

Report on the thesis titled, "Intercultural Dialogues and the Creativity of Knowledge: A Study on Daya Krishna," submitted by Ms. Elise Coquereau-Saouma to the University of Vienna and the Charles University, for the degree of PhD.

There are two aspects to the scholarship used in the dissertation titled, "Intercultural Dialogues and the Creativity of Knowledge: A Study on Daya Krishna," submitted by Ms. Elise Coquereau-Saouma to the University of Vienna and Charles University for the degree of PhD. The first one is the extent of the scholarship covered in the thesis; and the second, efforts made to build the scholarship and make it ready for use, given the fact that it is not available readymade. Regarding the second aspect, the efforts are made to accomplish the task of building the claim and giving evidence in support of it. This is an onerous task and is well organised. Though most of the writings of Krishna are now available, the way in which the author makes use of them is very impressive on two counts. (1) the use of Krishna's works is not only good but these works are placed in a larger context where they are available for other researchers. This is a good achievement and goes a long way in building a new system to the otherwise scattered philosophical works of Krishna. (2) the quality of the presentation in organisation of these works is good. The methodology adopted can set a new path for further research on other modern Indian philosophers and writers. Now regarding the first aspect, the extent of scholarship that is covered is not only extensive but impressive.

My second observation about the thesis is with regard to the nature of strategy adopted in building the systems for Krishna to account for not only his own admission that his intercultural project of dialogue, namely, *Samvad*, has not succeeded but also his critics who criticised him by highlighting, rather over highlighting, his confession about this failure. The author adopts the strategy of discussing in Chapter 1 all those luminaries from Western philosophy who expressed their scepticism about the viability and possibility of a dialogue. This consists of dialogues in Franco-German thought.

When most of the mainstream philosophy is busy in highlighting the similarities, differences and adding new insights and understandings to the existing philosophical scholarship, Chapter 1 makes a concerted effort to bring together those who expressed doubts about the possibility of dialogue. This includes B. Waldenfels, Danial Hornuff on class room, conferences; Michel Serres initial resistance towards all forms of academic debates and discussions in his interview to Bruno Latour; the Paris encounter between Hans-George Gadamer with Jacques Derrida where both declared that nothing happened in this debate. The chapter also discussed a similar fate in the case of discourse and debates with reference to Habermas and Foucault. Having thus reduced the status of all these forms of inter-personal communication, the chapter then goes on to establish a common ground by stating some preliminary and general grounds from French, German and English speaking academic regarding dialogues. This then makes a move to entice the intercultural dialogues initiated by Krishna.

Having created this strategic scaffold to entice Krishna with others in the activity of dialogues in this chapter the next chapter goes on to reconstruct the context of *Samvad* initiated by Krishna and explain what is the meaning of, and beginning of

the project of *Samvad*. The interesting strategy of this chapter is that, in responding to the critics of Krishna who relied mostly on his own confession regarding the failure of *Samvad*, undertakes the task of enlarging the domain of this form of dialogue to include not only what is there in the book titled, *Samvad* but brings into the discussion others forms of dialogues that are initiated by Krishna. This according to the author, should include his blog like writings as an editor of *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research* and other similar activities. This, thus enlarges the domain of *Samvad* and rightly answers his critics who relied on one particular text with the title *Samvad*. This is a brilliant move both as a scholarly strategy and a display of scholarship on Krishna. The other aspects of *Samvad* that are discussed are not only rich that thickens the plot of *Samvad* but these are systematically organised in this chapter.

Following the same strategy and in a way extending the same methodology, Chapter 3 brings into discussion different experiments, forms of dialogue and methodology of *Samvad*. This largely culminates in both extending the domain of *Samvad* and also reconstructing it. This includes: The Jaipur experiment; editing *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, *Samvad* experiments; the Pune experiment; the Bhakti experiment (this particularly is very complex as it involves engaging the believers in Bhakti by those who are from academics and not similarly disposed towards devotion); and those experiments of *Samvad* that remained unpublished. This chapter, thus, developed the broad domain of *Samvad*. This extended domain reduced the purview of both the confessions by Krishna regarding the failure of his intercultural dialogue and the critics to a part of the larger and extended domain of this dialogue.

In almost quarantining this part, Elise goes on to pool together different but scattered activities of *Samvad* and organised them within a constructed larger domain of *Samvad*. She then makes her next important and wonderfully choreographed move by discussing T. N. Madan's take on Krishna. Madan while comparing Krishna with Louis Dumont, claimed that Krishna's theoretical approach remains unachieved. According to him, Krishna is both located and is trained within Western philosophy. Remaining within Western philosophy and driven by the feeling of its monopoly and discrimination of Indian philosophy he sought to include the latter into the mainstream philosophical dialogue. However, Krishna could not achieve this goal as he lacked theoretical work, claims Madan. Dumont, says Madan, was successful as he had a strong theoretical framework. Elise makes a brilliant move here. She agrees with Madan's claim that Krishna did not have a theoretical framework. She then goes on to make a wonderful use of the alleged disadvantage attributed to Krishna by justifying her own work as providing a theoretical outline of the dialogue in Krishna. Seizing this available opportunity, she makes a further use by organising in a systematic manner descriptions of the experiments discussed in chapters 2 and 3. In this context, she attempts to reconstruct the relation between dialogue in praxis and the dialogical in theory. This second task is executed in the chapters in Part II. Strategically this is a good and productive move. This move reveals not only familiarity, competence of the researcher but also presence of mind in seizing opportunities amidst adverse conditions.

The chapter 4 makes an elaborate survey that is presented in a systematic manner, the *Samvad* in theory. This discusses themes including *Sastra*, *Silpa* and *Purusarthas*. The next chapter seeks to unveil various aspects of these themes discussed in providing theory of dialogue, especially, unquestioned in one's own belief, that can be used to make Krishna's idea of *Samvad* strong. Chapter 6 deliberates on dissatisfactions and creative deception of reality vis-à-vis ideality. Interestingly at the end of this chapter Elise makes an attempt to bounce back by highlighting the success aspect of *Samvad* by quoting from Krishna. She makes a further adventurous and in a way risky move, where she jumps from these sporadic and particular instances of success to claim the success of the *Samvad* project initiated by Krishna. While one may have problems in accepting this move, what needs to be admitted is the boldness behind this move.

The last chapter before conclusion presents an interesting idea regarding the move from presuppositions and dissatisfactions to the illusions of their distinction. This chapter like the earlier one makes some bold claims that include *Samvad* is a critical and creative dialogue in which the future of dialogue in which as many and as diverse participants can 'possibly reach.' This is a bold claim and needs to be critically scrutinised as it has implications not only to the predicament of Krishna's philosophical *Samvad* but also has implications to dialogues in philosophy. Another feature of this attempt is to highlight the continuity between his early and later works regarding the dialogical experiments. Yet, another interesting aspect of these chapters from 4 to 7 is that they are rich in theoretical insights, they not only cover the available scholarship but also add new dimension, bring new light and make some unusual connections.

Thus we have in part one an attempt to build a larger canvas that is appropriate to elevate a failed project of *Samvad*; goes on to extend the purview of *Samvad* to overcome both its critics and the confession about the failure by Krishna himself. Having accomplished this task successfully by including and organising different forms and activities of *Samvad*, particularly those that fall outside the book with the title, it makes a room for providing the theoretical framework to Krishna's intercultural dialogue thereby further strengthening the discourse of *Samvad*. The way in which the asymmetry between Indian and European scholarship is sought to be overcome is very impressive. The works discussed and many works that remain at the background are extensive and also useful to other scholars working in this area. Another important feature of this attempt is the path of building a theoretical system for a project that was allegedly unsuccessful. A work like this on a modern Indian philosophy is rare. It is evident from the above that this is an excellent research work. **The thesis in my assessment deserves Grade 1 (excellent) and I therefore recommend the award of Doctor of Philosophy (Doctoral Degree) to Ms. Elise Coquereau-Saouma.**

While acknowledging the ingenuity and use of those who expressed doubts about the success of dialogues to make a case for *Samvad* is she not restricting or contrasting the domain of dialogues to these limited instances and failed to take into consideration those instances where dialogues succeeded. Alternatively, is she not contrasting the extent of dialogue and extending the domain of *Samvad* to overcome asymmetry. Further, how will she account for those instances of positive aspects of

dialogue by Krishna that she highlights. Alternatively, what is the status of these positive aspects of dialogue by Krishna. This is only by way of placing possibility in front of her to think in future. **I once again recommend the award of Doctor of Philosophy (Doctoral Degree) to Ms. Elise Coquereau-Saouma with Grade 1 (excellent).**

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