

Jonardon Ganeri, *Philosophy in Classical India*, London: Routledge, 2001, vi + 207 Pp. £14.99 (Paperback).

Contemporary Indian philosophical studies show welcome methodological diversities. For many the method was and still is mainly descriptive. The historical-philological method associated with German Indologists like Hacker, Frauwallner and others produced works of outstanding quality. Matilal opened up a new method in the studies on classical Indian Philosophy not only by approaching them as they should be as genuinely philosophical texts but also by relating them with contemporary western analytical philosophy. In this way Matilal also helped to bring classical Indian Philosophy into the discourse of the international community of philosophers. Ganeri comments on his own method in the Introduction, "My goal then is not the mere comparison of one idea with another, but the unravelling of new philosophical paradigms ... My approach, distinct both from comparative philosophy and from the history of ideas, is instead a critical and analytical evaluation of conceptual paradigms in Indian theory" (p. 5). And without doubt Ganeri is very successful in putting these methodological principles into practice. The result is a brilliant contribution to the study of some of the basic questions of classical Indian Philosophy, and at the same time quite a convincing presentation of new philosophical paradigms.

There are extended discussions on a variety of topics. The fundamental philosophical question is indeed whether human reason is capable of attaining reality. Different approaches and answers are clearly seen in Indian philosophical tradition. Nyāya system is certainly one of the most rational of all classical systems of Indian thought. This is chiefly because as Vātsyayana, the fourth century commentator on the *Nyāyasūtras* observes, Nyāya examines things with the help of methods of knowing; it is basically inferential and based on observation. It is actually critical enquiry which has its own procedures; otherwise it would be a spiritual discipline, like the wisdom of the upaniṣads. And right enquiry enables us to move from an initial uncertainty about the nature of the thing under investigation to an ascertainment of its properties. Certainly a rational enquiry should normally be capable of being made public through verbal demonstration. Further according to Nyāya rational enquiry is linked with the final ends of life which is the complete elimination of *dukha*, suffering. Ganeri mentions that according to both H.N. Randle and B.K. Matilal debate was the most typical form of rationality in classical India. But what may also be noted is that it is not only an actual debate that is rational, but many works too in the *Nyāya* tradition display a very high degree of rationality using often enough essentially the method of debate in abbreviated forms of inferences. As for instance the works of Udayana, the *Ātmatattvaviveka* and the *Kusumāñjali* are systematic works of outstanding originality. Gaṅgeśa's *Īśvarānumānam*, a section of the great work *Tattvacintāmaṇi*, is a masterpiece of closely knit arguments and counter arguments for and against the existence of God. Here it may also be pointed out that examples are used in *Nyāya* inferences not primarily because of their persuasiveness but because at least one instance is to be given where

invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*) is grasped in the case of a particular reason (*hetu*) and that which is to be established (*sādhyā*). This is clearly seen in the arguments and counter arguments in the *Īśvarānumānam* Section of Gaṅgeśa's *Tattvacintāmaṇi*.

This account of Nyāya rationality was challenged by the Mādhyamika Buddhists who claim that reason is self-defeating. Nāgārjuna was a radical sceptic according to whom thought can in no way penetrate reality. The doctrinal key to his philosophy is his concept of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Nāgārjuna explores the possibility that our conception of experience, as produced by self-sustaining and independent objects is itself a fiction. But perhaps we can accept Nāgārjuna's contention that the common sense concept of a cause is incoherent, but reject his further claim that the structure of reality lies beyond the powers of human conception.

However the Vaiśeṣika philosophers make use of reason to construct a formal ontology. Classical Vaiśeṣika mentions six kinds of things: substance, quality, motion, universal, particularity (individuator) and inherence. Later Vaiśeṣika holds that absence also is a separate kind of thing. Ganeri has illuminating comments on all topics both from the philosophical and historical points of view. Diñnāga on the contrary is an ontological reductionist and a nominalist. He is uncompromising in his search for unity and simplicity in accounting for things. Like Nāgārjuna, he also rejects the ontological commitments of common sense. However Diñnāga tries to show that the ontological commitments made by common sense are reducible to fewer things. At the centre of Diñnāga's system is a new theory of a concept. According to him the function of a concept is to exclude. The boundary of a concept is a line drawn in the space of objects. On one side falls the excluded and whatever is left falls within the concept. This is his basic insight. Diñnāga's basic ontology can be found in the first chapter of his *Pramāṇasamuccaya*. He drew on Abhidharma for the development of his system. Abhidharma admits only one basic thing: the category of dharma which constitutes both substance and property though it is neither. For Diñnāga there are two kinds of things: the *svalakṣaṇas* and the *sāmānyalakṣaṇas*, i.e. the individuals and the universals. The object of perception is *svalakṣaṇa* while that of inference is *sāmānyalakṣaṇa*. Ganeri has valuable comments on the other aspects of Diñnāga's philosophy.

The Jaina philosophers seek a rationality of reconciliation. According to them there is an element of truth in every deeply held opinion. The underlying reason for this assertion is that the various elements of the philosophical contexts of these opinions have to be taken into account when assessing their truth. It is on these two lines of thought that the Jainas build an ontology on the many sidedness of things (*anekāntavāda*). Haribhadra (C. 800 A.D.) develops this idea much more clearly: many sidedness is a theory of manifoldness of every real entity, a theory of integration and a theory of entanglement and intermixture of conflicting aspects. This will lead to the goal of reason viz harmony which consists in an integration from a diversity of sources. Although exquisitely noble in approach and delicately respectful of other people's opinions still the Jaina theories perhaps raise as many

fresh questions as they answer. Ganeri finally vindicates reason especially against the sophisticated arguments of the Advaita polemicist Śrīharṣa.

At this stage of researches in classical Indian Philosophy, the importance of a work like this cannot be exaggerated. We need to look anew at the philosophical heritage of classical India. What is striking in Ganeri's work is the commendable combination of sound grasp of the Sanskrit texts with outstanding interpretative skills. There is no doubt that the book will be acknowledged as a pathfinder in the interpretation of classical Indian Philosophy.

*De Nobili College  
Pune, India*

John VATTANKY

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