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DEDICATED  
TO THE  
REVERED MEMORY OF MY LOVING FATHER  
KALIPRASANNA DASGUPTA

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# INDIAN IDEALISM

BY

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## Foreword

*Indian Idealism* was written by the late Professor Surendranath Dasgupta when he was the Principal, Government Sanskrit College, Calcutta. While he was writing the third and the fourth volumes of his *History of Indian Philosophy* (published by the Cambridge University Press), he was invited by the University of Patna to deliver a course of lectures on some important aspects of Indian thought. This was the occasion for which the present book was written.

Those who are acquainted with the works of the late Professor are well aware of the fact that he never spared himself in making his investigations in any field of research as exhaustive and thorough as these could be. He collected materials from a direct study of the original texts in Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit and presented them in a clear, simple style for the easy understanding of readers, beginners and scholars alike.

In the present book he expounded the various strands of idealistic thought in India which stemmed out of the Upanishads (c. 700 B.C.) and later from Buddhism. He explained in what sense these theories can be called 'idealism', brought out the significant contributions of each of the principal Upanishads, and compared Buddhist Idealism with that of Saṅkara (A.D. 800) and some of his followers. The work thus gives the reader an adequate background in Indian Philosophy and provides valuable materials collected from various important sources to enable him to proceed further in his studies.

The book went out of print some years ago, and since then there has been a growing demand for it from

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## FOREWORD

students, teachers, scholars, and the general public. I am grateful to the Cambridge University Press for bringing out a paperback edition of the book so that it will again be available to readers throughout the world and serve a very useful purpose.

SURAMA DASGUPTA.

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*Preface* p. xxv

### *Chapter I. Beginnings of Indian Philosophy pp. 1–19*

1. The emergence of philosophy from the ritualistic religion of the Vedas was a slow process, and even in its subsequent career philosophy in India has not become entirely free from the domination of religious tendencies.

2. Sacrifice became the most powerful instrument for securing one's desired ends and if duly performed it was bound to produce the desired results irrespective of the favour or disfavour of the gods, to whom it was ostensibly offered. The unalterable efficacy thus associated with the sacrificial acts came to be easily transferred to all acts and deeds in general, and so in this cult of sacrifice we find the germs of the law of Karma, which occupies such a central position of importance in the later ethico-philosophical speculations of India.

3. But bold philosophical speculations about the origin of the world from one God are not altogether wanting even in the Samhita period, and this is evidenced by some philosophical hymns of the Rigveda and the Atharvaveda, where for the first time the riddle of the universe is found to be attacked with wonderful philosophic insight and ability.

4. The magical value of the sacrificial deeds came to be transferred in course of time to meditation and to acts of self-mortification or *tapas* also, and the Purāṇas are full of stories of ascetics who achieve even impossible things by their *tapas*. But this is not a post-Vedic creation; it goes back even to Vedic times where we find it stated that the great Creator produced the world by an act of self-sacrifice or by performing *tapas*.

5. Two hymns from the Rigveda.

6. These hymns definitely prove that there were some minds at least among the Vedic seers who could rise, in spite of their predilections for sacrifice and *tapas*, to the conception of a Universal Creator, who held the destinies of the universe under His control. But this highest God is still an external God and has not yet come to be identified with our fundamental moral and spiritual existence. It is only in the Upanishads that the question of the Self and Brahman and their relation receives full consideration, and Brahman comes to be regarded not as an external deity but as the inmost reality of our being.

7. The new enlightenment of the Upanishads, however, came as a slow process, and this is evidenced by the texts where Brahman is enjoined to be meditated as *prāṇa*, etc., and also under other symbols. The search after the highest which began with some of the Vedic seers came in the Upanishads to be directed towards the inner spirituality of man and the goal was not a happy residence in heaven as of old, nor even individual survival through infinite time, but immortality in the sense of deathless and indestructible spiritual experience. An illustration from the story and teaching of the Kāṭha Upanishad.

8. This undying spiritual existence is the highest principle, which enlivens and vitalises all thought-processes and sense-functioning and as such cannot be grasped by thought or powers of reasoning. It can be grasped by persons of highest moral elevation through undivided contact with the reality itself. Death is a terror for those who regard the psycho-biological functioning to be their self, but to the wise who have a vision of this reality as their true self, death is an illusion.

9. The transition from the unspeculative realism and formal ritualism of the Vedas to the bold mystical idealism of the Upanishads is very pronounced. The speculations of the Upanishads soared beyond the limits of discursive thought and landed in a mystical experience which was beyond thought and beyond life—unspeakable, unthinkable and unfathomable experience of reality, joyous and transcendent in nature. It is not a mere *esse est percipi*, for the existence of things is not denied, but is confirmed in this immortal self. It is doubtful whether the philosophy of the Upanishads, which posits a reality which is beyond all thought, is to be characterised either as idealism or mysticism.

## Chapter II. Upanishadic Idealism pp. 20–50

1. Two types of idealism distinguished by Professor Sorley. Contemporary idealism seems to be agreed upon the fundamental spirituality of the ultimate reality; but there is divergence of opinion regarding the meaning of the word “Spirit” or “Spiritual” as illustrated from the writings of McTaggart, Bradley, Berkeley and Kant.

2. Though it is difficult to formulate a positive definition of idealism, a negative definition comprehending all known types of idealism can be propounded.

3. The definition of idealism further discussed.

4. It follows from the definition of idealism that the world of reality as perceived must be illusory in some sense. Belief in the existence of an ideal state of perfection either as timeless existent or as the ultimate goal of the universal process seems to be a fundamental attitude of idealism.

5. Baldwin’s definition of realism too lends support by implication to the finding that our perceptions of the world are illusory in some sense.



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6. The question is raised whether the definition of idealism can be applied to the philosophical speculations of the Upanishads. The method of approach in the present work is entirely different from that of previous writers both in India and Europe and America.

7. The Kenopanishad describes Brahman as beyond the reach of words or thought, but at the same time it is the ultimate source from which all our powers and even the powers of gods are derived. Its nature is different from all that is known and all that is unknown, but one cannot find truth and become immortal unless one knows Brahman.

8. Though reminiscent of Brahman as the highest God, as in the Atharvaveda, the Brahman of the Kenopanishad is not an external deity, but is the inner controller of our thought and motor and sensory activities. It is the ultimate reality from which both the subject and the object derive their existence, and though beyond the reach of sensuous experience and logical thought, it can yet be somewhat realised. The philosophy of the Upanishad may therefore be regarded as a sort of mystical idealistic absolutism.

9. The Kathopanishad describes the ultimate reality as invisible, all-pervading, yet hidden deep in the cave of the human heart. It is the inner essence of man, eternal and imperishable and unaffected by all bodily and mental changes. It can be realised through moral purity alone, and learning, scholarship or fine intellect are absolutely incompetent to reach it.

10. It is the great self of man and the ultimate essence of the world. One who fails to realise the essential unity of the world and thinks the manifold variety to be real is doomed. It is inconceivable and indescribable and can be realised as a mere *be-ness*, for all descriptions and predications fall outside.

11. A review of the philosophical ideas set forth in the Kathopanishad. The ultimate reality is found to be spiritual, as the ground of all that is mental and all that is material. The Upanishad ends in mysticism when it refuses to define the ultimate reality, which in fact is unknowable and indescribable. The problem—how this reality can be the ground and source of our psychical life and of the multiform external world, and can yet remain unaffected by the modifications and changes going on therein—is left an unsolved mystery.

12. The Praśna Upanishad describes the individual as a bio-psychological entity composed of sixteen parts, which are all grounded in and derived from the inmost reality in us—the indestructible self.

13. The special point of interest of this Upanishad lies in its concentration on the nature of the bio-psychological individual, which is ultimately merged with all its individuality and specific characters in the highest self, like the waters of a river in the ocean. It is, however, unfortunately silent upon the nature of this highest reality as to whether

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it is to be regarded as the inner essence of man or as a superior non-subjective spiritual entity.

14. The Muṇḍaka Upanishad starts with the enquiry into “what being known all else becomes known”. It speaks of two sciences—the lower and the higher. The lower science consists of the study of the Vedas with their accessory literature, and the higher is that by which one realises the indestructible reality, the cause of all, from which all that exists comes out as a natural emanation. It further speaks of two selves, the higher and the lower, residing together on the tree of the human body, of which the former is free and pure and the lower is in bondage. When the lower self perceives the higher self as its lord it becomes free. It cannot be attained by those who are weak or inadvertent. The path of attainment is the path of knowledge and self-control.

15. The special feature of interest of the Muṇḍaka lies in its emphasis on the creation of the world as an emanation from Brahman, and here we notice its departure from the tradition of the Atharvaveda, where Brahman is looked upon as an external creator, the traces of which are still noticeable both in the Kena and the Kaṭha. The four similes used emphasise the fact that the world has sprung out of Brahman as a natural emanation. Brahman is described as omniscient, omnipotent and also as the self that resides in the heart of man. It does not, however, throw any light as to how the physical world can, with all its diverse forms and laws, be regarded as an emanation from the spiritual light which forms the inmost self in man. Apart from the classical interpretations, one way of reconciling the difficulty seems to regard Brahman as having two diverse manifestations, the one psychical and the other physical, which, however, do not represent its essential mystical nature, which is to be realised through the dawn of spiritual illumination. Viewed in this light thought and materiality would be like two attributes of Brahman—a philosophy closely akin to that of Spinoza.

16. The Māṇḍūkya speaks of the four stages of Brahman—the waking stage, the dream stage, the stage of dreamless sleep and the fourth stage, which is invisible, unthinkable and ungraspable. It is not described even as pure consciousness or bliss, but only in terms of pure negation. Here the philosophy of the Upanishads enters a new stage of development, and the negative description of the ultimate reality reminds one of Nāgārjuna's negativism, with this difference that here the stuff is described as ātman, whatever that may mean.

17. The chief importance of the Taittirīya Upanishad lies in its emphasis on the nature of Brahman as pure bliss, from which the whole world, conscious and unconscious, has come into existence. There are theistic passages which speak of Brahman as creating the world through tapas and as the sole controller of the forces of nature. The whole concept of creation through tapas seems to be pre-Upanishadic. Tapas is described as thought-activity in the Muṇḍaka, but this too does not make the

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problem of creation easier of understanding. It remains a mystery how the world could come out of pure bliss or how Brahman, who is beyond thought, could take thought-activity as an instrument of creation.

18. The Chāndogya Upanishad speaks of Brahman as the ultimate reality from which everything is produced and to which everything returns. It is the subtle essence of all that exists, conscious and unconscious. Āruṇi says to his son Śvetaketu, "Thou art this subtle essence, which is identical with the universe". The Chāndogya emphasises the old truth that the ultimate reality is the subtle spiritual essence of man.

19. The most important contribution of the Chāndogya consists in its enunciation of the relation of cause and effect. It speaks of the cause as the essential reality and the effect as mere name and form. So, if the whole universe is to be viewed as being a transformation of Brahman, the ultimate reality can be affirmed of the causal stuff, Brahman alone. The view of the relation of the Universe with Brahman as formulated here seems to be entirely different from that of the Muṇḍaka, for in the latter the universe is looked upon as being a real transformation of Brahman as opposed to the *vivarta* view in the Chāndogya, where the material cause is the only reality and the transformations are mere illusory appearances.

20. The conception of Brahman as having two forms, visible and invisible, is not a new contribution of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka. Its notable contribution lies in the emphasis it lays upon the fact that the self is the dearest of all dear things—dearer than the son, riches and everything else—and that by discovery of this fact one attains the true bliss. This idea is brought into prominence in the dialogue between Maitreyī and Yājñavalkya where the latter explains that the self is the truest reality and everything else is true because of it. All differences are false and the ultimate reality is the undivided consciousness, which is the ground of all knowledge. It is beyond all predication and can be described only by negation of all that is knowable and predicable. It is the great self of man, the Brahman, the realisation of which gives immortality and ignorance of which means death.

21. Though the inner self is regarded as the ultimate reality and the multiplicity is denied, yet there is a passage which admits in a way the reality of the world by holding that the inner self of man is the inner controller of all the natural forces and phenomena. It is the eternal indwelling controller, the invisible seer, beyond which nothing exists.

22. The most important contribution of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka is the doctrine that the inmost self is of the nature of pure consciousness and pure bliss. All the knowledge and all the bliss of beings comes from this fountain head and are grounded in it as their ultimate cause of reality.

23. A résumé of the doctrines of the Upanishads and the fundamental features emphasised.

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*Chapter III. Upanishadic Idealism (cont.) pp. 51-75*

1. It is difficult to characterise the philosophy of the Upanishads either as subjective idealism or as objective idealism or as absolute idealism after the model of European systems of thought.

2. The philosophy of the Upanishads contrasted with the philosophy of Hegel and of Spinoza. The ultimate reality of Hegel and of the Upanishads is a spirit, but the analogy does not proceed farther. The spirit of Hegel is of the nature of reason and manifests itself through its law of dialectic into the two illusory forms of subjective and objective categories; but the spirit of the Upanishads has no such dialectic movement. The spirit of the Upanishads is self-complete, being of the nature of immediate consciousness and bliss. With Spinoza the infinite is a *causa sui*, of which matter and thought are regarded as attributes. There is no idea of any process or change, for everything is contained in God and is deducible from His nature. The Upanishadic spirit is a *causa sui* no doubt, but that is not its fundamental characteristic. The highest reality is our innermost self and is of the nature of pure consciousness. It may be called mystical idealism.

3. The earliest attempt at a consistent interpretation of the philosophy of the Upanishads is the Brahmasūtra of Bādarāyaṇa. There were previous writers on the subject, whose views are referred to by Bādarāyaṇa. The sūtras are not always clear in their import and have been variously interpreted by commentators. The earliest commentary available to us is of Śaṅkara.

4. The idealistic philosophy of the Geetā is based on the Upanishads. God in the Geetā is not only immanent but transcendent as well. His is a super-personality, which transcends Brahman and of which Brahman is a constitutive essence.

5. The Geetā contains elements of Pantheism, Deism and Theism all fused together into one whole. It is based largely on the teachings of the Upanishads, but instead of tackling the philosophical problems it combines the various elements in the conception of a super-personal God. The outlook of the Geetā is idealistic, but it has more of emotion than of logic in it.

6. The Geetā is supposed to belong to the *Ekāntī* school of the Vaishṇava Pāñcarātra. Another important school of thought is found in the Ahirbudhnyasaṃhitā. It teaches the idea of a dynamic God, who appears as the many individual selves and whose will, conceived as a vibratory thought-movement, causes the differentiation of *prakṛiti* into the various categories. It gives a philosophy, which is different from that of the classical Sāṃkhya, though all its categories are found in it.

7. A review of the philosophy of the Sāṃhitā. It may be regarded as an original interpretation and development of the Upanishadic

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philosophy. It seems to be the best reconciliation of the apparently irreconcilable strands of thought found in the Upanishads. It gives a system of dynamic absolutism in which the Absolute, out of the necessity of its nature as thought, spontaneously moves itself through its will-power, called also time, and ultimately splits itself up into the subjective and the objective order.

8. The Upanishadic line of thought was followed by heretical schools of thought, who made bold adventures in independent thinking. The Ājīvakas are an instance in point. They denied the law of karma and set up a sort of ethical nihilism. The next phase of development was marked by the rise of Buddhism and Jainism, who entered an emphatic protest against the fatalism of the Ājīvakas.

9. The life and career of Gautama Buddha.

10. Buddha preached the doctrine of the twelvefold chain of causation. The doctrines of a permanent self and permanent substance were denied.

11. The true self of the Upanishads was a matter of transcendental experiences, but this was denied by the Buddha, who regarded the idea of a permanent self in any form as a delusion.

12. The early phase of Buddhism was a system of pluralistic phenomenalism with neither matter nor mind as abiding entities.

13. It is a matter of much speculative interest as to how this doctrine could give rise to systems of monism, idealism or absolutism in later periods in the hands of Brahmin converts who had probably a grounding in the Upanishads.

#### Chapter IV. Buddhist Idealism pp. 76-106

1. The doctrine of the unsubstantiality and the impermanence of all elements of existence was pushed to its logical consequence of nihilism by Nāgārjuna, who applied the Law of Contradiction to all phenomena and concepts and showed that they could be explained neither by themselves nor by others and hence were essenceless appearances.

2. Nāgārjuna's definition of reality as that which does not depend on anything else for its existence was applied to all phenomena, and as they were found to have no self-existence they were declared to be illusory appearances. *Nirvāṇa* is said to bring about the cessation of phenomena, but in reality they never existed. Even the Buddha and his teaching are in reality mere appearances, like a mirage or a dream or the illusory snake in the rope.

3. The division of things into phenomenal and metaphysical order. In the phenomenal plane it is content to follow the commonsense logic of the Naiyāyikas and looks upon the logical and epistemological improvements of Dīnānāga's school as futile and wrong. In the metaphysical order, it has no thesis, as it does not tolerate any kind of essence or reality

behind the phenomenal order. Its philosophy is therefore neither idealism nor realism nor even absolutism but pure phenomenism.

4. The philosophy of *bhūtatathatā* of Śvaghosha, together with the Laṅkāvatāra, marks the foundation of Buddhist idealism. The *tathatā* means the oneness of all things whose essential nature is uncreative and eternal. It appears as subject and object owing to the working of incipient, unconscious memory (*vāsanā*) of our past experiences.

5. The *tathatā* can be realised by pure wisdom, when the integrated constitution of the mind through associations and relations is broken down and the modes of evolving consciousness will be annulled. This is possible because it is pure, eternal, calm and immutable in its true nature.

6. Enlightenment and non-enlightenment. The three ways of the manifestation of non-enlightenment and the consequent rising of the phenomenal world and the reaction of the subjective consciousness.

7. The relation between truth and *avidyā*.

8. The working of *avidyā* on the all-pervading consciousness and the evolution of the ego with its various faculties and functions and the ego-creation of the external world.

9. Non-enlightenment is the *raison d'être* of birth and rebirth. *Nirvāṇa* is the annihilation of the modes of the mind and not of the mind itself. The theory of inter-perfuming as an explanation of the interaction and inter-relation of *tathatā*, *avidyā* and *vishaya* (the external world).

10. *Nirvāṇa* is not nothingness but *tathatā* in its purity with the veil of ignorance removed.

11. Śvaghosha's philosophy compared and contrasted with the philosophy of the Upanishads and of early Buddhism. *Avidyā* is given a new orientation. The comprehensive character of Śvaghosha's philosophy, which may be characterised as Subjective idealism, Pure absolutism and also as Absolute idealism when viewed from different angles of vision.

12. The idealism of the Laṅkāvatāra. The external world is a creation of consciousness with its two functions induced by the beginningless *avidyā*.

13. The ultimate reality is described as "thatness" in one place and as "voidness" in another place, which is one and has no origin or essence. It cannot be characterised as a positive entity, which would be equated with Vedāntic Brahman. It is a stage in which the positive and the negative coincide.

14. *Pratītyasamutpāda*, both external and internal, and the world of matter are false appearances, created by the twofold faculty of our understanding.

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15. The seven aspects of the nothingness of things. The doctrine of *tathāgatagarbha* does not posit any absolute principle, but is only a false bait to the superstitious.

16. The philosophy of *tathatā* and that of the *Laṅkāvatāra* compared and contrasted.

17. Aśvaghoṣa deprecates the false interpretations of the sūtras and finally posits one reality as ultimate, absolute and true, which he designates as *tathatā*, with which the phenomena of false appearances are ultimately identical.

18. The *Laṅkāvatāra* on the other hand emphatically denies the existence of any positive principle behind the illusory appearances and thus seems to advocate the doctrine of absolute non-being. But this comes into conflict with its doctrine of *ālayavijñāna*, in which arise, as ripples in a sea, the sense-data with their relations, and the external world as well as the inner experience.

19. The apparent contradiction can be reconciled by the supposition that the *Laṅkāvatāra* teaches two distinct philosophies, one higher and the other lower. The higher is too radical and the lower philosophy of the subjective mind, as creating the whole phenomenal world, subjective and objective, seems to be a concession to weaker intellect. Kant and the *Laṅkāvatāra* compared. Kant's philosophy is inconsistent, whereas the *Laṅkāvatāra* is logical.

20. The philosophy of Aśvaghoṣa seems to have been influenced by the Upanishadic theory of causation, whereas the *Laṅkāvatāra* is on its own avowedly indebted to Nāgārjuna's negative philosophy. The *Laṅkāvatāra* does not allow the justice of philosophical enquiries into the origin and nature of the world, but this enquiry is possible in Aśvaghoṣa's philosophy. But the latter, too, fails to explain experience as he fails to explain the relation of *avidyā* with the ultimate reality.

*Chapter V. Buddhist Idealism (cont.)* pp. 107-148

1. Denial of relations is the common feature of the idealism of Bradley and of Aśvaghoṣa, and the same logical necessity leads ultimately to the affirmation of an absolute principle in which all relations and all distinctions are non-existent. Bradley does not attempt to explain the *raison d'être* of differences, which Aśvaghoṣa does at his peril. The dialectical criticisms of Bradley are but a repetition of Nāgārjuna's dialectics. The *Laṅkāvatāra* takes an entirely subjectivistic attitude towards the phenomenal world, together with their relations, and ends in the denial of the validity of all knowledge, logical and non-logical alike, and hence of the world.

2. The philosophy of idealistic absolutism that was started by Maitreya and Asaṅga, and elaborated by Vasubandhu, denies the

existence of the external objective world and ends in affirmation of oneness of all things.

3. The difference of perception and memory explained, and the difficulty of intercommunication and uniformity of experiences solved by the theory of direct action of one subjectivity upon another subjectivity. The evolution of the subjective and objective categories, the individual perceivers and the objects perceived, are held to be the self-creation of one thought-principle. The transformation of the self-evolving thought is regarded as real by Vasubandhu as opposed to Āśvaghosha, who believes such transformations to be illusory appearances.

4. The mode of causation allowed by Vasubandhu is that of *prattiyasamutpāda*, which holds that the effect is a novel phenomenon distinct from the cause, which comes into being independently of an external excitant cause. It is entirely different from the *pariṇāma* (transformation) of the Sāṃkhya school, which means that the effects produced are but transformations which were already existent in a latent form in the causal substance, but this presupposition is denied by Vasubandhu.

5. The first two forms of transformation of the *ālayavijñāna*, of which the initial change is called *vipāka* (the accumulation of the results of past root-instincts), and the second again is of two kinds, *manana* (psychosis) and *vishayavijñapti* (perceptive character). The *ālayavijñāna* is called such because it is the home of the seeds or root-instincts that lead to world-experiences. It manifests itself as the internal psychosis or microcosm and as the external world of Space. The *ālayavijñāna* contains within itself the elements of subjectivity and externality in an undifferentiated form and is a dynamic principle, splitting itself up into different subjective centres, which acquire fresh experiences and produce fresh instincts and are again reacted upon by these tendencies. With regard to the enlightened subject, the *ālayavijñāna* ceases to work and is lost in the ground consciousness.

6. The third transformation is in the form of perception of six classes of objects, colour, sounds, etc., which are determined by the antecedent moments as their causes. The different cognitions are but impositions upon the nature of consciousness and have no existence outside it. The *ālayavijñāna* as conceived by Vasubandhu is different from that of Āśvaghosha, the latter being a differenceless entity, whereas the former is a dynamic concrete universal thought-principle which by an act of self-alienation externalises itself as the world of objects. The three kinds of essencelessness of these appearances described.

7. The *ālayavijñāna* is the ground of all individual centres of experience analogous to the *buddhitattva* of the Sāṃkhya, containing the resultant tendencies of the whole past. It is one unitary principle from which the individual subjects spring out and in which the past and future



experiences are gathered up as root-tendencies, making the further future career of individuals possible.

8. The *ālayavijñāna* so conceived is but a hypothetical state and is grounded upon the foundation of pure consciousness, which is also of the nature of pure bliss, eternal, transcendent, unchangeable and unthinkable in character like the Brahman of the Vedānta. The close similarity of Vasubandhu's philosophy to the Vedānta of Śaṅkara's school discussed and fully brought out.

9. Maitreya and Asaṅga gave an idealistic philosophy closely akin to the philosophy of Vasubandhu in their work called *Madhyantavibhaṅga*, which was commented upon by Vasubandhu and Sthiramati. So Vasubandhu was not the originator of this type of philosophy. It however appears to have been influenced by the logic of the *Laṅkāvatāra*. The subjective thought and the objective reality are held to be false alike together with their relations. But it does not end in pure negation as the ultimate truth, as that would preclude the possibility of illusion.

10. The three forms of appearances. It admits the existence of one pure consciousness absolute and eternal, entrance into which brings salvation.

11. The doctrine of causation in the Theravāda school. Two causal categories, *paccaya* and *paṭṭhāna*. The former stands for those causal conditions which can transmit their energy to the effects. Twenty-four kinds of *paṭṭhāna*. The two kinds of *pratyaya-samutpāda*—one due to *hetu* and another due to *pratyayas* as propounded in the *Śālistambasūtra*. This view of causation denies the necessity of any kind of relation between cause and effect and reduces it to mere succession.

12. Candrakīrti's interpretation of causal relation in the commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Mādhyamika Kārikā*. The relation of cause and effect is logically indeterminable appearance.

13. Relations are proved to be imaginary constructions by Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. Difference of qualities and substances is a false creation of the understanding. So also are the universals.

14. The datum of perception is a unique and indescribable fact, which is made determinate by the application of categories of quality, quantity, relation, etc., which by themselves have no reality and are external to the unique real. The association of categories is a post-perceptual act of imaginative tendencies.

15. In the Buddhist idealism as interpreted by Śāntarakṣita, the objects have no independent existence from their awareness. The objective reference is a false projection. The question of validity or invalidity of our experiences in this view reduces itself to a question of self-consistency or inconsistency.

16. Śāntarakṣita refutes the existence of external objects by attacking the atomic theory after the fashion of Vasubandhu, but his difference

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from Vasubandhu's idealism is also fundamental in that he denies the existence of one eternal conscious principle such as *vijñaptimātratā*, which is the ultimate category with the former. Śāntarakṣita's idealism is pluralistic and not monistic like that of Vasubandhu.

17. The doctrine of *padgala* as the principle of individuality both different from and identical with the combining elements, which is postulated by the Vātsīputriyas and the Sammitiyas, is scouted as unphilosophical and self-contradictory.

18. The heretical doctrines of permanent selves and the existence of the external world as a conglomeration of atoms are refuted by the exposure of self-contradiction inherent in such conceptions. The ultimate conclusion is the existence of diverse centres of consciousness, each constituting a series by itself, in which there is a perpetual succession of one moment of consciousness by another, each distinct from the other and self-revelatory in character.

19. The identity of knowledge and its object is proved by the law of simultaneous manifestation of the object and its awareness. This simultaneity is impossible of explanation except on the supposition of their identity. But this identity does not imply that consciousness is changed into the forms of objects or that objects are petrified consciousness. The objects as forms of consciousness are purely illusory manifestations.

20. Śāntarakṣita does not believe in one eternal ground-consciousness and also denies the *ālayavijñāna* as a concrete universal in which the different centres of consciousness are synthesised and integrated. This distinguishes his philosophy from the idealism of Vasubandhu.

21. Śāntarakṣita repudiates the Nyāya theory of a permanent self as the unifying principle of our psychological experience, on the ground of self-contradiction and infinite regression inevitable in such conception. The idea of a unitary self is an illusion.

22. The Sāṃkhya view of the self as pure consciousness and its theory of vicarious enjoyment, though the functions of the *buddhi* are equally untenable owing to the difficulty of relations between them.

23. The Upanishadic conception of one eternal consciousness cannot be maintained on account of its failure to explain the diversity of experiences. It also fails to explain the distinction of true knowledge from false knowledge and makes bondage and emancipation impossible.

24. Buddhist denial of a permanent self on the ground of consciousness being a product of psychological elements. It is criticised by Śāṅkara.

25. Śāntarakṣita's definition of reality as its capacity for serving a purpose leads to the doctrine of momentariness of things.

26. The objections based on recognition of identity and sameness of nomenclature are proved to be invalid.

27. Refutation of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika categories—atoms, wholes, substance, time and space.
28. Refutation of qualities.
29. Refutation of action and movement as independent entities.
30. The absurdity of class-concepts exposed.

### Chapter VI. The Vedānta and Kindred

#### Forms of Idealism

pp. 149–198

1. The most important interpretation of Upanishadic idealism comes from the school of Śaṅkara. Gauḍapāda, who was the earlier exponent and who probably was a teacher of Śaṅkara, was profoundly influenced by Buddhist idealism.

2. The radical idealism of Gauḍapāda denies even the empiric validity of the experiential world and puts it on the same level with dreams and illusions.

3. The reality is one unchangeable principle like the void (*ākāśa*), and all ideas of production and destruction, distinction and integration are but impositions of *māyā*.

4. The identity of cause and effect is denied and the contradiction involved in the conception of causal production and the vicious infinite it leads to are exposed. Production and destruction, existence and non-existence are the creations of the fool's mind.

5. Gauḍapāda's obligation to the *Śūnyavāda* and *Vijñānavāda* doctrines in his interpretation of the philosophy of the Upanishads is obvious and undeniable.

6. The Philosophy of the Yogavāsishtā, probably a product of the seventh or eighth century, also bears unmistakable traces of Buddhist influence. The ultimate reality is indefinite and indescribable of which no transformation is predicable. The appearance of the world is due to the imaginative activity of *manas*, which, too, is an unreal fiction. There is no perceiver and none perceived.

7. The world-appearance is as unreal as a barren woman's son and the state of emancipation consists in the cessation of this appearance. It is of the nature of pure cessation, variously designated as Brahman, Puruṣa, Śūnya or Pure idea. A tentative theory of creation is offered, but the reality of every stage and category involved in this cosmic activity is denied. The existence of individual souls is also denied, along with the conceptualising activity which creates them.

8. The category of *manas* is of the nature of pure activity and is responsible for the emergence of successive categories over the subject-objectless pure consciousness, which is the ultimate reality.

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9. The appearance of successive categories does not imply any change in the being of pure consciousness, and the act of self-alienation is an illusory appearance. The experience of the world-order is as fictitious as dream constructions.

10. The difference between our wakeful experience and dream experience is one of degree and not of kind. The former has more consistency, apparent persistence and continuity, whereas the latter is of short duration. They are at bottom equally false creations of the imaginative activity of *manas*.

11. The striking similarity of the Philosophy of the Yogavāsishṭha with the idealistic systems of Vasubandhu and others. If *manas* be equated with the *ālayavijñāna* of Vasubandhu, it would be difficult to distinguish the two systems.

12. Bādarāyaṇa seems to advocate the doctrine of Bhedābhedavāda, in which the immanence and transcendence of Brahman are equally emphasised. This philosophy is earlier than the absolute monism of Śaṅkara, as is evident from Śaṅkara's references to the views of Bhartṛprapañca and the Vṛttikāra which advocated some form of *bhedābhedavāda*.

13. Though it is difficult to define the exact character of the *bhedābhedavāda* entertained by Bādarāyaṇa, it is almost certain that he regards the causal transformations of Brahman as real. Even Śaṅkara could not point out a sūtra which supported the vivarta view. This and the diversity of views among post-Śaṅkara writers about the specific causality of Brahman show that Śaṅkara's interpretation was not above question.

14. Śaṅkara starts with his theory of illusion by reason of which the self as pure consciousness is identified with body and mind and behaves as an individual. His theory of illusion follows as a corollary from the Upanishadic monism, which he accepts without proof and without question. The world of experience, with all its diversity and plurality, which is in antagonism with the conception of Pure consciousness, the only reality, is simply thrown overboard as the creation of *māyā*.

15. Brahman is the ultimate cause of the world, and as the ultimate cause it must be intelligent, otherwise the law and order of the world could not be explained. It is also the inmost essence of us all—the immediate consciousness that shines as the self and expresses the objects of cognition.

16. Brahman, according to Śaṅkara, is the identity of pure being, intelligence and pure bliss and is the true self of us all. Its nature is partially realised in dreamless sleep. Creation of a diverse world is the work of *māyā*, which is equally illusory with its products. Brahman in association with *māyā* seems to be the creator, as both the material and the efficient causes of the world, and as effects are but illusory superimpositions upon the causer, the world is also a super-imposition upon Brahman and has no existence by itself.

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17. The twofold view of things in Vedānta—one referring to the ultimate reality and the other to appearance. The ultimate reality is pure intelligence, which is changeless and devoid of subject distinctions. In all the varied experiences the self as pure consciousness remains unchanged and the change and diversity belong to the contents. This is proved by an analysis of the epistemological situation involved in all experiences.

18. Consciousness is the fact of revelation—which is one in all experiences. The distinctions of time and space, quality and quantity and the like are out of the question with regard to consciousness.

19. Consciousness as revelation cannot be characterised either as a fact or as an act. It is one unchangeable entity which reveals all finite things, but there is no finitude in it. The “I” is as much a content as any other object. Revelation cannot be individuated and all distinctions of “I” or “thou” or “mine”, etc. fall outside of it. All existence can be divided under two heads—the principle of revelation and all that is revealed. The former is eternal, unchangeable, absolute and all-pervading consciousness, and the latter is constituted of an unsubstantial, indefinable stuff called *māyā*.

20. In the Dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi school of Śaṅkara Vedānta, it is held that all is pure and simple illusion, and that things exist only when they are perceived; and dissolve into nothingness as soon as we cease to perceive them. Prakāśananda, following Maṇḍana, the original expounder of this school, argues in trenchant dialectic that there is no proof that cognition and cognised objects are different.

21. Prakāśananda, however, does not attempt to give any positive proof in support of his thesis that the world-appearance and all objects contained in it have no existence while they are not perceived, or that the being of all objects cognised is their *percipi*. He only tried to show that it could not be logically established that the cognised objects were different from their cognition.

22. The idealism of Śaṅkara and that of Vasubandhu compared. In the former the basic principle of pure intelligence explains the growth of experience in each individual; while in Vasubandhu’s system the ultimate consciousness, necessary as an unchangeable background of all the changes of ordinary experience, remains in its undisturbed quiescence.

23. Padmapāda points out that the main point with the Buddhist is his doctrine of causal efficiency; and he refutes this by arguing that if causal efficiency means the production of another moment, then the last moment, having no other moment to produce, would itself be non-existent, with the consequence that all other moments would be non-existent.

24. Pure consciousness, associated with the mind and memory-impressions, gives rise to the category of ego-consciousness, which by itself is a fiction.

25. The difference of Vedānta from the subjective idealism and the phenomenism of the Buddhist schools lies in the admission of an objective reality independent of individual subjects and of a quasi-objective category, called *māyā*, of which neither reality nor unreality is predicable, but which still is the *causa materialis* of the subjective and the objective world of experience.

26. The theory of perception of the Vivaraṇa school of Śaṅkara Vedānta explained.

27. An analysis of the epistemology of perception reveals three fundamental characteristics of Vedāntic idealism, viz. (1) identification of the subjective consciousness with the external consciousness underlying the objective reality; (2) the essential nature of the subjective and the objective phenomena emphasised as Pure consciousness; and (3) the transformation of the objective data from their indescribable nature into known forms of cognition.

28. The function of *avidyā* in the creation of the world is made possible through the instrumentality of unconscious desires and impulses called *vāsanās*, which supply the motive power and determine the teleology. This element of voluntarism is particularly stressed in the schools of Buddhist idealism and is an important trait of Vedāntic idealism also.

29. The doctrine of Ekajīvavāda holds that there is in reality one individual *jīva* of whom others are but shadows and phantom creations.

30. The three different kinds of existence. The concept of falsity differentiated from impossible concepts like round square, etc.

31. Conception of *ajñāna* as a positive entity and of its relation to consciousness both as a creative and as a screening principle is different with different writers.

32. Post-Śaṅkarian writers of dialectical treatises and their refutation of the realistic categories.

33. The most notable contribution in this direction was Śrīharṣa's *Khaṇḍanakhaṇḍakhādyā*, the main thesis of which is to prove that all that is known is indefinable and unreal, the only reality being consciousness, one and undivided, which is self-shining and independent of proof.

34. Citsukha carries further this dialectical criticism and introduces many improvements.

35. The difference of Vedāntic dialectic from that of Nāgārjuna consists in the different conclusions reached by them. With the former the one absolute consciousness as the support and revealer of the world-appearance is the only reality, while the nihilist is landed by his dialectic in the void of absolute nothingness.

36. Two main types of Vedāntic idealism: (1) Pure subjectivism and (2) Absolute idealism.

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37. The concrete idealism of the Śaiva schools is a later development from Śaṅkara Vedānta. The main point of departure lies in the unification of consciousness and *māyā*, which together constitute one concrete reality. *Māyā* is the real energy of the Absolute and not an unreal adjunct as in Vedānta.

38. The Kāshmirā school of idealism, as developed by Abhinavagupta and others, though closely analogous to Śaṅkara Vedānta, differs from the latter in its conception of the ultimate reality. The ultimate principle is pure consciousness endowed with self-spontaneity, and it is this self-spontaneous consciousness which manifests itself as psychological categories and as objective data side by side, and this makes the whole world of mind and matter with all their developments essentially spiritual in nature.

39. Śaṅkara's obligation to previous philosophers, notably to the Buddhists. The *vivartavāda* (the theory of illusory causation) and the consequent denial of pluralism, which may be regarded as original contributions, were also anticipated by Bhartrihari.

40. The theistic systems of thought, which may be regarded as idealistic from one point of view or another, have however been left out of account in the present work, for their pronounced realistic sympathies. The dominant position of idealism in all branches of Indian thought and its influence on Indian ideology and life cannot be overestimated.

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## Preface

Years ago these Lectures were delivered as the Readership Lectures of the Patna University. Their publication has been delayed for various circumstances over which I had no control. This is probably the first attempt to put together some of the most important strands of Indian idealistic thought within a small compass. I fear however that my success has been but a doubtful one. The field of Indian Idealism is very vast and defies any attempt at compression. The table of contents will, I hope, be found helpful in following the general argument of the different chapters. These Lectures are printed here more or less in the same form in which they were delivered. Conscious as I am of my shortcomings and defects, I feel that they would have been far greater had it not been for the help that was rendered me in reading the proofs of these Lectures by my esteemed friend Mr Haridas Bhattacharyya, M.A., P.R.S., of the University of Dacca. I am also grateful to my esteemed pupils, Dr Satkari Mukherjee, M.A., Ph.D., of the Calcutta University for the preparation of their contents, and to Mr Satindra Kumar Mukherjee, M.A., and Miss Surama Mitra, M.A., for the assistance I received from them, without which, in my present state of health, it would have been wellnigh impossible for me to see the book through the press.

S. N. DASGUPTA.

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