

The relation of a particular Indian philosophical system to the socio-economic and cultural milieu within which it arose has not yet been articulated in a generally accepted form. Some think that all philosophical systems form part of a super-structure largely determined by the underlying sub-structure of socio-economic relations in a given society. Others on the contrary see the contribution of the milieu to a philosophy as minimal. It will be useful, wherever adequate data are available to assess the extent to which the cultural milieu supplies the basic categories of thought, shapes the perception of the central problem in human existence, and influences the choice of life-ideals to be pursued. One may also find, on examining the evidence, that the proportion between the influence of social milieu and that of the personal experience of the philosopher varies from case to case.

It has been argued, but not yet convincingly demonstrated, that the purpose of most systems of philosophy is to legitimize existing power structures and stratifications of authority, or alternatively to question authority structures in society, in order to validate the claims of a group slowly climbing to the top. The issue needs to be studied in relation to a representative sampling of Indian philosophical systems.

Even those who argue for the strict sub-structure - super-structure dichotomy admit that ideas arising in the superstructure in turn react on the sub.structure giving direction to needed social and economic change. A Seminar to assess Indian philosophy in the World Context can profit from studies, from somewhat opposing ideological standpoints on the question &

To what extent, if any, does the socio-economic and cultural milieu influence the origin of and become influenced by the spread of particular Indian philosophies ?

Does society create philosophy ?

Does philosophy change society ? How ?

The studies should document the answer to these questions, as well as to the question of how social and personal experiences influence or shape a philosophy.

It has been argued, for example, that the caste system was a way of resolving social conflict. Systematic and rigorous Indian philosophy does not, some say, engage in overt justifications of the caste system, or seek to legitimise the domination by one caste over the others. Is this so ?

Does any school of Indian philosophy (e.g. Madhwa) consciously strive to provide galvanisation for a society under threat of being overwhelmed by a strident outside culture ?

Many Indian philosophies appear to present a pratipaksha to an existing pratipaksha. Was this a social need of one group asserting itself over against another ? Is this not a reflection of the socio-cultural milieu in a particular philosophy ?