

**INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE ARTS
EASTERN REGIONAL CENTRE,
VARANASI.**

Celebration of 22nd Foundation Day of Kalakośa Division

Twenty-second Foundation Day of Kalakośa Division, IGNCA, was celebrated by the IGNCA, ERC, Varanasi on 23rd July, 2010 in 'Parispanda'. This year 'Guru Pūrṇimā' (the actual Foundation Day) being a Sunday, the function was arranged two days before. On this occasion, a special lecture was delivered by Prof. Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, Ex-Head, Dept. of Philosophy, B.H.U. on "Buddhist Theory of Meaning". The lecture was presided over by Prof. P.K. Mukhopadhyay, retired Professor, Dept. of Philosophy, Jadavpur University, Kolkata. The other members present in the audience were:

1. Prof. Jayshankar Lal Tripathi
2. Prof. Sudarshan Lal Jain
3. Prof. S.P. Pandey
4. Prof. Reva Prasad Dwivedi
5. Prof. Bishwanath Bhattacharya
6. Prof. D.A. Gangadhar
7. Prof. Krishnakant Sharma
8. Prof. R.K. Shukla
9. Prof. Amalhari Singh
10. Prof. Kamalesh Dutt Tripathi
11. Smt. Bimla Poddar
12. Dr. Krishna Goswami
13. Dr. Lalita Goswami
14. Prof. Bratati Chakrabarty
15. Dr. Bipin Kr. Pandey

16. Dr. Sacchidananda Mishra
17. Dr. Urmila Sharma
18. Dr. Abhiram Das
19. Dr. Anupam Kr. Tiwari
20. Dr. N.D. Tiwari
21. Dr. Pavati Banerjee
22. Dr. Rama Dubey
23. Dr. Rajni Kant Tripathi
24. Dr. Trilochan Pradhan
25. Dr. Sharada Singh
26. Sri Jayant Upadhyay
27. Sri Chaturbhuj Das
28. Sri Gautam Kr. Chatterjee
29. Sri Sanjai Singh
30. Sri P.K. Chatterjee
31. Sri B.D. Ram
32. Sri R.K. Rawat
33. Sri Vinod Kumar and
34. Dr. P. Ghosal

The programme opened with *maṅgalācaraṇa* rendered by Dr. Urmila Sharma. After the formal rituals of Foundation day were over, Prof. K.D. Tripathi delivered welcome address to the assembled guest-scholars, and introduced the topic of lecture and the speaker of the day as well.

Prof. A.K. Chatterjee delivered a lecture on “**Buddhist Theory of Meaning**”. His speech had mainly two divisions: in the first part he explained Buddhist theory of Meaning i.e. *Apoḥavāda* and in the latter portion he focussed its aesthetic implication. In the beginning he summarized the structure of Buddhist thought which began with the

doctrine of *avyākṛta*, through the doctrine of *śūnyatā* and culminated in the theory of language of Dinnāga School. According to Buddhist thoughts reality is stratified into two levels *svalakṣaṇa* what is objectively given and *sāmānyalakṣaṇa* what is constructed on it by creative imagination. *Svalakṣaṇa* is the thing in itself, unrelated to anything else. Relatedness is created by certain forces which are either mental (*citta-samprayukta saṃskāra-s*) as in Theravāda or are latent in the ultimate elements themselves (*citta-viprayukta saṃskāra-s*). In this context he also focussed on the causal effectiveness (*arthakriyākārika*), as the nature of reality. Prof. Chatterjee continued that Buddhist theory of meaning technically known as *apohavāda* has attracted much flak from various quarter but one has to appreciate the logical compulsion because of which he is compelled to adopt this *bizarre* theory. Once the universals are denied their reality, this could mean that they can be referred to only negatively since any affirmative reference would entail their reality. So the word "A" could only mean 'not - not A' (*tad-bhinna-bhinnatvaṃ*). The word cannot directly refer to A, since A is nothing real at all.

A is not only different from B but also from C, D, E, etc. i.e. everything other than A, and this would claim a sort of omniscience in fixing the meaning of any word. To know A we have to know everything which is distinguished from A.

For the realist, when I know a tree, I perceive not merely that particular tree but also the tree as a member of a class. This class-notion of the universal is presented at the same time. So in knowing a tree, I come to know all trees through a peculiar way of knowing i.e. *sāmānya-lakṣaṇā-pratyasatti*. This too is to claim another sort of omniscience.

In course of his lecture Prof. Chatterjee concentrated on Buddhist negativism which had a profound and lasting effect on all its opponents. Without giving up their own positions, the latter had to take into account

the Buddhist onslaught and to tighten up their own formulation. Though the controversy had died down, the negative method was adopted by all the subsequent thinkers, e.g. *vyāpti* (concommittance) had a straight forward definition as *sāhacarya niyama*. Later on all definitions of *vyāpti* had to be couched in negative terms; and this is true of all later definitions. The problem of language and the meaning of words is really an impracticable one. A word has to refer to a particular and this is possible only through its universality.

In the second part of his lecture, Prof. Chatterjee concentrated, where the theory of *apoha* lends itself to the implications applicable to the aesthetics.

The most relevant feature of *apoha* is its purely negative approach to any problem. *Apoha* is to depict a thing in an eliminating process i.e. what it is not (*a - tad - vyāvṛtta*). This extreme negativism has been reflected in the depiction of Tāntric gods. In Vajrayāna, an entire pantheon of gods and goddesses are described as satelites to the Supreme Reality. Kālacakrayāna in particular offers an "*embarrass de riches*", containing innumerable deities which are in flagrant contradiction to the aesthetic origin of early Buddhism.

A startling feature of these deities is their hideous appearance. Referring to Wadell's *L'lamaism'*, Prof. Chatterjee remarked, "these deities appear more demonic than divinities." It is extreme negativism to picture gods as ugly with frightful looks going against the *kalyāṇa-sundara* or *maṅgalamaya-rūpa*. In Prof. Chatterjee's language "the ghost of *apoha* is haunting us here."

Now the question arises, whether ugly can enter our aesthetic experience at all or whether ugliness could be considered as a suitable aesthetic object. Indian tradition is totally against this attitude. But according to some Western scholars like C.J. Ducasse, ugliness too could be

an aesthetic category. Ducasse opined that many works of art are ugly, because the artist aims not at beauty but at objective self-expression. The artist feels an impulse, and describes accurately his then psychological state. His endeavour was not to create beauty.

Prof. Chatterjee raised here a question: "why did the Tāntric artist start with ugliness of gods, rather than the other way round? Text books keep silence on this point. But Prof. Chatterjee in his lecture tried to solve this problem in his own way. One reason may be to differentiate gods from human category. In his opinion beauty is only a human category, so to think of gods as beautiful is to think of them in anthropomorphic terms. Gods are not human beings and in order to characterize them as non-empirical or transcendent the artists take recourse to this peculiar device.

Another reason may be, were the gods to be depicted as beautiful we shall be attracted to them not letting them to go. But in the final stages of spiritual ecstasy, even the gods disappear. What remains is pure absolute bliss (*mahāsukha*), all the notions of good and bad, ugly and beautiful, plurality and variety everything merges in the Supreme Reality variously named as *prajñā-pāramitā* / *vajrasattva* / *thatatā*.

Prof. P.K. Mukhopadhyay in his presidential address remarked that theory of *apoha* is not only nihilism on extreme but it has a positive side also. That is why in both the Buddhist and Hindu pantheon, on the one hand, the deities like Kālī have been described as dreadful '*karālavadanām ghorām*', at the same time depicted as *suprasannām, smerānana sarorūhām* (i.e. benevolent, and auspicious) also.

The programme ended with vote of thanks rendered by Prof. K. D. Tripathi.

- Pranati Ghosal