

# Listening to Philosophers

Sunil Sahasrabudhey (May 2019)

When all politics is bereft of ideological considerations, there is need of a philosophical intervention. When ordinary life gets very muddled and moral imperatives fail to provide the criteria of resolution, philosophical intervention becomes imperative and inevitable. The world today appears to be in the grip of changes which have no promise for a better world.

What is the contemporary philosophical scene which may come to rescue? Where do we look for philosophers, who we should like to listen to?

Where we look for may be - new epistemological foundations in the wake of the emergence of the virtual world, reflections on the human condition in the wake of the new forms of oppression let loose by the New Empire, debates on Climate Justice, culturally rooted thought on economics and politics, holistic thought as against piecemeal, art as preferred way of thinking over science, *lokavidya darshan* when organized knowledge is seen as hand maiden of the state, neighbourhood as primary form of social organisation and the like.

Every department of human life and social organization has undergone huge changes since the appearance of the internet and the world wide web, close to 30 years ago. Economics, politics, trade, social organization, finance, industry, education, science research and finally also ordinary life, everything has undergone great changes. *Vidya Ashram* has tried to look at these changes by its research, investigations and dialogues pertaining to the world of knowledge, particularly the flux in it. In the process it encountered radically different approaches for understanding the world which

had different epistemological perspectives and pointed towards new ontological constructions. New languages and idioms can be seen emerging to enable these approaches to be true to their contexts including the emancipatory needs of the people - farmers, women, artisans, service providers, workers, students, adivasis and those in the market doing business with tiny capital. One would often find that these approaches do not accept the riders of logic, values and methods of modern science. Some of these approaches are broadly mentioned below.

- The Rights of Mother Earth and *buen vivir* that emerged in some countries of South America like Bolivia, Ecuador and part Colombia.
- *Lokavidya Jan Andolan* in India - an explicitly epistemological movement creating the concept of *lokavidya*.
- European Students Movement against corporatization of education creating the idea of Cognitive Capitalism.
- *La Via – Campesina*, an international farmers organization and movement focusing on Climate Change and Food Sovereignty – suggesting a *Swaraj*like reorganization of societal priorities.

There are explicit philosophical writings in the context of these movements and phenomena. There is also wide ranging philosophical reflection which is not rooted explicitly in these phenomena. They come from different ends like: primacy of art in life and understanding, reassertion and innovation of traditional ways of practice and understanding by the subaltern classes, new critique of Science focusing on Information Technology, Biotechnology, Nano-science and Cognitive Science, network focused

ontology, primacy of communication over production leading to fundamental changes in how history and science need to be viewed etc.

It is suggested that this note be shared with a small group of persons who may be interested in this, seek their views on it and if they would be willing to contribute to shape this dialogue with philosophers and among philosophers. The discussion in this group needs to be very open both on content as well as form of this 'listening to philosophers'. It can be conceived on a global scale with virtual and actual forms intertwined.