epistemology (DE), as synonymous to the Allahabad School of Philosophy. Two claims are made in this remark, one that there was a more-or-less systematic school of philosophizing, at the Department of Philosophy, at Allahabad and two- that it is depth epistemology, which is the core and quintessence of the school. Apart from his prolegomena to the anthology, which summarizes his conception, there are four articles in the anthology, one each, by Prof. P. S. Burrell, Prof. R. D. Ranade, Prof. A. C. Mukerji, and Prof. R. N. Kaul. All these four thinkers were academicians of high repute in pre-independent India, and all of them were professors at the Allahabad University². Insightful remarks are made by him, upon his conception of depth epistemology, in his subsequent thin but concise book on epistemology, *Jñānamīmāṃsā Ke GūḍhaPrašna*.³

One of the many ways, in which Pandey explicates his idea of depth epistemology, lies in contrasting it with surface epistemology. In the opinion of Pandey, surface epistemology (SE), is any such epistemic analysis, which is sheerly concerned with object or objective knowledge or empirical knowledge or even with sheer subject or subjective knowledge⁴; it should be specified here that by the term subject at this juncture, Pandey refers to *jīva* or *vṛttijñāna* and not to *ātman* or *sākṣijñāna*; the latter, as we shall see later, is the real concern of depth epistemology.

¹ Pandey, S. L. (ed.), 1987, *Problems of Depth Epistemology*, Allahabad: Ram Nath Kaul Library of Philosophy, University of Allahabad (henceforth PDE)

² I have omitted a discussion of P. S. Burrell and R. N. Kaul here, owing to brevity and that to my understanding Ranade and Mukerji, represent two different strands of DE; Burrell and Kaul could be located in these. Pandey precedes Ranade and Mukerji, though chronologically of a much later posterity, because it is he, who coins the term and ascribes the same to others, as such a discussion on thinkers of the DE tradition must start with Pandey.

³ Pandey, S. L., 1999, *Jñānamīmāṃsā Ke Gūḍha Praśna*, Allahabad: Darshan Peeth (henceforth JGP)

⁴ PDE, pp.1-2

Pandey further clarifies, drawing from A.C. Mukerji, that an analysis of knowledge which treats all cases of knowledge as a compresence of object and subject⁵, is an instance of surface epistemology; in other words, any theory of knowledge which treats the subject and the object on the same plane, or a theory of knowledge which does not differentiate between the levels of factors involved in a knowledge situation⁶ is an instance of surface epistemology. Giving instances of such a surfaced epistemic analysis, Pandey categorizes the realist epistemic theory of Nyāya as an instance of surface epistemology for the simple reason that in the analysis of Nyāya, *ātman* or the knower too is just another type of *prameya* or object of knowledge⁷; coupling this with the mark that an analysis which has to do with ‘subjective knowledge’ too falls under the same rubric, an enterprise such as that of Vijnānavāda, will join Nyāya in being a case of surface epistemology. Such theories of knowledge in Western epistemology, which yet again fail to underscore the inner oligarchy⁸ of knowledge situation, both Rene Descartes and the theory of rationalism and John Locke and the theory of empiricism fall under this category; the three classic formulations of truth, join suit. One of the philosophers of the Allahabad School, chosen by Pandey, A. C. Mukerji, underscores the position of Spinoza and Berkeley, as quite distinct, in the traditions they represented, on which Pandey would agree that the two carry elements of depth epistemology. Thus, any theory of knowledge, which in the ordinary course of an epistemic analysis, attempts to analyse ‘object’ of knowledge will be an instance of surface epistemology.

In our understanding the primary reason behind categorizing of the aforementioned classic theories or analyses of knowledge, under ‘surface epistemology’, is because they are exclusively committed to either an analysis of the ‘external’/*bāhyārth* or an inner mental state and fail to underscore the foundational role of some factors, compared to some other factors, in the knowledge situation, i.e., a failure to see that some ideas are more pivotal than some others in our epistemic enterprise. A depth epistemology, as such, should obviously not miss the foundational role of some factors of knowledge, i.e., an ‘oligarchy of ideas’ and it should avoid resorting to descriptive analyses of ‘object’ and/or the subjective; these we may add are marks of a psychological analysis of the knowledge situation, instead of the requisite transcendental or foundational analysis.

⁵ Ibid., p. 2

⁶ Ibid. and JGM, pp. 112-113

⁷ JGM, pp. 109-110

⁸ Ibid., pp. 110-111

But other than these negative marks, what precisely would be the nature and concern of depth epistemology. The differentia features of depth epistemology could be delineated, from the assertions made by Pandey in the above two works, and by synthesising the same with the ideas of the four thinkers in his compilation and the traditions which he cites as instances of depth epistemology. Some of the marks of depth epistemology could be seen as corollary of the above stipulations of surface epistemology. For our purpose, after having formed for ourselves, a picture of depth epistemology, based on Pandey's stipulations and ostensions, we shall revisit the question again after making a reflection on Ranade and Mukerji.

The foremost differentia of depth epistemology, is the idea of a levelled view of knowledge. This refers to a gradation between two types of knowledge: empirical knowledge and transcendental knowledge, wherein the latter is of greater value for the philosopher and the proper domain of depth epistemology.⁹ Transcendental knowledge is termed as 'inverted reflexion' by Pandey, among other things; it is the presupposition of empirical knowledge. The same is trans-objective as well as trans-subjective, for the ordinary subjective knowledge is as empirical as the objective one. Thus, clearly enough, depth epistemology is a type of transcendentalism, though different to the Kantian version.

On the trans-objective and trans-subjective character of DE, Pandey clears this idea by introducing the term, *akhaṇḍārthatā*¹⁰. He is of the view that while in objective and ordinarily subjective knowledge, there remains a chasm between the subject and the object or when expressed in propositional form, between the subject and predicate; in such cases, there is either *sāmsarga-sāmsargī-bhāva* or *viśeṣī-viśeṣaṇa-bhāva*, between the subject and predicate. Contrary to this, in the depth-epistemological analysis, there is *tādātmya* and *abheda* between the two, thus the proposition, in DE, is *akhaṇḍārthaka*.

Another prominent feature of DE and its mark of discernment with SE, lies in criteriology¹¹. Pandey stipulates a distinction here between *lakṣaṇamīmāṃsā* and *pramāṇamīmāṃsā*; in his view the latter has to do with sheer enumeration of isolated sources of knowledge, while the former involves a more foundational question. As per Pandey, the most basic question for DE, is that of 'criterion'; what is criterion, how is it related to truth and what is the distinction between the two, are some prominent questions of DE. Such criteriology, Pandey tells us is yet again, a common feature of the philosophers associated with DE tradition and in his view parallel to the tradition

⁹ Ibid. pp. 112-113

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 111

¹¹ PDE, pp. 3-6

of Vico, D. J. Mercier, and Wittgenstein who were dealing with the question of criterion as a philosophical tool, the Allahabad philosophers were also advancing their own criteriology *de novo*. For Pandey, *lakṣaṇais* prior to *pramāṇa*, the latter gains ground only when the former has been settled with rigour, as “a *pramāṇa* is first defined and identified”¹², through a *lakṣaṇamīmāṃsā*. Therefore, in a way, *lakṣaṇamīmāṃsā* is a second order inquiry, in relation to *pramāṇamīmāṃsā*. Per the reckoning of Pandey, for each of the four philosophers of Allahabad in his anthology, the question of criterion is paramount and the same as we shall see later, is ‘internal’ for each of them. As a second order inquiry, criteriology or *lakṣaṇamīmāṃsā* falls in the domain of DE, whilst *pramāṇamīmāṃsā* lies in the ambit of SE.

Extending the relation of DE and criteriology, Pandey posits an interrelationship between DE and analytic philosophy or philosophy of language¹³, which was a movement almost contemporary to DE. He terms this as the “focal point of depth epistemology”. He argues that since criterion is founded on definition, it is necessarily related to language, since definition is a linguistic act, in our understanding the two require prominently an act of clarification of thoughts or analysis of concepts. However, more than this, Pandey does not comment or show as to how any of the four thinkers, resorts to a clarification of thoughts; this lack is identified by Prof. Ambika Datta Sharma in his crisp essay on DE¹⁴. Though this is surely a lack in *Problems of Depth Epistemology*, nevertheless in his subsequent work (1999), Pandey demonstrates a brilliant linguistic analysis of terms, and how the same varies in the stylistics of Navya-Nyāya and that of Advaita Vedānta¹⁵; all the same, Burrell’s exercise of a clarification of the concept of criterion¹⁶, is quite akin to his British brethren belonging to the analytic tradition.

As indicated above, the primary locus of DE, ‘the criterion’, is invariably internal in all the four thinkers of Pandey’s anthology, as much in the editor of the anthology; such internality of criterion is stressed using different lexicon by each of them. Ultimately, the internal criterion is identified with intuition or vision¹⁷ or insight or *prātibhajñāna*¹⁸ or *aparokṣānubhūti*. We are told by the proponent, that Śaṅkara’s

¹² Ibid., p. 4

¹³ Ibid., pp. 5-6

¹⁴ Singh, Ramlal (ed.), 2004, *Philosophical Contributions of Professor S. L. Pandey*, Allahabad: Ram Nath Kaul Library of Philosophy, University of Allahabad (henceforth, PCSP)

Sharma, Ambika Datta, 2004, “Gahan Jñānamīmāṃsā Ke Nihitārtha” in PDE, pp. 209-210

¹⁵ JGM, pp. 115-118

¹⁶ Burrell, P. S., 1987, “The Criterion” in PDE, pp. 17-47

¹⁷ PDE, pp. 6-8

¹⁸ JGM, pp. 111-112

aparokṣānubhūti, Spinoza’s intuitive knowledge, Berkeley’s notion, Bradley’s immediacy, are some aspects of such internal criterion/insight¹⁹. Pandey underscores at this juncture, that “self-knowledge” is the most significant form of knowledge²⁰ and such self-knowledge, which is self-evident, is the complete or *aśeṣa-pramāṇa* or *carama-pramāṇa* in DE, while the six *pramāṇa*-s dealt by SE are all types of *śeṣa-pramāṇa*²¹. The discovery of such self-knowledge or most foundational element or transcendental presupposition of knowledge, also identified by the thinkers of DE tradition, with the foundational consciousness or *sākṣī-jñāna*, is the most pivotal discovery and beginning point of depth epistemology.

We are told that, while, cognitive notions such as *samśaya*, *vipratipatti*, *apratipatti*, *sambhāvanā*, observation, experimentation, belong to SE, DE is marked by *niścaya*, *śraddhā*, *manana*, *nididhyāsana*. We are further told that, depth epistemology enjoins *śānti* and *ānanda*, while SE is dry and insipid²². Depth epistemology is prominently employed in our ventures into the realm of moral, aesthetic, and religious knowledge, while SE is employed more in our inquiries into natural sciences, mathematics, logic, etc²³. From here, Pandey furnishes to us, another important characteristic of DE. Since SE, advances a Procrustean analysis of epistemic issues, it fails to appreciate the synthetic and integral character of knowledge; DE focuses on the foundational character of knowledge and is therefore able to tap the “openness of knowledge situation”²⁴. Pandey and DE tradition do not undermine the importance of SE and empirical knowledge in any manner; the view that is offered to us is a gradation of knowledge. In simple words, knowledge has infinite levels, which include, empirical, scientific, mathematical, logical, moral, aesthetic, and religious knowledge. The infinitude or plurality of knowledge situation mandates a different criterion for each different level. Harping upon this openness and graded view of knowledge, Prof. Hari Shankar Upadhyaya, a student of Pandey and an epistemologist par-excellence, stresses that the attempt of Western epistemologists to analyse all cases of knowledge by one set of paradigms, is not an appropriate way of analysis, as an openness of knowledge situation demands a different set of paradigms, for a specific level of knowledge.²⁵

¹⁹ PDE, pp. 6-7

²⁰ Ibid., p. 7

²¹ Ibid., p.3

²² JGP, p. 112

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ PDE, p. 3

²⁵ Upadhyaya, H. S., “Prof. S. L. Pandey on Openness of Knowledge”, in PCSP, p.155

2. R. D. Ranade: Doctrine of the Criterion and the Epistemology of Self-Consciousness

Ramchandra Dattatraya Ranade (1886-1957) was the first Indian professor and head of the department of philosophy, at Allahabad. Innumerable legends and incredible anecdotes, inside the campus, had gathered around him; his reputation as a saint and a mystic is still a matter of reverence in the spiritual heritage of Maharashtra. Ranade was an unparalleled scholar of Upaniṣad-s, Vedānta and the literature of Sanskrit, Marathi, Greek, Hindi traditions. The article of Ranade, that Pandey has chosen for his anthology, is sourced from his seminal work, *Vedānta- The Culmination of Indian Thought*²⁶. Other than this, one may form some clue of his epistemic position, from his essay, “The Evolution of My Own Thought” in the now classic, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*²⁷, edited by Radhakrishnanand Muirhead.

The essay by Ranade, in the anthology, “Doctrine of the Criterion”, is an attempt to discover the ultimate criterion in matters of knowledge and truth. The method adopted by Ranade, may be seen as a kind of *pramāṇāntarabhāva* exercise, where some *pramāṇa*-s are reduced into some other ones, and the more basic of *pramāṇa*-s are shown to be incapacitated, in their reach to truth and reality. The ultimate criterion, in Ranade’s argumentation, comes as an intuitive experience or *anubhava*, which in his case is the *carama-pramāṇa*. Ranade also critiques the traditional theories of truth and shows how *anubhava* encompasses in its fold, the cream of all the three theories.

Ranade re-asserts the Vedantin view concerning reality, wherein spirit is the highest grade²⁸, and states that the problem he seeks to discuss in “Doctrine of the Criterion” is how to know the criterion and how to know whether knowledge pertaining to it is true or not²⁹; the criterion which he, therefore, is seeking, is the criterion for the knowledge of such highest reality and also test of truth for such knowledge. Such criterion must be comprehensive, simple, self-evident, and exclusive, i.e., ‘only-this-or-nothing-principle’. For Ranade, one’s epistemic ideas and views regarding criterion are essentially rooted in the basal structure of one’s metaphysical views³⁰. He reduces *anuplabdhi* into *pratyakṣa*, and *upamāna* and *arthāpatti* into *anumāna*, thereafter we

²⁶ Ranade, R. D., 2001, *Vedānta-The Culmination of Indian Thought*, Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan

²⁷ Ranade, R. D., 1952, “The Evolution of My Own Thought”, in Radhakrishnan, S. and Muirhead, 1952, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, London: Muirhead Library of Philosophy (henceforth EMT and CIP respectively)

²⁸ Ranade, R. D., 1987, “Doctrine of the Criterion”, in PDE, p. 48

²⁹ PDE, pp. 48-49

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 49

are left with *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*. For *pratyakṣa*, he utilizes the *upamāna* of Rāmaṇuja and shows it to be misleading³¹. For *anumāna*, he argues following Bradley, that all inferences and judgments, yield us, only partial and probable knowledge of the appearance³². Thence, the arguments of Śrīharṣa against *vyāpti* and Śaṅkara's *starkāpratiṣṭhānāta* are invoked to show how invalid and incapable *anumāna* is, in the pursuit of the highest grade of reality.³³ Thus, five out of the traditional six *pramāṇa*-s are shown to be incapacitated. *Śabda*, for Ranade, requires validation by *anubhava* or intuitive experience, lest it is only a ritualistic dogma³⁴. Therefore, it is *anubhava* alone which could be accepted as the criterion of the true knowledge of reality.

The three traditional theories of truth are then shown to be problematic and Ranade demonstrates how, *anubhava* is the most suitable criterion of truth. In correspondence theory, for Ranade, it is problematic to believe how can an idea represent a physical reality; if per Berkeley, things are mentalised, then the problem would still magnify, since now how can two ideas be identical; it remains technically impossible to ascertain correspondence; as such the theory is untenable. The criterion of utility does not work as utility is relative and depends on individual idiosyncrasies; in addition, the theory is assailed by the vitiations of Benthamite utilitarianism. In coherence theory of truth, "absolute coherence is not knowable as the knower will be outside the coherent system"³⁵ and as such it lands into approximation. However, if coherence lands into a plane where the knower, known and knowledge become non-dual, which will be a case of transparent coherence, this will be nothing else than *anubhava*. Similarly, for a realised being (mystic), there is absolute parity (correspondence) between the internal and the external. All the same, *anubhava*, confers on beatification, happiness, highest and unblemished bliss; thus, the pragmatist criterion of satisfaction is also encompassed in this mystic criterion.³⁶

Ranade at the end of his polemical essay, tells us that *anubhava* is an immediate and first-hand intuitive apprehension of reality, self-evident, not requiring an intermediate criterion since it is direct. "Reality though ineffable, is experienceable", *anubhava*, as such is the only appropriate criterion of its knowledge, blinking at intuition on one hand and at beatification on the other³⁷.

³¹ Ibid., p. 51

³² Ibid., p. 54

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 54-55

³⁵ Ibid., p. 57

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 55-57

³⁷ Ibid., p. 57-58

Ranade highlights the epistemological significance of self-consciousness as discussed and portrayed in the Upaniṣad-s, in “The Evolution of My Own Thought”. He notes correctly, that in the Upaniṣadic view, it is not possible for us to know the ‘self’ in the technical sense of the term “knowledge”³⁸; but he adds that the self and God are not mere matters of faith as in Kant, but also objects of mystical realisation. The unknowability of self, per Ranade, in Upaniṣad-s, is not the Spencer-like unknowability but one from the standpoint of ‘philosophical humility’; “to which the eye is unable to go...neither speech nor mind is able to reach”, what else conception, about it, could be formed other than its being *avāṅgmanasagocara*. Secondly, the knower itself cannot be an object of knowledge, per *Śvetāswatara* and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*. These positions, as per Ranade, raise another pivotal question, given that the self is the pure subject, then “would it be possible for the knower to know himself”³⁹. The question was actually asked by Yājñvalkyā and answered in the affirmative. “Nothing (no knowledge) is possible if self-consciousness is not possible”, the same is the ultimate fact of experience; for Yājñvalkyā, Ranade tells us that, “introspection and self-consciousness are the verities of experience”. It is unfortunate in Ranade’s view that despite the discovery of “unity of apperception”, in Kant, he should have denied the “reality of the corresponding psychological process of introspection”. Self and self-consciousness are the light of man, when, the sun, the moon, the fire are all set and extinguished, Ranade writes, explicating the position of Yājñvalkyā. Thus, in “the act of pure-self-contemplation...the self is most mysteriously both the subject and the object of knowledge”⁴⁰. This, as per our understanding, in Ranade, is the core of all epistemic principles, the centrality of self and its being self-conscious; the self-conscious self, knows or sees itself through *anubhava*.

3. A. C. Mukerji: The Foundations of Knowledge and Suggestions for an Idealistic Theory of Knowledge

Almost every important writing of Anukul Chandra Mukerji (1888/1890? - 1968), is an instance of philosophy without borders, as much as it could be seen as a dialogue between the idealist traditions of India and the West. Termed as the Plato of Allahabad, by Jay Garfield and Nalini Bhushan⁴¹, Mukerji’s work, on the patterns of K. C. Bhattacharyya, presents a Vedāntic critique or emendation of Kant. In my understanding, Mukerji is the only one, out of the four thinkers in the anthology of Pandey, whose primary philosophical objective was an analysis of epistemic problems.

³⁸ CIP, p. 553

³⁹ Ibid., p. 554

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 555

⁴¹ Garfield, J. and Bhushan, N. (eds.), 2011, *Indian Philosophy in English: From Renaissance to Independence*, Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, (henceforth IPE), p. 459

His two important treatises, *Self, Thought and Reality*⁴² and *The Nature of Self*⁴³, are very serious and original advancements in the directions of transcendental idealism. His importance and originality, and at the same time a neglect of his contribution, could be understood from the underneath remark by Garfield and Bhushan:

It is hard to overstate Mukerji's creativity. Most of us would regard Wilfrid Sellars and Donald Davidson (of course along with W. V. Quine) as the most significant exponents of American pragmatist and neo-Kantian thought of the 20th century. We would cite as being among their principal contributions to our discipline, in Sellars' case, the identification of and attack on the "myth of the given" and the harnessing of Kant's idealism in the service of realism, and in Davidson's, the attack on the possibility of alternative conceptual schemes, and of the scheme/content and world/word distinctions. These contributions were made between 1956 and 1980. The circulation and later publication of "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" (Sellars, 1963) and "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" (Davidson, 1984, pp. 183–198) transformed Anglo-American philosophy and set entirely new agendas for generations of Anglophone philosophers. Indeed, some of the most important philosophical books of the last few years are direct descendants of these seminal essays.

*Mukerji identified each of these themes and anticipated these conclusions and their arguments long before his better-known American colleagues, and with a distinctively Vedānta motivation and inflection.*⁴⁴

Other than his two aforementioned treatises, this section forms a picture of his ideas banking upon his essay in the anthology of Pandey, which is also found in a later edition of *Self, Thought and Reality*, namely, "Foundations of Knowledge" and upon his "Suggestions for an Idealist Theory of Knowledge" in the Radhakrishnan and Muirhead volume.

A. C. Mukerji is against the democratization of the epistemic domain and rigorously rejects the idea of a coordinate view of knowledge which fails to acknowledge the oligarchic structure and the foundational character of the knowledge situation. Mukerji believes that the ideal of clarity and distinctness, though has rendered a tremendous service to philosophy, all the same, an excess committed for the

⁴² Mukerji, A. C., 1957, *Self, Thought And Reality*, Allahabad: The Indian Press

⁴³ Mukerji, A. C., 1943, *The Nature of Self*, Allahabad: The Indian Press

⁴⁴ IPE, p. 460

sake of these ideals was done at the expense of depth of insight⁴⁵. As against this, for Mukerji, Kant's descent into the foundations of knowledge, is more significant than a venture to seek clear and distinct ideas and that the momentous question raised by Kant regarding transcendental presuppositions of knowledge is foundational to all knowledge situation; though we will see that Mukerji very aptly and lamentingly pinpoints the shortfalls of Kantian views which led to the unfortunate collapse of idealist theory of knowledge, which Mukerji sought to revitalize, by emending the Kantian position.

Mukerji draws our attention to the divide between the "only two directions in which the pendulum of human thought is capable of oscillating"⁴⁶, these two directions are represented by the empirical and the transcendental methods. He argues, that the prime defect of empiricism lies in "its blindness to its own presuppositions", which he terms as "transcendental blindness". Mukerji traces the reason of such transcendental blindness to the Cartesian dichotomous division of the universe.⁴⁷, because of which, Locke found the "dualism already established firmly in philosophical thought", consequently, his problem reduced itself to show that the mistakenly "innate furniture of mind" had its genesis in the external world. Mukerji sees the great dualism in Descartes, as containing the germ of scepticism, for him Descartes had set such a sharp opposition between the spirit and the matter, and the self-centred individuality had been stressed to such an extent, that, only a little re-adjustment and re-orientation exercise was required to develop the germ fully. In his reasoning, with such a sharp chasm between the knower and the known, knowledge cannot be explained; it is beyond imagination, as to how mind could break its boundaries and reach things different from itself. For Mukerji, however, a greater danger that the Cartesian dualism threw on epistemic matters, is that, for it the knower and the known coordinate in status. They are, as per him, in such an analysis, members of a democracy, where none possesses a "privileged dignity over the other"⁴⁸. Such an analysis makes, knowledge a relation of compresence. Locke took this democratization process started by Descartes, more seriously, and attempted to derive ideas such as those of unity and cause from the same experience, which is also the source of the idea of colour and that of sound. Thus, a sharper denial of hierarchy in knowledge situation is brought out by Locke.

⁴⁵ Mukerji, A. C., 1987, "The Foundations of Knowledge" in PDE, pp.59-60

⁴⁶ SITK, p. 434

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 437

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 441

Mukerji therefore, sees the process of levelling down the status of transcendental presuppositions of knowledge situation, to that of the very ideas which they condition, as the source of scepticism. He terms, such a levelling down, as the fallacy of transcendental dislocation.⁴⁹ He contends, that the very contention of empiricists, that the idea of a cause, comes at a later stage of mental development, “owes its intelligibility to the causal principle”.⁵⁰ A confusion between the empirical ideas and the transcendental ideas, is a transcendental dislocation which makes the foundations of knowledge, an ordinary coordinate of its superstructure.⁵¹ After Locke, Berkeley sees the heterogeneity between the spirit which knows and perceives ideas and the ideas themselves, the former is entirely distinct from the latter. The knower in Berkeley, cannot belong to the same order as the things that it knows.⁵² But the intellectual legacy of Berkeley, arrests him somehow from taking this dichotomy to its logical consequence. In Mukerji’s argumentation, Hume’s scepticism, is the inevitable consequence of democratizing the foundational principles of knowledge, who as per Mukerji was more interested in making Locke and Berkeley more consistent with the “creed of empiricism”, than examining the very foundations of empirical outlook. But Mukerji offers astute examples to argue, that even a simple statement of doubt cannot be imagined, without some presupposed certainty; as per him, Hume’s doubt - regarding the sunrise - cannot arise, until one has a presupposed certainty that “there is a world where things remain identical in different contexts and at different times”⁵³ (that the sun of today will remain identical to that of tomorrow) and “where events are so connected that one can only succeed and not precede, the other”⁵⁴ (that tomorrow will definitely succeed today). In simple words, “space, time, identity, causality, are presupposed by the sceptic”⁵⁵; and, therefore, empirical generalizations, rest on the non-empirical.

Mukerji highlights the invaluable source of inspiration for idealists, which comes from the Kantian dive into the transcendental foundations of knowledge, i.e., the subject as the universal pre-condition of all objects of knowledge and a fundamental difference between the nature of its relation to objects and the nature of inter-objective relations; thus the entire superstructure of world of objects which includes both mind and matter is supported by the subject; “we cannot trace the origin of transcendental

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 442

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., pp.438-439

⁵³ Ibid., p. 445

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

principles of knowledge to the mind conceived as a member of democracy of ideas”⁵⁶, and the “formative principles of self-consciousness” are not of empirical origin. He, detests a naturalistic analysis of thought and proposes that whatever is involved in thinking cannot be a coordinate of things, i.e., they cannot be treated as belonging to the same plane.

Having, eulogized the contribution of Kant, Mukerji points out where Kant follies in his opinion, and where a Vedāntic emendation of Kant is required. He is of the view, that despite having identified the structural role of thought in the knowledge situation, Kant, too, makes thought a coordinate of things conditioned by thought, in his own manner. In his reasoning, since “I think”, is the ultimate transcendental ground of experience in Kant, it follows that all objects of experience must conform to the conditions of self-consciousness; but here Kant’s insight becomes unsteady in offering an analysis of self-consciousness. “On the one hand it was taken to be the pre-condition of all objects, and, on the other hand, it was held to be equivalent to the consciousness of the self as reflected back from the consciousness of object”⁵⁷. While the former “makes the unity of apperception, the transcendental condition of object-consciousness”, “the latter makes it consequent upon the consciousness of object”⁵⁸. The Kantian analysis wavered between these two alternatives, wherein the subsequent development of idealism sustains the latter, and insists the correlativity of the subject-consciousness and object-consciousness and an inseparability of the two. In this interpretation, self and non-self, subject and object, thought and thing are supposed to be correlative, in the same sense as cause is correlative to effect; wherein each correlative term has a necessary relation to the other and would be unintelligible when taken in its abstract identity. This entails that the pure consciousness of self is essentially synthetic, however still the subject is of higher order as the above correlativity is a “correlativity for the subject”; which means that it is the subject which is the locus of such correlativity. This, then implies that the “world is a self-manifestation of a spiritual principle which is a universal that differentiates itself and is yet one with itself in its particularity”⁵⁹. Thus, the knowing mind cannot have a sheer atomic existence, nor can it be a sheer coordinate with matter, but a self-distinguishing principle, which on one hand distinguishes itself from its “other” and on the other over-reaches such distinction.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 446

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 447

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

A great disdain for the naturalizing tendency in epistemology could be seen in the writings of Mukerji, who presciently, anticipates the later debate of naturalized versus normative epistemology in the West; and wages a crusade to safeguard the latter. A naturalistic tendency to treat the thought as coordinate of things, has given birth to a number of paradoxes and prevarications in the course of epistemology, and cautions Mukerji, that to misconceive the universal principle along-side particulars, or to consider thought as one of the members of the relation of distinction, when all distinctions are within thought, will be an unmitigated paradox. As such, following Giovanni Gentile, he repeats the warning that, “the unity of mind” and the “multiplicity of things” must not be put on the same plane.

Other than a more rigorous denial of the coordinate view of knowledge, Mukerji seeks to bolster the Kantian position and idealistic theory of knowledge by importing some insights from Vedānta. For Mukerji, it was deplorable, that while Kant had an insight into the “I” being a “consciousness that accompanies all conceptions”, he still condemns it as completely empty of all content simply on the ground that consciousness cannot be defined.⁶⁰ It is a folly to have simultaneously underlined the centrality of the unity of apperception and yet having dismissed self-consciousness as a sheer abstract identity⁶¹. Therefore, the recognition of “unconditioned unity of self-consciousness as the ultimate basis of knowledge....could alone build up a sound theory of knowledge and experience and lay the foundation of a more robust type of idealistic metaphysics”⁶². As such, Mukerji believes, that the Kantian insight was not developed sufficiently, and a notion like foundational consciousness or the unobjectifiable, *swayāṃprakāśasākṣījñāna*, is essential to sustain and revitalize an idealistic theory of knowledge. The epistemic position of Mukerji could be, in our understanding, seen as a type of Vedāntic transcendentalism.

4. Making some sense of Depth Epistemology: Is it a revitalizing of Vedāntic Epistemology?

A recapitulation is in order, to make some sense out of the idea of depth epistemology, as per Pandey, Ranade, and Mukerji. It follows from the preceding sections, that the notion of depth epistemology may be identified with any epistemic enterprise which seeks to unfold the transcendental and foundational structure of knowledge. In Pandey and the two thinkers cited, the same lies in a recognition of a qualitative, structural and level difference between the self and the object, in an internal or immediate nature of the criterion and in exalting the self-knowledge as the highest

⁶⁰ PDE, p. 70

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 73

⁶² Ibid., p. 75

form of knowledge. Pandey's accounts make Śamkara as the foremost depth epistemologist; his treatment of Kant is ambivalent, he is careful to point out that such elements in Kantian analysis that were dislodged by later epistemologists, for an instance, his illustrations of synthetic apriori judgments, his noumenal agnosticism are traces of SE, while his transcendental analysis, identification of self as an original unity is an element of DE; this as clear from the section of A. C. Mukerji is also the view of the latter who is flustered with the fact that Kant did not develop what is implied by the "I think" to its logical culmination and that the coordinate view of knowledge is not completely dislodged in Kant. Pandey also, absorbing from Mukerji, cites traces of internal criterion in Spinoza, Berkeley, and Bradley. In my understanding, Pandey's own views and his account of DE, is more influenced by Mukerji in comparison to the other three thinkers. However, in the *Jñānamīmāṃsā Ke Gūḍha Praśna*, the places where he cites the mystical bent of medieval poets Kabir, Nabha Das, and others in giving an illustration of the tranquillity and blissfulness that one achieves via depth epistemology, the same is also seen as source of aesthetic, ethical and religious knowledge⁶³; at such places Ranade's beatification/mysticism is clearly influencing Pandey; though what is more likely is that such elements in Pandey's thoughts, are cultivated in his adherence to the Advaitic tradition.

The utmost dichotomy between the 'I' and the non-I or the subject and the object, that has been stressed by Ranade and Mukerji, reiterated by Pandey, is clearly traceable, to Yājñavalkya. Biswambhar Pahi, a logician, academic philosopher of matchless rigor and synthetic abilities, a reformer of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika traditions, suggests a very novel categorization of classical systems of Indian philosophy; in his magnum opus, *Vaiśeṣika Padārthavyavasthā Kā Paddhatimūlaka Vimarśa*⁶⁴, he categorizes the systems under two heads: *santānavāda* and *nityavāda*, the latter systems are again categorized under two sub-heads: *Yājñvalkyīya* and *Kāṇādīyadhārā*s. The *Yājñvalkyīya* systems are such systems, which subscribe to a primacy of viṣayi-viṣaya-bheda; that is the subject and the object are two very different elements and cannot be analysed by the same method; Vedānta and Sāṃkhya are two representative systems of this tradition. The *Kāṇādīya* tradition is founded on the primacy of *dharma-dharmi-bheda*, and considers both subject and object to be on the same plane of analysis, where the two are to be analysed by the same method of *dharma-dharmi* analysis. Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā, Non-Advaitic Vedāntic systems belong to this tradition. Though Pahi himself is a Naiyāyika, and will not accept the positions of Vedānta and

⁶³ JGP, p. 112

⁶⁴ Pahi, Biswambhar, 2000, *Vaiśeṣika Padārthavyavasthā Kā Paddhatimūlaka Vimarśa*, Jaipur: Department of Philosophy, University of Rajasthan, pp.1-3

Mukerji, etc., his categorization and the *Yājñvalkyya* tradition is an apt way to understand the idea of depth epistemology. The hierarchy of 'I' and non-I and the centrality of pure knower or foundational consciousness is the Vedāntic core of depth epistemology.

The emphasis on internal criterion, as *aśeṣapramāṇa*, very much reminds, of *tatvāvedaka* and *atatvāvedakapramāṇa* dichotomy in the Vedāntic tradition. The same is corroborated by Pandey's engagement with the intuitive and immediate apprehension of truth, in its various formulations, in Spinoza, Berkeley, post-Kantian idealists, neo-Hegelians. P. S. Burrell, dialectically establishes that in every man, a faculty to discern between non-sensible objects is the ultimate criterion of truth and epistemic matters. Burrell, suggests that in the classical maxim, 'man is a rational animal', the term rational also means inner and spiritual, and as such, an inward witness, is the ultimate adjudicator of epistemic and axiological matters.⁶⁵ *Anubhava*, in Ranade, is clearly immediate and intuitive experience of reality, as noted in the preceding section on Ranade. The central position of 'thought' in Mukerji, is another formulation of the same position, i.e., inner criterion. In R. N. Kaul, who is a neo-Hegelian idealist, an intuitive grasp of immediacy, following Bradley, is the criterion.⁶⁶

Sākṣijñāna and *swasamvitti* occupy the central stage in Pandey, Ranade, and Mukerji. Self-knowledge as the highest form of knowledge and the key concern of epistemic interests of these thinkers, has been noted in the above sections. It is on this league, that Mukerji suggests an Advaitic emendation of Kant. The emphasis on the pivotal role of the inner criterion, 'self', subject as superior to the object or the I/inner being superior to non-I/external, makes the depth epistemology tradition, very clearly, a specific kind of transcendental idealism.

Therefore, it is not inapt to conclude, that the three thinkers are engaging, in their own ways, with epistemic notions of Vedāntic pattern. While, Ranade is contextualizing Upaniṣadic and Vedāntic ideas in terms of the epistemic categories of other systems of classical Indian philosophy, and attempting to show that it is Vedānta which is the culmination of Indian thought; his endeavour is throughout underpinned by his mysticism. A. C. Mukerji magisterially contemporizes the Upaniṣadic and Vedāntic vision and engages the same with the modern Western idealistic traditions. The inflection of Vedānta, in Kant and Western idealism, is not out of a sense of jingoistic superiority, but the result of a thoroughly well-informed acquaintance with the two traditions of thought; wherein a plausible demonstration of the vitality of

⁶⁵ PDE, pp. 46-47

⁶⁶ PDE, p. 14

Vedāntic ideas in making the ‘normative’ epistemological pursuits of the idealist tradition more robust, is something of remarkable significance for both history of ideas as well as for the furtherance of thought. Thus, to my understanding, in simple words, depth epistemology is a program of furthering and revitalizing the Vedāntic epistemology.

We may very clearly discern, the two broad variants of depth epistemology in the three thinkers dealt by us. The exercise by Ranade, which ultimately culminates into a mystic and beatific experience, is visually distinct to the transcendental or foundational analysis of ideas by Mukerji; the latter is clearly more epistemologically-grounded. A perusal of the vast literature left by Ranade, makes it sufficiently clear that the centre stage of Ranade’s writings is not epistemology, while epistemic concerns, idealism to be precise, is the central component of Mukerji’s philosophical program. This is in no way undermining the philosophical stature of Ranade, who was a source of inspiration to Mukerji, as his senior colleague, but simply pointing out that Mukerji is a core epistemologist, while the same is not the primary concern of Ranade. Thus, we get two distinct strands in the DE tradition. For our understanding, we may term Ranade’s enterprise with epistemology, as an epistemology of self-consciousness or an epistemology of beatific mysticism; he himself uses the former of the two terms; whereas Mukerji’s brand may be seen as an epistemology of foundations for an idealistic theory of knowledge. Pandey, in accordance to his belief in ‘openness’ and infinitude of knowledge situation acknowledges, that there may be a variety of depth epistemologies, though its typology is not clearly specified by him.⁶⁷

5. Some Problems with the Conception and Idea of Depth Epistemology

The conception of depth epistemology, its identification with Allahabad school of philosophy, its uniqueness and distinction from the ordinary understanding of the term epistemology, raises numerous problematic issues, which need to be addressed with seriousness, in order to repletethe ideawith a living continuity.

In the history of epistemology, what we ordinarily understand by its connotation, is that it has to do primarily with ‘veridical knowledge’. The naturalist as well as normative epistemologists in the West, the realist as well as the idealist epistemologists in India, concentrated more of their energies, on an analysis of veridical and empirical knowledge which lay in the scope of ‘confirmation’. This raises a serious concern, that an exercise, which in the end falls back upon, *anubhava* or an intuitive insight into reality or an intuitive grasp of immediacy, how far is it proper to ascribe the label of ‘epistemology’ to such a philosophical exercise. This is not

⁶⁷ JGP, p. 118

degrading intuitive knowledge, which has clear importance in the matters of axiology, religion and even constructing metaphysical, logical, and mathematical systems; but its central role in epistemic analysis, is something unusual for most traditional epistemologists. Is not such a venture blurring the distinction between ‘intuitionism’ and ‘epistemology’, if not between ‘mysticism’ and ‘epistemology’.

Clearly, immediate experience is not the only thing in ‘depth epistemology’, the hair-splitting analysis of thought-thing relation supplemented by a lofty and masterly scholarship of both the traditions of thought is very much a hardcore epistemological exercise. However, here we will have to clearly distinguish the latter normative exercise in pursuit of foundations of knowledge from such epistemic exercises wherein an epistemic discussion is just a sidelight phenomenon. On this league, in our understanding, such depth epistemology is very much viable as an idea which seeks to explore the foundations of knowledge. The transcendental analysis of Mukerji is one such exercise; however, in the accepted sense of the term ‘epistemology’ the categorization of Ranade under any rubric of epistemology may not be a proper venture. Ranade’s synthetic hermeneutics of Upaniṣadic corpus, his unparalleled scholarship and understanding of the classical and medieval Indian as well as Greek traditions, deserves veneration; but he is not an epistemologist, in such sense of the term, in which A. C. Mukerji emerges as an astute epistemologist. Thus, while one pattern of epistemic analysis surely deserves the ascription of epistemology, the question still remains serious: should an exercise, which is centred around an intuitive and immediate experience, be termed as an epistemology of any sort. The juxtaposition of ‘depth’ and ‘epistemology’ is therefore in question, in our understanding.

There are however alternate uses of the term epistemology and episteme in recent history of epistemology. Feminist epistemology, Epistemic injustice, are ideas that broaden the notion of epistemology. Veridical knowledge is not the final import of an epistemic analysis, in all these recent conceptions. Such an alternate view, may save the other type of depth epistemology; though in all likelihood such depth epistemologists will not relish the idea, for the reason that these alternative types of epistemologies emphasise relativity and subjectivity, which is clearly not acceptable to the exponents of DE.

The identification of ‘depth epistemology’ with ‘Allahabad School of Philosophy’ also demands some clarification. Will the four thinkers associated with the idea, agree to such categorization? We should again take a recourse to their literature and see if their philosophical program is primarily focused around the idea of depth epistemology. While clearly Ranade’s literature is not concerned primarily with epistemology of any sort, Burrell and Kaul have left very thin literature, barring a few

articles and text books, they did not leave the kind of serious treatises which Ranade and Mukerji left. As noted above, Mukerji is the most rigorous and serious epistemologist in the list of thinkers. In this way, the identification of DE and the Allahabad school of philosophy, is problematic. This problem gets magnified, when we notice the presence of many other serious scholars and philosophers stationed at Allahabad University, who do not have much association with the conception. After Mukerji, S. S. Roy hints towards a foundational idealist theory⁶⁸; and alongside Pandey, Ramlal Singh suggests an Advaitic revision of Kant⁶⁹. A. E. Gough, G. F. W. Thibaut, H. N. Randle, J. G. Jennings, Ganganath Jha were some very outstanding scholars of philosophy in the colonial period, who served the university but have no direct tinge of ‘depth epistemology’. Shashdhar Datta, V. S. Narvane, S. K. Seth and D. N. Dwivedi too, had different concerns in philosophy. Thus, a good number of serious scholars and academic philosophers at Allahabad University were not directly connected with the idea. If the idea is equated with an Allahabad School of Philosophy, then there seems to be less development on this front post-R. N. Kaul, until Pandey edits his anthology, and then again afterwards, not much significant development regarding the conception is visible.

The conception has sadly been greeted by, either an attitude of reverence or an outright rejection. What is required and hoped, is that the successive generations of scholars and philosophers at Allahabad University and elsewhere, take the idea seriously and contribute to its furtherance, by analysing its theoretical nuances and replenishing the debate on the nature of criterion, among other debates in the larger scene of contemporary academic philosophy in India.

⁶⁸ Roy, S. S., 1965, *The Heritage of Śaṅkara*, Allahabad: Udayana Publishers

⁶⁹ Singh, Ramlal, 1978, *An Inquiry Concerning Reason in Kant and Śaṅkara*, Allahabad: Chugh Publications

_____, 1979, “An Advaitic Emendation of Kant: A Study in Comparative Metaphysics”, *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, Volume 6, No.2, pp. 175-184