

AANVIKSHIKI (PHILOSOPHY)

Its Relevance to Contemporary Indian Society*

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**Professor K. Satchidananda Murty Endowment Lecture, delivered at the Indian Philosophical Congress, 90th Session, Magadh University, Bodh-Gaya, Bihar, February 1-4, 2016.*

Let me convey and place on record my heartfelt gratitude and thanks to the Executive Committee of the Indian Philosophical Congress (hereafter IPC), and my esteemed friend and colleague Professor George Victor (former Vice-Chancellor, Adikavi Nannaya University, Rajahmundry) for nominating me to deliver Professor K.S. Murty Endowment Lecture at the Ninetieth Session of IPC (Bodh-Gaya, February 1-4, 2016). I deem it an honour to deliver Prof.K.S. Murty Endowment Lecture under the auspices of the IPC at Bodh-Gaya -one of the sacred places in India according to Tradition, and a centre of multi-religions and cultures. After the receipt of letter of offer, I was rather diffident to accept the nomination from a highly respected national-level professional association of the discipline of Philosophy, for

the simple reason that I am an out-sider to the guild. After a good deal of reflection, I accepted the offer of nomination for the following reasons. First, it is an appropriate opportunity for me to pay homage for my mentor and guide in research studies. Secondly, I have had the pleasure and benefit of an intimate, long (fifty years) and stimulating fellowship with Prof.K.S. Murty. My inter-action and exchange of ideas with him was based on non-philosophical perspective (Politico-historical). It was an arduous task for me to keep up the dialogue because of his versatile scholarship and the philosophical rigour of argument. We enjoyed and carried on the exercise out of sheer zeal in the history of Ideas. Therefore, I think and feel that I am competent to present an intellectual portrait of his world of ideas, reflections and vision of the legacy and relevance of Indian Philosophy to the Indian Society as well as humankind at large. I beg pardon of this august assembly of scholars of Philosophical scholarship and wisdom for the flamboyant claim.

I do not propose to catalogue and evaluate his oeuvre. It will prove to be a good analytical exercise to trace the progressive development of his thought and ideas via the vast body of his learned and critical studies. Even though, it is an easy task for me to do so, I will not under-take it. Neither do I propose to refer to the positions and Offices (academic and administrative) that he ably held with ease and grace in his glorious and illustrious career, nor to the honours and awards he was rightly conferred with by reputed and learned bodies in India and abroad to measure the depth of his eminence and accomplishments in several fields. I have read scholarly writings, reviews and comments on the works of Prof. K.S. Murty. (See Boaz P. (ed.). 2013. Philosophical Perspectives of K. Satchidananda Murty. New Delhi : D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd. for bibliography of Writings and Scholarly career, contributions and achievements of Prof. K.S. Murty). In my humble understanding, he is a great and an original thinker. He endeavoured hard and burnt mid-night's oil throughout his life to build a system of ideas and thought to explain and understand the meaning and destiny of human life. What follows is an attempt to identify the central or key concepts which will enable us to interpret and construct a coherent system of his ideas and thought. I feel this is a desideratum to appreciate and appraise the works, contributions and legacy of Prof.K.S. Murty.

1. Early life and Environment

He was born on the 25th September, 1924, in a well-to-do agricultural family at Sangam Jagarlamudi (Village), Tenali (Revenue Division), Guntur (District), Andhra Pradesh (then Madras Presidency). His family enjoyed high customary status and respect in the village, and known for probity of conduct and good reputation. His father was deeply interested in religious studies and had a good collection of books in Telugu language.

He was the only surviving child of the family. His parents reared him with unique attention and care. As a young child and boy, he did not have the pleasure of the company of siblings, or even the company of the children of the neighbourhood families. In effect, he was brought up as a lonely child and young boy. He had no taste or time for games, swimming, music or other childish pleasures of fun and frolic. This personality trait was a lasting feature in his life. He did not join any club and had no interest in sports and games and music.

His father put high premium on his education and studies, and instilled in him love for knowledge and habits of virtuous conduct. He was trained in Sanskrit education and learning in the traditional mould under the tutorship of Sri Gadiyaram Sivayya Sastri, and Sri Palle Purnaprajnacharya. Both the tutors were celebrated scholars, and his grounding in Sanskrit studies and learning was very strong and dyed with rational and critical spirit. Often he used to recall that Sanskrit learning shaped his outlook in a substantial measure. Later in the School, College and University, he mastered western knowledge and pedagogy with an equal measure of passion and devotion.

His sole focus was on studies and cultivation of scholarship. Reading, reflection, accumulation of knowledge and writing (authorship) was an addiction for him since childhood. He was an voracious reader. The universe of knowledge was the domain of his mental faculties. Rich Sanskrit learning, mastery over western knowledge and modern methods of critical inquiry, and an incredible studious discipline in pursuit of knowledge, constitute the rare combination of his intellectual equipment and dynamism. It is this conceptual mould of his mind and work that will unlock the doors of his system of ideas and thought.

His native village is on the banks of Buckingham canal, which is a major irrigation channel as well as in British India a major commercial water-way transport from Bezawada to Madras. It is located

within a radius of three kilometers from Tenali town, which is on the railway trunk route from Madras to Calcutta. The formative period of his youthful mind was deeply influenced by the ideas and ideals of the critical phase of Swaraj Movement. Tenali Town and its neighbourhood region was a centre of cultural renaissance of modern Andhra. It was a centre for the whole range of mass movements and ideas - Gandhian movement and its programmes of social reform and national re-construction; Rationalist movement; Communist movement; Radical humanism; and other protest movements. The ideals which were up-held and advocated by these movements left an indelible impression on his mind. This is another source to follow up and understand his ideas and mode of thinking. Thus both the mental and material base for the formulation and growth of his ideas and thought processes lay in the environ of early life and studentship.

2. Nature of Philosophical Discourse:

Philosophy or philosophical outlook is the first field of study and reflective life and work of the mind of Prof.K.S. Murty. Philosophy is an integral part or essence of his being. As I have submitted earlier, this observation is based on a careful study of the corpus of his writings in English and Telugu language, and extensive and intensive partnership with him in the realm of ideas. Permit me to say that it is not derived from personal loyalty and devotion. He is not around either to reward or punish me. I am eighty plus, and I do not stretch my hand for any position or reward. Hence, I seek your indulgence to grant me benefit of doubt with regard to the truth content of my observations. I am not concerned with trivial aspects of his life and career. My aim is to present an analysis of his ideas and thought.

Philosophy is said to be love of wisdom of life and things in a two -fold sense. First, it is the intrinsic or given attribute of human mind to enquire about thinking, its nature and its ultimate reference or source. The problem of philosophical wisdom deals with the nature of ultimate reality or sat (actuality or reality). Therefore, metaphysics, epistemology, ontology, theology, ethics, logic (tarka), spiritual experience, revelation and speculative modes of thought constitute the stuff of philosophy as love of wisdom. Secondly, philosophy is love of knowledge. It comprises of general principles and laws generated (also observed) through the application of rational procedures in respect of the vast body of factual world. It seeks to understand and explain the patterns of relations among the various parts and divisions of the factual world. Its aim is to make the world and human life and work intelligible and intelligent and coherent entity and process.

Prof. K.S. Murty mastered the discipline of philosophy. His writings are an ample proof for the encyclopaedical learning and critical scholarship of philosophic schools, doctrines and theories. He surveyed the gamut of Indian philosophical wisdom, knowledge and tradition from the ancient to contemporary times. He cultivated a wholesome and critical vision of Indian Philosophical heritage in respect of philosophical love of wisdom and philosophical love of knowledge. Philosophical love of wisdom is grounded on two tenets: 1) the fundamental belief that truth or ultimate reality is infinite and unknowable; and 2) logical argument and strict adherence to its rules and propositions is a satisfactory method in the search or groping for truth. Equally the validity of philosophical love of knowledge is based on two categories: 1) the factual world or material world is the given or existing undeniable actuality or a substantial aspect of reality; and 2) rational procedures and scientific methods are the gate-way for the discovery and validity of the general principles or laws of the philosophical knowledge in respect of the different things or aspects of the material world.

The two-fold manifestation and development is the true spirit and character and the main body of Indian Philosophical tradition. The corpus of Prof.Murty's works document with minutiae information and the most open-minded approach the true spirit and body of Indian Philosophical tradition. The problem or problems of Indian Philosophy arise out of the inability to correctly understand the two-track course of Indian Philosophy. Indian and Western scholars misread and misunderstood the Indian Philosophical heritage. They gave either undue and exaggerated importance or under-emphasized the role and validity of the stream of philosophical love of wisdom or the branch of philosophical knowledge of the material world. The need of the hour is to cultivate an objective, authentic (based on original sources), and critical approach in order to appraise the merit and weakness of the Indian Philosophical tradition. In fact, both the streams of Indian Philosophical tradition have developed simultaneously and have been mutually dependent on each other. Each stream has its own realm of ideas, theories and applicability, and rules and procedures to investigate and find solutions pertaining to its problems. Simply, both the streams of philosophical consciousness represent the philosophy of different things - of the human soul and unknown or unknowable other world, and of the human body and knowable material world. In one sense, they are separate entities and their beliefs and doctrines neither contradict nor invalidate each other. Both the streams of Philosophical tradition complement each other in striving to promote human happiness, progress, prosperity and liberation from the condition of bondage and suffering. According to Prof.Murty this is the pith and substance of the real nature and content, role and legacy of Indian Philosophical tradition.

Due to the malevolent role of several forces in the maze of historical change of the Indian society including the genesis and growth of sectarian doctrines and outlook among the native intelligentsia, and the impact of dominant colonial rule and Orientalism, Indian Philosophical tradition had been misinterpreted and misunderstood. Philosophy had been fossilized by confining it to arid metaphysical theories and theology. The critical spirit, dynamism and the wholesome tradition of Indian Philosophy and its active role in the social, cultural, economic and above all political life was enveloped by the dross of religious and dogmatic beliefs and customs. Therefore, the nature and function of Philosophy was distorted. We addressed wrong questions to Philosophers or philosophy and received wrong answers. Hence the running theme of Prof. Murty's works is the call for restoration of Indian Philosophical tradition to its pristine form and content, and rehabilitation of it as the centre-piece and guiding force of our civilization and life. This is the proclaimed goal of his professional work and calling. His magnum opus (1985. Philosophy in India: Traditions, Teaching and Research. UNESCO Country Report. New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research) used the technical term Aanvikshiki (Vide Kautilya's Arthasastra) to refer to Philosophy. Kautilya wrote Aanvikshiki is one of the four traditional Vidyas, but it is the governing body of knowledge of all the Vidyas: Pradipah Sarvavidyanam. This is the key concept to sum up Prof. Murty's system of ideas and thought. Let me cite the text of Kautilya on traditional Vidyas, and then proceed to substantiate the observation in respect of the system of ideas and thought of Prof. Murty.

The following is the citation from Kautilya's Arthasastra

Chapter -2 Section-1 Enumeration of Sciences or Vidyas

"10 Samkhya, Yoga and Lokayata these constitute:

Aanvikshiki (Philosophy).

11 Investigating by means of reasoning, (what is)

spiritual good and evil in Vedic lore, material gain

or loss in economics, good policy and bad policy

in the science of politics, as well as the relative

strength and weakness of these (three sciences)

(Philosophy) confers benefit on the people, keeps the mind steady in adversity and in prosperity and brings out proficiency in thought, speech and action.

12 Philosophy is ever thought of as the lamp of all sciences, as the means of all actions (and) as the support of all laws (and duties)"

(Kautilya's Arthashastra Part-II An English translation with Critical Explanatory Notes, pp 6-7. R.P. Kangle. 2000. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers).

Prof. Murty had a full-blooded vision of the nature, and function of Philosophy, as envisaged and advocated by Kautilya's Arthashastra - a classical text of Indian Civilisation and Tradition. He deliberately employed the technical term Aanvikshiki to designate the discipline of Philosophy. He also cited and used other technical terms: Aatmavidya, Brahmavidya or Paravidya, Darsana. Drishti to refer to Philosophical wisdom and knowledge and activity in Indian tradition. Of all these terms, Aanvikshiki captures and conveys the universal character and attributes and function of philosophical discipline. The uniqueness of Philosophy lies in its methodology of rational examination and critical appraisal of ideas, ideologies, historical environment of the society, and the programme of action relating to various spheres of social life. Philosophy is rational examination and evaluation of the foundations of customs, traditions, beliefs and faith. The ultimate aim of Kautilya's Arthashastra and its governing idea-magisterial Aanvikshiki is the Security, prosperity and happiness, and Indriya Jayah (mastery of senses and mind) of the king (ruler) and of the people. The universal aim of Philosophy is the promotion of human welfare and well-being in this world as well as the other world.

Prof. Murty fully endorsed and adapted Kautilya's Aanvikshiki as the arch-stone of his system of ideas and thought. Simple doubt, why did he accept Kautilya's Aanvikshiki as the frame of reference to his thought, given the background of his profound and critical scholarship of the Western (specially Greek and Christian), Islamic, Chinese, Japanese, Indian (including the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Lokayata, Sikh, and Christian and legacy of Bhakti movements and the tradition of spiritual experience in the Hindu and Islamic cultures) Philosophical systems?. The question begs an answer as a prefatory

note to our topic of the lecture. I propose a provisional answer to the question. First, he concluded that the true spirit of Philosophical discipline is critical and rational examination of things to enquire about the nature of ultimate reality. Aanvikshiki foots the bill eminently. For example, it approves rational examination of the good and not so desirable teachings of Vedic discourse and practices regarding spiritual knowledge and experience. This is acme of rational and critical spirit. In this connection, note the critique of Buddhism, Jainology, Lokayata and Theosophy with regard to vedic heritage. Secondly, his Sanskrit education and learning was the source, which enabled him to understand and realize the true character of classical Indian Civilisation and culture. The splendid achievements and the lasting legacy of classical India in all fields of thought and activity is the product of spirit of rational examination and critical appraisal of things. Nor is this all. The gradual extinction of critical spirit and the rise and hold of dogmatic beliefs and sectarian outlook on the Indian mind is the cause for stagnation and decline of Indian Civilisation. Thirdly, he was deeply influenced by the ideals of Swaraj Movement. After careful observation of the problems and progress of independent India, he felt and thought that the cultivation of the spirit of Aanvikshiki is sine qua non for the fulfillment of the ideals of Swaraj Movement, particularly its twin programme of Social Reform and National Re-construction. It is the duty of intellectuals to suggest ways and means for the promotion of an objective understanding and interpretation of Indian Tradition and its meaning to the contemporary Indian Society. He thought rational examination and- critical appraisal of the problems faced by the Indian Society and alternative choices to solve the problems is our task. For these reasons, he approved and accepted Kautilva's Aanvikshiki as the foundation for his ideas and thought. In the following section, I will attempt to present an account of his ideas and thought.

In a substantial measure, Prof.Murty's ideas and pattern of thought process is adumbrated in his conception and vision of the discipline of philosophy. The earlier part of the lecture, is an elucidation of his doctrine of philosophy. The main features of his system of ideas and thought have been indicated or suggested. Hence this section carries the burden of repetitive argument. One may ask why tread again the ground which has been previously covered. I submit the objective of this part of the lecture is two-fold: 1) to present a concise and clear account of Prof.Murty's ideas, and 2) to point out and emphasize the function of Philosophy in contemporary Indian Society.

Prof. Murty's account of Indian Philosophy - its character and spirit, and function - has solid foundation in linguistic proficiency of Sanskrit, Telugu, Hindi and English languages. It is based on

authentic and original sources - both textual and commentaries-and is informed by versatile scholarship of the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Lokayata, Islamic, Sikh and Christian philosophic legacy. His approach in studies is objective and open-ended, singularly free from parochial prejudices, and above all is stamped by rational and critical spirit. It is supported by exceptional love for learning and knowledge, which had been pursued with rare capacity for laborious, disciplined and devoted study. Further-more, he cultivated abiding love for India and its heritage, partly inspired by Sanskrit learning. He deeply yearned for the progress and prosperity of the Indian society, influenced by the ideals of Swaraj Movement. He felt and thought that intellectuals owe a primary duty to the society in helping the resolution of its basic social, economic, cultural and political problems through the application of their knowledge, and thus foster the progress of the society. This is the ideological and historical context for his firm conviction that philosophy (Aanvikshiki) should function as a catalyst agent to support and strengthen the endeavour of Indian society for the fulfillment of the tasks of nation-building and development. Incidentally, such a constructive and useful role of philosophy in national life will contribute for the enhancement of its professional status and value.

Prof. Murty meant that the spirit, method and substantive parts of knowledge of philosophy (Aanvikshiki) has capability to play a constructive role in national life. At the risk of repetition, I venture to say that the twin branches of philosophy - the love of philosophical wisdom and the love of philosophical knowledge - constitute holistic approach for the study of the meaning and destiny of human life and society in this world as well as the other world. The two aspects or dimensions of human life and experience are equally worthy of study and reflection. There is no contradiction between the findings and knowledge of the two branches of philosophy. If there is any contradiction between the empirical knowledge and scriptural knowledge and spiritual experience, it should be reconciled and resolved in accordance with the tenor and sprit of the following criterion. 1) Empirical knowledge and spiritual knowledge are equally worthy and valid, within their respective spheres. 2) Rational procedures and critical methods should be employed and followed in the construction of knowledge and in the judgement of the validity of knowledge. 3) The social and historical context and the immediate as well as long-run goal of advancement of human well-being and welfare should be the guide-lines for the choice and implementation of the findings of the two branches of philosophical knowledge. Prof. Murty cited classical texts, authors, scientists, and saintly spiritual leaders in support of the justification of the above portrayal of Indian Philosophy. According to Prof. Murty, this is the true spirit and substance of Indian Philosophy.

Prof. Murty had a fond hope and deep conviction that Indian Philosophy is bound to play a critical role in shaping the process of thought transformation and cultural change in modern India. It is a two-pronged process. First, the whole baggage of mis-understanding and misinterpretation of Indian Philosophy - the alleged dominant religious orientation, other worldly attitude to life, and sectarian spirit and outlook and the hold of dogmatic beliefs and rituals - will not stand the test of rational examination and critical appraisal. Consequently, the support base for prevalence of social inequality and inertia, economic backwardness, and conservative foundations of cultural life and practices will be gradually eroded. Issues and questions like religion vs. science, revelation vs. reason, tradition vs. empirical knowledge, Nivritti vs. Pravriti, Jnani vs. grihastha etc, will loose their relevance, or could be resolved in accordance with the triple criterion (noted earlier) to reconcile the contradiction between spiritual experience and empirical knowledge. This is the first part of the role of Indian Philosophy in clearing the intellectual landscape for fostering social and cultural change in Indian society.

Secondly, philosophy is a vital ideological force in helping the process of national development and nation - building. This is a fundamental conviction with Prof. Murty. Through its unique method of rational and critical examination of affairs and issues, philosophy promotes rational culture in the society. It questions the utility and validity of the age-old customs, beliefs and social practices of inequality and exclusion and discrimination. It generates and builds-up correct knowledge and right behaviour and disciplined and responsible conduct. Such a ground-breaking change in the outlook and attitudes of people and society is the foundation for development. It is a pre-condition for the successful implementation of the programmes with regard to national development. Further-more, Indian philosophical tradition adds an ethical dimension to the concept of development. In addition to economic prosperity and welfare, individuals should cultivate habits and manners of virtuous conduct and honest behaviour, and a sense of concern for the well-being of other persons. The ethical base of development will promote harmony and happiness in the society and helps to reduce conflict and violence in the society.

Nation-building process in India is a formidable task, given the multi-religious and ethnic stocks of people, cultural and linguistic traditions, and the hoary past of its history and civilization. The hold of sectarian, exclusive and orthodox outlook, and the belief that India is a blessed land is very strong on

the Indian mind. Philosophy examines the basis and truth content of the popular beliefs and myths. For example, India is neither a blessed nor cursed land. Its culture is materialistic and religious oriented just as the cultures of other countries. It is a part of universal history of humankind. It has unique features in some fields of thought and activity. Indian philosophical heritage is a body of schools, doctrines and knowledge comprising of the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Lokayata, Islamic, Sikh, Christian traditions and the rich philosophical and theological literature in the regional vernacular languages, which flourished in the vast space and historical time of Indian Civilization. Like-wise, Indian history is a history of various territorial units and people of different ethnic stocks, who have been inhabitants of it. Indian Civilization and culture is a product of cross-fertilization and mutual impact of different cultural traditions of different religions and people. In the long span of historical time and vast space of India, composite culture and plural society had evolved and flourished in our country. Such a conception of glorious and shared history, culture and religious doctrines and beliefs (constructed by philosophy) will facilitate the process of nation-building in India. This is the functional role and relevance of philosophy in contemporary Indian society.