

**INDIAN COUNCIL OF PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH
NEW DELHI**

**NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON
THE STATE OF TEACHING, STUDY AND RESEARCH IN PHILOSOPHY IN
INDIA**

One thing that appears not to have been done in the country in recent times is to take a serious look at where the teaching, study and research in philosophy are actually heading. Such stock-taking is absolutely vital because philosophy itself has always been a very core area in the history and culture of our country. But, for all practical purposes, philosophy appears to have become just like any other routine academic discipline in the country since its teachers appear to have lost the vision of its special place and role in the general scheme of things. This is an extremely unfortunate development. It is sad that philosophy needs to be rescued from some of those very persons whose duty it happens to be to nourish and promote it. Philosophy should never become a tool for self-promotion and if it is being so used anywhere, every attempt must be made to stop it. We must also note that if such misuse is taking place at all, it is only because regular stock-taking by the community of philosophers in the country has stopped taking place long ago.

Philosophy teachers in our country seem to be perfectly satisfied in carrying on their teaching just like any other academic—teaching the students if they like such teaching, doing some reading and preparing academic papers and attending academic seminars like all others in other fields. They are not playing any pro-active role. They have not been examining their own actions and roles critically. One of the chief purposes of this National Seminar is to focus on this serious shortcoming which has come to threaten the very survival of philosophy in our country where there was a time when philosophy was at the pinnacle of serious study and research.

While completely granting the academic character of philosophy, we should remind ourselves that in our country philosophy was always used as a tool for self-transformation and for the making of total and complete human beings. Philosophy was almost never pursued just for its own sake. This role of philosophy has become gradually lost on us probably under the inescapable and wide-spread spell of the colonizing West whose philosophy has for a very long time been fiercely autonomous and with no defined human purpose as its chief goal. In fact, the very notions of self-transformation and self-discovery have today come to be regarded as old-fashioned and have been relegated to the blind and ineffective sphere of religion. It is completely forgotten that self-examination necessarily involves self-criticism and self-assessment which are invaluable in themselves irrespective of whether they are rooted in any philosophical need or religious regimen. Having lost the benefit of self-criticism, some of our teachers of philosophy have gradually ceased to uphold any value even in public and private life and have thus ceased to lead a life of value. Such teachers are no more an asset to philosophy because no person not leading a life of value can value philosophy. They can only hypocritically claim to value it and live for it when they are actually living on it.

This sort of development must be arrested and systematically reversed in the interest of protecting and promoting philosophy. When some philosophy teachers themselves do not value philosophy, it is futile to expect the members of the general public to value it. That is how, it seems, philosophy is fast losing public esteem which it had gloriously enjoyed in the classical past. Nobody can dispute the idea of philosophy as a discipline

valuable in itself even if s/he disputes it as a valuable tool for self-realization. Therefore it is high time that all of us in the field of philosophy pay serious attention to its study and teaching, to proper research in it. We are uniquely fortunate in the Government of India itself recognizing the importance of philosophy and we should try to make the best use of the assistance of the Government.

The Indian Council of Philosophical Research has already being doing whatever it can to promote the study of, and research in, philosophy all over India for the past several years. The present National Seminar is to bring together all like-minded individuals in order to take stock of all that has been done well and also of all that has gone wrong in teaching and research in philosophy. The attempt is to arrive at a generally acceptable diagnosis and also a general plan of attacking the maladies. Specific issues concerning the teaching of philosophy in India and also the shortcomings in philosophical research need to be clearly identified and addressed. This document is only tentative and indicative of the enormous task lying ahead and therefore the participants are welcome to add new dimensions and issues relating to the main theme of the National Seminar. The chief aim is to take into confidence one another and proceed as a united group with the generally accepted common goal of improving the quality of teaching and research in philosophy in the interest of philosophy itself and in the interest of all those engaged in the teaching and research in philosophy in India.

It is hoped that this most urgent issue of revitalizing philosophical studies in India is as dear to your heart as it is to ours and that you will therefore join us in seriously trying to do what best we can for the future of philosophy in India since this future seems to be under serious threat from within the community as well as without.