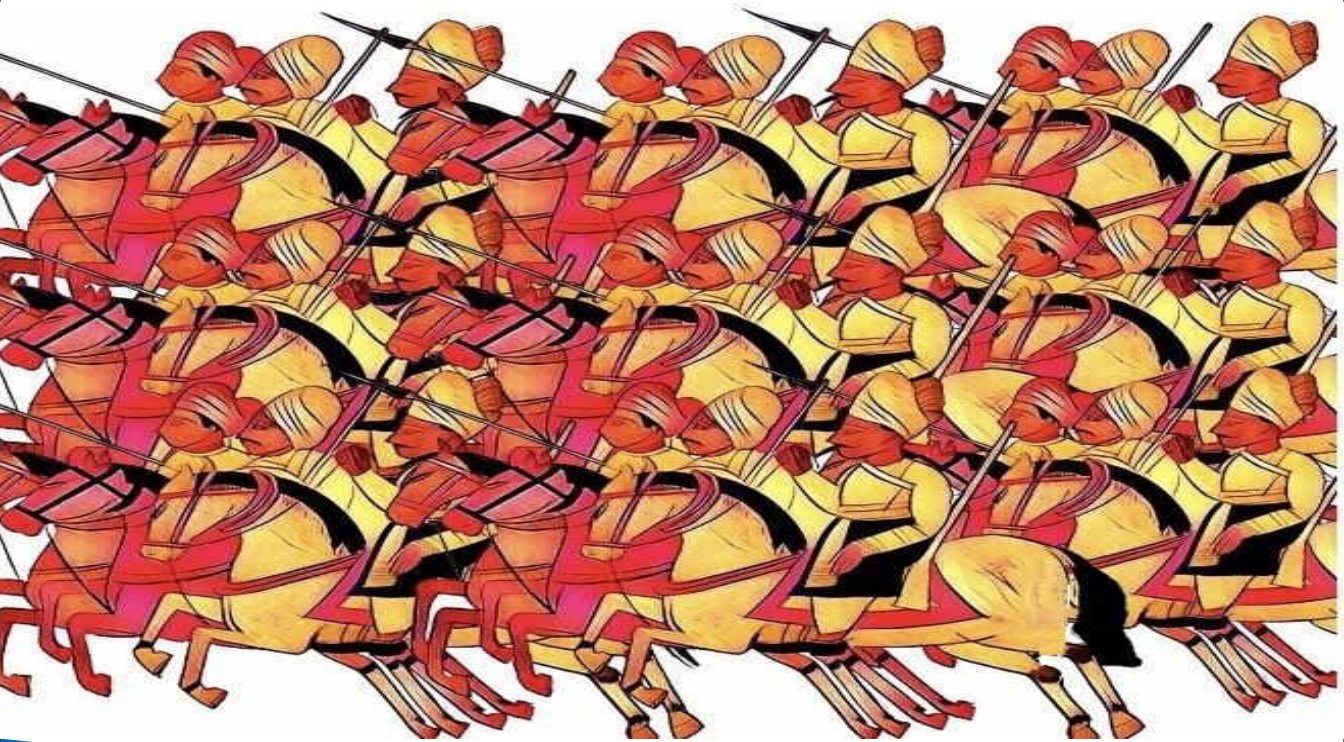


MHRD
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New Developments in Global Political Theory: Comparative, Decolonial and Indian Political Theory

04-08 December 2017



**Discipline of Philosophy
School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology Indore**

OVERVIEW

Increasingly influential and widespread critiques of the internationally dominant tradition of political theory – that is, Rawlsian liberalism – along with the advent of globalization, have led political theorists towards the view that political theory should not quarantine itself from the world's social and political realities, but instead must remain attentive to the burning issues of our time. To achieve this, political theorists should be willing to enlarge their horizon of engagement – they should be comparative, global, and cross-cultural. The term for this orientation is comparative political theory. But is it really what we need? According to de-colonial theorists, comparative political theory might at bottom be understood just to be a more perfect universalization of transatlantic (commonly called, 'Western') political theory. If so, it would scarcely contribute to the authenticity and autonomy of Indian political theory. But what, exactly, is Indian political theory?

Some of the very same forces behind the development of comparative and de-colonial political theory have been serving as sources of momentum and inspiration for the many scholars of Indian social and political theory, who have been trying, against the odds, to inaugurate and cultivate a new tradition of Indian political theory in recent years. In this course, we shall aim to help redirect the gaze of (Indian) political theory back upon the lived experiences of (Indian) political life, and to present an innovative, systematic, compelling case for why we need to. Our fundamental concern will be how to re-found the discipline of Indian political theory. In its re-founding, it must not rely on transatlantic (or 'Western') theory, nor can it glibly participate in 'global' or 'comparative' thought. The poverty, or inadequacy, of those two alternatives pushes us toward a return to 'tradition', but a hybrid and evolving tradition. To avoid this return being stultifying or oppressive, we introduce a principle of reform alongside the return, which is analogical to what is widely known as the difference principle; that is, the principle that any modifications to be made must benefit the least advantaged and that only those changes that do benefit the least advantaged are legitimate.

OBJECTIVES

- i) Exposing participants to the most recent developments in global political theory
- ii) Building capability amongst the participants in the application of deep, thoughtful, critical reappraisal of currently dominant academic/ institutional expectations regarding research and writing in political theory and its associated disciplines
- iii) Providing exposure to theoretical problems and their solutions, through case studies in political theory and the associated disciplines of transatlantic Marxism, post-structuralism, and postcolonial ethnography
- iv) Enhancing the capability of the participants to begin to formulate ways to inaugurate an authentic and autonomous political theoretical framework in India



COURSE DETAILS

PART I: What is political theory meant to do?

Lecture 1: Introduction: time for a new Orientalism?

The first lecture introduces the subject matter in terms of the pathbreaking book *Orientalism*, which was published in 1978. Hence, forty years have passed. Is it time for a new Orientalism?

Lecture 2: The thick and thin of svaraj

In lecture 2 we first cover the meaning of *svaraj*, and attempt to show that we have not yet achieved *svaraj* in ideas. That is, Indian political theorists (as well as international theorists of Indian politics) continue to work with categories and concepts alien to the lived social and political experiences of India's 'common man', or everyday people.

Lecture 3: Political theory, de-colonial and comparative political theory

Lecture 3 explains the nature of political theory, and then pushes on to comparative political theory, which is discussed in the light of globalization. The important lessons from de-colonial theory are then utilized for a critical appraisal of the newest trend in comparative political theory.

Lecture 4: What is Indian political theory?

In this lecture we aim to help redirect the gaze of (Indian) political theory back upon the lived experiences of (Indian) political life, and to present an innovative, systematic, compelling case for why we need to.

PART II: The inadequacy of transatlantic political theory

Lecture 5: Theories of 'our' condition: Habermas and the post-secular turn

Lecture 5 presents and then critiques certain orientalist traces in Habermas' recent political and social philosophy; specifically, his so-called post-secular turn.

Lecture 6: Theories of 'our' oppression: Žižek and the critique of human rights

In Lecture 6 we discuss human rights, which have occupied the space of emancipation so completely that the possibilities of new imaginations and alternatives have received little to no attention. In an effort to draw out some of the seriously limiting consequences of this, we enter a critical discussion of Žižek's work 'Against Human Rights'.

Lecture 7: Theories of 'our' liberation: Rawls, Sen, and the romance of global justice

Lecture 7 plunges into the great global justice debate. This has been raging for 40 years now. The debate treats of the international relations of persons, states, and institutions. Curiously, such large-scale issues are being determined, debated, and negotiated, and yet so very few non-Western participants are active in it.

Lecture 8: Unkindness of theories: transatlantic Marxism, post-structuralism, postcolonial ethnography

In Lecture 8 we turn to another set of theories, prepared specially for or about 'us' by transatlantic academics; what I call, using the collective noun for ravens, an unkindness of theories. We explore the inauthenticity and ill-fit of 'Western' Marxist, post-structural and postcolonial theories and ethnographies with the ground realities experienced by the Indian masses.

PART III: Preconditions for svaraj

Lecture 9: Tradition, hybridity, equality: tarrying with the negative

Lecture 9 delves into the nature of 'tradition' within contemporary political theory. 'Tradition' is not a backwards turn to some pre-modern golden age; rather, it is a look within, which is to say an excavation downwards.

Lecture 10: Dalit svaraj: the precondition for authentic Indian political theory

The final lecture attempts to tie together the strands, and to clarify why Indian political theory has found itself at an impasse. We unfold clearly here that Ambedkar holds the solution for overcoming this dilemma: we must interrogate the Indian masses for the determination of a vocabulary of experience-near concepts that form the legitimate basis of authentic Indian political theory.

TEACHING FACULTY



Prof: Aakash Singh Rathore

Aakash Singh Rathore is Professor of Global Political Philosophy at the Department of Political Science, LUISS University, Rome (Italy) and Visiting Professor at the Division of Global Affairs, Rutgers University, New Jersey (USA). He has also been Visiting Professor of Political Science at University of Toronto (Canada) and a Visiting Scholar at Upenn (Philadelphia, USA), and several other universities and centres around the world. He completed his post-doctorate in jurisprudence at Humboldt University, Berlin (Germany), his Ph.D. and M.Phil in Political Philosophy at the Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium), his LL.M. in Comparative Constitutional Law at the Central European University (Budapest), and his M.A.L.A. in classics at St. John's College, Annapolis (USA). He also studied Law and Philosophy (BA, LL.B., J.D.) in the USA (Michigan, Maryland) and Brussels (Belgium).

As Director of the International Research Network on Religion and Democracy (www.irnrd.org), Aakash Singh Rathore is Series Editor of the Oxford University Press book series, Religion & Democracy: Reconceptualising Religion, Culture & Politics in Global Context. As International Fellow of the Centre for Ethics & Global Politics in Rome, he is Series Editor of the Routledge book series, Ethics, Human Rights & Global Political Thought. He is also the Chief Editor of the journal Plurilogue: Politics and Philosophy Reviews (www.plurilogue.com).



Dr. Bharath Kumar

Bharath Kumar is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Indore, Indore. He works in the areas of Contemporary Indian Philosophy, Moral Philosophy, Social and Political Philosophy. He is interested in engaging with the philosophical and theoretical concerns of modern Indian thinkers.

DEADLINE

Interested candidates can e-mail their latest CV to bharathk@iiti.ac.in

Last date for receipt of applications: 31st October 2017

Shortlisted candidates will be intimated by e-mail.

FEE

The participation fees for taking the course is as follows:

Academic Institutions:

Students: Rs 500/-

Faculty members: Rs 1000/-

Research Organizations: Rs 2000/-

The above course fee includes all reading materials, stationary kit, refreshments, certificates and library facility.

The outside participants will be provided with accommodation on nominal payment basis.

COURSE COORDINATOR

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