Indian Philosophy and Social Work: Some Interfaces

Dr. (Ms.) Samta P. Pandya
pandya.samta19@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper is a conceptual attempt to examine the interface between Indian philosophical schools and social work. Commencing with an understanding of the positions in the classical period, the paper describes the stances in the medieval phase and the contemporary period. The interface with social work is sought through four standpoints-worldviews, discourses on ‘being’ (and hence stances on humanism), ethics and moral reasonings, and visions of social utopia and transformation. The endeavour is to begin a deliberation on an epistemic foundation for social work which is indigenous in its origins.

Key Words: Indian philosophy, social work

Introduction

The core commencing points of the normative and ideational orientations in social work has been theology and theism since historicity. Embedded within it is a philosophical genre with multiple nuances and facets that shape the epistemic base. In the Indian context, the existence of philosophical schools can be affirmed through ages – having traditional, medieval, modern and contemporary manifestations. Indic philosophical schools comprise of the traditional six systems, Jaina and Buddhist philosophical thoughts; Bhakti and the emergence of the feminist philosophical genus in the medieval phase; and modern and contemporary thinkers drawing from and modifying traditional tenets. Each of the phases have unveiled epistemologies that when coagulated form Indic positions on worldviews and social orders as well as intentionalities of transformation. Hence effectively, the ‘social’ domain of Indic thought has unearthed several dimensions. This paper is a twin attempt at understanding varied facets of Indian philosophical schools through history as well as seeking to unearth their interface with social work. Certain linkages of western philosophies to social work have been established through social theorisations such as positivism, phenomenology and hermeneutics, Marxism and critical theory, structuralism and the poststructuralist versions. To look at the core of established
Indian philosophies and their connections with social work normative and ideational standpoints, is largely a virgin area so to speak. This is a maiden endeavour to examine the linkages between ontologies, epistemologies, ethics and metaphysics of Indian thought to positionalities in social work. Effectively it is also envisaged that some aspects of indigenous ideational base would be unearthed – linking Indian epistemologies to social work normative and ideational stances. Hence within a purely conceptual exploration, certain elements of indigenising praxis positions may surface.

**Indian Philosophy: Genesis and Traditions**

The history of Indian philosophy can be divided into four periods-the Vedic period (1500 BC to 600 BC), Epic period (600 BC to 200 AD), sutra period (200 AD to 1700 AD) and the scholastic period (1700 AD and onwards) [62]. Some of the core characteristics common to all systems of Indian philosophy are: soteriological conceptions and contentions concerning life; human freedom as the ultimate goal which can be attained through knowledge; the cruciality of ‘beings’; the possibility of attainment of transcendence through bodily existence facilitated by the discipline of Yoga; and concepts and contentions pertaining to ultimate reality, empirical world and beings and Being [66]. The prominent themes in Indian philosophy thus are intentionality, causation, non-duality, theistic ontology, duality of mind-body consciousness, embodiment as being, quintessentiality of aesthetic experience and domains of nothingness [20].

From the classical point of view, there are six schools of Indian philosophy – Mimansa, Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya, Yoga and Vedanta. Cumulative and amalgamated stances are also visualised such as Nyaya-Vaisesika and other variations emerging from contexts. The texts of each of the schools span across the four periods into which the history of Indian philosophy can be divided. Primarily Indian thought is idealistic in character [28, 14]: the pragmatic lens inserted through Buddhist and Jaina stances. Other core characteristics are in terms of an inquiry into what constitutes knowledge, the theory of knowledge and ways to understand the same [80]. Further prominent general domains of Indian philosophy are as follows: deliberations on the issue of causation and thus a penchant for logic [9]; relation between difference in non-difference, dualism and non-dualism, reality of knowledge and non-reality, prominence of mind, consciousness, unity of absolute being, existence and non-existence of the soul, causality and non-causality, inferential perceptual knowledge and transcendental knowledge and universality and many-sidedness of reality; monism and pluralism-the core aspect herein being that juxtaposed notions co-exist, to form complex realities [6]. In the various schools of Indian philosophy there are stances ranging from non-dualism to pure, modified and implicit monism [67]. Aspects of cosmological speculation, relationship of the world to the absolute, pluralistic realism, ethical idealism, subject-object dichotomy and non-dualism as well as theism predominate. The core qualities of the six schools are logical realism (Nyaya), atomistic pluralism (Vaisesika), causality, cosmic evolution and Purusa-Prakrti dichotomy (Samkhya), ethics of praxis (Yoga), ritualistic metaphysics (Purva Mimansa), theism, dualism and non-dualism (Vedanta) [18].
Some of the abiding questions in Indian thought are pertaining to real, reality, universe, truth and life [7]. Atomism, the idea of universals, twofold purport of the metaphysical inquiry (study of existence as a study of being qua being and domains of liberation) form the basis of Indian thought [52]. Indian philosophy also has a strong ethical component with a combination of teleological and deontological theories. The basic presuppositions of morality are freedom and the soul-world connections, with basic concepts as dharma (law of existence), rta (cosmic order), moksa (salvation), karma (duty) and purusartha (righteousness) [78]. Ontology is thus the core locus classicus of analysis in comprehending Indian thought – various texts proposing differential versions of ontologies. This ontological stance is subordinated to logic as a modicum of analysis. Pure realism (based on sense perceptions alone) and critical realism (based on inference and reflection as a mode to comprehend reality) – Nyaya Vaisesika, Samkhya Yoga, Jainism and Purva Mimansa of Kumarila Bhatta are also parts of the genus [43, 54].

The ‘traditions’ or the classical school of Indian philosophy are: Mimansa, Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya, Yoga and Vedanta; the amalgamated positions of Nyaya Vaisesika and Samkhya Yoga, as well as Jain and Buddhist thought as part of the league. The core contentions of each can be outlined thus: The main tenets of Purva Mimansa are that Vedas provide prescriptions and injunctions, action is the core to existence, soul has the freedom and responsibility to act. The embodied sentence, that is man, asserts his freedom over the universe and makes further constructions over the universe. The meaning of Jaimini’s system of Purva Mimansa – particularly his sacrificial ontology and his view of transcendence are discussed thus. Self and selfhood are constructed through a ritual ontology and in that sense there is a ‘decentering’ of the human. Identity is then a product of divine origination, derivation and actualisation [23].

The Nyaya school predominantly deals with logic and the problem of inference. In developing a comprehensive theory of knowledge, the Nyaya school resorts to the philosophy of language. Further aspects include substance-attribute duality and causality [56]. The Nyaya epistemology is a quest for validity of knowledge. Valid knowledge is assumed to be of two kinds – presentative and representative. Pramana (proof) which is the pivot of Nyaya is considered to be the instrument of representative valid knowledge. Nyaya proposes four such kinds of valid knowledge namely perception, inference, comparison and verbal testimony. In that sense the Nyaya school is substantialist and realist and combines inductive and deductive modes of knowledge. Nyaya school represents a syllogism that in turn represents a typical form of inferential reasoning comprising of following constituent parts – truth desire, doubt about the real nature of the thing, capacity of the pramanas to lead to true knowledge, purpose of inference, truth of inference, first proposition reason, exemplification and conclusion. Hence Nyaya philosophy as a system of logical realism provides a philosophy of the knowledge for reality that then leads to liberation, produces a theory of cognition that explains the world through four logical proofs and is thus the architectonic of knowledge [42]. The Vaisesika school is concerned with ascertaining the true nature of entities – categories, substance and qualities [77]. The Nyaya Vaisesika school is concerned with analysis of categories,
causes and proofs of God’s existence – cosmological, logical, experimental, moral and intuitive. In terms of the Nyaya-Vaisesika system the world is real, knowledge is core and the cause-effect relationships predominate. Samkhya signifies a scientific worldview privileging evolutionism and a criterion of truth supporting sensory hermeneutics and perceptions. The core Samkhya categories are Prakrti and Purusa incorporating within it Mahat (the cosmic principle), intellect, functions, structures, elements and substances [69]. On the basis of the classical text called the Samkhya Karika, it can be said that it is a school or system which emphasises the enumeration of principles, evolutes or emergent [50]. Other domains of Samkhya include investigation and analysis of various categories of existence, seeking the ultimate discrimination or discernment of the difference between prakrti and purusa, and salvation through reasoning and ratiocination. There is a fundamental dualism between consciousness and the world is viewed in instrumental terms. Human existence in the world is seen as suffering and the doctrine of freedom is developed on the basis of analysis and nature of individual consciousness. In the argument of Samkhya dualism the concept of dualistic interactionism wherein mind-matter causal interaction is purported is proposed [17]. Samkhya dualism arises out of a disparity between purusa and prakrti – purusa being the self and prakrti being the matter and regarded by Samkhya as co-eternal realities and mutually independent. In samkhya a connection is sought between the causal and non causal manifestations of prakrti and some of its evolutes, the postulate of phenomenality of world experience, causality of the phenomenal world and causality of the world of tattvas [11, 1, 72].

Yoga (primarily the Patanjali school) commences with certain core metaphysical propositions of – identification of Self and God (Absolute Being), transcendence of God and ephemerality of world experience. From the epistemological point of view there are arguments for self and God and from the ethical standpoint there are virtues prescribed and included under Yama and Niyama, the other aspects of Dharma, Dhyana and Samadhi being mystical and psychologistic in nature. The ontological elements of Yoga comprise of the higher self and the innumerable transcendent selves or the soul monads which are eternal, omniscient, omnipresent and apart from the cosmos (the prakrti-purusa distinction) [33]. There are gross and subtle aspects of nature – the gross aspects comprising of the physical cosmos with the gross elements along with the cognitive states and the subtle aspects comprising of the sphere of the undifferentiated (subtle dimension of the cosmos covering the principle of individuation, the five categories of matter and mind), the first principle of creation and the transcendent core of the created universe of the state of balance of primary energies. Patanjali’s work is divided into four chapters – samadhi pada, sadhana pada, vibhuti pada and kaivalya pada. The first deals with the complete concentration of the mind or meditative absorption which is the final aim and culmination of Yoga, the second deals with the means leading to the end, the third covers certain supernatural powers, that is, siddhis, which may result in the practice of Yoga and the fourth part is the liberation which is regarded as the final goal of human life [64]. In the Samkhya-Yoga school, Samkhya are the ground metaphysics for Yoga. There are references to the fundamental dichotomy of Purusa and Prakrti, the distinctive role of the three Gunas in their various permutations and combinations and the finality of Prakrti as the
basis for Yoga [30]. Rather than cosmological, the ethico-spiritual aspect is drawn upon. The Samkhya-Yoga epistemology is dealt with by examining representative works such as Samkhya Karika and Yogasutra [15]. Direct and indirect knowledge form the core of the system along with aspects of perception and inference. In this twin system, Yoga adopts Samkhya metaphysics and engrais concept of God upon it. The reality of the principles of prakṛti, mahat, ahamkara, manas, ten sense organs, five tanmatras, five gross elements and purusa are recognised along with the abiding principle of God.

Vedanta draws from Upanisadic tenets, the Bhagavad Geeta and the Brahma Sutra further manifesting into various schools of Sankara, Madhva, Ramanuja, Vallabha and others. Parallels can be sought to Greek philosopher Parmenides’ discussions on being and not being; Plato’s theory of Ideas; Plotinus’s mysticism; Berkeley’s idealism, Spinoza’s substance monism; Kantian phenomena and noumena (akin to Vedantic conception of vyavaharika and paramarthika); personal idealism of Ward and Rashdall; and the personal idealism of Bradley and Bosanquet [2]. Parallels have been drawn to Husserlian phenomenology and his theory of meaning [13]. Parallels are also drawn to the theory of the eidos (looking at modes of consciousness, existence and essences) and transcendental subjectivity (attributing primacy to the nature, structure, intentionality and temporality of consciousness). Vedanta has a threefold understanding of the world – real, unreal and illusory and contains the concept of levels of consciousness. From a hermeneutical lens, it has been that Vedanta as expressed in the Upanisads and interpreted by Sankara is a discourse on truth and being – which goes beyond pure semantics expressed through the rudiments of language [36]. This mysticism that urges for transcendence is expressed by Sankara in Prasthanatrayi and Sankarabhasya that contain commentaries on the Upanisads. Parallels have been drawn between Spinoza’s substance, Hegel’s Absolute and Vedanta’s Brahman. There is a belief in the teleological nature of reality and a cosmic order supporting that teleology [35].

The following central principles of Advaita Vedanta have been proposed: the doctrine that Brahman, the non-dual reality, is devoid of qualities; the doctrine that Brahman, without undergoing any transformation, is responsible for the appearance of the world; the doctrine that posits the existence of an entity whose ontological status is indescribable as it is different from both the real and the non-real; and, that doctrine that proposes that liberation can be attained while being alive [4]. The first two doctrines have an epistemological background, the third is both epistemological and metaphysical and the fourth one is soteriological and will be viewed meaningful only when it is viewed against the metaphysical background of the nature of the self and the theory of the identity of jiva and Brahman [39, 40]. The Dvaita Vedanta system of Ramanuja is realistic in epistemology and pluralistic in metaphysics relies much more on evidence of common experience supported by perception than on other pramanas such as inference and scriptural testimony. Vallabhacharya founded the sattvidvaita school of Vedanta speaking of Brahman without a second as the governing principle of the entire world, sentient as well as insentient and it is, that is, not associated with Maya. Sattvadvaita places Bhakti as the supreme means of God realisation,
Bhakti both as a means and as an end in itself.

Some of the key points of dissension pertaining to six traditional schools of Indian philosophy are about its conceptual structure and tenets of transcendence and world negations as inherently hierarchical and aporetic. Prescriptions about social existence in Indian philosophical texts are instrumental in establishing the notions in the realm of the institutional ‘other’ pertaining to society, law and polity [47]. This creates in the individual a basic dichotomy between the empirical being which comprises of the biological, social, legal and political realms and his transcendental being to which all of this is an ‘object’ that is something ‘other’ than what his own ‘real’ self is. The former has generally been designated jiva in the Indian tradition and the latter has been termed as atman – conflicting identification with them as defining the Indian situation. Furthering the arguments on an epistemological note, popular constructions on Indian philosophy have been deconstructed. This has meant the problematizing of aspects of world negation, illusory character, predominance of Brahminical thought trends (relegating Buddhistic and Jaina stances to the background), the ontological status of difference, problems of identity (Atman-Brahman issues) and hence bringing in domains of critical hermeneutics and subalternist interpretation of texts [48].

In the Jaina tradition, the works of Kundakunda who has authored Samayasara, Prvacanasara and Pancastikaya has enriched Indian philosophical tradition. The core content of his thought is to create categories of phenomena in the world. Nayavada is another important concept in Jaina thought meaning point of view. These two nayas are tested on the touchstone of modes of knowing and knowledge which are sometimes contradictory. So in the Jain epistemological framework there are seven substitutes or possibilities and two certainties expressed by truth and contradiction. Jainism’s atomistic sense draws parallels with Leibnizian monadism and with a probabilistic epistemology (the sevenfold formation of the Syadvada) and many-sidedness of reality (Anekantavada). The Jaina view however proposes that reality does not consist of absolute universals and in reality there are neither absolute universals nor absolute particulars. The universals and particulars are related aspects of the same complex reality – further the objective basis of universal concepts is not identity but similarity in development. The universal is not an identical feature common to different particulars, but similarity which is different in different particulars.

In terms of Buddhist philosophy, there are two broad trends – the Hinayana (realists) and the Mahayana (idealists). Within the Hinayana tradition, there are two important schools – Vaibhasika and Sautrantika and within the Mahayana tradition, Yogacara and Madhyamika. Vaibhasika school tenets can be paralleled to Descartes’ propositions of the importance of direct perception in comprehending the ultimate reality. The Sautrantika’s along the lines of Locke emphasise on indirect perception, the Yogacara school along the lines of Berkeley emphasise on ‘ideas’ as real and the Madhyamika school emphasise on the primacy of matter and the absolutism of nothingness. Within Mahayana Buddhism, there are three chief conceptions – tathata or that-ness, vijnana or idea (vijnanavadins) and sunya or void (sunyavadins). In emphasising that-ness, Asvagosa proposes that there is an ineffable Absolute or God which is transcendent. Vijnanavada (emphasised in Lankavatara sutra) is a
philosophy of ideas and Sunyavada as discussed by Nagarjuna has seven modes of
voidness – interdependence of things, essencelessness of things, unknowability,
phenomenal causality, ineffability, lack of desire and temporal and spatial limitations.
There are also references to dialectical Buddhism comprising of differential
conceptions of Nirvana or salvation. In the Dhammapada and the
Mahaparinirvanasutra of Buddhism, the impermanence principle is emphasised – life
period, universal and momentary [7]. The basic ontological version of early
Buddhism is the doctrine of dependent co-origination which proposes that things
come into being and pass out of being by way of a chain of interlocked, mutually
conditioning events culminating in ignorance [82]. Other core aspects of Buddhist
philosophy are meditation, emptiness, enlightenment, liberation, perception for the
attainment of cessation and negation of mundane realities. Particularly the Yogacara
school of Buddhist thought has analysed the structure of consciousness on two themes
– the container consciousness in its conscious interlay with the active consciousness
of thinking and perception and the three patterns or nature of its functioning [44]. In
the Buddhistic genre, reality is comprising of momentary particulars which are
absolutely discrete and disparate and there is no identity or similarity in reality. All
class concepts are constructions of thought and there is subjectivity of all conceptual
knowledge. Nominalism is established on a secure foundation by distinguishing
between two orders of reality – the ultimate and the empirical. The ultimate is the
world of unique point instants which are given pure sensation and the empirical is the
world of universals which are given by the understanding [29].

Medieval Indian Philosophy

Medieval Indian philosophy is characterised by renditions in the Bhakti order, with
roots in the traditional Vedic tenets. Also recognised as the Bhakti renaissance, the
original roots can be traced to the hymns of the Rgveda (Rg I.62.11), the other
references being Brhadaranyaka Upanishad (4.5.60), Svetasvatara Upanishad (6, 18)
(6, 23) and the Brahmasutra (iii.2.24). Doctrinal references to Bhakti are sought in the
Bhagwad Geeta, Sandilya Bhakti sutra, Narada Bhakti sutra and the Bhagwata Purana
(II.1.21). In Sankara’s commentary on Gita (VIII, 19, XIV, 260), worship has been
qualified as bhakti (bhajanan bhaktih) and defines ananya bhakti as non-experience
of anything other than the Ultimate Being. In Bhaskara’s commentary, bhakti refers to
attendance on God by meditation and Ramanuja has used meditation and devotion as
interchangeable terms. In the Vedarthasangraha, bhakti is a special kind of knowledge
which seeks to ignore everything that is not done for the sake of Isvara (the Absolute).
The Visistadvaitic philosopher Venkatanatha in his Vedanta Desika has declared
Bhakti to be a feeling of joy (priti). For the dualistic philosopher Madhva, bhakti and
jnana are synonymous and for Vallabhacharya, Bhakti consists in a firm and
overwhelming affection for God. Similar principles have been evoked by Sri
Chaitanya who has advocated an intellectual type of bhakti which consisted of a
constant and unflinching meditation and realisation of the ultimate reality of all things
with Siva. In the middle ages, the basis of Bhakti, apart from the Bhagwat Geeta and
references in the Puranic legacies, are sought in the Narayaniya section of the
Mahabharata (chapters 332-339). In the sixth century AD, the Vaisnava Alvars and
the Saiva Nayanars proposed Bhakti as devotional tenets through their legacies [10].
Within the regionalised contexts, the mysticism of the Dasa poet philosophers of Karnataka, the non-dualistic metaphysics of the Mahanubhavas of Maharashtra and the advaita doctrines of the north and West Indian traditions prevail. Bhakti as a medieval manifestation and subsequent modernist developments influenced by enlightenment rationality, have unveiled several facets of Indian philosophy based on theism. Devotional literature, the semantic-linguistic-historical analysis of which provides the base reveals several domains of Bhakti tradition in its early history of Krsna to its modern adaptations in nineteenth and twentieth century culture forms the fundamental rendition [57]. Allegiances are drawn towards the ontology and ideation of St. Bonaventure and Gabriel Marcel, with a focus on rediscovering the philosophy of presence and emphasis on transvaluation [65]. Parallelism and diffusion characterise the spread of the Bhakti genre with an alignment to the understanding emerging from Weberian understanding of the religion of the non-privileged class drawing from Nietzschean understanding of the sentiment of resentment [55]. Traces of congregationalism, salvation and rational ethical religion are identified. The Dumontian understanding has been drawn upon to interpret how Bhakti is a modified and subaltern replication of the upper class belief; articulation of social ideology and formation of community identity as key processes in the evolution and definitions of the saguni and nirguni traditions [51]. Expressed principally through the hagiographies and genealogies of teachers and disciples, Bhakti symbolises subaltern historiographies, re-examination of authority and manifestations of dissidence. Also, Hobsbawm’s analysis of invented traditions have been looked at to comprehend the variations in the Bhakti genre [51]. They are those establishing or symbolising social cohesion, real or artificial communities; those establishing or legitimising institutions, status or relations of authority; and, those inclined towards building a sense of communitas and bonding type of social capital. The religious vocabulary of the Bhakti genre has been constructed by protest oriented socially conscious canon of poetry [38].

Some of the key affinities emerging from Bhakti are: rejection of degenerated forms of ritualism and reinstating divinity; focus on love and service (Vallabha devotion and Bengal Vaisnavism); erotic love; supremacy of the devotional sentiment. There is a certain denominational name of God, an overarching Divine Principle which reveals itself in form and mode and a lateral movement from ‘ego-centrism’ to ‘theocentrism’ is facilitated. Bhakti genre finds parallels in Charles Hartshorne’s neoclassical theism where one includes contingency, becoming and variability in divine nature, without, however, diminishing the metaphysical perfections of the divine such as constancy and necessity. Further nuances within the Bhakti understanding include aspects of disembodied spiritualism (drawing from the Puranic, Agamic and the Tantric traditions) and holistic realism. Mysticism characterises another domain of Bhakti – delving into the psycho-somatic structure of the individual. Transcendence of language, subject-object duality and pervading levels of existence – gross, physical, vital and subtle so as to attain Godhead are other domains. Categorical imperative of sameness-oneness, time, space, objecthood, subjecthood and related thought constructs concretise the tenets of Bhakti – retaining voices from the below and syncretic sensibilities [75].
Two other prominent medieval manifestations of Indian philosophy are the Saiva Siddhanta school and the feminist philosophical genre originating from the Sakta traditions, Buddhism, Vaisnavi literature, aspects within the Bhakti tradition and Srivaisnavism. Saiva Siddhanta as a school of Indian philosophy propounded in the 13th century by Sri Meykandar is a realistic, pluralistic, monotheistic and orthodox school of Indian philosophy based on scripture, reasoning and experience. It defined a means of knowledge (pramana) as a means without which no knowledge is possible – consciousness (citsakti) as fulfilling the criteria and all other, senses and mind are auxiliaries in the process. Three coeval realities were accepted – God, soul and matter; liberation as the unity of the soul with Siva. The feminist philosophical genus within the Indian context was reflected in the feminist soteriologies of the Sakta tradition operating on the divine feminine principle and the Vaisnavi legacy of devotionalism to krṣna. Buddhism demonstrated equanimity and ontological spatialisations for women within the ascetic fold, thereby proposing an epistemic equity of feminine existential domains. Vaisnavi literature discussed the phenomenon of goddess worship and the divine feminine energy within an essentially patriarchal locus classicus [71]. Whereas rebellion and pushing boundaries was characteristic to Mirabai, ecclesiastical leadership is particular to women within Gaudiya Vaisnavism of the Caitanya movement of Bengal (feminist critics have however viewed this as a hidden agenda of subtle hegemonies of women – elevating their status as spiritual exemplars and ensure confinement to domesticity negating personal-political spaces). Within the Bhakti tradition, there were two models of feminine behaviour – women saints who defied societal norms and the ordinary woman who followed their ‘stridharma’; the comparison was further sought to two basic types of Goddesses – the solitary Goddess of the folk tradition and the goddess consort of the classical tradition. Srivaisnavism, based on the hymns of the Alvars and the writings of the Acaryas, had explicit positions on gender inclusivity, universality and equality; women having access to the path of salvation and the lover-belonged relationship within bounds of feminist theistic philosophy as the prominent discourse.

Modern and Contemporary Indian Philosophy: Some Dimensions
Postclassical, modern and contemporary versions of Indian philosophy can be identified with Nagarjuna, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, philosophers of Bengal Renaissance and Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, Gandhi, Krishnamurti, Ramana Maharshi, Tilak, Sai Baba, Satchidananda Murthy and others [75]. Contemporary Indian philosophy oscillates through periods and modes of realism, romanticism, idealism, modernism and postcolonialism [31]. The devices and powers are that of imagination, character, style, emotion and memory contextualised vis-a-vis knowledge and morality. The discourse debates in Indian philosophy juxtapose spiritualism (Radhakrishnan) and rationalism (Daya Krishna) [68]. In the postcolonial milieu, the philosophies of Vivekananda and Gandhi have demonstrated discursivity; Gandhian understanding further into spiritualising polity vis-a-vis Savarkar’s politicising spirituality. Two paradigms have emerged in the postcolonial genre – the Swami paradigm and the Mahatma paradigm. The Swami paradigm subscribes to the
orientalist categorization that identifies East with spiritualism and West with materialism. It constructs the West as a monolith admitting continuity from the Greeks to the present Europe simultaneously recommending a materialist exchange with the West. The Mahatma paradigm recognized discontinuities between modern and non-modern in the Western context. Further Sri Aurobindo’s evolutionary logic combined with mysticism and supramental manifestation and Krishnachandra Bhattacharya’s gradations of thought from empirical, pure objective towards spiritual and transcendental – both represent different genres of postcolonial Indian thought. Hence contemporary Indian philosophy can be viewed as non-dialogical and context laden. Ramanujan had traditionally classified western philosophy as context free and Indian thought as context laden. Texts (transcendent) and contexts (immanent) are perceived to be in mutual interaction. In the revised version, contemporary western philosophy is direct and context free and contemporary Indian philosophy is non dialogical and context laden.

Nagarjuna’s thought was phenomenological – involving negation of causality, of movement, time and of Being, negation of knowledge, space, negation of negation and the suspension of judgement [32, 79]. Ramakrishna’s philosophy centred around theistic realism and this worldly asceticism [41, 3]. Two important features of Vivekananda’s neo-Vedanta are catholicity or synthesis of diverse views and the spirit of desireless action which is at the centre of ideal service to mankind. He called the Bhagvad Geeta the last of the Upanisads because he thought that the two ideals represented the maturity of Upanisadic thought [25]. Further it has been proposed that philosophical thought of the Bengal renaissance genre is characterised by cognitive identity and creative mentality; symbolised by an interface of three creative spaces – belief/knowledge, emotion and goal [24]. Such processes draw upon a creative being’s emotions and his beliefs and knowledge, in order to perform an organised set of mental actions intended to realise his needs, goals and desires. These actions entail accessing and retrieving relevant elements of one’s belief/knowledge space (including retrieval of schemata) forming links between them, drawing analogies, producing inferences and so on. A large part of the mental actions may occur in the unconscious – others may be performed consciously. Maharshi Devendranath Tagore propagated Vedanta based monotheism [21] and Rammohun Roy’s renaissance orientedness brought in aspects of rationality, existential humanism, free human will and humanist historiography, scientism and creativity [76]. Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy has elements of evolutionism and integrality – a spiritual worldview stemming from idealism. Consciousness is viewed as crucial to envisaging transformation as also the transcendental method [74, 22].

Gandhian philosophy has key tenets of – pluralism, liberation theology with a commitment to non-violence, ascetism and self-sufficiency to counter the ecological crisis. In terms of the world thus he spoke of return to nature, in terms of morality he discussed aspects of peace and non-violent relationality; in terms of society he discussed the natural classes and dignity of labour, decentralisation and trusteeship and political idealationalism emerged through satyagraha or quest for truth [26, 19, 34, 37]. Gandhi’s anti-imperial, non-violent energy was refined and fulfilled through acts of relational embodiment – his experience of vegetarianism, his quirky experiments
with alternative medicine and his renowned fasts. Sites of sociality, professional relationality and discursivity were crucial in shaping Gandhi’s political and ethical orientation to the times he lived in. These included his friendships in various ashrams, his practice as a lawyer in colonial South Africa and his English rendering of the Hindu Swaraj and tensions involved in translations thereof.

J. Krishnamurti’s teachings discuss the unconditioning of the mind to grasp the teachings of truth, beauty and love. The author equates the unconditioned mind with the perceptive mind. The revolution consists in our awareness that we possess a total or composite mind – conceptual as well as perceptive – and our free acceptance of the superiority of the perceptive mind. The revolution is to be accomplished by a constant awareness of all that is implied in our possession of the conditioned mind [27]. He proposes a theistic empiricism of sorts in discussing relationships as one of the pillars of human existence – the phenomenon of ‘othering the other’ as the core cause of conflict in relationships. This binary of self and other is dichotomous, it blurs direct perception and hence is detrimental to relationship formation and sustenance. Relationships according to Krishnamurti are a process of self revelation and seeking utilitarian gratifications is a proletarian endeavour – hence paving the way for unconditionality in relationships as a higher order utopia. This is also a transcendance of sorts in this endeavour traversing understandings of relationships from sense perceptions and gratifications towards actualisations and revisiting the I-other dichotomy [49].

Ramana Maharshi’s thoughts centre around aspects of existence – drawing from Vedanta as a term that indicates the nature of the highest reality – it is not bare existence as it is existence that is consciousness and bliss. The philosophy of Ramana Maharshi is the same as Advaita Vedanta – has for its aim self realisation. The central part taught in his philosophy is an inquiry into the nature of the self, the content of the notion ‘I’ [53, 70, 60]. Tilak’s philosophy centred on spirituality in action [46, 45] and Tagore’s thought had twin elements of humanism and nature veneration embedded within it [59, 58]. The philosophy of Sai Baba is based on a symbolic spiritualism of sorts – recognising the transcendent in the material. Symbolism is the recognition of a correspondence that exists between the physical universe and spiritual reality [61].

K. Satchidananda Murty’s philosophy focuses on two theme complexes – re-interpretation of traditional philosophy in a critical manner and the problematics of war and peace from a philosophical perspective. The overarching principles in his philosophy are: the need for metaphysical reflection; regulation and transformation – regulation in so far as it helps the individual to transcend an ordinary course of life through discipline of various kinds and normative in the sense that it makes life goal oriented, the goal being the realisation of the transcendent both in its immanence and transcendence; universality of religious experience; and that peace would be possible only through a spiritual reconstruction of society which calls for a spiritual vision. A society which is reconstructed on the basis of a spiritual vision will be a society of equals ensuring justice – social, political and economic – and providing equal opportunity for all through enforcing the system of rights and obligations [12]. In Murty’s thinking the cause of war and peace to what may be called human nature – two broad understandings of human nature – psychological and anthropological.
Sankara’s advaita thought and institutionalisation of non-dualism was seen in its contemporary manifestations in philosophical genres of Ramadasa, Sivananda, Yogananda and Prabhupada [63, 81]. Contemporary scholar of Kashmir Saivism, Swami Lakshman Joo – propounded an Advaita tradition with tenets of universality, equity and sacralisation in that frame of reference [8]. Hence from the classical schools, Jaina and Buddhist traditions, Bhakti and feminist philosophical genre in the medieval periods, several postcolonial flavours with orientalised overtones have emerged in the contemporary spaces.

**Seeking Interface and Epistemic Linkages with Social Work**

For the tapestry of Indian philosophy, the interface and epistemic linkages with social work can be sought on four major standpoints – worldviews, discourses on ‘being’ (and hence stances on humanism), ethics and moral reasonings, and visions of social utopia and transformation. Worldviews portray positions on lifeworld and cosmological notions; discourses on being look as the level of credence given to human existence and positions on the same; ethics (deontological and teleological) posit arguments that are of the order of value base that is attested; and, visions of social utopia and transformation discuss dimensions and desiderate of change and continuity as also a preferred world order and social existence. The following three tables look at the major standpoints of interface between Indian philosophy (classical, medieval and contemporary schools) and social work through the prescribed four organs of – worldviews, discourses on ‘being’, ethical and moral reasonings and visions of social utopia and transformation.

**Table 1: Major Standpoints of Interface: Classical Schools, Jaina and Buddhist Stances**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classical Schools, Jaina and Buddhist Stances</th>
<th>Worldviews</th>
<th>Discourses on ‘being’</th>
<th>Ethics and Moral Reasonings</th>
<th>Visions of Social Utopia and Transformation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Logical realism and atomistic pluralism</td>
<td>World as real juxtaposed against world as illusion conceptions</td>
<td>Embodiment as being</td>
<td>Combination of teleological and deontological ethics</td>
<td>Human freedom as the ultimate goal that can be attained through knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World as real</td>
<td>World as real juxtaposed against world as illusion conceptions</td>
<td>Possibility of being to attain transcendence through self-discipline</td>
<td>Action as the core to existence Ethics of praxis</td>
<td>Pluralism and co-existing juxtapositions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaina worldview</td>
<td>Idealism as the overarching lens with pragmatic overtones</td>
<td>Non-duality</td>
<td>Transcendence and salvation of beings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaina worldview</td>
<td>Letting beings becoming</td>
<td>Identity as the product of divine origination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist worldview</td>
<td>Jaina worldview</td>
<td>Inherent equity of beings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist worldview</td>
<td>Buddhist worldview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Major Standpoints of Interface: Medieval Schools and Bhakti, Feminist Philosophical Genre**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medieval Schools and Bhakti, Feminist Philosophical Genre</th>
<th>Worldviews</th>
<th>Discourses on ‘being’</th>
<th>Ethics and Moral Reasonings</th>
<th>Visions of Social Utopia and Transformation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medieval Schools and Bhakti, Feminist Philosophical Genre</td>
<td>Medieval Schools and Bhakti, Feminist Philosophical Genre</td>
<td>Medieval Schools and Bhakti, Feminist Philosophical Genre</td>
<td>Medieval Schools and Bhakti, Feminist Philosophical Genre</td>
<td>Medieval Schools and Bhakti, Feminist Philosophical Genre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3: Major Standpoints of Interface: Postcolonial Flavours with Orientalist Overtones**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postcolonial Flavours with Orientalist Overtones</th>
<th>Worldviews</th>
<th>Discourses on ‘being’</th>
<th>Ethics and Moral Reasonings</th>
<th>Visions of Social Utopia and Transformation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postcolonial Flavours with Orientalist Overtones</td>
<td>Postcolonial Flavours with Orientalist Overtones</td>
<td>Postcolonial Flavours with Orientalist Overtones</td>
<td>Postcolonial Flavours with Orientalist Overtones</td>
<td>Postcolonial Flavours with Orientalist Overtones</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dr. (Ms.) Samta P. Pandya
epistemology and
manysidedness of
reality
Negation of
absolutism
Buddhistic
penchant for logic
and empiricism
Importance of
subjectivity

As depicted in Table 1, the classical schools, Jaina and Buddhist stances depict a myriad worldviews – classical schools having positions of the order of logical realism and atomistic pluralism. Arguments oscillate between notions of the world as real vis-a-vis the world as illusory – the realist positions prevailing by and large. Further, embedded within an essentially idealist stance, there are pragmatic positions; Jaina and Buddhist positions proposing a manysidedness to reality, negation of absolutism and cruciality of empiricism. Beings are viewed at as epitomising embodiment – other discussions looking at the possibility of being to attain transcendence through self-discipline, non-duality, identity as the product of divine origination and inherent equity of beings. Ethics of praxis dominate, with ‘actions’ (which are within the ambit of morality) being the core to governing existence. Visions of social transformation validate – human freedom, pluralism and co-existing juxtapositions as well as transcendence.

### Table 2: Major Standpoints of Interface: Medieval Indian Philosophy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medieval Indian Philosophy</th>
<th>Discourses on ‘being’</th>
<th>Ethics and Moral Reasonings</th>
<th>Visions of Social Utopia and Transformation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Devotionalism as the Archimedean standpoint Feminine Soteriologies through the Sakta traditions, Buddhism and Vaisnavi literature Disembodied spiritualism and theocentrism</td>
<td>Beings as embodiment of Godhead or the Absolute Equanimity and Ontological Spatialisations for women</td>
<td>Inclusivity Equality Non-dualism as the abiding tenet</td>
<td>Bhakti as symbolising subaltern historiographies, re-examination of authorities and manifestations of dissidence Epistemic equity of feminine existential domains in Buddhism, Vaisnavi and Sakta traditions Syncretic sensibilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As depicted in Table 2, medieval Indian philosophy has depicted worldviews that have brought in aspects of devotionalism and feminine soteriologies. Elements of demystification and disembodiment of spiritualism and theocentrism are visualised, making thus a case for humanist stances. Beings are viewed as embodiment of godhead and there are propositions of equanimity and ontological spatialisations for all beings including women. These epistemic claims of equity manifest in terms of ethical reasonings that deliberate on – inclusivity, equality and non-dualism. These ethical and moral stances align organically to the core of social work and thus the interface gets operationalised. In terms of visions of social utopia and transformation, there are symbolisations of subaltern historiographies, manifestations of disdissence and syncretic sensibilities (as depicted in Bhakti) and epistemic equity of feminine existential domains – providing credence thereby to liberal feminist notions.

### Table 3: Major Standpoints of Interface: Modern and Contemporary Indian Philosophy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worldviews</th>
<th>Discourses on ‘being’</th>
<th>Ethics and Moral Reasonings</th>
<th>Visions of Social Utopia and Transformation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postcolonial recognitions with disjunctures and difference</td>
<td>Existential humanism Negating self-other dichotomy and hence claims to equality</td>
<td>Pluralism Non-violent relationality Truth discourses Cosmological ethics Spirituality in praxis Peace discourses</td>
<td>Transcendentalism and alterations in consciousness Liberation theology Supramental realisations and transformations re-instating metaphysical unity and equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juxtaposing of spiritualism with rationalism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theistic realism and this worldly ascetism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenological (as in Nagarjuna’s thought)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evolutionism, spiritualism, symbolic spiritualism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As depicted in Table 3, modern and contemporary Indian philosophies have depicted worldviews which represent postcolonial recognitions of disjunctures and difference, a realism which is inspired by theism and this worldly ascetism; phenomenology (Nagarjuna’s thinking) which primarily focuses on differential consciousness as also subjectivity and categories of understanding that emerges from reality itself.
Spiritualism as a worldview prevails taking evolutionist and symbolic overtones. Hence there is a certain alignment towards worldviews that have an amalgam of theism, existentialism, realism and phenomenology with postcolonial overtones. In terms of discourses on ‘being’, contemporary Indian thinking emphasises on humanism (with underpinnings of theistic existentialism) as also metaphysical claims to equality by negating the self-other dichotomy. Ethical discourses are primarily teleological and pragmatic with aspects of pluralism, non-violent relationality, truth discourses (absolute and relative), cosmological ethics (discursive and practical relationships with nature), spirituality in praxis (along Habermasian lines viewing spirituality and transcendence as imperatives for alleviating the crisis of scientism) and peace discourses – peace viewed as an absolute categorical imperative (along Kantian lines) to restore a moral and ethical world order. Hence in terms of visions of social utopia and transformation, contemporary thought supports transcendentalism and transformations in consciousness towards a metaphysical unity and equity. Hence claims to universalism do not take essentialist overtones, but discuss the co-existence of diverse claims and difference. Further along the lines of liberation theology, contemporary Indian philosophy adopts the public face of theism and envisages change from a theistic and faith-inspired standpoint. In that sense there is a certain credence provided to spiritual social capital for social change and development.

Conclusion
This paper has thus attempted to discuss the genres of Indian philosophy – classical, medieval and contemporary. In the classical phase, the six schools of Mimansa, Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya, Yoga and Vedanta along with the Jaina and Buddhists stances. The medieval phase is characterised by the Bhakti genus as well as feminist soteriologies, particularly depicted by the Vaisnavi traditions – which brought in subaltern voices to the foray. The contemporary phase has flavours of postcoloniality, theistic existentialism and metaphysical claims to equity with orientalist underpinnings. The interface with social work can be sought through four standpoints – worldviews, discourses on ‘being’ or existence, ethics and moral reasoning and visions of social utopia and transformation. Several positions have been unearthed in the same through historicity. Effectively, a case can be made for an indigenous epistemic base for social work.

References
[41] Isherwood, C., 1959, Ramakrishna and His Disciples, Simon and Schuster, New York.