

Report of the Summer Course 2008

The School of Philosophy & Culture of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, Katra (SMVDU) has organized a Ten-Day Summer Course on “Language and Knowledge Representation: The Method of Indian Logic” during May 21 – 30, 2008, under the Directorship of Prof. Rama Shanker Misra, Dean of College of Philosophy, Culture & Languages, SMVDU. The Course was financially supported by the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi. Prof. V. N. Jha and Prof. Mrs. Ujjwala Jha of the University of Pune were the two instructors of the Course. The content of the Course was envisaged by Prof. Jha in the year 2000 to disseminate the methodology of the Navya-Nyāya Language so that one can aspire for the kind of clarity and unambiguity in one’s ideas and expressions which the Navya-Naiyāyikas were systematically advocating from the tenth century onwards.

The Course began on 21st May with a thought provoking remark by Prof. Jha that the Vedic ritualistic culture has been instrumental in the development of all domains of knowledge in India. In his introductory lectures Prof. Jha alluded to the continuance of the Vedic literature *in toto* and said that the development of the technique of preservation of texts, *interalia*, was necessitated by the requirement of the continuance of the Vedic rituals. The purposive inquiry charged the intellectual energy of human beings which finally culminated in the blossoming of various disciplines of study such as phonetics, mathematics, astronomy and other basic sciences. However, these disciplines were aiming at a particular domain of knowledge and were not considerate about general questions pertaining to the reality and existence as such. Hence, the next step in the intellectual pursuit was a systematic development of reflective or philosophical investigation.

Ever since the beginning of reflective thinking, questions related to the origin of cosmos, the essence of human beings, the phenomenon of human cognition etc. were in fore among the mind-boggling riddles of our existence. Early human inquiry was naturally expressed in simple colloquial languages. Even though the natural language is capable of fulfilling the emotional demands

of human beings, it involves very many concepts which are obfuscating to an analytic mind. And, therefore, a natural language apparently does not fulfill the intellectual demands of a rational inquiry. Hence, one of the fundamental concerns of the thinkers has been how we should communicate our ideas so that everything intended is communicated and grasped and nothing un-intended is allowed to intrude in the speaker-hearer communicative relationship. Moreover, a philosophical thinking relates itself to asking very general questions pertaining to our existence and reality. Its general attempt requires a high level of linguistic precision so that its expressions do not become susceptible to misunderstanding or leave a scope to perverted extraction of their meaning. It is with this objective that the Navya-Nyāya thinkers sought to develop an artificial language for the scholastic community. This language was considered to be so precise that all the successive philosophical systems of different orientation had adopted it as the standard language of scholarly discussion.

After introducing necessary metaphysical background of Indian philosophical systems Prof. Jha explicated the theoretical aspect of the Navya-Nyāya method of logical analysis. The uniqueness of this method lies in its promise to reveal before the hearer exactly the same world which the speaker has cognized and is now verbalizing so as to enable the hearer to grasp the *same* content encoded in the linguistic expression. In this communicative process, the Navya-Naiyāyikas, sometimes obsessively, use delimiters (*avacchedakas*) to restrict the semantic scope of a concept to their *intended-meaning*. Mere theoretical presentation of the artificial language developed by the Navya-Naiyāyikas would have been elusive had there not been the demonstration of its application. And this job was very ably and convincingly accomplished by Prof. Mrs. Ujjwala Jha in her Text Reading classes. In her classes, she graphically demonstrated the effectivity of the expressions of the Navya-Nyāya language and methodology. Nyāyaratna Maheśchandra's *Navyanyāyabhāṣāpradīpa*, written sometime in the early nineties of 19th century A.D., was thoroughly studied. The

Text Reading classes have not only exposed the Navya-Nyāya language to the participants but also generated keen interest in Sanskrit language in them.

There were 40 participants in the Course belonging to different parts of our country including Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Jammu & Kashmir. Thus the Course has been a National Course in true sense; not only that, with the participation of Mr. Hugo David of the University of Paris-III, it has acquired an International character (*avacchedaka*). Out of forty participants of the Course, 35 have appeared in the examination conducted on 30th May in the morning session between 9:30 – 10:30. Two students, Mr. Hugo David and Mr. Sanjay Kumar (an MA student of Philosophy of SMVDU) have performed extraordinarily well and secured 100 percent marks in the examination. They were awarded with a big zero, that is, “O” which stands for “Outstanding”. 8 participants have secured “A+”, 13 have got “A”, 7 have got “B” and only 5 got “C”. The grading list shows the success of the Course and the effectivity of the class instructions and the aspiration of participants for knowledge accumulation. We hope that the Course will not only stimulate research oriented teaching in various institutions but also create a new vista for inquiry into traditional knowledge of our country.

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