

By LOUIS RENOU

A History of Indian Philosophy. Vol IV., Indian Pluralism.

BY SURENDRANATH DASGUPTA.

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This great history of Indian philosophy, begun in 1922, is drawing towards its completion with the present volume.

The first volume dealt with what could be called Indian 'classical' thought, almost the only subject-matter of earlier text-books. After the inevitable introduction on Vedism and the Upanishads, we are presented with the smooth development of Brahminical speculation in the six '*darśanas*' or 'ways of looking at things, points of view'. Among these, the *Vedānta*, the only one, indeed, which may properly be called philosophical, was represented by the earliest and most important school, that of Śāṅkara. The same volume included also the 'heretical' traditions, those of the Jains and Buddhists.

Thus the work could easily have been completed in two volumes like Radhakrishnan's Manual; but like all lengthy writings which have not been planned beforehand, it took on a new lease of life after the second volume.

Volume II appeared as a kind of inner development of the preceding one; it carried on the study of the *Advaita* (the strict nondualism originated by Śāṅkara) with an account of the post-Śāṅkarite teachers; some chapters on the *Yoga-vasiṣṭha* and the *Bhagavad-gītā* were easy enough to add to the account of a doctrine of which these texts might be called doubtful extensions.

Volume III went up to the study of the non-Śāṅkarite *Vedānta*, which is

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first thought of in connection with the names of Rāmānuja and Nimbārka, and ended with a description of several speculative theories of a 'sectarian' kind, whose disorderly arrangement is adequately excused by the lack of Indian chronological data.

The present volume completes the study of the *Vedānta*, which will, then, have taken up three quarters of the work so far published. It is concerned principally with Hadhva and Vallabha, two founders of a school who come later than Rāmānuja and Nimbārka; but, like the earlier volumes, it includes sections of literature which are only loosely connected with the *Vedānta* and moreover of very varying dates, on the one hand the *Bhāgavata* and on the other Caitanyism.

There would remain for consideration the so-called philosophy of Kashmir, an offshoot of the *Vedānta*, which should doubtless be studied in connexion with the other Śivaistic speculations, particularly with the *Śaivasiddhānta* of the Tamil country, the only important movement which is not expressed in Sanskrit. This could provide the subject-matter of an entire volume. And there would still be the 'philosophy of grammar' of which the manuscript is, I believe, already prepared; and the Tantric doctrines of the *Śaktas*, to say nothing of contemporary movements which most authors, fascinated by the spell of antiquity, simply pass over in silence.

The strongest feeling provoked by this work is respect for the effort invested in it, an effort which up till now has not been equalled either for extent or penetration. A number of

Sanskrit works—some of them accessible only in manuscript—have been analysed for the first time, and specialists appreciate the difficulty of mastering this literature in the original and the further considerable difficulty of making sure that a summary in a Western tongue is readable. Anyone who has had dealings with the master in Calcutta will be able to testify to his prodigious memory and the astonishing facility with which he moves among texts and arguments, where a novice would immediately lose heart.

Several individual 'philosophers' emerge thus from the shadows. The Indian Middle Ages, which have long remained relatively unexplored to the benefit of the earliest beginnings (India is the chosen land of Origins) now permit us to catch a glimpse of the wealth of speculative thought which flourished at that time. From the tenth to the eighteenth century (for these are more or less the limits of the Indian medieval period, at least on the intellectual level) commentaries, controversies, and sectarian insurrections continually succeeded each other, the later ones rising on the ruins of the earlier. The description 'philosophical' covers speculations from every source. No doubt, our Western philosophical treatises include the work of moralists, sociologists, and a few other 'non-technical' philosophers. But in India things go much further. Every normative study, from medicine to poetics and from grammar to religion, has its metaphysics and ontology: above all, religion, which, after a certain period, may be seen to reconstitute at the mystical level most of the earlier

systems. Each important sect has its share of works of which the inspiration can plainly be traced to early sources, but whose form is adapted to the practical needs of the community.

None of this material can be presented chronologically. It would be devoid of meaning. In India there is no thirteenth-century thought, no doctrines or literature of the sixteenth century. There are only autonomous movements, developing parallel with one another from an often extremely remote antiquity, and indefatigably resurrected and re-examined throughout the ages. What, indeed, is sadly lacking for the clarification of these movements of thought is a description of the sects themselves and of the organisation of the religious groups. But up till now, India, the most religious country in the world, has not produced the detailed history of Hinduism which we still await from her large body of scholars.

Madhva, who is the central subject of the present volume, is one of these sectarian philosophers. He has both their character and limitations. It is he who, of all the Vedāntists, deviates furthest from the original postulates: from a system very clearly orientated from the beginning towards monism (if not towards the absolute form given to it by Śaṅkara) he develops a form of dualism, or rather an essential pluralism, as the subtitle of the present work suggests (a subtitle which applies much less well to Vallabha, who held a reconstituted form of 'nondualism'). Madhva regarded on the one hand the Absolute and, on the other, the world and the eternal souls

as equivalent entities. This is the way that fidelity to an original text, spiritual adherence to a doctrine, is conceived in India.

Even more than Madhva, entirely immersed in elementary theological speculation based on devout love or *bhakti*, it is his successors in the school, Jaya-tīrtha and Vyāsa-tīrtha, whose work has been clearly brought to light for the first time. Professor Dasgupta speaks of these authors, particularly of the second, as the greatest theorists that India has produced. We can imagine how far we still have to travel when we consider that no other textbook had even mentioned their names, neither M. Masson-Oursel's nor the excellent account given by Professor von Glasenapp, which has just been translated into French.

We are able to follow in Professor Dasgupta's work the discussion between these teachers and the followers of Śaṅkara (particularly Madhusūdana) on the fundamental ideas of the classical *Vedānta*, cosmic and psychological illusionism, in which the point of view of the new masters is opposed to that of the Śaṅkarites, perhaps with greater obstinacy than in any other non-Vedāntic school: the greatest divergencies in India are to be found within the same movement.

I can hardly imagine what impression the uninitiated reader will receive from this difficult work, if he be patient enough to finish it. We do not find here that organic, almost necessary, evolution which bespeaks a great deepening of human values between the pre-Socratics and Plotinus. We are faced here with a scholastic system;

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and yet it lacks the landmarks, the human vitality, and the intellectual confrontations which enrich other scholastic eras. Professor Dasgupta is acquainted with western philosophy. He has written some articles on it, in which the eastern tradition is tastily blended with the inquisitiveness, which it seeks to bridle, of a scholar streaked with humanism. Here, however, he shows a consistent affectation for excluding everything which could pro-

voke comparison with non-Indian subject-matter. We are on an Indian substratum, tacitly asked to make a clean sweep of the values by which we live.

However that may be, we must fervently hope that this very considerable work will be finally completed. Without doubt, it is the last occasion (and at the same time the first) that the entire field will have been mastered to such an extent by one man.