



Editorial

Philosophy in the Time of the Covid 19 Pandemic

As a section editor of the journal, *Tattva -Journal of Philosophy*, I became aware of the conundrum quite early; the challenge of reviewing and bringing forth a myriad range of philosophical issues and deliberations when the world, my family and friends, students and collaborators are fighting against the deadly virus, the contagion. The process of connecting and coordinating changed drastically, and so did our processes of reflection. The privileges of having access to food, shelter and work stood in stark contrast to the disturbing images of lives lost in their struggle to gain access to these basic amenities. Theorists, policymakers, and academics deliberated on questions of inequity and the future of education, health and our moral universes. The nature of grief, nature of living, education, culture and sociality saw a massive change during these trying times. This is important because as the Cartesian dictum proposed, we are thinking about the pandemic and reflecting on our existence, moral universes, and lives and therefore are able to live in a certain manner (Descartes, 2003).

Amidst these, the reflection of many of us, including philosophers has been to constantly question our relevance, contribution and connectedness as scholars and as people surviving the pandemic. Velázquez (2020) opines,

There are spontaneous questions that arise in the face of the current situation and which seem reducible to a single fundamental one: What is philosophy for? Or: "What have philosophers written in the past in the face of thousands of deaths caused by the event of an epidemic?" Some ask themselves more concretely in what philosophers can contribute, what effective contribution they have made or can give to the solution of the problems that are oppressing us, as if they were a caste of specialists. This perspective,

rather than magnifying the figure of philosophers, diminishes them. (Velázquez, 2020)

Velázquez's article brings forth the various possibilities of philosophy during these times of crisis; a medical, bioethical and moral crisis that different sections of the people are facing and concluding with the possibility of philosophical deliberations as a human enterprise that can offer means to continue amidst the crisis. The pandemic brought forth issues of fragility, for example the virus spread across the world irrespective of the diversity in demographic and other allied aspects which lay naked the questions of power and privilege, albeit in different ways, vulnerability of individuals, personally and professionally, impotence (inability of contributing to anything substantial). It posed a challenge to the emerging problematic of human omnipotence rooted in celebratory discourses of trans and posthumanism, and forced us to rethink our perspectives on material conditions, questions of solidarity and accountability, and the inevitability of death.

This was also a reflective moment for us to revisit few philosophers and their deliberations. I would like to bring our attention to the book, *The Plague* by Albert Camus. The story set in Algeria affected by an epidemic is strangely reminiscent of the questions about human condition, social responsibility, inequity and justice that we are facing during this continuing pandemic.

Apart from few important questions that the book raised, one issue was how especially during pandemic, the moral question, the question of tolerance and the question on equity became an important issue. The book touches upon two distinct events; historical context of the French occupation and the literal context of the plague, the epidemic (Illing, 2020). The existential questions marking the location and purpose of human existence in these times evident in the novel helps us reflect on this trying times as well.

One of the major lessons that the pandemic taught us was the power of collective. From mundane everyday affairs to critical healthcare, from vaccine production to distribution, from accountability for solely oneself to the accommodation of the other

not as a matter of choice driven by pity or philanthropy but from the basic desire to live and continue. The collective as evident in Camus, who says, “Well, that’s all well and good, if you’re interested in making the case for an individual ego. But I’m more interested in knowing how to make a case for the collective, rather than for the individual.” And so for him, it’s not so much “I think, therefore I am.” It’s “I resist, and therefore we are” (Illing, 2020). The purpose of referring to the idea and reiteration of the purpose of the collective is what drives this issue and nurtures it.

We have six research articles for this issue. Thokchom Shantilata Devi and L. Bishwanath Sharma in their article, *Truth, Identity and Religious Pluralism in Contemporary Society: Gandhian Response* provide an analysis of a Gandhian perspective in the realm of truth and pluralism. *A Priori Problems with the Metaphysical and Causal Reduction of Consciousness* by Kamarajsinh Vaghela is a study on revisiting Searle’s ideation of causality and metaphysical reality of consciousness. In the article, *Feuerbach’s Concept of Religious Alienation and its Influence*, Sujit Debnath studies quite extensively how the concepts of human essence, Marxian understanding of alienation and religious belief work in tandem. Shabin Varghese provides a detailed exposition on scientific language and the applicability of Kuhn’s Theory in his article, *Kuhn’s Theory of Incommensurability: A Special Reference to Theory of Meaning*. *Kant on Radical Evil: A Pragmatic Reading* by Anthony Rimai provides a critical analysis of Kant’s notion of radical evil and its critiques. *Understanding Advaita: A Panikkarean Perspective for a Cross-Cultural Journey* by Maria Delasal Viswas provides a means to reflect on a collective and plural existence.

I wish to thank the editorial team for their patience, the authors for the contribution and the reviewers for providing us with their critical feedback. Let us explore this issue together and as a section editor, would request and encourage you to write to us for questions, feedback or suggestions.

Rolla Das
Section Editor

References

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- Velázquez, G. L. (2020). The role of philosophy in the pandemic era. *Bioethics Update*, 6(2), 92-100.