

The background of the book cover is a close-up photograph of sand with several dark, reflective metal spheres scattered across it. The lighting is dramatic, with a strong orange and yellow glow from the left, creating deep shadows and bright highlights on the sand and the spheres. The spheres are positioned at various points: one in the top left, one in the top center, one in the middle right, and two in the bottom right corner. The overall texture is grainy and tactile.

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**IMPLICATIONS OF THE
PHILOSOPHY OF KANT**

KĀNTDARŚANER TĀTPARYA

**KRISHNACHANDRA
BHATTACHARYYA**

**TRANSLATED FROM BENGALI BY
J.N. MOHANTY
TARA CHATTERJEA**

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IMPLICATIONS OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF KANT

In remembrance of our teacher

Sanatani Dr. Ras Vihari Das

A great scholar who inspired a generation of students

Foreword

In the eighties of the century past, there was a lot of concern amongst intellectuals in Calcutta as to how to avoid Eurocentricism and write philosophy in self-conscious continuity with the great tradition of Indian philosophy. We read the great Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya's Bengali essay '*Cintaye Swaraj*', i.e. 'Swaraj in thinking' which comes to groundlessness in Indian tradition in thinking and writing. This requires that we read the great western philosophies such as Kant's, but understand him in the conceptual framework handed down by the Indian traditions. But how do we do that? We were good, we thought, at following the reverse task, i.e. presenting the Indian philosophies in the language of Kant or Hegel. But how to do the reverse, namely, to express Kantian philosophy, for example, in the language of Nyāya or Vedānta?

It is at this moment that Krishnachandra's Bengali essay, translated here into English came to my attention. A former student, Hiranmoy Banerjee drew my attention to it, and asked me if I would do it. Most enthusiastically I began the work, and was hoping to be able to publish the translation in 2004, the bicentenary of Kant's death. But little did I know what I was getting into at the end of my life, with my energy diminished by years of ailments. At last I asked my student Tara Chatterjea if she would do it, or if we both can do it. With her admiration for Krishnachandra, she readily assented,

and started the work in Calcutta, I remaining in Philadelphia. During my visits to the city, we would read the text and the translation together, discuss Kant's texts and Krishnachandra's original reading. The experience was frustrating, exhilarating and wonderful. So the book, mostly Tara's work, is here at last—a product of her devotion, hard work and unceasing love for abstract philosophy.

August 2011
Kolkata

J. N. Mohanty

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Translator's Introduction

I

Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya was born in 1875. He died in 1949. He has been hailed as the most original and creative Indian academic philosopher of the twentieth century.¹ He was a profound thinker but he published little. It is said that he often scribbled his thoughts on little pieces of paper and threw them away. His able son Late Professor Gopinath Bhattacharyya collected some of his finished articles and published them in two volumes as *Studies in Philosophy*.² Outside this, very little of his writings are available to us.

Krishnachandra wrote an article in Bengali on Kant's philosophy. One of his students, Ras Vihary Das, a well-known professor, wrote a book in Bengali on Kant. It is called *Kanter Darsana*.³ Krishnachandra's article is attached as an epilogue to this book. It is named *Kantdarsaner Tatparyya*, which translates as *Implications of the Philosophy of Kant* (hence forward to be referred to simply as *Implications*). It is not an exposition of Kant's philosophy; he does not provide a line by line commentary of any of Kant's texts or doctrines. He tries to integrate the three critiques, show their interconnections, and find out their essential theses. The book is a singular example of how Western philosophy can be creatively interpreted and appropriated by an Indian philosopher, using the concepts and terminology of Indian philosophy and writing in an Indian language.

It is very difficult to have a proper understanding of Krishnachandra's philosophy because the writing is terse, pithy and he seldom provides examples to elucidate a point. He uses many familiar terms, but assigns to them additional layers of meaning. He has used extensively the typical philosophical terms common in Indian philosophy. His language is close to that used in later Sanskrit writings on philosophy, especially that of Navya-Nyāya and that of Advaita Vedānta. This helps him to condense his thoughts and express himself with a minimum of words. But, this economy of words makes his writings more difficult to decipher, unless one is already familiar with his language. His style of presentation makes him unapproachable to many readers even in his native language.

Translating into a foreign language has its advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that when we adhere to the terms always used within a system, our thoughts are sometimes limited by those terms with their accepted meanings and nuances, which discourage original thinking on the part of the reader. Reading texts in languages other than the original often helps us reach the underlying thoughts easily. On the other hand, it is possible for a writer, steeped in his native philosophical thinking, to project ideas foreign to the original thinker and inadvertently distort the latter's views. When we examine Krishnachandra's writings on Kant, these are some important considerations to keep in mind.

In his works we can detect an acutely analytic mind and a deeply authentic thinker. It is said that his thinking was deeply influenced both by Kantian philosophy and Advaita Vedānta. Krishnachandra gives an idealistic interpretation of Kant. He has been profoundly influenced by Indian idealism, but in no way does he project Indian idealistic thoughts on Kant. In very general terms we can say that Indian idealism (to be found in most of the schools excluding Cārvāka, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika) tends to recognize a sharp distinction, an unbridgeable gulf,

between consciousness and object. It often devaluates the object, and if the idealism is monistic, then the object is accepted as an irrational surd,—a presented unreality. Their ethics is based on this metaphysical foundation, and they consider the realization of pure consciousness as the highest goal of life. Krishnachandra makes it abundantly clear that Kant never thinks of consciousness as an unchangeable substance. Both in speculative and moral philosophy consciousness is considered to be active and functional. Kant's position has not been in any way distorted. At the same time, it is to be borne in mind that Krishnachandra is not writing a commentary on Kant. It is a continuation with clear cut points of departure—more a constructive interpretation than a simple elucidation. The mark of his creative mind is present everywhere.

Interestingly, in another way he represents the typical Indian philosophical tradition. Here thoughts are developed in systems—through commentaries and sub-commentaries. Philosophers never claimed credit for any original thinking. They professed to unfold the thoughts of their masters and bring out the implications. They defended the positions held by their teachers against the criticism of their opponents. This continued for centuries. New horizons opened up, and in spite of the restrictive styles, mutually opposing schools evolved as explanations of the same text. Two different types of commentaries have been accepted in the Indian literary tradition. In one the commentaries did not deviate from the words of the original text. These are called *Bhāṣyas*. In the other, the commentator had liberty of exploring beyond the original text, expanding the thoughts contained therein. These are called *Vārttika*.⁴ Krishnachandra's *Implications* belongs to the second category. He explains, amplifies and perhaps also transcreates.

In what follows, I shall try to introduce some of the more interesting features of his new understanding of Kant.

II

Krishnachandra wrote an essay in English titled *Studies in Kant*. He says there, 'We have in moral willing a certitude about the reality of the self' (Section 2).⁵ This is the starting point of his *Implications*. This certitude is knowledge. It has been described as *knowledge of self as essentially willing*. He looks at the whole of Kantian philosophy as implication of this position. Practical Reason demands the existence of its object generally speaking. This object is constituted as a specific unique object by Pure Speculative Reason as Understanding. There are also certitudes in ethics, which arise out of pure feeling. Some of them are appropriate, some are not. They create a lot of confusion both in morality and in epistemology. These can be solved only through a discussion and evaluation of knowledge. The Critique of cognitive judgments is therefore accompanied by a Critique of moral and aesthetic judgments. In the end, Krishnachandra concludes that the whole exercise is an expansion of what is implied in knowledge of the self as willing.

It is to be noted that Krishnachandra is not appraising the Kantian concepts of morality and beauty or of the teleological nature of the world. He is basically interested in knowledge. Knowledge, for him, is the awareness of reality. He focuses on different types of other judgments *vis-à-vis* knowledge. Two features of his thinking are worth mentioning at this point. First he tends to integrate. He assimilates the Kantian categories and with that brings together all three Kantian Critiques. And he finds symmetries everywhere. Moral and aesthetic judgments, space and time, quality and quantity are all compared and contrasted. Within the same framework they often exhibit contrary features. In no way is Krishnachandra giving a running commentary on Kant. He is rather interested in an overall view of Kantian philosophy. He attracts attention

of the reader to the implications of different steps in Kantian philosophy.

In the next section I shall try to say something about the interesting points which he makes and give some explanation of the Indian terms which he uses.

III

Knowledge of the Self

We have in moral willing a certitude about the reality of the self. For Krishnachandra this is the most fundamental certitude in Kant's critical philosophy. It is called a cognition of practical kind and it is described as the knowledge of the self as non-object or as *aviśaya*. He describes it as *knowledge of the self as essentially willing*.

Krishnachandra holds that in Kant's view, there are two different types of knowledge: theoretical knowledge of objects and practical knowledge of self as willing. Knowledge of objects is limited to appearances; but we can know the noumenal self as practical reason, as pure willing, and not as an object. Krishnachandra asserts that in obeying the ought, we have knowledge of the self as *aviśaya* or non-object. Kant makes it abundantly clear that no *knowledge* of the noumenal self is possible. By describing the self as *aviśaya*, perhaps Krishnachandra is saying that this knowledge of the self is not theoretical knowledge. But his statement may be misleading. One may think that knowledge of self as object and as non-object are *qua* knowledge the same, the difference lies in their content. However, this is definitely not the Kantian position, nor is Krishnachandra asserting this. In all three Critiques, Kant makes it clear that awareness of the self, which he speaks of, can be anything but definitely is not theoretical knowledge. It has been variously called thought, faith, practical extension of knowledge, etc.

Krishnachandra asserts, 'Knowledge then (according) to Kant need not be theoretical knowledge and need not imply intuition: it is only theoretical or objective knowledge that has intuition as a necessary factor'⁶ (Section 2). (Most probably this interpretation of the Kantian position is borrowed from Fichte). But Kant would deny this in no uncertain terms. We find that according to Kant, *knowledge* is necessarily that of an object, and necessarily involves intuitions and categories. In the *Transcendental Dialectic* Kant shows that the 'I' which is present in all thought is merely a consciousness, which accompanies all concepts, only a transcendental subject of thought. But to turn it into 'I exist thinking' is to depend upon intuition from the inner sense, and the 'I' is transformed into an object, which belongs to the phenomenal world⁷ (B420).

For correct understanding of this comment we need to be acquainted with Kant's general opinion about knowledge. Kant held that knowledge arises out of application of pure categories of understanding to spatio-temporally formed data provided by the sensibility. But the forms are transcendently ideal. This implies that the objects of experience are also ideal. Theoretical knowledge cannot go beyond phenomena. In the *Transcendental Dialectic* he shows how we land into contradictions when categories are applied without any input from sensibility. But this worries him. He insists that the idea of noumenon cannot be completely dismissed. If we are unable to *cognize* objects as things-in-themselves, we at least must be able to *think* them as things-in-themselves. 'For otherwise there would follow the absurd proposition that there is an appearance without anything that appears' (Bxxvi). He clarifies what he means by 'thinking'. 'I can think whatever I like, as long as I do not contradict myself....But in order to ascribe objective validity to such a concept...something more is required. This "more" need not be sought in theoretical sources of cognition; it may also lie in practical ones.'⁸

Kant discusses the limits of speculative or theoretical knowledge in the *Preface to the Second Edition* of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. All speculative knowledge is limited to mere objects of experience. He adds that, 'At the same time, it must be carefully borne in mind that, while we surrender the power of *knowledge*, we still reserve the power of *thinking* objects as things-in-themselves' (Bxxiv). Reason is limited to what is given in sensibility and thus to appearance. When the limits and boundaries of theoretical knowledge are set and theoretical reason becomes restricted to the realm of experience, the question arises as to whether we can go beyond the limits from a practical point of view or not. The results of the *Critique of Pure Reason* may look apparently *negative* as it restricts theoretical knowledge to experience, but it has a definite *positive* value. We are convinced that there 'is an absolutely necessary practical use of pure reason (the moral use), in which reason unavoidably extends itself beyond the boundaries of sensibility, without needing any assistance from speculative reason...' (Bxxv). Thus he leaves open the possibility of practical reason to extend cognition.

Kant specially discusses this issue with reference to the concept of freedom. Natural causality belongs to the realm of appearances; here the preceding state produces the succeeding state strictly according to rules. The effect is necessarily determined. Freedom is the faculty of beginning a state from itself, here causality does not depend on another previous cause. Kant's solution is that in respect of what happens one can think of causality in two ways—either according to nature or from freedom. 'Freedom in the practical sense is the independence of the power of choice from necessitation of impulses of sensibility' (A534/B562). That in the object of sense which is not itself appearance, is called intelligible. Accordingly, if that which must be regarded as appearance in the world of sense has in itself a faculty which is not

an object of intuition through which it can be the cause of appearances, then one can consider the causality of this being in two aspects, as intelligible in its action as a thing-in-itself, and as sensible in the effects of that action as an appearance in the world of sense. He makes a number of subtle points here. Subject, as noumenon, begins its effects from itself without the action beginning in itself, for such action would involve time. Or in other words, natural causality belongs to the phenomenal world; moral causality involving freedom belongs to the noumenal world, but it can only be *thought* and not *known*.

This idea further unfolds in the two later *Critiques*. In the Preface to *The Critique of Practical Reason*, he asserts that the concept of freedom is the keystone of the whole of practical and speculative philosophy.⁹ The possibility of freedom is known *a priori*. It is known as the condition of the moral law, which we *know*. In the footnote attached to this part, he asserts that while freedom is the *ratio essendi* of the moral law, the latter is the *ratio cognoscendi* of the former.¹⁰ While the First *Critique* shows that the supersensible idea of freedom involves no internal contradiction, the Second *Critique* asserts that the Practical Reason itself provides reality to a supersensible object of the category of causality, i.e., to freedom. He is well aware that his position here involves 'the paradoxical demand to regard one's self, as subject to freedom, as noumenon, and yet from the point of view of nature to think of one's self as a phenomenon in one's own empirical consciousness'.¹¹ Man is conceived as a being in itself in relation to the moral law, whereas the same man is appearance in relation to natural law. He dwells in two realms.

He holds that morality presupposes freedom as a property of our will. Now, freedom is incapable of being thought by speculative reason. But morality does not require *speculative knowledge* of freedom. As long as it does not interfere with the