

DAYAJI'S LAST WRITTEN PIECE

Dr. Ravindra K.S. Choudhary

It was a cold, clam November morning. I woke up at eight without any plan what to do till evening. The day seemed to pass at a snail's pace. My first book had already seen the light of the day. It seemed as though I had used up my stockpile of study and research, ideas and insights all at once. I opened the bedroom window and stood staring emptily into the vast stretch of space and time. My thoughts again turned towards my recent work. The Book could have been better written than its published form, I thought. Unsurprisingly perhaps every beginner in the art of writing is prone to suffer from this sort of hangover.

I busied myself with routine tasks. There was no better alternative to bring the dull day back to life. It did not take me so long to get ready to go out and to reach my place of work. There was a letter for me from the other side of the globe. I opened it impatiently. Here's an account of the unforgettable letters of the letter.

05.11.2007

Dear Dr. Ravindra K.S. Choudhary,

My name is Daniel Raveh. I teach Philosophy in Tel-Aviv University and was assisting Prof. Daya Krishna in his philosophical work for the last decade. As you probably know, Dayaji passed away exactly one month ago, leaving many of us heartbroken. The last letter he dictated was to you. Hence I'm attaching the letter, Dayaji's last written piece.

All the Best with your work on Advaita Vedanta.

With kind regards

Dr. Daniel Raveh
Department of Philosophy
Tel-Aviv University, Israel.

On reading it I was torn between wonderful surprise and a sense of great loss. My first book could favourably impress a philosopher of such stature, even in the very last moments of his life!

Prof. Daya Krishna - popularly known as Dayaji - was born in Delhi in 1927, got his higher education from Delhi University, severed several leading intellectual fora of national and international levels, retired from Rajasthan University after serving there for many years, and passed away in Jaipur in 2007. He has left behind an extraordinarily rich legacy of writings on many issues in philosophy and allied disciplines. He was undoubtedly one of our most creative academic philosophers of the last century (Miri, 2009: xi). He was "one of the most widely acknowledged doyens among the living philosophers in India" (ICPR Newsletter, 2007-08 :26). Dayaji was the editor of the Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research (JICPR) till he breathed his last. It was only due to his Socratic spirit and phenomenal scholarship that "the Journal became the mouthpiece of Indian philosophical thinking throughout the corners of the globe" (Mishra :x).

Just before his death on 5th October 2007, Dayaji wrote a couple of letters to me in response to my book - Wittgensteinian Philosophy and Advaita Vedānta: A Survey of the Parallels (Choudhary, 2007). It will be well here to have a look at the Book. One of its reviews has been done by the Professor & Head of Osmania University English Department, and it seems to be of wider interest. According to the

reviewer, - Comparative studies, to find parallels in this case, of Western philosophy and Indic religious systems, is a growing field of intensive investigation; it is certainly a commendable attempt and promises a common ground which, alongside religious harmony, may also prove to be fruitful philosophical exploration. Especially so when the attempt tries to correlate the most elusive and also the exceptionally original philosophy of Wittgenstein and equally though Advaita Vedānta - for instance, a pioneering study by Harold Coward of Nagarjuna and Derrida comes to mind. It is in this hinterland that Professor [sic] Choudhary's study finds its moorings (Sivaramakrishna, 2011 : 465).

In his first letter of 21st August 2007, Dayaji viewed the Book as a 'serious' and 'well- thought' work on the subject and he offered me some constructive criticism. He went on to suggest me: "Why not write something on what you have said in the book for publication in the JICPR. I will be happy to publish it in the JICPR as I think you have tried to say something in the book and have made serious attempts to do what you have undertaken to do, in it".

In my reply to it, dated 27.09.2007, I responded to the critical points in brief, and accepted the opportunity to write an article for JICPR. Coincidentally, it was a crucial phase for me at the personal front. I was in dire need of time and space to tackle some personal predicaments.

Again, on the very last day of his life Dayaji wrote another encouraging letter to me with further suggestions. His second and the last letter ran thus:

Jaipur
05.10.07

Dear Dr Ravi KSC,

Nice to hear from you and learn that you are thinking of writing

something on the subject as suggested for the JICPR. Please take your time. Good articles are not written in a hurry.

As you seem to have been closely interested in Advaita Vedanta in Wittgenstein's perspective and also Wittgenstein in Advaitic perspective, you might find the enclosed article by Prof. Srinivas Rao interesting as it deals with an aspect of Śamkara's thought which as far as I know, has not been highlighted.

There is also the problem of understanding what Śamkara exactly means by the distinction between Purusatantra and Vastutantra implying and arguing that Brahman alone can be "really real" which is absolutely independent of whatever man may think or see or do.

Wishing you all the best.

With regards.

Your sincerely,
(Daya Krishna)

This was "Dayaji's last written piece", according to Dr. Daniel Raveh who mailed it to me from Tel-Aviv. We have also a report that Dayaji dictated the letter to his old aide Mr. D.D. Mathur on the 5th October 2007. In the evening he was going to offer a glass of water to a guest, but before he could do so he breathed his last. He died quite in the Wittgensteinian manner: [A man should die in his boots]. Like a Jeevanmukta, Dayaji blurred the line between life and death in an elegant way (Mishra : xii).

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