

INDIAN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION, BAKHTIN AND SOME CONCERNS

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Abstract

The English education and English studies as it is form the crux of the issue – (re)visiting Indian intellectual tradition through Bakhtin. In such a state of conditioning induced by the English education and the English studies that we are eager to reject anything that is Indian and keen to embrace that is Western, 'Bakhtin in India' poses the sternest possible challenge because Bakhtin is a good scholar and it is easy to get carried away into thinking that his ideas can illumine our path along the Indian tradition. But the wise would caution that Indian tradition is self-illuminated and one does not need any external light. All one needs is genuine sincerity, an open mind and a true yearning for discourse. However, we have alienated ourselves from the tradition to such an extent that Indian tradition seems distant and unfamiliar, and Bakhtin seems like one of our own. But such are the contradictions of the academic scholarship in India. 'Bakhtin in India' is an occasion, less to celebrate Bakhtin, and more to discover the tradition for ourselves and see if there were any scholars, who were and are still our own and if we can benefit from their insights in our pursuits of furthering the dialogue for which we have to resort to Bakhtin and the like.

Keywords: Indian intellectual tradition, English Education, English Studies, Discourse, Dialogue, Debate

Lead In:

In the 21st century world of varied intellectual crises, it is inevitable to engage with issues of where we belong, from where and how we have evolved as a society, and where we are headed to sort out why we perceive things in the way we do and the challenges that face us in this regard. It is also pertinent to rethink our assumptions of what we hold sacred and what we outright reject because it is in celebration and rejection of glorious and inglorious ideas respectively that we seem to have erred so far and erred in a way that has affected our intellectual orientation. The basic premises that we take for granted and the new premises we readily embrace have to be questioned and investigated rigorously and honestly to come somewhere close to the core of the fundamental issues of being and thinking; resolving them to some extent might be a little difficult to attempt till we fully grasp the true nature of the issues. The true challenge lies in educating ourselves as to how education is not sufficient to enable us to

comprehend the world as it is and in fact, education that we have received might come in the way. It is a worrisome scenario to the extent that research carried out and published is also no longer something sacred; the best of scholars writing the best of books at times may not lead us to the right path because they themselves have slipped in matters most subtle. With digital revolution, there is an onslaught of (mis)information masquerading as true knowledge. It is worth noting that if one sees/reads something on a website it is considered modern and bound to be latest and true, and if one reads an old but intellectually stimulating book from ancient India it is a backward mindset that one is held guilty of. In the desperate endeavour to be modern and progressive, it is required to discard what is old, and unquestioningly accept what is new and what comes from a tradition other than one's own.

There is no escape from the truth that the foundation of all of these intellectual biases is laid in the classrooms- the space so sacred that it requires some heart to violate its sanctity. It is the training and education of a country's youth that ensures whether we uphold or undo our cultural and intellectual heritage. In the dire situation such as this when the education system in this country does precious little to introduce us to whatever is of some value that came down to us from our tradition, the young minds are likely to grow up believing that only the West created knowledge and still holds the patent. To add to this, they are likely to grow up with a firm opinion that whatever is a part of the native tradition is antiquated, backward and of no relevance and significance to the modern world. Eventually, the onus of this also lies with academia that indulges in irresponsible writing and research on fashionable but peripheral issues, and leaves out the essential and fundamental issues which determine the intellectual orientation of the young minds whom they shape and influence in classrooms and beyond. The matters are aggravated when the curricula comprise the ideas, concepts, texts and opinions of the other traditions of the world, except one's own.

At such a juncture, (re)visiting Indian intellectual tradition is of profound significance and such (re)visiting may happen, as it does in this case through Bakhtin, in ways that we may not usually associate with the studies of the tradition. However, whether it happens through Bakhtin or some other eminent scholar, it is significant that it takes place in an otherwise intellectually doomed scenario of education and academic scholarship in India with respect to the Indian intellectual tradition and how we comprehend its import for the obtaining world.

Disconnect with the Tradition and its Consequences

It is proverbial to refer to English education and what it has done to the national consciousness. But it is unfortunate that we stop at this reference and do not delve deeper as to what it has done to the intellectual heritage of this country. It would be apt to take a look at other countries and see for ourselves how they have conceptualized their education system and how they have dealt with their cultural and intellectual heritage. Basically, most countries in the world have firmly upheld the dignity of their native languages. The French are proud to speak French. The German would love to communicate in German and so and so forth, one can quote other examples. But when it comes to India, Sanskrit is perceived to be fraught with all the politics and malice, and it is not a matter of pride to most English educated Indians that some of the best ideas in the world were articulated in Sanskrit, and whether we like it or not, it is well and truly our own language. In fact, they have done their best to distance themselves from Sanskrit and thus created untouchability with it. In this country, if one studies English as a major, it is in consonance with the idea of progress but lest one studies Sanskrit, the society thinks itself to be a little let down by the person in question. It hardly matters to us that world's finest grammar was conceptualized in

this language we have renounced. It also means nothing to us that even the scholarly grammarians and linguists in the West have studied Sanskrit and the way it is constructed to enrich their understanding of grammar and phonetics.

Secondly, most countries in the world revere their writers and thinkers, and institute awards in their names and construct museums to pass on the pride and sense of history to the next generation. For us, we have distanced ourselves from the writers and thinkers this country has produced. In fact, we stand up against those writers and thinkers more often than on their side, obviously without reading them and discoursing over their intellectual merit. It seems to be of little use to us to consider that the books written by these writers and ideas articulated by these thinkers have timeless quality and universal significance. It is all in the great English education that we are engaged and limited. What it has done is that it has alienated us from our roots and heritage. It translates into lack of firsthand knowledge of the tradition, disproportionate reverence for the West and misconceptions about the tradition and what it means. Gradually and eventually, the mindset develops that flatly rejects one's own tradition and embraces whatever comes from the West. It explains the disrespect and dislike for Sanskrit and what is written in it. It also explains the inclination towards Bakhtin because one tends to think that it is Bakhtin who first articulated such groundbreaking ideas in the history of the world. However, it is history of India which will suffice to show that a tradition of scholars and thinkers who did a similar job hundreds of years back. In the case of those who are aware of the Indian intellectual tradition, they will still be hesitant and moderate in appreciating the intellectual heritage but in the case of Bakhtin, certainty and absolute admiration will take over the hesitation and moderation of the kind they use for Indian tradition.

It is these nuances of intellectual servitude to that which exists outside one's tradition, and a sense of hesitation in acceptance of one's own tradition that articulate the true damage done by English education to the so-called modern and progressive urban India. University departments do it more systematically, and undertake SAP projects granted by UGC in these areas and publish their work to place matters on record. They find nothing of value to research and explore in the tradition of the soil but some American writer inspires their intellect better to comprehend the world in new light. There is nothing wrong in studying the writers of diverse traditions of the world but excluding one's own tradition spells intellectual bias of the worst kind. Privileging such authors over the tradition that is timeless and of profound significance to the entire world is blatantly disrespectful to one's intellectual heritage. The latest trend is to study the tradition through some author or thinker of the West and hence understand the tradition in the light of the ideas of such an author or thinker. It seems fascinating, apparently, but it is intellectual disservice to the tradition and of course, such an author or thinker is propagated further in what has been the direction of English education.

Consequences of such a disconnect with the tradition are dire. The young generation has grown up without a sense of history and any respect whatsoever for the cultural and intellectual heritage. It is not their fault; we have not introduced them to the heritage because we have been busy indoctrinating them in favour of the ideas of the other traditions. Hence, they tend to simplistically reject what is Indian and embrace and celebrate what comes from foreign shores. This exercise is self-defeating also because they will fail to appreciate even what comes from foreign shores in the absence of a sense of history. They will not have anything against which they can measure what is presented to them. They will not be able to rigorously engage with and analyze the ideas presented before them, and will merely accept them without a proper and thorough examination. In such a scenario, we shall create a generation of young minds that

knows little about their cultural and intellectual heritage, and have meekly accepted the ideas from other traditions without subjecting them to serious cross-examination. Hence, whether we study the Indian intellectual tradition through Bakhtin or anybody else, it will fail to serve the purpose because they know neither of the two well nor in true sense. We have come to a point where it is not only the young minds who do not understand what the true of value of this tradition is but even our eminent scholars do not seem to be aware of the deeper significance of the tradition, and some even indulge in blank rejectionism—something to be avoided in the intellectual domain for one cannot understand and argue what one flatly rejects. It is unfortunate that it is fashionable to reject the native tradition and it is being old-fashioned and intellectually regressive to uphold the significance of this tradition.

Dialogic/Polylogic Nature of Indian Intellectual Tradition

While it is a noble endeavour to approach the tradition through Bakhtin, it would be advisable to understand the tradition beforehand, as it existed and what it was made of. The real issue lies here that we have disregarded the tradition and proffered wholehearted acceptance to Bakhtin and many others of his kind. While there is nothing wrong in admiring Bakhtin’s work, it is also required to study the tradition, prior to interpreting it through Bakhtin. It will be of great value for us to (re)visit the tradition and see whether it was dialogic in nature, which is our main concern with respect to Bakhtin.

It would be impossible to understand the Indian intellectual tradition by only one approach. One would need to take recourse to diverse approaches and discover for oneself the dialogic/polylogic nature of the tradition. Firstly, it would be of immensely meaningful to dwell upon the significance attached to speech/language in this tradition. While in other traditions, it was and still is, to some extent, deemed merely as a means of communication, here was a tradition that considered it in a manner that requires to be underscored with respect to the idea of dialogue. This tradition, unlike many other traditions, takes pride, not for producing the finest war manual or defining treatise on Politics but it takes pride in the finest grammar it produced in the form of Pāṇini’s *Aṣṭadhyāyī*. It is a tradition that is not known by its book on Economics and History but it is a tradition known across the world by its book on grammar such as Bhartrhari’s *Vākyapadīya*. Even the grammarians in the West refer to the works of Pāṇini and Bhartrhari as the staple illustration of what the Indian intellectual tradition stood for. It would be enlightening to refer to what the *Aitareyopaniṣad* says with respect to the significance of speech, “The teacher Pāṅcālacanda considered speech itself as the Samhitā, “By speech the Vedas are strung, by speech the metres are made, by speech friends are united, by speech all beings (establish their intra-subjective knowledge and relation) and hence all this is speech (III.1.6).”

But views of one Upaniṣad would not be sufficient as one point of view is never sufficient in this tradition. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* puts the same idea differently: “Without speech who could explain right and wrong, good, evil; pleasant, unpleasant? Speech explains all (VII. 2).” The same respect to speech is also articulated in Ṛgveda, which contains numerous references to this idea. Ṛgveda says that language gives “name to object” (10.71.1).

For a tradition that elevates language or speech to this philosophic stature at the earliest phase and in its earliest articulations, it is surely not doing it for monologue. A tradition that attaches this profound significance to language/speech is deeply dialogic by orientation. Add to this the fact that this has been a robust oral tradition, and what we have a tradition that is dialogic by nature, methodology and orientation. A tradition that articulates in its foundational texts the true merit of language and devotes itself to construct texts that celebrate such dialogue in the

form of Vedas and Upaniṣads – all dialogues - is to be complimented, rather than rejected, for establishing the significance and relevance of dialogue in the foundational years of its being. Rather than rejecting it, it is certainly required to be credited for illustrating to the rest of the world how dialogue is not its co-curricular activity or lip service or instrument of furthering personal agendas and political campaigns but its mode of constructing knowledge and its founding philosophy.

To put it in simple terms, Indian intellectual tradition is a long and attested tradition of core knowledge texts, thinkers and concepts, and hence stands unparalleled for the sheer democracy of diverse views and dialogic or polylogic mode of constructing and celebrating discourse. As some would argue against such a thesis, it is pertinent to establish it beyond any reasonable doubt. To begin with, it is worth considering that it is a tradition that gave foundational ideas in each domain whether it was medicine, warfare, philosophy, literary theory, polity etc. The knowledge of diverse worldviews was so integral to this tradition that Bhartrhari, in the penultimate *kārika* of the second *kānda* of his celebrated *Vākyapadīya* says, “The intellect acquires critical acumen by familiarity with different traditions. How much does one really understand by merely following one’s own reasoning only? (Ka-484).” The tradition did not bring its work to a close with a single text in each of the knowledge domains. Each successive thinker came and enriched the knowledge enshrined in the foundational text further with his own insights elucidated in yet another core text in the domain. This existed as a practice for hundreds of years leading to a treasure house of texts, concepts and thinkers. Such was the emphasis on plurality that it never ever occurred in the Indian intellectual tradition that a single book, a single idea, a single individual, a single concept dominated and went unchallenged. In fact, it celebrated a pluralistic, dialogic/polylogic method of discourse and knowledge creation. As mentioned earlier, this is a fundamental thesis which requires to be substantiated beyond dispute and hence, it would be pertinent to resort to the views of those who researched in this area. Satishchandra Chatterjee and Dheerendramohan Datta assert in their *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*:

Indian philosophy is marked, in this respect, by a striking breadth of outlook which only testifies to its unflinching devotion to the search for the truth. Though there were many different schools and their views differed sometimes very widely, yet each school took care to learn the views of all the others and did not come to any conclusion before considering thoroughly what others had to say and how their points could be met. This spirit led to the formation of a method of philosophical discussion. A philosopher had first to state the views of his opponents before he formulated his own theory. This statement of the opponent’s case came to be known as the prior view (*pūrvapakṣa*). Then followed the refutation (*khaṇḍana*) of this view. Last of all came the statement and proof of the philosopher’s own position, which therefore was known as the subsequent view (*uttarapakṣa*) or the conclusion (*siddhānta*). This catholic spirit of treating rival positions with consideration was more than rewarded by the thoroughness and perfection that each philosophical school attained.

(Chatterjee and Datta 1939: 5)

This tradition defies generalizations of every sort except one that it has been pluralistic and that it exhibits astonishing diversity in terms of the variety of viewpoints and counter-viewpoints- something integral to the idea of dialogue. But only the views of Satishchandra Chatterjee and

Dheerendramohan Datta are not sufficient as the tradition itself would like to resort to some other views. In this context, the views of M. Hiriyanna, an eminent scholar on Indian intellectual tradition, would be useful to come somewhere close to the true significance of this spirit of dialogue and pluralism. M. Hiriyanna says in *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*:

A striking characteristic of Indian thought is its richness and variety. There is practically no shade of speculation which it does not include. This is a matter that is often lost sight of by its present-day critic who is fond of applying to it sweeping epithets like ‘negative’ and ‘pessimistic’ which, though not incorrect so far as some of its phases are concerned, are altogether misleading as descriptions of it as a whole. There is, as will become clear when we study our subject in its several stages of growth, no lack of emphasis on the reality of the external world or on the optimistic view of life understood in its larger sense. The misconception is largely due to the partial knowledge of Indian thought which hitherto prevailed; for it was not till recently that works on Indian philosophy, which deal with it in anything like a comprehensive manner, were published. The schools of thought familiarly known till then were only a few; and even in their case, it was forgotten that they do not stand for a uniform doctrine throughout their history, but exhibit important modifications rendering such whole-sale descriptions of them inaccurate. The fact is that Indian thought exhibits such a diversity of development that it does not admit of a rough-and-ready characterization.”

(Hiriyanna 1932: 16)

Even for a commoner, it is customary to refer to six systems of Indian philosophy but we fail to realize their significance that there existed a tradition of philosophy that gave rise to six distinctly diverse systems of thought and allowed each one its space and place. It never occurs to us that there existed a tradition that had six different systems in perpetual dialogue over key issues, debating the merit of each idea. One would like to pause here and wonder, if there was any other tradition in the world that exercised such democracy of dialogue through six diverse worldviews. It would also be apt to ask whether there is a better illustration of the dialogic nature of a tradition founded on dialogue.

For those uninitiated in the way the tradition operated, it would be astonishing to learn that it was the norm to subject each book, each idea, each thinker and each concept to rigorous debate and disputation. Hence, it was not merely one scholar against another on a one-to-one dialogue. A debate of this kind was not a hush-hush affair carried out behind closed doors. It was conducted out in the public space gathered for the purpose of intellectual re-examination of proposed ideas in a completely transparent fashion. Such a disputation carried out by a variety of scholars defined the true dialogic/polylogic nature of this tradition. To put it in perspective, can there be a better demonstration of dialogue than a host of scholars arguing the validity and authenticity of an idea? It was not an aberration in the tradition; it was ‘the order of the day’, as B. K. Matilal puts it. B. K. Matilal defines the tradition with respect to debate and dialogue succinctly in “Debate and Dialectic in Ancient India” thus:

During the sramaṇa (post Upaniṣadic) period of Indian philosophy, the intellectual climate was brisk, critical and controversial. Topics that came under fire were not only the organized religion and ritualism of Vedic orthodoxy, but also the established social codes and moral norms, as well

as knowledge-claims regarding the final destiny of man. In such an environment, debate, by which I mean controversy, question-and-answer and discussions, was the order of the day. No subject was considered too sacred for criticism and refutation.

(Matilal 1990: 52)

At a time when scholars and philosophers love to live on their ivory towers, it is significant that B. K. Matilal further mentions that ‘some professional training in the art of debate’ was not additional qualification but ‘essential for a scholar’.

Secondly, some might wish to ask whether such debates were carried out arbitrarily or there were any set rules to effect discipline and rigour in these debates. Hence, it is apt to note here that norms for such a disputation were clearly laid down. Every debate was required to be chaste in its intellectual objective and spirit. Quite in sync with the idea of plurality, a single model of debate was not followed, as Matilal elaborates:

Manuals for the professional debate must have been written for different schools for training the debater in the types of debate, types of arguments, tricky devices of debate and the checks or grounds for censure or defeat. The canons of Buddhism and Jainism contain frequent references to many technical terms of the art of disputation. The texts like *Kathāvastu* (at the Buddhist council at c.225 B.C.) reports about various topics for debate for the Buddhist monks as well as various ways of debating. Early manuals of debates, however, are not in extent. But we have some crystallized versions of them, probably from two distinct sources, in such texts as *Upāyahrādaya*, Asaṅga’s *Yogācārabhūmi*, *Caraka* and *Nyāyasūtras*

(Matilal 1990: 54)

Matilal goes on to elucidate all the forms of debates conceptualized in the aforementioned texts:

The Jaina canon, *Sthānāṅga*, refers to four types of refutation in a “tricky” debate. First, there is the trick of confounding the opponent by using verbiage and thereby trying to give him a ‘run-around’ (*yāpaka-hetu*). Second, there is the direct refutation with a valid reason by confounding one’s trick (*sthāpaka-hetu*). Obviously, the first kind can be countered with the second. Third, there is the argument based upon equivocation (*vyamasaka-hetu*). This can be countered by the fourth kind, called *luṣaka*, by exploiting the means of equivocation and thereby confounding the opponent.

(Matilal 1990: 55)

Matilal also mentions how Caraka broadly divides the debate into two types- while the first kind is held with a fellow-scholar and in a spirit of cooperation (*sandhāya sambhāṣa*), the second in a spirit of opposition and hostility (*vigṛhya*). Caraka further divides the hostile debate into *jalpa* and *vitandā*. In *jalpa*, both sides establish their position with reason and try to refute each other. In *vitandā*, one tries to censure the other without establishing anything.

In order to further understand the diversity of even types and classification of debate, it is necessary to revert to Matilal who explains the *Nyāyasūtra* model of debate thus:

The *Nyāyasūtra* classification of debate was more systematic and hence carried more authority in philosophical circles. The name for philosophic debate in *Nyāyasūtras* is *Kathā*, literally, speech, discussion. It notes three kinds of debate, *vāda*, *jalpa*, *vitandā*. The first kind corresponds to the friendly and congenial debate in Caraka (*sandhāya sambhāṣa*). It must have the following characteristics:

1) There should be a thesis and a counter-thesis mutually opposing each other.

Such a situation arises when mutually incompatible attributes are ascribed to

the same locus (cf. *ekādhikarāṇa*, in Vātsyayana). Uddyotakara further qualifies it by saying that such contradictory attributions are to be made with regard to the same locus *at the same time* and neither should be taken, for the purpose of the debate, to be finally decided.

- 2) Proving, i.e. establishing and disproving either of the thesis, should be based upon evidence (*pramāṇa*) and argument (*tarka*)
- 3) Each side should mention the standard five steps in the demonstration of one's reasoning. (Definition of these five steps are given elsewhere in the *Nyāyasūtra*)
- 4) The reasoning should not entail contradiction with any tenet or accepted doctrine.

This debate is usually held between the teacher and the students or between friends, where each participant is a seeker after truth (*tatvabubhutsu*)

The second type of debate, *jalpa*, is held between equals, i.e. two rival parties, and the explicit goal is victory (*vijaya*) which may not necessarily coincide with the establishment of truth. Here we come to the discussion of 'tricky' debates that I have alluded to earlier. According to Uddyotakara, this debate will share only the first two characteristics of the first type, but not the last two. For the last two characteristics imply that only certain types of censure are applicable here, not all other types. The *jalpa* debate will include, apart from the first two, the following.

Proving and rebuttal are based upon equivocation (*chala*), false parity of reasoning (*jāti*) and censure of all kinds.

It may be pointed out that equivocation and false or unwarranted parities can neither prove nor disprove anything. Uddyotakara concedes the point and says that the debater uses these tricks anyway, when he is unable to defend himself or censure the opponent on fair grounds. Since victory is the goal, such tricks are allowed, according to the rules of the game, so to say. The onus is on the opponent to stop him or to 'call his bluff'. The *Nyāyasūtra* lists three varieties of equivocation and twenty-four varieties of rejoinder based on parity of reasoning (*jāti*) - (twenty in the *Upāyahṛadaya*). The ways of censuring a debate are given in the *Nyāyasūtra*, as twenty-two. In other words, it notes that in twenty-two ways a debate might be brought to a close with a decision where one side wins and the other side loses.

The third type of debate, *vitandā*, is more controversial in nature and, it seems to me, philosophically more interesting. It is said to be characterized by the lack of proving the counter-thesis. In other words, the debater here is engaged simply in the rebuttal of a position but does not give the opponent a chance to attack his own position.

(Matilal 1990: 58)

Thirdly, the tradition did not celebrate the compartmentalized system of disciplines divided into smaller sub-sections of specializations that we have conceptualized in the name of modern education. The tradition celebrated interdisciplinarity, and knowledge of more than one discipline was required as staple qualification of scholarship. The dialogue of the tradition did not limit itself to a single form. The dialogue among disciplines was also a dimension of dialogue that the tradition upheld.

The tradition was so deeply dialogic that the idea of dialogue transcended the barrier of time as well. The dialogue did not remain confined to a particular time period but continued generation

after generation through a rich tradition of commentaries by successive scholars who would come later in a different time period and question and engage with the tradition.

For a clear articulation of the definitions and types of commentaries, one has to turn to Rājśekhara who elucidates the types of commentaries in *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā*:

Commentary that explains the ideational content of a *sūtra* is called *vr̥tti*; analysis of a *vr̥tti* is *paddhati*. *Bhāṣya* is a detailed analysis that takes into account the possible objections and counter-arguments. *Samīkṣa* gives an explanation of the intended and deeper meanings and issues implicit in a *bhāṣya*-analysis. A mere indication of meaning in the simplest and briefest language is *tīkā*. Explanation of only the difficult words is *pañjikā*. A brief statement of the meaning of a *sūtra* is *kārikā*. In the same manner, an analysis of the unexpressed or suggested meanings and implications of a *sūtra* is called *vārttika*.

(Rājśekhara, 12)

Plurality was the defining characteristic of this tradition as is well illustrated by even the types of commentaries as well! Rājśekhara had not theorized something that never existed; in fact he had articulated the classification of what was prevalent as tradition. These different types of commentaries were integral to the spirit of dialogue across time periods. Major texts were read and re-read through these commentaries and enriched by the same as well. At times, the source text had a long line of commentaries, illustrating the discourse continued over a long period of time. For a text such as *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra*, it is not possible to imagine its complete understanding without its commentaries. The oldest commentary now available is the *Bhāṣya* by Śabara Svāmī, known as *Śābara-Bhāṣya*. In line with this, Kumāriḷa Bhaṭṭa penned his remarkable commentary on *Sabara-Bhasya*. It is constituted of three parts known as *Śloka-Vārttika*, *Tantra-Vārttika* and *Tuṭṭīkā*. On *Śloka-Vārttika*, there are two commentaries whereas on *Tantra-Vārttika*, there are six commentaries available. Apart from these interlaced commentaries, there were other commentaries such as Prabhākar Mīśra's *Bṛhati*, Śālikanātha's *R̥juvimalā* etc. Even in 17th century, there were some commentaries written on Mīmāṃsā system such as Appaya Dīkṣita's *Upakramaparākrama*, Āpadeva's *Mīmāṃsānyāyaprakāśa*, Khaṇḍadeva's *Mīmāṃsā Kaustubh* etc. In same way, a text like Pāṇini's *Aṣṭadhyāyī* was also followed by commentaries such as Kātyāyana's *Vārttikas*, Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* etc. Kaiyaṭa (eleventh century) wrote his commentary titled *Pradīpa* on Patanjali's *Mahābhāṣya* and Nāgeśabhaṭṭa wrote a commentary on *Pradīpa*. Even a text that has been popularly deemed religious such as *The Bhagavad-Gītā* is not above the re-examination and rigorous analysis. From Ādi Śāṅkara to Vinoba Bhave, the commentaries have enriched our understanding of *The Bhagavad Gītā* even more and firmly established the dialogic/polylogic nature of the intellectual tradition that does not consider any text, however religious and spiritual for the populace, above analysis and discourse. These commentaries are the testimony of the concept of dialogue that the tradition had systematically evolved and strengthened by hundreds of years of stern discipline and rigour. No text or author was above the incisive re-examination and hence all major texts in the tradition were followed by equally profound commentaries. For those who wish to understand how the tradition was inherently dialogic/polylogic, a merely superficial acquaintance with the commentary tradition would serve to dispel the myths and unequivocally establish its dialogic nature.

For those who have doubts whether this tradition was inclusive and allowed space to the marginal voices, it is also required to be underscored that this tradition is characterized by a profound democracy of views diverse and at times opposite, and yet systems of these diverse viewpoints co-existed and discoursed over their respective positions in relation to others. In a

tradition that celebrates such a wide range of systems of thought, viewpoints and worldviews, it is easy to deduct that intellectual democracy served as the foundation of the spirit of dialogue we revere so much. Unless such intellectual democracy exists, no dialogue is possible and the contemporary global scenario of intolerance is testimony of the same. On the other hand, the diversity that existed in the tradition in terms of the texts, scholars and worldviews even more enhances the merit of such intellectual democracy. For the sheer democracy of diametrically different ideas alone, the tradition should be credited, rather than criticized, celebrated, rather than doubted and studied, rather than rejected. In the increasingly intolerant society and world that we live in, such a tradition based on intellectual democracy is an exemplary illustration of tolerance in spite of the diversity and multiplicity of views on the most fundamental issues.

Indian Intellectual Tradition and Academic Scholarship in India

While some of us are aware of what Macaulay said and the damage he did to the tradition and heritage, it is pertinent to revisit his ideas in this context as it is his ideas which serve as the site of rejection of the tradition-something we see the emergence of in contemporary era:

That English is better worth knowing than Sanscrit or Arabic, that the natives are desirous to be taught English, and are not desirous to be taught Sanscrit or Arabic, that neither as the languages of law nor as the languages of religion have the Sanscrit and Arabic any peculiar claim to our encouragement, that it is possible to make natives of this country thoroughly good English scholars, and that to this end our efforts ought to be directed.

(Macaulay 1835: 7)

In order to adequately understand the state of academic scholarship with respect to Indian intellectual tradition, it is imperative to revisit the fundamental issues of English studies and English education. The Empire had envisioned English education and English studies as an extension of the Empire in a subtle sort of a way but effective nonetheless. When the question that one is exploring is that of one's intellectual and cultural heritage, how the education, literature and languages have been dealt with actually contains the hints of the answer to the question. As for education in India, it is a system of education that the Empire handed down to us to debilitate us further and forever. Those who disagree must be British, in letter(s) and spirit. We have yet to recover from the damage it has caused to the Indian mind in terms of its perception of Indian culture and heritage and the worldview education is expected to facilitate. Macaulay debated a lot about the kind of education that Indians should be provided in the infamous Minute he drafted. He had the audacity to proclaim that we should create "English scholars" who would be "a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect (7)" through the teaching of Western knowledge imparted in the English language. That is exactly the kind of education system we have in place till date. We have a system in which Western knowledge is being served in the English language, and as he aptly put it, we have English educated "English scholars" galore, particularly at seminars and conferences who quote Western scholars at will. However, when these "English scholars" are reminded of their intellectual heritage, they are usually offended! For Macaulay, it was not only a question of which language was superior, but which language was backward. Moreover, he also believed that the masses of Indian population need to be redeemed and English was to be its noble means, as he sincerely believed, "The languages of western Europe civilised Russia. I cannot doubt that they will do for the Hindoo what they have done for the Tartar"(4). Hence, English was supposed to modernize India and civilize the barbaric people that we were or still

are, because we still continue to believe that English is the language of scholarship and redemption, and Sanskrit is a sign of intellectual backwardness. We denounced Sanskrit as it was politicized but we did not denounce English—a language that has been the heart of all educational, cultural and intellectual politics.

In Macaulay’s Minute are seeds of what our young minds would, generation after generation, grow up believing as sacred. The mindset that upholds the superiority of everything that was English and backwardness of whatever was Sanskrit/Indian has its origin in Macaulay-like thinking that proclaimed, “It will hardly be disputed, I suppose, that the department of literature in which the Eastern writers stand highest is poetry. And I certainly never met with any orientalist who ventured to maintain that the Arabic and Sanscrit poetry could be compared to that of the great European nations”(3).

Our young minds pursuing literary studies tend to develop this sort of mindset from day one of their college education because they are fed disproportionate eulogies of Shakespeare before they can evolve enough to form their individual judgment, and are not even introduced to the Indian literary and philosophical texts and so the mindset takes deep roots. It is these young minds, when they pursue literary studies well, graduate to become teachers at university departments and colleges. Once they become teachers of English without a sense of history with respect to their cultural and intellectual heritage, they know only one literature, one language and propagate one viewpoint that is of the superiority of English. After acquiring a job, it is research that is the next challenge and the next casualty. It is a challenge because research is all about keeping an open mind and exploring even viewpoints and ideas which may be contrary to one’s hypothesis and one’s sacred most premises. But since English studies provides only one viewpoint, there is hardly any challenge left, except surpassing others in the number of publications. Secondly, it is fashionable to work on certain areas and foolish to explore some others, and academically unrewarding to sweat on some others. It is fashionable to join the latest trend, be it Diaspora, Gender Studies etc, of course without questioning at all, and the rest of the areas can wait till this trend subsides but then a newer trend would emerge and it will engage us even more intensely. As for their PhDs, they would generally opt for what is in vogue, or what the PhD supervisors would seemingly be comfortable in guiding them, or what the Department/School of English/Languages would prefer to uphold as its flagship areas of research. Hence, as street-smart as PhD candidates are, they would opt for Diaspora and Gender Studies over the rest of the universe of ideas available for research, thinking that it is easier to research on these areas and that their research proposal would be easily considered and accepted if they work on areas in vogue. It is a matter of pride among the young research scholars to say that s/he is working on Diaspora or Feminism.

With this sort of a mindset, we have most of our PhD candidates pursuing research in similar areas and similar topics. In case, universities decide to publish the last five years of PhD dissertations, the book stores would be flooded with books on Diaspora and Gender Studies! If that happens, we would be able to see as a rare occurrence - book stores with books only on two or three topics! This is compounded by the fact that most of the researchers extend their research in these areas well after their PhD and continue to remain confined in a single area. In earlier generations, scholars would select their areas of research on their own, irrespective of the rest of the world considers intellectually fashionable, and pursue it for years together and then it would result into defining publications. They did not feel compelled to write and research on the latest research trend and present a paper at every tempting occasion (read ‘seminar’). Their scholarship was independent of the latest trends and themes of seminars and conferences. Their scholarship

was focused on timeless concerns of the domain and hence, their scholarly work would stand the test of time and their writings would be of enduring significance as against the publications of fleeting nature of the contemporary era. What could possibly be the shelf life of a paper/book, merely following a fashionable trend in the domain? Barely till the next issue of the journal or the publication of the next book on the topic.

Hence, the culture of research that earlier generation of old-fashioned but committed scholars established and upheld was founded on convictions derived out of years of work in that particular area. Unlike today, when the researchers take a week to write a paper on Bakhtin and Indian intellectual tradition- either of which they had not known till the conference was announced. Basically, the issue is that researchers are getting carried away by what is more fascinating rather than pursuing what is of perennial value. At seminars and conferences, and in papers published, they celebrate a Western author, a text or a concept without much rigorous cross-examination and get away with it, and hence the wasteland of lasting research that we see around us. Academic scholarship in India needs to revisit the basics of true scholarship which ought to uphold the idea of questioning with respect to what comes their way and reserve the judgment on weighty issues of tradition and heritage till the firsthand knowledge is acquired and is subjected to rigorous cross examination with an open mind. In other words, we have a scenario in which we know more about Bakhtin and little about Bhartrhari and the tradition we seek to study through Bakhtin. We have given rise to an entire generation of teachers and researchers who are comfortable writing papers on Bakhtin and a host of other Western scholars but know little about the rich diversity of scholars in the Indian tradition but that does not deter them from writing papers on how to interpret the Indian tradition through the Bakhtinian ideas. In fact, it does not even cause the slightest bit of hesitation to them to superimpose Bakhtin on the Indian tradition. In the absence of a sense of history and firsthand acquaintance with the profound ideas that formed the cultural and intellectual tradition, it is of little value to discuss either Bakhtin or the tradition and it is of little value to revisit either Western scholars or the Indian scholars.

Academia in India must realize that there is a certain intellectual heritage that we cannot simply and completely disregard, write off and reject, and certainly not prior to engaging with it. Secondly, such irresponsible scholarship is likely to influence the next generation the wrong way and they will also develop this sort of rejectionist mindset for everything Indian. In contemporary era, there are movements across the world to preserve whatever is unique and valuable to a particular society and community whether it is artifacts, languages or monuments. There are campaigns to reassert the identity of a society or community by celebrating their language and culture and strengthen it further. At such a time, it is unfortunate to see that we do not even know what our cultural and intellectual heritage is and what it means in today's world. The masses may be spared of the hard work to read and research on these matters but the academia in this country cannot be forgiven for not reading and exploring the true significance of the cultural and intellectual tradition that India has been endowed with. Not only have we not known it, we have also harmed it by either trivializing it or accusing it of some or the other thing. Some of us, who as Shakespeare said, have greatness thrust upon them, have rejected the tradition without reading its core texts and writings of its greatest scholars in diverse knowledge domains. Some others have also accused a lot of what constitutes the tradition of being 'dated'. One would tend to agree but the question to be asked is, what about the rest of the tradition that is not 'dated', by your admission? Simply because a part of a tradition is dated, is it a fair ground to reject the whole of it? To take the counter-offensive further, these scholars may also introspect a little and they will find that a lot of what they have written is now 'dated', should we reject

them in totality? No, we would not and should not reject anything or anyone in totality. The relevance of a repertoire of ideas such as Indian intellectual tradition is as much as we can see. The limits of this tradition are actually limits of our vision. It is needless to say that such myopic intelligentsia is not good for any society that once upheld, ‘let noble ideas come from all directions’ and now prevents noble ideas of one’s own tradition from being discussed and discoursed over. Hence, it would be fruitful for academic fraternity to be sufficiently self-critical about its adequacy and efficacy with respect to Indian intellectual tradition before rejecting or making sweeping statements that reflect, at the most, the lack of authentic knowledge in this regard. In fact, we can all learn from Macaulay’s Minute as he extensively debates the merits and demerits of the languages as he put it, “What then shall that language be? One-half of the committee maintained that it should be the English. The other half strongly recommended the Arabic and Sanscrit. The whole question seems to me to be—which language is the best worth knowing?” We can learn even from Macaulay that even in his most biased Minute, he had kept this debate alive to an extent as to which is a language worth knowing and why. Unfortunately, we are worse than Macaulay because we have put an end to that debate in favour of English and banished Indian intellectual tradition from curricula, research and seminars. At the most, once in a long while, it unexpectedly gets a backdoor entry through Bakhtin, and unfortunately Bakhtin hogs all the limelight, as expected!

Integrating the Insights of the Tradition into Education

The fact that there has not been any discussion and subsequent recognition about the disregard for the Indian intellectual tradition, and that it holds some value for our intellectual pursuits till today, tells a sorry state of affairs in intellectual discourse in this country in general and education in particular. As it has not been discussed much apart from efforts of a few scholars whom we read less and understand lesser, it would be ideal to debate it afresh and see for ourselves the true value of the tradition and what it has to offer to the 21st century India.

But while it will take its own time, it would be good to see how we can devise ways of bringing the Indian intellectual tradition into mainstream discourse. To start with, it is necessary to educate young minds of the country about the intellectual tradition that we have inherited. It is pertinent to note that it is an idea that has already found its way in mainstream education system with CBSE implementing a course on ‘Knowledge Traditions and Practices’ in Higher Secondary, conceptualized by country’s some of the finest scholars. Actually, this initiative puts to rest many questions and concerns of those who disapprove of the tradition and its integration into the mainstream education system. Apart from this course, the aspects of the tradition may also be integrated in the language and literary studies at the undergraduate and post graduate levels to introduce the young students and research scholars to the wealth of foundational ideas that evolved in the tradition over a period of time and they can learn to co-relate the Indian and Western ways of thinking and conceptualizing and imbibe the best things from both.

As mere theorizing is hardly convincing enough for those who wish to learn by examples alone and who wish to see if others have done it and done so effectively. The case study chosen here also puts to rest the argument that it cannot be integrated into the curriculum and rendered a part of education. To illustrate it further, it would be pertinent to draw our lessons from the fact that Saurashtra University, Rajkot, Gujarat, has introduced Indian Poetics at the undergraduate and post graduate levels as a remarkable example of how this integration of Indian intellectual tradition into mainstream education is possible. At undergraduate level, students are familiarized with foundational concepts of Indian poetics. At post graduate level, the Department of English

and Comparative Literary Studies at Saurashtra University has introduced a full-fledged course titled 'Indian Poetics' so that the post graduate students get acquainted with literary theories and concepts expounded by critics in the Indian tradition. The Course deals with how major theories of Indian poetics evolved, and the core concepts like *Rasa*, *Dhwani*, *Vakrokti* etc. form the units of the Course. The Course in MPhil Curriculum is an even more exemplary in terms of what it encompasses. It is titled *Analyzing Texts: Indian and Western Approaches*. It incorporates application of Indian theories such as *Rasa*, *Alamkāra*, *Dhwani*, *Vakrokti* to a set of texts. The other half of the Course includes application of Western theories to another set of texts. What this remarkable course accomplishes is that the research scholar will be equipped with two diverse ways of reading a text, and hence if dialogue is what we are after and plurality is what we hold sacred, this is the way forward. If this is not implemented, young minds would continue to learn through one way of reading and constructing meaning which is dangerous, to put it mildly. They need to be trained into celebrating diversity and plurality for which we have left no room in the present architecture or philosophy of education. Hence, unless we integrate the Indian intellectual tradition into mainstream programs of higher studies with respect to Humanities, we shall not be able to do justice either to the task of training the young minds for pluralistic thinking, or to what we would expect them to learn from the ideas of scholars like Bharṭṛhari or Bakhtin. They would keep up the mono-dimensional method of studying even after their postgraduation and undertake PhD in line with this closed, myopic mindset. When the time comes to write a paper on Bakhtin in India, their inadequacies will be exposed and their limited understanding of Indian intellectual tradition will serve to further reinforce the fact that we have not trained them well either in education or research.

The world of research and publication needs a fair share of writing on the scholars and texts of the Indian tradition as well. While we do have huge volumes of writings on the Indian intellectual tradition like Dasgupta's voluminous *A History of Indian Philosophy* for in-depth study, high end research and reference, we do not have short, teacher editions and student editions on the issues pertaining to the tradition, penned in a language and manner easy to follow for the beginners. OUP's famous series *Very Short Introductions* is a very good model to follow and they have left out the Indian scholars and concepts, so we can undertake the task of filling the vacuum. If Routledge can bring out *Critical Thinker Series*, we can certainly do so for the Indian critical thinkers like Bharata, Bhamah, Rājśekhara etc. and introduce young teachers and students to the work on literary theory that exists in the tradition. While we do have a few scholarly Companions and Encyclopedias for Indian philosophy and literature, we do not have dictionaries of language, literature and theory that young research scholars and teachers can use while teaching and researching on the topics related to the Indian intellectual tradition. Along the lines of M H Abrams' *A Glossary of Literary Terms* and J A Cuddon's *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, similar glossaries for the Indian poetics and Indian literature require to be prepared because only then the young teachers and students will have access to the knowledge embedded in the tradition, and only then proper study and research of/on the same will be possible. There are numerous ways in which now technology can also be harnessed to create access, and dissemination of the knowledge of the tradition can be effectively realized with a few specific web portals dedicated to the salient aspects of the tradition.

Simply put, it amounts to this straightforward deduction that if one is convinced that the Indian intellectual tradition is of value to the students and teachers, one can always find ways to integrate it into the education and training of the same. This is the true litmus test of Indian academia whether we can wake up to this and effect the change or we continue to remain

subservient to other traditions of the world and disregard our own. But let it be said that it will be at too high a cost and future generations are likely to ask some disconcerting questions about what we did and what we accomplished while we were at the helm of affairs and organized conferences like ‘Bakhtin in India’.

Lead Out:

A society is measured by how conscious it is of its heritage and its significance in the contemporary times, and how aware it is of new insights emerging from alternative traditions. Across the world, people have grown increasingly conscious of their language, literature, writers, thinkers, customs and traditions as all of these have come under threat due to a variety of factors. Moreover, people today celebrate their culture and wear their identity on their sleeve and compared to it, we do not only evince apathy to our culture and tradition, we are, in fact, critical and cynical about it to the point of rejecting it outright without appropriate and sufficient (re)examination. At such a juncture, it is required to be stressed that tradition does not need us; it is we who need the tradition to come to grips with who we are and where we are headed. Secondly, traditions do not die and become ‘dated’, we die to the tradition and we become arrogant enough not to learn anything from the native tradition, and to make matters worse, we pronounce value judgments on the same tradition without firsthand/secondhand knowledge of the same.

It is a scenario that needs to be examined in all its complexities. Its implications are on not our seminars and conferences alone but also on our worldview and what we impart to the next generation. Do we wish to leave behind rejectionism as the lasting legacy, and if we do so, can we then expect our young minds to understand the tradition through Bakhtin or anybody else? Some might say that Bakhtin is an opportunity to revisit the tradition, the question to be asked is, have we even visited the tradition yet? Revisiting can take place only after we have visited it and explored it on our own with an open mind. Even in case, if we have to study the tradition through Bakhtin, are we equipped to do so, in view of inglorious ignorance of and pronounced biases against the tradition? If at all, ‘Bakhtin in India’ is an opportunity to expose ourselves to the truth that we may not like but the truth that we have to confront in order to understand the tradition, and subsequently and eventually understand Bakhtin as well. The heart of the matter is that we have evaded the responsibility of passing on the knowledge of the tradition to the young minds- students and teachers and aggressively propagated Western models and theories. It is something that has intellectually debilitated us to engage either with the native tradition or the Western tradition. ‘Bakhtin in India’ is hardly the remedy; it can only serve to provide us the unpleasant diagnosis that the tradition in us is near dead, and a jab of Bakhtin cannot revive it. At the moment, ‘Bakhtin in India’ is not the apt theme; actually the apt theme would be ‘Bakhtin without India’.

However, the discourse has its own significance and for the discourse that Bakhtin has initiated, one cannot be ungrateful to those who envisioned ushering in Bakhtin for the re-examination of the tradition and lead the discourse back to where it belongs-the tradition and our true nature, foundational values and identity with respect to the same. We have masqueraded as some other people for far too long, probably as ‘English scholars’ as Macaulay put it, it is high time we took a look at our roots and decide for ourselves what kind of society we should seek to become in the light of the knowledge enshrined in the tradition. If at all, Bakhtin is required as our true test to see how we handle his ideas without getting too carried away, and it will serve to tell us a bit more about ourselves as the academia of a progressive society that is ready to engage

and discourse. It is the quality and depth of our discourse over Bakhtin in India that will reflect the values we hold sacred when it comes to discourse, be it Bakhtin or the Indian tradition. 'Bakhtin in India' is an occasion to celebrate the spirit of dialogue and discourse, in spite of our inadequacies because it is the discourse and dialogic or polylogic disputation that defined the tradition that we seek to understand through Bakhtin.

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