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# Indian Philosophy and Ethics: Dialogical Method as a Fresh Possibility

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## Abstract

This paper discusses the positions held by two opposing camps—the traditionalists and the positivists (to use Pradeep Gokhale's typology) regarding the presence or absence of ethics in Indian philosophy. It subsequently offers a way ahead of the impasse where I consider some inputs inherent in the method of dialogue in pre-modern Indian philosophy for imagining an ethics of and ethics for plurality. Such an ethics, I argue, cannot be imagined without involving the category of 'Other,' which has otherwise remained elusive in the Indian philosophical debates. The diverse nature of Indian societies demands Other-centric ethics to assess and evaluate the enduring moral crisis pervading contemporary times.

During the last four decades, several Indian philosophers have claimed that a moral crisis plagues the actually existing Indian societies. In his 1982 essay, Rajendra Prasad laments the fact that Indian societies have made moral principles disposable (Prasad 1982, p. 332). The serious lack of morals in present Indian societies according to him compels thinkers and philosophers to either invoke mythological figures or particular instances from the past to substantiate moral discourses. Falling back to the past, according to Prasad, symbolizes a decadent society where a moral imbalance between India's past and present reflects a moral crisis. Recently, Sundar Sarukkai expanded the domain of thinking regarding the moral crisis in India by bringing the practice of sciences in general and applied sciences in particular under the purview of philosophical interrogation. For him, the practice of science deeply affects the social and moral fabric of a society. He argues that the overall paradigm of sciences has crumbled for want of a 'workable' ethics which in turn has affected the moral structure of Indian

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society. Medical science, he writes, 'gets away with inhuman practices under the guise of this image (of scientific development). What we need is not more science to stop hatred and superstition but workable ethical perspectives—not only for society but also for science as it is practiced today' (Sarukkai 2017). Sarukkai does not offer any alternative for envisaging a workable ethics and leaves the question open.[1] Prasad, however, offers a perspective for 'genuine morality' to transcend the moral crisis inhibiting contemporary India. 'Genuine morality,' he writes,

> consists in a code of conduct applicable within, or valid for, any relevant group of people and the good it aims at is the social good, the good of mankind, which also includes the general good of individuals. (Prasad 1982, p. 336).

Prasad envisages two schemes which can help evolve genuine morality among the Indian masses: one general and the other academic. In the general scheme, 'alert and critical individuals' can debate the normative questions of morality in a serious and persistent manner. Such debates while being general and popular might help bring a Socratic revolution and provoke the Indian mind to remove or lessen its insensitivity towards the distinction between morality and immorality. The academic scheme advocates a need to pursue academic research in the field of morals. Prasad laments the fact that much of the research pursued in moral philosophy and ethics in contemporary India is meta-ethical (1982, p. 347). Only an interdisciplinary research in normative ethics can provide tools for assessing and evaluating the inherent moral crisis. Along the lines of Prasad's academic scheme, this essay interrogates the registers of Indian philosophy and asks whether it can offer a sustainable ethical perspective as a response to our moral crisis. Thus, the first section discusses the debate concerning the presence or absence of ethics in Indian philosophy. The second section explains the basic methodology of Indian philosophy in theory and practice. In the concluding section, I attempt to extract a perspective of ethics from the steps of Indian philosophy's method in practice.

## The Debate

During the twentieth century, a debate regarding the neglect of ethics (hereafter no-ethics) in Indian philosophy took place. The British philosopher John McKenzie, American Indologist E. W. Hopkins, and Indian philosophers such as B. K. Matilal, P. T. Raju, and N. K. Devaraja held the view that Indian philosophy lacks a systematic approach towards ethics and moral thinking. In response to this debate, contemporary

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[1] Apart from philosophers like Prasad and Sarukkai, public intellectuals have also meditated on the moral morass of contemporary Indian society. Sarim Naved considers today's times as 'times of fear and insecurity' and looks forward to a 'politics of morality' based on Gandhian assumptions as an alternative (Naved 2017). Kamal M. Morarka, a former union minister in the Indian government, underscores that the lack of morals in politics is the real crisis that India faces today (Morarka 2012). In a newspaper column earlier this year, I reflected on the challenge of our neglecting moral responsibility as if it was disposable. I argued that Indian philosophers need to take up the 'challenge of moral deliberation on the most pressing issues of our difficult times. We have to revoke the suspension of ethics and morality from our lives by initiating a dialogue on it.' (Ali 2017).

philosophers such as Shyam Ranganathan and Meena Kelkar argue that any claim of no-ethics in Indian philosophy is misplaced. Interrogative of the debate, Pradeep Gokhale considers both claims as extreme and implausible.

McKenzie argues that the 'ethical side of Hindu teaching' (1922, p. 4) needs to be studied as it can be of great significance for the Western ethical thought which at that time was suffering from 'certain insularity' (1922, p. 4). However, he could not offer a real history of Hindu ethics because of its own limitations. It is not an independent subject of inquiry as compared to its Western counterpart and the basic principles which underlie and support Hindu practice 'are expressed in the main incidentally in connection with religious and philosophical discussions' (1922, p. 4). Hindu ethics according to him has a limited possibility as its foundations are illogical and superstitious. Hopkins underscores that McKenzie is more concerned about the anti-social foundation of Hindu ethics.[2] McKenzie does not outrightly reject any altruistic assumptions in Hindu ethics. Rather, he claims that such assumptions are 'of savage origin' and funded on 'selfishness and magical super-stition' (1924, p. x). Logical rigor or reason which (according to the traditional Western Framework) needs to be the foundation of ethics is entirely absent in Hindu ethics. Thus, as per McKenzie, 'Hindu philosophical ideas when logically applied, leave no room for ethics' (1924, p. xi). Hopkins doubts McKenzie's deployment of logic and philosophy as evaluative parameters for understanding Hindu ethics. In contrast to McKenzie, he attributes the flaws in Indian ethics to 'emotionalism.' The idea of devotee emotionalism offers 'mystic rapture' as a replacement to ethics (Hopkins 1924, p. 201). A. D. Widgery argues that Hopkins' focus is to evaluate the intricacies of moral judgments advocated by different religious and philosophical movements in India, although he highlights that Hopkins is mainly correct in his evaluation that 'the ethical is there taken for granted, and there is no systematic study of ethics (…) in the modern Western sense' (Widgery 1925, p. 499).

Matilal argues that discussions of moral thinking in Indian tradition are limited to the epics and *dharmaśāstra*s. Indian philosophers have mainly supplemented discussions on ethics by adhering to these texts. However, morality as such is never discussed in epics or *dharmaśāstra*s. *Mahābhārata*, for example, deals with moral dilemmas which at the end do not offer any 'satisfactory solution.' The main problem of morality remains unresolved, and the situation is overturned with a practical action guide that trashes the basics of the moral issue under question. Matilal cites the example of Draupadi whose question was 'met by silence and side-long glances'. Bhisma's inability to respond rendered Draupadi 'to conform at the end and the situation was saved by a miracle' (Matilal 2002, pp. 20–21). Professional Indian philosophers could have substituted the void left by the miraculous culmination of moral problems in epics and *dharmaśāstra*s. However, the hiatus remained intact and Indian philosophers over the last two thousand years preoccupied themselves with all but moral philosophy.

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[2] Quite contrary to the position advocated by McKenzie, Kedar Nath Tiwari argues that in Indian philosophy, morality has both a personal as well as a social import. The latter has been given more emphasis, as morality has not been recognized as a social enterprise which can guide individuals to organize their conduct in society. The social import of morality has to be and is necessarily dependent on the eternal moral order of *Ṛta* which encompasses the universe. Morality in the social sense does not have its origin from a kind of social contract or from any such contingent agency. (…) It has in a sense a divine origin (Tiwari 2007, pp. 3–4).

But, except some cursory comments and some insightful observations, the professional philosophers of India very seldom discussed what we call moral philosophy today. It is true that the *dharmaśāstra* texts were there to supplement the Hindu discussion of ethics, classification of virtues and vices, and enumeration of duties related to the social status of the individual. *But morality was never discussed as such in these texts*. (Matilal 2002, p. 22—emphasis added).

Purushottama Bilimoria is of the view that Matilal was agonized over the fact that the discussions of ethics had a rational predilection and yet these discussions remained preoccupied with theology and mysticism (Bilimoria 2017, p. 13). N. K. Devaraja argues that Indian philosophy is exceptional in its contributions to the field of philosophy of religion. He cautions that his stress on the philosophy of religion should not be taken as an intended belittlement of Indian aesthetics, logic, or epistemology. While these fields

compare well enough with cognate achievements in the European philosophical tradition, it must be admitted that the contributions of Indian thinkers in the fields of ethics and socio-political philosophy seem to be very poor indeed when viewed against those of European philosophers, e.g., Plato and Aristotle, Kant and Hegel. (Devaraja 1962, pp. v–vi).

Devaraja further claims that the 'traditional indifference' of Indian philosophers or seers towards a secular outlook of history was partly responsible for the scarcity of effective socio-political philosophies, ethics being one of them. Abha Singh invokes G. E. Moore's famous distinction between casuistry and ethics to argue that Indian ethical philosophers such as Manu and Praśastapāda mainly engaged 'in presenting casuistry rather than ethics' (Singh 2002, p. 206). Such flaw according to her becomes the foundation of Devaraja's charge regarding Indian ethics.

P. T. Raju argues that Indian ethics in comparison to its Western counterpart is 'more ethical' as it does not miss its meaning if the framework of society is suspended (as in the case of Robinson Crusoe). Indian ethics grants precedence to the existence and purpose of the solitary individual and attempts to acquire the fulfillment of social ethics through him. Ethics is mainly understood as dealing with the conduct of individual for the sake of realization of 'inner reality' through a 'path of inwardness' (Raju 1947, pp. 149–50; Raju 1952, p. 533). The structurally futile attempt to realize social ethics from an ethics of inwardness restricts the scope of ancient Indian philosophy to the discovery of ultimate truth *and ethics-proper is left out.* It did not 'care to develop an ethical, political, educational or social philosophy as such.' (1949, p. 345). Raju laments the perpetuation of such structural limitations and yearns for a potential 'progress' and 'logical expansion' in Indian philosophy in order to cover the missing fields. Otherwise, Indian philosophy runs the risk of getting mummified (1949, p. 346).[3]

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[3] Shyam Ranganathan offers an additional reference for Raju's charge of Indian philosophies' lack of interest in ethics. Apart from Matilal, Devaraja, and Raju, he adds Eliot Deutsch and Albert Schweitzer to the list of scholars who share the charge that 'Indian philosophy neglects ethics altogether' (Ranganathan 2007, pp. 4–5).

Shyam Ranganathan argues that the charge against Indian philosophy's neglect of ethics is an expression of 'the myth of India.' The charge evolves from a category mistake where scholars employ European moral theory as the sole standard of evaluation. Such projects are bound to fail in their departure. The burden of excess of interpretation from the Eurocentric perspective leads to '*reification* of the failure of interpretation on to what it cannot tolerate' (Ranganathan 2017, p. 53). If the context in which ancient Indian philosophers wrote about moral issues is understood and clarified, then *Indian philosophy definitely has an ethics to offer*. The temporal and contextual imbalance between the traditional and the contemporary images of ethics in Indian philosophy can be neutralized by a renewed interest in clarifying the meanings of such terms like '*dharma*,' 'ethics,' 'moral,' 'philosophy,' 'moral-philosophy,' etc. In other words, Indian philosophers should fine-tune and standardize a yardstick of their own if at all the question of ethics or no-ethics in Indian philosophy is to be settled. He writes:

> Scholars who conclude that Indian philosophers did not address moral issues draw an incorrect conclusion. In reality, Indian philosophers have written on ethics: it is just that their views on morality are frequently very different from many of ours. In order to appreciate whether Indian philosophers wrote on ethics, we need to be clear on the meaning of moral concepts. To do so, we need an unambiguous account of moral meaning. (Ranganathan 2007, p. 9).

William F. Goodwin argues that the question of ethics or no-ethics in Indian philosophy depends on whether 'we are clear about how we are using words' (Goodwin 1955, p. 343). S. S. Barlingay argues that the problems discussed in Western ethics are not the ones discussed by Indian thinkers, as similar problems did not emerge in Indian thought. Thus, the classification championed in Western philosophy, which invokes the separation of the practical from the metaphysical and logical, is not adopted in India. Moreover, he emphasizes that the Western classification need not be adopted in Indian thought: rather, a different classification which has its own truth and justification should be welcome (Barlingay 1998, p. 3). Kedar Nath Tiwari argues that the charge of no-ethics is founded on the prejudice that philosophy, ethics, and religion should have neatly drawn boundaries. Ethics, however, does not presuppose a clearly recognized boundary between the three domains and the intermingling of these domains provides the unique distinctiveness to Indian moral philosophy (Tiwari 2007, p. 31). Bilimoria, Joseph Prabhu, and Renuka Sharma argue that the claim of no-ethics withstanding, Indian thinkers like their Western counterparts did inquire into the nature of morality. The inquiries, however, did not culminate into the theorization of an abstract and formalistic ethics that we know of from the Western vantage point (Bilimoria et al. 2007, 17).

Meena Kelkar considers the claim of no-ethics among Indian philosophers as a manifestation of the 'colonial impact on Indian Psyche' (Kelkar 2002, p. 14). The claim is founded on the belief that disciplinary autonomy and independence are prerequisites for cataloging any moral thought as ethics. She counters the claim by espousing that autonomy is neither needed nor necessary in order to put forward moral philosophy. Indian philosophy offers an ethics although it never considers ethics in isolation from other philosophical inquiries. She considers the meaning and understanding of philosophy as *darśana* as one of the responsible factors for it. The attempts of such thinking

constitute a symbiosis of rational and the perceptual and morality is typically expressed as a liberating force and not a socially binding force (2002, p. 15). In suitability with Ranganathan's need for an unambiguous moral meaning, she considers the understanding of 'vocabulary of *Dharma*' as a prerequisite for understanding the nature of Indian moral thought (2002, p. 19).

Gokhale argues that the no-ethics claim emerges from a 'positivistic' position and the contrary claim emerges from a 'traditionalistic' position. The positivistic position, drawing its name from the logical positivism's attack on logical status of ethical statements, considers the superimposition of non-moral issues within the traditional Indian moral thought as a justification for its thesis. The traditionalistic position, on the other hand, considers Indian moral philosophy as an established discipline which is inseparable from other non-moral areas of life and philosophy. The former emphasizes distinction and the later consistency. Gokhale argues that 'both the extreme positions are unconvincing and truth lies somewhere in between' (Gokhale 2002, p. 28). As a remedy, he considers the unsystematic renditions of ethical thought accessible in ancient Indian literature as an appropriate resource for espousing a 'formulation under the heading "Indian moral philosophy"' or 'moral philosophy of Indian origin' (2002, p. 28). Gokhale, in continuity with Ranganathan and Kelkar, identifies *dharma* as having the potential to become a central theme if Indian moral thought is to be elevated to the status of an Indian moral philosophy.

I am of the view that apart from pursuing research on the morally loaded terms and values already existent in ancient Indian literature, we should also evaluate and analyze the general character of Indian philosophy so that an ethics which stands up to the contemporary challenges can be developed. An example is the dialogical method practiced by ancient Indian philosophers which—to my mind—can offer an appropriate footing for expounding what Gokhale calls 'moral philosophy of Indian origin.' It might sound academically awkward to interpret a pure method through an ethical language. However, one needs to consider the importance of the dialogical method for Indian philosophy through Daya Krishna's emphasis on *saṃvād* as the medium to do Indian philosophy in post-colonial India (Daya Krishna et al. 1991; Mayaram 2013; Freschi et al. 2017). Raghuramaraju also gives precedence to the dialogical method when he considers its disruption as a medium of doing philosophy in India as an 'important achievement of colonial intervention' (Raghuramaraju 2006, p. 7). To my mind, there is a significant advantage in reading the dialogical method from the vantage point of ethics. Such an ethics when developed can help settle a lot of muddy water around Indian philosophy's relation with ethics. In order to construe the role of the dialogical method for a 'moral philosophy of Indian origin,' it is necessary to understand 'what the method in theory is?' and 'how classical Indian philosophers have practiced it?'

## The Method in Theory and Practice

The *Nyāya Sūtras* owing to their systematic exposition of conducting a debate are generally considered as the fundamental canon for outlining a framework of debate and dialogue. A debate as Matilal tells us means a 'controversy, question-and-answer, and discussion' (Matilal 1989, p. 9). Since debating with friendly philosophers and opponents was the main medium of doing philosophy, strict professional training of mastering the art

of debate was indispensable. Matilal argues that different schools might have written various manuals to train philosophers regarding the art of a perfect debate. The Buddhist, the Jains, and the orthodox literatures are replete with examples and injunctions regarding the manners of debating. However, such early manuals 'are not extant. We have some crystallized versions of them, probably from two distinct sources, in such texts as *Upāyahṛdaya*, Asaṅga's *Yogācārabhūmi*, *Caraka*, and *Nyāyasūtras*.' (1989, p. 10).

Caraka classifies debate into two forms. The first form of debate is one held with a fellow scholar on friendly terms (*sandhāyasambhāṣā*). The second form is a debate held with one's opponent (*vigraha*). According to Matilal, cooperation constitutes the spirit of *sandhāyasambhāṣā* and hostility constitutes the spirit of *vigraha*. Caraka further divides *vigraha* into *jalpa* anṣd *vitaṇḍā*. In *jalpa*, the hostile participants attempt to establish their own positions, while as in *vitaṇḍā*, the attack on other participant is solely to condemn him without establishing any position (1989, pp. 11–12). *Nyāya Sūtra* classifies the forms of debate in a more systematic manner into: *vāda*, *jalpa*, and *vitaṇḍā* (1989, pp. 12–17).

Jonardon Ganeri maintains that the goal or purpose of scriptural studies and philosophical inquiries might be the same. *The method, however, differentiates the two*. For instance, *vāda* becomes the fundamental theoretical paradigm for envisaging such methodology as it employs 'reason in a good and proper way' (Ganeri 2001, p. 11). In *vāda,* two philosophers (or schools) participate in a debate where a thesis and antithesis regarding a particular concept or issue are debated to seek the truth. The debate, however, cannot be limited to face-to-face friendly debates or *kathā*. A philosopher while conducting a proper philosophical inquiry may or may not be in a position to organize a *kathā* with his opponent. A written thesis propounded by her may seem like a monologue, but in actuality, it is a dialogue with a real or conceived opponent. Vātsyāyana attempts to resolve the problem of identification by arguing that a philosopher attempts to start an inquiry because of the existence of doubt in her mind. The doubt arises because she is faced with two rival positions (thesis '*pakṣa*' and anti-thesis '*pūrvapakṣa*') which offer claims and counterclaims regarding a problem without settling the problem in a proper manner. The doubt, in turn, leads her to ascertain both positions and seek the limitations of both in order to arrive at a reasonably sophisticated position regarding the problem at hand. A properly conducted philosophical inquiry

> adds Vātsyāyana, is that process by which we move from an initial uncertainty about the nature of the thing or concept under investigation, to an ascertainment of its properties. The inquiry is permitted to draw upon such data as are incontrovertible or accepted by both parties in the dispute, and it proceeds by adducing evidence or reasons in support of one side or the other. The first element here is the existence of a doubt (*saṃśaya*) which initiates the investigation. (Ganeri 2001, p. 13).

In other words, the philosopher attempts to go for a critical examination (*parīkṣā*) of the doubt while lending claims to and from the two opposing positions. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya examines classical Indian philosophical literature to conceive how the method proposed in theory has been actually practiced by (well-known) professional philosophers of India. He names the method in practice as *confrontation*. In confrontation, a classical Indian philosopher in order to expound her (or her school's)

position on a particular theme takes the route of critical refutation of the opponent's argument. In practice, the first step towards that purpose is to explain her rival's perspective in detail. Then, an attempt is made to construct the rival point of view as a 'possible objection' or *pūrvapakṣa* to her view. Usually, the philosopher in order to make her position argumentatively more viable raises possible objections against *pūrvapakṣa* and answers all these objections from the point of view of *pūrvapakṣa*. After every possible objection is resolved from the perspective of *pūrvapakṣa*, the philosopher starts her attack on it and 'proceeds to explain the *siddhānta*'. This, according to Chattopadhyaya, is the 'very manner of our philosophical writing' (Chattopadhyaya 1964, p. 21). In *What is Living and What is Dead in Indian Philosophy?* he revisits the question of method in practice and writes:

> An Indian philosopher (...) develops his own view by first confronting it with its opposite, i.e., the view that negates his own. In Indian terminology this is called the *pūrvapakṣa*—the thesis of the opponent, or, more simply the antithesis of one's point of view. Only on the basis of a more or less elaboration of it does one establish one's own thesis, called the *siddhānta*. (Chattopadhyaya 1976, pp. 8–9).

A dissection of Debiprasad's method in practice reveals the following four preconditions to conduct a successful philosophical investigation:

a)  A real rival position known to have been historically defended by another rival philosopher or philosophers (*pūrvapakṣa*) is the first prerequisite for engaging in a proper philosophical inquiry.
b)  An *imperative necessity* to know, elaborate, and remain honest while conveying the contents of rival position (*pūrvapakṣa*).
c)  Need to *add more arguments in favor of the pūrvapakṣa by the pakṣa*, sometimes more than its actual representatives. However, it has to be done while adhering to (b).
d)  Based on the first three, a *khaṇḍana* or demolition of the *pūrvapakṣa* to support, extend, or establish one's position or *siddhānta*.

The steps appear to contain a radical epistemic import bereft of any moral insight. That is why Matilal, Ganeri, and Chattopadhyaya limit the (applicability of) dialogical method in general to a mere philosophical debate. I am of the view that the second and third steps of Debiprasad's method in practice contain *essential conjectures* for espousing a fresh ethical perspective. The freshness of such an ethical perspective is that it responds to the charge put forward in the positivistic position (supporting the no-ethics view) held on Indian ethics.[4] Firstly, this fresh ethical perspective adheres to the

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[4] Since the traditionalistic position already holds that Indian philosophy has an ethics to offer, although in its own way, I do not think the proponents of this position offer a challenge to my argument. The only difference between their position and mine is that while they adhere to the extraction of ethical discourses from the mixed moral and non-moral contexts of ancient Indian literature, I stick to the fundamental methodology of Indian philosophy to search for inputs and hints so that a 'moral philosophy of Indian origin' can be envisaged. The two positions also differ because I do not claim that the dialogical method offers an ethics. I limit my position to offer a perspective towards an ethics which is yet to be! They, on the 'Other' hand, extract Indian ethics directly from various resources of ancient Indian literature.

fundamental dialogical method of Indian philosophy without taking recourse to the extra-philosophical moral discourses contained in ancient Indian literature. It is the muddle created by the inclusion of epics and *Dharmaśāstra* discourses which becomes the main reason for the positivist's adhering to a no-ethics claim. Second, it tries to actualize the positivist's hope that Indian philosophy as philosophy has the potential to offer fresh perspectives on ethics. On the one hand, it peeps at the lacuna which Matilal and Raju lament with the belief that it could be filled by Indian philosophers. On the other hand, it goes beyond the remedy offered by Gokhale while furthering his project of envisaging a 'moral philosophy of Indian origin.'

## Ethics from the Method: a fresh possibility

Let us for a moment bracket the mindset of methodology and open it up for some extra-methodological reflection. Here, my main endeavor is to limit such extra-methodological reflection to find if something akin to an ethical insight can be harbored from the dialogical method. If we dare to extend the steps in the method to the multi-cultural, multi-linguistic, multi-religious, multi-gender, or multi-ethnic frameworks of Indian societies, we find that every individual has a *pūrvapakṣa* to consider. The *pūrvapakṣa* in actually existing societies is what we call the 'Other.' For instance, a Muslim is a Hindu's *pūrvapakṣa* on the issue of beef. Being a practicing Muslim, my viewpoint on beef is completely opposite to that of a practicing Hindu. Being a Keralite or Tamilian, my viewpoint on how languages ought to be inclusive is completely opposite to the mainstream champions of language.[5] The play of the *pakṣa* of self and the Other's *pakṣa* (*pūrvapakṣa*) is inescapable amidst the diversity of Indian societies. The method of Indian philosophy, I think, has something significant to offer for an ethical foundation to sustain such diversity. If we substitute the terms *pūrvapakṣa* and *pakṣa* in steps (b) and (c) with the terms 'Other' and 'Self,' the ethical underpinning hinted in the method becomes clearer:

b)  An imperative necessity to know, elaborate, and remain honest while conveying (or understanding) the contents of rival position or one's '*Other.*'
c)  Need to add more arguments in favor of the '*Other*' by the '*Self*' sometimes more than its ('*Other's*') actual representatives. However, it has to be done while adhering to (b).

The moral import is implicit even if we use the method for the sake of method. The moral import considers and emphasizes on responsibility as the fulcrum of human existence. Understanding the *pūrvapakṣa*, even for the purpose of a philosophical debate or dialogue, becomes a real ethical responsibility for the *pakṣa*. Any successful philosophical investigation presupposes that the investigator takes pains in

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[5] Beef has remained a thorny political and social issue in India after 2014. At times, the issue has taken a moral-religious turn with advocates citing scriptures to support or oppose beef eating. In a similar way, the issue of Hindi as a national language has also been contentious. Since India as a country constitutes a multi-linguistic community of communities, people belonging to the southern states have usually protested any such move. The linguistic framework of Southern India is entirely exclusive of the Northern part of India. Suppressing one's 'Other' in-language or even coercing her to follow the mainland has serious moral bearings.

understanding and reproducing the *pūrvapakṣa* honestly. The knowledge and elabora-
tion of one's *pūrvapakṣa* implicitly demand the philosopher to be ethically careful
while dealing with the rival. *The epistemic, in other words, is accompanied by a
nuanced sense of ethical in the method itself.* In a plural society, a need for such an
ethically underpinned understanding can lend support to an Other-centric ethical
perspective: *one based on the concern for 'Other' and care for 'Other' prior to one's
own.* It will not be wrong to say that the concept of 'Other' is elusive throughout the
history of Indian philosophy.[6] Elise Coquereau-Saouma argues that Daya Krishna is
critical of the 'insufficiency of otherness' in the value structure of classical Indian
philosophy. Daya Krishna was of the view that the 'Other' is considered as a moral
limit which can hinder the self-realization of a seeker and can thus be easily
quarantined. Coquereau-Saouma writes that to overcome this limitation, Daya Krishna
classifies values into two types: contemplative and active. Contemplative values are
self-centered while active values are Other-centered. The 'Other' becomes 'an active
and constitutive participant' in one's seeking of active values (Coquereau 2016, p.148).
Some contemporary Indian philosophers have also attempted to understand the frame-
work of diverse Indian societies without mentioning the concept of 'Other.' Margaret
Chatterjee's work on inter-religious communication may offer some insights in this
regard.

Chatterjee considers inter-religious communication as a special case of communi-
cation, as it presupposes a religious-self's urge to understand the faith of her religious-
Other. The specificity of the communication between the religious-self and religious-
Other lies in the fact that it is mutual and shares a high degree of openness: openness
not needed in ordinary communications. What is essential for our present reflection is
that Chatterjee argues that most often, such inter-religious communication takes place
through actions. She writes:

> Religious communication in particular, need not, of course, take place through
> the medium of language. The New York house-wife neighbors, Jewish and
> Christian, who exchange certain domestic duties on the Sabbath and on Sunday
> in order that each may follow her own religious way of life undisturbed, are in a
> state of communication. So also were the Hindus and Muslims of pre-Partition
> Bengal who participated in each other's festivals. Even at this "behavioral" level
> of communication the distinction between "understanding" and "sharing" may
> perhaps be relevant. (Chatterjee 1967, pp. 392–93).

The exchange of domestic duties between Jewish and Christian homemakers may seem
like an example of simple sharing. Such a sharing, however, is founded on a prior
understanding of one's religious-Other. Chatterjee argues that an inter-religious com-
munication based on the presupposition of mutual understanding between religious-self

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[6] A google search for the phrase 'concept of "self" in Indian philosophy' throws 8,86,000 results with the
words 'self,' 'atman,' 'soul,' 'mind,' occurring in almost every title offered on the first search page. A similar
search for 'concept of "Other" in Indian philosophy' throws 4,47,000 results with only the first title
corresponding directly to the phrase searched. Successive search results deal with words such a 'mokṣa,'
'emotion,' and 'self' even on the first result page. The lack of philosophical resources on the concept of
'Other' in Indian scholarship compels Sarukkai to invoke Levinas and Derrida as main anchors for under-
standing the concept of 'Other' from a philosophical perspective (Sarukkai 1997).

and religious-Other encompasses participation rather than mindless confrontation. For it does not entail the abandonment of particular religious faiths. On the other hand, it demands 'certain porosity, an abandonment of exclusiveness' to help formulate the fundamentals of an 'open society of tomorrow' (1967, p. 400). To my mind, the demands laid here constitute the ethical understanding which Indian dialogical method envisions. I, for example, will be in a position to give space to my religious-Other only when I honestly try to understand the fundamentals of my religious-Other's religion. At times, I might have to tax my understanding and elaborate it in a proper way so that the generated space is secured. That is simply following (b) and (c).[7] Proper knowledge and understanding of the religious-Other are ethically underpinned as these demand responsibility towards the religious-Other. Only an ethical understanding will help the religious-self to find the meaning of her existence. In other words, the self-existence is entirely derivative of the existence of 'Other' as 'Other.' The 'Other's' otherness can serve as a precursor of ethical relationships.

In his recent work, Raghuramaraju tackles the contested issue regarding the influence of colonial-other on Indian thought. He interrogates the colonial philosophical discourse which mainly views the 'Other' as an inhibitor. The 'Other' for Fanon, Said, and K. C. Bhattacharya is an opaque entity which cannot be permeated at all. For it was the 'Other' who was responsible for colonization, slavery, destruction, or oppression. He argues that while Fanon labeled the 'Other' as an oppressor, Bhattacharya labeled it as the creator of a state of slavery. Raghuramaraju thinks that such a portrayal of the 'Other' is limiting in itself. In contrast to such a reading, he considers *the 'Other' as an enabler rather than an inhibitor.* In support of his argument, he considers the 'Other' as a significant influence in the making of Gandhi. For it was at the request of two Englishmen (Gandhi's 'Other') that Gandhi read *Geeta* and offered a radical interpretation of it. Had the 'Other' not enabled Gandhi, the innovative interpretations of *Geeta* to articulate the secular demands of colonial struggle would not have been possible (Raghuramaraju 2017, pp. 56–75).

Emanuel Levinas offers a radical perspective of ethics based on the concept of 'Other.' Moral responsibility, according to him, is primarily based on one's reaching out to and understanding the 'Other.' If anything instructs us, it is the strangeness of 'Other,' for he is repulsive to any typology or classification that one might adduce to her. The face of the 'Other' turns to me by itself and supplicates and demands my responsibility towards her. Language through discourse and conversation plays an essential role in fostering this ethical bond between self and 'Other.' Discourse is not a 'pathetic conversation' where the 'Other' is represented or generalized. Instead, it is a welcoming of the 'Other' to whom it is addressed. It is in this addressing that the 'Other' is maintained and a plurality envisaged and respected.

Language far from presupposing universality and generality first makes them possible. Language presupposes interlocutors, a plurality. Their commerce is not

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[7] N. S. Dravid in a short essay on the concept of tolerance in Indian philosophy indirectly hints that a viable relation between diverse factions of a society is necessary to inculcate positive tolerance. He argues that 'the category of relation' within diversity is pivotal for espousing positive perspective of tolerance towards the 'Other.' Tolerance based on such a relation intends 'to promote and encourage all kinds of individual diversity that is at the back of creativity.' (Dravid 1992, p. 24).

the representation of the one by the Other, nor a participation in universality (…)
Their commerce (…) is ethical. (Levinas 1979, p. 73).

Levinas diffuses the argumentative burden of dialogue by bringing it down to the realm of simple conversations which can foster an Other-centric ethics. In the method of Indian philosophy which I explained with the help of Chattopadhyaya's ideas, the emphasis on actual representation of Other's position is akin to the concept of Levinasian responsibility which the 'Other' thrusts upon me, the moment I encounter her. The only need is to bend the method in an ethical direction. One's attempt to understand, illuminate, elevate, or assert oneself underlines the need to appropriate the 'Other' with responsibility. Chatterjee's emphasis on porosity and Daya Krishna's position that the 'Other' is constitutive in search for shared values are different interpretations of the role which the 'Other' can play in imagining an ethics of and ethics for plurality. Raghuramaraju's category of the 'Other' as enabler is another perspective to take the Other's constitutive role into account. What I add to the categorization of 'Other' is that the dialogical method offers insights which can be useful for cultivating Other-centric ethics. An emphasis on these insights can transform the method of dialogue into a model of ethics. It is in the method of dialogue, if anywhere, that a real encounter with the 'Other' can take place. The possibility of an ethical reading of real encounters is imperative for Indian societies which are deeply diverse and need to transform the diversity into a shared pluralism. It would be an interesting task to transform these insights into a real ethical approach; an approach to be called 'moral philosophy of Indian origin.'

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