

## EDITORIAL

# On the varieties of Indian thought

Issue four of *Synkrētic* focusses on Indian philosophy, a tradition which Mysore Hiriyanna notes begins almost two millennia before Christ and spans over thirty centuries.

Hiriyanna emphasises the essential differences between the diverse traditions that split off into orthodox and heterodox doctrines across the history of Indian philosophy. These have included the Vedānta, Buddhism, Jainism, and other schools which have been ascendant at various times.

It is a complex picture that resists easy generalisation, one made more complicated, according to Hiriyanna, by the fact that we know comparatively little of the lives of the great Indian philosophers, unlike the historical sources that exist in the Western canon, such as Diogenes Laërtius' *Lives of the Philosophers* and Plato's works for the life of Socrates.

But Hiriyanna does attempt to sketch some common threads across these traditions, including that in India philosophy was not sundered from religion, aimed beyond logic and ethics, was seen as a way of life and not just as a way of thought, aimed at *mokṣa* or liberation, and cultivated an ascetic ideal of discipline to attain it.

In his interview, Aaron Ortner notes the historical diffusion of Indian ideas to Ancient Greek thinkers like Heraclitus, in whose system he sees a Greek equivalent of the Indian concepts of *mokṣa* and *samsara*. He also fascinatingly finds similarities between the *Iliad* and the *Mahābhārata* and the *Odyssey* and the *Ramayana*.

Akshay Gupta's analysis of the problem of evil in the *Bhāgavata Purāna*, one of the most important Hindu sacred texts, offers another incidental but tantalising connection between Indian and Western thought, which also has a tradition of theodicies—justific-

ations of God's existence in the face of evil—including in the works of Thomas Aquinas.

In a wide-ranging interview, Krishna Pathak offers a thought-provoking case for why Indian and Hindu thought should be taught at Western universities, particularly the founders of various philosophical schools of the classical period, and proposes a list of subjects that merit attention.

Pivoting to the Pacific, David Gegeo passionately argues for revitalising Indigenous good governance in Solomon Islands, contrasting this Western concept with the conflict resolution practices and epistemology of the Kwara'ae people.

In a moving essay, Theresa Meki reflects on the passing of her grandfather Kruksie, who was from the Eastern Highlands Province in Papua New Guinea. The story of Kruksie's life and death is surrounded by the mysterious phenomena of the unseen, such as the appearance of the *papa graun* or spirits of the land.

With a similar focus on spirits and also in Melanesia, the two translations of Georges Baudoux which appear in this issue narrate the stories of the Indigenous Kanak people of New Caledonia from the perspective of a white French settler novelist. Both stories, the comical 'That old Tchiao' (1919) and the more macabre 'A horror story' (1939), are published in English for the first time in this issue.

Also appearing for the first time is an extract from Christian Romuss' forthcoming translation of the German philosopher Philipp Mainländer's *The Philosophy of Redemption*. 'God has died and His death was the life of the world,' Mainländer argues in his magnum opus, the first volume of which will be published later this year.

Still on the topic of God, Maulana Muhammad Ali's *The Religion of Islam* (1936) argues that Islam is the true religion for the whole of humanity, that it is the religion of peace, and that it is the religion of all the prophets of God, including those of the Torah. Islam 'is an all-inclusive religion which contains within itself all religions which went before it,' he strikingly writes.

In the final piece of the issue, Noel S. Pariñas reflects on comparative philosophy. 'Claiming a comparison between Eastern and Western philosophies is problematic because philosophy is funda-

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mentally Western,' he argues. This is an important point for *Synkrētīc* itself as a comparative journal of Indo-Pacific philosophy.

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