

Ramesh Chandra Pradhan

The Early Philosophy of Daya Krishna

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*Dedicated
To
The Memory of
Prof. R. Balasubramanian
And
Prof. Suresh Chandra
Who were the great admirers of Prof. Daya
Krishna*

Acknowledgements

An earlier version of the present essay on the early philosophy of late Professor Daya Krishna was conceived as a monograph to be published under the series “Builders of Modern Indian Philosophy” under the editorship of late Professor R. Balasubramanian. But it could not materialize due to various reasons. Subsequently due to the sad demise of Prof. Balasubramanian, the manuscript remained unpublished. Since Daya Krishna is an eminent contemporary Indian philosopher, I thought of bringing out this volume to fulfil the desire of Prof. Balasubramanian and my own desire to see it in print. However, this essay has taken into account only the early writings of Prof. Daya Krishna. I am thankful to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive criticisms and guidance in preparing the essay.

I am thankful to Prof. Balasubramanian for having given me the chance to write on the philosophy of Prof. Daya Krishna. He has painstakingly read and edited the manuscript with thoroughness. It is unfortunate that it could not be published in his lifetime. I am also thankful to Mrs. Janaki who assisted Prof. Balasubramanian in the editorial work.

The book is dedicated to the revered memory of Prof. R. Balasubramanian and Prof. Suresh Chandra who were great admirers of Prof. Daya Krishna.

I am thankful to my wife, Jhansi, who encouraged me to work on the philosophy of Prof. Daya Krishna under the direction of Prof. Balasubramanian.

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Prologue

This essay is a survey of Daya Krishna's early writings on philosophy which span over many decades touching his main ideas in logic, metaphysics, ethics, value theory, and religion. Daya Krishna has written substantially also on sociology, economics, and anthropology which I have omitted because of my own limitations. I have concentrated exclusively on his early philosophical writings. His later philosophical writings are equally original and important, but I have not included them in my survey as my focus is on the early writings. My aim is to show how Daya Krishna has treated philosophical problems with a new style of his own which differs from that of the analytic thinkers of the contemporary West. He has not done philosophy in the traditional Indian style, either, but has brought in a fresh way of doing philosophy broadly as an analysis of concepts. This is some sort of a revolution in contemporary Indian philosophy precisely because though the ideas are rooted in the Indian tradition, Daya Krishna retains his openness to the Western way of articulating them.

Daya Krishna could broadly be called a philosopher of value since in his writings on culture, civilization, ethics, and religion, the significant idea of values gets prominence because he thinks that human beings are basically pursuers of values and that the human culture and civilization are the articulations of the central values of human life. The value centrality of the various human pursuits is the hallmark of human life as such so that when we project the vast panorama of the human history we see in it imprinted the struggle to realize the values which are embedded in the human culture and civilization. Daya Krishna is committed to a theory of values which does not remain confined to what he calls the "active values" but establishes the "contemplative values" which are transcendental in nature. It is the latter which are central to human civilization because human beings have never been satisfied with the realization of the so-called social and political values but aspire for the realization of the transcendental values in ethics and religion. Indian civilization from the Vedic times has been emphasizing the importance of the transcendental values over those pertaining to the values concerning human life and society. Daya Krishna is pursuing this aspect of the philosophy of value in his writings. However, I do not intend to claim that he is consciously pursuing the traditional Indian theory of values within any particular tradition such as Vedanta. He is an independent thinker and has openness for ideas from any tradition.

The concept of the human being occupies a central place in Daya Krishna's philosophy. It is not nature but the human being which draws his attention because the human beings are that part of nature which embodies all the significance that we can attach to the universe as a whole. The human being represents the universe in a microcosm so that truth, goodness, and beauty which we associate with reality are ultimately rooted in the human consciousness. Thus, the human being holds the key to the universe and unfolds the meaning underlying the universe. Daya Krishna places the human species at the centre of the universe not in the physical sense but in the sense of the human species which pursues the values of truth, goodness, and beauty. The human beings are not mere physical beings according to him, but are those who can aspire for the values and establish a meaningful world within the physical universe.

As a philosopher of value, Daya Krishna is not enamoured of the physical sciences but of the liberal studies like the human and the social sciences which unfold the meaning of life in its depth and grandeur. The physical sciences have their own limitations because of their basic concern with the physical world; the liberal sciences on the contrary give us the true picture of the meaning and value of the human creations like art, literature, and culture. Philosophy brings out the unity of all the values and meanings of the human creations in its many-sided endeavour to understand the human beings, culture, civilization, and value. Daya Krishna builds up his philosophical system on the basis of the central categories of values, meanings, and significance.

The concepts of culture and civilization have drawn Daya Krishna's attention because of the fact that the human beings are known as the builders of cultures and civilizations and as such are the creators of history in the broader sense. For Daya Krishna, culture is a component of civilization in the sense that while civilization includes the vast panorama of the human history, culture pertains to that aspect of man's life where the peculiar forms of life are constituted, e.g. ancient culture, modern culture, and so on. Civilizations are superstructures which bear the imprint of the valuational perspectives of the human beings, e.g. the Indian civilization, Western civilization, etc. Daya Krishna finds the values and meanings broadly in the civilizations as their hallmark, while he finds in the cultures the typical articulation of those values and meanings. According to him, both culture and civilization arise in time and history and are therefore bound to the constraints of time and space. Yet, both culture and civilization have an aspiration for the eternal values which transcend time and history.

Daya Krishna's concept of transcendence of time and history is rooted in the notion of the timeless reality beyond the temporal world. He is of the opinion that what pertains to the temporal reality can be transcended and that a vast realm of timeless existence can be visualized such that there is always a human aspiration for realizing the transcendental value in the form of truth, goodness, and beauty. Daya Krishna's metaphysical inclination is towards the transcendent reality beyond the horizon of time and history. Though he does not consider time and history as *māyā*, yet he agrees with the metaphysical insight that the world itself is not self-sustaining and that it must look beyond itself to the transcendent reality for its own intelligibility.

Though Daya Krishna does not discuss the role of the traditional religions, yet he is inclined to accept the authenticity of the religious and mystic experience of the transcendent reality. He accepts that our moral and spiritual experiences are accountable only if we introduce the notion of transcendence as a basic category. For both ethics and religion are a part of man's quest for the transcendent Reality. While in ethics we are aware of the higher values, in religious experience we have direct awareness of the transcendent reality. Thus for him, ethics in its ultimate form is transcendental, while religion is wedded to the mystic realization of the ultimate reality. Daya Krishna believes that human culture and civilization will remain incomplete without the idea of transcendental values and the aspiration for the transcendental reality. In my reading of Daya Krishna, which may be subject to correction, there is a definite place for the notion of transcendental reality in his early writings on values and reality.

Though this essay is primarily intended to focus on Daya Krishna's notions of culture, civilization, and value, it makes effort to bring into one focus his ideas of logic, metaphysics, history, art, literature, and so on, so that a comprehensive survey of his early philosophy is presented. Chapter 1 gives a brief account of Daya Krishna's life and works, while Chap. 2 outlines the nature of philosophy according to him. Chapter 3 delves into his notion of logic and metaphysics. Chapter 4 discusses his ideas of self, freedom, and culture, while Chap. 5 gives an overview of his theory of ethics and religion. In Chap. 6, an attempt is made to discuss his understanding of Indian philosophy in its classical form so as to show why he disagrees with some of the classical notions like *mokṣa*, *dharma*, etc. Chapter 7 discusses his notion of art and literature, while Chap. 8 brings out his notion of the historiography of all cultures and civilization in the history of mankind.

The present essay makes an attempt to get at the central issues in Daya Krishna's early philosophy as a synthesis of the Indian and the Western philosophical methods and as an amalgamation of the problems of the past and the present in a holistic frame of creative philosophizing. My aim is not to straitjacket his philosophy within any particular school of thought, Indian or Western, but present as a constructive philosophy of immense depth and originality. If at all I find resemblance between his thought and the thoughts of any classical Indian thinker or thinkers, that may be treated as only incidental. After all he was thinking within the Indian cultural and philosophical milieu.

The present essay is the result of a honest attempt to study, understand, and reconstruct the early philosophy of Daya Krishna, one of the most creative thinkers of contemporary India. Though I have not covered Daya Krishna's later writings in this essay because of my limitations, my survey of his early writings stands on its own because of its methodological and thematic orientations.

Contents

1	Life and Works	1
1.1	Life	1
1.2	Works	2
1.3	The Intellectual Profile	3
1.4	The Philosopher	3
1.5	The Turn Towards the Indian Philosophical and Intellectual Traditions	5
1.6	Conclusion	6
2	Philosophy: Its Scope and Limits	7
2.1	Introduction	7
2.2	The Art of the Conceptual	7
2.3	Philosophy and Science	8
2.4	Logic and Metaphysics	10
2.5	The Metaphysics of the Transcendence	12
2.6	Self and the Spiritual Experience	13
2.7	Life and Culture: Empirical and Transcendental	15
2.8	The Indian Mind: The Search for the Transcendental Roots	16
2.9	Philosophy, Culture, and Value	17
2.10	Philosophy as a Value Inquiry	18
2.11	Philosophy as an Open-Ended Quest	19
2.12	Can Philosophy Be Systematic?	21
2.13	Reason, Rationality, and Truth	23
2.14	The Critique of Analytic Philosophy, Phenomenology, and Existentialism	25
2.15	Conclusion	27
	References	28
3	Reality, Logic, and Value	29
3.1	Introduction	29
3.2	Ontology of the World	29
3.3	Types of Appearance and Types of Reality	31
3.4	Types of Coherence	33

3.5	Logic and the World	36
3.6	Logical Laws and the Empirical Reality	37
3.7	The Possibility of the Synthetic A Priori	38
3.8	Logical Necessity, Truth, and Reference	41
3.9	Language and Reality	43
3.10	Reality and Value	44
3.11	Values and Transcendence	46
3.12	Conclusion	47
	References	47
4	Self, Freedom, and Culture	49
4.1	Introduction	49
4.2	The Study of the Human Reality: The Metaphysical Roots	49
4.3	The World of Values and Meanings: The Search for the Higher Self	51
4.4	Self and the Transcendental Values	53
4.5	The Human Situation: The Immanent and the Transcendent	54
4.6	Freedom: Empirical and Transcendental	56
4.7	Freedom and the Other	60
4.8	<i>Mokṣa</i> : The Spiritual Ideal	62
4.9	Two Models of Culture: The Spiritual and the Material	63
4.10	Towards the Blueprint of a New Civilization	65
4.11	Conclusion	66
	References	66
5	Religion, Ethics, and Society	67
5.1	Introduction	67
5.2	Religious Experiences and Truth	67
5.3	Mysticism and Its Intelligibility	71
5.4	The Realm of Morality	72
5.5	Ethics and the Consciousness of the Beyond	75
5.6	Society as a Moral Institution	77
5.7	Self and Society	80
5.8	Freedom, Action, and Social Determinism	81
5.9	Social Change and Cultural Continuity	83
5.10	The Problem of Unity, Social Change and Autonomy	84
5.11	Conclusion	87
	References	87
6	Understanding Indian Philosophy	89
6.1	Introduction	89
6.2	The Method of Understanding Indian Philosophy: The Textual Versus the Hermeneutical	89
6.3	The Three Myths	91
6.4	“Three Conceptions of Indian Philosophy”	93
6.5	The <i>Purusārthas</i>	95

- 6.6 The Law of *Karma* and Moral Freedom 97
- 6.7 Transcendentalism and Indian Thought 99
- 6.8 Where Indian Philosophy Stands 100
- 6.9 Why Is Indian Philosophy Not “Theological”? 101
- 6.10 Indian Philosophical Tradition Versus Western Philosophical
Tradition 103
- 6.11 Conclusion 104
- References 104
- 7 Art, Literature, and Knowledge 105**
 - 7.1 Introduction 105
 - 7.2 Art, Meaning, and Truth 105
 - 7.3 Art, Imagination, and Experience 107
 - 7.4 Art and Morality 109
 - 7.5 On Literature 110
 - 7.6 Self and Its Representation in Literature 112
 - 7.7 Literature, Knowledge, and Philosophy 114
 - 7.8 Literature, Culture, and Value 115
 - 7.9 Conclusion 116
 - References 116
- 8 History and the Historiography of Cultures and Civilizations 117**
 - 8.1 Introduction 117
 - 8.2 Understanding Cultures and Civilizations: The Immanent
a Priori 117
 - 8.3 Culture, Consciousness, and Śāstra 119
 - 8.4 What Does Śāstra Do in a Civilization? 120
 - 8.5 Civilization and Value Apprehension 121
 - 8.6 Change, Continuity, and Identity of Civilizations 123
 - 8.7 History and Historiography 126
 - 8.8 History, Progress, and Value Realization 128
 - 8.9 Revolution and the Possibility of Progress 130
 - 8.10 History, Society, and Development 132
 - 8.11 Conclusion 133
 - References 133
- Index 135**

About the Author

Ramesh Chandra Pradhan was Professor at the Department of Philosophy, University of Hyderabad, during 1998–2015. He taught at Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, and Karnatak University, Dharwad, before joining the University of Hyderabad in 1987. He was Commonwealth Academic Staff Fellow at the University of Oxford during 1990–1991. He has specialized in the philosophy of Wittgenstein, philosophy of language, and philosophy of mind and metaphysics. He has authored a number of books on the philosophy of Wittgenstein and philosophy of language and metaphysics. He has contributed many papers to philosophy journals. Professor Pradhan was a National Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla during 2018–2020.

Chapter 1

Life and Works



1.1 Life

Daya Krishna lived a truly philosophical life. He was not only a profound scholar but also an original thinker with a philosophical worldview of his own. For him, life and philosophy were synonymous in the sense that he lived his own philosophy. What he called creative philosophizing was personified in him. He never believed that philosophy is a professional activity confined to classrooms, seminars, and conferences. It was an ever-widening passion for him, not just an occasional occupation. This passion remained with him till his death in 2007.

Daya Krishna was born on 17 September 1924. He was the eldest of four children of his parents, Krishan Baldev Harita and Annapoorna Devi. The family lived in Delhi. He completed his early education in the Sanatan Dharma School at Delhi. He graduated from Hindu College in 1938 with Honours in Philosophy and took his postgraduate degree from the University of Delhi in 1940. He obtained his Ph.D. Degree from the University of Delhi under the direct supervision of Professor N. V. Banerjee. His Ph.D. examiners included Professor Gilbert Ryle and Professor H. H. Price, both from the University of Oxford and Dr. S. K. Moitra of the University of Calcutta. His Ph.D. dissertation has been published as a book entitled *The Nature of Philosophy* (Daya Krishna 1955). Among his illustrious teachers at the University of Delhi were Dr. Indra Sen and Dr. S. K. Saxena.

Daya Krishna's teaching life started from Sagar University where he spent his early academic life before he moved to the University of Rajasthan, Jaipur. Jaipur remained his *karmabhūmi* for the rest of his life. He was Professor of Philosophy at the Department of Philosophy of Rajasthan University for decades during which he brought the department to national prominence as a UGC Department of Special Assistance till he retired from active service in September 1984. Daya Krishna himself became a legend and an icon during his life time for his many-faceted philosophical pursuits and also for his magnetic personality which attracted great many scholars to Jaipur, among whom were Professor B. Pahi, Professor R. S. Bhatnagar, Professor K. L. Sharma, Professor V. Shekhawat, and many others. He was surrounded by a band of

enthusiastic young scholars and also by many eminent scholars like Professor Yasdev Shalya, Professor Mukund Lath, and many others. A centre of creative philosophizing grew around Professor Daya Krishna as he practised philosophy in a new style.

1.2 Works

Daya Krishna's multifaceted life unfolded both as a teacher and thinker over the years. Apart from philosophy, he started writing on many subjects, such as literature, sociology, economics, anthropology, and political science. In all these, he has seminal contributions. He was recognized as a versatile thinker and as one who can speak and think on any subject with authority. His long range of interests did not exclude music, fine arts, and aesthetic pursuits which influenced his creative approach to philosophy.

Daya Krishna had been the editor of the *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research* for over a decade and has added many features to it such as discussions and comments, agenda for research, focus and notes, and queries, which show his creativity and ability to encourage research among the scholars. These features always bore the imprint of his active and searching mind. His contributions to the *JICPR* in the form of articles and discussions are enormous and everlasting.

Daya Krishna authored/edited around 20 books and published around 200 papers which embody his original and versatile thinking on philosophy and other allied subjects. His early works centred around philosophy, society, culture and values. Some of his original writings are published as *The Art of the Conceptual: Explorations in a Conceptual Maze Over Three Decades* (1989). This book embodies the most original ideas of Daya Krishna. His *Considerations Towards a Theory of Social Change* (1965) and *Social Philosophy: Past and Future* (1969) are two more original works in the corpus of his early writings. His thoughts on cultures and civilizations are embodied in his *Prolegomena to Any Historiography of Cultures and Civilizations* (1997).

Daya Krishna's later writings include many of his works on Indian Philosophy. He is not a traditional scholar in Indian philosophy, but he has fearlessly interpreted Indian thought in a new way in many of his works. His, *Indian Philosophy: A Counter Perspective* (1991), *Indian Philosophy: A New Approach* (1997) and *New Perspectives in Indian Philosophy* (2001) are some of the seminal works in this period apart from many others which cannot be listed here. He introduced the *Samvāda* (dialogue) tradition in contemporary Indian philosophy which has opened up new ways to understand the classical Indian traditions. His important work *Civilizations: Nostalgia and Utopia* (2012) posthumously published is a seminal work that gives a global vision of how the future civilization of mankind is going to be shaped. His engagement with Kant's philosophy was phenomenal which is manifested in his famous work *Towards a Theory of Structural and Transcendental Illusions* (2012). This work is a critical study of Kant's ideas. It aims at bringing out the structural and