MUMBAI PHILOSOPHY RESEARCH SCHOLARS' FORUM

19TH MARCH 2019

TIMING: 10:00- 17:00 Hours

Panel I: Faith(s), Freedom(s) and History(-ies)	Panel II: Knowledge, Language and Mind: Perspectives from different traditions.
Towards an Ambedkarite Philosophy of Freedom by Mr. Danish Hamid	*From Function to Meme: Evolution of Dennett's Philosophy of Mind* by Mr. Abhishek Yadav.
Mirabai's Krishna Bhakti by Mr. Amit Deshmukh	*Consciousness in Śramaṇa Tradition with Respect to Yogācāra Buddhism.* By Mrs. Varsha Shah
Morality, Society and State from Jaina Perspective by Mrs. Krupa Shah.	*What Can We Know – A Critical Appraisal of 'What' and 'How' in the Process of Knowing in Indian Epistemology* by Supriya Deshmukh.
Prapatti as a device for Religious Experience: A Sri-Vaishnava Viewpoint by Mr. Sudhindra Maganahalli.	*Communication, Conversational Implicatures and Cooperative Principle: A Glimpse of Normativity in Grice's Intention Based Semantics* by Ms. Ankita Jha.
Fissured Histories: Towards the Antithesis of Universal Developmental History by Rintu Borah.	*A Critique of Analysis in Analytic Philosophy* by Mr. Vaibhav Narula.

1. ***Towards an Ambedkarite Philosophy of Freedom*** by Mr. Danish Hamid

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to trace out the philosophical trajectory which leads up to a theory of political freedom as a version of 'positive liberty' as it appears in the work of B.R.Ambedkar. Positive liberty has been defined as the possibility of acting in a way that helps one be in control of one's life and realize the fundamental purposes of life.(Carter, 2016)[1] For the purposes of this paper, I am calling this view of freedom 'positive' only in the sense that it is fundamentally opposed to negative liberty which is defined as the absence of constraints and interferences. Also, as Ian Carter writes, "whereas negative liberty is usually attributed to individual agents, positive liberty is sometimes attributed to collectivities, or to individuals considered primarily as members of given collectivities."(Carter, 2016) This, as I shall show, rings especially true for Ambedkar. In leading up to Ambedkar's version of 'positive liberty', what I shall call 'freedom as growth', I will engage in an essential ground-clearing exercise, a reconstruction of some of Ambedkar's most important philosophical commitments.

I have attempted to present Ambedkar as a pragmatist thinker, or at the very least, someone who held many core pragmatist commitments, which best explain his political writings, which as I shall try to show, are threatened to be misunderstood in separation from his core philosophical views. Ambedkar did not have the luxury of time to put into words a rigorous philosophical foundation for his political writings.

In laying down his theory of freedom, I shall engaging in a proxy effort of doing that post-facto. In enumerating some of his philosophical commitments, I shall rely on Ambedkar's own texts, and a simultaneous reading of Ambedkar's and Dewey's work. John Dewey is of course the most important philosophical influence in Ambedkar's life as confirmed by Ambedkar's own statement that he "owed all [his] intellectual life to him [Dewey]".(Stroud, 2018, 64) Scott Stroud, who has done the most to trace the influence of Dewey on Ambedkar, has focused most of his attention to Ambedkar's views on Democracy

and his conversion to Buddhism. But as I shall try to show, the influence of Dewey runs deeper than what is acknowledged. The kind of connections between Ambedkar and Deweyan pragmatism that I am interested in have not been discussed in the literature, except perhaps marginally in the work of

K.N.Kadam (Kadam 1997, 1-33), who offered an accurate, but nevertheless thin account of Ambedkar's philosophical influences. I shall try to show that Ambedkar's theory of political freedom follows logically from his view of the 'social individual'. Having borrowed his philosophical conception of a person from

John Dewey's philosophy, Ambedkar creatively employs it in his mature writings like The Buddha and His Dhamma (1957), Untouchables, or the Children of India's Ghetto (2014, unpublished in Ambedkar's life) and even texts like Annihilation of Caste(1936).

Keywords: Ambedkar, Dewey, Freedom, Pragmatism, Liberalism, Republicanism, Social Psychology.

About the Speaker: Danish Hamid is a lawyer by training and currently a graduate student in Philosophy at IIT Bombay. His areas of research interests are Moral and Political Philosophy and the Philosophy of Law, and he is specializing in the thought of John Dewey and B.R. Ambedkar."

2. *Mirabai's Krishna Bhakti* by Mr. Amit Deshmukh

Abstract: Mirabai had a very intense devotion or pure unalloyed bhakti for Lord Krishna since her childhood. Mirabai had earlier enquired during her childhood to her mother about her would be bridegroom. Her mother had replied to her that Lord Krishna who is the purna purushottam bhagawan as per the scripture Shrimad Bhagavata maha purana (1.3.28) will be her bridegroom in the future. Mirabai had to get married against her wishes to prince Bhojraj of the Sisodia. Her husband was heartbroken when he came to know about her intense devotion to Lord Krishna in the conjugal mood, but he still was friendly, supportive, understanding, caring and protected her and also helped her in building a temple for Lord Krishna within their palace complex. Her husband appreciated her poetic talents which she utilized to express her selfless devotion or

bhakti for Lord Krishna. Mirabai's sister in law, Udabai had tried to defame the innocent Mira. She had informed some of the concerned persons that Mirabai was secretly in love with someone. Some people even tried to kill Mirabai. She was sent a basket with a cobra inside along with a message that the basket contained a garland of flowers. She was also sent a cup of poison saying that it was nectar by someone. Mirabai had offered the cup to Lord Krishna as prasadam or the sacred remnants of the Supreme master. It was real nectar to her. When the torture and scandals continued, Mirabai sent a letter to Tulsidas and asked for his advice. Tulsidas had replied that the relationship between the individual soul and the supreme soul lord Krishna is the only eternal relation and rest all the material relationships are temporary and will end with the power of time.

About the Speaker: Having completed his M.A. in philosophy from Annamalai University, he is planning to pursue research in the subject of Gaudiya Vaishnavism from the Department of Philosophy, University of Mumbai.

3. *Morality, Society and State from Jaina Perspective* by Mrs. Krupa Shah.

Abstract: Morality is the essence of humanity. human beings are not only rational but moral being because of their capacity to evolve culture. Morality is intimately related to all aspects of human life in terms of religion, culture, economics, politics, art and literature. Moral actions or human effort can be performed at two levels. In one sense it is the means to achieve goal in one's life. One can have kama, arth, dharma and moksha as a goal in one's life. In the second sense the term effort or purusartha is understood as the means of self realization. According to jain tradition one should do purusarth for the ultimate goal of moksha.

Sramana tradition is dominated by asceticism which was a vital concept of jaina as well as Buddhist tradition. Sramana in jain tradition referred to any ascetic who renounced secular life and society in order to focus solely on finding religious truth and to achieve liberation. Liberation is the state of getting rid from rebirth. The way of life jain ascetic lives is very ideal, moral and spiritual. It is interesting to examine the code of conduct (mahavratas) he performs not

for only self purpose ultimate goal of liberation but he developed moral virtues like compassion, equality, equanimity, fearlessness and friendliness. His role of action is not limited to religious or spiritual at personal level but he transcends the culture so at social level also.

Some concepts about jain sramana are need to be discuss. The concept of performing very strict codes of conduct, rigorous austerities, aloofness, detachment from worldly affairs, minimizing of activities give rise to various questions regarding his connection to the world and involvement to the other fields except spirituality like education, sociology, politics, literature etc.

The paper read the counter perspective of above conceptions. There is no sharp distinction between spirituality and morality. A person who is spiritual is also moral in his actions. Aloofness and detachment from the world is for realizing impermanent nature of the materialistic world and relations. But that does not mean that a jain mendicant cannot perform social and other responsibilities. Their engagement with the world emerges as a thinker, as a philosopher, as a social reformist, as a political adviser add great moral values to the society and states. Their actions are without desire and intentions are passionless. They conduct and live moral values like non-violence, non-possession, Anekant view, compassion, friendliness and fearlessness. They give ideals to the people. Through their moral character they become the role model and character building of people.

About the Speaker: Mrs. Krupa Shah is pursuing her M.Phil. from the Department of Philosophy, University of Mumbai.

4. ***Prapatti as a device for Religious Experience: A Sri-Vaishnava Viewpoint*** by Mr. Sudhindra Maganahalli.

Abstract:

This paper is an attempt at a critical analysis of the origin and development of the notion of 'Prapatti' in the context of Sri Vaishnava school of thought. The Sri Vaishnava School is traditionally said to be founded by Ramanujacharya, a 12 th century Vaishnaivite saint and an Acharya with his unique take on the Brahmasutras.

The current paper looks at Ramanujachraya's contributions to the idea of Prapatti. The term Prapatti has been used interchangeably with the word 'Saranagati.' Traditional accounts accept the authorship of Ramanujacharya with respect to the works called 'Gadya-Trayi.' The Gadya – Trayi are three poetry form texts written from the point of view of a devotee having a dialogue with the Deity. Of the three texts, the 'Saranagati Gadya' talks in detail about the idea of surrender to the Divine. Traditionally this forms the basis of the idea of Prapatti for the Sri Vaishnava School. Further ideas of Prapatti have been developed in detail by the successors to Ramanujacharya, most prominent being Vedanta Desika and Pillai Lokacharya. Recent western scholarship (Lester Robert, Van Buitenen) has started a debate as to whether the Gadyas can be rightly attributed to Ramanujacharya. This has given rise to multiple studies and different points of views. This paper shall take them into account as well. Finally this paper seeks to talk about a purely philosophical concept of Prapatti, devoid of its historic context and seeks to apply it in a current context as an approach to religion; taking into account the religious experience it attempts to bring.

About The Speaker: He is a Junior Research Fellow pursuing his Ph.D. with the Department of Philosophy, University of Mumbai under the guidance of Dr. Uma Shankar.

5. *Fissured Histories: Towards the Antithesis of Universal Developmental History* by Rintu Borah.

Abstract: Every claim that universality makes always has the vestiges of particularity. It carries the traces of the identity(s) in whose name that claim is made. Such a claim grounds itself from a historiography written in the universal method. The effort to assume such a uniform, ahistorical ground is, in fact, never universal. The postmodern break has enabled us to deconstruct all

universalizing worldviews and to not privilege any certain historical frame. More than being a site of essentialization, modernity must be made a site of active proliferation of cultures. In this paper I shall interrogate this idea by evoking Kant's old question again: Is it possible to write a Universal History of humankind, taken from a cosmopolitan perspective at all? Corollary to this, another set to immediately come: Do all or most societies must go in a certain uniform direction, or should their histories follow a proliferative path?

The paper aims at tracing the developmental notion of history that is often given a universal character but is only the Western particular, particularly through Kant's Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim. Debates about narratives of historical progress have renewed scholastic efforts to interpret Kant's essay anew. In this essay that was written three years after The Critique of Pure Reason was published, Kant gave nine propositions that continue to raise questions for philosophers, historians, and social theorists of today. The propositions that have a universal and necessary form that goes far in idealizing what is 'purposive', 'determined', and 'natural dispositions' in all life forms. For Kant, nature wants all potentials to be fully developed (First Proposition), human potential can only be fully developed in civil society (Fifth Proposition), and civil society needs, in the long run, a cosmopolitan state (Seventh Proposition). I shall critically examine Kant's key ideas in the essay like the teleological system of history, unsociable sociability, cosmopolitanism, the hidden plan of nature and providence, all of which support his end of creation thesis- that humankind can be considered as the ultimate end of nature. I reject such a central notion of developmental universalism to propose a counter thesis of fissured histories; that all histories across the world do not necessarily have to converge into a

universal paradigm of developmental history. This is a movement towards a unified antithesis of universal development history which will not become universal like the old universal, but will seek to speak more for the subaltern particularities without entirely doing away with the universal. At the heart of such a project lies the attempt to find coherent theoretical alternatives to all political theories operating within the old universal. This, I finally argue, may provide for those societies living in the periphery for too long to come to equal grounds with the historical positions of those societies which have assumed the universal position for most part of human history.

Key words: Universal History, Teleology, Fissured histories.

About the Speaker: Rintu Borah is pursuing M.phil degree in Planning and Development from Indian Institute of Technology Bombay. He holds a Masters degree in Development Studies from Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati. Currently he is in this final year and is writing his M.Phil dissertation under the supervision of Prof. Siby K. George. His current interest areas are ethnic philosophy, political ethics, development in global south and community.

PANEL II: Knowledge, Language and Mind : Perspectives from Different Traditions.
(14:00-17:00 Hours)

1. *From Function to Meme: Evolution of Dennett's philosophy of Mind* by Mr. Abhishek Yadav.

Abstract: With Ryle's serious blow to Descartes dualism (1949), and then with the publication of UT Place's article Is Consciousness a Brain Process (1956) started the serious consideration of a strict physical system. Within this strict physicalist framework, John Searle and Daniel Dennett are the two very prominent philosophers. Both Searle and Dennett rely on Natural Selection to explain the origin of mind from brain however they differ from each other in the treatment of intentionality. The paper will examine this in brief. Searle sees intentionality to be a biological capacity, Dennett on the other hand holds no such relation. He attempts to explain intentionality and other related phenomena by providing a functional account of those in physical terms. His earlier emphasis was in pragmatic anthropology rather than trying to look for its ontological foundations. The paper presents in brief the curve of Dennett's philosophical journey and how his conception of human consciousness and mind has evolved throughout his journey. In recent times, Dennett uses the concept of memes to explain how mind came into being from biological brain. The term meme was introduced by Richard Dawkins in his book The Selfish Gene (1977) and he defined meme in an analogy to gene. A gene is a replicator and carries genetic information; similarly a meme is a carrier of cultural evolution. Dennett defines mind as brain infested with memes. The paper attempts to critically analyze and explain Dennett's use of the concept of meme in explaining mind.

Keywords: Memes, Natural Selection, Evolution, Intentionality.

About the Speaker: He is a PhD research scholar at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Bombay. His primary areas of interest include Philosophy of Mind, Analytic Philosophy and Philosophy of Language.

2. ***Consciousness in Śramaṇa Tradition with Respect to Yogācāra Buddhism.*** By Mrs. Varsha Shah

Abstract:

Śramaṇic Tradition has produced outstanding Philosophical personalities who have made substantial contributions not only to Indian Philosophy but to the world thought. The concept of suffering forms one of the basic presuppositions of human existence in Indian Philosophy. Indian Philosophies offer not only views about the conditions of life, but also offers solutions to the problem of human existence.

The study of consciousness is an advanced stage in man's pursuit of Truth. Science of consciousness deals with consciousness at all the levels, human, supra-human and sub-human. It expounds the various levels of consciousness, states of consciousness, the nature of consciousness at each level, the nature of Truth at each level of consciousness and methods to attain those levels. . The Sanskrit word vijnāna, which is translated as consciousness, includes a wide range of activities, including sensation, cognition and conscious thought. The most famous innovation of the Yogācāra school was the doctrine of eight consciousnesses. The eighth consciousness, ālaya-vijñāna, 'warehouse consciousness', was also called the 'basic consciousness' (mūla-vijñāna) since it retains and deploys the karmic seeds that both influence and are influenced by the other seven consciousnesses. As the layers of consciousness are transformed (vijnana parinama), they each give rise to unique forms of wisdom. This

transformation is three fold: vipāka, manan and viṣaya- vijñapti. The wisdom inherent in the eighth consciousness allows us to perceive ourselves, our experience and other phenomena with perfect clarity and to profoundly appreciate the interconnectedness and interdependence of all things. As the deep-rooted delusions of the seventh consciousness are transformed, an individual is enabled to overcome the fear of death, as well as the aggression and violence that spring from this fear. A wisdom arises which enables us to perceive the fundamental equality of all living beings and to deal with them on an unchanging basis of respect.

An understanding of these levels of consciousness and the interaction between them can offer valuable insights into the nature of life and the self, as well as pointing to the resolution of the fundamental problems that humanity confronts.

About the Speaker:

She is currently working in K.J. Somaiya College Jain centre as Research Assistant. She is Pursuing Ph.D Under prof. Geeta Ramana. The Topic of her thesis is "Paradigm of Consciousness in Sraman Tradition with special respect to Jainism and Yogacara Buddhism."

3. *What Can We Know – A Critical Appraisal of 'What' and 'How' in the Process of Knowing in Indian Epistemology* by Supriya Deshmukh.

Abstract:

Positive sciences and common sense presume that three things are necessary in the process of acquiring knowledge; firstly, there should be an observer, a subject or a knower who is interested in knowing, secondly, there should be an object to be known outside and independent of the knower, and thirdly, there should be a methodology or a means to know

the object. When all three things are fulfilled then we can say that the process of knowledge is complete. However when one desires to study the theoretical aspects in the whole process which is systematically done in the branch of philosophy known as epistemology things are not so simple. Here, in epistemology, the researcher is more interested in perennial questions such as what is knowledge, what makes us know, what can be an object of knowledge, etc. The present paper attempts to deal with these questions from the Indian perspective.

In Indian context the knower is the Self or the ātman and he knows with the help of certain means. The body, sense organs, mind, intellect, ego, etc. all act as instruments for gaining knowledge. The objects of knowledge constitute the entire world including the ātman. In fact in most systems of Indian philosophy except the Cārvāka, that is the materialistic school, the ātman illuminates itself as well as the entire existence. Buddhism though who does not postulate an unchanging, immutable substratum has the concept known as vijñāna which is translated as momentary consciousness. The major schools of Indian philosophy describe the relationship of ātman with knowledge. In Nyāya School knowledge is an adventitious quality of the soul (ātman), in Sāṁkhya the distinguishing characteristic of soul (puruṣa) is knowledge, in Vedānta knowledge or consciousness is said to be the intrinsic nature of ātman, in Jaina the soul has upayoga (manifestation of consciousness) as its distinguishing characteristics. Thus most of the systems unanimously hold that knowledge (consciousness, capacity to know or whatever other terminology may be used for that matter) is an attribute of ātman; it is the absence or presence of consciousness that differentiates matter (anātman) from soul (ātman). The present paper attempts to take into account this concept of ātman as a

knower found in Indian philosophy while studying the process of knowledge.

The objects of knowledge also differ in various schools of Indian philosophy. In Nyāya School there are nine dravyas (entities) that are to be known, Saṁkhya has two irreducible principles puruṣa (soul) and prakṛti (matter) along with its evolutes, Vedānta postulates the existence of non-dual indestructible, immutable reality known as Brahman or ātman, Jaina enumerates six dravyas that are knowable, and so on and so forth.

The methodology of knowing likewise differs in various schools of Indian philosophy. Valid means of knowledge (pramāṇa) are considered to be primarily three, that is, perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāna) and verbal testimony (śabda) with the exception of Buddhism who accepts the first two while Cārvāka who accepts only perception as the valid means of knowledge. Jainas also make use of the concept of naya along with pramāṇa as valid means of knowledge.

In the present paper the primary focus will be on 'what' and 'how' in the process of knowing while due weightage will be given to particular systems of Indian philosophy as and when necessary.

About the Speaker: She is pursuing her Ph.D. with the Department of Philosophy, University of Mumbai.

4. ***Communication, Conversational Implicatures and Cooperative Principle: A Glimpse of Normativity in Grice's Intention Based Semantics*** by Ms. Ankita Jha.

Abstract: H. P. Grice's approach towards 'intention based semantics', gives cardinality to the role of speaker's intention in determining the meaning of expressions in language, when they are used by a speaker in specific contexts. The paper discusses the notion of meaning proposed by

Grice. The Gricean model prioritizes the relevance of non-natural (intentional) meaning with regard to language use. An important question that may be raised with regard to the role speaker's intentions come to play in the Gricean model is that in any discourse on communication, we need to see how we can account for figures of speech which are often used such as metaphors, sarcasm, verbal irony etc. That is to say, there is a need to distinguish between the literal meaning of the utterance and what the speaker means by it when he is uttering it in a context. Grice's answer in order to explain this distinction is given in the form of what he calls conversational implicatures. Grice introduces the Cooperative Principle to explain successful communication. The paper also delves into J. R. Searle's criticism of the Gricean framework and his attempt to amalgamate the notion of convention with speaker's intention to account for meaning in a more consistent way. We see how certain rules and norms become important to facilitate the 'intentional' acts of language use in human communication. This suggests a way towards semantic normativity. One can in a way say that even Grice's intention based approach incorporates some form of normativity by appealing to the notion of Cooperative Principle in everyday language use.

Keywords: Intention based semantics, Non-natural meaning, Communicative intention, Conversational implicatures, Convention, Normativity, Performative and Language use.

About the speaker: She is currently enrolled in the PhD Programme at HSS, IIT Bombay. She has completed my M. Phil in Philosophy of Language from University of Delhi in 2018. Her primary areas of interest include Philosophy of Language, Analytic Philosophy and Philosophy of Mind.

5. *A Critique of Analysis in Analytic Philosophy* by Mr. Vaibhav Narula.

Abstract:

The ability to distinguish right from wrong is a sign of good moral sense; the ability to distinguish good reasons from bad reasons is a sign of rationality. Our conduct in everyday life owes itself to an ability to distinguish what is good from what is bad whether that be morally or rationally. We allow our thinking and our actions to be regulated by a value system where it is necessary to distinguish the good from bad in order to achieve a certain goal which in case of a theoretical inquiry is Truth. The Philosopher tries to understand the normative force behind this rational order – what is a reason, what makes a certain reason good or bad, what is Truth and can we know what is true. This investigation requires that we understand the subject and the way he experiences the world and the place of the subject within this world. Down the ages the best minds of the world have been engaged in resolving this question but with no unanimity in sight. Philosophy differs from other disciplines in as much as it is self-regulatory. In every other discipline we acquire skills in order to be able to follow certain rules. We question these rules only when a practical need arises but we never question why certain rules are right and others wrong; how do we know which rule is the correct one – in short we never question what makes a following a certain rule rational. One thing is certain that in selecting the correct rules we cannot consult other rules otherwise there would be an infinite regress. There is some intuitive way in which we know that a certain rule is a correct one. Philosophy seeks to understand as far as possible the source of this intuition. But since unlike any other discipline philosophy is both the arbiter in which rules or method one ought to follow and also account for the validity of that method – different philosophers have come up with different ways to do philosophy. This does not mean that a philosopher's system is a product of artifice so far as philosophy is unregulated but it means that a philosopher is simultaneously concerned with regulating his inquiry by strict theoretical standards while at the same time probing what those standards are and why. While in everyday life we follow rules blindly; in philosophy we are conscious of those standards and we seek to find their source.

But in Contemporary Analytic Philosophy we see that this level of self- consciousness is missing. By reducing philosophy to conceptual analysis; philosophy has become a blind execution of method. The question is seldom asked about what an analysis is and what makes a certain analysis a correct one and when it is asked – it is taken as another analytical puzzle to be

solved – an attempt to give an analysis of analysis. As a result hard philosophical questions are never asked and it is simply assumed that philosophical questions can be answered via technical analysis. This loosens the relation between theory and practice making the latter unregulated and as a consequence unfruitful. In this paper I would attempt to demonstrate this conclusion. First as a theoretical and historical background I would probe three approaches to question of essence and then see how a contemporary attempt made by Kripke fails to account for essences and raise the pertinent philosophical questions surrounding it. The topic of essence is chosen because it is a notion used to account for the possibility of knowledge and in the contemporary context we shall see a certain blindness to the core philosophical issues surrounding knowledge while attempting to provide technical solutions to philosophical problems.

About the Speaker:

He is currently pursuing his Ph.D. with the Department of Philosophy, University of Mumbai.