

Two Levels of Reality and the Concept of *māyā* (Vedanta and Schopenhauer)

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I

The present paper is an expository response to some of the seminal passages in the writings of Schopenhauer who has been rightly regarded as benchmark for cross-cultural encounters, particularly in the context of Indian thought. Though he had limited exposure to very vast and complicated Early Indian thought, and that too through translations, he made the best use of it. His enthusiastic reception, fascination, appreciation and appropriation of Indian thought are worth recording. He writes, “[i]f I say, the reader has already received and assimilated the divine inspiration of Indian wisdom, then he is best of all prepared to hear what I have to say to him.”¹ About the Vedic *Ṛṣis* he opines,

[t]hey were thus capable of a purer and more direct comprehension on the inner essence of nature, and were thus in a position to satisfy the need for metaphysics in a more estimable manner. Thus there originated in those primitive ancestors of the Brahmanas, the Rishis, the almost superhuman conceptions recorded in the Upaniṣads of the Vedas.

He further opines,

[b]ut the conviction here described and arising directly out of the apprehension of nature must have been extremely lively in those sublime authors of the Upaniṣads of the Vedas who can scarcely be regarded as mere human beings. For this conviction speaks to us so forcibly from an immense number of their utterances that we must ascribe this immediate illumination of their mind to the fact that standing nearer to the origin of our race as regards time, these sages apprehended the inner essence of things more clearly and profoundly than the already enfeebled race as mortals now are, is capable of doing so.²

There are several such references in his works highlighting the subtlety, depth and sublimity of Indian thought which needs to be pointed out to get the neces-

1 WWR I, 15.

2 WWR II, 475, Kap. 41.

sary background to understand Schopenhauer's ideas as claimed by him. In the next section a brief account of some such ideas is presented.

II

To undergo experiences is a feature common to all living beings. But nature has endowed human beings with a unique capacity to heighten, deepen and widen experiences as also to reflect upon them. It is a prerogative of human beings to retain them, to ratiocinate about them, to discriminate among them and to articulate all these in clear, distinct and logical terms. Conceptualization and verbalization of experiences provide human beings with immense empowerment. A human being who possesses reflective awareness can exercise rational ability to regulate experiences by manipulating innate endowments and natural surroundings, after examining the veracity, utility and significance of his experiences. Human cognitive and reflective potentiality is tremendous and unfathomable. It is wondrous and variegated and as stated earlier it admits of expansion, regulation and systematization. It would be sheer wastage of human potentiality if such a task were not undertaken. This is what should be meant by philosophizing or doing 'darśana' to be specific. Every act of doing *darśana* is undertaking systematic reflection upon our experiences with a view to be profited from this process. It is an inquiry into the nature of reality in order to understand its meaning and significance and to be benefited by it. Thus it is not a futile or barren enterprise. It has a definite purpose and an end to realize.

Philosophizing taken as doing *darśana* stems from experience, is embedded in experience and gets its culmination in experience. It begins with experience and ends in experience. It is rooted in experience and is tied down to experience. To be meaningful and useful it has to confine itself to the arena of experiences alone. Experience is the only gateway to reality. A real is apprehended in experiences and there is no other way or means to have an access to it. *Samvideva bhagavati vastūpagame naḥśaranam*, avers Vacaspati in the *Nyāyavārtikatātparyatikā*.³ Reality is amenable to experience and a genuine experience must pertain to real. To experience is to experience a real. An unreal is never experienced, but only imagined or hypostatized and superimposed. Human mind has this capacity of abstraction, computation and superimposition. It can also discriminate between the real and the unreal, the experienced and the mentally construed. Of course the construed also has its own value, utility and significance. It is called *ābhāryajñāna* in Indian tradition and is given the status of knowledge in a different context. It is speculation. A speculative enterprise begins from experience, but it gets entangled in the labyrinth of imagination and gets removed from

3 WWR II, 36.

reality. Doing philosophy is not speculation or brooding. Speculation has its own importance as there is nothing valueless in reality, but its role is ancillary and subservient to experience. So long as it helps experience in revealing the depths and subtlety of reality it has meaning and utility.

Philosophy is primarily theoretical and not speculative, and therefore it must have practical overtones. It must entail practice. There is a popular saying that knowledge is burden without action (*Jñanam bhāram kriyā vinā*). If philosophical reflection is not applied to concrete life-situation, it is incomplete and abortive. It will have an abrupt end if it does not fructify in action that may be in the form of realization. There is no chasm or incompatibility between being and knowing on the one hand and between knowing and doing on the other. The relation among the three can be viewed as symmetrical and transitive and can be put as being = knowing = doing. Being is *sat*, knowing is *cit* and doing is *ānanda* (value-realization). The reality is *saccidānanda*. The same reality is at once *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*, but the modes of its apprehension may be different and varied. This is because reality is multi-layered and multifaceted. This fact is vouchsafed by experience only. We have not to go beyond the ambit of experience (and in fact we cannot do so) to apprehend the reality.

Reality is experienced as multi-layered and multi-faceted. Like reality experience has also to be multi-layered and multi-faceted. And it has to be so in order to be genuine, veracious and comprehensive. The variety of experiences is in tune with the multiplicity in reality. The multiplicity originates from, is situated and embedded in and is sustained by one all-inclusive reality. It is an organic unity, a *multiplicity-in-unity* (not just unity-in-multiplicity or unity brought about in, or imposed on, multiplicity). Multiplicity issues forth from unity, is accommodated in an ordered way in unity and that is why it is cosmos and not chaos. It is cosmos in the sense that it is an orderly arrangement of multiple parts. It is universe and not multi-verse. It is universe in the sense that it houses many in one as an organic whole.

Ordinarily our experiences are sense-generated. We possess cognitive senses that provide us variety of experiences, both internal and external. The functioning of the cognitive senses is both amusing and bewildering and at times beyond the ken of human understanding. It also undergoes expansion and contraction with the increase or decrease of cognitive capacity. It can be thwarted by impeding forces and augmented and reinforced by supplementing agents. The ever-increasing technological inventions and advancements have devised many apparatus that serve as aid to the enrichment of our experiences, particularly of the present objects that are remote or subtle or covered. There is constant and perhaps endless improvement in our cognizing capacity.

There is something called extra-sensory perception that opens up a new field of experience particularly regarding our awareness of the past and the future. It

is a cognitive domain that is sometimes a suspect, but its veracity cannot be outright denied. In a sense it is also not extra-sensory if mind is taken to be an inner sense. But availability of such experiences to some persons cannot be denied on the ground that they are not available to every one. This type of experience is also sense-generated, though, not in the normal sense.

Our ordinary experiences are no doubt sense-generated, but they do not exhaust the entire gamut of our experiences. The sense experience itself points out to something beyond itself, something transcending it both in terms of its presupposition as well as its culmination, its first cause and the final cause. In the Kenopaniṣad we find very illuminating references to the supreme experience that is the source and sustenance of all empirical experiences, a light of all lights (*jyotisam jyotiḥ*). Everything shines by its light⁴ (*Tasya bhāsā sarvamidam vibhāti, Muṇḍaka II,10*). It is not amenable to reflection or ratiocination (*Niasa matih tarkenapaniya*). It is self-luminous. It is only to be experienced (*pratibodha viditam*). The Mandukya, Chāndogya, Bṛhadāraṇyaka and many other Upaniṣads also refer to it. Through proper *sādhana* one can have this realization. The path of yoga is helpful for this. One need not dwell upon it in detail, as it is well known.

The sense-generated experience is called empirical and the one that transcends it can be termed as trans-empirical. They are two modes (*avasthās*) of experience. Both are qualitatively different. Their objectives, contents and modes of realization are different. So they need to be clearly demarcated, but they need not be dichotomized as opposites. There is *anubhūti-dvaividhya* (two-fold-ness of experience) and there is *vyavasthā* (orderly differentiation) between them. Both are two facets of the same reality. Under different conditions and from different perspectives both are realizable. Both are real and valuable though in different senses and different ways. It is like an organism. The organic unity can be viewed from the point of view of parts or the whole. This is the *vyavasthā* of the *avasthās* of experience.

In this paper it is proposed to take a holistic and integral view of the nature of and interrelationship among reality, knowledge and values. It is an organic and symbiotic approach that characterizes the nature of reality given to us in our experiences and which we realize in our value-pursuits. It can be termed as *axi-ontonoetic* in the sense that in the realm of reality value-pursuits and value-realization can be possible through the means of knowledge. This is the immanent teleology inherent in the cosmic process.

To start with the nature of reality a distinction may be drawn between the proto-form (*svarūpa*) and the assumed-form (*svabhāva*) of reality. There can be different ways in which this difference can be approached, understood and ex-

4 Muṇḍaka II,10.

pressed. In Sanskrit literature we find a host of expressions which formulate these two facets of reality in the form of pairs (*dvandvas*). They are not to be taken as dichotomies as they are at once different and correlated. There is no exclusive 'either-or' relation between them and they do admit of reconciliation. They may be viewed as in juxtaposition. These *dvandvas* are given to us in our experiences and there is no incompatibility or contradiction between them. They are wonderful, but not bewildering. The Upaniṣads and the Quantum Mechanics evince this. The real is *sat* as well as *tyat*, *avyakta* as well as *vyakta*. It is locatable as well as non-locatable. It moves as well as does not move. It has form as well as it is formless. It is in *kāraṇavastha* (causal) as well as in *kāryavastha* (effect) state. The two need to be differentiated sharply, but they are not to be dichotomized. The Isopaniṣad is very emphatic about this and this is how the averments of the Kaṭhōpaniṣad are also to be understood. Some of such pairs are *akṣara-keṣara*, *amṛtatva-mṛtyu*, *sat-asat*, *satyasya satya-satya*, *ekatva-nānātva*, *prakāśa-tamas*, *akhaṇḍa-sakhaṇḍa*, *asaṃbhūti-sambhūti*, *avināśī-vināśī*, *akṣata-keṣata*, *nitya-anitya*, *aśva-śva*, *nirdvanda-dvanda*, *dhātu-jantu* and a host of others. These pairs are figurative expressions suggestive of various aspects and features of reality which is *vicitira* (wonderous). The Kaṭhōpaniṣad declares that

Śravanāyāpi bahurbhīryo no labhyaḥ śṛnvanto 'pibahavo yam no vidyuh
 Āścaryo vaktā kuśalo'sya labdhā" āścaryo jñātā kuśalanuśiṣṭah. (II.7)

The proto-form of reality is trans-empirical and the assumed form alone is amenable to our ordinary experience. The trans-empirical and the empirical are the two forms of the same real. "*Dve ve Brahmaṇe rūpe*" is the essence of the teachings of the Upaniṣads. This also is the teaching of the Buddha, as Nāgārjuna in Mādhyamika karikā has put it in the following words, "[*d*]ve satye samāśrītya Buddhasya dharma deśanā." (XXIV.8)

Both the forms are real and equally valuable, of course, from different points of view. From the point of view of the totality that is an organic whole the real is trans-empirical and from the point of view of parts it is empirical. This is how the ontological problem of 'one and many' can be approached. Both one and many are the inevitable facts of our experience. In a satisfactory philosophical position both are to be recognized and accommodated in a holistic and integral system, in a synthesis in which the two are not posed as opposites, but as complementary. Such a position can be termed as Organicism that fulfills this task by postulating a primordial unity that expresses itself in and through the multiplicity of diverse forms and functions (*Ajāyamāno bahudhā vijāyate*). The analogy of living organism, given to us in our experiences, is best suited to explain the nature of reality. A living organism is neither assemblage of scattered and unrelated multiple parts, nor it is a barren unity or an abstraction that is bereft of the multiplicity of its organs. It is a concrete unity that realizes itself in and through that

multiplicity. Just as a part is not intelligible except through the whole of which it is a part and just as a whole is not conceivable without any reference to its constituent parts, so also the organs are not intelligible except as inhering in an organism and the organism also is not conceivable without any reference to its organs. Thus Organicism regards one and many as members of an organic whole each having a being of its own, but a being that implies a relation to the other. This is a holistic and integral approach based on the principles of interrelation and coordination, mutuality and cooperation, reciprocity and interdependence.

In no other system of thought one can speak of such a world of mutual appreciation and organic interrelation. This is particularly so in Absolutism, Dualism, and Pluralism of all varieties. In Absolutism there is no manifoldness, but solid singleness. In Dualism there is no mutuality, but rigid bifurcation. In Pluralism there is no inter-relatedness, but monadic exclusiveness. So these systems cannot entertain the idea of mutual give and take or mutual appreciation that is the core of Organicism. The chief value of Organicism lies in the fact that it recognizes the inalienable individuality and the reality of the manifoldness of finite spirits and matter and assigns them a proper place, function and value in the unifying framework of an all-embracing Unity without in any way destroying Its supreme perfection. The Unity, which is concrete Absolute, differentiates Itself into multiple finite beings and matter, but It does not get exhausted by them, just like a whole which is not a mere summation of parts. It is immanent in them, but does not become completely identified with them. It reserves an inexhaustible amount of reality whereby It transcends them. It is thus both immanent and transcendent. The multiplicity of finite beings and matter also, instead of being annihilated in the all-absorbing Unity of the Absolute, enjoys a relative reality, a dependent reality, and derives its being, discharges its function and realizes its value within the concrete Unity of the absolute. Both are necessary to each other and realize themselves in and through the other.

III

A distinction is drawn between *vyavahāra* and *parāmārtha*, *loka* and *lokottara*, *prapañca* and *niṣprapañca* in Indian thought. This is quite prominent in Vedānta. These are two realms of existence given to us in our experience. This is *sattā-daivīdhya* and there is a *vyavasthā* in it. But it should be emphasized that they do not bifurcate our life. The two can be lived together. A person who harmonizes the two is known as *sādhu* or *jīvanmukta* or *bodhisattva*. The two are distinct, no doubt, but not to be separated. The Bhagavadgītā gives an analogy of a lotus leaf that lives in water, but is not affected by water. In the Indian tradition examples of Janaka, Yajñavalkya etc. are cited. In modern times also Pt. Lal Bahadur Shastri tried to live up to this life. It is difficult, but not impossible. It is a *sādhyā*

(realizable ideal) and not *asādhya* (utopia). It requires *sāadhanā* (a particular mode of living) a specific type of employment of *sādhana* (means) and *itikartavyatās* (modalities).

The realm of *vyavahāra* is the empirical world that is objective as *jagat* or *viśva* and subjective as *saṃsāra*. *Jagat* is *kṣara*, i. e., mutable, where there is change, movement and multiplicity. The underlying real is *parāmārtha* that is the substratum of the world. *parāmārtha* makes *vyavahāra* possible. Both are interrelated as two facets of the same real. It is lopsided to regard any one alone as real. The *saṃsāra* is also real, but it is real so long as it is experienced to be so. The *lokavyavahāra* (worldly life), both in *jagat* and *saṃsāra*, is real so long as we are engaged in it. We have to reckon with it whether we like it or not. It may be differentiated from that which is foundationally real, but it is also real in its own form and therefore it can not be negated. Rather it would be disastrous to think that it is to be negated. It may be *māyā* or *mithyā* or *anirvacanīya* from a particular standpoint, but it is not *tuccha* or *alīka*. The worldly life may be of no interest to a self-realized person, but one, who has not reached that stage, has no right to say that it is not real. Any worldly being who says so, is indulging in self-deception or he/she is fooling others.

The empirical world is a cosmos, a system that has its own laws and principles. It is orderly, full of purpose and value, though, we the human beings disturb that order, it has implicate order. It is amenable to rational analysis, though, the finite human intellect cannot fathom its depth and vastness, its richness and variegated nature. But in order to live a good life and a meaningful existence one has to understand its nature, significance and value. The life in the empirical world is imperfect, but it has the potentiality of being perfect. This requires a symbiosis of knowledge, will and action. This is known as *puruṣārtha* or *puraskāra*. As per the doctrine of *karma*, it is meant for a rational, free and responsible agent, who is titled as *puruṣa*. It is three-pronged consisting of *sādhya*, *sāadhanā* and *itikartavyatā*, as stated earlier. But the doctrine of *karma* is not just about management of *karma*, but also about management of *karmaphala*. So the *Iśāvāsyopaniṣad* says that '*Kurvanniha karmāṇi*', but also avers that '*Tena tyaktena bhujithā*'. This is the *karmayoga* of the *Bhagavadgītā*, which consists in the *kauśala* (skillfulness) of the symbiosis of *pravṛtti* in *karma* and *nivṛtti* from *karmaphala*. The empirical world is both the *karmabhūmi* and *bhogabhūmi* and therefore there is a role of *karma* and also of *kāma* through *artha*. Righteous or legitimate *karma* is *dharma*. *Dharma* regulates *artha* and *kāma* also. Thus the worldly life is a life of *trivargas*, which will be discussed later. The point to be noted is that the world is an arena for 'perfectuation' or *Brahmanization* for the finite existences. The finite existence is beset with imperfection and stands in need of constant progress. All pursuits of science and technology, of arts and humanities are the varied steps to actualize the inner potentialities. All that is

needed is proper balancing of priorities, the cultivation of *triratnas* of *samyak dr̥ṣṭi*, *samyaka jñāna* and *samyaka cāritrya*, as emphasized in Jainism.

IV

In the Upaniṣadic philosophical tradition a distinction is drawn between two facets of knowledge, viz., *vidyā* and *avidyā* or *parā vidyā* and *aparā vidyā*. The word *avidyā* has been used in very many different senses in Indian literature causing a lot of confusion. In our context it means *aparā vidyā*. It is not opposite of *vidyā*, but different (*anya*) from it as has been clarified in the Iṣāvāsyopaniṣad. *Vidyā* stands for the unconditioned or absolute knowledge of the total reality. It is pure experience bereft of all conceptualization and verbalization. It is impartite (*akhaṇḍa*) experience of the whole. It is trans-empirical, not acquired by empirical means or sense-experience and *sui generis*. Therefore it is not amenable to empirical verification. It does not purport to describe the real, but leads to realization of oneness with it. It is thus prescriptive. Finite being has the potentiality of such a realization, but it requires methodological cultivation of the inner capability. *Avidyā*, on the other hand, is descriptive knowledge of an aspect of reality that is sense-generated and conditioned by thought and language. It is *prapañca*, a play of thought and language. It is proliferation of pure experience and, therefore, it is *nāmarūpa*. It is conditional and relational. Both in its origin and validity it is dependent upon certain conditions. That is why it is regarded as relatively true. All it means is that its truth is subject to verification and falsification. Its truth or falsity is contingent upon confirmation or confutation. This is due to its being empirical and sense-generated. All empirical knowledge is *avidyā* in the sense that it is believed to be true at a time and the moment its falsity is exposed belief in its truth is withdrawn. In it there is always a superimposition of conceptual and linguistic categories on pure experience of the real (*vastusvarūpavadharana*) and this renders it subject to built-in falsification.

Perhaps in order to avoid the confusion surrounding the word *avidyā* the other pair of terms as *parā vidyā* and *aparā vidyā* is introduced in the Muṇḍako-paṇiṣad. Again the meaning of the adjectives *parā* and *aparā* need clarification. They are not to be understood as higher and lower in valuational context or as having more value and less value. Knowledge is knowledge and cannot be so evaluated. As discussed earlier, *parā* is the unconditioned knowledge of the total or whole and *aparā* is the partial and conditioned knowledge of the parts of the same whole. Both are knowledge and hence true and valuable, but *aparā* is conditionally true and provisionally valuable. The epistemic difference is not to be confused with axiological difference. *parā* is inclusive of *aparā* in the sense of being its foundation. The *parā* transcends *aparā* only in the sense in which the whole transcends its parts. Between them the relation is that of includer and

included just as in another set of terminology of *parājati* and *aparājati* the former includes the latter like genus including its species. This is how the famous Upaniṣadic statement, “[e]kena Brahma vijñātena sarvam vijñātam bhavati,” becomes meaningful. The empirical and the trans-empirical are no doubt different, but they are not contradictory or incompatible. They are complementary and have a logical order of prior and posterior, *aparā vidyā* being a stepping stone to *parā vidyā*. Both are to be pursued not in isolation or mutual exclusion, but conjointly as the Iśāvāsyopaniṣad (verses 9 and 11) explicitly enjoins. It gives a stern warning that any exclusive resort to any one is lopsided, truncated and disastrous. It is like entering into stark darkness.

This distinction between *vidyā* and *avidyā* conveys the idea that the empirical means of knowing and conceptual-linguistic apparatus have a distinct sphere of operation that is parasitic upon sense experience, whereas the foundational reality is beyond their comprehension. Our intellect has only practical serviceability and is inadequate to deal with the ultimate real. A seeker of truth has to know the nature and bounds of both. This is Brahma-realization. This is Nirvana or *mokṣa*.

V

Human being is the highest emergent in the cosmic process so far. The evolved human consciousness is bi-faceted in so far as it is self-consciousness as well as object-consciousness. We know, we know that we know and we also know what we know is true and valuable or not. On the basis of ratiocinative discrimination we form judgments. We make a distinction between fact and value. These two are distinct, but closely interrelated and interdependent. Fact is already in existence in the present or in the past. Value is to be brought into existence through our efforts. Experience of fact enables us to postulate value and engages us in the pursuit of its realization. When value is realized it becomes fact. So fact-value-dichotomy is only apparent and for practical purposes only. Further, we distinguish between value and dis-value. Within values again we distinguish between intrinsic value and instrumental value, ultimate value and proximate value and so forth.

Consciousness of values and their planned and systematic realization is another unique feature of human being. The quest for value and efforts to realize them constitute the core of human life. There is an innate necessity in human beings to participate in the process of value-realization. That is why consciously or unconsciously value-concepts, value-discriminations and value-judgements feature prominently in human life.

Once we have grasped that the nature of man is such as to urge him to participate in the fullness of life and, therefore, in the process of value-realization, the questions arise as to how we know what is valuable in life and reality and how to

realize that. The answer available in the Indian cultural tradition is in terms of the distinction between values of empirical existence (*preyas*) to be known through various types of *avidyās* and the value of spiritual enhancement (*śreyas*) to be realized through *vidyā*. Though *preyas* and *śreyas* pertain to two different facets of existence, there is no exclusive ‘either-or’ between them, as we have delineated earlier. Material advancements represented by *artha* and *kāma* as regulated by *dharma* and spiritual enhancement are both complementary and, therefore, are to be correlated. In fact one should reinforce, season and temper the other. Material advancement is the base and a stepping stone to spiritual advancement and therefore it has temporal priority, but it has to be spiritualized for just and equitable sharing.

Man is supposed to be a rational, free and responsible agent in this cosmic set-up. He is infinite-finite in the sense that he is endowed with tremendous potentialities, which he needs to actualize. Inherently he is of the nature of infinite (*amṛtasya putra*), but gets finitized in the world process. He therefore has to strive hard to restore his infinitude. This is self-realization posited as an ideal for human pursuits. It consists in overcoming of imperfections – cognitive, affective and conative – that can take place gradually by human efforts, individual as well as collective.

In the value-pursuits and value-realization there is no dichotomy or incompatibility between individual and society. The individual is only a *piṇḍa* in the *Brahmāṇḍa*. There is no isolated individual, but an individual-in-cosmos. So the human development cannot be at the cost of other humans or the cosmos. In fact the very possibility of human development is dependent upon cosmic development. Thus our concept of development should not be *anthropo-centric*, but *cosmo-centric*. Such an understanding of the nature and the status of human beings helps in evolving harmonious corporate living (*saṃgha jīvana*). It is conducive to avoiding the extremes of individualism and socialism. It steers clear the false dichotomy of individual versus society and views them in organic interrelationship and interdependence.

VI

These ideas are commonly shared by Vedanta and Schopenhauer. From philosophical point of view it is immaterial whether Schopenhauer borrowed them from Vedanta or was influenced by Vedanta in formulating them or got confirmation and collaboration from Vedanta. We have discussed the Vedantic position in detail so as to provide the requisite background and to help in better understanding of the views of Schopenhauer as claimed by him. The two levels of Reality as Will and Representation formulated by Schopenhauer correspond to the *parāmarthika* and *Vyavaharika* levels enunciated in Vedanta. And this is a consequence of the introduction of the concept of *māyā* in the two traditions.

Māyā is both an epistemological mistaking (*Atasmin tadbuddhi*) and metaphysical projection (*Satyamamṛtena channam*). It is not a principle of illusionism or falsification, but of phenomenology and ultimate *essence-less-ness* of worldly existence. But it is not pessimism or other-worldliness. It only points out the inevitability of the need to transcend the world of suffering through the path of *nivṛtti*. Only by realizing Nirvana the world of *karma* and *punarjanma* can be overcome. Thus the principle of *māyā* becomes a helpful guide to realize the *summum bonum* of life. Thus there is a close parallelism between Vedanta and Schopenhauer justifying the inspiration the latter received from the former. Schopenhauer was quite explicit and vocal about this. A study of Schopenhauer in the background of Indian thought can be a benchmark for the study of comparative philosophy and cross-cultural encounters.