

ON INTERPRETING RADHAKRISHNAN, THE INTERPRETER TODAY

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Radhakrishnan's two volumes on *Indian Philosophy* published in 1923 and in 1927 were generally regarded as his interpretation of the different system of Indian philosophy and they have ever since been regarded as so. Interpretative works, indifferent to the question of their loyalty to the text (s) interpreted, have a context. The text itself may and often does, provide the context which an interpreter interprets. The text, in fact is written within a milieu. The interpreter is regarded as faithful if he too can share the milieu. The Question arises immediately 'Is such sharing possible on the part of the interpreter who is within a different milieu' from the point of his of the context of his space and time, his history, his reading of his history his geographical locale (with its urban rural- cultural continuum) and so on and on? These are all woven into the psyche of the interpreter. How then would he speak to the text-writers psyche? If he cannot he would not ever share the text-writer's point of view,- his interpretation would not share the text- writer's view(s) what, then would one, as a student of philosophy do with interpretations which appear to be at variance with the point of view of the text?

A Question such as this is of a piece with solipsism which renders communication to a nullity. It self presupposes which is a communication to a nullity. It itself presupposes a view of the text; it is conceived as outside the arena of interpretation which is a communitarian enterprise. Right or wrong, an interpretation is open to debate and is to that extent, sharable. Even if it appears to be wrong to one who sits in judgment on it, it can be impugned only within the spectrum of communicative language. Again, the question is self-stultifying. Is the text solipsistic? Supposedly mired in the unsharable milieu (which is no milieu at all!) of its writer, it cannot be communicated. But if it is communicable, then it is not solipsistic. Interpretation –theory, worth the name, turns its back at any (supposedly) solipsistic text, solipsistic text writer, and solipsistic interpretation.

This and this is the reason why an interpretation is sought to be understood as situated in a milieu. A Supposedly unsharable milieu is not worth the name. Or in other words, a text is not a text but a text which is amenable to interpretation. In so

far as it is a text, it is interpretable and so, communicable. And it is communicable within the entire spectrum of thought and mores and customs and initial and behaviour and so on and on. A word of caution is needed before distinctively philosophical interpretation is understood just because Radhakrishnan claims to have ‘interpreted’ the doctrines of particular system of philosophy in India.

While the concept of milieu admittedly guards against any solipsist understanding of the text which is the subject of interpretation, it cannot be accorded any place in philosophical interpretation. For milieu is predominantly a sociological – political concept, a glut - so to speak of a people’s (a people’s) social and political ideas and mores and customs and behavioural patterns-and so on and on. Any interpretation of, a sociological or / political text may have to attend to peoples social and political beliefs, customs practices-and-things of that sort. But a philosophical interpretation attends to the concepts which constitute a philosophical thought – system. The philosophic interpreter seeks to unravel for himself the logic of the philosophical theory he seeks to interpret. This is a philosophical exercise. He may see, i.e., envision in his philosophic imagination the unfolding of the logic of philosophical system, ask himself whether the logic of the system develops immanently, whether or not the system introduces extra concepts or ideas as presupposition not guaranteed by its logic. Thus a philosophical interpretation has distinctively conceptual overtones. The interpreter sits in judgment on the thought-systems to be interpreted. And what gives warrant to him to judge the thought system is the philosophical point of view he has to be credited with. His is not the task of chronologically situating the system in time but of seeing for himself, i.e., immanently developing the logic of the system he interprets. As Erdmann observed long ago ‘The history of philosophy can be represented rightly.....only with the help of philosophy....’Erdmann of course thought, like the Hegelian that he was, that philosophy, in representing history of philosophy, would unfold the dialectic development of system into Absolute India. But then, minus his Angelian predictions, his point that philosophic interpretation is philosophic exercise, whatever the predictions of the interpreter may be accepted.

Be it noted here that Radhakrishnan wrote *Indian Philosophy*, not *History of Indian Philosophy*. Interpretative as Radhakrishnan study of Indian philosophy was it

has to be situated in the context of theirs of interpretation *vis-a-vis* the text (s) for interpretation. For one thing, such attempt may stave off consideration of fidelity of interaction to text; for another, it helps the student of Indian philosophy histories philosophy. The philosophy histories what he interprets a philosophic thought - System within a spectrum of viewing things; the spectrum is the transform (2) But for from being a traditionalist, he creative response to the tradition the makes the tradition amenable to creative response. The gets the tradition speaks to him. In so for as a thought system having its moving in a traction - can be creatively responded to, it becomes universal. Of necessity, a philosophic thought develops; it develops thought interpretation, thought - what student of India philosophy is familiar with *Bhāsyas*. The *Bhāsyas*-s enlarge the tradition within which a thought system can be historically Situated; enlargement is a creative philosophical task. Introducing his interpretative work on Indian philosophical system, Radhakrishnan makes a cluster of observations are philosophical interpretation. These are significant.

- In interpretation the doctrines of the particular System, I have tried to estimate their indebtedness to the past as well their contribution to the progress of thought.
- The task of the historian is hard, especially in philosophy. However much he may try to assume the attitude of a mere chronicler ... Still the judgments and sympathies of the writer cannot long be hidden.
- Effective exposition means criticism and evolution.
- The historian of philosophy must approach his task, not as a mere philologist or even as a scholar but as a philosopher who uses his scholarship as an instrument to wrest from words the thoughts that underline them.
- It is the task of creative logier to interpret for us the life they (i.e. the texts) harpoons.
- The philosopher must pay alteration to the logier of ideas if the trial of philosophy is to be more than a bare catalogue of facts. The historian should be a critic and an interpreter but not a mere mechanical 'ragpicker'.

Radhakrishnan claims to have formulated a creative interpretation of Indian philosophical systems, one has to understand how interpretation they has come to be formed. Here we have no better guide than I tans - Georg gardener. Gardener sets his

face against an all-to-text based interpretation which makes the text frozen in time (as though) and ignores the possibility of moving the text both forward in time and backward in time as he unites. It may be that the creator of a work intends a particular public to say and that stretches fundamentally out beyond every historical of the historicity of the text to be interpreted. As he unites in truth, the horizon of the present is conceived in constant formation insofar as we must all constantly test our prejudices understanding is always a process of the fusing of horizons. Merleau-Ponty has the same view of the possibility of stretching the text in time as he writes ‘Husserl has used the fine word *stiffing* - foundation an establishment - to designate the unlimited fecundity of each present. It is thus that the world as soon as he has seen it, his first attempts at painting, and the whole past of painting all deliver of a tradition to the painter that is Husserl nuances, the power to forget origins.

The foregoing account of the view of gardener, Merleau-Ponty and Husserl point to one thing viz. the different between philosophical interpretation and historical interpretation. History of philosophy is, at bottom, philosophy. Whitehead wrote his history of philosophy not by dating though - systems unit by arranging than problem wise. A philosophical interpretation, worth the name, can embrace in its sweep through whose dating is important to it and thereby it forever re-antes and reviews the tradition fun which it springs up. In such continuous re-creating and renewing the tradition of a though - system, philosophical interpretation canonized the though – system to universal disperse within the pantheon of philosophy.

It is in this pantheon that Radhakrishnan tried to situate and envision India philosophical thought. The task that he took upon himself during 1923 - 1927 has not lost its importance today; indeed. It cannot be because it rescued India philosophy from the oblivion of the past and accords it temporality and historicity. Radhakrishnan view Indian philosophy creatively - in his own way though. Instead of seeing India philosophy chronologically as a fossil, he view it creatively within the ever - expanding horizon of Philosophy. His was a latent at writing exegesis on India philosophy in conformity with spirit of the *Bhasya*-s. He was in line with his illustrious predecessor Krishna Chandra Bhattacharyya who has observed, for back in 1905, that ‘exegetical interpretation inevitably shades off into philosophic construction. Radhakrishnan’s interpretation work was at once centrifugal and

centripetal, centrifugal as outliving the dead past in which orthodox scholars had view India philosophy and centripetal as conforming to the spirit of traction and incorporating novelty of expanding interpretation into it.